

DARK MAGE OF RHUDAUR™

#8013



A Fantasy Role Playing adventure module from
J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH®

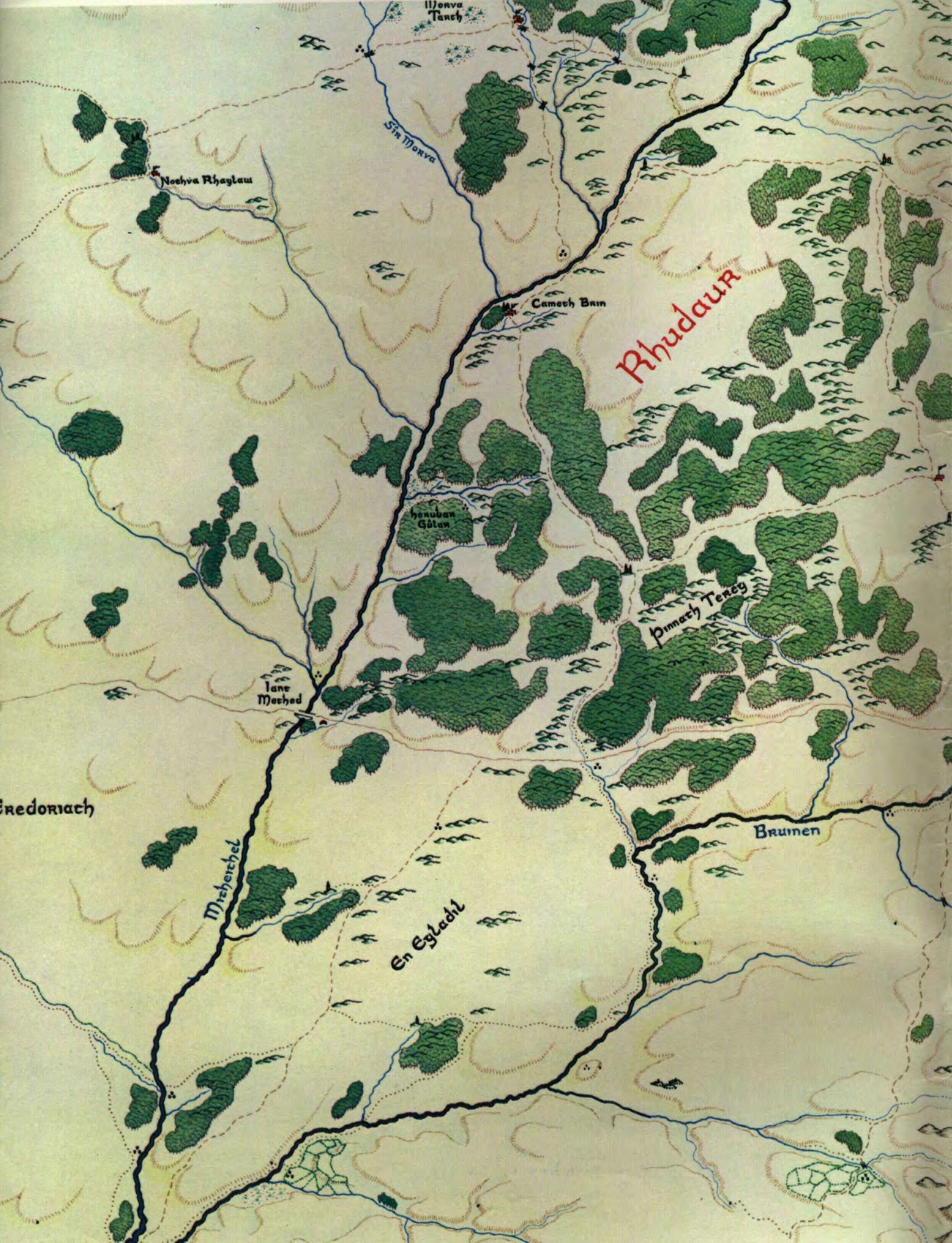


Playable with



Rolemaster™

Based on THE HOBBIT® and THE LORD OF THE RINGS™, this supplement embroils adventurers in a desperate attempt to save the Beacon Towers of the Dúnedain. The last bastions of the Free Peoples in Rhudaur, these towers oppose the unscrupulous Cultirith Rangers, Orc troops, packs of Wargs, and the newly awakened horror from the Yfelwood, all now gathered by Angmar's minion—the Dark Mage.



DARK MAGE OF RHUDAUR™

1.0 Guidelines

1.1 ABBREVIATIONS	2
1.2 DEFINITIONS	2
1.3 ADAPTING THIS MODULE	3
1.31 Converting Stats and Bonuses	3
1.32 Conversion Chart	3

2.0 Player Characters

3.0 An Introduction To the Border War

3.1 THE ANGLE	5
3.2 THE TROLLSHAW AND THE YFELWOOD	5
3.3 THE PEOPLES OF THE FRONTIER	6
3.4 THE LITTLE WAR	6
3.5 THE PLOT AGAINST THE TIRTHON	6
3.6 ADVENTURERS IN RHUDAUR	7
3.7 THUIN BOID	8

4.0 Before the Snow Falls

4.1 THE AIRUND-SHEGAN	8
4.2 DAGAR'S FIRST WAENHOSH	8
4.3 THE GATHERING STORM	9
4.31 Maig Tuira	10
4.32 The Dunnish Warbands	10
4.4 THE NPCS	10
4.5 THE TASK	12
4.6 ENCOUNTERS	13

5.0 Besieged

5.1 THE BEACON TOWERS OF RHUDAUR	15
5.11 The Tirthon	17
5.12 Terrain Surrounding the Tirthon	17
5.13 Tower Layouts	17
5.2 ETHACALI'S PLAN OF ATTACK	21

5.3 NPCS AT THE SIEGE OF TIRTHON	22
5.4 THE TASK	25
5.41 Starting the Players	25
5.42 Aids	25
5.43 Obstacles	25
5.44 Rewards	25
5.5 ENCOUNTERS	25
5.51 Nightfall	25
5.52 The Battle of the Tirthon	27
5.53 Striking Back	28
5.54 The Grand Assault	28

6.0 The Horror of the Yfelwood

6.1 THE TALE OF THE SHAPECHANGER	29
6.2 EXCAVATIONS IN BLOGATH'S VALE	29
6.3 THE NPCS	33
6.31 Orcs	33
6.32 Trolls	33
6.33 The Blood-wights	33
6.4 THE TASK	36
6.41 Starting the Players	36
6.42 Aids	36
6.43 Obstacles	36
6.44 Rewards	36
6.5 ENCOUNTERS	36
6.51 Trolls	36
6.52 Orcs	36
6.53 Blogath and Her Minions	36

7.0 Tables

7.1 BEAST TABLE	37
7.2 NPC TABLE	38
7.3 ENCOUNTER TABLE	40

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Odaric crouched behind the moss-grown trunk of a fallen oak. The first stars of dusk glimmered in the light-filled sky above. Shadows deepened around the unmoving Northman. With a quick, indrawn breath, he shifted his weight to obtain a better view of the conflict raging in the fields before him.

Wounded Vulseggi and Dunedain lay sprawled among the corpses of Orcs, Dunmen, and proud Cultirith. Punctuating the hiss of arrows, siege engines hurled stones at the Beacon Tower. Silhouettes flickered on its battlements, providing targets for the troops gathered beneath the eaves of the surrounding wood.

A sudden eruption of shouts drew Odaric's attention to his left. A battalion of Orcs, bearing the weight of a steel-shrouded battering ram, staggered from the forest's edge towards the Tirthon. Could the defenders withstand this renewed assault?

Odaric stiffened. Surely he heard a noise beneath the tumult of the battle. A softer sound. A hesitant, intermittent rustling like that of stealthy footsteps behind him.¹ The Northman whirled and raised his sword as two savage Dunmen lunged forward with spiked clubs.

1.0 GUIDELINES

Fantasy role playing is akin to a living novel where the players are the main characters. Everyone combines to write a story which is never short of adventure. They help create a new land and strange new tales.

This series is designed as a tool for Gamemasters (GMs) who wish to run scenarios or campaigns set in J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. The adventure modules are complete and ready to run studies of very specific areas, and are intended to be used with a minimum of additional work. Each has statistical information based on the *Middle-earth Role Playing (MERP)* and *Rolemaster (RM)* fantasy systems. The modules are, however, adaptable for use with most major role playing games. Creative guidelines, not absolutes, are emphasized.

PROFESSOR TOLKIEN'S LEGACY

Each module is based on extensive research and attempts to meet the high standards associated with the Tolkien legacy. Rational linguistic, cultural, and geological data are employed. Interpretive material has been included with great care, and fits into defined patterns and schemes. ICE does not intend it to be the sole or proper view; instead, we hope to give the reader the thrust of the creative processes and the character of the area.

Remember that the ultimate sources of information are the works of Professor J. R. R. Tolkien. Posthumous publications edited by his son Christopher shed additional light on the world of Middle-earth. These modules are derived from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, although they have been developed so that no conflict exists with any of the other sources.

1.1 ABBREVIATIONS

GAME SYSTEMS

MERP
RM

Middle-earth Role Playing
Rolemaster

MIDDLE-EARTH TERMS

A	Adûnaic	LotR	<i>The Lord of the Rings</i>
BS	Black Speech	Or	Orkish
Cir	Cirth or Certar	Q	Quenya
D	Dunael (Dunlending)	R	Rohirric
E	Edain	Rh	Rhovanion
El	Eldarin	S	Sindarin
Es	Easterling	S A	Second Age
1 A	First Age	Si	Silvan Elvish
F A	Fourth Age	T A	Third Age
Har	Haradrim	Teng	Tengwar
Hob	<i>The Hobbit</i>	W	Westron
Kd	Kuduk (Ancient Hobbitish)	Wo	Wose (Druedain)
Kh	Khuzdul (Dwarvish)	V	Varag

CHARACTER STATS

Ag	Agility (RM/MERP)	Me	Memory (RM)
Co	Constitution (RM/MERP)	Ig	Intelligence (MERP)
St	Strength (RM/MERP)	Re	Reasoning (RM)
Pr	Presence (RM/MERP)	Em	Empathy (RM)
It(In)	Intuition (RM/MERP)	Qu	Quickness (RM)
SD	Self Discipline (RM)		

GAME TERMS

AT	Armor Type	Lvl	Level (exp. or spell level)
bp	bronze piece(s)	MA	Martial Arts
cp	copper piece(s)	Mod	Modifier or Modification
Crit	Critical strike	mp	mithril piece(s)
D	Die or Dice	NPC	Non-player Character
D100	Percentile Dice Result	OB	Offensive bonus
DB	Defensive Bonus	PC	Player Character
FRP	Fantasy Role Playing	PP	Power Points
GM	Gamemaster	R or Rad	Radius
gp	gold piece(s)	Rnd or Rd	Round
ip	iron piece(s)	RR	Resistance Roll
jp	jade piece(s)	Stat	Statistic or Characteristic
tp	tin piece(s)		

1.2 DEFINITIONS

Angmar — (S "Iron Home") Angmar is founded around TA 1300 by the Witch king, the Lord of the Nazgûl. An evil realm, it lies nestled in and along the icy flanks of the northern Misty Mountains (S "Hithaeglar"), in the high plateau of northeastern Eriador. Between TA 1301 and 1974, Angmar wars on Arthedain, Cardolan, and Rhudaur, the three Dunedain successor states to old Arnor.

Arnor — (S "Land of the King" or "Royal Land") Encompassing most of Eriador, Arnor is the northernmost of the two Dunedain "Realms in Exile." The Kingdom of Gondor is its sister land to the south. Founded by Elendil the Tall in S.A. 3320, both realms are settled by the Faithful Dunedain (Edam) who flee the sinking island continent of Numenor. Arnor is split on TA 861 into three companion states: Arthedain, Cardolan, and Rhudaur. It is overrun by the host of the Witch king in TA 1974, and is known as the "Lost Kingdom" until FA 1, when King Elessar (Aragorn II) refounds the state and reunites with Gondor.

Arthedain — Last Kingdom of the Dunedain of the North. As of TA 1700, it is the only surviving unit left of the lost Kingdom of Arnor.

Bruinen — (S "Loudwater") A river running through Eriador, marking the northern border of Eregion. At Tharbad it joins the Mitheithel to form the Gwathlo.

Dunedain — (S "Edam of the West," sing. "Dunadan") These High Men were those Edam ("Fathers of Men") who settled on the island continent of Numenor, far to the west of Middle-earth. The Dunedain conquered and/or colonized many areas along the western, southern, and eastern coasts of Endor during the Second Age, and were great lords among men. Unfortunately, their great desire for power—at least among some—led to the destruction of their island home near the end of the Second Age. This "Downfall" occurred as a result of their invasion of the Undying Lands and challenge to the Valar. Those called the "Faithful" opposed the policies and hatred of the Elves which led to the Downfall, and were saved when the isle sank. They later founded the kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor in the North and South of northwestern Middle-earth. Many "unfaithful" groups survived in the various colonies of the Dunedain established in happier times (e.g. the "Black Numenoreans" of Umbar). The term Dunedain refers to the Numenoreans and their descendants in Middle-earth, groups which possessed considerable physical and mental strength, longevity, and a rich culture based in great part on Elven ways. They are but one group of the Edam, a collective grouping of men with relatively advanced cultures and traces of Elvish blood who had aided in the wars against Morgoth in the First Age.

Dunlendings — A rugged race of Common Men who migrated out of the White Mountains in the Second Age. Moving northward along the western flanks of the Misty Mountains, they fought and later merged with The Hillmen and Northmen of Eriador. Those tribes that founded Dunland

retain their old ways, but by the late Third Age most have settled to become the majority populations of Arthedain, Cardolan, and Rhudaur. These folk are generally farmers and herders. Dunlendings have a medium or stocky build, brown hair, and tanned or ruddy complexions. Men average 5' 10" and have little body hair, women stand around 5'6". Although late Third Age Dunlending highlanders are often called "hillmen," they should not be confused with the peculiar Hillmen race of Rhudaur. Others call them by various names: Dunmen, Dunnish Folk, Dunlanders, the Hillmen of the White Mountains, etc.

En Egladil—(S "The Angle") A region in southern Rhudaur between the Rivers Hoarwell and Bruinen, and the Trollshaws. The Angle comprised a major lordship while the Dunedain Kingdom lasted (T.A. 1-c. 1450) and was noted for its large population of Stoor Hobbits in its later years.

First Age (L.A.)—The first recorded Age of Middle-earth. Its beginnings date back to a period relatively soon after the dawn of time as we know it and its ending point was marked by the overthrow of Morgoth, (the Black Enemy), Sauron's overlord and mentor. The tales of the First Age are, for the most part, found in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Unfinished Tales* and *The Silmarillion*.

Fourth Age (F.A.)—The fourth recorded Age of Middle-earth, the "Age of Men." It began with the passing of the Three Rings over the sea. During the Fourth Age most of the Elves departed Middle-earth for the Undying Lands, other non-mannish races such as Dwarves and Hobbits began to seek solitude, for their ways were no longer understood by the overlords of the continent—Men.

Hillmen—A short, dark, hardy folk who settled Rhudaur in the late First and the early Second Ages. Distantly related to the Dunlendings, they lived peaceably as hunters and gathers until the coming of the Dunedain and Dunlending tribes during the late Second Age. Over time they all but disappeared as a distinct group.

Mitheithel—(S "Pale grey Spring" or "Grey Spring," W "Hoarwell") The relatively narrow, swift moving stream that rises in the Misty Mountains near the junction between the Ettenmoors and the Coldfells of Eriador. Cutting through Rhudaur, the Mitheithel slows and widens after its confluence with the Bruinen (S "Loudwater"). It joins the Glanduin in the marshes of Swanfleet, giving birth to the Gwathlo, a wide, slow moving river that cuts through southeastern Eriador. The Mitheithel forms part of the northeastern border of Cardolan.

Northmen—Also called the Northrons. A group of tall, strong, fair, and hairy mannish folk. They are the "Middle men", a group culturally and physically closer to the Elves than those labeled "Common", but nonetheless distinct from the "High Men" or Edam Branches of the Northmen include the Wood-men, the Plains-men or Gramuz, the Lake-men, the Eotheod, the Beornings, and the Nenedain, and the Estaravi in Angmar.

Rhudaur—(S "Place of Roaring Red gold") Easternmost of the three sections of Arnor it was an independent kingdom between T.A. 861 and 1409. Rhudaur is a rugged land set in the western foothills of the Misty Mountains, and incorporates (1) all the territory between the rivers Mitheithel (W "Hoarwell") and Bruinen (W "Loudwater"), (2) En Eredorath, the "Lone lands" east of the Weather Hills, and (3) the Ettenmoors which lie to the north of the Mitheithel and south of the Misty Mountain spur that forms the border with Angmar.

Second Age (S.A.)—The second recorded Age of Middle-earth. It began after the fall of Morgoth, with the founding of the Grey Havens and Lindon. The Age ended in S.A. 3441, when Elendil and Gil-galad overthrew Sauron, Isildur took the One Ring, and the Dark Lord and Nazgûl passed into the shadows.

Third Age (T.A.)—The third recorded Age of Middle-earth. It began following the defeat of Sauron as a result of the Last Alliance of Men and Elves and ended in T.A. 3021, when the Keepers of the Ring passed over the sea (from the Grey Havens).

Trollshaws—(S "Pinnath Tereg") The hilly region of Rhudaur that lies south of the rugged Coldfells, east of the river Mitheithel, west of the river Bruinen, and north of the gentle fields of the Angle (S "En Egladil").

Witch-king—The Witch-king of Angmar, also called the lord of Morgul, was the chief of the Nazgûl, he was the Lord of the Nazgûl and possessed the greatest power of independent action.

1.3 ADAPTING THIS MODULE

Like the rest of this series, this module is designed for use with the Middle-earth Role Playing game (*MERP*) or the more advanced Rolemaster (*RM*) system, but is adaptable to most other major FRP games. Statistics are expressed on a closed or open-ended scale, using a 1-100 base and percentile dice (D100). No other dice are required.

1.31 CONVERTING STATS AND BONUSES

Bonuses: When converting percentile values to a 1-20 system a simple rule is: for every +5 on a D100 scale you get a +1 on a D20.

Hits: The concussion hits numbers found in this module only represent general pain and system shock. They cover bruises and small cuts rather than serious wounds and fatal blows. The hit figures shown here are less important than those used in game systems where death occurs as a result of exceeding one's available hits. Should you use a game system that employs no specific critical strike results (e.g., TSR Inc.'s *Dungeons and Dragons*®), simply double the number of hits your characters take or halve the hit values found in this module.

1.32 CONVERSION CHART

If you play something other than *MERP* or *Rolemaster* and you do not use a percentile system, use the following chart to convert 1-100 numbers to figures suited to your game.

1-100 Stat	D100 Bonus	D20 Bonus	3-18 Stat	2-12 Stat
102+	+35	+7	20+	17+
101	+30	+6	19	15-16
100	+25	+5	18	13-14
98-99	+20	+4	17	12
95-97	+15	+3	16	—
90-94	+10	+2	15	11
85-89	+5	+1	14	10
75-84	+5	+1	13	9
60-74	0	0	12	8
40-59	0	0	10-11	7
25-39	0	0	9	6
15-24	-5	-1	8	5
10-14	-5	-1	7	4
5-9	-10	-2	6	3
3-4	-15	-3	5	—
2	-20	-4	4	2
1	-25	-4	4	2

2.0 PLAYER CHARACTERS

The following Section provides a sampling of pregenerated characters of varying professions and levels. Each set of characters is tailored for one of the adventures in Sections 4.0 to 6.0.

The characters' statistics are given on the table on the next page and cover both *MERP* and *Rolemaster*. The GM may wish to assign each player a character or he can allow them to pick from the list. Of course, the GM can utilize the unused PCs as non-player characters. After all, the players may want to design their own characters or employ the characters they already use.

The GM should remember, however, that regardless of how the players acquire their characters, each adventure is geared for a different difficulty level. We suggest characters tough enough to meet the challenge.

3.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BORDER WAR

When the scrolls of the loremasters and the sagas of the bards turn to the subject of war, they tell of fierce battles and mighty captains. Perhaps the course of history is determined by these epic events, yet such clashes are, perforce, rare — occurring only a few times in an Age. Elves would hold that great wars come only too often, but the Eldar measure their years in yens. Among Men, only a few of the noble Dunedain see their lives encompass an entire yen of 144 Mannish years, and, for most of the dwellers in Middle-earth, four generations may pass in this span. The Elven Queen, Galadriel of Lorien, once spoke of the Long Defeat, she perceived but one continuous conflict against Morgoth and his avatar, Sauron, in all her long sojourn in Endor.

The ceaseless battle between Light and Darkness has made no less an impact on the multitudes forgotten in the histories, especially those inhabiting the frontiers. Even in centuries otherwise considered peaceful or quiet, humble folk fight against evil. Yet their unremembered struggle is no less desperate, no less final for those who fall in the myriad little skirmishes, and, perhaps, no less important in the eyes of the One. The following tale recounts the deeds of the last faithful Dunedain of Rhudaur in northeastern Eriador, but it is also the story of those who hold back the Haradrim in South Ithilien, the Easterlings in Rhovanion, the foul Orcs of the Necromancer under the eaves of Mirkwood, and of all those who fight what the Elves call the Oiodagali, the endless little war.

In T.A. 1408, fifty years after his defeat in the Great Northern War, the Witch-king of Angmar has recovered his strength and is preparing to launch a new war against the Dunedain of the North. As a preliminary measure, he intends to destroy the Beacon Towers in southern Rhudaur which yet defy his power. Eliminating the five Gondyrn-onen-Egladil (S. "Stone Trees of the Angle") will secure his supply routes to the borders of Arthedain and Cardolan. First on his list is the northernmost, the Tirthon, which lies at the edge of the Yfelwood in the Trollshaws. The Witch-king has several schemes afoot to assure that the Beacon Towers will fall quickly, but even should these plots be thwarted, the defenders must endure the rigors of a formal siege.

NOTE: During the early days of the *Realms in Exile*, the Dunedain built Beacon Towers along many of their borders, especially in Calenardhon (Rohan) and the Blown Lands. Virtually all of these watchtowers have been modified to suit local conditions, but the Tirthon is representative of the basic principles. This module is specifically designed to be readily adaptable for use in other regions and in other times. The small-scale siege is one of the most common experiences of the warriors of Middle-earth, and as will be shown, one that well-rounded adventurers should encounter in their travels.

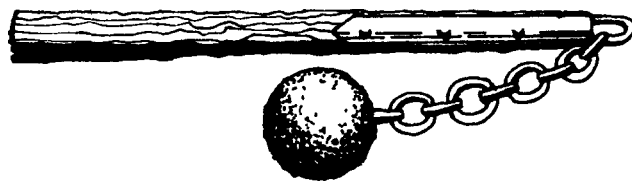
3.1 THE ANGLE

En Egladil (S. "The Angle") is an open and windswept country lying between the Rivers Mitheithel (Hoarwell) and Bruinen (Loudwater). To the north lie the Trollshaws. It is not a fertile land, better suited to serve as summer pasturage for the tribes of Dunland and the Enedhwaith. In times past, the tribesmen paid tribute to House Melosse, the Dunadan lords of the region, for this privilege. During the feudal wars of the last hundred years, the herdsmen sought safer fodder. In the absence of the Dunlendings, large numbers of Hobbits, mainly robust Stoors, settled along the riverbanks in the far south of the Angle. Their taxes sustain the struggle of the Northron heirs of the Melosse against the Hillmen and their evil masters.

3.2 THE TROLLSHAWS AND THE YFELWOOD

The hilly woodlands of central Rhudaur have been aptly named, for no place in Eriador is more perniciously infested with Trolls. It is small comfort that most are ignorant Hill Trolls and Stone Trolls, since the region is also home to savage Wolf packs. Despite these perils, diminishing but still vast herds of Caru and Losrandir winter in the Trollshaws — a vital part of the economies of the peoples of Rhudaur.

However, neither Losrandir, nor Wolf, nor the craftiest Hillman Ranger stray far into the shadows beyond the edges of the Yfelwood (Hi. "Evil Wood"). Unlike the rest of the Trollshaws, the Yfelwood is a remnant of the primordial forest that once spanned most of Eriador. Tall oaks and beeches tangle their branches together, and little light penetrates the leafy crowns to filter to the forest floor. A few thickets may never have been touched by the light of either sun or moon. Few folk have sought these spots, less because of the Forest Trolls than because of the brooding miasma of decay and death that drifts from beneath the eaves of the wood. The suspicion that the Yfelwood is the sarcophagus for some long-festering evil is more than rumor.



REGIONAL MAP (See inside back cover)

1. **Thuin Boid.** The capital of Dor-onen Egladil (S. "The Lands of the Angle").
2. **Harnalda** (S. "The South Tree"). The southernmost of the Gondyrn.
3. **Rilinelidor** (S. "The Shinning Beech"). One of the Beacon Towers.
4. **The Dunnish Track.** A road (actually more of a path) across the north-central Angle.
5. **Maig Tuira** (Hi. "Magtumaturo"). A semi-permanent Dunnish village inhabited by loyal Dunlendings, there is a very small inn nearby.
6. **Sirtathar** (S. "The River Willow"). The easternmost of the Gondyrn.
7. **The Camp of the Siol Nûnaw and Macha Mur.** Two hostile warbands from the Dunnish tribes of the Enedhwaith have established their base here.
8. **Tirthon** (S. "The Watch Pine"). This Beacon Tower overlooks the East Road (See Section 5.0).
9. **The Yfelwood.** The most dreaded woods in the Trollshaws.
10. **Blogath's Vale.** (See Section 6.0).
11. **Iant Methed** (S. "The Last Bridge"). As this is virtually the only spot where the River Mitheithel can be easily forded, it and the nearby inn are treated as neutral ground by both rival forces in the northern Angle (See *MERP* Section 8.0).
12. **Dol Cultirith** (S. "The Tower of the Copper Guard"). Formerly one of the Beacon Towers of Rhudaur, has become the home of evil Rangers.
13. **Herubar Gular** (S. "The Dwelling of the Sorcerer-Lord"). This castle of relatively recent construction is the abode of Feafuin, a Dunadan alchemist who is talented, but insane. He paid a steep price to the masters of Cameth Brin for his nominal fief in the western Trollshaws (See *MERP* Part III, p. 115. Note that the castle is not yet ruined and now contains far more perilous inhabitants).
14. **Cameth Brin.** The capital of Rhudaur is now ruled by the so-called Argil the Great whose claim to royal blood is more than dubious, but whose loyalty to the Witch-king is impeccable (See *CE/Hil/menofthe Tiollsha*).

HIRGRIM



3.3 THE PEOPLES OF THE FRONTIER

As winter approaches, the Dunnish tribes withdraw from the northern Angle, preceded by the bolder Stoors who fish up river and the few traders who travel the East Road. Once the Hillmen made their winter camps here, but the strange and sorcerous events at the castle of Herubar Gular have caused the clans to shun the southwestern Trollshaws for the past two decades. Thus, for many years the Cultirith, who serve the puppet kings of Rhudaur, and the Wolf-warriors (Vulseggi) of the Angle have been free to pursue their long and bloody feud.

THE RANGERS OF DOL CULTIRITH

The Cultirith (S. "Bronze Guard") was formed by Eldacar, heir to the throne of Arnor, in T.A. 159 to encourage the native Hillmen of Rhudaur to enter his service. The unit attracted only renegades and turncoats and was filled out by assorted sell-swords. The Cultirith eventually evolved into a tribe of professional warriors, though they have always been despised by the Hillmen, even after the Dunadan Kings established relations with their erstwhile subjects. Although the Cultirith cannot match the skills of the best Hillmen Rangers, they are very capable scouts.

THE VULSEGGI

The Vulseggi, named after their war-leader and ruler, Vulfredda, are the remnant of the myriad Northman mercenaries who once served in the army of Rhudaur. The warriors traveled alone over the Misty Mountains from Rhovanion, sending for their wives and families when the promises of steady employment proved to be true. They built their own hill-forts (known as

"buhrs") along the borders of the warring successor kingdoms. In the Angle, where forts were already established, the mercenaries scattered their cabins and corrals across the land. Now, the Five Fortresses of the Nen-in-Sul in eastern Cardolan have been ravaged and abandoned, and the Buhr Calden, a massive twin fortress in northern Rhudaur, has become a den of Ores and Easterling cavalry. Only among the Gondyrn-onen-Egladil, the Beacon Towers of the Angle, does their traditional life continue west of the Mountains. And ordered security grows increasingly harder to maintain.

3.4 THE LITTLE WAR

The feud between the Vulseggi and the Cultirith has become a way of life with its own rhythms and cycles, not entirely unlike that lived by farmers. After the spring thaw, the Northmen release their precious herds of horses and foals from the paddocks to roam the fields. The Men of Rhudaur withdraw to the woods, since they cannot match the mounted patrols in a fair fight. Throughout the summer, the Vulseggi search for the camps of their foe and block the routes to Angmar, while the Cultirith set ambushes and practice horse-thievery. In the fall, the Northmen take their horses to market and purchase winter supplies. Convoys of wains bringing stores to the Towers are harassed, and each side makes one or two major attacks. The winter belongs to the Rangers; so the mercenaries withdraw to their virtually impregnable stone towers. All the Gondyrn will be blockaded, and one fortress selected for a siege. Lacking sappers and siege engines, the Rangers rely upon treachery and sneak attacks. They have only thrice succeeded in capturing a Beacon Tower. The Cultirith lack the desire to hold a captured fortress, since they could not supply it during the summer. And the Northmen might readily hire Dwarven engineers to conduct a proper siege. Few engagements in this little war involve more than a hundred men on either side. The great Lords of Eriador rarely take interest in the northern Angle, but now events far more destructive than the 'normal' feud threaten the safety of all.



3.5 THE PLOT AGAINST THE TIRTHON

The holds of Angmar, realm of the Witch-king, are vast and contain hoards of wealth as well as hordes of Ores. Yet the valor of the Northern Dunedain will not be overcome easily. The Easterling armies needed for victory must be maintained on the eastern side of the Ered Mithrim (S. "Misty Mountains"), because the borderlands of Eriador are infertile and depopulated. The Witch-king seeks to control the East Road to allow the rapid deployment and supply of these forces. Thus far, the Beacon Towers of the Angle have blocked this route. As a preliminary move in the great assault on the North, the Gondryn must be taken. However, the Ringwraith's resources are not so extensive that he can overwhelm his foes with sheer numbers; the Witch-king cannot dispense with stealth. His latest strategy requires that the forts fall to apparently local forces which will not overly alarm the ever-watchful Elves of Rivendell.

Hirgrim, the Captain of the Cultirith, has been provided with sufficient silver from the treasuries of Carn Dum to procure the services of Dunnish tribal warbands and a few Ore war-miners; a small portion of the sum induced some minor treachery in the ranks of the Vulseggi. These tactics are not unprecedented, but, as has been previously demonstrated, small-scale reinforcement is unlikely to have the decisive impact desired by Angmar. When the Witch-king sought the advice of his master, the Necromancer of Dol Guldor proposed an especially foul scheme.

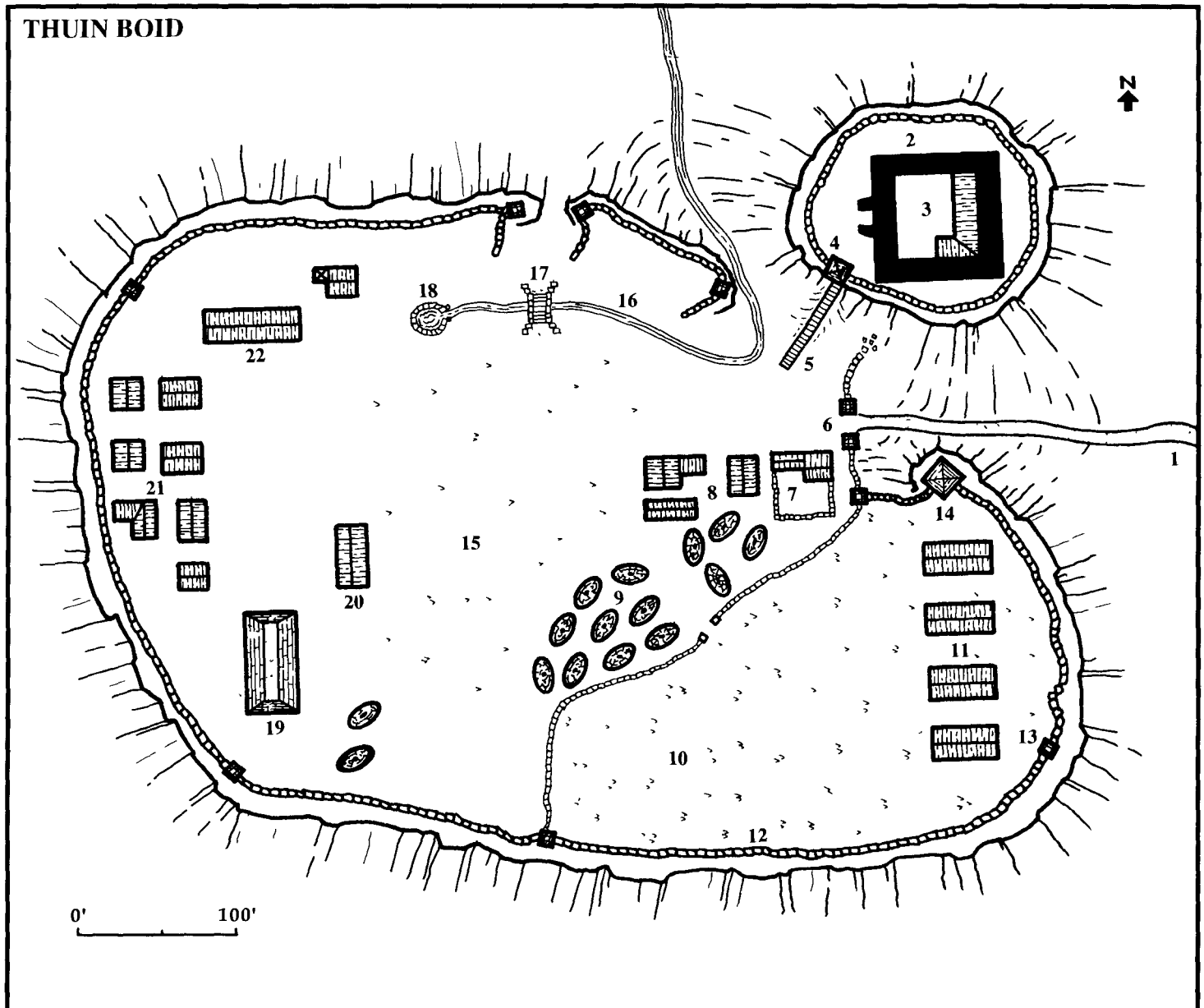
In the early Third Age, Sauron learned that the lair of Blogath (B.S. "Mighty Blood"), a Blood-wight from the Second Age, was not utterly destroyed during the Last Alliance of Elves and Men. The unquiet sleep of that undead spirit, deep in the heart of the Yfelwood, has been the true source of the tangible evil lingering beneath the trees throughout the centuries. At his command, the Witch-king sent many expeditions into that dark forest to unearth and arouse the ancient font of evil. Blogath's long slumber is drawing to an end. Already, the Nazgul's lieutenant, Ethacali the Easterling, has awakened two lesser Blood-wights. They will be tested against the leaders of the Vulseggi to ensure the rapid and mysterious fall of the Beacon Towers.

3.6 ADVENTURERS IN RHUDAUR

Although a party of adventurers traveling in Rhudaur might easily be caught up in the unfolding Battle of the Angle, the Witch-king's minions in Vulfredda's realm seek unwitting dupes for a bit of minor treachery. (It is up to the group to demonstrate that their selection for this role is based on a mistakenly low estimate of their capabilities.)

The adventurers' over-riding purpose is to provide the garrison at the Tirthon with the needed muscle and magic to withstand this first of the renewed assaults of the Angmarim. Failing that, they should send warning of the attack and the deadly additions to the ranks of Darkness to responsible persons in Cardolan or Arthedain, or, perhaps, to Elrond in Rivendell.

NOTE: Regardless of the PCs success or failure, the Beacon Towers will eventually succumb. The annals are obscure on this subject, but they suggest that the last of the Rhudauren Towers fell to the forces of evil in T.A. J420-J429. Some of the Stoor Hobbits lingered on their lands in the far south of the Angle until sometime after the Great Plague, two centuries later.



3.7 THUIN BOID

Thuin Boid (N "High Fort") has served as the seat of government of the Dor-onen-Egladil since Minas Brethil was razed during the Great Northern War. Although Thuin Boid is somewhat larger than the average buhr — its Beacon Tower was rebuilt with two extra stories, so that a proper rampart could be added. It is the capital primarily because Vulfredda raised the banner of House Melosse here after all her male kin had fallen. Thuin Boid is a rough and ready community where outsiders are not especially welcome, but it is by far the safest place in all of the Angle.

1. The Eastern Trace. After 7 miles, this road joins the South Fork of the main road of the Angle.

2. Beacon Hill. The Beacon Tower of Thuin Boid (and the residence of Vulfredda) stands atop a 10 high mound. A wooden palisade (6 high) surrounds the top.

3. The Beacon Tower. It has a small interior courtyard unlike most other forts of this kind.

4. Gatehouse. This small, squat structure overlooks the path down to the town. It is usually manned by two guards.

5. Stone Stairway. The steps climb the hill to the Gatehouse, providing the only access to the Beacon Tower.

6. The Horse Gate. This is the main entrance to Thuin Boid. From far away on a misty night, the wooden gatehouses vaguely resemble overturned horses' hooves.

7. The Yellow Dawn. The only inn suitable for travellers' use, it is rather expensive and very untidy, but the food is good, the mead and ale excellent. In general, the Yellow Dawn is remarkably free of vermin.

8. Culberth's Tavern. There is a stable, a large storage barn, and an inn for fellow Northmen and mercenaries. Culberth himself is away on business (in Fennas Drunin), so Nasen and Dagar are in charge.

9. Huts. The dwellings of the Dunnish Jerls (N "Serfs"), the agricultural workers of the community.

10. The Great Corral. This is a grazing and training ground for the highly prized horses of the Northmen.

11. Barns. The four buildings are commodious and at least as comfortable as many of the homes in Thuin Boid.

12. Ramparts. The town of Thuin Boid is defended by a roughly 6 high rampart surmounted by a palisade similar to that encircling the Beacon Hill (#2).

13. Watchtowers. These seven small stone towers are irregularly placed along the palisade. The three in the north-east corner (near the sally-ports) are always manned by at least two guards apiece, while one man is considered sufficient for the other four.

14. Large Watchtower. This guardpost is about twice the size of the others as it overlooks the vital Horse Gate. The garrison here is three men.

15. Common Ground. The pasture in the center of Thuin Boid is primarily used for grazing sheep and cattle when it is unsafe to take them beyond the walls. Temporary housing is put up here during real emergencies.

16. Stream.

17. Bridge.

18. Well. The natural spring that provides water for the town has been rebuilt into a well, the overflow gives birth to the stream (#16).

19. Feasthall. A large stone building with a gabled wooden roof, it also provides a home for many of Vulfredda's retainers.

20. Lord's Smithy. Actually, it should be called the Lady's Smithy now, but the name has become traditional.

21. Houses. Those few families that practice trades live in this cluster of residences. They often shelter their kin from outlying households, after the first snow.

22. Barracks. This building houses Vulfredda's warband (when they are gathered here) and the families without town-kin during the winter. A small healing house lies nearby.

4.0 BEFORE THE SNOW FALLS

Among the Vulseggi, the time from mid-Narbleth to mid-Hithui (mid- to late autumn) is known as the Tregtagan or Troll Days. It is said that during this season the Trolls teach their young to hunt. The weather in the upper Angle is unpredictable while the leaves brown and fall, and the Northmen have no desire to see their mounted patrols caught outside the towers at the first heavy snow. Yet, until the frost unquestionably takes hold, the Cultirith cannot be too forward, lest a short bold stroke be launched against them.

For the merchants and traders who supply the rival forces, it is a time fraught with opportunity as well as peril. Those brave or lucky enough to bring one of the last (or first) loads of supplies reap lucrative profits. So every year, as the first flurries swirl, there is a buzz of activity on both sides of the border while the fearless and the desperate prepare to make the dash to the troops.

4.1 THE AIRUND-SHEGAN

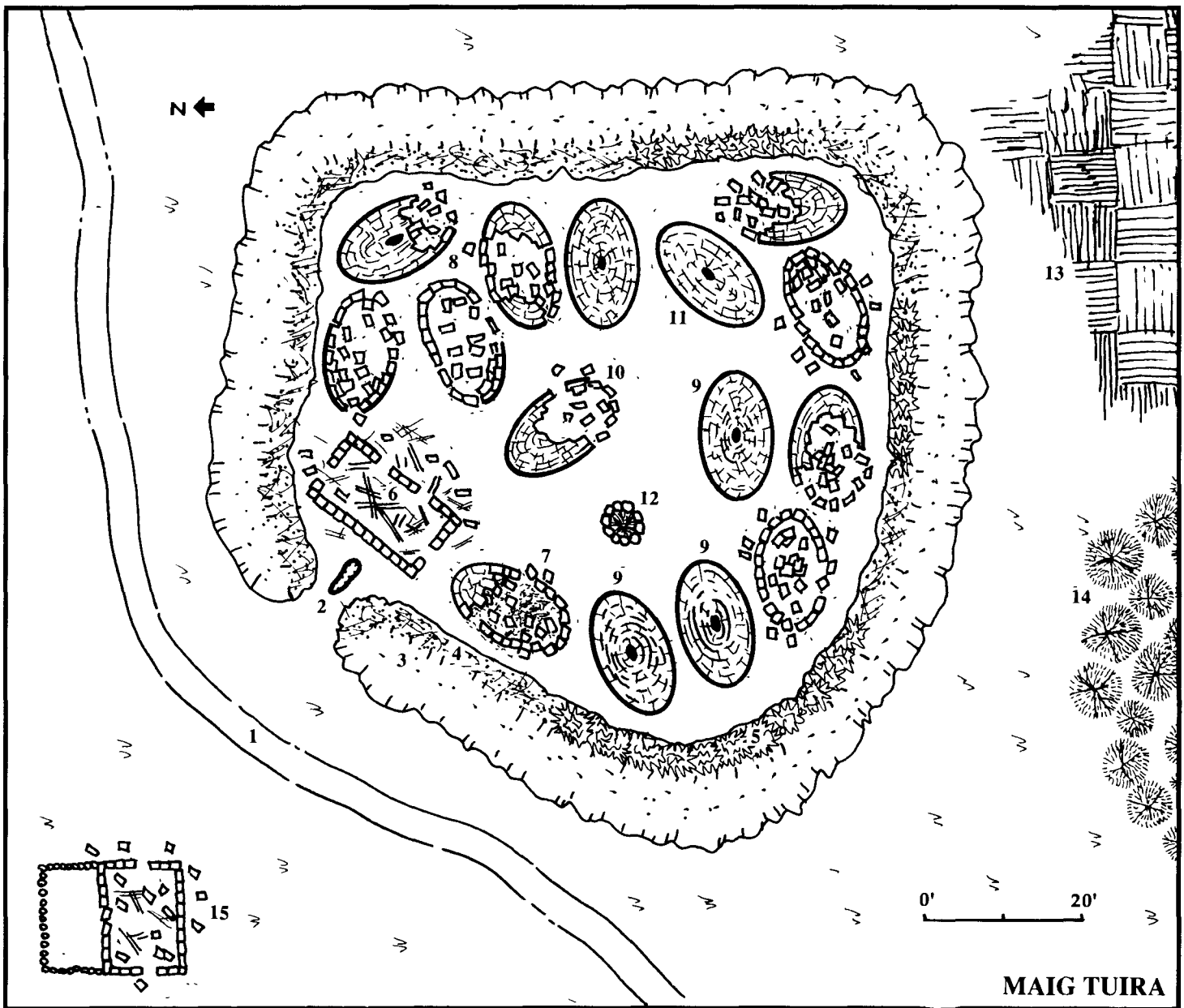
In the declining days of Eriador, merchants require guards for their wares even within sight of the walls of Tharbad. And the need is more acute in the wilds. The Vulseggi view such intermittent sell-swords with contempt, calling them Airund-shegan (N "Trader's War-lackeys"). Although many competent and honorable men (and a few women) follow this trade, the scorn is not unmerited, the profession also attracts the worst sort of riffraff. The Northrons expect any group of Airund-shegan to contain its share of traitors and assassins. The sell-swords are watched carefully and forced to stay with the Jerls when not on the road.

Whatever the size or composition of a trader's expedition, it is called a waenhosh (N "Wagon Host"). The prosperous merchants pack their wares on ponies and employ mounted guards who earn one silver piece per day with a bonus at the successful completion of the expedition. Other commonly use wealli (N "Debt-slaves") as beasts of burden, they are cheaper and more expendable. It is rare to see either horse or oxen-pulled wagons, because they are so slow. In either case, foot guards earn somewhat less than half the fee of their mounted counterparts. Of course, the rates for Airund-shegan rise sharply during the Tregtagan.

4.2 DAGAR'S FIRST WAENHOSH

Cultirith's Rangers have tried to poison or destroy the winter stores of the Beacon Towers so often that this ploy is almost ritual in the Little War. The Vulseggi take careful precautions against the threat, and it has not succeeded in over a decade. Perhaps a certain complacency has set in. Culberth, Chief Victualler of Thuin Boid, has recently been reconciled with his wastrel son, Dagar. Culberth's assistant, Nasen, who labored faithfully at the Victualler's side for over twelve years, cherished a very legitimate expectation of inheriting the profitable business. The reunion crushed all his hopes. An Angmaran spy slowly turned Nasen's disappointment to disaffection, and then to betrayal.

Nasen's price for treason is the death of Dagar, and a complex plot has evolved which will create no suspicions towards the traitor. Culberth's assistant guided Dagar to the discovery of a supply of late and very cheap corn — an opportunity to make his first independent and profitable business deal. The corn is infected with a rare mold from the East, bread made from it will cause the eater (25% chance) to suffer wild and violent hallucinations lasting from 1-20 hours. The arrangements for delivery of the corn to the Tirthon, the northernmost and most vulnerable of the Beacon Towers, were planned with Nasen's quiet assistance and bribes.



Since it is very late in the year for such a venture, Dagar is taking personal responsibility for this expedition which he will lead. Nasen has persuaded him to follow the more direct, but risky, Dunnish Track to the stronghold.

Dagar's expected profits allow him to pay twice the going rate for guards (i.e., expenses, two silver per day, and one gold piece on completion). However, his contract states no payment unless the corn is delivered within two weeks. If necessary, Culberth's son will double the pay once more to obtain an armed escort.

Nasen has an additional task for the hired guardians; that of presenting a ring to the commander of the fort. This ring, provided by Angmaran agents, is part of another scheme against the Beacon Tower of which Nasen is ignorant. (See Section 5.3.) For the moment, the delivery of the ring provides the traitor with a plausible excuse to intervene with clever words and extra cash should the party balk at accompanying Dagar's caravan.

The waenhosh consists of three wagons, each pulled by two oxen and loaded with roughly a thousand pounds of grains. Dagar has provided an ample supply of provisions (primarily cram — Dwarfish waybread) for the journey and 12 kegs of mead for celebration upon arrival.

4.3 THE GATHERING STORM

The Witch-king placed a reliable (and crafty) subordinate from the far reaches of the Sea of Rhun in charge of the campaign against the Gondryn, since he has little faith in his local servants. Ethacali the Easterling has never served as an independent commander, but he knows military strategy and has devised a multi-layered plan to amuse and please his master. The first phase was the gathering of sufficient indigenous forces such that the rapid capitulation at Tirthon does not immediately alert those who could rush support to Vulfredda. The detachment of Ore war-miners (who have slunk into the Cultirith's camp) will create the appearance that the attackers have been lucky, rather than part of a larger plot. And the Dunlending warbands from the Enedhwaith, lured into an alliance with promises of loot and glory, are to cut a bloody swath through the Angle on their way north, furthering the illusion that nothing unusual is underway. The tainted supplies were an afterthought. Ethacali has ordered that the victualling expedition is to be annoyed and harassed, but not destroyed. However, these instructions may not arrive in time, and the tribesmen are not known for passing up easy booty.

4.31 MAIG TUIRA

Ten miles west of the River Bruinen, across the downs, are the remains of the fortified village, Maig Tuira (D "Home of the Tuira"). It was typical of the Dunnish tribal villages of Rhudaur, and notable primarily because of its northern location dangerous, but able to attract enough travellers on the Dunnish Track to support a modicum of prosperity. There was no other waystop for two days journey in any direction, now there is none at all. On their way to the Tirthon, the hired warriors of the Enedhwaith stopped to pillage the settlement and to acquire some strong backs for the drudge work of the upcoming siege. Among the company who razed Maig Tuira, the forty-odd tribesmen of the Siol Nunaw (D "Descendants of Uisnagh") are reasonably civilized, but the twenty-six Macha Mur (D "Great Macha") are primitive savages.



THE RUINS OF MAIG TUIRA

- 1. The Dunnish Track.**
- 2. The Main Gate.** Actually a gap in the ditch and wall, partially blocked by the Magtuma's (Hi "Chief") stone house
- 3. Ditch.** The village is surrounded by a ditch about 4 deep
- 4. Earthen Rampart.** There is a 3' earthen wall behind the ditch. In the areas indicated, the thorn hedge atop the wall has been burned
- 5. Hedge.** In these areas, the 3 thorn hedge is intact
- 6. Magtuma's Hut.** The stone walls of the Magtuma's House are largely intact, but the thatched roof and furnishings have been burned. One of the old chief's limbs rots outside each of his doors. This formally announces that the warbands have been ordered to fight without quarter
- 7. Burned-out Dunnish hut.** A moderately careful search of the ashes will reveal numerous human bones. (The casualties from both sides were cremated here.)
- 8. Burned huts.** Searching for clues or booty will prove futile
- 9. Intact huts.** These show the classic construction, with a 2-3 deep sunken floor, a low stone outside wall, and a bowl-shaped roof with a small smoke hole. These huts have been looted
- 10. Half-burned huts.**
- 11. Intact hut.** This is like the others except that a Very Hard (-20) Perception or Tracking roll will reveal (from tracks, etc.) that many prisoners were gathered here and then marched away to the north
- 12. Central Fire Pit.**
- 13. Fields.**
- 14. Trees.** A small copse of pines. A mixed pack of Wolves and Wargs hiding here keeps watch on the road
- 15. Tavern.** The ruins of the Maig Tuira's tavern. Baga Monturi, an adolescent male just short of his initiation as a warrior, escaped from the attack and has taken refuge here

4.32 THE DUNNISH WAR BANDS

Although the Dunnish hirelings appear indistinguishable, they belong to two very different tribes. The Siol Nunaw form a large clan that lived in Rhudaur for many centuries before deciding to seek greener pastures during the Great Northern War in T A 1350. They did not thrive during their wanderings in Dunland and the Enedhwaith, and many of the young warriors are anxious to return to their old lands. The Witch-king has promised that these will be restored to them after this war.

The Macha Mur is a small tribe which has long resided in the Enedhwaith. Their lands are poor, and they traditionally support themselves by renting out the swords of their young men as mercenaries. The Macha Mur have a reputation for barbarity and are the effective leaders of this expedition.

THE CAMP OF THE SIOL NUNAW AND MACHA MUR

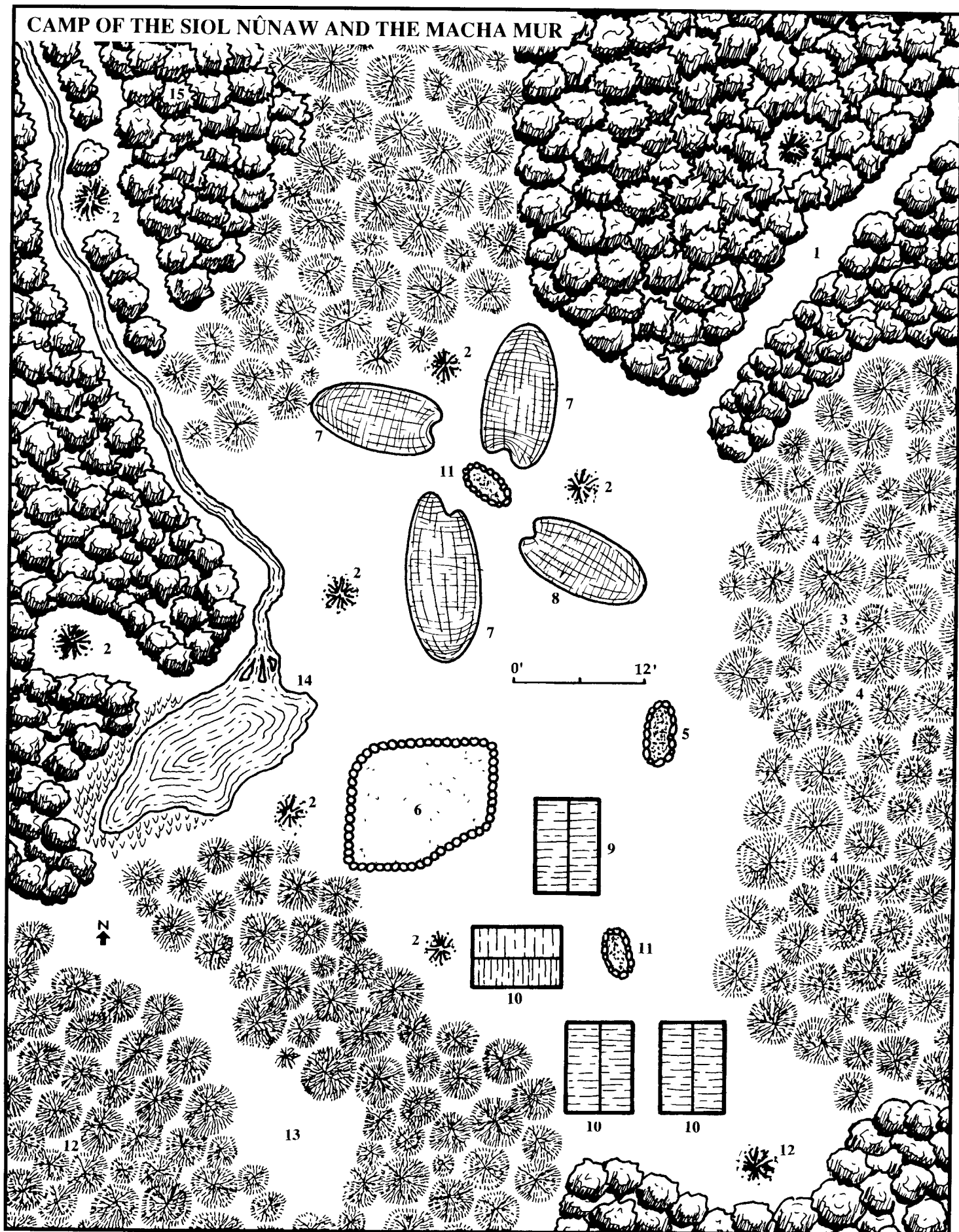
- 1. Track.** The path towards the Tirthon
- 2. Watchfires.** Manned by the Siol Nunaw. Usually two warriors stand by each, but they are not vigilant (35% chance of spotting intruders)
- 3. Hill.** A small, wooded ridge
- 4. Watchfires.** On the ridge, these are jointly manned by two fighters from each tribe, and they maintain a careful surveillance (80% chance to observe passers-by)
- 5. Large fire pit.** For joint use by both tribes
- 6. The stockade.** The prisoners from Maig Tuira are kept. It has a wooden wall 8 high. There are always two guards at the narrow gate. Within are 8 wounded adult males, 3 old men, 11 boys, 5 old women, 12 adult females, and 9 girls
- 7. Huts.** The warriors of the Siol Nunaw have erected temporary huts for their quarters. These have 2 deep floors with the excavated dirt used to form the lower wall and boughs spread over wicker frames on top. There is supposed to be a guard at the entrance of each hut, he will usually (60%) be inside with the 2-8 of the dozen-odd tribesmen residing there
- 8. Chiefs Hut.** Caw Monunaw, the war-leader of the tribe, has a smaller, more carefully built hut. There are always 2 guards on duty. Stores of cram and ale are kept within
- 9. Lumban's tent.** Though chief of the Macha Mur, his caribou hide tent cannot be easily distinguished from the others. All are unguarded, but one of Lumban's bodyguards always keeps watch on his fine silvered armor
- 10. Macha Mur tents.** Each holds 8 fighters, only 1-2 are likely to be nearby
- 11. Fire Pits.**
- 12. Watchfires.** Kept by the Macha Mur. There will only be 1 or 2 lookouts (50% chance), but they are veterans (80% chance to notice intruders)
- 13. Field.** A third tribe intended to send a warband on this expedition, but they failed to arrive. The more fastidious of those present use this unoccupied field as a latrine
- 14. Bog.** The camp's water supply is a bog fed by a small stream from the adjacent hill
- 15. Lookout post.** From dawn to dusk, there are 3-4 scouts atop the hill keeping a distant eye on the Tirthon

4.4 THE NPCS

DAGAR

Dagar is Culberth's only living child. The Victualler's first wife died in childbirth along with his firstborn. Dagar's mother was a Dorwinadan serving-girl whom Culbreth married after many years as a widower. Northrons do not approve of marrying outside of one's people or below one's station, and Dagar was a small sickly child who showed little promise in any respectable endeavor. His early years were miserable. Culbreth sent the boy to Tharbad as apprentice to a merchant, but Dagar fell in with bad company and discovered the false solace of wine and soporific herbs. He was expelled from the merchant's guild, disinherited by his family, and finally ended up keeping the books for a nightsinger's house. However, on her deathbed, his mother requested that Dagar be given another chance, and Culberth relented.

Dagar is not certain that he has really reformed, and he has always been too anxious to impress his father. Yet the young man has grown more reliable in the past year. He can be very persuasive and personable, though his taste for city-cut clothes and comparatively refined manners engender little respect here on the frontier. Dagar knows considerable trade lore, is good with numbers, and better with his short sword than one might expect. Besides mead and ale, his greatest problems stem from an inability to judge character and a tendency to put on airs in stressful situations. Additionally, Dagar is very gullible.





NASEN

Nasen resembles the average, middle-aged artisan: a bit portly, a few lines on his brow, and slouching shoulders balanced by an air of competence. His dark skin and hair could be a social liability, but he has sufficient claims to Northron and Dunadan blood to dine with the lords of the Angle. Nasen's boasts of business acumen are better substantiated than Dagar's. Nasen overestimates himself, but he does have sure instincts and is very adept at persuading people to do what he wants — usually by glib words, but by coercion if necessary.

Nasen worked long and hard for Culberth and expected a comfortable semi-retirement after the old man died. Although currently Dagar compliantly follows all of Nasen's suggestions, the Victualler's assistant fears, perhaps not incorrectly, that another faster talker may someday replace him in the young man's regard. A fellow merchant who spies for Angmar noted Nasen's smoldering rage and slowly seduced him into treachery against his master and his people. Nasen does not imagine that his betrayal will bring to pass anything worse than the loss of the Tirthon for a season. Otherwise inheriting Culberth's business and position as Chief Victualler to Thuin Boid would be worthless; Nasen is just a dupe, not an idiot.

DAGAR'S WEALLI

If Dagar obtains too few guards for the expedition to the northern Beacon Tower, he will enlist three of his father's slaves, including his own bodyservant, Old Pad. Old Pad is hale for his fifty years, though he shirks as much work as possible and complains about those tasks which he cannot avoid. His mind is as thick as a brick wall, but Old Pad is fervently loyal to Dagar. He was a close friend to the young merchant's mother before her marriage.

Nasen will recommend Nig and Cisgid as the other slaves to accompany the loaded wagons. The brothers are young, strong, and alert, but already have cropped ears as punishment for escape attempts. They are almost sure to take the first good opportunity to flee again once they're on the road. Neither Nig nor Cisgid will use violence, since the penalty for such is a long and agonizing death.

NASEN'S ALLIES

When Nasen needs dirty deeds done at Thuin Boid, he turns to Penda Oxkiller and his friends. Penda is the largest man in town and ranks among the strongest and the best warriors. The balding, flaxen-haired barbarian has never risen to command; he possesses a violent temper which he indulges with little provocation. Nasen has won his favor by supplying him with fine Dorwinadan wine. His three drinking buddies number, not surprisingly, among the younger and least capable members of the garrison. The little gang often goes to the Yellow Dawn Tavern seeking trouble.

THE WAR-CHIEFS

Cagh Monunaw, the war-chief of the Siol Nunaw, is readily recognizable by his gilt leather cuirass and greaves. He is a talented Ranger, but an unexpectedly urbane fellow with high regard for Dunadan culture. Though no coward, Cagh has little taste for war and has undertaken the attack on the Tirthon only to protect his succession to his aging uncle's position as high chief of the tribe. Having accepted the task, Cagh will devote all of his facilities to its successful accomplishment; he is highly impressed by Ethacali's breadth of knowledge, if not his tastes. Where possible, Cagh will wage a more civilized and honorable war than his current allies might choose.

On the other hand, Lumban, the leader of the Macha Mur warriors, is a barbarian's barbarian. His most notable features are a cape made from the ears of his foes and extremely broad shoulders. He is a heavy drinker and a teller of tall tales, but oddly enough his status is not based on his prowess as a fighter. Lumban is too short to be a great spearsman. He is merely clever and possesses an almost animal instinct for danger and opportunity. As long as Lumban and his followers are paid and permitted to sack any villages encountered, they will follow orders without question or complaint.

4.5 THE TASK

The party will be hired to escort Dagar's grain to the Tirthon: this is their primary objective. The random dangers met on the road during the Tregtagan are perilous enough, but Wolves and the Dunnish warbands are also moving in the same direction. (The existence of these fellow travellers will be discovered at Maig Tuira, if not before.) At this point, the secondary mission of gathering as much intelligence as possible about the forces arrayed against the Beacon Tower will become apparent. The party should begin to suspect that there are hidden influences at work. They are the easiest target in the area, but their potentially overwhelming foes are paying little attention to them.

STARTING THE PLAYERS

The party must be assumed to have arrived at Thuin Bold. Perhaps they have just completed a waenhosh, but were cheated out of their pay. Or bandits bested them in the wilds, sending the adventurers toward refuge with their pockets to let. In any event, they should not be in a position to be choosy about what work they take: there are no other sell-swords present for Dagar to hire, and no other employment available. If Dagar cannot consummate the negotiations, Nasen will intervene with extra cash and the task of delivering the ring. (See below.) If the group remains reluctant, Nasen will not hesitate to use Penda Oxkiller and his crew to persuade them that leaving Thuin Boid soon is an excellent idea.

NOTE: *There are several secure places in the vicinity from which these adventures could commence: Rivendell, Tharbad, Moria, Cameth Erin, or the Last Inn, all of which are detailed in other ICE modules. Misadventures on the road might make the players more amenable to the task at hand. Alternatively, these disasters might cause them to arrive directly at the Tirthon to be plunged into the siege.*

AIDS

Dagar has a thorough knowledge of both the perils of travelling during the Tregtagan and of local politics. Unfortunately, little of his information has been acquired firsthand, and Dagar may prove less and less useful as the situation deteriorates. The player's greatest aid may prove to be Ethacali the Easterling, who wishes

LUMBAN



their mission to succeed — as part of his own schemes. The evil Mage does not expect the moldy bread to have much impact on the coming siege, but does want the garrison to learn of the forces opposing them (as a blow to morale). He does not, however, necessarily want the party to arrive unscathed. If the players are exceptionally lucky or clever, they may turn some of their obstacles to their own advantage. "Oft evil will shall evil mar." (*LotR II*, p. 200.)

OBSTACLES

The garrison will be happy to inform the group of the perils of travelling during the Tregtagan, so the difficulty of the undertaking should prove to be no surprise. As Northmen mercenaries take the law of contract very seriously, the party would do badly to renege on their deal with Dagar. If any brawls in Thuin Boid result in fatalities, the group can expect severe problems with the local authorities. (Penda and his friends are unusually persistent and ungracious sparring partners.)

A likely encounter with patrolling Wolves on the road should not prove too difficult, as long as the party employs sound defensive tactics. However, finding the Dunnish warbands' camp, whether accidentally or not, could be extremely dangerous; the tribesmen might forget their orders to leave the adventurers alive, if they consider themselves under attack.

REWARDS

Even if the party is successful in their negotiations with Dagar and Nasen, they are not engaged in a well-paying endeavor. They will, however, gain considerable experience for travel abroad during these dangerous times. The encounters en route will also provide good practice. All in all, by the time the party reaches the Tirthon, they should be happy to have found a warm and (temporarily) safe haven.

4.6 ENCOUNTERS

The players are likely to encounter some of the following persons, groups, sites or events between Thuin Boid and the Tirthon.

NOTE: *After the departure from Thuin Boid, rolls on the Random Encounter Table yielding a "Spy" result should be treated as encounters with Gorcrows; the result "General Traps" should be considered to be a breakdown of one of the wagons.*

DAGAR

Dagar will have heard of the party (from Nasen) before he makes his offer of employment. He will be overly friendly and solicitous — buying the adventurers drinks and making small talk. If the party is credulous, or interested enough to play along, Dagar will soon be drunk and reveal rather more than they need to know about the mission, especially the maximum price he is willing to pay for their services. If these negotiations fail, Dagar will try again without trying to act important, and his normal, amiable vacuousness may make a better impression.

Dagar will be extremely effective in organizing the expedition, but notably less so on the road. He thinks of a good idea now and then (such as organizing watches at night), but is essentially incapable of effective leadership. Old Pad will step into this role if the party complains. (Putting a dim-witted house servant in charge of a wilderness expedition is a sure formula for disaster.) The other wealli will be sullen and uncooperative, although they will fight well in self-defense. The only thing that Old Pad and Dagar absolutely will insist upon is completing the mission at any price. The players may want to retreat after reaching Maig Tuira. Dagar will argue (and even Old Pad knows it to be true) that their closest shelter is now the Tirthon, and that the rest of the Gondyrn can be most quickly alerted from there. Dagar is very persuasive in a desperate spot (+75 Seduction Skill), since he has had a lot of practice.

NASEN

Nasen's cool demeanor is a sharp contrast to Dagar's spastic enthusiasm. He has had years of practice at verbal misdirection, so it will be absurdly difficult (-75) to discern that he is acting on any other motive than his expressed desire to help his boss's wayward and foolish son. Nasen would prefer not to be directly associated with this venture, but if Dagar fails to obtain the party's services, he will step in, first offering to double Dagar's fee. If this gambit fails, he will unleash Penda and his buddies, trusting that they will convince the adventurers that any reason to get out of town is a good one.

Once the group is hired, Nasen will approach one of them with a side assignment: the delivery of a filigreed gold ring to Marendil, the commander of the Tirthon. The merchant has a convoluted tale about this being the repayment of another trader's obligation to the Knight. Marendil will remember the debt and accept the present. Nasen himself believes this task to be legitimate, as his new masters don't entirely trust him. (For further details see Section 5.3.) Nasen will pay 3 gold pieces up front for this undertaking (having pocketed the other 9 he was supposed to spend) and will have unerringly picked out the most honest of the players. Nasen declares that he has urgent business at Fennas Drunin shortly after the expedition departs.

PENDA AND HIS FRIENDS

Penda and his bullies usually drift over to the Yellow Dawn looking for trouble whenever strangers are in town. They are rude and insulting, but will not force a fight if they aren't challenged (a tavern brawl with uniformed guards is seldom prudent). If Nasen has asked Penda to pressure the players, a fight will be unavoidable. The rowdy Northmen avoid using edged weapons as this would get them in trouble. However, if their opponents draw steel, the servant in the inn will send for the watch, and Penda will be happy to reply in kind. Foreign violators of the peace are flogged, though Nasen or Dagar could pay a fine to spare this embarrassment. If any of the guardsmen are seriously wounded, a severe flogging is the mildest of the penalties that Lady Vulfredda will impose.

The Oxkiller's friends will stop fighting once a foe is down, but he usually is not satisfied until the victim is unconscious. Unlike his folk, Penda will bear a grudge if beaten in a fair fight (and almost surely if the victims 'cheat' by using magic). In this case, there is equal probability that he will attempt sabotage against the wagons or plan an ambush and fight to the death well outside of town. (The Vulseg guards all have horses and can catch up to the waenhosh easily.)

DAGAR



WOLF PACKS

Ethacali has placed three packs of Wolves (11-20 animals apiece) to watch the southern Dunnish Track. They are instructed to follow any group too strong to attack while sending warning north, and to kill anyone they can. There is an additional 30% chance on the Random Encounter Table (Section 7.0) of running into the Wolves south of Maig Tuira, and a 60% chance that they will consider the group weak enough to attack. The packs will not cooperate, and after one is defeated, the remaining members will disperse. The chance of encountering these Wolves falls 10% for each pack driven off.

MAIG TUIRA

Although the captives from Maig Tuira fulfill part of the booty promised the warriors from the Enedhwaith, the village's destruction is primarily intended to send a message — this year's campaign is going to be unusually brutal.

Baga Monturi, the sole survivor of the attack, has been badly wounded and is losing a lot of blood. He will, however, attempt to rouse himself for one last blow against his enemies. There is a 60% chance he will be able to accomplish one attack before he passes out. Unless the party has an adept healer, Baga will spend 75% of the time unconscious, and the rest in a mild delirium. None the less, it will not be too hard to discern that the village was attacked by foreign Dunlendings, in large numbers, who took prisoners and moved north on the road. If clear-headed, Baga will estimate that the enemy numbered 300 (i.e., more than 200 too high). In the best circumstances, Baga will need several weeks to heal his wounds; if not competently aided, there is a 25% chance per day that he will die. If the blizzard strikes before the players reach the ruins, the poor lad will get only the chance to rave for a few minutes before he expires.

The Wolves and Wargs in the woods are the best that Ethacali has under his command. If the party is currently shadowed by another pack, or if they have not been previously accosted, these carnivores will attack while the party explores the ruins. They will attempt to withdraw after taking 20% losses, and then will trail the convoy. Even if this pack is decimated, the other randomly encountered Wolves will not challenge the adventurers.

THE WITCH-KING'S BLIZZARD

Two to five days (1+1d4) after the PCs leave Thuin Boid, an early blizzard hits the upper Angle. The storm is not so severe as to attract unwanted Elven attention, but it is clearly of unnatural origin. Those with weather-watching skills might have as much as 8 hours prior warning. The temperature will not drop much below freezing, but with wind gusts peaking at 40-50 mph the chill is severe. Additionally, any shadowing Wolves will attack under the cover of the storm. Limited visibility reduces all OBs by 1-50 (half d 100; determine at beginning of every round), and exhaustion rates should be tripled. Base snow cover is only 3-4", but there is an additional 30% chance of being impeded by a 4-9' snow drift (3+d6) on the Encounter Chart. The snow will melt in 25-34 hours (24 +/- d 10). The main purpose of the blizzard is to reduce the roads to quagmires, preventing a rapid relief of the Tirthon; road movement is reduced by 50% after the thaw.

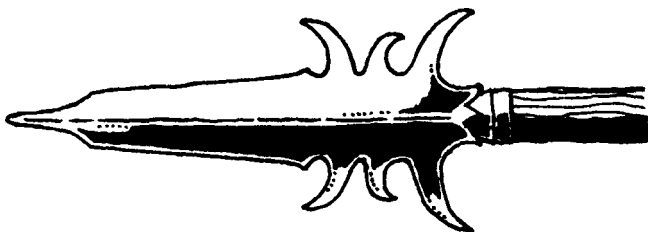
DUNNISH PATROLS

After departing Thuin Boid, any military units randomly encountered will be detachments from the Dunnish warbands. Small patrols come from the Macha Mur, consisting of 2-3 seasoned scouts who will avoid a fight unless surprised or ambushed. Large patrols consist of 5-6 warriors from the Siol Nunaw. They are also supposed to scout not fight, but they are only 55% likely to do so. Their tactics involve the exposure of one man who runs away into cover, leading any pursuers into an ambush.

THE DUNNISH CAMP

A successful reconnaissance of the Dunnish camp would be the most praiseworthy exploit accomplished during this adventure. It is also by far the most dangerous. Although the Siol Nunaw are not particularly watchful, they are numerous, and the Macha Mur are experienced mercenaries. The best opportunities to reconnoiter would occur if the camp were approached under cover of the snowstorm or while the Dunmen held a formal feast to celebrate their victory at Maig Tuira (10% chance per day).

If the players put the camp under surveillance, there is a 20% chance per observer of spotting some Cultirith present and an equal probability of seeing an Ore or two. There is only a 2% chance that Ethacali and his bodyguard will be present during any given 8-hour time period. If inept spies should be captured, their wounds will be given minimal treatment and they will be tossed in with the other new slaves. Lumban and Cagh will separately question any prisoners. Escape from the stockade should prove easy, though it will be Very Hard (-25) to determine that the tribesmen are being deliberately careless: the warleaders agree that news of their presence should reach the Beacon Tower.



5.0 BESIEGED

The Vulseggi say during the Tregtagan that there is no finer sight in all of Endor than the first glimpse of a Beacon Tower at journey's end. This occasion might be an exception, for our travellers are aware that there are foes gathering who will provide a serious threat to the strength of the stone walls and the sword arms of the garrison. In his own time, Ethacali, the commander of the Witch-king's besiegers, will reveal that grave threats already lie within the Tirthon.

NOTE: *This adventure differs from the others of this module in that it contains four parts. It is likely that events will unfold in the order provided, but even this minor siege is a complex situation; the players will have an unusual opportunity to 'disturb' the sequence of events as it is presented here. If this occurs, GMs must use their judgment and imagination.*

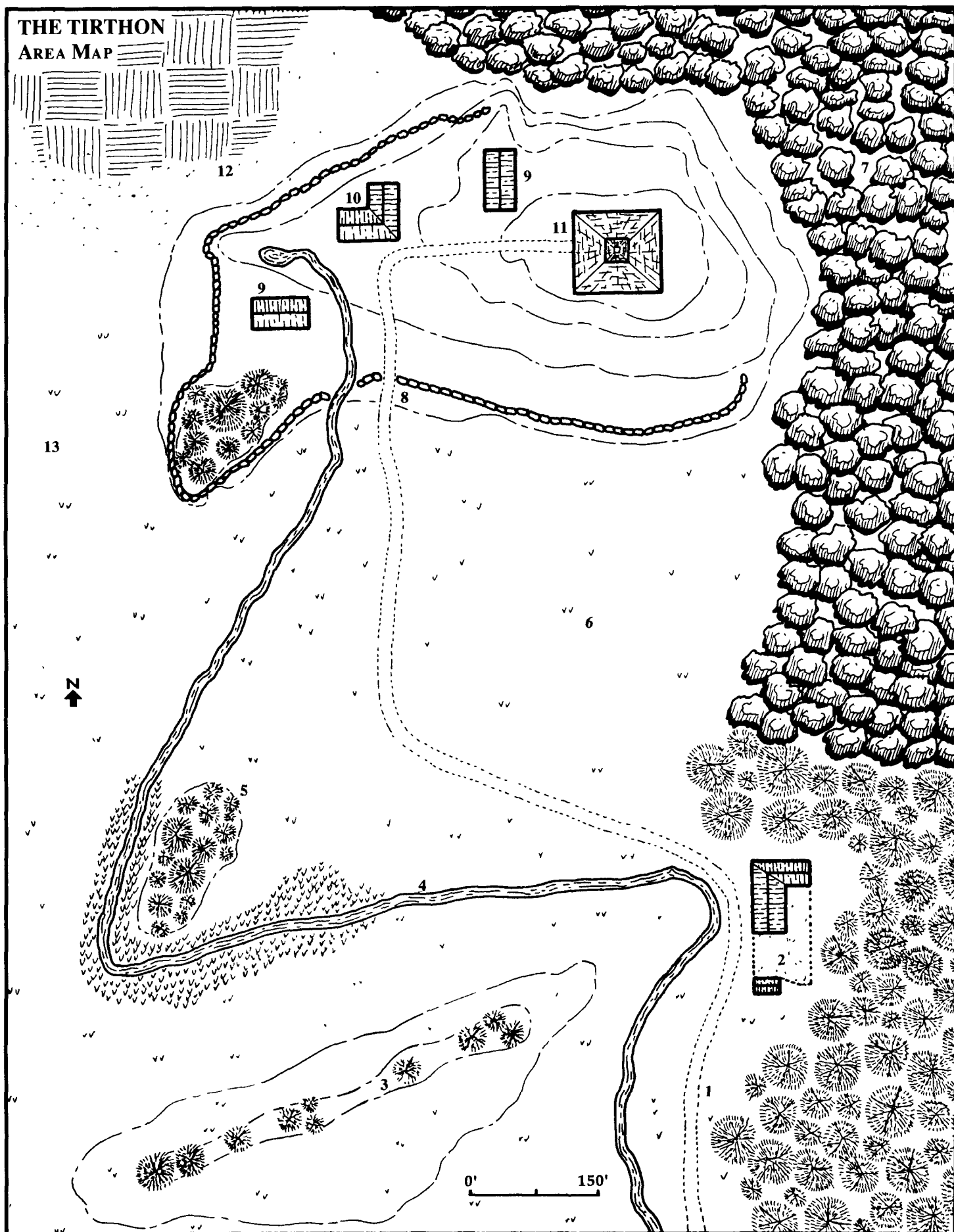
5.1 THE BEACON TOWERS OF RHUDAUR

The Gondryn were built in the early Third Age when the Northern Dunedain claimed dominion over the lands of eastern Eriador. Although the Dunedain meant well, the indigenous Hill-men did not particularly want to be civilized: their perennial revolts created a need for safe stone havens and rapid communications. The Beacon Towers of Rhudaur easily withstood the hit-and-run raids of the native tribesmen, but many fell when the Northern Dunedain began to quarrel and war among themselves after the Division of Arnor in T.A. 861.

Few of the towers remain intact within the lands controlled by the puppet-kings of Angmar, evil men who rule from Cameth Brin. Dol Cultirith (S. "The Tower of the Copper Guard"), in the heart of the Trollshaws, is a notable exception. Opposing Dol Cultirith, only the Five Towers of the Angle are still held by the enemies of Darkness. The bitter contest for control of southern Rhudaur has now raged for almost a century.

In T.A. 1307, Aldor the Addled ascended the throne of the Dunadan Kingdom of Rhudaur, bringing into power a coterie of advisors. Eventually everyone in this clique discretely went into the service of Angmar. Soon thereafter, the few High Men in the land not already seduced by evil fled to Arthedain and Cardolan. However, Celebendil Melosse, the Aran-onen-Egladil (S. "Lord of the Angle") and one of the five Great Nobles of the Realm, was determined to remain in his country; he openly revolted against his King. Celebendil had long served as Warden of Rhudaur, and thus had won the loyalty of the Northron mercenaries who garrisoned the remaining Beacon Towers of the central and southern Kingdom. With the aid of these doughty blond warriors, Celebendil's little realm long remained a breakwater against the southern expansion of the evil power of the Witch-king and his lackeys.

The defiance of the Aran-onen-Egladil lasted until the Great Northern War (T.A. 1352-1359) when the Lord and his sons fell in battle, and House Melosse was driven from its last outposts. Celebendil's bold grand-daughter, the half-Nothron Vulfredda, rallied the remnants of the mercenary army and recaptured her ancestral lands in southern Rhudaur, winning renown as a ferocious shieldmaiden. Though largely unnoticed in the west, Vulfredda's campaigns prevented a battalion of Easterling cavalry from taking the shorter march through the High Pass and the East Road in T.A. 1358. This obstruction enabled the armies of Arthedain and Cardolan to win their major victory at Nothva Rhaglaw later that year. The Lord of the Nazgûl wishes to be positive that this kind of delay and disruption does not reoccur.



5.11 THE TIRTHON

The Tirthon (S. "Watch Pine") is the most exposed of the towers held by the Vulseggi and the only one that lies north of the East Road. It was the first of the Dunadan Beacon Towers to have a complete garrison of Northrons: service here was always extremely unpopular due to its proximity to the dreaded Yfelwood. There is perennial talk of abandoning the fort, but it is too convenient a base for the annual summer blockade of Dol Cultirith. There are very few non-combatants in the garrison, and it is primarily manned by the young and unmarried or the old and widowed warriors of the Vulseggi. Even the horses are removed after the thaw of the first snow, as the defenders are effectively restricted to the tower for the duration of the long winter.

5.12 TERRAIN SURROUNDING THE TIRTHON

1. **Path.** Connects to the East Road.
2. **Ynarri's Drift.** Originally an outlying homestead, it was converted into a tavern with accommodations for the rare traveller.
3. **Low Ridge.** Overlooks the fields around the tower.
4. **Cam Run.** A burbling stream for most of its length to the River Hoarwell, it falls into marsh shortly below its origin in a spring on the Tower Hill.
5. **Scrub Pines.**
6. **The High Pasture.**
7. **Forest.** The old deciduous trees of the Yfelwood approach the edge of the stony Tower Hill; elsewhere, there is a swath of gnarly pines around its border.
8. **Fence.** The Tower Hill is surrounded (except at the Yfelwood corner) by a high, wooden, slotted fence. Where the path and the fence intersect it is comparatively easy to remove the boards, for no other entrance to the compound is provided.

9. **Barns.** All three are built of stone, without windows, and with very stout doors. Ventilation for the horses is provided by pipes in the roof.

10. **Central Barn.** Attached to the quarters for the wealli, the Dunnish debt-slaves who work the fields.

11. **The Tirthon.**

12. **Fields.**

13. **The Lower Pasture.** After the first snow, it becomes an impassable (Maneuver -30) quagmire until the ground dries in late spring.

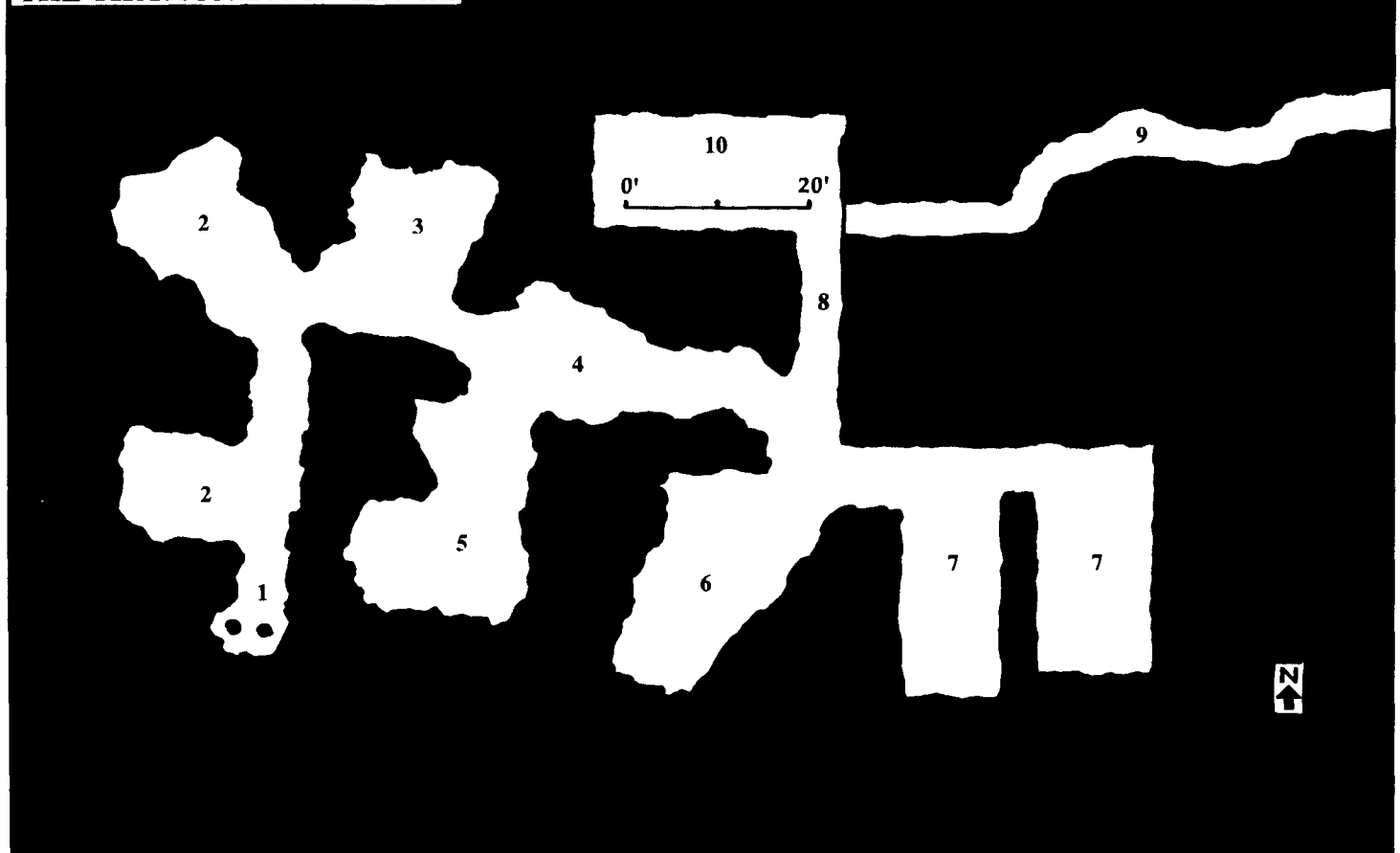
5.13 TOWER LAYOUTS

The Tirthon originally differed from the common pattern of Dunadan watchtowers only in that its walls taper off quickly as they rise. The Dunadan builders felt that there was little chance that it would ever face a formal siege. During the later years of the Kingdom of Arnor, the previously open third story was enclosed within a high copper turret. The commander thought this might counter the famous climbing abilities of the intractably rebellious Hillmen of the Trollshaws.

LOWER CELLARS

1. **Ladder.** From the upper cellars.
2. **Natural Caves.** Used to store the garrison's ale and mead.
3. **Cave.** Contains broken furniture, crockery, and worn-out clothes to provide busywork during the interminable winter.
4. **Corridor.** This unworked area is only about 4' high.
5. **Trash Cave.** Used when there is no ready egress during the winter and cleaned out by the wealli in the spring. It is now clean, but still rank.
6. **Steam Cave.** With a hot spring nearby, the vent is usually kept partially blocked, allowing just enough condensation to supply water for the garrison. These rocks can be removed with the thick leather gloves hanging from a hook on the wall. The cave (and much of the lower cellars) will quickly fill with vapors; it serves as a steam bath.

THE TIRTHON LOWER CELLARS



7. Rooms. One of the early Kings of Rhudaur planned to exterminate the Forest Trolls of the Yfelwood. Work was begun here to enlarge the garrison of the Tirthon, but never completed. The troops are allowed to drink, play, and brawl here during the winter.

8. Corridor.

9. Escape Tunnel. It eventually exits beneath Ynarri's Drift. The secret door is Extremely Hard (-30) to find and has an equally difficult lock.

10. Empty Room. The garrison infrequently recounts a story about two brothers who accidentally killed one another in a brawl here about 140 years ago, a false rumor asserts that their ghosts haunt the room. The commanders foster this tale to keep people from poking around near the escape tunnel.

UPPER CELLARS

1. Stairs. From the kitchen.

2. Hall.

3. Storage Rooms. All five are now roughly 1/3 full of dried supplies, mainly wheat. None of the doors is locked. There are ample stores for two winters.

4. Secret Door. It is only Routine (+10) to discover. It does, however, have an Extremely Hard (-35) lock. Within is a trapdoor and an iron ladder down to the lower cellars. The ladder has a Very Hard (-25) to detect trap if either the top or bottom rung have more than 30 lbs. of weight placed on them, all touching the ladder will receive "B" Cold Crits.

5. Stairway. Connects to the sunken level of the upper cellars.

6. Secret Door. This one is Hard (-10) to detect and is equipped with a lock identical to that on the secret door to the Lower Cellars (#4). A short L-shaped corridor lies within, it appears to terminate in yet another Hard (-5) to discern secret door. This is actually a Very Hard (-25) to detect trap. The mechanism closes and permanently bars the outer door. This stone portal will take roughly 1600 hits before giving way.

7. The Dungeon. A narrow hall lies behind a small iron door which is triple-bolted from the outside.

8. Cells. The outer two chambers have barred entries while the innermost also has an iron door that can be bolted. The locks are all Very Hard (-20). No prisoners are now in residence.

9. Smithy. This area sees little use as virtually all the weapons for the garrison are brought from Thuin Boid. The fuel for the Beacon Fire and for the cauldrons of hot oil and lead is stored here. There is enough room remaining that the wealli are permitted to live here during the winter, although they have not yet moved into these dismal quarters.

LEVEL ONE

1. Front Gate. Has decorative columns on either side.

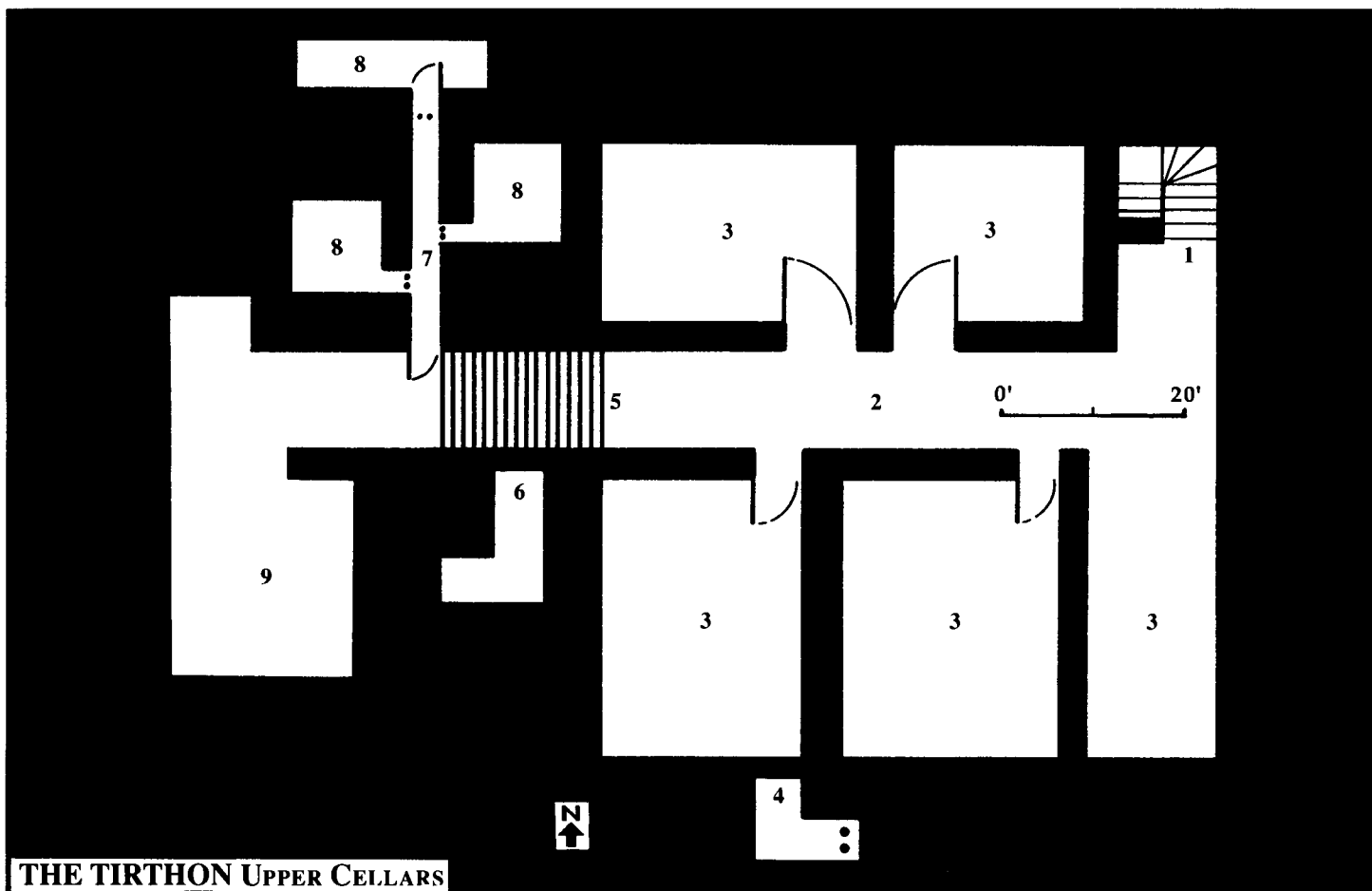
2. Front Door. It is constructed of +10 steel and cannot be operated when the interior portculli are lowered. It is not locked or trapped, but is deadbolted, making it at least Extremely Hard (-30) to open, the door will take 800 hits before giving way.

3. Two Portculli. They hang behind the front door and are operated from the left guardroom (#6). These iron barriers are designed to disrupt an attack that has breached the front door, they will only take 250 hits apiece, and anyone with any contortion skills should be able to squeeze between the bars in a Very Hard (-20) maneuver. However, anyone standing beneath the spikes when they are dropped must make a similar maneuver to avoid them or take 1-4 +40 spear attacks.

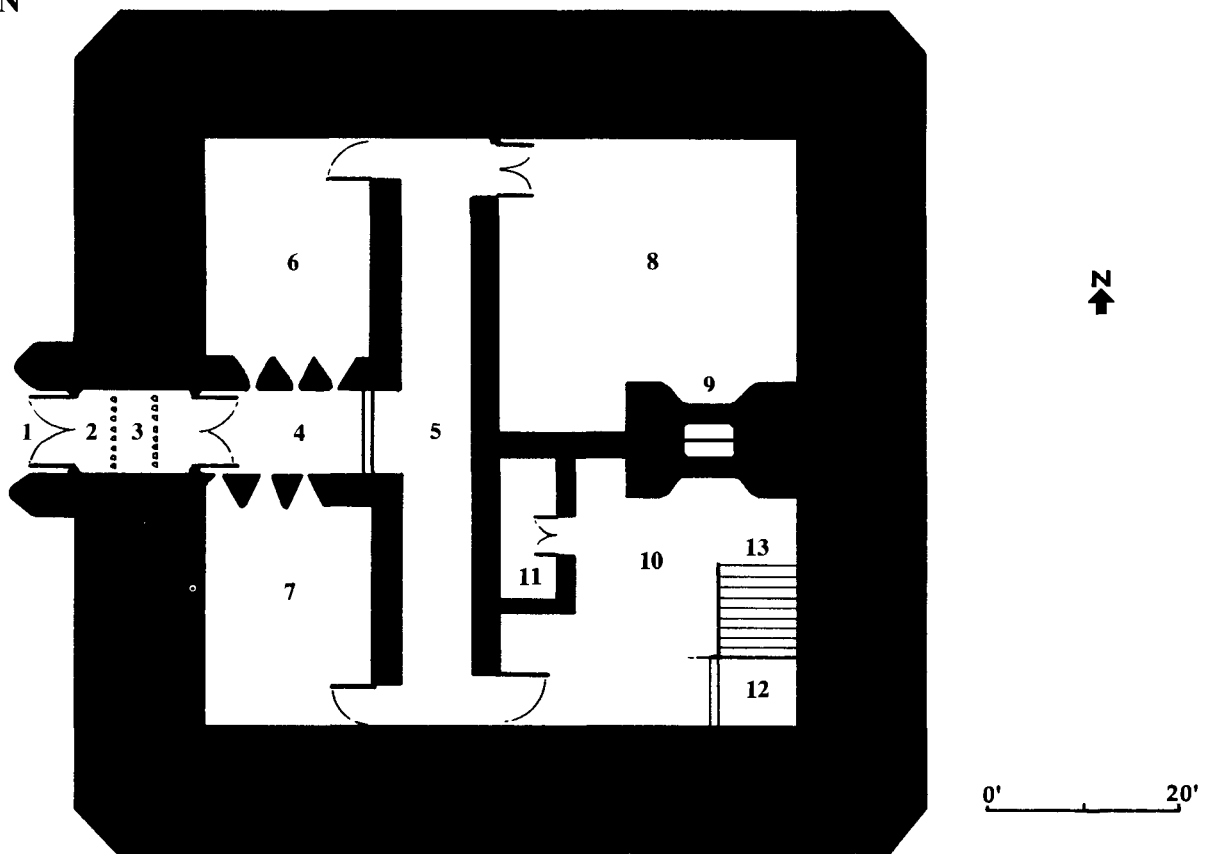
4. Front Hall. It has portals similar to the Front Door (#2), as well as 3 arrow slits on the walls to right and left and six murder holes in the ceiling. Since their regular opponents usually do not use tactics more sophisticated than a battering ram, this is the heart of the tower's defenses.

5. Central Hallway.

6. Guardroom. Used as the main armory for the garrison, a large variety of +5 weapons are stored on the walls and in four unlocked oaken chests. There is at least one guard here at all times. The door from the hall is reinforced oak and has a Very Hard (-20) lock besides the interior deadbolt. The door has two slits just wide enough to shoot a crossbow through. The other doors off the hall follow the same design.



THE TIRTHON LEVEL ONE



7. Guardroom. This is occasionally used for lower status guests during inclement weather; there are three fold-up cots in the corner.

8. The Main Barracks. The guardsmen have nine bunk beds and a large dining table. There will usually be 3-4 off-duty guardsmen resting, gossiping, or playing games of chance here.

9. Barracks Room. It has a large fireplace through which food can be passed from the fireplace in the kitchen. There is an Extremely Hard (-30) to find device in the flue that will enlarge the opening so that a person can squeeze through. This maneuver is only Hard (-10) unless the fireplace is hot, when it will be Sheer Folly (-50) to avoid an "A" Heat Crit (roll every round).

10. Kitchen.

11. Pantry. The better foods are kept here. The door follows the same pattern as the Guardroom's (#6); except that it has a different Very Hard (-20) lock. Only the cook and the commander have this key.

12. Spiral Staircase. Leads down to the cellar.

13. Stairway. Leads up to Level Two.

LEVEL Two

14. Stairs. Connects to the ground floor.

15. Central Hall.

16. Sewing Room and Library. Eanfled and Oswy spend their leisure moments here. The chamber is garishly decorated. The door is rarely locked, but Eanfled does have a key for the Hard (-10) lock.

17. Bedchamber. As above, though the door is locked, Hard (-10), when neither is present and can be bolted from within (making it Extremely Hard, -30). Eanfled and Oswy sleep here.

18. Guestrooms. Reserved for important visitors. They hold only a tapestry, beds, and a small chest. They can be locked like the other sleeping rooms (#17).

19. Room. Wiglaf the Hallward and Aldhelm the Sergeant reside here with their wives and Wiglaf's small child.

20. Iron Ladder. It connects this floor to Level Three. A trapdoor can be deadbolted from either side, but it is usually left unfastened.

21. Marendil's Dining and Conference Room. Most of the room is occupied by the table; there is an excellent map of the region on the wall. The outer door functions like those to the bedrooms (#17), but requires a separate key.

22. Den. Since his wife's death, Marendil has turned the room into a memorial to her, with various relics lit by a great number of candles. The inner doors have Extremely Hard (-25) locks, and Marendil has allowed no one in for weeks.

23. Marendil's Bedchamber. The garrison's payroll of 300 sp is kept in a Very Hard (-20) to find false bottom in the middle drawer of the bureau. The drawer has a spring trap that is Hard (-10) to detect and disarm, equipped with poison. Marendil now suffers periodic fits and has destroyed most of his non-martial possessions, leaving the debris scattered around the room. Apparently, the knight has been sleeping on the floor with a chamber pot as a pillow.

LEVEL THREE

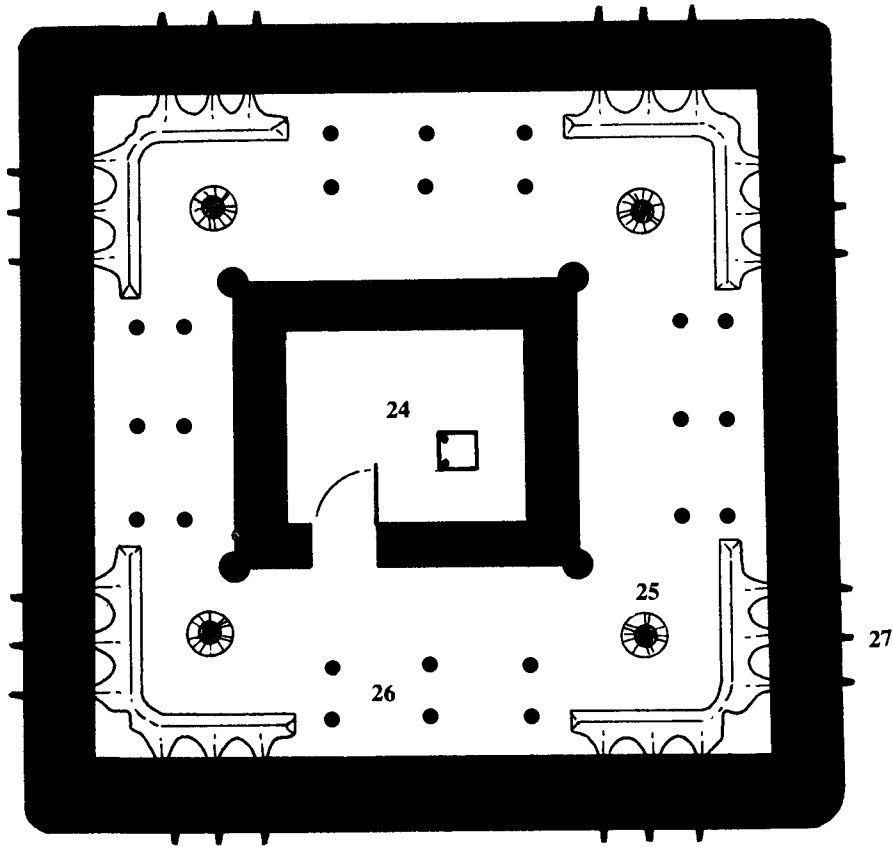
24. Stone Chamber. Originally the topmost of the tower, it now serves as the foundation for the copper turret. The iron ladder from the second floor continues up to the roof.

25. Four Large Kettles. These hold boiling oil or molten lead to greet unwelcome visitors. It takes half an hour to fire up the oil, and two hours to heat the lead. There are tracks on which to maneuver the kettles to the troughs cut into the floor.

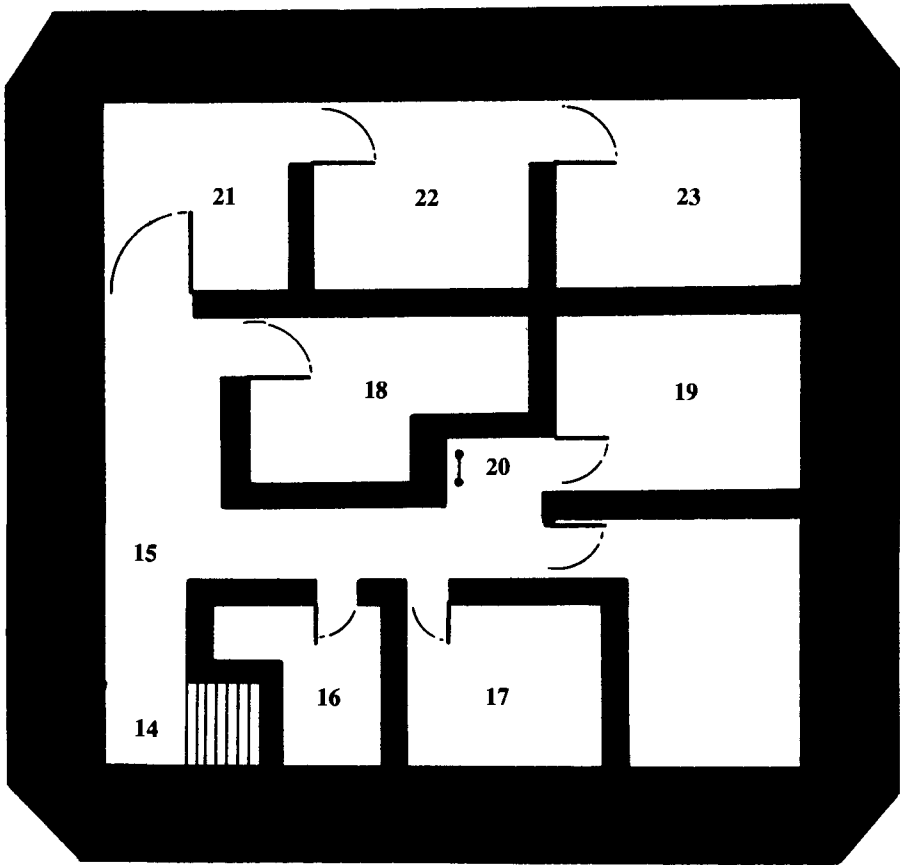
26. Bronze Pillars. These were added to support the turret built in T.A. 831-2.

27. Pipes. Used to spill hot oil and molten lead on unwelcome visitors, they slope sharply downward to prevent their use as a means to climb the walls.

THE TIRTHON



LEVEL THREE



LEVEL TWO

LEVEL FOUR

28. Iron Ladder. It continues upwards with a trapdoor like #20. This level has only a rickety wood floor.

29. Arrow Slits. A dozen pierce the turret at this level. They have limited fields of fire but not even the slimmest Elf and certainly not a stocky Hillman could possibly gain entrance through them.

ROOF

30. Platform. There is a small open platform at the apex of the turret where a guard keeps watch (two people can just fit here). The roof is well above the range of the missiles of the usual foes. The floor and trapdoor are both made of bronze. When it is clear, one can just descry the tops of the two nearest Gondyrn from this vantage.

31. Metal Basket. It contains the fuel for the beacon fire and is suspended above the platform from four metal pillars.

5.2 ETHACALI'S PLAN OF ATTACK

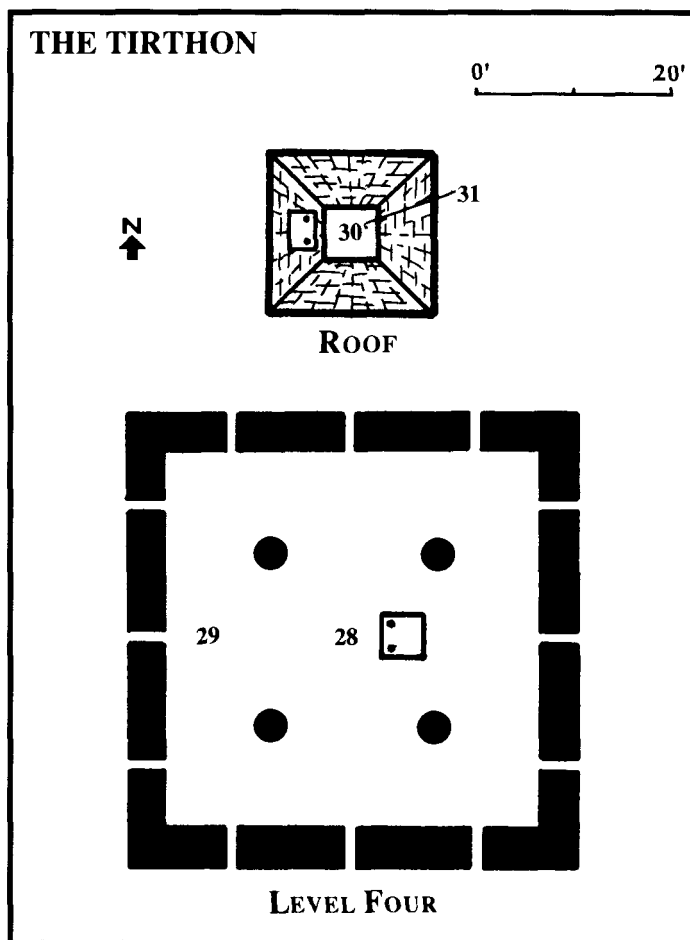
Although a mage by profession, Ethacali the Easterling has always longed for the glory of military command. Now, the Witch-king has granted his trusted subordinate with an important assignment. Ethacali's status is such that it is unlikely he could survive failure in this task, but that grace has only spurred him to greater efforts. The results of his scheming are impressive. With the substantial detachment of the Cultirith, the Ore war-miners, the Dunnish tribal warriors, and the Wolves and Trolls recruited locally, Ethacali has sufficient forces to reduce the Tirthon before spring, even if his luck is consistently poor, eventual success is assured. In his master's eyes, unfortunately, delay would constitute a serious defeat, for the Nazgûl wishes all of the Gondyrn breached and subjugated by winter's end.

Ethacali plans to employ treachery to supplement his sword-fodder: the tainted grain and the filigreed ring en route to the Beacon Tower. (See Section 4.2.) The garrison's cook was cured of pyromania in his youth by a healer whose loyalties secretly belonged to Angmar. The faithless physician hypnotized his patient with the filigreed band and left the suggestion that the cure be undone if ever the apprentice cook should see this ring again. It has been a long time, but the Lord of the Nazgûl is patient and sows many seeds of evil, that the right one may be reaped at will.

Ethacali finds such mundane skulduggery tedious and suspects that it might be easily thwarted. Three years ago, he organized the first of many expeditions into the Yfelwood in search of Blogath's Vale. (See Section 3.3.) Many an Ore never again saw the light of the moon, but at last the site was found and excavated. The Mage has tread most carefully, keeping the lingering spirit of the ancient evil under strong restraints and compulsions. Now, as his master designed, two powerful Blood-wights obey the Mage's will.

Undead spirits whose translucent forms resemble noble Men and Women with pale faces and huge, black-feathered wings, Blood-wights haunted the night winds of the Second Age. Molded in the shape of the living, they were able to fly as eagles, falcons, wild swans, or ravens. Death caught them amidst the change from Man to bird, condemning each to a shadow existence within Arda. Circling above the tumult of storms, cyclones, and squalls, a Blood-wight made the descent to earth only rarely, panicking any herds of sheep, goats, or swine present. Upon landing, the winged spirit drained the nearest creature of its blood, by a touch, and leapt into the skies again with renewed life. On the wildest nights, these undead haunted the dreams of Men, changing their sleep from a time of peace and repose into one of affliction and despair. The victory achieved by the Last Alliance of Men and Elves loosed the Blood-wights from their living death and freed the Middle Lands from their predation. Even the Eldar believe the Blood-wights to be a blight long defeated.

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In all but this last particular, the ancient tomes are correct. The Blood-wights were a devastating plague in the earlier Ages, and their shrill calls frequently pierced the roar of ram, sleet, or hail on stormy nights. Unfortunately, the darkest corners of the land, those untouched by the light of sun or moon, still harbor the sleeping remnants of the foul brood.

The Lord of the Nazgûl strictly instructed Ethacali that losing or prematurely exposing the newly awakened Blood-wights would obviate any other success he might gain. Subtlety is Ethacali's style, the two accursed spirits are taking some time to adjust to a much-changed world, so the Easterling's schemes are unfolding slowly. Two wealli from the Tirthon were captured and thoroughly interrogated last winter. That information has been used to exacerbate the existing flaws of the stronghold's leaders, using the dream powers of the Blood-wights in several cautious nocturnal visits. Marendil Rhudainor the Roquen (S "Knight") in command of the garrison, recently lost his young wife, and he has always been secretly insecure about his capacity for command. He is still grief-stricken and vulnerable. Eanfled Amrodan, wife to Oswy, the second-in-command, is the only trained herbmistress at the Tirthon. She has always been something of a flirt. Ethacali expects the pressure exerted by the Blood-wights on these quirks to spawn many crises under the stress of a siege. He will commit the Blood-wights openly to the fray only as a last resort, and even then only if he can be sure of the death or capture of all potential witnesses.

Lastly, Ethacali has garnered from the wealli prisoners the details of the secret escape tunnel exiting the Tirthon. He has gathered a party of adventurers (none too careful about their employers) to attempt a surprise attack via this route at an appropriate moment.

5.3 NPCS AT THE SIEGE OF TIRTHON

The major personalities and groupings of people involved in the siege of the Tirthon are briefly described below.

MARENDIL RHUDAINOR

Marendil is a member of the third branch of House Rhudainor. Once part of the Greater Nobility of Rhudaur, most of his relatives are now living in genteel poverty in Cardolan. The Knight's recently deceased spouse numbered ambition among her few faults, and persuaded him to return from exile and take service with Vulfredda. Marendil has proved himself a solid, if uninspired, warrior well suited to the command of a small fortress.

The commander is small in stature for a Dunadan noble. And, although he is a capable soldier with a sure and steady manner, Marendil's intellect is sluggish. He strikes observers as dull. His ability to inspire respect and obedience might benefit if he paid more attention to polishing his fine suit of half-plate armor, his heavy hand ax, and his repartee. However, Marendil's duties constantly occupy his thoughts even when his command is quiet.

The Dunadan has no heir. He lost his wife in her last of a series of miscarriages and has been quite despondent since her death. Until recently, the depression did not interfere with the performance of duty, but, for the last fortnight, he has spent most of the time locked away in his chamber. On those few occasions when he ventures outside, the commander seems both unkempt and extremely detached. This demeanor results from persistent nightmares in which his wife appears as a ghastly apparition, accusing him of innumerable failures that led to her miserable death. The ghost blames him for his caution and unwillingness to take great risks in the quest for glory and advancement.

MARENDIL



OSWY AMRODAN

Oswy is the junior knight at the Tirthon and second-in-command. His family hails from the happier days of the Northron mercenaries in Rhudaur, when many a successful adventurer married the widows and heiresses of a declining Dunadan Lesser House, claiming the wife's name and title. Oswy is Northron in culture and character, despite his knightly status and his specious claim to a defunct lordship in northern Rhudaur.

Oswy wears the appropriate armor for a Roquen (S. "Knight"), although he keeps his blond hair long, as do his troops. He shows considerable promise as a captain, but is still young and impetuous. Oswy has few interests beyond warfare. He does not possess the gift of interesting conversation, even about the art of war. With Marendil's affliction, Oswy became the *de facto* commander, doing a passably good job. However, the Northron Knight has begun to have problems within his own household, due to his spouse's odd behavior.

EANFLED AMRODAN

Eanfled possesses a family background similar to that of her husband, although her title has slightly more merit. She affects the manners of a true Dunadan lady. Eanfled has recently returned to her homeland, since she was sent as a lass to Tharbad for a noble education. She showed great potential in music and herblore from an early age. Her potential is still unrealized, for she spent more time studying the saucy ways of the court of Cardolan than learning the lessons and disciplines of her vocation.

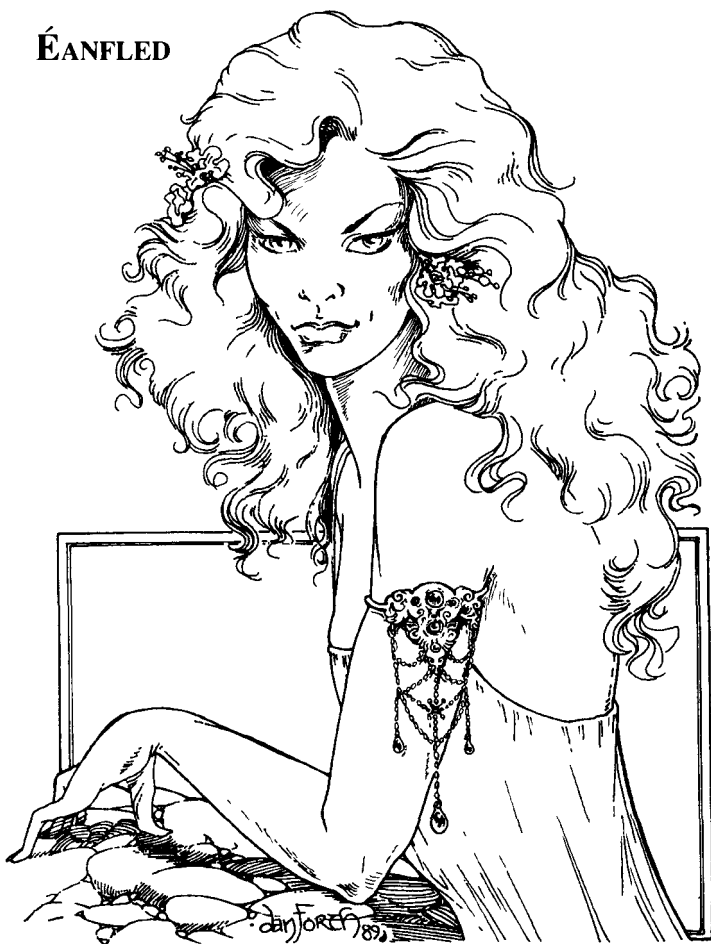
Eanfled was well pleased with her arranged marriage to a dashing young warrior. She arrived at the Beacon Tower roughly six months ago. This occurred soon after the death of Marendil's wife, and Eanfled has enjoyed the unofficial status of the Lady of the Tower. However, she soon discovered that she had wed a gritty and inelegant life, and an uncultured husband. Lady Amrodan has been experiencing strange dreams of late in which her darkest fantasies, of which she's not consciously aware, are fulfilled. In consequence, she has become cool and sulky with Oswy and more familiar with the garrison and guests than even the bawdy standards of the Northmen condone. The chance that she will commit some overt breach of propriety grows more likely as the siege commences.

THE GARRISON

Most of the daily management of the keep is performed by Wiglaf Harcarl, the Hallweard. Few Northmen have much talent for or liking of administration, and Wiglaf was no exception. However, as his blond mane turned to white, he realized that he needed to pursue less strenuous duties. Wiglaf is still a fit warrior and follows a program of regular exercise and sparring. In his normal garb, he is distinguished from the garrison only by his mace of authority. Wiglaf was exceptionally impoverished as a youth, and it required most of his life to garner the bride-price for a fitting wife. His young spouse is a sheltered, vacuous girl whose main interests are in the kitchen. They have a little boy, now five years old.

Aldhelm Demuret is an old companion-in-arms to Wiglaf. Aldhelm is less ambitious than his friend and remains satisfied with his position as chief sergeant of the Tirthon. He married the daughter of a local Dunnish chief, receiving a dowry instead of paying a bride-price for a wife. However, Aldhelm spent most of this windfall at the wedding feast; his interests in life do not extend much farther than knocking a few heads together and drinking. He is very well liked, but has little real authority among the troops.

ÉANFLED



Tonfall, the junior sergeant, is one of the few Northmen to move west across the Misty Mountains in this generation. Most people suspect, correctly, that he had a criminal past in Rhovanion. However, he is very conscientious and efficient now, and whatever he did was not bad enough to merit pursuit. Tonfall's second chance in life has been fairly earned. Although he is comparatively laconic, Tonfall lives among the line Vulseggi: the main arbiter of their daily existence. The Lances are loyal to Tonfall, and, in turn, he does Marendil's bidding without question (unlike Wiglaf and Oswy, who wonder about their lord's judgement because of his recent odd behavior).

There are three line commanders, known as Lances: Lassar, Vilhelm, and Ecegar. Although this rank is usually a stepping stone to higher command, Lances are selected on the sole basis of superior martial prowess. Lassar is older and has long held this rank, but comparing his memory to that of a sieve would be unfair. He tends to be conservative and more than a little complacent. Vilhelm is a young braveheart, still prone to fly into a frenzy when it is not appropriate. Ecegar is younger still, but he has discernment, valor, and high potential, lacking only experience. The remaining 14 Vulseg warriors are equally divided between younger and older Men. As a rule, the elders are more conservative, and the striplings boisterous fire-eaters.

Seven male wealli do desultory labor in the fields near to the tower. They are dispirited and would like to escape. However, their master's enemies would not treat them any better, and they know it. Among the female wealli, four are married to field workers, and seven serve the troops as laundresses and seamstresses. Finally, there reside five Dunnish children at the Tirthon; two of them are towheads.

ETHACALI THE EASTERLING

The man whom the chronicles will dub the "Dark Mage of Rhudaur" was born into the Logath: nomadic tribesmen generally known as Wain Easterlings. A son of the youngest son of his band's chief, Ethacali was allowed to pursue his magical talents, although he quickly grew frustrated with the limited knowledge of his mentors. He departed to find greater teachers, following a path that led him to the Ore-holds on the borders of Mordor, thence to the lair of the Necromancer, and finally to Cam Dum, the capital of the Witch-king's realm in Angmar. Propelled by his tireless and quenchless search for arcane knowledge, his complete detachment from any sense of morality, and his uncanny knack of picking the winning side in the endless internecine power struggles in the counsels of Darkness, Ethacali has risen rapidly in the ranks of evil. Although far from the most powerful, Ethacali is among the Witch-king's favorite henchmen.

Ethacali wears dark brown robes (better for not requiring the removal of bloodstains) and travels with a considerable collection of books, fancying himself an intellectual. The Easterling has a disarmingly bland demeanor, carefully cultivated; it is an often fatal error to underestimate him. Ethacali's staff is surmounted by a gilded skull, which serves to emphasize his specialization in spells involving necromancy.

Currently, Ethacali is accompanied by a new bodyguard, Oologg, a fierce Snow Troll. The Mage devotes his spare time to teaching this unlikely pupil how to read and to utilize the rudiments of philosophy. The Easterling is noted for such jests, but his opponents usually do not appreciate his wry and twisted sense of humor.

ETHACALI



THE CULTIRITH

Despite their barbaric appearance — outsiders usually cannot distinguish the Cultirith's warriors from the Hillmen — these Rangers and Scouts take as much pride in their profession as do the Vulseggi. The band of twenty under Hirgrim's command, about one fifth of the total force, is rated as one of the best units. They have high morale and follow their captain's orders to the letter.

Hirgrim is easily recognized by the multiplicity of scars that snake across his body. He wears a leather cuirass and greaves that stand out amid the hides of his troops. Hirgrim has begun to feel his body's first hints that he is no longer young, but this change has only made him more aggressive in battle. The warrior is well pleased that his lifelong struggle with the Vulseggi is finally receiving proper attention from the "High Command," but he is not pleased that an outsider has been foisted upon him and placed in charge of operations. The subtle Ethacali is aware of this discontent and actively solicits Hirgrim's advice, following it as often as possible. Whenever feasible, Ethacali allows the Cultirith to operate independently from his other forces. None the less, the Dark Mage has subverted one of Hirgrim's two sergeants with bribes.

THE DUNLENDINGS

With their traditional leather shield, spears, and ineffective throwing clubs known as wheebbs, it is hard to tell the Siol Nunaw and Macha Mur mercenaries apart. Actually, the tribes are quite distinct. Formerly one of the more civilized tribes, the Siol Nunaw have little practice in serious warfare. They will be very bold at the outset of a fight, but have rather brittle morale if things begin to go badly. The Macha Mur have been at the business of war for many generations, and in their own way these barbarians are as professional as the Vulseggi and the Cultirith. Their nature, however, tends more towards scavenging: pillaging the countryside, avoiding the worst of a fight, and dispatching the wounded of both sides.

THE ORC WAR-MINERS

Ethacali's contingent of siege workers are lesser goblins from the bowels of Mount Gundabad. The dozen war-miners are led by Yarnaghk, who has seen many a siege and learned to keep his followers out of the heat of battle. Indeed, such skilled laborers are expensive and better employed elsewhere. The Ores are not popular with the Cultirith (who think them cowardly) and the Dunmen (who fear their eating habits), so Ethacali keeps them separated from the rest of his forces. Yarnaghk is a competent engineer, but while the Mage respects his opinion, he has little use for the goblin's continual fawning and limited knowledge of personal hygiene. Lumban, the leader of the Macha Mur, visits with the Ores fairly often, both to learn a smattering of their trade and to impress his men by his cool bravery with these little fiends.

YNARRI

Ynarri is a former Vulseggi, forced into other work because he is lame. This handicap is the result of an old war wound that festered too long before treatment. Marendil granted him a local monopoly on full-strength mead and ale; without the soldiers' trade he could not eke out a living from the few travellers who come to his inn. Garrulous and clever, Ynarri verifies the identity and business of any travellers or tradesmen. Few are allowed into the keep without his approval. Consequentially, he seems very nosy to those who must visit with him, but none suspect how effectively they're being interrogated. Ynarri has an adolescent mute wealli, Olbaddol, who serves as his servant. Olbaddol is loyal to his master; given Ynarri's growing distaste for physical endeavors, this is somewhat surprising.

THE BLOOD-WIGHTS

Naranatur and Skrykalian were once shapechangers, dedicated to service as messengers and spies for the dreadful Blogath. Returning from one such errand when their mistress's halls trembled under assault, they were killed precipitately while abandoning the forms of raven and swan for those of Man and Woman. The pair became Blood-wights, preying on the living like the rest of the undead. Unlike their kindred, these two never left their place of origin. As prey grew scarce, they passed into a death-like stupor, languishing for centuries until Ethacali's Ores unearthed their tomb.

With runes and incantations provided by the Necromancer, Ethacali sought to destroy their ancient loyalties before he awakened the Blood-wights. Naranatur and Skrykalian now are strongly compelled to obedience to the Witch-king and his designated servants. Unfortunately, these rites have partially revived the spirit of the Blood-wights' former lord. Guards and wards preserve the sorcerous

sleep that yet holds her, but the force of Blogath's will stirs in restless dreams and occasionally bends her servants from their new allegiances.

Skrykalian appears as an unusually tall Lady of the Aravador, with a pale face, curling black hair, and great swan's wings. Her robes are darkest grey, girdled by a belt of crimson leather. Naranatur might be her slighter male twin, except for his sweeping raven's wings. His garb (tunic and hose) is also dark grey, but his belt and boots are black. He wields a greatsword of black steel with engraved runes on the blade. Both undead have a translucent quality to their forms.



5.4 THE TASK

The players should arrive at the Tirthon in time to be caught in the siege. Ethacali's schemes include four phases: Nightfall, the Battle, Striking Back, and the Grand Assault that will transpire as the tower falls (though maybe not in that order). Each scenario places its own demands on the party, but the overriding task throughout this adventure is to save the Tirthon.

5.41 STARTING THE PLAYERS

The adventure begins when the players arrive at Ynarri's Drift, whether they do so in completion of their task in the previous scenario or by some other route. If this adventure is being run independently, the party should first encounter some of the enemies gathering against the Tirthon, in order that things do not begin too abruptly.

5.42 AIDS

The party might be better considered as an aid to the existing garrison of Vulseggi than vice versa. The NPCs will certainly regard them in this light. Simultaneously, the Vulseggi will be highly suspicious of the group and their motives. Winning the garrison's trust is a very high priority, which can be most easily done by convincing Ynarri of their sincerity. Once this has been accomplished, Oswy will actively seek out the adventurers' opinions on how to conduct the defense. However, unless they miraculously discover and cure Marendil's malaise, he will have no use for them except as warm bodies to flesh out his line-of-battle. Eanfled has a considerable collection of healing potions and herbs and will not be stingy, given that the wounds have been suffered in the service of the garrison. Aldhelm is the easiest source of information about the defenders; the others are close-mouthed about such matters. One of the wealli could provide a surprising amount of accurate and unbiased gossip, but it will be extremely hard to gain the slaves' trust. There is a wide selection of +5 equipment in the armory and four extra horses in the stables. The party should gain free access to these stores without much difficulty, though the horses will only go out on loan.

5.43 OBSTACLES

A successful siege presupposes that overwhelming forces be arrayed against the defenders — desiring quick results in the Angle, the Witch-king has been profligate. The Vulseg defenders, brave and fell-handed, are capable of withstanding any normal threats that they might face. Ethacali, not unaware of this, has several surprises to spring: the poisoned grain, the filagreed ring, the Ore war-miners, knowledge of the escape tunnel, and, most importantly, the Blood-wights. It is essentially the PCs task to provide the sneakiness, brains, and magic needed to counter these threats. Each scenario has specific dangers which will be discussed separately in Section 5.5.

5.44 REWARDS

Being alive never seems to be adequate compensation. Although there is very little treasure in this adventure, considerable loot can be amassed by scavenging fallen opponents, several of whom are well equipped. Additionally, a map detailing the route to the heart of the Yfelwood can be obtained by force from Yarnaghk. For the less avaricious, success in this endeavor would lead to profound gratitude (and presents) from Vulfredda and possibly the favorable notice of more powerful lords.

5.5 ENCOUNTERS

The following scenarios are likely to occur during the siege of the Tirthon. Outlines and brief descriptions of the probable reactions of the involved NPCs follow.

5.51 NIGHTFALL

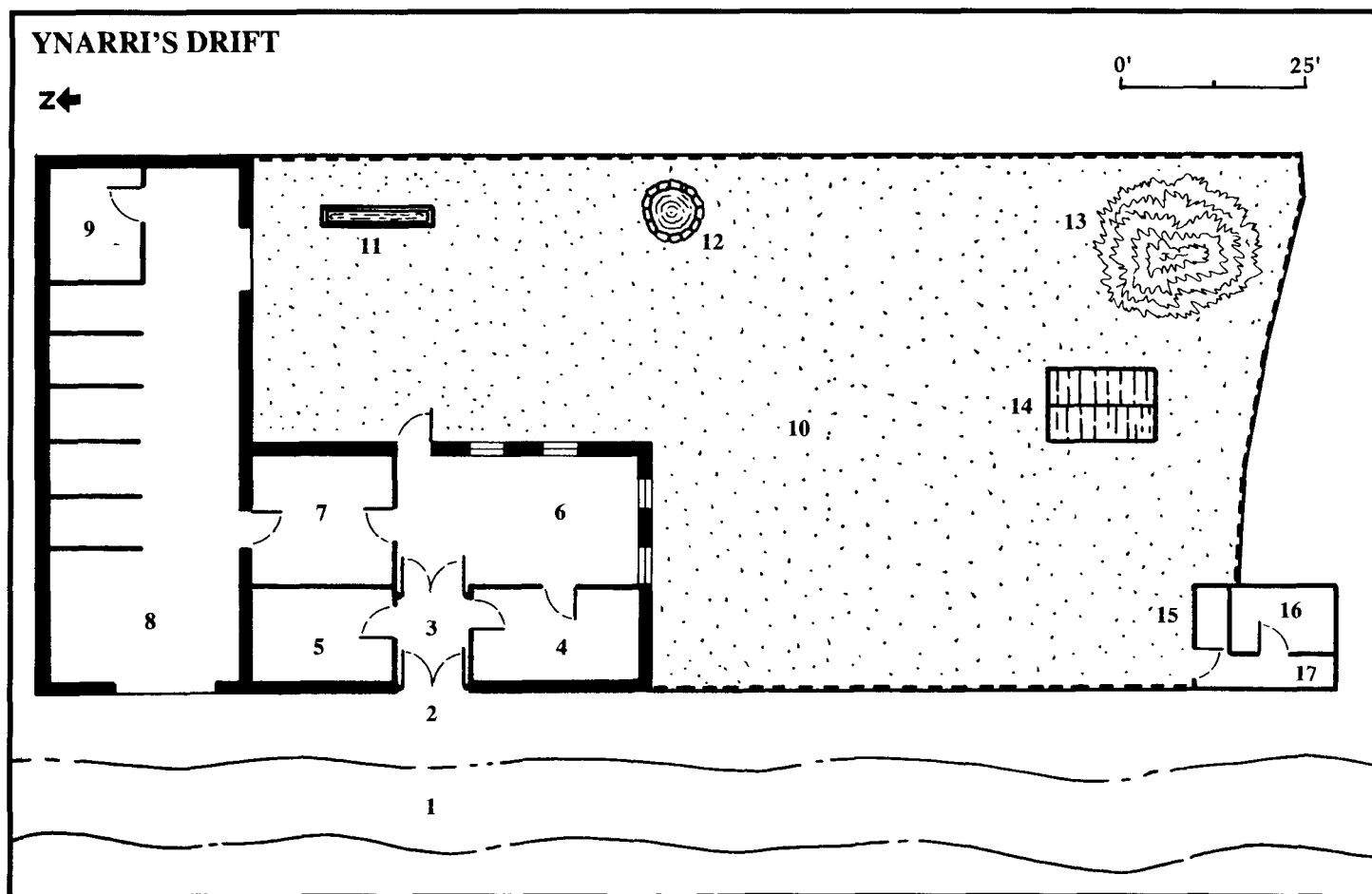
During the Troll Days, Marendil enforces a quarantine on any visitors to the Tirthon: they must spend one night at Ynarri's Drift. The commander is partially motivated by his desire to keep the old soldier in business, but this is a rational safety measure in these perilous times. Ynarri plays the buffoon well. Few travellers detect that it is his approval of their story or credentials, rather than the passage of some statutory number of hours, that is necessary to gain admittance to the Beacon Tower.

The PCs will arrive just in time for the formal announcement of the siege, which unfortunately includes the capture of the inn. Hirgrim is in complete command of this phase of the operation. Ethacali wants all to look like a normal raid for a few more hours. Hirgrim prefers to use about half his men in this endeavor (i.e., 9 fighters and 2 sergeants) and will personally supervise the skirmish. Beyond an infrequent arrow or two, he will fight only if his men are loosing. His Rangers will 'knock' by sending several volleys of crossbow bolts against the doors and windows of the inn. This barrage will continue for about three minutes or until any defensive fire is suppressed. Then, the Rhudaurans will move up to scale the walls of the main buildings, with half of them providing cover as needed. Their approach will be very cautious, taking another 4-5 minutes. The Rangers are under strict orders to attack the smokehouse last (so that their leaders' knowledge of the secret passage will not be revealed) and not to shoot any draft animals (so that the tainted grain will be delivered to the castle as planned).

After the first 'knock' of arrows, Ynarri will use any excuse or explanation necessary to get away from the PCs (so that he can use the tunnel to escape to the tower). Even if the group has done exceptionally well at gaining his trust, he cannot reveal the egress on pain of death. Olbaddol has not been allowed to learn of this either, but he has the advantage of knowing a secret path through the woods to the castle. However, he will not be anxious to have strange people of unknown stealthiness following him, and he can drop out of sight almost as well as Ynarri.

In any event, if Dagar is also here (see Section 4.0), he will insist on running the gauntlet to deliver his grain to the castle. After all the trouble on the road, he is not about to fail within sight of his goal. If he cannot convince anyone that the wagons will provide good cover, Dagar will make rash promises about extra pay if he thinks that might sway the adventurers. The young trader's second choice is to defend the barn to the last man until relief arrives.

Despite his bulk, Ynarri will certainly get to the Tirthon before the wagons do, and before any serious assault is underway. Arrangements will have been made to allow the group inside. If they have abandoned their cargo and gotten there first, the players may wait for awhile at the door under an intermittent shower of crossbow bolts. Whenever they gain entry, after the unpleasant experience of being exposed to sustained long range missile fire, the party should be happy to get behind stout stone walls. That pleasure may fade very quickly.



LAYOUT OF YNARRI'S DRIFT

1. Road. The muddy track leads to the Tirthon.

2. Front Door. There are no windows on this side of the main building. This structure and the barn are faced with slate in order to make them fire-resistant. The double doors into the inn and the barn door on the west side are made of hard oak, heavily reinforced with iron. The former will take 240 hits and the later 360. Both rely on deadbolts and bars to keep out unwanted guests; the doors are both Extremely Hard (-40) to open.

3. Entry Hall. There are hooks on the walls for sodden cloaks. All the doors from this room are like the front doors, except, being smaller, they only take 180 hits.

4. Ynarri's Room. Despite his bumpkin's demeanor, the innkeeper maintains a neat and tasteful bedroom. He keeps spare change to the tune of 8 bp and 23 cp in the top drawer of his dresser which has an Easy (+10) lock. His footlocker possesses a Hard (-10) lock, but it only contains his accounts and his better clothes. Ynarri's stores his personal treasure of 11 gp and 67 sp buried in a small casket beneath the elm tree in the yard. He is careful enough not to visit this little trove and does not know that rust has ruined the trap and made the lock Absurd (-50) to open. Ynarri will rent this room for 1 sp per night, staying in the loft or even in the barn.

5. Guest Room. This room has three musty beds and a small table. Olbaddol is allowed to sleep here when no guests are in; otherwise he stays in the loft, as will cheap or poor guests.

6. Dining Room. Three rough tables have proved enough to seat Ynarri's previous lodgers. The dining room has an exterior door like those in the front (#3). This is the only room in the house with windows, which have stout wooden shutters for emergencies.

7. Kitchen. As neither Ynarri nor Olbaddol have any culinary knack, they bring in one of the female wealli to cook for any long-term guests, or if the Vulseggi are having a party. There is a trap door in the middle of the floor leading down to the half-cellar that holds the inn's meager collection of wine and ample amounts of ale, beer, and mead. There is a door leading into the barn, but it is padlocked until winter (Very Hard [- 20] to pick).

8. Barn. With stalls for five horses, the barn is very clean (Olbaddol has just finished cleaning it). No more visitors were expected before next spring. The supplies of hay in the open loft are low.

9. Tack Room. This room is in disarray as all the riding gear to be repaired over the winter is tossed in heaps. It may take some effort to crawl over the piles to get them, but there are six assorted +5 hand weapons and two +5 bows hung on the wall. Ynarri or Olbaddol will invite anyone to borrow them in case of attack. The barn door across from the tack room leading into the yard is quite flimsy.

10. Yard. It is enclosed by a 6' high slotted wooden fence. Because of the recent bad weather, the barnyard animals have been shut up, and the yard is pretty muddy. Once the inn is captured, the Ore sappers will build their siege engines here, dismantling the inn for building materials.

11. Drinking Trough. Olbaddol hides his personal fortune, 2 sp, 8bp, 35 cp, under the north end.

12. Well.

13. Large Elm Tree. The branches are trimmed so as not to overhang the fence.

14. Chicken Coop. Any prisoners taken during this adventure will be kept here for a day or so before being transported to the stockade at the Dunnish camps.

15. Smoke House. Unlike the other buildings, it is made of brick. The door is padlocked; both Ynarri and Olbaddol have keys to this Very Hard (-20) device.

16. Pen. As the Beacon Tower has facilities for curing meat, Ynarri has converted the Smokehouse into an abode for his prize truffle pig, Mehittable. The pig is huge and does not like strangers.

17. Secret Trapdoor. At the far south end of the smokehouse, on the floor of the corridor around Mehittable's pen, is a secret opening that is Sheer Folly (-50) to discover. It has a Lvl 9 +50 magic lock, concealed by a anti-screaming spell of similar level and pluses. Further protection is provided by a magical trap in the form of a glyph (Lvl 7 +20 Sleep Spell affecting all within the Smokehouse) and a mechanical trap: if either of the top two

rungs have more than 5 lbs. of weight placed on them the tunnel flooding sluice will be opened. The trap door opens onto a 30' deep shaft accessed by a iron ladder. The secret tunnel to the Tirthon (roughly 5'x5') lies at the bottom, slanting sharply downward for 300'. The stairs bring one up to a flat tunnel to the lower cellars. At the top of the stairs, a lever opens and closes the sluice gate. This will fill approximately 200' of the sloping tunnel with water in under 3 minutes. Once re-fastened, it will take 3-8 (2+d6) hours for the flooded tunnel to dry out enough to allow passage. Ynarri will unleash the flood behind him as he flees to the tower, in case he's followed.

OBSTACLES

Hirgrim's objectives in the opening attack on Ynarri's Drift are to secure the place in a relatively intact condition and to hasten any guests to the Beacon Tower. He is not prepared to take many casualties in this round of the siege and, therefore, won't press the attack too closely. The party's greatest problem will lie in settling on a reasonable course of action after Ynarri's mysterious disappearance. The building makes an adequate temporary fort, but the perimeter of the yard is far too long to defend. If they can hold out until morning, the garrison will sortie to retrieve them, being lightly harassed in said endeavor.

If the group decides on a fighting withdrawal or on blind flight, much will depend on the direction they choose. Every way will initially be barred by sustained bow fire from the excellent cover of the woods, the primary tactical problem in this scenario. If the PCs do too well, Hirgrim will commit the other half of his Rangers from reserve. Moreover, Ethacali does not want anyone to break out from the siege and has deployed most of his Wolves, Trolls, and Gorcrows, to the south and east. Running north involves moving towards the tower or into the Yfelwyd. Those going west will soon encounter the patrols around the Dunmen's camp. None of these foes will show the restraint of the Rhudauran Rangers, herding any would-be escapees back towards the Tirthon. Prisoners eventually will be taken back to the stockade at the mercenaries' camp.

There are several ways to escape the ambush at Ynarri's inn, the fighting withdrawal to the Tirthon being the easiest. Whichever route the players choose, the party must avoid panic.

5.52 THE BATTLE OF THE TIRTHON

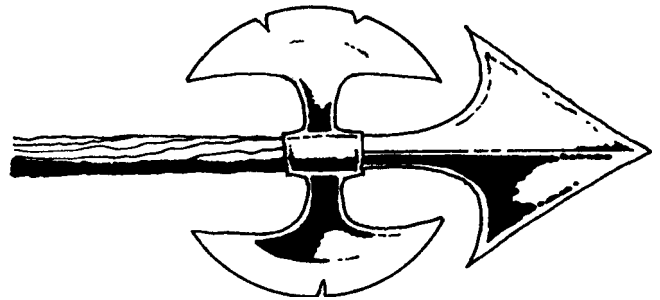
At dawn on the day after Ynarri's Drift has been secured by the Cultirith, the Dunnish tribesmen will array themselves on the ridge south of the Tirthon. They will hoot, holler, and make derisive comments about the courage and manhood of the defenders. There is a chance (01-66) this verbal abuse will spur Marendil into ordering a sortie. If he declines, they will appear again on the next morning, and Marendil will be unable to resist ordering the charge.

If the guests do not question Marendil's decision, Oswy will. Because of the stream, the tribesmen occupy a strong defensive position, and, although not visible, the Cultirith are known to be present. Oswy smells a trap, and the Vulseggi, at best, will be outnumbered by three to one. Marendil will grant that the odds aren't good, but they aren't unmanageable either. Moreover, the Dunmen have notoriously brittle morale, and there is unlikely to be another chance to launch a mounted charge at them. If the charge succeeds, then the winter's siege will be broken before it has really begun. The commander will rant about the necessity of taking great risks to gain great victories, before he ends all further debate.

The guests will be offered the honor of participating in the charge, and horses can be provided for four of them. (Four guards must be left back at the castle in case of a small sneak attack.) Marendil will be pleased if they accept his offer, but will be mollified if they propose to undertake some independent secondary attack. Any who decline altogether will face the full weight of the Knight's wrath.

Ethacali expects the Vulseggi to fight and has rigged the odds as much as possible. A large pack of Wolves (14) and Wargs (9) slink concealed in the woods to the north of Ynarri's Drift, and the Cultirith hide in the copse to the northeast of the ridge. If the Ores have had an uninterrupted 24 hours to work, they will unveil two medium onagers (small catapults) and a heavy ballista from the yard of the inn. At over a 100' range, these will hit with two 4x damage Bash attacks and a +10, 4x damage Spear, respectively, each able to fire once every two minutes (12 rnds). The greatest peril awaits in the twenty small pit traps and four dozen caltrops that the Rangers have prepared in the marsh below the ridge. These will take down at least a quarter of the horses as the Vulseggi charge, forcing the remainder to stop and reorganize. At that point, the Dunmen will throw their wheebes and charge, while the Wolves and Cultirith break from cover.

NOTE: If the battle is resolved abstractly, about a third of the Vulseggi casualties will be taken prisoner and perhaps used in negotiations later.



OBSTACLES

The greatest danger in the entire adventure lies in this clash of arms. Marendil may (01-33) decline the Dunlending's offer of battle on the first day (or second if the party has successfully defended Ynarri's inn on opening night), but will surely fight at the next chance because of the malign influence of the Blood-wights. Moreover, he will be committed to a frontal charge on the Dunlending ranks, with no attention to his flanks — trusting that he can crush the tribesmen before any hidden foes come to their aid. This strategy insensibly ignores the unknown nature of the unseen enemies and the horse traps that the Cultirith have arranged below the ridge.

If the party decides to join in the assault, they will be at grave risk, even should they come up with a clever tactical plan (such as using their wagons as a mobile strong-point, a sortie from the escape tunnel, etc.). They might be best off to attempt a raid under the cover of the main assault. At least, the Cultirith will try to see that prisoners are not mistreated or eaten.

NOTE: Since there will be approximately 100 NPCs involved in the battle, it is not impossible to play out the entire fray. It would be far more practical to actually play out the fighting in the immediate vicinity of the players, while using some abstract methods to determine what is happening elsewhere. Unless the whole battle is being played, these abstractions should reflect the fact that this little fight is going to be an irretrievable disaster. Marendil will frenzy and fight until he dies, but his subordinates will try to save as many as possible after they have taken 50% casualties. It is also possible that Marendil may refuse to allow the group to participate on some whim, in which case the battle can be abstracted in its entirety. This should reflect Vulsegg losses of 50-70%, the named NPCs having the same chance of survival with the exception of Marendil.

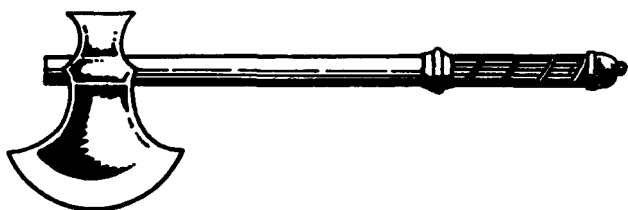
5.53 STRIKING BACK

In an average siege, the defenders usually launch a stroke or two against their foes. A raid might be needed to restore morale after the battle (although to some it may have seemed a good means of avoiding participation in the battle in the first place). Once the Ore war-miners have the siege engines built and have started to find their range, a raid to destroy them becomes a necessity. The upper walls of the Tirthon are too thin to stand up to a sustained bombardment. Other possible targets for a foray include the Dunlendings camp and the lair of the Blood-wights — if their presence has been discovered. Any sorties into the Yfelwood in search of Blogath's Vale are probably premature. The Vulseggi know that the Cultirith move their camp every night and keep very careful watch; they will be hard to find, much less attack. The most likely target for the raid is the yard of the inn where the war machines are kept.

After the siege engines are finished, about a dozen of the slaves from the Dunlending camp will be brought to provide the heavy labor, while the Ores supervise and keep watch. They will be assisted by 10 or 12 Wolves in the woods and a half dozen Gorcrows.

There is a chance (50%) that Ethacali will launch his hired adventurers on their raid through the escape tunnel randomly rather than in coordination with the battle or the grand assault.

NOTE: *The enemy adventurers are a party of 5-7 and can be drawn from unused PCs in Section 2.0. They are led by a 6th Lvl Half-ore Scout/Thief with sufficient swimming and trap skills to operate the flooding mechanisms in the tunnel. These opponents should be noticeably more adept at small unit tactics than the average NPCs.*



OBSTACLES

If the party has been thorough in planning the raid, they have a good chance of success. An attack on the Dunmen's camp entails a longer venture out of the Tirthon, but it is considerably less well guarded. The Ores beside the siege engines in the yard behind Ynarri's Drift are aware of their vulnerable position and are exceptionally watchful. None the less, their position and their machines are vulnerable to fire. The players would be well advised to have a sense for the appropriate time to run away when undertaking this mission. There is some chance that raiders exiting through the escape tunnel might encounter enemy raiders entering; that situation should foster a nasty little fight in tight quarters.

5.54 THE GRAND ASSAULT

Ethacali will wait a day or two after the battle before attempting to storm the Tirthon. The siege engines have a chance (01-05, subtracting 5x number of hours fighting) of causing a breach in the upper tower, if they are not interrupted or destroyed. The Easterling Mage would prefer to pound the top into rubble before launching his main attack. He expects morale to plummet in the castle and hopes that the Blood-wights will have as much success against Eanfled as they did against the late commander.

In the interim, the Vulseggi will be offered honors of war under flag of truce. This would permit them to leave unmolested, but unless both Knights, the sergeants, and the Hallward have been captured or slain, the Northrons will not consider this offer. If the defenders decline, Ethacali will order a line of Vulseg prisoners executed within sight of the walls.

If the bombardment of the Beacon Tower has been stopped or disrupted, Ethacali will commit the Blood-wights to rend holes in the thin copper turret of the roof to provide an opening for the storming attack. Eight wild Forest Trolls, recruited by the Easterling, will scale the walls, primarily to force the defenders to use up their boiling oil and molten lead. Then the main assault will be unleashed: the Cultirith will scale the walls to force any breaches in the upper level, and the Dunlendings will use a battering ram to break down the main gate.

The Cultirith need to check morale only after taking 50% losses or if Hirgrim falls; the tribesmen must check after 25% losses or after either war-chief is forced to retreat. Ethacali, his bodyguard, the Blood-wights and any remaining Ores and Wolves form the reserve to be committed to whichever attack first gains a foothold in the tower. If neither is going well, the evil commander will attempt to blast his own breach into the tower, though the walls are prepared against such attacks and resist magic (+50 to RRs vs. Essence).

Ethacali hopes that the storm will take the Tirthon without much trouble, but realizes that a repulse would be a major setback to his schemes. Therefore, he envisions this assault as an all-out attack, accepting ghastly casualties before he admits defeat. He is willing to commit both of the Blood-wights and even his own life to ensure victory. Equally, the defenders have the chance of winning a permanent victory by driving off this last assault.

OBSTACLES

Ethacali's plan calls for the siege engines to seriously damage the upper levels of the Tirthon, allowing the walls to be scaled by breaking the pipes that deliver the boiling oil and molten lead. Once the defenses have been seriously hurt, the Cultirith will attack on high while Dunnish mercenaries charge the gate with a battering ram. This assault should have a better than even chance of overwhelming a maladroit defense. No matter how few remain, the defenders must post viable forces high and low and must keep a fast reserve to react to crises as they develop. Ethacali may choose to send his corrupted adventurers to force the escape tunnel simultaneously with the main attack. This third front would leave the defenders with little hope, so hopefully they will have forced or tempted the Easterling to commit his reserves beforehand. The defenders are vastly outnumbered, but if used properly the Beacon Tower is a potent equalizer.

If the attack succeeds, any notable prisoners (including player characters) will be taken to Blogath's Vale for eventual shipment to Cam Dum. Ethacali is busy planning the attack on the next Beacon Tower on his list, so there may be time for any who escape the fall of the Tirthon to organize a rescue expedition — possibly from Thuin Boid, but more likely from Rivendell. The Elves will have heard about the siege, and, if they learn the details, they will be sufficiently concerned about the Blood-wights to take direct action. (The wise GM might then generate a strong party of Elves to undertake the adventure in Section 6.0 as a rescue mission against victorious evil forces.) If the Tirthon withstands the grand assault, Vulfredda will dispatch a relief expedition as quickly as possible. For those on the scene, the highest priority will be to discover the source of the Blood-wights. The disarray of this crushing and unexpected setback to the plots of the Witch-king should provide opportunity to further confound the Nazgul's plans.

6.0 THE HORROR OF THE YFELWOOD

Scattered in deep and dark lairs throughout northwestern Middle-earth, there linger some of the the deadly Elf-banes of the Elder Days — minions who served the Dark Lord at the height of his powers. As the Dwarves of Moria discovered, woe to those who unleash these primordial evils. The Trollshaws of Rhudaur have been the abode of one of the forgotten monsters for eons. Recently, the servants of the Witch-king of Angmar unearthed the hidden crypt and sought to command the horrors of the Yfelwood for their master's dark schemes. But the lackeys who began this grotesque endeavor have been defeated, and now the cruel spirit of Blogath struggles to escape its ancient bonds.

6.1 THE TALE OF THE SHAPECHANGER

During the early centuries of the Second Age, Sauron wore the fair guise of the "Lord of Gifts." He courted the ambitions of the Noldo jewel-smiths and hoped to bind them to evil with the Rings of Power. While engaged in this subterfuge, he also sought to gain dominion over the Men in Eriador. Since his scheme to enslave the Elves required continual deceptions, the Dark Lord relied on the Priests and Priestesses of malignant cults to subvert the Edain to his evil purposes. Blogath was neither the greatest nor the least of these minions, but she served her master well.

The Shapechanger, with three others as minions, gained influence and adherents to the Black Religion for a score of years, delving a dark mansion in the lands later known as the Trollshaws of Rhudaur. Foul deeds of every kind were perpetrated among her worshippers, and the Shadow spread. When Sauron revealed himself as the evil Lord of the Rings, the Edain revolted against the Priestess-queen's deceptions, and noble heroes slew the monster in her own halls — imprisoning her spirit within the very altar upon which she had made human sacrifice to her master. Embroiled in wars against the Eldar, the Dark Lord paid little heed to the death of his Priestess. Yet, he did not forget her fate. Now, in the Third Age, Blogath's spirit will serve Darkness again.

The festering hate of the Blood-wight infected all the ancient forest around her sunken and forgotten lair. Thus it might have remained until the end of days, but for the Witch-king's request for assistance in his war against the Northern Dunedain. The new reins the Nazgul's minions placed upon Blogath are falling slack. She is again aware, struggling against her bonds.

6.2 EXCAVATIONS IN BLOGATH'S VALE

The Shapechanger originally built her halls in a narrow vale amidst a small cluster of hills near the center of what is now the Yfelwood. Over the centuries since Blogath's demise, the vale filled with accumulated silt until her dark halls were entirely buried. The numbers of dead trees near the site halted the Ore explorers' search for the sunken mansion in the correct vicinity, but it took over a year of digging (and the fruitless construction of a small dam) to find the exact spot. Finally, the distinctive blood-stone walls were uncovered, and word was sent to Ethacali. Amidst sorcerous incantations and rituals, the Easterling Mage made the final entry.

THE YFELWOOD



He found the stuporous spirits of Naranatur and Skrykalian guarded by the actively hostile ghosts of Blogath's ancient worshippers. When these undead warriors were subdued, the Dark Mage of Rhudaur attacked the Blood-wights' loyalties while they yet remained vulnerable. Runes of Command forged within Amon Lane itself secured their obedience, but also disturbed their mistress' rest. As a preliminary to stricter measures, Ethacali placed a lesser Sign of Sleep on Blogath's prison.

While her spirit stirred, Ethacali discovered a third Blood-wight before the accursed altar. Warned by the disturbances of battle, Balasimur was ready to fight. Back and forth across the foul sanctuary, the struggle raged. An Ore died, providing the undead foe with nourishment and an increased strength. Another Ore died, and then another. Goaded beyond prudence, Ethacali pulled from his sleeve the scroll reserved for Blogath's restraint. The incantation bound Balasimur to the confines of the chamber, granting the Dark Mage dominion over the remainder of the buried mansion.

Ethacali left three powerful Ores to stand guard, while he pursued the siege against the Tirthon. Urfase and Athrug, both Evil Animists, monitor the restless Blogath and the imprisoned Balasimur. Ethacali hopes that Balasimur will provide a last line of defense against any intruders, but is more confident of the four Ghosts that roam the halls. Grashur, an Evil Bard possessing both natural and magical talents for the mastery of evil beasts, supervises the lair of Naranatur and Skrykalian, commands the huge local bats, and keeps other native creatures away — occasionally compelling some to scout. Two large Hill Trolls, Orig and Cadnuir, provide any needed muscle. During the campaign against the Beacon Towers, Ethacali irregularly returns to make sure all is well here.

LAYOUTS OF BLOGATH'S VALE

- 1. Path.** The track runs from the vale to the Tirthon.
- 2. Ravine.** The path passes through a narrow cleft in the ring of hills before entering the vale. On the northern slope there is a cave (Hard, -10, to find), consisting of a single large chamber and furnished in the normal Troll fashion. Orig and Cadnuir live here—it is likely (80%) that one is keeping watch, while the other completes a chore for the Ores or hunts nearby. If neither is on watch, each is engaged in these pursuits.
- 3. Southern Hill.** Two sentient and malicious huorns on its slopes will attack any living creature.
- 4. Burned Area.** This area was thickly infested with similar dangerous tree-spirits when the first scouts arrived. The huorns had to be destroyed with a small forest fire before work could begin at the site.
- 5. Central Hill.** It is covered with loose gravel, which makes maneuvers (especially stealthy ones) Extremely Hard (-30).
- 6. Southeastern Ridge.** A small cave at the south end is home to a black bear on reasonably good terms with Grashur.
- 7. East Hill.** The upper reaches of this hill are nearly as treacherous as the Central Hill. The eastern face conceals the extremely narrow entrance to a cave — home of large flesh-eating bats, the Serganka. The cave mouth is Routine (+10) to find, but the entrance and interior are so tight that only the smallest Hobbit has hope of gaining entry.
- 8. Cave Hill.** This small, but steep hill has two cave mouths (Hard, -10, to discover) on the north flank, and one cavern entrance (Extremely Hard, -30, to spot) on the south. These interconnected caves are the abode of the Ores. Ethacali resides with them when he is present (seldom).
- 9. Northeast Hills.** A collection of ridges and hummocks completely covered by long-dead trees and devoid of other vegetation, this area was particularly accursed by the residence of the great Blood-wight. A cave opening (Very Hard, -20, to find) faces the interior of the vale. As the cave is very shallow, the Trolls have rigged it with a (Very Hard, -20, to detect) deadfall trap that unleashes 6 boulders, each hitting as +30 3x damage Large Bashes. It is also Very Hard (-20) to disarm this trap. There is an open chest filled with dirt covered by a thin top layer of 29 silver pieces just inside the cave.

10. Small Marsh. This is the boneyard for the many Ores who died here. Ethacali has placed an illusion (Extremely Hard, -30, to disbelieve) of a dozen rotting skeletons rising from the muck to assail any who proceed on the path south of the marsh. The Trolls have not figured out the situation (after a dozen tries), so now they go north of the marsh. Their trail is Hard (-15) to discover.

11. Big Marsh. The diggers were forced to build a small dam so that their initial trenches wouldn't flood. A stagnant pond about 2' deep stands behind the dam. The Ores threw the trash from their old camp into the water, but no illusion lies on these bones.

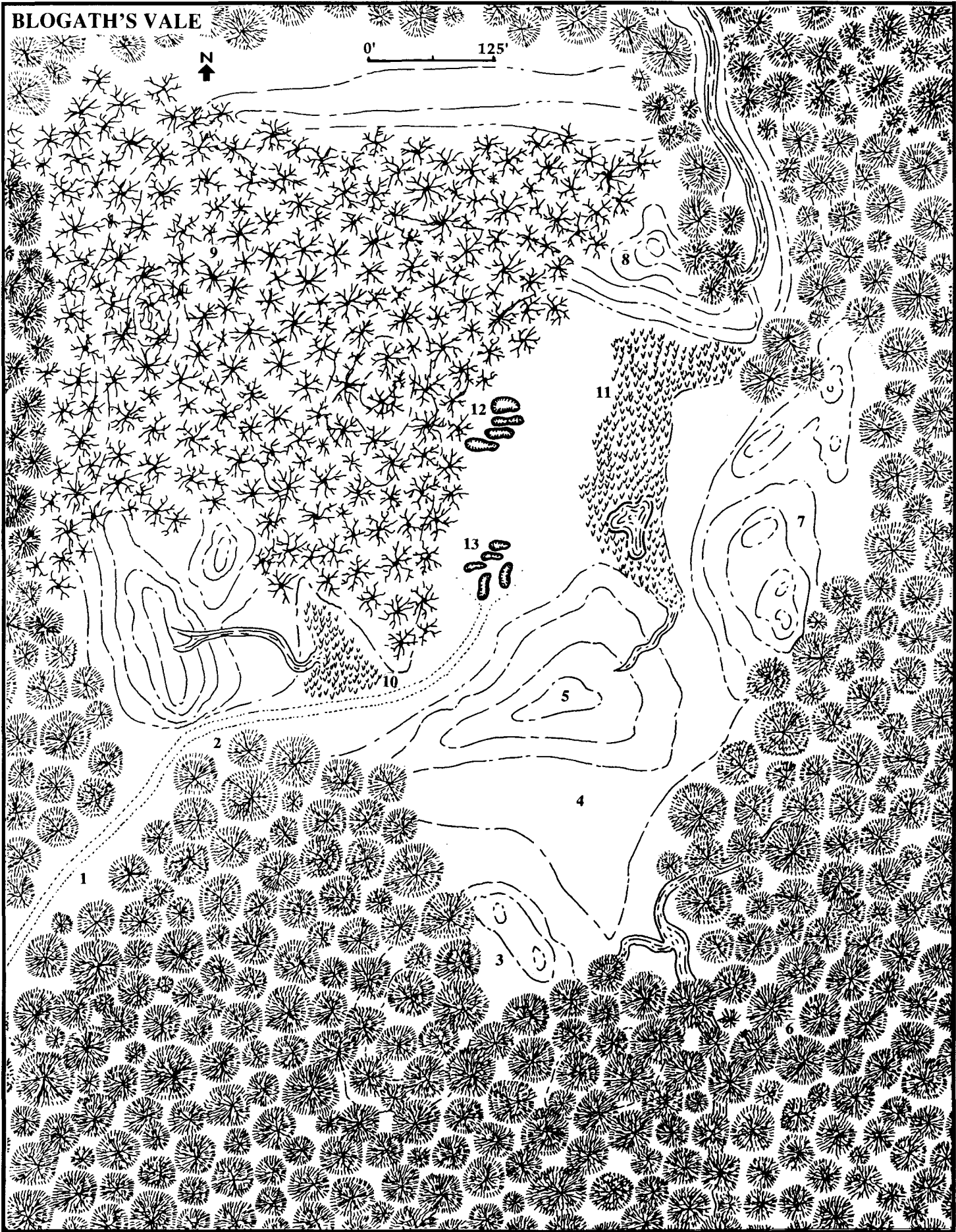
12. Trenches. The southernmost trench contains the entrance to Blogath's Halls. Ethacali has ordered the Trolls to make this site look abandoned, but such work is a little too subtle for them.

13. Initial Excavation. Tools and tents have been left in this area to make it look as if the work continues.

THE CRYSTAL CAVES

Subterranean chambers studded with crystalline growths are not uncommon in the White Mountains, but are rare in Eriador. The caves of Blogath's Vale are unique, because the crystals here range in color from deep red to black.

- 1. Northeast Cave Mouth.** Some light brush is kept outside, so that the cave entrance may not be instantly seen, it is not very effective (Hard, -10, to spot).
- 2. Chamber.** The walls are granite, and the roof is 10' high, the floor is covered with bat guano.
- 3. Corridor.** Except for a few dull black crystals in the wall, it is similar to the entry.
- 4. Red Caves.** Studded with the brightest of the crystals in the caves, which are worth perhaps 2 gp per pound. The roof is almost twenty feet high, providing a very convenient place for the Blood-wights to roost during the day. Sunlight dispels their shadow forms in a temporary death, they require 10-30 days to manifest again after such an exposure.
- 5. Grashur's Room.** The Ore has pried virtually all of the crystals out of the walls, keepings them in two 17 pound sacks. Grashur is content to sleep on a pile of animal hides. The passage to the Red Caves is only 2' in diameter.
- 6. Tunnel.** A narrow rising passage. The irregular floor serves as a series of steps.
- 7. Cave of Pillars.** This area is limestone, stalactites and stalagmites have joined to form five sturdy pillars in the tall cave. A full rucksack has been nailed to the roof, though it only contains about 1000 ancient copper pieces too corroded to be used. This is a trap to attract climbers: each of the pillars was been carefully weakened by the Ore war-miners. This is Extremely Hard (-30) to detect — requiring an Absurd (-50) maneuver to climb the 20' up to the sack without causing any of the pillars to collapse for a +10 Medium Fall/Crush, the debris causing 4 +25 Small Bashes for all present in the cave.
- 8. Northwest Cave Mouth.** The face of the hill is irregular, and shadows do provide some concealment from a distance. A Forest Troll lived here before the Ores arrived. The cave still resembles an abandoned Troll lair. The passage to the Cave of Pillars is only 2' wide at its narrowest — the primary defense of this entryway.
- 9. Central Cavern.** The crystals are a dull red, quite worthless. The Ores use this area as kitchen, dining room, and common room, appropriate utensils lie on the ground in disarray.
- 10. Urfase's Chamber.** The Ore fancies himself to be an evil ascetic, and his only possession is a pallet of rags. He has not disturbed the black crystal on the walls of his abode.
- 11. Cave of Boulders.** This area is congested. The roof and floor quickly close on each other, leaving only a 3' clearance. The Ores store their valuables near the front, but they have not explored the interior.
- 12. Hidden Cave.** This chamber can be glimpsed through a few small gaps in the wall. It would take a lot of serious labor (10-20 hours with appropriate mining tools) to gain entry. Although nothing can be discerned from the outside, there are several (1d6) small crystals of raw laen embedded in the north wall, each worth from 200-300 gp each to a skilled alchemist.



THE CRYSTAL CAVES



13. Athrug's Cave. The Ore Animist is as self-indulgent as his boss is self-denying. His residence is decorated with gaudy tapestries, and he keeps a gilt bed with a feather mattress (although the feathers have begun to rot). Athrug has an iron chest with a Hard (-10) lock and a similarly difficult needle trap with a Lvl 3 Nerve Poison. Within are some clothes, a pouch of healing herbs, and a small purse with 3 sp, 4 bp, and 14 tp. The false bottom is Extremely Hard (-30) to find, but it contains the Rod of Suggestions (20th level) that allows Athrug to subdue the bound Balasimur when it struggles with its bonds.

14. Side Cave. Previously used by the Ore war-miners en route to the Tirthon, this large cave is now quite empty.

15. Passage. The entry way to the resident Ores' quarters is hung with a vast collection of ugly, dangling wind-chimes. It will be Sheer Folly (-50) to try to pass without causing a din that will alert the inhabitants.

16. Cracked Cave. Virtually all of the crystals here are severely flawed. The numerous boulders provide excellent cover, and the chamber was used as a guardroom when there were more Ores present.

17. Tunnel. This passageway is only 4' in diameter, making it slow going for Men and Elves.

18. Sharp Cave. The crystals here are large and wickedly sharp; any actions without the greatest care will result in one "A" Slash per round. The three Ores plan to keep prisoners here, if they ever get the opportunity.

19. Den. The pack of 11 Wolves that Grashur has befriended make their den here. It is possible (01-10) that they will all be out hunting. Otherwise, two groups of three Wolves each will be patrolling the area, while the rest remain inside.

20. The Brown Caves. The crystals covering the walls are a very dull reddish-brown hue. The area was used for storage while Ores were digging. A few broken tools and weapons still lie scattered across the floor.

21. Corridor. Five Serganks, trained by Grashnur, stay more or less concealed behind the boulders. They will awaken at the least sound and attack unless the password, "Kadard," is given while one is in the northeast cave mouth (#1 or #2).

22. The Black Cave. The crystals on the wall are jet black (and worth up to 1 gp per pound). Ethacali uses this cave as his residence when he's present, so there is a comfortable bed and wash stand. A rough bookcase holds nine books on its shelves, but these are only the trash that the Evil Mage uses for light reading, worth no more than 2-3 sp each. Ethacali's Troll bodyguard sleeps just outside the cave; effectively filling the passage, he makes up for the lack of a door.

23. Granite Chamber. It is unusually bare except for a few Wolf droppings.

24. Southern Entrance. Well-concealed behind a fracture in the rocks of the hill (Extremely Hard, -25, to spot), this is the main entry for Wolf, Ore, and any other residents.

6.3 NPCs

The following creatures are likely to be encountered near the black heart of the Yfelwood.

6.31 ORCS

The three Ores under Ethacali's command in the Yfelwood are a remnant of the time before the Witch-king came to the North. Long ago, the Ores of Mount Gundabad brought clerics and mages from Mordor to match those of the Men and Elves they fought. Sauron created goblins capable of wielding the Essence (by selective breeding) before he had sufficient Men and dark Elves to serve him, and still preserves the line. The Lord of the Nazgûl soon found it easier to train evil Men to his service, as they were generally more magically adept than the brightest of Ores. However, the breeding continued in a desultory fashion, to meet the Ore tribes' needs for magic, and a whole generation of these Orcish mages and shamans were pressed into the Witch-king's forces after his defeats in the Great Northern War over fifty years ago.

Urfase, Athrug, and Grashur all belong to this cadre and are physically past their prime. Grashur has often served in Rhudaur and is generally the most competent of the trio. He is only comfortable in animal company, dealing with his companions as little as possible. Urfase was an acolyte in Cam Dum virtually all his life. He is not particularly skillful, but he is fanatically devoted to the cause of Darkness. Athrug spent many years among the feral Ore tribes of the Northern Waste and has a taste for being fawned upon. He would like to be disloyal to Ethacali, but is not bright enough to devise his own schemes. His companions have pointedly ignored the hints he utters.

6.32 TROLLS

Orig and Cadnuir were captured from the wild while very young and thoroughly trained to act as guards. Although neither is noticeably brighter than the average Troll, both the tall Orig and the stocky Cadnuir are very good at following orders. Neither is fond of Ores, and Orig positively loathes Grashur, though not for any particular reason. Orig might betray the Ores, if he could be convinced that this was Ethacali's secret wish. Cadnuir cannot be subverted and will stop Orig from any treachery if he can.



6.33 THE BLOOD-WIGHTS

The spirit of Blogath is imprisoned within the stone altar where she made sacrifice to the Dark Lord. Those who slew her did not dare to touch this artifact, but levitated it into a sturdy platinum chest containing a trace of kregora (a rare magic-dampening ore) and embossed with many runes of containment. They hoped that it would hold the spirit of the monster forever. Thus, the Blood-wight remained in a dreamless slumber with no power except that of tainting all life around her. Her presence created the Yfelwood, and its Serganka, as a reflection of her twisted soul.

Ethacali's subjugation of Naranatur and Skrykalian damaged the wards restraining their mistress, and the Mage's own Sign of Sleep has proved ineffective. Blogath can now manifest herself as an almost physical spirit of hate, although she remains trapped within her crypt. She can control and communicate with the undead spirits of the human worshippers who fell in her defense. There are four of these slaves, bound within the halls where they died. They are Ghosts of the normal and weakest variety. Blogath set these apparitions upon the Dark Mage, but Ethacali was prepared for the attack and easily dispersed them. (All three of Ores know these spells, but their ability is much less certain.)

The difficulties posed by the lesser Blood-wights, the original object of the expedition, were less severe than those of restraining Blogath. Ethacali, fortified with potions and rituals, employed runes with Words of Command scripted in Sauron's own calligraphy to compel their loyalty. (However despicable the Dark Mage's other traits, this must be respected as an act of no little valor.) The third Blood-wight was unintentionally imprisoned within the sanctuary of the buried halls. Ethacali will not free Balasimur, now strengthened by the blood of three Ores, or repeat the ritual of mastery until he's adept at controlling Naranatur and Skrykalian. The vain Dark Mage eventually hopes to learn to command Blogath herself.

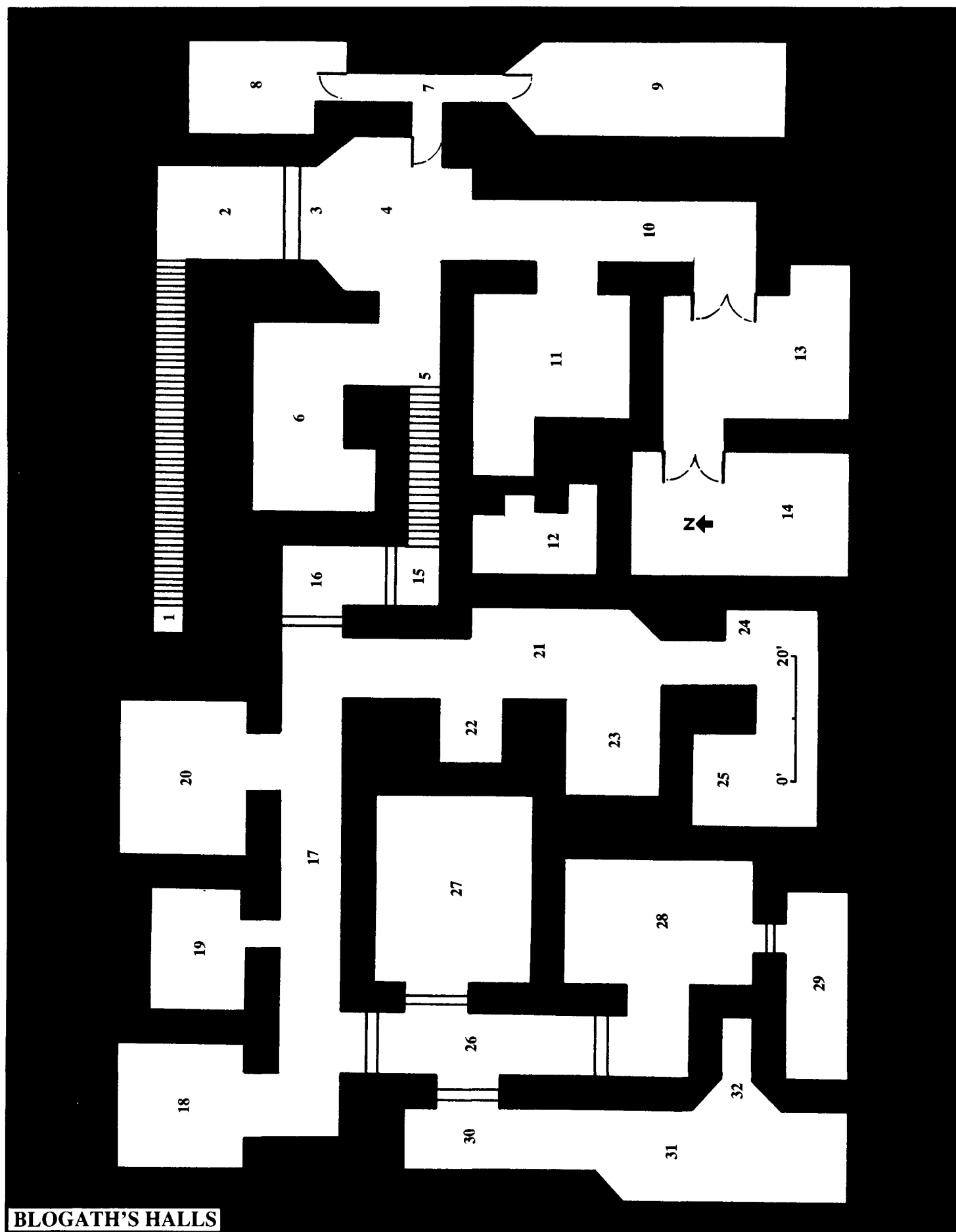
When Ethacali left the Vale to begin the siege of the Tirthon, all seemed to be unfolding perfectly, which worried him greatly. Even his master, the Lord of Morgul, undertook this plan with some trepidation. No one is certain that Blogath cannot escape her lair. Doubtless, it would take years for the former Priestess-queen to regain her strength, but she could conceivably rival the legions of Angmar in time. The only consolation for such a dreadful event might be the Blood-wight's inevitable clash with the Elves of Rivendell. (The option of trying to permanently destroy Blogath was discussed in council and determined to be an uncertain proposition, even the attempt would alert the Elves that some major plot was afoot.)

BLOGATH'S HALLS

- 1. Wooden Platform and Stairs.** These descend 30 underground, requiring a Hard (-10) maneuver, because they are so rickety.
- 2. Black Marble Foyer.** The ceiling here is 6' high.
- 3. Bloodstone Doors.** These are magically locked (+40 RR vs Essence) and trapped, delivering a "B" Cold Crit to all standing on the marble floor of the foyer (#2). Only Ethacali and Urfase know the password, each will endure considerable abuse before revealing it.
- 4. Central Hall.** The walls, ceiling (8' high), and floor are latticed bloodstone and black marble. Any furnishings have either crumbled with age or been pillaged by Ores.
- 5. Corridor.** Entryway to the sanctuary.
- 6. Former Guardroom.** Ores stored the heavy digging equipment they could not readily carry home here. Blogath can employ these tools to make +30 medium Bash Attacks via telekinesis.
- 7. Side Hall.** All three doors are made of an odd alloy of gold and lead, they are locked (Very Hard, -30). The trap is Very Hard to detect — the only evidence is the scrapes on the walls where wedges were recently employed to force them open. If any person not consecrated to the service of Sauron enters the Chamber of Evil Channeling (#9), the doors will magically close, the locks fasten and prove to be Sheer Folly (-75) to pick from the inside. The doors themselves are very solid and will take 1000 hits before giving way.
- 8. Preparation Chamber.** Blogath's minions once meditated and purified themselves here before participating in her unspeakable rites. Any allied with the Free Peoples who enter this chamber will take 10 hits per round from the lingering miasma of evil, until they depart. The chamber is completely bare.
- 9. Chamber of Evil Channeling.** All non-channeling magic users will operate at -100 here due to runes built into the foundation. Three of the four Ghosts tend to congregate here. They will only be too happy to attack any intruders, it will take 1-12 rounds for Blogath to become aware of the ensuing commotion. She might compel the Ghosts to desist, if that is her wish (unlikely, 01-20, if this is one of the first areas explored). Ethacali performed preliminary evil rituals here and has left religious paraphernalia, only of use to servants of Sauron, for future use.
- 10. Medium Hall.**
- 11. Audience Hall.** This room has gold moldings and was used for ceremonial purposes. It is now quite bare.
- 12. Treasury.** The heavy secret door normally is Absurd (-70) to detect. Blogath may try to tempt the unwary by having words (in Quenya) appear on the molding, suggesting that this room be most diligently searched. (This would demonstrate her 'good will' by rewarding the players with treasure.) The three locks are Extremely Hard (-35), Very Hard (-20), and Hard (-10), in that order. Each is equipped with a trap of similar difficulty: the first causes blocks to fall from the ceiling for 2 +60 Large Fall/Crushes, the second causes the door to fall outward for a double damage +80 Huge Fall/Crush, and the last unleashes 4 +65 Spear traps when the doorway is passed. Ethacali has added Very Hard (-20) to avoid Runes of Running Death, Absolution, and Ugliness of Orn on the walls within. Not avari-

cious, the Dark Mage left the 10,000 large copper like coins within for later use. (This is an antique alloy known as Eriadoran copper that can be used in the smithing of +15 arms and armor.) The Easterling secreted the third Sauronic Rune of Mastery (to be employed on the third Blood-wight) within a small unlocked wooden case. However, this case is invisible making it Sheer Folly (-75) to notice within the jumble of the treasury. Having no wish to have Balasimur used against her, Blogath will cause a virtual copper tornado to swirl if magical detections are used within the treasury. Any braving the storm will take 2-20 +30 Small Pincer attacks per round until the storm subsides — one minute (6 rnds) is the longest Blogath can maintain it. Her secondary plan is to cover the case with several heaping handfuls of coins — exerting over a hundred pounds of weight on each piece. The blood-wight can also use the coins to make other 'poltergeist' effects, consistent with her desire to convince explorers that a benevolent, if willful, spirit resides within these sunken halls.

- 13. Large Room.** This chamber was once the quarters for the lesser Shapechangers. The double silver plated doors are not locked or trapped.
- 14. Large Room.** Like the preceding room (#13), except the door has the same trap as the first in the Treasury (#12).
- 15. Stairs.** They lead to the sanctuary and Blogath's former living quarters.
- 16. Waiting Room.** The doors are smaller versions of those at the main entry (#3). Each has been deadbolted and magically trapped against entry from the inside (Very Hard, -20, to detect), releasing a Fire Storm in the room. Ethacali has added duplicates of the runes in the Treasury (#12) behind the first door.
- 17. The Long Hall.**
- 18. Library.** As can be determined from the trash heap made of moldering books and shelves, Blogath can manifest a limited effect here.
- 19. Storeroom.** Nothing but dust remains.
- 20. Kitchen.** A few +10 steel utensils and pots lie rusting on the floor. All the vents and flues were deliberately and thoroughly sealed by the slayers of Blogath.
- 21. The Broad Hall.** Servants once lived in this area.
- 22. Closet.**
- 23. Small Room.** Sleeping quarters, one of the Ghosts haunts this chamber.
- 24. Dining Hall.** A rotted table and chairs remain.
- 25. Sleeping Quarters.** The outline of a bed is visible in the dust on the floor.
- 26. Waiting Room.** Identical to the other Waiting Room (#16), except the runes are placed on the floor.
- 27. Large Dining Hall.**
- 28. Blogath's Study.** All of the materials inside were once consumed by fire.
- 29. Blogath's Bedchamber.** The door has been shattered beyond repair, the Blood-wight can manifest an image of itself here to talk with 'guests', but the effort involved will prevent her from taking any other action simultaneously.
- 30. Processional Hall.** There are indications (gouges and scraps on the walls and floors) that a pitched melee was once fought here. The Blood-wight, Balasimur, haunts this vaulted hall and the sanctuary to which it connects (31).
- 31. Sanctuary.** Ethacali has emplaced a dozen Symbols of Fear all about this room, they are Lvl 20 +30. It is even more damaged than the Processional Hall.
- 32. Platinum Box.** Blogath's prison has been placed where her throne once stood. The runes on the box are designed to keep something in it, rather than anything out. Ethacali has added layers of eog wire that give anyone touching them a "B" Cold Critical every round. The 4 locks on the wire are Sheer Folly (-50) to pick. Within the box lies only the stone in which the spirit of Blogath is bound. It must be touched to enable the Blood-wight to drain a victim's veins.



BLOGATH'S HALLS

6.4 THE TASK

Whether the party arrives in pursuit of defeated foes (after the siege of the Tirthon) or on some daring exploration of the wood, their task is to ensure that the forces of Darkness never again employ the Blood-wights of the Yfelwood. The less altruistic must at least endeavor to loot Blogath's Vale without unleashing the Priestess-queen's spirit. It would be even better to finally destroy the monster, but that will not be easy. A weak group might be content with thoroughly exploring the site and relaying their findings to the appropriate authorities: Vulfredda, the Aran-onen-Egladil, or Elrond Half-elven.

6.41 STARTING THE PLAYERS

This adventure may be run as an attempt to destroy retreating forces of the Witch-king after the siege of the Tirthon or some other little battle. It could occur during the course of the siege as courageous adventurers try to rescue their captured companions from duress. However, the scenario may also be treated as an entirely separate challenge, since many a foolhardy adventurer has disappeared into the darkness of the mysterious Yfelwood in search of fame and fortune.

6.42 AIDS

If the siege of the Tirthon has failed, there will be an unparalleled opportunity to explore the Yfelwood. Ore expeditions have destroyed many of its dangers, and other residents have been expended by Ethacali in his assault on the Gondryn. Some garrison soldiers may accompany the pursuit, if sufficient numbers are left to defend the Beacon Tower. Otherwise, the only possible aid would come from the defenders of the site, as the trio of Ores know that the unbinding of Blogath would be a disaster for both sides. Such a course might suit their moods in the face of abject defeat.

6.43 OBSTACLES

If this is a rescue expedition and the victorious Angmarim allies are at full strength (i.e., the Dark Mage is present), an attack on the Crystal Caves would be very dangerous. A group might need the assistance that Blogath may offer. However, the Ore-lair does not impose any particularly unusual or difficult problems in and of itself, and the defenders should be easily routed if unsupported.

The traps and spirits in Blogath's Halls are deadly, but there is ample warning of most of the perils. If the party fails to overcome the dangers, the Blood-wight will intervene to assist them, although she will try to make this aid as indirect as possible. She knows some outside agency is required to free her from the platinum chest, and she does not yet have enough power to compel her enemies. If all else fails, she will directly contact the players: the gravest danger of this adventure. Blogath is extremely persuasive and a brilliant liar. If the PCs loose the Blood-wight, they must rely upon luck, since Blogath will immediately forget all previous promises and seek to kill them.

6.44 REWARDS

The Crystal Caves possess vast amounts of bulky treasure for the greedy, and the very diligent might find the raw laen deep within the hill. However, the greatest treasure lies underground in the buried mansion — very few adventurers would sneer at 2,000 pounds of alloy worth as much as silver (albeit buyers will be hard to find). Unfortunately the danger involved in gaining this treasure is commensurate to its worth.

6.5 ENCOUNTERS

The following creatures are likely to be met during explorations of Blogath's Vale.

6.51 TROLLS

Orig and Cadnuir are diligent watchmen and hard workers; few of their kind merit even that much praise. They will try to roll boulders down the narrow cleft near their lair onto anyone incautious enough to approach that way. If they are losing a fight, the Trolls are just bright enough to attempt to warn the Ores of the intruders, though Orig might choose not to do so (01- 50).

6.52 ORCS

If surprised, the three Ores may be able to do no more than fight to the death in the Crystal Caves; if they get the opportunity to escape, they will do so. If an obviously more powerful group has entered Blogath's Vale, all three will abandon their lair and seek to gather their scattered forces. They will attack the group's rear guard (if they have one) after it has entered Blogath's Halls. If defeated, Ashrug will seek to warn the victors of the great peril that awaits underground, even if he is being tortured. His two fellows will encourage their foes to go to their death.

6.53 BLOGATH AND HER MINIONS

The Lich's overwhelming interest is escape. She is extremely intelligent and will maneuver the spirits of her ancient servants and use her powers to make it seem as though the party is slowly, but steadily winning their way through to some great treasure as they near her crypt. Blogath can command the bound Balasimur, though it is unlikely that her lackey can help her in any manner beyond refraining from killing the explorers. If they fare poorly, she will help them, subtly at first, but overtly as a last resort. The Blood-wight will pose as some imprisoned and disoriented force, allied with the Free Peoples, to persuade the party to help her. Should a PC touch the foul altar stone, the Blood-wight will drain him or her of blood for the increased strength and the accompanying chance of breaking free. If she succeeds, it will be obvious, to even the least perceptive and slowest wilted fighter, that Blogath is utterly evil; she will have no option but to fall upon her erstwhile rescuers.

7.1 BEAST TABLE

Type	Lvl	#/ Enc	Size	Speed	Hits	AT	DB	(Primary/ Secondary/Tertiary) Attack	
Auroch	2	1-10	L	MD/MD	140	No/4	20	50MHo/50LTs/—	Domesticated, popular among the Northmen.
Black Bear	5	1-4	L	MF/MF	150	SL/8	20	65LGr/70LCI/40MBi	Possessive of their territory, will attack.
Blue Pigeon	0	2-1000	T	FA/MD	5	No/1	70	0TPi/0TCI/—	Migrate across Eriador in immense flocks.
Boar	2	2-20	M	FA/MF	100	No/4	30	50MHo/50MBa/40STs	Males are very aggressive about defending packs.
Cave Bear	7	1-2	L	MF/MF	250	SL/8	40	95HGr/90LCI/60LBi	Fairly rare, will rarely attack unless provoked.
Gorcrow	1	5-50	S	FA/MF	20	No/1	55	10SPi/10SCI/—	Often spy for Angmar.
Great Elk	4	1-4	L	FA/VF	200	SL/4	20	65LHo/55LBa/—	Comparatively uncommon, can use their horns all year.
Losrandir	2	2-400	M	VF/MF	130	SL/4	15	40LTs/30MBa/—	Males use a 50 LHo as primary attack during winter.
Moose	4	1-3	L	SL/MD	240	SL/4	15	55LBa/35LTs/—	Keep to the woods, will fight only if attacked.
Red-headed Duck	1	4-100	S	FA/FA	8	No/1	50	0SPi/0SCI/—	Common along rivers.
Serganka	4	1-12	M	FA/VF	50	No/3	40	55MBi/—/—	Large Vampire Bats. Save versus disease at -20.
Troll									
Forest	6	1-4	L	MD/MD	100	RL/11	10	70LCI/60LBi/—	Degenerate even by Trollish standards
Hill	10	1-3	L	SL/MD	150	RL/11	20	95LBa/85CI/40ro	-50 in direct sunlight. Some use weapons.
Stone	7	1-5	L	SL/MD	120	RL/11	15	80LBa/65LCI/49ro	Turn to stone in direct sunlight.
Young	4	1-4	M	MD/FA	80	RL/11	15	45LCI/35MBi/20ro	Faster, but more rash than their elders.
Warg	5	4-20	L	FA/VF	160	No/4	55	85LBi/50MCI/—	Often ridden by Orcs.
Wight	7	1-5	M	MD/MD	100	No/2	75	100We/55MBa	Use Large Critical Table; immune to stun results.
Wolf	3	5-25	M	FA/FA	110	No/3	30	65LBi/—/—	Those found near the Yfelwood are larger and fiercer.

Codes: The statistics given describe a typical creature of that type. Most of the codes are self-explanatory: **Lvl** (Level), **#Enc** (number encountered), **Size** (Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, or Huge), **Hits**, and **DB** (Defensive Bonus). The more complex statistics are described below:

Speed: A creature's speed is given in terms of "Movement Speed/Attack Quickness": C = Creeping, VS = Very Slow, S = Slow, M = Medium, MF = Moderately Fast, FA = FAst, VF = Very Fast, BF = Blindingly Fast.

AT (Armor Type): The two letter codes gives the creature's **MERP** armor type (No = No Armor, SL = Soft Leather, RL = Rigid Leather, Ch = Chain, Pl = Plate); the number is the equivalent to the **Rolemaster** numeric armor type.

Attack: Each attack code starts with the attacker's Offensive Bonus. The first letter indicates the size of the attack; T = Tiny, S = Small; M = Medium, L = Large, and H = Huge. The last two letters indicate the type of attack; Ti = Tiny, Pi = Pincher/beak, Ba = Bash, Bi = Bite, Cl = Claw, Kr = Crush, Gr = Grapple, Ho = Horn, Ts = Trample/Stomp, St = Stinger, and We = Weapon. These codes may differ slightly from the **MERP** and **Rolemaster** codes. Each creature usually initiates combat using its "Primary" attack, which is the first attack listed. Depending upon the situation or success of the Primary attack, it may later use its "Secondary" or "Tertiary" (the next two attacks listed) attacks, perhaps all in the same round if previous attacks are very successful.

7.2 NPC TABLE

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT	DB	Sh	GR	Melee OB	Missile OB	Move M	Notes
NPCS FOR ADVENTURE #1: "BEFORE THE SNOW FALLS"										
Dagar	4	68	SL/7	20	Y	N	67ss	47sb	10	Urban Man Scout/Thief. Leader of waenhosh. +10 short sword and 6 assorted herbs.
Nasen	6	79	SL/4	30	N	N	92da	72da	15	Rural Man Scout/Thief. 1 list to lvl 5. 12 PP. Carries 2 hidden daggers treated with a soporific poison.
Old Pad	3	33	No/1	10	N	N	43sp	33sp	0	Old Dunnish Scout/Thief. Dagar's personal slave. +5 spear and 1 Potion of Life Preservation.
Nig and Cisgid	2	40	SL/8	5	Y	N	44sp	24sp	20	Young Dunnish Warriors/Fighters. Unhappy slaves, will fight only in self-defense.
Penda Oxkiller	7	110	Ch/15	15	Y5	Y	111ha	71ha	10	Northron Warrior/Fighter. Brawls with a +81 LBa and a +41 throw (chair, tankard, etc.).
Penda's Friends	3	55	Ch/15	5	Y	Y	69bs	19sb	5	Northron Warriors/Fighters. Brawl with 50% of Pendo's bonuses. Morale breaks if Penda falls.
Baga Montúri	1	31	SL/8	30	Y	N	33sp	23cl	25	Young Dunnish Warrior/Fighter. Stats applicable only if fully healed of his wounds.
Macha Mur Scout	3	50	SL/8	35	Y5	N	56sp	46cl	20	Tough Dunnish Scout/Thief. +5 spear, shield and throwing club.
Siol Núnaw Patrol	2	40	SL/8	20	Y	N	46sp	36cl	10	Inexperienced Dunnish Warriors/Fighters. Eager but untried.
Patrol Leaders	4	60	SL/8	30	Y	N	66sp	56cl	15	Dunnish Warriors/Fighters of the Siol Núnaw. One per patrol.
NPCS FOR ADVENTURE #2: "BESIEGED"										
Marendil Rhudainor	12	163	Pl/19	30	Y5	Y5	142ha	82sb	-5	Powerful Dúnadan Warrior/Fighter. Captain of the Tirthon. Uses a +122la when mounted. +20 hand ax. 1 List to lvl 5, 12PP.
Oswy Amrodan	9	141	Ch/14	25	Y5	Y	109bs	79sb	10	Tough Dúnadan Warrior/Fighter. Lieutenant of the Tirthon. Uses a +99la when on horseback. +15 Elven broadsword, detects Orcs in a 100' radius.
Éanfled Amrodan	7	83	No/1	40	N	N	80ss	25lcb	25	Dúnadan Bard/Lay Healer. Wife of Oswy and healer for the garrison; randomly determine 12 herbs and 6 potions. +15 short sword. +3 ring. 8 lists to lvl 10, 21 PP.
Wiglaf Harcarl	5	90	Ch/15	30	Y10	Y	75bs	35lcb	0	Rugged Northron Warrior/Fighter. Hallward of the Tirthon. +10 equipment.
Aldhelm Demuret	6	99	Ch/15	35	Y	Y	86bs	46lcb	-5	Old Northron Warrior/Fighter. Sergeant of the garrison. +15 broadsword.
Tonfall	4	87	Ch/15	25	Y	Y	78ma	57lcb	5	Northron Warrior/Fighter. Second Sergeant of the garrison. +10 mace.
Old Vulseggi	3	54	Ch/15	25	Y	Y	66ha	36lcb	-5	Old Northron Warriors/Fighters. +5 weapons.
Young Vulseggi	3	57	Ch/15	25	Y	Y	61ha	31lcb	0	Young Northron Warriors/Fighters. +5 equipment.
Lances	4	69	Ch/15	30	Y	Y	68bs	43lcb	0	Experienced Northron Warriors/Fighters. +10 weapons.
Male Wealli	2	34	No/1	10	N	N	34pa	—	5	Dunnish workers and servants, not supposed to fight.
Noncombatants	1	20	No/1	5	N	N	22da	—	0	Women and children residing at the Tirthon.
Ethacali	17	126	No/2	55	N	N	84wh	—	20	Easterling Mage/Evil Magician. Commander of the besieging forces. +4 amulet. 10 lists to lvl 20, 6 lists to lvl 10, 2 lists to lvl 5. 68 PP. +20 whip, simultaneous Grapple attack.
Lumban	9	107	RL/9	45	Y10	N	118sp	88wb	30	Fierce Dunnish Scout/Rogue. War-chief of the Macha Mur. +15 spear gives extra Puncture crits. 1 list to lvl 5, 18 PP.
Cagh Monúnaw	8	104	SL/8	35	Y5	N	104sp	84cb	15	Impressive Dunnish Warrior/Fighter. War-chief of the Siol Núnaw. +10 weapons, +10 shield holds Runes for Bladeturn II, 2x day.

7.3 ENCOUNTER TABLE

Encounter	En Egladil	Paths	Trollshaws	Yfelwood	Tirthon
Chance (%)	15%	25%	40%	55%	75%
Distance (miles)	8	4	.5	.25	.25
Time (hours)	4	2	.5	.25	.25
Inanimate Dangers					
General Traps	01	01-03	01-02	01-05	01-10
Natural Hazards	02-04	04-06	03-08	06-10	11-12
Animals					
Wolves	05-17	07-13	09-19	11-20	13-17
Bears	18-19	14	20-22	21-22	18
Cave Bears	20	—	23	23-24	—
Wargs	21-24	15-17	24-27	25-34	19-20
Elk/Moose	25	18	28-31	35	—
Serganka (N)	26	19-20	32-35	36-40	21
Losrandir	27-31	21-26	36-46	41-44	22-23
Boars	32-33	27-28	47-48	45	24
Dangerous Snakes	34	29-30	49-51	46-48	25-27
Birds	35-46	31-37	52-57	49-53	28-33
Other Animals #	47-55	38-44	58-62	54-59	34-38
Men					
Mercenaries/Brigands	56-58	45-51	63-66	60-62	39-42
Smugglers/Thieves	59-62	52-56	67-68	63	43-46
Northmen	63-68	57-63	69-70	64	47-48
Hillmen	69	64-69	71-72	65	49-51
Dunlendings	70-75	70-74	73-74	66	52-54
Merchants	76	75-76	75	—	55-56
Dúnadan Patrol	77	77-78	76	67-68	57-62
Cultirith Patrol	78-79	79-81	77-78	69-71	63-72
Spies	80-82	82-84	79-81	72-75	73-77
Undead (N)	83	85	82	76-84	78-81
Non-Mannish Races					
Elves	84	86	83	—	82
Forest Trolls	—	87	84-86	85-90	83-85
Hill Trolls	85	88	87-90	91-94	86-87
Stone Trolls	86	89	91-94	95-97	88-89
Dwarves	87-88	90	—	—	90
Hobbits	89-90	91	95	—	91
Stoor Hobbits	91-96	92-94	96	—	92
Orcs (N)	97-99	95-98	97-99	98-99	93-99
Other Beings†	00	99-00	00	00	00

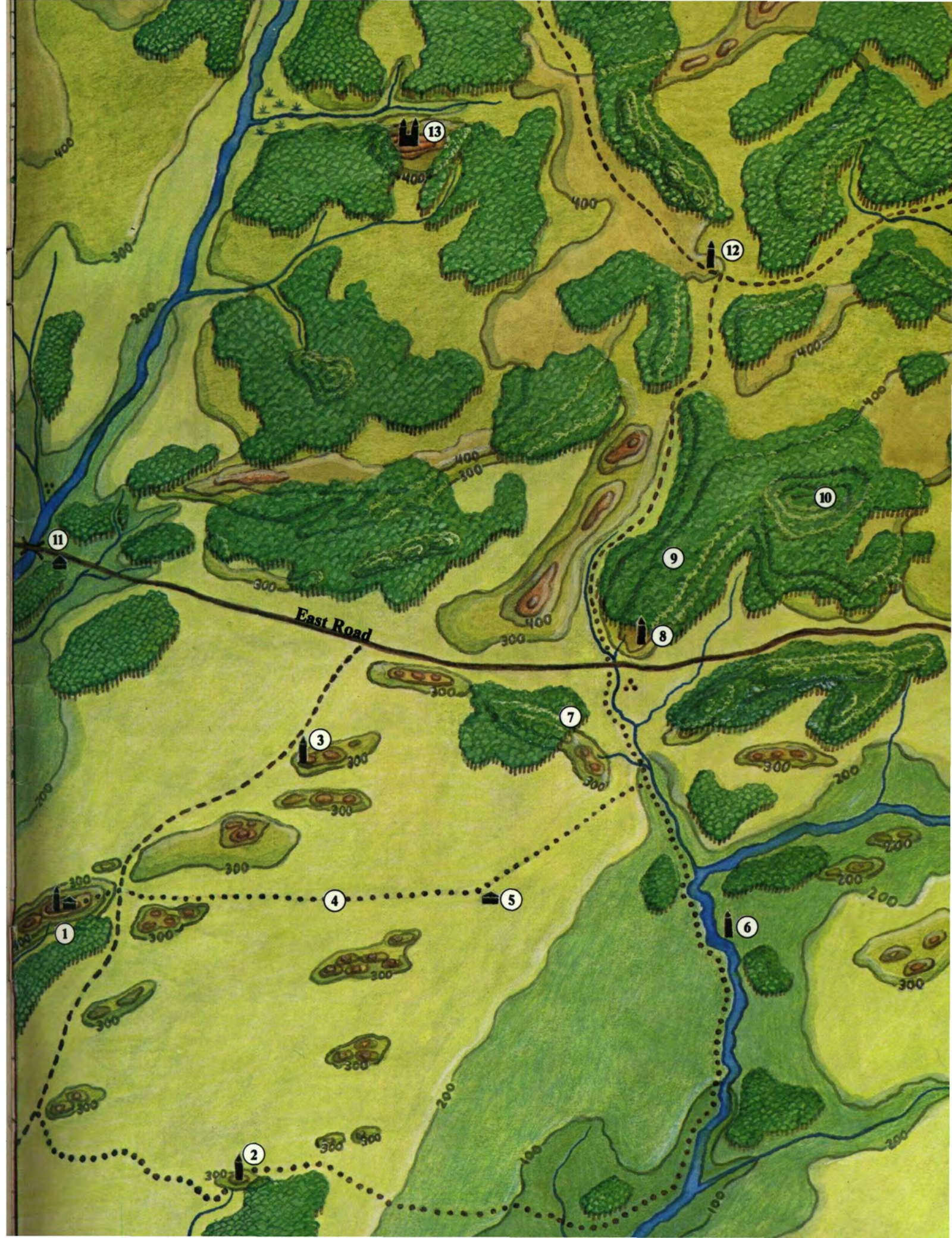
(N) — These creatures are entirely or primarily nocturnal. If primarily nocturnal (Orcs, Bats), they will appear only 50% of the time during daylight hours, and never if entirely nocturnal. Of course, if the PCs are underground, these restrictions do not apply.

— May be Crakes, Coots, Golodos, Green Pheasants, Jatewoones, Pied Swans, Vereut Eagles, Nethairin Erdyr, Shaking Asps, Wild Goats, Goral, Marsh Mastiffs, White Foxes, Gích, Chetmíg, or Madratines. The GM may reroll or, ideally, determine the type and number by referring to a general creature listing, such as *Creatures of Middle-earth* Table 8.1.

Use of the Encounter Table and Codes:

The GM should determine the group's location and the appropriate column and then roll for a possible encounter. The period of time covered by an encounter roll is either the **Time** given on the table or the time it takes the group to cover the **Distance** given on the table, whichever is shorter. If an encounter roll is less than or equal to the **Chance** of Encounter given on the table, a second roll of (1-100) is made to determine the nature of the encounter.

An encounter does not always require a fight of similar activity; a group can avoid or placate some of the above dangers/meetings with proper action or good maneuver rolls. This table only gives the GM a guide for encounters with unusual or potentially dangerous sites or creatures.



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