



THE
HALL OF FIRE
FAN WEBZINE

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GREETINGS,

Salutations... Hello All!

Well that last month just flew by didn't it? And now its time fow a new issue of The Hall of Fire. Being as there is little news since last month's issue, let's just get down to business. Thanks to some great fans, we've been able to get a hold of some great extras to present to you. Both authors have been around with the game since the beginning or close to it. So what does this month's issue hold in store for you? We've got a long-run chronicle written up by Dustin Strong and this being the first chapter of it, a whole slew of stuff from Taliesin, another Random Encounter, the final A Narrator's Life, and much more!

Happy Gaming!

Matthew A. Kearns
aka GandalfOfBorg

THE MRKX:FN:CM HALL OF FIRE

The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

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CONTACT THE HALL OF FIRE AT:
CODAWEBZINE@HOTMAIL.COM

CREW

MATTHEW KEARNS (GANDALOFBORG), EDITOR, WRITER
ultimac@hotmail.com
DOUG JOOS, WRITER
PETER MERRYMAN, ARTIST
DAVID D. (ISSACHAR), WRITER, LAYOUT
issachar44@yahoo.com

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A NARRATOR'S SO-CALLED LIFE: IN THE END

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

We've gotten our players, decided on the focus of the game, and overcome obstacles in and out of gaming getting us the final point in the game – The End. The End doesn't necessarily mean that the game is over, but the current phase might be. So what do you do now? Just give out the awards to the characters and players for their effort? And is it just experience or is there something more you could do?

HOW TO END A CHAPTER OR CHRONICLE

The easiest way to end a chapter more or less follows basic storytelling: you have the climax and then the denouement. The climax is the obvious 'big scene' where the major confrontation is met in the chapter is resolved. In an RPG, it typically comes out to be the big fight but it could also be a major revelation, a social contest, or acquisition of a hard-won artifact. The denouement is the phase that comes after the climax where the loose ends of the story are tied together and the result of the climax is now embraced within the story, be it for good or ill.

If you intend to continue on with the game following this chronicle, a cliffhanger is a bit more difficult, yet it can be highly rewarding if pulled off well. In the context of storytelling, cliffhangers can be made in a couple of manageable points. The first is to break off the action at its zenith, just before the major confrontation is resolved. This can lead to the obvious "Ah! Oh man!" A good reference for this kind of cliffhanger (done well or not, it is your opinion) in the old Batman TV series. The second is to make the story break just after the resolution of the climax. This leads to a sense of "Now we've accomplished our goal, did it make any difference?"

Finally, another way to break off the end of a chapter is to do it like the Professor and others: end it not on a big tell or conclusion of a struggle but in a lull in the story or just after what would seem

to be the beginning of a new chapter. This of course could be a natural consequence of the playing of the game or preplanned by the Narrator.

When ending a chronicle, it could be done in similar fashion as any of the above though of course any struggle at this point is much grander and important to the overarching story than any of the other chapters and the denouement of the chronicle itself is much more pivotal like at the end of any movie.

THE ROAD GOES EVER ON

Depending on how you end a chronicle or maybe in spite of it, that doesn't have to be the end of adventuring for the characters or at least the players. Some ideas to tie a previous chronicle into a new one are:

- Make the overarching theme of the chronicles generational. This means make the characters in the new chronicle the children or long lost descendents of the previous characters. For elves and their nigh limitless lifespan, they may pass the torch along or may accompany the new fellowship forward; that is a decision for the Narrator and player to make together.
- Pick up where you left off, Part 1. If the chronicle connects with the new one as part of a multi-chronicle campaign or not, you can pick up where the characters left off. There are always new threats to manage as, unless they all were dealt with in the chronicle, groups and individuals tend to make rivals or even enemies along their path; these complications can help drive or blind them to the focus of the new chronicle.

- Pick up where you left off, Part 2. Leave the old characters behind in quiet and blissful retirement, internment, or whatever, and roll up new ones. This option could work well with a generational theme or another unhappy circumstance embroils a whole new set of adventurers into the long and unending battle against The Shadow.
- Press the Reset Button. Forget the last game, the new one is gonna be even better. Trade responsibilities and get a new Narrator and whole new chronicle and focus. Start all over again completely from scratch.

EXPERIENCE AND REWARDS

GANDALFOFBORG ON XP AND ALTERNATE METHODS OF REWARDS:

"Another means of slowing down skill advancement is when you figure out how much XP to give after an adventure or whatever, for each member, you "spend" an amount of the XP on some bonus you feel is appropriate (200 XP is equivalent to 1 advancement pick) for the character then award the leftover XP and then allow them to spend whatever XP they've accumulated when they reach 1000 on whatever they want. These special awards don't have to be done for every awarding of XP, nor would I suggest it, but it is a nice change of pace."



And so ends the article series, *A Narrator's So-Called Life*.

“*ආරක්ෂාකරුවන්ගේ. ආරක්ෂකයන්ගේ*
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RANDOM ENCOUNTERS:

BANDITS

by Matthew "GandalfOfBorg" Kearns

Rogue bands of men can be found almost anywhere, lying in wait to pounce upon unsuspecting travelers and merchant caravans.

Description: This encounter is comprised of men who are archers, swordsmen, and brawlers.

Type: Combat

Numbers: (Standard) Fellowship x2 bandits
(Advanced) Fellowship x4 bandits

TN Equiv: 5

Locales: These gangs roam the lands, terrorizing both traveler and village alike. They are rarely found in more populated areas, but may be in large cities like Minas Tirith to trade in illegal goods or petty thievery. They are typically found in forested areas, plains near forests, and mountainous areas. They are also found roaming the lands near strongholds of The Enemy, hired on as sentinels or scouts.



ENCOUNTER PROBABILITY

Roll 2d6 to determine if there is an encounter. If there is, roll a 1d6 for the encounter's difficulty.

<u>TERRAIN TYPE</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DIFFICULTY</u>
Forest	4-9	1-3 Simple, 4-6 Advanced
Plains	5-8	1-5 Simple, 6 Advanced
Mountains	5-8	1-4 Simple, 5-6 Advanced
Desert	2, 12	1-5 Simple, 6 Advanced
Swamp	5-8	1-4 Simple, 5-6 Advanced
Tundra	2, 3, 11, 12	1-2 Simple, 3-6 Advanced
Underground	2, 12	Always Advanced
Sea Coast	5-8	1-4 Simple, 5-6 Advanced
At Sea	5-8	1-3 Simple, 4-6 Advanced

STATS

The basic stats for a bandit man are 10, 9, 7, 7, 5, 4. Apply +2 to Nimbleness for Archers, +1 Nimbleness and Strength for Swordsmen, +2 Strength for Brawlers, +1 Nimbleness and +1 Perception for Scouts, or +1 to any 2 of these: Bearing, Perception, or Wits, for Leaders.

UNIT STATS

Refer to *The Hall of Fire*, Issue #25, for how to create a mass combat unit.

SPECIAL ENCOUNTER ABILITIES AND MODIFIERS

AMBUSH

When bandits are stalking a mark and decide to attack, the reckoning can be devastating. The bandits receive a +5 bonus to combat skills during the surprise round or a +3 bonus to combat skills during the first round of combat. If fighting as a mass combat unit and have not been detected by their enemy, the unit gains a +1 Strength bonus (+2 if a leader is present) on the first round of combat between the units.

DIRTY TRICKS

Attacking bandit makes a Persuade (Bluff) test vs. the defender's Wisdom. Upon a Superior Success, the defender suffers a -2 penalty to all tests a number of rounds equal to the bandit's Bearing modifier, minimum 1 round. An Extraordinary Success causes the defender to suffer a -5 penalty or double the bandit's Bearing modifier, minimum 2 rounds.

HIDEAWAY

Bandits typically have a place they can go that is relatively safe and secure. They can gather here to discuss work, rest, and/or recuperate. It has enough supplies and contains valuables equal to a Hoard value equal to the number of ranks in Reputation.

REPUTATION

Every group of bandits is notorious for something in the city or region. This ability gives members of the gang a +2 bonus per rank (max 3) in the ability to Debate, Intimidate, and Persuade tests and any other social test the Narrator deems appropriate. In fighting as a mass combat unit, the unit gains a +1 bonus to Toughness per rank in this ability (max 3). Each rank in this ability also increases the TN Equivalency by +2.

NEW PACKAGES

TYPE	ROLE	SKILLS	TRAITS	ABILITIES
Basic	Archer	Acrobatics, Craft: Bowyer, Observe, Ranged Combat, Run	Accurate, Armour of Heroes, Keen-eyed, Quick-draw, Warwise, Wary	Evasion, Fleet-footed, Horse-Archer, Lurking in Shadows, Favoured or Preferred Weapon, Treacherous Blow, Warrior-born, Any in the Archer Elite Order
	Brawler	Acrobatics, Intimidate, Jump, Run, Unarmed Combat	Ambidextrous, Dodge, Doughty, Fell-handed, Hammerhand, Hardy, Swift Recovery, Wary, Weapon Mastery	Evasion, Fleet-footed, Favoured or Preferred Weapon, Swift Strike, Treacherous Blow, Warrior-born
	Swordsman	Acrobatics, Armed Combat, Jump, Observe, Smithcraft	Ambidextrous, Dodge, Fell-handed, Quick-draw, Two-handed Fighting, Wary, Weapon Mastery	Favoured or Preferred Weapon, Mounted Combat, Shield-Wall, Swift Strike, Treacherous Blow, Warrior-born
Advanced	Scout	Climb, Conceal, Guise, Inquire, Insight, Jump, Language, Lore, Mimicry, Observe, Run, Search, Stealth, Survival, Track	Bold, Charmed Life, Favour of Fortune, Fell-handed, Furtive, Hardy, Keen-eared, Keen-eyed, Keen-nosed, Night-eyed, Quick-draw, Travel-sense, Wakefulness, Warwise, Woodcrafty	Evasion, Fleet-footed, Lurking in Shadows, Master of Disguise, Favoured or Preferred Weapon, Treacherous Blow, Warrior-born
	Leader	Appraise, Debate, Insight, Inspire, Intimidate, Lore, Persuade, Siegecraft	Ally, Command, Eloquent, Friends, Honey-tongued, Indomitable, Rank, Warwise	Battle-hardened, Deference, Noble Mien, Retreat, Scoundrel's Fortune, Any in the Captain Elite Order

DEFINITIONS

Fellowship: Number of characters, PC and NPC, in group

Standard: This is the base number of foes suitable for a beginning level group (0-3 advancements)

Advanced: This is the adjustment used to increase the difficulty of the encounter; each adjustment increases the TN Equivalent by +2

FAN FLAVOUR

by Malcom "Taliesin" Wolter (malcolm@brandextract.com)

WATERSKIN OF THE WOODLAND REALM

These beautifully crafted waterskins are highly prized by the warriors of the Woodland Realm, especially the Warders, those small ranging companies tasked with scouting the borders of Thranduil's kingdom and beyond. The scarcity of potable water in Mirkwood makes these items a necessity for survival in the forest deeps. Any water poured into one of these vessels, no matter how befouled, is transformed into cool, clear drinking water in 1d6 hours (roll once for the entire party, per water source). Even the black water from the sleep-inducing Gûlduin loses its sorcerous potency when so contained. The waterskins only have the power to purify water. They cannot create water or transmute alcoholic spirits or wine. Merely possessing one of these waterskins grants a +4 Survival rolls for locating water. Finding even non-potable water in Mirkwood is difficult (TN 20) under normal circumstances.

ELVEN-LAMPS

"...one of [the Elves] uncovered a small lamp that gave out a slender silver beam. He held it up, looking at Frodo's face, and Sam's. Then he shut off the light again, and spoke words of welcome in his elven-tongue."

– The Fellowship of the Ring

It was Fëanor who first discovered the secret of catching starlight in clear crystal and holding it there for a while. This marvelous skill, much more difficult to devise than it was to learn, was soon mastered by other Elvish craftsmen. At the time of the War of the Ring, Fëanor's lamps are common amongst Elves from the Woodland Realm to the Grey Havens.

The lamps are typically small metal or wooden boxes, the designs of which are as many and varied as the artisans who fashion them. Sometimes the walls of the box are perforated with intricate designs through which the light shines, other times they are made of translucent material which creates a colorful soft glow. The lamps are most often easily carried in the hand, though handles are sometimes provided. In certain sacred rituals, the lamps are suspended by finely wrought chains or hithlain rope and swung slowly, to and fro. Those who need travel by stealthy means have special hooded lamps, the light of which can be uncovered to illuminate an area or focused through a small aperture into a narrow beam.

Each elven-lamp holds a single clear crystal, smooth yet unshaped, and smaller than a fist. The crystals are commonly found in the beds of such rivers as the Silverlode and Nimrodel rivers in Lothlórien. Once prepared using the proper rituals, which include the singing of certain hymns to the Star-Queen, Elbereth Gilthoniel, the crystals are able to capture and hold star-light for a time, and even return it with a steady blaze many times greater even the brightest star.

The pale silver light from an elven-lamp effectively illuminates an area with a radius of 60 feet. The brightness and directions of the light can of course be controlled in some of the more cunning lamp designs. The light lasts for 6+1d6 months before it has to be rekindled with the starlight ritual. Any found lamp has 1d6 months of light left in it before it goes out, unless it has been "lost" for more than a year, in which case it is already "burned out". In any case, the light will begin to wane 6 days before it is extinguished completely; each day, subtract 10 feet from the radius.

The pure light of Fëanor's lamp can also help reveal the Enemy's hidden agents. The light provides a +2 bonus when using Observe (Spot) to pierce an opponent's Guise.

FEATURED CREATURES

TAUROG by Malcolm "Taliesin" Wolter (malcolm@brandextract.com)

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 10 (+1), Nimbleness 10 (+1), Perception 9 (+1), Strength 15 (+4)*, Vitality 16 (+5)*, Wits 8 (+1)

REACTIONS: Stamina +5*, Swiftess +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Armour (4, thick hide), Cloaked in Darkness, Cunning, Mighty Charge, Natural Weapon (Tusks, 2d6+5 damage), Terror, Trample

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Natural Weapons (Tusks): +8, Intimidate (Fear) +11, Observe (Smell) +7, Run +7, Track (Scent) +6

EDGES: Hardy, Keen-eared, Keen-nosed, Night-eyed 2, Tireless, Travel-sense

FLAWS: Hatred (Elves), Dull-eyed

SIZE: Large (6 Wound levels, 2 Healthy)

HEALTH: 20

DEFENCE: 11

COURAGE: 4

RENOWN: 0

TN EQUIVALENT: 20



UNIQUE SPECIAL ABILITIES

CLOAKED IN DARKNESS

Deep shadow surrounds the Taurog like a cloak of darkness. All non-magical light within 10 feet of it is extinguished or dimmed, and anyone within this darkness suffers -5 test result penalty to all physical tests.

STENCH

Taurogs have a foul stench. Any who approach within 10 yards must make a TN 10 Stamina test or suffer a -2 test result as long as they remain in the creature's presence.

PURITY OF RUNNING WATER

Taurogs are frustrated by running water. They suffer a -6 penalty to all tests while at the shores of a river or stream. They never ford or swim deep rivers, and need to make a Willpower test to cross even shallow streams and creeks.

DESCRIPTION

A Taurog (Sindarin for "Forest Demon") takes the form of a monstrous black boar, enshrouded in a billowing cloud of stinking darkness and swarming flies. Occasionally a baleful red eye or the flash of long, curved tusks pierces the shadowy veil, and those fortunate few who have come face-to-face with the creature and lived to tell of it report a terrible bestial visage with bony protuberances sprouting from brow, snout, and jowl. The hulking beast is nearly as tall at the shoulder as a Man full grown and weighs well over half a ton.

HISTORY

Two centuries after Sauron came secretly into Amon Lanc, renaming it Dol Guldur and establishing it as his new stronghold, he sent forth the fell Taurogs to herald the coming of the Shadow over Mirkwood. Whether the monsters were the result of some new sorcery or long forgotten evils summoned anew none can now tell, but the demons poured out of the blasted volcano at the Dark Lord's pleasure, leaving death and destruction in their wake. Those few Elves who remained in the forest's southern reaches were driven before them, ever northward.

The Elven-king resisted this terrific threat mightily, and the lore of the Woodland Realm is replete with stories of the hunting of these fearsome beasts. It is told how, in the year 1432, the king's Master of the Hunt, Arthalion Gelireth, was slain near the ruined city of Caras Amarth. During a ferocious fight with a particularly large and cunning specimen, Arthalion was caught on the Taurog's tusks and bodily thrown across a narrow creek. Rushing to the aid of their fallen captain, his men turned to meet the monster's onslaught. They were amazed when the beast stopped his headlong charge just short of the water's edge. And so it was discovered that running water, even a shallow stream, presented an impassible barrier to the demon-boar. Soon the last of the Elves in the western wood withdrew to the lands north of the Forest River and east of the Gûlduin (River of Sorcery), where they were at long last able to wander the forest paths without fear. The westerly boundaries of Thranduil's kingdom have been marked by these watercourses ever since.

HABITAT

In the late Third Age, only a handful of these beasts haunt the deeps of Mirkwood. Active by day or night as their mood dictates, Taurogs lair in hidden forest caves or dense thickets. These are well known to other denizens in the area, who give them a wide berth. Taurogs are not part of the natural ecology and hunt only to sate their wanton appetite for destruction.

SOCIETY

After Sauron reenters Mordor, the few remaining Taurogs become miserable, solitary creatures, bereft of purpose and heedful of no master, often commanding a territory of over a hundred square miles. They do not reproduce or seek any other congress, one with another. Should one Taurog encroach on another's demesne, combat to settle the dispute is certain, swift, and deadly.

USAGE

Taurogs are usually encountered only in the deeps of Mirkwood, far from the beaten paths. They are mostly lazy, preferring sleep and their dark dreams to strenuous activity. Occasionally one is roused to aid the Giant Spiders of Mirkwood, who cannot suffer a superior Elven force to move through their territory with impunity.



TRUSTED LOCALES

THE HOUSE OF GRIMGAR

by David "Issachar" D.

INTRODUCTION

Grimgár is a Beorning who lives alone in a house built on the feet of the Misty Mountains, far from most of his kinsmen who dwell beside the river Anduin. His home, situated at the border of a small forest, overlooks a sloping field nestled between two rocky arms of the mountains. Here he dwelt for many years in contentment, until tragedy befell him.

Returning from the forest where he had been gathering nuts and berries, Grimgár found his house wrecked and empty, his wife slain with three Orcs dead around her, and his two young sons missing. Grimgár took up his axe and pursued the Orcs' trail until he came to a rough camp where many Orcs stood arguing with one another. He charged at the nearest two foes and swept their heads from their necks before they were aware of him, then slaughtered the rest in a blind rage, taking wounds that he scarcely felt.

Grimgár's sons were not in the camp. He called out their names and searched all around, then spent a day widening the search, but found no more than a few Orc-tracks leading off in different directions. At length he returned home to bury his wife.

Grimgár never learned the fate of his sons, that they had been taken by agents of the Necromancer in Dol Guldur, who wished to practice his sorcery on Beornings to see if the skin-changers could be turned to his purposes. Grimgár himself was not a skin-changer, being low-born among his kind, but his wife was of full blood, and both she and their children were capable of taking the form of bears. She had assumed bear-form to defend her children, but was killed by the Orcs, who greatly outnumbered her. (The eventual, unintended products of the Necromancer's vile experiments on his Beorning captives were the creatures known as *berandeorcs* – see *Hall of Fire* 38:12-13).

But none of this was known to Grimgár. He spent the next year hunting down and killing all the Orcs he could catch in the mountains, and they came to fear him greatly. When he found that revenge did not ease his sorrow, Grimgár returned to his home and tried to live as he had before. He is known to other Beornings but is seldom visited, for he is grim and silent, and enjoys no company but the wild bears of the forest by his house. He keeps no livestock, but farms a grain-field and produces flour for baking, and gathers what other food he needs from the woods.

Narrator's Note: Even after Grimgár's death, his house remains a site you can incorporate into your adventure. Decide whether Grimgár is alive or dead at the time of your chronicle, and use the relevant information from the rest of this article.

DISCOVERING THE SITE

Use any of the following hooks to lead PCs to the house.

- Characters traveling through the eastern foothills of the Misty Mountains could discover Grimgár's house by accident, especially if he is at home and the smoke from his fireplace is visible.
- If Grimgár is alive, the party might get a suggestion from other Beornings that they visit him, especially if their quest involves dealing with the Orcs of the Misty Mountains.
- The party might learn of Grimgár from Orcs that they encounter. If the Orcs are traveling near Grimgár's house, they are likely to discuss their fear of the place among themselves.
- Some captive Beornings might escape from the Necromancer and encounter the PCs. These folk are unlikely to remember much about their previous lives, but other Beornings might be able to help identify them. Grimgár's sons could be among these survivors.
- When the Necromancer purposefully releases some of his captured and ensorcelled Beornings, deeming them failed experiments, those who were Grimgár's sons might slowly make their way back to their childhood home, along with any *berandeorcs* who are the offspring of their union with true bears. Such creatures would attract the notice of many people living along the Anduin Vales.

GRIMGAR'S HOUSE

The dwelling is a large cabin built on the eaves of a thick mountain forest. Constructed of stout logs, it has a peaked roof of wood shingles and a stone chimney on one end. It looks as if it might bear up even if the mountain itself were to fall over atop it.

A low stone wall, overgrown with grass, encompasses the house on three sides at a distance of about thirty feet. The gate-posts are topped by large Orc skulls, with more skulls and an assortment of other bones heaped on either side of the entryway.

On the side of the house nearer the river valley, three stone markers stand alone in a corner of the yard. The names of Grimgár's wife Déorwyn and his sons Beranhelm and Holdwine are graven on the markers, partly hidden by the grass that has grown tall around them.

Inside, the house is a single large room, about thirty feet wide and forty feet long. The furniture is simple, sturdy, and sized for Beornings. A rough curtain hangs near one end of the cabin, affording privacy when drawn shut, though the fact that it is so thick with dust is evidence that Grimgár rarely receives visitors.

Above the curtained end of the room is a loft about ten feet deep, accessible by ladder. The hearth is across the room from the door, in the center of one long wall. Windows paned with horn are set on either side of the door and the hearth.

A stout chest beside the hearth, latched but unlocked, contains a few mementos of Grimgár's family: the clothing his wife and sons once wore, a copper locket engraved with a honeycomb, and a model cabin cunningly wrought of twigs and hardened tree sap – the handiwork of Beranhelm, the elder son.

A long bench is behind Grimgár's table, against the wall on the opposite end of the cabin from the curtained sleeping area. The seat of this bench can be lifted off, revealing a compartment in which an assortment of mundane items is stored, such as extra cups and platters, a whetstone, a pile of iron nails, and a few tools. Tucked beneath this miscellany is a small bag containing eighteen small silver coins. This was the money the Necromancer's agents paid for the captured Beorning children. When Grimgár found the moneybag in the Orc camp, he guessed that it might be connected with his sons' capture, and at first he left it lying with the corpses of the Orcs. But practical thinking eventually led him to return and retrieve the money, in case it should ever help him to locate and recover his sons at some unforeseen time.

EVENTS

If Grimgár is dead at the time your chronicle takes place, two *berandeorcs* have taken up residence in the forest area near the house. These are the offspring of Grimgár's sons, who returned there instinctively after their release, although they no longer remembered their former lives or even their true natures as Men.

The *berandeorcs* regard the house as their territory and will look for an opportune time to attack any PCs that they discover using the house as a shelter. Narrators should have the attack take place at night, providing a tense situation in which the barricaded PCs attempt to keep out the *berandeorcs*. The monsters are cunning and will use tactics such as having one of them distract their prey with a feigned attempt to break in the door while the other circles around to the other side of the cabin and breaks through one of the windows.

If Grimgár is still living, the site provides a primarily social encounter, though still a difficult one. Grimgár might be away from home and in the forest, and will be angry if he returns to discover trespassers poking around his house. If he is at home, he will offer little courtesy or hospitality, unless the visitors are in great need or are good at persuading him to let them stay awhile.

GRIMGAR

Unlike some Beornings, Grimgár is not a skin-changer and can not take the form of a bear. Nonetheless, even as a Man he is an imposing figure, standing nearly seven feet tall, with a mane of coarse black hair and limbs as thick as logs.

Grimgár is not a gracious or welcoming host, but he is basically kind-hearted and will not turn away a visitor whose need is genuine. However, he is wary of strangers and will not be quick to trust the PCs; they will need to speak carefully and demonstrate their good will. (Note: if they have slain any bears in the forest, for any reason, Grimgár will compel them to leave his lands.)

If the PCs ask for Grimgár's help in dealing with Orcs or other servants of the enemy, he is likely to aid them, providing he does not have to remain away from home for more than a week or two. He will also see to it that his guests are sheltered and fed on what stores he has: mostly bread, honey, nuts and berries.

RACE, SUB-RACE: Man, Beorning

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 8 (+1), Nimbleness 6 (+0), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 14 (+4)*, Vitality 10 (+2)*, Wits 6 (+0)

REACTIONS: Stamina +6*, Swiftiness +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

ORDER: Barbarian

ORDER ABILITIES: Hard March, One with the Wild (*Hall of Fire* 27:11), Rage (*Hall of Fire* 7:23)

ADVANCEMENTS: 10

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Axes (Greataxe) +10, Climb +2, Craft: Cooking (Baking) +4, Craft: Farming +3, Craft: Handle Animal (Bears) +5, Healing (Treat Wounds) +2, Intimidate (Power) +4, Jump +2, Language: Northman (Beorning) +6, Language: Westron +3, Lore/Race: Men (Beornings) +2, Lore/Race: Orcs (Misty Mountains) +2, Lore/Realm: Anduin Vales +4, Lore/Wilderness: Wild Beasts (Bears) +2, Lore/Wilderness: Survival (Mountains) +3, Mimicry (Beasts) +2, Observe (Hear) +4, Run +3, Stealth (Sneak) +3, Survival (Mountains) +7, Track (Orcs) +2, Unarmed Combat (Brawling) +5, Weather-sense +2

EDGES: Armour of Heroes, Doughty, Fell-handed (Orcs of the Misty Mountains), Hammerhand, Hardy, Night-eyed 1, Stern, Woodcrafty

FLAWS: Grief-stricken (*Hall of Fire* 21:15), Proud

HEALTH: 14

DEFENCE: 10

COURAGE: 4

RENOUN: 1

GEAR: Greataxe, long knife, waterskin, simple clothing

LOST LEGENDS OF THE FIRST AGE

OF THE COMING OF TURENANGA* AND TELEMIRE**

by Dustin R. Strong (dustinstrong@hotmail.com)

Of all the great tales of the First Age, much has been told throughout history. But there is one tale that few bards even know a little, fewer still know it to completion. Yet, this tale has affected all events that have come since. It is a tale of hope and despair; of loyalty and treachery; of great battles between armies and within souls. It is a tale of long forgotten heroes in a more glorious time.

All know of the coming of the Noldor to Middle Earth. But what is not known is another story that began at the same time. With the destruction of the Two Trees and the Darkening of Valinor, the Noldor king, Finwë, was slain by the Vala, Melkor. Stolen, too, was the greatest treasure of the Noldor, the Simarils. Wrought by Fëanor's own hand, they contained the light of the Two Trees, and Melkor had coveted them since their creation.

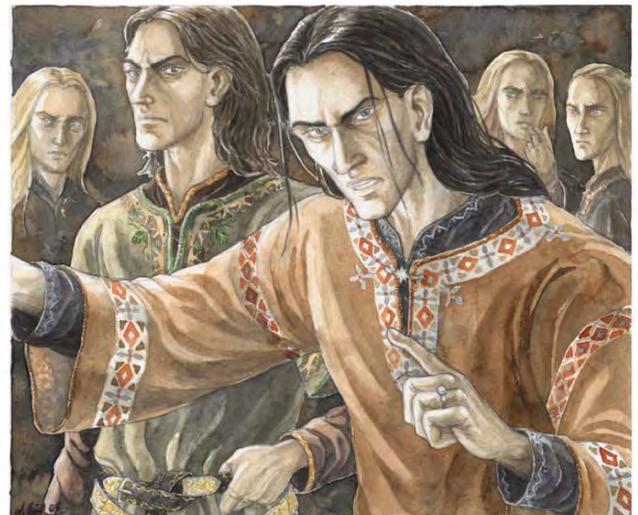
Melkor had long sown discontent and distrust among the Noldor. There was a split among the sons of Finwë that almost came to war. The oldest, Fëanor, began to see his two younger brothers, Fingolfin and Finarfin, as rivals to his rightful place as Finwë's heir. This distrust had always been there, for Fëanor and his younger brothers were of different mothers. Fëanor's own mother had forfeited her spirit to the Halls of Mandos in giving life to Fëanor. Finwë grieved for many ages before marrying again to a beautiful Vanyar maiden named Indis. She was the mother of Fingolfin and Finarfin. Finwë was happy again and Fëanor became increasingly more jealous. This jealousy Melkor played on to exact his revenge against the Noldor and the other Valar.

Fëanor, enraged by his father's murder, stirred the Noldor to pursue Melkor, renaming him Morgoth, to the ends of the earth, promising great riches and kingdoms to those who dared to follow. Upon the mountain Túna, in the Noldor city of Tirion, Fëanor and his seven sons swore a terrible oath to retrieve the stolen Simarils, no matter the cost, no matter the enemy. Fear and dread went through the gathered Noldor, for oaths are not taken lightly. They pursue oath-keeper and oath-breaker to the ends of the earth.

Fingolfin, and his son Turgon, spoke against Fëanor. Fierce words nearly came to be settled at the ends of swords. Finrod, eldest son of Finarfin, was with Turgon.

Finarfin and his second son, Orodreth, spoke softly, seeking to calm the Noldor. They cautioned Fëanor to ponder his decision before doing deeds that could not be undone.

Galadriel, daughter of Finarfin, was eager to be gone from Valinor. She swore no oath, but Fëanor's words had kindled in her heart a desire to see the wild lands of Middle Earth and to rule there a realm of her own. With Galadriel stood Fingon, eldest son of Fingolfin, and the twin sons of Finarfin, Angrod and Aegnor.



Dissention soon arose in the host, for not all Noldor accepted Fëanor as High King. Greater love was given to Fingolfin and his sons. They refused to renounce him and pled that he lead them. Against his wisdom, Fingolfin marched, partly because his son Fingon urged him and partly because he would not be sundered from his people and leave them to Fëanor's rash council. Nor had he forgotten his promise before Manwë not to divide the Noldor again, as in the days of Morgoth's deceptions. Finarfin marched also for like reasons; though he was most loathe to do so.

Manwë made one last attempt to sway Fëanor from his course. If he should continue, neither aid nor hindrance shall the Valar offer. The Noldor had come freely to Valinor and they may depart freely, but Fëanor, by his own words, is exiled. Fëanor rebuked Manwë's words and marched with his host in pursuit of Morgoth.

Well known are the consequences of this oath. Less known is the fate of two Noldor that were among those persuaded to action.

* Quenya. "Master of Iron".

** Quenya. "Silver Jewel".

Turenanga was a weaponsmith of great renown and claimed fealty to the House of Caranthir, fourth son of Fëanor. In the days of Morgoth's deceits, Turenanga tirelessly worked his forge to arm the Noldor of Caranthir's house. His weapons and armor were among the greatest of all Elvish works. Gripped by Fëanor's words at Tirion, Turenanga joined his lord in swearing that terrible oath.



There, too, was another of future legend. Telemire was a jewelsmith by trade, and a promising apprentice to Fëanor. To Curufin, fifth son of Fëanor, did he swear allegiance. Already well known among the Noldor, it was said that, in time, he may even rival Fëanor's skill. Knowing what the Simarils meant to Fëanor personally, Telemire was one of the most eager to answer his lord's call to arms.

But there was another. e'Narmire. A mysterious elf, not of the Noldor, but of the Vanyar. He was among the first of the Eldar to awaken at Cuiviénen and had made the Long Journey so many ages past. Considered old even by the Eldar, he was the brother to Indis, and uncle to her sons, Fingolfin and Finarfin. At hearing Fëanor's words, e'Narmire stood with Finarfin and Orodreth and cautioned the Noldor not to act in anger or in haste.

Though he had foreseen the trials that were to come, e'Narmire followed the Noldor into their exile, not to seek fortune and power, but at the urging of his sister Indis. She was distraught by Fëanor's words and feared for her children as they followed Fëanor into exile. Out of a brother's love, he promised that he would accompany his sister-sons to Middle Earth and to protect and guide them to the best of his ability.

e'Narmire was especially aware of the fates that awaited Turenanga and Telemire. He knew that each, in his own way, would come to serve the Enemy's purposes. He tried in vain to convince the two young Noldor not to follow their lord on such a fool's errand. He warned that only grief and hardships lay ahead that neither could yet understand. Caught up in their youthfulness and anger at Morgoth's betrayal, Turenanga and Telemire did not heed the words of e'Narmire, and the events of this tale are the result of their rashness.

Fired by the words of Fëanor, Turenanga and Telemire blindly followed their lord. Urged to gather all that they would need for the journey, Turenanga and Telemire and the host of the Noldor marched with Fëanor to the north, thinking to follow Morgoth. But Tirion lay along the Girdle of Arda where the sea was at its greatest width. To the north, the sea would be narrowest, but the path would be long and dangerous and Fëanor knew this.

The High King then came upon a new solution. He and his host would sail to Middle Earth, but a fleet would take too long to build. Then Fëanor remembered the Teleri, elves of the coast of Valinor, and their renown for their skills upon the seas. They had a great fleet, built by their own hand, and it was upon these ships, in the Teleri city of Alqualondë, that Fëanor set his sights.

Leaving behind the hosts of his uncles, Fingolfin and Finarfin, Fëanor hastened to Alqualondë and spoke as he did to the Noldor, but his words had not the effect he had desired and the Teleri refused their aid. Fëanor grew angered, but he still could not win the Teleri to his cause. Olwë, the Teleri King and brother to Fëanor's father Finwë, would not aid Fëanor in either loaning his ships or in the construction of more. Instead, Olwë chastised Fëanor for his rashness in leaving Valinor.

Wrathful, Fëanor left Olwë and sat in dark thought outside the walls of Alqualondë until his host had assembled. If the Teleri would not give up their ships, Fëanor resolved to take them by force. But he only had his most loyal followers with him. The main host of the Noldor, led by his brothers Fingolfin and Finarfin were a few days behind.

He readied his warriors for the attack. Maedhros cautioned his father not to attack, at least not until the rest of the Noldor arrived. To do so would be suicidal, for Alqualondë was too strong. Fëanor knew his brothers would never support such a course of action, and he resolved to carry through with his plan.

Thrice did the Noldor assault Alqualondë and thrice were they thrown back. It was not until the people of Fingon, son of Fingolfin, arrived that Fëanor at last overcame the Teleri. Fingon had not known the cause of the battle between the Teleri and his Noldor kinsman and he pitched into battle without question.



In these four assaults, Telemire and Turenanga took an active part. It was their company that pushed furthest into the city during the first attack before becoming surrounded and cut off by the Teleri. The battle was desperate along the quays as the two craftsmen held their ground, fighting as if they were seasoned warriors.

Telemire seemed to be always in the heart of the battle, as if he were everywhere at once, rallying the Noldor to hold on, assuring them that Fëanor would not abandon them. He suffered several minor cuts, but the Teleri could not quench his anger and each wound seemed to make Telemire more indestructible.

Turenanga occupied a high balcony in the small company's perimeter. From this vantage, he directed the Noldor archers to support Telemire's wild counterattacks. Teleri archers returned this fire, wounding Turenanga in his sword arm, but they could not stop the deadly rain of Noldor darts.

For nearly two days, the craftsmen held their ground. They were relieved by the arrival of Fingon's warriors driving toward their position. It was shortly after that the Teleri surrendered.

With the Teleri defeated, Fëanor had secured their fleet of ships. It was now that Fingon learned of the true cause of the battle and he was disgusted and regretful. Seeds of discontent were also sown among some of Fëanor's most faithful allies. Though he would not openly question his liege-lord, Telemire began to feel grief and guilt about his actions in this Kinslaying.

Fëanor now faced another problem that he had not counted on. With all of the ships of the Teleri, there was not enough room for the entire Noldor host. Even with the ships, Fëanor was still forced to journey north and confront the Grinding Ice, the Helcaraxë. With the greater part of the Noldor following the coastline, Fëanor and his loyal followers shadowed them in the Teleri ships, unaware of impending danger.

Though the Valar had promised to neither help nor hinder, the Maiar, only slightly less powerful than the Valar, made no such promise. It was the Vala Ulmo who was the Lord of the Waters, but the Maiar of his domain, angered by the murder of the Teleri, sent upon the Noldor fleet a great storm. Many of the ships were destroyed and hundreds of Fëanor's faithful were drowned in the raging waters. Turenanga and Telemire were among those of Fëanor's host that survived the storms, each narrowly escaping death.

Telemire was cast overboard and would have drowned if not for Fëanor risking his own life to save that of his loyal apprentice. Turenanga was nearly crushed by a masthead that had snapped in the violent winds. Only a timely shove by a crewmate saved his life. The crewmate was not as fortunate as the lines of the masthead entangled his feet and pulled him into the sea.

From the shore, e'Narmire watched the storm wreck Fëanor's fleet with nervousness. He was relieved to learn that Turenanga and Telemire had survived, but secretly wished they had not, for he knew that much worse lay ahead.



Many days passed after the storm. The Maiar no longer attempted to hinder the Noldor and the days were uneventful, save for the occasional hunting and foraging parties sent to find food for the great hosts. But this peacefulness would not last. Manwë would try one more time to sway Fëanor from his course. He sent Mandos, the Keeper of the Dead, to offer an ultimatum.

The Doom of the Noldor it has come to be called. In a great and terrifying voice, Mandos warned, "Tears unnumbered ye shall shed; and the Valar will fence Valinor against you, and shut you out, so that not even the echo of your lamentation shall pass over the mountains. On the House of Fëanor the wrath of the Valar lieth from the West unto the uttermost East, and upon all that will follow them it shall be laid also. Their oath shall drive them, and yet betray them, and ever snatch away the very treasures that they have sworn to pursue. To evil end shall all things turn that they begin well; and by treason of kin unto kin, and the fear of treason, shall this come to pass. The Dispossessed shall they be forever.

"Ye have spilled the blood of your kindred unrighteously and have stained the land of Valinor. For blood ye shall render blood, and beyond Valinor ye shall dwell in Death's shadow. For though Eru, the Creator, appointed to you to die not in the world and no sickness may assail you, yet slain ye may be, and slain ye shall be: by weapon and by torment and by grief; and your houseless spirits shall come then to Mandos. There long shall ye abide and yearn for your bodies, and find little pity, though all whom ye have slain should entreat for you. And those that endure in Middle Earth and come not to Mandos shall grow weary of the world as with a great burden, and shall wane, and become as shadows of regret before the younger race that cometh after. The Valar have spoken."

Fëanor hardened his heart at Mandos' warning and said, "We have sworn, and not lightly. This oath we will keep. We are threatened with many evils, and treason not least; but one thing is not said; that we shall suffer from cowardice, from cravens or the fear of cravens. Therefore I say that we will go on, and this doom I add: the deeds that we shall do shall be the matter of song until the last days of Arda."

At these tidings, Finarfin and his following refused to go any further and turned back in penance. Being filled with grief and bitterness against the House of Fëanor, they retraced their steps in sorrow until they beheld once more their city of Tirion. There, they received the pardon of the Valar and Finarfin was set to rule the remnant of the Noldor in the Blessed Realm of Valinor.

Finarfin's return to Tirion gladdened e'Narmire, but this was tempered by Fingolfin's decision to stay with his people. He was not yet released from his promise. The sons of Fingolfin would not abandon their father, and the sons of Finarfin would not forsake him either. All of Fingolfin's folk went forward, feeling the constraint of their kinship and the will of Fëanor. Since not all of them had been guiltless of the Kinslaying at Alqualondë, they feared to face the doom of the Valar.

As the host pressed forward, they soon came to the far north of Valinor, seeing for the first time the icy teeth of the Helcaraxë. Fëanor halted and the Noldor debated what course they should now take. But they soon began to suffer anguish from the cold and many began to repent and to curse Fëanor. But Fëanor took council with his sons and two courses they saw to escape from Valinor; by the straits of the Helcaraxë or by ship. The Helcaraxë seemed impassable and there were too few ships to carry all of the Noldor. None were willing to wait while the ships ferried the host across.



Fëanor then decided on a course of action, and fulfilled a part of the Doom. He would betray his kinsmen and leave them behind. The ships were manned only by those who had fought at Alqualondë, and were therefore bound to Fëanor. While the Noldor host debated on the path to take, Fëanor and his host slipped aboard the ships and sailed east, abandoning their kinsmen.

Since the sea was at its narrowest, Fëanor passed quickly and without incident. The first of the Noldor to set foot once more upon the shores of Middle Earth was Fëanor at the mouth for the Firth of Dengrist in Dor-lómin. After the landing, Maedhros, eldest son of Fëanor and friend of Fingon, spoke of sending the fleet back to retrieve the rest of the host.

To this, Fëanor replied, "What I have left behind I count now no loss; needless baggage on the road it has proved. Let those that cursed my name, curse me still, and whine their way back to the Valar! Let the ships burn!"

So then ended the fairest vessels that ever sailed the sea, in a great burning, bright and terrible. Fingolfin and his people saw the light of the fire and they knew that they had been betrayed. So did Telemire, and that was too much.



Telemir had been counted among one of the most loyal of Fëanor's followers, second only to his own sons. He had felt guilt and remorse about his actions at Alqualondë, but he had been able to justify them, however weakly, in his own mind. He had not gone into battle with hatred in his heart. He was only trying to save the lives of the Noldor around him. He had wanted to spare as many of the Teleri as possible, not wanting to kill them, but they gave him no choice.

Out of love for his master, Telemir had convinced himself that Fëanor would not leave Fingolfin behind. But now, in his heart, he knew that leaving the others behind to die was wrong. He had held his tongue before, but no longer could he stand by and do nothing. He did what no other had dared to do, not even Maedhros. He lashed out at Fëanor.

"This is not right! I will not be a part of this betrayal! This is not the way of a just king! Fëanor, you have gone mad and deserve not the mantle of Kingship!"

Fëanor gazed at Telemir. At first, Fëanor was taken aback, but soon the anger on his face and the flames of the great fire reflecting in his eyes gave him a radiance that was terrible to behold. Telemir instinctively stepped back.

"How dare you," growled Fëanor. "How dare you defy me? It was I that taught you the craft that you hold so dear. It was I that introduced you to the love of Hithwen, your wife. It was I that saved your pathetic life by fishing you out of the sea." Fëanor drew his sword, putting the point to Telemir's throat. "Now you repay me with this betrayal! I should kill you now, insolent child!"

Telemir stood his ground, flinching not, even with the sword at his throat, and spoke softly to his mentor. "You have already killed me, Fëanor. More than you know. Watching this betrayal has inflicted a thousand deaths upon my heart. You can do no more than that."

Fëanor lowered his sword, but anger still rang in his words as he agreed with Telemir. "You are dead. From this day forth, you are dead to me and to all of my House." Fëanor turned and stepped away from Telemir. "Leave this place at once. Make your own way in this dangerous world, for you are no longer welcome in any house of the Noldor, neither in mine nor in those that you willingly left behind." Fëanor turned sharply back to Telemir and, raising his voice, laid a curse upon his apprentice. "Know this, Oathbreaker, your greatest work shall be a curse upon your family. A curse that can only be lifted with blood. Be gone with you into exile, and obscurity."



Fëanor turned away a final time. Turenanga, bearing witness to the episode, glared at Telemir, a mix of confusion and anger showed in his expression. Telemir had always been a friend, but now, unbelievably, he was an enemy. A shadow of hatred fell over his heart, a shadow that would never fully go away, but would engulf him.

Telemir stood silently for a moment and muttered under his breath, "May the fires of your hatred consume you, Fëanor." With that, Telemir turned south and began his exile.

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THE ROAD GOES EVER ON...

THE TROUBLES OF THE TWEENLANDS by David "Issachar" D.

ACT 2: THE FURNACE OF WAR

In which heroes and common folk together turn the tide against the army of the warlord Maradoc.

INTRODUCTION

This chronicle takes place in Minhiriath, also known as Cardolan, the southernmost part of the divided kingdom of Arnor. It is set early in the year 3019 in the Third Age, concurrent with some of the events in J.R.R. Tolkien's book *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The adventure is suitable for low-level characters with 0 - 2 advancements.

In Act 1 (*Hall of Fire* issue 42), the heroes encountered the families of a farming settlement that had been raided by the soldiers of Maradoc, a ruthless warlord of the Folcwalda clan, recently risen to power. The soldiers took the farmers' winter stores and slew a young man, Clement, who attacked them.

After tracking down the warband, the heroes learn that these soldiers were forced into Maradoc's service and regret their deeds, but cannot mutiny without bringing Maradoc's punishment down on their entire home village of Chalnen. Their conversation is interrupted by a surprise visit from Geth, one of Maradoc's lieutenants. Geth distrusts the warband's loyalty and poisons their leader, Mabric. Infuriated, the others attack, and with the aid of the PC's they slay Geth and his bodyguards.

But a black hawk observes these events and flies off into the night. The soldiers inform the PC's that this bird belongs to Maradoc himself and will bear tidings to its master of the warband's betrayal. Mabric, dying, instructs his men to depart immediately for home, to defend the village against the forces Maradoc will send to raze the town. There will be little time to prepare for the battle.

SCENE 1: BELLOWS

The party travels all night to reach Chalnen. If the Dunlendings are with them, Theobald walks beside Mabric and listens to the older man's instructions, though his words are often interrupted by horrible cries as the poison slowly consumes his body. The other warriors walk silently. Some weep quietly in despair. The party must make four TN 10 Stamina tests to resist Weariness as they travel: after 4 hours, 6 hours, 8 hours, and 10 hours. The Dunlendings will not stop to rest, but will leave behind Helm as a guide if the PC's insist on resting awhile.

The company travels all through the cold night, shrouded beneath the gloom of the clouds. The light of moon and star is seldom visible, and only Caran's sure instinct for the road prevents the group from wandering astray. Now and again a terrible cry erupts from the cart, as the poison slowly consumes Mabric's body.

The men of the warband walk or ride without speaking. Some weep quietly, both for yesterday's evils and for tomorrow's. Late in the night, Thalón drops back to speak to Theobald and finds the young warrior cradling his leader's head, slowly stroking his brow. Mabric does not stir.

Daylight begins to filter across the land, imperceptibly at first, creating grey forms out of the black voids of trees and hills. It brings no cheer, only weariness and a slight lessening of the chill. The horses are tired, but their speed does not slacken. Sunrise is not far away when Caran points ahead to the dimly visible line of a river into whose shallow basin the group is descending. Half an hour later, they arrive at last in the village of Chalnen.

Many of the townsfolk are already up and beginning the day's work. It is Theobald's grim task to deliver to them the news of what has happened. The men bear Mabric's body home to his wife and daughters and lay him on his bed, where final blessings are spoken for his spirit. The villagers' grief is great, not only for Mabric but for their own lives as well. Some talk desperately of fleeing the town. But Mabric's men are insistent about the plan to stay and defend their homes, and their firm resolve prevails over the nay-sayers.

Soon Theobald comes to his new companions and brings them into a room in his own house. "We must lay plans together for this town's defence," he says. "Tell me of your designs and I will give my own counsel in turn."

With Mabric dead, the PCs must decide how to prepare the village for an attack, which will almost certainly come from the road. There are many ways in which the PCs can help prepare for the attack, but they have **only 20 hours** in which to prepare. At that time, Maradoc's forces will arrive from their base at Argond.



Preparing the Village for Battle

The conflict between the people of Chalnen and the fighting force that Maradoc sends against them is conducted as a mass battle between two units. Before the village receives any assistance from the PC's, the unit stats are as follows:

Maradoc's Army: Size 5, Strength 6, Toughness 6, Mobility 7, Morale 10

Villagers: Size 5, Strength 2, Toughness 1, Mobility 7, Morale 5

The preparations the PC's make over the next twenty hours (including 15 hours of daylight) can increase these stats to help the village remain viable in a battle. Following are some suggested ways for them to do this.

- **Creating weapons.** With a **TN 10 Smithcraft test**, a PC can make pitchforks into workable tridents (treat as spears) or plow blades into scimitars. This test represents 2 hours of work and equips 10 villagers with weapons, increasing the village unit's Strength by 1. For each degree of success above or below Marginal, modify the time required by 15 minutes.
- **Creating shields.** With a **TN 10 Craft (woodworking) test**, a PC can create wooden shields out of barrel bottoms, doors, or other comparable wooden components. This test represents 2 hours of work, equips 10 villagers with shields and increasing the village unit's Toughness by 1. For each degree of success above or below Marginal, modify the time required by 15 minutes.

- **Recruiting others to come and help.** 15 farmsteads are near Chalnen. It takes 1 hour to travel by foot from Chalnen to any farmstead, and 1 hour to travel in between farmsteads. (On horseback, this time is halved.) Each farmstead has up to 4 adults able to help defend the village. Recruiting a single person to aid Chalnen requires a **TN 10 Persuade or Debate test**. For each success level above Marginal, an additional person agrees to help. If a citizen of Chalnen accompanies the PC to plead their case, add +2 to the Persuade or Debate roll. Every 10 people recruited increases the village unit's Size *and* Morale by 1.

- **Combat training.** With a **TN 10 Armed Combat test**, a PC can train a group of villagers in basic combat techniques. Doing so takes 4 hours; for each degree of success above or below Marginal, modify the time by 30 minutes. For every group so trained, the village unit's Strength *and* Morale increase by 1.

- **Constructing defences.** With a **TN 10 Craft (carpentry) or Siegecraft (defence) test**, a PC can construct barriers and other defences to give a tactical advantage to the defenders. Constructing each defence takes 4 hours and increases the village unit's Toughness by 1. For each degree of success above or below Marginal, modify the time by 30 minutes.

- **Planning tactics.** With a **TN 10 Siegecraft (unit leadership) test**, a group of 10 villagers can be instructed in the execution of specific tactics. Doing so takes 2 hours; for each degree of success above or below Marginal, modify the time by 15 minutes. Up to three special tactics can be prepared; each one increases the village unit's Strength by 1.

- **Inspiration:** With a **TN 10 Inspire test** a PC can move around the village and encourage the people. (This is perhaps best done after dark, when physical preparations would receive a penalty.) This takes 2 hours and improves the village unit's Morale by 2, but *only on a Superior success* or better – making this a good candidate for a combined test with multiple participants.

The surviving Dunlendings from Mabric's warband are available to help with these preparations. If Theobald is present, he is especially helpful in such areas as planning tactics and training the villagers to fight. The village smith can make Smithcraft tests (with a +2 modifier) to create makeshift weapons, and a local carpenter can make Craft tests (with a +2 modifier) to create shields and defensive fortifications. Of course, a PC with these skills is likely to do a better job.

Let the players role-play these preparations as much as they like: the "last stand" situation makes this a Helm's Deep-like scene.

As the night grows late, the PCs retire to Theobald's house to eat and to get what rest they can. The long day holds one final surprise for them, however.

The door opens swiftly and a breathless man rushes into the room, black hair matted to his face with sweat.

"Footsteps on the road! Someone comes!" The man quickly tells what he knows: while on watch a small distance north of the village, the sound of horses' hooves on the road, accompanied by numerous feet, came faintly from afar. The darkness was too heavy to see who approached, and the man thought it best to come and raise the alarm at once.

Theobald sends several men to rouse the rest of his warband at their posts throughout the village, and then sets out with the sentry and his new allies. By the time they reach the watchpost, the approaching company is scarcely fifty yards off. The foremost among them holds aloft a lantern. Suddenly Theobald laughs and steps out onto the road, striding forth to meet the group.

It is Tobias, leading nearly twenty men armed with farming implements and makeshift spears. He is greatly surprised to hear of any locals who have come to the town's aid, having believed that his small band of recruits would be all the help Chalenen could depend on. Theobald grins broadly and declares that these simple folk might just give Maradoc's men a beating worthy of the lore-books for all time. "Though we may still perish in the attempt," he adds, his smile fading.

The newcomers are dispersed into various homes, a small group accompanying Theobald to his own house. As the first man steps inside and removes his hood, the heroes are surprised to see white-maned Cadoc, followed by his son-in-law Will Redhawk. Bernie Jorinn then puffs his way into the room, red-faced and sweaty, clapping his hands together against the cold. Behind his large frame, a slender figure enters last of all. It is Violet.

Old Cadoc gives greeting for them all, giving an account of Tobias' surprising appearance and all that has happened since then, as they went round to as many farmsteads as haste would allow, bringing all who would come and aid the rebellion against Maradoc. Tirroc would have come also, he says, but that they refused him, persuading him to remain behind for the sake of little Caidy, who had already lost her brother. Violet turns away at this, but says nothing.

Violet, young and unreasonable, is angry at any PC who vowed to avenge Clement's death, now that they have allied themselves with his killers instead. (The incongruity of this view with her own decision to come and aid the town is lost on her.)

If a PC expresses concern for her or asks why she is there, she lashes out at them:

"I am here to see justice done. Why are *you* here, oathbreakers? For a night's rest and a hot meal? Will you ride away at dawn, vowing to meet the enemy, and flee instead into the hills?" Anger passes over her face, then subsides into quiet contempt. "But I care not. I will fight here, and likely die too, but I will make them regret the exchange."

Barnie gives the others an apologetic look, but he lost the will to contend with his daughter's fury long ago, and remains silent. If the PCs show that they are offended by Violet's tirade and insist that they are here to defend the town, Violet relents:

"It is plain that you are no cowards. It was a rash thing to say, and maybe you will pardon me for it in time...if time is permitted us."

Theobald grins at her. "These men have endured sharper weapons than your tongue, and yet live," he says. "Tomorrow I hope I may make the same boast for myself, and for us all." He shows Violet to a room where she can sleep. When he returns, he bids the company good-night, adding that if the combat could be decided by harsh words alone, he would rest easy, knowing that the mightiest of warriors sleeps beneath his roof.

SCENE 2: HAMMERFALL

An hour before dawn, Theobald's men go around and rouse the villagers. Many are already awake; some have not slept at all. They rise in the cold and trudge to their assigned posts, frost crunching beneath their feet.

Dried meat and water are passed round, and the men chew their breakfast in silence, waiting while the minutes drag by. The sun appears, a bright hazy spot in the clouded sky, rising over the trees across the river. Still no report comes from the north.

More men are added to the few already walking among the buildings, to preserve the appearance of a village going about its ordinary morning activity. Theobald, watching from a window, is beginning to wonder whether he should allow the men to sit and rest, when two or three of them look up and point. Theobald follows their gaze in time to see a dark hawk pass low over the town and fly away to the north.

In less than a minute, galloping hooves are heard approaching on the road, and a sentry comes riding into the village. "They are coming, less than a mile away by now," he reports. "About two score, I think, though it is hard to be certain. I saw that hawk pass by overhead; it must have seen me as well."

"Unless Maradoc himself is here, I should not fear too much," Theobald muses. "I do not think any of his deputies share his art of beast-speech. But whether we take our enemy by surprise or not, we are now for it. Good luck, my friends. I hope we may meet again when the battle is done."

Fifteen minutes pass before the sound is heard of many booted feet marching in unison. Soon the mass of soldiers appears round the near bend of the water, a horseman in the lead bearing the standard of the Dunlending clan Folcwalda. Several other riders bring up the rear of the group. The village men make a show of confusion and panic, rushing between buildings and pulling shut the doors. A few linger in the streets, watching the advancing column of spears.

The standard-bearer raises a ram's horn to his lips and sounds a great blast on it that rings throughout the town. A shouted command is heard from one of the horsemen in the rear, and the soldiers bring up their spears as one man. On the next command, they charge forward with a terrible cry, abandoning any semblance of a military formation. They have come to terrorize and destroy.

Conducting the Battle

At Theobald's signal, armed villagers will pour from the northernmost houses and attack the soldiers *en masse*. Surprised, the soldiers fight back desperately while attempting to retreat and reform their ranks to present a wall of spears to the villagers. Now the battle truly begins, and the PCs must decide what to do.

Treat the actions of PCs as discrete events within the larger battle. For roughly every minute of real time, make a mass combat test to determine the overall drift of the battle, and report this in narrative terms to the players.

The PCs' actions should heavily influence the tide of battle, especially if they attempt daring deeds such as attacking the enemy officers. The village folk will follow and fight alongside the PCs if commanded to do so. A few suggested ways for the PCs to take part in the battle follow:

Archery brigade

A PC skilled at archery can command the dozen or so villagers who have bows. An advantageous position for the archers is at second-story windows with a view of the town center, from which they can fire down on the invaders. But the soldiers have several archers of their own, who will return fire. Give the PCs and village archers a Defence bonus due to the partial cover of the windows.

Fighting in the houses

Many soldiers from the initial charge are in the town, and others will follow after they establish their spear-wall and enter the town in ranks. They will move into houses defended by the village folk, especially if there are archers upstairs shooting at them.

A set piece involving some of the named NPCs is available for any PC who joins the fighting in a house:

Not far away, two soldiers at the door to a house finally prevail over the defender and surge inside to kill the other occupants. Racing to the building, the PCs enter to find the enemy dueling with a trio of villagers armed with pitchforks.

One of them lunges forward with a shrill cry, and with a start they see that it is Violet Jorinn, accompanied by her father and Will Redhawk. The girl's weapon grazes the shoulder of her foe, who counters with a swift, sure jab, and the next moment Violet lies on the floor at his feet.

The soldiers wheel around to confront the new threat posed by the PCs. But Violet's father has suddenly become reckless. Putting his considerable weight behind his weapon, he throws himself bodily at the soldier, impaling the man on his pitchfork and driving him to the ground. The soldier gives one shriek and is silent. His fellow casts down his spear in surrender.

A TN 5 Healing test reveals that Violet is alive, but badly hurt. Another Healing test at TN 8 is needed to treat her wound. Meanwhile, Will Redhawk goes to the door to see about the man lying there, the defender who was struck down when the soldiers entered the house. It is white-haired Cadoc. Will speaks softly to his father-in-law, but the older man does not answer. "He is not breathing," Will says, looking up.

As the PC's attempt to treat Cadoc, they hear Bernie Jorinn talking to his daughter, who has regained consciousness. "Shhh...no child, don't say such things," he murmurs to Violet. "Leave me," the girl grinds out weakly, her jaw clenched. "Go and fight! I am ready to die. I will go to be with Clem."

She begins to clutch at the bandage, trying to tear the cloth away from her wound. Bernie grips both her wrists and holds them firmly. Violet's face contorts in pain and in wrath, and she struggles with her father, crying "let me die, let me die!" Soon she exhausts her strength, and sags in his lap, tears of impotent rage streaming down her face. Bernie says nothing, but keeps his firm hold on his daughter's wrists. It is, perhaps, the first time in years that he has endured Violet's anger without yielding.

Fighting alongside Theobald

Theobald has set up a fortified alley between two long buildings in the middle of the town, and his men fall back there if the battle goes against them. Maradoc's soldiers can and will eventually break through the barrier, however.

When this happens, Theobald springs a trap. As his men retreat to the other end of the alley, townswomen appear at second-story windows above the alley and pour barrels of grease and tallow down on the enemy, who begin to stumble on the slippery ground. In the midst of this confusion, Theobald counterattacks and kills the struggling soldiers.

Attacking the enemy officers

The invading force is commanded by Caldarn, a tall, grim warrior who is Maradoc's favored lieutenant. He and his three bodyguards (one of whom is the standard-bearer) are mounted on warhorses. One bodyguard enters the town along with the soldiers to direct their attack.

A group of ten village men will attempt to make a run around one of the houses at the edge of town and attack the officers from the side, but several soldiers notice them and move to engage the villagers, who are forced to withdraw. If the PCs decide to help these villagers make a second attempt on the officers, their chances will be far better.

Caldarn, his bodyguards and his archers make for a very difficult fight for beginning characters. Nevertheless, with the help of several villagers, the PCs might be able to hold their own. When the situation becomes dire for the heroes, bring in a new NPC: **Caranlas**, an Elf sent from Rivendell. He attacks from hiding, using his considerable prowess with the longbow to make called shots at any foe who seems likely to deal grave injury to a PC.

With this unexpected assistance, the PCs should be able to prevail over the enemy soldiers. Caldarn and his bodyguards fight to the death, but other soldiers might be captured. At the conclusion of the battle, the Elf Caranlas takes aim upward and shoots an arrow into the air. A small black shape falls from the sky: it is Maradoc's black hawk.

Battle Aftermath

Caranlas helps tend to the wounded, including those among the PCs. "I have done what I can for the wounded," he reports after much labor. "But some of them I could not save, and others may not last out the day." He takes time to introduce himself properly now, explaining that his errand was to observe the happenings in Minhiriath and bring news back to his lord Elrond. He joined the battle only when it appeared that the villagers might, with his aid, win the victory against Maradoc's soldiers.

If one of the characters took part in the set piece in which Violet is injured, her father Bernie thanks the PC profusely, with a painful slap on the shoulder from his meaty hand. "You've saved my little girl's life, you know. Though it may be some time before she thanks you for it," he adds as an afterthought.

The victory is not celebrated with merrymaking, for the town's losses are not small. Many men and women of Chalnen lie dead, and their survivors labor for hours to dig graves for the fallen. There is also apprehension over what may befall the town now that they have openly rebelled against Maradoc. Few believe that they will live to see many more days in this world.

SCENE 3: FORGING

When the PC's meet with Caranlas to discuss their next moves, the Elf reveals that he has a plan not only to protect the village of Chalnen from further reprisals, but perhaps to end Maradoc's reign of terror once and for all.

Caranlas points out that among the belongings of the slain captain Caldarn are papers that could be used to forge a false message from the captain to his garrison at Argond. This could be used to learn Maradoc's location, for few have seen the warlord in the months since he seized power. If the group can surprise Maradoc in his lair, they might make a swift end of him.

Creating the forgery

Forging the false message will require a Wits test, to be opposed by the Observe test of those who read it. The test result can be improved by careful study of the details of Caldarn's documents. To examine the documents, make a Search test at TN 7. For each level of success on the Observe test, add +1 to the Wits test used to create the forgery. Careful duplication of the handwriting requires a Legerdemain test at TN 8; for each level of success, add another +1 to the Wits test result.

The forgery should report the outcome of the battle at Chalnen, claiming victory over the defenders and explaining the unfortunate death of Maradoc's hawk from an arrow. The PCs might think of other additions to ensure that the message is swiftly passed along to Maradoc, such as mentioning the intervention of a strange Elf, or a request for further orders regarding prisoners taken from among the village's defenders.

One or more intact uniforms can be obtained from the slain or captured soldiers. Wearing these articles of clothing, a PC can impersonate a legitimate messenger from Caldarn with two tests: a Guise test and a Persuade test, each of which is opposed by a Wisdom test from anyone who might challenge the "messenger". There are many new arrivals in Maradoc's freshly recruited army, and an unfamiliar face should be deemed unremarkable as long as the PC acts the part well.

Impersonating the messenger

Argond is seventy miles from Chalnen as the crow flies, but the road between the two towns runs north and then turns east, adding another twenty miles to the journey, for a ninety-mile trek in total. A messenger would be on horse, so if there are not enough horses for the entire party, the group may have to split up, with the walkers catching up to the others at Argond.

Upon arriving at Argond, the disguised PC must present himself to the guards on duty and ask to see the commanding officer. For each level of success on his Persuade test, reduce the Observe test result of the person who reads the forged document by -1 – if the guards take the messenger's word for it that he is who he says he is, they will give the forged message less scrutiny.

If the PC's Guise and Persuade tests succeed and the forged letter is accepted as legitimate, the commanding officer will compose a report to send to Maradoc. Maradoc's whereabouts are known only to a few of his followers, and the garrison has a special messenger to bear news to him. The PC will be dismissed to eat and rest, and may take the opportunity to slip away and leave the town. If he remains in Argond and interacts with the townsfolk, they will give him whatever he asks; they fear Maradoc's soldiers.

If the Guise or Persuade test fails, the guards may be unsure of the messenger, but they will accept him if the forged letter holds up to scrutiny. However, if the Guise or Persuade test suffers a Complete failure or worse, the guards will attempt to detain the PC and question him, regardless of whether or not the letter holds up to careful inspection. If this happens, the commanding officer will interrogate the PC, asking his identity and why no one at the garrison recognizes him. The PC can attempt to give an alibi using a Persuade (Fast Talk) test, but anyone listening gets a +5 to their opposed Wisdom test because of their suspicion.

If the PC fails to give a satisfactory answer, he is bound with ropes and placed under guard in a building a little way from the main garrison. A few soldiers are dispatched to Chalten to learn the true nature of the situation, but it will be long before they can return. The officer writes a different report to Maradoc and sends the special messenger on his way. He then continues to interrogate the captured PC, using Intimidate tests (opposed by the PC's Willpower test) to compel him to tell what he knows about Caldarn's attack on the village. The PC suffers minor injuries from the abusive interrogation, amounting to 1d6 points of damage each hour he is questioned.

The other party members can attempt to stage a rescue, though a direct assault on the garrison is almost certain to fail. Once an alarm is raised, five armed soldiers (up to the total complement of 40 men) arrive each round to deal with the invaders. Stealth is more likely to succeed, as the captured PC is directly guarded by only two men.

Forging ahead

When the PCs succeed in leaving Argond one way or another, they face the challenge of following the messenger who was sent to report to Maradoc. The messenger is on horseback and leaves Argond by the northeast road in the afternoon. After crossing the river, the messenger turns north to travel cross-country toward Delbarad, where Maradoc has established his command in an ancient keep. By this time night is beginning to fall.

If the PCs have horses, they can attempt to keep pace with the messenger and follow him from a distance. Otherwise, they must track the horse. Fortunately, the messenger was seen leaving the road by a pair of travelers who made camp nearby. Once the messenger's general direction is known, one of the PCs or Caranlas can guess the likely destination with a successful Lore/Realm:Cardolan test at TN 8.

If this fails, have the messenger's horse put a foot down a rabbit hole and stumble, injuring its leg. The messenger will be forced to continue on foot and must soon stop to camp. He builds a campfire which can be seen for some distance in the open lands, which should help the party discover him and follow him to Delbarad.

CONCLUDING ACT 2

Reward each PC with 500 XP at the conclusion of this Act, plus any additional experience point rewards you wish to give out for good roleplaying.

The PC's have passed through The Furnace of War and are now committed to the cause of Maradoc's overthrow. But their mettle will be sorely tested by the unearthly powers that stand between them and the fulfillment of their quest. The adventure continues in **Act 3: Shrouds**, in which the initial chapter of the chronicle *The Troubles of the Tweenlands* comes to a close.



NPCs

CALDARN

Race: Middle Man

Gender: Male

Racial Abilities: Skilled, Adaptable, Dominion of Man

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

Reactions: Stam +4*, Swift +3, Will +1, Wis +1

Defence: 12

Health: 11

Courage: 4

Orders: Warrior

Advancements: 3

Order Abilities: Swift Strike, Warrior-born

Skills: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +11, Intimidate (Power) +6, Language: Dunlendish +6, Language: Westron +5, Lore/Group: Dunlendings +4, Lore/Realm: Cardolan +3; Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +8, Ride +5, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +7, Survival (Forests) +4

Edges: Bold, Dodge, Hardy, Rank, Weapon Mastery

Flaws: Fealty

Gear: Longsword, Shortbow, 10 arrows, Leather armour

CALDARN'S BODYGUARDS (3)**Race:** Middle Man **Gender:** Male**Racial Abilities:** Skilled, Adaptable, Dominion of Man**Attributes:** Bearing 6, Nimbleness 8(+1), Perception 6, Strength 10 (+2)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits 6**Reactions:** Stam +4*, Swift +2, Will +0, Wis +0**Defence:** 11 **Health:** 10 **Courage:** 4**Orders:** Warrior **Advancements:** 2**Order Abilities:** Warrior-born**Skills:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +9, Intimidate (Power) +7, Language: Dunlendish +5, Language: Westron +3, Lore/Group: Dunlendings +4, Lore/Realm: Cardolan +3; Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +6, Ride +5, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +6, Survival (Forests) +4**Edges:** Dodge, Hardy, Warwise **Flaws:** None**Gear:** Longsword, Shortbow, 10 arrows, Leather armour**CALDARN'S SOLDIERS (40)****Race:** Middle Man **Gender:** Male**Racial Abilities:** Skilled, Adaptable, Dominion of Man**Attributes:** Bearing 5, Nimbleness 8(+1), Perception 6, Strength 8 (+1)*, Vitality 8 (+1)*, Wits 5**Reactions:** Stam +3*, Swift +2, Will +0, Wis +0**Defence:** 11 **Health:** 9 **Courage:** 4**Orders:** Warrior **Advancements:** 1**Order Abilities:** Warrior-born**Skills:** Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +7, Intimidate (Power) +4, Language: Dunlendish +5, Language: Westron +2, Lore/Group: Dunlendings +3, Lore/Realm: Cardolan +2; Observe (Spot) +2, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +5, Ride +2, Siegecraft (Unit Leadership) +4, Survival (Forests) +3**Edges:** Dodge, Warwise **Flaws:** None**Gear:** Spear, Leather armour**CARANLAS****Race:** Sindar Elf **Gender:** Male**Racial Abilities:** The Art, Enchantment, Beast-skill, Comfort, Elven Form, Elven-sense, Elven-sleep, Farsightedness, Ghost-scorn, Lightfootedness, Swift Healing, Musical Gifts**Attributes:** Bearing 8(+1), Nimbleness 14(+4)*, Perception 12(+3)*, Strength 7, Vitality 8(+1), Wits 7**Reactions:** Stam +2, Swift +4*, Will +2, Wis +3**Defence:** 14 **Health:** 8 **Courage:** 3**Orders:** Warrior **Advancements:** 5**Order Abilities:** Evasion**Skills:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +8, Climb +2, Healing (Treat Wounds) +3, Jump +2, Language: Sindarin +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore/Group: Elves +4, Lore/Realm: Arnor +4; Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +10, Run +2, Stealth (Sneak) +6, Survival (Forests) +3, Track (Orcs) +2**Edges:** Accurate, Dodge, Quick-draw, Resolute **Flaws:** None**Gear:** Longsword, Longbow, 30 arrows**ART CREDITS**

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

<p>DECIPHER'S LORD OF THE RINGS RPG HOME http://lotrrpg.fanhq.com DECIPHER'S LOTR RPG BOARD http://forums.fanhq.com/viewforum.php?f=164 THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE SITE http://halloffire.org FAN MODULES FOR MIDDLE-EARTH http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fan-modules THE MAD IRISHMAN http://www.mad-irishman.net STARBASE CODA http://www.starbase-coda.com ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARDA http://www.glyphweb.com/arda/default.htm SCOTT'S RPG CENTRAL http://www.geocities.com/scott_metz/ CHRONICLES OF THE NORTH http://roleplay.avioc.org/index.htm</p>	<p>THE LAST ALLIANCE http://thelastalliance.com RPG TOOLS FOR DECIPHER'S CODA GAMES http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rpgtools/ THE STEWARD AND THE KING http://www.stewardandking.net THE TOWER HILLS http://homepage.mac.com/jeremybaker/towerhills TREK-RPG.NET http://forum.trek-rpg.net/index.php CODA WEBZINE REPOSITORY http://groups.yahoo.com/group/coda_webzine THE ONE RING.COM http://www.theonering.com/ THE ONE RING.NET http://www.theonering.net/ VALINOR http://sauron.misled.us</p>
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