

OTHER MINDS

The Unofficial Role - Playing Magazine for
J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and beyond

OTHER MINDS Magazine, Issue 24, January 2021

Publisher

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Cover page illustration

EÄRENDIL

This inspiring artwork by Jenny Dolfen can be found (among many other great illustrations) in her 2014 book *Songs of Sorrow and Hope - The Art of Jenny Dolfen*. You can find Middle-earth-themed illustrations in there as well as ones from a celtic theme as well as some historical pieces centred upon the famous general Hannibal.

The image features the great mariner Eärendil, holding his wife Elwing (still in bird-form), looking out from his ship Vingilot for the Undying Lands.

Artwork

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- Matej Cadil
- Andres Canals
- Liz Danforth
- Anke Eißmann
- Marya Filatova
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Submissions

You can submit your contributions by sending them via email to

othermindsmagazine@gmx.net

Please send as plain text for all text contributions. For artwork and maps, please send the files as .PNG or .JPEG/JPG (**please no TIFF or GIF**) at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi and no greater than 600 dpi. If your file is too large to send by email (more than a couple of MB), then you can create an account on the Other Minds website

<http://www.otherminds.net>

and upload your contribution there. Then send us an email notifying us of your submission on the website.

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Other Minds Magazine is an unofficial fan-based publication (both online and sometimes in print) created for those who love to role play in J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth (and beyond) using any game system they wish. This magazine provides original scholarly articles of interest to Tolkien enthusiasts – whether they are role playing gamers or not. There is no affiliation between the creators of this publication and any current or previous owners of the Tolkien copyrights, including but not limited to Sophisticated Games, Cubicle 7, Decipher, Mithril Miniatures, The Saul Zaentz Company, Tolkien Enterprises, the Tolkien Estate, New Line Cinema, or any other Tolkien license holders. This publication is 100% free and Other Minds Magazine does not accept any kind of financial reimbursement in any way. Online issues are available in PDF format at <http://www.otherminds.net>

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EDITORIAL:

HAPPY YESTARË 2021!

The *estel* from my last editorial has not failed us, and we see Issue 25 of *Other Minds* back on its original schedule! In part this was facilitated by an incoming high number of excellent contributions – so many that not all could make it into this Issue. This is in part sad, since it is really great even in their current stages, but the good news that we already have a quality submission secured for Issue 25!

Now, for the actual content of this Issue, again we have a nice mix of submissions which should serve a wide range of interests.

We start with a TOR adventure from first-time contributor Christoph Hardebusch named **Blood in the Waters**. This is intended to show beginning characters the mechanics and basic themes of the game and it fits seamlessly to *The Marsh Bell* from TOR's rulebook, making the start even easier.

The second one is also from a first-time contributor – Viel Nast – who explores the theme of a popular alternate temporal setting. His **Fourth Age of Middle-earth: The Return of the Shadow, a roleplaying perspective** adds a new view to this era which was already the focus of the contributions in Issue 9. Check out his ideas on it and perhaps we may see more of this in the future!

Following this, we have another piece focussing more on worldbuilding. **Ravens and Crows** by myself delves into the details of these two prominent birds in Tolkien's *legendarium* and provides a background suggestion how they wound up the way as we encounter them in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Next one is a block of three submissions by another first-time *Other Minds* author – Andrew Laubacher. First in line is his **A TOR Guide to**

the Lands of Lindon, describing this fascinating elven realm in the west of north-western Middle-earth. It gives the LM some guidance and background information should he use this area in his campaign(s).

Complementary to the description of Lindon, Andrew also provides us with a flavourful short story centred around Hobbits and Lindon. Do not miss out what **The Sisters and the Sea** has to offer in terms of storytelling based directly on a note by Tolkien!

Third and last (but certainly not least!) of Andrew's contributions, comes **The Haunted Lake**, another short adventure set in the area of and near the Shire. It offers a Hobbit-centric company of heroes the opportunity to solve some local trouble.

And finally comes Christoph's second adventure **Of Ghosts (and Goblins)**. It is also designed for TOR and set in Wilderland. It is generic enough not to be tied a specific place or region and thus can be placed in almost any campaign there. Be prepared for some light hearted action in Rhovanion!

Finally you can find the first adventure for the campaign outline found in Issue 23 by Andreas Erdmann, called **A Mass Abduction** that introduces the characters into the dangerous plot growing in ancient Angmar. It is their mission to thwart these plans and protect the North from a great threat.

This is it for my introductory words – have fun and inspiration with this Issue and see you all in Issue 25, which is due for the end of June 2021.

For the Other Minds team
Thomas Morwinsky
January 2020





"Then Kŭvatar said to them: 'Of the theme that I have declared to you, I will now that ye make in harmony together a Great Music. And since I have kindled you with the flame Imperishable, ye shall show forth your powers in adorning this theme, each with his own thoughts and devices, if he will. But I will sit and hearken, and be glad that through you great beauty has been awakened into song.'"

- Amulindalë (The Music of the Ainur)

The Silmarillion

by J.R.R. Tolkien

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THE ROAD GOES EVER ON

Certainly it reminds me [Frodo] very much of Bilbo in the last years, before he went away. He used often to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep, and every path was its tributary. "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to..."

—*The Lord of the Rings. Book I (A Shortcut to Mushrooms)*

There are many paths on the internet waiting to take you somewhere for Tolkien gaming. The vast reaches of the worldwide community harbour numerous roads and paths—some dangerous and some not—but it also has many havens of lore and respite where the weary traveller or loremaster seeking knowledge may find what he is looking for. In order to aid people on their journeys, this column of *Other Minds* (not exactly new, but with a new name) which will be a regular feature from now on offers a quick overview and pointer to potentially interesting Tolkien roleplaying-related websites.

For each site we give you a short description of its primary purpose and content to give you an overview for better judging how it might meet your needs.

The following list does not claim to be exhaustive or representative. In fact, I believe it is only a beginning. All the content of these pages is the responsibility of their owners. They are organised according to their primary gaming focus (e.g. TOR, MERP or whatever else) and, within each category, in alphabetical order.

This listing is intended to be “living”, i.e. constantly evolving and updated. So, **if you know any other sites that present information of value for Tolkien gamers, do contact us at othermindsmagazine@gmx.net so we can include it here for others to enjoy as well.**

The following abbreviations are used:

TOR—*The One Ring*, the currently licensed game since 2011 (on hold since Nov 2019). Formerly by Cubicle 7 and Sophisticated Games. Now from Fria Ligan and Sophisticated Games.

AME—*Adventures in Middle-earth* by Cubicle 7 and Sophisticated Games. The content of TOR re-statted and adapted for D&D 5e

LotRRPG—*The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* by Decipher. Ran from 2002 to 2007.

MERP—*Middle-earth Roleplaying* by Iron Crown Enterprises. The licensee from 1982 to 1999.

TOR AND AME



UPDATED

Abenteuer in Mittelerde 5e: a group for the german translation of AME. Has 154 members as of December 2020.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/418209615569312/>

Adventures in Middle-earth (AME) RPGGeek forum: After the demise of the Cubicle 7 forums this is the place where some AME-related discussions take place:

<https://rpggeek.com/forums/family/40055/adventures-middle-earth>

James Brown's TOR resources: James has set up a Google Drive with lots of material for TOR. Don't miss out this material. In addition, he also maintains a blog on the topic.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PNNmis-EMAQalCBa05RuTpl3coEmvAh9/view>

<https://advancementpoints.blogspot.com/p/the-one-ring.html>


El Anillo Unico: A spanish fan-site dedicated to *The One Ring* by Cubicle 7 (see below for their presence).
<http://elanillounico.tumblr.com/>

UPDATED **Facebook AME group:** This is an unofficial group for *Adventures in Middle-earth (AME)*, the D&D 5th ed. Version of the TOR supplements. Currently there are 1,518 members (December 2020). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1855668421386951/>

Glorelendil's online resources: Designed for maximum usability with the PDF's of the TOR supplements as well as an excellent online calculating tools.

<http://nameless-castle-5228.herokuapp.com/>
<http://thawing-shore-2005.herokuapp.com/>
<http://lit-oasis-7482.herokuapp.com/>

UPDATED **TOR Loremaster Guild:** This is a Facebook group providing information, knowledge and advice for LM's running (or planning to run) TOR campaigns. As of December 2020 there are 1,000 members.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/TORLguild>

 **Truant Spiele:** A german publisher who does the german translation of AME:
<https://truant.com/>

Facebook LotRRPG sites: First an interest page. Not much to see, but you can “like” it. The second one is a closed group about actual gaming, but now membership has decreased to 2 people. Both look pretty dead.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Lord-of-the-Rings-Roleplaying-Game/135039343195996>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/jmezlotrrpgg/>

MERP

I.C.E. product listing: Contains a listing of MERP products for reference.

<http://www.icewebring.com/ice-products>

Facebook MERP groups: There are several groups/sites dedicated to MERP here.

NEW

Guardians of Middle-earth is a private group and has now (December 2020) 693 members. It was brought to our attention by a reader of OM.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1905369979694358>

UPDATED

Middle-earth Roleplaying by Iron Crown Enterprises, now (December 2020) has 1,018 members and has been merged with the former *Middle-earth Roleplaying* group on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1614785935491947/>

MERP UK is a closed group (December 2020: 61 members) dealing with “untold stories” in Tolkien’s world. You can find it here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/231370666959142/>

It seems I overlooked this one named *MERP*. Nothing new here for years though. Membership still stands at 17 as of December 2020.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/5519656692/>

Lindëfirion: A campaign log and resources for a mid-Third Age campaign set in the Northwest. It is now closed though and only an announcement on this subject remains.

<http://www.lindëfirion.net>

Loren Rosson’s Blog “The Busybody”: A blog with reviews (“retrospectives”) of a selection of old and long out-of-print MERP modules. The relevant section is named “Middle-earth Retrospectives” and can be found on the left side of the links section (you have to scroll down a bit). <http://lorenrosson.blogspot.com>

MERP printing edition reference: A great reference for all the editorial changes and different printings of MERP 1st edition. If you are interested in the various editions of MERP up to 1992 (i.e. 1st ed.), this one is for you! Online again at a new site.

http://www.icewebring.com/MERP_Print_Ref/PrintingEditionReference.html

MERP Wikia: A Wiki-based collection of articles detailing the MERP canon and expanding it.

There is some info on other sources like the LotRRPG (depending on subject), but the focus is the published MERP canon and its expansion by fans. Highly valuable for everyone focusing on the MERP canon. http://merp.wikia.com/wiki/Middle-earth_Role_Playing_Wiki

SYSTEM-NEUTRAL OR MIXED

UPDATED

Fan-sourcebooks: This Yahoo group (formerly fan-modules) was founded in 2001 after the demise of *Other Hands*. Yahoo has closed its last group functionality by 15 December 2020 and is no longer accessible.

UPDATED

Facebook *Other Minds* group: We are happy to greet new fans, so don’t hesitate to swing by and become a member. In the two months since last Issue, our membership has increased by 23 to a total of 828 by January 2021)! <http://www.facebook.com/groups/othermindsmagazine>

Gondica: Blog of former MERP author Anders Blixt with some of his Middle-earth stuff on it.

<https://gondica.wordpress.com/>

Iron Crown Enterprises: Publishers of HARP. Visit their website.

<http://ironcrown.com/>

MERP.com: The site devoted to roleplaying in Middle-earth (though **not** exclusively or even primarily ICE's MERP as the title may suggest). It contains a vast vault of useful information and gaming material. <http://www.merp.com>



Facebook group on Middle-earth tabletop games (in german): A Facebook interest group for tabletop roleplaying games set in Middle-earth, independent of a specific system (170 members as of December 2020).
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/209367129217255/>



Mittelerde-Rollenspiel: A site devoted to tabletop roleplaying games set in Tolkien's Middle-earth for all german speakers exclusively.
<http://www.mittelerde-rollenspiel.de/>

UPDATED

TOLKIEN STUFF IN GENERAL

Ardalambion: One of the best sites dealing with Tolkien's languages. You may need to get used to the colour scheme, though. <http://folk.uib.no/hnohf/>



Compañía, La: A spanish site with a forum and dedicated to Tolkien in general (including books, movies and RPG's). Looks quite good, though due to my lack in Spanish I can't say much about it. <http://www.lacompania.net>



Deutsche Tolkienengesellschaft (German Tolkien Society): Similar to the Tolkien Society (see below), this site is about the furtherance of Tolkien scholarship and analysis in general. <http://www.tolkienengesellschaft.de/>

The Elvish Linguistic Fellowship: A Special Interest Group of the Mythopoetic Society, this (and its journals) is the place for you if you're looking for information and lore about Tolkien's invented languages. <http://www.elvish.org/>

The Encyclopedia of Arda: A good encyclopedic website about Tolkien's world.
<http://www.glyphweb.com/arda>



Gernot Katzer's History of Middle-earth site (German): A good site describing the essentials of the *History of Middle-earth* series. <http://gernot-katzers-spice-pages.com/tolkien/home.html>

Grey Havens, The: One of the oldest reference sites on the web that is still in business.
<http://tolkien.cro.net/>



Hiswelókë's Sindarin Dictionary: This online dictionary for Sindarin is very comprehensive and always worth a look when you are looking for something in that language.
<http://www.jrrvf.com/hisweloke/sindar/online/english.html>



Tolkienforum (German): A good forum covering all aspects of Tolkien lore and fandom.
<http://www.tolkienforum.de>

Tolkien Forum, The (English): A good English forum on many aspects of Tolkien
<http://www.thetolkienforum.com/>

Tolkien Gateway: A good wiki site with an encyclopedia on many topics about Tolkien and Middle-earth http://tolkiengateway.net/wiki/Main_Page

Tolkien Society: The site for everyone interested in the more scholarly and academic treatment of all things Tolkien. <http://www.tolkienesociety.org/>

Wikipedia Portal "Middle-earth": Even Wikipedia has a whole section dedicated to Tolkien and his myth. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Middle-earth>

ARTWORK

IN THIS ISSUE

Aegeri: Find her colourful and inspirational art at:

<https://www.deviantart.com/aegeri>

Antti Autio: See his fascinating artwork at <http://aautio.deviantart.com>.

IN THIS ISSUE

Sergio Artigas (Artigas): You can browse through his inspiring art in deviantart.

<http://artigas.deviantart.com/>

Onur Bakar: Find more of his art on <http://bakarov.deviantart.com/>

Steve Bellshaw (Seraph777): Explore his great characters here:

<https://www.deviantart.com/seraph777>

IN THIS ISSUE

Matej Cadil: Found on deviantart at <https://www.deviantart.com/matejcadil>

IN THIS ISSUE

Andres Canals: Found at <http://www.bluewave.fsnet.co.uk/>, though the link is dead by now.

Nacho Fernandez Castro: Visit his site on <http://www.nachocastro.es/>

Thomas Cole: Famous american painter. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cole

Ralph Damiani (ralphdamiani): You can find him and his magnificent art here

<https://www.ralphdamiani.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Liz Danforth: The famous artists who skillfully illustrated numerous MERP books. You can find her Patreon page (preferred, as it is up-to-date) at <https://www.patreon.com/LizDanforth> and her webpage (outdated) at <http://www.lizdanforth.com/>

Jenny Dolfen (Goldseven): A great german artist who focuses on the Eldar of the First Age. Her watercolour images are fantastic. You can also buy prints in several versions and sizes as well as originals. <https://goldseven.wordpress.com/> or <https://www.patreon.com/jennydolfen>

Nacho Fernandez Castro (NachoCastro): See his page at <http://nachocastro.deviantart.com/>

Katherine Carina Chmiel-Gugulska (Kasiopeia): Found on

<https://www.facebook.com/katarzyna.chmielgugulska>

IN THIS ISSUE

Anke Eißmann: She is one the greatest Tolkien illustrators. Check her art out at

<http://www.anke.edoras-art.de>

Olanda Fang-Surdenas (Wynahiros): Find her inspiring art on

<https://www.deviantart.com/filat>

IN THIS ISSUE

Marya Filatova (Filat): See her art on <http://wynahiros.deviantart.com>

IN THIS ISSUE

Wouter Florusse (woutart): Check out his page on <http://woutart.deviantart.com/>

Caspar David Friedrich: Famous romantic painter. See the Wikipedia page for examples of his work: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_David_Friedrich

Raymond E. Gaustadness (shockbolt): You can find his fine work on

<http://www.digitalartwork.no/>

Olga G (steamey): Her beautiful art can be found at <http://steamey.deviantart.com/>

Donato Giancola: Find more from him at <https://donatoarts.com/online-store/secure-store/Middle-earth-Journeys-in-Myth-and-Legend-p133467821>

Daniel Govar: A great artist whose website can be found at <http://danielgovar.com>.

Gin Hardiarso: He focusses on a theme popular in Fantasy - Warrior Women. He does it, however, unusually well since his subjects are not bikini-armoured amazons, but realistic heroines. Check his work out under <https://gambargin.deviantart.com/>

Arvid Hjorth: You can find his great works under the following link:

<https://www.artstation.com/arvidhjorth>

John Hodgson: The primary artist and artistic director for *The One Ring*. It's no wonder that the game is so well received (beside the good rules) if you look at his art:

<http://www.jonhodgsondesign.com> and his Patreon page

<https://www.patreon.com/jonhodgsonmaps>

IN THIS ISSUE

John Howe: The second of the great Tolkien artists that allowed the use of his artwork within our pages. Check out his great index. <http://www.john-howe.com/>

Thomas Jedrusek: One of the illustrators of *The One Ring*. See his page at

<http://www.morano.pl/>

Milek Jakubiec (EthicallyChallenged): Thanks for giving permission to use your work!

See more at <http://ethicallychallenged.deviantart.com/>

Pierre Joubert: A well-known illustrator of youths' books. See his official page (in french)

at <http://www.pierre-joubert.org/>

Jowita: Her exceptional work focuses on the darker themes of Middle-earth. Find it at

<https://www.deviantart.com/dead01>

Pawel Kardis (KardisArt): Meet his stunning work under

<https://www.deviantart.com/kardisart>

IN THIS ISSUE

Liiga Klavina (LiigaKlavina): Check out her awesome art at

<https://www.deviantart.com/liigaklavina>

Joona Kujanen (Tulikoura): Find his amazing art at <http://tulikoura.deviantart.com/>

Elena Kukanova: Check it out on <http://ekukanova.deviantart.com/>

Olga Kukhtenkova: You can find her work on the Tolkien Gateway

<http://fan.theonering.net/~rolozo/cgi-bin/rolozo.cgi/collection/kukhtenkova>

IN THIS ISSUE

Anna Kulisz (kuliszu): do not miss out her fascinating works at the following DA link.

<https://www.deviantart.com/kuliszu>

Julien Labit (Ilanthar): An inspiring artist whose work can be found under

<https://ilanthar.jimdo.com/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Janka Lateckova (Jankolas): Have a look at this beautiful artwork at

<https://www.deviantart.com/jankalateckova>

IN THIS ISSUE

J. Lazarus (JlazarusEB): Find him and his numerous and diverse historic warriors under

<https://jlazaruseb.deviantart.com/>

Alan Lee: The third of the famous Tolkien artists.

<https://www.facebook.com/alan.lee.5496>

Carl-Friedrich Lessing: A famous romantic painter. See his Wikipedia article at

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Friedrich_Lessing

Angus McBride: The famous illustrator of numerous historical books as well as MERP.

The Facebook page of his estate can be found under

<https://www.facebook.com/mcbrideangus/>

IN THIS ISSUE

Turner Mohan: Find out more of his excellent work at <http://www.mohan-art.com>.

My Clipart Store: The webstore holds many useful designs.

https://www.etsy.com/de/shop/MyClipArtStore?section_id=11138275

OTHER STUFF THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING FOR ROLEPLAYING IN MIDDLE-EARTH

Facebook “Fans of Mithril Miniatures” group: Lots of photos of painted minis plus some awesome dioramas. <http://www.facebook.com/groups/107518272188/>

Elroi’s Mithril: The blog of a highly talented and skilled painter of miniatures. Please make sure you don’t miss out his marvellous versions of Mithril Miniatures’ figurines. Please be aware that this is in Spanish, but the images speak for themselves.
<http://paintingmithrils.blogspot.com/>

Forge of Doom: A new miniature company - run by our veteran contributor José Enrique Vacas de la Rosa. Find out more on the next page and his weblink:
<https://forgeofdoom.com/>

Frothers Unite miniature forum: It is related to miniatures for sure!
<http://deartonyblair.blogspot.com.es/>

Gamerboard: Here you can order a cool gaming supplement for your sessions!
<http://gamerboard.at/>

Games Workshop: If you are interested in miniatures made according to the movie design, then the Games Workshop miniature line (for skirmish-level tabletop wargaming) is for you.
<http://www.games-workshop.com>

Many Mithril Pages: A site run by fans of Mithril Miniatures (see next entry). Here you can find extensive information and fan support for both current and out-of-stock minis.
<http://mmp.faerylands.eu/index.php>

Mithril Miniatures: They have been producing Middle-earth figurines since 1988; thus being one of the oldest still in business. They now have a general line (though diminished in volume compared to earlier times; in fact practically non-existing anymore) and an exclusive ‘Fellowship’ one which anyone can buy too, but the Fellowship members may vote on the next figures to be made. They also have a board, which is mostly miniatures-centred but some general Middle earth related information can be found as well. Recently they have been refurbishing their website and the selection of minis seems to have narrowed down even further. They also have started to switch to 3D-printing for modelling, but as they show CGI of these models rather than the final metal figures, the quality and outlook of these cannot be judged from the website.
<http://www.mithril.ie>
Forum: <http://mithrilfigures.proboards19.com/index.cgi>

Wargames Terrain: Looking for the latest tabletop miniature wargaming and roleplaying news? Make sure to check out the Wargame News and Terrain Blog which is daily covering new miniatures, tabletop scenery and wargame rules from companies worldwide. Venture into the magnificent world of tabletop miniature wargaming and engage in fantasy, science fiction and historical warfare on your miniature tabletop battlefield. Check them out at
<http://wargameterrain.blogspot.com> and Twitter [@wnt_news](https://twitter.com/wnt_news)

Check the full review of the soon to be released Northstar Miniatures plastic Dwarf Infantry and prepare to field epic Tolkienesque and folkloric inspired dwarf armies and roleplaying dwarf adventurers soon.
http://wargameterrain.blogspot.com/2017/04/northstar-miniatures-plastic-fantasy_30.html

Facebook “Wargaming in Middle-earth” group: Lots of photos of painted minis with no default manufacturer or style. In a way, it mirrors *Other Minds*’ approach; only in the field of miniatures.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/151243738922969/?hc_location=group

INSIDE INFORMATION

THE HALL OF FIRE WEBZINE ON HOLD

As we have learned, the webzine *The Hall of Fire* (see *The Road Goes Ever On* section for link) has ceased publication for the foreseeable future. We have no knowledge whether this will change and if it happens, when this will be.

The webzine has a long tradition, dating back to its extensive support of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* and its recent resurrection for TOR. We will keep you updated once we receive new information on this.



NEW ARTIST: MARYA FILATOVA

I am happy to introduce you to several new artists that gave permission to use their work in *Other Minds*. The first is Marya Filatova, whose many excellent works can be found under her entry in the artists' section of *The Road Goes ever On* (or directly [here](#)). Please make sure to have a look at her fantastic drawings!

NEW ARTIST: ANNA KULISZ

Second in line as a first-time artist within the pages of *Other Minds* is Anna Kulisz, who gave us her kind permission to use her work here. You can find her work [on her Deviantart](#) page - and of course also in the artists' section of *The Road goes Ever On*.

NEW ARTIST: JANKA LATECKOVÁ

The third new artist in this Issue is Janka Latecková. She specialises in character portraits. Please make sure you also check out [her Deviantart page](#), where there is so much more to see!

NEW ARTIST: MARKUS WEBER

Last but certainly not least among our first-time artists is Markus Weber, who specialises with his business "Guter Punkt" in artwork and maps for books, websites and other illustrations in general. Please also have a look at [his page](#) (in German) to see his full portfolio. He is also listed in the artists section.





This Tolkien discussion group has existed since the First Age before the world was made round.....

Our list has existed since the early 1990s with many members who have been here for years beyond count....

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or contact rossiele@yahoo.com

BLOOD IN THE WATERS

Christoph Hardebusch
(christoph@hardebusch.net)

per the terms of the CC license: 

adventure

First-time author Christoph Hardebusch takes a new company by the lead and introduces them into the world of adventures. This scenario is well suited for beginners to learn the mechanics of TOR.

This is also not his only contribution to this Issue, but later you will find another short adventure. I am confident that these two will not remain his only contributions, but that he will also submit more for upcoming Issues.

But for the moment, enjoy this introduction to TOR and have fun with your company!

PREAMBLE

Blood in the Waters is an introductory adventure for a new company. While *The One Ring* assumes that the player-heroes met and formed a company before the game begins, this adventure is aimed at bringing a group of player-heroes together and forming a lasting bond between them and several Loremaster characters, setting the foundation for a campaign.

A few tips for Loremasters beforehand:

1. *Blood in the Waters* is written as a tie-in for *Tales from Wilderland*, especially for the mini-campaign contained in that excellent book. Events in this adventure foreshadow things to come and the driving force behind them is meant to be the main villain of *Tales from Wilderland*. If you do not own the book, I strongly advise you to buy it; you won't regret it. But of course, *Blood in the Waters* can be played without this connection.
2. The adventure is meant to showcase some of the aspects of the game, like travel, combat and encounters amongst others. The time frame is short, and it should be possible to quickly follow with the next adventure, for example *The Marsh-Bell*.
3. In my experience, bonds not only between player-heroes, but also between them and Loremaster characters are often the driving force of a campaign and one of the main reasons that separates a long-lasting campaign from one that fizzles out. This adventure provides several Loremaster characters to that effect, from possible recurring villains to patrons, friends and contacts. Make sure to provide the players with enough hooks to these Loremaster characters.
4. While the main event of *Blood in the Waters* is meant to be resolved by the player-heroes, a larger plot is running in the background. It is too soon for the player-heroes

to find out, but you should cast a shadow ahead nonetheless; the easiest way to do this is by having troubled Loremaster characters voice their vague concerns at the end of the adventure.

- **When:** The year 2946, right before the Gathering of the Five Armies.
- **Where:** The adventure starts in Lake town.
- **What:** The company find out that Goblins have taken prisoners near Lake-town.
- **Why:** No one else is near and the companions are the only hope for the captives.
- **Who:** The Goblins have taken Theustal and his travelling companions. They are led by Rigurz, a half-orc of great strength who is a servant of a dark power.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Theustal, Alderman of Grededun (which means Greenhill in the tongue of the West), a small settlement in the Grey Mountains north of the Mirkwood, set out with a young warrior named Lyskar to attend the festivities at Dale and talk to the Dwarves of Erebor. For many years, a small dwarven population had prospered in Grededun, operating a mine, and both dwarves and humans profited from each other. But the dwarves joined their cousins at the Lonely Mountain after it was reclaimed following Smaug's death and the Battle of Five Armies. Now Theustal wants to use the abandoned dwarven mines for his people and is determined to obtain permission to do so.

To earn good-will, he gathered gifts from his people, amongst them an old dwarven map. Unbeknown to him, the map contains the location of a dwarven keep once built to contain an old artifact of evil, which dark forces are trying to obtain now. They sent a band of Goblins, led by the Half-orc Rigurz, to capture Theustal and gain the map. The small warband attacked Theustal and his companion while they were at the Dragon's Head Inn and took them and other people captive. Rigurz took the map and some valuables and left the Goblins to their fate, returning to the south.

ADVENTURING PHASE

This adventure is divided into six parts.

Part One – A journey by boat

The companions set out from Esgaroth by boat to reach Dale and take part in the celebration of the Gathering of the Five Armies. They meet each other and the other travellers, a mother and her son.

Part Two – A grim Discovery

They arrive at the small wharf of the Dragon's Head at the northern shore of the Long Lake, only to find the inn deserted. To their dismay, they discover signs of a fight and tracks of Goblins. As they are the only good folk in the area, the companions are asked to follow the Goblins and free their captives.

Part Three – The taken's only hope

The company set out and hunt the Goblins, but the sly creatures have set a trap to deter any pursuers.

Part Four – The Battle of the Goblin Camp

Making great haste, the company discovers the Goblin camp and attack them.

Part Five – Of Orcs and Half-orcs

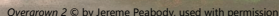
The grateful captives inform the companions that two of their assailants split from the raiding party before, a Half-Orc and a great Warg. They do not know where they went.

Epilogue – A Reception of Heroes

The company arrives at the celebrations and are welcomed by many as heroes. Gandalf the Grey asks them about the attack.

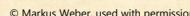
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Describe the peaceful scenery, have the Loremaster characters tell jokes about Smaug and his demise. It is a warm autumn day and the future looks bright.



At the Dragon's Head Inn

The Goblin band tracked Theustal and young Lyskar since they left Grededun, but only caught up with them on the shores of the Long Lake. They waited until nightfall and attacked the Dragon's Head. The few people at the inn were quickly overwhelmed; only Lyskar and Otar managed to slay attackers. Both were badly wounded in return. Lyskar was taken captive, while Otar was thrown into the waters, as the Goblins believed him dead. The Goblins took all that they deemed valuable, which is about everything that they could move.



Clues

- The sign of the inn, a round shield painted with the ornate head of a dragon, is missing. It was obviously removed by force (**Awareness, TN12**). In fact, one of the Snaga Trackers took it and now uses it as a shield.
- There is blood on the wharf (**Hunting TN14**).
- A survivor below the wharf: Otar, a Barding and veteran of the Battle of the Five Armies, who slew a Goblin and was badly wounded, but managed to survive. (**Search, TN14**).
- A Pony named Piri managed to escape; it now grazes near the inn. (**Persuade, Song or Hunting with TN14** to catch it)
- Tracks lead to the north-west (**Hunting, TN14**). The tracks of several Goblins and Wargs, plus the captives. A great success reveals that about half a dozen prisoners were taken by about a dozen Goblins and at least four Wargs. An extraordinary success reveals the precise numbers: 6 prisoners, 5 Wargs, 12 Orcs, two of which are larger than the rest.

Vetis offers to travel to Dale and report the attack, while Jarvi wants to pursue the Goblins, but receives a stern talking-to and sullenly follows his mother. The two ferry-men will carry Otar to a healer at Lake-town, and promise to send help as soon as possible. The old veteran is barely conscious but he warns the company of the giant Orc with the cruel blade and his vicious Warg, not knowing that Rigurz already left the warband. All five ask the company to follow the Goblins and rescue their captives; if they do not do it, the people are lost as the Goblins will likely get away before help can arrive.

Part Three – The captives' only hope

The Pursuit

As the player-heroes are the only ones able to help the captives, they should set out as soon as possible. The tracks lead them to the north-west. The Goblins tried to keep as much distance as possible between them and the Lonely Mountain and Mirkwood. They travelled with haste, using the Wargs as – unwilling! – beasts of burden.

Unbeknownst to the player-heroes, Rigurz ordered a small band of them to lay an ambush for any pursuers. This is as much a deterrent as a diversion; shortly thereafter, Rigurz left the main band and turned south, expertly hiding his tracks. The Goblins chose a small patch of wood for their trap. They fear Rigurz too much to disobey, but they are eager to leave and return to their ilk.

This part is about travelling the wild. All player-heroes have to roll **Travel**. If a Hazard episode occurs, the company runs into the ambush without notice. If no Hazard episode is triggered, the player-heroes might discover the ambush; have the lookouts roll **Awareness** versus the Goblin's stealth. For this instance, assume that one of the Snaga Trackers chose the spot: roll their **Survival** and add their Attribute Level (2). If the player-heroes discover the ambush, they have the following options: avoid the Goblins (scouts roll **Explore to circumvent the wood**), try to sneak up on them (have them roll **Stealth** versus the Warg's **Perception**) or simply attack them. If the company stumbles into the ambush, or decides to engage the Goblins in any way, Initiative and Combat Advantages are determined as per the normal rules.

Note how much time the company spends here. Lyskar is severely wounded and is in dire need of treatment. If the company loses too much time, either by avoiding the Goblins or by setting up an elaborate surprise attack of their own, the young Beorning could very well die of his wounds.

Adversaries: 2 Goblin Archers, 2 Wargs, 2 Snaga Trackers.

The Goblin Camp

The Battle of the Goblin Camp

The Goblin Camp

After Rigurz left, the Goblins lost their drive. The Orc Guard took over, but since Rigurz mercilessly belittled him, he is in a dark mood. Despite the orders to move as fast as possible, he decided that the small band should settle for the day and rest, waiting for the ones they left behind. Considering himself to be a much better leader than he actually is, the Orc Guard started to vent his anger by bullying the Goblins and sifting through the plunder, taking the best pieces for himself. Rigurz suspected this as he left, but did not care, as the Goblins had fulfilled their purpose. The cunning Half-orc knows that pursuers are likely to catch the war-band, but he figures that this will keep his foes occupied and allows him to escape.

The small warband took refuge below a massive rock upon a small hill. While not a real cave, overhanging rocks grant enough shadow for the creatures to feel comfortable during the day. As long as the battle takes place there, neither the *Hate Sunlight* nor the *Denizen of the Dark* special abilities come into play. The sides of the hill are covered in bushes, allowing for a stealthy approach.



At least one Warg and one Goblin will keep watch at all times, but a surprise attack is possible with a **Stealth** roll. Alternatively, the captives can be freed by **Stealth** or by creating a diversion. If the Goblins are attacked, the Orc Guard orders one of the Snaga Trackers to kill the captives before charging into battle himself. The player-heroes can stop the murder with ranged attacks or by engaging the Goblin in

melee. If the Orc Guard falls, all other adversaries lose 1 point of Hate.

If the player-heroes free at least some of the captives before or during the battle, two things will happen:

1. Toka the serving maid discovers steel in her heart and attacks the Goblins with wild abandon with whatever weapon she is given. She pushes back and eventually slays one of them.
2. Theustal defends the motionless Lyskar and the other prisoners, while Aesví throws rocks at the Goblins: each round, one adversary determined by the Loremaster is considered weary as he is pelted by rocks.

Adversaries: 2 Goblin Archers, 2 Wargs, 4 Snaga Trackers, 1 Orc Guard.

Captives: Theustal, Lyskar, Aesví, Toka, Miki & Fari.

Aftermath

If the battle is won, the freed captives are thankful and bless the player-heroes for their timely arrival. Even if Lyskar died of his wounds, no blame is laid on the player-heroes, for everyone knows they did what they could. If Lyskar is still alive, he needs immediate medical treatment; have a player-hero roll **Healing**. A success stabilizes the young Beorning enough to be brought to Dale on a stretcher; a great or extraordinary success brings him back to his feet.

Most of the plunder is still there, although some of it has been spoiled by the Goblins. Both pigs and all chickens have been slaughtered by the Goblins, with much of the good meat already eaten. Two dead Goblins lie nearby; they are the ones that Otar and Lyskar slew. The warband took their bodies as provisions for their journey home...



PART FIVE - Of ORCS and Half-ORCS

Talking with the captives reveals troubling news: the Goblins were initially led by a Half-orc named Rigurz, who was accompanied by a huge Warg. These two took some of the more valuable loot – including the old map – and left shortly after the their attack. To Theustal it seemed as if the Half-Orc did not like Goblins of the North. Rigurz spoke Westron with the Goblins, indicating that he is not of their tribe, and told them that the night of revenge would come. Nobody among the freed captives knows what this means. The significance of the map is also lost on the captives, and they rather guess that Rigurz was after more ordinary plunder, as he mostly took gold and the best provisions.

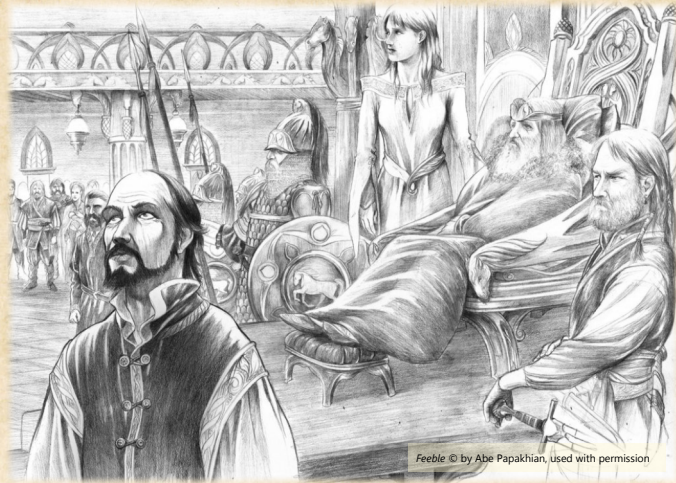
Theustal is unaware that the Goblins tracked him all the way. He knows that the Goblins hail from the Grey Mountains though, as he could identify their dialect – he spent many a night in his youth shadowing Orcs and Goblins, and knows some of their tongue.

Epilogue - A Reception of Heroes

The company escorts the freed prisoners to the Dragon's Head, where Aesví, Toka, Miki and Fari remain. The grateful owner hands them a reward (1 Treasure Point each) and tells them that they are always welcome at his inn.

Together with Theustal and Lyskar (if he survived) they set out towards Dale and are met by riders of King Bard, led by the young knight Arden. The riders escort them the rest of the way.

They enter the city where they are greeted as heroes and brought before the king. Several dignitaries of the Free Peoples listen to their account, amongst them King Bard, Dáin II Iron-foot, Legolas Greenleaf and Alisa, emissary of the Woodfolk. A grey robed figure keeps to himself; Gandalf is present and listens with great care, but does not involve himself in the council – yet.



Set Tolerance

While defeating the Goblins and rescuing their prisoners was an act of great valour, most of the dignitaries value Wisdom even more. As many different cultures are present, the attendants look kindly upon player-heroes from different cultures. Thus, the initial Tolerance is the highest Wisdom in the group plus one for each different culture present plus the Standing of any Barding.

Introduction

The company may use **Awe** or **Courtesy**, either telling of their heroic exploits or addressing the dignitaries with fair words. Both approaches yield the same result.

Interaction

The company may tell their tale via **Courtesy**, **Riddle** or **Song**. They may roll **Insight** on request; on a success they realize that some of the dignitaries are rather worried because of the boldness of the attack. A successful **Inspire** roll will rally the attendants, especially the men of the north.

Theustal only speaks when asked to, as he realizes that the tale is the company's. If asked, he will present his view on the Goblins, and will only have the highest praise for the player-heroes.

Compare the number of successful rolls they achieved (including the Introduction) with the entries given below; higher results only supplant lower results if they improve on them.

- **0:** Despite the heroic efforts of the company, the dignitaries are not impressed, and give only faint praise. They quickly fall to bickering amongst themselves as to who should do what about the Goblin threat.
- **1-2:** The player-heroes are praised for their efforts and are awarded 1 Treasure Point each. Most dignitaries assume that the attack was a singular event. Still, King Bard promises to send riders to the north to hunt Goblins. Dáin II Ironfoot, King under the Mountain, decrees that Grededun may use the abandoned dwarven mines.
- **3-4:** Praise is heaped upon the player-heroes. Dáin II Ironfoot promises Grededun aid from his miners.
- **5-6:** The player-heroes are given seats of honour during the festivities. Dáin II Ironfoot sends a small band of dwarves to Grededun to live and work there.
- **7:** King Bard sends even more warriors to the north. Legolas Greenleaf promises that his people will provide guidance and provisions to any who hunt Goblins near the forest.

Regardless of the outcome of the council, Gandalf approaches the player-heroes. He seems troubled by the news and asks questions about Rigurz and his companion and about the dwarven map. It is obvious that he considers the attack significant, but he cannot yet make head or tails of it. He does not take the company into his counsel, but they have gained his attention.

Fellowship Phase

The company can now consider Grededun and the Dragon's Head Inn as sanctuaries. They receive 1 point of Treasure each as a reward from Theustal.

Grededun can act as a focal point for a small series of adventures, as Theustal bids the player-heroes to visit him at any time – they could be involved in the small settlement's struggle for survival, fighting of Goblin incursions, helping re-opening the old mine and acting as emissaries to neighbours.

PERSONS, BEASTS AND MONSTERS

Persons

Vetis

Lake-towner & mercer. In her mid-thirties, travel-hardened and of great experience.

Javri

Lake-towner & son of Vetis, a young lad of twelve summers. Chestnut hair, tall for his age, with bright eyes and a big grin.

Adalroda & Juti

Lake-towner & ferry-men, both in their twenties, both blond, friendly and funny.

Otar

Barding & veteran of battle, took an arrow to the knee and works at the Dragon's Head, stalwart yet frustrated about his broken knee.

Theustal

Beorning & old man like gnarled wood. See below for a more detailed description.

Lyskar

Beorning & young warrior, tall and fair-headed, eager to prove his worth, but grievously wounded now.

Aesvī

Lake-towner & owner of the Dragon's Head, resolute woman in her forties, widowed on the night Esgaroth burned.

Toka

Barding & young serving maid. Seems wide eyed and naive at first glance, but there is a hidden fire in her.

Miki & Fari

Lake-towner & servants, one old, one young, both timid and full of fear.



Notable Loremaster characters

RIGURZ

Description

Tall as a man, broad shouldered with a powerful frame, heavily scarred.

Demeanor

Rigurz has learned to constrain himself if necessary, and usually plays the part of the gruff but kind-hearted wanderer if travelling among men. When under no such obligations, he is a true sadist, inflicting pain and anguish for his own pleasure, and seeing all others only as means to his own ends.

Background

Rigurz was born Rickun as the result of a terrible crime visited upon his mother by his half-orc father whom he never met. Shunned by the village of Northmen and hated by his mother, his childhood was singularly terrible. Many of his scars stem from the savage beatings he received from his mother, her long leather belt an object of terror, literally beating him to within an inch of death. But one night, after barely thirteen winters, he stood up to his mother, took the belt and strangled her with it. He crept away that night, knowing full well what fate awaited him if the villagers found out about this crime. He searched all over the Misty Mountains for his other kin, for in his dreams the Orcs always welcomed him as one of their own. Reality proved to be a harsh mistress; the Goblins loathed him, playing cruel tricks on him, letting him scrape together a living from their refuse. For years, Rigurz survived only on anger and hate. But he grew tall and strong, and began to kill his tormentors, until he was finally driven away.

Since then, he has travelled the whole of Wilderland, at first shunned by both men and Orc. After some years of aimless wandering, he felt a call in his heart, and he followed this

instinct to southern Mirkwood, where he met a new master, one who promised him vengeance on all who did him wrong. The sepulchral voice spoke of cataclysmic events, of the eradication of men, the subjugation of Orcs, of wanton destruction and countless deaths, and Rigurz listened. Finally he had found a purpose.

Now he is driven by this purpose, he travels to further this great task. He learned to walk as a man, blending in with the humans, all the while becoming a leader of Goblins and Orcs through his strength and his cunning. He does not care for either, and sees others only as tools to be used and abused.

When not travelling in human disguise, he rides a powerful black Warg, a beast that is so great and terrible that there must be more than mere wolves amongst its ancestry. There is no love lost between mount and rider, but they respect each other's strength and ferocity, and their bond is formed out of hatred for all else that lives.



Theustal

Description

Small for a man of the north, but imposing nonetheless with weathered features that show his experience and the hardships he endured. White hair and wiry arms, but he can still string and shoot a bow like a man half his age.

Demeanor

Theustal is a good listener, a man of great empathy and wisdom, who garners respect among his fellows. He is often silent while pondering situations, but when he speaks, his words carry weight.

Background

Theustal spent the first half of his life as a hunter in the wild, following the footsteps of his parents. He was based out of Gredun, but only spent the coldest part of the winters there. He was a talented hunter of game, and also a deadly foe of Orcs and Goblins.

This all changed when he met his future wife. He settled down, remaining a hunter but roaming less and less. It was at this time that his reputation grew, for the men of Gredun discovered him to be fair-spoken and wise. Soon, he became alderman of the small town, forging fast bonds of friendship with its neighbours, mediating in disputes and sitting as an impartial yet compassionate judge in the few trials.

He fthered several children, becoming the head of a great family. During his time as alderman, Gredun prospered, and its people repaid his dutiful rule with loyalty. His main concern is the well-being of Gredun, but he cares for all good folk.

PLACES

The Dragon's Head Inn



Founded after the death of the dragon, the Dragon's Head is mostly used by travellers on their way from or to Dale and the Lonely Mountain and those who travel even further east.

With its two small ferries, the inn provides the most comfortable way of crossing the waters, and there are often boats to and from Lake-town.

The lodgings at the inn are simple and rough, consisting of a great hall in which travellers can make their beds, but for most the sight of the shield painted with the famous dragon's head is still a welcome sight after traversing the wild. The food is surprisingly good, as merchants and hunters who stop by often sell or barter their goods. The prices are very affordable and Aesví, the owner, has been known to let those down on their luck stay in the stable and even giving them a hot stew without asking for money.



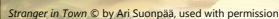
Prancing Pony © by Matej Cadil, used with permission

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So Grededun survived for generations, a small point of light in the savage North. Its fortune changed for the better when Dwarven refugees from Erebor asked for permission to settle there. The Dwarves were welcomed with open arms and soon began to dig into the hill in

Grenedun occupies a hilltop in the foothills below the Grey Mountains. Steep cliffs and sturdy, dwarven-built walls of stone across the only passageway protect the settlement from all aggression, and a spring ensures that there is enough fresh water to sustain any siege. Thrice the Orcs of the Grey Mountains tried to destroy Grenedun, thrice they have been defeated.

The Mines of Grededun contain a great secret: Caves of Crystal connected to a vast cavern with an underground mere - that contains something old and evil and cunning!



FOURTH AGE OF MIDDLE-EARTH

THE RETURN OF THE SHADOW , A ROLEPLAYING PERSPECTIVE

Viel Nast

(landofoyr@gmail.com)

per the terms of the CC license: 

supplementary
stuff

This submission takes up the theme of a previous Issue of Other Minds and adds some new perspective to it. The Fourth Age with its unwritten history (and thus roleplaying, worldbuilding and fan-fiction possibilities) has always fascinated fans of Middle-earth.

Therefore we are very happy to have another submission on this theme, which we hope we will enjoy and perhaps even build upon there. Do not hesitate to get into contact with Viel for any questions or suggestions!

In order for our beloved world and setting to live on forever, I believe there must be continuation of the story into the Fourth Age where new elements will blend with old ones and the road will go ever on...

As a Tolkien fan, an epic fantasy author and an avid roleplaying gamer, I would try to include these three traits into the present article, and present my opinion of how the stories of Middle-earth can continue to offer both reading material and roleplaying experiences.

During the last forty years there have been three attempts to bring Middle-earth into pen and paper roleplaying games. First it was ICE with the excellent *Middle-earth Roleplaying* (MERP) that boasted more than sixty supplements with detailed presentation for every known area of the Northwest of Middle-earth. A truly remarkable work of scholarly research and dedication. The second attempt came with Decipher and its *Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* (LotRRPG), though it is generally considered to have failed. The books had nice artwork from the movies though, but the company didn't publish more than ten supplements overall before it lost their license. Finally, the third attempt came with Cubicle 7 and *The One Ring* (TOR) with many supplements as well, but an early ending due to discrepancies between the licensee and the licensor. Free League publishing has taken the license and will bring a second edition to TOR but we don't currently have many details to be discussed.

All of these attempts focused on periods in the Third Age: Either its middle (MERP) or its end between *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* books (circa T.A. 2941-3000).

The problem with playing along the major storylines is that every character had to be in the shadow of the Fellowship and focus on a different area or mission that couldn't be as critical as the one overtaken by Frodo and Co or Thorin and Co. MERP, on the other hand, had a rather

¹ You can learn more in issues four and five of “Other Minds Magazine” that were dedicated to dwarves.

[illegible]

Also, as Eldarion is a half Elf, is he granted the life span of the Númenóreans kings of old (like Elros his forefather) or he will live like his father to have a span of three of four men?

Evil will surely remain as the essence of Morgoth had tainted the land, but how will this evil be manifested in the Fourth Age? Will the lieutenant of Barad-dûr gather evil forces around him, or maybe a new threat will come from the Far East to threaten yet again the peace and prosperity of the Free Peoples?

The possibilities are countless, and the project's vision of a Fourth Age in Middle-earth are limitless and rewarding. Middle-earth can continue providing new experiences and opportunities to live and breathe in a wonderful world we all grew to love.

Furthermore, if Middle-earth can become a truly open licensed world and many authors, under the acceptance of Tolkien Estate, could write fan-fiction of the Fourth Age to further enrich our beloved setting!

I tried to be both brief and comprehensive, and I hope the above article will be the ground from which we can grow something important and interesting!



RAVENS AND CROWS

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background stuff

Those of you who are familiar with my contributions to *Other Minds* know my special interest in the background and world-building aspects of Middle-earth - and this article is no exception.

I hope it will give you some ideas and inspiration for your games as well for the understanding of how and why Tolkien came to the solutions we find in *‘The Hobbit’* and *‘The Lord of the Rings’*.

Have fun with it and I am happy to hear any feedback on this!



INTRODUCTION

Ravens and crows play a role in both *The Hobbit* as well as *The Lord of the Rings*, and it is interesting to delve a bit deeper into the sources, the birds' depiction, models, roles, background and possible roleplaying conclusions based on this information.

The sources

Already in *The Hobbit*, Tolkien uses ravens as “good” animals, whereas crows are depicted more negatively:

“I only wish he [the Thrush] was a raven!” said Balin.

“I thought you did not like them! You seemed very shy of them, when we came this way before.”

“Those were crows! And nasty suspicious-looking creatures at that, and rude as well. You must have heard the ugly names they were calling after us. But the ravens are different. There used to be great friendship between them and the people of Thrór; [...]”

—*The Hobbit. The Gathering of the Clouds*

Balin's remark about the friendship of the ravens suggest that this was exclusive – i.e. setting it in stark contrast to the rude manners of the crows. This continues in *The Lord of the Rings*, when Aragorn observes:

‘Regiments of black crows are flying over all the land between the Mountains and the Greyflood,’ he [Aragorn] said, ‘and they have passed over Hollin. They are not natives here; they are crebain out of Fangorn and Dunland. I do not know what they are about: possibly there is some trouble away south from which they are fleeing; ; but I think they are spying out the land [...]’

—*LotR. The Ring goes South*

This is all the more interesting, as in our real world these birds are all closely related (all of them being members of the genus *Corvus* with more than 40 species). There is no real difference between them (i.e. behaviour, ecological niche etc.) – it is only that the larger species are called *ravens*, whereas the smaller ones are labelled as *crows*. The lifestyle of ravens and crows is also very similar, with both of them often feeding on carrion for example.

bringing news back to
Odin. The
image to the
left is a
typical rep-
resentation.



¹ Schwan, M. 2010. *Raven: The Northern Bird of Paradox*[Online]. Alaska Department for Fishing and Game. Available:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20100102055945/http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=birds.raven> [Accessed 06 Dec 2020].

Development

The History of Middle-earth series gives us the chance to look at the development of the world in general, while *The History of The Hobbit* (RATELIFF AND TOLKIEN, 2013) does this for *The Hobbit*. The earlier drafts and iterations still contained crows and ravens as equal regarding friendliness or trustworthiness: At that point (plot notes for the second phase of the writing of the *Hobbit*), both were depicted as birds of questionable worth or trust:

They [Thorin & Co] crept near^{<er>} the mountain by stages but only crows and ravens, and they were afraid of them as spies.

—*The History of the Hobbit.*
Plot notes B (p.362)

This concept of crows and ravens as being equally judged was retained quite long, until Tolkien made a radical change, since Thorin & Co. needed someone to tell them of Smaug's demise. Here the author changed the ravens fundamentally by making them friendly to Dwarves and transferred the negative traits of the ravens solely to crows.



Not until Tolkien comes to write the last few pages of the Second Phase manuscript, [...] do the ravens finally appear, with such suddenness that Bilbo himself comments upon it (see page 618).

[...]

Since ravens appear in that later scene as much more sympathetic figures than those described here, Tolkien recast this passage in several stages to remove this incongruity. Thus ‘a dark and ominous raven’ becomes in the First Typescript ‘a black and ominous crow’, [...]

—*The History of the Hobbit.*
Plot notes B (p.478f)

Beyond the pure necessity to gain a source of intelligence for Thorin & Co, the reasons for the “upgrade” of the ravens over their crow cousins might also have been influenced by his sources:

Tolkien’s specific choice of ravens combines both elements of traditional myth and real-world fact. Not only are ravens and crows traditionally associated with battles, but they are the smartest of all birds, exceptionally long-lived [...] and capable of speech, at least to the extent of being able to learn and intelligibly repeat several words or phrases. Tolkien has exaggerated or rather enhanced their intelligence, longevity [Roäc was 153 when he encountered Thorin & Co] and loquaciousness or linguistic ability for the purpose of his story, but his fantasy builds on a solid factual basis here.

—*The History of the Hobbit.*
Plot notes D (p.624)

Here we see Tolkien’s approach to take well-established zoological facts (the longevity and intelligence of these birds) and thus stay rooted in real-world models even if these traits were enhanced for his imaginary world.

ROLES

The roles that both ravens and crows (to use this somewhat awkward differentiation) fill in Middle-earth are quite similar. They act as gatherers of intelligence (i.e. spies) for their respective allies (e.g. Saruman for crows and the Dwarves of Erebor for the Ravens). The difference is not the role as such (which is the same), but only for whom they do it. *The Hobbit* has several passages highlighting this intelligence-gathering and messenger role of the ravens. The first one hints that the birds are doing this already on their own, without any specific mission given to them by the Dwarves. After the initial exchange, Thorin uses the ravens extensively both as messengers as well as to reconnoitre the dispositions of his adversaries.

Most of my people [the Ravens of the Mountains; Roäc speaking] are abroad, for there are great tidings in the South - some are tidings of joy to you, and some you will not think so good.

[...]

[Thorin speaking] If you would earn our thanks still more, bring us news of any that draw near. Also I would beg of you, if any of you are still young and strong of wing, that you would send messengers to our kin in the mountains of the North, both west from here and east, and tell them of our plight. [...]

“I will not say if this counsel be good or bad,” croaked Roäc; “but I will do what can be done.” Then off he slowly flew.

[...]

As they worked the ravens brought them constant tidings. In this way they learned that the Elvenking had turned aside to the Lake, and they still had a breathing space.

—*The Hobbit. The Gathering of the Clouds*

These were, in fact, precisely their plans (for the raven-messengers had been busy between Thorin and Dain); [...]

[...]

Not even the ravens knew of their [Bolg's goblins] coming until they came out in the broken lands which divided the Lonely Mountain from the hills behind.

—*The Hobbit. The Clouds Burst*

These passages make it very clear that the ravens fill exactly the same niche as the crows that Aragorn spots in Hollin (see quote from the *Lord of the Rings* above). Beside the necessity of someone bringing news to Thorin & Co, Tolkien might have been influenced by the already mentioned Old Norse mythology, where ravens also hold a special role:

He combines their rather sinister reputation as harbingers of battle (they are, after all, carrion birds as Roäc admits) with their legendary exploits as messengers: Odin's two ravens, Hugin and Munin ('Thought' and 'Memory'), fly forth every day and report back to him all that passes in the world (Prose Edda pages 63-4).

—*The History of the Hobbit. Plot notes D (p.624)*

Thus combined, we can see that both crows and ravens are used as messengers and scouts for their respective allies - beside their more sinister associations with battle, carrion and death. This role also offers some good opportunities for roleplaying beyond the well-known uses – especially regarding the origin of this specific connection.

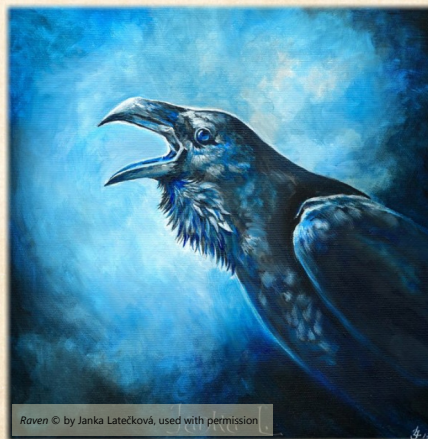
CROWS AND RAVENS AS MESSENGERS IN LITERATURE AND REALITY

Having discussed to some depth the role that these birds fill in Middle-earth, it is worth looking what is there beyond this.

First and foremost, ravens feature also prominent in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, (televised as *Game of Thrones*), where they are regular messenger birds between the large fortresses and/or cities over long distances.

In contrast, in the real world the only birds that were ever used for messaging were homing (or messenger) pigeons (*Columba livia domestica*). Here their natural ability to find their home even over long distances is used by humans for their purposes. Corvidae on the other hand were (and are) never used for such a purpose. First, they lack such a natural "long-distance homing ability", and their intelligence (which is often cited as the reason why they should be used for this purpose) might even work against it, as they get easily distracted by interesting things along the way – even if not to the extent of their relatives, the jackdaws.

Beyond the real world though, ravens and crows might work as messengers, if you have some way to actually talk to them and convince them that this should be done (or simply charm them to do the humans' bidding). This is possible in a fantasy setting and thus crows and ravens can offer an interesting alternative to the well-known homing pigeons as messenger birds. This possibility is used as the basis for my further developments below.



Raven © by Janka Latečková, used with permission

Եր երիցս արդ իւրիցս օճեր երիցս արդ իւրիցս օճեր երիցս արդ իւրիցս օճեր երիցս արդ իւրիցս օճեր երիցս արդ իւրիցս օճեր

Raven © by Līga Kļaviņa, used with permission

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Please note the figurative use of Saruman's black hair – "raven". It is probably just poetic license, but in this context it is a telling one that the chief Istar is given a "raven" attribute to describe his hair.

him the art of training *crebain*, which Aewenír – now mostly called Radagast – gladly did. However, the limited talent of the White Wizard in all things living also set clear boundaries for his abilities in training such birds.

The Rhovanian Era

After the Wainrider Wars and the flight of the ‘Necromancer’ from Dol Guldur, Curunír conferred with Mithrandir and set out for his greatest and most extensive journey east to find more about the elusive evil entity. In this endeavour, he visited the Dwarves of Var’s and Vigdis’ Folk and is instrumental in eventually breaking the influence of Sauron-in-disguise among them.¹ Even his limited skills in training *crebain* served him well there, providing the eastern dwarves with some additional means to communicate with each other and scout their territories.

After the White Wizard's return to the Northwest in the 26th century, he took a special interest in the fortunes of Durin's Folk, especially their trouble with the dragons in the Ered Mithrin and final re-location to Erebor. He greatly helped them in re-establishing the city in the Lonely Mountain. In addition, he also brought them many news about their eastern cousins and advised them to secure Erebor even better. It was also him that noticed the presence of some special and intelligent crebain at Erebor and with Radagast – whom he asked for support again – facilitated cordial relations between Durin's Folk and the Lord of the Mountain Ravens. Radagast also taught the Ravens the Common Speech in order to improve communication between the two people.



¹ See Mearls, M. & Seeman, C. 2003. *Moria*, Los Angeles, CA, Decipher, Inc. and Morwinsky, T. 2008. A Brief History of the Dwarven Mansions. *Other Minds*, Issue 4, page 11 ff.

The Late Third Age

After Durin's Folk was safe and secure again in Erebor, Saruman left Rhovanion for the last time and went to Gondor. He finally settled in Angrenost (Isengard) when the keys to its mighty tower of Orthanc were given to him by the Steward Beren in T.A. 2759. The strategic location of the great fortress and its resources served him well in the future years. Naturally, he was interested in as much news as possible for his mission to finally defeat Sauron. He found large numbers of *crebain* living in the area and deemed them well-suited to his purposes. His attempts to train them in a way that satisfied his demands were fruitless and eventually around T.A. 2780 he asked his old comrade Radagast once more for help. Believing in the good intentions of his peer (which was justified at this time), the Brown Wizard gladly helped his friend in befriending and training of these crows. Thus by the year 2820, Saruman/Curunír commanded a sizeable number of crows that brought him many news from the lands around, making him one of the best-informed lords in the Northwest. It also helped his efforts and supported the White Council with valuable intelligence.

As time went by the motives of Curunír gradually changed – first becoming selfish and then later outright evil – but his *crebain* were not considered especially evil, though somewhat sinister. As is well documented, Saruman was skilled in hiding his intentions even from the most wary and thus for long he was able to hatch his plots before being finally unmasked and defeated in the War of the Ring.

Thereafter, the *crebain* of the southern Misty Mountains were free from his malevolent influence, but for a long time to come were still regarded as birds of carrion, death and harbingers of ill omen – a tradition that lived on long after all these origins were forgotten.

USE IN ROLEPLAYING GAMES

Having delved into all the aspects of crows and ravens, a few words about their use in a game are in order. In the licensed games, only *The One Rings*¹ makes special use of these birds, as dwarven characters from Erebor can take the Cultural Virtue of *Ravens of the Mountain*, offering more options for communication and scouting.

Both *Middle-earth Roleplaying*² and *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*³ had no special rules for *crebain* beside the entries in their respective bestiaries and the mentioning of their use as spies and/or messengers by either Dwarves or Saruman.

Interestingly, MERP places them under the entry for “Flying monsters” rather than birds (under “Animals”) in its *Creatures of Middle earth*⁴, while LotRRPG summarise them under “Carriion Birds” without distinction between ravens and crows in its *Fell Beast and Wondrous Magic*⁵. To my knowledge, TOR has no similar overall creature index.

Beside their usefulness for the individual character, establishing *crebain* as an unusual messenger bird is something worth developing beyond the immediate examples we see in the books.

The above mentioned option from TOR is a good example for how this might be facilitated and this article may have given you some ideas or a template for the wider background of these animals in Middle-earth.

The origins detailed above offer many hooks for the use of such birds in a campaign, something I am also doing for my own current one set in the first decade of the 15th century T.A.

¹ Nepitello, F., Maggi, M., Angulo, A., et al. 2014. *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, Cambridge & Oxford, Sophisticated Games Ltd. & Cubicle7 Entertainment.

² Charlton, C. S. 1984. *Middle-Earth Role Playing*, Charlottesville, VA, Iron Crown Enterprises.

³ S. S., Rateliff, J., Moore, C. & Forbeck, M. 2002. *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game - Core Book*, Los Angeles, CA, Decipher, Inc.

⁴ Fenlon, P. C., Sochard, R. & O'hare, J. 1994. *Creatures of Middle-earth*, Charlottesville, VA, Iron Crown Enterprises.

⁵ Bennie, S., Mearls, M., Miller, S., et al. 2003. *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*, Los Angeles, CA, Decipher, Inc.

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TOR GUIDE TO THE LANDS OF LINDON

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background stuff

We are happy to have Andrew submit not only one, but right away three contributions for this Issue - all of which are set in western Eriador or Lindon in this case. While TOR has had a sourcebook for the Bree area, neither the Shire or Lindon are covered yet. That may change in the future with new publications by Fria Ligans, but for now Andrew presents us with a very useful and atmospheric view of Lindon for use with TOR.

We hope that he will submit even more of such material which you can then see in future Issues of Other Minds. But until then, have fun with his view on Lindon!

"In the days of the Kings most of the High Elves that still lingered in Middle-earth dwelt with Círdan or in the seaward lands of Lindon. If any now remain they are few."

—The Lord of the Rings. Appendix B

In the First Age of Middle-earth all of Lindon was a lush river valley dominated by the River Gelion, which was fed by many lesser rivers that found their sources in the mountains of the Blue Mountains, named the Ered Luin by the Elves. The lands of Lindon are the only remaining regions west of the Blue Mountains (with the exception of several small islands) to survive the sinking of Beleriand at the end of the First Age. However, the landscape was greatly altered by the sinking of Beleriand. The old rivers and forests were washed away to be replaced over time by new features. Even so, Lindon is still a green and pleasant land with thick forests growing at the feet of the Blue Mountains.

Beloved of the High Elves

Lindon is held dear by the High Elves as a remnant of ancient Beleriand. Gil-galad and his people dwelt in Forlindon in the Second Age, while Celeborn and Galadriel dwelt in Harlindon before founding the realm of Lórien east of the Misty Mountains. Círdan and his folk still dwell in the Grey Havens and live in small communities in Lindon where they acquire the lumber for the construction of their White Ships. There are still creatures in Lindon, particularly in Forlindon, that can no longer be found anywhere else in Middle-earth.



White dashed line: maximum extent of Lindon's borders

ELEMENTS OF LANDSCAPE

For London

Vingelion ('New Gelion', after the waterway from the First Age that followed much the same course though its original sources were dozens of miles farther north) starts in the Blue Mountains, to empty into the harbor of Forlond one hundred eighty miles away in the Gulf of Lune. Warm, moist air from the Sea provides plenty of water to feed the dense forests that have sprung up along the western sides of the Blue Mountains. The remainder of Forlindon consists of lush grasslands inhabited by a myriad of birds and animals.

There are two large tracts of forestland in Forlindon, both abutting the slopes of the northern Blue Mountains. The smaller wood is Taur-na-Forod ('The Forest of the North'), just north of where the Vingelion emerges from the range. It is largely comprised of ash, beech, birch and chestnut which transitions to poplar, firs and other conifers on the slopes. Willows line the Vingelion dipping their branches in the water. The wood covers an area of nearly one hundred square miles and was called Taur-na-Gelion ('The Forest of Gelion') by the High Elves under Gil-galad.

Taur-nu-Ered ('The Forest under the Mountains') is nearly five times the size of its northern sibling, stretching for a hundred miles from Mount Dolmed (itself thirty miles south of the head of the Vingelion) almost to the Gulf of Lune. The forest is a major source for the timber used to construct the grey ships that carry Elves across the Sea from the Grey Havens to the Undying Lands: tall pines, laurel, beech and ash. Ancient oaks dominate the deepest parts of the forest.

Harlindon

the south shore of the Gulf of Lune. There are no navigable waterways here; the forests and plains are watered by fast-moving streams and rivulets from the mountains and rains from the Sea. The open land is thickly covered in lush grasses and wildflowers.

Taur-en-Ephel ('The Fencing Forest') is an almost three hundred mile-long stretch of woodlands averaging about twenty miles deep. The forest rings the southernmost portion of the southern Blue Mountains. Ash, beech and birch dominate the forest, with poplar and evergreens taking over at higher altitudes. This is another source for the wood needed by the Elves of the Grey Havens for the building of their ships. The Dwarves of Hargrod and other Dwarven communities on the eastern side of the range cut down trees from Taur-en-Ephel for their own use, sometimes drawing protests and threats from the Elves if they stray too close to Harlindon.



Northern Beleriand © by Marya Filatova, used with permission

Coastal Islands

The Isle of Himling lies about thirteen leagues west of the northern point of the Bay of Thargelion. The island is small, measuring about twenty miles in diameter, and is thought to be all that remains above sea level of the Hill of Himring. Himring had been fortified by the High Elf Maedhros and was key to the defense of East Beleriand from the forces of Morgoth in the First Age. To the west of Himling is the larger island of Tol Fuin, over one hundred miles long and about fifty miles wide. Tol Fuin is the last surviving remnant of Taur-nu-Fuin, the Forest of Night, where Sauron dwelt for a while after being driven from his tower on Tol Sirion by the lady Lúthien. The island itself is forested, though unexplored for it has a dark reputation. Located about twenty-two leagues west and south of Tol Fuin is Tol Morwen, even smaller than Himling. Here, at the center of the island are the graves of Túrin Turambar and his mother Morwen with the Stone of the Hapless raised over them.

FORLINDON

The High Elves of Gil-galad dwelt in Forlindon throughout the Second Age and it was from here that they marched with him and with Círdan to challenge the armies of Sauron. Most of their towers and houses have been torn down or have fallen into ruin. Today, outside of the Grey Havens there are just a few small, peaceful communities dotting the coast and the banks of the Vingelion.

The broken remains of Mount Rerir marks the place where a great spur of the Blue Mountains stretches two hundred miles to the north-east. About fifty miles south of Rerir, the pass of Cirith Forod (the Northern Pass) provides a hazardous passage to East Lune north of the river, the Lesser Lhûn, though in these later days only a few of the Lossoth know where the pass lies. Nearly fifty miles off the coast to the west lies the Isle of Himling, another remnant of lost Beleriand. There are no paths here except those made by beasts; no one has lived in these lands since the time of Gil-galad.

Lower Forlindon is nearly bisected by the River Vingelion which has its source about thirty miles north of Mount Dolmed and empties into the harbor of Forlond one hundred eighty miles away. The land stretches one hundred seventy miles east to west from the Blue Mountains to the Sundering Sea. The Drowned Vale (called Nan Dolmed by the Dwarves), located north of Mount Dolmed, is a mountain vale formed where the earth over the northernmost section of Belegost subsided. South of Dolmed is the Hollowbold Vale (Nan Nogrod), a hidden passage through the mountains that follows the path of the old Dwarf-road built in the First Age. The west end of the pass exits into the depths of Taur-nu-Ered. The thick forest of beech and oak furnishes raw materials for the White Ships of the Grey Havens. The vales of the river provide wetlands for birds and beasts. The lush grasslands between the Vingelion and the Sea support herd beasts and the creatures that prey upon them. Elves wander these lands, but no longer maintain large communities outside of the Havens. This is a land of peace and plenty, all but free of evil.

Wildlife

The plains of Forlindon are home to many creatures. Hawks wheel across the sky, scattering flocks of smaller birds. Herds of deer, wild pigs and rabbits roam the gentle hills and grasslands and shelter in groves of trees, as do pheasants and quail, wildcats, foxes and wild dogs. As in Upper Forlindon, the hill lions hunt the great, antlered deer and other herd beasts. Herds of large elk-like deer with great, wide antlers, called Belegorasáras (great-horn deer) by the Elves, graze off the land. These impressive beasts stand seven feet at the shoulder and weigh upwards of fifteen hundred pounds, with antlers that can measure more than twelve feet across. Grey wolves stalk the herds.

The mountains are home to a kind of large, maneless lions that the Elves call Tundorávi (hill-lions). These great cats stand four feet at the shoulder and lair in the higher elevations. These big cats generally subsist on wild sheep and mountain goats, though they occasionally come down from the hills to hunt deer and other prey. Foxes and lynx prey upon hares,

mice, birds and other creatures. Reptiles tend to stay hidden, but snakes and lizards can be seen sunning themselves in the warmer months only to curl up torpid in their lairs through the cold of winter. Eagles nest in the heights.

The vales of the Vingelion host great numbers of waterfowl: ducks, loons, geese, cranes, heron and great swans. Thrushes nest in the willows on the river's edge. The waters teem with snakes, lizards, turtles, amphibians and many, many fish. Of particular note are the large, beautiful swans that ply the lower regions of the river, near Forlond. These birds sport lovely white silver-tipped feathers and are appropriately called Silver Swans (Celelph; singular Celalph). Stands of poplar provide food and material for beavers. Muskrats seek out succulent water plants, eggs or small lizards while otters frolic on the banks, ducking into the water to avoid swarms of mosquitoes, midges and other biting insects.

Large, brown bears dwell in the forests and foothills of the mountains fishing for salmon in swift mountain streams and rivers. The woods are populated with numerous species of birds, including Nightingales and other songbirds. Deer take cover in the forest eaves and feral swine root about for luscious tubers, fungi and other food. Hummerhorns, a large variety of cicada measuring three to four inches in length, are found in great numbers in the forests of Forlindon. The Hummerhorn has a horn-like 'beak' on its head that allows the insect to lift pieces of tree-bark to reach the softer wood and sap underneath.

Hazard Suggestion:

Hummerhorns

(All Companions - Weariness)

The companions find it difficult to get a proper night's rest due to the loud, constant drone of numerous Hummerhorns. All heroes must make a Travel test. Anyone who fails is kept awake by the noise and is rendered Wary for the remainder of the journey.

Notable Locations

Barad Mithlond

A lighthouse and fortress constructed by Galad at the northern point of the Gulf of Lune in Forlindon to guard the Grey Havens against a sea-attack. A smaller fortress, Amon Harlond, is located on the east end of the harbour of Harlond.

Mount Dolmed

Dolmed stands slightly apart from its brethren as the westernmost peak of the Blue Mountains, making it a useful landmark. It is revered by the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains as the site where their ancestral Fathers first awoke.

Mount Kerir

This was once one of the highest peaks in the Blue Mountains and one of the sources for the River Gelion. The High Elves of the West constructed a fortress here in the First Age, but it was overrun by Orcs, and later destroyed in the aftermath of the Great Battle when Morgoth was overthrown. There are legends among the Lossoth, though, of ruins in the mountains and treasures of the West-elves might still lie hidden in buried vaults.



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Harlindon

Harlindon once shared a south-easterly border with the North-kingdom of Arthedain. The Elves still live and wander in Harlindon, but in much smaller numbers than in ages past. The most sizable community of Elves here, outside of the Grey Havens, is the harbor and town of Harlond. Men of Eriador avoid entering Harlindon, except for Rangers of the North as special guests of Lord Círdan. Neither do the Dwarves who delve in the mountains come here. They are uncomfortable under the wide-open skies and some do not get on well with the Elves. The land is a bit too wild for the preferences of Hobbits.

Harlindon is somewhat vulnerable to invasion by land in the south where it borders Eriador. The watchtower of Amon Baran is set near the mouth of the Baranduin from which Elves keep watch and patrol the boundary. However, they usually encounter nothing more serious than Dwarves felling trees in the elvish part of the forest.

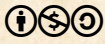
Wildlife

Life is plentiful in Harlindon. Sheep and wild cattle graze on the grasslands while large hares go about their own business. Lynx and fox are found throughout Harlindon. Black bears share the forest and hills with deer, wild pigs, mountain sheep and goats. Many varieties of fish inhabit the small rivers and streams that have their sources in the mountains and foothills. Owls and hawks hunt rabbits, voles and other small animals. Eagles nest in the mountains. Small birds feed off of swarming insects in the wetlands of the gulf and marshes.

The woodlands are also home to an exceptionally large and intelligent breed of magpie that sports a head, neck and breast of midnight blue; belly and shoulder feathers of pale yellow; and wings also of glossy, midnight blue with primaries of white inner webs. The bill and legs are jet black. It is said that the Elves have taught these magpies to understand and even speak Sindarin, and that these birds often relay messages from one Elf to another (sometimes for a reward, anything from a colorful polished stone to a small gem). Wildcats and foxes are common on the prairie.

THE SISTERS AND THE SEA

Andrew Laubacher
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supplementary stuff

Right on the heels of his previous submission, Andrew presents us with a story based on a small note by Tolkien (check the family tree of the Tooks in Appendix B of the LotR!) And weaves a fantastic around it! This is the kind of immersion and world-building I - and I am sure also many of you - love and enjoy!

So, have a great time with Andrew's view about an adventure of Bilbo's mother and her sisters during their early years. Tales like this make me always long for more of such stuff and I am sure Andrew can provide it for the enjoyment of many people.

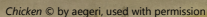
A Tookish plot

It was a day in early May in the year 1280 (in the Reckoning of the Shire), and the three remarkable Took sisters were plotting. Belladonna, the oldest of the three, was to marry young Bungo Baggins in another month, and the girls wished to have one last grand adventure together before the wedding.

To that end, they had been speaking with Gandalf the last time he'd visited Tuckburrow. Their father Gerontius – popularly known as the Old Took ever since he inherited the Thainship of the Shire – was still angry with the wizard, whom he blamed for the disappearance of their brother Hildifons. 'Fonsy', encouraged by Gandalf's tales, had gone off on some mad-cap journey to parts unknown some years ago, and had never been heard from again. It was generally assumed that the poor lad had met his end in some foreign land, though the three sisters preferred to imagine that he had forged a new life for himself, perhaps dwelling among the Elves west of the Blue Mountains, or even living as a sailor or trader in distant Gondor.

The sisters had needled Gandalf with requests for stories about his many wanderings, and he regaled them with descriptions of white cities, mailed knights, fair ladies and elven heroes. Yet, the girls' interest kept coming around to the subject of the Sea. They had asked about the white ships of the Sea-elves and the tall ships of the Big Folk far to the South. What was it like to watch a storm at sea? Had Gandalf ever been captured by Corsairs (and, if so, how did he escape)? Where was the wizard's favourite place to view the Sea? Thinking back to those tales, Belladonna had devised her plan and shared it with her two younger siblings. Donnamira and Mirabella readily agreed: the three of them would journey to the Grey Havens where they could visit the Elves and see the Great Sea for themselves.

Arrangements were made. Bell left their parents with the impression that the three were



The next morning dawned cool and cloudy. The young hobbits took their time; it was only thirty miles to the village of Greenholm, and the last comfort they could expect to find between the Shire and the Grey Havens. Besides, the countryside between Michel Delving and the Far Downs was quite lovely; they might as well enjoy the view. Their spirits were somewhat dampened when, what started out close to noon as a light shower had turned into a steady down-pour by the time the sisters made out the chimney smoke of *The Thirsty Fox*. The inn was often the first stop for dwarves entering the Shire from the Blue Mountains, and the last stop in the Shire for dwarves returning home. Mirabella was particularly miserable as she detested both the cold and the damp. She had never in her life been so grateful for a hot meal and a warm fire.

The skies had cleared by morning and the travails of the previous day were soon forgotten. The sun was warm and the smell of the freshly cleansed air was invigorating. The shirr-iff at the west gate asked the sisters, if they were going for a ride outside of the Bounds, wouldn't they like an escort? One could be quickly arranged. The girls scoffed at the guardian. They would be just fine; they might even sleep out under the stars before returning.

In fact, they had slept outside before, beyond the bounds of the Shire. Well, Bell and Donna had done so, having ridden to see the White Towers a few years previously, though Miri had been too young at the time to accompany them. They'd had an escort then, a pair of traveling dwarves, father and son, who had performed work for the Old Took on many occasions. Their brother Isembold was with them as well on that occasion (this was shortly before Hildifons' disappearance). It was summer and the siblings had had a wonderful time even if they weren't allowed to enter the three White Towers that had once marked the western border of the old North Kingdom.

As the sisters knew from this previous journey, the countryside was wilder than Hobbit lands, but still beautiful. The Road was well-maintained. Groves of trees – birch, ash and oak

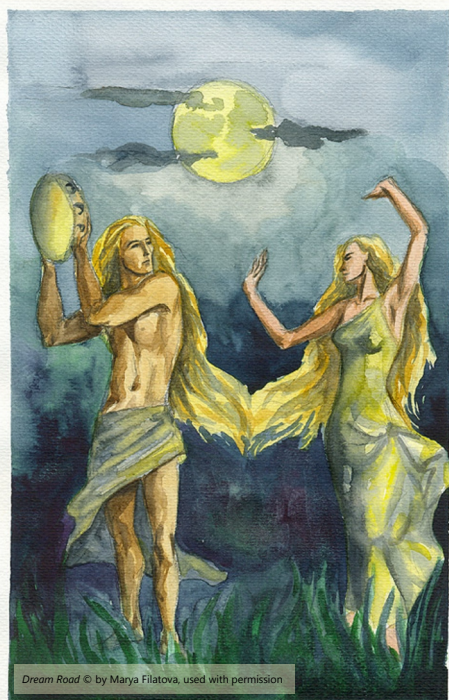
Once they were out of sight of the Smials, the threesome turned their mounts north, away from the lane, and struck out over hills and fields until they reached the Great Road that stretched from the Tower Hills in the west to the distant Misty Mountains and perhaps beyond. The village of Waymeet was only a few miles west of the spot where the girls gained the Road; they passed right through the town, hooded mantles pulled over their faces, not daring to stop for lunch at The King's Way, an inn where they would easily be recognized. All three were well-known there and they didn't want word of their unauthorized excursion getting back to their folks at Tuckburrow. They did take a meal when they reached the lane that turned south towards Hardbottle and Sackville, not stopping again for the rest of the day until they reached the White Downs and *The Fair Weather Inn* at Michel Delving.

– dotted the land, and fragrant wildflowers bloomed beside the road. Near evening, the sisters reached the eastern slopes of the hills and made camp for the night near a small brook. They saw to their ponies, gathered enough dry wood for a cook-fire, and laid out bedrolls and blankets.

AN UNUSUAL ENCOUNTER

Just as Donnamira began building the fire, the sound of hoofbeats came from farther down the road where their view was obscured by a bend in the path as it wound its way around a grove of oaks. As they listened, the sisters realized that there were several horses approaching, accompanied by the almost musical sounds of low conversation and merry laughter. The speech was in the Elven tongue, which Belladonna was only slightly familiar with, and her two sisters not at all.

As the sisters watched, a company of Elves rode into view, at least a dozen on sleek palfreys that were brought to a halt once the Eldar caught sight of the three girls. The lead rider was dressed simply yet elegantly in a silken tunic of sea-green embroidered in silver, grey leggings and shoes of soft, buttery leather, and a silver circlet upon his head. The others were similarly attired.



Dream Road © by Marya Filatova, used with permission

“Look, friends!” the leader exclaimed in the common tongue. “Three flowers of the Shire, blooming amidst the Eryn Beraid!” The Elf dismounted and bowed gracefully to the trio.

“What brings Belladonna Took and her younger sisters Donnamira and Mirabella to this land?”

“M-mae l’ovannen,” Bell stammered in her best Elvish, “Ēl síla erin lû e-govaded ‘wîn. My sisters and I are journeying to the Grey Havens to see for ourselves the Great Sea.”

“Well met, child,” greeted the tall Elf. “There is no need to be so formal. I think it will be easier to converse in the Common Tongue, especially as your sisters do not seem to share your knowledge of our language. I am Thandorion, harbourmaster of Harlond. My companions and I have ridden forth from Mithlond to feast and sing under the stars. You three may join us if you wish.”

‘I thank you,” the Hobbit-maid shyly replied. She turned to her sisters, who both nodded their assent to the Elf-lord’s invitation. “We would be delighted to dine with you and your friends. In truth, I have nearly exhausted what little Sindarin I know, and that was taught to me by the wizard Gandalf. May I ask how you know our names?”

“Little passes in these lands without our knowledge. And Mithrandir, or ‘Gandalf’ as you know him, is well-known to our folk. He has spoken some of his visits to your Shire. But come, share in what meagre fare as we can provide.”

Soon a wood-fire was lit and torches set ablaze. Food and drink was brought out. What Thandorion called “meagre fare” was comparable to the most wonderful feasts any of the sisters could ever recall. There was applewood-smoked fish delicately seasoned with unfamiliar herbs. There was fresh bread and fruits of indescribable sweetness and flavour, and cups of a sweet, cool liqueur that seemed to strengthen both mind and body without going to one’s head.

There was song as most of the Elves pulled out instruments and began to play. There was dancing under the silvery moon. The sisters sang and danced as well, feeling as awkward as

chickens next to the graceful Eldar, but if the Elves found any fault with their performance they gave no indication. Mirabella was somewhat more timid, at first, than her older sisters who had met and spoken with Elves before on their previous excursion to the White Towers; however, their hosts soon put her at ease and before long she was laughing and chatting as enthusiastically as the others.

WithLOND

Then Belladonna and the others noticed something extremely peculiar: they had made their camp on the east side of the hills, still miles away from the White Towers. Now they could see the stone towers some distance behind them in the direction of the rising sun. They had been moved in the night to within an easy day's ride of their destination, completely unaware!

caught in her throat; soft gasps from her sisters betrayed similar reactions.

"My young friends!" he said. "I welcome you in the name of Círdan, lord of the Grey Havens. Seldom do we see the Shire-folk here, much less such lovely representatives of your people."

"I have been charged by my lord to see to your comfort, ladies," said the harbourmaster. "Though, in truth, it is my pleasure to do so. My other duties can abide for a while. But, come, you must be tired from your journey. Food and beds have been prepared; you are to be Lord Círdan's guests!" The tall Elf-lord motioned for the sisters to follow him. "Also, your manners are impeccable, Miss Bell," he chuckled. "But, you needn't be so formal. I understand you're here on holiday, as it were, and not as envoys of the Thain!" With that, he turned to lead the way to Círdan's Halls.

“You were nervous?” Miri chimed in. “I’ve been afraid to even open my mouth!”

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"If only Hugo Boffin could see you," teased Belladonna. "I'd bet that he would ask you to be his fairy bride on the spot!"

“Oh, no he wouldn’t!” scolded Donnamura. If Hugo were to propose to anyone, it would be me!” At that, all three girls nearly fell over laughing.

WHAT A SURPRISE!

As the group approached the entrance they were met by grooms who took the girls' ponies and led them away to Círdan's stables. Thick double doors carved with images of beautiful swan-ships opened at Thondorion's approach. Another Elf, as tall and seemingly ageless as the harbourmaster and dressed in fine linen, met them. Thandorion introduced him as Galdor, chief emissary and chamberlain to the Lord of the Havens. "Galdor will see to your comfort, ladies, until Lord Círdan can join you for dinner. He will show you to a chamber where you may cleanse yourselves of the dust of the road and rest awhile. I hope to be able to see you again before you depart for home!" With that, Thandorion departed.



With yelps of surprise, all three maids turned to stare at the speaker. Instead of an Elf, the 'servant' who stood before them was their brother Hildifons, grinning like a fool!

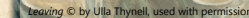
“Fonsy!” they all screamed at once. Immediately, the young Hobbit was surrounded by the sisters, all taking turns hugging him and glaring at him, their words blending together: “You’re alive! We thought you were dead! Everyone did! We missed you so! Have you been here this whole time? You said you were going to the Blue Mountains to visit the Dwarves, but Mam and Da got word that you never arrived!”

“How dare you worry us so! We thought something awful had happened to you!” That last came from Bell, who punched Hildifons in the arm.

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Bell and her sisters had to admit that Fonsy's new life seemed to agree with him. Though still youthful, his skin was browned and weathered by the sun and the sea. Much of his natural stoutness had been replaced by muscles developed from hard work. The sisters promised to keep his secret from the rest of the Shire only if he allowed them to tell their parents the truth,

"Wait," said Bell, "you already knew about my wedding, Fonsy? But, how? None of us have even mentioned it yet!" Hildifons reminded his sisters that companies of Elves often wandered through the Green Hill Country near Tuckburrow and picked up all kinds of news in their travels. As the only Hobbit dwelling in the



Havens, it didn't take long at all for word of Belladonna's engagement to reach him.

Dinner was served; Círdan and the Took siblings ate and spoke long into the evening. After some time the Elf-lord noted the nodding heads of the three girls and bade them be shown to the beds set aside for them for the duration of their visit. Hildifons assured them that he had set aside the time so that they could all four spend the next several days together. Their beds were so soft and comfortable that Miri swore that she never wanted to leave hers.

GOING ABOUT

The next day dawned bright and sunny, wispy clouds carried on a cool breeze from seaward. Once they awoke, the sisters were shown to the feast hall where Hildifons waited to share first breakfast with them. They spent the day exploring Mithlond with Fonsy as their guide. The town – more like a city by Shire standards – was constructed upon both the northern and southern shores of the firth where the River Lhûn emptied into the gulf. Dwarves from the Halls of Thorin Oakenshield and their goods had to be ferried across the inlet in order to visit their cousins in the southern range or to take the East Road to the Shire and Bree. Likewise, ores from the dwarven mines in the southern Blue Mountains needed to be ferried across the firth for delivery in the north.

The hobbits spent the morning in the lower city where Lord Círdan dwelt. They marvelled at the tower-observatory where the Elf-lord watched the moon and stars. They watched the graceful boats of the sea-elves depart with the tide for a day's fishing. Fonsy took his sisters to gardens where Elves recited poems and sang songs in the shadows of beautiful sculptures that had stood for centuries and might have taken the lifetime of a mortal to craft.

The four took a ferry in the late morning to lunch in the upper part of the city. There they spotted dwarves, Longbeards bartering with Elves for barrels of preserved fish, smoked meats and other perishables, fabrics and woodcraft in exchange for wares of iron and brass or perhaps for contracts for metal parts for ships

and other things. The upper city had a guest house that was built to accommodate such dwarven visitors (as did the lower city, though the sisters had not seen it, being the guests of Círdan). Hildifons told his sisters of the lands to the north where the Elves had often walked in the years before the fall of the North Kingdoms.

The following day Hildifons and his sisters rode their ponies (Fonsy having borrowed one from Círdan's stables) south-west along the coast of the gulf. They didn't travel far, Hildifons explained that it would have taken two days or more just to ride as far as the harbour at Harlond. As it was they had to cut their ride short, as thickening dark clouds and choppy water signalled a storm rolling in from the Sea. The foursome did not quite beat the storm; by the time they reached the halls of Círdan they were all thoroughly soaked, but laughing. The rest of the day was spent in front of a roaring fire, singing songs, telling jokes and reliving the exploits of the past several days as the storm broke against the peaks of the Blue Mountains.

ONTO THE SEA!

The morning following the passing of the storm, Fonsy again met the girls for breakfast. When they were finished the youth, carrying a covered basket, led his sisters to the harbour. The sea lay calm under a cloudless sky. A small single-masted vessel bobbed next to one of the wharves.

"This is my sloop, the Meaw," Fonsy proudly proclaimed, "the name being elvish for seagull. If you're willing to trust me, I thought we could sail up the coast for a way – not very far! We could sail along the north shore until we reach Forlindon. You haven't truly experienced the sea until you've sailed upon it." The sisters were nothing if not daring, though Mirabella did require some cajoling before she would acquiesce. Hildifons carefully helped his sisters climb aboard the boat, boarded himself, slipped the lines from the quay and rowed them out a short distance from the wharf. Satisfied, he finally raised a pair of triangular sails and sailed the vessel around the harbour for a bit to get the girls used to the feeling of riding the waves.

The girls talked quietly among themselves as their brother cleaned up the remains of their lunch. Before Hildifons could push the swoop off of the beach for the return voyage, Bell spoke for all three of them: "Thank you, dear brother, for spending this day with us. We understand a bit better now your love for the sea, and we respect your desire to live your own

The voyage back to the Havens was bittersweet; the three sisters were glad to be able to spend this time with their long-lost brother, but they also knew that they would soon be parted again. The swoop returned to her dock, just in time for Bell and her siblings to take afternoon tea. Fonsy spent the rest of the day showing his sisters around the town, pointing out places of interest. They again shared dinner in the house of Círdan, though this time their host did not join them. The four spoke well into the night, the sisters sharing news and gossip of the Shire, and Hildifons telling them of the friends he had made in Mithlond and the adventures he had experienced in his new home. Eventually the time came for Hildifons to bid his sisters goodnight, promising to ride back with them on the morrow as far as the Tower Hills.



THE HAUNTED LAKE -

ASHIRE ADVENTURE

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adventure

Finally here is Andrew's third submission for this Issue. Returning from the Lindon-themed contributions in the past two articles, he stays in Eriador with a Hobbit-centric adventure beyond the northern borders of the Shire.

I am sure you enjoy playing the adventure as much as did reading and editing it. Adventures lie at the core of all roleplaying games, regardless of the setting. And having more and varied adventures for Middle-earth is all the better for sure!

Have fun with your Hobbit party investigating the mystery presented in this adventure!

- **When:** This adventure could be set in the spring or summer of any year.
- **Where:** The adventure is mostly set in the North Farthing of the Shire and in the Twilight Hills south of Lake Evendim.
- **What:** A small group of young Hobbits have gone missing on a fishing trip to Lake Evendim. The companions must track their movements to discover what has become of them and bring them back safely, if possible.
- **Why:** The lake is rumoured to be haunted and the locals fear leaving the bounds of the Shire in search of the missing youths. The desperate parents have sent word to Hobbiton and other communities for help.
- **Who:** Two of the missing Hobbits belong to a northern branch of the Took clan. Their uncle is Hartigan "Hardy" North took, a Bounder who patrols the Bounds in North Farthing.

OVERVIEW

The adventure is divided into five parts, which begin at the Green Dragon Inn and ends in Greenfields.

Part One - At the Green Dragon

At the Green Dragon Inn the company is approached by Hartigan North-took, a Bounder from Greenfields who is an uncle to the young Hobbits who have not returned from a journey to Lake Evendim. Hartigan is attempting to enlist help to search for the missing youths. If the companions agree, he will lead them to the village of Greenfields.

PART TWO - Hidden Paths

At Greenfields, the companions are greeted by the parents of the missing Hobbits. Food and supplies are provided if needed, and Hartigan leads the party by hidden trails through the Hills of Evendim to the shore of Lake Evendim.

PART THREE - An Empty Camp

The company reaches the site at the lake where the youths set up camp. Their gear is still there, but there is no sign of the missing Hobbits until tracks are discovered leading to an ancient ruin.

PART FOUR - Trapped in the Ruins

The missing youths are found – cold, hungry and injured, but alive and in need of rescue.

PART FIVE - Back to Greenfields

Hartigan and the companions return the young Hobbits to their families, though the return journey might not be without its own complications.

Epilogue - Grateful Parents

A party is thrown for the heroes. Thanks are given, as are gifts.

ADVENTURING PHASE

PART ONE - At the Green Dragon

The companions have gathered in the Green Dragon Inn in Bywater where they are discussing the news of the day; the increased traffic of Dwarves traveling between the Blue Mountains and Erebor, and the stories of far-away lands they've heard from Bilbo Baggins and others. A stranger – a Hobbit of perhaps, of forty years or so, with a feather in his cap – approaches your table after briefly speaking with the innkeeper who gestures in your direction (an Awareness roll to notice him in advance of his approach).

"Excuse me, young sirs (and miss or misses, if appropriate), but I'm in serious need of help and I'm told that you might be in a position to be o' service. I am Hartigan North-took of the Watch; I beat the bounds as it were in the North Farthing."

"A week and a half ago, my niece Mimsy and her brother Madoc, along with a friend of theirs, left Greenfields on a fishing trip across the Twilight Hills to the lake. They were supposed to be back within the week, but they've not been heard from since. Now, I've been up that way a few times myself and I know the area pretty well. My sister has begged me to search for the children, but I need someone to come with me in case of trouble. Please, will you help me?"

If any companion succeeds on a roll of Insight, they get the sense that Hartigan is holding something back. A successful Persuade roll will get him to open up.

"Most folk are feared to go near Lake Twilight because of rumours that it is haunted. That's ponyfeathers! But try telling that to fools who put more stock in gossip an' old wives' tales than in plain sense! Not even the other Bounders in the North Farthing are willing to travel to the lake."

If the companions agree, the hobbit will ask you to call him 'Hardy' and insist that you all leave with him as soon as possible, within the hour if you can.

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The Road to Greenfields

It is a journey of about 60 miles from Bywater to Greenfields through the open terrain and well-trodden tracks of Hobbit lands. Hardy recommends taking the East Road to the North-way, just west of Frogmorton. It will take three days to reach Greenfields on foot; if riding, the company will reach the village in the afternoon of the second day of travel. If the party wants to rest at inns at night, accommodation can be found at the All-Welcome Inn where the North-way meets the East Road, and in Oatbarton, roughly a day's walk from Greenfields.

At the town of Greenfields, Hardy guides the company to the home of his sister and her family. Rather than a smial, the family dwells in a low, single-story stone house with a connected workshop and outbuildings. Marigold ‘Goldie’ High-moor is a handsome hobbit-wife of perhaps sixty years, though lines of worry make her seem older. A young child grasps the hem of her skirt. Goldie’s husband Salazar, a carpenter by trade, is a few years older; he seems to be more concerned about his wife’s distress than his missing sons. ‘Sal’ believes that the missing youths are just playing hooky and extending their holiday.

"I keep tellin' Goldie not ta worry. Tweens 'll be tweens, you'll see. They're just taking their own sweet time gettin' back, an' will be home in a day or two, if not sooner."

"Oh, what do you know!" exclaims Marigold in tears. "Mimsy promised that she and Matty would be back in less than a week! They could be hurt — or worse!" She turns to Hartigan and the companions. "Please! Find our children and bring them back safe, I beg of you!"

The parents of the other missing boy (Will come "Will" Stoneburrow) are as worried as Missus High-moor. Even Salazar eventually allows that it will do no harm to look for the children and, if nothing else, hurry them home. Provisions and gear will be made available, if needed, and the company is encouraged to leave as soon as possible. If there is still at least a few hours left of daylight, Hartigan suggests starting out right away.

Through Hill and Dale

Greenfields is about 10 miles from the northern boundary of the Shire and another 20 miles to the south shore of Lake Evendim. Leaving Greenfields, the company passes pastures of sheep and fields of barley and other grains. As the company approaches the North Moors the going continues to be easy, though the terrain shifts to gentle hummocks covered in heather and bracken. As you approach the Bounds, you can see the wild lands of the Hills of Evendim beyond the open border. Unless at least one companion is already familiar with the area, Hardy acts as Guide. All companions should make a roll for Awareness. Success means that a companion has noticed that the company is following traces of a very old track.

"The Northway's old; older, I ken, than the Shire. It used to continue past Greenfields, past the Bounds, and east 'round the Moors to what's left of a great town built by the Men of the West. In places, you can still see what's left of the old roadbed. We're leaving the road, though, once we reach the hills."

The wild country of the Hills of Evendim is considered to be Severe terrain. Steep ridges give way to narrow valleys and deep gullies through which small streams and brooks meander. Willows line the banks of the waters, while pine and fir trees dot the hills. However, Hartigan knows paths that, if his advice is followed, will reduce the difficulty of travel to that of Hard terrain. Hartigan warns the companions that they will not be able to ride; even using his paths, the woods are too dense for ponies. On foot, the journey will take two full days (or three, if the company loses the path).

Hazard:

An Unexpected Encounter

(Huntsman - Wound)

The companions are following what appears to be a game trail through the Hills of Evendim when they come across the tracks of a large animal. The Huntsman must make a Hunting test. If the test fails, the Huntsman fails to notice the nearness of a brown bear before the bear becomes aware of the company. Startled, the bear charges and swipes at the Huntsman, who loses Endurance equal to the result of a Success die or suffers a Wound on an Eye.

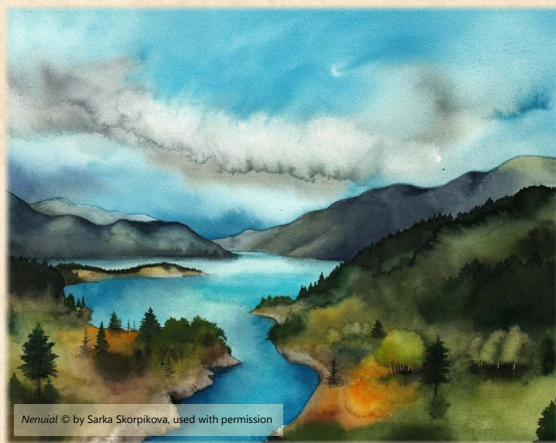
The company leaves the hills behind them as they approach Lake Evendim, giving way to dense woods largely of oak, beech and ash. Birdsong ceases for a moment as a screech sounds in the distance, almost like the scream of a person. Hartigan assures the companions that the sound is made by a wildcat, maybe defending its kill. Before long the glimmer of water can be seen through the trees.



Mirkwood © by Ulla Thynell, used with permission

Part Three - An Empty Camp

Lake Evendim (called Nenuial by the Men of Westernesse) is the largest freshwater body in all of Eriador – 30 miles wide and stretching 40 miles from end to end – and is the source of the Brandywine River. The founders of Arnor were so struck by its beauty that they built Annúminas, their original capital, beside it. The ruins of the ancient city lie several miles to the east.



As the company approaches the lakeshore all companions should make an Awareness roll. All those who succeed spot a campsite near the bank. Once the companions enter the clearing, everyone can see the camp. The lake spreads out before the company like a sapphire set amidst the green hills. To the left is a lean-to just large enough to provide shelter for three or four hobbits. Next to it is a collection of fishing poles, traveling gear, a tacklebox and several pails of water. A firepit (now cold) and cooking gear lie at the centre of the clearing, and gathered firewood is piled nearby. The camp seems deserted.

Hartigan calls out the names of the missing youths, listening intently for any reply. If any of the companions begin to search, they should roll for either Awareness or Hunting. On a success, they find tracks made by hobbit feet and other signs such as broken reeds or branches that lead east out of the clearing. If, after a thorough search, no companion has discovered the trail, Hartigan will find it himself.

Following the Trail

The trail of the young Hobbits is faint and difficult to follow. The Huntsman make a roll of Travel (at TN 16) to keep on the track. A failure means that it will take an additional hour to find the trail again.

After trekking through the forest for at least two hours, the companions reach what remains of an old, stone wall. The low wall seems to have marked the border of a ruined manor, though little is left except tumbled ruins overgrown by the forest. The tracks lead to a break in the wall and onward into the ruins. The only sounds are birdsong and the chattering of squirrels. Hartigan raises his voice.

*"Hullooo! Mimsy! Madoc! Wilcome
Stoneburrow! Can you hear me? Matty!
Mimsy! It's your Uncle Hardy! Answer if
you're able!"*

All of the companions should roll for Awareness. Anyone who succeeds can hear faint cries coming from deeper into the ruins. If no one hears the cries, a successful Search will reveal where the ground has given way resulting in a deep hole ringed by crumbled stonework. Cries of “We’re down here!” and “Uncle Hardy, help us!” issue from the pit.

PART FOUR - Trapped in the Ruins

Looking down past the edge of the hole, the companions can dimly make out the forms of the three missing hobbit-youths at the bottom of a large stone chamber, perhaps 15 feet below the ground. They all appear to be hungry and tired, showing some signs of injury, but alive.

Mimosa High-moor, or Mimsy, is the oldest of the youths, having recently reached her twenty-seventh birthday. Wilcome “Will” Stoneburrow is still in his twenty-sixth year and slightly taller than the girl. Mimsy’s brother Madoc, called Matty, is the youngest at twenty-three years of age, though in his current state he seems much younger. Mimsy’s right arm is roughly bandaged and in a make-shift sling. Matty is cut and bruised, but relatively uninjured. Will is sitting on a large square-cut stone, one leg splinted and bandaged.



The three have fallen into a large cellar or vault with walls and floor of cut stone. A portion of the ceiling, after having stood firm for uncounted centuries, had collapsed under their combined weight, dropping them to the stone floor below, unable to climb out. Fortunately, they had a bit of food between them and a skin of water, supplemented by more water from an underground spring seeping through one wall and trickling into what was once a drain in the ancient floor. The rations had run out two days earlier, though, leaving the three weak and exhausted.

The companions need to devise a way to get the young Hobbits out of the hole. If the company has brought rope, this should not be difficult, though care must be taken with the injured youths. A successful Craft roll will allow a companion to rig a sling or loop that will allow the tweens to be brought up safely one at a time. If a companion desires to do so, they may first climb down in order to examine the youths' injuries and assist them in regaining the surface. Any heroes who attempt this should roll their Athletics. On a success, they make it down easily. A normal failure results in the companion slipping about halfway down, losing 1 point of Endurance. The result of an Eye indicates that the lip of the pit crumbles beneath the companion, causing them to fall and lose Endurance equal to the result of 1 Success die.

The Grey Lady

As evening approaches, the young Hobbits become more and more agitated. They begin to look fearful and urge the companions to hurry. The companions should roll their Insight. Anyone who fails assumes that the youngsters are simply anxious to be pulled from the hole. Those who succeed realize that the younger Hobbits fear something else. A successful roll of Persuade will get one of the youths to open up.

"Please, hurry! We...we have to get out before she comes, the Grey Lady! I d-don't think she wants to hurt us, but she calls us her children. And her touch is so cold, it hurts!"

The Grey Lady is the ghost-like Spectre of a lady of Arnor who took her own life grieving for the loss of her own child. These are the ruins of the manor where she lived and died over two thousand years ago. She haunts the remains of her former home, taking the form of a beautiful woman made of grey mist. The Grey Lady will manifest if the companions are still within the ruins at sunset. If she appears while the young Hobbits are being rescued she will act as though her own children were being threatened and attack the company.



The Grey Lady can only be struck with weapons possessing Enchanted Qualities. If defeated with such magical weapons, or if her Hate is reduced to zero, the lady will vanish, able to manifest again at the following sunset, her Hate fully restored. If the company flees from the Lady, she will not pursue past the edge of the ruins.

The Grey Lady	
Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
28	6
Parry	Armour
5	2D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦
Movement ♦♦♦♦	Custom ♦
Perception ♦♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
None	
Special Abilities	
Ghost-form, Strike Fear, Dreadful Spells (Grieve): A hero who fails a Corruption check (TN 16) due to Dreadful Spells experiences a harrowing sorrow, causing him to gain an additional number of Shadow points equal to the creature's Attribute level. If the check failed producing an Eye, then the companion is also Wounded, as an old injury reopens as if inflicted at that very moment. Chill Touch: A hero struck or otherwise touched by this ghostly being and fails a Corruption check (TN 14) succumbs to its Chill Touch, losing 1d6 Endurance due to intense cold. If the failure produces an Eye, the companion also gains 1 temporary Shadow point.	

Part Five - Back to Greenfields

Once the company is clear of the ruined manor, any companion can roll their Craft, if desired, if they want to attempt to construct a litter or travois to aid in transporting anyone unable to travel on their own. It will take several hours to reach the campsite by the lake. Once there, the companions may opt to continue south towards the Shire, or they may remain at the campsite in order to take a short rest.

After striking camp, it will take the company three days to return to Greenfields with the

exhausted youths. It is suggested that the return journey should be uneventful, with hazards only introduced at the Loremaster's discretion. The younger Hobbits will not be fully recovered from their ordeal. One or more of them might be ill with a fever; Wilcome, at least, cannot travel without assistance due to his injured leg.

Travel becomes much easier once the company reaches Hobbit lands. A pair of Shirriffs, friends of Hartigan, greet the companions at the Bounds and offer their aid, including the use of a small cart pulled by a pony. One of the Bounders goes on ahead to announce your return. As evening approaches on the third day, the companions arrive at the village, greeted by many Hobbits, but especially the parents of the rescued tweens.

Epilogue - Grateful Parents

Once the parents and children are reunited, the company is led to *The Rabbit Hole* where a large supper is laid out for them. A room is made available for them to sleep in (two rooms, if the company is mixed). A hearty breakfast awaits the companions when they awake, and the entire town celebrates their success. Presents are given along with the thanks of friends and relations of the recovered youths. See the box below for suggestions.

The companions are celebrated heroes. But what are heroes to do in a quiet, peaceful place such as the Shire?

Suggestions for presents

- a Bow of the North Downs
- a King's Blade
- a carved pipe that focuses the mind when smoked (a Blessing to Inspire).

OF GHOSTS AND GOBLINS

Christoph Hardebusch
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adventure

This Issue is rather heavy on adventures, and Christoph's second submission is also testimony to that. It is much lighter and so serious about a sinister threat, making it a welcome change for a small side-mission or scenario between two larger sections of an ongoing campaign.

Personally, I really like the diversity in adventures in this Issue, as it shows the many facets of Middle-earth without sacrificing anything about the setting. Enjoy the mystery of ghosts and goblins in Rhovanion and solve the problems of the beleaguered villagers!

PREAMBLE

This is a short one-off with a light-hearted background. It can be inserted into any chronicle as a side-mission.

A few tips for Loremasters beforehand:

1. *Of Ghosts (and Goblins)* contains a tomb of the Wainriders of old, terrible Men of Shadow from the East, who waged war against Gondor and nearly laid that great kingdom low. They were a confederation of tribes that first struck the West in 1851 TA and were a threat for almost a century before finally being defeated in 1944 TA. They occupied most of Rhovanion during that time.
2. All the descriptions about the Wainriders are vague by design, to allow the Loremaster to fit them into the campaign. Remember that their heyday is more than a millennium past and that they have faded into history for most, with only the learned knowing more than legends, and only the Wise more than that.
3. The area is not detailed as the adventure is meant to be modular. The Loremaster can insert it into the campaign almost anywhere, possibly using known Loremaster characters to alert the player-heroes of the fake ghost and ask for help. For example, it can easily be used after playing *Blood in the Waters*, using the Grey Mountains around Grededun as the setting for the adventure and Theustal as the Loremaster character that bids the company for help.

- ## What happened before

ADVENTURING PHASE

PART One - A plea for help and a
terrifying tale

PART TWO - Searching for ghosts

PART THREE - Two Voices as One

Epilogue - Treasure fit for a King

Part One - A Plea for Help and a Terrifying Tale

The simple folk of the area are clearly out of their depths. Even their warriors are full of superstition and will not go near the ghost. Intrepid heroes are sorely needed...

Part Two - Searching for Ghosts

Finding the fake ghost is not easy. The ancient tomb lay hidden for many centuries, buried below a kurgan that people just regarded as a natural hill. But a few clues lead to it and may even alert the player-heroes that not all is as it seems:

- Stories about the ghost differ wildly. In some of the accounts, the creature is said to be a true ghost, translucent like mist, in others it is a walking corpse. This is due to the panic the fake ghosts usually incites; the farmers are not reliable witnesses at all. An **Insight** roll will grant a deeper understanding of this fact.
- The haunting occurs in a roughly circular area, emanating from some low hills. A **Lore** roll will help the player-heroes realize this.
- There are tracks of the ghost, but the Goblins are quite adept at concealing them. Finding them requires a hard **Hunting** roll (TN 16). The tracks lead towards the hills, but are lost on rocky terrain. Something about the tracks is odd, they are of great, nailed boots, but the heels dig in much deeper than the toes (this is because Rignarks feet do not fill the large boots).
- At a lonely farm, the Goblins lost a dagger of Wainrider make. The farmer is more than glad to present this weapon to the company as he believes it to be cursed. While the blade is indeed ancient, it has obviously been sharpened by quite mortal means in the recent past. A **Battle** roll will reveal this.
- The ghost seems weirdly interested in mortal things, such as food, coins and wine. A **Lore** roll will raise suspicions about such worldly ghosts.

The company will probably realize that the ghost has to be from the low hills and begin searching the area. **Hunting** and **Explore** rolls will finally lead them to the kurgan.

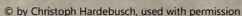
Part Three - Two Voices as One

Sooner or later, the company will find the tomb. From the outside, it seems to be a simple, natural hill, but it is actually a kurgan, an artificial hill raised over the grave of a great chieftain of the Wainriders. The entrance is hidden in the depths of a cave that has been opened by a fierce storm.

The whole tomb consists of stone slabs that have been erected to form crude walls and ceilings. The latter hang quite low, making it uncomfortable for anybody larger than a Hobbit – or a Goblin. Trying to sneak into the tomb is very difficult for Non-Hobbits, making the **Stealth** roll daunting (TN 20).

The main corridor leads directly to the Burial Chamber, but there was a collapse and the way into the actual chamber is blocked. Throughout the tomb, rocks and pebbles have fallen from the ceiling, creating treacherous ground.

All the walls are inscribed with strange and foreign markings, some of them being pictures of Men, but not of a kind the company has ever seen. Describe the eerie symbols and carvings as utterly alien and disturbing. The whole tomb should be shown as a place of dark worship and blasphemous ritual of Men of the Shadow, with a sinister and daunting atmosphere.



The corridor leads down over a few roughly hewn steps. The ceiling is even lower right at the entrance, forcing anyone larger than a Hobbit on its hands and knees. The air is cold and damp, with a draught giving it a chilly feel - as if ghostly fingers are touching the player-heroes. The corridor runs straight to the Burial Chamber. There are two other openings, one to each side.

This was once the place where the Wainriders brought sacrifices to please their dark god and ease the passage of their chieftain. The Goblins put the remains of the dead guards (see below) here in a big pile of bones, but were unable to open the stone door that leads to the shrine. The strange images carved into the stone above the door make them feel uneasy, so they seldom go there.

wicked claws and long tongues sticking out of fanged maws. There are still remains of the sacrifices to be found, mummified for centuries, and the player-heroes will notice that they look somewhat familiar, as if they were of human origin...

Anyone spending some time with searching for treasure or desecrating the shrine, will have to roll a **Corruption** test.

Several of the chieftain's bodyguards were slain when he died and entombed in the antechamber to guard their king even in death. They lay in silent watch for centuries, until the Goblins stripped their remains of everything valuable and unceremoniously dropped them in the Antechamber.

A short corridor leads downward from the Chamber of Guards to the Statue Chamber. This room is small and dominated by the statue of the chieftain himself, clad in Wainrider armour and wielding sword and shield.

65

If they hear the player-heroes, the Goblins hastily don their disguise and wait in the darkness of the Statue Chamber. As soon as someone enters, they will blow the horn of the Wainriders, which emits a dark, haunting sound, and begin to curse the player-heroes for defiling the resting place of a righteous king. The two voices crying in unison sound truly unearthly, and the player-heroes will have to make a **Fear** test. Those who fail will back up and may even flee the scene.

to rest, the Goblins will make up errands that need to be done. In theory, if the player-heroes are actually fooled, this could lead to some rather senseless quests...

But the most likely outcome is that the company finally realizes that the ghost is not undead at all. If they attack the ghost, the Goblins will split up and fight. Still, a fight against the two Goblins might prove surprisingly difficult:

- The low ceiling and cramped chambers prevent normal fighting from anyone larger than Hobbit or Goblin; add 2 to any attack roll made. Only one player-hero can engage each Goblin in melee due to the confined space. The rest can attack with ranged weapons from the rearward stance.

- The Goblins use the buried equipment, which is significantly better than weapons and armour of orcish make. Raise their Parry to six and their Armour to 4d; Their weapons are axes (Damage: 5; Edge: Ψ ; Injury: 18).

Adversaries: 2 Snaga Trackers

BURIAL CHAMBER

Getting into the main Burial Chamber will take some effort, as the ceiling of the entrance collapsed. Have the player-heroes roll **Lore** and **Craft** to determine the best way to open the blocked passage, using **Athletics** and **Craft** to do the actual work. They need to achieve 5 successes before they fail five rolls, or the rest of the ceiling caves in, too, burying the chamber for all time.

A sarcophagus sits directly across the entrance. It is large, measuring almost twelve feet by three feet. Its lid depicts the man that can be seen on the statue, laying on his back, covered with his shield and sword. If the player-heroes try to open the sarcophagus, have them roll **Athletics** (TN 18). Depending on their motivations, this can incur a **Corruption** check. If they manage to open it, they find the sarcophagus almost empty: a small urn contains the ashes of the chieftain, who has been burned in the fashion of his people and then interred in the tomb. His shield is split and his sword broken, both obviously by purpose.

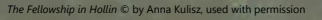
Falling rocks have crushed most of the grave goods. A small pile of ancient coins is in one corner, obviously once stored in clay vases that have been shattered. The pictures are mostly of kings long forgotten, but there are some old coins minted by Gondor, too. A few scrolls and even books of vellum survived; unfortunately, they are written in the tongue of the Wainriders which is all but forgotten.

All in all, the coins and other grave goods are worth 3 Treasure Points per player-character.



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Because the adventure is just a short side trek, there should be no need for a prolonged Fellowship Phase.



A MASS ABDUCTION -

RAVENS IN THE NORTH, ADVENTURE 1

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adventure

This is the first adventure in a - hopefully - series centred around the plot of Gorlanc the Sorcerer as outlined in overview 'Ravens in the North' from Issue 23. It sets the scene for the adventurers to become involved in Gorlanc's plots and possible ways to thwart his designs.

I am looking forward to see more of the series, bringing a greater campaign to Eriador which is otherwise largely devoid of major dangers. It features a rather sinister plot, a bit different from the usual obviously evil enemies like orcs, trolls etc., making choices more difficult and less black-and-white.

This adventure is very promising when thinking of the next instalments of this great campaign. Well done Andreas and keep up the good work!

SETTING

This is the first adventure of the *Ravens in the North* campaign outlined in *Other Minds*, Issue #23. It builds upon the first two adventures of the Bree book, while further developing ideas found therein. In these adventures the heroes have discovered hints about the presence of the evil Sorcerer Gorlanc: Through the antagonists Berelas or Hirlinon the heroes could have obtained enough information about a dangerous man living in a fortress in the north, gathering evil men around him. On the other hand, the heroes may not know much about Gorlanc at all, beside his unscrupulous practices and interest in old treasures and especially the ring of seven jewels.

In any case his dangerous potential and his true ambitions as described in the campaign outline in Issue #23 should not yet be known to them. Instead the LM should reveal enough information about Gorlanc in order to convince the heroes of the need to find out more about this strange man and his ambitions. The information should include that Gorlanc planned to meet Berelas or Hirlinon near Mount Gram. This should be enough to lead the heroes north for further investigations.

SUMMARY

The heroes travel to Mount Gram to find out more about Gorlanc. They witness an attack of Burzash – one of Gorlanc's sub-commanders – on a village of Hill-men. He was given the task to build and man a new fortification on the site of Eldanar – a stronghold of ancient Arnor and a field of ruins for many centuries – which lies roughly in the centre of Angmar. Burzash needs men and craftsmen to fulfill the task. He therefore called for men to come to Eldanar and serve him, but not enough followed the call. He therefore now tries to force tribes of Hill-men to work for him.

At the beginning of this adventure Burzash attacks the settlement “Bar-Raduk” of a tribe of Hill-men led by Raduk and carries off many of their children as hostages. Burzash plans to use them as leverage in enforcing the village’s compliance. When the companions reach Raduk’s village, Burzash has already moved on. Raduk begs the companions to rescue the children.

The heroes’ main task is to save the children. During their mission they are betrayed, find another hint regarding Gorlanc (a green amulet) and learn about a dispute between Raduk and a neighbouring tribe. Returning to Raduk’s village they find the chief trapped in a feverish trance for days. They have to save Raduk, and thereby his village, from subjugation by the rival tribe which is voluntarily following Burzash. At the end of the adventure the heroes face the tough choice whether to help the remaining children (adventure #3 of the campaign) or the village and its chief (adventure #2 of the campaign) first.

LOREMASTER CHARACTERS

Gorlanc will not personally show up in this adventure. Also Burzash, the great orc and one of Gorlanc’s commanders, is not intended to be met by the companions, but depending on how things develop, this might change. The stats of both antagonists can be found in the campaign outline in *Other Minds*, Issue #23. Other LM characters with an active role in this adventure are listed below:

Raduk, Chief of the Hill-men

Raduk lives with his tribe in a valley near Mount Gram. He is not the most skilled leader, but dedicated to his tribe and genuinely concerned about its well-being and life. Living in the North can be perilous due to the cold climate, the scarce (food) resources and the rivalry with other tribes. Thus he believes his tribe will only survive if they stay together and keep a low profile. As a result he refuses to send men and arms north following Burzash’s call. Raduk’s village does not have a palisade as he assumes this would only attract challengers and attention. His strategy is simply to hide.

Raduk, Chief of the Hill-men	
Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
19	5
Parry	Armour
5	1D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦♦	Survival ♦♦♦
Movement ♦	Custom ♦♦♦
Perception ♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Spear ♦♦♦	
Special Abilities	
Patient, Cautious, Enemy Lore (Orcs), Mountaineer	



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Frack, Captain of the Hill-men

Frack is the best warrior in Raduk's tribe and captain of roughly 30 fighters. He sees Raduk as a weak leader. He disagrees with Raduk's policy of hiding and being content with their simple life. He judges Mendamar the leader of a rivaling tribe as a much better leader. Frack heard Burzash's call and believes that the tribe should be led to old strength with the help of Burzash. But every time he brought the subject up with Raduk, he rebuked him, even in front of others.

Frack is secretly wearing a green amulet of Gorlanc under his shirt, given to him by Burzash during his first visit (see below). The amulet gives him a free attribute bonus (+4) to Awe.

Frack, Captain of the Hill-men	
Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
26	5
Parry	Armour
6	3D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦♦	Survival ♦♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦	Custom ♦♦
Perception ♦♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Spear ♦♦♦	Orc-Axe ♦♦
Special Abilities	
Cruel Stroke, Fire-making	
Curse of Hill-men: Dreadful Spell TN16: A hero who fails the Corruption check (TN 16) loses 1 point of Hope every time he makes a roll and produces an EYE result. The curse lasts until sunrise or sundown.	
Raven Spirits: When the first Hillman dies in combat, a flock of ravens swoops down on the battlefield. When this happens, the Parry rating of all companions is reduced to the basic combat TN of their chosen stance for the length of 3 rounds of combat.	

Warriors of the Hill-men

Raduk, Chief of the Hill-men	
Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
18	3
Parry	Armour
5	2D
Skills	
Personality ♦	Survival ♦♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦	Custom ♦♦
Perception ♦♦	Vocation ♦♦
Weapon Skills	
Spear ♦♦♦	Orc-Axe ♦♦
Special Abilities	
Hatred (Dúnedain), Curse of Hill-men: Dreadful Spell TN16: A hero who fails the Corruption check (TN 16) loses 1 point of Hope every time he makes a roll and produces an EYE result. The curse lasts until sunrise or sundown.	
Raven Spirits: When the first Hillman dies in combat, a flock of ravens swoops down on the battlefield. When this happens, the Parry rating of all companions is reduced to the basic combat TN of their chosen stance for the length of 3 rounds of combat.	

Burzash

Burzash himself will most likely not appear on stage in this adventure. His motivation and actions, however, strongly influence the events. Thus, a brief account of them is in order.

As pointed out above, Burzash has been given the task to build a fortification and an army in Eldanar by Gorlanc. For the moment he has too few orcs and men to fulfill the task and has issued a call throughout Angmar and the neighbouring lands to come to Eldanar and serve him. Some have answered the call, but there are by far too few to start working on the fort. Thus Burzash travelled to several villages of the Hill-men in the area to recruit his work-force personally. While some tribes were more cooperative, Raduk's tribe is still reluctant. Burzash has too few warriors to violently force Raduk's village. He needs every single one from those who are already following him, and also every single man from Raduk's men. He simply cannot afford any bloodshed at the moment.

Burzash thus reverted to cunning trickery where violence would not avail. In his visits he quickly recognized in Frack a disaffected



warrior who is easily impressed with recognition and gifts. Thus, on his first visit he gave him a green amulet of Gorlanc and promised him great acknowledgement if he can convince the tribe to serve willingly in the building project. Later, he returned twice but Frack was still not able to convince Raduk. Then he realized that he might use the families' children as leverage to secure the tribe's loyalty. On his last visit he instructs Frack to inform him when the hunters and warriors are away, so that he can force his will upon the village even with his limited resources. Once Frack provides this intelligence, Burzash returns with a few orc-riders. The villagers are taken by surprise and lack the means to effectively resist. He knocks down Raduk and Frack and let some houses in the village be set on fire. Then he orders his orcs to gather the children from all families, except for the very youngest. During this, some villagers who resist are wounded and two even killed. This underlines his resolve, and the fires and the wounded effectively hinder an immediate pursuit. Two children are able to escape the kidnapping in the village, and Burzash sends a small group out to catch them. They can be quickly caught by a few of his orc riders, which then face the company when they want to re-join the main group. He himself soon leaves the burning village with the rest of his orcs and the child hostages. He informs the tribe, that he expects their arrival at Eldanar within 20 days, if they are interested in the continued survival of their children.

ACT 1 - INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

Scene #1 - The assault

One evening the companions reach the foothills of Mount Gram and notice a glow of fire between the hills. Judging by the amount of smoke, the fire must be rather big. As the companions draw nearer, they make out a small village. Several of the simple huts are burning. Smoke covers most of the scene, making it hard to see what exactly is going on. But shouts and sounds of crying women and children can be heard clearly.

Suddenly orc-riders (1 per companion) break out of the smoke and head towards the heroes. Companions with a successful Awareness test can make out two orc-riders, each of them having a loudly crying human child sitting before them.

The heroes can try to ambush the group of riders, but time is pressing (TN 16). If the riders spot the heroes in advance, the two riders with the children will separate from the group and try to get around the companions while the other orc-riders make a charge attack.

Orc-Riders	
4	
Endurance	Hate
16	3
Parry	Armour
4+2	2D
Skills	
Personality ♦♦	Survival ♦♦
Movement ♦♦♦	Custom ♦♦
Perception ♦♦♦	Vocation ♦
Weapon Skills	
Spear ♦♦	Orc-Axe ♦♦
Special Abilities	
Hatred (Dunedain), Riding Mod -2, Charge Bonus +3	

Charge attack

We use simplified riding in combat rules here as outlined below. Still the LM may choose to use the more detailed riding rules found in *Horse Lords of Rohan* (p. 135ff).

The orc-riders will charge once against the heroes and then move into a close combat fight. The handling of the wolves during the charge attack is handled as an automated success: the orc-riders can immediately make an attack with their spears. The roll is resolved as normal ($TN12 + \text{Parry of the hero}$) but a bonus of +3 (the charge bonus) is added to the endurance loss if a spear attack has been successful. In the following rounds the attacks of the orc-riders are resolved according to the normal melee rules (like it is done with any of the orcs who are on foot).

Heroes attacking the orc-riders on the other hand have to choose to attack the wolf or the rider. Due to the difference in height, the rider is harder to hit ($TN+2$). An attack on the wolf is easier ($TN-2$) but only a great or extraordinary success brings the wolf down, inflicting 4 endurance loss to its rider. Any Orc dismounted this way may join the fight with his close combat weapon the very next round. Companions with ranged weapons in rearward stance can attack the orc-rider as normal (they do not experience a penalty due to the height difference).

If the heroes are able to stop the orc-riders and return one or both children to the village, they will have a benefit in the upcoming encounter with Raduk. Otherwise the children will be carried away. The remaining orc-riders won't let themselves be drawn into a long fight. They'll follow the riders with the children as soon as those are out of reach of the heroes.



Warg Riders © by Andres Canals, used with permission

Scene #2 - The village

Ulfas



Ulfas © by Jan Pospisil, used with permission

Entering the village, the heroes find the place in total chaos: several huts are burning, people cry for help, frightened women run around shouting names, etc. The heroes can try helping to extinguish fires (Athletics, Craft), taking care of some wounded (Healing), calming down people (Awe, Inspire), etc. Successes will as well increase the tolerance (see below) in the upcoming encounter with the chief of the village - Raduk.

As the companions explore the area they find a tall old man standing in the centre of the village. He wears a long brown cape and holds a long spear with black feathers around the spearhead. Next to him is a strongly built warrior. Dressed in furs he carries an orc-axe. Both look banged up. The warrior looks grim and speaks to the old man with lowered voice. As the group approaches, companions with a successful Awareness roll ($TN14$) are able to hear the following: "This wouldn't have happened if we weren't always hiding like cowards!"

Both Hill-men notice the approaching companions and look up. The warrior immediately raises his axe, but the older man gives him a sign to stand down. The warrior obeys reluctantly, but keeps his guard up, watching the companions suspiciously. The older man looks at the companions with uncertainty: "What do you want? Do you also want to harass and rob us?"

Act 2 - First attempt and failure

Scene #3 - The chase

If the encounter went well, Frack and a warrior named Narran will accompany the companions on their attempt to save the children. If the heroes are on their own, Raduk sends those men after them secretly, as he does not fully trust them. The heroes can follow the tracks of the orcs fairly easy (TN12). The attackers didn't bother to cover their tracks and the ground is mostly soft. The tracks split after a short time. Several orc-riders, including a large one, separated from the main group and turned east. Burzash has separated from the main group with a few of his wolf riders to pay a visit to yet another village of Hill-men (e.g. Mendamar's Tribe). The main group continued their way northwards. According to the tracks it consists of numerous orcs and children on foot. They hurried and Frack and Narran are able to follow the tracks without any problems. They know the region well and offer the companions their help, if the heroes are lacking the appropriate skills.

After several miles the main track once more splits into two. A small group separates from the main group and heads into the mountains close by. An examination (Hunting TN14) reveals cut ropes on the ground. Four children seemed to have freed themselves and ran away from the main group and four orcs gave chase. The tracks disappear after a short time between bushes and rocks. A small wolf carved from wood can be found close by (if Hunting succeeded TN16 also). The tracks of the children and orcs do not return. The main group also didn't wait, but continued their march soon.

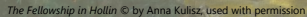
If Frack and Narran are not with the company, they are approaching the heroes now. Frack greets them. He calls the heroes capable warriors and hunters and suggests joining forces. Meanwhile Narran takes a quick look around and finds the wooden wolf, if the heroes have not done so. He shows the miniature to Frack. Narran first suggests and later insist that the group should follow the tracks of the four children and their pursuers. When asked

- Outcome:**

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oṭḥēr tārjōs arjō/harjōs oṭḥēr tārjōs arjō/harjōs oṭḥēr tārjōs arjō/harjōs oṭḥēr tārjōs arjō/harjōs oṭḥēr tārjōs arjō/harjōs

If the companions choose to follow the tracks of the four children, the adventure continues as described below. If the companions choose to follow the main group to the north instead, it will lead them to Eldanar (Adventure #3 of the campaign “A new Stronghold”). The four children will then most likely be caught as they stand alone against much more experienced fighters. Some or all might die, if they refuse to comply with the orcs or surrender.



"This is the entrance to the valley we talked about. It is shady and pitch dark at night. There is a rest area about half an hour into the valley. We should rest there and move on quickly at first light."

Scene #4 - The betrayal

As the night draws nearer it's getting increasingly colder. Frack suggests putting their troubles aside for the moment. He offers to make a warm soup against the cold in the tradition of his people. If asked concerning the attention of fire and smoke he assures, that's no problem (He is able keeping fires low and smoke-free due to his fire-making trait).

Unknown to the heroes, Frack poisoned the soup and the bottle. He sees a chance to regain Burzash's favour by killing the heroes and bringing him the runaway children. Everyone who tasted his soup / bottle vomits and feels extremely weak and bad in the night. Let the players temporarily tick the boxes for wounded and weary. Frack uses the unrest to steal away in the night in order to reach the children first. Narran stays behind, being poisoned as well, vomits and collapses unconscious. All heroes need to spend one point of hope in order not to lose consciousness. A successful healing roll (TN14) reveals the poison as of orcish origin. It saps all energy, spreads slowly through the body and leads to certain death within two days if the antidote is not given. The latter is not too uncommon in the area, the companions can find suitable herbs with an appropriate skill (TN14 or herb-lore). Still it takes time to find, prepare and apply the herbs. The companions can search for it during daytime twice a day.

With the antidote the symptoms wear off within four hours and the heroes (and Narran, if they choose to do so – refusal will give them a point of Shadow each) can tick off the wounded and weary boxes. Narran wonders what has gotten into Frack. He is seriously worried.

At the end to the scene the heroes have lost some time, two points of travel fatigue and one point of hope. That's not too bad so the LM can use the scene as an opportunity to make it quite dramatic and to stir up the grudge against Frack.

Act 3 – Showdown

Scene #5 – The cave

Frack didn't bother to hide his tracks, as he deemed the heroes dead. If they search, they are able to find recent tracks of Frack (TN14), older tracks from four orcs (TN16) and even older tracks from the children (TN18). As the heroes move forward the mountain slopes on both sides get steeper and draw nearer. The valley becomes narrower until it finally changes into a ravine where no more than two men can walk side by side. The tracks are continuous leading upwards.

At the end the ravine opens into a small mountain basin. Several rocks, big and small, lie scattered around. The cliffs all around are high and steep and it is obvious that the only way in and out is the ravine. On the other side of the basin the entrance to a small cave is visible. A boy and a girl of about 10 years are standing there blocking the entrance with their spears (which belong to the emergency equipment stored there; see below). y tense and fearful.

Between the boulders a fire has been lit. Frack and some orcs are sitting there talking. Any companion who manages to sneak nearer (TN 14 due to the scattered rocks) is able to hear the following (see next column):

Orc Leader:

"True. But I am the great Grashnik. What do I need you for?"

Frack:

"They will not go with you voluntarily and they are of no use dead. Let me speak to them."

The Orc Leader grunts.

Orc #2:

"But we can have an arm or leg. Don't we? They look fresh!"

Frack:

"Didn't you listen? Burzash needs the children alive and unharmed! Hurt them and I'll kill you!"

Orc Leader stands up, looks down to Frack and laughs:

"You. All of us. Who do you think you are, Whiteskin?"

Frack stands up as well. His eyes flash angrily. He reveals his green amulet and uses it's free attribute bonus on Awe to impress the orcs:

"I am Frack and I am wearing Burzash's amulet. I am his spear punishing every disobedient one! I will make sure his orders are followed. They are to be left unharmed. If you want fresh meat go and get Narran and the other fools. They lie dead in the ravine."

Suddenly, a lot of things happen almost simultaneously: an angry yell can be heard: *"You killed my father! You traitor! You miserable traitor!"* A boy jumps forth behind one of the boulders surrounding the fire and rushes towards Frack. He throws a spear at Frack but misses. Frack curses but does not return the attack. Three orcs on the other hand jump up and draw their weapons to attack the boy.

Almost at the same time another yell is heard from the opposite direction: *"No! Arran! No!"* Narran had crept forward secretly and instantly jumps forward to help his son. Frack curses again, spins around and blocks Narran's attack. The girl and the boy from the cave rush into the fight to help Arran. So, at the beginning of the upcoming fight, little Arran faces three orcs (the



other two children join him next round) and Narran faces the orc leader as well as Frack. Arran and the other children can be treated as a regular Hill-men with one less rank in Movement, Survival and Spear. The orcs can be treated as regular orc-riders without their mount.

If more than half of the companions succeeded in sneaking forward to observe the orcs, the company can now launch a successful ambush without any further roll. They have the initiative. Otherwise the companions have to rush forward to join the fight, which takes one round. The orcs and Frack have the initiative in this case. All orcs and Frack fight to the death as possibilities to flee are limited. The boy and the girl cannot affect the outcome of the battle at all. Both get severely wounded in the first round and collapse to the ground. While Arran tries to stand his ground a second girl tries to draw her wounded friends back into the cave.

The tide of events might help the LM to create an exciting atmosphere. Frack and the orcs in the basin are only five in number and thus - depending on the number of heroes – maybe outnumbered. At the LM discretion and depending how the fight is going, he may add even more pizzazz to the fight by having several orc-riders appear in the ravine behind the heroes. They could have been sent by Burzash.



Scene #6 - Saving the children

If Frack and the orcs can be defeated, the companions can take a closer look around. Among Frack's belongings is a map on which Eldanar is marked. The amulet he is wearing is green embossed with a black bird. If the heroes have seen one of Gorlanc's amulets before they should immediately recognize it as such.

The four children are 9 to 11 years old. At least the boy and the girl have been badly wounded in the fight and are in a severe condition. They can be stabilized with a successful healing roll - for the moment. It is obvious that Narran and the other children are not able to bring the wounded back to the village alone, even if they survived the battle unscathed. The injured need stretchers to avoid reopening of the wounds and strong men/women to transport them to the shaman of the village. The LM should describe the situation in a serious yet hopeful manner to convince the heroes to abandon the pursuit of the main group for now and return the children safely to the village for the time being. This then lays the foundation for a competing adventure, see below.

When the cave is examined, it turns out to be a dry, dark and relatively large place. Besides some storage of dry food, furs, simple weapons and some firewood the cave is mostly empty. Just another 6 year old boy can be found hiding in the dark. He has been carried here by the other four children. With the things lying around in the cave it is possible to build two rudimentary stretchers for the injured with a suitable skill.

The End - A TOUGH DECISION

The travel back to the Hill-men village is not played out in detail. The LM can assume the heroes are able to reach the village within a day or two. In the village the parents are overjoyed to have their children back. Nevertheless at least two of them are severely injured and most of the others are still missing.

Additionally there seems to be a problem with Raduk. The shaman healer (named Sinaf) of the tribe leads the heroes to Raduk's hut. She points at Raduk who is sitting there motionless. He is not responsive, his face looks very worried and he sweats cold. The old lady relates that he's been in this state since the heroes departed. He wanted to search for the children himself but obviously got stuck. If asked, the old lady explains that Raduk's spirit is traveling as a

wolf, but it has not yet returned (to his body). This is very unusual. Something must have happened to him! Something must prevent his spirit him from returning.

Some of the tribe assume that Mendamar is behind this. He rules a neighbouring rival tribe and was one of the first to follow Burzash's call. Regardless of whether Mendamar is involved, people fear that he will take advantage of the situation to subdue the tribe once he learns of Raduk's condition. Two groups vigorously discuss what to do next. Should the children be saved first or possibly the whole village?

At the end the tough decision it up to the heroes. They are the only ones to tackle both tasks. Should they free Raduk (Adventure #2 of the campaign "The Chiefs Challenge") or go for the older children in Eldanar (Adventure #3 of the campaign "A new Stronghold") first?



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