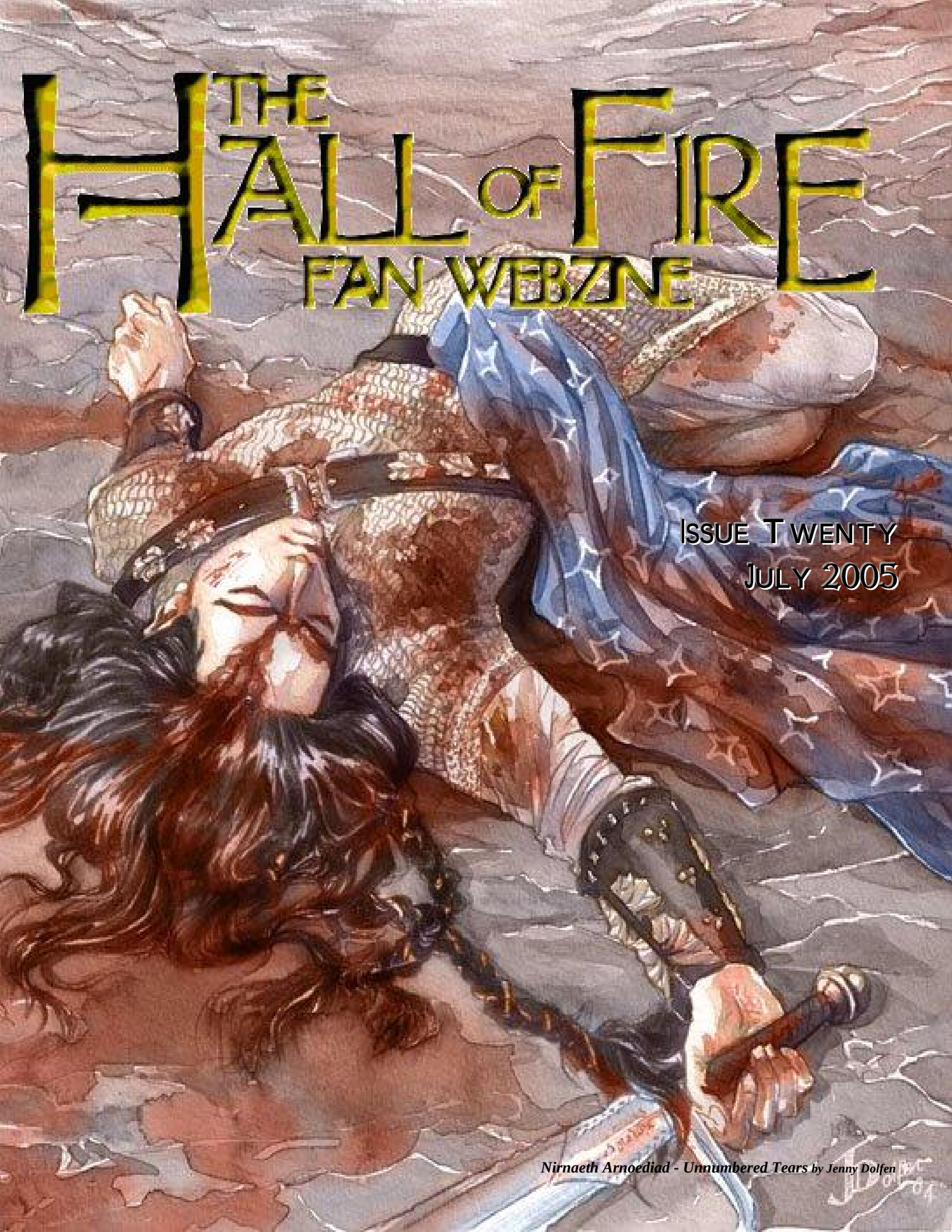
The Hall of Fire

Fan Webzine

Issue Twenty
July 2005



Nirnaeth Arnoediad - Unnumbered Tears by Jenny Dolfen

Greetings,

Salutations… Hello All!

Another month has passed. We have seen an announcement for Decipher's next release, the Helm's Deep Sourcebook, and there was growling and griping. We then saw an announcement that the release would be delayed until early to mid-July and this time we got griping and growling. Then finally there was the announcement that it'd be available at Origins in limited release and what happened? You guessed it, there was more growling and griping. And after all of that, all I have to say is: "Can't we all just get along?"

Well enough of that news and gossip and on to this month's issue. As promised, this issue would take a look at Dale and boy does it! There are articles about the city and the surrounding area, the line of lords and kings from Girion to Bard II, and the Bardings and other local peoples. In addition, there is an article on Fornost Erain, optional rules for the expansion of the Vala Virtue ability, a discussion of the Loremaster Order, plus more!

Happy gaming to one and all,

Matthew A. Kearns
aka GandalfOfBorg
Editor

The Hall of Fire
The Unofficial Lord of the Rings RPG Webzine

In This Issue

Greetings 1
Adventuring In… 2
- Dale
- The Peoples of Middle-earth - Men of the Dale
- Deadman's Dike: Fornost Erain

It's All Optional… 9
- Vala Virtue
- Flawed around the Edges: Fixing CODA's broken character traits

Hostile Haunts… 17
- Bastion of the Troll-god

Fan Flavour… 22
- The Effective Ranger

The Road Goes Ever On… 25
- The Reach of the White Hand

Hall of Fire Index 30
What's Out There… 33
Calling All Gamers… 33

Contact The Hall of Fire at:
CODAWEBZINE@HOTMAIL.COM

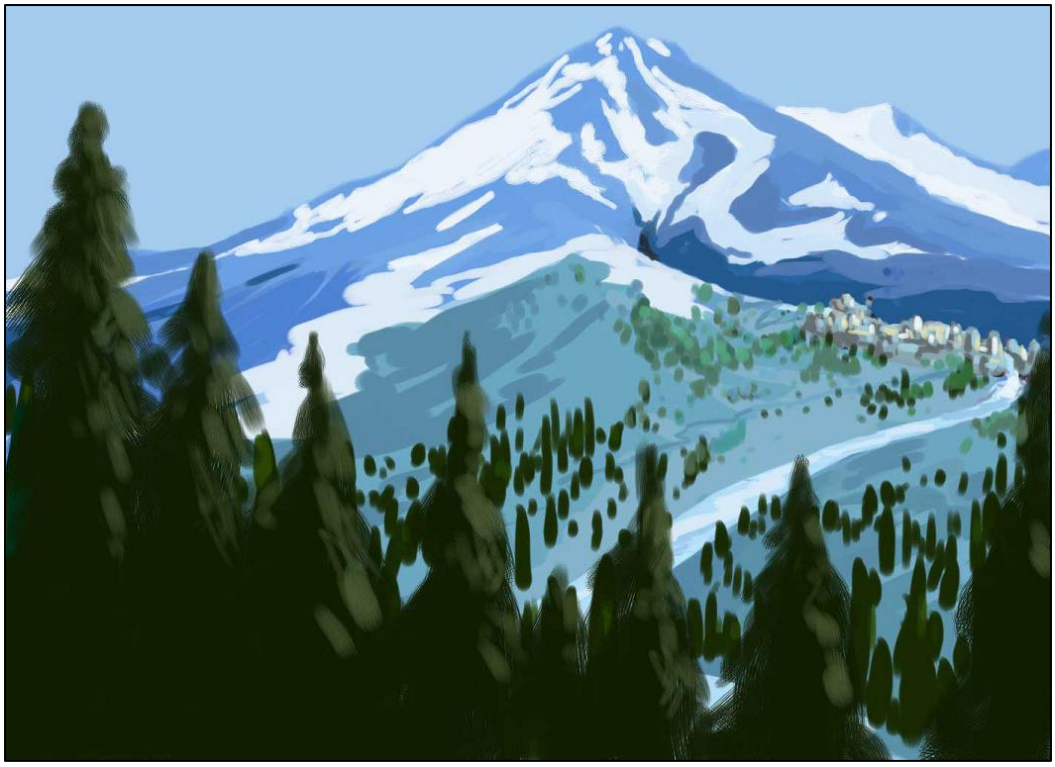
This is an unofficial fan webzine created for players of Decipher's *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* and the world of Middle-earth created by J.R.R. Tolkien. There is no affiliation between the creators of this webzine and Decipher, Tolkien Enterprises, or any other related corporation. All material is either direct from Tolkien sources, Decipher, opinion, or has been created for the said purpose of roleplaying in the world of Middle-earth. Some images are used herein for the purpose of adding flare to the webzine, but are owned by varied sources mentioned in the Credits on the last page. THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT FOR RETAIL SALE AND INDIVIDUALS MAY PHOTOCOPY AND PRINT FOR THEIR PERSONAL USE.

Issue Twenty – July 2005

ADVENTURING IN DALE

by Mathew Kearns (GandalfofBorg)
pictures by Peter Merryman

HISTORY



In the north of Middle-earth, east of Mirkwood, and at the foot of The Lonely Mountain, there lies the city and kingdom of Dale. In its early days, Dale was a settlement of Men who were a plain and simple folk but renowned as expert woodworkers and crafters. As time wore on, Dale grew in size and renown as it became the leading trade partner with the Dwarf-kingdom under Erebor.

Eventually, rumor of the wealth and prosperity of the two kingdoms fell upon the ears of the last great wyrm of Middle-earth, Smaug the Golden. In 2270 Third Age (TA), the great dragon came with fiery breath upon wings of a hurricane and destroyed both Dale and the Dwarf-kingdom, taking up residence upon a great pile of plunder.

The lands around the mountain and ruins of Dale became a desolate wasteland, bleak and unfriendly. The borders of The Desolation of Smaug (as it came to be called) harbored a little clinging greenery and life, but its heart was scorched and utterly barren, cursed by the dragon's foulness. The desolate lands extended southwards some miles along the banks of the River Running from Smaug's lair beneath the Lonely Mountain, but the lands to the north of the mountain seem to have suffered even more fiercely, if the map accompanying The Hobbit is a reliable record. After Smaug's death in TA 2941, it seems that the curse was lifted and The Desolation was slowly reclaimed, as both Erebor and Dale were recovered from their destruction and now prosper once again. Ironically, the kingdom of Dale eventually came to claim the lands covered by the The Desolation as if it were some weregild for their loss and long years of fear and suffering.

Battle of Five Armies

"So began a battle that none had expected; and it was called the Battle of Five Armies, and it was very terrible. Upon one side were the Goblins and the wild Wolves, and upon the other were Elves and Men and Dwarves."
- The Hobbit

Since the ending of the War of the Dwarves and Orcs, the orcs had nursed a hatred of that race. In the year TA 2941, Bilbo, Thorin and their companions were captured by a colony of the orcs that infested those regions. With Gandalf's help they escaped, but not before killing several of their captors, including their leader the Great Goblin. The loss of the Great Goblin at the hands of a band of Dwarves inflamed the bitter memories of the old wars with the Dwarves. Under the command of

Bolg, whose own father Azog had been killed, all the armies of the orcs of the Misty Mountains issued forth from Gundabad with their allies, the wolves and bats, with aims of revenge and retribution.

Oblivious to these events, Bilbo and the Dwarves continued their journey eastward. Though their quest to recover Erebor was successful, they earned the anger of Thranduil the Elf-king of Mirkwood, and indirectly caused the destruction of Lake-town. Thranduil's Wood-elves joined with the Lake-men and marched to the doorstep of the ruined dwarf-kingdom to claim a share of Smaug's treasure in recompense. In response, Thorin called on his cousin Dáin, who set out with his own army from the Iron Hills.

So the scene was set for a confrontation between the Wood-elves and Lake-men on the one side, and the Dwarves of Thorin and Dáin on the other. Already the first arrows had been shot when a dark cloud was seen coming out of the north - the bats that heralded the orc-armies of Bolg. The Elves, Men and Dwarves quickly forgot their differences in the face of this new threat, and battle was joined on the slopes of Erebor and the valley beneath. The battle was ferocious, and as it raged, it was joined by others - Eagles out of the Misty Mountains, and even Beorn himself in the shape of a monstrous bear.

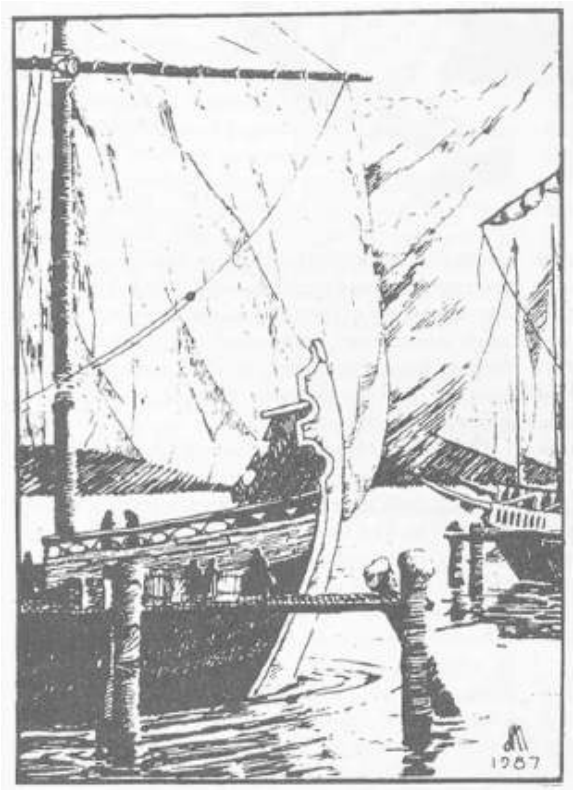
This battle was the end of Thorin and his cousins, Fili and Kili, and it severely diminished the presence of orcs in the Misty Mountains for years to come. Dain took up the throne in Erebor and Bard the Bowman, of the Line of Girion and the man who killed Smaug, was unanimously given lordship and kingship over Dale.

Battle of Dale

A battle that took place nigh the end of the War of the Ring in Dale and Erebor. Brand of Dale (grandson of Bard the Bowman) and Dáin Ironfoot were both lost in the battle, and their respective forces besieged in the Lonely Mountain. The sons of these two lords, Bard II and Thorin III, were eventually able to break the siege and defeat the forces of Sauron sent to beleaguer them.

The actual Battle of Dale ended with the victory of the Easterling invaders, leaving Brand and Dáin dead, and their heirs, Bard II and Thorin III, besieged within Erebor. The siege lasted for seven days, until news of the Downfall of Barad-dûr reached the besiegers and sapped their morale, giving the two kings and their armies the opening they needed to rout the dark forces and drive them from their lands.

Surrounding Area



Esgaroth

Also called 'Lake-town', it is a town on the shores of the Long Lake, the original home of the Lake-men. After the coming of Smaug to Erebor, Esgaroth was abandoned from shore to be built upon platforms out in the Lake as a form of defense from the dragon. Run by the elected Master, Esgaroth is a town of merchants and farmers eking out a decent life on the lake.

Forest River

A river so-named because for much of its length, running through northern Mirkwood. It rose in the Grey Mountains to the north of the Forest, and followed a roughly southeasterly course to its outflow into the Long Lake.

Long Lake

The lake that lay to the south of Erebor and Dale, the site of Esgaroth, home of the trading people of the Lake-men and descendant of the ruined city of Dale. The lake provides both sustenance for the people and a wealth of trade, both of their own goods and the trafficking of goods between surrounding realms like the Woodland-realm and Dorwinion.

Dale
FEET
400

River Running

This river flows out from the south end of Long Lake, traveling generally in a southeasterly direction and eventually pouring into the great inland sea of Rhûn. It is the River Running that facilitates transportation of people and goods between the Woodland-realm, Dale, Erebor, and the friendlier realms of the Near East like Dorwinion.

Notable Features

NOTE: This description is of Dale at the time of Bard the Bowman's kingship and may be altered as you see fit for earlier years or as ruins during Smaug's "reign" over the area.

Statue of Girion

In the center of the city's square surrounded on four sides by the keep of Dale (south), the merchant guild house (north), the constabulary (east), and the officers' barracks (west), this is a monument to the first actual Lord of Dale, Girion. This is the spot where he reportedly made his last stand with his guards against the onslaught of Smaug while he bided time for his wife and young child to escape into the night.

Keep of Dale

Even though Dale became a kingdom after the death of Smaug, and the keep was rebuilt to its original splendor, it remained nothing more grand than that. Though given pretty much carte blanche the ability to rebuild as he saw fit, humility remained with Bard as he decided to honor his and Dale's past. The keep consists of not much more than a great room, kitchens, living quarters for the royal family, the keep's servants, and the royal guard; everything else can be found elsewhere nearby.

Merchant Guild House

As their trade in woodworking, food, and supplies is what makes the city so prosperous, the merchants' guild was given leave to build the great house in the downtown square. The building is large, allowing for a number of meeting rooms and residences for some of the regulars along with dwarves visiting from Erebor on business.

Officers' Barracks

This is the main residence for the officers of Dale's army, connected to the royal livery, smithy, and the foot soldiers' barracks. Along with quarters, the build also holds one great war room, a huge library of maps and other information, and a number of smaller rooms for instruction and training.

Constabulary

Not affiliated with Dale's army, this building is the city's jail and courthouse. As Dale grows, so does the number of kingdom constables. This is where all trials are held, unless they are petitioned to be brought before the king.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. Soon after the fall of Smaug, Esgaroth must be rebuilt along with Dale. Even though the goblins were routed in the Battle of Five Armies, they are still a potential threat along with the spiders of Mirkwood until the return of the dwarves to Erebor. Protect the rebuilding effort and/or seek to cleanse the ruined city of Dale from any horrors that remain.

2. Now that Dale is being rebuilt with part of the treasure of Smaug and Esgaroth has recovered, trade is booming on the long-lived trade route along the River Running, the Long Lake, and the Forest River. You have been hired by the merchant guild of Esgaroth and Dale to protect shipments from bands of thieves along the long roads into the East and the perils of Mirkwood up to the Woodland-realm.

3. King Brand has come to the throne upon the death of his father. Dale has earned a few enemies in the nearest East realms for their persistent, yet mostly peaceful expansion of the kingdom. Mordor seeks to fuel this enmity further as part of its plans for wiping out the last of the kingdoms of the Free Peoples while it searches for the One Ring. Protect the realm from incursions from the East and southern Mirkwood and/or defend against the Siege of Erebor where Brand and Dain fall.

Men of the Outlands

These rural folk live in the area of the Lonely Mountain and within a few days' ride of Dale and Esgaroth. They live the simple life of farmers, fishers, and craftsmen. Little of their heritage has been interrupted or changed for as long as any can remember, except when the Dark Lord's minions made war upon all Men at the end of the Third Age, burning and pillaging as they went.

Men of the Steppe

Like the Wainriders and Easterlings further east in Rhûn and south, these people live a nomadic life, roaming the lonely plains between Erebor and Dorwinion. Though they are free from the influence of Sauron, they descend from men who betrayed men and elf, siding with Morgoth long ago. The same as the Men of the Outlands, little to nothing has changed about the Men of the Steppe, appearance or heritage, since the "dark days of when the earth broke and fell into the sea" as they put it.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Bardings

Descendents of original Dale, including the Line of Girion, are a broad and grim folk, coming out most with ire and displeasure. The men and women are of approximately the same height and build, dark brown or black hair, and brown eyes.

Men of Esgaroth and Outlands

These people come from a mixture of the original residents of Dale, Men of the Steppe, and a small portion from the Men of the Anduin Vales. They have no typical or distinguishing features to themselves.

Men of the Steppe

These people are closely related to the ancient Men of the East and those of Dorwinion. They are light of build with light brown to white blonde hair and blue or grey eyes.

SOCIETY

Bardings

Their seemingly unfriendly demeanor hides their true nature in the joy that they take in providing for themselves and friends and as skillful workers of wood, greatest in the region, rivaling even the folk of the Woodland-realm. Home, family, and community are the three pillars of life to them. Little crime can be found, but when it is, its roots are typically in outsiders, especially from the East.

Men of Esgaroth and Men of the Outlands

Similar to the Bardings, as they were a part of their society for a long time, they are a people who are simple and honest. Their city is governed by a mayor who is elected by popular vote, a rarity in this world, though typically it is the most wealthy and/or influential merchant. Though initially unfriendly and wary, if you are trustworthy, they will open their arms and hearts to those in need.

Men of the Steppe

These people lead a nomadic life, living frugally off the land, following the herds of wild deer and antelope. They have a simple life where pride and honor are what hold their clans together. Like the rest of the Free Peoples, they revere the elements, sun, moon, earth, sky, plants, animals, etc., but unlike the rest, they worship them as well as deities. To a certain extent this belief reflects the cosmology of Middle-earth, but the Elves and some of the Dúnedain know the actual history of Middle-earth along with who and what created the world.

ECONOMICS

Dale

The economy of Dale is fairly closed, like that of Erebor -- Dale supplies the dwarves with foodstuffs and their expert woodcraft items while Erebor trades their own goods (metal- and stonework) and training in these arts. There is little outside trade in Dale as they produce most all they need, though their woodcraft is exported throughout the region via Esgaroth.

Esgaroth and the Outlands

Though it has a limited craft and goods industry, Lake-town's economy is primarily based on being a waypoint along the profitable trade route between Dale, Erebor, the Woodland-realm, and on to Dorwinion and the beyond.

The Steppe

There is little trade between these nomadic clans and other peoples and realms due to their self-sufficiency. When there is trade, it is done using the barter system where their beadwork and bone/antler carvings are highly prized by the obscure collector.

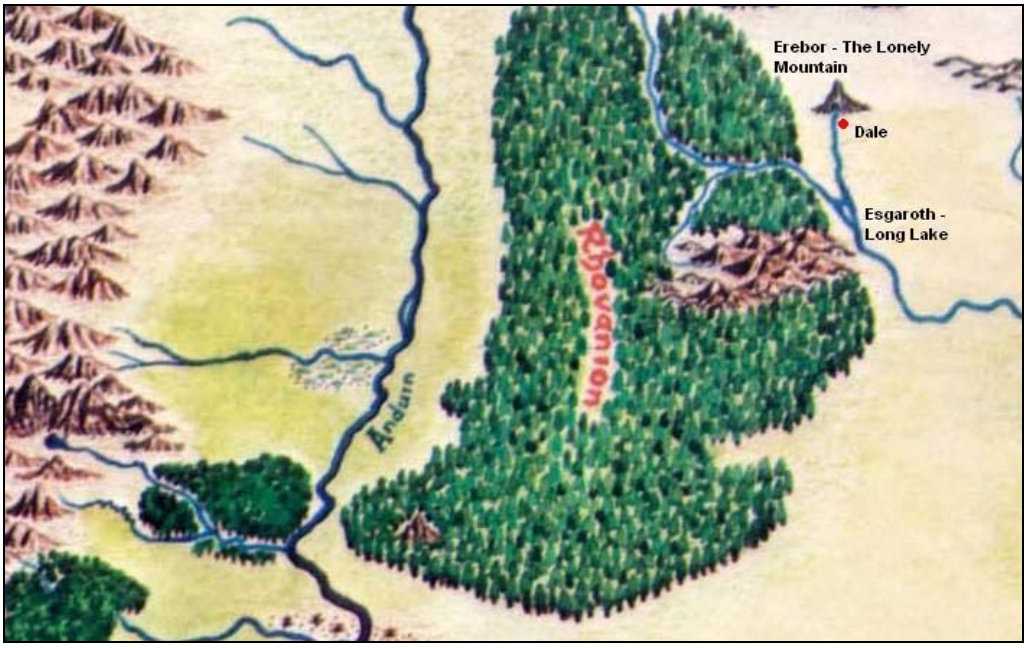
STANDARDS/DEVICES

Black Arrow Pennant

The Black Arrow is representative of the ruling family of Dale, formally known as the Line of Girion. The red dragon is Smaug as he was a prominent figure in the history of Dale. The dragon in combination with the arrow represents the refounding of Dale as a proper kingdom and those of the Line of Girion to be the line of kings. The mountain represents Erebor, 'The Lonely Mountain', and the realm of The King Under the Mountain where these kingdoms have a symbiotic relationship -- the closest relationship between Men and Dwarves.

Shield of Lake-town

This simple device has a blue field representing Long Lake and The River Running as they are the life-blood of this town. The tree stands for Mirkwood, for it provides much for the town along with being the residence of the Elves of Mirkwood, one of their biggest traders and staunchest allies.



Dead-man's Dike: Fornost Erain

by Doug Joos

Arthedain's capital city since the abandonment of Annúminas, Fornost Erain stood as the realm's principal fortress and center of culture and trade. Perched strategically on the highest crest of the North Downs, and further protected by earthen and stone dikes and palisades beneath its high curving stone walls, Fornost housed the royal family and nobility of the kingdom in addition to Arthedain's renowned seers, scholars, artisans, and their many assistants and servants. The crest upon which it sat was a series of natural tiers rising up a 1,000 feet where the King's citadel was perched. The natural defenses along with those built up by the great folk of Arnor made Fornost a formidable stronghold.

The state of ruin of the city is based upon the year that the Narrator's game is being run. Fornost was abandoned to the besieging forces of Angmar in T.A. 1974 and the Witch-king sent a horde of undead fell-spirits to chase out any stragglers and to take up residence and keep away any would-be heroes trying to restore the crown. The town may be nothing but a large mound with broken fragments of the once proud walls and rubble as the only trace that buildings and homes once stood there, or it could be still somewhat intact only showing the ravages done by the armies of the Witch-king. In either case, the residents listed below will be found in their respective areas.

The Narrator can describe the ruin as a series of standing walls on which ivy now grows thick. The gardens and orchards that once were cultivated now are overgrown with wild plants, scrubs and trees. The once manicured parks and squares are now stretching out over the cobbled roads that used to intertwine throughout the city, the trees grown large and full and their roots breaking up the stones and earth. A wispy fog seems to lie over the old city from dusk until dawn no matter how strong the wind may blow.

In the winter, the 'dead' city seems colder still and ice hangs over the landscape and ruins. The foliage that grows thick in the summer months and that at least makes the place a bit more pleasant to look upon is not there to cover up the scars. Even in the coldest of months, the wispy fog mentioned above still lays over the land.

Lastly, there is no evidence of any animals or birds making the down a home, only the foliage shows that life still roots here. There are voracious insects that swarm around the ruin of all kinds, buzzing, flying in ears and eyes, and biting. The bugs make for restless nights and for patience wracking days.

Standard information for the Narrator for any adventurers that enter the ruins of Fornost:

- The area that is encompassed by the map given has an unnatural feel to it that affects birds, beasts, and any of the Free Folk. Since its horrible and sorcerous destruction at the hands of the Witch-king, and its many years of dominion by the undead, the hill that Fornost sits on has an intimidating look and feel. Any animal or person that approaches the hill must make an Opposed Willpower test TN 12 or suffer the result based on the degree of success as is illustrated in Table 9.19 of the *Core Rule Book (page 233)*. The ill-effects from the intimidation will persist for one hour per point of failure on the dice roll (i.e. if a character rolled a 10 on their Willpower test, the ill-effects will last for 2 hours). This effect can be reduced or negated by an Inspire test TN 12 which if successful, will allow the characters another chance to resist the intimidation.
- For every half hour spent picking through the ruins, the Narrator may roll 2d6. On a result of double 1's, a stone will shift or rocks will fall on the hero(es) searching. The hero(es) must make a TN 10 Swiftness test or an Acrobatics test TN 15 or each sustain 2d6 damage (armor does not apply).
- Any walls still standing are 30' in height and any towers that the Narrator wishes to be whole will be three story and rise to the height of the adjoining walls.
- The ruin is quite old and has gone relatively undisturbed since its abandonment in T.A. 1974. Due to this, there may be natural pitfalls (i.e. overgrown holes, basements with weak ceiling, etc.) and other type of dangers that any explorers may run into as they move throughout the old city. The Narrator may add any pitfalls and define the required tests to escape the dangers.

Ulmo

Lord of the seas and one of the greatest of the Valar. In the dark days of the First Age, he kept watch and lent indirect aid to both Elves and Men while the others of his order remained in Valinor. Devotion to him grants a +2 bonus to tests related to the sea (Sea-craft, Weather-sense, Survival, etc.).

Aulë

One of the Aratar, the eight greatest of the Valar, Aulë was the Vala concerned with the substance of Arda; rock and metal. As his name suggests, he was also the builder and inventor of the Valar. Among his greatest creations were the race of Dwarves and the vessels of the Sun and Moon. Devotion to him grants a +2 bonus to Appraise plus Stonecraft or Smithcraft.

Oromë

Oromë, one of the Aratar and the brother of Nessa, is known as The Huntsman of the Valar. In ancient times, he rode often in the forests of Middle-earth, and it was he who first discovered the Eldar at Cuiviénen. Devotion to him grants a +2 bonus to Ride, Survival, and Combat tests when hunting wild beasts.

Mandos

The Doomsman of the Valar and keeper of the slain in his Halls in the west of Valinor; his true name is said to be Námo. Devotion to him grants the Foresighted edge (superseding the edge's requirements if they aren't met).

Irmo

More commonly called Lórien, from the gardens of Lórien in Valinor where he dwelt with his wife, Este. Devotion to him reduces by half the amount of sleep required to recover from Weariness.

Tulkas

The last of the Valar to descend into Arda, and the most warlike; he did battle with Melkor in the years when the World was young. It is said that he laughs more than anything, especially while in battle, instilling great fear into his enemies. Devotion to him grants a +2 bonus to Unarmed Combat or Inspire or Intimidation tests while in combat.

Elbereth

The Queen of the Stars and spouse of Manwë the King of Arda, great among the Queens of the Valar. She set the stars in the sky, for which the Eldar of Middle-earth revered her, calling her by the name of Elbereth. Devotion to her grants a +2 bonus to resist Sorcery and other spells cast by evil powers.

Yavanna

Called the 'Giver of Fruits', Yavanna was the Vala whose province was all growing things upon the earth. She was the spouse of Aulë the Smith. Devotion to her grants a +2 bonus to Lore tests related to plants and animals.

Nienna

A Queen of the Valar, the sister of Námo and Irmo, who dwells alone on the western borders of the World. Nienna ranks as one of the eight Aratar, the most powerful of the Valar. Grief and mourning are Nienna's province; in her halls in the distant west, she weeps for the suffering of Arda. Her part in the Music of the Ainur was one of deep sadness, and from this grief entered the world in its beginning. The Maia Olórin, who was later to travel to Middle-earth as Gandalf, learned much from her. Devotion to her grants a +2 bonus to Insight and Persuade (Oratory) tests.

Estë

A lady of the Valar, the spouse of Irmo, who dwells with him in the gardens of Lórien in Valinor. Devotion to her reduces by half the Weariness penalties applied to movement through natural areas.

Vaire

She is a Queen of the Valar, spouse of Mandos, and the one who weaves the tales of the history of Arda. Devotion to her grants a +2 bonus to Lore: History tests.

Vana

She is a lady of the Valar, sister of Yavanna, and spouse of Oromë. Flowers were said to open, and birds sing, at her passing. Devotion to her grants an additional +2 bonus when spending Courage on social tests.

Nessa

The spouse of Tulkas and sister to Oromë, she delights in dancing on the green lawns of Valimar. Devotion to her grants a +2 bonus to Perform tests.

Morgoth

Followers of evil cults throughout the ages have devoted themselves to Melkor Morgoth, Sauron, and others powerful in the darkest of arts. These cults are savage and brutal, exacting bloody rites and sacrifices to these 'gods' of darkness. Devotees of these faiths do not garner any bonuses as Melkor Morgoth is beyond the reaches of the world to affect it in any way until the End of Days.

FAN FLAVOUR

THE EFFECTIVE LOREMASTER by Mathew Kearns

Smelling of musty tomes and torch smoke, Loremasters are an integral part of any adventuring party in Middle-earth. The men and women are scholars and students of all types of knowledge, subjects ranging from healing to plants and animals to history. When it comes to researching a cure for a fast-spreading disease or deciphering ancient languages, the Loremaster is your go-to person.

BACKGROUND

The CODA system and the game itself almost beckons that you create your character's concept and background before rolling the dice and picking skills, traits, and abilities. Regardless of the Age in which you game is set, the Loremaster is a viable Order that can be used at almost any time. Think about where he comes from, his motivations, and maybe even sketch out a few of his personal goals. This will help both you in focusing your roleplaying and your Narrator for creating side adventures for developing your character. Work with your Narrator to come up with something suitable for the game in which you will be playing.

RACE

There are no racial restrictions for this Order. While all races of the Free Peoples have Loremasters within their societies, Elves (moreso Noldor and Sindar) would have more characters of this type or least some advancements put toward it.

ATTRIBUTES

Wits is the key attribute for Loremasters as it governs the Order's bread-and-butter skills: Language and Lore. A high score also provides for a higher starting Wisdom. Perception is essential in that it allows a Loremaster to "see" beyond the obvious and understand what is beyond normal senses. Bearing is important when it comes to persuading others of your opinion or casting spells. The latter two attributes also are key to Willpower.

REACTIONS

Willpower is probably the most important for Loremasters as they are typically in situations where resisting forced-upon influences and successfully casting spells (if they ever gain the ability). Wisdom is also a good choice for Favoured Reaction (detecting lies, coercion, etc.). When making a concerted effort for research and investigation, a good Stamina score will help keep you going.

SKILLS

Language and Lore, governed by Wits, in their various incarnations are what Loremasters specialize in, representing their vast knowledge and worth. The other Order skills are all great choices for a Loremaster, except maybe Games. If there were a Cross-Order Skill a Loremaster should acquire, it's Search as it complements his investigative and studious nature (Note: Consider spending Racial Skill picks on this).

EDGES

There are many edges that enhance the effectiveness and give a bit of flavor to the Loremaster: Ally, Curious, Eloquent, Friends, Gift of Tongues, Healing Hands, Honour's Insight, Stern, Strong-willed, Tireless, Wakefulness, and Wise.

FLAWS

With the pros of being a Loremaster, there are always cons -- the flaws -- that reflect their erudite and, at times, idiosyncratic nature: Dark Secret, Proud, Rival, Stiff-necked, Weak, and Weak-willed.

ABILITIES

Ancient Scripts - This is a very useful ability and reasonably priced. It fits the best for Loremasters who focus on doing research, treasure-hunting, or travelling through foreign lands.

Expertise - This high-priced ability provides nothing more than a bonus for a skill (or maybe multiple skills in certain situations) that already should provide a fairly large bonus to roll and happens to be the prerequisite for the ability. The bonus isn't worth the 3 picks spent either unless it could be applied to multiple skills.

Scroll Hoard - This ability is almost the same as Expertise in its results, but could be considered more powerful as it doesn't have prerequisites and, as written, applies to any Lore or Language skill when he has access to the scroll hoard. This may "tie" a character to a location and could become abused by players. An idea to cut down on the abuse is be to have the player specify the types of knowledge contained in the scroll hoard and/or scale the amount of time required for research in the hoard along with the bonus for the test by how much info in the scroll hoard pertains to the topic being researched.

Secretive - This ability is very powerful compared to its cost as early on it could double your Willpower bonus (potentially equivalent of 6 picks or more), this being its base use. The specialized use of the ability is probably worth the 3 picks alone when adding 2x Wits modifier to Willpower tests (instead of 1x) for resisting torture/domination.

Spellcasting - Through your intense studies, the Loremaster has happened upon the knowledge being able to manipulate the fabric of the world around them by casting spells. This ability is wholly less powerful than the same for Magicians and has expensive prerequisites, but it still is a worthwhile ability.

Vala Virtue - An interesting ability as its thematic quality could be considered a bit dubious (where devotion to a Vala isn't all that canonical in my opinion outside of Maia), but its practical quality can be quite potent when used appropriately along with a few choice edges and/or abilities. This ability would gain the most use if the character gains advancements in other Orders.

MULTIPLE ORDERS

Craftsman - This Order would make a good complement to Loremaster, giving him the ability to apply his accumulated lore to the creation of items, including enchanted or magical items or aiding in Craft test from Vala Virtue for Aule.

Magician - Being so close to what the Loremaster already is, it isn't a likely choice to be acquired unless it is for the more powerful Spellcasting ability or Secretive to make casting spells easier.

Mariner - Like the Craftsman ability, Loremaster can complement this one quite well, gaining the most from probably Vala Virtue for Ulmo.

Minstrel - Someone of this Order coupled with an expanded base of lore through the Loremaster Order could create interesting and memorable ballads about far off places and times long past. The Spellcasting ability could be used to increase the evocativeness and/or persuasiveness of his performances.

Noble - Shrewd and wise rulers would either have or benefit by gaining the Loremaster Order.

Rogue - When it comes to a well-timed and executed heist or investigating potential prospects, a Loremaster's expanded knowledge base can come in handy when attempting to pull one off.

Warrior - Many soldiers, especially those considered officers and captains of men, know the value of a good education and do what they can, when they can, to increase their knowledge.

Archer - This Elite Order is a far stretch for the Loremaster as the prerequisites are quite expensive for any Order that doesn't have Ranged Combat as an Order Skill, and high Nimbleness scores would almost never exist.

Captain - Your commanding presence can only be enhanced by having or acquiring the Loremaster Order. This is especially true when using Vala Virtue for Elbereth when leading men against the forces of the Shadow.

Knight - Like the Archer, this Elite Order wouldn't be likely to gain much by already having or gaining advancements in the Loremaster Order.

Ranger - Loremaster would be an okay choice for the Ranger when it comes to lore about plants, animals, etc. and Vala Virtue for Orome or maybe Yavanna.

Spy - Like the Ranger, Loremaster would help in expanding your Lore and Language skills and maybe the Secretive ability when resisting domination if caught and trying to resist revealing your secrets.

Wizard - This Elite Order is quite likely the one that a Loremaster would attempt to achieve, while the reverse isn't true except for maybe the same reasons as listed for Magician.

SPELLS

If your Loremaster does acquire the Spellcasting ability, he is limited to 2 spell picks to spend per rank in the ability. This can hamper your expansion of power (unless you join the Magician or Wizard Orders), but there are plenty of useful spells for you: Crafting-spell, Create Light, Display of Power, Healing-spell, Ithildin-fire, Scribe Moon-letters, Voice of Suasion, and more.

PLAYING A LOREMASTER

The greatest value a Loremaster hero brings to any game is his great wealth of information, be it in books, tomes, scrolls, or his mind. When he speaks, the Loremaster should be listened to, especially if you are relying on him to get out of a particularly difficult situation where brawn is useless. If ever you should need assistance in finding good examples of Loremasters, look to Elrond, probably the greatest of all Loremasters in Middle-earth, Gandalf and any of the other Istari, and smallest of all, Bilbo Baggins.

The Road Goes Ever On...

The Reach of The White Hand

by Paul Bennett

A Parallel Adventure
To the Fellowship of the Ring
For The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game

This adventure is designed for 3 to 5, beginning or 1 advancement characters with at least one Dúnedain character with tracking skills. This is a fast paced adventure and every effort should be made to keep up the momentum. It was also designed as a lead in for *The Ruins of Annúminas*, a free adventure game found on www.decipher.com.

THE RACE OF THE RING

The world of Man has borne witness to the growth of the Shadow for many a long year. But now in the air one can sense a race between those that would preserve the good in the world and those that would utterly control or destroy what good remains. The One Ring, formed in evil by Sauron long ago, has the power to spread its malice throughout the world. Sauron, the enemy of the all the Free Peoples, has gained knowledge of the whereabouts of his precious trinket and sent his dreaded Black Riders forth from Mordor to search The Shire for one named Baggins. Meanwhile Frodo Baggins, after receiving the Ring from Bilbo Baggins, and his companions have made it to Bree where they meet Strider. Strider, sent by Gandalf the Grey, has laid plans for the Ring to travel to Rivendell. That night the Black Riders enter Bree, called by the ring, yet do not find it or the hobbits and disappear into the night. As the morning breaks the company sets out on their journey. But the Black Riders are not the only ones searching for Hobbits. For within Bree another power has eyes that too are searching for The One Ring. So Strider sets out for Rivendell with the uneasy feeling of being watched.

THE SHORT OF IT

The adventure begins in a Ranger outpost within the Chetwood Forest. Pelegond the Captain of the Chetwood sends the characters to investigate an encampment of strangers southeast of Bree. As the heroes reach the Great East Road they encounter Bill Ferny who is looking, as always, for information to sell. Bill tells them a story about a camp of strangers, seeking to make a few silver pieces, and leads them (or is chased) back to Bree. But Bill has other plans to make a few coins. Once they are in Bree outside the blacksmith's shop, Bill's thugs try to mug the heroes.

In the failed attempt, Bill now runs to his house where the characters first encounter one of Saruman's spies giving Bill his just rewards. After the characters defeat the spy, Bill will tell the characters about the stranger's interest in a Ranger called Strider and his new-found friends. From here they track two other spies to their abandoned camp where they pick up the tracks of the strangers leading back to the East Road. And the pursuit ends in a battle to the death, where the victorious heroes return to inform Pelegond of the White Hand.