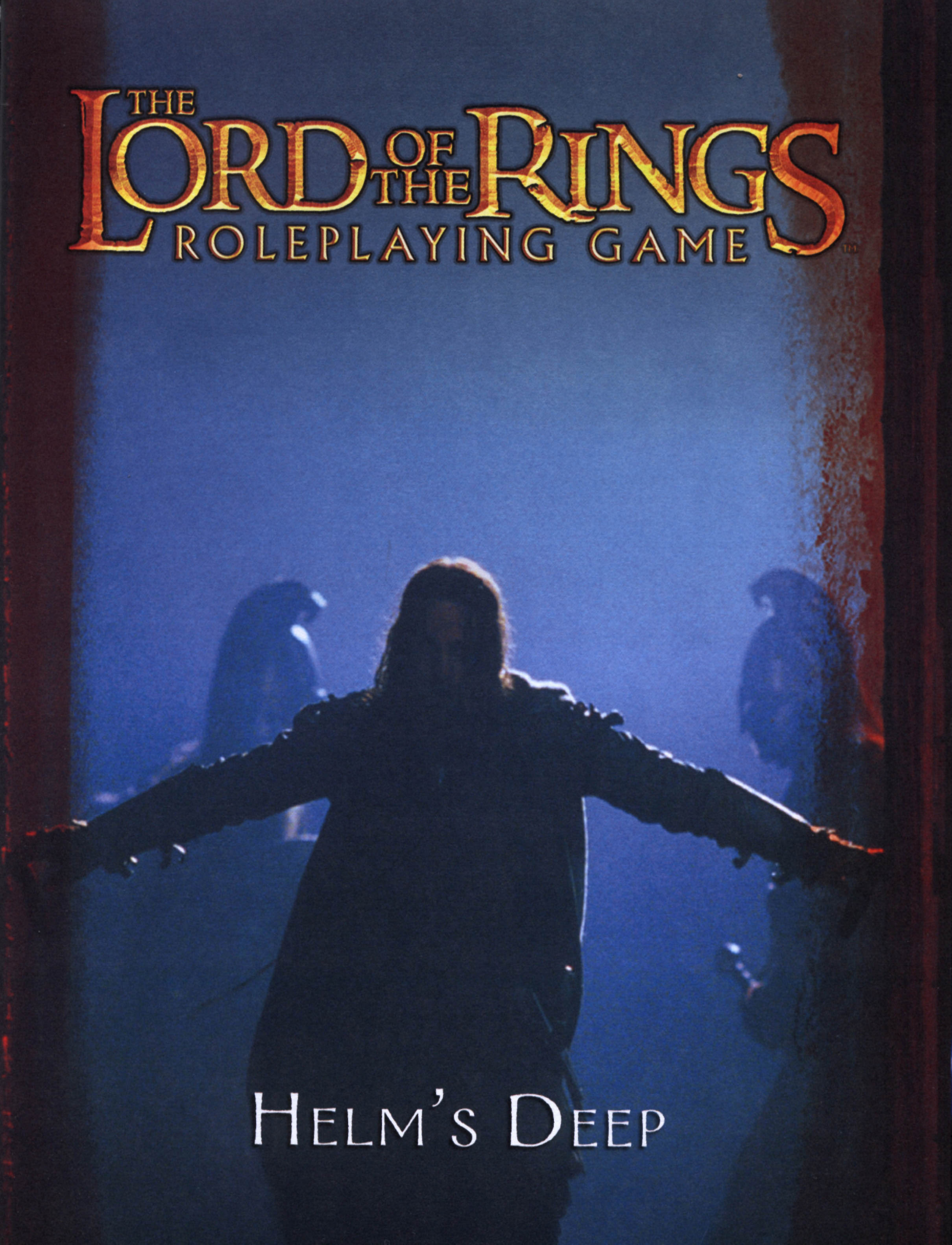


THE  
**LORD OF THE RINGS**  
ROLEPLAYING GAME™

HELM'S DEEP



# THE LORD OF THE RINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME™



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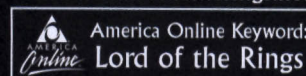
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PRODUCED BY DECIPHER INC.  
Decipher Inc.  
253 Granby St.  
Norfolk, Virginia 23510



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First Printing — 2005      Printed in USA

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# THE FASTNESS OF ROHAN



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*By order of the king, the city must  
empty! We make for the refuge of  
Helm's Deep. Do not burden yourself  
with treasures. Take only what  
provisions you need.*  
—Háma, *The Two Towers* film

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Welcome to *Helm's Deep*, a sourcebook detailing the historic, nigh-impregnable fastness of Rohan. Within its pages a wealth of history, background, description, rules, and advice for your chronicle can be found, a collection of information useful to both players and Narrators of *The Lord of the Ring Roleplaying Game*.



## OVERVIEW

---

*'Let this be the hour when we draw  
swords together! Fell deeds awake! Now  
for wrath! Now for ruin! And the red  
dawn! Forth Eorlingas!'*

—Théoden, *The Two Towers* film

---

**H**elm's Deep is divided into two chapters, not including this introduction.

**CHAPTER ONE: HELM'S DEEP** is the heart of the book, an exhaustive

gazetteer of the fortress and surrounding areas. It includes information on the history of Helm's Deep going back to the discovery of the Glittering Caves of Aglarond, details about the geography and settlements of the Deeping Coomb, descriptions and floor plans of Helm's Deep's many fortifications, new options for player characters who hail from the area, game statistics for all those who dwell in the fastness, and much more.

The information contained in Chapter One is primarily for the Narrator's eyes and contains some secret details which the Narrator







may wish to reveal only in the course of the chronicle, if then. Some Narrators may, however, allow players whose characters hail from Helm's Deep—or from other parts of Rohan—to read Chapter One, or parts of it, as background information. Players, check with your Narrator first.

**CHAPTER TWO: BATTLE AND WAR** begins with advice for Narrators on how to incorporate epic conflict into their chronicles. While of great use—especially for novice Narrators—these sections are not particularly useful to players. The heart of Chapter Two, however, is a system of new rules for battle between armies in Middle-earth. While the core rulebook provides an abbreviated system for waging war, these new rules provide many more options.

The rules for battle in Chapter Two can be read by all, and players whose Narrators choose to include war in their chronicles will want to read and understand them. This is doubly true for players whose characters aspire to personally lead the Free Peoples in battle against the massed forces of the Enemy.

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

*'You are looking now south-west across the north plains of the Riddermark. . . .'*

*—Aragorn, The Fellowship of the Ring*

While later sections discuss the lands surrounding Helm's Deep in great detail, a brief orientation to these areas will prove useful to those approaching this geography for the first time.

In the midst of a spur of the White Mountains that stretches toward the southern tip of the Misty Mountains lies the Thrihyrne, which comprises three great peaks. Before these peaks on the north-east side lies a great valley, extremely narrow at its apex but wide and verdant where it opens onto the grasslands of Rohan. The valley separates naturally into two portions—inner and outer—at the fortress called the Hornburg.

The inner portion of the valley lies behind the fortress. This narrow, rocky ravine, known alternately as the Horn, the Deeps, or Helm's Deep,

is where the stronghold's defenders store supplies and mounts, quarry rock, and keep barracks. The portion of the valley outside the fortress is the Deeping Coomb, a great valley that is home to many families of Rohan. The Coomb's social and economic centre is the Streamhouse and Coomb Market.

A series of defences protect the Deeps. Any who would attack it would first face Helm's Dike, an earthen wall at some remove from the main fortress. The Horn is further guarded by both the Deeping Wall and the Hornburg, linked fortifications. The former spans much of the Horn's mouth, while the latter stands high upon the Hornrock, spans the rest of the mouth, and is home to the master of Helm's Deep as well as his household, staff, and most elite followers.

The Deeping Stream bisects both Horn and Coomb, flowing north-east from the deep recesses of the Horn, where lie the Glittering Caves of Aglarond. These caves, whose vast extent is unknown even to those most familiar with them, provide additional storage as well as a final line of defence should the fortifications ever be completely overtaken.



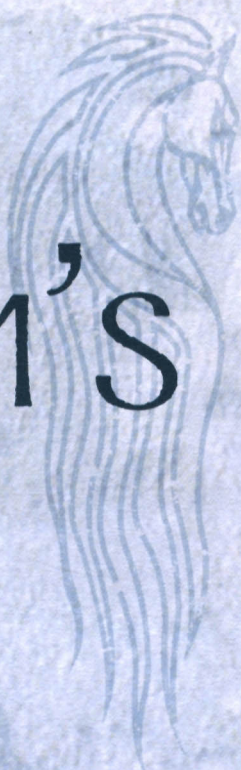


# OVERVIEW OF HELM'S DEEP





# HELM'S DEEP



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*'Men said that in the far-off days  
of the glory of Gondor the sea-kings  
had built here this fastness with the  
hands of giants.'*

*—The Two Towers*

---

**T**hroughout its many ages, Middle-earth has seen massive conflicts, vicious battles, and dreadful wars. Marching armies have covered entire plains, a thicket of spears and shields as far as the eye can see, and many a mighty castle has fallen before such massed fury. Yet some structures have maintained their defences, even against such overwhelming odds, and have stood tall, wrestling victory from the jaws of certain annihilation. Among these stands Helm's Deep, considered by many the sturdiest stronghold in all Middle-earth, and one of the most enduring structures built entirely by Man. Though neither Dwarf nor Elf had a hand in its creation, its walls stand as solid today as they did when first they were constructed.



## HISTORY

**H**elm's Deep demonstrates how skill and cunning may enhance natural strengths without robbing them of their native grandeur. The stronghold known as Helm's Deep lies in the west of Rohan, between Isengard to the north and Edoras to the south. Long ago the Dúnedain arrived from the isle of Westernesse, and established

their kingdom in the lands of Middle-earth. Gondor was their domain, and they built many mighty cities so that their people were housed across that great land.

Among the Dúnedain were two mighty brothers, the twins Endoron and Endorion. Great warriors they were, and powerful leaders of Men, but these brothers loved most the joy of exploration, and delighted in travelling across the lands of the kingdom







and discovering new wonders in every corner of the realm. With them travelled a small band of Men, and they had many great adventures together. But while camped in the far western corner of the kingdom the brothers and their allies were set upon by bands of barbarians from the western coast, and many died in the ambush. A spear thrust sorely wounded Endoron, and his brother Endorion carried him to the Thrihyrne, where he hoped to at least plant himself with solid rock behind him. Instead, Endorion discovered a cleft in the mountain, a natural gap running narrow and deep. Into this he gathered the last of his followers, and there they prepared to make their stand.

But the barbarians were many, and arrows and spears rained down upon the Men of Gondor as water during a thunderstorm. There was no shelter to be had amidst the bare rock, yet Endorion refused to surrender. With a single mighty blow of his great axe, he shattered the side of the mountain and opened a way into the caves that lay deep beneath its peaks. His followers he thrust inside, and with them his wounded brother, but Endorion himself remained at the entrance and slew any whom dared approach it.

Two days later Endoron awakened to find himself and his band safe inside the caves, and his brother dead at the cavern entrance. The barbarians had fled, unable to fight their way past the great warrior, and he had remained standing even as life

fled from his body. Endoron's grief was great, and his tears flowed like a mighty river—where drops fell they became gems encrusted

in the rock, and where they pooled they

became  
ponds  
of

still

clear water.

Endorion was buried deep in the caverns, which were named Aglarond, Sindarin for 'Glittering Caves.'

At the mouth of the ravine Endoron constructed a mighty keep in remembrance of his brother, so that no Man of Gondor would ever be forced to take refuge in the caves

or to flee an enemy in those mountains. With great craft he fashioned ramparts and gates of massive stone, hewn from the mountains themselves so that the rock blended easily with its surroundings. On a rocky spur from the north face he built a mighty keep to overlook the pass, ringed round with walls thick and strong. From that fortification, which was named Harnost (Sindarin for 'South-fort,' named such in comparison to

Isengard at the north of the Gap of Rohan), a thick wall ran to the southern cliff, so that passage into the cleft was controlled by those

within. This structure became a guardpost, and from it the Men of Gondor could look out

over the western portion of the kingdom and spy out trouble ere it reached

them.

The

chasm

also

became

a strong-

hold,

containing

many stores

of food and

other necessities, and in

times of violent

weather

the people of

that region could

retreat into the

fortress and pro-

tect themselves and

their kin. But no change

was made to the caves themselves, in memory of Endorion who had created the entrance to them and who had given his life protecting them.





## THE LONG WINTER

*'Men of that land called it Helm's Deep,  
after a hero of old wars who had made  
his refuge there.'*

*—The Two Towers*

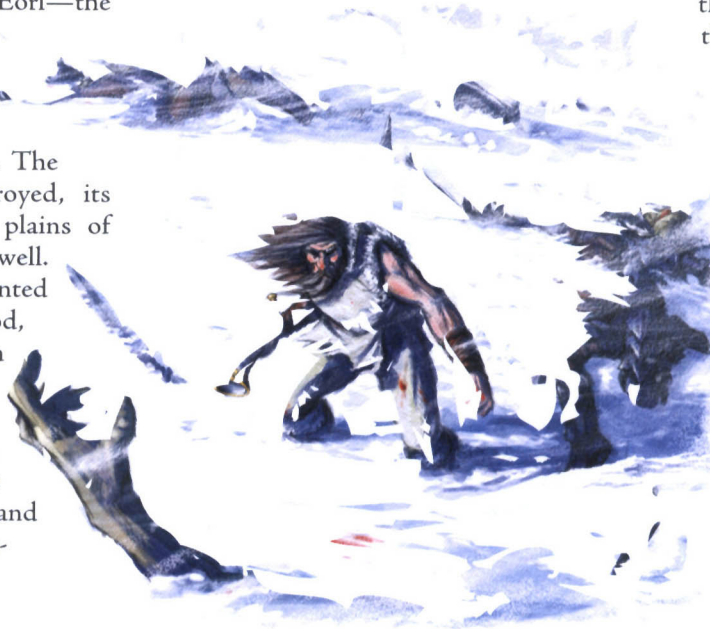
In TA 2510, a tribe of Easterlings known as the Balchoth assaulted Gondor from the east. The North Army of Gondor was cut off from aid and backed against the Anduin, and the situation looked grim for them. Then the hosts of Eorl—the Éothéod—arrived, galloping hard from the far north and striking the Balchoth from behind on the Field of Celebrant. The invading army was destroyed, its forces scattered, and the plains of Calenardhon reclaimed as well. In gratitude, Gondor granted these lands to the Éothéod, making the territory between the Isen and the Anduin into a separate kingdom, the Mark of Rohan. The fortress at Aglarond was included in this new land and became the Rohirrim's westernmost defence.

Unfortunately, the lands surrounding Rohan had not been entirely empty. Across the Isen lay Dunland, and its people hated the Rohirrim for claiming lands they once inhabited themselves. From the time Rohan was formed, the Dunlendings waged war upon the Rohirrim, and battle across the Isen was bitter and frequent. In 2710, the Dunlendings gained control of Isengard, which provided them with a base along the northern edge of Rohan. In 2758, Gondor was assaulted by the Corsairs of Umbar and the Men of Harad, and

could send no aid to its allies. The Dunlendings took full advantage of this situation. Allied with Southrons, they assaulted Rohan from the west and defeated the Rohirrim at the Crossings of Isen. King Helm was forced to retreat into the mountains with his riders, taking refuge at Harnost and in the ancient hold of Dunharrow while the Dunlendings claimed his land. Wulf, the leader of the Dunlendings, showed his scorn by claiming Edoras as his own and establishing there the seat of his newly expanded realm. (Wulf's father Freca had once been an advisor to King Helm, but had dared to insult Helm in Edoras itself, years before. After the affront, Helm slew Freca with a

Helm became fierce and solitary after this second loss, and began setting forth on solitary hunts beyond the fortress. Clad all in white, he would disappear into the swirling snow, bearing no weapon but his mighty fists. Upon setting out, Helm would blow a mighty blast on his horn, and it was said that enemies would flee upon hearing the sound, rather than face his wrath. Hours later he would return, often bearing meat to feed his people—the Dunlendings claimed the meat came from fallen foes, and from this arose the stories of Rohirrim as fiends who consumed their enemies.

Throughout the winter the Rohirrim resisted every attempt by the Dunlendings to drive them from their mountain fortress. One night Helm sounded his horn, but the next morning he did not return. Instead the sun shone down for the first time in months, heralding the end of the winter and the coming of spring. In the dawn light the Rohirrim beheld a single figure, all in white, standing on the Dike. It was Helm, dead and frozen but still standing upright. A few days later spring truly arrived, and the meltwaters flooded the plains and left the Dunlendings unable to retreat. Helm's nephew Fréaláf drove Wulf from Edoras, and Helm's forces swept forth from the mountains and crushed the Dunlendings between themselves and the forces of Gondor (which had finally dealt with its own war and thus could finally send aid). Fréaláf became King of Rohan, and he renamed the fortress Helm's Deep to honour the strength and courage of his fallen uncle.



single blow of his fist, and exiled Wulf and his kin to Rohan's western marches.)

Winter conspired with war to increase the Rohirrim's misery, for snow fell solidly from November to March, and a thick blanket of white covered all the land. Thousands perished from lack of food or fuel, and fever ran amongst the refugees. Helm's first son Haleth had died defending the doors of Meduseld, and his second son Háma was lost in a scouting party shortly after the first snowfall.



## PASSAGES

Helm's Deep occupies the only sizeable gap in the spur that runs northward from the White Mountains to the threefold Thrihyrne peaks. The mountains themselves form an impressive defence, for their peaks are high and steep and only the hardest would attempt to scale them. Travellers heading west from Rohan are forced to pass through the Gap of Rohan, betwixt the Thrihyrne and the southern edge of the Misty Mountains, which end with Methedras (Sindarin for 'Last Peak') just north of Isengard. Helm's Deep is located near enough to the Gap that its sentries can see any force passing over the Fords of Isen and into Rohan, and troops may be sent to hinder an invasion while messengers fly to Edoras for more aid. The fortress also provides a clear view of the entire Westfold Vale, and it is from the Hornburg that Erkenbrand rules this region of the Mark. Because Helm's Deep is easily reached by those within the Vale, it is used to store grain, fruit, meat, and other goods against any time of need, and it is within the Deep that the Westfold Men train in arms and set forth on their patrols of the region. Few foes manage to enter their territory, yet the Rohirrim remain vigilant against such dangers. Their foremost concern lies to the west, where the Dunlendings wait and sharpen their old hatreds. Often small raiding parties attempt to sneak over the river, and Erkenbrand's soldiers must drive them back.

Though few know it, Helm's Deep has a third use beyond fortress and storehouse. Théostor, nephew to King Fréaláf, became fascinated with the fortress after the Long Winter, and particularly with the caverns buried in the mountains. Though most Rohirrim delighted in open air and the speed of riding a horse across the plains, Théostor preferred quiet and calm, and was one who delighted in books and dark places. Many considered him strange, yet he was still

a valiant leader and noble, and the people forgave his oddities for love of his honesty and generosity. Théostor admired the glittering caverns of Aglarond, but his interests there were more practical than aesthetic, for he desired to prevent the Long Winter from being repeated. The caves within the Deep were many and twisting, and Théostor hoped to find a passage underneath the Thrihyrne in them.

What he discovered, over the course of many years' explorations, was far more impressive. Passes through the rock did exist, and some did lead to caves on the other side of Thrihyrne. These were set with guards to prevent the Dunlendings from using the tunnels to invade the Deep and claim the fortress from behind. Other passages, however, also led into the White Mountains, and could be used by messengers to cut the distance to Edoras and to travel unseen part of that way. Horses were stationed at a small guardhouse near the exit for these passages, so that messengers could mount upon emerging from the mountains and ride the rest of the way more quickly. A third direction was also found, for some caverns led through Thrihyrne to the north and overlooked the Gap itself. Sentries were placed in these cave mouths, and could report back to Helm's Deep on any who passed through the Gap. Thus the guard at the Hornburg would know of any approach within minutes of its sighting, and could muster troops to meet the incursion at the Fords of Isen themselves. This prevented many a would-be invasion, for the attacking forces found themselves faced by armed Men across the river and were forced to turn back before even setting foot within the Mark. Théostor's discoveries were most welcome to Fréaláf and his heir Brytta, as they provided additional ways to protect the Mark, and Théostor was highly honoured for providing such useful information. He was granted control of the Westfold Vale and Helm's

Deep as a reward, and his kin inherited mastery over those lands.

## MASTERS OF THE WESTFOLD

*As the days darkened with threat of war, being wise, [Erkenbrand] had repaired the wall and made the fastness strong.*

—*The Two Towers*

Since the end of the Long Winter the Masters of Westfold Vale have traditionally lived in and conducted their business from the Hornburg of Helm's Deep. Herein lies the lineage of that noble family, who have long been the Mark's greatest western defence. All dates refer to the Third Age unless otherwise noted.

**THÉOSTOR (2730-2810):** Nephew to King Fréaláf, Théostor spent the Long Winter (2759) in the fortress at Aglarond, with Helm and many others, and there became enamoured of the caves and their potential. He was made master of the Westfold in 2765, in gratitude for the discoveries he made in the caverns. Théostor moved his household into the Hornburg, and thus transformed that keep into the hereditary house of the masters of the Westfold.

**ERMUND (2757-2807):** Ermund inherited the Westfolds from his father in 2796, when Théostor announced that he was becoming too old to control the lands properly. Sadly, Ermund was master of the Vale for only eleven years—he was killed in a Southron raid when he threw himself from his horse to shield a woman with his own body.

**ETHELMUND (2786-2821):** Called the Unlucky by many, Ethelmund was twenty-one when he became master of the Westfold, and he had already demonstrated many times that luck bore him an ill will.



**ETHELMUND'S MANOR**

The foundation-stones of Ethelmund's manor still lie among the rubble of its walls, covered with mosses and shrubs, in the north of the Deeping Coomb. At the end of the Third Age these ruins are surrounded by flourishing orchards and fields. Though the manor itself suffered a violent fate, the local farmers prefer to tell tales of Ethelmund's love of the Vale's trees rather than stories of his unlucky fate or the manor's end at pillaging Orc-hands. The site is frequently visited by local Westfoldmen, and is a common meeting place of travelers in the area.

If a stray rock fell, it was likely to hit him, and if any could discover the loose step or the ice slick on the ramparts, that would be Ethelmund as well. Despite this he was well-liked, for clumsiness aside he was a kind soul who listened well to the troubles of others and who was always ready to help his neighbours and friends. Ethelmund was head of the household only a short time longer than his father had been, for at the tender age of thirty-five he slipped on an ice patch while inspecting a guard tower and fell over the stair railing and down to his death.

During this period few in the Vale lived near Helm's Deep, and only a small force was left to man the Hornburg. Ethelmund preferred the trees of the Vale to the cold stone of the Deep, and built for himself a great manor house in the Deeping Coomb, so that the mountains stood at his back but his doors looked out upon the land. The fortification fell largely into disuse and the caves stood empty and cold.

**ETENWEARD (2790-2864):**

Etenweard was the younger son of Ermund, and became master of the Westfold after his brother Ethelmund died. Etenweard proved a wise and noble lord, and was well beloved by the people. His rule was marked by near-constant warfare, however, for Orcs led raids into Rohan beginning in the year 2800, and the Westfold's cosy farms were a favourite target for brigands. In this time Etenweard created Helm's Dike, constructing the mile-long fortification as a first line of defence for the Deep.

The manor constructed by Ethelmund was taken and burned in the first year of these Orc-raids. Etenweard had by this time already placed more Rohirrim upon the Deeping Wall and within the Hornburg, so he withdrew his household to the Burg itself, re-establishing it as the chief residence of the master of Westfold. His people learned again the value of the Deeps, for many were forced to flee there from the invaders, but even at their strongest the Orcs could not penetrate beyond the walls of the Hornburg, and the people were well-protected. Etenweard vowed that never again would the stronghold's defences be neglected, and stockpiled a great store of goods within the caves against the people's need.

**GÁRAMUND (2813-2893):**

Gáramund was a born warrior, and learned to fight while still a lad. During his father's mastery, Gáramund often led *éoreds* against the Orcs, finally exterminating their last raiding party in 2864. Upon being told it had been done, Etenweard is said to have muttered, 'That, then, is that,' and died the next day. Gáramund assumed control of the Vale, and kept his followers on guard against renewed attacks, but none came and gradually the people came to believe the times of strife were at last over.

**ORMUND (2847-2923):**

Ormund was more akin to his ancestor Théostor than to his own father, for as a lad he eschewed weapons for books

and horses for halls. Ormund concentrated on improving the productivity of his people's farms and devoted much time to gardening a small patch of land just beyond Helm's Gate. Fortunately, his mastery of the Vale was marked by increased crops and little warfare, as the Orcs had long since departed. The people became content but idle, their alertness weakened by complacency.

**ÉSTIG (2891-2922):** Éstig was the youngest son of Ormund. By the time his father passed away, all of Éstig's older brothers had also died, and he was left to assume control of the Vale. The times of peace and prosperity continued, although Éstig was forced to deal with the Dunlendings after they tried claiming that many of the Westfold lands were rightfully theirs.

**AINHELM (2914-2946):** Known as the Restless, Ainhelm was never content to sit idle, and preferred to race his horse across the Vale. An energetic young Man, Ainhelm often acted before he thought, and this proved his downfall. He was killed while riding one day, when a rock-slide occurred—Ainhelm spurred his horse toward the rocks, believing they could reach the pass before the falling stones did, and was crushed beneath them instead. The two with him held back, and were able to pick their way over the fall after it had ended.

**ÉSTGEORN (2944-2977):**

Sometimes referred to as the Puppet (though never before his kin), Éstgeorn was only two when his father died, and so the Westfold was controlled by his uncle Engereth until he reached the age of his majority. At that time Éstgeorn became the master, but he was a weak-willed lad and had become addicted to fine wine—forced upon him by his uncle, so the stories say. Engereth remained his closest advisor, and was the ruler of the Vale in all but name, for his nephew obeyed his every suggestion. Many of the local folk believe that Éstgeorn's death, which occurred when he caught a fever after a night of heavy drinking, was caused by his



uncle, who feared he was losing control. Others say it was Éstgeorn's own choice, and the only action he ever took of his own free will.

## **DRAIFEND (2964-3007):**

Éstgeorn's son was only thirteen when his father died, and so his great-uncle Engereth became regent again. But upon his eighteenth birthday Draifend asserted his control, and when Engereth resisted Draifend banished him from the region. He saw that the storerooms in Helm's Deep were all but empty, and none of the Rohirrim were contributing to them any longer, preferring to stockpile goods themselves. Draifend taxed his people heavily and thus rebuilt the cavern stockpiles. He was not cruel, though at first many of this people claimed this to be the case. Draifend simply did not believe in complacency, and insisted that prosperity be tempered by prudence and preparation.

## **ERKENBRAND (2980-FA 13):**

Many compared Erkenbrand to Helm himself, a tall and powerful Rohir, wise but strong and quick both to defend his people and to attack his foes. Others saw his forebear Théostor in him, for Erkenbrand pondered matters before taking action and appreciated the strong rock of Helm's Deep as much as the open plains of the Vale.

Sometimes called the Wise in the lore of the Rohirrim, it was Erkenbrand who sensed an end to the time of peace and who prepared Helm's Deep against attack and siege.

Although Draifend had rebuilt the fortress stockpiles, for many generations the fortifications themselves had fallen into disuse, for the Men of the Westfold had turned their attention to farming and horses rather than to threats of war. The mountain passes were still watched, but by roving patrols rather than by stationed guards. The signal mirrors were so covered in dust and grime as to be unusable. Truly, Erkenbrand sensed the changes in the world and scented the hint of war on the wind. Though he could not tell from which direction danger would come, he knew that Helm's Deep stood as the strongest defence in the Mark, and thus he ordered that it be restored to its full glory, the walls cleaned and mended and the caves kept full with provisions. His soldiers trained within the Hornburg once more, and thus when war fell upon the Mark Erkenbrand was prepared and Helm's Deep stood ready to receive its king and to repulse the armies of Saruman.

## **ÉARDMER (3009-FA 60):**

Éardmer was but a boy during the

Battle of Helm's Deep, yet he participated in the defence along with many other youths. He was friendly with Éomer, and was one of Éomer's most loyal subjects during his reign. Éardmer was soft-spoken, slow to anger and quick to forgive, and delighted in seeing his people merry even though he rarely partook of revelry himself. He grew close to Gimli Elf-friend, who resided in the Glittering Caves, and with the Dwarves' help rebuilt much of Helm's Deep and fashioned many new structures within the Horn and Coomb.

## THE FOURTH AGE

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*'After the fall of Sauron, Gimli brought south a part of the Dwarf-folk of Erebor, and he became Lord of the Glittering Caves.'*

—*The Return of the King*

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With the end of the great War of the Ring, a time of relative peace began, and a renewal of the ties amongst Men, Dwarves, and Elves. Gimli, Elf-friend returned to Helm's Deep after the wars and brought with him many of his kin from Erebor. With Éomer King's permission, they took up residence in the Glittering Caves. There they constructed a great Dwarven city, and a true marvel for all to see, for the Dwarves did not hew stone slabs or shatter existing formations. Instead they built around the features of the caves, enhancing rather than diminishing, and their halls and quarters were marvels of twisting spires and curving columns and vaulted roofs bedecked with stalactites. The front portion of the cavern was still apportioned to the people of the Westfold, and the Dwarves enhanced their storerooms, stables, and living quarters, so the people of the Deeps could store their goods and beasts and take refuge in times of need. But further into the caves lay the Dwarven realm, and there they continued to work the stone. Forges were also built, and the Dwarves created many great and wondrous items within the Glittering Caves. Their most famous creation was the new gate for Minas Tirith, crafted from *mithril* and diamond, which Gimli presented to King Elessar as a sign of their friendship and of the alliance between the races.

For many years Gimli Elf-friend was Lord of the Glittering Caves. But then Legolas the Elf came to him, and the two departed from the land and went over the sea. Leadership of the Dwarves fell to Orin, Gimli's sister-son, and the Dwarves became less sociable. Still they remained good neighbours to the Rohirrim, but less frequent were their excursions beyond the Glittering Caves, and the Westfoldmen left them in peace deep within the caverns.

## REGION

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*'There is good rock here.  
This country has tough bones.'*  
— Gimli, *The Two Towers*

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Each portion of the fortifications of Helm's Deep has its own name and its own characteristics. Each is considered separately below, in the order that one travelling from the Westfold Vale might encounter them, that the strength of the whole may be better understood.

## DEEPING COOMB

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*'Still some miles away . . . lay a green  
coomb, a great bay in the mountains, out  
of which a gorge opened in the hills.'*  
— *The Two Towers*

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Travellers who pass south from the Westfold Vale toward Helm's Deep first encounter the Deeping Coomb, a wide plain that lies before the Horn and its fortifications. Like the Westfold Vale, the Deeping Coomb contains rich farmlands—many say the blood of those who have died in and around the Deep has fortified the soil—and many farms and small villages. Wood is scarce, however, and thus most buildings and other structures are created from stone, which is quarried from the Deep itself.

## COOMB MARKET

The Coomb is not large enough to have a village of any size, but it does have a central meeting place. This is the Coomb Market, an area staked out alongside the Deeping Stream

halfway across the Coomb, on the south side of the stream next to the Deeping Road. Farmers gather here to trade their goods, and others from the Westfold often attend to barter their own items for those of the farmers. Men and women from the Deep also come out, and the Lord of the Westfold usually buys his produce at this time as well. During summer and spring the farmers gather once a month, and in winter only every other month, but near harvest time they meet each week, and often trade labour as well as goods. In ill weather, however, the Coomb Market is closed and the farmers meet instead inside the Deep.

The Deeping Stream cuts through the centre of the Deeping Coomb, running straight and narrow across the plain. Alongside it runs the Deeping Road. Centuries ago the stream channel was carved deep by the hands of Men to prevent the risk of flooding. The stone from that excavation was laid as gravel alongside the stream to form the road itself. These loose rocks have been shattered time and again by horse hooves, and have been pressed down into the earth beneath so now the road appears almost to be a single sheet of granite. Nary a chip flies from it nor a speck of dust.

At the midpoint of the stream's journey across the Coomb, where the Coomb Market begins, stands a single three-story structure of stone and wood (a rarity in the Coomb, where wood is scarce). This is the Streamhouse. The Lord of the Westfold maintains a guard here, to keep watch over the road and the stream and to render aid to any Rohir in need. The Streamhouse is thus a guardhouse, first and foremost. It contains a small barracks, a kitchen, a dining hall, and an armoury. But it also serves as an inn, providing shelter and food to travellers passing to or from the Deep. A stable stands alongside the Streamhouse, containing horses for the guards and a handful of spare mounts, and the place is also used as

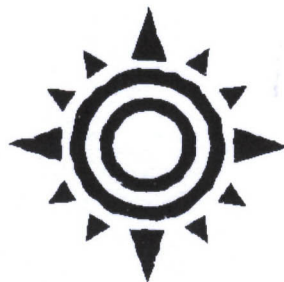


a way station for messengers. They can stop at the Streamhouse, get a hot meal, perhaps catch an hour or two of sleep, change mounts, and continue along their way. The Streamhouse is one of the tallest structures on the Coomb, and because of that and its placement by the stream it is easily visible from anywhere on the plain. At the peak of the roof is a small wooden platform, and from there a guard may see to the Deep in one direction, to the edges of the Coomb in another, and beyond that into the Vale from the remaining two. A small bronze mirror stands here as well, and with it the guard may signal those upon the Deeping Wall and in the Hornburg.

The Coomb is bordered in the north by long low hills and their gentle slopes house many farms and even small orchards, for there the soil runs deeper and trees may grow in the shade of the mountains. To the south and east, however, the hills are steep and rocky. These cannot easily be covered by horse or Man, save those travelling along the Westfold Road, a dirt road that runs from the Gap of Rohan to Edoras along the edge of the White Mountains. Where the Westfold Road and Deeping Road cross lies another guardhouse, though smaller than the Streamhouse and less elaborate.

When Saruman's army invaded Rohan and made for Helm's Deep, they burned everything in their path. Many of the farms in the Deeping Coomb were destroyed, especially those near the Deeping Road. But the buildings were of solid stone, sturdy and dependable and withstood the attacks of Orcs and Dunlendings alike. Thus, after the battle had ended, the people of the Coomb discovered their crops were burnt away, their livestock slaughtered, and their stores eaten or spoiled, but their homes were still intact. Éomer King provided new goods after the War of the Ring, and King Elessar sent many animals and seeds as a sign of friendship. The Elves of Ithilien helped replant the

fields, and their arts caused the plants to grow and mature more quickly, so that only a single season was lost. The Streamhouse had been destroyed, its walls shattered by the fire of Orthanc, but it was rebuilt and made stronger than ever, with a wide porch on which the guards could stand and a water-wheel with which the Deeping Stream itself provided power to grind grain. Thus the Streamhouse became a mill as well, and the farmers of the Coomb brought their wheat and other grains there to be ground into flour. The guardhouse at the crossroads was also torn down, and later rebuilt, as a combination guardhouse, way station, and inn, much as the Streamhouse had been. Otherwise the Coomb was undamaged by the invasion, and after a few years life returned to normal, though none forgot the events of that dark night, or the loss of life it caused among friend and family.



## FARMS

Farms in this area each follow the same basic pattern, so any Westfoldman could find his way around a neighbour's farm without difficulty. A farmhouse stands at the centre, two storeys of stone above ground with a root cellar in back. Nearby stands a barn, also of stone, and between the two structures runs a covered walkway so the family may reach the barn dry even during a rain-storm. The walkway is lined with stones, and between these and the

roof snow and rain fall outside the walkway rather than on it, keeping the footing dry and solid even amid snow and ice. Behind barn and house stands another building, this one a long low structure only one storey tall. Here the farmers store their crops and other goods—the root cellars are used for personal stores, while these granaries contain crops and also supplies for the animals. A walkway connects the granary to the barn, so that the farmers must pass through the barn to reach it under cover. Alongside the barn stands the henhouse, with a yard around that for the chickens and hens. Other pens exist around the barn for pigs and other livestock.

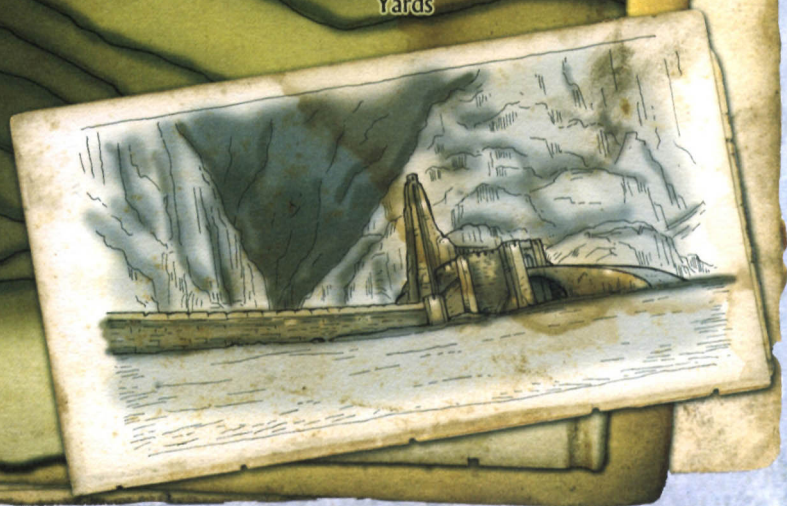
Not surprisingly, every farm in the Coomb has horses. Every farmer, in fact, breeds his own, though most have only enough horses for their own needs. Two types of horses are bred in the Coomb: draft horses and riding horses. The draft horses are used to pull ploughs through the fields, and to cart waggons to and from market. Riding horses, smaller and faster, are used for running errands and also for corralling livestock from the yards or fields.

The horses have their own stable, which stands along the farmhouse on the opposite side from the barn. This building is also of stone. A walkway connects the stable to the farmhouse, and another runs from the stable back to the granary so hay and oats can be carried easily to the horses.

Though the soil of the Coomb is rich and dark, beneath it lies hard rock, the same which makes up the mountains themselves. Because of this, traditional wells are useless—the ground cannot be pierced more than a few feet without picks, and no water can breach the rock. Even the cellars rarely extend more than six feet below ground, for beyond it becomes too difficult to chisel out walls and floors. Instead of wells, water comes to the farms through channels. These long, smooth ruts in the ground cut beneath the soil and into the rock,



# DEEPING COOMB





# TYPICAL DEEPING COOMB FARMSTEAD





and are chiselled to provide a long slick surface. The Deeping Stream's waters fall into this system of channels and then along to the farms. The farmers draw water for bathing and drinking from wide stone basins between the farmhouse and granary. Jugs are filled from the basin, both to keep it from overflowing (which would turn the land behind the house to marsh) and so water can be stored for later. These jugs are kept within the root cellar, where the cold stone keeps them cool and fresh. Water for irrigation is taken directly from the channels, which can be blocked so the overflow seeps into the adjacent farmlands. At the start of spring, the meltwaters fill the channels to overflowing and saturate the land with moisture.

Most farms on the Coomb are owned and run by single extended families—as children marry, they may take up residence with either spouse's parents or move away to establish a farm of their own. The farmhouses are large, with a high-ceilinged main room used for both meals and relaxation. The kitchen lies just behind the main room, with a back door allowing quick access to the root cellar and water basin. Small alcoves off the main hall, both on the ground floor and on platforms up above, are curtained off to form sleeping quarters. A wide firepit sits in the centre of the main room, and the heat rises to warm the sleeping platforms and spreads to heat the alcoves on the ground floor.

Fruit does not grow well on most of the Coomb—the soil does not go deep enough for tree roots—so the farmers must trade for such commodities with others in the Westfold. But grains and vegetables prosper in the rich, moist soil, particularly wheat, barley, and cotton. Livestock is raised on each farm, but land is too valuable for use as pasture and so the livestock are limited to the family's own needs—most have a handful of chickens and hens, a handful of pigs, and a few sheep or cows. Dogs are kept both

for company and to help herd animals, and cats are kept to rid the place of mice and other vermin.



## HELM'S DIKE

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*Not far ahead now lies Helm's Dike,  
an ancient trench and rampart scored  
across the coomb, two furlongs below  
Helm's Gate.*

—Éomer, *The Two Towers*

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When the Orcs began raiding into Rohan, Etenweard was master of the Westfold. He saw that Helm's Deep would become important again, and recognised the need for additional fortifications beyond the mountain itself. He ordered Helm's Dike constructed as a first line of defence. This earthen wall thus stands two furlongs below Helm's Gate. Underneath it lies a natural division in the land between the Coomb and the mountains, the outer portion covered in soil and the inner being entirely rock. The Deeping Stream also widens at this point, changing from a fast, narrow stream to a wide, shallow wash.

When the Dike was built, a channel was cut into the rock to focus the Deeping Stream and prevent it from flooding the area the Dike was to protect. The dirt that had already built up was patted down until solid earthwork walls had formed. These

walls stand a good twenty feet high, and cover the stretch between the two cliff faces. The distance is more than a mile, and the walls curve outward in the centre. Just beyond the wall Etenweard cut a deep trench, which effectively increases the height of the wall from that side. The trench is cut into the rock itself, and is deep enough for a tall Man to stand within and wide enough for five horsemen to ride abreast. The Deeping Stream—and the Deeping Road beside it—passes through the centre of the dike, and there stands a mighty gate of stone and metal. The road passes through the gate proper, while the stream flows through a grate in the wall alongside.

The walls of the Dike are thick and strong, even though they are made of dirt and not stone. Several Men can stand abreast at their top, and they slope downward in back so that steps are not needed. In front (on the trench side), however, the slope is nearly vertical. In winter, water is poured down this side and turns to ice in the cold air, making it slick and impossible to scale.

Though the Deeping Stream's channel runs below the bottom of the trench, and the force of the flowing water keeps it along this narrow path, Etenweard recognised the potential value of a moat. He re-engineered the trench near the Stream's course so that the channel could be blocked at the trench's outer slope. Cleverly constructed piles of stone were erected so they could be collapsed by removing a few key stones at a moment's notice. The Deeping Stream, upon striking the collapsed barrier, would fill the trench with water. The Deeping Road, which passes over the trench on a bridge, would not be affected by the flooding, but Etenweard also had the bridge rebuilt so it could be torn down at a moment's notice by removing its archstones. This would cause the road to collapse into the trench, preventing invaders from taking that path across the newly filled moat.



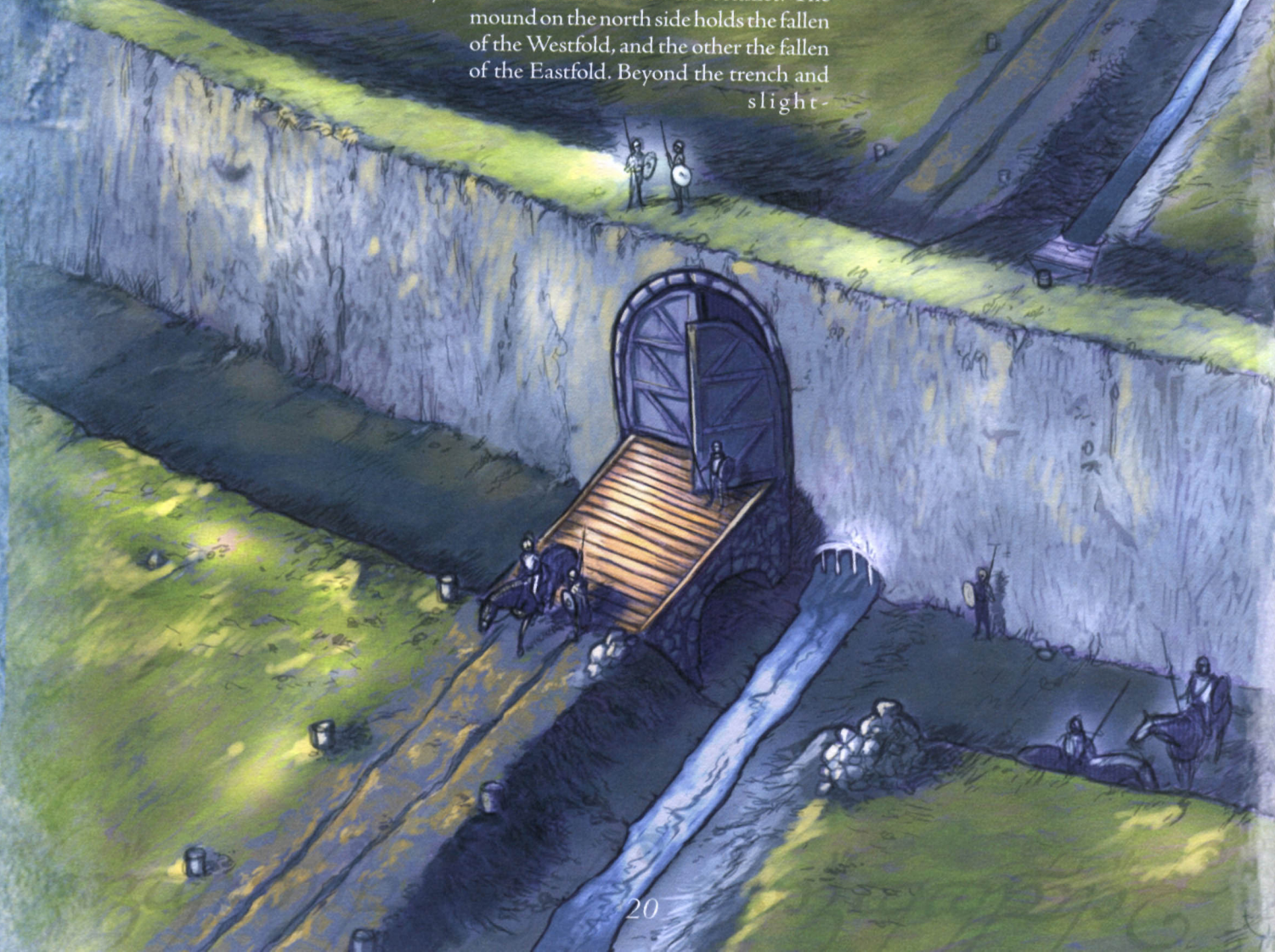
## HELM'S DEEP

Etenweard's son Gáramund added a feature of his own. He understood that, although the Dike was a formidable defence, it could be overrun, especially if it could not be fully manned. If that happened and enemies claimed control of the Dike, they would have access to an easy staging ground from which to attack the Deeping Wall and Hornburg. To prevent that, Gáramund had a second easily collapsed plug created, which could block the Deeping Stream *above* the trench. When collapsed—again, simply by removing a few stones—it would turn the Dike into a solid wall, damming the stream before it could pass into the Coomb. This would flood the area behind the Dike, making it more difficult for attackers to wade back into the Deep proper and giving the defenders more time to ready

themselves at the Deeping Wall and the Hornburg. The doors in the gate through which the Deeping Road passes were also taken down and altered at this time, so they overlapped tightly when closed. This not only made it harder to shatter them with battering rams, but would prevent water from escaping through them if the flood blockage were employed. None of these defences has ever been used, and in truth, some may no longer be remembered, as the moat-stone and flood-stone piles have since grown over with grass and shrubbery so one could stare at either without realising its true form or function.

After the Battle of Helm's Deep, several new features appeared near the Dike. Two mounds were erected on either side of the Deeping Stream just inside the Dike, containing all the Rohirrim who fell in the conflict. The mound on the north side holds the fallen of the Westfold, and the other the fallen of the Eastfold. Beyond the trench and slight-

ly to the south was raised a third, larger mound, the Mound of the Dunlendings, which holds all of those folk who died attacking Helm's Deep. Beyond that to the north-east, a full mile beyond the Dike, stands a fourth mound, though this was not the work of Man. A great hill piled with stone and packed so tightly not a rock moves even beneath a horse's hooves, this is the Death Down, where (they say) the Orcs of Saruman's army were laid to rest. The Death Down was constructed in the middle of the night by forces unseen, and appeared in the exact spot where the day before had stood a strange and ominous forest not before and never seen since.





Nothing will grow on the Death Down, not a flower nor blade of grass, and the farmers whose property it borders have constructed around it a tall fence so they can avoid sight of it while going about their chores. Though the Mound of the Dunlendings and the Death Down are properly part of the Deeping Coomb, they are associated with Helm's Dike as a structure of war, and fall under the direct control of the Master of Westfold rather than the farmers who reside nearby.

Though the Dike was overrun during the Battle of Helm's Deep, its walls were not destroyed. While the gate was torn down, the army of Saruman saw no reason to damage the place further, and were too intent upon the Rohirrim within the Deep to stop and examine the Dike more carefully. Thus it survived in good condition, and with the construction of new doors was quickly restored to its former utility. Erkenbrand had long desired to improve the Dike, however, and the battle gave him good reason to do so, for it proved clearly that the Dike could not be properly defended without enough soldiers.

Erkenbrand dug a second trench behind the wall, and permanently filled both it and the outer trench with water. The inner slope of the wall was sharply planed, making it as steep as the outer, and wooden stairs were constructed so guards could cross over the inner moat to reach the top of the wall. These stairs were not permanently affixed to the Dike, and could be lifted and carried off to render the inner moat impassable.

The Deeping Road was shattered where it ran across the moats and replaced with two drawbridges, each of thick wood bound with metal. Deeper grooves were chiselled into the trenches just below these doors, wide enough to fit them but no wider, and cut two feet deep, and the chains which operated both doors could be used to lower or raise them vertically as well as horizontally, and could be removed quickly. This made the Dike

more defensible, for invaders would need to cross the water to attack it from the outside. The doors could be dropped into their grooves at the first sign of attack, creating a doubly thick door that no battering ram could pierce. And even if the wall's defenders were outnumbered and unable to drive off their attackers, they could retreat and take the stairs and the door chains with them—this would prevent invaders from raising the doors or getting through them, and once on top of the walls (the only other way to breach the Dike), they would find themselves stranded with water on both sides and archers ready to cut them down from the Deeping Wall. Gimli Elf-friend is credited with the design of the doors, and with helping the construction of the trenches and grooves. But the stairs were added by Legolas the Elf, and crafted by his Elves in Ithilien, so they would be strong enough to bear the weight of armed and armoured Men but light enough that a handful of Men could move them out of the way.

## THE HORNBURG

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*'There upon its spur stood high  
walls of ancient stone, and within  
them was a lofty tower.'*

— *The Two Towers*

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At the heart of Helm's Deep, both literally and figuratively, stands a single great spur of rock, the Hornrock, thrust out from the northern cliff so its front end stands nearly halfway between the ravine walls. Upon this imposing crag stands a mighty fortress, its thick walls cut from the same rock so the structure seems to grow from the mountain rather than to have been built by mortal hands. This is the Hornburg, the great keep of Helm's Deep. It was the first structure built within the gap of the mountain,

back when Endoron determined to make a mighty defence in the place where his brother Endorion had fallen, and still the walls stand as straight and their edges as sharp and crisp as if they had been hewn last winter.

Beginning at the Hornburg and Deeping Wall, the cliffs of Thrihyrne loom close on either side and slant in towards one another, forming a massive roof of natural rock. Because of this, the sun is not visible from within the walls of Helm's Deep. Of course, the overhanging cliffs provide a great deal of protection, for even if one were to scale the peaks and reach the crest of the mountain, finding a way into the Deeps from above would be next to impossible. In fact, even water can find no straight path, and rain enters by sliding through cracks and crevices and along angled edges to drip along the sides of the cliff rather than directly onto the Hornburg and its surroundings. This lack of open air is oppressive for some, particularly as the Rohirrim are accustomed to the open plains. Those not born in the Westfold frequently find Helm's Deep too close for their tastes, and too colourless, its rocky walls too cold and dark for comfort.

## THE COURTS

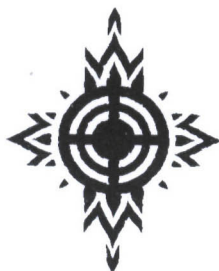
Between the outer and inner wall lies the outer court. This space is open, unroofed, and paved with wide, flat stones. It is often used as a marshalling yard for drills and a practice yard for the guards' training sessions. Stairs lead up to the outer wall's battlements so guards can easily reach their appointed stations. Beneath these stairs are small storerooms which contain spears, bows, arrows, torches, and shields, so these may be grabbed quickly by those defending the walls.

The inner court, between the inner wall and the keep, contains several small structures, which are built along the inside of the inner wall. The stables stand here, large enough to house



the horses of the Lord of the Westfold and his elite guard, known as Helm's Shields (see pages 47 and 56–7). Not far from them is the blacksmith's forge, where weapons and armour are made and repaired. Just beyond it stands a large kiln, where pottery is made for the use of those within the Deeps. As with the outer court, stairs lead from within the inner court to the top of the inner wall.

Both the inner and the outer wall are thick stone, and wide enough for several Men to stand abreast. Their stones were fitted together so well few chinks can be found, and the outer portions are too smooth to be climbed and too hard for most weapons to take hold. The top of the walls bear parapets as well, so guards may stand behind those and still shoot arrows or hurl spears upon attackers. In addition, the outer wall has many stones resting by the parapets. These are used by the guards for sitting, and are large enough they can still see out over the Dike and into the Deeps from their perches. But the real purpose of the rocks is defensive, and they can be lifted and hurled by several acting in concert, to drop down on attackers. Such a weight, dropped from such a height, can easily crush a group of attackers, and is often enough to shatter a shield wall or knock a battering ram off the ramp.



## THE BURG

The heart of Helm's Deep, the keep tower itself, is known as the Burg. Seven levels exist within it, with the lowest penetrating the Hornrock itself and the highest affording views of the Horn, Helm's Dike, the Deeping Coomb, and even the land beyond.

The lowest level consists of barracks. All the single men of the corps of Helm's Shields live here together, and woven tapestries hang between the bunks to provide a semblance of privacy. The space is otherwise filled with bunks, chests, and tables. Shelves and hooks along the walls provide places for coats, belts, and other items to be stored and hung. Two washrooms stand here as well, with buckets filled and carried from the Deeping Stream where it runs just outside the Hornrock.

Above the barracks level lies the armoury level, which is slightly larger

than the other levels. This is possible because part of it lies underneath the inner court, and can be accessed by a small staircase known as the armoury stair that descends into the armoury directly from the inner court. The armoury contains the weapons and armour of the lord's soldiers, and also such instruments of war as may be needed—small siege engines, barding for the horses, spears and bows and swords, mail and shield and helm. The private quarters of Breothain, the Captain of Helm's Shields, can be entered from the armoury, but the other quarters on this level can only be accessed by descending from the storeroom behind the warchamber. These quarters belong to Witulf, the chief counsellor; Fulhár, the head cook; and the members of the household staff who cook, clean, and handle chores.

The main floor of the Burg is dominated by two of the most important chambers in the fortress: the great hall and the warchamber. Both have tall windows facing east, with massive ironbound shutters that fit tightly over them in case of harsh weather or attack. When open, what little light reaches the Deep falls through them and casts a golden hue, bright enough to see by but dusky enough that all in its light appears as in a dream,





# HELM'S DEEP





HORN LEVEL



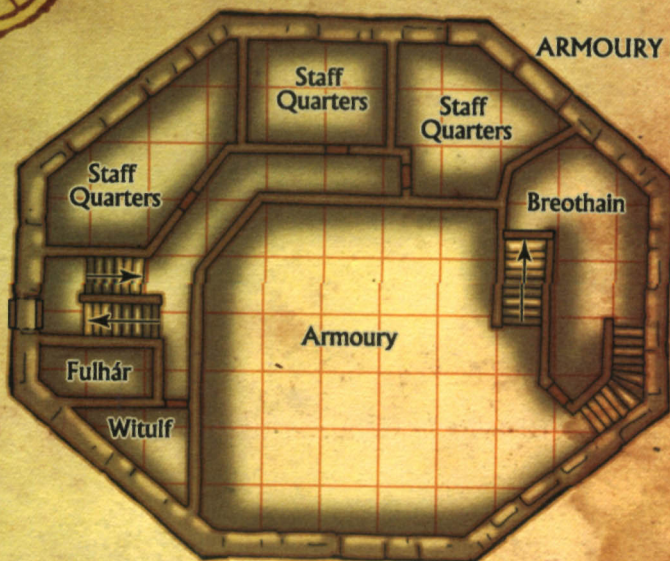
KITCHEN LEVEL



WATCH LEVEL

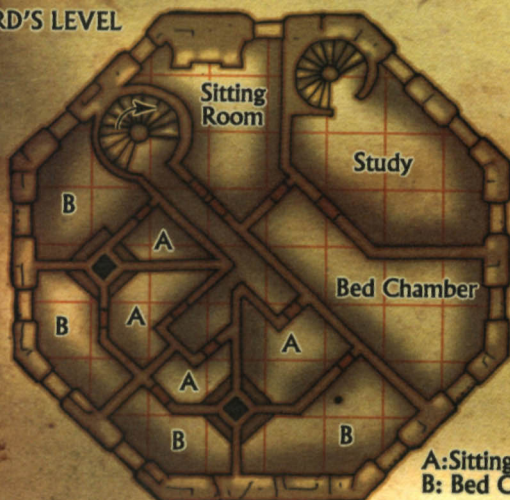


ARMOURY LEVEL



Arrows point down stairs

LORD'S LEVEL



BARRACKS LEVEL

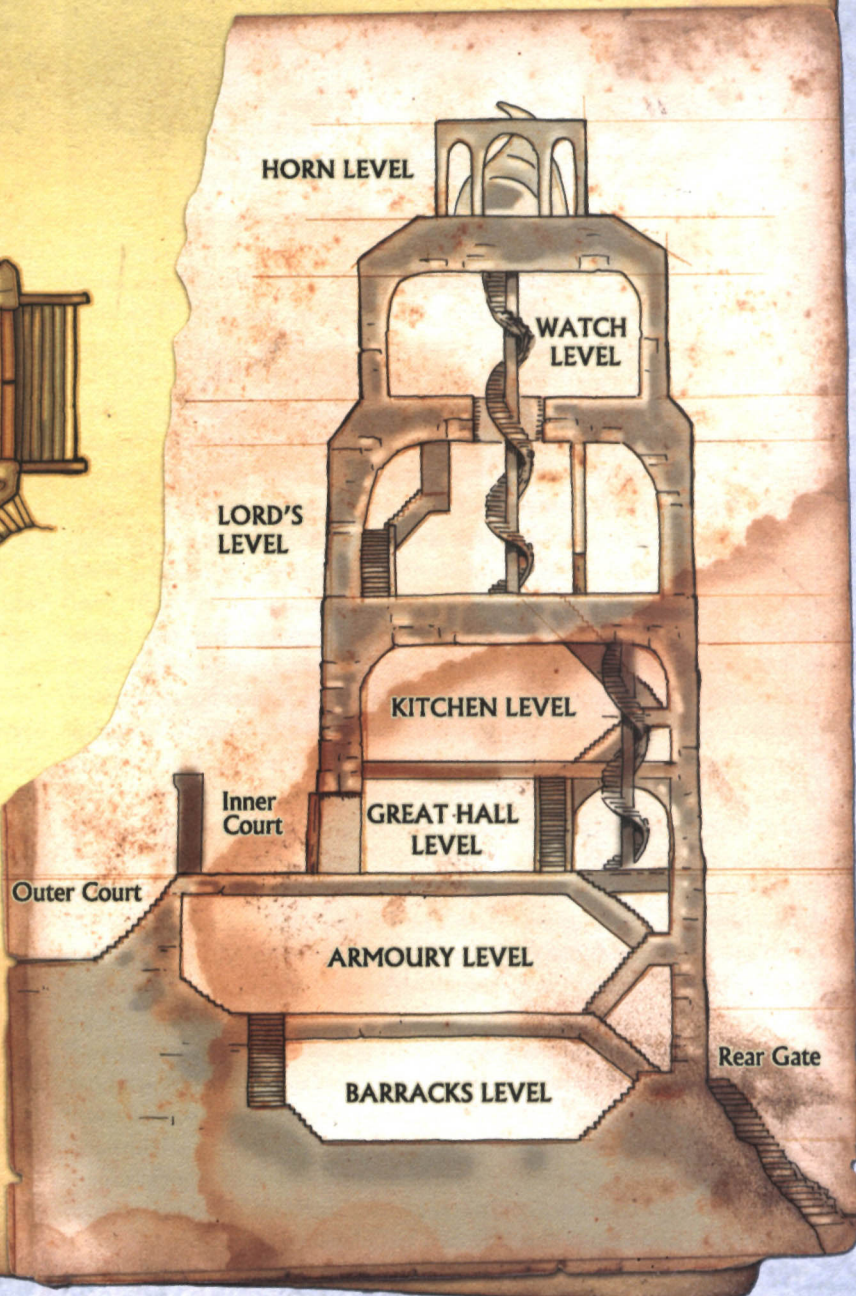
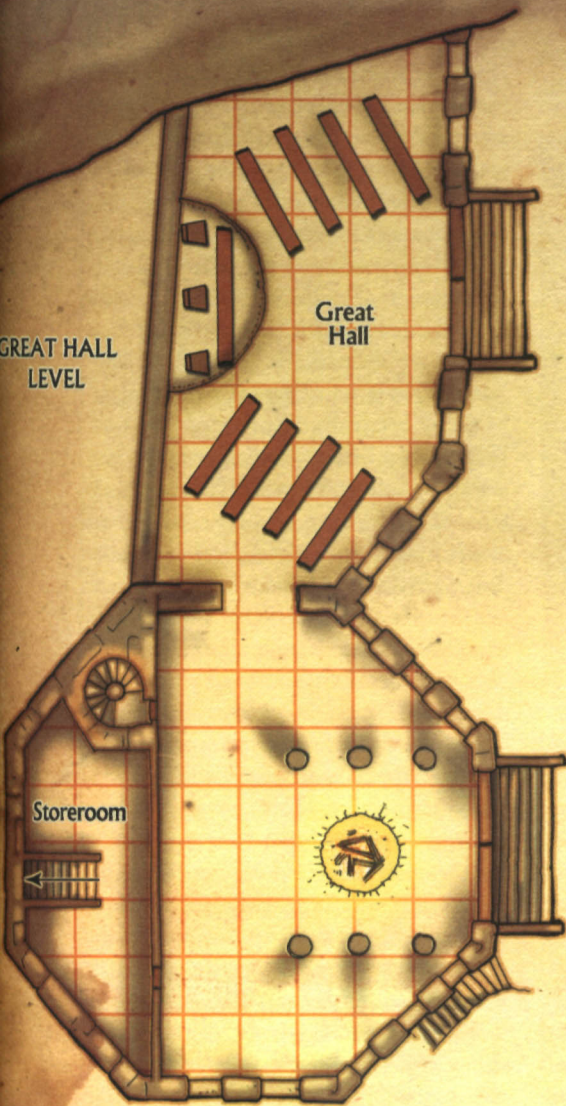


A: Sitting Room  
B: Bed Chamber

Scale: One Square = 10 feet



# THE BURG







softened at the edges. Both can be accessed individually through wide stone steps which rise up from the inner court.

Long tables line the great hall, with benches alongside them and tapestries on the walls between the windows. Along the rear wall lies a low platform, and on that a long table with chairs on its far side and nought else before it. The centre chair is taller and more ornate than the others, and it is here the Master of Westfold sits when he takes audience with his subjects and considers the daily affairs of the Vale and its people. Feasts and many meals are also served in this chamber, though they often overflow into the warchamber.

The warchamber is to the military affairs of Helm's Deep what the great hall is to its domestic affairs, for it is here the Lord of Helm's Deep confers with his military officers, considers plans of war, and issues orders to his soldiers. A wide firepit is set into the floor at the centre of the room, and torches gutter in their iron holders along the wall and along the pair of columns that cut through the room, dividing a wide middle aisle from the

tables on the sides. Two doors stand near the back of the hall. The door to the right leads to a spiral staircase rising upwards. The door to the left leads to a storeroom, through which the quarters on the armoury level can be accessed.

Above the warchamber the kitchens and perishable stores of the Burg are found. Two giant ovens bake bread and sear meat day and night and long tables for preparing meals line the walls. There is always a chaotic whirlwind of cooks, their assistants, scullery boys and maids, and other servants. The stores on this level can contain provisions for only a few days at a time. Long-term provisions lay within the caves and are drawn forth as needed.

The Burg's next level is known as the lord's level, though his family's chambers occupy only the front half of it. The rear portion is set aside for honoured guests, and contains several small apartments. Each apartment has a bedchamber, a separate space for sitting, and an alcove for washing. The bedchambers have thick tapestries on the walls, thick rugs on the floors, fireplaces, and large heavy beds

covered with blankets and pillows. The sitting rooms also have tapestries and rugs, and heavy wooden chairs set around a fireplace. The washroom alcoves contain garderobes, whose refuse pours into the channels carved along the outside of the keep, and wash basins which are filled from the pitchers next to them. These apartments are always warm, even in the coldest dead of winter, for the kitchen ovens are located immediately underneath them.

The chambers of the Lord of Westfold are similar in appointment to the guest apartments, though they are, of course, much larger and even more richly furnished. The lord also has a private study to which he retires to ponder problems and devise solutions. This last is a simple room with a large wooden desk, several chairs, a long table, a massive wardrobe, and a fireplace. The room also contains a narrow spiral stairway leading up to the north watch room, above.

The penultimate level is known as the watch level. Four rooms exist here, each with a single great window that runs from floor to ceiling. Before each window stands a pair of chairs and a small table, and two guards are stationed by each window at all times. They are both expected to keep watch throughout their shift, but in reality they take turns, one staring out through the window while the other rests his eyes, uses the garderobe, or fetches food or drink. In the northern room a staircase leads down to the lord's private study, which may be used only at his request or to bring him critical information, such as news of the appearance of an army beyond the Dike. The centre of the fourth floor contains another spiral staircase, which leads up to the Horn's Mouth.

The Horn's Mouth is the roof of the keep. There are no walls, only eight great columns, the opening from which the stairs protrude, and the pedestal on which Helm's Horn rests. The pedestal curls up around the top steps of the stairs, rising high



enough that a tall Man can walk around its back edge and the crest of his helm will barely show. The steps continue up the pedestal, however, so even a child can reach the horn itself if necessary. Atop the pedestal sits Helm's Horn—the horn worn by Helm Hammerhand himself, the same instrument on which he blew a blast every night before setting forth to attack his foes. But clever Rohirrim craftsmen have extended its range and utility. The actual horn fits into the front of an enormous curled horn of metal, so seamlessly that it seems all of one piece. The larger horn curls down around the pedestal and then around the top edge of the keep. From there, its sound is carried into channels carved along the upper walls of the keep, which emanate from openings roughly halfway up its height. In this way the sound of the horn is amplified so its echoes fill the Deep and roll forth across the Coomb and into the Westward Vale. To take up Helm's Horn without the lord's permission, and to blow it without his order, is to risk banishment from the Mark, or worse.

From the outside, the Burg resembles a single massive stone spire, thrust up from the mountain side as if it were a flower yearning for the sun. The sides of the fortress are carved into columns and arches, some over and around windows and others adorning otherwise blank wall. Many say this is to confuse enemy archers so they do not know which is a real opening and which a ruse where their arrows will shatter uselessly. The keep is also marked by several round openings, angled either up or down as if a pipe had been shorn at an angle. Those pointing downward are from garderobes, washrooms, or, in the kitchen, refuse bins. Liquid and solids which fall from these holes slide down the grooves cut below them and from there into the Deeping Stream or refuse pits. Those openings that point upward are chimney vents, and smoke can be seen gusting from these

openings as if the keep were a kettle with many spouts.



## ORNAMENTATION

The Dúnedain who built the Hornburg were not interested in ornamentation—they were concerned only with war and defence. Thus the walls were made thick and strong, and the supports carved to last, but the rooms were not decorated nor the structure embellished to make it pleasing to the eye. When the Éothéod were given the Mark, they had little immediate use for the fortress at Aglarond, and thus left it in much the state they had found it. It was not until the Long Winter that any Rohirrim spent much time in the fortress. During the course of that season, the men and women trapped there often despaired, for their king's heirs were dead, his throne usurped, and he himself seemed at times to have gone mad with grief. But Helm understood Men need purpose to distract them during hard times, and so he set his people a task.

'This fortress,' said he, 'is a dough-ty one, of a certain. But it is plain and unappealing, and more like to the

Corsairs with their grim ways than to the Rohirrim with our love of life and our delight in art and skill. Let us make this place our own, then. Lay aside your swords and axes, for these will not avail you now, and take up hammer and chisel instead. Carve for me a place where we may reside in comfort, and a place where our kin may come and admire our work.'

This statement struck a chord in the Rohirrim and they leapt gratefully to the task. They spent the long months of the winter carving on the keep. Its rooms were not changed in their size and disposition, but the outer walls and even some of the inner ones were transformed from blank stone to elaborate sculptures. Along the outer walls of the Hornburg runs a panorama depicting one of the Rohirrim's favourite tales—the ride of Eorl the Young, when he and his Men galloped onto the Field of Celebrant and struck the Balchoth from behind. The scene includes the Men of Gondor as well, where they stood with their backs to the River Anduin. So cunningly was the scene wrought that the great shutters of the main hall are included as shields or pennants, and do not disrupt the image whether open or closed. Columns became spears and horses' legs, and arches transformed into the tops of helms, the bends of arms, and the curves of equine underbellies leaping down upon the plains. Nor is the scene painted, as any dyes would be worn away quickly by the wind whistling between the cliffs, but through a trick of carving the Rohirrim were able to create illusions of colour, so that some portions of the image seem pale and light and others dark. Other types of rock were used as well, wedged carefully into cracks or lain in thin sheets over the granite and held in place with small spikes of iron, so that blood runs red and the grass is green and the hair of Eorl is golden in the sunlight. The massive doors of the great hall were carved as well, though they were of metal



and not of stone, and on these were set scenes of Eorl and his son Brego settling their people at what became Edoras, and the construction of their great hall Meduseld. The roofs of the hall were gilded in gold, so that even in carving they shone as brightly as the roofs of the real building did far away to the south.

Inside the Burg, many of the rooms were judged too small to accommodate such grand designs, so the carvings were scaled down. Archways and doorframes were decorated with interwoven figures, knotwork, braiding, and stylised animals. Since the interior was shielded from the wind, paints could be used, and scenes of mountains and plains and horses appeared along the walls. Rooms where tapestries were hung had their patterns incorporated—a room whose tapestries showed hunting scenes became a forest, while another filled with tapestries of battle became a great armed plain. Doors were carved with various scenes, always in keeping with the walls of their rooms. Hinges and handles were removed, sculpted into knotwork, horse heads, or other decorative motifs, and replaced. In many ways the Hornburg has become a monument to the Rohirrim as they truly are—fierce and free and stern on the outside, but filled with joy and revelry and a powerful love of beauty deep within.

The great hall offered a vast canvas, of course, and the artisans filled it happily. This was the centre of the keep, the room where their king sat at his board and where, if happier times came again, he might feast with his warriors and celebrate their victories. So the room was dedicated to Helm and his ancestors, who marched proudly about the walls. Gram and Déor (Helm's father and grandsire) stood their mounts on either side of the great doors. Beyond them were Goldwine and Fréawine, and beyond them Fréa and Aldor the Old. Past him and approaching the platform was Brego, and leaping up on the

back wall was Eorl himself, astride Felaróf. All the kings of Rohan were arrayed about the room, on their steeds and in full battle gear, as if the Mark and all its history were going to war. And on either side of Eorl, life-sized and standing with swords at the ready, were Haleth and Háma, Helm's sons. It is said, upon seeing that room, and his sons standing with their ancestors, Helm nodded, and a single tear fell from his eyes to strike the floor—and where that tear struck it froze into a diamond, so that still in the centre of the platform is a single teardrop diamond imbedded in the stone.

After Helm's death and the end of the war against the Dunlendings, the Rohirrim continued to decorate the rest of the Burg. Théostor ordered the Horn's Mouth fashioned at that time, so that Helm's Horn might rest in a place of honour and continue to alert friend and foe alike to the strength of the Rohirrim and the power of their resolve.

The outer walls were left all but unornamented on the outside, but in fact they do bear a single design, though it is subtle and requires great insight to notice. The Rohiric carvers, working slowly and carefully, created faint depressions here and there about that wall. Standing next to them, the marks are almost invisible. From a few feet or yards away, they seem smudges. From the Deeping Wall or the causeway, they appear as soft lines with no purpose. But beyond that distance, from Helm's Dike or from the Deeping Coomb, the lines coalesce into a form—that of a running horse, the emblem of Rohan. There, cast upon the outer wall, runs the great horse of the Horse-lords, for all to see, if they have the eyes. It is said that, upon returning to Helm's Deep, Gimli Elf-friend raged, 'Why did I not see that before? Surely the war did make me blind to beauty, and only now are my eyes truly opened again.'

The inside of the outer wall, and both sides of the inner wall,

were sculpted less cleverly but no less gracefully, and both show scenes of green valleys with herds of wild horses running free. These are the *mearas*, the kings of horses who are descended from Felaróf and whom only the Lords of the Mark may command. And indeed, at the far edge of the inside of the inner wall, stand the Lords of the Mark, as if summoning not only the *mearas* but any visitors to attend them inside the keep itself.

## ENTRANCES

There are five important points where one can pass either into the fortress of Helm's Deep or between its major divisions. These are the Great Gates, inner gate, Deeping Wall arch, rear gate, and postern gate.

The Great Gates are a set of wide double doors that open onto the ramp which runs across the channel cut by the Deeping Stream, down from the Hornrock, through Helm's Dike, and out across the Deeping Coomb as the Deeping Road. These doors are massive beams of oak, bound with dark iron, and carved into the likeness of horses running amidst a great wave, so heads and manes and hooves and legs emerge from within water and seem ready to vanish again within it. Above these gates stands a mighty archway, designed to resemble a rocky outcropping in the midst of the ocean, and indeed many foes have shattered against its stone as waves break against a cliff.

The inner gate is the only point at which the inner wall can be passed, and is thus a choke point of great utility in the defence of the Burg. The gate itself is carved to resemble tall grass waving in the wind.

The Deeping Wall arch lies in its southernmost tip of the outer wall. Here stands a great arch and a heavy door beneath it, and beyond the door lies a long stair. This stair leads to the northern end of the Deeping Wall, and is used by the guards to travel back and forth between the



two. During times of attack Helm's Shields take this stair to rush to the defence of the Wall, and if necessary can retreat back up it to the safety of the Hornburg.

The rear gate is a single wide metal door at the top of a narrow stair cut into the Hornrock. It is shaped to show a single proud Rohir astride a great steed, flying over the ground, his head alongside the neck of his mount so horse's mane and warrior's braid dance together in the wind. Servants use this gate to gather water for the needs of the keep and its occupants; it connects to the rear staircase near the servants' quarters on the armoury level.

Finally, the postern gate is a small door in the outer wall carved of stone and designed to perfectly match the wall itself, so the closed gate cannot be seen from the outside. It opens onto a narrow ledge which runs along the wall to the ramp. On the inside the door is sheathed in iron and bears the image of a foal, still hesitant on gangly legs, but yearning to chase after the rest of the herd. On that side the foal's forelock is the door handle, but on the outside the handle is merely a bump, which when pressed in the proper direction releases the locking mechanism. This device was wrought by the smiths of Gondor long ago, and many now cannot tell how such a device was created.

The postern gate stands almost where the outer wall meets the mountainside, and what none but the Lords of Westfold know is that a space exists between the postern gate and the mountainside. Betwixt them is a triangular hollow which has been sealed over with stone so the wall appears carved from the mountain behind it. On the inside of the outer wall, the carving in that spot shows a lone horse, raised on his hind legs as in defiance. The horse's left front hoof masks a second sliding mechanism, which, when activated, reveals a hidden door. Steps cut down from the door and into the hidden area, and

here a score of Men could stand in full armour, awaiting a time when their enemy was lulled into false security so they might sneak back out and strike. Too, in this space could be hidden women and children, or heirlooms of the Rohirrim, or anything else desired.

During the Battle of Helm's Deep, the Great Gates were destroyed and their archway shattered. The rear gate was all but torn from its frame, and in many places the outer wall was scored with deep gouges from siege engines and scaling ladders. After the War of the Ring had ended, Gimli Elf-friend returned here with many of his people. They established themselves in the Glittering Caves, and helped the Rohirrim restore Helm's Deep to full strength.

The Dwarves wrought new gates for the outer wall, and on them were carved Théoden King and his riders, charging onto the causeway with Aragorn—he who became King Elessar—beside them. So lifelike were the carvings that many swore they

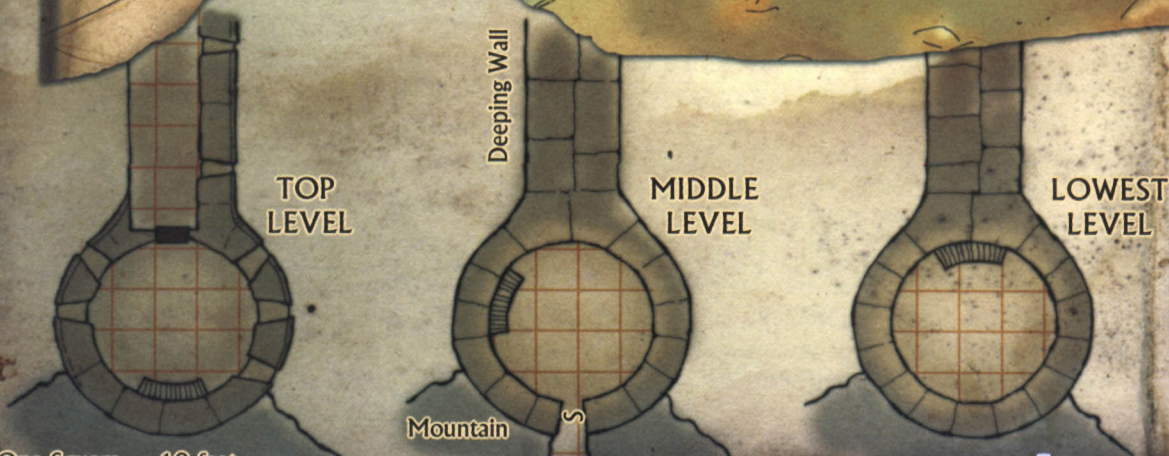
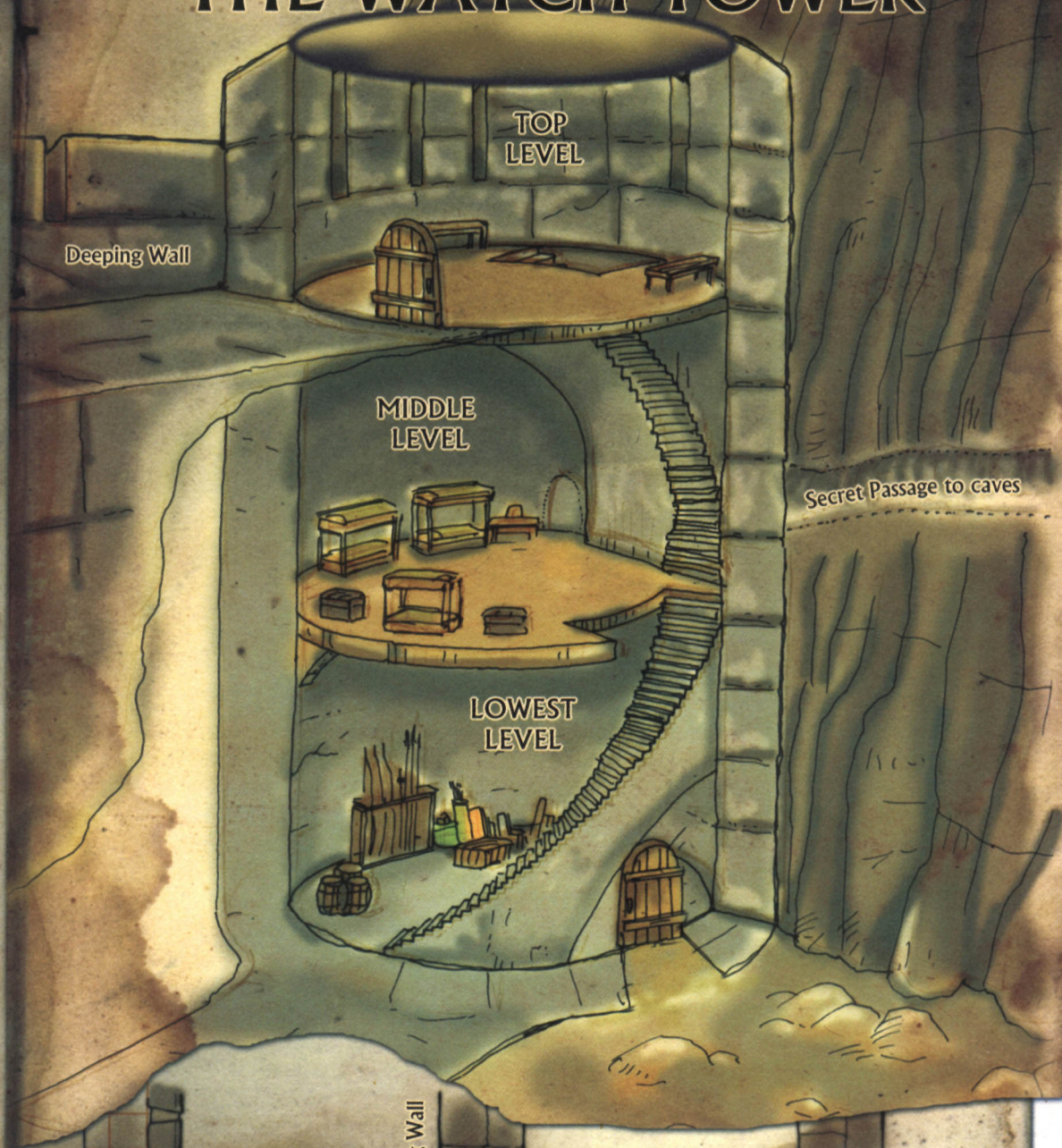
could see the horses' nostrils flaring and their neck muscles bunching, and so clever were the Dwarves that, when the gates were opened, it appeared as if the great host leapt to either side so that people might pass amongst them. The walls were also restored, the gouges carefully smoothed back out and the great horse emblem repaired so still the symbol of Rohan gleamed from miles away.

In place of the rear gate Gimli fashioned a new door—the image was similar, that of a Rohir on his horse—only the face was now that of Théodred son of Théoden, so the mighty warrior would live on forever in the fortress of his people. A channel was also dug through the rock alongside that stairway, cut down from a hatch next to the rear gate clear to the Deeping Stream. The opening is just large enough for a bucket, which is attached to a rope from above. Thus the servants at the Hornburg could fill their buckets from the stream without having to run down the stairs and back.





# THE WATCH TOWER





The postern gate Gimli did not change at all, save to make the hinges smoother so the door might open without a sound.

Fortunately Saruman's army had been stopped before entering the keep proper, and so the damage to those structures was minor. The keep was so well-conceived, and so well-crafted, little could be added to it by way of improvement, even by Dwarf-hands.

## THE DEEPING WALL

*'A wall, too, the men of old had made  
from the Hornburg to the southern cliff,  
barring the entrance to the gorge.'*

— *The Two Towers*

Though Helm's Dike is a formidable barrier, it is not the true defence of the Deep, for its breadth requires a great many to stand upon it, and without full support it cannot be adequately protected. Nor is the Dike, built from earthenworks, full proof against a concerted attack, or the blows of massive rams and other implements of war. Thus, when battle occurs, the Dike is sometimes overrun, and its defenders fall back to the stronger defence of the Deeping Wall.

The Deeping Wall stands fully twenty feet high, massive blocks of stone cut from the very mountain-side itself and fitted together with such skill that no joints exist between the blocks, no crack wide enough even for a twig. The Deeping Wall was crafted by the Men of Gondor long ago, using skills which even the Dwarves admired, and no force has ever breached its thick stones. The wall itself is wide enough for four to walk abreast, fully armed and bearing shields and spears, and the top is perfectly smooth, saving only the gutter along the inside edge, down which rain water pours and leaves the rest

of the surface gleaming but secure for guards to pace. Along the front edge the wall rises into a mighty parapet, into which are cut notches so the wall's defenders may look out toward the Dike, and may fire arrows or hurl spears or pour burning oil upon their foes. The wall is sloped slightly, as a wave rising up to strike the shore, and the parapet overhangs the base enough that climbing the wall would be impossible even were it not slick and smooth, without joint or crack. Gimli Elf-friend, upon testing the wall with feet and hands, expressed his approval, and the Dwarves have sharp eyes for stonework and its strengths.

## THE WATCHTOWER

At the far southern end of the wall stands a watchtower. Though small when matched against the Burg, the tower is nonetheless of goodly size and well-crafted, emerging from the wall as a sapling sprouting from rich soil. The Deeping Wall curves slightly to encompass the tower's outer edge, providing no corner with which foes might climb to the parapet, and the only windows are set level with the parapet itself, narrow slits through which more arrows may be volleyed down below.

Within its thick walls, the watchtower contains three levels. The highest is the watchroom, a single circular chamber where the guards may sit and look out through tall windows, watching for trouble below. The windows are situated so a guard can see the entire expanse of the Deeping Wall before him, and the Hornburg beyond that, as well as a portion of the Dike and the beginning of the causeway that leads to the Deeping Road. Windows are also cut along the back, so the guards may look out toward the Glittering Caves, their entrance barely visible through the twisting Horn. The watchroom is furnished with several chairs and two small tables, so guards may sit and eat meals while keeping watch, and racks

of weapons, spears, and bows and arrows, to be used in time of attack. Finally, the watchroom contains a pair of lanterns and a pair of bronze discs polished till they shine. These are used for signalling others along the Wall, or in the Hornburg, as to the status of the tower and anyone spied down below.

The middle floor of the watchtower is a barracks. This is often used by those guards posted to the tower, so they may sleep without having to return to the larger bunkhouses behind the wall. In this way the guards may maintain a closer watch, each one rousing the next at the end of his shift, and only a short set of stairs separating them from aid if a sudden attack were to occur. The barracks is simply furnished, with solid wooden beds bunked together, one atop the other, in pairs on both sides of the room. Small tables stand alongside the bunks, so items may be placed on them and small lanterns lit for light. A small washroom and garderobe is placed along the back wall.

The lowest floor of the watchtower contains a small storeroom and armoury. Here are stored goods for the soldiers in the tower and along the wall, so if cut off from the caves and the Hornburg they may still have some provision. Extra spears, bows, arrows, swords, and armour are housed here as well, both for the guards on duty and to outfit any others who might need such equipment, such as Men of the Westfold sheltering within the Deeps or even allies who arrive unprepared for war. A door on this level allows access from behind the wall, and it is by this door the guards usually enter to prepare for their shift within the tower.

One other notable feature does the tower contain. Within the barracks on the second floor, a portion of the wall on the mountain side can be opened. This is activated by shifting a paving stone in the centre of the floor there, and the wall then slides out on silent hinges, revealing a passageway. This is a secret entrance into the caverns that honeycomb the cliffs, leading



back and around to the Glittering Caves themselves. The Dern-deepers know of this entrance, and use it to deliver messages to soldiers along the Deeping Wall. Many of the guards are not aware of the door, however, and have not been told, for the fewer who know of it the less likely the information could escape and be used against the Deep's defenders.

## STAIRS

Along the back side of the Deeping Wall stairs ascend in three places, to landings which connect to the parapet by three more steps. These stairways were built wide and solid, with walls that rise up alongside so that a child or a Hobbit might scurry up the stairs unnoticed by those below. Beneath these stairways are small rooms, which most commonly are used for provisions and other necessary goods. The doors to these chambers have been cunningly carved from the same rock as the wall, and blend into them so well one unfamiliar with the Deep would never notice their presence. In times of great need, the chambers can be used to hide precious goods, or even people—small channels cut where the stairs meet the landing allow air to pass within, yet are so subtle even a Dwarf might miss their presence.

A fourth stair, at the far northern end of the Wall, runs up from the wall, connecting the Deeping Wall to the outer court by way of the Deeping Wall arch. It is by this stair Helm's Shields reach the wall to help man it in times of attack, and the stair may also be used to reach the Hornburg if the Wall itself is overrun. Though the bottom of this stairway opens directly onto the wall, at top it passes under a massive stone arch, and this can be sealed with a heavy iron door emblazoned with the sign of the Horse-lords.

A hidden storage space also exists beneath the Deeping Wall arch stair,

though it is different from the other three hidden storage rooms. A small shaft in the floor of this room penetrates the Hornrock and meets an underground channel that connects—underground—to the Deeping Stream. Thus has a well been constructed, so water may be drawn up by bucket for use along the Wall. This well is circular, lined with close-fitting stone, and is wide enough for a slender individual to fit through, though the walls are too slick for grasping. A clever person, however, well familiar with the layout of this place, might strike out in the proper direction and emerge in the Deeping Stream itself, though such a method of escaping the Wall would be far more risky than simply braving a hail of arrows to break for the stairs.

## THE DEEPING WALL

The Deeping Wall is sometimes referred to as Helm's Gate, for it blocks the entrance to the Deep proper. Other times, Helm's Gate may mean the space just behind the Deeping Wall, or just before it, between the Wall and the Dike.

The Deeping Stream winds about the Hornrock like a protective mother, and passes beneath the Deeping Wall on its way into the Coomb. Here the Wall has been carved into a great arch, and a culvert set there, with a heavy grating. Though the arch itself is tall enough for a tall Man to stand within and raise his arms above his head, barely two feet show, for the rest is beneath the water.

The Deeping Wall is a solid barrier, its only entrance from the front the culvert and its heavy grate. The Rohirrim defending the Deep, however, must be able to breast the Deeping Wall at will, in order to reach the Dike quickly. To this end, the Rohirrim fashioned ladders of linked chain, with sturdy wooden rungs and heavy weights at the bottom. The top ends of these ladders

were anchored in the rock at the top of the Wall. Each was set before a notch, and alcoves carved at the base of the notches were made large enough to hold the rolled-up ladders. Then sheets of cloth, painted to match the stone in colour, were placed over these alcoves. In this way the ladders are hidden from sight—it takes a TN 15 Spot (Observe) test to notice the cloth coverings—but they can be drawn out and tossed over the side in an instant. The Rohirrim use these ladders to climb down from the Wall when they need to reach the Dike quickly. The ladders are only used in time of great need, however, to prevent outsiders from spotting them.

Very little has been done to the ravine walls above the Deeping Wall. The rock of the cliffs is strong and solid, and too steep for any to climb. Even the Fastwards would not attempt to scale the walls at this point, for the cliffs are nearly vertical and slope inward as they rise, until they form a roof high above. The Men of Gondor judged the mountains strong enough to stand alone, and merely built the Deeping Wall to bridge the gap between.

## RENOVATIONS

During the Battle of Helm's Deep, the Orcs of Saruman's army crept through the culvert and into the Deep. The spaces within the grating are too small for a Man to pass, but the Orcs bent the iron bars outward and wriggled through beneath the water, where the metal was more slippery and allowed more opportunity to pass. Once inside the Deep, they launched a sudden attack, timed with one of the waves that struck the Wall from outside. Fortunately, Gimli and others spotted the Orcs and struck them down. The culvert was then walled off, providing only a small space for the water to escape and no room for anyone to climb within. But the Orcs had brought with them the



fire of Orthanc, and with this they blasted a hole in the wall, destroying the culvert utterly and tearing enough space in the Deeping Wall for a horde to pour through and attack. The Wall was overrun, and the forces of Rohan retreated to the Glittering Caves and to the Hornburg.

After the War of the Ring ended, Gimli and his kin returned to settle in the Glittering Caves. They aided Erkenbrand and his men in repairing the damage to Helm's Deep, and rebuilt the destroyed portion of the Deeping Wall. So great was the Dwarves' skill that no eye could discern the place where the original stonework ended and their repairs began. The culvert was restored as well, for the Deeping Stream must be allowed to pass out of the Deep and down the Coomb below, but steps were taken to prevent its breach

by future foes. A massive stone wheel was carved from the mountainside and set along the northernmost edge of the wall, where it rose up to stand upon the outer edge of the Hornrock. The Dwarves carved a channel for this wheel, and passed a thick chain through a spur standing out from its centre. The chain was pulled taut, holding the wheel in place, and secured to a thick iron staple planted into the base of the Hornburg's outer wall. By releasing the chain from this staple, the wheel could be dropped down the channel and into the culvert, where it would block off all but a tiny space beneath it. Due to its thickness, and the channel in which it lay, the wheel could not be pushed aside even if Men and horses and other beasts choked the culvert to reach it. Hauling on the chain, however, would drag the wheel back up the channel to its resting place.

This precaution removed the risk of enemies sneaking in through the culvert, for during an attack the wheel would be instantly released and seal off that passageway. But still there remained the chance another might use the fire of Orthanc to blast open the grating and the wheel behind it. To prevent this, Gimli and his kin constructed a clever trap. When the wheel was lowered into place, it pressed down upon a stone lever at the base of the culvert. This in turn raised a section on the outside of the culvert, where stone spikes had been inserted into the floor. These spikes faced outwards, angling up from the ground, and were spaced so closely together even an Elf could not find space to walk between them. The waters of the Deeping Stream concealed these obstacles from the naked eye, and any attempting to sneak close to the culvert would be impaled upon them. In this way the culvert was protected as much as Dwarven craft would allow.





## THE HORN

*'In the narrows they may hold back the enemy and come within the caves.'*

— Aragorn, *The Two Towers*

While the name 'Helm's Deep' is often used informally to refer to the Hornburg and all its surroundings in their entirety, including even the Deeping Coomb and Glittering Caves, those speaking more precisely use this title to describe only the cleft that lies between the Hornrock and mouth of Aglarond. Those who wish to avoid confusion, however, refer to this area by a second name: the Horn. The reason for this name is two-fold. First, this portion of the Deep begins as a wide stretch of ground but narrows as it penetrates into the mountains. Thus, the distance resembles a great horn, curving slightly as it stretches from the mouth to the bell. Secondly, the people of the Deep say that oftentimes the blasts from Helm's Horn are still heard between the cliffs, as if his echoes linger still, and those sounds are loudest and clearest within the Horn, where they echo from the walls on both sides, the Wall and the Hornburg in front, and the cliffs over the Caves behind.

The Deeping Stream flows right through the centre of the Horn, and at several points low bridges have been placed over it for ease of passage. The cliffs on either side of the Horn are steep and solid, sloping inward as they rise and closing to within a foot of one another at their highest point, some hundreds of feet overhead. Thus the Horn lies in perpetual darkness beneath the shadow of the mountains and is never touched by the light of the sun.

When the Hornburg was built the Horn was an empty stretch, used as a staging ground or encampment for any sheltering behind the walls who would not fit, or chose not to

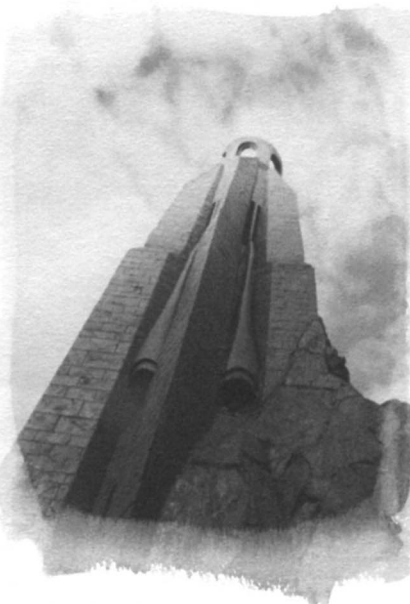
stay, in the fortress itself. Over time, as the number of people living in the Deep has grown, that has changed. The Horn now features many permanent buildings, and is home to constant activity. Since the Hornburg is reserved for military matters and other important business concerning the entire Vale, the Horn becomes the location where most other matters are handled. In foul weather the Coomb Market is held here, just behind the Deeping Wall, for rain and snow reach the Horn as little as does sunlight. Several merchants have regular stalls within this area, and Erkenbrand allows this, for they sell to the people within the Deep. The merchants are all Rohirrim, of course, and their wares approved by either Erkenbrand himself or one of his senior advisors.

Much within the Deep is carved from stone, as that material exists here in abundance. The Horn provides the rock, for along its sides are quarries, where slabs and sheets and blocks of hard grey granite may be removed. This serves a fourfold purpose. First, it ensures that Erkenbrand knows from whence the rock came, who is taking it, and for what purpose. Second, it keeps the sides of the cliff steep and impassable, for by quarry-

ing at their base the walls are made to be vertical or even to overhang. Third, such activity expands the Horn, providing more space for other activities. Finally, those who quarry the rock are expert carvers, and can remove portions at any height they can reach. Often, they carve out small chambers within the cliff walls, taking the rock from within but leaving walls, ceiling, and door. In this way the sides of the Horn are lined with stalls, pens, and rooms, carved into the living rock itself and thus not cluttering the narrow ravine. These rooms are also very defensible—with their doors shut again and the window panels closed, it takes a sharp eye—a TN 10 Observe (Spot) test, at least—to notice their presence in the cliff walls.

Easily the largest chamber carved in this fashion is the stable. Though the horses of the Master of Westfold and Helm's Shields are housed within the Hornburg, all other mounts are kept in the Deep. Initially they were stabled within the Glittering Caves, but that posed several problems, with both people and provisions in the same caverns. Thus, when the Rohirrim began to quarry the side walls, the Master of Westfold determined to dig out a stable large enough to house all the animals. The stable entrance is roughly one-third of the distance from the Deeping Wall to the Glittering Caves, for just past that point the Horn narrows greatly and hinders easy movement. At the stable doors, however, four horses may still stand easily alongside one another on each side of the Deeping Stream, and thus enough space exists for animals to turn before the doors if necessary. The stables are also set back this far to protect the horses in the event of an attack, for the Rohirrim do value their steeds highly. Yet the distance from stables to Deeping Wall is not so great that the horses cannot be mounted and charged to the front in moments.

The stable doors are massive, each fully ten feet high and half that width, and swing open at a touch. The





stalls themselves line both sides of the stables, with a wide aisle between and racks above for saddles, blankets, and other accessories. Alongside the stables is the hay barn, where hay is stored—a window has been cut between the two chambers, near the front, so hay can be drawn into the stables without going out and around and back in at the next door. The stable was built when a small force was kept in the Deep, and it can house only one hundred horses at a time. Additional stables stand throughout the Horn to accommodate other mounts, as needed.

The most noticeable structures in the Horn, and the largest, are the bunkhouses. Eight of these exist, each a long low hall set against the cliff. These bunkhouses provide living quarters for most of the guards within the Deep, and each can house one hundred and twenty-five men. The sleeping quarters are simple, with

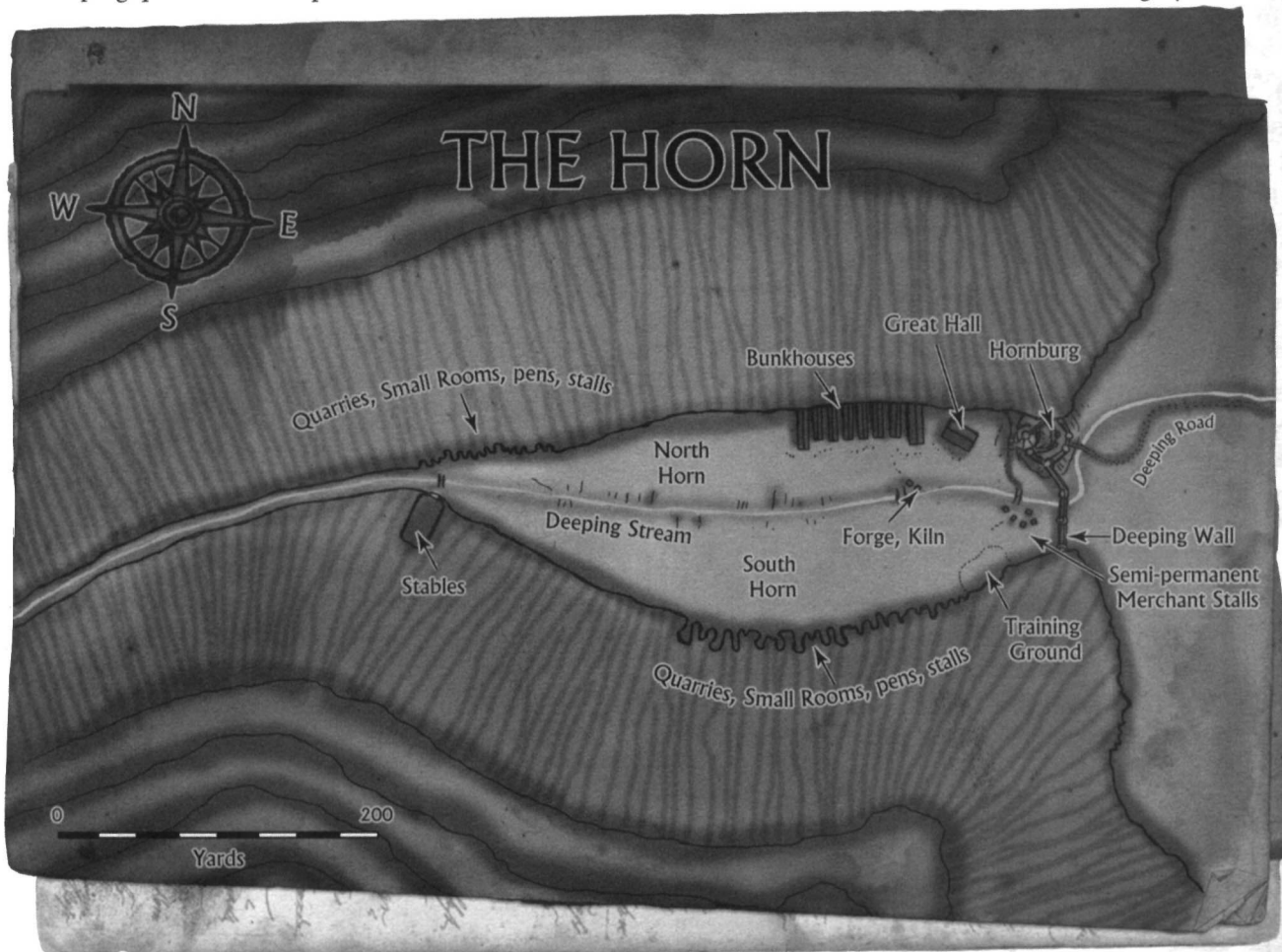
beds, chests, and small tables, and hooks and shelves along the wall. Tapestries between provide privacy, and washrooms and garderobes stand at the cliff end of each bunkhouse. A single set of doors opens in the front, and narrow windows line the long walls. Though the bunkhouses seem low-ceilinged, this is only due to their great length, and inside they have high beams running the length and breadth of them, so the guards may use the space above for additional storage.

Another hall stands in the Horn, even larger than the others. This is the great hall, where the guards take their meals. It contains long tables in rows, with benches on either side. Food is prepared by a host of cooks in extensive kitchens and distributed throughout the hall by a legion of servants, many of whom are warriors-in-training. Behind the kitchens

are quarters for the cooks and the servers.

Guards are not the only folk residing in the Horn, for a great forge stands to one side of the Stream. Although a second forge lies within the Hornburg, that is primarily for the lord, his kin, and Helm's Shields. The blacksmith of the Horn also provides equipment for use throughout Helm's Deep and the Hornburg, including kitchen tools, pots, pans, helmets, swords, and shields. Beside the forge lies the kiln, where pottery is fired. Clay is scraped from the sides of the Deeping Stream and cast into cups and bowls and other utensils. Both the blacksmith and the potter live behind their workshops.

A large square has been blocked off within the Horn with rope strung between four short posts. This is the training ground, where guards may practice both unarmed and armed combat. A set of roughly Man-high





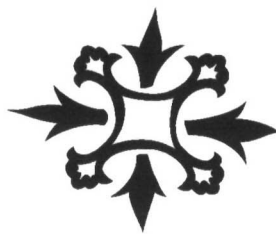
wooden blocks has also been placed along the cliff wall on the far side of the training yard, and these are used for archery practice and for spears. The training ground is not large enough to accommodate even a fourth of the guards within the Horn, so they are expected to use the yard sparingly, allowing others to take their place after a time.

Because the nights can be cold in the Deep, most buildings contain fire pits at their centres, and torches along the walls. The pits are usually filled with peat, though logs are sometimes found, and the warmth spreads throughout the long buildings, keeping them from being uncomfortably chill. Tapestries and rugs help keep the cold from entering, and the doors and shutters are carefully fitted so that, when closed, they allow no drafts to creep inside.

Because the Deeping Stream cuts through the centre of the Horn, and is too deep and swift to wade, often the Rohirrim are forced to walk a ways from their intended destinations to cross. The two halves of the Horn are referred to as South Horn and North Horn, respectively, so clear directions can be given as to where an item is to be placed or a specific person found: 'First bridge, South Horn' is close to the watchtower, while 'First bridge, North Horn' lies near the Hornburg.

The Horn was largely undamaged during the Battle of Helm's Deep. The forge and kiln were both overrun and destroyed, and the bunkhouses and the great hall put to the torch, but the stables were not damaged and none of the carved-out rooms were even discovered. After the War of the Ring, the Rohirrim rebuilt the buildings that had been demolished and the guards moved back into the Horn. Erkenbrand and his son Éardmer encouraged more people to settle within the Horn, especially merchants and craftsmen, and even carved small houses out of the cliffs for families to settle. The arrival of the Dwarves made the area even more

attractive, and before many years the Horn had become its own small village, with merchants, crafters, and tradesmen. Many of the guards took up trades, though they continued to take their turns at watch, and this made the community more tight-knit, for it protected itself. By the time Gimli the Dwarf departed from the area, the bunkhouses had been replaced by smaller houses, a pair of barracks had been carved into the mountainside, and the great hall had become a town hall and central meeting place.



## THE GLITTERING CAVES OF AGLAROND

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*'Strange are the ways of Men, Legolas!  
Here they have one of the marvels of the  
Northern World, and what do they say of  
it? Caves, they say! Caves!'*  
— Gimli, *The Two Towers*

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The least visible yet perhaps most impressive aspect of Helm's Deep is not the mighty tower of the Hornburg, nor the imposing Deeping Wall, nor even Helm's Dike through which flows the Deeping Stream. No, the most inspiring element of the Deep—at least according to the Dwarves and those others who have been allowed to see—are the Glittering Caves.

Named for the glitter of the minerals laced through the walls, ceilings, floors, and protrusions, these caves riddle the mountain behind the Deep.

It was the combination of these caverns, the narrow pass before them, and the mountains surrounding that made the Deep so defensible, even before the addition of the Deeping Wall and the Hornburg.

The mouth of the caves was initially but a hole broken through the rock, said to have been hewn by Endorion himself with his axe Orodrist, whose blade slid through rock as easily as through flesh. Over the years the entrance was widened to allow for the storage of larger goods, and by the time of Erkenbrand a great archway stood at the cave mouth, with a pair of heavy iron gates to protect it from prying eyes or intruders, if any pierced the Dike and the Deeping Wall and survived through the Horn. On these gates stood the figure of Endorion, a mighty warrior in armour old and ornate, his great axe grasped in both hands before him as if barring the way. Thus this ancient Man of Gondor continued to defend the caves, even long after his passing.

Once inside the gates, the passageway widens into a courtyard. This space was carved out by the Gondorians long ago, the walls smoothed and the floor levelled, with ceilings vaulted high above. Standing within this first room, the caves appear more as a castle about which a mountain has grown than a series of caverns shaped for habitation, so even and smooth are the walls and so little like their original form.

Two narrow staircases lead up from the courtyard on either side of the main door. Each leads to a guardroom where a single guard can look down from a concealed watch point upon the area directly outside the cave entrance. These gaps are large enough for arrows as well, and thus an intruder may be shot down as if Endorion himself had raised arms against him.

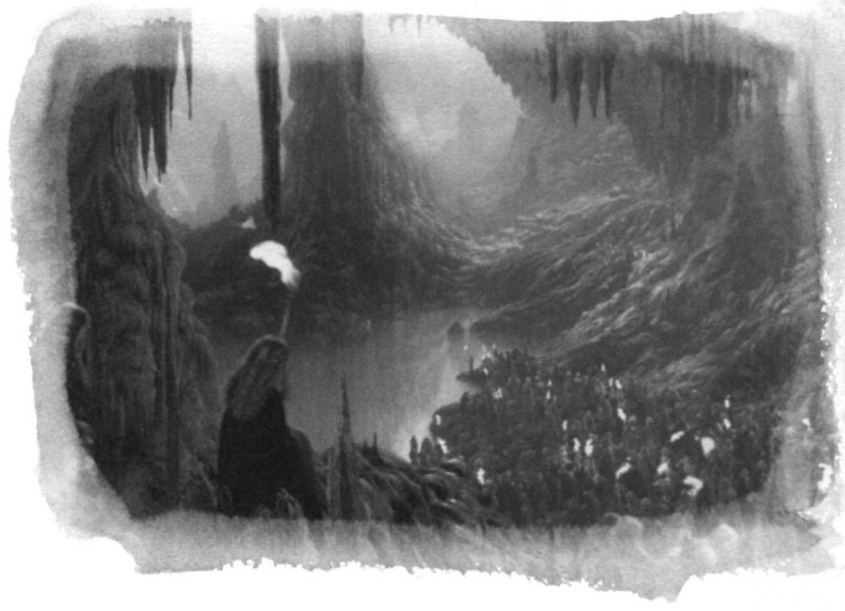
The south-east passage off the courtyard, which is on the left of one entering the caves, leads to the great main storerooms. Here are chambers



large as the greatest granary, secured with massive doors of wood and iron. Stone pallets cover the floor, to protect goods from the risk of seeping water, though the Deeping Stream runs not along this path. Within these rooms are great provisions, enough to feed the better part of the Vale's people for many a week if the need should arise. Bags of grain are stacked high and baskets of vegetables—potatoes, carrots, beans, corn, and others—form towering columns nearby. Bags of dried fruit stand nearby as well: apples, pears, grapes, and peaches dried and cut into flat rings for ease of packing. Meat hangs on racks suspended from the ceiling above, great joints of beef, mutton, pork, veal, and lamb, with chicken, duck, and other poultry as well. Fish, dried and salted, is stored in small barrels below the racks. Casks contain flour, while others along the back wall hold wine and mead. Water is not stored, for the Deeping Stream provides that in plenty, but all else needed for proper food is contained here, saving only fresh fruit, which is hard to come by in the mountains, and fresh dairy, which cannot be kept.

It bears noting that while these chambers are the main storerooms of the Glittering Caves, other chambers deeper within the complex are also used for storage. Nooks and crannies of various sizes and temperatures often lend themselves to storing specific types of items, and Stirling, the Master of the Caves, is frequently the only one who knows for sure where some of the more esoteric staples stored within the Glittering Caves can be found within the maze.

Along this same corridor are the animal pens. Beasts are not kept here during normal conditions, for most dislike the damp cool of the caves, and the lack of light and breeze. Animals normally are held in the Horn, in pens erected there along the side of the cliff or in stalls dug into the mountainside but still open to fresh air in front. In times of attack, how-



ever, the animals are led within the caves for safekeeping, and held within the pens standing for that purpose. Often, if the folk of the Coomb or the Vale retreat to the Deep, they bring the livestock with them, both to provide more food while taking shelter and to protect the creatures from slaughter by invaders. The pens are divided into groups; families are given pens of their own, so that animals are not mixed together and each family may care for its own stock. Taller pens hold horses and cattle, while lower ones accommodate sheep, pigs, and poultry. Henhouses stand at the back of each pen as well, so the hens may continue to lay eggs while within the caves, and their eggs provide a welcome relief from dried fruit and salted meat. Likewise, the milk from any cow is highly prized, and those families within share together, taking particular care to offer milk to the children first to keep them healthy.

The second passage off the courtyard, which runs straight from the gates, leads to the refuge caverns. These chambers have not been altered in the way of the storerooms. The floors have been smoothed for ease of passage and great jagged spots along the wall have been removed to prevent any from catching themselves on such protrusions, but beyond that the

caverns have been left untouched, and many a spire projects from the ground to the ceiling high above, natural columns that twist and turn, while the ceiling itself is a mass of projections, some reaching only a few feet and others longer than the height of a tall Man, their shapes seeming delicate in the distance yet are more massive in fact than many a horse or cow. These caverns house the people who take refuge here, and frames have been constructed along the walls, simple boxes or domes. On these are hung furs and tapestries, and the floors covered with more of the same, so each frame becomes a large room. In this way families may sleep together for warmth, and retain some privacy from their neighbours, for most are uncomfortable with the idea of sleeping out upon the cavern floors for all to see. Torches hang upon the walls at intervals, to provide some light, but within each frame stands a small brazier in which peat or wood can be burned for warmth and for more illumination. Most families use these frames only for sleeping and dressing, and otherwise gather in the open areas between, to speak with friends and neighbours and find comfort in the presence of others.

Along the third passage off the courtyard, which runs to the west, lie



more permanent quarters, for here are the rooms set aside for the Rohir warriors who dwell within the caves in peace and in war. These men are divided into two groups, the Dern-deepers and the Fastweards.

The Dern-deepers are warriors chosen for their speed of foot, their agility, and their ability to withstand closed spaces and heavy masses of rock on all sides—in short, for their willingness to live and work within the caves themselves. These folk generally prefer darkness to light, running to riding, and caves to open air—traits which to many Rohirrim are cause for distrust and alarm. Yet Draifend saw in them a use, and tasked such men with stocking and protecting the provisions he had caused to be stored within the caves, where none had existed for many years before. When Erkenbrand became Master of the Westfold, he saw a greater use for these individuals than merely protecting piles of grain and meat. The ease with which they moved through the caves impressed him, as did their knowledge of the passageways that cut through the mountains. Théostor long ago discovered tunnels running deep into the caves, but they had since been forgotten as his descendants had grown lax in their care of the Deep. These Rohirrim had rediscovered several of the tunnels on their own, and with them Erkenbrand shared the journals of his ancestor so they might know the others as well. To them he assigned responsibility for guarding those entrances, and for keeping watch on all who passed within hearing or sight of them. These Rohirrim became guards, not just for the store-rooms but for all Helm's Deep and for Rohan as well, and carried messages through the tunnels to Erkenbrand, to the guards along the Deeping Wall, to other warriors within the caves, and even beyond the caves to messengers bound for Edoras or Dunharrow. The Dern-deepers take great pride in their work and constantly seek to better their knowledge of the caverns

and their skill at navigating dark caves and tunnels. Twenty strong are the Dern-deepers, though few know this, for they rarely venture beyond the comfort of their caves.

The second group within the caverns is equally strange, and equally reclusive. The mountains surrounding Helm's Deep are high and forbidding, and difficult to scale. Yet in places they may be climbed, and those who accomplish such a feat gain a view unparalleled of the lands below and surrounding. From atop the peaks the whole of Helm's Dike may be seen, and all the Deeping Coomb beyond it, out into the Westfold Vale proper. The edge of the Deeping Wall is visible, and the spire of the Hornburg, though the cliffs close in over the rest of the Deep and hide it from view. To the north, the Gap of Rohan is clearly visible, with the Fords of Isen that mark the border of Rohan along that side, and those with keen eyes may spy the dark form of Orthanc in its valley of Isengard. To the west run the River Adorn and the River Isen, cutting through Dunland on their way to the Great Sea Belegaer. South is less visible, for here stand the White Mountains and their peaks tower high above, yet to the south-east the golden roof of Meduseld may be seen far away, gleaming in the sun at the centre of Edoras.

One who can see such things may provide useful intelligence for his lord, and warning of both good and ill tidings approaching. Thus did Erkenbrand and his father before him select Rohirrim comfortable with the mountainside and skilled at climbing, and task them to scale the cliffs each day and look out over the lands as far as they could see, so the Master of Westfold would not be taken unawares. Erkenbrand added to that another charge, that these Rohirrim, all warriors trained, would protect the Deep from intruders striking from above. He named them Fastweards, for they protected the stronghold, and gave them freedom to cut down

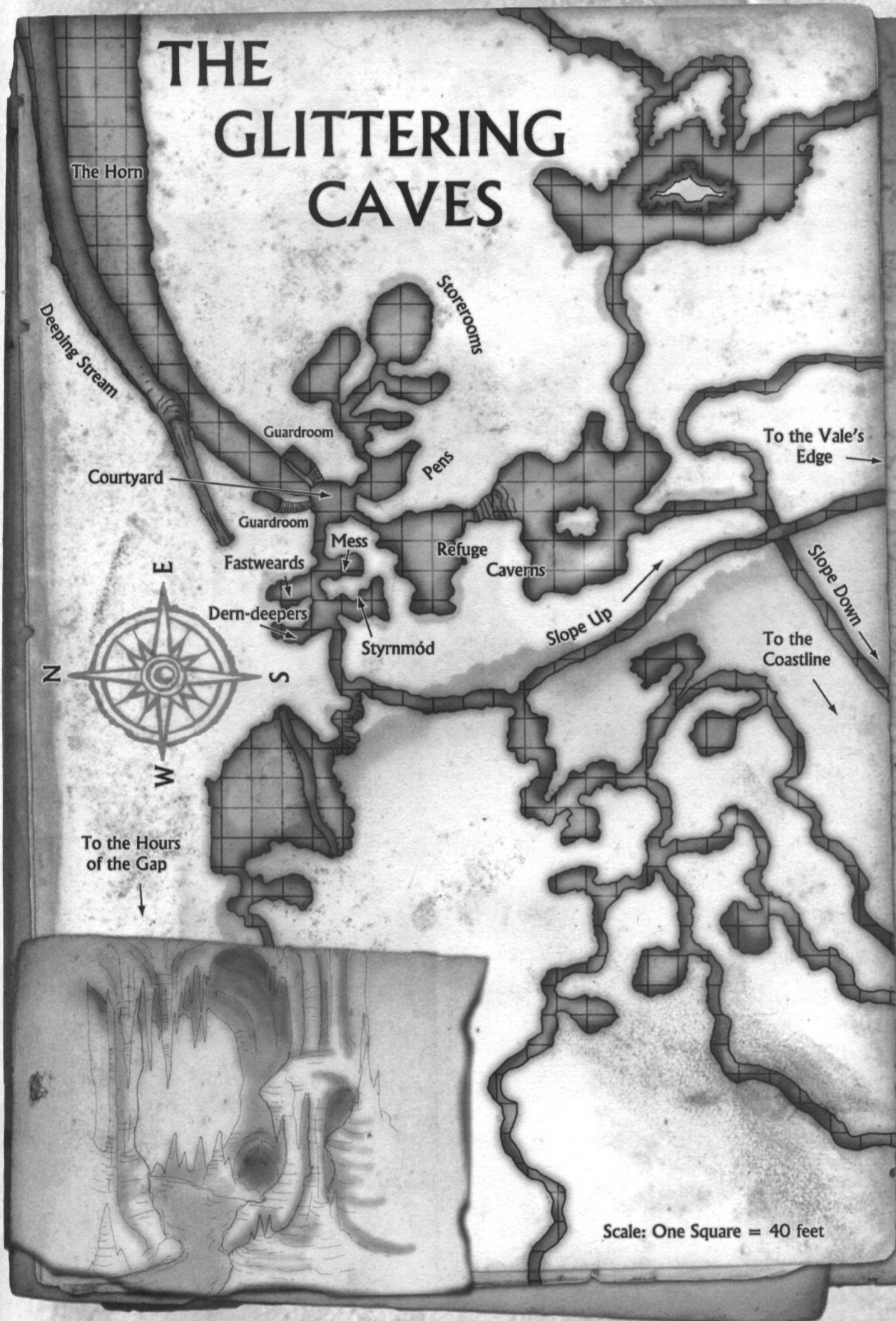
any they found on the mountainside, if they deemed those a threat to the safety of the Deep and its people. The Fastweards clamber about the mountainside each day, often staying the night on its high peaks, and watch for any other life among the cliffs. They hunt the wild beasts that wander the mountains—goats and great cats and birds—and in this way provide fresh meat for those below. But strange Men also may fall beneath their bows and their long knives, and the Fastweards ensure none but they come close to Helm's Deep from above. Only twenty are within this troop, yet their skill in the mountains makes them deadly to forces many times their size.

The sleeping quarters of the Dern-deepers stand alongside those of the Fastweards, and the two groups take meals together in the hall before their barracks, for both share a love of the mountains and a respect for stone and rock. A single long room suffices for the Fastweards, and the walls and ceiling have not been altered, though the floor has been smoothed somewhat. Simple palettes covered with furs and blankets provide beds, and nooks within the walls offer space to hang clothes, weapons, and other items. A single fire pit in the centre of the room, placed within a natural depression, provides enough warmth and light for all within, for the Fastweards are accustomed to the chill of the mountain air and the dark of the caves and the peaks.

The Dern-deepers have a room alongside that of the Fastweards, and their space is similar save their beds possess frame and mattress, for the Dern-deepers do not often spend more than a day beyond their chambers. Chests stand at the foot of each bed, for personal items and clothing, and natural spurs from the walls serve as hooks. The fire pits in these two rooms are kept low, for the Dern-deepers do not mind the cool air of



# THE GLITTERING CAVES





## NEW ORDER PACKAGES

### DERN-DEEPER

This is a warrior package for those who specialise in speed, stealth, and underground combat.

ORDER SKILLS: Armed Combat +2, Climb +2, Jump +3, Observe +2, Run +4, Survival (Underground) +2

PICK 5 BONUSES: +1 to any order skill.

PICK 1 EDGE: Dodge, Fleetness, Furtive, Mobile Archer, Night-eyed, Tireless, Travel-sense, Wary

### FASTWEARD

This is the warrior package for those trained to climb mountains and cliffs and to hunt and fight from those heights.

ORDER SKILLS: Armed Combat +2, Climb +3, Jump +2, Observe +2, Ranged Combat +2, Stealth +2, Survival (Mountains) +2

PICK 5 BONUSES: +1 to any order skill.

PICK 1 EDGE: Accurate, Dodge, Doughty, Keen-eyed, Master of Heights, Mobile Archer, Quick-draw, Wakefulness, Warwise

the caverns and their eyes are accustomed to dim lighting and near-darkness.

The hall where both troops take their meals is similar to the great hall in the Horn, lined with benches and tables, but only small torches gutter along the walls, providing enough light to find one's way through the crowd and no more. Behind that hall stands the kitchen, and those who make the meals are Dern-deepers and Fastweards themselves, for few others are willing to remain within the caves long enough to do such duties.

A small suite also lies off this corridor, and contains a pair of rooms. These are the chambers of Styrnmód, the Master of the Caves. The first room is a study, containing a desk and chair and a wall of scrolls and maps. The second room is his bedchamber, with a simple bed, chest, side table,



and wardrobe. A garderobe stands off the bedchamber, and a washroom alongside with a pitcher of water he fills each day from the Deeping Stream, which rushes through the large cavern above. Styrnmód can be found in his suite when he is not in the storerooms themselves, poring over inventories and charts and assigning tasks. Though not a Fastweard or a Dern-deeper, he has charge of both, and both troops respect him as their commander.

Though the Glittering Caves beyond the courtyard have no doors or windows they are not completely dark, even when all torches have been extinguished for the night. Likewise, the caverns are not stuffy and stale, and the air within stays cool and crisp at all times. This is because the caverns are riddled with tiny openings, small cracks and crevices which twist through the thick walls and open onto the world outside. These provide fresh air, cycled through the caverns by the force of the Deeping Stream as it flows past, and glimmers of light as well. The light is picked up and magnified by crystals within wall, floor, and ceiling, and many a chamber within the caves is filled with a rainbow of light cascading across the walls.

The name 'Glittering Caves' is no misnomer, nor was Gimli's admiration of them feigned. Those who see only the courtyard and the storerooms may wonder, for these seem the rooms of a rough-hewn castle and nothing more. The sleeping quarters of the Dern-deepers and the Fastweards are more impressive, for many of the spires and shapes have not been altered, but the crystals in the walls have been partially obscured by design, to allow those within to sleep in darkness and not be awakened by beams of light dancing across their brows. The caverns themselves, however, whence refugees go in times of need, have been all but untouched, and it is these that captured Gimli's heart, for within these spaces are

delicate columns, massive spires, perfect pools, and many more wonders besides. Strands of rock as dainty-seeming as fine chain yet as sturdy as tree trunks drape across beams and arches and wind around spikes and protrusions, and in many places the stone seems as if it were water, for it sprays outwards in a delicate wave, or dances upwards from the floor to arc against the wall, or drips from above to coat a column with fantastical shapes. Nor are the shapes without the only objects to catch the eye and the breath, for the stone itself is a delight and a wonder. The rock of the cliffs is mostly granite, hard and grey and solid, with enough quartz to contain a faint shimmer in the light. But the caverns are filled with limestone, marble, quartz, and other minerals, and the walls change colour from rose to gold to palest white, with reds and greens and blues and even night-black mixed in as well. Many coloured faces of rock glow from within, the light of torch and fire pit catching on crystals imbedded in the stone, or shining through rock so thin it seems almost a window with a fire glowing behind it. Natural stairs and ramps lead to other levels, to ledges and platforms and balconies constructed by nature, and the chambers lead into other chambers, each different from the last and each shaped by no hand but only by water, air, and time. Nor have these caves been entirely mapped, for such would be the work of a hundred lifetimes. Passages run through the caverns, but none is straight and true—rather they require climbing over ledges and around columns, following ramps to other levels and squeezing through narrow spaces into further rooms, and other contortions which only the most dedicated and the most agile can manage.

Three long routes leading from the main complex used by the Rohirrim did Théostor discover long ago. The first leads to the west, and links to caves on the far side of the Thrihyrne,

overlooking the Westmarch of Rohan. This is known by the Dern-deepers as the Coastline, for from it one can see the distant sea past the land of the Dunlendings.

The second route runs south into the White Mountains and emerges in a series of caves nearly halfway to Edoras, where a guardhouse stands. This pass is known as the Vale's Edge, and Dern-deepers use it to deliver messages to the guards at that guardhouse, who then ride to Edoras with the information. In this way the distance between the two strongholds is covered more quickly, and more secretly, for none see the Dern-deepers emerge from the mountains and thus even one watching would not suspect the guards carry messages from as far away as Helm's Deep.

The third route leads north, and ends in caves overlooking the Gap of Rohan. This route is known as the Hours of the Gap and has many entrances along the east side of the mountains. Each of the entrance caves is numbered so one Dern-deeper can tell another "I saw riders through the Fourth Hour," and they will both know which cave the riders passed near. Each of these entrances is guarded by the Dern-deepers, and every four hours other Dern-deepers arrive to relieve those standing guard, or to carry messages. In times of war, messengers visit each post every hour, to make sure news is carried quickly.

In addition to these three routes, which are heavily protected by the Dern-deepers at all times, the Men of Gondor who first built the Hornburg and Deeping Wall added another. The secret entrance from the second floor of the watchtower at the south end of the Deeping Wall leads to a long twisting corridor, which runs just inside the south wall of the Horn and connects to the Glittering Caves themselves. This pass is called the Blind Gate, and is known only to the Dern-deepers, the Master of Westfold and his advisors, and a handful of others. Over the last decade, more



## NEW EDGES

### FLEETNESS

Speed courses through your limbs, and you seem to fly as you run, so swift is your movement.

REQUISITE: Run 4+, Nimbleness 8+

EFFECT: Your run and sprint movement paces (see page 214 of the core rulebook) are increased by one quarter. Thus, Medium characters may move 34 yards at a run and 50 yards at a sprint.

IMPROVEMENT: You may devote one additional pick to this edge. This increases each pace to half again its normal maximum, so that Medium characters may move 41 yards at a run and 60 yards at a sprint.

### MASTER OF HEIGHTS

The crest of the mountain, far from filling you with dread, leaves you exhilarated. You are most comfortable on such heights, where the air is crisp and clear, and are not bothered by the altitude. In particular, you have trained to fight at such heights, and are more comfortable there than on the ground.

EFFECT: You gain a +2 bonus to all Armed Combat tests while atop mountains or cliffs.

### MOBILE ARCHER

Most archers prefer time to stand and aim, but that is not always possible. You have mastered the art of aiming and firing while on the move.

REQUISITES: Nimbleness 6+, Ranged Combat 2+, Run 4+

EFFECT: Most archers suffer a penalty when shooting while in motion. Thanks to your training, your penalty for firing in such situations (see the target motion penalties on page 230 of the core rulebook) is 4 less than it would otherwise be. This edge has no effect on the penalty associated with firing while on horseback.

## NEW FLAWS

### CONSTRAINED

You cannot abide close quarters. Low ceilings make you uncomfortable, but far worse are small rooms, where the walls press in on every side. You can only find true comfort in large spaces, or out in the open air.

EFFECT: You suffer a -2 penalty to all tests while you are within a confined space. (Note that caves are not automatically confining—many have high ceilings and vast chambers.)

IMPROVEMENT: This flaw can be taken twice, in which case the penalty increases to -4.

### LIGHT-BLIND

The light of day seems harsh to you, causing you to blink and wince.

EFFECT: You suffer a -2 penalty to all tests while you are exposed to daylight.

IMPROVEMENT: This can be taken a second time, at which point the penalty increases to -4.

secret entrances have been carved into this tunnel along the length of the Horn, for the rooms—including the stables—which cut into the side of the Horn often butt up against it. Because of these new entrances, guards from the Glittering Caves can saddle horses without setting foot beyond the security of the caverns.

Other passages besides those which have been named also exist. Several lead up towards the top of the mountain, and these are used by the Fastwards to ascend the peaks for scouting and hunting. Still others descend below the level of the caves, and cut below the mountains and deep into the earth. No one knows where these channels might lead. The Deeping Stream flows down from the

mountains, its waters collected from rivulets along the peaks, but some portion of it may flow from the Isen, and underground channels may link the two together. Other Man-made paths may exist as well, though lost in time—it is said Endoron, after fashioning the Hornburg and the Deeping Wall, carried his brother Endorion deep within the caverns and laid him to rest in some distant chamber.



Endoron himself never returned, and many believe he wandered the caverns for all the remaining days of his life, perhaps discovering or fashioning new chambers. Though renowned as a warrior, Endoron was also a great explorer and a mighty stonecrafter, and it may be that deep within the mountain he constructed rooms and passages which have never been seen by other eyes.

After the War of the Ring, Gimli the Dwarf and his kin returned to Helm's Deep. With the permission of Éomer King they settled in the Glittering Caves, beyond those chambers already in use by the Rohirrim. There the Dwarves fashioned a mighty city, though to the eyes of Men they did little crafting, for the beauty of the caves they left untouched, making only tiny alterations to enhance the natural splendour of their new realm. The floors they smoothed, though columns and arcs and other protrusions were left undisturbed, and here and there a jagged edge was smoothed to blend with its surroundings.

The largest change brought by the Dwarves was the lights, for they crafted great ornate lamps and hung these on the walls throughout, so the caves were filled with light and colour, reflected throughout in a great array. Furs and rugs were laid down, and furniture wrought from stone that had been carved, or from the granite quarried in the Horn beyond, but the walls were not covered, for their beauty surpassed that of any tapestry. The Dwarves built great forges within the caverns, near the Deeping Stream for its cooling waters and near channels through the roof for their clean air, and worked in metals mined from deep within the caves, crafting great and wondrous items of steel, iron, silver, and other metals. Many jewels they also plucked from the walls around, though only where the removal would not mar the cavern itself, and these they fashioned into jewellery: rings, brooches, diadems,

great helms, and other such ornaments.

The Dwarves proved to be merry neighbours, and traded briskly with the Rohirrim and others. They explored many of the caverns, and often a Dwarf and a Dern-deeper would be found together wandering in some far-off chamber, discussing which path to try next. The Dwarves lent their strength to guarding and protecting the caves, and thus the great refuge of Helm's Deep became even more strongly defended.

## LIFE

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*'Ever steeper and narrower it wound  
inward from the north . . . till the crow-  
haunted cliffs rose like mighty towers on  
either side, shutting out the light.'*

— *The Two Towers*

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When not at war, life within Helm's Deep is quiet. The guards go about their duties, manning the Wall and the Dike and the Hornburg. Those not on guard duty assist with carrying provisions into the Glittering Caves or into the rooms carved along the Horn. Some assist the blacksmith or the potter at their work, while others help quarry rock. Erkenbrand has roving patrols, and at any given time during the day up to five hundred soldiers may be outside the Deeps, riding along the Deeping Road, stopping in at the farms along the Coomb, and checking with the guards at the Streamhouse and the guardhouse where the Deeping and Westfold Roads meet. Others go hunting in the hills near the Coomb, both to keep wild animals at bay and to provide fresh meat for those within the fortress. Daily drills and practices keep the soldiers alert and their martial skills sharp.

Within the Hornburg, Erkenbrand and his advisors consider the daily affairs of the Westfold Vale. They hear petitions, check inventories, consider crop estimates, and figure taxes. Erkenbrand also receives reports from scouts all throughout the Vale, including the Fastweards atop Thrihyrne, and based on these he assigns his followers to guard duty, scouting, hunting, or intercepting raiders and other intruders. Monthly reports are sent to the king in Edoras, and goods often accompany them—the Westfold grows most of the nation's vegetables and grain, and these are traded for fruit, meat, and other commodities.

The normal diet in Helm's Deep is not much different from that elsewhere in the Mark. The farmers on the Coomb have no herds, but most keep enough animals to provide their own meat and a little for those in the rest of the Deep. More meat is bought from the Eastfold, and sometimes deer, rabbit, or other game can be brought down along the hills nearby. Most of the meat is salted to preserve it, and fresh meat is a rare treat. Fish is a common staple, however. The Deeping Stream has many fish, as do several of the underground pools, and though the fish there are pale and sightless their flesh is firm and good to eat. Grain is plentiful in the Coomb, and fresh bread is provided every day, as are potatoes, carrots, beans, and other vegetables. Mead is expensive, since no bees live near the mountains, and it and wine must be traded for, but every farmstead makes its own beer and ale, and these are sent to those who guard them. Erkenbrand is wise and knows his soldiers will serve best when they are well-fed and healthy, so he does not stint on provisions for them. At the same time, he recognises idleness as a grave danger during peacetime, and makes sure his soldiers have tasks to keep them active and alert.

Most of the people in the Westfold Vale live well beyond the Coomb, and come to the Hornburg but rarely.

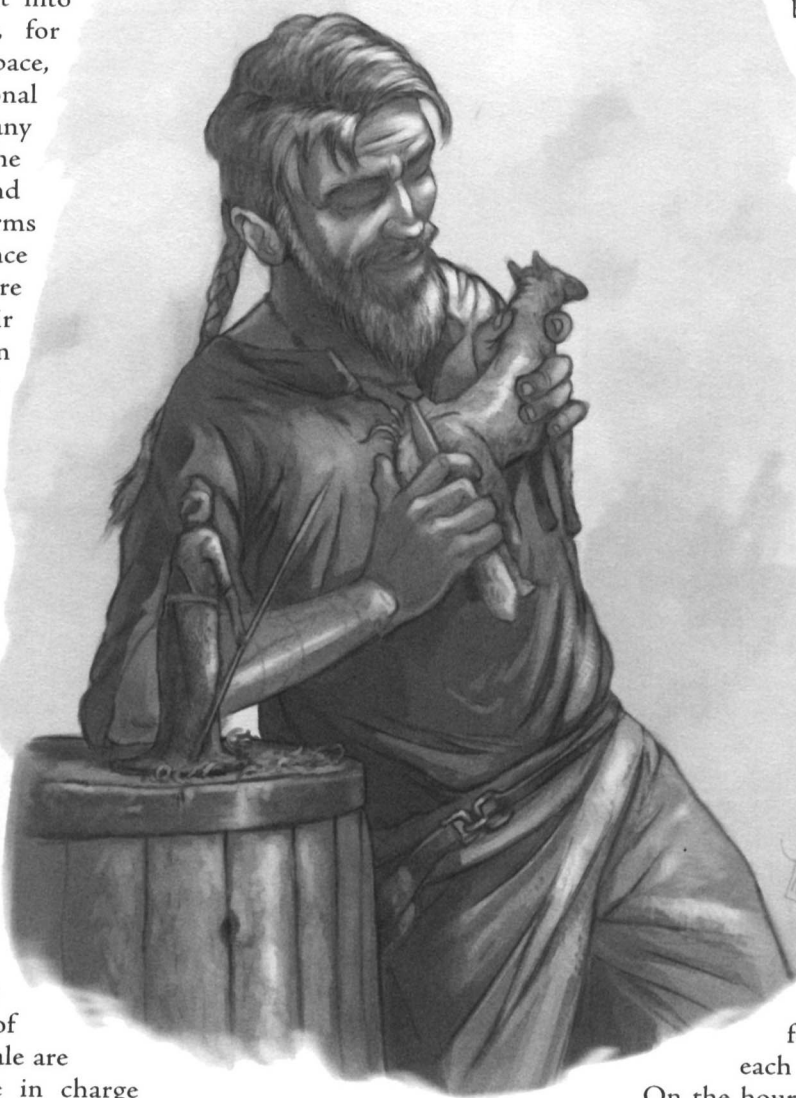


Taxes and goods are sent every few months, but as long as peace prevails most have little reason to seek out Erkenbrand personally, and no desire to travel far from their homes and crops. The Deeping Coomb is closer to the Hornburg, yet the farmers there also travel rarely to the fortress. Most of their disputes are brought before the guards of the Streamhouse and settled close to home, and their market place is there as well. Those who dwell within the Horn or Hornburg often go out into the Coomb, however, for exercise, a change of pace, and to trade for personal items in the market. Many of the guards within the Deeps are married, and their families live on farms with their other kin. Once a week these guards are allowed to visit their wives and children on the farms. This not only keeps the soldiers happy, but also reminds them of their duties, for their families are the very people they must protect, and failing to stay alert while in the Deep could put those loved ones at risk.

When not on duty or engaged in other tasks, the guards of the Deep gather in the great hall of the Horn, or the outer court of the Hornburg. There they tell tales, sing, work small pieces of wood or stone, and otherwise relax from the events of the day. Some beer and ale are provided, though those in charge keep a close eye on such things. Drink in moderation aids the soldiers in relaxing, but too much dulls their senses and could prove deadly were a sudden attack to occur. The Rohirrim are devoted to the arts,

perhaps surprisingly to most who only see or hear of them. Most paint, carve, shape leather, or know some other small craft. These items often adorn the soldiers' bunks, and sometimes their persons in the form of jewellery, bracers, belts, or daggers.

Perhaps the strangest thing about living within the Deep is the lack of direct light.



The cliff walls on either side loom high overhead, leaning together as they rise until, at their peaks, they nearly touch; one can easily step across the gap between them at their summits. The

sun only glances down into the Deep at noon, and even then it is blocked by the cliffs so a mere trickle of light dusts the floor of the Horn, and that only on bright days. The Hornburg receives some light of its own, for it stands higher above the ground and the cliff above it does not loom over quite so much, though little warmth reaches the keep from above.

Still, this lack of sun is good as well, for the guards of the Hornburg are never bothered by glare, and can see a goodly ways out over the Coomb and beyond.

Though Helm's Deep is famous for the horn of the king for whom it was named, and for the way horn blasts echo between its walls, horns are seldom heard within the Deep. This is by design, for the sound of a horn within is a call to alarm, and used only in times of great need. A small brass gong rests on the landing of the central stairway of the Deeping Wall, however, and next to it stands a thick candle with rings marked around it.

This candle burns for an entire day, and each ring marks one hour.

On the hour, just as the wax burns down to the next ring, the gong is struck, and reverberates through the Deep, though not so loudly as a horn. In this way the time is measured, so that all may know the hour and be about their appointed tasks. A new



candle is lit each night, just as the old one gutters out. The crafting of these candles is an ancient art, handed down through generations, and those who make them are honoured by all in the Westfold. It is said that Erkenbrand keeps a like candle in his study, so he may know at a glance the time of day and gauge the time before the next strike of the gong.

Each guard post at Helm's Deep is manned by at least two guards at all times. At dawn, one guard is relieved, and his partner at nine in the morning. The first position changes again at noon, and the second at three, then the first at dusk and the second at nine in the night, then the first at midnight and the second at three in the morning. Thus each guard must stand watch six hours at a turn, and his partner changes halfway through his shift, so always one has been there less time than the other. This prevents a pair of guards from being equally tired, for they did not start together. On the hour, a third guard arrives, and one of the two standing watch is relieved for ten minutes, during which time he can stretch his legs, use the garderobe, pour a drink, or smoke a pipe. This keeps all fresh and alert.

Some guard posts are stationary, such as the watchtower at the south end of the Deeping Wall, or the archway over the Great Gates of the Hornburg. Others are mobile, such as the great stretches of Helm's Dike and the Deeping Wall. Men patrol these, walking in pairs along the walls and looking out on both sides. At various spots other guards stand waiting, and these trade places with the patrol when they approach, so key points are always guarded and stretches are always being walked. Guards are also sent out on horseback to patrol between the Dike and Deeping Wall, and more to cover the region below the Dike and along the Deeping Road. These patrols are staggered, so one is leaving just as another returns and a third is midway through its route. Erkenbrand is

cautious, and though some find his patrols excessive, all agree it is better to patrol and find nothing to report than to be caught unawares by an enemy.

## BATTLE CONDITIONS

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*'A new power is rising. Its victory is at hand. This night the land will be stained with the blood of Rohan! March to Helm's Deep! Leave none alive! To war! There will be no dawn for Men.'*  
—Saruman, *The Two Towers* film

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If an enemy is sighted the guards alert their commander. This might be the commander of the Dike, the commander of the Deeping Wall, or the captain of Helm's Shields, depending on the guards' location. The leader in question then decides a course of action. If the foe is few in number, he may choose to lead a party or send a troop to deal with them immediately. Raiders are sometimes spotted creeping through the Gap of Rohan and toward Helm's Deep, and these groups are usually no more than a score of warriors, easily crushed by a troop of Rohirrim on horseback. If the enemy have greater numbers than that, or seem to be more than a mere raiding party, the commander informs Erkenbrand directly, and the Master of the Westfold selects the course of action. If a threat to the Vale itself seems likely, Helm's Horn is blown.

The sound of Helm's Horn carries throughout all the Deep. It echoes up and down the Horn, rings out over the Helm's Gate and the Deeping Wall, carries across Helm's Dike, and is heard clearly all throughout the Deeping Coomb, even so far as the Streamhouse. Even within the Glittering Caves the horn can be heard, its sound picked up by the

hanging spires and setting them to vibrating as if a mighty giant walked above with heavy boots. Upon hearing Helm's Horn, the Rohirrim spring to action. The people of the Coomb gather their families, their livestock, and whatever heirlooms they can carry and make for the Dike at once. Upon arriving, the women and children (and any too old to bear arms) continue up the causeway and into the Hornburg, and from there down into the Horn, through it, and back to the Glittering Caves, where they place their animals in the pens and then take shelter in the caverns. The men go directly to the Dike itself, and there they receive weapons and armour brought out by the guards from various storerooms and armouries.

When Helm's Horn sounds, the guards also take up their weapons, each wakening from sleep and grabbing armour and gear. The guards are drilled on their responses, and each goes to his assigned place without needing any further direction. Most climb the stairs along the Deeping Wall. Some then deploy the ladders, climb down over the Wall, and go quickly to the Dike, to ensure that it is fully staffed and will not be overrun. Others remain on the Wall, haul the ladders back up, and take positions along its length. Still others are sent up to the Hornburg to provide it with enough soldiers to line its outer walls as well. The Fastwards scale the mountain to keep watch for anyone attempting to reach the Deeps from above. The stalls, stables, and other chambers along the Horn are closed to protect their contents from spying eyes, and the gates of the Glittering Caves are shut fast behind the last of the refugees.

Once the people of the Coomb are within, the gates of the Dike are shut, as are the Great Gates. Men array themselves upon the walls, but if it be night torches are not lit. This allows their eyes to adjust to the darkness



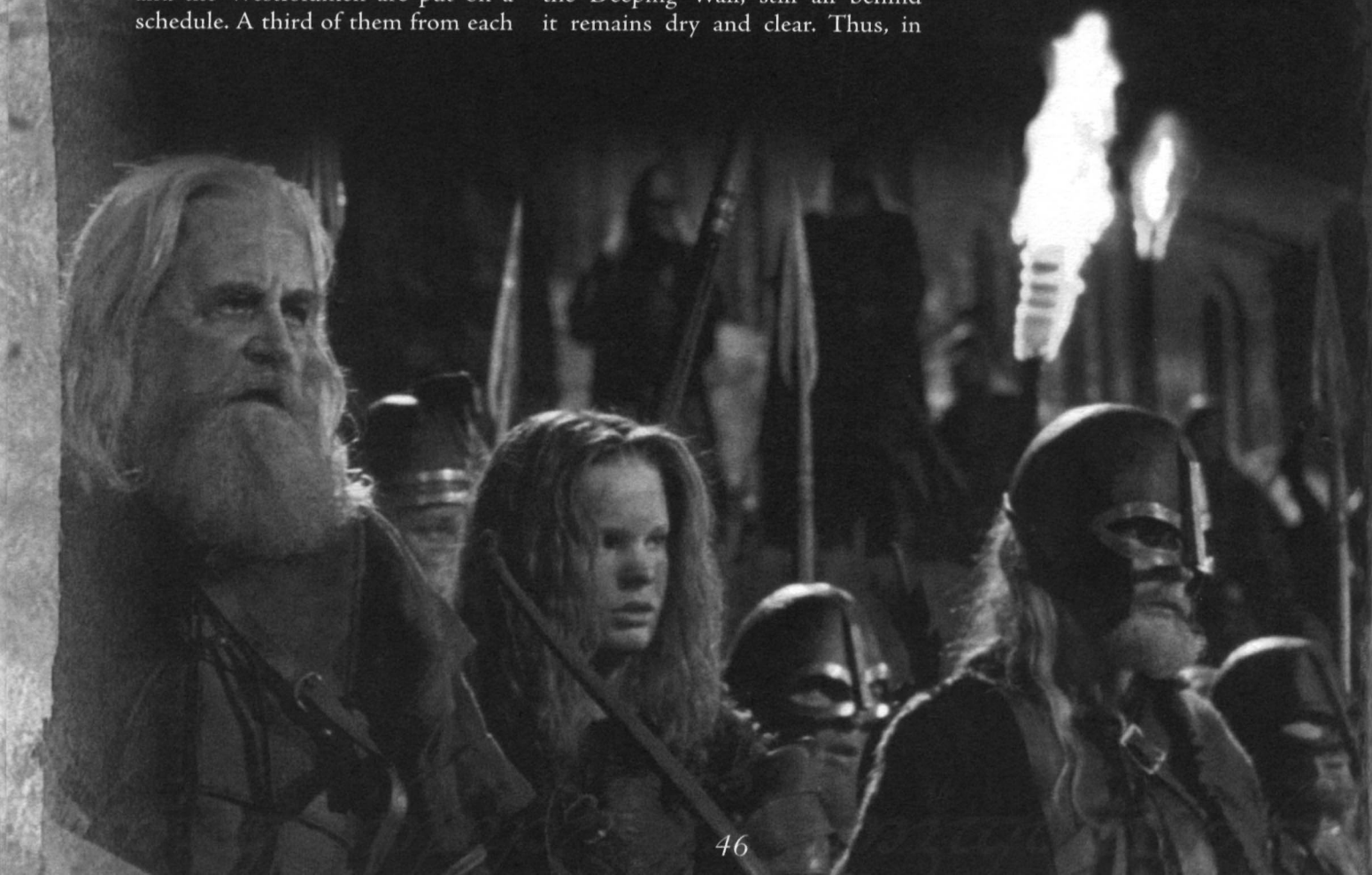
and makes a better target of any approaching army bearing torches. Guards stand ready with spears and bows to fire down upon anyone approaching. At the same time, Dern-deepers are dispatched to the guardhouse in the valley between Helm's Deep and Edoras to alert the king to the attack. The Dern-deepers also send reinforcements along each of the other major routes so that no foe can sneak into the caverns and strike the Rohirrim from behind.

Any attack is assumed to be the start of a siege, for the strength of the Deeping Wall is great and never has the Hornburg fallen to a foe. Thus, food is carefully rationed, as are candles and torches. Water is not restricted, as the Deeping Stream continues to flow strong and steady out of the Glittering Caves, but wine, beer, and ale are not drunk, for soldiers must keep all their wits ready. If an attack does not occur within the first hour after the Horn is blown, the guards and the Westfoldmen are put on a schedule. A third of them from each

location are sent to get rest, while the rest continue to guard. Every three hours the portions rotate, so that everyone gets three hours of rest out of nine and the Deep always has two-thirds of its forces at the ready. The Men of the Westfold take bunks in the bunkhouses, rather than trek the distance through the Horn to their families within the Caves. If the enemy are seen preparing to charge, Helm's Horn is blown again and those sleeping leap back to the walls.

Helm's Deep was built to withstand the siege of mighty armies, and its walls can endure much. The storerooms within the Glittering Caves are large, and hold a great many provisions, and if given enough time to retreat within and seal the gates, the people of the Vale can survive without difficulty for many weeks. One advantage of the cliffs overhead is that weather does not strike the Deep themselves. Though it may snow and storm just beyond the Deeping Wall, still all behind it remains dry and clear. Thus, in

foul weather, the defenders have an even greater advantage, and can sit in comfort while their attackers are drenched and must slog through water and snow to reach the Dike. The fortification is also well-protected from fire, for little within the walls will burn: the buildings are stone rather than wood, and very little is left outside even on quiet days. Too, the distance from the Dike is so great that no enemy beyond it could fire an arrow or other projectile beyond the Deeping Wall—thus there is little danger, while the Dike stands, that anything could reach the Deep and bring flame or any other danger to the people there. Of course, during battle conditions the only people in the Deep are the guards, and most of those stand on the walls—those taking their rest are safe within the heavy bunkhouses.





## GROUPS

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*You said this fortress would never fall  
while your men defend it. They still  
defend it. They have died defending it!*

—Aragorn to Théoden,  
*The Two Towers* film

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During conflict, all the Men of Helm's Deep work together as one for the defence of the area. But in times of quiet certain divisions exist. The guards are the most numerous of those within the stronghold, and handle basic guard duties plus many of the menial chores. Helm's Shields, quartered in the Hornburg, look to the protection of the keep itself and the ordering of the regular guard. These guardsmen do not carry provisions to the Glittering Caves, nor take up any other tasks beyond guarding, riding patrols, and hunting. Each tends his own horse and weapons, but that is considered the responsibility of a warrior—other tasks are seen as beneath them.

Though the regular guards respect Helm's Shields for their fighting prowess, many grumble the elite are still men as they are, and should still be held to taking a hand in the daily chores. Why should a man not have to haul water from the Deeping Stream or sweep the stables, simply for his skill with a sword? Helm's Shields, for their part, see the regular guard as lesser men, those who lack the skill to become part of the elite and so must handle basic duties instead of riding against raiders or patrolling the hills. Some of the elite are good-natured and acknowledge the importance of the regular guard, but others have been heard to mutter that those men serve as much purpose as empty shields on practice figures, simply to take blows from the enemy so the real warriors might be about their work unmolested.

Fortunately, the elite and the regular guards do not often mix. They have separate sleeping quarters, take their meals separately, train separately, and even stable their horses in different areas. It has been suggested by some that this division is what causes the animosity between the two groups, for if they lived together and interacted more the regular guards might see that not all of the Shields were arrogant, and the Shields might see that many of the regular guard are skilful men who can be relied upon to do their part. But Erkenbrand recognises that, as long as some of the warriors under his command are given more responsibility and more dangerous tasks, there will be some strife between them and the others. To his mind, placing Helm's Shields with the regular guards would only worsen matters, for the regular guards would then see the elite not taking part in chores, and would be angered by this far more than simply hearing it but not seeing such arrogance themselves. For their part, the elite, if they were to watch guardsmen cooking or cleaning or clearing tables, might make jests about such activities as unbecoming of a warrior, and this would earn them no friends among their neighbours.

For certain, however, not every chore in the Deep is managed by the guards. Servants handle most of the cooking, serve food and drink in the great hall, and clear away dishes for the tables as well. They are generally responsible for fetching water, cleaning out stables, feeding animals, washing and mending clothes, and other basic tasks. But many of these servants are related to the guards, by blood or by marriage, and since during peace the guards have some time to idle many of them assist their wives, sisters, and cousins, both to ease their tasks and to pass the time. Among the Rohirrim, being a servant is not a dishonourable occupation, and because so many of the servants are kin to the guards they are treated with respect. Most of the guards

recognise that, without these women (and some men) handling the chores, they would go hungry and would live in filth and squalor. Aiding in these tasks when other duties allow seems a small way to repay such service.

During battle conditions, many of the servants retreat to the Glittering Caves, but others stay on at their posts. Clothes can be cleaned by the pools in the caves, but food must still be prepared in the kitchens and served in the great halls, regardless of enemies pounding on the doors. This is less a risk than it sounds, for as long as the Dike stands no foe will reach the Hornburg or the Deeping Wall. Should the Dike fall, all servants are sent back into the caves, and the guards must survive on dried fruit and salted meat until such time as the attack is past and proper hot food can once more be safely prepared.

Erkenbrand is a wise ruler, but though considerate, his is not the softest manner or the gentlest speech. He goes among his soldiers at least every other day, to inspect the defences of the Deep, but rarely does he stop to speak with any unless some defect catches his notice. To Helm's Shields Erkenbrand is more familiar, for often he rides with them to hunt or to fight, and these know him to be a mighty warrior and a strong commander. But the regular guards and the servants, while they respect him, know little of the man himself, and deem him as cold as the mountains about his home, and as lofty as the peaks above. His family is rarely seen outside the Hornburg, though they are less difficult to speak with. None of Erkenbrand's family are ever seen without at least one of Helm's Shields for protection. Éardmer, the heir of Erkenbrand, is an exception to this. Though just a boy, he can often be found roaming the Horn and even the Glittering Caves, and though he speaks little and softly Éardmer is eager to listen to anyone he meets, and is well-liked by all who have encountered him. Many believe that he will



one day be a greater Master of the Westfold than his father, for though less warlike he is more responsive to the people, and more attuned to their concerns and problems.

The final groups within Helm's Deep are the most reclusive, and the least comfortable with others. These are the Dern-deepers and the Fastweards, both of whom live within the Glittering Caves even during times of quiet. The other guards find these strange for their preference of dark caves over open sky, and have little in common with them beyond heritage and appearance. The latter is a weak link as well, for the Dern-deepers are turned pale from lack of sun, while the Fastweards are weathered beyond their years.

Fastweards are often seen above-ground, but usually far above, high atop the peaks where no other Rohirrim dare go, and they rarely come within speaking distance of others. Their leader, Cráwa, delivers reports directly to Erkenbrand, often clambering down the cliffs and into the outer court of the Hornburg before even Helm's Shields detect his presence. Those under his command are all quiet, for the mountains breed patience and stealth, and when not asleep or on duty they often walk the mountain peaks, delighting in the wind and the view and the call of birds overhead.

The Dern-deepers, by contrast, do not leave the caverns if they can avoid it. Their leader, Théodwine, delivers reports to Styrnmód, and only for the most dire events will he travel to the Hornburg. When this is necessary, he goes by way of the passage into the watchtower, then along the Deeping Wall and from there to the outer court, as if the presence of thick walls on either side helps block the sight of the sky high above and out of reach, and the open stretches to either side. Dern-deepers are also quiet, for within the caverns a careless word could cause a spire to fall from the ceiling or a passageway to

collapse, and their eyes are so accustomed to darkness that even dim daylight bothers them. Even when not working they often travel the caverns, exploring new passages or sitting in familiar ones and admiring the quiet splendour of the caves. At night faint melodies waft forth from the mouth of the caves, as the Dern-deepers deep within play flutes and harps and other instruments, matching their haunting melodies to the unearthly beauty all around them. Some compare them to Gollum, for he too lived in a cave for many years and was accustomed to darkness, but Erkenbrand and his advisors speak harshly to any whom they hear repeating such tales. The Dern-deepers are honourable Rohirrim who protect the Mark from intruders, they scold, and should be respected for their courage in travelling deep beneath the mountains alone and unaided, living in darkness so their kin may live freely in the light.

Among the guards, the Dern-deepers and Fastweards receive a mix of respect and derision—respect because their work is valued, but derision for their odd habits and their refusal to speak with others. Skulkers, the Dern-deepers are sometimes called, or Fish-bellies for their pallor, or Worms for they wriggle about in the dark. Fastweards are more respected, for their skill with bow and spear is well-known, but even so they may be known as Goats after their nimble leaping from rock to rock, or Crows for their habit of sitting high upon the mountainside, or Tanners for their weathered skin. These groups of warriors rarely hear these jokes themselves, and do not care much when they do. They have their own sense of humour, and often laugh amongst themselves about the Crops who must stand in the sun or wither and the Roosters who cannot bear to be caged and the Hens who must chatter all day long and cannot appreciate silence or the beauty of the mountain. This difference is made

all the greater by the fact the Dern-deepers and the Fastweards prepare their own food and thus rarely come in contact even with servants.

Among the Rohirrim, women may be taught martial skills without disdain or dismay, and some among the guards of the Deep are female. The Dern-deepers and Fastweards care even less than most about such superficial distinctions, and welcome women as easily as men into their ranks. Few grown adult warriors of either gender join these tight-knit bands, however. Youths who show agility and fleetness of foot—and who display an affinity for darkness and enclosed spaces—are sent to the Dern-deepers. Those children who show a love of climbing and an ability to sit still are sent to the Fastweards. The children stay in the caves, sleeping and eating alongside the men and women, and are tested every day. The ability to adjust to such a life is as much a test as any challenge of climbing or running. Most youths find themselves yearning for open air, idle chatter, and horses, and are sent back out. Those who accept and enjoy the quiet and the darkness officially apprentice to the Dern-deepers or the Fastweards, and begin to train in earnest. On occasion, a couple forms within one of these two groups (once it even formed between them, when a male Dern-deeper and a female Fastward married), and those couples may bear children. These offspring usually stay within the caves and join one of the two groups, for the darkness and quiet are familiar to them and comfortable. If the children grow restless and constricted, they are allowed to apprentice to a guard or craftsman beyond without restriction. The Dern-deepers and Fastweards understand all too well the harshness of forcing someone to a life they do not love, and refuse to consign their own children to such sad fates.



## CELEBRATIONS

Rarely do celebrations occur within the Deep, for it is a fortress, built for war rather than revelry. Nonetheless, the people therein are Rohirrim, given to an appreciation of life, and several times during the year they rejoice in the anniversary of great deeds, or the mark of a new season, or some other notable event. The major festival of the Deep is Helmwatch, which remembers the night Helm died and the morning he was found frozen, still standing and looking out over the Coomb. This is always a night of the full moon. The people of the Deep remain awake all night, drinking and dancing and singing and telling tales of Helm's valour, and in this way they still keep watch for their ancient king, and alert their enemies that the eyes of Helm's Deep are never closed against them.

The second major festival of the Deep is the Feast of Endorion, when that fateful battle at the mouth of the Glittering Caves is celebrated. The gates of Aglarond are thrust open, and everyone in the Deep marches in a single line into the caverns and then back out again. Drinks and food are offered on the Dike, at the Great Gates, in the outer court of the Hornburg, on the Deeping Wall, at the gates to the Glittering Caves, and in the centre of the first refugee cavern. The people

of the Deep make a complete circuit and drink and eat at each stop, toasting to Endorion and his brother for discovering this gap in the mountains, creating the entrance to the Glittering Caves, and building the Deeping Wall and Hornburg. The Feast of Endorion is held in early autumn, for scholars claim that was the time when the brothers and their followers faced that fateful ambush

grey of winter, and the first day that the sun reappears and the waters melt. Everyone drinks, eats, dances, and sings, showing respect to the sun and thanks for its warmth, as well as regret it will leave for winter or delight it has returned again.

After the War of the Ring, a fifth festival was added, the Long Night. On this night, the anniversary of the Battle of Helm's Deep, all the torches are put out, so all within the Deep is black as pitch. The men and women of Helm's Deep wind their way outside, into the Dike, and then turn to face the Deeping Wall, whence they begin to march towards it, calling for the king to come forth. Suddenly the Great Gates part, and forth from

the Hornburg pours a great host of men on horseback, and in their lead a mighty warrior on a white horse, bearing a golden shield and a long spear.

Thus does Théoden King ride once more, leading the Rohirrim against the army of Saruman.

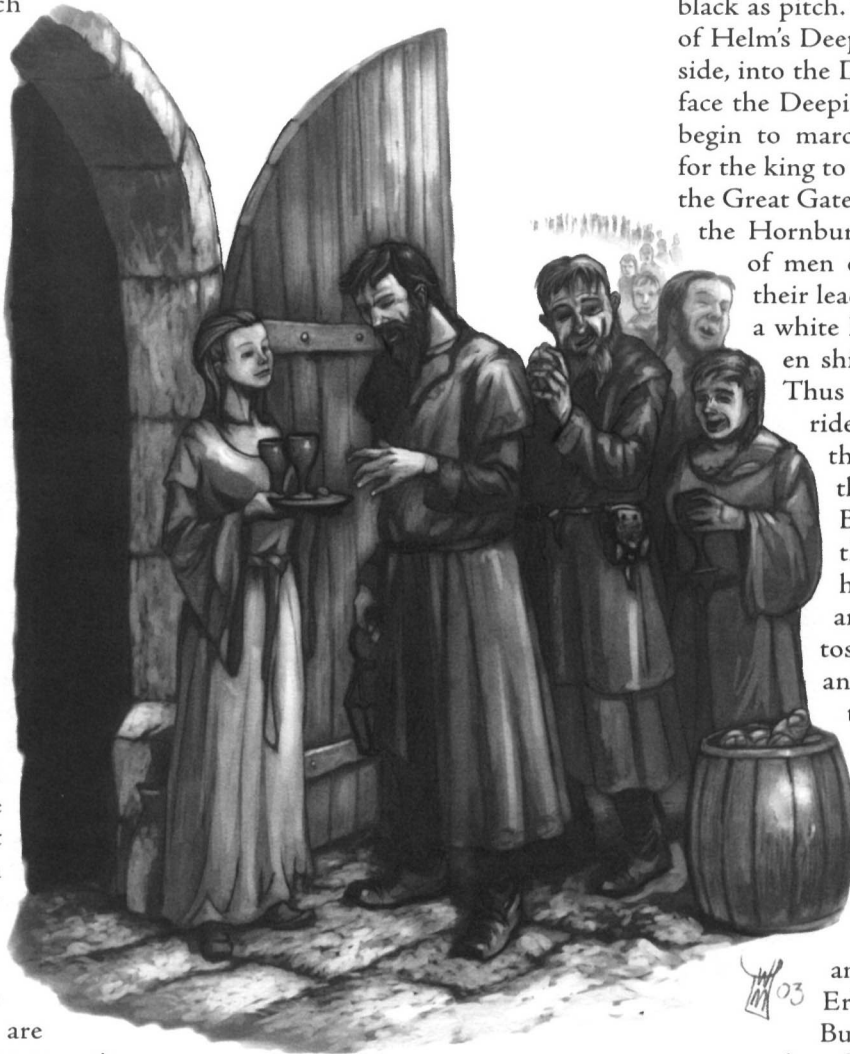
But the warriors carry their spears raised high, not levelled, and as they ride they toss candies and fruits and wineskins about them. Another troop

appears from the Deeping Coomb, marching down into the Dike.

They carry shields as well, and their leader a red shield

and a black horn, as did Erkenbrand himself.

But these Rohirrim bear great casks of wine, beer, and ale, and all those waiting dip their goblets and flagons. Finally a rider all in white, on a white horse, appears on the hills beyond, and salutes the assemblage before riding into their midst, tossing coins about him as he comes. This is the image of Gandalf, bringing good fortune in a time of



long ago.

Two other festivals are held within the Deep, one for the last day of autumn and the coming of winter and the other for the first day of spring. Both are known as Light Days, for these are the last day of clear sunlight before the cold and



TABLE 1.1: TROOP STATIONS

| LOCATION         | COMPLEMENT | BREAKDOWN                                |
|------------------|------------|------------------------------------------|
| Hornburg         | 250        | 100 guards, 150 Shields                  |
| Deeping Wall     | 625        | 600 guards, 25 Shields                   |
| Helm's Dike      | 1325       | 300 guards, 25 Shields, 1000 Westfoldmen |
| Glittering Caves | 20         | 20 Dern-deepers                          |
| Cliffs           | 20         | 20 Fastwards                             |

great need. Then the people cheer, feast, and drink to the memory of Théoden and his soldiers, and the night that dawn seemed so far away yet arrived to deliver victory against what seemed certain defeat.

## LEGENDS

Just as Helm's Deep has its own celebrations, so too does it have its own tales and legends. Many concern Helm Hammerhand, of course, and the great deeds of the Long Winter. People of the Westfold still believe Helm can be heard sounding his horn during the winter months, warning foes that he is preparing to stalk them like a wild beast.

Other stories speak of Endorion, both of the battle in which he died and of the hidden chamber within the caves where his body still rests. His twin Endoron is also a figure of legend, and many a mother has frightened her children into behaving with tales of the mysterious Man of Gondor who still roams the night centuries after his brother's death, searching for a soul he can trade so that Endorion might be returned to him.

Then there are the Helmingas, the warriors who died defending Helm's Deep and whose spirits are said to linger within the mountain walls. In some stories these are restless and malicious spirits who harm to the living. In others they are simply mischievous and play pranks on the unwary. In others still, the Helmingas tease their living kin, but turn their undying wrath upon any foe of Rohan

who dares breach the sanctity of the Deeping Wall.

Many tales are told of the Glittering Caves as well, and particularly of the Heart of the Stream. This is said to be a massive diamond, fully the size of a grown man's head, lying at the spot where the Deeping Stream first enters the caves. The Heart, so it is told, is wedged into the mountainside there, and if any were to remove it the Deeping Stream would become a mighty river, and its waters would sweep away those within the Glittering Caves and the Horn and shatter the Deeping Wall as if it were kindling before flooding across the Deeping Coomb and into the Mark itself.

## DENIZENS

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*'[T]hey are true-hearted, generous in thought and deed; bold but not cruel; wise but unlearned, writing no books but singing many songs.'*

— Aragorn, *The Two Towers*

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Helm's Deep is, first and foremost, a military structure, designed as a fortress and refuge for those who live within sight of its walls. For several generations the stronghold was largely unmanned, containing only those in the Hornburg and a handful of Rohirrim who patrolled the Deeping Wall, the Dike, the Horn, and the Caves. But Erkenbrand sensed that war would strike during his tenure as Master of Westfold, and began increasing the gar-

rison there. For the past five years it has been at full capacity.

The Hornburg's barracks house two hundred men, Erkenbrand's elite guard, known as Helm's Shields. The Fastwards, totalling a mere twenty men, and the Dern-deepers, another twenty, live within the Glittering Caves themselves. None of the other Rohirrim are comfortable living underground in that fashion. The remaining guardsmen live in the barracks in the Horn. Eight long bunk-houses stand there, each with one hundred-and-twenty-five beds.

When the Deep is under attack, the Rohirrim are assigned to different areas. The Dern-deepers remain within the caves, protecting them and their tunnels from an underground assault, while the Fastwards climb the cliffs to ensure that enemies cannot get above the keep. Most of Helm's Shields stay in the Hornburg, but twenty-five are dispatched to Helm's Dike and another twenty-five to the Deeping Wall. These act as subcommanders to those in charge of those two defences. The guards from the barracks divide into three groups, two larger and one smaller. The smaller group ascends the rear stairway to the Hornburg to help defend the keep itself. The second group climbs the stairs onto the Deeping Wall. The third group, a little more than half the guards, goes over the Wall and marches the two furlongs to the Dike to provide a first line of defence. This last group is joined by the Westfoldmen, who escort their families to the Deep and then deploy to the Dike while the women and children proceed down the Horn and into the caves. At full battle readiness, then, the guards are arrayed as shown on Table 1.1: Troop Stations.

Erkenbrand has considered building barracks on the Dike itself so the guards would be able to reach their posts there more quickly. But the Dike is easily overrun if it is not fully manned, and those there would be vulnerable during a sudden



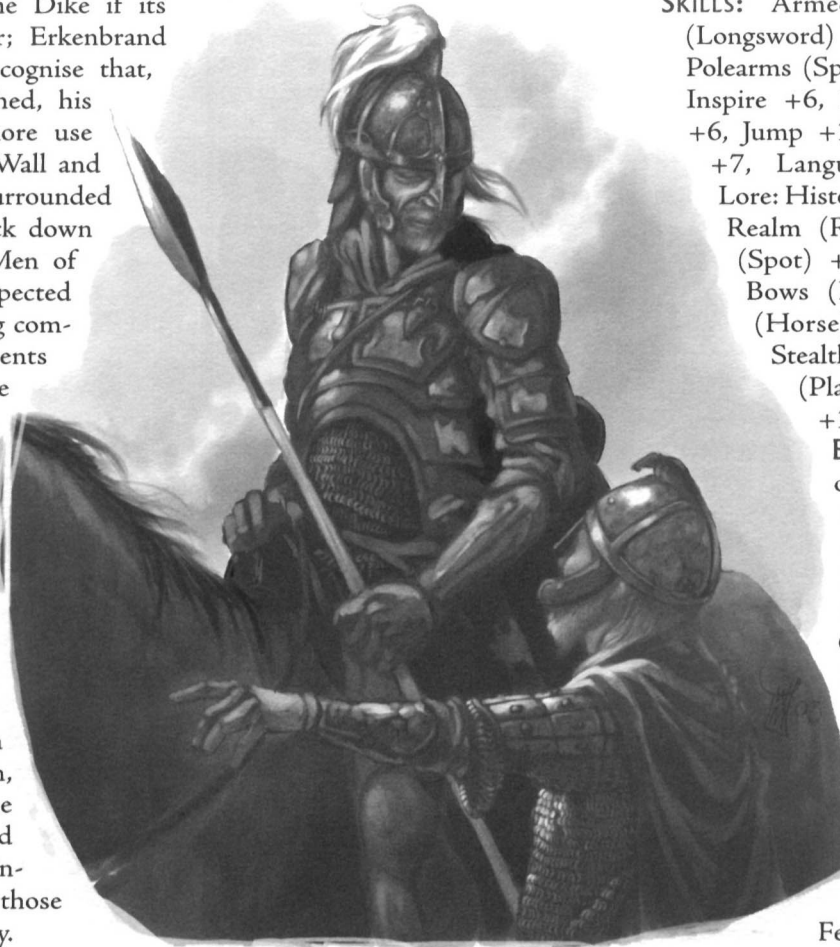
attack. Soldiers patrol the Dike at all times, but a stealthy enemy or a swift-marching one could still reach them before they are prepared (as happened at the Battle of Helm's Deep). The guards are drilled in responding to Helm's Horn, and can mobilise quickly. They can cover the distance between the Deeping Wall and the Dike in ten minutes, and be arrayed for battle in twenty. The guards are trained to give up the Dike if its defences fail, however; Erkenbrand is wise enough to recognise that, if the Dike is breached, his soldiers will serve more use back at the Deeping Wall and the Hornburg than surrounded at the Dike and struck down from all sides. The Men of the Hornburg are expected to remain there during combat, regardless of events elsewhere, just as the Dern-deepers and Fastweards will not leave the caves or the cliffs. This protects those two locations, where the people and their goods are likely to take refuge. The guards on the Deeping Wall, however, may shift between the Wall, the Horn, the Hornburg, the Glittering Caves, and even the Dike, if reinforcements in any of those areas become necessary.

## LEADERS

*'Amid them strode a man tall and strong.  
His shield was red . . . he set to his lips a  
great black horn and blew a ringing blast.'*

— *The Two Towers*

Erkenbrand is the undisputed Master of the Westfold Vale and Lord of Helm's Deep. He is wise, however, and knows he cannot maintain the stronghold on his own. Fortunately, his followers are loyal and true, and dependable men have risen to places of importance in the fortress and the surrounding area. Listed below are those who rank most highly in Helm's Deep.



## ERKENBRAND, MASTER OF WESTFOLD

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 10 (+2), Nimbleness 10 (+2)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 10 (+2)\*, Vitality 10 (+2), Wits 9 (+1)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +5\*, Swiftiness +4, Willpower +3, Wisdom +3

**HEALTH:** 12

**ORDERS:** Warrior, noble, knight

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Battle-hardened, Born to the Saddle, Deference, Domain (Westfold of Rohan), Evasion, Horse Archer, Horsemaster, Mounted Combat, Swift Strike

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 22

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +6, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +10, Climb +3, Inspire +6, Intimidate (Majesty) +6, Jump +3, Language: Rohiric +7, Language: Westron +5, Lore: History (Rohan) +6, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +6, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +9, Ride (Horse) +10, Run +3, Stealth (Sneak) +9, Survival (Plains) +5, Track (Men) +3

**EDGES:** Armour of Heroes, Bold, Command 3 (Soldiers of Helm's Deep), Fell-handed (+1 versus Orcs), Keen-eyed, Quick-draw, Rank 3 (Marshal of the Westfold), Valiant, Valour, Warrior's Heart, Warwise, Weapon Mastery (Longsword)

**FLAWS:** Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden

King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOWN:** 6

**GEAR:** Longsword, spear, chain mail, helm, shield, great horn, warhorse

Erkenbrand is a tall, powerfully built Man with a thick mane of dark blonde hair and a thick beard. He carries a red shield and a great black horn, and wields an axe when on foot but a long spear when mounted. Erkenbrand is a mighty warrior and



respected throughout Rohan and into Gondor—the Dunlendings fear him as well, and have avoided Helm's Deep since he became Master of Westfold. He is well-versed in strategy and tactics, and a wise commander, though like many Rohirrim he leads from the front rather than allowing others to defend him. Erkenbrand loves his people, and the Vale, and protects them as much as possible, but he also recognises that too soft a hand will make the people soft in turn—he is a fair ruler, and just, but too much the warrior to be truly gentle.

## GAMLING, COMMANDER OF THE DIKE

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 9 (+1), Nimbleness 7 (+0)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 7 (+0)\*, Vitality 7 (+0), Wits 9 (+1)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +0\*, Swiftiness +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +3

**HEALTH:** 7

**ORDER:** Warrior, knight

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Battle-hardened, Born to the Saddle, Evasion, Horsemaster, Mounted Combat, Swift Strike

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 10

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +4, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +8, Climb +1, Inspire +2, Intimidate (Power) +2, Jump +1, Language: Dunlendish +4, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +5, Lore: History (Rohan) +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +6, Ride (Horse) +9, Run +1, Stealth (Sneak) +5, Survival (Mountains) +5, Track (Men) +2

**EDGES:** Armour of Heroes, Bold, Keen-eyed, Quick-draw, Rank 1 (advisor to nobles of Rohan),

Valiant, Valour, Warrior's Heart, Warwise

**FLAWS:** Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOUN:** 3

**GEAR:** Longsword, spear, chain mail, helm, warhorse

Sometimes known as Gamling the Old, this sturdy Rohir has lived in and around Helm's Deep since the days of Draifend, father of Erkenbrand. Though hair and beard have long since shifted from red to grey, still Gamling's eyes and wits are sharp, and his sword arm strong. He commands the defences of the Dike, and can often be seen above its gates, his sharp eyes turned towards the Coomb and beyond. His duties are a matter of great import for Gamling, and he prides himself on keeping those under his command fit and alert. Often



he seems glum, but this is merely his habit of considering the worst possibilities so that he can ponder ways to overcome them should they befall.

## BREOTHAIN, COMMANDER OF HELM'S SHIELDS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 7 (+0), Nimbleness 8 (+1)\*, Perception 8 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)\*, Vitality 9 (+1), Wits 9 (+1)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +4\*, Swiftiness +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1

**HEALTH:** 10

**ORDERS:** Warrior

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Swift Strike

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 4

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +4, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +8, Climb +1, Insight +1, Inspire +2, Intimidate (Power) +4, Jump +6, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +3, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +2, Ride (Horse) +2, Run +2, Siegecraft +5, Survival (Mountains) +4, Unarmed Combat: Brawling +4

**EDGES:** Ambidextrous, Honour's Insight, Night-eyed

**FLAWS:** Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOUN:** 4

**GEAR:** Longsword, spear, longbow, chain mail, helm, small shield, horse

Tall and lean, with hair of pale blond but beard and brow of light red, Breothain commands Helm's Shields, the elite guard of Helm's Deep. To him falls the protection of Erkenbrand and his kin, and that of any guests also



in the Deep. Breothain handles the security of the Hornburg, and assigns all of Helm's Shields to their daily duties. Long have he and Erkenbrand been friends, and strong is the bond between them. Breothain trusts in his lord completely, and obeys his commands without question. When not fulfilling his duties, Breothain reveals a clever wit and a love of fine music. He is a great favourite among the ladies of the keep.

### CRÁWA, FIRST AMONG THE FASTWEARDS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 5 (+0), Nimbleness 10 (+2)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 9 (+1)\*, Wits 6 (+0)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +5, Swiftiness +2\*, Willpower +3, Wisdom +0

**HEALTH:** 10

**ORDERS:** Warrior

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Evasion, Favoured Weapon, Swift Strike

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 4

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +8, Climb +8, Inspire +1, Intimidate (Power) +3, Jump +8, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe (Spot) +5, Perform (Flute) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +6, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons (Rocks) +6, Ride (Horses) +1, Run +4, Siegecraft +5, Stealth +6, Survival (Mountains) +8, Track (Men) +4, Weather-sense +4

**EDGES:** Accurate, Keen-eyed, Master of Heights, Night-eyed, Tireless, Wakefulness

**FLAWS:** Constrained, Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**REOWN:** 1

**GEAR:** Short sword, daggers, longbow, leather armor, heavy cloak, fur-lined boots

Long-limbed and lean, Cráwa often startles others, for he will stand unmoving for hours on end. This skill is useful among the cliffs, where any motion may be noticed and any sudden movement could set the rocks above to cascading down upon him. For Cráwa commands the Fastwards, those Rohirrim trained in mountain combat. He and his followers scale the cliffs about the Deep every day, and often camp atop them at night, scanning the crags and peaks for signs of intruders. They hunt goats and other mountain creatures for meat, and ensure that no predators lurk there—human or otherwise. Constant exposure to wind and sun have bleached Cráwa's hair a pale blonde and given his skin the weathered tan of much-worn leather, yet his movements are sure and his green eyes still sharp. He dislikes containment, and chafes at bedding down within the Glittering Caves, though the presence of strong rock all around and the airiness of the caverns console him somewhat. Cráwa is most comfortable in the mountains, high above where the wind whips through his hair. He speaks rarely, as that same wind carries away words, and prefers gestures to convey messages to his followers. Cráwa is an accomplished flutist, however, and many a night guards can hear the faint melody of his flute carried down from the cliffs around them.

### THÉODWINE, HEAD OF THE DERN-DEEPERS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 5 (+0), Nimbleness 10 (+2)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 9 (+1)\*, Wits 6 (+0)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +5, Swiftiness +4\*, Willpower +3, Wisdom +0

**HEALTH:** 10

**ORDERS:** Warrior

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Evasion, Favoured Weapon, Swift Strike

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 4

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Dagger) +8, Climb +3, Inspire +1, Intimidate (Power) +3, Jump +8, Language: Dunlendish +3, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +5, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons (Rocks) +6, Run +8, Siegecraft +5, Stealth (Sneak) +8, Survival (Caves) +8

**EDGES:** Dodge, Fleetness 2, Night-eyed 2, Tireless

**FLAWS:** Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King), Light-blind

**COURAGE:** 5

**REOWN:** 1

**GEAR:** Daggers, leather armor, short bow

Shorter than most Rohirrim, and slight of build, Théodwine is nonetheless a mighty warrior, and deadly within his element—the Glittering Caves are his territory, and in them Théodwine is all but unmatched as an opponent. He commands the Dern-deepers, the elite group of Rohirrim who travel the underground passages within and around the Glittering Caves. Lack of sunlight has turned once-blond hair white as snow and skin equally pale, yet the eyes of Théodwine, dark blue and constantly searching, suggest his comparative youth. Théodwine is an oddity among Rohirrim in that he actively dislikes animals, and only barely tolerates the presence of other people—within his band he is comfortable, but among strangers he has great difficulty speaking. Because of this, most assume Théodwine to be humourless. His warriors know this to be false, however, for their commander delights in practical jokes, and is apt



to spring them upon his warriors at any time. His true loves, however, are running and the caverns, and many a time his own followers are startled by their leader's swift passage through a nearby cavern, as he races for no reason other than sheer enjoyment.

## WITULF, COUNSELLOR

RACE: Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable,  
Dominion of Man, Skilled

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +2, Swiftsness  
+1, Willpower +2, Wisdom +4\*

HEALTH: 8

ORDERS: Loremaster, noble

ORDER ABILITIES: Ancient Scripts,  
Deference, Domain, Expertise  
(Rohan)

ADVANCEMENTS: 5

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades  
(Longsword) +2, Debate  
(Negotiate) +4, Healing +2,  
Insight +4, Jump +2, Language:  
Rohiric +8, Language: Dunlendish  
+6, Language: Westron +7, Lore:  
Realm (Rohan) +9, Lore: Realm  
(Dunland) +5, Lore: Isengard +4,  
Lore: History (Rohan) +6, Observe  
(Spot) +5, Ranged Combat: Bows  
(Longbow) +2, Ride (Horse) +2,  
Siegecraft +3, Survival (Mountains)  
+2, Weather-sense +2

EDGES: Eloquent, Honour's Insight,  
Night-eyed, Rank (advisor to  
Erkenbrand), Wise

FLAWS: Duty (advise the Master of the  
Westfold), Fealty (to Erkenbrand,  
and to Théoden King)

COURAGE: 4

RENOUN: 3

GEAR: Longsword, leather armor,  
horse

Witulf is Erkenbrand's principal advisor, and handles many of the daily affairs of the Vale, including the finances. Unlike Gríma Wormtongue, Witulf speaks his counsel openly and

plainly, and presents his advice to Erkenbrand as suggestion only, rather than order or subtle insistence. Though only of moderate age, Witulf appears older for his thin face and the streaks of white which run through his red-brown hair. He despises indirect language, and often grows impatient with those who do not simply speak their mind at once. An exacting man, Witulf insists on proper service from the house staff, yet he is not cruel—merely demanding.

## ÉARDMER, HEIR TO THE VALE

RACE: Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable,  
Dominion of Man, Skilled

ATTRIBUTES: Bearing 6 (+0),  
Nimbleness 8 (+1)\*, Perception 6  
(+0), Strength 5 (+0), Vitality 6  
(+0), Wits 5 (+0)

REACTIONS: Stamina +2, Swiftsness  
+2\*, Willpower +0, Wisdom +0

HEALTH: 6

ORDERS: Noble

ORDER ABILITIES: Courtier

ADVANCEMENTS: 0





**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +2, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +1, Climb +2, Jump +4, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +6, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +5, Observe +2, Ranged Combat: Spears +2, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +2, Ride +3, Running +3, Siegecraft +1, Survival (Mountains) +2

**EDGES:** Curious, Honour's Insight, Night-eyed

**FLAWS:** Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 4

**RENOVN:** 2

**GEAR:** Longsword, spear, chain mail, helm, small shield, horse

Though merely a lad of ten, already Éardmer shows great promise. Quiet for his age, with a head of wild red hair and a small wiry frame, Erkenbrand's heir is always watching those around him, occasionally asking questions but often content to sit for hours and observe what occurs. He is friendly and well-liked, and willing to play games with the other youths in the Deeps. Yet Éardmer is as likely to be found in the keep, watching Witulf pore over old scrolls or scribe a record in his massive books.

## STYRNMÓD, MASTER OF THE CAVES

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)

**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled

**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 6 (+0), Nimbleness 9 (+1), Perception 9 (+1)\*, Strength 9 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1)\*, Wits 6 (+0)

**REACTIONS:** Stamina +3, Swiftmess +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +2\*

**HEALTH:** 9

**ORDERS:** Noble, warrior

**ORDER ABILITIES:** Deference, Domain (Glittering Caves), Warrior-born

**ADVANCEMENTS:** 5

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +5, Insight +4, Jump +4, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +2, Ride (Horse) +2, Run +1, Siegecraft +2, Survival (Mountains) +2, Unarmed Combat: Brawling +4

**EDGES:** Honour's Insight, Night-eyed, Rank (Master of the Glittering Caves)

**FLAWS:** Duty (safekeeping of the stores of Helm's Deep), Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOVN:** 2

**GEAR:** Longsword, longbow, chain mail, helm, small shield, horse

Though Erkenbrand is lord of Helm's Deep, and thus master of the Glittering Caves as well, he rarely ventures into those caverns. Instead, responsibility for that place falls to Styrnmód. At first sight the choice seems odd, for Styrnmód is tall and broad-shouldered, with a full beard red as flame and hair to match. Yet despite the fiery hair Styrnmód is a calm Man, rarely raised to anger or haste, and a great believer in careful records and proper organisation. His duties involve overseeing everything that takes place within the caves, but most sections are given to another to handle. Styrnmód's personal area is the stores, and so strong is his memory that he can recite an inventory of the goods there on a moment's notice. Styrnmód is also oddly comfortable within the caves, and enjoys the calm their thick walls afford him. It is said once he was a Dern-deeper himself, and certainly those warriors treat him with great respect, but if this is true it was long ago, for Styrnmód no longer ventures far from the storerooms or the front courtyard of the caves, except to meet with Erkenbrand or to discuss other matters with those within the Horn.





## GRINGULF, MASTER OF THE STREAMHOUSE

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)  
**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled  
**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 8 (+1)\*, Nimbleness 9 (+1), Perception 6 (+0), Strength 9 (+1)\*, Vitality 6 (+0), Wits 7 (+0)  
**REACTIONS:** Stamina +3\*, Swiftswess +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +1  
**HEALTH:** 7  
**ORDERS:** Warrior  
**ORDER ABILITIES:** Warrior-born  
**ADVANCEMENTS:** 3  
**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +6, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +3, Insight +2, Intimidate (Power) +3, Jump +4, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +4, Observe +4, Ranged Combat: Spears +3, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +2, Ride (Horses) +3, Swim +4, Unarmed Combat: Brawling +8, Weather-sense +2  
**EDGES:** Friends (Deeping Coomb), Honour's Insight, Night-eyed  
**FLAWS:** Fealty (to Erkenbrand, and to Théoden King)  
**COURAGE:** 5  
**RENOVN:** 3  
**GEAR:** Longsword, spear, chain mail, helm, small shield, horse

Gringulf is a senior guardsman, and holds responsibility for the Streamhouse. He and his men live there, and Gringulf serves as innkeeper for any travellers who stop in. He also provides provisions for any soldiers or messengers of the Mark, and keeps watch on the Deeping Road and the Deeping Stream beside it. Gringulf is a massive man with thick red-blond hair, and his strength is the source of many local tales. Because Gringulf is always present, and the clearing alongside the Streamhouse is the site of the Coomb Market, the Westfoldmen of the area know him well, and he is well-liked for his

open nature and his fairness. Local disputes are often taken to Gringulf rather than to Erkenbrand, and the Master of Westfold approves of this, for he values highly the honesty and justice of Gringulf, and knows the farmers in the Coomb are comfortable with him. For himself, Gringulf enjoys his job—though a mighty warrior, he prefers speaking with locals and strangers, gathering news, trading stories, and maintaining the peace.



## RANK AND FILE

*'Behind him, hastening down the long slopes, were a thousand men on foot: their swords were in their hands.'*  
*— The Two Towers*

## GUARDS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)  
**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled  
**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 9 (+1), Nimbleness 7 (+0)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 7 (+0)\*, Vitality 7 (+0), Wits 9 (+1)  
**REACTIONS:** Stamina +0\*, Swiftswess +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +3  
**HEALTH:** 7  
**ORDERS:** Warrior  
**ORDER ABILITIES:** Battle-hardened  
**ADVANCEMENTS:** 1

**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +4, Climb +1, Jump +1, Language: Dunlendish +1, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +3, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +3, Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +2, Ride (Horse) +3, Run +1, Stealth (Sneak) +2, Survival (Mountains) +3, Track (Men) +2  
**EDGES:** Honour's Insight, Night-eyed  
**FLAWS:** Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden King)  
**COURAGE:** 4  
**RENOVN:** 0  
**GEAR:** Spear, longbow, chain shirt, small shield, helm

These are the soldiers who man the Deep, and are by far the most numerous of the region's warriors. The guards' gear, as listed, is provided by the armoury. A great many also possess—and have ranks in the use of—longswords and battle axes, though these are the guards' personal possessions, and in many cases, are also heirlooms of their houses and families.

## HELM'S SHIELDS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)  
**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled  
**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 9 (+1), Nimbleness 7 (+0)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 7 (+0)\*, Vitality 7 (+0), Wits 9 (+1)  
**REACTIONS:** Stamina +0\*, Swiftswess +1, Willpower +1, Wisdom +3  
**HEALTH:** 7  
**ORDERS:** Warrior  
**ORDER ABILITIES:** Battle-hardened, Swift Strike  
**ADVANCEMENTS:** 3  
**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +8, Armed Combat: Polearms (Spear) +5, Climb +1, Language: Dunlendish +1, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +4, Lore: Realm (Rohan)



+4, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +3, Ride (Horse) +3, Run +2, Survival (Mountains) +2, Track (Men) +2  
**EDGES:** Bold, Keen-eyed, Night-eyed, Warwise  
**FLAWS:** Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden King)  
**COURAGE:** 5  
**RENOUN:** 2  
**GEAR:** Longsword or axe, spear or longbow, chain mail, small shield, helm, horse

Helm's Shields are the finest warriors in the Deep, hand-selected by Erkenbrand to protect the Master of Westfold and his kin, staff the Hornburg itself, and are accorded much honour and respect.

Helm's Shields are armed with swords and axes, daggers, and spears or bows—unlike standard guardsmen, these warriors often own their ranged weapons as well. Each is outfitted with full chainmail, small shield, and helm, and keeps these at the ready. Helm's Shields also own steeds, which are housed in the stables of the Hornburg for ready access.

## DERN-DEEPERS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)  
**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled  
**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 4 (+0), Nimbleness 9 (+1)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 7 (+0)\*, Vitality 9 (+1), Wits 5 (+0)  
**REACTIONS:** Stamina +2, Swiftiness +4\*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +0  
**HEALTH:** 9  
**ORDERS:** Warrior  
**ORDER ABILITIES:** Evasion  
**ADVANCEMENTS:** 3  
**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Dagger) +5, Climb +4, Jump +3, Language: Dunlendish +3, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +3, Observe (Spot) +6, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +2, Run



+5, Stealth (Sneak) +6, Survival (Caves) +6, Track (Men) +4  
**EDGES:** Fleetness, Night-Eyed 2, Tireless  
**FLAWS:** Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden King), Light-blind  
**COURAGE:** 4  
**RENOUN:** 0  
**GEAR:** Leather armour, leather helm, long dagger, shortbow

The small, pale Dern-deepers wear only leather armour. Chain is too cumbersome, and the clank of metal on stone would reveal their location to a foe. They prefer long daggers to swords, as the shorter blades are more effective in close quarters, and they carry shortbows as well. Each Dern-deeper carries a pouch with several days' dried rations, a waterskin, a shallow wooden bowl, and a smaller bag. Within the bag are lichen scraped from the walls of deep underground caves which give off a faint green-white light. For the Dern-deepers, this light (when the lichen are poured into the bowl) is enough for them to see by, even in the darkest cavern. They also wear boots with thick leather soles to muffle the sounds of their footsteps; those equipped with such gain a +1

bonus to Stealth tests while treading upon rock. Sounds carry a long way in the caves, and the Dern-deepers train themselves to move quickly and silently.

## FASTWEARDS

**RACE:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir)  
**RACIAL ABILITIES:** Adaptable, Dominion of Man, Skilled  
**ATTRIBUTES:** Bearing 4 (+0), Nimbleness 9 (+1)\*, Perception 9 (+1), Strength 8 (+1)\*, Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 5 (+0)  
**REACTIONS:** Stamina +4\*, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +2, Wisdom +0  
**HEALTH:** 9  
**ORDERS:** Warrior  
**ORDER ABILITIES:** Favoured Weapon (Longbow)  
**ADVANCEMENTS:** 3  
**SKILLS:** Armed Combat: Blades (Dagger) +3, Climb +6, Jump +8, Language: Dunlendish +2, Language: Rohiric +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore: Realm (Rohan) +3, Observe (Spot) +5, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +7, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +4, Run +3, Stealth (Sneak) +5, Siegecraft +3, Survival (Mountains) +6, Track (Men) +2



## HELM'S DEEP

**EDGES:** Accurate, Master of Heights, Night-eyed

**FLAWS:** Constrained, Duty (to safeguard Rohan), Fealty (to Théoden King)

**COURAGE:** 5

**RENOWN:** 0

**GEAR:** leather mail, leather helm, hooded cloak, fur-lined boots, daggers, longbow, sling

Fastwards wear leather mail for the same reasons as the Dern-deepers. They also bear thick hooded cloaks and fur-lined boots, as the wind atop the mountains can chill even on a summer day. For weapons they prefer long daggers at close quarters and longbows for distance. Fastwards are adept at rock-hurling, however, and have a plentiful supply of ammunition from atop the peaks. Some carry slings, and those who do are frequently as skilled as Hobbits in their use.

### WESTFOLDMEN

**WESTFOLDMEN:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir), Craftsman (Farmer): 1, Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword or Axe) +2, Craft (Farming) +4, Observe (Spot) +2, Ranged Combat: Bow (Longbow) or Ranged Combat: Spears +1, Ride (Horse) +2, Teamster +2.

These are the common folk of the Coomb, and all are trained to ride and to wield sword, spear, and bow, so that they may defend themselves. If the Westfold Vale falls under attack, the people of the Deeping Coomb retreat to Helm's Deep, and the men are pressed into service to assist the guards already stationed there. Most have at least some training in weapons, and all can ride, but they are not proper soldiers and will only fight when their own family and property are threatened. Many of these folk own axes or swords, usually handed down from a forefather, but few have mail or even shields. Bows are common, and are used for hunting.

### WESTFOLD WOMEN

**WESTFOLD WOMEN:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir), Craftsman (Farmer): 1, Armed Combat: Blades +1, Craft (Farming) +4, Observe (Spot) +3, Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +2, Ride (Horse) +1, Teamster +2.

Though the women of Rohan are taught to ride and even to fight, they are rarely expected to demonstrate martial skills. The women of the Coomb are capable of managing a farm on their own, and of handling their children (and, often, their husbands), but they have no experience with battle and will not fight unless their own family is threatened. They carry small knives for household use, and are adept with them, but have no other weaponry beyond iron skillet or stone rolling pin.

### NON-COMBATANTS

In times of war, the Deep may have many more than its guards present, for the people of the Coomb and even further throughout the Westfold Vale retreat there for protection. Normally, the only non-combatants within the Deep are the servants and any children, but during an attack that number is vastly multiplied.

**WESTFOLD ELDERS:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir), Craftsman (Farmer): 2, Armed Combat: Blades +1, Craft (Farming) +4, Observe (Spot) +4, Ride (Horse) +1, Teamster +3.

These are the elders of the Coomb, men who have lived in this place their entire lives and who, though still strong enough to manage a farm (usually with the help of sons and other kin), can no longer effectively wield a sword or a bow. Most carry a knife or dagger for personal use, but have long since surrendered sword and axe to those younger than they. They may carry canes or staves, however, and these can be swung with deadly force.

**WESTFOLD CHILDREN:** Man (Middle Man: Rohir), Craftsman (Farmer): 0, Craft (Farming) +2,

Ranged Combat: Thrown Weapons +1, Ride (Horse) +1.

The children of the Coomb are raised as farmers, not as warriors. Any who show skill at arms are sent to the Deep for further training, but most learn only what is necessary from their own parents. These children are strong, sturdy lads and lasses, but have no fighting experience beyond rough play together, and cannot be counted on in an armed battle. Many of the children have knives, or slings, and they are often skilled at hurling rocks or even firing small bows.

## ADVENTURE AT HELM'S DEEP

*'Maybe we shall cleave a road, or make such an end as will be worth a song—if*

*any be left to sing of us hereafter.'*

— Théoden King, *The Two Towers*

Helm's Deep is a fascinating place, and rife with adventuring possibilities. Here stands a mighty fortress, renowned throughout the land, and behind it lies a system of caves no man has fully explored. From its origins to its battles to its naming, Helm's Deep has stood as a place where powerful legends are forged, and the eyes of friend and foe alike turn there frequently.

### ADVENTURE SEEDS

Below are a few possibilities for tales of your own, which could add to the story of Helm's Deep and to the fame and fortune of those involved.

**THE LOST HORN:** Helm's Horn has vanished! It's the tool used to announce crises in the Deep, but more than that, it is a symbol of one of the greatest Rohiric warriors and a treasured possession. The Horn was



kept at the very peak of the Hornburg, the most secure spot in all the Deep. And now it's gone. Who could have taken it, and where? For an enemy to hold Helm's Horn is a massive blow to Rohirric pride, and could easily demoralise their forces. The culprits must be found, and dealt with, quickly!

**ROCKSLIDE:** The southern cliff is showering Helm's Deep with bits of rock. Those cliffs have stood for centuries, but it's possible that they've worn down over time and are finally beginning to crumble. If the face collapses it could crush all of the Deep beneath its weight. And what if the sudden shower is not natural? If enemies have managed to climb to the top of the cliff, they could attack the Deep with arrows, darts, and worse. The player characters are dispatched to investigate the situation, deal with the problem, and report back.

**FLOTSAM:** A small craft has bobbed up on the Deeping Stream. It's a tiny boat, empty, barely large enough for a Man, and cunningly constructed—its material is a pale stone of some sort, one not familiar to the Rohirrim. Who could have built this boat, and where did it begin its journey?

**CAVEDWELLERS:** The people of Helm's Deep have reported strange sightings from within the Glittering Caves. They've seen figures, similar to Men but paler and more hunched, darting through the deeper caverns. It isn't the Dern-deepers, for they've seen these strangers as well. Could they be descendants of Rohirrim who were lost in the caverns long ago? Or Orcs that somehow found their way into the cliffs? Whatever these creatures are, they've begun stealing food. They have to be caught and dealt with before they get bolder—and start stealing children.

**REPAIRS:** Helm's Deep was heavily damaged during the war, and the gate completely demolished. Now it's time to rebuild. But that gate was ancient work, and not easy to replace. Erkenbrand wants a new

gate, preferably Dwarf-wrought, one that cannot be breached. But first the Dwarves have to be found—Gimli Elf-friend swore he would return to the Glittering Caves, but he has not done so yet, and so some of his kin must be located instead. And once they have been found, the Dwarves must be convinced to accept the commission, and then a bargain must be struck.

**SNOWBOUND:** Winter has come to the Mark, hard and fast and fiercer than any there remember. Snow has fallen for ten days and nights without pause, and the Deep has been sealed in by a ring of ice and snow. The people of the Deep have a great many stores hidden in their caves, and can handle a siege, but now they are besieged by Nature herself! And if the snow and ice do not melt, at some point the food will run out. The Rohirrim need to find a way through winter's blockades, to make sure the people of the Vale are all right and to make sure they themselves can leave if necessary.

**FIRESTORM:** The Orcs and the Dunlendings have been raining burning pitch down onto Helm's Deep for a week, and the people have finally been forced to retreat into the caves. Now, while the rest of the Deep burns, they're trapped within the glittering caverns. How long can the Rohirrim survive without sunlight and open air? Will the Orcs and Dunlendings descend the cliffs and harry them in the caves, forcing them further into the deeps? And what else lies within those hollows?

**TREASURE TROVE:** Rumours have begun in the cities, claiming Helm's Deep holds a vast treasure within its







caverns. These are lies, of course, unless you count treasure by water, food, and families, but the rest of the world believes the stories. Fortune hunters have begun arriving at the Deep, as have brigands and con artists—every sort of lowlife who believes riches should be found or won rather than earned is on the way. Erkenbrand can deal with armies, but he's an honest, direct man, and does not understand these swindlers and opportunists. Someone has to handle them before Helm's Deep is ruined!

**THE HEART OF THE STREAM:** Every child in the Deeps has heard the tales of the Heart of the Stream, the diamond as big as a man's head that dams the Deeping Stream where it first enters the Glittering Caves. Now rumours have begun, saying the

Heart has been found! The stone, if real, would be worth a small kingdom. But removing it could transform the Deeping Stream from a fast-flowing stream into a mighty river, and could destroy everything within Helm's Deep! If the Heart is real, it has to be protected, for the good of the Vale!

**ENDORION:** A Man of Westfold, who had lain within the caves while sick from fever, awoke and wandered deeper into the caves while his caretakers were busy elsewhere. Days later he was found again, still feverish and now weak from lack of food. His ravings spoke of a cavern deep within the cave system, that glowed as if from its own light, and of the Man who lay there. A mighty warrior, with a massive axe across his chest and many wounds about his body—the weapons and

armour were ornate, and constructed in the fashion of Men of long ago, yet the form lay untouched by time. The feverish man died shortly thereafter, yet his story lives on. Some believe this form could be that of Endorion, the Gondorian warrior who created the entrance to the Glittering Caves and in whose honour the Hornburg was built. If so, he is a creature of legend, and his axe Orodrist a mighty weapon—it was said the axe bore potent enchantments and could carve stone and metal as easily as flesh. But who will dare to search for this famous hero? And what sorcery has kept him preserved over these long centuries?

## CHRONICLES

The history of Helm's Deep is as old as the kingdom of Gondor itself, and many a long tale has been spun from its rocky crevice. But the fortress' time is far from over, and its place in epics is undimmed. Great events may still take place around the mountain keep, and those involved will be immortalised in song and tale long after their own flesh has passed. Herein lie several ways in which those tales might begin, possibilities for sweeping stories that will last many nights in their occurrence and many decades in their retelling. Unlike the tales mentioned above, these are no mere chapters, but stories on a grander scale, many of which will take months or even years to unfold and which may contain a collection of shorter adventures within their framework. These epics may even be woven between other tales, their events and concerns resurfacing from time to time until finally the matter is resolved fully.

## CAPTURED HELM

The wild hillmen of Dunland, with the aid of Orcs, have taken Helm's



## ORODRIST, THE AXE OF ENDORION

According to legend, Endorion cleaved the rock of the Thrihyrne with this weapon to protect his brother and followers from a barbarian horde that pursued them (see page 10). In doing so, and in defending the entrance of that cave so that his brother might live, Endorion imbued his mighty axe with legendary powers (as described on page 90 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*) that give its wielder a +3 bonus to Inspire and Intimidate tests when the subjects of the test recognise the weapon.

This is not the only capability awakened in the axe that day, however, for in creating a mighty cleft in the mountain, Orodrist also gained the ability to hew through solid barriers. Any time its wielder spends a Courage point and strikes stone, the blow causes damage equal to that done by a large battering ram: 2d6 points of structural damage against gates and 1d6–1 points of structural damage to walls and similar structures.

In appearance, Orodrist is of deceptively simple make. It has a smooth wooden handle and blades completely unadorned. Even so, and no matter what it might cleave, its sharpness never dulls. Orodrist's combat statistics are similar to those of other battle axes.

Orodrist's location in the late Third Age is unknown, but were it found, it would prove not only a mighty weapon but an heirloom of incalculable worth.

Deep! They feinted a massed attack on the Westfold Vale and waited until the Rohirrim charged out to defend it, then dropped down on the Deep from above on lines thrown over the cliff edges. The Fastwards attempted to stop them, of course, but the Dunlendings brought down a rockslide which cut off many of the warriors; the rest were overwhelmed through sheer numbers. The Dunlendings made quick work of the handful of remaining defenders, and Erkenbrand found himself stranded outside his own fortress! Now the Rohirrim need to reclaim Helm's Deep before another enemy approaches and crushes them against its walls!

The Hornburg is too strong for a direct attack, of course. But the Rohirrim know the Deep better than anyone. There are caves on the outer mountains that lead to caverns within, and narrow passages through the cliffs themselves. Still, the current occupants are strong,

and entrenched. Plans need to be made carefully, and every action considered before anything is done. But the Rohirrim cannot wait too long—some of their people may yet be trapped inside!

## THE DWARVES OF AGLAROND

The Dwarves have come! Gimli son of Glóin mentioned the Glittering Caves to some of his kin, and they've come to claim possession of them. Théoden and Éomer granted their permission, and so the Dwarves have set up camp inside the caves and are working to transform them into a glittering underground city.

At first Erkenbrand is pleased to have such solid neighbours, but as the Dwarves settle in he's not so sure. A small faction amongst the Dwarves nurse their old grudge over the hoard of Scatha the Worm, which was claimed by the Fram, the ancient

king of the Éothéod, and denied to the Dwarves. Some Rohirrim claim that it is not fitting Dwarves should dwell within the Horn.

The Dwarves become more possessive every day, insisting that the Rohirrim move out of the caves so they can work. How will Erkenbrand deal with these stubborn neighbours without angering them and starting a war behind his own walls?

## HAMMERHAND REBORN

A Man has emerged from the Westmarch to the south of the Vale. Tall and broadly built, he has a mane of red hair and massive hands that can shatter rock with a single blow. The people are referring to him as Hammerhand reborn, and he has not denied it. Could this be the ancient hero, somehow returned? But what would that mean?

Hammerhand is making his way to Helm's Deep, and people are flocking to his banner as he goes. By the time he reaches the mountain stronghold, he will have an army of thousands at his back. For the first time, the Dunlendings and the Rohirrim are united—at least some of them are. But the man himself is a barbarian. How could he be Helm renewed?

More troubling is his recent claim Helm's Deep is his by right, and he means to reclaim it. Can Erkenbrand stand against an army, half of whom are his own people? Does he have the right to bar the gates against Helm returned? And if he allows Hammerhand to take control, or loses to his forces, what will that mean for the Rohirrim? Their greatest stronghold will belong to the Dunlendings. Will Hammerhand forge peace between the two peoples, or will he use the Deep to wage war against the Rohirrim around him?



# BATTLE AND WAR

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*"I see a great smoke," said Legolas.*

*"What may that be?"*

*"Battle and war!" said Gandalf.*

*"Ride on!"*

*— The Two Towers*

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**T**he *Lord of the Rings* contains the two greatest battles ever envisioned in fantasy literature: the Battle of Helm's Deep from *The Two Towers* and the Battle of the Pelennor Fields in *The Return of the King*. Both are spectacular examples of war waged on a truly epic scale.



This chapter provides all the tools you need to introduce similar epic battles into your game. The first two sections, 'The Role of War' and 'Parameters of Battle' contain advice for Narrators about how battle between armies shapes the world of Middle-earth and how such clashes can be brought into the chronicle. The sections that follow explain the characteristics of armies and present two options—one abstract, the other tactical—for resolving battles.

The rules provided in this chapter replace the rules for unit combat on pages 239–41 of the core rulebook by expanding the

detail and options available many times over. The core rulebook's basic combat rules (pages 238–9), however, remain an excellent way Narrators can adjudicate a battle very quickly—much more quickly than can be done even with the abstract system presented here. Note, finally, not all battles require rules to resolve. If the heroes aren't there or can't affect the outcome of the battle, you don't need to do any of the work described in this chapter. Simply decide which side will be triumphant and inform the heroes as they perceive the results.







## THE ROLE OF WAR

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*'So began . . . the Battle of Five Armies . . . Upon one side were the Goblins and the wild Wolves, and upon the other were Elves and Men and Dwarves.'*  
— *The Hobbit*

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As Narrator, you must decide what role, if any, war will play in your chronicle. Luckily, finding a place for battle in your storyline need not involve charting the strengths and motivations of entire nations. The following sections examine the three major battles in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Each represents a different way battle might come into play. When planning battle-related chapters in your chronicle, simply consider which of the following 'templates' most closely fits your aims, and begin!

### THE BATTLE OF FIVE ARMIES

The Battle of Five Armies is an example of a conflict that arises around heroes of relatively humble origins, yet expands in scope until it becomes an exciting, dramatic battle in which the heroes themselves play a critical role. Because it is a self-contained conflict (not part of a larger political situation) and because it is prompted by the unwitting actions of relatively unimportant characters (as opposed to mighty heroes or the rulers of nations), constructing a battle like the Battle of Five Armies requires relatively little preparation on the Narrator's part. Any chronicle centring on a group of heroes—none of whom need be kings or possessed of ancient and mighty legacies—can

easily include a conflict like the Battle of Five Armies.

The first task in creating an event like the Battle of Five Armies is assembling the actors on the stage of battle. By the time Thorin & Company arrived at the Lonely Mountain, all the necessary ingredients for the Battle of Five Armies had been introduced, though not in such a way that it was clear to anyone involved—or, indeed, the reader—that a battle was imminent. Bilbo and the Dwarves had met Elrond, Beorn, the Great Goblin, Thranduil, the Great Eagles, and the Men of Esgaroth. With the exception of Elrond, each of these characters played a part in the final battle.

The same principle applies in your chronicle. As the heroes wind their way from chapter to chapter, each person or creature they meet is a potential enemy or ally in war. One of the most exciting aspects of the Battle of Five Armies is it was not clear that, over the course of their journey, the heroes were establishing relationships with future enemies and allies. If it's not clear to your players either, they'll be all the more surprised—and pleased—when these NPCs show up with their armies at the final battle.

It's not enough for the heroes to meet many different characters in their adventures. The characters they meet must be important. Instead of meeting a group of mundane Elves in Mirkwood, Thorin & Company were taken to see Thranduil. Instead of being captured by a company of Goblins, the heroes were captured by a whole tribe of Goblins with their own underground city. Instead of meeting a simple woodsman, the heroes met Beorn, a single man capable of fighting entire units of soldiers. By introducing NPCs who can affect battles—either with their own physical prowess (like Beorn) or the troops at their command (like Thranduil and the Eagles)—you set the stage for epic conflicts down the road.

The final key in constructing a scenario like the Battle of Five Armies is

inventing a reason for the individuals and groups introduced earlier to come together and fight. In *The Hobbit* this was done with a 'bait-and-switch' technique. Throughout the story, it seems as though the final conflict will be between Thorin & Company and the dragon Smaug. Once Smaug was dead, however, a larger problem presented itself. Many different factions in the area around Mirkwood were interested either in taking revenge upon the Dwarves (like the Goblins) or in exacting their share of the dragon's hoard (like the Men of Esgaroth and Thranduil). Even greater conflict arose—in which the heroes were centrally involved.

In your chronicle, consider the consequences that will arise when the heroes achieve the goals you've set for them. For example, stopping the machinations of the Shadow might lead to changes in the political landscape. Opportunistic NPCs may arrive with armies to fill the void left by the defeat of the chronicle's nemesis. Others may want to congratulate the heroes and lend their forces to the defeat of the opportunists.

Whatever the consequences of the heroes' success, they should take place suddenly, just as the players are congratulating themselves on a job well done. With so much conflict arising out of something they've accomplished, the players will feel their achievements have been that much more far-reaching, and their satisfaction will increase—as long as their allies win the final battle.

### THE BATTLE OF HELM'S DEEP

The Battle of Helm's Deep is a battle with great political significance for one nation of Free Peoples—Rohan—but relatively few immediate ramifications outside it. Battles of this type are appropriate to your chronicle if you



drastically affect the destiny of a single people, but not all of Middle-earth.

In many ways, the set-up for a battle like the Battle of Helm's Deep is simpler than the set-up for one like the Battle of Five Armies because at the Battle of Helm's Deep, the simmering political conflict between Isengard and the Rohirrim existed before the heroes arrived on the scene. As the Three Walkers journeyed across the plains of Rohan, they had no notion they were about to be caught in a war between Saruman and Théoden. They were simply looking for their abducted friends.

Ideally, the nature of the simmering struggle in which the heroes are not involved is one where some action the heroes do take can loose the flood-gates and set the stage for war. The situation in *The Two Towers* is just like this: the heroes' arrival at Edoras—and their almost obligatory heroic deed of freeing Théoden from Saruman's influence—allowing the great king to engage Saruman in battle. Because the heroes were then allied with the Rohirrim, they took part in the battle as well.

With a little work, you can achieve the same effect. Perhaps, for example, the characters in your chronicle are travelling in the North, seeking out a great treasure of an earlier age.

They have heard tales of one of the Dwarf-houses in an area where they must go, and these rumours make the Dwarves seem fell and dour, possibly allied with the Enemy, probably too concerned with their own demesne to ever aid the heroes. The heroes meet the Dwarves, and, after some misunderstandings, come to recognise the rumours were false and the Dwarves are valiant. At this point, they discover the Dwarves are sorely pressed and on the brink of war with an Orc-captain whose followers are descended from the armies of Angmar of Old. Now the PCs are embroiled within a fairly sophisticated political situation, which likely lead to battle. Though this example has many similarities to the relationship between Théoden and Saruman, your story may evolve differently, if, for example, once the heroes are present, the Dwarves are stirred to act, and assault the fortresses of Angmar rather than waiting for the enemy to come to them.

### THE BATTLE OF THE PELENNOR FIELDS

On the great plain that covered the field before Minas Tirith, the armies of Gondor and Mordor clashed. The great gates of Minas Tirith seemed

impregnable until the Orcs fielded Grond, the great battering ram named for the mace of Morgoth. The Men of Gondor despaired at the fall of their gates, until the sound of horns blowing through the Mindolluin valley signalled the arrival of reinforcements: the Men of Rohan. Sauron's captain, the Witch-king of Angmar, Lord of the Nazgûl, seemed invincible, until struck down by the shield-maiden Éowyn. The Corsairs of Umbar seemed to herald the end of the battle for the Free Peoples of Middle-earth, until Aragorn revealed his standard, and the Free Peoples knew the Corsairs had been defeated. It is an epic battle unequalled in fantasy literature.

For characters such as Merry, Pippin, Legolas, and Gimli, the difference between the Battle of the Pelennor Fields and the Battle of Helm's Deep was only one of scale. In both battles, they were valiant heroes who enlisted with Gondor and Rohan because it was the right thing to do. For characters such as Aragorn, Faramir, and Gandalf, however, the Battle of the Pelennor Fields was the resolution of their lives' struggles and the end to a conflict older than the Third Age. Unlike the Battle of Helm's Deep, their aims and fate were



intimately intertwined with the origins and resolution of the battle. Instead of aiding the leaders of nations, as they did in Rohan, the heroes of the battle were themselves those very leaders.

Your players' characters can be involved in such a pivotal battle without much more work on your part than that involved in a conflict like Helm's Deep. The only real difference is you must lay the groundwork when you construct your chronicle and begin by inventing some conflict between two peoples in your chronicle. It need not be world-altering as the War of the Ring was. It need only be central to the lives of the heroes and the history of their people. Consider the above example of the Dwarves of the Misty Mountains. While the conflict there is only of transitory importance to player characters who are otherwise looking for an ancient treasure, it would be of critical importance if one or more of the PCs were leaders among the Dwarves. By placing PCs in the heart of the conflict as members of one of the battling factions, you escalate the importance of the battle for the players.

It's not enough, however, to take a player character's background and invent an ancient conflict for his peo-

ple. The end of that conflict must also be in sight, though it may not seem so at the beginning of the chronicle. Some event or series of events must push the conflict toward resolution. Ideally, this resolution will be the result of the heroes' actions.

An easy way to give the players the opportunity to end an age-old conflict is to evolve your chronicle through three stages. First, bring the characters together. This can be an adventure or series of adventures on its own. By the time the Company of the Ring was formed at Rivendell, for example, all had been through many adventures individually. Second, the act of bringing the characters together must somehow enable the characters to achieve something they could not have done separately. The Fellowship could, once assembled, get the Ring to Mount Doom, something Frodo could not have accomplished on his own. Finally, the accomplishment of this quest must enable the heroes' allies to fight their ancient enemy. This, obviously, is the portion of the chronicle that involves the epic battle you've been waiting to introduce.

As you can see, it's best when attempting a conflict of this scope to have the basic outline of the chronicle

prepared before you start. Remember you have control over these elements and are free to invent any past conflict you wish between the peoples of Middle-earth.

## PARAMETERS OF BATTLE

*"And I won't take that from you, Bill Huggins," says Bert, and puts his fist in William's eye.*

*'Then there was a gorgeous row.'*

— *The Hobbit*

Great battles have many complex elements. The following sections address the roles of Narrators and players in battle, the ingredients of battle, and a number of other considerations you should address when planning epic conflict in your chronicle.

## THE NARRATOR'S ROLE

As Narrator, you have many responsibilities related to the battle. The first is to keep narrative control over the conflict, to make sure it serves the story of the chronicle. The second is to choose the rules, scale, location, and troops that will be involved. The last is to make the mechanics behind the conflict—the rules described later in this chapter—come alive in the story. The following sections tell you how to do these things.

## NARRATIVE CONTROL

Narrative control over the battle begins when you decide, privately, which side of the conflict you believe should carry the day. The nature of your chronicle may require a dramatic defeat or two on the heroes' side before they finally win out at the last





battle. You might also decide that the nearly inevitable outcome is not at all apparent. The Battle of Helm's Deep, for instance, appeared as though it would be a decisive victory for the forces of Saruman. His Orcs vastly outnumbered King Théoden's forces. You may want to impress the heroes with how hopeless everything seems while privately believing they will win.

Sometimes, however, the most satisfying result is the one no one could have predicted. In these cases, you may want to set up the battle without favouring one side and let the dice fall where they may. This can lead to unexpected twists of fate, entertaining turns of story, and satisfying resolution for the players, who are likely to feel things turned out as they ought to have, no matter which side carried the day. Obviously, it is easier for you to deal with either outcome if you've thought about what happens if the good guys win *and* what happens if they lose.

If you decide in advance that one side should win the battle—or at least, have an overwhelming chance of success—you can affect the outcome of the battle by stacking the deck for or against the heroes. You can do this in many ways. You can give one side a bigger army, or a better trained army, or troops with special abilities in tune with the terrain upon which the battle will take place. You could allow reinforcements to arrive at an unexpected point. You can also include turns of story not related to the troops at all. The course of the Battle of Helm's Deep might have gone much differently if the Orcs had not had access to Saruman's Fire of Orthanc, for example. Any of these techniques allow you to control the outcome of the battle before it even begins.

## SYSTEM

As has been mentioned, two different systems of battle are described later in the chapter. You must choose

which one you will use in any given conflict. The abstract rules are the simplest and do not require a map or the tracking of troop movements. You simply total up the forces on each side, execute manoeuvres, and roll to determine casualties. This can simulate days of constant battle in relatively little game time and effectively answers basic questions about the battle such as who won, what happened to the heroes, and how the armies were affected.

If you are looking for a system with more opportunities for decision-making, however, the tactical rules describe a system for mapping the battlefield and keeping track of where units are. This is more satisfying for players who want to feel as though the battle is its own 'game within the game.'

## SCALE

Once you know which system you will use, you must determine at what *scale* the battle will occur. Scale simply describes the overall magnitude of the conflict. Is it a small skirmish, or a massive campaign? Table 2.1: Scale of Conflict lists the three scales at which battle can take place, the number of soldiers that compose each unit at those scales, and a suggested range of Effective Values—subject to your narrative judgement, as discussed above—for each army in the conflict.

For a battle of average rules complexity, choose a scale where each side in the conflict will have between 10 and 100 units at its command. For example, if you know that 3,000 Dwarves will battle 8,000 Orcs, you'd choose the Battle scale, because that would result in 30 units of Dwarves versus 80 units of Orcs. You can, if you like, make the conflict faster (easier to resolve mechanically) or slower (but more detailed and perhaps more satisfying) by choosing a scale one higher or lower than what would normally be suggested. For example, 3,000 Dwarves and 8,000 Orcs could

## FUDGING THE DICE

Fudging die rolls—secretly ignoring the result of the dice in favour of another result you'd prefer—is an acceptable tool you (the Narrator) can use to affect the outcome of a battle if you feel the story calls for something other than what is happening. If done obviously, however, this can leave the players feeling cheated, as though they did not actually win the day. If you're using the battle rules presented here, you're implicitly stating that the battle itself is a game to be won or lost. The players will want to win and if they feel as though you are simply deciding the outcome and ignoring the rolls, they'll be unsatisfied.

The players are only likely to feel this way if they roll very badly, yet keep winning. To prevent this, you can provide the heroes not only with their own troops, but allies as well. While the heroes control and roll the dice for their own armies—which may be extensive—you control both the enemy forces and the heroes' allies. When things are done this way, if the players roll badly, over and over, you can fudge the die rolls in favour of their allies. Players who are rolling badly are more likely to believe their allies are doing well than believe the enemy is doing really, really badly.

fight one another in a short period of game time at the Epic Battle scale (where it would be three units versus eight units), or could fight a conflict



that might take the better part of a gaming session to resolve—but with more options for the players—at the Skirmish level (where it would be 300 units versus 800 units).

As a useful point of reference when thinking about army sizes, recall the number of troops present at some of the example battles described at the beginning of this chapter. At the Battle of Helm's Deep, for example, Théoden arrived from Edoras with 1,000 Rohiric Heavy Cavalry. There, Gamling had been defending the ancient fastness with 1,000 Rohiric Light Infantry. The Battle of the Pelennor Fields, the largest battle of any kind in the Third Age of Middle-earth, pitted roughly 12,000 Free People against hosts of Sauron numbering at least 45,000.

## THE FIELD OF BATTLE

Choosing the location where the battle will take place is more than simply picking a spot in Middle-earth. Armies can't meet and fight just anywhere; they must have large open areas

in which to engage each other. It's your responsibility to provide such a place, by ensuring that when the events in your chronicle come to a head, they do so in an area conducive to war.

You'll notice that in each location Tolkien placed a battle, there was a large plain near the objective. The Lonely Mountain had Smaug's treasure inside, and there was a large field outside of which the Battle of Five Armies could be fought. Helm's Deep is cut into a mountainside, next to which the Deeping Coomb is large enough to hold thousands of Urukhai. Minas Tirith is built into the side of a mountain, at the foot of which are the fields of the Pelennor, perfect for fighting the last battle of the War of the Ring. You must carefully ensure when your battle takes place, it does so in a suitable locale.

The location you choose for the fight also has a concrete effect on the likelihood a given side will prevail. Fortifications, native soil, and other features of terrain all give an advantage to one side or the other. The Battle of Helm's Deep would not have

lasted long at all had it been joined on the plains of Rohan rather than at Rohan's mightiest stronghold.

## THE COMBATANTS

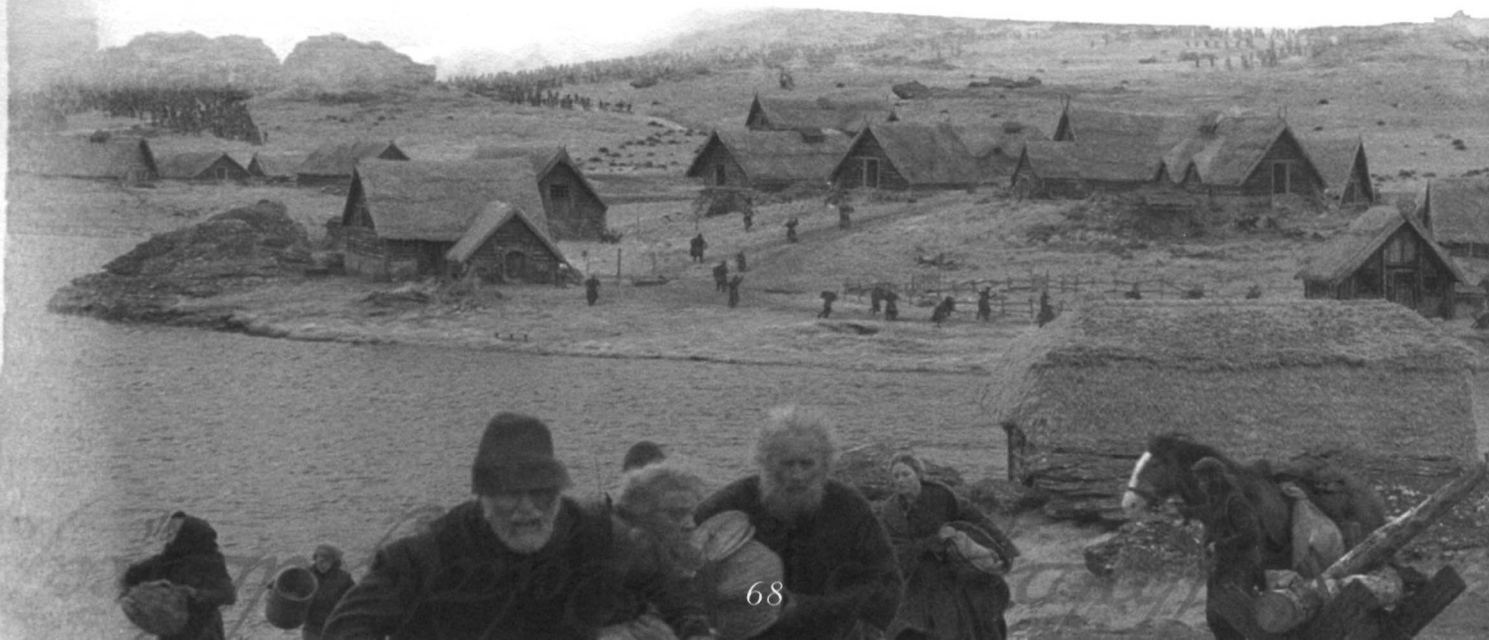
The first step in constructing a battle is to know who's fighting. This should be obvious as a result of the narrative events in your chronicle. Those factions in your game upon whom the heroes have made a good impression are potential allies, or may be the forces the heroes lead into battle. Those factions the players have upset, or set themselves against, are the enemy.

Once you've decided which sides are fighting and how large the battle is, refer to Table 2.1 for an appropriate Effective Value of each side's army. You might decide, for example, to stage a Skirmish between the Riders of Rohan and the Dunlendings. In this instance, with all other factors being equal, you'd provide 5,000–50,000 EV worth of troops to each side. Having roughly equal EV totals on each side means that unless you oth-

TABLE 2.1: SCALES OF CONFLICT

| SCALE       | EXAMPLE                           | UNIT SIZE      | SUGGESTED EV      |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Skirmish    | Outside Fangorn Forest*           | 10 soldiers    | 5,000–50,000      |
| Battle      | The Battle of Helm's Deep         | 100 soldiers   | 50,000–500,000    |
| Epic Battle | The Battle of the Pelennor Fields | 1,000 soldiers | 500,000–2,000,000 |

\*Referring to the small battle where Éomer's cavalry attacked the Orcs that—unknown to them—had taken Merry and Pippin captive.





erwise affect the outcome of the battle, each side has a roughly even chance of winning. If you have already decided one side or the other ought to have the advantage, this is one stage where you can stack the deck by giving one army a higher total EV. For more information about the differences between types of troops—as well as the function of units in general—see 'Units,' below.

Although in most cases it will be obvious, you must also identify a single leader for each side. Even in cases where there are many heroes, nobles, and villains present on the battlefield, one must be chosen to lead each army. The only exception to this rule is that some armies are led by their lieutenants and have no supreme commander present on the battlefield. These armies have 'naught' for their leader.

Note that allied forces should be grouped together into a single army for simplicity's sake. If forces of Elves and Men fight together against those of the Enemy, for example, the Narrator should group the Elves and Men together into a single army with one leader.

## TRANSITIONING FROM STORYTELLING TO BATTLE

You've established the motivation for the conflict, the armies are present, and it's time to stop speaking in character and begin deciding the outcome of the battle. If you've never run a large combat before, it can seem tricky the first time you do it. Fortunately, getting things rolling is easy.

In the normal course of your chronicle, the heroes often engage in combat. Imagine they journey through the forest and come upon a group of strangers who look hostile. The heroes treat with them for a few minutes and, when you've decided enough words have been exchanged and it's time for fighting, you call for initiative tests, signalling the beginning of combat.

Battle works much the same way. Once the armies are together there may be some treating and diplomacy, or there may not. In either case there comes a point when the two sides begin fighting. To signal the end of words or preparation and the beginning of battle, tell the players it's time for Siegemcraft tests. This lets them know that the normal flow of narrative play is over and the battle has begun.

## DESCRIBING BATTLE

Just as in normal combat, rolling dice and determining results isn't the end of the action, it's just the beginning. It's your responsibility to describe what is happening on the field of battle to the players. If one side attempts to Charge and fails, for example, it's up to you to describe how the valiant defenders rebuffed the units, or how the terrified horses refused to attack. Because determining the outcome of a clash of armies requires many abstractions in terms of the rules used and rolls made, you must turn outcomes that can sometimes seem strange into exciting, concrete events that make story sense.

## THE PLAYERS' ROLE

Although the work of battle preparation lies with the Narrator, the players have a significant role in the battle itself. If the players' characters are personally leading armies in battle, the players should clearly assume control of their side of the conflict, choosing and executing manoeuvres, rolling on the various battle tables, and dealing with the outcome of the battle. If the heroes are merely present at a battle while an allied NPC leads the troops, however, the Narrator may still choose to grant control of the troops to the players to give them a sense that their decisions are what will carry the day.

Some players, however, feel uncomfortable leading armies and believe

their inexperience may cause their side to lose the battle. As Narrator, you may want to ask the players beforehand whether they'd like to run their side of the battle or merely participate as combatants in the army. If they want the opportunity to control the troops, give it to them. If they do not want this responsibility, you should not put them in a position where they have to assume it.



## UNITS

*'[A]nd out of the East Men were moving  
endlessly: swordsmen, spearmen, bowmen  
upon horses, chariots of chieftains and  
laden wains.'*

*— The Fellowship of the Ring*

Armies are made up of soldiers, and soldiers are organised into units. In game terms, a *unit* is a group of warriors of the same race who all have the same sort of arms and armour and perform the same function on the battlefield. For example, a unit of Dwarven Heavy Infantry is composed of Dwarves, outfitted with heavy arms and armour (like mattocks and Dwarf-chainmail), and expected to engage the enemy on foot.

A unit is composed of a specific number of soldiers, which varies based on the scale of the battle and is listed for each scale on Table 2.1. For example, 300 Elf-archers fight-



ing in a Skirmish would make up 30 units, while the same archers fighting a Battle would only compose three units.

When defining units you need not concern yourself with precisely what weapons and armour the members of a unit are carrying. This level of detail, while of narrative interest, has no impact on the outcome of the battle. You may describe one unit of light infantry as having leather armour and another to be wearing simple clothes, but both are light infantry with the same attributes.

It is important to note that 'unit' is a term used by players. Characters within the world of Middle-earth use terms like host, legion, and company to describe collections of soldiers, and the precise definitions of such terms vary widely. Use these terms colourfully when talking in character, but remember that 'unit' is a game designation.

## UNIT ATTRIBUTES

Units have attributes, just as characters do, that describe their effectiveness in battle. Unlike characters, however, units have only a handful of attributes. This keeps things simple, allowing you and your players to manage many dozens of units at once. Each unit attribute is described below.

**TYPE:** Type is a description of the unit, such as 'Rohiric Heavy Cavalry,' 'Orkish Light Infantry,' or 'Entish.' Type defines the unit's race (such as Rohiric, Orkish, or Entish), arms and armour (such as light, medium, or heavy) if applicable, and battlefield function (such as infantry or cavalry) if relevant to that race. It is important to note all units of a given type have the same attribute values. Heavy Dwarven Infantry from the Iron Hills have the same attribute values as Heavy Dwarven Infantry from the Blue Mountains.

Heavy units wear heavy armour, are difficult to injure, and move slow-

ly. They are deadlier in combat than medium and light units. *Medium* units wear moderate armour and have good mobility, but they are less deadly than heavy units. *Light* units are the least deadly of the three types, but are the most mobile.

*Infantry* are foot soldiers who engage the enemy directly and usually make up the front line of any battle. *Archers* are foot soldiers who stay away from the front line, usually behind the infantry, and assault the enemy with ranged weapons, usually bows. *Cavalry* are mounted soldiers who are faster than infantry and typically better armed. Cavalry are capable of striking swiftly and wheeling away from the front line, out of danger, to strike again. The fact that infantry generally engage the enemy in melee combat and archers usually engage the enemy from a distance does not mean each is incapable of performing the other's task, just that they're not very effective at it.

**COMMAND:** Command measures a unit's experience and training in battle. This attribute is used to execute Command manoeuvres, which grant a unit tactical superiority on the battle-

field and allow it to take advantage of terrain and positioning.

**RANGED COMBAT:** Ranged Combat is a unit's effectiveness with ranged weapons such as bows. It serves as a bonus to Ranged Combat manoeuvres and also (in the tactical system) measures the distance over which one unit can attack another on the battlefield.

**MELEE COMBAT:** Melee Combat describes a unit's effectiveness with melee weapons such as swords and axes and serves as a bonus to Melee Combat manoeuvres.

**TOUGHNESS:** Toughness is a combination of how hardy and how heavily armoured the members of a unit are. It is used to determine whether a given unit is destroyed if it is imperilled in battle.

**SUPPORT:** Support measures a unit's ability to employ the healing arts and assist its fellows in other ways. Typically, units with high Support values have low combat values.

**MOVEMENT:** Movement describes how mobile a unit is. Distances in combat (under the tactical system only) are described by TNs against which the Movement attribute is tested. For more information, see 'Paths' on page 91.





**SPECIAL:** Special describes a unit's special abilities, if it has any. Rohiric cavalry units have a special ability called Fell Charge, for example, which grants them a bonus when executing the Charge manoeuvre.

**EFFECTIVE VALUE:** Sometimes abbreviated *EV*, this is an abstract value that lets the Narrator determine at a glance how potent a given force is on the battlefield. Units with equal EVs are equally potent, in theory, though because effective values are so abstract the Narrator should always consider the actual forces in addition to their effective values.

You can determine most troops' EVs by adding up their Command, Ranged Combat, Melee Combat, Toughness, Support, and Movement to arrive at a Base EV. Some units have a Base EV is slightly higher than this sum to account for their special abilities. Once the Base EV is known, the EV for a unit can be found by multiplying the Base EV by the number of troops in the unit: 10 at Skirmish scale, 100

at Battle scale, and 1,000 at Epic Battle scale.

### FORMATIONS

To simplify record-keeping, collections of units of the same type in the same army are often treated as a single *formation*. This allows many units to be listed on the same line of the army record (see below) and dealt with as a group. In the abstract system, each army is required to group all units of the same type into a single formation. In the tactical system, however, armies' leaders are allowed to split their formations into their component units in order to send different parts of their armies to different battle locations.

### THE ARMY RECORD

Much as characters' statistics are recorded on character records, the statistics of armies are recorded on an *army record*. You will find a blank army record on page 96 which you can photocopy and use in your chronicle.

At the top of the army record are spaces for the scale of the battle being fought, the total size (in units) of the army, and the name of the army's leader. An army being led by its lieutenants (see 'Leaderless' on page 76) has 'naught' for its leader.

In the grid below that, each formation takes up one horizontal line on the army record. On that line, spaces are provided to record each formation's size (in units) and its respective attributes. Beneath each unit's attribute scores, spaces are also provided where modifiers which arise in the course of battle can be recorded.

The Rohiric example army below is composed of three formations totaling 15 units. Because it describes an army at the Battle scale, each unit represents 100 soldiers, for a total army of 1,500 Men of Rohan.

### EXAMPLE UNITS

The tables that follow provide statistics for all the units present at the Battle of Helm's Deep—novel and film—as well as other units of general

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME

### BATTLE SHEET

SCALE:  TOTAL ARMY SIZE:  LEADER:

| UNIT OR FORMATION      | UNITS | COMMAND | RANGED<br>COMBAT | MELEE<br>COMBAT | TOUGHNESS | SUPPORT | MOVEMENT | SPECIAL     |
|------------------------|-------|---------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|---------|----------|-------------|
| Rohiric Heavy Infantry | 8     | 8       | 6                | 14              | 15        | 6       | 4        |             |
| Modifiers:             |       |         |                  |                 |           |         |          |             |
| Rohiric Medium Cavalry | 5     | 8       | 6                | 15              | 14        | 6       | 14       | Fell Charge |
| Modifiers:             |       |         |                  |                 |           |         |          |             |
| Rohiric Medium Archers | 2     | 8       | 12               | 8               | 12        | 6       | 8        |             |
| Modifiers:             |       |         |                  |                 |           |         |          |             |



TABLE 2.2: ROHIRIC UNITS

'[Théoden] turned to Merry. "I am going to war, Master Meriadoc," he said.' — The Two Towers

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE     | C | R  | ME | T  | S | MO | EV | SPECIAL      |
|-------------------------|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|--------------|
| Rohiric Heavy Cavalry   | 8 | 6  | 18 | 17 | 6 | 12 | 74 | Fell Charge* |
| Rohiric Medium Cavalry  | 8 | 6  | 15 | 14 | 6 | 14 | 70 | Fell Charge* |
| Rohiric Light Cavalry   | 8 | 6  | 12 | 11 | 6 | 16 | 66 | Fell Charge* |
| Rohiric Medium Infantry | 8 | 6  | 11 | 12 | 6 | 6  | 49 | —            |
| Rohiric Light Infantry  | 8 | 6  | 9  | 9  | 6 | 8  | 46 | —            |
| Rohiric Medium Archers  | 8 | 12 | 8  | 12 | 6 | 8  | 54 | —            |
| Rohiric Light Archers   | 8 | 10 | 8  | 10 | 6 | 10 | 52 | —            |

\*FELL CHARGE: Succeeding at a Charge manoeuvre grants a formation with this ability a +8 Melee Combat bonus rather than the usual +4 bonus.

TABLE 2.3: ORKISH UNITS

'I saw the enemy go: endless lines of marching Orcs; and troops of them mounted on great wolves.'  
— Merry, The Two Towers

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE    | C | R  | ME | T  | S | MO | EV | SPECIAL        |
|------------------------|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|----------------|
| Orkish Medium Cavalry  | 8 | 6  | 14 | 14 | 4 | 14 | 65 | Warg-mounted*  |
| Orkish Light Cavalry   | 8 | 6  | 11 | 11 | 4 | 16 | 61 | Warg-mounted*  |
| Orkish Medium Infantry | 7 | 6  | 10 | 12 | 4 | 6  | 47 | Cave-dweller** |
| Orkish Light Infantry  | 7 | 6  | 8  | 9  | 4 | 8  | 44 | Cave-dweller** |
| Orkish Medium Archers  | 7 | 12 | 7  | 12 | 4 | 8  | 52 | Cave-dweller** |
| Orkish Light Archers   | 7 | 10 | 7  | 10 | 4 | 10 | 50 | Cave-dweller** |

These statistics are those of Standard Orcs (see pages 38–9 of Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic). Other breeds have slightly different statistics.

\*WARG-MOUNTED: Warg-mounted units gain a +3 bonus when testing to attempt the Flank manoeuvre.

\*\*CAVE-DWELLER: These units suffer no penalties from fighting in 'Caverns' terrain.

TABLE 2.4: URUK UNITS

'Why do you look out? Do you wish to see the greatness of our army? We are the fighting Uruk-hai.'  
— The Two Towers

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE  | C | R  | ME | T  | S | MO | EV | SPECIAL            |
|----------------------|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|--------------------|
| Uruk Heavy Infantry  | 8 | 5  | 14 | 16 | 5 | 6  | 61 | Fighting Uruk-hai* |
| Uruk Medium Infantry | 8 | 5  | 11 | 13 | 5 | 8  | 57 | Fighting Uruk-hai* |
| Uruk Heavy Archers   | 8 | 13 | 8  | 15 | 5 | 8  | 64 | Fighting Uruk-hai* |
| Uruk Medium Archers  | 8 | 11 | 8  | 13 | 5 | 10 | 62 | Fighting Uruk-hai* |

\*FIGHTING URUK-HAI: A formation of Uruks in a leaderless army can make a TN 15 Command test and, if successful, execute one extra manoeuvre this round. No army may gain more than two extra manoeuvres this way, no matter how many formations of Uruk-hai it contains.

TABLE 2.5: DUNLENDING UNITS

'Saruman has armed the wild hillmen and herd-folk of Dunland beyond the rivers, and these also he loosed upon us.' — Rohiric messenger, The Two Towers

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE        | C | R | ME | T  | S | MO | EV | SPECIAL |
|----------------------------|---|---|----|----|---|----|----|---------|
| Dunlending Light Cavalry   | 6 | 4 | 10 | 9  | 5 | 16 | 50 | —       |
| Dunlending Medium Infantry | 6 | 4 | 9  | 10 | 5 | 6  | 40 | —       |
| Dunlending Light Infantry  | 6 | 4 | 7  | 7  | 5 | 8  | 37 | —       |
| Dunlending Light Archers   | 6 | 8 | 6  | 8  | 5 | 10 | 43 | —       |



TABLE 2.6: ENTISH UNITS

'Though Isengard be strong and hard, as cold as stone and bare as bone/  
We go, we go, we go to war, to hew the stone and break the door!' — Ent-song, The Two Towers

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE | C | R  | ME | T  | S | MO | EV  | SPECIAL                     |
|---------------------|---|----|----|----|---|----|-----|-----------------------------|
| Ents                | 5 | 14 | 30 | 28 | 6 | 12 | 107 | Forest-friend*, Tear Rock** |
| Huorns              | 3 | 6  | 24 | 24 | 3 | 2* | 69  | Forest-friend*, Silent      |

Mobility\*\*\*

\*FOREST-FRIEND: Ents and Huorns suffer no penalties for fighting in 'Forest' terrain.

\*\*TEAR ROCK: Ents who perform Assault Fortification receive a +12 bonus on their Command tests to do so.

\*\*\*SILENT MOBILITY: When using the tactical combat system Huorns can move along a Path as though they had Movement 12 as long as they are accompanied by at least one unit of Ents.

TABLE 2.7: ELVEN UNITS

'I bring word from Elrond of Rivendell. An alliance once existed between Elves and Men. Long ago we fought and died together. We come to honour that allegiance.' —Haldir, The Two Towers film

| UNIT/FORMATION TYPE  | C  | R  | ME | T  | S  | MO | EV | SPECIAL        |
|----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------------|
| Elven Heavy Archers  | 12 | 19 | 10 | 17 | 11 | 9  | 80 | Forest-friend* |
| Elven Medium Archers | 12 | 17 | 10 | 15 | 11 | 11 | 78 | Forest-friend* |
| Elven Light Archers  | 12 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 76 | Forest-friend* |

\*FOREST-FRIEND: Elves suffer no penalties for fighting in 'Forest' terrain.

use to the Narrator. More units of different races, with new special abilities, will be described in upcoming Decipher supplements like *Isengard*. The Narrator may also create new units, assigning them statistics as she sees fit, using those here as guides.

## BATTLE RESOLUTION: ABSTRACT

*'You have won a battle but not a war.  
... You may find the Shadow . . . at  
your own door next: it is wayward, and  
senseless, and has no love for Men.'*

—Saruman, *The Two Towers*

Now that you've constructed your battle and assembled the armies, it's time to fight! The rules in this section are abstract. They do not track movement or other strategic aspects of battle, but

they do allow you to run through an entire battle relatively quickly. Even if you're planning on using the tactical rules that follow you should still read these, as this system forms the core of the tactical rules.

Battle is conducted by performing the following steps, in order. Each one of these steps is described in detail in the following sections.

1. Calculate terrain and situational modifiers.
2. Determine the order of battle.
3. Determine the leaders' positions.
4. Execute manoeuvres and apply manoeuvre modifiers.
5. Launch attacks against the enemy.
6. Determine casualties.
7. Determine the leaders' fates.

Each iteration of Steps 1–7 makes up one round of battle. The length of one round, in game time, depends on the scale of your battle and is shown in Table 2.8: Battle Rounds.

## STEP 1: TERRAIN AND SITUATION

Terrain plays a significant role in battle as does the situation the armies find themselves in. Elves fighting in a forest usually have an advantage over other races; troops who've taken a hill usually have an advantage over those trying to take the hill from them. There are an almost unlimited number of factors that could play a role depending on how much detail you wish to consider. The terrain and situational modifiers listed below cover the majority of possibilities.

When using the abstract system, it's up to the Narrator to determine whether a given modifier applies, and to which side, formations, or units, based on the story and what she knows

TABLE 2.8: BATTLE ROUNDS

| SCALE       | ROUND LENGTH |
|-------------|--------------|
| Skirmish    | 15 minutes   |
| Battle      | 1 hour       |
| Epic Battle | 4 hours      |



of the situation. To apply terrain and situation modifiers, the bonus or penalty described is simply noted on the appropriate modifier line on the army record. Terrain and situation modifiers (and all other unit attribute modifiers, for that matter) are cumulative unless noted otherwise.

## TERRAIN MODIFIERS

To determine which modifiers apply, simply go down the list and identify those conditions present on the battlefield. Some modifiers are applied only to one army in the battle while others affect all sides. Terrain modifiers usually do not change over the course of a battle, so rounds after the first will not typically involve recalculation of terrain modifiers.

### Arctic

All but the most hardy have extreme difficulty fighting in the biting cold of the Northern Waste. Units without the special ability *Cold-hardy* suffer a -3 penalty to Melee Combat and Ranged Combat and a -5 penalty to Movement in arctic conditions.

### Caverns

Fighting underground is alarming and strenuous for those not used to confined spaces and dark conditions. Units without the special ability *Cave-*

*dweller* suffer a -5 penalty to Melee Combat, -4 penalty to Movement, and -3 penalty to Support when forced to fight underground.

### Desert

Fighting in desert conditions is an arduous affair for those not used to it. Units without the special ability *Desert-trained* suffer a -3 penalty to Melee Combat and Support and a -4 penalty to Movement in such conditions.

### Forest

Fighting within a forest makes movement almost impossible and ranged attacks completely useless for those used to more open spaces. Units without the special ability *Forest-friend* have their Ranged Combat score reduced to 0 and suffer a -5 penalty to Movement in such conditions.

## Fortifications

Fortifications are any structures intentionally designed to slow down or stop an oncoming army. (While a forest or a river could be used for this purpose, they are natural formations and have their own special modifiers.) Fortification bonuses only apply when one side is defending from within the fortification against an army attacking from outside the fortification. Those

within the fortress gain bonuses depending on what kind of fortification they're defending.

**LIGHT FORTIFICATION:** This covers simple obstructions to an advancing army: a fence, moat, or short wall, for example. Anything short of an actual stone building or keep qualifies as light fortification. The High Hay, the defensive perimeter built by the Brandybucks to defend the Buckland from incursions from the Old Forest, is an example of a light fortification. Units defending a light fortification gain a +2 bonus to their Toughness and a +3 bonus to their Ranged Combat and Support scores.

**MEDIUM FORTIFICATION:** This includes keeps and small castles, usually without a moat or outlying defensive perimeter. The hall of Meduseld and the walls surrounding Edoras are examples of medium fortifications. Units defending from within a medium fortification gain +3 to their Toughness and +4 to their Ranged Combat and Support.

**HEAVY FORTIFICATION:** Heavy fortifications are castles, usually surrounded by walls or a moat. Prince Imrahil's castle at Dol Amroth is an example of a heavy fortification. Units defending from within a heavy fortification gain a +5 to their Toughness and Support and +5 to their Ranged Combat.



**LEGENDARY FORTIFICATION:** These strongholds, built ages ago on a scale grander than any mere castle, have withstood the onslaught of mighty armies generation after generation. Helm's Deep, Minas Tirith, and the Morannon are all examples of legendary fortifications. Units defending a legendary fortification gain +10 to their Toughness, +6 to their Support, and +5 to their Ranged Combat.

### Hill

If both sides are fighting atop a hill there is no modifier. If, on the other hand, one side holds a hill while another is trying to assault it, those who hold the hill have the advantage. Holding a hill grants a +3 modifier to Melee Combat and a +5 modifier to Ranged Combat.

### Mountains

Mountainous territory can be very treacherous. Steep passes, uneven footing, and the absence of vegetation make manoeuvring extremely difficult. Units fighting in mountainous territory without the special ability *Mountain-native* suffer a -5 penalty to their Ranged Combat and Movement attributes.

### Places of Power

In many places throughout Middle-earth the land itself is infused with subtle power. This power is sometimes aligned with some purpose or people. Imladris, for example, is a place of power for the Elves. Men, allied with the Elves, might find their activities blessed by the magic of the Elves, but that same power would oppose any Orcs who came to the place. Units of a race aligned with a place or power gain a +5 bonus to Command and Support when fighting on such ground. Those allied with members of that race

gain a slightly smaller bonus of +3 to those attributes. On the other hand, those clearly opposed to the aims of those races suffer a -5 penalty to their Command and Support attributes.

Similarly, a location can be aligned with some purpose, such as destruction, preservation, or defence. Such activities at those locations—no matter who performs them—are easier to carry out. Units that act in accordance with a place of power's purpose receive a +3 to their Command and Support attributes, while those clearly opposed to them suffer -3. In the few places of power that have both racial alignments and alignments of purpose, the maximum modifier that can be applied is  $\pm 5$ .

### Plains

Most battles in Middle-earth take place on vast plains. Flat and lacking obstructions that might impede the course of battle, plains offer neither bonus nor penalty.

### Swamp

A thick bog of swamps such as the Dead Marshes makes movement difficult, often impossible. Units forced to fight in a swamp suffer a -7 penalty to their Movement attribute and a -3 penalty to their Command attribute.

## SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

Situational modifiers cover special circumstances surrounding the ways the armies come into conflict. As with terrain modifiers, all possible situational modifiers would be impossible to include here. You should use the following examples to create your own situational modifiers if the need arises in your chronicle. To determine which modifiers the units in each army may benefit or suffer from, simply

read down the following list, applying all modifiers that fit the circumstances of the battle. Situational modifiers often change from battle round to battle round.

### Ambushed

Units not expecting battle suffer a severe disadvantage as they scramble to defend themselves. Ambushed units suffer a -5 penalty to their Command and a -3 penalty to their Movement, Ranged Combat, and Melee Combat. These penalties, however, apply only on the first round of battle.

### Badly Supplied

Armies require extensive supply chains to maintain their efficiency in battle. If an army has marched beyond its normal territories into enemy lands where no friendly towns or cities exist to help supply the troops with food the units must either forage, raid, or depend upon their depleted supplies. Units suffering in this way incur a -4 penalty to their Command and a -2 penalty to their Toughness.

### Defending Homeland

Armies defending their homeland fight with enhanced vigour and greater morale. They gain a +2 bonus to their Command and a +4 bonus to their Toughness.

### Dismayed

An army that is otherwise well-fed and fortified may have its potency reduced by ill-tidings, such as news that its leader has perished or defeat has befallen allies on another field of battle. Dismayed armies suffer -2 to their Melee Combat and Ranged Combat and -1 to their Command and Toughness.



## Entrenched

Often, opposing armies don't meet at the same time on the field of battle. One side arrives early, or has been there for days or months, awaiting and anticipating the battle. This gives those units the opportunity to prepare by training, surveying the field, and erecting simple fortifications. Units that have been at the battlefield for at least a day before the enemy arrives gain a +3 bonus to their Toughness.

## Escape Blocked

Any time one army in a battle has its escape routes blocked, such as by an impassable river, gorge, or sheer cliff wall, it becomes difficult for the units in the army to move freely. Routes can be blocked by natural features or man-made walls and fortifications. Other armies do not block movement, and those fighting within a fortification ignore this condition. Units fighting with their escape route blocked suffer a -5 penalty to their Movement and Command.

## Exhausted

Units that have marched for long days without rest arrive exhausted

and are less capable than well-rested units. Such units suffer a -3 penalty to their Toughness and Movement.

## Leaderless

Armies need leaders, but occasionally these leaders cannot be near the field of battle and must delegate responsibility to their lieutenants. Nameless lieutenants often led the Enemy's armies. An army with 'naught' for its leader suffers a -3 penalty to its Command attribute.

## Mercenaries

Many leaders are forced to hire mercenaries. While mercenaries are usually experienced combatants they are motivated solely by profit and do not fight as passionately as those driven by patriotic zeal or a charismatic leader. Mercenary troops gain a +2 bonus to their Melee and Ranged Combat (representing their battle expertise) but suffer a -2 penalty to their Toughness (because they are more likely to throw down their weapons and go home than troops motivated by allegiance to their nation).

## Noble-led

Soldiers who see their king striding onto the battlefield to engage the enemy directly are inspired to valiant deeds. Units in an army that is led by one of their nation's nobles gain a bonus to their Command and Toughness equal to the number of picks the leader has in the Rank edge.

## Outnumbered

Being heavily outnumbered is not only mathematically disadvantageous, it also imposes a devastating penalty upon an army's morale. If the larger army's size (in units) is two to three times greater than the smaller army the smaller army suffers a -3 penalty to its Command. If the larger army outnumbers the smaller army by more than three to one, the smaller army suffers a -5 penalty to its Command.

## Rain and Snow

Both rain and snow provide a serious obstacle to waging war. In each case visibility is reduced and movement is hindered. Units fighting under such conditions suffer a -3 penalty to their Movement and a -5 to their Ranged Combat.

## Recently Beaten

Regardless of how well-supplied, how well-led, or how prepared a force is, if it was recently beaten by the army it faces the troops will be less confident and find their morale flagging. Troops recently beaten by the force they face suffer a -2 penalty to their Command. This includes battles fought against the same army in the past month or so, but does not apply to one battle extending over a series of days or weeks.

## Struck from the Rear

Armies are rigidly structured entities. Infantry must be at the front,





archers at the rear. When an army is attacked from behind not only are its most vulnerable members being assaulted first, it must scramble to mount an effective resistance. An army struck from the rear suffers a -5 penalty to Ranged Combat and -2 to Command and Movement. Like Ambushed, this modifier is unlikely to apply after the first round of combat.

### Untrained

Armies composed of conscripts, youths, or the aged are at a disadvantage against seasoned warriors. Untrained forces suffer a -4 penalty to Command and Toughness, -3 penalty to Ranged Combat and Melee Combat, and -2 penalty to Movement and Support.

### Wind

High winds make flying and firing arrows difficult. Any units with the *Aerial* special ability in high wind have a -5 penalty to their Movement and Command, and all units suffer a -3 penalty to their Ranged Combat.

## STEP 2: THE ORDER OF BATTLE

To determine the order of battle, the leader of each side makes an opposed Siegecraft test. The winner has the option to either execute all his manoeuvres first or defer to his opponent and act after his opponent has executed all of his manoeuvres. An army that has no leader (or whose leader was Injured or Wounded on a previous round of battle) automatically fails the opposed Siegecraft test. If both sides are leaderless, each side simply rolls 2d6 and the higher roll prevails.

## HEROES IN BATTLE

Heroes are often involved in battle even when they are not themselves the leaders of armies. Narrators have a number of options for dealing with heroes—who may be player characters, important NPCs, or their counterparts in the armies of Shadow—when battle is joined and the battle resolution system is being used.

The first option and the quickest is to allow each hero to choose, just as an army's leader does, what position he will take in the battle. Will he fight on the Outskirts, Thick of Battle, or Heart of Battle? This choice should be made in Step 3: Leaders' Positions, just after the army's leader makes the same choice. Then, when Step 7: Leaders' Fates comes, each hero rolls on Table 2.10: Leader's Fate to determine what happened to him in that round of battle. While army leaders can gain extra manoeuvres for their side by their position, player characters (unless one happens to also be the army's leader) do not have the same effect. Instead, the level of danger they subject themselves to determines how many experience points they earn during that round of battle. A character on the Outskirts gains no experience points, a character in the Thick of Battle earns 10 experience points, and a character in the Heart of Battle gains 20.

The second option, a bit more complex, is to allow player characters to lead individual formations in battle. If this is allowed, a character with an appropriate Rank or Command edge (Narrator's judgement) chooses, just like an army's leader, where to position himself (Outskirts, Thick of Battle, or Heart of Battle). In this case, extra manoeuvres are earned just as they are for an army's leader, but they can only be used by and only affect the formation the character leads. For example, while the Inspire manoeuvre (see page 80) usually gives all formations in the army a +2 bonus to their Toughness, a PC-led formation performing it as an extra manoeuvre can only apply the bonus to themselves. Note that if player characters are allowed to lead formations in this way the Narrator should provide the enemy army with a few villains of its own who can lead formations, lest the heroes' army overpower its foe by being the only one with the possibility of extra manoeuvres.

The third option, which requires the most from the Narrator, is for the players to decide precisely where their characters are going and what they are doing while the battle rages around them. The Narrator then orchestrates those events as he would any other in the chronicle, resolving combat against individual foes or other tests according to the normal rules. (Note, of course, that battle rounds and action rounds do not correspond to each other on a one-to-one basis. Heroes will be able to do many different things while a single battle round rages around them.) The things characters do should typically be resolved each round between Step 4: Manoeuvres and Step 5: Launch Attacks. The Narrator may decide that the actions of the PCs, if they are successful in accomplishing—or failing to accomplish—some important objective like holding a crucial point, taking a certain hill, or slaying a particular enemy, bring about modifiers to some formations' unit attributes when the victor is determined on that round of battle.



### STEP 3: LEADERS' POSITIONS

Once the order of battle has been determined, each side's leader must determine where he will position himself. This choice affects the number of manoeuvres the army will be able to make, as well as how likely the leader is to be captured or injured in combat. Each leader has three options.

**OUTSKIRTS:** The leader is able to observe and support the troops but is not directly involved in the battle. The army can make one extra Leader or Support manoeuvre if its leader is on the Outskirts.

**THICK OF BATTLE:** The leader fights with the main body of soldiers. The army can make one extra manoeuvre of any type if its leader is in the Thick of Battle.

**HEART OF BATTLE:** The leader moves to the heart of the conflict, usually somewhere on the front lines. The army can make two extra manoeuvres of any type if its leader is in the Heart of Battle.

### STEP 4: MANOEUVRES

The members of each army may, collectively, attempt to execute two manoeuvres each turn. The army may also gain extra manoeuvres as a result of its leader's position in battle. All manoeuvres must be executed when the army acts, according to the order of battle. An army that acts first cannot execute one manoeuvre and decide to save the second until after the opposing army has acted. An army can, however, attempt to execute its first manoeuvre before deciding which manoeuvre to attempt next. Of course, failed attempts count against the manoeuvre total. It is important to note while the total manoeuvres possible is measured out across an entire army, each individual manoeuvre is performed by only one formation, not by the entire army (unless, of course, the entire army consists of only one

formation). Even so, manoeuvres executed by a single formation can sometimes affect the entire army, depending on the manoeuvre. Also, note in armies with many different formations, some of them may never execute any manoeuvres at all.

Each formation (or leader, in the case of Leader manoeuvres) may only perform one manoeuvre per battle round. The only exception is when an army has fewer formations (including its leader) than the number of manoeuvres it is allowed. When this is the case, each formation and leader may make a second manoeuvre once all formations have made a first. Once all formations and the leader have made two manoeuvres, any remaining manoeuvres due the army are wasted. When a formation or leader performs more than one manoeuvre in a round, it may never perform the same manoeuvre more than once, even if it failed the first time.

The effects of manoeuvres are like situational modifiers that contribute bonuses to the army's effort. The difference is in order to put them into effect a formation must make a test. To execute a manoeuvre, the Narrator (in the case of armies led by NPCs) or the players (in the case of armies led by PC heroes) decide which manoeuvre is being attempted and

which formation is attempting it. The manoeuvring formation makes a test against the TN listed for the manoeuvre, adding its appropriate attribute as well as any relevant terrain and situation modifiers.

If a formation's manoeuvre succeeds the effect is immediately resolved (in the case of actions which can be immediately resolved) or recorded (in the case of manoeuvres which affect attributes and whose effects will not be felt until the round of battle is resolved). The effects of manoeuvres—such as bonuses to formation attributes—last one battle round unless otherwise specified.

Some manoeuvres have formation targets in the other army (or, rarely, in the same army) that will be affected if the manoeuvre is successful. Because formations vary in size (that is, in the number of units that compose them) there are penalties for small formations to affect larger ones and bonuses for large formations to affect smaller ones. These modifiers are in Table 2.9: Manoeuvre Modifiers.

Manoeuvres are categorised by *manoeuvre type*: the attribute used to execute them. Command manoeuvres test a formation's Command attribute, Ranged Combat manoeuvres use Ranged Combat, and so forth. There are also Leader manoeuvres,



TABLE 2.9: MANOEUVRE MODIFIERS

| TARGET FORMATION IS...                                   | TN MODIFIER |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| One-quarter the size of the manoeuvring formation        | -15         |
| One-half the size of the manoeuvring formation           | -5          |
| Twice the size of the manoeuvring formation              | +5          |
| Three times the size of the manoeuvring formation        | +10         |
| Four times the size of the manoeuvring formation         | +15         |
| Five or more times the size of the manoeuvring formation | +20         |

**EXAMPLE:** A formation of 2 units attempting to affect a formation of 5 units would suffer a +5 TN to its manoeuvre, because 5 is twice the size of 2, but not yet 3 times as large.

**EXAMPLE:** A formation of 10 units attempting to affect a formation of 3 units would gain a -5 TN, because 3 is smaller than one-half the size of 10, but larger than one-quarter the size.



which only leaders may execute, and which test the leader's Siegemaster skill. Armies with Injured or Wounded leaders may not attempt Leader manoeuvres unless someone else has taken the leader's place while he is incapacitated (see page 83).

The following list of manoeuvres is far from exhaustive, but these are the basic manoeuvres available to all armies. Other manoeuvres can be invented by players, though if the Narrator allows this, she will have to determine their TNs and effects.

Some manoeuvres are designated *first strike only*. They can only be executed by a unit which won the Siegemaster test and opted to act first. Other manoeuvres are designated *response only*. These manoeuvres can only be executed by a unit in an army acting last in a round.

### Aid the Wounded

MANOEUVER TYPE: Support

TN: 10

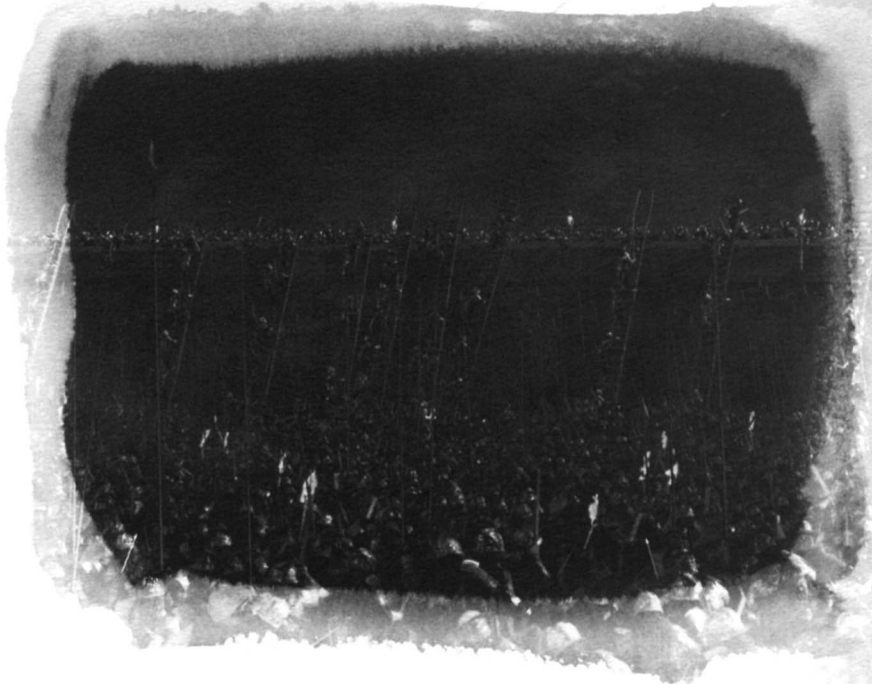
EFFECT: By ministering to those who have been injured, a formation's full strength may be restored. If this manoeuvre is successful, the target formation is relieved of any penalties they are currently suffering to their Toughness, including those resulting from terrain and situation modifiers. A formation can target itself with this manoeuvre.

### Assault Fortification

MANOEUVER TYPE: Command

TN: Varies

EFFECT: This manoeuvre allows a formation to attempt to destroy a fortification and negate the bonus its defenders benefit from. This can be accomplished by employing siege engines to destroy fortifications, undermining a wall with engineering, or even using demolitions as Saruman's troops did at Helm's Deep. The TN of this manoeuvre varies with the level of fortification as follows: Light (10), Medium (15), Heavy (20), Legendary (25). The



TN is not affected by the size of the attacking formation, since only a small number of attackers can assail a given fortification at once.

### Blanket Fire

MANOEUVER TYPE: Ranged  
Combat

TN: 10

EFFECT: By unleashing a blanket of fire across the enemy ranks a formation's effectiveness in ranged combat is increased. If successful, the manoeuvring formation receives a +4 modifier to its Ranged Combat. This manoeuvre requires no specific target in the opposing army.

### Charge

MANOEUVER TYPE: Movement

TN: 10

EFFECT: Charging units smash into the opposition, inflicting heavy casualties. If the formation attempting this manoeuvre is successful it gains a +4 bonus to its Melee Combat. This manoeuvre requires no specific target in the opposing army.

### Concentrate Fire

MANOEUVER TYPE: Ranged  
Combat

TN: 10

EFFECT: By concentrating their fire on a specific target a formation can make their target more likely to suffer casualties. If this manoeuvre is successful, the target formation suffers -3 Toughness.

### Far Strike

*First Strike Only*

MANOEUVER TYPE: Ranged  
Combat

TN: 20

EFFECT: As the opposing side's forces close in, the formation looses arrows at their maximum range, softening up the ranks of the enemy before they can return fire. If successful, this manoeuvre inflicts a -2 modifier to the Toughness attribute of all formations in the opposing army. This TN of this manoeuvre is not subject to modifiers based on the size of the formation or the size of the opposing army, but can only be used during the first round of a given battle.





## Flank

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Movement  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** By attacking from the side or rear a formation can put its enemies at a severe disadvantage. The formation attempting this manoeuvre selects a target formation in the opposing army and an allied formation in its own army. (The allied formation's size does not affect the manoeuvre's TN.) If successful, the manoeuvring formation receives +4 to its Melee Combat, the allied formation receives +2 to its Melee Combat, and the target formation receives -2 to its Melee Combat and Command.

## Hearten

*First Strike Only*  
**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Support  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** Enthusiastic soldiers can inspire their fellows to greater deeds, making them more effective in combat and less likely to break and run. If this manoeuvre is successful the target formation receives a +2 bonus to its Command and Toughness.

## Inspire

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Leader  
**TN:** 10

**EFFECT:** By displaying the king's standard, blowing an ancestral horn of his people, or driving the troops with whips, a leader may rally his troops to greater effectiveness and vigour in combat. Success with this manoeuvre gives all formations in the army a +2 bonus to their Toughness and a +1 bonus to any attribute (including Toughness) the leader chooses. The chosen attribute must be the same for all formations.

## Outflank

*Response Only*  
**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Command  
**TN:** 20

**EFFECT:** This manoeuvre negates the bonus one target formation received from executing the Flank manoeuvre and grants the manoeuvring formation a +5 bonus to its Melee Combat attribute.

## Press the Attack

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Melee Combat  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** By pushing forward despite all peril, a single formation can bring a whole army closer to victory. To press the attack, the manoeuvring formation must target the largest formation in the opposing army with this manoeuvre. If successful all units in its own army gain a +2 bonus to their Melee Combat.

## Rally

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Leader  
**TN:** 10

**EFFECT:** Many unit casualties represent not the literal death of the soldiers but failures of morale and command that cause otherwise ready warriors to inadvertently split from their unit and lose their way. A leader who succeeds with this manoeuvre reforms one unit in his army that was destroyed on the previous round of battle.

## Receive Charge

*Response Only*  
**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Melee Combat  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** By bracing their weapons and standing firm the front line of an army can try to withstand a charge and inflict severe casualties on their enemies. If successful, this manoeuvre negates the bonus one target formation received from executing the Charge manoeuvre and grants the manoeuvring formation a +4 bonus to its Melee Combat.

## Refuse Flank

*First Strike Only*  
**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Movement  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** A skilled unit can anticipate a flanking attempt by an enemy formation and position itself to deny enemy formations that possibility. If successful, the manoeuvring formation prevents any enemy formation from using the Flank manoeuvre in the current round of battle and gives



itself +1 Toughness. This manoeuvre requires no specific target in the opposing army.

### Shelter

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Movement  
TN: 15

EFFECT: An agile unit can place other units or elements of terrain between itself and its opponents. This manoeuvre may not be attempted by the largest formation in a given army. No enemy formation may use its Melee Combat to attack a formation that executes this manoeuvre successfully.

### Shield Wall

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Command  
TN: 15

EFFECT: By standing close and presenting a uniform shield front to the enemy, a formation can reduce the effectiveness of ranged attacks against it. No enemy formation may use its Ranged Combat to attack a formation that successfully executes this manoeuvre. Only medium infantry and heavy infantry may use this manoeuvre.

### Single Combat

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Leader  
TN: 15 (or see below)

EFFECT: Often the leaders of opposing armies seek each other out and engage in single combat. If the leader attempting this manoeuvre is successful, the two leaders meet in the middle of battle and fight using the normal rules for combat between single characters. If a leader attempts this manoeuvre after the opposing leader attempted it (but failed) in the same round, the TN is reduced to 10. If both leaders are trying to find each other on the battlefield, it's more likely that combat will result.

### Stand Firm

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Command  
TN: 15

EFFECT: By standing shoulder-to-shoulder in the face of an onslaught a formation makes itself more likely to weather the storm. A formation successful in executing this manoeuvre gains a +4 bonus to its Toughness.

### Surround

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Movement  
TN: Target formation's Movement

EFFECT: A formation cut off from its fellows is less likely to survive attacks and cannot help its allies. If this manoeuvre is executed successfully the target formation suffers -3 Support.

### Wheel

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Melee Combat  
TN: 10

EFFECT: By carefully rotating to bring the maximum number of warriors to bear on the enemy a formation can increase its effectiveness in combat. If successful, the manoeuvring formation gains a +3 bonus to its Melee Combat attribute.

## STEP 5: LAUNCH ATTACKS

Once all manoeuvres have been attempted and all modifiers applied, each formation attacks in turn. First, each formation on the side that executed manoeuvres first attacks. Then, each formation on the other side attacks. On a given side formations may attack in any order their leader chooses, and each formation's attack is fully executed before the next is begun. Each formation's attack consists of two steps:

CHOOSE TARGET: The attacking formation chooses a formation on the opposing side that will be the target of its attack.

MAKE ATTACK TEST: The attacking formation makes a Ranged Combat test or Melee Combat test. The attacking formation may normally choose which of these attributes to test, though certain manoeuvres may dictate that one or the other must be used. The TN of the attack test is the Toughness of the formation that was chosen as the target of the attack.

If the attack test results in marginal or complete success, a number of units in the target formation equal to the number of units in the attacking formation are *imperilled*. On a superior success twice that number are imperilled, and on an extraordinary success three times that number are

### ATTACKS BY UNIT

You may elect to launch a separate attack with each unit individually rather than rolling only once for each formation. This takes a little longer but may be more satisfying for some players.

When using this option, each attacking unit chooses an enemy formation to attack. It makes an attack test as described, testing its Ranged Combat or Melee Combat against its target's Toughness. The attacking unit imperils one enemy unit in the target formation on a marginal or complete success, two enemy units on a superior success, and three enemy units on an extraordinary success. If it fails, none of the enemy are imperilled. Extra imperilment can spill over onto second formations just as it can under the formation-based rules and the normal option to penalise the Support of already-imperilled units can also be chosen.



imperilled. If the test fails the attack has no effect.

If an attack imperils more units than exist in the formation, the extra imperilment can be applied to units in any other formation as long as the second formation's Toughness is less than or equal to the Toughness of the original target formation. Imperilment cannot spill over onto a third unit.

Alternatively, any time an attacker would normally imperil a unit he may choose instead to inflict a -2 Support penalty on a unit that is already imperilled. This makes that unit less likely to survive its imperilment when casualties are determined. Such penalties can be stacked if enough imperilment is inflicted.

## STEP 6: DETERMINE CASUALTIES

Once all formations have attacked, each side must determine how many of its imperilled units will become casualties of battle. Each imper-

illed unit makes a TN 15 Support test. Each unit that fails the test is destroyed, while each unit that succeeds shakes off the effects of imperil-

ment and survives to fight in the next round of battle.

TABLE 2.10: LEADER'S FATE

| 2D6  | OUTSKIRTS | THICK OF BATTLE | HEART OF BATTLE |
|------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 2    | Captured  | Captured        | Captured        |
| 3    | Wounded   | Captured        | Captured        |
| 4    | Injured   | Wounded         | Captured        |
| 5    | Injured   | Injured         | Wounded         |
| 6-7  | Uninjured | Injured         | Injured         |
| 8-12 | Uninjured | Uninjured       | Uninjured       |

**UNINJURED:** Nothing happens to the leader.

**INJURED:** The leader is incapacitated for the next round of battle but returns afterward. When the battle is over the leader will have taken all but 1 Wound Point of his Injured Wound Level.

**WOUNDED:** The leader is incapacitated for the rest of the battle. When the battle is over the leader will have taken all but 1 Wound Point of his Wounded Wound Level.

**CAPTURED:** The leader falls into the hands of the enemy. Those who captured him may do anything they like from killing him to setting him free (though player characters should never be killed arbitrarily in this way). The entire battle may stop as the leader's people try to negotiate his return, or an entire adventure could result as the heroes quest to liberate the captured leader.



When many units must be tested the Narrator may rule that—to save time and die rolling—units may be tested in groups of two, three, five, or any other convenient number. Obviously, units tested together must have the same Support and penalties to Support.

## STEP 7: LEADERS' FATES

After unit casualties have been resolved the fate of each side's leader must be determined. Recall each leader's leadership position (determined in Step 3) and roll 2d6 on Table 2.10: Leader's Fate for each army's leader.

If the Narrator allowed heroes to lead formations in battle (see 'Heroes in Battle' on page 77) the roll may be modified: -1 if the led unit was imperilled this round and -3 if it was destroyed.

In the event an army's leader is Injured or Wounded, the army becomes Leaderless (see page 76) until the leader recovers. In such a case it is possible for a heroic player character or appropriate NPC to assume command of the army. In order to successfully assume command during the chaos of battle, such a character must make an Inspire or Intimidate test whose TN is equal to the number of units in the army. He may also add twice his picks in the Rank edge, if it is relevant to the majority of soldiers in the army. If provisions were made before the combat was joined ('If I fall in battle, command falls to Aragorn son of Arathorn!') the TN is half that number. Clearly, it is very difficult to assert control over a large army while battle rages. In any case, if the original leader recovers, he automatically retakes command of the army.

## FIGHTING ON

Once a round of battle has been resolved each side has the opportunity to withdraw from the field of battle or fight on. If both sides choose—or are forced, because of their positions—to press the battle, go through another round. If one or both sides withdraw, the battle is over and the adventure narrative resumes, with the consequences of the battle obvious to all who participated. If one side withdraws and the other still wants to press the attack the Narrator must decide, based on the circumstances, whether another round of battle must be fought or whether the fleeing side can successfully escape.

### ROHIRRIM ARMY RECORD

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 4,000 (40 units)

LEADER: Théoden King

| UNIT OR FORMATION       | UNITS | C | R  | ME | T  | S | M  | SPECIAL |
|-------------------------|-------|---|----|----|----|---|----|---------|
| Rohiric Medium Infantry | 20    | 8 | 6  | 11 | 12 | 6 | 6  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Infantry  | 16    | 8 | 6  | 9  | 9  | 6 | 8  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Archers   | 4     | 8 | 10 | 8  | 10 | 6 | 10 | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |         |

### WHITE HAND ARMY RECORD

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 10,000 (100 units)

LEADER: Naught

| UNIT OR FORMATION         | UNITS | C | R  | ME | T  | S | M  | SPECIAL           |
|---------------------------|-------|---|----|----|----|---|----|-------------------|
| Uruk Heavy Infantry       | 10    | 8 | 5  | 14 | 16 | 5 | 6  | Fighting Uruk-hai |
| Modifiers:                |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Infantry    | 60    | 7 | 6  | 10 | 12 | 4 | 6  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Archers     | 10    | 7 | 12 | 7  | 12 | 4 | 8  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Infantry | 15    | 6 | 4  | 7  | 7  | 5 | 8  | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Archers  | 5     | 6 | 8  | 6  | 8  | 5 | 10 | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       |   |    |    |    |   |    |                   |



# EXAMPLE OF BATTLE

*But the Hornburg still held fast. . . . Its gates lay in ruin; but over the barricade of beams and stones within no enemy as yet had passed.'*

— *The Two Towers*

To illustrate the abstract combat system, the set-up and first battle round of the Battle of Helm's Deep is presented below as it might have happened in a Narrator's chronicle. Some elements presented in the book and film have been simplified or glossed over to make this an illustrative example.

The first decision the Narrator makes is that the conflict will be fought at battle scale, meaning that one unit will be composed of 100 soldiers and each battle turn will represent one hour of fighting.

# UNITS AND ARMY RECORDS

First, the Narrator must assemble an army record for each force. Théoden took roughly 1,000 fully armoured Rohiric knights to Helm's Deep. There they met Gamling, who commanded the garrison at the Deep, consisting of 2,000 Rohirrim from the muster at the Fords of Isen and 1,000 who represented Gamling's regular command. Roughly one-fifth of these were archers. This is a total of 4,000 troops. The knights, brought by Théoden, would normally be cavalry, but their horses are useless within the Hornburg and they are therefore Rohiric Medium Infantry, rather than Heavy Cavalry. Gamling's command are Rohiric Medium Infantry while 1,600 of his 2,000 mustered troops are Rohiric Light Infantry and the other 400 are Rohiric Light Archers. The Rohiric army record appears on page 83.

Saruman sent an army of 10,000 composed of his fighting Uruk-hai, a host of Orcs, and many Dunlendings who bore an ancient hatred for the

Rohirrim. The Narrator decides they are divided into types and formations as shown on the White Hand army record on page 83.

The Narrator notes the Rohiric army has an effective value of 98,000 (20 units Rohiric Medium Infantry) + 73,600 (16 units Rohiric Light Infantry) + 20,800 = 192,400.

He further notes the forces of the White Hand have an effective value of 61,000 (10 units Uruk Heavy Infantry) + 282,000 (60 units Orkish Medium Infantry) + 52,000 (10 units Orkish Medium Archers) + 55,500 (15 units Dunlending Light Infantry) + 21,500 (5 units Dunlending Light Archers) = 472,000.

He sees Saruman's forces are theoretically more than twice as effective as the Rohirrim, but notes that the strength of the Legendary fortification of Helm's Deep will contribute greatly to the Horse-lords' effectiveness in battle. He decides these forces will be suitable for the battle he has planned. This illustrates the importance of the Narrator considering fac-

## EFFECTS OF TERRAIN AND SITUATION: ROHIRRIM

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 4,000 (40 units)

LEADER: Théoden King

| UNIT OR FORMATION       | UNITS | C  | R  | ME | T   | S  | M  | SPECIAL |
|-------------------------|-------|----|----|----|-----|----|----|---------|
| Rohiric Medium Infantry | 20    | 8  | 6  | 11 | 12  | 6  | 6  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +18 | +6 |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Infantry  | 16    | 8  | 6  | 9  | 9   | 6  | 8  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +18 | +6 |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Archers   | 4     | 8  | 10 | 8  | 10  | 6  | 10 | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +18 | +6 |    |         |

## EFFECTS OF TERRAIN AND SITUATION: WHITE HAND

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 10,000 (100 units)

LEADER: Naught

| UNIT OR FORMATION         | UNITS | C  | R  | ME | T  | S | M  | SPECIAL           |
|---------------------------|-------|----|----|----|----|---|----|-------------------|
| Uruk Heavy Infantry       | 10    | 8  | 5  | 14 | 16 | 5 | 6  | Fighting Uruk-hai |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    |    | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Infantry    | 60    | 7  | 6  | 10 | 12 | 4 | 6  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    |    | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Archers     | 10    | 7  | 12 | 7  | 12 | 4 | 8  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    |    | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Infantry | 15    | 6  | 4  | 7  | 7  | 5 | 8  | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    |    | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Archers  | 5     | 6  | 8  | 6  | 8  | 5 | 10 | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    |    | -2 |   |    |                   |



tors other than an army's effective value when planning an epic battle in the chronicle.

## BATTLE IS JOINED

By the time the Narrator decides it is time for battle to be joined, the forces of the Rohirrim are solidly within Helm's Deep and the army of the White Hand is marching on the Deeping Wall. He hands the army record for the forces of Rohan over to the players and instructs them that—until he tells them otherwise—they may make battle decisions on Théoden King's behalf even though he is an NPC in the chronicle. Then the Narrator begins following the seven steps of the abstract battle system.

## STEP ONE: TERRAIN AND SITUATION

Looking down the list of terrain and situation modifiers, the Narrator rules the Rohirrim are in a Legendary

Fortification (+10 Toughness, +6 Support, +5 Ranged Combat), but no other terrain modifiers apply.

Considering the situation modifiers, he declares the Rohirrim are Defending Homeland (+2 Command, +4 Toughness), Nobleled (+4 Command, +4 Toughness, as Théoden King has Rank 4), and Outnumbered (-3 Command, as their opponents are fielding between two and three times the number of units they are). He declares the White Hand are Badly Supplied (-4 Command, -2 Toughness) and Leaderless (-3 Command).

These modifiers are recorded on the army records as shown.

## STEP 2: THE ORDER OF BATTLE

Because Théoden King leads the Rohirrim while the White Hand have no leader, the forces of Rohan automatically win the opposed Siegecraft

test. They elect to defer their movement to the armies of Saruman.

## STEP 3: LEADERS' POSITIONS

The players, thinking collectively, decide Théoden King can lead to best benefit from atop the walls of the Hornburg, alongside his men, but slightly removed from danger. They choose the Thick of Battle position.

The Narrator must also decide whether and how the other heroes present will be integrated into the battle. While he wants the presence of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli to be noted he doesn't want to allow them to lead individual units or interrupt the battle with a complex narrative. He decides to allow each hero to choose a battle position and leave it at that. The players controlling Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli each choose to place their respective hero in the Heart of Battle.

### EFFECTS OF MANOEUVRES: ROHIRRIM

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 4,000 (40 units)

LEADER: Théoden King

| UNIT OR FORMATION       | UNITS | C  | R  | ME | T   | S  | M  | SPECIAL |
|-------------------------|-------|----|----|----|-----|----|----|---------|
| Rohiric Medium Infantry | 20    | 8  | 6  | 11 | 12  | 6  | 6  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +19 | +6 |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Infantry  | 16    | 8  | 6  | 9  | 9   | 6  | 8  | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +22 | +6 |    |         |
| Rohiric Light Archers   | 4     | 8  | 10 | 8  | 10  | 6  | 10 | —       |
| Modifiers:              |       | +3 | +5 |    | +18 | +6 |    |         |

### EFFECTS OF MANOEUVRES: WHITE HAND

SCALE: Battle

TOTAL ARMY SIZE: 10,000 (100 units)

LEADER: Naught

| UNIT OR FORMATION         | UNITS | C  | R  | ME | T  | S | M  | SPECIAL           |
|---------------------------|-------|----|----|----|----|---|----|-------------------|
| Uruk Heavy Infantry       | 10    | 8  | 5  | 14 | 16 | 5 | 6  | Fighting Uruk-hai |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    | +2 | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Infantry    | 60    | 7  | 6  | 10 | 12 | 4 | 6  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    | +6 | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Orkish Medium Archers     | 10    | 7  | 12 | 7  | 12 | 4 | 8  | Cave-dweller      |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    | +2 | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Infantry | 15    | 6  | 4  | 7  | 7  | 5 | 8  | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    | +2 | -2 |   |    |                   |
| Dunlending Light Archers  | 5     | 6  | 8  | 6  | 8  | 5 | 10 | —                 |
| Modifiers:                |       | -7 |    | +2 | -2 |   |    |                   |



As the armies of Saruman have no leader and no heroes, there are no positioning decisions to make for them.

#### STEP 4: MANOEUVRES

As determined in Step 2, the White Hand execute their manoeuvres first. They are allowed the standard allotment of two manoeuvres. In addition, the formation of Uruk-hai can take advantage of their special ability to make one additional manoeuvre on their own.

The Narrator sees the armies of Saruman, with their lowered Command, stand no chance of successfully executing an Assault Fortification manoeuvre against a Legendary fortification. As Charge tests Movement and only requires TN 10, the Narrator declares that the Orkish Medium Infantry will attempt this manoeuvre. He rolls a 5, succeeding with a test result 11. That formation receives a +4 bonus to its Melee Combat. Next, the Narrator decides the Orkish Medium Archers will Concentrate Fire on the Rohiric Medium Infantry in hopes of eliminating them from the battle early. Their Ranged Combat 12 compared to the manoeuvre's TN 10 would normally indicate success without a roll, but the target formation is twice the manoeuvring formation's size, which makes the modified TN 15. With a roll of 7, the manoeuvre succeeds and the Rohiric Medium Infantry will suffer -3 Toughness this round. Finally, the Narrator uses the Uruk-hai's special ability. Their formation executes the Press the Attack manoeuvre. Their Melee Combat score of 14 cannot fail against that manoeuvre's TN 15, so a +2 Melee Combat bonus is added to every unit in Saruman's army.

Next, the players choose the manoeuvres for their army. In addition to their standard allotment of two manoeuvres, they gain one additional manoeuvre due to Théoden's position in the Thick of Battle.

First, they see Far Strike affects their opponents' entire army, but can only be used on the first round of a battle. They test their Rohiric Light Archers' modified Ranged Combat 15 against TN 20 but roll 4, failing with a test result of 19. For their second manoeuvre the players talk about trying to Receive Charge, but it occurs to them that any unit of theirs that attempts it will have to compare its own size to the 60 units of Medium Orkish Infantry who executed the Charge. Even their largest unit would need to achieve TN 25 to succeed (considering the +10 TN modifier that would result), so they discard that idea. Because their Rohiric Medium Infantry suffered a Toughness penalty as a result of the enemy's Concentrate Fire



manoeuvre, they declare that it will Stand Firm. They roll 5, add that formation's modified Command 11, and beat the manoeuvre's TN 15. This increases the Rohiric Medium Infantry's Toughness by 4. Liking the results of that manoeuvre, the players decide that the Rohiric Light Infantry will also Stand Firm. They roll a 7 and also succeed. (Note that the Rohiric Light Infantry had to perform whatever manoeuvre the players decided on, since all other formations had already performed manoeuvres and it had not.)

The effects of these manoeuvres, cumulative with existing modifiers from situation and terrain, are reflected on page 85.

#### STEP 5: LAUNCH ATTACKS

Because the White Hand executed their manoeuvres first they also launch their attacks first. The Narrator decides to resolve his Orkish Medium Infantry first, choosing the Rohiric Medium Infantry as their target. Melee Combat is the obvious choice of attribute and he rolls 7 for an attack test result of 23. This results in failure because the Rohiric Medium Infantry have Toughness 31. (In fact, the Orcs would have had to roll a natural 12 followed by a 3 on their bonus die to achieve even marginal success. There is a reason Helm's Deep has never fallen while the Men of Rohan defend it.)

The Narrator continues. The Uruk-hai attack the Rohiric Light Archers because they have the lowest Toughness of possible choices. They employ Melee Combat, miraculously roll a natural 12, follow it up with a 2 on the bonus die, and achieve complete success. Because they number 10 units they can imperil each of the four units, assign -2 Support to each of the four units, and assign a further -2 to two units. Thus, two of the four units of archers will be making their Support tests at -4 and the other two will be making their Support tests at -2. (The Uruks cannot spill their additional imperilment to other formations because no other formations have Toughness equal to or less than the formation they imperilled.) The Orkish Medium Archers use their Ranged Combat to attack the Rohiric Medium Infantry, roll a 7, and fail. The Dunlending Light Infantry use their Melee Combat to attack the Rohiric Light Archers, roll an 8, and fail. Finally, the Dunlending Light Archers open fire with their Ranged Combat on the Rohiric Light Archers, roll a 5, and fail.



The forces of Rohan launch their counter-attack before casualties are determined on either side. Again considering the situation collectively, the players decide that they ought to concentrate their attacks on the Uruk-hai because if they can eliminate that formation their enemies will have one less manoeuvre to use against them each round (because the Uruk-hai are the only unit with a special ability that gives them extra manoeuvres). The players begin with the Rohiric Medium Infantry. They use their Melee Combat and roll a 4, at which point the group vows that the player responsible for the roll will never again be allowed to roll on their behalf. After calculation, however, they see that their result is complete success against the reduced Toughness of the Uruk-hai. They imperil all ten Uruk units. They have ten 'points' of imperilment left over, and must decide whether to further penalise the Uruks' Support rolls or spill leftover imperilment onto other units. One player points out that while most Uruk units are likely to fail a TN 15 Support test without the penalty, one or two of them might make it, which would leave the formation intact and allow their opponents the benefit of the third manoeuvre they were trying to eliminate. With a -2 on their tests, however, only units who can roll a

natural 12 will survive—probably none. They decide to give each of the 10 Uruk units a -2 Support. The Rohiric Light Infantry are up next. The players decide that the mass of Orkish Medium Infantry are a grave threat and concentrate their Melee Combat test there. They roll an 11 for a test result of 20. This beats the Toughness-based TN by ten points: not quite enough for extraordinary success, but a very handy superior success. They imperil 32 of the 60 units of Orkish Medium Infantry (because on superior success twice the attacking formation's size is imperilled). Finally, the Rohiric Light Archers use their Ranged Combat to attack the same formation of Orkish Medium Infantry, roll 4, achieve complete success, and bring that formation's total imperilment to 36.

#### STEP 6: DETERMINE CASUALTIES

Each side now makes a Support test (TN 15) for each imperilled unit, making sure to count all Support penalties that arose when attacks were resolved.

The Uruk-hai of the White Hand begin. Because their Support was reduced to an effective value

of 3, to succeed and survive these units must roll a natural 12. After ten rolls, none of them do, and that entire formation is crossed off the army record. Next, any given unit of Orkish Medium Infantry, with Support 4, needs to roll 11 or 12 to survive. As 36 units were imperilled, the Orcs have 36 rolls to make. To save a bit of wear on his wrist the Narrator decides to test them in groups of three. In twelve rolls, the Narrator rolls one 11 and one 12. Six of the imperilled 36 survive, leaving that formation with only 30 units remaining. No other White Hand units were imperilled.

Rohan's only imperilled units are the Rohiric Light Archers. Recall that two of the four have -4 Support and the other two have -2 Support because of the way the Uruks who successfully attacked them allotted their imperilment. Those with -4 roll 4 and 9 for test results of 12 and 17. Compared to TN 15, one lives and the other dies. Those with -2 roll 6 and 7 for test results of 16 and 17. The TN is the same, so both survive.

#### STEP 7: LEADERS' FATES

Before the battle round is complete the fates of the leaders must be determined. The players roll 2d6



for Théoden and get an 8. Recalling he was in the Thick of Battle and referring to Table 2.10, they see he is Uninjured. Because the Narrator allowed Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli to choose battle positions, they must also roll. Rolling 11, 7, and 5 respectively, Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli are Uninjured, Injured, and Wounded.

As the hosts of the White Hand have no leader they have no rolls to make.

## Fighting On

The round of battle is over. The attacking force has broken against the Deeping Wall, sustaining serious losses while inflicting almost none. The Narrator decides privately, however, that they will not retreat from the field of battle. What he knows—and the players do not—is that Saruman's army has been preparing their Fire of Orthanc. The Narrator has decided this potent powder will give one formation a +15 to any test to execute the manoeuvre Assault Fortification. If they are successful they will eliminate the overwhelming modifiers the Rohirrim derive from their Legendary fortification. The next round of battle may go much differently.

## Other Considerations

This example provides some insight into how good battles are structured using these rules. At first, the Hosts of Rohan seem vastly outnumbered. Yet they have their ancient stronghold which more than evens the odds. But then, the Armies of Saruman are provided with the means to circumvent the walls of the Deep. Looking ahead even farther, the Narrator knows Gandalf is leading Rohiric reinforcements to the scene of battle. Dramatic developments keep battles interesting. Without them,

armies which outnumber their enemies or bring vastly superior force of arms to bear usually win.

## BATTLE RESOLUTION: TACTICAL

*'And as if in answer there came from far away another note. . . . Great horns of the North wildly blowing. Rohan had come at last.'*

— *The Return of The King*

Although the abstract battle system offers players many options, sometimes you may want a more spatial representation of what's happening on the battlefield than the abstract system can provide. The tactical battle system overlays any battlefield with a battle web that identifies potential Arenas of combat and the Paths that connect them. Battle webs can be drawn at any scale. They can cover battles between handfuls of units or keep track of conflicts like the War of the Ring, tracking the movement

of troops across all of Middle-earth. On the Battle of Helm's Deep Battle Web on the facing page, the circles represent Arenas. The lines connecting them are Paths.

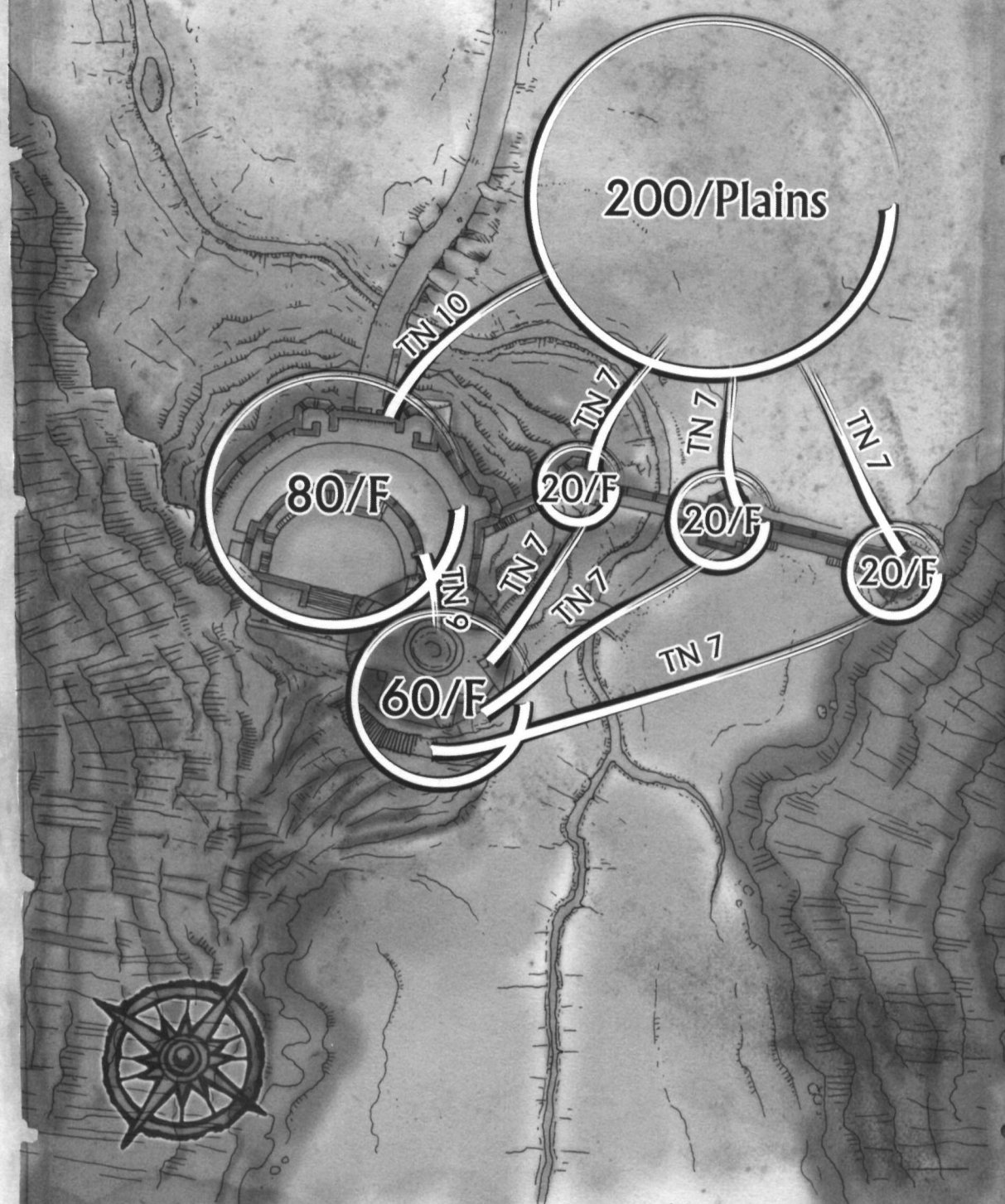
There are two advantages to employing this system over the abstract system. First, it gives you and your players greater control over what units are doing, where they fight, and how manoeuvres and positioning affect the outcome of the battle. If your players want the sensation of actually moving their armies around on the battlefield, this system can convey that feeling. Second, it allows you to track the movements of large or small armies across any region of Middle-earth. By creating a battle web for the entire region your chronicle covers, you can place troops where you think they belong, then move them around using the rules provided, allowing them to respond to events in your chronicle. Using this method not only lets you keep track of large armies over the course of months, it also provides opportunities for dramatic development as (for instance) heroes await the arrival of reinforcements. Although the tactical system does provide more realism than the abstract system, it is impor-



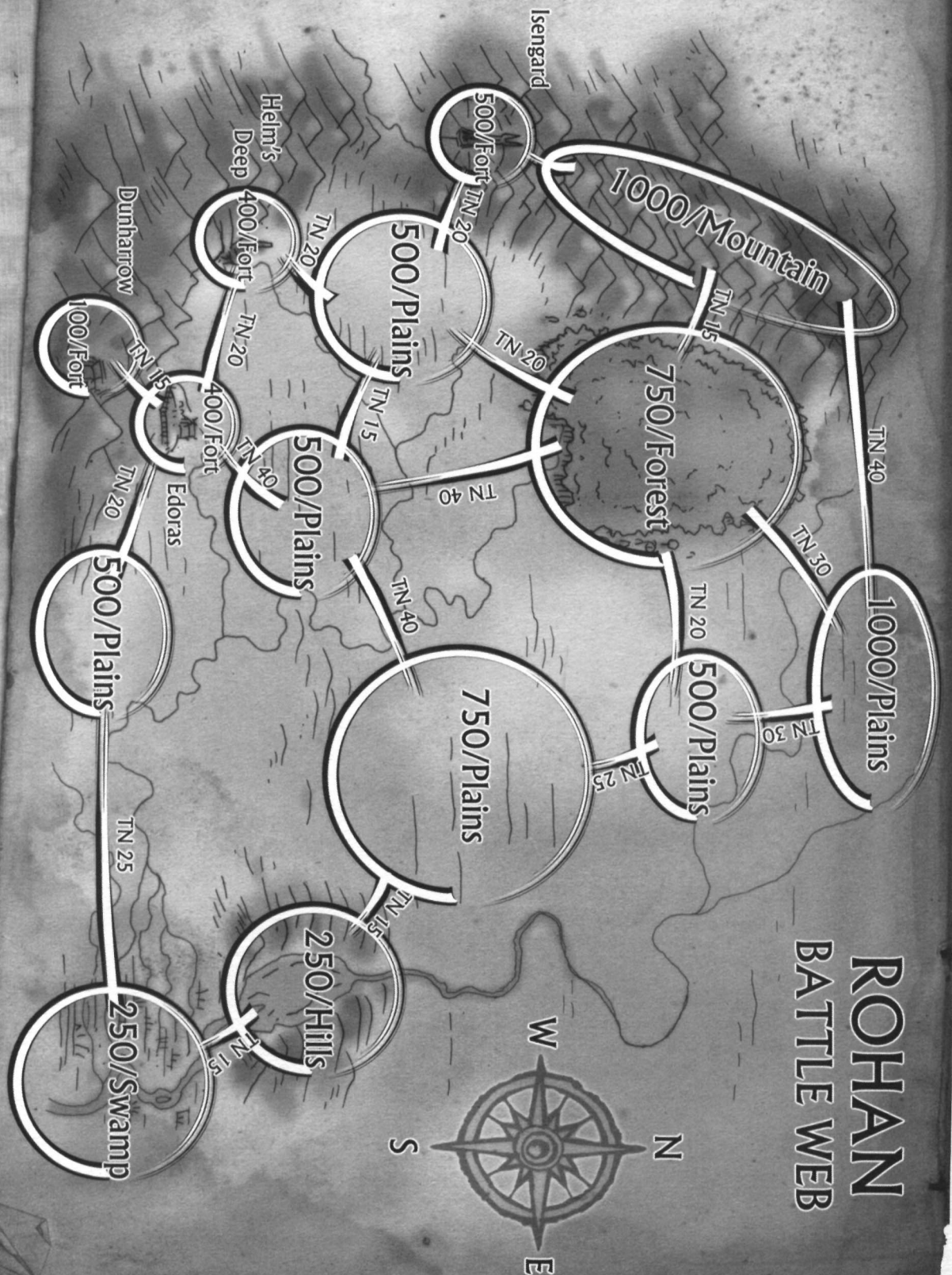


# BATTLE OF HELM'S DEEP

## BATTLE WEB







tant to remember there are still many abstractions present in it.

Normally, conflict within a given Arena is resolved using the rules of the abstract system. Depending on the Size of the Arena, however, you could decide to build another battle web existing wholly within one of the Arenas on your map. You could, for instance, build a battle web for all of Rohan where Helm's Deep was a single Arena. You could then build another web, at a different scale, showing different Arenas within Helm's Deep. The battle webs of Rohan and Helm's Deep illustrate this concept of nested battle webs. Battle webs of various scales give you many options for resolving battles. You can use large-scale webs to resolve large battles quickly or scale down for more detail and more tactical options.

## ARENAS

An Arena is any large section of the battlefield where units are likely to gather and fight. Each Arena represents a separate area of conflict, though events in one Arena can affect the outcome of conflict in another. In relatively small-scale battle webs such as Helm's Deep, for example, archers in one Arena can contribute their Ranged Combat attribute to an adjacent Arena. Arenas are considered 'adjacent' if a Path exists between them.

Arenas have two properties, *Terrain* and *Size*. *Terrain* describes whatever land feature is prevalent in the Arena. A single Arena cannot have more than one *Terrain* type. *Size* indicates the total number of units that can normally fit in an Arena. Because unit size varies at different scales of battle, each battle web must be created with one of those scales in mind.

## PATHS

Paths represent the routes armies can take when moving between

Arenas. Each path has a TN representing how difficult it is for a unit to move along that path in a single round. High TNs might represent great distances, difficult ground, or a combination of both. Some Travel TNs are so high a unit must make extended tests and take several rounds to travel along them.

## CONSTRUCTING A BATTLE WEB

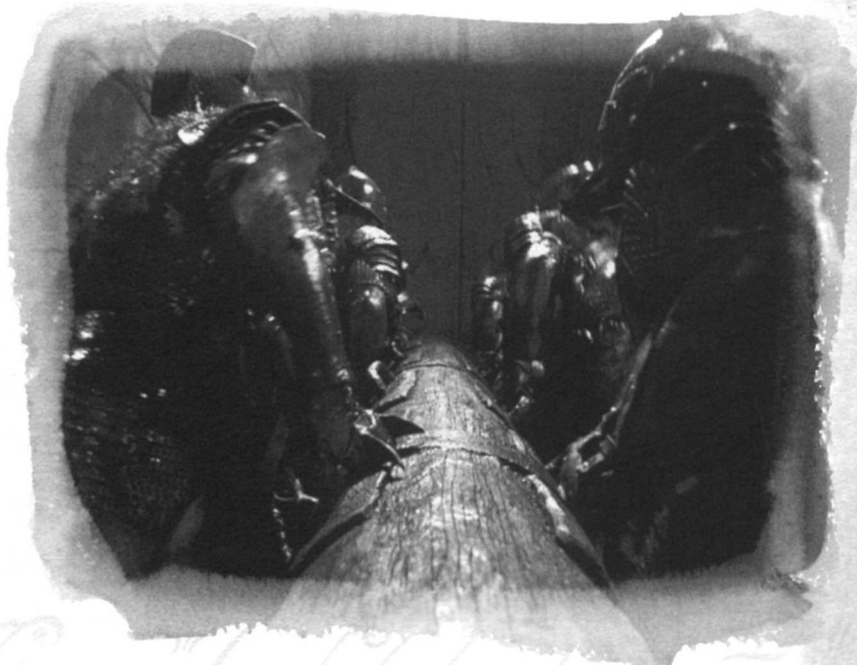
Building a battle web is more an art than a science, and involves a great deal of estimation and guesswork. Through examining the examples provided, however, you can learn to quickly lay a battle web over virtually any locale. Because of the extremely flexible nature of the concept of battle webs, you *could* build a battle web that covered all of Middle-earth in just a handful of large Arenas and long Paths. Until you've used battle webs a few times, though, your first attempt should concentrate solely on the battlefield, ignoring the larger issue of units moving from region to region in your chronicle. Remember, after you've constructed a battle web for your first battle, you can nest that web within a single Arena on a large web.

The first thing you must consider is the scale of the conflict. Will the battle web host Skirmish-sized units, Battle-sized units, or Epic Battle-sized units? It is, of course, possible to move from scale to scale by multiplying or dividing Size attributes by ten, but you may as well create your web at the best scale the first time.

The next step is to draw a map. You can base your map on an existing map—such as those in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* source-books or Decipher's Maps of Middle Earth series—or create your own from scratch.

After you have a map it's time to put Arenas and Paths on it! Any large, open area is a good place for an Arena. After you've drawn Arenas on all the open areas where troops might fight or attack from, you should also examine the map for any fortifications, buildings, or other terrain features the battle might be focused on. When thinking about an appropriate Size for an Arena, consider how many soldiers might be able to squeeze into it. To determine Size from there, divide that number by the number of combatants in a single unit at the scale you've chosen.

You must also choose the *Terrain* of each Arena. No Arena may have





more than one Terrain type. If two types are possible (such as an Arena with both mountains and forest) either pick the dominant feature or break the Arena into two smaller Arenas linked by a Path.

On the Helm's Deep map, for example, there are basically two areas: the area outside the wall, where the Armies of Saruman will gather, and the area inside the wall, where the Hosts of Rohan await the coming onslaught. Added to this are Arenas based on the fortification. The Hornburg itself is one Arena, while the Deeping Wall gets three Arenas. If a simpler map was desired the entire Deeping could be considered one Arena, but by breaking it into three Arenas both sides have more tactical choices.

Since each Path represents a means of moving from one Arena to another, the easiest way to determine where

Paths go is to examine your map and the Arenas you've placed and consider how easy it is to move from one to the other because of distance or terrain. Recall that most units have Movement scores that range from 6–10, so if you want to make movement uncertain you'll need Paths of TN 12+.

You should also consider whether it is even possible to move directly from some Arenas to others. For instance, at Helm's Deep the only way an Orc outside the wall could gain entrance to the Burg would be to first take the Deeping Wall or Outer Court. If you place Paths that connect all of the Arenas to each other you remove many of the tactical possibilities from the battle web.

As detailed below, archers can contribute their Ranged Combat attribute to an Arena if a Path of TN 12 or less

exists between the archers' Arena and the targets' Arena. Keep this in mind when placing Paths on your battle web. If you believe archers should be able to fire between two Arenas, you should place a Path there.

### USING THE TACTICAL SYSTEM

Once the battle web is in place, combat can begin. The following sections describe the differences between the abstract and tactical systems step by step. The cardinal rule of the tactical system, however, is that unless explicitly changed, the rules of the abstract system are followed.



## SET-UP

Both sides construct army records just as they do under the abstract system. The only potential complication is that formations under the tactical system are allowed to 'split up' so some units can go to one Arena and some can go to another. As they divide you may discover that different terrain modifiers (for example) apply to units that are located on the same line of the army record, making record-keeping difficult. You may want to keep spare army records handy to record the varying statistics of formations that split apart. It is important to note even though formations are allowed to split up to move to different locations, all of the units of the same type that wind up in the same Arena automatically become a single formation as soon as they stop moving. (If units of the same type arrive at a given Arena but have different attribute modifiers they may elect to remain separate. As soon as their modifiers equalise—typically at the beginning of the next battle round—they must combine into a single formation.)

## STEP 1: TERRAIN AND SITUATION MODIFIERS

Terrain and situational modifiers are applied by Arena. Most situational modifiers apply to the entire army, but terrain modifiers might apply to one Arena and not another. A battle web might have two nearby hills, for example. Each hill could be an Arena with the Hill Terrain, while the ground between them might be an Arena with the Valley Terrain type. Units in the valley would be at a severe tactical disadvantage. They suffer from the Valley penalties, while the units on the hills benefit from the Hill bonuses. It is important to note the terrain modifiers applied to a unit in Step 1 persist until the end of the battle round even when units subsequently move to an Arena with a different Terrain. Note also that when

one Arena has units from opposing sides in it, both sides gain the modifiers from the Arena's Terrain.

## STEP 2: THE ORDER OF BATTLE

The order of battle is determined the same way in the tactical system as under the abstract system.

## STEP 3: LEADERS' POSITIONS

The three positions available to leaders are the same as under the abstract system. In addition to choosing whether to be on the Outskirts, in the Thick of Battle, or at the Heart of Battle, each leader must also determine which Arena he will go to. Because leaders are much more mobile than massed units of soldiers, each round a leader may choose to go to any Arena on the battle web as long as his side already has at least one unit there.

If the Narrator allows heroes to lead units (see 'Heroes in Battle' on page 77) they must obviously go where the units to which they are attached go.

## STEP 4: MANOEUVRES

In the abstract system the success of a Manoeuvre test determines if one army flanks another, and provides flanking units a bonus to their Melee Combat attribute. In this tactical system, however, two units flank another simply by virtue of both being able to attack an enemy's position from different Arenas. The bonus they gain is the ability to bring greater force of arms to bear upon the enemy. Thus, successful tactics need no manoeuvres; they are their own reward.

Nevertheless, there are plenty of manoeuvres formations can perform in the tactical system. The most important is a new manoeuvre called 'Move.' It enables formations to move from Arena to Arena. A number of

manoeuvres described in the abstract system also remain available. Units can still Assault Fortification, Aid the Wounded, and Receive Charge (for example) even though the field of battle is now broken into Arenas. All of the manoeuvres allowed in the tactical system are described below.

The number of manoeuvres available to each army is the same as under the abstract system.

## Assault Fortification

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Command

TN: Varies by fortification type as described in the abstract rules.

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules. In cases where a single fortification consists of more than one Arena, certain defenders—at the Narrator's discretion—may not receive a bonus from their fortification depending on which direction their attackers came from. If, for example, a unit of Orcs were successful in taking one section of the Deeping Wall at Helm's Deep, defenders in adjacent Arenas on the wall would probably not receive its bonus against those Orcs.

## Aid the Wounded

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Support

TN: 10

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules. The target unit must be in the same Arena as the acting unit.

## Charge

*First Strike Only*

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Movement

TN: Path TN + 5

EFFECT: Charge is just like Move, save that the TN is higher and upon arrival in the destination Arena the moving formation receives a +4 bonus to its Melee Combat.



## Commit Archers

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Ranged Combat  
**TN:** Path TN

**EFFECT:** Any unit can commit its Ranged Combat to an adjacent Arena with a connecting Path of TN 12 or less. If successful, the formation that executed this manoeuvre can declare an attack against any formation in the target Arena during the Launch Attacks step.

## Concentrate Fire

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Ranged Combat  
**TN:** 10

**EFFECT:** This manoeuvre can only target a formation in the same Arena, but is otherwise as described in the abstract rules.

## Hearten

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Support  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** As described in the abstract rules. The target unit must be in the same Arena as the acting unit.

## Inspire

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Leader  
**TN:** 10

**EFFECT:** As described in the abstract rules, save that the bonuses apply only to units in the same army and in the same Arena as the leader.

## Move

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Movement  
**TN:** Path TN

**EFFECT:** When a formation attempts to move from one Arena to another it must make a Movement test against the TN of the Path it must move along. If the test is successful the formation arrives in the Arena it was moving to. If it fails, the controlling player has the option to remain in the original Arena or turn the test into an extended test. In an extended Movement test, the acting formation records the test result of its Movement test. It may then

attempt another Move manoeuvre on the next round of battle, adding the new test result to its previous total. Once the total test result exceeds the Path TN the formation arrives at its destination.

Formations using extended Movement tests to move from one Arena to another are considered *en route* and cannot affect or be affected by the battle. Even two opposing formations using the same Path may not fight one another. If you think formations will frequently cross the same Paths simultaneously you may want to place an Arena along it, creating two shorter travel Paths and an Arena where battle can take place.

Formations may attempt to traverse more than one Path with a single Move manoeuvre only if the Arena between them is unoccupied or occupied only by friendly forces. To traverse more than one Path, the formation executing the Move manoeuvre simply adds the two Paths' TNs together and tests against the sum. On a success the formation arrives in the ultimate destination Arena at the end of the second Path. If this test fails the formation remains in its original Arena and does not have the option to initiate an extended Movement test. This is the danger of

trying to move too far at once under battle conditions. It is not possible to traverse more than two Paths in a single round of battle.

It is important to note Arenas can contain units from both sides at once. In fact, this is the only way they can battle one another! During the Manoeuvre step an Arena can contain up to twice its Size in units. Once this limit is reached, however, no more units can move into that Arena.

## Press the Attack

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Melee Combat  
**TN:** 15

**EFFECT:** As described in the abstract rules, save that the +2 bonus applies only to units in the same army and in the same Arena as the formation executing this manoeuvre.

## Rally

**MANOEUVRE TYPE:** Leader  
**TN:** 10

**EFFECT:** As described in the abstract rules, save that a unit can only be reformed in the Arena where it perished or an Arena adjacent to that one, and can only be reformed in the Arena where the leader is located.

## THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CAPTAINS

As the system presented in this chapter replaces the unit combat system in the core book, some of the order abilities of members of the Captain elite order must be amended to work with these rules.

**FIRES OF DEVOTION:** The bonus provided is +2 Command to an entire army (if the Captain is the army's leader) or +4 Command to a particular formation (if the Captain leads only a single formation according to the option presented under 'Heroes in Battle' on page 77). If slain, the army (or unit) suffers -2 Command for 1/2-d6 battle rounds. The +2 bonus to Inspire test remains unchanged.

**HERO'S STRENGTH:** The bonus provided is +1 Melee Combat to an entire army (if the Captain is the army's leader) or +3 Melee Combat to a particular formation (if the Captain leads only a single formation according to the option presented under 'Heroes in Battle' on page 77). If slain, the army (or unit) suffers -2 Melee Combat for 1/2-d6 battle rounds.

## Receive Charge

*Response Only*

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Melee Combat

TN: 15

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules.

## Shield Wall

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Command

TN: 15

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules.

## Single Combat

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Leader

TN: 15 (10 using the abstract rules)

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules, save that two leaders can only enter single combat if they are in the same Arena.

## Stand Firm

MANOEUVRE TYPE: Command

TN: 15

EFFECT: As described in the abstract rules.

## STEP 5: LAUNCH ATTACKS

Once both sides have finished executing manoeuvres battle is joined in each Arena that contains forces from opposing sides. (It can also occur in Arenas that were the target of a Commit

Archers manoeuvre.) To resolve these engagements the abstract system is used as though each Arena were a completely separate field of battle. Formations launch attacks in turn against other formations located in the same Arena. Units are imperilled as normal, though imperilment can only spill over to other formations in the same Arena. Because dividing a battle over Arenas decreases the number of units involved at any given location, the optional 'Attacks by Unit' rule is especially appropriate under the tactical system.

## STEP 6: DETERMINE CASUALTIES

Imperilled units must test to avoid destruction just as under the abstract system, but once all imperilled units across the entire battlefield have tested there is a new factor to consider in the tactical system: Arena Size. If casualties in a given Arena do not lower the sum of units there below the Arena's Size, all units that moved into the Arena that battle round must move back to the Arenas they came from. When the Arena to which a given unit must return is full it may move into any other Arena adjacent to the Arena the unit was

fighting in. If this proves impossible, the unit is destroyed.

## STEP 7: LEADERS' FATES

The fates of leaders in battle are determined the same way in the tactical system as in the abstract system.

## FIGHTING ON

As in the abstract system, battle continues for as long as each side wishes to press the attack. The layout of the battle web may provide insight to the Narrator about whether it is possible for a given side to disengage if their opponents want to continue the attack. He may rule that all formations that successfully reach a given Arena are safe and can escape, for example.

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*Sauron's wrath will be terrible, his retribution swift. The battle for Helm's Deep is over. The battle for Middle-earth is about to begin.*

—Gandalf, *The Two Towers* film

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—Aragorn, *The Two Towers*

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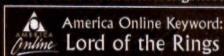


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ISBN 1-58236-961-5



No. 103592



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