

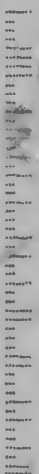
# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



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## WORDS FROM THE WOODS

There is a down side to the enormous popularity that ME-PBM has gained in only a few months! The rate at which EARTHWOOD games are filling has greatly reduced! The rate has decreased SO much that EARTHWOOD is being considered for retirement. It has had an extraordinary run over the past 12 years and it may be time for us to consider letting it go. Soooooo, if you want to get into just one more game, let us know SOON. It may well be that the game currently filling will be the last!

3-week games of ME-PBM are currently filling. They take slightly longer to fill than 2-week games, but give you that extra time to plan and to avoid the idiosyncrasies of the US Postal Service. So, if you're interested in a 3-week game, write in and let us know!

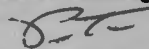
And if you are having late arrival problems with the post, maybe it's because you're only using a 5 digit zip! Make sure and give us your 9 digit number. It will help the post office to get your turns to you faster!

Standby players are still needed for ME-PBM. These are positions which are still viable in the early weeks of a new game when a player must stop playing for one reason or another. Please understand that you can NOT request to be put into a specific game. If you're on the Standby list, you will be notified when a position opens up and given a choice to start play in that game. So, if you're interested in getting on our standby list, just give us a call. If you have a preference for Good, Evil, or Neutral, let us know that as well.

For those who want a rulebook that already contains the few changes which have been made since ME-PBM began, ME-PBM 2nd Edition is available for \$5.00. This edition has corrected the typos and added the words that were missing from edition #1. The 2nd edition is automatically provided to the player with each new registration.

Well, with June here, summer is definitely not far away. And summer bring with it GenCon/Origins. This year, both conventions are being held at the same time and place! Everybody is going! We hope to see you there. If you're going to attend any convention this year, this is the one not to miss! Bill and I are planning again to offer a seminar for our players. This year will obviously focus on ME-PBM and we hope to be joined by some of the resident Tolkien gurus from I.C.E. as well. Plan on coming - you never know WHAT you can learn at such a time!

Good Gaming,

  
Pete Stassun



## ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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## PERSONALS, CLASSIFIEDS, AND WHAT-NOTS. . .

Every current player in a GSI game is entitled to a free forty word submission to this column each issue, for each game they are in. Further submissions require a charge after the initial 40 words of \$2.00 per each additional 40 (41-80 words is \$2.00 etc. ). GSI reserves the right to refuse material deemed unsuitable.

### GENERAL

#### State of War?

Ho-hum life's too dull - Bruce and Stephen of NY would like to know-will anyone challenge us in SOW. We're too sexy to lose! PS- Where's Winn War?, you still alive?

\*\*\*\*\*

### GRUDGE GAME

10 Free Peoples challenge 10 Dark Servants. Contact Dean Lehr or Bill Feild @ GSI.

Middle-earth™ *BBB*

#### GAME 2

If Nightblade isn't dead already, then he will be soon!

Gallantrisydy

#### GAME 3

Baaltrac,

Thanks for taking such good care of Morannon! I'm proud to take up where you left off...but I must say, the gates are now closed to those sweaty horsemen from Rhovanion - No Eothraim Allowed!  
- Ren the Unclean

\*\*\*\*\*

Enion the beloved was indeed killed by the vile Dancu before the gates of Fornost. I have now assumed command of the remaining

forces of Dunland. We shall not quit, we shall not forget!

Kurgan the Dunman

\*\*\*\*\*

Mûrazôr:

Dancu may have beaten Enion at Fornost, but the Free Peoples shall prevail. Both Mt Gundabad and Mt Gram have already fallen. Carn Dûm will be next and Bain will finish the job at Fornost.

Baaltrac

\*\*\*\*\*

Azaghal,

Tell me again of your great victory against the Long Rider. Azaghal? Where are you? Thelôr? Falin II? Eoder? Is there anybody out there?

Bain

#### GAME 4

At last the Cloud Lord displays his strength and is humbled by Gondor's superior armies. You had better go back to skullduggery, but beware I've been sharpening my guillotine for you.

Celdrahil

#### GAME 7

Did I feel the bite of those annoying gnats again? No, must have been the former armies of the Dwarves and the Northmen. Any more takers?

The Great Khan

#### GAME 12

Dear Fulla,

Welcome to Buhr Waldmarh. You should have brought more troops - your army has no chance against our elite cavalry. I'll give you a chance...cross blades with me. If you win, your army will survive.

Love, Tros

\*\*\*\*\*

After the mournful funeral of Warlord Camlin, the people of South Gondor rejoiced at the public execution of Ji Indur. The realm of the Cloud Lord will be no more.

The Dol Amroth Tribune

\*\*\*\*\*

A shadow passed over Goblin Gate during the night. After the passing the warrior Falin, a follower of Bain I, was found in 3 different areas of the castle there. Where next shall the shadow fall? Beware Sinda, darkness comes for thee.

The Shadow of the East

#### GAME 13

How many Dark Servants does it take to subdue a Neutral? The Haradrim have freed the Corsairs, Quiet Avenger, and Cloud Lord for 11 turns: 4 towns lost, 3 leaders assassinated, but we still endure!

The Haradrim

#### GAME 14

Not all Numenorean 'Kin' have been lording over 'ordinary' men! I Haruth Ramam, Lord of the Haradwaith, do however agree that Gondor should fall! I, and my brothers Dunland and Rhudaur, will do all we can to make it so! 'Free Peoples' your policies forced my

hand! Now pay for what you have done!

Haruth Ramam, Lord of Harad

\*\*\*\*\*

The Free Peoples treat the Neutrals as anything but "free". The Harad will tolerate this no longer! No matter the outcome of the war; Now it is personal. Gondor feel our wrath.

Carlion, Lord of all the Southern Lands

#### GAME 16

Even though the lessor of us have tried to sow the seeds of discord within our ranks the Free Peoples will continue to stand together against the hated foe. Death to the Dark Servants!

Angamalite, Lord of the Seas

#### GAME 17

Well things seem to be getting a lot more active here. Fire King, tough break bub. Long Rider, yeah, right. Dog Lord? Haven't seen him. Probably hiding under a rock, maybe I'll toss you a bone.

The Shadowhawk Player #6

#### GAME 18

We are the terror that stabs in the night. We are the Robin Hood that empties your vaults. We are the "Dark Servants' Knife".

Doc Cold Toes' Midnight Pokers and Pickpocket Bunch

#### GAME 19

Yo, Marl -

What say we clean up this corner of Arnor Reborn and head south, sweeping the dirt out of

Rhudaur and Dunland as we go?! I hear there are still a few non-Good regions left...

Love, Dawnmist

\*\*\*\*\*

People of Middle Earth:

Rejoice!! Barad-Dûr itself has fallen! Khamûl, Ji Indûr, Hoarmûrath, Ren and Gothmog lie slain. Thousands of Free People pour through the Gates of Mordor. Gondor stands united and evil feels our wrath!

Celdrahil

\*\*\*\*\*

So, Ji Indur received what he deserved, RIP. Another Nazgûl bites the dust. My course has become clearer now, I know whom I shall join.

Zarendarger(22)

\*\*\*\*\*

Free Peoples,

Rejoice for the Evil in the north known as Angmar is no more. Unfortunately, Lord Marl Tarma and Regent Sarkar were slain in the conquest. They will be remembered.

Argeleb II  
King of Arnor

GAME 20

Noldo Elves,

Watch your back and decide who your enemies are.

Death + 4

GAME 21

The Easterlings and Haradwaith have entered into a defensive pact. If sufficiently provoked by either side we will join the other.

Haradwaith

In a driving storm Earnil fell to Dancu's sword, as shall other good. Though in passed form, the forces of Cardolan have been reduced today at Angamalte's hero's hands.

Over and Out  
The Witch-king

GAME 22

"Rhudaurian propoganda is rampant. Their public statements indicate they alone are active. Untrue! The Free simply act rather than threaten. Reference reports from Goblin Gate that indicate Dwarven troops with a 3:1 advantage took less than 1:10 losses..."

Extract from Dwarven  
Intelligence

GAME 23

Free Peoples News Release:

- North Gondor prevents Dark Servants from entering Gondor; The Witch-king feels wrath of the Free People; Haradwaith and Corsairs vow to rid Harad of the Quiet Avenger; Celdrahil foils assassination attempt -

\*\*\*\*\*

The Khazad mourn their fallen leader. A new leader rises from the Dwarven armies to carry the battle against the forces of evil. Enjoy your triumph, Khamul, whilst you may! The Khazad shall yet cause you great pain.

\*\*\*\*\*

King Argeleb II has fallen. His 2700 men are dead. All four of his artifacts stolen. The Rhudaur have gone evil. Yet, the Arthedain fight on! Death to the Witch-king and all who follow.

Prince Amlaith of the Arthedain

Tragedy strikes the forces of Light. Bain I and Argeleb II have been slain. The Woodmen have been destroyed. Chaos reigns. Can the forces of Good even hope to fight the dark. You bet. (We could do it blindfolded).

Gisulf

GAME 24

Ice King,

What happened to the largest fighting machine in Endor? Northern Gondor hasn't crumbled, and the Eothraim did all the sweeping aside, and now you own the largest pile of dead orcs in all Endor!

Celdrahil

\*\*\*\*\*

To All Nations,

Be it known that no one but the Corsairs speaks for the Corsairs!

Cryändil, King of Corsairs

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi!!! I'm the new Dragon Lord. Hey, I'm a nice guy and would like to talk to everyone. So, please send all hate mail, love notes or anything else to me ASAP.

Well...Good Luck  
Khamûl

GAME 25

The Dark Servants continue to die one-by-one! The Free Peoples are working together as a united alliance. We will be victorious! Neutrals: Now is the time to join the winning side!!!

King Benjamin

GAME 26

The Easterlings fiercely proclaim their neutrality. We strive for commerce with all nations. We

suspend all previous territorial claims and related negotiations - the hills and plains contain room enough for all! We denounce all rumors of our alleged aggression!

- Ovatha

GAME 27

There is little hope for the Dragon lord. Bain I of the Khazâd, Beoraborn of the Woodmen nation and I, Amroth of the Sinda Elves are camped outside the gates of Dol Guldur.

Next Month: The death of the Witch-king...

\*\*\*\*\*

Arise Free Peoples,

Send forth your armies now, against the Dark Servants, while they still thaw from Winter's grasp. Dragon Lord at 3506 is mine. The Dark Lieutenants town at 3120 is destroyed. Next shall be the Dog Lord who feels my wrath. Huddle not in your towns and villages (it's too expensive) strike now!

Lord Mahrcared  
War Leader of the Eothraim

GAME 28

Knowing the importance of a positive outlook in the face of adversity. Er-Mûrazôr said to his eight remaining allies, "Well, at least the role call portion of our war council is becoming easier."

Subedei Bahadur  
Prince, Southern Gondor

\*\*\*\*\*

Dark Servants,

Bring it on!

Naurmegil

PS - The phrase Dark Servants now includes the Easterlings (though it seems it always has).

## GAME 29

Posted in Kas Shadoul..People of Harondor arise! Ramam and Carlon are fools! They were warned to side with the servants. Kas Shadoul will become rubble unless you cooperate now!

Malezar - Emissary for the Seventh of the Nazgûl

## GAME 31

To the Slaves of Sauron,

Welcome to my fortress tall I'll take some time to show you 'round. Impossible to break these walls for you see the steel is much too strong. My warriors and wizards will rule the world with mithril blades to steal your souls.

Hard Harry #7

\*\*\*\*\*

Beware of Scott clones. The Rin of Light is hidden here, beyond the pine. The ambassadors speak nothing; so do I. I dream I move and groove like Mike. Be like Mike.

-Fisher King

\*\*\*\*\*

Goblin-gate and Carn Dûm:

What do these two major towns have in common? Both are nothing more than a handful of ashes blowing in the wind.

Thrar III

Editor of the Khâzâd-dûm Daily

\*\*\*\*\*

The battered remnants of the Eothraim nation flee across the plains of Rhovanion. Who among the Free Peoples will be the next to feel the wrath of the Servants of Sauron?

Akhorahil, The Blind Sorcerer

## GAME 32

Hail, Elrond, Coward of Imladris:

War is in the land. All will kneel before Sauron or be destroyed. Will you hide until the last? It shall avail you not, for in the end we, the Dark Servants, shall pluck you from your hidden holes and hang your people from the trees they love. But, you are safe for now. No, now others shall suffer our wrath, we shall kill until the land runs red with blood and even the sun itself will fear to rise. Woe unto the free peoples of Middle Earth, woe and despair. The dark tide turns to wash you away!

So sayeth Khamul,  
The Dragon Lord

## GAME 33

With a sword of fire I will cleave through the darkness. All nations take notice as the might of Northern Gondor swings into motion!

Naurmegil

PS - Ren, does it really take every soldier you have to defeat 400 new recruits?

## STATE OF WAR

### GAME 75

Paladin (Washington),

I've given you 6 turns to start sending help to the East. Neutral states are on your border, and you still just sit there. So now you must die!

Silvanus, (The Black Company)

### EARTHWOOD - THE SEA KINGS

### GAME 41

So you want to play hard ball.  
OK!! I shall come for you one by

one. HW #25, you first. You offered me friendship and gave me a stab in the back. I on the other hand will hit

you head on. You have been warned the Storm is coming.

The Angry Storm

Strategy for ME-PBM...

## ME-PBM - A Few Suggested Strategic Tips

ME-PBM is a game for sharp minds and patient dispositions. I now consider myself very experienced in most aspects of the game. I have experienced all three points of view available in the game having played the Witch-king, Dwarves and Rhudaur in three different games. I wish to pass on some of the more practical strategies of the game for novice players and hopefully give some ideas to some of the more experienced players.

Most (not all) military nations have:

- 1) 5000 or more total troops.
- 2) Troop training levels of 30 or more.
- 3) A large number of starting characters with decent (30) to excellent (60+) command skill (this doesn't include artifacts).
- 4) The ability for some nations to recruit new troop types at training ranks above 10.

A fairly easy determination system for you to tell if yours is a character strong nation:

- 1) Most nations characters start with their primary skill ranks in the 30 to 40 range with 1 or 2 characters having considerably more skill.
- 2) Most nations also begin with challenge ranks below 40 for most of their characters.

So if lots of your characters have high skill and challenge ranks you are probably a character oriented nation. There are a few nations that are strong in both categories, but those nations are usually in close proximity to multiple hostile nations.

Early in the game military oriented nations are usually more exciting to play. Most military nations have economic deficits in excess of 10,000 gold to start with, which means that military expansion is usually the best way to solve your deficit problems. First things first, you must get back-up commanders in each of your armies. The most practical way of doing this is by transferring command to one character, while keeping former army commanders attached to the new army. Remember, you can never have too many army commanders attached to an army. Back-up commanders can train individual troop types much more quickly than an

The first thing you need to determine before you begin writing your character's orders is what type of player position do you have, for instance a military strong nation, or a character strong nation. In my research I've developed a generalized formula which can be used to determine if your nation is strong militarily.

army commander can train the entire army. Multiple commanders can quickly whip even training level 10 troops into shape if you continuously train them every turn. The main purpose of your military is to expand your economic base by taking enemy population centers while preventing enemy forces from taking your population centers. Threatening undefended population centers is the most desirable way to gain them. Study the population size factors on page 113 of the rulebook. The total number of troops required is usually low enough so that you can make a decent attempt if you have a skilled commander. Be forewarned though, you either need the appropriate number of troops listed on the chart and an excellent commander (60+), or you need considerably more troops than listed, and a decent commander (40+).

If your deficit becomes dangerously high, you may want to capture rather than threaten any undefended population centers. This serves two purposes, your troops take casualties thereby reducing your army costs, and this method is a more certain means of gaining a population center (ie If you threaten a population center and fail you don't reduce your deficit, don't gain a population center and you won't have an affect on the center in anyway!)

One rule to keep in mind - Never take on more than one enemy at a time if you can help it. However, if an opportunity presents itself and you decide to break this rule, make sure you can eliminate one of your enemies from the game soon (say within 5-6 turns) while you keep your other enemies occupied. Just remember a two front war against both Russians on one front and the rest of the Allied nations on the other is generally regarded as Hitler's biggest mistake of World War II (luckily for us). You may not have the economy or the resources to maintain a two front war and be able to exploit an enemy's weaknesses fully. A good military leader in ME-PBM will also constantly work with allies against a common enemy (thus putting him/her into a two or more frontal war situation) until that enemy is eliminated by bankruptcy, losing their last available capital, or by dropping out of the game due to player frustration.

Character oriented nations usually have other priorities, and usually have to be run by a player who is willing to be patient, and make slow but steady gains by having Emissaries improve existing pop.

Other more specific items I feel players should know in relation to character types:

**Emissaries:** Improve your population centers early while you have a gold reserve, especially if you don't have any hostile neighbors attacking you early in the game. This improves your long term economy without raising your taxes.

**Mages:** I suggest you specialize your mage in one of four categories:

- Combat:** learn defensive and/or offensive spells for Army or character combat.
- Artifact:** dedicated to researching and locating artifacts.
- Info:** dedicated to scrying, locating armies or characters to gain any additional intelligence information.

centers, create new pop. centers, and coordinate military strikes with allies. However, if your nation starts surrounded by enemies you may have to quickly move your armies against one enemy, personal challenge their army commanders (and back-up commanders) and try to frustrate that player into dropping out of the game, or at least intimidate him/her into a purely defensive mode. You should also attempt to combine your armies for the same reasons listed above, plus the fact that you will repel invading armies. Go with your strengths. If your nation starts with excellent Mages send them out early to disrupt enemy movements by casting appropriate spells to locate and eliminate weaker characters (especially back-up commanders), locate and reveal hidden enemy pop. centers, etc. Good agents are especially valuable for disrupting enemy plans. You can steal gold, sabotage bridges or fortifications, kidnap or assassinate army commanders, and generally make life miserable for someone. Take risks with your agents. If you start with good agents (40+) and you take no risks you'll find that the players with lousy to mediocre agents (most players) will be taking risks early and surpassing your characters' skills quickly. Never trade or give away agent or stealth artifacts. They are worth their weight in mithril for starting up new agents and creating a few "super agents" with ratings in excess of 100 eventually. Emissaries are valuable for expanding your resources for sale and improving your population centers. They can also recruit double agents and influence enemy population centers to gain skill quickly.

**Healing:** usually a character with mage as a secondary skill. dedicated to healing army commanders or characters injured by army combat, personal challenges or encounters.

**Agents:** Steal from non-capital locations when developing your low level agents. You have a decent chance of succeeding, and if you fail you are usually injured, not killed, if the attempt was not made at the capital or a guarded location. Agent is a great complimentary skill to add to a newly created commander. A newly created commander/agent can train troops and guard the army commander every turn and increase his challenge ranking quickly (faster than any other skill combination I've seen), another important aspect for nations who don't start with good agents. Also, don't forget-Guard your capital! Gold theft at a capital can mess your plans up for several turns.

**Commander:** Train your troops every turn! This is the best way to improve your challenge rank, and if you combine lots of commanders into one army you can quickly develop some excellent troops no matter how miserable they are to start with. Keep at least one of your better commanders at your capital to issue all those important capital-only orders that only commanders can issue. Hire and train replacement troops at your capital to keep improving their ranks when not issuing commander only orders.

As for the various listed supplemental material available out there, if you are planning on sticking with the game long-term, in my opinion some of the required texts are: I.C.E.'s Lords of Middle Earth volumes 1, 2 and 3 and the Creatures of Middle Earth. These will let you research 90% of the characters and/or monsters you will run into in the game. The other I.C.E. material is enjoyable reading (especially if you are a Tolkien fan) but isn't as useful (unless you are going to invade a nation and want to see what characters you may have to face or where possible fixed encounters may be located if used in ME-PBM). Creatures of Middle Earth has been especially useful in identifying the many "foreign characters reported in hex-" reports. Contrary to most players initial reactions, those characters at your population center are not of enemy nations performing acts of sabotage and/or theft from you, however, they are more likely to be NPC's who randomly drift around the map influencing the loyalty of the population centers and in some cases being a nuisance to the players. If you have Creatures of Middle Earth you'll be able to determine that the character in your population center named Leucaruth is really a dragon, not an enemy agent and if

you are an evil nation then you should leave her alone because she can be somewhat beneficial to you. For those of you who play the Dwarves you will learn that she particularly hates Dwarves, so you should flee if you encounter her (and pray for the best), or go for broke and attack her (good luck! you'll need it.) because she probably won't be in the mood to talk to you anyway.

You should also adopt both long and short term goals immediately after determining the locations of your nearest enemies and allies. Long term goals can be something like balance your economy or to eliminate the Witch-king from the game, whereas short term goals can be to eliminate the Witch-king army at hex 2713, locate artifact #124, etc.

If you're a neutral you should cooperate with one side or the other early in the game, this will eliminate half of your potential enemies while giving you valuable time to grow. So, if things are going well then you can declare your allegiance for the side in which the relations are good, and if not, then you can always assist the other side. If I'm playing a non-neutral nation that is a potential threat and they don't want to cooperate, I would prefer to attack them sooner rather than

## Middle-earth Strategy Guide

### Playing the Dark Servants

by David Hill

later. If three armies were to show up at three of their population centers they may declare allegiance to your side, if you promise to give back at least two of the population centers immediately. (Always follow through on your threats because you can always transfer population centers back if they begin to see the light.) Economically neutrals usually start with better potential than most of the other player positions. If they are allowed to grow and they attack you then it's your own fault.

Communication and coordination are the keys to victory in this game. Even the Ultra powerful nation of Northern Gondor is reasonably easy to defeat if 3 or 4 Mordor based nations begin attacking them with coordinated strikes. (Assuming Northern Gondor doesn't coordinate with other good nations to help them out.) In general when beginning a military campaign, first pick an enemy then contact allies in the area to coordinate attacks until

that nation is either eliminated or drops from the game, before proceeding on to the next target. Attack population centers in the mountain hexes sooner rather than later. If your troops become low on food mountain hexes become more impossible to move onto even if you force march your troops. And lastly, check your map each turn to see if someone may have dropped from the game (in the three games I've played in there's been a 20 to 40% drop rate per side by turn 10). A player who may have dropped will be a nation that hasn't moved its armies in 2 or 3 turns. After a while armies of an inactive nation will disappear if they are not located at one of their own population centers. Uncover Secrets with emissaries from time to time can also tell you if a nation has collapsed while also informing you of any nation which have to eliminate any of your characters as part of their victory conditions.

Good Luck,  
Melkor, Lord of Sauron

(Editor's Note: GSI neither confirms nor denies the accuracy of these figures, or the efficiency of the strategy.)

Poem for ME-PBM...

### The Death of Tarondor

By: Will Parker

This was a true and mighty king of men,  
Who led his people through times good and bad.  
He was not perfect and not without sin,  
But people loved him and he made them glad.  
Children used his name as a magic word,  
And soldiers honored him with cheerful praise.  
The people they called him a hawk, a bird,  
Whose reign burned brighter than the sun's rays.

Yet struck down he was by assassin's blade,  
And with him the might of Gondor did fade.  
On a marble slab his body was laid,  
While plans of vengeance were hastily made.  
We mourn for you, our noble Tarondor,  
In our hearts you will live forever more.

Almost every evil nation faces a deficit problem early in the game and, compounding this, needs gold to finance more characters and armies. To solve this problem, you can sell your production, create camps, disband troops, raise taxes or take over enemy population centers. This last alternative is the best strategic course you can adopt. I have played several games as a dark servant and have never gone bankrupt, but I continually hear deficit problems are the most vexing part of the game. So here are some tips for new players to get past your first turns.

Selling production is a temporary solution that is useful early in the game while the market prices are high. Creating camps therefore will not help your deficit as in the time it takes to create the camps, market prices will have dropped too low. Disbanding troops is not an option as it leaves you wide open to an attack. If you really cannot afford an army, suicide them against the Free People so you at least weaken your enemy at the same time. Raising taxes is also a temporary solution as it still confines your nation to a revenue ceiling.

A combination of the above tactics can help get you past the agonizing first few turns. First, sell everything you produce that's worth more than 10,000 gold the first turn. Have your best commander raise your taxes to 75% on the first turn- there are usually characters in all your population centers which diminishes the reduction in loyalty. Create camps in mountains and

plains, but make sure you leave your emissary there a few turns to build up loyalty or you may lose it the next turn. While you still have a surplus in cash, create the maximum number of characters possible. This will give you more options later in the game as you can issue more orders and have more powerful characters.

If your surplus gold diminishes, stop selling your production and let your taxes be raised automatically. This saves wasting a Command order. Be sure you have characters in population centers with loyalty less than 30 or else you might lose that center! Remember, you cannot issue orders that cost gold while your gold reserve is zero.

While you are taking the above steps to correct your deficit problems, you need to plot your future expansion. Your army should not sit idle during this period as they cost too much gold to do nothing. The best way to use your army is to transfer all the light troops to one group and all the heavy to another. Keep the heavies in reserve so that they can be trained and outfitted in steel. Use the lights as cannon fodder against enemy armies or as a force to take over population centers.

Taking over other population centers is the best strategic course for your army to take. Not only do you increase your revenue stream, but you decrease your enemy's which drags them closer to an early bankruptcy. Losses to your army will also help correct your deficit problem. GSI's only warning against this course is that it makes your neighbors hostile,

but they're already hostile! This is a war game in which twenty players already know who their

enemy is. Conflict is inevitable, so get going!

The above strategies are general and should be adapted to your current situation depending on how the nations around you are allied. Here are some specific tips to playing the Dark Servants:

**LONG RIDER:** You have the best protected population centers of any Dark Servant, so you can attack immediately with little fear of reprisals. All the towns around the Sea of Rhun are owned by Free People except 4318/4014 which are Easterling, so take your pick. The army in Southern Mordor should be brought forth immediately and attack the Northern Gondor towns along the way. The Northmen are easy pickings early in the game, but watch out for help from the Eothraim - their armies are deadly. Use your agents to steal gold with skill of 40+ and assassinate army commanders when their skill exceeds 70.

**DRAGON LORD:** Recruit heavy infantry to guard your two major towns near Mirkwood. The Woodmen and Sinda Elves are easy pickings early, but watch out for the Dwarves and possibly the Eothraim. Your northern army can either attack the Sinda towns nearby or reinforce Goblin Gate. Your capital is heavily fortified and so you can transfer the lighter troops to your 60 commander to threaten the towns near you.

**WITCH-KING:** Your survival depends upon which alliance Rhudaur and the Dunlendings choose. Develop relations with the other Nazgûl early so you can learn quickly whether someone dropped and take over a secure major town. This nation has many encounters which are very

interesting and deadly. If a character appears in one of your towns, avoid it! You have no chance of recruiting dragons, but a good chance of dying.

**QUIET AVENGER:** You need to recruit heavy inf/cav quickly. Your neighbors have much stronger armies and can take you out easily. Put your feet under one commander to patrol the shore and delay enemy fleet movements. Write the Haradwaith and Corsairs to see if they are interested in taking on your defended major towns or Southern Gondor's many undefended towns.

**THE MORDOR SIX:** There are three Free People nations and one Neutral nation in your immediate vicinity. The Easterlings should be taken out early unless you are absolutely certain they are on your side - they are too close to your blind side to be left alone. Focus all of your armies/agents against Northern Gondor and the Eothraim to keep their powerful armies at bay. Your nations suffer from large deficits, so don't let your troops sit idle - ATTACK, ATTACK, ATTACK! This may seem obvious, but I've heard too many players whine about their deficits while their armies guard their capital. Most of your capitals are heavily fortified or sheltered from Free People, so a defensive strategy will spell disaster for your team. Also, remember that you are a team and never let victory conditions sway you to backstab an ally.

( Editor's Note: GSI neither confirms nor denies the accuracy of these figures, or the efficiency of the strategy. )

## The Ring

By: Will Parker

There it lay, Evil's wretched thing,  
I knew at last I had found the one ring,  
Glittering there in its pale yellow gold,  
It lay waiting, deadly silent and cold.  
I reached forth with care and with trembling hands  
Took hold of the power that rules all lands.  
Holding the ring up to the dying light,  
I beheld all its majesty and might.

The ring is poison, that I now do know.  
It corrupts all, from best friend to worst foe.  
The Dark Lord's soul has tainted it forever,  
In this, his most triumphant endeavor.  
Some want it destroyed and raise such a fuss,  
But I will fight to protect my precious.

## COMMENCEMENT

by Ironboot

Commencement address of Ironboot, Marshal General of the Free Peoples to the graduates of the Unified Command School:

Congratulations new Captains and Commanders, praise for one and all. You have completed your work at Command School, finishing the job you began last fall. Now as you go to lead your nations, in times beset with war and woe, remember what you have learned here, let it guide your path as you go.

Assess clearly your situation, use wisdom to guide your plan, set goals and then priorities by such actions you will stand. Communicate with other nations, even those you expect to hate. Valuable knowledge is gained this way, do not learn it too late. For even nations opposed may find their interest align, but only way to benefit from this is to learn it in time. Be certain to see to your income to ensure a steady gold flow. There are many ways to do this, we will discuss them as we go. One way is taxes, raise them as much as you dare. The trade-off here is loyalty, something I do not lightly spare.

Next is the use of emissaries, to plant new camps of your own, or take them from your enemies though they may be reluctant the camps to disown. Emissaries can also improve locations where your people live, while this is costly, camps vs cities, the cities have more gold to give. Using Agents must be

considered in both a defensive and offensive way. This both increases their proficiency and provides you with more pay. Agents may guard the home treasury and loot the enemy town. Maps may also assist, telling you where gold may be found. Consider well the size of your armies for the soak up much gold in pay, do not hire more without plans to use them, lest your own armies get in your way. There is also the use of the armies to take from the enemy what you need, beware, since this makes him angry, you may pay more than you think for your greed. So much has been said about budgets, the balancing of income and expense. Yet it is the major key to victory with population centers you cannot dispense.

Let us now speak of optimal timing of when and whether to go to war for the above necessary planning has already been made before. First you must pick a target then put your enemy down for it would not do to merely wound him in time he could drag you through town, better still, if you co-ordinate with your allies for no nation can stand long three-against-one for with such a gathering of forces your task will be done. When directing your armies and instructing them which cities to take, remember striking his undefended

is an attack he will find hard to shake. First best is to threaten his cities if your lead commander has rank, next best is to capture, to add his resources to your bank. But if your troops need training or morale is low before the fray then to destroy the enemy center may sometimes be the best way. If you must face his armies as occasionally one must do, be sure that you have a second commander to duplicate what you do. If the enemy forces are small and you have no doubt you will win, then use your mages in defense preserve as much of your forces as you can. If your enemy is larger and you do not expect to see the other side of the fray then command your mages to attack take down many of the enemy with you in that day

Consider whom to hire based on your strategy and plans if you believe the conflict will run long hire more skills in fewer hands. If you want to slay dragons this is what I suggest you do. Hire a Commander-Mage-Agent, and place him in the army at the capital, too, while his army commander maneuvers the army too. In this way the your dragon slayer improves in all three skills so sooner, rather than later he may go out to make his kills. Who then you should hire, depends on what circumstances press your hand, and you must remember to be flexible too. So, leave now to lead your nation, plan well and be wise as you can, may you be saved from devastation, may life of the enemy be in your hand.

## The Journey Begins

By: Will Parker

As I stand looking down the shadowed road,  
I wonder where it leads and where it goes.  
Apprehension and doubt make up my load,  
And the path feels foreign beneath my toes.  
Sight cannot pierce the misty cloud ahead,  
Instead a flood of visions fills my view.  
The air has grown chill with my growing dread,  
I know at last what I have come to do.

The time has come for us to go our way,  
Now is the time and today is the day.  
We must be steadfast and make our own way,  
Despite the troubles that ahead may lay.  
Neither you nor I know where this path ends,  
But take the first step, the journey begins.

Strategy for ME-PBM...

## To Destroy, Capture or merely Threaten

by Christopher Dexter

### 'Some Tips on Population Center Combat'

So now you've got a powerful army put together with extra commanders, some mages and various troop types in large numbers; and you've decided to go thrash upon the enemy to make them sorry that he/she ever thought of getting into this game. Well, there are some things that you should take into consideration before you go out to make the

other players fear and tremble when they hear your name.

The first is that when you give the order to "Destroy" a population center, it is not only that population center you are destroying. That population center is not going to let you come in, tear it apart and kill everybody there. They are going to fight back, and if there are any fortifications,

they are going to fight even harder. So, you are going to lose troops while destroying the population center. As you lose troops, your army gets smaller, and because it does, you are awarded less victory points on the turn that follows, and, of course, your ability to attack other population centers and enemy armies is diminished. All you get out of it is a couple of points of command rank for your commander, an increase in your army's training and morale, and a pile of ruins that used to be a population center. Perhaps some may get overwhelming joy by sending a 3\*5 card to the vanquished foe with a message that boasts of great destruction, but really that player loses more than they gain.

The order to "Capture Population Center" accomplishes the same thing only that the population center is not brought down to ruins, but is reduced by one size. Now, if there is an enemy army targeted population center, then issuing any of the above orders will cause your army to do battle with them as well. Which means that you lose more troops and may mean that you won't even

have enough troops left to be able to attack the population center.

The least painful way to take a population center is to use the "Threaten" order. If your army has enough troops combined with War Machines to threaten the "Population" center (see Rulebook pp. 22-23), then essentially what happens is that the Commander says, "Surrender to us and no one will die!" Then your army goes into the city, takes down the enemy flag, hoists up your nation's flag; and then the troops meet the mayor, visit the taverns, do a little shopping, see the sights, kiss some fair maidens, insult some ugly ones and then they're off to the next place of conquest. As a result, you haven't lost a man, the Population Center then produces for you rather than for its former owner and it all adds to your victory points. No deaths, no loss of armor or morale, everyone has had a good time, How much better can it get?!

So, if you want all other players trembling at the mention of your name, have them tremble because you can take their cities and keep right on going without losing a man.

## The Seduction of the Nine

By: Will Parker

Nine they were, men of power and of might,  
Seduced they were, by Evil's wretched hand.  
They served the darkness and they served the night,  
Their control stretched across the entire land.  
Some were enemies and some were close friends,  
Yet all fell to the power of the ring.  
Their lives came to horribly tragic ends,  
And all did answer that fateful calling.

Under one evil all came to be one,  
Under The Dark Lord's guidance all became dark.  
Nine they were, they had lost, Evil had won,  
Hear me now for my words you should well mark.  
Greed and pride brought about their destruction,  
Won't you please learn from the Nine's seduction.

## The Hall Of Heroes

### **Venom**

**GAME 21** - In 42 turns the Demigod Cronus #7 defied all odds and became a God. He used his skills to the highest degree and slayed all those who opposed him. Congrats to him!

**GAME 22** - In 30 turns the Demigod Logan #10 laid waste to all those who opposed him. In our last game of Venom he became our final victor. Our hat goes off to you on a job well done!

### **State of War**

**GAME 69** - In 34 turns the alliance known as DDT moved swiftly through the states to overwhelm the opposition. The alliance was spearheaded by player #3 and he gained support from players #1 and 5. Congrats!

**GAME 72** - In only 29 turns the alliance called 1/2 of the Big Red + 2, led by player #13 took full control of the states. The alliance also contained players #5, 7 and 8 who were very instrumental in the success of this mighty team. This Bud's for you!

## The Hall Of Heroes

### **EARTHWOOD**

**Game 221**-Because We Can ends up a winner in a game that has lasted 42 turns! Only three players were needed to conquer all enemies! Our congratulations go out to players #11, 20, and 24 on a job well done!

**Game 226** - After an incredibly short game, (only 24 turns) the Guardians of the Flame has destroyed all opposition and gained full control of Earthwood! Congratulations to #10, 18, 22, 23, and 25 !!

### **STATE OF WAR**

**Game 74** - In an exceptionally close game, the Governor of New Mexico edges out his allies to become the leader of the new Confederation! Only 12 points separated the lowest point total from the highest and second place was only 4 points from the winner. Congratulations to players #2, 4, 6, and 8!