

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME  
SYSTEMS  
INC.**

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## WORDS FROM THE WOODS

This is the 12th issue of this year's Whispers offerings. Every year at this time, we turn to you the players and offer our thanks for making Whispers as enjoyable as it has become. Without your stories, brags, poetry and strategy articles, we couldn't have done it. So our hats off to all of you - well done!

Now, just because I've applauded you, don't think that you can stand on your laurels! We still need those articles, poems, and strategy sessions. Let's have some rebuttal, too. If you don't agree with a position taken by a player in a strategy article, then tell us and all of the other players why! Remember that every story which is accepted will generate a free turn for the author, so get those fingers to typing!

Now that people are beginning to use our fax facilities, a question has been posed by one of you that needs input from all of you. One player wants to know whether GSI would be willing to run a one week game of Middle-earth where all the turns would be faxed to GSI and GSI would mail the turns back. This could be a tight schedule but it IS workable. If anyone out there is interested in such a game, please let us know.

Also, there are a number of players who have formed groups who wish to compete with other groups in ME-PBM. One group would play the Free Peoples and the other the Dark Servants. GSI would add in the 5 neutrals who would be solicited by either or both sides. So if you can gather 10 or 12 players and wish to take on a similar team in a Tolkien battle to the death, just let us know!

Finally, it looks like GENCON/ORIGINS is going to be the convention of the century and it occurs in Milwaukee this August! If you are planning to attend any convention this year, try to go to this one! It appears that it will undoubtedly be the biggest and the best. We're going to provide all of you with ballots to vote for your favorite new PBM game of 1992. We would be more than pleased if you would vote for Middle-earth PBM. We certainly feel that it is the finest of the '92 offerings and we hope that you will feel the same.

Good Gaming,



Pete Stassun



## ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of EARTHWOOD, EARTHWOOD - THE SEA KINGS, STATE OF WAR, AND ME-PBM™. Subscription rates: \$15.00 for one year (12 issues) or \$25.00 for two years (24 issues). Individual issues cost \$1.75. GSI reserves the right to change these prices without prior notice of any type. Back issues are available.

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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

#### \*\* MIDDLE EARTH \*\*

"Ten Dark Servants want to play a team of 10 free people. Looking for people to form the good side. The Neutrals (a team of 5) will be supplied by GSI and be unknown to either side. Willing to play any group, but we can be contacted via Compuserve. Phone (605) 775-2462 or send message to Compuserve at 71241, 1206. Looking for experienced, mature players."

Keith Petersen

\*\*\*\*\*

Please do not let ME-PBM become polluted by riff-raff from other games. Maintain the flavor of ME-PBM by using names authentic to the times none of this "baaltroc" or "psycho-pirate" garbage! Keep to your own humorous games.

Dwarves

Middle-earth™ PBM

#### GAME 3

A reports from the field: killed: Bulrakur, Kaldurmeir. Captured: Morannon. Disbanded: Two armies totalling 2700 troops. Dwarven Losses: None. Bain, Excellent job. You may choose your next target.

Baaltroc

Evil grows while the Free People fall, where will the Neutrals throw their weight? All of Endor waits to see for its future hangs in the balance! Meanwhile I continue to crush my enemies...

\*\*\*\*\*

Goodbye Northmen! It was fun while you lasted. Let's see if the dwarves will put up a better fight.

Uvatha

#### GAME 4

With half the Free Peoples and the Dunlendings attacking me and still the Witch King is undaunted. Now the real power of the Dark Lord will be seen, and the lying Dunlendings will see it first!

-Witch King-

\*\*\*\*\*

The Mordor Association for Higher Education wishes to thank Northern Gondor for its continuing support of the Hoarmurath School for Agents and Emissaries. Total contributions to date exceed 50,000 gold.

Hoarmurath

P.S. Agents in your vaults make excellent final exams.

#### GAME 6

Free Peoples, soon the darkness in the north will be crushed and our might can be turned fully onto our enemies to the south. King of Gondor do not fear we are

coming. You have stemmed the tide of evil alone for too long.

Beoraborn

\*\*\*\*\*

To the Free People (YES, Rhudaur, you too), You took too long, now I'm in a safer neighborhood. Come and get me before I return the favor!

The Witch King,  
A name you can trust

#### GAME 7

"We have awakened a sleeping giant." Admiral Yamamoto, Japanese Imperial Fleet (after Pearl Harbor), "You Goodlings have had your sneak attack! Now you will pay the price."

Ovatha

#### GAME 9

These many turns of peace have allowed me to recruit a huge force. We will sweep Gondor off the map soon!

Fire King

#### GAME 10

In other news: Gothmog of the Dark Lieutenants was found dead on the outskirts of Buhr Ailgra. King Mahrcaed of the Eothraim has claimed responsibility for the Warlord's untimely end, explaining to authorities: "Hey, I had no choice-he drew a knife on me!" Sauron was unavailable for comment.

\*\*\*\*\*

If Ren the Unclean is at large in Middle-Earth, can Stimp the Stupid be far behind?

#### GAME 12

Arintine's At The Movies:

Final Analysis: Good will win. Evil will lose. Shining Through: The Light of Good shines into Mordor in the form of Gondorian armies. Juice: How far will you go to get the Juice?

\*\*\*\*\*

Northmen's Capitol Falls!

In a lightning assault, the war machines of Regent Tros Hesnef's army reduced the fort to a tower, and thousands of troops poured through the breaches to seize Shrel-Kain, last outpost of Northmen on the Sea of Rhun. Jubilant at victory, over a thousand charioteers were rewarded with shiny new sets of steel armor, made from stores recently seized from the Northmen as well! Who shall next face our superb warrior?

Ovatha II,  
Lord of the East

#### GAME 13

Party in Harad! Everybody's welcome!

Ulfacs

#### GAME 14

"Greetings to all worthy opponents" know this: Harondor, under the leadership of Lord Carlon, has joined the Rhudaur and Dunland alliance. Any slight against them and you incur the wrath of the strongest nation in Middle Earth! Carlon, Lord of the Haradwaith.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Fire King has returned to Mordor to find that things are a mess! Gondorians everywhere! What's our neighborhood coming to? Let's clean the place up, okay!

Ren the Unclean

Well! Things seem to be quite complicated! By the way, there is a rumor that I am no longer in the game: that my cities are up for grabs! Don't even think of it!

Haruth Ramam  
Lord of the Haradwaith

#### GAME 15

To All the People,

Know that the Free People are no better than the Dark Servants who at least sent me missives of friendship, while the Free ATTACKED ME! They struck the first blow at Fanuilond. That is how they negotiate, so beware.

Haruth Ramam

\*\*\*\*\*

To Easterlings,

Are you still seeking metals and timber for your exchange of assisting in my battles? You were offered the timber, and seem hesitant to fight against the Dark Lords?

Eothraim Horse-Lords  
of Rhovanion

#### GAME 17

Greetings Dark Servants, The Dragon Lord will be gone very soon. Witch-King, you are next. Thus speaks Bain I Lord of the Dwarven People.

\*\*\*\*\*

I've heard of a captain going down with his ships, but a fleet going down with its captain?

#### GAME 19

Attention Free People and Dark Servants, the nations of HARADWAITH and the CORSAIRS are united. Do you dare to raise our wrath or gratitude? Ji Indur and Hoarmurath

rethink your strategies.

Zarendarger

\*\*\*\*\*

Yo Witch Queen,

Are you going to sit in Angmar for the rest of the game, or am I going to have to come kick you out? My armies hunger for battle, please oblige them.

Marl Tarma  
Minister of Defense

#### GAME 20

Greetings To All Free Peoples And Neutrals, Northern Gondor invites you to join NWMETO (North-West Middle Earth Treaty Organization) Its purpose to destroy Sauron's minions. Please contact us so we can ally and work together.

\*\*\*\*\*

Northmen,

It is wise to fear the sound of rolling thunder; the forces of Sauron are reclaiming that which is rightfully theirs. Beware the specters of darkness for they signify the regenesis of Sauron.

Uvatha  
Ninth of the Nazgual

#### GAME 21

Dear "Dandy",

I, Enion, the true leader of the Dunlendings will spit on your rotting corpse for using my people's name! Then I will turn your stinking pile of goo over to the elves to use as fertilizer.

Enion

\*\*\*\*\*

Rahburt the red nosed Rhudaur has a very neutral nose and if you wish to tease it, yours will be filled

with red snow! Our motto, "We stink it up!"

Rot N Rhubart Of Rhudaur

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Baaltroc,

We laugh in the face of your invitation since there can be no other relationship with North Gondor other than enmity with Dark Servants. So, pathetic King of Gondor, be still.

Angmar

P.S. Niamamnur! Get out of my lands!

\*\*\*\*\*

The forces of good are on the march. Beware, those of you who have not yet joined the greater Forces of Evil. They will take your women, food, and wealth all in the name of Good!

Dendra Dwar

\*\*\*\*\*

Hoarmurath and Ren the Unclean, Don't bother sending envoys to Minas Arnor, for King Tarondor will not listen to them. Our future relationship will be decided on the battlefield.

Baaltroc

#### GAME 22

The sun has set, forth comes the night. Harken the Shadow of the East.

\*\*\*\*\*

My Lords Of the Dark, "Prepare for thy Doom?" Surely a more original threat has never been spoken! I quake at the thought of what lies ahead from the Anonymous Author!

Bain of Moria

Greetings from Rhudaur,

My realm is open to diplomats from both sides, Subjects open to discussion are 1) Possibly declaring Allegiance with your cause, 2) Establishing open trade with ANY NATION until such a time as I declare my Allegiance.

Arfanhil

\*\*\*\*\*

Lords of the North Unite! We must crush the Evil doers while they slumber in their strongholds. There is strength in combined campaigns. Let us sweep aside all evilness with the armies and agents of light.

Occam Clancheif

#### GAME 23

Dark Servants,

Your days are numbered. Soon the armies of the Free People will rise as one and crush you. Be made aware we give no peace and expect none.

Raven,  
Guardian of the Free People.

\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome one, welcome all, Let us watch the Evils fall. The good will win, have no doubt. Let us begin round one of the bout.

Mahrcared  
Lord of the Eothraim

\*\*\*\*\*

Murazor,

How's the weather up there? A little cold? Same here. I'm curious to see how you use your nation's strength. Good Luck. See you soon.

King Argeleb

## GAME 24

Northern Gondor shall crumble to my might! My army is the largest fighting machine in Endor and will sweep all foes aside!

Ice King

\*\*\*\*\*

The Woodmen's days are numbered: 1, 2, 3, Bye!

Dragon Lord

\*\*\*\*\*

Peoples of Middle-Earth,  
Dark Servants again are arising, Neutrals waffle in the middle of the road. But the free peoples stand united, against the dark and the cloud. Die well Dark Servants.

Ironboot, Marshal  
General of the Free Peoples

## GAME 25

Free Peoples...Middle-Earth is a big place to keep an eye out for my silent shadow's agents

The Cloud lord

\*\*\*\*\*

Death to Sauron and all those who follow the Lidless Eye. Free Peoples and Neutral Unite to destroy all the Dark Servants. Sauron has armies at his towns at 3120 and 3221.

King Benjamin

## STATE OF WAR

### GAME 76

Cry Havoc and let slip the Dogs of War! Michigan: Knock, Knock, welcome Wagon calling! We send

you a warm welcome to the Neighborhood! Delivion Blackhawk and the Blackhawken Confederation.

### GAME 77

Enemy Slime, So I'm facing off with four of you and am going to get my butt kicked in a bad way. You'll taste blood before I go!

Ivan the Terrible,  
Czar of Wisconsin,  
Legions of death.

### GAME 78

Weasel of Wyoming,  
What a master tactic! Please tell us 80,000 troops or should I say "Girl Scouts". Lost to 90 man garrison? No matter. By now you know I've destroyed your invading armies and I'm returning the favor. Please contact your family funeral director and choose your coffin. It will be my pleasure to pay for the arrangements. My condolences to your family.

Montana Max,  
Directorate of the Montana

## EARTHWOOD - ORIGINAL

### GAME 209

UGH! Bowels move with no problem now.

<--Chief Bowels

### GAME 219

The war is nearly over. Even now our forces assault the few remaining enemy cities. They cannot withstand our immense power. Earthwood shall soon be united. All hail the knights of fortune.

King Oberon  
Defender of the Athians

### GAME 226

Ho hum. Another game, another victory.

Arintine  
The Original Party Animal

### GAME 229

I'm the terror that lurks in the night. I'm the cop your radar detector doesn't pick up. I'm the hand that reaches up to trip you. I'm the noise that won't let you sleep.

I AM THE DARK MAGE

Once alive, Once dead, Now undead! Arcanis the Lich rallies all of the spellweavers to join his dark armies and strip Earthwood of all its vermin!

\*\*\*\*\*

An Alliance formed early in the game could very well win. Join me Dark Elves, join me Giants, join me Necromancer and we will be victorious.

Derek and the Boys  
AKA The Rumonians

## The Last of the Dragon Slayers By: Will Parker

"MANDRIG!!!"

Mandrig awoke with a start, visions of dragon combat and beautiful dragonesses slipping away into the dark recesses of that part of his mind used only in dreams. He opened his eyes, saw Deston Minkai standing there with a proud smirk on his face, and groaned. From the lofty heights of heavenly fantasy, he had plummeted into the icy depths of cold reality. Mandrig wanted to cry.

"It's not fair," he said, his deep dragon voice echoing across the swamp that was his home.

"My mom says that life isn't fair," Deston said, "so I guess you're just out of luck."

"How many times do I have to tell you to watch your mouth, young man?"

"Five million, four hundred and sixty-five thousand, eight hundred and sixty-two, or somewhere in the general vicinity."

"You're asking for it, wiseguy."

"Asking for what, snake-face?"

"Asking to be eaten alive by one tired, old, cranky dragon." Mandrig grinned, showing Deston his pearly whites. "Get the picture?"

"Give me a break," Deston chuckled. "You couldn't scare a rabbit, much less a fearless warrior like myself."

"Deston, you are not a fearless warrior. You are an eight year old boy who has more mouth than he has brains. Your mouth is going to get you in a lot of trouble these days, especially if you keep bothering a dragon who might forget how bad you probably taste. Now go away."

Mandrig watched Deston walk away a bit, but to the dragon's dismay, the boy clambered onto an old, fallen down log and turned to watch the dragon. He didn't say anything, he just sat there, watching Mandrig with his piercing blue eyes that Mandrig could have sworn glowed with an inner malevolence. Mandrig tried to go to sleep, hoping that the boy would go away. He did not. Mandrig couldn't see the boy, but he felt his presence there, just sitting and watching.

Mandrig tried to ignore him and go to sleep, but he couldn't. He tried counting sheep. He tried counting virgins. He tried every trick he knew of to coax himself into a dragon's

slumber, but nothing worked. At last, with an exasperated sigh, he gave up and opened his eyes.

"All right," he said, fixing his most evil dragon gaze upon the young man, "exactly what is it that you want?" Deston was not phased by Mandrig's gaze, and a smile appeared on his freckled face.

"Nothing much. Just to talk."

"Talk about what?" Mandrig asked suspiciously.

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Okay," Mandrig said hesitantly, "what is it about me that you want to talk about?"

"How come you aren't dead?"

"Huh?"

"You heard me. Why aren't you dead? I mean, come on, let's be realistic here. You are a dragon, right? Right. Dragons are menaces who eat virgins and terrorize people throughout the countryside, right?"

"Well, sort of, but I really don't see what you're getting at."

"Hold on," Deston said holding out his hand, palm first. "Hear me out. Dragons are monsters and need to be killed, right? Right. So some king gets it in his head to give his daughter in marriage to the man who kills the local dragon, right? Right. So soon, everybody who has a sword goes out to kill dragons, right? Right. So how come you aren't dead? I mean you're not much of a dragon."

"Whoa, hold it there, young man," Mandrig said indignantly. "What do you mean I'm not much of a dragon? Why, I should kill you this very instant, but since I have a heart, just like any other creature, I shall spare you this untimely death. I would advise that you not insult me again."

Deston laughed. "Oh, come off it, Mandrig. You and I both know that your vision is poor, your hearing failing, your teeth and claws dull, and your breath not much more than a bonfire. Any dragon slayer with a

decent sword and shield could make short work of you."

"Well," Mandrig said with a sneer, "I guess it's a good thing that I've already killed all the dragon slayers."

"What? You? Kill all the dragon slayers? You've got to be pulling my leg. Mandrig, you couldn't kill a cow tied to a tree so it couldn't get away."

"Kid, you are really pushing my patience. Now get out of here before I roast you." Steam curled out of Mandrig's nose and the dragon's eyes glazed over. Deston, deciding he had pushed the old dragon just a bit too far, decided it was time to beat a hasty retreat. With a wave and a bow, the boy took off into the swamp.

Mandrig watched him disappear into the distance with a self-satisfied smirk. "Old, my tail," he whispered to himself. "I could kill a million cows; even if they weren't tied to trees." And with that, Mandrig closed his eyes and drifted off into a well earned sleep.

Deston emerged from the woods some thirty minutes later. A stout, oaken stick held loosely from his hand, and every now and then he would make a half-hearted swipe at some imaginary opponent. He lacked enthusiasm for this game, however, for his mind was elsewhere. He could not figure out why Mandrig had gotten so mad at him. After all, he had only been telling the truth. Oh well, Deston thought, I guess he's just a bit cranky from having been woken up from his nap.

As Deston walked down the old dirt road that led to the village that was his home, he heard the sound of horse's hooves off in the distance. Deston quickly jumped into the bushes along the side of the road in case it was his father out looking for him--he was supposed to be at home helping his mother with the gardening, but Deston had decided to go visit Mandrig instead.

It was not Deston's father, however; in fact, as the rider came into view, Deston realized that he had never see this person before. The rider was clad from head to foot in armor; the horse, too, was equally garbed. One hand held the reins of the wild-eyed stallion that the figure rode upon and another grasped the haft of a lance. The lance was tilted upright and a pennon rippled in the wind from on top of it. As the rider rode by, Deston noticed the emblem on the shield. A dragon's head roaring flame with a line drawn diagonally across the picture. Inscribed at the bottom in gilded letters were the words, "Draconia occido magnamus," or more appropriately, "The Greatest of all Dragon Slayers."

"Wow!" Deston shouted, "A real dragon slayer." The figure, startled by the unexpected voice, jumped. The horse, deciding that this meant the rider wanted more speed, took off. The rider, not expecting the sudden increase in speed, fell off the back of his erstwhile mount and onto the dirt road. Deston laughed and the horse kept on running.

"Come out wherever you are, you brigand," the figure said in a deep, gruff voice. "You may think you're clever by scaring my horse off, but I will soon take care of you." The figure waved his arms and his legs in a vain attempt to turn himself over, but his armor kept him as helpless as a new born babe. "That is," the man amended, "I'll take care of you as soon as someone gives me a hand."

Deston laughed.

"Will somebody help me!" Shouted the figure, his shout turning into a wheezy cough. "Help me! I've fallen and I can't get up, and I'm about to be chopped up by bandits. Help!"

A mysterious voice called from the sky, "Help is on the way, Mrs. Fletcher."

Deston started to cry from laughing so hard.

"Well," said the figure, at last lying still, "you may think it is terribly funny, but I find it quite unbearable. Now are you going to kill me, or not?"

"Kill you," Deston laughing, "I'm eight years old and you're worried about me killing you? What am I supposed to do, beat you to death with a stick?"

"Well, I do have a dagger in my sheath," the figure said helpfully.

"But, I don't want to kill you."

"And, why not?"

"Well, uh, because, my mom told me not to get my clothes dirty."

"Well then, if you're not going to kill me, why don't you help me?" The man reached out his hand and Deston reached out and took it. Unfortunately, try as he might, Deston could not pull the man up.

"I'm sorry, Sir Knight," Deston said, "but you're too heavy. Maybe you should take off your armor."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because, I'm on a quest, and I vowed not to rest until I completed my quest. I must wear my armor until I have accomplished my task."

"Gee, that's rough. Doesn't it get a little stuffy and smelly in there."

"Well, as a matter of fact, yes, it does. But after the first year or so you don't notice it anymore."

"Year?"

"Yes, year, or more appropriately, years."

"Exactly how many years have you been on your quest?"

"Oh, I don't know, maybe fifty years, maybe more."

"FIFTY YEARS!!"

"Yes, fifty years. Now, are you going to help me or leave here to die."

"I already told you I'm not strong enough to lift you up."

"Find a stick."

"Find a what?" Deston asked.

"A stick, a piece of wood, a metal rod, or something."

"What for?" Deston asked suspiciously. "I'm not going to give you one if you plan on spanking me with it."

"No, you silly boy, I want you to use it as a lever to help me up."

Deston shrugged his shoulders, having no idea what the dragon slayer was talking about, but realizing that maybe this grown-up knew what he was talking about. Deston managed to found a stout oak shafter of wood and, under the guidance of the dragon slayer, managed to flip him over onto his stomach. From there, the man was able to slowly but surely clamber to his feet.

Once the dragon slayer regained his feet, he removed his crested helm. Deston stared in amazement at the man beneath it. The dragon slayer was an old man of probably seventy years or more. Long, white, wispy, flowing hair came down to his shoulders and he sported a well trimmed mustache and beard. The most striking feature of all was his sparkling blue eyes that belied the age implied by the wrinkles that surrounded those eyes.

"Thank you, sir," the man said, "for helping me out, even though you did cause my problem in the first part." The man stuck out his hand. "My name is Kentough Berrizinni Dragonbane, but my friends, most of whom are dead, call me Kent."

"My name is Deston Minkai," Deston said, taking the hand. The boy was amazed at how firm the frail looking old man's grip was, but then again, after toting around all that armor for fifty years, he had to be strong. "But my friend calls me brat, boy, demonspawn, or something else. But you can call me Deston."

"Sure thing, boy. But this friend of yours--I did hear you right in that it is 'friend' and not 'friends' right?" Deston nodded. "This friend of yours

doesn't really seem like much of a friend to me."

"He's all right and he means well, but he's kind of old and a little jealous of my youth so he gets angry." The old man nodded. "But anyway, I've got to be getting back home. Sorry about your horse; I'm sure he didn't go too far. Well, I've got to run."

Deston turned and began to wander off down the road. Kent watched him slowly move away with wry amusement. However, Deston did not go too far, for he turned around after about ten yards and came sprinting back. Kent raised his eyebrows in question.

"Yes, what is it, young man," Kent asked.

"Well," Deston said, "I was just kind of wondering. You said you were on a quest, right? Right. What kind of quest?"

Kent straightened up and his face flushed with pride, "I am the last of the great Dragon-Slayers, as you can well see from the image engraved upon my shield, and I am on a quest to rid the world of dragons."

"Really?" Deston asked.

"Yes, really," Kent said gravely.

"I don't know, though," Deston said, "you don't really look like much of a dragon-slayer."

"That's Dragon-Slayer, young man. And what do you mean I don't look like much of a Dragon-Slayer. For that insult, I ought to draw my sword and cut off your head. Luckily for you, my sword is rusted into its scabbard, or you would surely die."

"Well I'm glad I'm lucky, but I still don't think you could kill a dragon."

"Could, too."

"Nope."

"Yes, I could."

"No. I don't think so."

"You are really getting on my nerves, young man. Now get lost. I have to get back to my quest."

Deston's face turned red with childish anger, but then a sly look

crossed his face and he grinned impishly. He scratched his chin and eyed Kent with speculative odds. Evidently he was pleased, for he nodded his head and his grin grew wider. Kent, not liking this look, put on his helmet, turned around, and headed after his horse. Deston followed, whistling a merry tune.

At last Kent turned to face him. "Why are you following me?" He asked with a snarl.

"Suppose," said Deston, "just suppose, I could tell you where you could find a dragon to slay. What would you do?"

"Nothing, because I know that you do not know where any dragons are."

"Do, too."

"Do not."

"I do, too."

"You do not! Now, go away!"

"I think you're just chicken," Deston said snidely. "I think you're afraid you'll lose. I think that you think that you will be killed if you fight a dragon. I think that facing a real live dragon, even after searching for one all these years, would cause you to flee in terror. I think--"

"ENOUGH!!!" Kent bellowed, turning red in the face. "I could face and slay any dragon. Why, I could take two on at one time, with one arm tied behind my back, blindfolded, and with my bare hands."

"Really?"

"Well, maybe only one."

"Really?"

"Well, maybe with my sword."

"Really?"

"Well, maybe . . . will you cut that out?"

"Have you ever fought a dragon before?"

"Well, I fought a wyvern once, and I killed it."

"Dragons are bigger than wyverns. A lot bigger."

"Yes, yes, I know that. What are you getting at anyway?"

"You want to find a dragon to slay, right? Right. Well it just so happens that I know where one is."

"You know, you just might be telling the truth. So where is this dragon of yours?"

"He's back in the swamp," Deston said pointing into the woods, "he's kind of old so you two should be pretty evenly matched. I'd watch out though, he's got a real bad temper."

"How do you know of this beast, boy?"

"How do I know of him? He's my best friend, and my only friend. How else would I know of him. Really, you dragon-slayers really aren't much in the brains category, are you?"

"Dragon-Slayers," Kent corrected.

"What?"

"Nevermind," Kent pulled at his ear lobe, scratched his head, and attempted to bite his finger nails but only managed to end up chewing on his gauntlets. "Let me get this straight. You know where a dragon is? And it just so happens that this dragon is your best friend? How do I know you're not trying to lead me into a trap where you could rob me?"

"You don't, but do you really have a choice? I mean, after all, this might be the one and only chance you get to face a real live dragon before you die, old man. Besides, if I wanted to rob you, I would have done it while you lay helpless upon your back. Now, are you going to come with me, or not?"

Kent nodded his head gravely, "Well, it seems this may be my only chance as you said, so I must not pass it up. Besides, this is the most exciting thing that has happened to me since I entered that tourney nine years ago. Yes, I'll go with you, my young friend. Just let me go get my horse and we shall proceed." The two shook hands and the two proceeded down the road, following the horse's footsteps.

"Oh, and, kid," Kent said, "don't call me 'old man'. I could still whip your butt."

"Sure thing, you old fart."

Kent growled, but then a thought occurred to him. "Hey, you said this dragon was your only friend. Why are you helping me find him so I can kill him?"

"I'm only helping you find him so you can try and kill him. Mandrig will probably roast you and your horse and eat you for dinner."

"Oh," Kent said, "but what if I, by some miracle, slay your friend?"

"I don't think Mandrig will mind."

## To Be Continued

Tales of Middle-earth PBCD

### ELROND: I DO NOT CARE FOR .....

A Dramatic Dialog: by (Ketch Haddock)

Argeleb: "Greetings Elrond. I hoped that my letter to you had explained my actions in your forest, but meeting between us shows that it did not."

Elrond: (Furiously) "Your letter meant nothing to me Argeleb. You have wronged me more than once now and I demand an explanation!"

Argeleb: (Surprised) "That was the whole purpose of the letter, what more explanation do you need?"

Elrond: "Do not play these games with me! Why did you create a camp on my land when you told me you would not? Why wasn't Eruimar, the village you promised me, turned over to my emissary? The location of the enchanted sword Glamdring has already been given to you in return! I have given you every thing you asked for and in return you have given me lies! These are the explanations I demand you traitorous fool!"

Argeleb: (Getting angry) "Cool your temper Elrond, before someone is forced to do it for you! All of these problems can be solved without foolish words. I created the camp in your lands because at the moment I need it more than you."

Elrond: "That is nonsense that you speak Argeleb!"

Argeleb: I am speaking strategically, maybe you don't understand that concept. I, unlike you, am at war with the Witch King and am on the front line. I need the resources that the camp has to offer to support my armies. You on the other hand do not have any population centers vulnerable to his attacks."

Elrond: "And maybe you, Argeleb, do not understand the concept of honor! You made a promise and broke it! And, as for not having anything vulnerable on the front, you are very mistaken. Rivendell is very much vulnerable, being in the same woods as Rhudaur's main army. It is also much too close to the Witch King than is safe...."

Argeleb: "You are a fool and your anger blinds you. Rivendell is hidden by your magic! No one can harm it unless it is revealed by similar magic, and you know very well that the Witch King is too preoccupied with his western front to go searching for a heavily defended hidden population center! You are correct in accusing me of breaking a promise but never dare to accuse me of

treachery! Take the camp if it pleases you."

Elrond: "I do not care for the camp any more! I am more concerned about the sword Glamdring. I swear that you will never hold it in your hands and if I find out that you take it I shall spend the rest of my days destroying your nation!"

Argeleb: (Disbelieving) "You have gone too far Elrond! You truly are mad and you plan to take the rest of the free peoples down with you!"

Elrond: "I would only destroy you!"

Argeleb: "You are sick in the head and cannot see things clearly enough to understand the consequences of a war between us! The Witch King would take advantage of our personal war and concentrate his might on the Cardolan and Dunlendings in the south. After them

Tales of Middle-earth PBCD

## Campaign Strategy

by David Hill

The emissaries stood at attention, awaiting orders from Uvatha. They were dressed in fine clothes and unused to military discipline, so they shuffled their aching feet. Uvatha had kept them waiting to increase their nervousness and make them more pliable to his wishes. He also needed more time to determine the future goals of his army, but finally looked up from the map he had been studying to address them.

"You three have done well at attracting the populous to our camps. The production from their efforts will keep this campaign funded for the next few months. Now I need you for more important functions. We need to win over the hearts and minds of our opponents to drain them of the

he would finish us off and the north would be conquered!"

Elrond: (Taken aback) "Then leave the sword Glamdring and prevent the war. Learn not to doublecross people in the future Argeleb."

Argeleb: (Grasping the hilt of his sword) "Enough! I have heard enough from you! I will leave the sword as you wish, and you shall never set foot in Eruimar as long as I live. Furthermore, you will no longer hear from me and you are no longer welcome to send messengers to my nation. You will no longer be told of plans between the Cardolan, Dunlendings and I, nor will you be included in joint military operations against the Witch King. Fare as well as you can, Elrond. I wish you as much luck as the foul Witch King does. Maybe he can accomplish the task that I am unable to do."

energy to resist us. You have learned much of the desires of these 'free humans' over the last few months, so I would appreciate your input as to the best strategy to take."

The chief Emissary, Gardwin Frec, hesitantly spoke up, "The desires of the people seem to vary with the Race and Nation. The Dwarves lust for mithril, the Northmen for trade, and the Eothraim for glory. Our tactic would have to vary with the wishes of those we want to sway."

"Yes, very good, Garwin. There is one theme, though, that should be true to all people. They all desire more of what they have already and what they want more than anything is longer life. This is the yoke with which the Valar restrain them from

achieving greatness. They hand out long life like a gift to those few they deem worthy, like the Elves and Numenorians, then withdraw their bounty if more is asked from them. I doubt that anyone likes the brief span they are allotted. They should be interested in knowing if they throw off the rule of those from beyond the sea, they could gain immortality with Sauron!"

"That is an excellent plan, Lord Uvatha. The Dwarves, however, already have a long lifespan. I think we could beguile them with dreams of Mordor Mithril, though."

"You will need to use your best digression, but do whatever it takes to get those towns to accept our rule! Tell the Northmen of the great increases in production we have brought to Dilgul, that should appeal to their greed. We will bring the efficiencies of technology to them one way or another. Agreed?"

"Yes, sir", the three humans piped in unison.

"Good. Now that you have your orders, you may excuse yourselves and send in my agents." The emissaries shuffled out quietly and soon after two agents strolled in. One was a tall dark man who wore a cloak that blended well into the setting. The other was an athletic

woman with very short hair and a handsome face.

"Now, Loeminde, explain your failure to me."

"Sir, I infiltrated the Dwarves camp successfully. I assumed a haggard appearance so they would think I was a refugee from Scari. They cared not for my distress and put me to do menial chores as though I were a servant girl."

"Your beauty had no effect on them?"

"No, sir. But this is understandable as Dwarven women look like men. I was not stout and rugged-looking enough to attract the commander's eye and his tent was too well guarded at night for me to slip in without permission."

"I see. Perhaps a man would be more interesting to them. How is Kaalar coming in his training?"

"Very well, sir. He should be ready for the ring soon."

"Good, your agents are the main reason we're winning this war. For now, you should direct all your energies toward stealing gold as our reserves are dwindling rapidly. Once we have a good reserve again, there are some lonely Eothraim commanders whom I think would welcome your company."

"Yes, I'll give them a night to remember...."

## The Beggar's Staff and Ring

by Narthos, demigod of Beggars (Juris Baidins)

In the Holy City's temple square only one shrine remains standing, the one to Narthos. The rest have become home to Narthos' priests. In its shadow, a sun bronzed old man with a horseshoe brand on his chest instructs his children: "When carving your staff think of what you want to occur every turn of time for possibly a very long war and what will bring strength in the final conflict. Some

powers will help directly, for example, adding followers every turn and others directly by giving you information on targets or adding to the combat capability of your divisions. Still others prevent damage from being done to you by protecting you or denying information to your enemies. When enchanting the ring, look at your staff powers to decide what

should be placed in the ring to make up for staff's weaknesses."

"And yes, I will tell you my mistakes and boast of my successes..."

### The Staff

**Flight training:** Every turn the chance of getting lost increases by 2.5% and in eight turns this chance is up by 20%. To make up for this 20% increase, flight skill needs to go up by the same amount. Each time flight skill is performed it goes up by 4%, so it needs to be performed five times. Putting this skill in a staff would waste three actions every eight turns.

**Contact Lord:** According to the designer, the chance of something good occurring is greater than something bad, but the designer suffered a streak of bad luck in the game he played and stopped the contacts.

**Seek Vortex:** DO NOT put this in your staff. You will lose control of your divisions movements near the Vortex and this can be disastrous if something needs to be done immediately. If you want divisions to fly into the vortex, do this as an activity.

**Magic Hunt:** Each division may find some sorcery blades or maybe some armor. Even when a divisional hand claims to feel the presence of magic the gain has always been rather trivial, a few sorcery blades. Sacking a city will give more magical armor and weaponry than this skill ever could.

**Training:** This skill improves your division combat capability and the offensive strength of the palace guards. Increasing your division's fighting capabilities is always good. Strong palace guards are a must since you must go rest sometime.

Training proved to be very useful especially in the palace combats

and when an opponent piled up a five point focus lead.

**Praying:** This power has recommended by other successful demigods.

**Meditation:** Unless you believe you will be in violent area and fighting every turn all the time, this is best performed as needed. Keep your energy point pool at thirty or so and meditate to keep it there.

**Security:** If the enemy cannot find anything with spying spells, they are reduced to viewing spells and guessing where your portals are. If performed twice every turn, this skill will deny effective information gathering to all except the most dedicated spy trainers.

**Detect Traps:** Useless, a small trap is a nuisance at best, while a large one is a waste of spell points. To get good use of this, the skill needs to be worked up and this gets in the way of more useful skills.

**Gambling:** Gold is available from sacking cities and your own mines and is not that useful anyway. To win the percentage needs to be high and again this gets in the way more important activities.

**Sight:** The ability to spot invisible mine and portals may sound useless, since taking every square you land in is a sound tactical and strategic policy. But a division that is lost cannot capture territory and this is the only way to find out if a square your lost division entered has an enemy mine or portal.

An alternative to sight is to pick meditation for the staff and use defensive tactics every turn to protect yourself from invisible enemies.

**True Sight:** This skill tells you if an attacking division is under an illusion.

Also, a scroll of location allows you to check where a demigod's divisions are, allowing you to

determine if that demigod was the likely culprit.

**Detect traps, sight and true sight** are rather useless by themselves. If all were bundled together into one skill, it would be useful to build up that skill, especially if the improvement is 4%.

**Spy Training:** If you are going to use this, put it in your staff and have it as an activity every turn as well. For this to be useful, you must make up for a paranoid demigod who adds 8% to his security every turn.

**Ghost and Spirit Rituals:** A must, for you will need powerful divisions to conquer and hold squares. Also, divisions are among the best point providers in the final battle.

These proved to be the most valuable of the powers. My divisions accounted for 3-4 million of my 6 million points.

**Resist Teleport:** Later in the game when magic points are plentiful, "teleport other" spells are cast often and you do not want to be caught in a barrage. Putting this skill in a staff is wasteful. This skill needs to be performed twenty-five times at most. By turn fifteen this skill will have risen to 60% and "teleport other" spells cast against you will fail more often than they succeed.

**Find Essence Mine:** Finding and destroying one enemy palace will give essence enough for half the game, so this looks to be a waste of time.

**Add 50 points to Wounded Demigod:** You can stay out quite a while without this power, but if you are nervous about coming home to your palace, this power may be useful.

**Add 10 Shadows per Division:** Over a thirty turn game, this gives an extra 1500 shadows total. This does not add up to much in terms of final combat points, but may be

useful to beef up your divisions, especially in the beginning when even a tiny difference in strength can be decisive.

**25% edge on revenge wishes:** The revenge wishes begin only on turn seven and are rather weak then. **Persuasion bonus:** While gold plentiful, some traveler groups are so large that gold will not sway them much. A ten percent edge on such groups is welcome and can make the difference between success and failure, but this does not happen that often and other powers may bring in more experience points.

**50% Combat Bonus for Palace Hands:** A well defended palace destroys even the strongest divisions given a palace angel or two and combat training. The most serious assault on my palace resulted in 2500 Spirits and an angel destroying a division of four angels, 2000 or so Spirits, 639 ghosts and 502 shadows, while losing only 400 spirits.

**Add 50 Followers per Turn:** Over a 30 turn game this adds 1500 followers (who can be taken from you) and gives 930 experience points extra. In the final combat, this becomes around 168,000 points or the amount that could be gotten from 700 spirits or sacking a city and winning some more combats. While this power, gives a rather large fixed amount, a power that allows you more combat or information power could indirectly generate far more than this fixed amount.

**The Ring:** Pick your spells to be useful and to make up for weaknesses in your staff.

**Create Essence:** If you lose an essence mine, this can come in handy to create locate and teleport scrolls.

**Create Gold:** No, enough gold is available elsewhere.

**Firelance:** No, divisions are superior to practically all border guards and armor on a division will often absorb most blows from mortals.

**Find Storm:** You may need to get into the Ninth Dimension quickly and the fastest way to do that is entering the vortex storm by using the seek vortex activity. But to avoid having other divisions enter by mistake, the location of the storm is needed.

**Vision I and II:** Pick one of these. These are useful when someone is putting up massive amounts of security, especially if you do not have spy training, eventually your spying spell information will dry up and you will need other methods of discovering the location of targets.

**Godlight and Dispell:** Useful only if an enemy has more ghosts or shadows than you and usually such division are weak in spirits. Assuming you have built up your spirits, such divisions are killed easily.

**Wish Reverse:** Useful if you have the spell points to cast every turn or can guess when a revenge wish is coming. This can be used instead of the staff power concerning wishes.

**Spiritsplit:** Even though this spell is similar to Godlight and Dispell,

this can be useful. If some demigod owned the Ninth Dimension since turn five and as a consequence is running around with divisions with 4000 or more spirits and 1500 each of ghosts and shadows, your division is dead anyway and will not even though the spirits during the combat (often he is protected from "teleport other" spells). Casting this ring spell will turn his victory, if any, into a pyrrhic one. Your division may die, but so will your enemy's spirits and the rewards of destroying your division are inconsequential in comparison. This also works if a just recreated division encounters a stronger enemy.

**ESP:** Knowing where you stand in relation to your enemies is useful. If you are the strongest, you will want to eliminate weak players to throw the game into the final combat and if weak attack the strongest to enhance your position and whittle the strong down.

**References:** (1) J.D.W., "Venom: an overview", Whispers, August 1988. (2) William G. Golson, "Carving a Better Staff", Whispers, January 1989. (3) Bruce Abrahams, "VENOM: Designer's Corner", Whispers, October 1989. (4) Phillip Hanson, "How to Become a God", Whispers, November 1990.

## DESCENT by JOHN HUNTER

The clank of steel on floors of stone  
echo throughout a gigantic hole  
Voices speaking in whispered tones  
for they knew near the enemies  
home

Swords are drawn and spells prepared  
soon will begin an attack upon the lair.  
Some will live and some will die and  
none but a few will never know why.

No great tales will be told of  
adventures brave and bold,  
No reward of gold or jewels nothing  
will they receive, save the thanks of  
the people

To this day no bollard of their  
compassion and courage has never  
been told but, at  
fireplaces around the village their  
stories are well known.