

# WHISPERS OF THE WOOD



**GAME  
SYSTEMS**  
**INC.**

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## WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Well, September is here and that can mean only one thing--football!! That's right, sports fans, we have an exciting season for you this year in the Middle-earth Football League. The top rivalry in the MEFL is between the Eothraim Broncos and the Easterling Chiefs. There is no love lost between these two teams, as the Horse-Riders try to hold the Five Tribes from taking their championship. The annual meeting between the Fire King Redskins and the Dwarven Steelers proves to be one of the hardest hitting this season. The Corsair Buccaneers and the Haradwaith Raiders also bring some bad blood into their series. With this much excitement coming up, you will want to make sure you don't miss a single game this year! So we'll see you on the gridiron... if there is no strike!

I'd like to clear up some confusion regarding newsletter "personal" submissions. We recently had an instance where we received one personal (totaling over 40 words) from 3 different players, claiming that each 40 word section constituted their free 40 words for that particular game. We would like to clarify that we do not accept such submissions. Each player is allowed 40 free words for each of their games - period! If we allowed combined player submissions to subvert the 40 word per player limit, we would be forced to raise the cost for such submissions to everyone, and we do not want to do that. Each player can submit up to 40 words free, but they must be separate submissions. If we receive a multi-player submission, we will have to charge one player the full price for that personal. So keep this in mind when submitting those personals.

Most of you may have noticed that the address on your turns has the zip+4 added to it. We now have the ability to (almost always) automatically add this to your address, thus improving (hopefully) mail service. If you have questions or concerns, you may want to double check with your postal carrier to verify that we have the correct zip+4. If there are any problems, let us know and we will correct it.

By the time you get this, we will hopefully have games of the new ME-PBM scenario (T.A. 2950) starting. We are very excited about the new release and apparently so are you. For those of you who don't know (and if you don't--WHY NOT?), the prices will be \$25 for first time ME-PBM players and \$17.50 for previous (T.A. 1650) players. The price for previous/current players includes a copy of the new rulebook, which will have the new nation listings, new artifacts, new position stats, new charts, and an index which will be usable with BOTH rulebooks! Not bad, huh? Hope from you soon.

Well, the last con of the summer season (for us, anyway) is approaching. We will be at AndCon, which is a convention that focuses most of its attention on PBM. The dates of the con, as well as the GSI seminar and booth # are below. We hope to see you there!

AndCon - 9/15/94 - 9/18/94  
Contact phone number - 216-673-2117  
GSI Seminar - 9/16/94 Friday 6:30-8:30 PM  
GSI booth #401

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all of you to keep your game accounts funded. GSI will usually extend the courtesy of running the occasional turn with a negative balance. We do not mind doing this, as we have all hit those tight months. However, a number of players are abusing this courtesy, turn after turn. We would hate to have to stop running such turns



## ALONG THE PATHWAYS

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This Month's Cover: "Shipmates" by Calvin Camp

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## PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 40 word personal in this column each issue, for each game they're in. Submissions require a \$2.00 charge for each additional set of 40 words (41-80 is \$2.00 etc.). GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

### GENERAL

We, a team of 12, seek a team of 13 to face us in a game of ME-PBM Circa 2950. If your team is up to it, contact: Eric @ (207) 947-4891 or email: Tolkien@AOL.COM.

## Middle-earth™ PBM

### GAME 13

Dark Servants:

Almost 3 years old and you still have at least 5 of us left to eliminate! We won't quit and it may take longer than another 3 years to knock us out. We're tougher than the others were.

### GAME 20

Ohmigosh--they've uncovered Moria!! You guys sure Turn 44 is soon enough--I'd hate to see you do anything premature . . .

### GAME 43

I will admit that I didn't get to where I am alone, and yes, I did receive advice and info from the two sources mentioned in last month's column. Yet I also owe a great deal of thanks to the Cloud Lord's agents, to the Ice King for turn by turn (almost) info cards, and to several others who helped me directly or indirectly.

I would also like to say that I gave as well as I got and did so honorably. It is really hard for a newcomer (this is my second game) to establish trust and stay afloat in this PBM. But because I offered help to those who wanted it and helped several people whenever they needed

it, I've been able to make it to the "top of the heap."

Don't let petty jealousy taint what has so far been a pretty clean game.

Russell Thorp  
Haradwaith

PS Don't cry you green-gilled, yellow-bellied scum suckers! Look at me, I'm laughing at you: Har! Har! Hee! Hee! Now I'm sticking out my tongue: Nyaah, nyaah! etc. . . . Get a life!

### GAME 45

"Nobody told me it was a city/fort!!"  
Overheard by both  
Dirhael and Zaranilla

### GAME 80

Dunlendings, Noldo, Arthedain, Northmen, Southern Gondor, Sinda, Dwarves and I still stand. Against us are the Fire King, Ice King, Quiet Avenger, Dark Lieutenants, Long Rider, Cloud Lord and maybe . . . the Dog Lord. After 70 weeks, the battle rages.  
Ensam Harskare (5)

### GAME 84

Two months ago a "huge" army was 2,200 troops; now, 4,800 is merely large. Who is massing troops? Dunland? Beware of water snakes, O' Crimson Toad. They bite when and where you least expect it.  
Ensam Harskare (7)

### GAME 89

Any Free Peoples that are still playing, please chime up. We would like to reward your obstinance by saving you some cash.

The Bad Guys

### GAME 108

Infidel Defilers . . .

They will all drown in lakes of blood. Now they will know why they are afraid of the dark! Now they will know why they fear the night!!  
Helrazor

\*\*\*\*\*

Does anybody really know what time it is?

Does anybody really care?  
If so I can't imagine why--  
We all have time enough to die?  
Gondorian Bards

### GAME 109

It is Turn 23 and the Witch-king, Quiet Avenger, Blind Sorcerer and Ice King are gone. The Dragon Lord, Dog Lord, Dark Lieutenants and Cloud Lord have all lost their capitals. Both the Corsairs and Easterlings are half gone. Soon the light will prevail.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Five Tribes fight on.  
We have tasted your steel,  
yet stand. Defiant.  
Now taste vengeance.

Ovatha II  
Greywolf of the East

### GAME 112

\*\*NEWS FLASH\*\*

Harad barbarians catch new plague disease just months after the Course-Hair inflammation. Andu-navel syndrome spotted in two Harad cities. Local witch doctors predict an even quicker cure rate . . .

### GAME 115

Mr. Talksalot--

You babble. Having recently sunk 21 loaded Gondorian transports, helped destroy Celdrahil's army at the

Battle of Barad Harn, and aided Haradwaith in other ways, I find your lies amusing . . . South Gondor is the pounded one.

Adûnaphel

\*\*\*\*\*

I sold my soul,  
So let's rock-n-roll!

Enion

### GAME 120

Turn #18: Dwarven forces recapture Esgaroth.

Turn #19: Free Peoples reel from our "character" assassinations:

Tharudan foolishly leaves himself open to my challenge,

"Twilight" met his twilight,

Zanlor now only exists in lore,

And we have stopped "The Blorgh."

Bulrakur

### GAME 121

Cardolan and South Gondor are stubborn. You are the last of the Free Peoples. All efforts shall be done for your quick painful deaths. This has gone on for far too long.

Zarendarger (13)

\*\*\*\*\*

Work for 20 rounds and all I get is a stab in the back. I leave this game but will not forget your treachery, Long Rider.

Arfanhil

### GAME 124

Overheard in Umbar:

"What!? What do you mean you lost the whole fleet!? Where is it!?"

"At the bottom of the Bay of Lhun, my Lord."

"Have my troops taken Mithlond-west?"

"There was no time, my Lord. We were ambushed. They, too, rest in the Bay of Lhun."

"Where's Teldûmeir!? I'll have his head for this!!!"

"He was slain before the battle trying to prove his manliness. I'm sorry, my Lord."

Loud whimpering sounds followed as Angamaitë, Lord of Umbar, Ruler of the Universe, slapped around his harem girls, and pulled the arms off his favorite teddy bear.

\*\*\*\*\*

Witch-king,

I spurn your armies! You gloat on false and shallow victories! You die a little each day while I grow strong! Foul and impotent shadow! You are undone by your own works! Waste not my time with treaties!

Arthedain

#### GAME 125 CONTEST OF CHAMPIONS

We lost Minas Ithil but was it worth 10 characters, hmmm, Gondors?

Baaltrac, is that your promised army coming into Mordor through the back door? If so, I've been waiting for you, Heh Heh!

Zarendarger (15)

\*\*\*\*\*

I'm getting really sick of these stinking dragons. If they are not killing my characters, they are killing my armies. To date: 3 characters and 10263 troops.

Dwarves

#### GAME 130

Atheya has already paid the ultimate price for the massacre at An Sakal. The rest of South Gondor will soon follow!

Haruth Ramam

#### GAME 133

Why is it that the only people sending cards or writing to *Whispers* is Northmen (thank you) and North Gondor?!

Uvatha

\*\*\*\*\*

Ûrzahil, how tremendous are you, anyway?

#### GAME 134

Mûrazôr looks across the banquet table at his henchmen.

"Our enemies speak of our defeat. They have one of our pop centers, we have six of theirs. They can not stop us, and their false hope will make our victory the sweeter for crushing it.

Hey Dwarves, Bonk Bonk.  
Grendel

#### GAME 140

Warning o' slaves of darkness. The Easterlings have decided, we follow the light. Begin your lamentations, my hordes are upon you!  
Grendel

\*\*\*\*\*

Dragons overhead, armies at the front door, assassins in the dark! I guess we upset someone's cart.

#### GAME 141

Hey Cardolan:

Smaug told Khuzadrepa that man flesh is very good and Khuzadrepa said he was very hungry.

Doombringer (11)

#### GAME 142

On strategy:

Keep the swords swinging until there are no more heads to roll. Give

no quarter, take no prisoners. There will be one pace, all-out; only one direction, forward!

Helrazor

\*\*\*\*\*

Lackey: We have moved to the Eothraim capitol, Lord.

Overlord: Good. Soon it shall be ours . .

Lackey: There is one minor snag, sir.

Overlord: What!?!?

Lackey: 2000 Northern Gondor cavalry are there as well.

Overlord: Oh, well, that is minor.

#### GAME 144

Have a Holly, Holly Christmas,

It's the best time of year.

We won't go slow and blood will flow, All out from your ear!

The Mystery Man

#### GAME 147

"What news do you bring me, Ûrzahil?"

"Master, I have spread your dark words. Behold, Argeleb lies dead to sickness."

"Go, my evil and faithful servant, bring me more deaths."

\*\*\*\*\*

There once was a Nazgûl named Mûrazôr

Who always wore his hair in a pompadour

He lost his land of Angmar

E.L.F. covered his hide with black tar

Then sent him torched back to Mordor

Minstrel Argeleb III of the

Eriadorian Liberation Front

#### GAME 153

Rhudaur drops, after destroying Dunland. Witch-king chased out of the Northwest. Easterlings destroy the Northmen. Sinda and Dwarves take Dol

Guldur. Where will Harad and the Corsairs stand? North and South Gondor bottle up Mordor's gates. Next to invade!

Ensam Harskare (1)

#### GAME 154

Middle-earth Gazette

Wanted

An opponent in the battle of wits--even if you are unarmed! Must be breathing and able to write English. Taunting you Freeps is like kicking a dead dog--no fun!

The Scarlet Pumpernickel

#### GAME 157

NOTICE:

I have assumed control of the Dragon Lord kingdom, and your chance to shatter my realm before I stabilized it is gone. You deal now with an experienced player--truce or character war is your decision!

Khamul

#### GAME 159

Open Letter to the Gondors:

Is there no limit to your generosity? Gold for my agents, camps for my emissaries, and now an army for my Dragon! Thanks already, but enough is enough.

Hoarmurath

\*\*\*\*\*

Hey diddle diddle

Elf guts for the fiddle

And Ashdurbuk leaped over Arthedain.

Doombringer (11)

#### GAME 161

To "The Watcher"--

Look carefully . . .

Now you see it . . .

... now you don't!

Jí Indûr

PS--Anyone too afraid to give their identity out is, to our mind, a WIMP . . . to your health I drink--NOT.

\*\*\*\*\*

Though his true love lies dead at the hands of a foul sorcerer . . . though his fair city is laid waste by trolls and goblins--still one thought burns clear in Amroth's consciousness: THE DRAGON LORD WILL PAY!

\*\*\*\*\*

Dark Servants:

Ten weeks of war and your assassins are only victims. Your timidity will be your deaths. For now we can slay you with sword, dagger and spell.

Elrond

#### GAME 163

Dark Servant Press

Ji Indur: 2 Other Cloud Lord characters: 0

Ji Indur takes the early lead but the boys say they'll catch up, it's only a matter of heads.

#### GAME 165

What turn are we gonna be out by? Apparently, you don't know who you're dealing with!

Freeps

\*\*\*\*\*

Tarondor--

What's a "stream of life" and where can we get one?

Celdrahil

\*\*\*\*\*

Boatin', boatin', boatin',  
Keep those boats a-boatin',  
Boatin', boatin', boatin',

Flotsam!

The Island Fish

#### GAME 167

Scraping for money to run the war effort, Mûrazôr opened the Angmar County Fair. The greased-elf contest and the bobbing-for-hobbits booths were very successful.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Witch-king strikes early but foolishly and will soon suffer the consequences. Goblin Gate will soon fall and Dol Guldur soon thereafter--in the North the battle is already half won. The Light will eradicate the Dark.

#### GAME 169

Fear ye the coming storm from the North for Mûrazôr the mighty is on you!!

#### GAME 171

This is a tale of sadness and woe  
For the powers of light, destroyed and laid low

Their cause is so desperate, their dilemma so plain

Naught in their future but sorrow and pain

So rise up brave Neutrals, listen not to their cries

In spite of their "freedom" you'll hear nothing but lies

Our cause is assured, our victory certain

Sauron will triumph by the final curtain

So join with us now, share in our glory  
That's all I can think of, so it's the end of this story.

The Wart-Nosed Bard

#### GAME 172

And so the Shadow rises once again . . .  
Beware, servants of Eru, for within lies your doom . . .

## The Eye of A Storm to Come

by

John H. Lamulle

In the year 1650 of the third age of Middle Earth an event took place. A great gathering of evil was called. This gathering would forever change the face of Middle-earth.

Peering into the night sky the burning eyes of a Nazgûl spotted the great ramparts of Dol Guldur. The massive fortress loomed upon the horizon like a mountain jutting out of a sea of trees. With his destination in sight the Nazgûl spurred his winged beast to even greater speeds. Soon the dark one is upon the keep and horns call from its many walls to herald his arrival. Mûrazôr lands within the inner courtyard and hastily climbs down from his ancient mount. Guards give way to the wraith saluting and kneeling as he passes by without a glance. The lord of the Nazgûl does, however, notice the nine flags of Sauron's mightiest servants flying upon the wall of the inner keep. As he walks forward the tenth and final banner is erected under the lidless eye notifying all that the lord of the Nazgûl now stalks the halls of Dol Guldur. Mûrazôr was glad the he was the last of Sauron's lieutenants to arrive but still he hoped that he was not too late, for it was not wise to keep the Dark Lord waiting.

A bald man in black robes meets the Nazgûl at the gates. Bowing low Maben greets his lord's lord nervously. "Ah, welcome, great one. You have arrived at the perfect time as always. Please allow me to escort you to the great hall."

The wraith does not move.

"Is there anything I may do before we proceed, great one?"

"Yes, little man." The Nazgûl's voice sounded as if it came from the depths of the earth and it gave the mage visible shudders. "You will see to my steed. You should also be grateful that I am feeling particularly merciful today. For you see, I do not know how my brother runs his affairs here at Dol Guldur but where I rule an attendant never speaks to his lord first, nor does he assume what course of action his master will take. But I am glad that it is you who welcomes me despite your rudeness, for I am in need of an agent. The trip to Dol Guldur is long and I would like someone to report to me regularly about the events in this region. You, Maben, will do nicely for you can report to me directly by magic if need be."

Maben's eyes dart about seeing if anyone was within earshot of the dread lord's voice. Khamûl would not be pleased to discover that one of his most trusted servants was about to become a double agent to his greatest rival. As always with Nazgûl Maben has no choice but to comply. "I would be honored, great one."

"Good. Then see me after my little meeting. Now proceed." With that the two sorcerers enter the keep amidst screams of orcish slaves being fed to the Nazgûl's winged beast.

The two huge doors are parted before Mûrazôr and all within scramble to their feet to show him their respect. The great hall of Dol Guldur is immense and lavish yet twisted to show its evil patriotism. A huge throne of black rock sits upon a dais. This is the very throne that Sauron had ruled upon until the end of the second age. The great seat was picked out of the ruins of Barad-dur and

erected here upon his return to Middle-earth nearly 600 years ago. At the base of the dais sits a long table and around this table stand Mûrazôr's peers. The lord of the Nazgûl strides up to the table and takes his seat at its head. Not since they were all cast into the shadows more than a millennia ago have all of the Nazgûl gathered together in the same place at the same time. The doors slam shut leaving the wraiths to themselves. When Mûrazôr sits the others take their places around the table. There are no greetings or words between them, they sit in the firelight and await the arrival of their lord. As he waits Mûrazôr knows that his lord is not far for he feels him near like a fire burning in his dark soul.

Soon the doors open once again and a man enters. Ūrzahil calls out in a voice of steel, "Prepare to receive the Lord of all Middle-earth!"

As the doors slam shut the Nazgûls stand and chant in the tongue of Mordor for what seems like hours. Then the dais is bathed in fire and a lidless eye materializes upon the huge throne. At his arrival the firelight dies and the stench of brimstone fills the great hall. The Nazgûl drop to their knees until a hollow voice beckons, "Rise my children and take your places." All sit at the great table including Ūrzahil. At this Mûrazôr curls an invisible lip and all within the room feel his discontent. The Mouth of Sauron was not a Nazgûl yet he takes his place among them. Sauron's voice rings on, "I have called you all together because the time to strike has come. The great plague is over and I am strong again. We must crush the Free Peoples of Middle-earth if I am to cover the land in a second darkness. Report."

Mûrazôr stands and addresses his dark lord, "Angmar is ready, my Lord. In the west they know me only as the Witch-King. The plague has crippled Arnor. Arthedain and Cardolan are shadows of their former glory. Upon my return I will give my commanders the order to strike. We have planned long and, although the war will probably cost me all that I have built in the North, my armies shall turn Arnor into a wasteland."

The fire shrouded eye of Sauron glows brighter as he speaks, "That is of little concern, for if the west falls the elves shall be alone and I will have my revenge upon the heirs of Isildur. What of Rhudaur?"

"They are strong and would prove invaluable. Should I gain their aid the west will be ours. Their leaders are weak and greedy. I believe that they may be bought with gold and magic."

"Excellent. You may take some items of power from the stores here upon your departure. These give as a gift of my good will to the people of Rhudaur." With that Sauron focuses his attention upon another of his greatest servants. "Khamûl."

The Dragon Lord stands and reports to his dark lord. "You know my plans, Lord. My mages shall soon be able to reveal the hidings of the cowardly Sinda, and with that my armies here will strike while my forces at Goblins Gate shall keep the Beornings occupied."

"Very good. What news of the dwarves?"

"I know very little of them, my Lord. They hide within their holes and their numbers are not known. They could have been eradicated by the plague or unharmed, it's just not certain."

"Either way they will probably do as they have in the past and remain in isolation. One thing is certain, one of my rings is in their possession. I want it! You see to this personally, Khamûl, do not fail me. Dendra Dwar."

The Dog Lord removes his wolf helm and then stands before the lidless eye. "The Morannon rivals Dol Guldur, my Lord. The fortifications are immense and it alone is enough to hold the North of Mordor. My armies are strong and I

will test my wolf riders against the horsemen of Rhovanion. But, they have more troops and resources. I will be in need of assistance."

There is a long silence before Sauron responds. "Yes, the Eothraim are strong and a threat, yet they have many weaknesses. Ji Indur, report."

The Cloud Lord stands and speaks in a voice which sounds like a howling wind. "I shall hold the back of Mordor while I send my armies to aid against Northern Gondor. I will send forth my agents to help my brother against the Eothraim and to relieve Angmar. I will also try and secure the Easterlings. They will make powerful allies and should not be overlooked."

"Good. Akhōrahil, report."

The Blind Sorcerer stands and speaks in a voice which echoes about the room. "I have accumulated a good number of powerful sorcerers, my Lord. And so there is little within the realm of the arcane which is beyond me. I have also recruited a strong army and acquired the wood to make a navy within the dark lake. I shall hold back my troops to see where they are most needed and put my mages to work finding items of power which have been lost for ages. Such items could prove invaluable."

"That is true." Sauron pauses as if to consider all that was said and then continues. "Your navy was foolish and a waste of valuable resources but you have done well. Perhaps the navy might speed in the supply of troops to the front. We shall see. Soon I will instruct you to seek out The One, so train your wizards well. Hoarmûrath, report."

Gathering up his many garbs the Ice King rises and speaks. "Your plague has devastated Gondor. They have abandoned many of their old fortifications in Mordor. Durthang is mine and I have a powerful army there which is poised to strike. Osgiliath is no longer the capital of Gondor and so it has been neglected. Soon it will be under my rule."

"I see. We must control all of the lands east of the Anduin by winter in order to supply our swelling armies throughout Middle-earth. I have faith in your ability to accomplish this small feat. Now, Adûnaphel."

At that Sauron's Quiet Avenger stands and speaks with a fair voice. She is one of the few women in all of Middle-earth to have worn a ring of power. Deadly and cunning Adûnaphel has been said to be the apple of Sauron's catlike eye. "Indeed Gondor is weak! Because of the Kinstrife wars and now the plague they have lost control of the Haradwaith and the Corsairs of Umbar. In the chaos of the separation I have managed to secure a strong foothold south of Mordor. I have set my seat of power in the ancient Harad town of Lugalur and I now control a good number of old Gondorian outposts. I have also managed to secure a fleet of some size, though it is a far cry from the armadas of Umbar and South Gondor. I know that as soon as I move against Dol Amroth they will sail and destroy all that I have worked for. To prevent this I shall remove my ports and Harbors and thus eliminate the threat of a sea invasion. My goal is to prove great enough of a nuisance to them so that they do not join their brothers to the north in the war against Mordor. I shall also go to great lengths to try and coerce the Haradwaith and Umbar to turn against the Free Peoples. With their aid I could bring much harm to Gondor and control the entire region."

The Lidless Eye laughs and then says, "Very good, my daughter. Ren."

The Fire King stands and as he talks sparks fly from his unseen mouth. "I rule from Barad Ungol and armies from Mordor arrive there daily. Soon I will secure the eastern pass by capturing Minas Ithil. From there I shall join in the assault upon Osgiliath."

The fires about Sauron crackle in delight. "Good. As I said before, I want the Tower of the Moon and the Citadel of the Stars under my control by winter.

Gondor still holds many of the Palantiris of old. I want those stones. You and Hoarmûrath shall gather these for me. In the wrong hands those orbs could spy deep into Mordor or worse find out that I have arisen. I do not wish to be discovered until the time is right. Úvatha!"

The ninth Nazgûl, known as the Long Rider, stands and bows low to his lord before speaking slowly. "Although many said that it could not be done I have built a hidden outpost upon the mountain island of the Sea Of Rhûn. I have done this without raising the eyes of my Northmen and Sinda neighbors. I have also reestablished our reign of Olbamarl which has been untouched for centuries. There I discovered within ancient vaults many items of stealth and espionage. These I shall give to my most trusted agents and turn them loose upon the Free Peoples. I have also recruited an army of Easterling Cavalry so that I might protect what I capture in the North. The men of the North are doomed, my Lord, and within a few months the entire area of Rhûn will be ours."

"Do not underestimate the enemy, Úvatha. There is no room for failure! Úrzahil."

The Mouth of Sauron stands and speaks with a voice which booms about the great hall. "Your Dark Tower is rebuilt, my Lord. You may return to Mordor with great honor."

The burning eye explodes in hellfire and all within the room step back as the great table is set aflame. "No! I shall not reveal myself yet. But, tend my home well for soon I will return."

Úrzahil stutters as he continues his report. "Y-Yes, my Lord. I shall coordinate the efforts of all your servants in Mordor. I have many troops and only time stands in our way. Hail, Sauron! May his dark glory cover all!"

With that, all of the Nazgûl stand and praise their dark lord. Long into the night the Dark Servants plot, scheme, and take fell orders from their master. When the sun rises the meeting is adjourned and the Nazgûl return to their black kingdoms. Soon all of Middle-earth will feel the effects of this dark gathering, and only the winds of time know what is to come.

## The Oracle Speaks

Got a question about your game you can't seem to find an answer to? Ask the Oracle!

### MIDDLE-EARTH PBM

If my commander is killed in an army attack along with his army, and the enemy commanders and their armies were killed in the same turn assaulting my pop center, what happens to the artifact(s) my commander was carrying?

**If all characters are killed, the artifact(s) will drop in the hex. That is not to say another player can not pick up the artifact in the same turn . . .**

If the artifact was dropped in my pop center, can I issue order #796, Pick Up Artifact, to retrieve it?

**Order #900 would serve you better. Order #796 is more for picking up artifacts which a character dropped in a hex (and is usually best accomplished by the character who dropped the artifact).**

If a player is knocked out via capturing all possible capitals, what happens to his pop centers, armies, characters, hostages and any artifacts with those characters?

**We do not go into detail regarding nations which have been eliminated and what happens to that nation's holdings.**

Can I hire (bribe) a Neutral or Dark Servant character if I am a Free People?

**No. Characters can only be recruited by nations whose alignment is the same as the nation who controlled that character.**

When calculating army strength in a pop center assault, do war machines count only against fortifications, or does the army still get 50 strength points per war machine?

**When calculating army strength in a pop center assault, war machines first go against the fortifications of the pop center. If there is anything "left over," the remaining will get the 50 Strength against the pop center. Example: If there is a pop center with fortifications which give 2000 defense points and you have an army with 40 war machines, the war machines will take down the fortifications but do nothing to the pop center. If you had 41 war machines, 40 would be used to take out the fortifications and the remaining 1 would give 50 extra strength points when attacking the pop center. You do not get strength bonus from war machines if they do not overcome the fortifications.**

Are war machines only counted on the first round of combat like artifacts and offensive spells?

**No, they are counted every round.**

**Address any questions you may have about your game to "The Oracle Speaks". Printed inquiries may be signed or anonymous but please include your name and game number when submitting.**

## **Why Sauron Really Wants the One Ring**

A tale of Middle-Earth

by

Sheldon Campbell

### **MORDOR: THE DARK TOWER**

A room high in the iron fortress of Barad-dur. The lurid glow of Orodruin shines angrily into the room, illuminating the dread Faces gathered there.

"What is this thing? It looks like stewed slugs on a shingle." Mûrazôr, the Witch-King of Angmar, Lord of the Nazgûl, was not pleased. He held the plate as if it might bite.

"It's tofu and watercress and zucchini on sprouted wheat-oatmeal bread." Adûnaphel explained patiently. "It's high in soluble fiber, protein, and complex carbohydrates, and completely fat free. And here's some water from a hidden, completely unspoiled spring in the Misty Mountains."

"Who let her bring the snacks again? Just once, couldn't we get something decent? Didn't you capture an Eothraim camp last week, Hoarmûrath? Those people know how to eat! Couldn't we get some beef? And some wine? Or even horsemeat. Or boiled potatoes. Orc rations. Anything!"

"I'll bring the snacks next time. Can I please?" whined Dendra Dwar hopefully.

"Try the sandwich, Mûrazôr my son. It contains the fruits of the earth, in their natural state. You will find that your mystic powers will sing in tune with the inner harmonies of the universe." Akhôrahil swung his crystal softly back and forth, a beatific expression on his eyeless face. He took a bite of the sandwich. "Radiant, my child." he said to Adûnaphel.

"Um. Food." grunted Gothmog. "Eat." He took a bite, and made a face. "Bad food."

"We're not supposed to be in harmony with the universe. We're the nameless horrors from beyond this time, the unnatural creatures of Darkness, the dread servants of the Dark Lord. Remember? She even cut the crusts off." Mûrazôr shuddered. "This looks like something Elves would eat."

"Uh, well, actually, I got the recipe from Elven Home and Gardens." admitted Adûnaphel. "But I killed the emissary who was carrying it."

"Elven Home and Garden?" gagged Mûrazôr.

Ren the Unclean sauntered into the room, smoking a cigar the size of a cucumber.

"Put it out, Ren." said Úvatha. "We fumigated the room. The rats are already dead."

"What's wrong with my cigar? Got it from Khamûl. Wrapped in genuine dragon scales. Right, Khamûl?" Ren slapped Khamûl on the back. Khamûl cringed.

"Dragon scales?" sniffed Adûnaphel. "Just like Ren to smoke an endangered species. The secondhand smoke is going to make *us* endangered species."

"Every meeting you belch smoke like a Woodman town after a raid. I can't even see the maps half the time." complained Hoarmûrath,

"Plus it smells like a long-dead hedgehog." added Jí Indûr. "Put it out!"

"Okay." Ren stubbed out the cigar. He pulled a case of long, black, unfiltered cigarettes from his pocket, lit one, took a deep drag, and blew the smoke in Adûnaphel's face. "Happy?"

Another arrival halted the argument. The Dark Lord entered, surveying the Nazgul and Dark Lieutenants. The Lidless Eye balefully regarded the assembled leaders.

**"Greetings. We are here to discuss developments in Ithilien and elsewhere..."** began Sauron from the head of the table. Unfortunately, the effect was spoiled by Mûrazôr's simultaneous, and equally portentous speech.

"Hail, Great Master of Middle-Earth. Your faithful servants await your command! We are come from undertaking great deeds of monstrous wickedness in Your name. The pitiful Free Peoples cower at Your name and run like mice at the approach of Your great servants..."

A well aimed apple took the Witch-King neatly on the back of the head. Cries of "Put a sock in it", and muted retching came from the gathered Servants. Khamûl flinched as the apple bounced in his direction.

"Who threw that!" the Witch-King whirled to face the poker-faced group. "I'll suck your so-called soul out! I'll stuff that apple in your..."

**"Silence!"** tolled the Voice of the Dark Lord. **"We were discussing developments in Ithilien, if you will be so...kind as to recall. The main North Gondor army under King Tarondor has advanced to the Ruins of Osgiliath, and threatens our forces in Western Mordor."**

"I'll take care of that." lisped Jí Indûr. "Those big strong North Gondor commanders. I'll be glad to kidnap some of them for you. Ooh."

Though in the matter of clothes most of the Nazgul struck with basic black, Adûnaphel favored earth tones, and Akhôrahil was wearing sky-blue robes trimmed in silver, with mystical embroidery and a large purple crystal around his neck. The Cloud Lord, on the other hand, wore pearl earrings, a puce mantle, cerise knickers, and polished white wing tips.

"Yes, and I'll help." crooned Úvatha. "We've got big plans for them, don't we, Jí darling?" Úvatha stuck with black: black leather, from his polished riding boots to his spiked collar.

"I bet I know why they call him the Long Rider." muttered Úrzahil to Hoarmûrath.

"More like the Short Rider, I've heard." replied Hoarmûrath in a stage whisper. Barely stifled guffaws again interrupted the Dark Lord.

"Just what did you mean by that?" snapped Úvatha.

"I'd rather not say. You might not be able to take it." replied Hoarmûrath.

"Yeah? I can take anything a runt like you can dish out!"

"Hush! Our Great Leader is trying to speak." interjected Mûrazôr.

"Oh yeah, tough guy? What are you gonna do about it!"

"Quiet! Sauron the Mighty is speaking," shouted Mûrazôr.

"Peace, my children." said Akhôrahil placidly. "Let the cosmic harmonies soothe your angry words. Try some sprouts." He handed a bowl to Mûrazôr.

"Where'd you get this 'my children' stuff? Sprouts! Not even an Orc would eat sprouts!"

"They will calm you, my son. Your aura is disturbed. Be at peace. Think of a green meadow under a cloudless sky..."

Mûrazôr shook his fists skyward. "Gharrgh! Green meadow? Cloudless sky? You've gone over to the Elves!" The Witch-King lunged toward Akhôrahil, shaking his fist. "We might as well hold our meetings in Imraldis and invite Elrond! Tofu! Sprouts!"

**"We *will* continue now. Ji was going to tell us how..."**

Without warning the tapestry caught fire. The dry, ancient fabric exploded into flames that reached hungrily for the ceiling beams.

"Dammit, Ren, watch where you throw your stinking butts," hissed Úvatha.

"Don't worry, I'll handle it," shouted the Ice King, gesturing mystically.

"No!" shrieked the Nazgul. It was too late. A blast of icy wind howled in the window, scattering flaming shards of tapestry throughout the room, igniting the clothing of the Nazgul as they dove for cover. Most of them ended in a pile under the table. Fortunately, they were rapidly extinguished by the blizzard of snow, sleet, and golf-ball sized hailstones that swept the room.

"Wow! That was neat, Hoarmûrath!" said Dendra Dwar.

"Get off me, Jil!" growled Ren. "And keep your hands to yourself."

"Ooh, that was fun."

"Wind. Snow. Where from? It's summer now. Not supposed to snow." muttered Gothmog, frowning.

"Explain it to the boy, Úrzahil." said Mûrazôr staggering erect and looking down at the half burnt, half rimed remains of his mustache.

Úrzahil, a wizened creature who looked much older than his two centuries, took Gothmog aside like a small boy towing a large captive balloon. His sigh as he began to speak to Gothmog implied that they'd had this conversation before--many, many times before. Khamûl, Quivering like a leaf, finally crept from beneath the table.

"Well, at least the sandwiches are history." continued Mûrazôr, surveying the wreckage of the table with a trace of relief.

"That's alright." replied Adûnaphel sweetly, placing another plate on the table. "I brought more."

"No end to catastrophes around here."

"Certain ancient horrors should be watching their cardiovascular fitness. There's a catastrophe waiting to happen. One minute out in the field, dealing woe and destruction in Eriador, the next minute the crushing chest pain, the world grows gray...and at the next meeting everyone's saying 'Poor old Mûrazôr. Yeah, but I hear he was able to sit up in bed yesterday without getting short of breath.' Not to mention that you're getting a tummy." responded Adûnaphel, prodding him in the ribs.

"I'm in as good a shape as I was a century ago." shouted Mûrazôr heatedly. Adûnaphel just smiled.

All smiles faded as the Dark Lord cleared his throat. It sounded like the sound the last star in the universe makes when it sputters out. It was a throat-clearing with texture. The dripping, slightly singed, very angry Dark Lord spoke.

"You will all sit down...now."

They all sat down. The Eye glowed like fresh blood in moonlight.

"You will all be...quiet. We will discuss the war in the Ithilien. Or there will be new Nazgul. Nazgul who understand the meaning of ...discipline. They will understand the meaning of discipline because they will know what happened to the ...former Nazgul. They will know what happened to the former Nazgul, because it will still be ...happening. For thousands of years, it will still be ...happening. Is this clear to ...everyone?"

"Give me a chance, boss. I'll handle the situation for you. Honest, boss. Just let me have a chance." Dendra Dwar practically cringed in anxious entreaty. To his chagrin, Sauron ignored him.

"So, does anybody have an idea? Or even a clue?"

Dendra Dwar turned and sulked at the window. On the back of his cloak faintly glowing green runes could be seen, forming the mystical words "KICK ME."

"A thousand gold says he doesn't notice it this year." whispered Ren to Jí Indûr.

"No bet. It's been six months already since you put it on there. Do you think he ever washes that cloak?" replied the puce-robed assassin.

"Nah. I've seen cleaner cloaks on Woodmen." The Fire King and Cloud Lord chortled.

"Shh!" hissed Mûrazôr.

"So, are you prepared to act, Jí Indûr? I understand that you and three of your associates (Jí sighed; 'My boys!') will deal with Tarondor. Ren, you then will evade the army and strike into Gondor. Burn. Destroy. Spread terror through the lands of our foes. The forces of the Ice King will cover Mordor against further attacks."

"Him? I don't trust that clown to cover my capital!" said Ren. "He couldn't cover his mouth to sneeze."

"Yeah? Who needed 10,000 gold just to stay alive last week? Who's so incompetent that he got captured in the last battle and had to be rescued?"

"Oh yeah? At least I fight, unlike some Nazgul I could name. Yes sir, when you ask for help from Ren the Unclean, you can count on it. Not like at Osgiliath. 'Where's the Ice King army', I said to Uklurg. 'Haven't seen it, boss.' he said to me. 'Send Nazog to look for the Ice King army.' I said. Nazog went to look, came back. 'Nope, boss.' he said. 'No Ice King.' 'But Hoarmûrath promised he'd help out.' I said. 'Sorry, boss, no Ice King.' So we went ahead and fought 'em all by

ourselves. No Ice King. I wouldn't want anyone to draw any conclusions from that. No, sir. I'm sure there was a perfectly good explanation. Sunspots. Your auntie was ill. The dog ate the army." Ren leaned back and lit up a cigar.

"You know perfectly well I was fighting the Eothraim!"

"That's right, you were. The big, bad Eothraim. Nasty boogers, all right. What've they got now, three, four hundred troops? And Jí's got all their commanders -- poor sods. And yet somehow, whenever the Gondors show up at the front door with ten thousand men, you're fighting the Eothraim."

"I'm sick of your sneaking insinuations." Hoarmûrath rose to his feet. "Let's go outside and settle this once and for all!"

"Should any of you, such as ...Ren and Hoarmûrath, continue to annoy me, they will doubtless be pleased to relieve Khamûl in Greenwood, fighting the ...Dwarves, Elves, Woodmen, Northmen, and Eothraim. Our friend Khamûl has been looking a bit ...discouraged." Khamûl, who had been staring at the floor and muttering to himself, instantly brightened. "I'm sure you two would just ...love taking over those operations, wouldn't you. Or could you be ...persuaded to shut up, sit down, and get on with it!" Khamûl sighed and turned his gaze floorward again. Ren and Hoarmûrath turned pale (or paler, anyway -- a nice trick for a wraith) swallowed, and sat down.

"Ûrzahil, you will send Gothmog with forces to assist Khamûl."

"Gothmog go fight."

"We will continue to the next item on the agenda."

Akhôrahil, Adûnaphel, Jí Indûr, and Ûvatha arose. "We have a guest speaker, my Lord." said Akhôrahil. "he is an ancient lore-master, who has important insights for us into the sociopolitical aspects of magic. The title of his presentation is: 'Gender Identification, Traditional Power Relationships, and Conceptual Spell Development in Middle-Earth: a Post-Deconstructionist Perspective.' Allow me to introduce the Masked Sorcerer."

Polite applause came from most of those assembled, who maybe understood a word here and there, and maybe didn't. The Masked Sorcerer entered the room; a tall, thin man in a voluminous black cloak and black hood. A stray strand of golden hair escaped from the back of the hood. "First slide, please."

...to be continued?

Thanks to Payton Turpin for critical reading.

(continued from inside front cover)

simply because a few players are abusing the policy. So keep all those accounts funded!

Lastly, it's time for our ever-lovin' new game needs (don't ask me what that means--it just sounded keen). We currently have a 3-week ME-PBM 1650 filling, so those of you wanting the slower pace game should write to us. Also, we have a few team games pending - looking for the a few Dark Servant and Free Peoples teams to balance out each side. As usual, Neutrals for several different games are guaranteed to be quick game starts! We also have a game of State of War filling. Those of you feeling rebellious can take up the challenge and take the fight to the Feds! We will also be filling many games of the new scenario in the next few weeks, so be on the lookout for your new game positions.

That's the low down this month. I'll talk to you same time next month.

Stuart

## The Hall Of Heroes

### Sea Kings Game #42

In a conflict lasting 55 turns, the Land of the Seas is now ruled by player #18, the Conjuror, and #20, the Warlock. Their hand now guides the Sea Kings to a new age of wonder and achievement. Congratulations to both players on a job well done!

### ME-PBM Game #15 - The Free Peoples: #10

The People of Light have spread Eru's luminescence throughout Middle-earth, preserving the continued growth of the Free and the destruction of the Shadow. The feat was accomplished in 70 turns. Final Standings are as follows:

#10 Noldo Elves - 1800  
#19 Long Rider - 2050 (expired)  
#14 Cloud Lord - 1933 (expired)

Top Dark Servant: #19 Long Rider - 2050

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrohir/Noldo Elves: 279  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Elrohir/Noldo Elves: 200  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Simaur/Noldo Elves: 127  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Silion/Noldo Elves: 108  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 250  
Most Mithril - Noldo Elves: 9740  
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 90  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 45

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

### Game #85 - The Free Peoples: #22, #10 & #23

The Children of Light and Freedom have triumphed in the ages old struggle against impending Darkness and Despair. With the Lidless Eye now eradicated from Middle-earth, the challenge of creating a world worth living in can now begin. Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 2267  
#10 Noldo Elves - 1966  
#23 Dunlendings - 1883

Top Dark Servant: #15 Blind Sorcerer - 1125

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Akhórahil/Blind Sorcerer: 182  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Tarondor/Northern Gondor: 140  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Mimas/Haradwaith: 122  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Rakar/Blind Sorcerer: 123  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Akhórahil/Blind Sorcerer: 163  
Most Mithril - Dunlendings: 2759  
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 27  
Most Kills - Southern Gondor: 17

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

### Game #92 - The Dark Servants: #22, #21 & #23

Sauron has gained dominance in Middle-earth through the bold leadership of allies which were gained as the struggle developed between Light and Dark. They have reaped the just rewards the Lidless Eye bestows on those who serve him well--that of Regency in His name! Final standings are as follows:

#22 Haradwaith - 2300  
#21 Corsairs - 2250  
#23 Dunlendings - 1867

Top Free People: #9 Sinda Elves - 800

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

## The Hall Of Heroes

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 203  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 175  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Lomëllindë/Corsairs: 138  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Silver/Dark Lieutenants: 101  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Meriot/Corsairs: 149  
Most Mithril - Corsairs: 2520  
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 28  
Most Kills - Corsairs: 18

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

### Game #113 - The Dark Servants: #21, #25 & #20

The Lidless Eye's malevolent gaze sweeps Middle-earth and sees that no more of the hated Free remain in a land that he now calls his own. His faithful Servants orchestrate the choir of screams wrung from those who chose to oppose his will. Final standings are as follows:

#21 Corsairs - 2200  
#25 Easterlings - 2000  
#20 Dark Lieutenants - 1925

Top Free People: #10 Noldo Elves - 1533

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Carrog/Dark Lieutenants: 180  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 119  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Dfn Ohtar/Dark Lieutenants: 138  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Gilrean/Arthedain: 96  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Carrog/Dark Lieutenants: 162  
Most Mithril - Dark Lieutenants: 692  
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 26  
Most Kills - Easterlings: 10

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

### Game #123 - The Dark Servants: #20, #21 & #16

The rulers faithful to Sauron's dark cause have reason to rejoice as their Dark Lord now rules supreme in a world devoid of Light. Their shall be positions to be envied in the ages to come. Final standings are as follows:

#20 Dark Lieutenants - 2000  
#21 Corsairs - 1950  
#16 Ice King - 1751

Top Free People: Sinda Elves - 883

#### Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 189  
Highest Net Commander Rank - Shogmog/Fire King: 189  
Highest Net Agent Rank - Tormog/Dark Lieutenants: 152  
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Úrzahil/Dark Lieutenants: 99  
Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 137  
Most Mithril - Ice King: 659  
Most Artifacts - Dark Lieutenants: 24  
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 8

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!