

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD

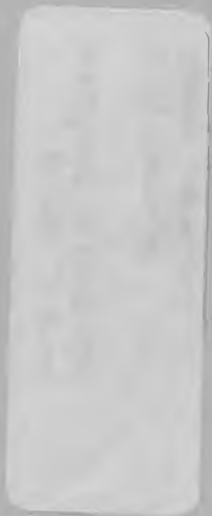
639 4294



GAME SYSTEMS

PO Box 160129 Miami, FL 33116-0129

forwarding & address correction requested



MIAMI
JUL 21 1985
FL
U.S. POSTAGE
032

WORDS FROM THE WOOD

O.K., so here it is, staring me right in the eye--the big 3-0. Yes, it's finally here. I know I talked about it earlier in the year, but my 30th birthday arrives on the 10th of this month. I have decided to look on the bright side of this situation (such as the first day of GenCon will actually BE the fateful day--so any of you who will be attending are more than welcome to stop by and rub . . . er, wish me well) and not mope or grouse about leaving the twenties behind. So, the positives about turning 30, according to me: 1. Money previously spent on loud, crashing music can now be spent on a hearing aid. 2. Money spent on gas will now decrease, because of reduced driving speeds. 3. PRUNE JUICE! PRUNE JUICE!! PRUNE JUICE!!! 4. Well . . . ummm . . . O.K., I can't think of a fourth positive right now, but I'll work on it.

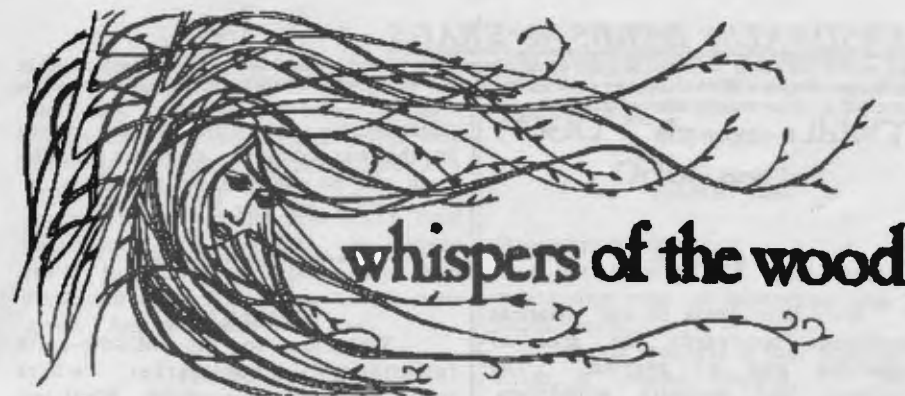
The first order of business I'd like to address is something you may have noticed on your turnsheet. The turn number is now printed on the top of the page, along with the game and player number. This is in response to requests from players that this information would help them out when filling out their turns. Please note, however, that the turn number printed on the top of the page differs from the turn number printed on the front of the turnsheet. That's because the turn number on the front of the page is the turn number for the UPCOMING turn. The turn number printed on top of the page is the CURRENT turn number. Please remember this when referring to this information.

GSI would like to announce a new pricing service now available to our players--prepaid turn fees. This is a one time fee of \$250 paid up front that will cover all TURN fees for that game. That's right, this one time fee will eliminate all turn fees for the rest of the game. Please be aware that this is a non-refundable fee. If you are knocked out of the game on Turn 10, we will not be able to refund the remainder of the fee. If you last until Turn 39, however, then you would play the rest of the game for free. This DOES NOT cover fax fees or extra charges that may be assessed to your account. You can keep a small account to cover such charges if you so desire. Those of you who are interested are welcome to contact GSI to set up such a game.

As mentioned last issue, we now have the capability of sending out our email results in the reduced two-pages-per-page format. If you want to receive your results in this format, send us a message to this effect. Please note that, if you cannot print out the file, we do not recommend using this format, as it is very hard to read onscreen. This format may be very desirable to those of you who can print the file, however, so let us know if you are interested.

For those of you who will be attending GenCon, don't forget that we will be hosting two--count 'em, two--seminars for your attending pleasure. These seminars will be on Friday, August 11th, and Saturday, August 12th, from 8 PM to 10 PM. These seminars are a good place to ask questions about ME-PBM, GSI, and any other topic you want to discuss. Our Origins seminar was well received and we hope to match the success of this seminar at GenCon. So if you're at GenCon, stop by our booth to say hello and stop by one of the seminars to learn more about ME-PBM and GSI. Hope to see you there!

Speaking of conferences, I'd like to remind you all of our monthly AOL conference on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 9 PM. This month's conference will be held on August 8th. We can be found by going to Keywords and typing OGF; click on Conference Center, then click on Antechambers and you are in. For those of you not able to attend GenCon, this is a good place to get your questions



ALONG THE PATHWAYS

Words From the Wood.....	Inside Cover
EDITOR'S COLUMN	
Personals.....	1
COMMUNICATION	
Surviving In A World Of Agents	8
STRATEGY	
An Unexpected Reconciliation	11
FICTION	
Hall of Heroes	13
THE VICTORS.	

WHISPERS OF THE WOOD is a monthly publication primarily for the use and enjoyment of GSI players of 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.

Credits

Editor.....Stuart Taft
 Assistant Editor..Michael Heckert
 Staff.....Yaman Battikhi, Milly Borja, Harold Ford, Michelle Heath,
 Stephanie Jones, Sabrina McNeely, Anthony Vialon
 Publishers.....Pete Stassun & Bill Feild Jr

Editor's Note: GSI neither confirms nor denies the accuracy of any figures or the efficiency of any strategies published herein.

This Month's Cover: "A Long Winter's Knight" by John Kisse

Volume XII Issue #5
 Published by GAME SYSTEMS INC
 August 1, 1995
 Copyright GSI 1995

PERSONALS: BARBS & BRAGS

Every current GSI player is entitled to a free 60 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 (61-100 is \$2.00 etc.). GSI reserves the right to edit or refuse material deemed unsuitable.

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 1650

GAME 20

Over three years of war. Nations plundered, boneyards the size of mountains and no respite. The woodmen just recently withdrawn. Blind Sorcerer not heard from. And so, Murazor and Argeleb turn from battle large to contest ownership of that final trinket, the One Ring.

Helcent

GAME 94

Just when things get interesting someone goes and finds the One Ring. All those great stratagems and movements gone to waste. Ah well, at least they aptly named Mt. Doom, for many will meet theirs before this is over.

Helcent

GAME 100

This, our second year anniversary shall be your last. You haven't run two turns now and you haven't a chance militarily! Ah but the final joke is that the Eothraim, the most vocal (and obnoxious) of your adversaries will capture your last major town. I can visualize no more fitting end to the likes of you.

Uirdiks the Eothraim Mage

GAME 103

Dear Free,

I may be the only remaining original Dark Servant (if I'm not already, I soon will be), but I'm determined and won't be going anywhere soon. On the up side, I

welcome my new allies to the fight--let the war continue, and may Middle-earth yet be plunged into darkness!

Rhys, the Fire King of 103

ON SALE NOW!

Welcome to the Middle-earth Inflationary Supermarket, where prices are out of this world! We'll buy steel at 432 per unit, mithril at 2557, and bronze at 156! But hurry, because the prices keep going higher!

Rhys (18)

GAME 105

Eothraim--

If you don't refuse my mages' challenges, how are my agents gonna have any fun?! Plus you missed out on the pleasure of Uirdiks dying by disease...

In two turns, four dead by challenges--and one kidnapped and being tortured for info. Give it up already!

Khamûl, Master of Mirkwood

GAME 116

The One Ring is mine now! Mine alone. All about whisper and plot but they shall not have it. I'll hide it well, but where, where? And a sibilant voice whispers across the ages, "Mt. Doom, perhaps..."

Helcent

GAME 125

Rhovanion is now the expressway to Mirkwood. The way is lined with Woodmen dead and burnt out Eóthraim towns. The way looks very inviting...

Zarendarger (15)

GAME 132

After 18 months of struggle and bloodshed it seems the forces of light are victorious. Free armies travel with abandon throughout Mordor and few remain to stop them. Sauron, frustrated once again, demands a final sacrifice. His servants are denied leave to withdraw, rather they must fight and die. No quarter asked, none given. And so it shall be...

GAME 141

Hoarmurath: So . . . you escaped capture, did you?

Daron Fullblown: Yes, my liege.

Hoarmurath: And you were captured by a dwarf?!

Daron Fullblown: Yes, my liege.

Hoarmurath: And they took you to their capital, did they?

Daron Fullblown: Yes my liege.

Hoarmurath: Now that wasn't too smart, was it?

Daron Fullblown: No, my liege, it was not.

Hide your gold, hide your characters, await my revenge, I will be coming...

Berserker (16)

Lord Murazor, Black Prince, King of the Frozen North.

I have taken Khazad-Dum from the Dwarves, Tharbad from Cardolan, forced the Noldo to evacuate Mithlond, and am about to see the Arthedain crushed; what's next?

Doombringer (11)

GAME 154

"Aw rats! Another Northmen town," Nevren Talas growled and pulled out a map.

"What is this stupid town doing . . . HEY! These cretins were supposed to have joined Dendra Dwar months ago! You'd think that when they've

sworn allegiance to Sauron, knives at their throats, they'd keep their word. Hrmph. Probably call anything duress these days."

Rhys (15)

GAME 158

Hoarmurath shivered.

He lowered his gaze from the smoldering ruin of Morannon and the Sinda horde.

At his feet was a bag, holding the heads of Uvatha, Urzahfl, Din Ohtar, Carrog, Lomelindë, Tormog, and others.

And a simple card that read, "El & the Vaders."

Hoarmurath shivered.

GAME 165

The end draws near for the once mighty free nations. Once mighty, they now cower in damp holes seeking to hide themselves from the all seeing eye of Sauron. They can only hope to fail and in failing to die.

Helrazor Master of Ships

GAME 167

The war grinds on as the 2 to 1 ratio of free to dark presses home. Morannon is now free and other pop centers in Mordor will soon be liberated. Who will go next?

GAME 178

The North. Never forget about the North. The sun is rising. The shadows disappear.

GAME 181

Cirdan,

Yes, we are not as far apart as we once were. 7,500 Haradwaith heavy cavalry have been bridging the gap.

Carlton, Shah of Harondor

GAME 184

Rubbing his eyes, Mahrcaed awakes from a long, alcohol induced slumber.

"Aide!"

"Yes, Sire."

"Where are we?"

"Why, we're at 3135 next to the QA capital."

"What! How did we get here?"

The last thing I remember is the victory celebration after burning Khand Amu."

"Sire, right before you passed out you told me to move the army south."

"No I didn't! You were bothering me. I said, 'you should shut your mouth.' What is our present situation?"

"We are facing two QA armies and are swamped with enemy agents including the weasel Ji Indur. We captured him last night but he got away before we could cut off his other ear. He did leave his Cloud Bow and the Morlhach behind though."

"Useless toys. Tell the army to charge. I'm going back to sleep. Wake me up if you hear of any real threats."

GAME 186

Soon the last Dark Servant will be sent howling from Mirkwood. With that evil expunged the servants of light shall march on Mordor. As for the Long Rider, I see his sniveling troops turned from the Wood to attack a leaderless militia. So be it. His time will come, anon.

Helcent

GAME 190

Gather, Darkness;
And Dragons, Awake!
March Ye to War in the Dark Lord's wake.
Pride, farewell; And Ambition, forsake.
Rhudaur, thou mine enemy shall be,
Till Time Stops, or the World Breaks.
Murazor, Witch-King of Angmar

"It's iz time to dee!"
And mighty Wodurishak's arms were grabbed.

"Wait, I have more names."
They continued to drag him towards the gallows.

"How about Tharudan?"

"Busy."

"That dwarf Anvil."

"Busy."

"Gisulf or Leofigild."

"No!"

"How about that North Gondor guy?"

"Zhut up Zpy!"

Wodurishak thought for a moment, how to stall?

"I have a name for you."

"Yez?"

"El & The Vaders."

He hit the ground.

A bitter wind swirled around a young woman studying various reports on the war. Northmen and Cardolan gone, Easterlings and Dunlend joined with Sauron. Was it even possible to prevail? Why struggle futilely? Should we not surrend . . . Her eyes narrowed. Fist clenched she strode to the window and shut it. "You haven't beaten us yet, Sauron!"

Rhys(24)

GAME 191

Brain-Damaged Move of the Month--This award goes to Lord Marl Tarma of the Arthedain and Captain Hallas of Cardolan, for assaulting the camp/castle of Amon Sûl with just enough troops so that their armies survived (after huge losses) but not enough to actually destroy the camp . . . Thanks for the entertainment!

--Mûrazôr

GAME 192

He shook my hand, as his hat fell to the left, and with a stern look he whispered:

"All will not be lost. The burden is great but I send you to battle with my blessings. Go and stop the Wraiths. I'll come again."

GAME 194

Dead, Dead, Dead.
Everyone, anyone--
Dead, Dead, Dead.
Dead to the North.
Dead to the South.
Dead to the East.
Dead to the West.
(They died their best)
And guess what?
In eight more turns . . .
I'll have . . .
. . . The . . .
. . . One . . .
. . . Ring . . .!
(All Freeps--Dead!)

My Fellow Lords

This is a reminder that embassies to the Courts of Harad will only be received until 10 PM Eastern Standard Time. Your compliance is commanded.

King of Harad

Been interesting so far. Rhudaur and Dunland immediately pounce on the semi-active and dubiously ept Cardolan, and he's out by turn 5. Arthedain, the Dwarves, and the Noldo are certainly making up for his absence though. I've been in battles ever since turn 3, and Rhudaur and Dunlend are still negotiating with both sides.

Still haven't lost a population center though. And looking to the horizon I can see Cloud Lord agents

and Fire King armies coming to relieve me. Soon I will be able to give the Free a taste of their own medicine.

Er-Murazor, Witch-king of Angmar
and Lord of the Nazgul

GAME 195

Bain I snapped to attention as Leader stepped into the tent. Leader viewed the battle board and deployment of forces. Then he spoke:

"Job well done. You deserve a rest. A 2 week leave for all commanders!"

Bain I stood erect in full armor and replied:

"Thank you my liege but we haven't begun to FIGHT!"

A cheer went up as Leader gave the order to press the attack!

Argeleb seems to think that 2000 troops in steel is going to put me in my place!!! Well . . . maybe to one of my armies, but not all of them. I suggest you relearn how to count. As for my "myriad of mistakes" . . . erratic behavior supports misinformation. If the Witch-King hadn't approached my borders I would have crushed the Cowardlans in April! Thanks to the Noldo & Rhudaur. I now have a character more powerful than a Nazgul!!!!

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ENEMY!!!!

Dunland Military Advisor Orillion
Darkblade

GAME 199

A warning to the future saviors of Sauron!!! If you fail to stop my armies in Mirkwood your feeble bones will pave the road to Arnor!

Lore Master of the Rhûn Sea Orillion
Darkblade

"My Lord, there are still no enemy forces found."

"Hmm . . . things go too easily for us. Time to draw some blood!!"

(Uvatha scans his map).

"There!!!!!! We shall strike the very heart of the Woodsmen!!"

"Yes, my Lord!"

"We shouldn't forget our little Northmen neighbors."

"Send a few of their souls to Sauron."

"Courtesy of 'The Dark One'?"

"Of course! Now be gone!!"

Orillion Darkblade # 19

GAME 200

"Are you certain of these reports? They suggest a force of considerable magnitude."

"I am as certain as is reasonably possible. No gathering of that size could pass unnoticed. Moreover, it's too large for a defensive garrison. It can only be a strike force."

"But who will they strike? Where? And when?"

"Good questions, my Captain. I do not know."

GAME 203

"They shall tear the teeth from the Dragon and rend asunder the strong. Night shall be their ally, as Dark is their enemy; they shall give death to the dead, and peace to the living."

The book shut. A feral, pearl white smile gleamed for an instant in the candlelight.

So it is written. So let it be done."

GAME 205

To whom it may concern:

Folks before you take an action that may affect your allies the least you can do is make contact with them.

Doombringer (13)

The time of rest has passed and our armies once again seek your blood!! Resistance is futile, prepare to know the meaning of fear & pain.

Fire-King War Master Orillion
Darkblade

Middle-earth™ PBM
circa 2950

GAME 24

To the Fire Stink-

You brag of your huge armies, and how you'll see me where I least expect it--then, when I finally let you win a battle by attacking with only one army instead of two, you drop out of sight?! What a wimp! Or maybe you just went bankrupt . . . a common fate in these times of depressing economies . . . sure, that's it.

To the Cloud Laird-

Go steal some gold from someone who has some!

--Ecthelion II, (barely) Ruling Steward

GAME 25

NEXT!

-Ren

As dawn broke, the two figures were still fighting, twisting, lunging, darting about in a deadly dance. Both were wounded, but lightly, enough to slow them down but not enough to stop them. The coming of dawn seemed to pain the smaller figure, as it was one of those terrible undead creatures known as a wraith. A wraith named Din Ohtar. The larger figure was much less menacing. A human, strong and well-muscled, wielding a gleaming steel broadsword, to match the slender sabre of the wraith. The human was known as Swithwulf, and was the more skilled swordsman,

though he could not match the incredible speed of Din Ohtar.

"Did that speed kill Girion? Or Karrol?" asked Swithwulf, malice dripping from his voice.

"Bain as well, come sundown," replied the wraith, with a voice like melting ice.

Hearing this, the man lunged, plunging his sword deep into Din Ohtar's side.

"I win," he shouted.

"Wrong," was the reply of Din Ohtar, as with a vicious backhand swipe of his sabre, he cut one of Swithwulf's lungs in two.

Swithwulf fell, and Din Ohtar, clutching his side, stumbled out of town, cutting at any of the townfolk of Shrel-Kain who got too close.

A figure, dressed in green and brown, ran forward to the side of the fallen Swithwulf. The figure was young, and many of the townfolk recognized him as Luc Dubois, of the camp of Deepwood.

"Luc," gasped Swithwulf, then paused to cough. More blood joined the already sizable puddle in the market square. "I guess he was too fast for me. You *did* warn me."

Luc rummaged through his pack, pulling out a bandage. "We'll get you all fixed up, big guy."

"No, no, I'm already gone," Swithwulf said, then coughed again. "I'll be with Araw soon."

"We'll get you to Rhubar, the elves there will . . ."

But Luc trailed off, for Swithwulf's rousing laughter, and his famous battle-cry were never heard again. His hearty shoulder slap and his crushing bear hug were never felt again. And his deep brown eyes never flashed again, for Swithwulf the Glad, Swithwulf the Strong, Swithwulf the Friendly was dead.

Farewell, Swithwulf.

GAME 26

Except for Dol Guldur, Mirkwood is at peace for now. The push is on to rid the wood of all evil, alas, many a hero shall fall. An Ice King army heads this way, here we go again . . .

Zarendarger (5)

Let it be Known:

Whereas the nation of Umbar has had elves from Lindon and Rivendell trespassing upon our realm, and stealing heirlooms from within our borders;

Whereas the elves of Lindon and Rivendell have deemed it unfit to respond to our requests for recompense, much less apologize for the trespass and theft;

And whereas the kingdom of Gondor has also ceased diplomatic communications with us, much less bothered to entreat with the Elf Kingdoms on our behalf;

We declare that a State of War now exists between the nation of Umbar and the Elf Kingdoms of Lindon and Rivendell. Additionally, this State of War extends to all allies of Lindon and Rivendell, which include the kingdom of Gondor, including the province of Calenardhon where Eotheid squatters are currently resident, and all those currently residing within the former territories of the lost kingdom of Arnor, which are ours by right of birth descending from the line of the rightful king of Gondor, Castamir.

This decree is signed by us on the first day of the month of Midsummer.

Lord Sangarunya of Umbar
High Admiral of the Corsairs
Protector of Harondor and Harithilien
Rightful Heir of Arnor and Gondor

GAME 28

"My Lord, a Dog Lord army has been spotted moving westward towards our lands."

The high elf's look hardened.

"We'll deal with them first and then Khamul."

Bard I, Northman--K.I.A.
Koldana, Northman--K.I.A.
Charon

GAME 31

"You have summoned me, my lord?"

"Yes, I'm feeling restless: Ready my cavalry! Ready my Infantry! Ready my archers! Ready my War machines! We're going to war!"

"At once, my lord."

GAME 33

Scene: Great Hall in the Palace of "Storm Bringer."

"My Liege, a Neutered King has declared you . . . a coward."

"Who dares!?"

"I don't know, great one, he proclaimed these lies in secrecy."

"He has the audacity to declare me a coward but then does not identify himself!"

"Sire . . . he fears you even though he declares you the coward."

"He will know my name unless the appropriate apologies are made."

"He thinks he's been secretive, my Liege."

"Do you mean you know . . ."

A brilliant flash of lightning interrupts, a smile flashes across the face of the "Storm Bringer."

"Time to play," he whispers.

*APB*APB*APB

Missing: Riders of Rohan, alias: Rohirrim, Riddermark.

Described as about 1000 mounted troops led by an old man with a white beard; answers to "Theoden." Last seen sitting idly to the north of White Mountains. If found please send to Gondor; they are sorely missed.

Note: Dark Servants approach with caution; they are armed and potentially dangerous.

"My liege, 1800 gold is missing!"

"Who would dare! They must not know whom they defile."

"Your orders my lord?"

"Call in my dark angel--he's been very restless. It's time to play."

"Yes my lord, at once."

"Funny how many executions 1800 gold will buy."

To Stormbringer and all the other Fiends of Darkness:

Let your "waves of death" come crash and break upon the bastion of freedom that is Minas Tirith.

Minas Morgul is the first crack that will allow light to shine in Mordor.

Ecthelion II

Surviving in a World of Agents

by Bradford Fisher

The king sat upon his throne and glowered. Enemy agents had successfully assassinated several of his kin last week along with Masador, the last of his great generals. Worse, Masador's army had scattered with his death, wreaking havoc upon his carefully-laid plans.

"What are we going to do?" asked his chancellor.

"Send out our own agents and retaliate!" hissed the king.

"But our top agent has only a 31 rank, only three of our leaders have agent ability in any case," countered the chancellor.

"Fine," growled the king. "Have our commanders locate agents among the lesser nobility, swear them into service to the Crown, train them, and THEN send them out to retaliate! Hoarmurath and Jí Indûr will be very sorry in fifteen to twenty turns when our agents begin smashing them into rubble . . ."

Sooner or later, everyone finds himself in the unfortunate situation of having large numbers of enemy agents crawling like lice over his population centers. Perhaps your agents aren't good enough to square off against them, or perhaps you just don't have enough agents to protect everyone. Your leaders are threatening to get mowed down like grass, and you're getting frustrated. What are you going to do?

Typically, the solution is to begin mass-producing agents of your own, or start mass-producing them as soon as the game begins. The problem with this is that not everyone can afford to run an agent-rich nation. Having hordes of agents has the consequence of NOT having other character types which may be needed just as badly. (Having great agents doesn't help if a huge army shows up on your capital and burns it to the ground.) But if you don't create the agents, won't your leaders get slaughtered later in the game?

Not necessarily!

First, if you are not going to run an agent-rich power, or perhaps even if you are, you need to resign yourself to losing some characters sooner or later. These suggestions will keep you around in the long-term as a nation when enemy agents begin wiping out your leaders, but they don't help any particular leader very much.

1) Maintain the maximum number of characters at all times.

If you lose a character, replace her immediately! A sure route to death is to lose characters faster than you can replace them. One advantage of having as many characters as possible, at minimum, is that the enemy will have more leaders to mow down before they can drive you out of the game. For example, if the enemy only has one good agent at your capital, and you have two or three good commanders, those commanders can create command/agents faster than the enemy is going to be able to kill them off.

Attempt to anticipate losses and replace a character the turn on which he dies. As the "Name Character" orders come after challenges, executions, battles, and assassinations; and it doesn't take a whole lot of foresight to guess that Jí Indûr and friends and friends are going to kill off your army commander this turn; go ahead and attempt to name a character now. If you're wrong, and didn't lose a character, then you're in for a pleasant surprise in any case.

2) Give all new characters agent ability, and most command ability.

If you think you are going to be on the receiving end of an agent war, make certain that every character you create has some agent skill, and that a good many have at least some scrap of command skill. The purpose of the agent skill is not really to attempt to guard anything--it's to ensure that the character will escape from being held hostage sooner or later. If all your characters have agent skill, enemy agents will have a hard time hanging onto them if they succeed in a kidnapping. Eventually, they'll give up kidnapping your leaders and will just assassinate them, which is good for you--dead bodies can be replaced, hostages can't!

There are two reasons for giving a character command skill. First, any character with command, however little, can name new characters and replace those that you lose to enemy agents. Second, if you aren't fighting an agent war against your foes, and you are still a target for their agents, it's probably because you're cranking out armies to throw at them. Even a ten point commander can raise troops!

3) Don't concentrate your characters.

There are exceptions to this, (such as emissary companies) but in general, scatter your characters. That way, if a company of nine 90+ agents show up there's only one character, maybe two, for them to kill off--the rest of their agents are wasting their time. If you only lose one or two characters per turn, they're easy to replace and you can keep ahead of the deaths. If you concentrate your characters and lose ten leaders on a single turn, you're going to have a much harder time replacing them.

What about army commanders? Don't you want backup commanders? Well, not necessarily. If you don't have thousands of very good agents, and you send an army into enemy territory late in the game, you can almost count on getting killed. I consider this sending a commander on a "suicide-run" and try not to have anybody I care about losing too much in charge. Sticking a backup command/agent with the army generally slows down the death of an army by a single turn--one turn to kill the backup commander, and one to kill the commander, so I generally back-up an army commander only when I absolutely must have the army survive during the extra turn. It's also important to remember that they have to know who's in charge of the army to follow it and kill it. So try to surprise your enemy by having your army "appear out of nowhere" on his population center (and create the army in an out-of-the-way place, off of their maps). Hopefully this will be the first they know of the army, and it'll take two turns for them to wipe out the commander (one to bring agents onto the scene and another to assassinate). During those two turns you can burn the first population center and move to and burn a second population center; which means the army has accomplished its purpose in any case. Besides, they won't know how many backup commanders you have and they may send nine or ten agents to accomplish what a single agent could have, and all those extra agents have wasted an order. Other tactics include transferring command to a new character (so that they cannot "scout and follow" you), moving evasively, and generally running away from the area where they last saw your army.

Note that backup commanders are very useful if you aren't under much agent pressure, such as if the enemy doesn't have more than one or two agents to throw at your army, or earlier in the game, when the assassins aren't quite so good. Putting dozens of characters with an army as backup commanders can sometimes be as useful as none at all, if you have the time and orders to spend this way. Then your backup commanders can scout for characters following

your army, guard your commanders, and attempt to assassinate the agents before they assassinate you!

4) Keep companies, characters, and armies moving.

If you hang around in one place for a turn or two, it becomes very likely that agents are going to show up and kill you off. On the other hand, if you keep your characters moving and your armies jumping around, they're going to have a much harder time slipping a knife between your ribs. Try to be unpredictable!

5) Scout for characters.

If you're moving an army into a rough spot, or if you're trying to protect a company, scout for characters. You'll probably discover who's around, and then you can plan accordingly.

6) Get agent help from your allies.

If your own agents aren't great, and you need to know what you're getting into, whistle up assistance from the agent powers on your own side. They'll probably be glad to help!

7) Other tricks of the trade.

Naturally one solution to dealing with agents is to do unto them before they do unto you. This includes double-agenting them before they can assassinate your emissary, issuing a personal challenge, and judicious use of curse-squads. I've also heard that spreading rumors can stymie scouting attempts, although I do not know the truth of this . . . but if they don't know who you are, they can't kill you!

Enemy agents may also attempt to clear you out of your capital. Ways around this include bringing in a horde of agents of your own to clear them out, waiting for them to leave then bringing home one of your many scattered leaders, or to simply move the capital. Note that an ally can transfer by caravans the gold you need to move the capital after any and all gold thefts have taken place. Likewise you can move a character to the current capital and order the capital to relocate on the same turn, before enemy agents get a shot at assassinating your commander. If you do this, it's probably a good idea to have several characters already waiting at your new capital location to create characters immediately.

If your foes are stealing the gold you need to create characters with, consider having your allies transfer a huge sum of gold all at once--the enemy agents will have a difficult time stealing it all before you can create several characters.

Conclusion

All of these suggestions are just that--suggestions. There are always circumstances in which you should not follow them. A great deal depends on the volume of agents being used against you, how important it is to win any particular battle, and how good the enemy agents are. The key is to remember that if they have a large number of highly-skilled agents, the more you concentrate your characters the more you risk. It is possible for a non-agent power to thrive in a world of agents, but watch your back!

The king looked at the report and smiled. Though he was the last of the original leaders of his nation at the war's start, and though most of his current leaders were of the third and fourth generation, the war was at last tilting in his

favor. The heroine Narab Kolandu, Masador's granddaughter, had just reported sacking the enemy city and slaughtering its inhabitants. And though she had little of her grandfather's skill, she would grow better with time . . . assuming she lived that long.

"An Unexpected Reconciliation"

by
David Rossell

"We need your troops now, not a month from now," protested Tarondor.

"Well, I haven't seen much of the great Northern Gondorian levies," replied Celdrahil with a sneer. "Here again you expect Southern Gondor troops to save your territory. Why should we? If you had . . ."

"How can you ask that question! This is the Enemy of all Free Peoples pouring from the passes of Mordor! No one can stand idly by!" Color began to flush Tarondor's cheeks. "I've had about all of this effete 'cavalier' I'm going to take . . ."

"True," purred Celdrahil. "But we of Southern Gondor must look to our own defenses as well. And we have already sent thousands of our best men to fight and die to protect the citizens that you cannot. We too have suffered losses. We have our own interests to pro--"

Tarondor slammed a fist down onto the wooden table. "Enough!" You rule at my suffrance, as my vassal. You will fulfill your obligations to me as your lord, or I will throw you to the trolls and replace you with someone who upholds their commitments!"

"You won't get away with that sort of bluster with me, 'Lord' Tarondor," said Celdrahil, standing and leaning over the table. "We of Southern Gondor are an independent people with our own institutions. We are not subject to your rule, or anyone else's!" Tarondor opened his mouth to speak, but Celdrahil cut him off, slapping the table with his hand.

"You rule the richest realm this world has ever seen, your citizens number beyond count, yet you beg us for help. I know what you want, oh yes, you want Southerners to die in your war, under your incompetent command, sparing your nation so that when the battle is over, you can just move in and take over, just as you crushed the sea captains at Pelagir, well . . ."

"You selfish, pigheaded dolt!" yelled Tarondor, rising also to put his face inches from Celdrahil's. "Already the people of Ithil, Romenost, Tir Limlight, Onodrih and Warfinger face the oppression of the enemy! And what have you done! Send a token force to Ithilien. Sail your navies aimlessly. Cry how you cannot send more aid because of poor logistics. Bah! I begin to wonder if you are in league with the Enemy himself!"

"That, sir," said Celdrahil, his voice quaking with rage, "is an affront to my honor. I demand satisfaction."

"Oh yes, of course, your precious Southern Honor." Tarondor pushed back from the table, his voice quiet. "You demand, sat-is-faction." He drew the last word out, hissing it like a snake. "You would shed blood in this hall, in this sacred place?" He stared at the self-styled 'Rightful Ruler of All Gondor', the man who would murder his leige in cold blood, to uphold his 'honor.'

"Ah, Tarondor the Just proves to be Tarondor the Coward as well? Well, perhaps I should horsewhip you from your own chambers instead. I should have know better than to expect a Northern fool and incompetent to understand honor."

"All right!" bellowed Tarondor, drawing his sword. "I will fight a traitor and a renegade! If only to cleanse the filth . . ."

Celdrahil howled with rage. He lunged toward Tarondor, drawing his sword and swinging down at the king's head in one smooth motion. Blades clanged and screeched as Tarondor parried and swept Celdrahil's sword aside. They closed again, attack, parry, beat-riposte, cursing and puffing under the ringing weapons.

Neither noticed the old man enter the room, nor saw his bushy eyebrows arch in surprise to see the rulers trying to kill each other. Nor did they see him raise his staff . . .

CRRRAACCCCK--BOOM Lighting shot from the wizard's staff, shattering the swords, and hurling the opponents to the ground. The rulers sprawled on the ground, choking on ozone and smoke, making no effort to recover their dignity.

Gandalf lowered his staff and glared at them. "Look at you two!" He muttered to himself and walked over to them. "Fighting like children! The Enemy is outside, swarming from Mordor!"

"No, sir," said Celdrahil as he struggled to his feet. "The enemy is in here, choking off our rights, our freedom!"

"No, the enemy is out there," Gandalf said, thumping Celdrahil's chest with the staff. "Both of you are doing the Enemy's work for him." Gandalf fixed them with a stare as they hung their heads sheepishly. "Now, apologize."

"I'd sooner kiss a Nazgul, " muttered Celdrahil, as Tarondor rose to his feet. Gandalf gestured again with the staff and the air began to crackle, and the rulers' hair stood on end.

"Er, maybe an apology would be best, " stammered Celdrahil.

"Er, yes, I agree, " added Tarondor.

"Er, I apologize, Lord Tarondor"

"I apologize also, Prince Celdrahil"

"Good." Gandalf lowered his staff. "Now," and he glowered at them again, "Get to work like civilized men." Celdrahil and Tarondor promptly found their seats. "And if I see any more bickering, I'll turn both of you into, oh, newts or something."

Tarondor paled, Celdrahil gulped, and they set back to work.

(continued from inside front cover)

answered, find out about what's new at GSI and to chat about ME-PBM. This has been an ongoing conference for the past 5 months, so don't forget to tell your friends!

O.K., it's time for some game needs now. I know I said we wouldn't have to do this any more, but these are special cases. We are currently looking for players for 3 week games in both scenarios. Those of you looking for a more leisurely paced game should send in those registrations. Conversely, those of you who have access to email or a fax machine and are looking for a more fast paced game should consider our 1 week turn around all email or all fax games. That's right, all the ME-PBM action in half the time! We are currently accepting registrations for 1 week all email games and 1 week all fax games, so get those keyboards a-whirring and send off those registrations.

That's it for this month. See you here in 30, same orc time, same orc channel.

Stuart

The Hall Of Heroes

Game # 111 - The Dark Servants: #19, #25, & #22

Songbirds chirped and fluttered over the otherwise quiet silvan glade, oblivious to the week-old carnage below them. Birds of a different sort swarmed on the ground, feasting on the remains of the vanquished. Bodies were strewn everywhere like so many broken puppets, their limbs bent at impossible angles. Some, having been the first claimed by the vultures, were barely even recognizable as human. The cheerful song of the sparrows mixed with the harsh cawing of the vultures in a twisted symphony. All went quiet then, and several carrion birds on the edge of the clearing took suddenly to wing. A split second later, a slightly-built figure hurtled into the clearing, running at full speed despite his many wounds. The young Dunlending's face was a mask of horror, soot-stained and caked with dried blood. He made it halfway across the clearing before several black-clad crossbowmen reached the edge of the clearing and began firing. His legs were both hit, and he fell face-first into the mud. Still trying in vain to escape, he clawed frantically toward the opposite edge of the clearing, head bowed in pitiful concentration. He stopped, though, when his hand landed on a steel-shod boot tip. Slowly his gaze elevated, taking in his captor. His eyes widened in terror as he realized that it was none other than Malthorn of the Long Riders. This wasn't good--

Darkness took him instantly as a single, well-placed axe blow from behind cleft his skull in two. Wiping the gore from his blade, the soldier addressed his lord, who glared in disbelief at the gobbets of brain that clung to his boots.

"Well, Sire, that's the last of 'em."

Malthorn turned his murderous gaze over the man, who was oblivious to both the major slight and his impending death.

"Yes, it is," he replied in a surprisingly soft, whispery voice.

Faster than any human eye could follow, his slender mithril sabre snapped out of its scabbard, beheading the man where he stood and returning to its scabbard in the blink of an eye. Slowly, he turned, surveying the battlefield, the land that was now his . . . and Sauron's . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#19 - Long Rider

#25 - Easterlings

#22 - Haradwaith

Top Free Peoples: #23 - Dunlendings

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Zorfla/Dark Lieutenants: 212

Highest Net Commander Rank - Zorfla/Dark Lieutenants: 202

Highest Net Agent Rank - Tormog/Dark Lieutenants: 110

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Angamaitë/Dunlendings: 120

Highest Net Mage Rank - Shabla/Haradwaith: 142

Most Mithril - Cloud Lord: 2680

Most Artifacts - Cloud Lords Dark Lieutenants: 23

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 55

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game 148 - Dark Servants: #14, #15, & #13

Black storm clouds boiled in the sky over Middle-earth, occasionally illuminated by a stark flash of lightning. Cold rains pounded the continent, lashing the known lands with a fury never before seen by the fearful commoners of the Free Peoples. A lone figure stood at the heart of the storm, heavy black robes plastered to a withered frame by the freezing rain. Ten cold, gray headstones lay arrayed before him. The rotted remains of a bouquet of roses rested on nine of the ten graves. In eerie silence, the figure turned toward a small table bearing a fresh bouquet on an etched pewter tray. The sweet scent drifted up, assailing Mûrazôr's senses. As a withered, dessicated hand crept from beneath the robes toward the bouquet, the flowers faded and cracked, blackening and splitting before he even lifted them. A sharp thorn pierced the grayed flesh of Mûrazôr's hand, drawing a single droplet of black blood.

"So it ends," he hissed, placing the last bouquet. Final standings are as follows:

#14 - Cloud Lord: 2016

#15 - Blind Sorcerer: 1934

#13 - Dog Lord: 1817

Top Free People: #6 - Northern Gondor: 650

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 249

Highest Net Commander Rank - Araudâgû/Cloud Lord: 170

Highest Net Agent Rank - Din Ohtar/Long Rider: 151

Highest Net Emissary Rank - Virsh/Ice King: 120

Highest Net Mage Rank - Celedhring/Dragon Lord: 184

Most Mithril - Arthedain: 1127

Most Artifacts - Blind Sorcerer: 21

Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 25

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #152 - Dark Servants: #20, #19, & #16

A foreboding stone tower stood on the border between Northern and Southern Gondor. No one from the nearby town of Minas Arthor could remember the construction of its cold, gray walls, so ancient was the tower. Rumored to have been built immediately following Sauron's victory over four hundred years ago, the tower held an aura of despair. Few knew the hideous truth.

Within, a withered old man stared out the window. In the corner of the tiny cell, another old man rocked himself and murmured softly, oblivious to the pains of old age.

"One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them," he chanted, staring into space. "One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them. One Ring to rule them all . . ." he droned, mantralike.

He's gone, Vagaig thought. Eternity will do that to you. Tarondor was dead, and how he longed to join him. But Iyanthala's ultimate prison would not let them die. He'd lost count of the years around two hundred. Soon, he knew, he would also fall into madness . . .

Final results are as follows:

#20 - Dark Lieutenants: 2200

#19 - Long Rider: 1867

#16 - Ice King: 1766

Top Free People: #6 - Northern Gondor: 875

(cont'd)

The Hall Of Heroes

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 196
Highest Net Commander Rank - Gothmog/Dark Lieutenants: 169
Highest Net Agent Rank - Erennis/Cloud Lord: 121
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Dauterath/Dark Lieutenants: 113
Highest Net Mage Rank - Khathog/Ice King: 137
Most Mithril - Long Rider: 440
Most Artifacts - Ice King: 25
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 31

Congratulations to the Dark Servants!

Game #156 - Free Peoples: #10, #9, & #21

The main avenue of Mithlond-West was crammed with the commoners of the Noldo nation women, and children; young, old, nad in between, all were celebrating the return of Glorfindel from the war with Sauron. Trumpeters headed the parade march, followed by a retinue of Glorfindel's elite forward guard. Next came Glorfindel himself, resplendent in his finest armor. Beside him rode the leaders of the Sinda and Corsair empires. Glancing at his Sinda ally, he smiled, gesturing broadly at the massed crowds. Immediately, a cheer went up, thundering in his chest. He smiled again, knowing that he had saved them. Final standings are as follows:

#10 - Noldo Elves

#9 - Sinda Elves

#21 - Corsairs

Top Dark Servant: #20 - Dark Lieutenants

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Elrond/Noldo Elves: 237
Highest Net Commander Rank - Glorfindel/Noldo Elves: 169
Highest Net Agent Rank - Tharúdar/Sinda Elves
Highest Net Emissary Rank - Umromcaraj/Corsairs Valwen/Corsairs: 95
Highest Net Mage Rank - Erbhen/Dunlendings: 181
Most Mithril - Southern Gondor: 677
Most Artifacts - Noldo Elves: 26
Most Kills - Long Rider: 13

Congratulations to the Free Peoples!

The Hall Of Heroes

Game #9 - Dark Servants: #25, #15, & #14

Like a vile tide, the servants of Sauron have surged forth to completely cover all of Middle-earth. The Nazgûl have successfully murdered or enslaved all that were left of the once proud Free Peoples, and no hope remains. The Easterlings, once balanced precariously on the brink of good and evil, have staked their claim and come out the overlords of all Middle-earth. Combined with the forces of the Blind Sorcerer and the Cloud Lord, the overseers of the Easterling armies spur on the Free People slaves with the cruelest of whips . . .

Final standings are as follows:

#25 - Easterlings: 2100

#15 - Blind Sorcerer: 2050

#14 - Cloud Lord: 1725

Top Free People: #23 - Dunlendings: 1300

Interesting Notes:

Highest Challenge Rank - Tónn Varthkûr/Dog Lord: 181
Highest Net Commander Rank - Tónn Varthkûr/Dog Lord: 148
Highest Net Agent Rank - Jí Indûr/Cloud Lord: 122
Highest Net Emissary - Obirt/Witch-king: 104
Highest Net Mage Rank - Erester/Noldo Elves: 140
Most Mithril - Blind Sorcerer: 2015
Most Artifacts - Witch-king: 22
Most Kills - Cloud Lord: 13