

INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

THE HOUSE OF MARGIL

s the Shadow in the East grows and lengthens, casting a pall of worry and despair over the hearts of the Free Peoples, lesser shadows, serving it and drawing power from it, have arisen elsewhere in the world. One such place is the far North, in Angmar of old, where Sauron's chief lieutenant the Witch-king once held sway and brought about the destruction of Arnor. Drawing on the ancient evils lurking there, a magician of dark might, Carangul the Red Sorcerer, has put in motion a plan to conquer all of Eriador on behalf of the Dark Lord. Unless he is stopped, and his minions routed, Carangul will eventually ravage all the fair lands of the North, surrounding the Men of Gondor and Rhovanion with the forces of Shadow and crushing all who stand against his dark master.

The House of Margil is an introductory adventure for *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*. It is meant to stand alone, but it can also serve as the first of many chapters in a chronicle called *The Shadow of the North*, which the text of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook describes briefly on page 263. Narrators can use these ideas to get their own chronicles started (even if they choose to take them in some other direction after the heroes conclude this particular adventure). Otherwise, the Narrator can simply use this as an example of how to create and structure ongoing stories and chapters for *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*.

If you are not a Narrator, *read no further!* It's important for you not to spoil your own fun, and everyone else's, by learning in advance what's likely to happen in this adventure.





CARANGUL'S PLAN

One thing this adventure does not contain is a description of Carangul's master plan and strategy for conquering the North. The text here, and in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook, contains some suggestions and hints, but no more. We've left the Red Sorcerer's designs deliberately vague for now. As Narrator, you must decide for yourself what sort of plan best fits your chronicle and group of heroes. If possible, you should at least decide on the broad outlines of Carangul's plan, since that may influence some events during this chapter as well as any information the heroes uncover during the game.

SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the player characters (PCs) in Rivendell. Elrond asks them to seek out Margil, a Ranger with whom neither he nor any other Ranger has had any contact for several months. The heroes journey to Margil's house, perhaps encountering and overcoming various obstacles and challenges along the way. Upon arriving at Margil's house, they find that Orcs have attacked it, slaying Margil's wife and son. Margil himself is not there.

Following the trail left by the Orcs, the heroes pursue the killers, eventually catching up with them. During their fight against the goblin-folk, they discover that Margil leads the creatures! Margil tries to escape into the wilderness he knows so well, but the heroes give chase. At long last, the heroes bring Margil to bay, slaying or capturing him, and perhaps discovering a clue to lead them towards their next adventure.

ACT ONE: AN UNEXPECTED TASK

The first part of the adventure hooks the characters into the story by bringing them together and giving them a task to perform—the first step, though they do not yet know it, on a great quest to free the North from evil.

SCENE ONE: THE HALL OF FIRE

The story begins in the Last Homely House in Rivendell. It is here that the player characters first meet one another, and then learn of a task that Elrond, master of Rivendell, would have them perform.

PRELIMINARY MATTERS

Before you launch into the adventure, there are several things you might want to consider.

First, how did each of the heroes get to Rivendell in the first place? Elven heroes have sufficient reason to be there because they're Elves. The same applies to characters who are Rangers-in-training (characters who want to become Rangers eventually and are working with the Rangers to safeguard the North, but who have not yet achieved the requisites necessary to belong to the ranger elite order). For other characters, you may need to devise a plausible explanation. Perhaps they came to Rivendell to deliver a message to Elrond or seek his wisdom, or they stumbled upon the valley while fleeing from a large pack of wolves, or maybe their wandering feet have simply brought them here for no reason they can readily articulate. In short, the powers of fate and the subtle magic of Middle-earth

are conspiring to put them where they need to be to take the first steps toward fulfilling their destiny as heroes.

If you want to, you could even run a solo 'mini-adventure' for each player before you narrate this chapter. This brief adventure would tell the story of what happened to each character on his way to Rivendell. It probably would only involve one or two encounters—just enough for you and the player to begin to get a feel for the character and for the game's rules. Even though this approach requires a little more work, you may find it more fun than simply saying, 'You're all in Rivendell.'

Another thing to consider is whether some (or maybe even all) of the player characters know each other in advance. The text above assumes that the heroes are all strangers when they meet, but that doesn't have to be the case. Players often like to design characters who have interacted before the game begins, and there's no reason to discourage that. In fact, you should encourage it, because it improves the game. The characters' relationships with each other may even give you some ideas about how they came to Rivendell in the first place.

Lastly, you may want to run a few roleplaying scenes in which the characters first meet each other in Rivendell, rather than just throwing them together in the Hall of Fire. They could meet at a feast and discover they have something in common, or they might develop a rivalry for the affections of the same Elven maiden. It all depends on what you and the players are most comfortable doing.

On with the Adventure

As the chapter begins, the player characters come together in the Hall of Fire, a large, firelit room in the Last Homely House where Elves and visitors alike tell tales and sing lays. Elrond has asked the heroes to meet him there, and is waiting for them when they arrive.

'Thank you for coming, my friends,' he says, a sombre note in his voice. 'It is well that you have all come to Imladris at this time, and perhaps it is more than chance. I have need of your help. You must find for me one of the Rangers, named Margil, from whom I have not heard in many months.'

It's likely that at least one, if not all, of the characters may not know who or what 'the Rangers' are. If one of the heroes knows of them, allow his player to explain. If no one else knows, Elrond explains that they are Dúnedain of the North, brave Men who travel the wilds, protecting care-free folk from the dangers and terrors that lurk in dark and forgotten places.

Elrond continues: 'All the Rangers know of Imladris, and come here as often as they may, to bring reports to me, and to rest and heal. Even those who travel to lands far away usually return once or twice a year. One such as Margil, who lives and works in the regions of Eriador near to Imladris, usually visits every few months. But I have heard nothing from Margil in nearly five months, and none of his fellow Rangers have seen him, either.'

'The last to speak with Margil was Forendur, who saw him at the Forsaken Inn three months ago. Margil told Forendur he was going to his house to see his wife and son, and would then come to Imladris to tell me what he had learned of events near Fornost Erain. But he came never here, and I grow more concerned about him each day.'

Elrond asks the heroes to look for Margil and determine what happened to him. If they do not think of it themselves, he suggests they go to the missing Ranger's house, north of Rivendell on the River Mitheithel, known in Westron as the Hoarwell. Even if Margil is not there, his wife Orilwen may have seen him since Forendur did. If not, the heroes can travel from his house to the Forsaken Inn to see if they can find any trace of the wayward Ranger.

If the players devise some other plan, such as investigating the Forsaken Inn, you can improvise using some of the possible encounters presented hereafter. However, they discover nothing of import until they finally arrive at Margil's house.

If the player characters are true heroes, they should readily agree to assist Elrond Halfelven in any way they can. If they insist on some reward or cause other problems, Elrond simply suggests that they need not trouble themselves with this task. He's not going to force anyone to help him, after all. The so-called heroes can return to their homes or whatever else they were doing before they came to Rivendell. Have the players in question create new characters appropriate to the chronicle.

Some of the characters may question why Elrond wishes to send *them* on this mission, particularly if they are simple Hobbits or the like. If so, Elrond responds: 'Not all who have assembled here may seem suitable for this task, but I assure you that you are here for this purpose. I see a destiny upon you, one of storm and fire, blood and steel, great darkness and great hope. Now, I think, is the time for you to set forth to find out what this destiny may be. It is not chance that brings you to me in the hour of my need.'

Preparations

If necessary, Elrond can supply the characters with any gear they need, from food and blankets right up to weapons and armour. He can also provide horses, but the land they must travel through is so rough that he counsels against riding, though a pack-pony or two would be all right. He also gives them directions to Margil's house and maps of the surrounding region (Rhudaur), so they can find the place easily. Elrond refuses to provide any magical assistance, such as *miruvor* or Elven-rope, unless the heroes give persuasive arguments for the need of such things.

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SCENE TWO: THE JOURNEY NORTH

Margil's house is approximately 100 miles (33 leagues) from Rivendell. The land the heroes must travel through is rough and harsh, with no roads and few paths of any length. It counts as rough terrain in most places, restricting the heroes to a speed of 1.25 miles per hour whether on foot or on horseback—and don't forget the TN 10 Stamina test every hour to resist Weariness. In some places, the terrain worsens to very rough, cutting the heroes' speed on foot to 0.75 miles per hour, at most, and making riding impossible. Assuming the heroes travel for ten hours per day, and encounter no significant distractions or obstacles, they should need eight to ten days to complete the trip. (See the 'Travelling' rules on pages 251-253 of the core rulebook for more information and possible modifiers to the characters' speed.)

Of course, this being an adventure story, distractions and obstacles are almost certain to arise. As Narrator, you can choose how many encounters the heroes have during their travels north, and how severe such tribulations may be. If the first encounter takes a long time to resolve, perhaps that's all you need to do to liven up the trip. On the other hand, if the heroes handle the first challenge quickly and easily, you may want to throw another one at them to keep the pace of the game flowing properly.

Here are some possible encounters you could use during this scene. They're not the only ones, though. Feel free to create your own if you think of something you like better.

Deep Ravine

One day around mid-afternoon, the players leave a small forest, cross over a low hill, and see a deep ravine or cleft blocking their path. It stretches away southwest and northeast as

far as the eye can see. Walking around it would likely add another day to the journey, if not more, but crossing it does not look much easier. It is so sheer and deep that it requires careful climbing and walking to get down into it and then out again without breaking a leg. If the heroes have a pony or horse, traversing the ravine becomes even harder. Furthermore, sunset is fast approaching, making any attempted traverse or descent even more perilous.

Descending into the cleft involves some walking and some climbing. Have each character make a Climb test with a TN of 10 (15 for any character managing a horse). Any character who fails slips and falls, suffering 1d6 damage (2d6 for a disastrous failure). Climbing back out again requires another Climb test. The journey up or down takes 3-5 ($1/2d6+2$) hours. Walking around the ravine requires no tests, but adds one day to the trip.

If the players choose to descend into the cleft, you may want to complicate their lives even further by having a fell beast or monster lairing at

the bottom. Perhaps a giant spider or two have woven their webs in one of the darkest corners of the ravine, or maybe a large and fearsome serpent waits here for its next meal to cross its path. If you narrate the scene right, you should be able to evoke a lot of worry and excitement in the players despite the fact that the situation is not extremely dangerous.

PREDATOR, PREY

During the journey, a half-starved hunting cat catches the heroes' scent and begins stalking them. Allow the heroes an opposed test, pitting their Observe against the cat's Stealth. If the heroes succeed, they spy the creature, and it runs away and doesn't stalk them again until the next day. If the heroes fail, that night the cat attempts to pick off any one character who wanders away from the group or is otherwise unprotected (perhaps while he's standing watch, for example). Smaller characters, such as Hobbits and Dwarves, make the most attractive prey.

For the cat, use the template for a wolf on page 297 of *The Lord of the*



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Rings Roleplaying Game core rulebook. However, the cat's claws do 1d6-2 damage, and its fangs do 1d6+2. It also has Unarmed Combat: Claws +6 and Unarmed Combat: Fangs +6.

THE RUINED TOWER

One afternoon the heroes notice the ruins of some ancient tower—perhaps a guardpost or beacon tower of Rhudaur from centuries past—standing atop a nearby hill. They can see a large fragment of the tower like an old, grey fang thrusting up toward the sky, a weathered, often-broken ring of stones surrounding it.

If the heroes can resist the temptation to examine the ruins more closely, give each of them 100 extra experience points for keeping their minds on the important task of finding Margil. On the other hand, the ruins are intriguing, might make a defensible camp for the night, and what the heroes encounter there may earn them some extra experience points as well (though they can't know that at first). Essentially, this is a win-win situation for the players; all that matters is how you weave it into the story.

If the heroes examine the ruins, they find three things of note. First, there are half a dozen odd lumps in the

grass within the broken ring of stones. A close investigation proves that each one contains the partial skeleton of a Man, so old that the earth has closed over it. For each lump the heroes dig into, roll 1d6. The first time you roll a 1 or a 2, they find the remains of a broken sword with a hilt decorated with gold wire. The hilt is worth one silver piece, or perhaps a bit more to a loremaster interested in Arnorian weapons or art. The first time you roll a 6, the heroes find a rotten leather pouch containing 3d6 badly corroded copper pennies. They're probably not worth anything as money, but again may have some value to certain loremasters.

Second, the remains of a stone staircase run up one part of the tower wall. Though it looks a little dangerous, it's still sturdy enough to support the weight of one or two characters. They can climb to the top of the ruin and survey the countryside. If they do this during daylight and succeed with a TN 12 Observe (Spot) test, they discover a shortcut through the hills. If they follow it, they can travel three more miles toward Margil's house the next day than they ordinarily could. If they suffer a disastrous failure on the test, they think they find a shortcut, but in fact it's a dead end that costs them 1d6 hours of travelling time.

Third, within the ruins of the tower is a staircase going down into the hill itself—perhaps to the tower's former storeroom, cellar, or dungeon. Although choked with debris and bits of animal bones—a bear or wolf may once have made their lairs here—the staircase remains passable. The stairs lead down into pitch-blackness. About 15 feet down, they end in a single large room filled with leaves, dust, twigs, and similar detritus. If the characters spend an hour searching and succeed with a TN 15 Search test, they find the only thing of true value in the room: a single silver penny, badly tarnished.

An Elf character or a spellcaster who uses Sense Power can detect an air of ancient tragedy and despair about this place—perhaps the echoes of the emotions of soldiers who made their last stand here. If the character succeeds with a TN 10 Observe (Sense Power) test, he likewise perceives a sort of subtle menace or danger about the hilltop, but no more.

The characters may decide to spend the night in the ring of stones. As noted above, the ruins are easily defensible and would make an excellent campsite. Trash from the old storeroom even provides fuel for a fire. Unfortunately, a danger lurks here: the ghost of one of the soldiers!

If the heroes dug up any of the skeletons, the phantom appears in the night to fight them. It manifests as a wraith-like soldier—clearly not a living person—bearing a pale, ghostly sword. Give it the same combat abilities—attributes, skills, and so forth—as the group's best warrior. The ghost picks a single victim—the person who dug up its skeleton—and appears out of nowhere to attack him, automatically achieving surprise the first round.

The ghost's weapon does no real damage, having only a stun effect (see *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, pages 231-232), but don't tell the players that! Instead, roll the reaction test and stun damage secretly. If a



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THE LANDSCAPE

As the heroes journey through the lands north of Rivendell, be sure to describe the region to them thoroughly enough so that they get a good visual 'feel' for it. This part of what was once known as Rhudaur contains many hills (often steep and rocky ones, so close to the Misty Mountains), small and tangled forests, swift, shallow streams running down from the mountains, and the occasional ruin or long-abandoned cottage. The foliage reflects the time of year. Evidence of animal life is abundant. The characters often see and hear birds, and sometimes small (or not so small) mammals such as squirrels, foxes, and weasels.

character falls unconscious, tell the player his character suffers just enough damage to reduce him to Near Death. If the reaction test succeeds, tell the player his character suffers enough damage to reduce him to Wounded. If the ghost manages to 'slay' two characters, he vanishes forever. Having successfully defended the tower, he can now rest in peace. If slain by the heroes, he vanishes and does not trouble them again, but he appears the next time travellers visit the ruins.

STORMY WEATHER

Unless you decide to use this encounter, the weather during the heroes' journey to Margil's home remains untroubling, perhaps even pleasant for the time of year. Otherwise, after about six days, a day-long rainstorm drenches the heroes. This is mostly just uncomfortable, but it slows down travel and may make other tasks and tests difficult. Every two hours, have each hero make a TN

10 Quickness test. Anyone who fails slips and falls into the mud, making him look even worse than before and imposing a +2 TN penalty on his next two Stamina tests to withstand Weariness. Anyone who disastrously fails the Quickness test twists his ankle when he falls (1d6 damage; armour of any kind offers no protection), reducing his movement and travel rates by half. Trying to start a fire in the rain requires a successful TN 15 Survival test unless the characters wisely kept a bundle of firewood dry for this sort of eventuality.

TROLLS

If you really want to challenge the heroes as they journey northward, have some Trolls attack them. The number of Trolls you use depends on how many heroes the group contains, and how powerful you think those heroes are. Typically, one Troll for every three heroes is a good balance for most inexperienced parties.

These Trolls, though of the ordinary breed and therefore not as smart as the heroes, are cunning and know the local lands well. Since they must hide in a cave during the day lest the sunlight turn them to stone, they can only attack the characters at night. They detect the heroes with their sense of smell and then try to sneak up on them and ambush them, hoping to kill or capture them all.

Any heroes who are awake get to make an opposed Observe skill test against the Trolls' Stealth (Sneak) +2. Since it's nighttime, the heroes suffer a -5 penalty to any Observe (Spot) test. Hopefully at least one hero can manage to detect the Trolls before they attack. If so, he can alert his friends.

The Trolls attack with large clubs (Armed Combat +7) and try to stun the heroes, making it easier to roast and fillet them later! If the heroes slay more than half the Trolls, the survivors flee, using their knowledge of the terrain to aid their escape.

When you run this fight, keep the suggestions about injuries on pages 271-272 of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook in mind. If you hurt the heroes too badly, it could derail the story altogether, particularly if none of the heroes have the Healing skill. That's one reason why the Trolls only strike to stun.

If the Trolls capture all the heroes, they tie them up and take them back to their cave to roast and eat them. Any heroes who escape the Trolls' attack, or who are captured but awakened before arriving at the Trolls' lair, have to find a way to free their friends and/or themselves. Make sure they have a few chances to get away, particularly if they come up with a clever idea to trick the Trolls into remaining outside until dawn.

If the heroes slay or drive off all the Trolls, when daylight comes they can make a TN 10 Track test to follow the Trolls' trail back to their cave lair. Any Trolls that survive the initial battle return here. They are ready to fight to the death to defend their home. Once the heroes get past the relatively narrow entrance tunnel, the cave is big enough for the Trolls to fight in without trouble.

If the characters defeat the Trolls, they can search the cave. A successful TN 10 Search test uncovers three buried, locked chests. Once they open the chests, the heroes find the Trolls' 'treasure.' This includes Mannish clothes (once fine, now aged and ruined), several weapons (mostly rusty and pitted), and other such things. However, by looking through all the chests the heroes can find 4d6 silver pennies squirrelled away here and there in sturdy leather pouches.

ACT TWO: MARGIL'S HOUSE

In the second part of the adventure, the heroes reach Margil's house, find out what happened there, and chase

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down a band of Orcs that may have killed him—only to discover that he *leads* the Orcs!

SCENE ONE: THE JOURNEY ENDS

After the heroes make their way through some rough territory and overcome whatever encounters you saw fit to place in their path, they reach the vicinity of Margil's house as dusk falls on a dark and cloudy day. The first sign that the heroes are close to the house is their discovery of a path—obviously made by Men, not beasts—that leads through a series of wooded copses and dells. The voice of the River Mitheithel soon sounds in their ears as it rushes down from the Misty Mountains.

A few minutes' more walking brings the heroes out onto a broad, stony hillside. In front of them and a little to the north, the hill climbs up to a small but comfortable-looking cottage. To their left, the hill slopes down to a rocky riverside shingle. A path leads from this tiny beach to the cot-

tage. A few cattle graze contentedly not far from the house.

However, the heroes soon get the impression that something's wrong with this idyllic scene. Ask the players to make Observe (Spot) tests. Depending on the individual test results, each character has a chance to notice any or all of the following three conditions.

TN The Hero Notices

- | | |
|----|--|
| 5 | The front door to the cottage has been left to swing open in the breeze. |
| 10 | No one seems to be moving around inside or outside the house, or watching the cattle; the place seems eerily quiet. |
| 15 | The chimney has no smoke coming from it. Normally a fire would burn in the fireplace virtually all day, particularly in chill weather. |

When the characters get within 40 feet of the cottage, anyone with the Track skill may make a TN 10 test to notice some unusual prints in the ground, as if many people had

approached the house recently. Any character who scores a superior or greater success, or who has at least one rank in Lore: Race (Orcs), can identify the tracks as being those of Orcs! The tracks seem to be no more than a few hours old.

When the heroes actually look or go inside the cottage, they discover a scene of carnage. The home has been savagely attacked, and no skill is needed to realize that this can only be the work of Orcs. Virtually everything breakable has been shattered, blows from weapons scar the walls, and—worst of all—in the room lie the lifeless bodies of a woman and a young boy. Such is the sad fate of Margil's wife Orilwen and their only child. Of Margil himself there is no sign.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE

As yet, the heroes have no way of knowing the full truth behind the terrible events at the cottage. But you, as Narrator, need to know what's going on so you can properly deal with their questions and actions.

While on his way home from the Forsaken Inn many months ago,



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Margil was set upon and captured by Orcs in the service of Carangul, the Red Sorcerer, who was alerted to Margil's travels by a spy who heard him talking in the Forsaken Inn. A man of surpassing evil and cruelty, Carangul serves the Dark Lord, and on his orders has come to Angmar in the hopes of reviving that ancient kingdom to threaten or even conquer Eriador. Seeking powerful servants and the means to spy upon his enemies, Carangul instructed his Orcs to seek and kidnap powerful Men and bring them to him. To his good fortune, one of the first people they captured was Margil, a renowned Ranger of the North who had already perceived Carangul's presence and begun to oppose him.

Over several months, through torture and sorcery, Carangul broke Margil's will and corrupted the Ranger to his service. Now an evilly twisted shadow of his former self, Margil was sent with a company of Orcs to kill his own family and bring to Carangul such books and maps as he kept at his cottage. Margil and his company completed their foul task mere hours before the heroes arrived. With their prize in hand, Margil and his Orcs are making for the relative safety of the lands nearer the Misty Mountains, from where they plan to head north and return to Angmar.

SCENE TWO: PURSUIT!

If the heroes search the ground all around the cottage, have any character with Track make a TN 10 test. Any character who succeeds detects a group of Orcish footprints leading off northeast, toward the mountains. The tracks seem to be several hours old. Any character who achieves a Superior or greater success determines that the band of Orcs numbers at least a dozen, and quite possibly more.

The player characters now have a choice. Since it is nearly dark, they can



camp at the cottage for the night and start chasing the Orcs in the morning. Or they can begin the pursuit immediately, despite the difficulty of following the tracks in the dark. Or they could return to Elrond to report what they discovered. No true hero would choose this last option.

When the heroes push on, they will eventually encounter the Orcs. If they stop for the night, they can resume pursuit the next day and should catch the Orcs early the next evening.

Though Orcs travel swiftly, Margil and his band have no reason to believe that anyone is pursuing them, so they are not moving as quickly as they otherwise might. That gives the heroes a reasonable chance to catch the Orc-band before it makes it to caves in the mountains.

At night, the best speed the heroes can make is no more than 0.75 miles per hour, whereas the Orcs travel at 0.95 miles per hour. However, the Orcs intend to take it easy on this journey, so they travel more slowly much of the time and stop often to eat or rest. Once dawn breaks, the daylight will also work to slow the Orcs down, although a cloudy and overcast day won't hinder them too badly. A

successful TN 10 Weather-sense test tells the heroes the weather should be much like today.

Following tracks in the dark over rough terrain, even when the person being tracked makes no effort to hide his footprints, is no simple matter. Have the hero leading the chase make a Track test every hour against a TN of 15 (base of 10, +5 for darkness). If he succeeds, the heroes stay on the trail. If he fails, the heroes lose the trail and must spend one hour and succeed with another TN 15 test to re-acquire it. If he disastrously fails, the heroes lose the trail completely and cannot find it again until daylight.

The next day dawns overcast and rainy, allowing the Orcs to keep travelling without too much difficulty. Fortunately, they make no effort to hide their trail, so the occasional drizzle imposes no penalties on the heroes' Track tests.

The pursuit continues throughout the day. By nightfall, the heroes realize they are getting quite close to their quarry. A few more hours may be enough to catch up with them, especially if they stop to eat and rest for a while. Eventually, the heroes will overtake Margil and the band of Orcs.

SCENE THREE: THE ORC CAMP

The Orcs make camp in a small dell and hack down several trees for firewood, despite the numerous fallen branches and sticks available on the ground. They post sentries, but the sentries do a poor job, preferring to pay attention to the joking and arguing around the campfire. Margil, who dislikes the Orcs' company and is far warier than they, remains by himself, hidden in a small tent in the centre of the camp.

If the heroes approach without stealth or carry sources of light such as torches or lanterns, the sentries can make Observe (Spot) tests to see them coming. Otherwise, have each hero make a TN 10 Stealth test. As long as no one suffers a complete or disastrous failure, they can get close enough to the sentries to attack them silently with ranged weapons.

If the heroes opt to have one or more characters sneak up and attack

the sentries with melee weapons, have each attacker make a TN 10 Stealth test. If anyone fails, the Orcs at the campfire can make Observe (Hear) tests as opposed tests against the heroes' Stealth test results to hear them approaching.

If the heroes all succeed at their stealth tests, they should be able to dispatch one or more sentries. Since the sentries are minor NPCs at best, use the rules for combat pacing on page 270 of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook and call them one-success opponents. Any successful attack kills them.

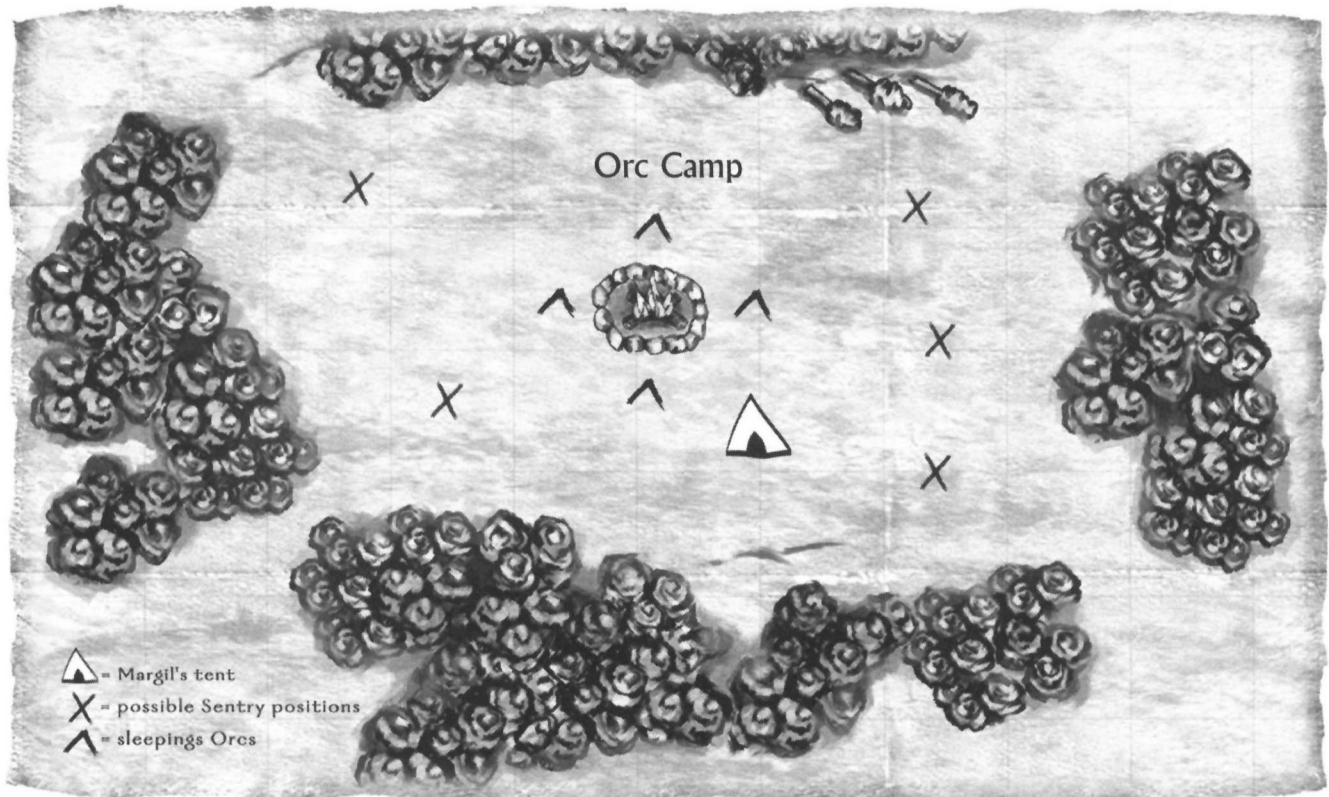
If the Orcs detect the heroes, they cry out, grab their weapons, and attack. Otherwise, the heroes can plan the attack as they see fit: use the trees for cover and pepper the Orcs with arrows, charge the campfire and use the element of surprise to cut down as many Orcs as possible, cast spells from afar, or whatever other actions they prefer.

There should be at least two to three Orcs for every one of the heroes,

more if you think your players can handle it. Try to make the fight a challenge, but not so deadly that there's a chance the heroes could get slaughtered.

If the heroes triumph, a surprise awaits them. As the battle winds down and any remaining Orcs flee or are slain, a tall figure emerges from the tent and into the firelight, a bow drawn and an arrow nocked. The heroes can each make a recognition test to see if they can identify the figure as Margil. Residents of Rivendell are considered to be from the same area (TN 10).

Unless the players specifically stated that at least one hero was keeping an eye on the tent, Margil automatically achieves surprise, thus gaining initiative and restricting the heroes to one action each in the first round. Margil is no fool. While skilled and experienced, he knows it's not likely he could take on the entire group of heroes and survive. Instead, he hopes to slow them down so he can escape.



MARGIL THE RANGER

RACE: Man (Dúnedain)

RACIAL ABILITIES: Adaptable (+2 to Swiftiness),
Dominion of Man, Skilled

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

REACTIONS: Stamina +3*, Swiftiness +4, Willpower
+3, Wisdom +2

ORDER: Warrior, Ranger

ORDER ABILITIES: Evasion, Protector, Swift Strike,
Wilderness Lore

ADVANCEMENTS: 12

SKILLS: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +5,
Climb +3, Healing (Treat Wounds) +2, Intimidate
(Majesty) +3, Jump +2, Language: Quenya +1,
Language: Sindarin +2, Language: Westron
(Common) +4, Lore: History (Dúnedain) +5,
Lore: Realm (Eriador) +4, Lore: Realm (Rhudaur)
+5, Observe (Spot) +4, Ranged Combat: Bows
(Longbow) +8, Ride (Horse) +3, Stealth (Sneak)
+10, Survival (Forest) +8, Track (Orcs) +8,
Weather-sense +3

EDGES: Charmed Life, Night-Eyed 2, Wary,
Woodcrafty

FLAWS: Dark Secret (servant of Carangul; before his
corruption, this was Duty (to protect Eriador),
Enemy (Rangers of the North; before his corrup-
tion, this was Orcs)

HEALTH: 9

COURAGE: 4

RENOWN: 3

GEAR: Longsword, longbow, 20 arrows, leather
armour, Ranger garb, trail rations

*: Favoured attribute or reaction



Once a proud and loyal member of the Rangers of the North, today Margil has been transformed into a servant of evil by Carangul's sorcery. He is cruel and heartless, caring nothing for others except when he can use them to further his goals and those of his dark master. Characters who use a Sense Power ability can perceive that all is not right with Margil—that someone has changed his personality with sorcery.

For Margil's first action, he chooses one hero—probably a spellcaster, if one is evident—and shoots him in the leg. This requires a Ranged Combat test at +6 TN (see the 'Armour and Cover Protection Table' on page 232 of *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook). If Margil succeeds, apply double the standard injury TN modifier to the victim's Climb, Jump, and Run tests, and reduce his travelling speed by -0.2 per hour per Wound Level lost. For Margil's second action, he turns and runs into the woods, immediately gaining a +9 TN bonus from cover against any efforts to shoot back at him.

If the heroes have the chance to search the slain Orcs, they discover that each bears a distinctive badge or emblem on their equipment. The heroes have not seen this device before: a stylized flame surrounding a crimson C-rune. This is Carangul's symbol, though of course the heroes don't know that yet.

ACT THREE: HUNTING MARGIL

The last part of Act Two was the turning point for this adventure. The heroes now realize Margil is an enemy, not a victim, and can act accordingly. The rest of the chapter consists of hunting him down.

SCENE ONE: THE CHASE BEGINS

This scene flows seamlessly from the last scene of Act Two, when Margil starts to run. His goal for the scene is to get away from the heroes, while theirs is to capture or kill him.

Thanks to his *Night-Eyed 2* edge, Margil can run, manoeuvre, and attack in the darkness of night without suffering any penalties. The heroes probably lack this advantage. At least some of them may have to

give their position away by carrying light sources.

If possible, Margil prefers to simply run away toward the northeast, using his Lore: Realm (Rhudaur) skill to pick the best route. He tries to use his Stealth (Sneak) skill while he runs, though he suffers a +7 TN penalty (+5 for running, +2 for moving through an area with leaves and other things that make noise). Once he is out of immediate danger from the heroes, he uses his Track skill in an attempt to hide his trail.

If the heroes move quickly, get lucky, or have the right abilities and skills, they may be able to slow Margil down, keep him from getting away, or even capture or slay him. If he's hurt or decides running away isn't working, Margil shifts to using his Stealth skill to try to ambush the heroes. He hides, shoots at them from surprise, then runs and hides again until he can find a way to elude them.

If Margil does get away, the heroes must once again rely on their skills as trackers and hunters to stay



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on his heels and keep him from escaping altogether. If possible, make the pursuit a challenge—Margil is resourceful, and no easy quarry—but not so difficult the heroes lose the trail and cannot find it again. Try to maintain the tension of the chase, by causing the heroes to wonder whether the rustling in the underbrush comes from small animals or from Margil waiting to attack them once more.

If any of the Orcs escaped the battle, they rejoin Margil as he flees, perhaps showing up at an opportune moment to distract the heroes so he can keep running or hiding. If they run with him, tracking Margil becomes easier as he can't use his Track skill to hide a group's tracks.

SCENE TWO: THE FINAL BATTLE

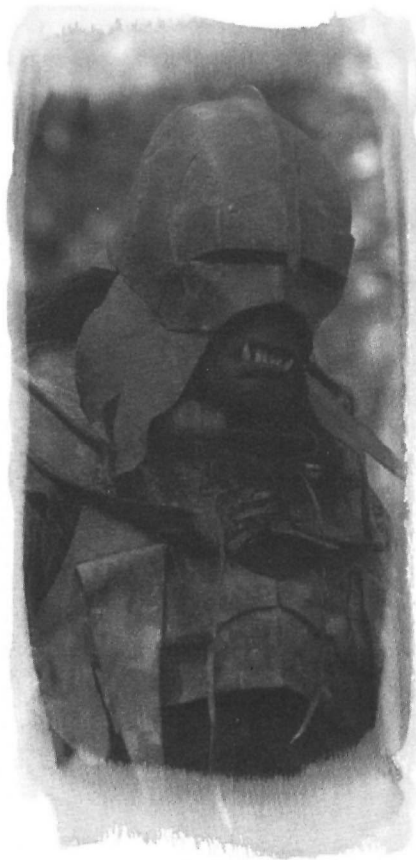
Margil cannot run forever, particularly if he's injured. Sooner or later, the heroes may find and surround him. In any event, he has to sleep sometime. If the heroes are clever, lucky, or sufficiently skilled, they may catch him quickly. If not, Margil heads for a cave in the hills. He thinks he can hold out there longer than he could in the open wilderness. If he is lucky, the heroes may lose the trail and not know where he went. If they do, though, he's ready for them.

The cave, a fairly small one, has two short branches off a main shaft. Margil and other Rangers have used it for years to store food and gear, disguising the entrance with branches and dead foliage. There Margil finds arrows to replace the ones he's already used, as well as any other appropriate gear that could help him in this final confrontation with the heroes.

Assuming they find the cave, the heroes have several options: wait for Margil to come out, try to force him out (by, for example, starting a fire in the cave entrance and letting the smoke get to him), or go in after him.

If the heroes attempt to speak with Margil, he tries to lure them into complacency by spinning a fantastic tale of his abduction and enslavement by the Orcs. When he feels their guard is down, he strikes without warning, using the resulting surprise to escape. Whatever the heroes decide to do, try to give Margil one last, desperate fighting chance to escape. But even with that, they should finally defeat him at this point.

If the heroes kill Margil, they notice a final look of peace on his face just as he dies. At last he's free from Carangul's spells. If the heroes cap-



ture him alive, Elrond can break Carangul's hold on his mind. Or, if you prefer, a player character spellcaster can do so with a Resist Fear spell enhanced by the Word of Command spell.

Either way, the heroes find that Margil carries several things of interest. The first is a bundle of scrolls and

maps taken from his cottage. These contain information about the Rangers and their activities that Carangul would find most useful. The second item is an amulet in the shape of Carangul's symbol: the flame and C-rune described in "Scene Three," page 15. If Margil dies or the heroes dispel the hold on his mind, the amulet breaks. This is the subtle magic of Middle-earth at work. The amulet does not maintain Carangul's spell on Margil. Finally, Margil carries a purse containing 8 silver pennies and a small ruby worth another 10 sp.

CONCLUSION

With Margil defeated, the heroes must return to Rivendell to inform Elrond of what has transpired. At this point, it's up to you, the Narrator, to take over. Is this the first chapter in a greater chronicle detailing the rise and fall of Carangul, the Shadow of the North? Or is it simply a brief introduction to roleplaying in Middle-earth, a prelude to brand new adventures of your own creation? It's up to you and your players to decide the future direction of your chronicle, although other products from Decipher can provide new adventures and ideas.

Since the heroes are new to adventuring, this chapter probably proved fairly difficult for them at times. On the average, each hero involved should earn at least 500 experience points. Characters who were roleplayed particularly well, or who had some particularly clever ideas during the adventure, might earn another 100-300 experience points. Refer to the section on "Experience," page 277, in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook for additional information and guidelines on awarding experience to the players.

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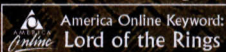


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