

Introduction: Above Men of Other Crafts

'[We] hold that a warrior should have more skills . . . than only the craft of weapons . . . we esteem a warrior, nonetheless, above men of other crafts.'

— *Faramir, The Two Towers*

Middle-earth is a land of danger and battle—of strife between a Great Enemy and Free Peoples with the firm resolve to match his minions blow for blow. Standing solidly at the forefront of these conflicts are martial characters, trained and experienced in the craft of dealing death by force of arms. Whether they are the representatives of storied, civilised cultures or descendants of tribal groups, in the dangerous days of Middle-earth's history, martial characters of all types must truly be esteemed above men of other crafts.

How to Use This Book

Fields of Battle: The Guide to Barbarians and Warriors will enrich your chronicle whether you are the player of a barbarian, warrior, or other martial character or a Narrator seeking ways to challenge martial players in your adventures and chronicles.

Chapter One: Martial Middle-earth examines the roles of martial characters through cultures from the Northern Waste to Far Harad. It includes six zero-advancement barbarian and warrior characters who, in addition to serving as examples throughout the text of this book, can be used in the chronicle as NPCs or modified with the addition of skill specialties to serve as player characters when time is lacking to create PCs from scratch. It also gives a wealth of advice to players of martial characters, whether their characters are just being created or have many advancements under their belts.

Chapter Two: Expanding the Orders provides a wealth of new options for martial PCs and NPCs. New order abilities are introduced for barbarian and warrior characters, new traits are presented that may be chosen by any characters at all, and the existing-but-unnamed skill trigger is expanded and clarified. Ten new martial elite orders round out the chapter.

Chapter Three: Fell Deeds Awake! provides a plethora of new combat options. Each one presents a new rule or rules to alter the combat process. Some make things faster, some increase the game's realism, **some increase the cinematic effect of armed conflict**, and others improve the game in other ways. **The largest combat option is a tactical combat system that allows you to use counters or miniatures in the game to improve your mental picture of the action of fighting.** Most combat options are completely independent of the others so they can be adopted wholesale or piecemeal, depending on the Narrator's desires and sensibilities.

Chapter Four: Tools of the Trade adds a number of new weapons to the game—**familiar tools from our history** that are not mentioned in the novels or films but **which make sense given Middle-earth's technology.** It also includes rules for categorizing just about any improvised item for use as a weapon. Finally, it presents a completely

revised system for brewing poisons that gives barbarians with that order ability access to many new and potent effects.

Chapter Five: Combat and Storycraft *is for the Narrator's eyes.*  gives advice on structuring stories for martial characters, as well as suggesting ways that potent martial villains can be created and controlled to give martial heroes a run for their money. A number of adventure and chronicle seeds round out this chapter's offerings.

Finally a section of **Player Aids and References** completes the book. In addition to a selection of maps and counters for use with the tactical combat options introduced in Chapter Three, a number of helpful tables summarise combat statistics from throughout [this book and the core rulebook, drawing them together to one place for ease of reference](#)

in play. 

Chapter One: Martial Middle-earth

'Foes and fires are before you. . . . Yet, though you fight upon an alien field, the glory that you reap there shall be your own forever.'

— Théoden, *The Return of the King*

Middle-earth is a land of struggle and its stories are those in which the Free Peoples must come to grips with the forces of an Enemy that would subjugate them. Though many battles must be won by might of intellect and proficiency at stealth, the martial talents of Middle-earth's barbarians and warriors are more frequently necessary ttle matters by brutally direct means.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of martial characters across Middle-earth, whether most appropriate for player characters or a chronicle's antagonists. Later the text turns to a discussion of barbarians and warriors in *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, providing much advice to players both creating and playing those of warlike bent.

Cultural Elements

'[A]rise, Riders of Théoden! Fell deeds awake: fire and slaughter! . . . A sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises! Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor!'

— Théoden, *The Return of the King*

[[Playtesters: I'm considering including mass combat statistics for the types of warriors included Thoughts?]] 

Justice in Middle-earth frequently extends only so far as one's sword—or that of one's egemen—might reach. Those dedicated to the fighting arts, warriors and barbarians among them, are therefore highly valued members of their societies, be they primitive barbarians of Druadan Forest or elegant Eldar liers of Lindon. The sections that follow survey cultures and settings where warriors and barbarians thrive, and from whence they might come in your chronicle, as PCs or NPCs. 

[Movie Still 3]

Dwarves

[Movie Still 4]

'Hood and cloak were gone; [the Dwarves] were in shining armour, and red light leapt from their eyes.' 

— *The Hobbit*

The seven Dwarven houses—those of Durin, Úri, Linnar, Sindri, Thulin, Var, and Vigdís—are scattered throughout Middle-earth. Though ever seeking holds and mansions where they might work stone and metals in peace, the Dwarven folk are constantly beset

by their enemies, especially Orcs, and must always train new generations of warriors and champions to protect their people.

In times of peace most Dwarven warriors pursue trades as craftsmen, miners, labourers, or traders. Dwarven soldiers who wish to devote themselves to their orders all the time, however, often seek positions as house guards or in mercenary companies. In time of war, of course, male Dwarves of healthy body forsake hearth and forge to wield axe and sword in battle.

Dwarven dragonslayers were once common among the clans of the north; now only the Sons of Thulin follow this path. For more information, see page XX of *Dwarves: The Seven Houses of the Khazad*, in the *Moria* boxed set.

Most Dwarf-holds contain a wealth of riches and are themselves strategic assets worth taking. Thus, every Dwarf-settlement, no matter how poor, maintains a house guard—a standing defensive force—to protect a hold's assets and denizens. The members of these bodies man the great doors of the hold, guard its treasuries and mines, and escort caravans travelling to other mansions. They also stand ready to go to other holds' aid; in this way, allied Dwarves from nearby colonies can quickly mount a credible army even before a hold's Dwarves are mustered. Most guards spend their careers at one hold, but exceptional members serve as messengers, spies, scouts and pathfinders, and in such capacities may travel far afield.

In addition to a hold's house guards, every Dwarf-lord able to afford it maintains a personal retinue. These trusted warriors form a bodyguard when attending their lord and serve as his emissaries when sent from his side. The older members of the circle also serve as military counsellors and captains; younger ones are his most elite warriors.

Finally, some Dwarves abandon ties with their houses to ally with whatever Dwarf-lord will pay or promise glory. Some do so to flee disgrace while others simply seek fortune and glory. Still others, such as the sons of Úri, become free axes when their lines fail. No matter the estrangement, free axes always return to fight under the banners of their fathers when a Union of the Khazâd is evoked. For more information on free axes, see pages XX [Uri's folk] and XX [Var's Axes of Nargubraz] of *Dwarves: The Seven Houses of the Khazad*, in the *Moria* boxed set.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Aukrad

Race: Dwarf (Son of Sindri)

Racial Abilities: Animal Aversion, Craftsmanship, Firestarting, Hardness of Body, Hardness of Mind, Healthy, Stout

Attributes: Bearing 6 (±0), Nimbleness 10 (+2), Perception 8 (+1), Strength 11 (+2)*, Vitality 12 (+3)*, Wits 7 (±0)

Reactions: Stamina +3, Swiftness +3*, Willpower +0, Wisdom +1

Defence: 12

Order: Barbarian

Order Abilities: Stealthy Strike**Advancements:** 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Axes (Battleaxe) +6, Climb +3, Language: Easterling +3, Language: Khudzul +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore/Race: Dwarves (Sons of Sindri) +4, Lore/Race: Men (Easterlings) +1, Lore/Realm: Rhûn +3, Lore/Wilderness: Survival +2, Observe +3, **Ranged Combat +2**, Stealth +4, Stonecraft +3, Survival (Mountains) +4, Track +2



Edges: Furtive, Hardy, Warwise, Wary

Flaws: Proud, Stiff-necked

Health: 14

Courage: 3

Renown: 0

Gear: Battleaxe, spear, scale mail, cloak with hood

Aukrad is a headstrong young member of one of the lost clans of Sindri that found refuge in the rough steppes of Rhûn. Aukrad grew up listening to the greybeards' tales of glory days long past, and grew disillusioned with the meagre life his clan eked out among the unpleasant Easterling tribes. He committed himself to finding the hope of better days for his people and set out to seek other clans of his kind. His travels have brought him to the West, where he has taken to lurking behind his cloak and hood, listening for clues as to the whereabouts of his brethren. **When forced into battle, Aukrad prefers stealth and subtlety over open assault.**



[[END BOX]]

Elves

[Movie Still 5]

'We live now upon an island amid many perils, and our hands are more often upon the bowstring than upon the harp.'

— *Haldir, The Fellowship of the Ring*

The Elves have never forgotten their legacy as children of the Undying Lands. Aided by the great rings they crafted long ago, they are the guardians of much that is civilized and beautiful in Middle-earth.

Few Elven warriors remain in Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age; most who fought in the Last Alliance have returned to the Undying Lands. Of those who remain, many—especially among the Noldor and Sindar—take little interest in the troubles of Men. And yet, as the Shadow gathers, there remain some Elves willing to take up bow and sword to support the Free Peoples. Most active of these are the Eldar dwelling in Rivendell and the Silvan Elves of Mirkwood.

The Silvan Elves of Lothórien, surrounded by the beauty of the mighty *mellyrn*, dwell in isolation and go abroad but seldom. Few, indeed, speak Westron. These Galadrim

warriors are skilled in the use of bow, spear, and sword, and are dauntless trackers. Trespassers into the Golden Wood do not get far thanks to their tireless watches in the *flets* that ring the borders. Warriors from Lothórien are rarely seen abroad, except perhaps as messengers to Imladris or the Grey Havens. Even then, few detect their passing.

In times of peace Rivendell is a place of refuge and counsel; in times of war it stands as an unassailable fortress. The Eldar of Rivendell, led by Elrond, keep a watch on the surrounding lands, including the passes of the Misty Mountains to the east, the Ettenmoors to the north, and Hollin to the south. Some, under the leadership of Elrond's sons Elladan and Elrohir, support the Dúnedain Rangers patrolling the wild lands of Arnor. Others set out on errands for Elrond or scout the surrounding mountains. Rivendell's warriors dress in muted greys and greens when afield, and fight with longbow and sword. When girding for battle they don **elegant** Elf-mail.

Lindon, sole remnant of lost **Bereriand**,  always been held by the Elves as the most beloved of all lands in Middle-earth. Under  the guidance of Círdan, the Elves of Lindon build beautiful ships that bear their brethren back to the Undying Lands. Most of **Lindon's warriors fought in the army of the Last Alliance, and are formidable.**  Historically, they have aided the Dúnedain of Arnor in their wars against Sauron and his proxies. By the end of the Third Age, however, they have distanced themselves from the cares of Middle-earth, save Círdan himself and a small number who continue to support the Rangers.

The Silvan Elves of Mirkwood, though seldom welcoming of guests, are active traders in Rhovanion, and deal regularly with the Beornings, Woodmen, and Dalelanders. Their warriors are experts in woodcraft, and are deadly with bow, long knife, and sword alike. They guard the approaches to King Thranduil's lands, ever watchful for the Orcs, great spiders, and other fell creatures that slink through Mirkwood's shadows. Many are veterans of the Battle of the Five Armies and bear fine Erebor swords liberated from Smaug's hoard.

Finally, though not associated with the Elves of a particular location, the Company of the Council is a network of Elves throughout Middle-earth who can be called upon by the Wise at need. They serve because it is clear that, while they are wise and powerful, the members of the White Council—Saruman, Gandalf, Elrond, Círdan, Galadriel, and others—cannot be everywhere at once. The members of the Company may thus be dispatched on a variety of missions: spying on Dol Guldur, watching Easterling movements along the River Carnen, or carrying messages between members of the White Council, for example. They may also be assigned to assist allies of Council members such as the Woodmen of Mirkwood on behalf of Radagast, the Rohirrim for Saruman, or small bands assembled by Elrond or Gandalf for important missions.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Narufindelin

Race: Elf (Sinda)

Racial Abilities: The Art, Beast-Skill, Comfort, Elven-form, Elven-sense, Elven-sleep, Farsightedness, Ghost-scorn, Lightfootedness, Musical Gifts, Swift Healing

Attributes: Bearing 10 (+2)*, Nimbleness 12 (+3)*, Perception 10 (+2), Strength 8 (+1), Vitality 8 (+1), Wits 8 (+1)

Reactions: Stamina +1, Swiftiness +3*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +2

Defence: 13

Order: Warrior

Order Abilities: Evasion

Advancements: 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Blades (Long Knife) +3, Healing +2, Language: Silvan +3, Language: Sindarin +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore/History: Elves +3, Lore/Race: Elves +3, Lore/Realm: Mirkwood +4, Lore/Wilderness: Survival (Forest) +3, Observe +4, Perform +3, Ranged Combat: Bows (Longbow) +6, Run +1, Stealth +4, Survival (Forest) +4, Track +4

Edges: Accurate, Armour of Heroes, Fair, Keen-eyed, Swift Recovery, Woodcrafty 2

Flaws: Enemy (all Orcs), Fealty (to King Thranduil)



Health: 9

Courage: 3

Renown: 0

Gear: Long knife, longbow, 20 arrows, Elf-cloak

Narufindelin, a forest-scout of Mirkwood, helps to defend her homeland from Orc-advances and any fell beast that strays into the forest. She knows little of the world beyond the borders of the forest, and so rarely ventures beyond it—she would do so without hesitation if her king so desired, though. Her preferred weapon is the bow, and her ability with it is formidable, even for an Elf so young. She would like to one day serve as a member of the king's personal guard, but is content to serve as a scout and learn all she can about the forest and her people's history in the meantime.

[[END BOX]]

Hobbits

[Movie Still 6]

'[T]hough you may have taken me for  soft, stranger-lad and easy prey, let me warn you; I am not, I am a halfling, hard, bold, and wicked!'

— Pippin, *The Return of the King*

Those who know them at all know Hobbits best as peaceable folk with little taste for adventure and none at all for battle. The arms of the Shire, thus, are largely trophies hung above hearths or displayed in the Michel Delving museum as *mathoms*. Generally speaking, Hobbits who express undue interest in combat or weaponry beyond the hunting bow are regarded by their peers as strange at best, if not outright mad. This outlook, however, overlooks the resiliency that lies just below most Hobbits' soft—and often

ample—exteriors. Though most Hobbits prefer simply to be left alone, they are surprisingly resourceful and fierce when threatened.

The Shire has few martial orders, and few resident warriors as a result. Most Hobbits are skilful bowmen, however, and at great need may be assembled in a Shire-muster captained by the Thain. The Muster is more a formality than reality, but has nevertheless on several occasions marched into battle. In TA 1974, for example, a company of bowmen supported the Dunédain of Arnor in the Battle of Fornost. More recently, the Muster defeated an Orc-invasion of the Northfarthing in TA 2747, and a decade later fended off marauding wolves that crossed the frozen Brandywine during the Long Winter. At the end of the Third Age, the Muster repelled a more insidious threat—Sharkey and his Half-orcs.

A small police force called the Watch maintains order within the Shire's four farthings. There are only three Shirriffs assigned to each farthing, all of whom report to the First Shirriff, the Mayor of Michel Delving. Since Hobbit-conflicts never culminate in violence, its Shirriffs seldom have need of any weapon larger than a dagger. The Watch wears neither uniform nor armour; a Shirriff's sole badge of office is the rakish feather perched in his cap. Because Shirriffs never leave the Shire, and are more renowned for their political skills than martial prowess, they typically maintain reputations as respectable Hobbits.

In addition to the Watch, a small but dedicated band of Hobbit-warriors known as the Bounders—those who beat the bounds—guard the borders of the Shire, turning away undesirable outsiders and driving off dangerous animals. The number of Bounders varies from generation to generation according to need. At the end of the Third Age its numbers are greatly increased, as troubling reports of strange folk and fearsome creatures moving abroad grow. Tooks, by heritage and temperament, are most likely to be recruited by the Bounders.

Bounders wear leather armour and are skilled in woodland pursuits, as well as the use of sword and bow. They patrol all of the Shire's borders, but are most concentrated along the north-east frontier. Bounders seldom travel outside the Shire, but are certain to be among those dispatched on any official errand requiring Hobbits to travel beyond its borders.

Finally, the Hornbucks of Bree are a clan of Fallowhides who have for several centuries provided escort services for Hobbit merchants travelling between the Shire and Bree. [Regarded as eccentric by other Hobbits](#), Hornbucks are nonetheless considered a reliable investment for Hobbit travellers  sure about the safety of a highway shared by Dwarves, Men, and other unsavoury types. Hornbuck escorts favour leather armour and handle both dirk and bow with equal skill. Most ride ponies and some can even swim.

Some of the more daring young Hornbucks, particularly those interested in assuming leadership roles later in life, travel with Mannish merchant trains for a time, ranging into the scattered Dunédain settlements to the north and as far south as the Dunlands. Some rare few have wandered even further afield.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Tolman Longhole

Race: Hobbit (Stoor)

Racial Abilities: Six Meals a Day, Small Folk, Soft-Footed, Sure at the Mark, Tough as Old Tree-roots

Attributes: Bearing 8 (+1)*, Nimbleness 8 (+1), Perception 11 (+2)*, Strength 7 (±0), Vitality 10 (+2), Wits 7 (±0)

Reactions: Stamina +2, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +1*, Wisdom +2

Defence: 11

Order: Warrior

Order Abilities: Tough as Stone

Advancements: 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Blades (Short Sword) +4, Craft: Cooking +3, Games +2, Healing +1, Inspire +4, **Intimidate +2**, Language: Late Adûnaic +3, Language: Westron +6, Lore/Race: Hobbits +4, Lore/Race: Men +3, Lore/Realm: Bree-land +4, Lore/Realm: Shire +2, Ranged Combat: Bows (Shortbow) +6, Observe +4, Run +2, Stealth +4

Edges: Accurate, Eloquent, Hoard 1, Honey-tongued

Flaws: Rival (Gorbo Mugwort)

Health: 11

Courage: 3

Renown: 0

Gear: Short sword, short bow, 20 arrows, leather corselet

Tolman Longhole is from Staddle, a small town in Bree-land. Most of his family lives nearby, though he does have relations in the Shire. Tolman serves as sergeant of a caravan guard, protecting goods transported from farm to market and back again. Tolman prefers to reason his way out of fights whenever possible, but many a highwayman have been fatally surprised at his martial abilities when he does resort to using them. He is happy with his position, though he has often contemplated moving to the Shire and becoming a Shirriff. Tolman and a fellow sergeant, Gorbo Mugwort, compete bitterly over both caravan safety margins and consumption of beer.

[[END BOX]]

Descendants of Númenor

[Movie Still 7]

'Here was one with an air of high nobility . . . one of the Kings of Men born into a later time, but touched with the wisdom and sadness of the Elder Race.'

— *The Return of the King*

The descendants of the Númenóreans are those who, through culture or bloodline, can trace their heritage back to the Númenóreans who settled in Middle-earth in the Second Age. (Black Númenóreans, because they lack a cohesive culture, are treated as members of their respective societies. See ‘Men of Darkness’ on page XX.) Those who settled in the North, the Dúnedain, have been bereft of their kingdom since the fall of Arnor. Most live in isolated and well-fortified communities in Arnor far from travelled paths, farming and trading with their Middle Man and Halfling neighbours.

The Rangers of Eriador, the remnants of the noble families of fallen Arnor, dedicate their lives to protecting their communities and those of their allies. To this end, they ceaselessly patrol Eriador to fend off Orcs, dangerous beasts, and fell creatures. They keep a special watch on the Shire and travellers along the roads. Grim in aspect, Rangers clothe themselves in grey or dark green cloaks and wear long leather boots. They favour shaggy, sturdy horses and arm themselves with spears, bows, and swords.

Before joining the ranks of this elite order, recruits spend many years as warriors, learning the lay of the land and the arts of war. Before being raised to the rank of Ranger, some recruits embark on years of solitary errantry, travelling abroad, gaining knowledge and wisdom—which might include instruction at Rivendell—or even serving under a foreign lord. When accepted as a full-fledged Ranger, a recruit is presented with his sole badge of rank, a cloak clasp in the shape of a six-pointed star.

The Men of Gondor are not as pure in bloodline as the northern Dúnedain, though their culture and blood yet run strong and they remain legitimate descendents of Númenor.

The Guard of the Tower are soldiers of Minas Tirith charged with protecting the great city and serving the Steward of Gondor. Clad in the black and silver livery of the Tower—a hauberk of blackened steel, a high-crowned silver helm, and a surcoat of black with the token of the Tree in silver—they man its gates and guard its walls and courtyards. The Guard is organized in companies, each with its own officers, who report to the lords of Gondor. Guardsmen wield sword and longbow in battle, and spear and pike when repelling attackers along the wall. Guardsmen seldom leave their city unless escorting a captain or courier dispatched to another Anórien stronghold.

Outside Minas Tirith, Gondor’s many lords outfit their knights as well as the wealth of their fiefs permit. At need, most of these lords can field a small contingent of such mounted knights as well as several hundred footmen. **In general, knights are provided full harness and their choice of weapons**, while common footmen are outfitted in leather armour or mail and armed with spear and dagger. Archers, however, typically provide their own bows. 

The rich farmlands of Anórien also boast several well-off holds; their warriors are equipped in similar fashion to the Guard of the Tower in Minas Tirith. The warriors who man the beacon-tower hills and those of the mountainous Lossernach region are hardy warriors well suited to fighting on the wooded slopes of their fiefs. They favour black helms and mail, and fight with the bow and the great axe.

The great coastal towns of Pelargir in Lebennin and Dol Amroth in Belfalas, long subject to raids by the Corsairs of Umbar, maintain a bevy of knights and many footmen, some of whom are assigned to Gondor’s navy as marines. The fief of Belfalas is particularly

wealthy, and the Prince of Dol Amroth maintains a full company of mounted knights, outfitted with plate armour, lances, and longswords.

Other fiefs east of Ered Nimrais are less well off, but can also field hundreds of soldiers at need. Lamedon and Morthond are both known for their sharp-eyed bowmen. Pinnath Gelin is known for its nimble pathfinders, scouts, and footmen clad in forest green. Perhaps one fifth of the warriors these fiefs can field are professionals; the rest devote themselves to other trades in peacetime. Anfalas and Ethir are poorer fiefs and do not maintain standing armies at all save for warriors attached to the households of their lords; their soldiers are in peacetime hunters, herders, and fisherfolk

The Rangers of Ithilien were formed as a brotherhood of knights to safeguard Ithilien and defy all foes who enter. At last driven from their homeland in TA 2954, they now dwell in the ruins of Osgiliath and Gondor proper, stealing across the Anduin to harry the hosts and creatures of Sauron. By tradition, the Rangers recruit only men of pure Dúnedain blood, the first of which is their captain, always a highborn son of Gondor.

The Rangers wear uniforms of brown and green, with matching gloves and masks. Elite woodsmen, they are masters of the spear, great bow, and sword. They maintain numerous secret base camps, the greatest of which is the refuge of Henneth Annûn. A noble band driven to ruthlessness by necessity, they are pledged to slay all outsiders who discover their secret places.

Northmen

'But the white fury of the North-men burned the hotter, and more skilled was their knighthood with long spears and bitter. . . .'

– *The Return of the King*

The Northmen are descendants of the Edain who remained in Middle-earth. Originally denizens of northern Rhovanion, they migrated to various parts south, diverging into distinct cultures over the centuries.

The Beornings are great black-bearded men who live in the Anduin vale, guarding the Ford of Carrock and the High Pass of the Misty Mountains. Fierce men who fearlessly hunt Orc and Warg alike, most Beornings are warriors as well as farmers or craftsmen. They dress in coarse wool garments, eschewing armour, relying on stealth and their great strength to defeat their foes. They favour the mighty woodman's axe as a primary weapon, and are also adept at throwing spears.

Beorning fighters drive themselves into a berserk rage in battle, and some, it is said, assume the shapes of bears like their namesake Beorn. While Beornings are civilised Men, many belong to the barbarian order due to their nature. Some are accounted great horsemen, but do not saddle their mounts or use tack of any kind. Full-time warriors among the Beornings spend much of their time roaming the wild lands along the Anduin and in the mountains, often alone but occasionally in the company of Woodmen or Elves from either Rivendell or Mirkwood.

The Dalelanders consist of the Bardings, Lakemen, and other Northmen who dwell northeast of Mirkwood, all of whom banded together after the fall of Smaug to present a

unified front to ever-increasing Easterling encroachments. Their culture has much in common with that of their cousins the Éothéod, who migrated south to populate Rohan. The Dalelands have no standing army, but the king of Dale fields the Daleland Guard, a great company of cavalry that patrols the borders of the Dalelands and garrisons the watchtowers along the eastern frontier west of the River Carnen. Armed with Erebor steel and skilled with the longbow, the Guardsmen are on a permanent wartime standing.

Dorwinion is a land traditionally claimed by the Easterlings, but after the fall of Dale many Northmen settled in its mild river valleys. At the end of the Third Age most who dwell here are a mingling of both peoples, but the dominant culture has more in common with the North than the East. Warriors of Dorwinion spend much of their time guarding the many vineyards of the land and escorting great shipments of wine that pass both east and west—some travel as far as Dale, Gondor, or even Umbar. Others patrol Dorwinion's borders, wary of Dalemens and Easterling incursions alike. Some Dorwinions take service in Easterling armies, while others seek their fortune in the West.

[Movie Still 8]

The Rohirrim, the descendants of the Éothéod who once lived in Framsburg and other settlements under the shadow of Mount Gundabad, now dwell in the plains ceded to them by Gondor in ages past. Surrounded by enemies—Dunlendings and Orcs to the west and Easterlings to the east—the horse-lords are ever prepared for war. Warriors attached to a lord's household are quartered under arms in bands known as *éored*. The chief *éored* in the Riddermark is the King's Company, drawn from lords and veteran soldiers who serve at Edoras, but others ride under the command of the Marshals of Rohan. Riders wear silver corslets and gleaming mail, and silver helmets with flowing horsetail manes. They carry green shields emblazoned with a golden sun, and for arms wield spears and longswords, some of which are Dwarf-heirlooms recovered from great Scatha's hoard, others of which are local creations bearing equine motifs. In time of war, the Men of Rohan are gathered into three great cavalry companies, the Muster of Edoras, the Eastern Muster, and the Western Muster. Each of these falls under the command of a Marshal of the Mark.

The Men of central western Mirkwood and the Vales of Anduin are known as the Woodmen of Mirkwood. Taciturn and quiet folk, they distrust strangers but are loyal to friends. Most dwell in stockade villages and herd sheep or hunt with dogs. Full-time warriors are rare among the Woodmen, but all have some training in combat as many evils creep forth from Dol Guldur and Orcs from the Misty Mountains occasionally raid their communities in search of new slaves. Shepherds in particular are skilled in the use of the great yew bows with which they protect their flocks from predators such as wolves, Wargs, Orcs, and—occasionally—Great Eagles.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Bronwyn

Race: Man (Middle Man: Rohirrim)

Racial Abilities: Adaptable (+2 to Stamina), Dominion of Man, Skilled

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

Reactions: Stamina +3, Swiftiness +2*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +2

Defence: 11

Order: Warrior

Order Abilities: Favoured Weapon (longsword)

Advancements: 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Blades (Longsword) +6, Climb +2, Craft: Farming +4, Healing +3, Inspire +4, Language: Late Adûnaic (Rohirric) +6, Language: Westron +3, Lore/History: Rohan +3, Lore/Other: Horses +2, Lore/Race: Men (Rohirrim) +4, Lore/Realm: Rohan +4, Lore/Wilderness: Survival +2, Observe +3, Ranged Combat: Bows +3, Ride +4, Run +2, Survival (Plains) +5

Edges: Armour of Heroes, Faithful (to family), Valiant, Warwise

Flaws: **Duty (to protect family)**,  my (Chief Baran), Provincial Upbringing

Health: 8

Courage: 4

Renown: 0

 **Gear:** Longsword, horse, father's ring

Bronwyn is a farmer's daughter turned shield-maiden of Rohan and head of her household. A Dunlendish raiding party attacked her family's farm and put her father and brothers to the sword. This left Bronwyn to care for her aged mother and younger sisters, a task she took to with a will. She maintained the farm and taught her sisters to care for it, all the while learning the warrior's ways. She desires nothing more than to turn the farm over to her sisters, freeing herself to seek vengeance on the raiding party's leader, a chief named Baran. Bronwyn wears her father's ring as a constant reminder of her desire.

[[END BOX]]

The Wild Men

[Movie Still 9]

'[W]e fight not. Hunt only. Kill gorgûn in woods, hate orc-folk.'

— *Ghân-buri-Ghân, The Return of the King*

Most Mannish societies of Middle-earth bear the civilising influences of the Númenóreans or the Elves. Some, however, eschew such trappings. These so-called wild men, clad in the furs of beasts, live off the land and answer to no rulers save their own.

The descendants of a more civilised culture, the dark-haired Dunlendings live in a **chaotic**  assortment of tribes and clans constantly fractured by strife and competition over limited

resources. Those of the lowlands farm and herd animals, but the wilder highland tribes are rough in speech and comportment, and are hunters and woodsmen rather than farmers.

Barbarians and warriors are seen in equal number in Dunlending society—the former are more common in the highlands, while the latter are more common in the lowlands. In times of greater conflict, many Dunlenders hire themselves out as mercenaries. They have no steadfast allies—though some clans are friendly with Durin’s Folk—and in choosing enemies they make no distinction between Orcs and the Men of Gondor and Rohan. They despise the Rohirrim, who displaced them centuries ago and forced them over the Isen; every few seasons they raid outlying villages of the Westfold.

Descended from the ancient Forodwaith, the snowmen of Forochel inhabit the coastal regions of the frozen Northern Waste. They speak little Westron, favouring their own Lossothren tongue. They are a peaceful folk who produce few warriors, but in such a harsh climate many men and women alike are hunters skilled in the ways of the barbarian, tracking elk and other game across the frozen landscape. Every few years a great caravan departs Lossoth bearing furs, ivory, and other trade goods, which they give the Men and Dwarves of Arnor in exchange for metal weapons, salt, and other items they cannot provide for themselves. Many barbarians make the journey to ensure the caravan’s safe passage, for rumours persist that they also traffic in gold recovered from secret deposits even the Dwarves know nothing of.

In the shadow of Ered Nimrais dwells a race of squat, unlovely Men. These secretive wild men of the woods, the Woses, haunt the thickets of Druadan Forest, clad only in fur and woven grasses. They have no interest in the affairs of Man or Elf; few save the headmen speak Westron or other tongues of civilised Men. The deep woods often echo with the distant boom of drums, with which tribes speak to one another.

The Woses have no warriors, but nearly all males follow the path of the barbarian to some extent. Their woodcraft is second to none, and some say they use ancient magic akin to that of the Púkel-men of old. They never lose their sense of direction and can sense the movements of the sun even when hidden behind dark clouds. Though non-aggressive, the Woses are sometimes hunted for sport by Orcs and the Rohirrim. They hate Orcs and Wargs above all else, and ruthlessly run them to ground, using poisoned arrows and blowpipes to slay them. There is no record of one of the Woses leaving his forest, but their ancestors were closer to civilized Men, and it could be that one might follow a Man or Elf out of friendship.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Thân-deri-Thân

Race: Man (Wild Man: Púkel-man)

Racial Abilities: Adaptable (+2 to Stamina), Dominion of Man, Skilled

Attributes: Bearing 7 (±0), Nimbleness 7 (±0), Perception 10 (+2)*, Strength 10 (+2)*, Vitality 11 (+2), Wits 8 (+1)

Reactions: Stamina +4*, Swiftiness +2, Willpower +1, Wisdom +2

Defence: 10

Order: Barbarian

Order Abilities: Wilderness Warrior (Forest)

Advancements: 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Clubs (Mace) +6, Climb +2, Craft: Brewing +2, Healing (Herbal Remedies) +3, Language: Druadan +5, Language: Rohirric +1, Lore/Group: Púkel-men +4, Lore/History: Púkel-men +2, Lore/Other: Poisons +2, Lore/Realm: Druadan Forest +5, Lore/Realm: Rohan +2, Lore/Wilderness: Herbs +3, Observe +5, Ranged Combat: Spears (Spear) +3, Stealth +4, Survival (Forest) +4, Track +4

Edges: Curious, Keen-eyed, Night-eyed, Woodcrafty 2

Flaws: Battle-fury, Enemy (all Orcs)

Health: 13 

Courage: 4

Renown: 0

Gear: Grass skirt, spear, mace

A member of the strange clan of Púkel-men, or Woses, Thán-deri-Thán protects the borders of the Druadan Forest from the ravages of Orcs and other enemies of his people. Thán-deri-Thán is a curiosity among his kind in that he is brave enough to venture beyond the borders of the forest to explore the surrounding realm of Rohan. Thán-deri-Thán has seen several Rohirrim up close and has even learned a little of their strange tongue. He's reluctant to stay out in the open for long, though, and is quick to retreat to the safety of his forest-home. Like many of his kind, Thán-deri-Thán is a fearsome fighter within the confines of his own realm.

[[END BOX]]

Men of Darkness

[T]he Southrons were bold men and grim, and fierce in despair; and the Easterlings were strong and war-hardened and asked for no quarter.'

—*The Return of the King*

The Men in the lands ringing Mordor have long been under the dominion of Sauron, and of Morgoth before him. Stirred up by hatred and fear, their armies have many times marched on the Men of the West. The Black Númenóreans, the Unfaithful who flocked to Sauron's cause in the Second Age, dwell among them, many of purer bloodlines rising to positions of great power.

The Easterlings are a great confederacy of kingdoms and tribes that dwell in Rhûn. All owe **homage**  Mordor and provide soldiers and materiel to feed Sauron's massive war machine. All Easterling societies are militaristic, but not in a uniform fashion. On the northern plains east of the River Carnen, bearded barbarians of the nomadic tribes gird themselves in thick leather armour and wield great two-handed axes. In the tilled lands of

Rhûn, proud and noble warriors march in polished steel armour forged in the smithies of Mordor. All Easterling soldiers are accustomed to instantly obey their superiors and to despise the weak. Easterlings of lighter complexion are sometimes recruited as spies and travel the lands of the West disguised as merchants of Dorwinion.

The swarthy Variags dwell in Khand, an arid land south of Mordor. Not by nature willing allies of Sauron, the Variag chieftains have long given tribute and soldiers to Mordor to avoid the enslavement of their peoples in the brutal plantations of Nûrnen. Variags are disciplined and hardened soldiers, as failure means suffering for their families and tribes back home. Variags are both warriors and barbarians. The former come from the kingdom's terraced cities while the latter issue from its primitive wilderness tribes. Barbarians wield great axes in battle and serve Mordor's armies as footmen. The warriors of the cavalry drive ornate chariots from which they hurl spears upon their enemies. Few Variags travel north unless driven to war by the captains of Mordor.

The Haradrim of the far South, also known as Southrons, have served Sauron for thousands of years. Many indeed worship him as a god and seek his favour by committing depraved acts of cruelty on rivals and fallen enemies. Thousands of young Southron men dedicate themselves to the sword each year, seeking glory and honour in battle. Haradrim warriors grant no quarter in battle and ask for none, which inspires fear in their enemies.

[Movie Still 10]

Southron soldiers are well trained and vary in type and temperament according to the lands of Harad from which they come. Barbarians from Harad's great savannas fight on horseback, using spear and buckler, while those from the jungles of Far Harad, strong and immense as trolls, paint their bodies and fight barehanded, dealing death to all with whom they come to grips. The crack legions of Near Harad are the Haradrim most feared by the Men of Gondor. Stern warriors in corslets of fine scale mail and clad in scarlet livery, the men of Near Harad wield mighty scimitars and carry great round shields studded with steel spikes. Their dreaded Mûmakil Riders drive the mighty oliphants into battle, and fight with both bow and scimitar from the war towers lashed to the backs of the great beasts.

The Corsairs of Umbar are great pirates and raiders. Plying the seas in their infamous black-sailed dromunds, they fall on merchant ships and coastal cities alike in search of plunder. Most Corsairs are of course mariners by trade, but their sleek ships hold many warriors in addition to the galley slaves chained to the oars. All are well schooled in the use of scimitar, long knife, and whip. Many inhabitants of the fortress city state of Umbar have borne the name Corsair, beginning with the proud Black Númenóreans who founded it in the Second Age. Its inhabitants at the end of the Third Age are primarily of Harad extract, though some Black Númenóreans live there still.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

<3>Zézago

Race: Man (Man of Darkness: Easterling)

Racial Abilities: Adaptable (+2 to Swiftiness), Dominion of Man, Skilled

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

Reactions: Stamina +2, Swiftiness +3*, Willpower +2, Wisdom +2

Defence: 11

Order: Warrior

Order Abilities: Tireless Fighter

Advancements: 0

Skills: Armed Combat: Axes (Battle Axe) +6, Healing +1, Inspire +4, Intimidate (Fear) +3, Language: Easterling +6, Language: Westron +2, Lore/Group: Easterlings +4, Lore/History: Rhûn +2, Lore/Realm: Dale +2, Lore/Realm: Rhûn +5, Observe +3, Ranged Combat: Spears (Spear) +4, Ride +3, Siegecraft +3, Survival (Plains) +4, Track +2

Edges: Bold, Fell-handed (Bardings), Stern, Warwise

Flaws: Enemy (all Free Peoples), Hatred (Bardings)

Health: 10

Courage: 4

Renown: 0

Gear: Battle axe, large shield, mail hauberk, spear

A young and fierce warrior, **Zézago**  one of the countless Easterling soldiers devoted to following the indomitable will of Sauron. He has given his life to the ways of the warrior, and has developed a reputation among his peers as a tireless fighter and strong. His utter disdain for all the Free Peoples fuels both his need for combat and his burning ambitions. His prowess in combat serves to inspire others of his kind, and he has taken to assisting others in learning the military arts. Zézago desires to one day be named captain of his own troop and to lead them into glorious victory over the foul enemies of his Shadowed Master.

[[END BOX]]

Orcs

[Movie Still 11]

'[A] huge orc-chieftain . . . clad in black mail from head to foot, leaped into the chamber . . . His broad flat face was swart, his eyes were like coals. . . .'

– *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Orcs are long-lived, if not immortal. Nevertheless, only the most hardy and wily live more than a few hundred years. The hazards of battle and deadly infighting reduce most

to a lifespan measured in decades rather than centuries. Those who do survive are intelligent and dangerous foes.

Orcs are infamous as skilled combatants because they pursue few other careers. Those who become craftsmen or take on other ‘useless’ roles are looked upon as weak. There are as many fighting styles and traditions as there are Orc-tribes because the members of each band emulate the habits of its strongest members. Some follow the barbarian traditions, while others, particularly those commanded by the Uruks, are fell warriors.

Orcs fight dirty, and no foul trick is beneath them. They favour as weapons scimitars, brute swords, whips, war hammers, poisoned arrows, and a variety of wicked daggers. They delight in mechanical things that deal in death and pain, and express a creative flair in the construction of siege machines. Few Orcs ride beasts, save those who ride Wargs, preferring to lope along under their own power.

Though cruel cannibals, Orc warriors are not entirely without virtue. Those who have fought together enjoy a strong *esprit de corps*, and while friendship only goes so far, an Orc-band will travel far to avenge the death of fallen comrades for the pride of the group. Unguided, Orc soldiers are chaotic and express limited ambition, but under a strong and feared captain they can achieve an astonishing focus and discipline.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Of Savage Dwarves and Hobbits

Though there are no communities of barbarian Elves, Dwarves, or Hobbits wandering Middle-earth, the following speculative departures from established canon could lead to new roleplaying opportunities for those interested in playing against type.

Dwarves

Many Dwarf-clans were displaced in history and are unaccounted for. What of the Petty Dwarves of the First Age? They are said to have died out long ago, but might some have survived in isolation? What of Sindri’s folk, many of who fled at Sauron’s downfall to the fastness of Nurunkhizdín and were forgotten to history? Such lost clans might easily serve as an origin for barbarian Dwarves. One might also imagine a small clan of rustic Dwarf-pathfinders living in the shadow of Mount Gundabad under the very noses of the Orc-hosts, unwilling to abandon the halls of their fathers.

Hobbits

Hobbit communities were widely dispersed during the Wandering Days that took them from the vales of the Anduin to the Shire. One or two may have gone astray and settled in some isolated mountain hollow, unmarked save by beasts and the occasional uninterested Elf. Perhaps a clan of Stoors lingered in the fog-shrouded coves west of the Misty Mountains and now hunt wild game (and mushrooms) astride great boars in the wild holly thickets of Hollin.

Elves

Only a weak case might be made for barbarian Elves. As immortals, they do not readily forget the culture they acquired in the Undying Lands. Still, one might imagine an isolated band of ungentle Elves, girt in silvery seal fur, lingering in the lands far to the north of Forochel, perhaps safeguarding some remnant of Morgoth. There may also be individual Elves who have for some reason forsaken their own kind and wander alone in the wild, or been driven to solitude by despair or Dragon forgetfulness.

[[END BOX]]

The Way of the Warrior

'To hope's end I rode and to heart's breaking:

Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!

— Éomer, *The Return of the King*

In *The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game*, heroes are time and again forced to take up arms against the Shadow. Orcs pour forth from the dark places of the world, seeking to pillage and slay those unfortunate enough to cross their paths. Sauron makes war upon the Free Peoples, using the might of his armies to subjugate and dominate them. While few Men, Elves, Dwarves, or Hobbits seek war, all too often forces beyond their control force it upon them. This section provides you, the player of a martial character, with advice and ideas on creating your character's background; selecting his skills, traits, and order abilities; and fulfilling his role as a brave fighter in the company of his fellow player characters.

Creating Martial Characters

Before you can select your character's order abilities, traits, and skills, think first about his personality, background, and goals. Most of the Free Peoples fight out of love for their homes, their families, and their friends, not because they love bloodshed or combat. Victory for such characters is measured not in foes slain but lives saved. Thus, the most important step in fleshing out your character is to consider why he has chosen a martial path. What makes your character fight?

For a barbarian, the answer may be simple. As a child or young adult, he learned to hunt with a bow and spear. The talents he once used to provide meat for his family and friends are equally useful against Orcs, Trolls, and other threats. While barbarians are by no means violent or warlike, they take to the huntsman's weapons as readily as the Rohirrim take to the saddle.

[Movie Still 12]

Alternately, military service could be a tradition of your character's family. Boromir and Faramir, as sons of the Steward of Gondor, were expected to train with weapons and lead Men into battle. Their duty to the realm compelled them to serve. Even so, duty does not

always translate into a love of warfare. While Boromir enjoyed his role, his gentler, wiser brother Faramir was driven by responsibility, not his personal preferences.

Circumstances beyond your character's control could also drive him to take up arms. A barbarian hunter may turn his bow against Orcs when the Shadow threatens his homeland. Merry and Pippin knew little of warfare, yet the events of the War of the Ring led them to become honoured warriors in service to Rohan and Gondor respectively. A simple farmer or innkeeper could be transformed into a warrior when he takes up weapons to defend his home from invaders.

Dwarves have a strong martial tradition, though they typically fight out of necessity rather than to conquer their neighbours. Aside from their war of bloody revenge against the Orcs, Dwarves tend to be peaceful as long as their mountain homes and treasure hordes are safe. At times, however, their willingness to fight for their material wealth can prove troublesome. Thorin and his followers, for example, almost caused an irreparable rift amongst his own people on one hand and Men and Elves on the other when he sought to claim the Lonely Mountain as his own. In that case, he allowed avarice and old feuds to cloud his **better judgement.** 

Elves are typically more concerned with beauty and majesty than warfare. As lovely as they are while happy, they can be equally terrifying when their anger is aroused. Many times in the history of Middle-earth the Elves have marched to war against the Shadow. As immortals, they remember best the great evils that can befall Middle-earth should the Enemy conquer the Free Peoples. Thus, when the Elves take up arms they are terrible in war. They fight with the skill of centuries and the passion of those who desire peace enough that they are willing to die for it.

While your character's background plays a key role in determining his personality, physical details can also help you craft a memorable martial hero. For example, your character may rely on a certain preferred armament. Picture Gimli or Legolas in your mind and you are sure to see them with axe or bow, respectively. A warrior or barbarian may have scars from a particularly perilous battle, while a seemingly mundane piece of equipment such as a helm or shield may hold tremendous emotional importance to your character. At the battle of Helm's Deep, for example, Gimli bears a shield originally crafted for Théoden when he was but a boy. In *The Hobbit*, Bard of Dale felled Smaug with a treasured heirloom passed down for generations of his family. Any newly created character might carry a shield, weapon, ring, or other heirloom that helps define his past, goals, and personality.

Over the course of a chronicle, barbarians and warriors can expect to engage in battle against the servants of the Shadow. Consider how your character approaches such dangers. *The Lord of the Rings* films, with their fast-paced battle scenes, provide many examples of how a character's actions in battle can illustrate his personality. Does he trudge into battle with a grim determination, struggling on despite great adversity like Aragorn? **Does he throw himself into battle with a furious vigour like Gimli?**  Does he fight with a lethal grace, combining speed and agility like Legolas? Picture not only how your character looks and talks but also how he fights. Then use the descriptions that come to mind during play to help illustrate your character's personality in the same manner that the characters in the films fought using different styles.

Warriors and barbarians should also have goals outside combat. Aragorn may be a skilled fighter, but he is also a wise and just leader. Even when facing Saruman's horde at Helm's Deep, Gimli took time to admire the beauty of the Glittering Caves. What does your character want to do once the fighting is over? If he could never again bear a weapon, what would he do instead? Remember that the Free People rarely fight unless they must. Most soldiers amongst them were once farmers, tailors, or millers who would gladly set aside their swords for these callings. Consider the sorts of things that are likely to draw your character's notice, admiration, or distaste and work those into his actions during play. A Man of Rohan travelling through Bree may take a moment to inspect a local horse. A Hobbit might comment on the cuisine (or lack thereof) while a Dwarf is likely to notice the skill that went into building a castle he must help defend against an army of Orcs.

Using CODA to Your Advantage

While your barbarian or warrior's background, goals, and personality make your character real, the decisions you make when picking your character's skills, traits, and order abilities play just as important a role in your character's success. This section highlights some abilities you might overlook when designing your character. While it is aimed at barbarians and warriors, the advice provided here is useful in any character's development as a fighter.

Order Abilities: Barbarians

Brew Poison, Champion, and Preferred Weapon are the best order abilities for barbarians who wish to excel in combat. The other choices are the best for barbarians who are scouts first and soldiers second. **Ancestral Weapon (see page XX) is also a fine choice, but keep in mind that it must usually be taken at character creation.** If it is an ability you want to have, you may have to put off these others for future advancements. 

Brew Poison: Brew Poison is an ideal choice not only because it is useful in adventures but also because it is unique to barbarians. While Men of Gondor or Rohan may have better weapons and armour than your character, they cannot match your skill at crippling your opponents with a lethal concoction. Unless you devote additional picks to this ability to reduce the onset time of your poison, though, you should plan to rely on hit-and-run tactics to give your toxins time to affect your opponents. Brew Poison also works well if your character relies on stealth and trickery rather than brute strength. You can sneak into an Orc-encampment, poison their cook pot, and wait a few hours for a few doses of poison to do the work of 100 men-at-arms.

Champion: When choosing the Champion order ability, take care that your barbarian's adventuring career will be built upon service to his people, checking with the Narrator to make sure his plans for the chronicle are compatible with yours. If the adventures planned for your company **won't be related to defending your homeland against enemies, this order ability is all but wasted.** On the other hand, if the chapters of your chronicle will revolve in every respect around your people, you'll have bonuses no matter which way you turn. You should also keep in mind that the Champion order ability is one with great roleplaying importance. If you take it, be sure your character's dedication and 

station play a major role in his mannerisms, decisions, and actions. With such weighty responsibilities, he should treat even minor tasks with great gravity.

 **Preferred Weapon:** Preferred Weapon works best if your character's signature weapon defines him. If, when you picture your character, you always see him carrying the same armament, Preferred Weapon is an ideal choice. On the other hand, if your character is more a generalist, another order ability might be a better choice.

Order Abilities: Warriors

Evasion, Favoured Weapon, and Warrior-born are good all-around choices for warriors.

 **Battle-Hardened** is best for warriors who expect to become captains, while Swift Strike's prerequisites place it out of the reach of starting characters. When your character gains enough picks to select a second order ability, however, **Swift Strike**  perhaps the best choice he can make.

Evasion: This ability is perfect for archers, scouts, and other warriors who rely on speed and agility rather than heavy armour to preserve them in battle. If your character relies on dodge actions for defence, a single bad roll can spell his doom. The Evasion ability helps reduce the chance of that happening.

Favoured Weapon: Favoured Weapon helps starting warriors bring their primary Armed Combat skill up to the maximum +12 ranks in their first few advancements while leaving advancement picks open to other avenues of improvement as well. This can allow a relatively inexperienced warrior to dominate the battlefield. The **downside**,  course, is that it has no utility at all once this maximum is reached.

Warrior-born: This order ability provides a consequential bonus to a wide range of tests, and is thus an excellent pick for warriors who employ a wide range of weapons in battle. Since Courage points drive this ability, however, you must make sure to have some available for important battles. Valiant is a good edge to pair with Warrior-born, since you can use it to gain Courage when you are otherwise spent. On the other hand, you may want to avoid other edges and abilities which will also drain your Courage, such as Bold and Lion-hearted. Also consider bolstering Warrior-born with extra Courage paid for with advancement picks from one of your first advancements.

Skills

While Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat skills have the most direct bearing on your success in combat, other skills can help put you in a position to maximise your fighting abilities. When taken together, certain combinations of skills can produce unique, specialised characters with markedly different fighting styles.

Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat: These three skills are the basis for a warrior or barbarian's abilities. Obviously, you should choose specialties with weapons your character often uses. Keep in mind that you can have more than one specialty in a given skill. Gaining Armed Combat: Blades (longsword, long knife), for example, gives you the specialty bonus to both of the listed weapons. Since additional specialties only cost one advancement each, you can gain +2 to an additional weapon at relatively little cost.

 **Climb and Jump:** These skills allow you to move across otherwise impassable terrain in battle, giving you an edge over less mobile opponents. For example, you might be able to take position atop a cliff or tree, allowing you to rain arrows upon your enemies without giving them a chance to attack you with their swords and axes. Climb and Jump might allow you to avoid or escape ambushes by passing over barriers you opponents were counting on to box you in.

[Movie Still 13]

 **Healing:** Inevitably, you or one of your friends will suffer an injury in battle. Although you can only refresh so many lost Wound Points with Healing, the ability to recover to the next higher Wound Level after a battle (see page XX of the core rulebook) reduces a penalty that would otherwise be suffered in the next combat. Further, additional Wound Points, no matter how few, are never unwelcome. If the optional rules for fell strikes (see page XX) are being used in your chronicle, Healing is that much more important; a warrior who cannot staunch his own bleeding or safely remove arrows lodged in his body is at a serious disadvantage. Most warriors should devote at least a few ranks to Healing even if they usually travel with learned characters who are leechcraft experts. In the course of battle it is not always possible for fragile characters to advance to the front lines for triage, and any company of heroes can become separated for long periods of time against their will, as Merry and Pippin were from Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli.

Lore/Wilderness: Herb Lore: If you have a barbarian character and own *Paths of the Wise*, you may wish to devote a number of ranks to this skill, especially if your barbarian also has the Brew Poison order ability, which will allow you to prepare healing and helpful herbal brews to cure yourself and aid your allies.

 **Inspire:** If you see your character as a leader, devote as many ranks as possible to this skill. Inspire allows you to lift your allies' spirits and make them more effective fighters. Since all of your allies benefit from it, this skill is ideal in almost every combat situation.

Intimidate: While Inspire lifts your allies' hopes, Intimidate crushes those of your enemies. This skill is the perfect choice for a character who, like Gimli, throws himself into the fray with a reckless abandon.

Mimicry: This skill can prove useful before battle is joined to lure opponents into a disadvantageous position or coordinate activities among allies who cannot see one another.

Observe: The best way to avoid an ambush is to spot it before it takes place. Even during battle it is impossible to take advantage of changing conditions if they are not recognised. Spot is typically the best Observe specialty for warriors to choose.

Siegecraft: This skill is essential for warriors who serve as officers or wish to become captains. On the other hand, warriors who have no such aspirations are best off spending their picks on other skills.

Stealth: Attacking from ambush is a critical combat tactic, and this skill is crucial to such endeavours. Before the attack it is necessary to gain information about enemy movements, and when setting the trap it is essential to make sure the enemy is not alerted too early. Both require Stealth. In fact, if your character shuns heavy armour for speed

and manoeuvrability, Stealth may be even more important than Armed or Ranged Combat.

Edges

Here are a few suggestions on the edges that are of the most use to barbarians and warriors.

 **Accurate:** The large test bonus provided by this edge—the equivalent of spending a point of Courage—makes it practically mandatory for any martial character who expects to make use of ranged weapons.

Armour of Heroes: Although it offers significantly less protection than a sturdy chainmail corslet, this edge is useful for barbarians and stealthy warriors who don't want to be encumbered by armour. It is also a nice backup in case of ambushes or where a warrior's armour is not close at hand.

Command: Rightful command of a group of up to 150 warriors will allow any barbarian or warrior to prevail over enemy forces against which he and his companions would otherwise have no chance at all. Although the Rank requirement increases the effective cost of this skill, and the situation in the story may provide additional difficulties, this edge is an excellent choice if allowed by the Narrator. Characters with Command should develop their **Inspire and Siegecraft skills**,  obvious reasons.

Dodge: This edge's utility and significant bonus in an area that it is hard to augment in any other way makes it another nearly mandatory choice for martial characters.

Faithful: As with the barbarian order ability Champion, this edge can be useful in a wide array of circumstances. As with Champion, however, it pays to make sure the underlying object of loyalty is central to the chronicle planned by the Narrator. Needless to say, barbarians with the Champion order ability can double their bonus with this edge.

 **Tardy and Lion-hearted:** A single injury can be the one advantage your foes need to overwhelm you. These edges ensure that a few lucky attacks by your enemies don't defeat you.

Valiant: If you have the Warrior-born ability, use this edge to ensure that you always have Courage available to activate it. It also pairs well with Bold when you absolutely must score a critical hit against a particularly grim opponent.

Playing Martial Characters

[Movie Still 14]

While your martial character's role in the chronicle is by no means limited to combat, you should be ready to take a leadership role when violence erupts. As the most skilled combatant in the group, you can expect to take the greatest risks and face the most terrible foes in combat. Think of Aragorn's heroism in slaying the Orc-chieftain who assaulted Frodo in Moria or Gimli's valiant effort to defend the gate at Helm's Deep.

When swords are drawn, your warrior or barbarian must take centre stage. 

Your first order of business in battle is to ensure everyone's safety. The Orc-chieftain's death may mean little if your friends perished at the hands of a Cave Troll you ignored. Use terrain to shield the more vulnerable characters from attack while you move into battle. A tree is a convenient hiding place that keeps a character safe from hand to hand combat. A pile of rocks or ditch provides cover against arrows. Keep an eye out for places that can ward off danger and be prepared to help your friends move to them while you defend them.

You can also draw the enemy's attention away from your allies if there are no convenient hiding spaces or cover in the area. With your armour and skill at arms, you can afford for many weaker foes to attack you at once. Better to have six Orcs surrounding you than five while the sixth stalks the Hobbit rogue. **Leap into the enemy's midst and force them to deal with you first.**

Knowing when to fight is more important than knowing how to fight. Always try to attack when the odds are in your favour. Lure your opponents into areas where they are forced to break up or where they can lose track of each other, allowing you to defeat them one by one; defeating five groups of ten Orcs in five successive battles is a much easier prospect than facing **50 Orcs at once.**

An **ambush** is the best way to overcome powerful creatures or large numbers of weaker ones. The moments of surprise an ambush provides are a critical time that allow you to strike down the enemy's leaders, wound particularly powerful foes, or launch a volley of arrows and flee before your opponents can muster a counterattack. In addition to the advantage of surprise, by staking out an ambush location you choose where a fight takes place. This choice is a big advantage in battle, as it allows you to maximise your abilities. If you and your allies excel in close quarters fighting, you can attack in a narrow mountain pass or forest trail. If you prefer to fight with ranged weapons, you can select a position atop a hill or behind a line of boulders and rain arrows down upon your foes as they try to advance.

If you and your companions are caught in an ambush, **focus on escape.** Her the party and charge through the weakest concentration of opponents. Speed is of the essence, as each moment you remain in a vulnerable position could spell your doom. The worst thing you can do is stand and fight unless you comfortably outclass your opponents or cannot afford to run.

In a fight, **terrain can be your greatest ally, or, if mishandled, your greatest threat.** Where terrain blocks line of sight or creates barriers to advancement, use it for shelter from ranged attacks and to prevent your opponents from surrounding you. If you stand with your back to a wall, for example, you cannot be attacked from behind. Take care, however, to avoid placing yourself into an inescapable position. Unless you are confident you can handle your foes, leave yourself an out.

If you face opponents who have the benefits of blocking terrain, try to use that terrain against them. Scout out the area to find cover and any concealed paths that offer you a way to sneak up on your enemies. A diversion, such as a volley of arrows or even an **attempt to parlay, can draw the enemy's attention away from your stealthy allies who can move into position for an attack.** Once they are in place, you can lead a charge that catches the foes between your hammer and your hidden friends' anvil.

Other terrain features hinder movement but still allow missile fire and other ranged attacks. A river, deep snow, or low wall makes movement more difficult but does nothing to hinder ranged attacks. These terrain features are best used against opponents who rely on close combat. You can hold a position at these features, raining arrows down on your enemies as they approach. When they come near, meet their charge as they struggle to clear the terrain and close.

If you face opponents who use hindering terrain against you, look for other avenues of advance. If a group of Orcs holds a bridge, for example, you might seek an alternate path over the water. Perhaps a shallow area down river is usable as a ford, or logs could be fashioned into a crude raft. Once on the opposite side you either ambush your enemies from behind or avoid combat altogether. Remember that while terrain can be useful, it often gives those defending it tunnel vision. 

Last but not least, teamwork is critical to overcoming an enemy. Each member of your company should use his skills to best advantage. Stealthy characters should scout nearby terrain for dangers and potential advantages. Your fellow barbarians and warriors should work side by side to protect the less resilient and create battle plans. Bowmen and others skilled at ranged combat should seek out commanding spots where they can see the entire field of battle. In addition to being able to rain down fire on the largest number of opponents, they will be able to spy ambushes, traps, and other dangers as the melee progresses. Characters with Inspire are almost as important as those with skill in fighting. They can grant test bonuses to all those in earshot and counteract the Enemy's powers of fear and terror. 

Chapter Two: Expanding the Orders

‘[N]o heir of Minas Tirith has for long years been so hardy in toil, so onward into battle, or blown a mightier note on the Great Horn.’

— Faramir speaking of Boromir, *The Two Towers*

[Movie Still 15]

Although their dreams, fears, quirks, and strivings define many of the martial characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, so too do their mighty capabilities. In this chapter you’ll find new tools to bring to life barbarian and warrior characters, including many new order abilities, edges, and flaws. In addition, you’ll find an expansion of the skills triggers presented (but not named) in the core rulebook, as well as ten new elite orders especially appropriate for advanced barbarians and warriors.

New Order Abilities

‘A swift stroke she dealt, skilled and deadly. The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn head fell like a stone.’

— *The Return of the King*

Order abilities are key traits that define a character and his role in the chronicle. The new order abilities presented here broaden the options for barbarians and warriors.

New Barbarian Order Abilities

‘Let us be thankful that they are not hunting us: for they use poisoned arrows, it is said, and they are woodcrafty beyond compare.’

— *Elfhelm, The Return of the King*

Barbarians are at their best in the wilds, using their knowledge of the terrain to undermine their opponent’s plans and bolster their own. The following new order abilities are available to all barbarian characters, both newly created and more advanced.

Ancestral Weapon

You bear a legendary or magical weapon forged in ancient days and passed from generation to generation of your line. You may only choose this order ability with the permission of your Narrator, as she must create this weapon and its abilities and integrate it into the chronicle.

Requisite: This ability may normally be chosen only by starting characters. If you wish to gain it later you must get your Narrator’s permission.

[Movie Still 16]

Stealthy Strike

You are an expert at attacking from ambush, striking with focused speed and fury that leave your foes overwhelmed before they have a chance to strike. You gain an additional action in any round of combat during which you surprise your foe.

Requisite: Stealth 4+.

Trail Blazer

[Movie Still 17]

You are skilled not only at crossing difficult ground on your own, but are also capable of guiding others through it at good speed. You may apply the effects of your Hard March ability to two companions who travel in your company. This ability applies to the same terrain as your Hard March ability.

Requisite: Hard March.

Improvement: Each time you select this ability the number of allies you may guide through the wilderness increases by two. For example, if you spend two picks on this ability you could grant the Hard March ability to four companions.

Wilderness Warrior

Long years of living off the land and dwelling in the wilds have made you into a skilled fighter on your familiar territory. When fighting in the wilds, you can turn the terrain to your advantage. When you choose this ability, select a terrain type such as forest, mountain, or desert. When in this terrain type, you gain a +2 bonus to all Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests.

Requisite: Survival (same terrain) 4+.

Improvement: Each time you spend an additional pick on this ability you may choose another terrain type, though you must meet the requisite for each terrain type you add.

New Warrior Order Abilities

“Twenty-one!” cried Gimli. He hewed a two-handed stroke and laid the last Orc before his feet. “Now my count passes Master Legolas again.”

— *The Two Towers*

Warriors rely on their skill, bravery, stout armour, and well-forged weapons to overcome their foes. The following order abilities are available to all warriors, both newly created and advanced.

Ancestral Weapon

You bear a legendary or magical weapon forged in ancient days and passed from generation to generation of your line. You may only choose this order ability with the

permission of your Narrator, as she must create this weapon and its abilities and integrate it into the chronicle.

Requisite: This ability may normally be chosen only by starting characters. If you wish to gain it later you must get your Narrator's permission.

Enduring Defender

Terrible wounds that would leave a lesser warrior in a crumpled heap have little effect on you. Drawing on your dedication you focus your mind, ignore the pain, and attend to the task at hand. At any time, you may spend a point of Courage to ignore the penalties you suffer due to injury for one battle or a single non-combat scene of similar length.

Requisite: Vitality 8+.

Favoured Weapon Master

Through years of dedicated practise you have advanced your skill with your favoured weapon to levels that are virtually unknown. You may have up to 16 ranks in your favoured weapon, though the penalty you suffer when using other weapons within your favoured weapon's skill increases to -6.

Requisite: Armed Combat 10+, Favoured Weapon Parry.

Favoured Weapon Parry

You have practiced endlessly with your favoured weapon, learning to handle it with speed and grace to knock aside your opponents' strikes. Choose any speciality to which your Favoured Weapon order ability applies. When fighting with that weapon you gain one free parry action per round. Furthermore, the party taken with this free action is automatically successful if you have six more ranks in your favoured weapon than your opponent has in the skill he is attacking you with.

Requisite: Armed Combat 10+, Favoured Weapon.

Riposte

You are a skilled fighter, capable of turning an opponent's advantage into a liability as you fight. When using an action to make a parry (free parries from order abilities such as Favoured Weapon Parry do not apply) you can knock aside your opponent's strike, open up his defences, and launch a speedy counter-strike. Resolve your parry as normal. If your Armed Combat check beats your opponent's by five or more, you may immediately make a free basic attack against him. You may use this ability no more than twice per round.

Requisite: Armed Combat 10+.

Tireless Fighter

When battle calls your limbs burn with renewed strength and vigour, shaking off the effects of a hard march, hours of heavy labour, or other tiring deeds. You ignore all weariness penalties to Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests.

Requisite: Vitality 8+.



Tough as Stone

Your extraordinary toughness and dedication allow you to shrug off minor wounds. Whenever you suffer an injury, reduce the damage you sustain by one point. This is cumulative with the damage absorption effects of armour and edges like Armour of Heroes.

Requisite: Vitality 8+.

Improvement: You may spend one additional pick on this ability to increase the reduction in damage to two points.

New Traits

‘There was a flash like flame and the helm burst assunder. The orc fell with a cloven head. His followers fled howling, as Boromir and Aragorn sprang at them.’

– *The Fellowship of the Ring*

While any character may choose the new edges and flaws that follow, they will be of greatest use to warriors, barbarians, and other martial PCs.

Edges

‘Andúril rose and fell, gleaming with white fire. A shout went up from the wall and tower: “Andúril! Andúril goes to war. The Blade that was Broken shines again!”’

– *The Two Towers*

[[Playtesters: I had to cut a number of edges I didn’t like from this section. Suggestions for replacements (and attendant mechanics) are welcome.]]

Agile Combatant

You are exceptionally adroit, capable of defending yourself while taking many actions in combat.

Requisite: Armed Combat 6+ or Unarmed Combat 6+ 

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX), you do not drop your guard when you change weapons, stand from prone, mount a steed, or pick up an object. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Agile Caster

You are spry and sure, capable of concentrating on your spellcasting even while defending yourself against attackers in combat.

Requisite: Nimbleness 8+

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX), you do not drop your guard when you cast spells with casting time 1 while engaged in melee combat. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Improvement: If taken a second time, you do not drop your guard when invoking spells with casting time 2.

Agile Runner

You are fast and agile, capable of defending yourself against opponents while moving at speed.

Requisite: Run 6+

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX), you do not drop your guard when you jog. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Improvement: If you take this edge a second time you can run without dropping your guard. If you take it a third time you do not drop your guard even when you sprint.

Arrow-breaker

You wield your weapon with such speed and agility that you can knock aside arrows and other missile weapons even as they fly through the air.

Requisite: Armed Combat 4+ 

Effect: You may use the ‘parry/block’ combat action against ranged attacks. (Normally, it applies only to close combat attacks.)

Defensive Fighter

You are skilled in knocking aside your opponents’ attacks when you focus on defence rather than offence.

Requisite: Armed Combat 4+.

Effect: When using the ‘defensive attack’ action in combat, you gain a +4 bonus to Swiftness for dodge and parry/block tests against the opponent you attack. (Normally, the ‘defensive attack’ action grants a +2 bonus.)

Fast as Thought

Your mind and body are fast enough to permit you to cast a spell in reaction to someone foolishly dropping their guard in your presence.

Requisite: Agile Caster

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX), you can cast any spell you know with casting time 1 as a free attack, and you need not drop your guard to do so. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Force of the Attack

Your bulk, strength, or sheer force of will make you skilled at knocking your foes off balance, pushing them to the ground, and pressing your advantage.

Requisite: Strength 9+, Armed Combat 8+.

Effect: When using the charge combat action, you gain an additional basic attack action against your opponent if you knock him prone. Make this Armed Combat test immediately after resolving your charge attack. You do not gain any of the bonuses for charging on this attack.

Improvement: For each additional pick you devote to this trait, the TN of the Strength test your opponents must make to avoid being knocked over by your charge increases by 2.

Halberdier

You are well trained in the use of all long weapons and wield them with much less difficulty than those without special training

Requisite: Armed Combat: Polearms 3+.

Effect: Your penalties for making reach attacks are two less than they otherwise would be. That is, you suffer no penalty for making a normal reach attack and -2 for making a reach attack with an intervening character or obstacle

Improvement: With one improvement to this edge you do not drop your guard when making reach attacks. With two improvements you may make a free reach attack in response to characters who drop their guard within the range of your reach weapon.

Strike Like Lightning

You are keenly aware of all motion around you and can take advantage of your opponents' lapses of defence many times over the course of a round.

Requisite: Agile Combatant 

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX), you suffer no limit to the number of free attacks you can make in a round, though you may still make only one free attack against each opponent who drops his guard. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Unfazed by the Horde

You waded into combat against enormous group of enemies without regard for their numbers. You think nothing of fighting three or four opponents at a time.

Requisite: Armed Combat 6+ or Unarmed Combat 6+.

Effect: When using the tactical combat option (see pages XX-XX) you are only outflanked when you are subject to attack by more than four opponents at once, rather than the usual two. When surrounded by five opponents you suffer only –1 Defence and when surrounded by six opponents you suffer only –2 Defence. This edge has no effect (and should not be selected) if the tactical combat option is not being used.

Vengeful Fury

When your friends and loved ones are threatened you are filled with a terrible thirst for vengeance that instils great strength into your blows and puts great courage into your heart.

Effect: If, during combat, your liege, ally, close friend, or other person you hold dear falls to the enemy—either slain or knocked out—you are overcome with fury. You gain a +2 bonus to damage and a +1 bonus to all Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests. The Narrator alone determines whether the fallen individual was sufficiently dear to you, as demonstrated by your roleplaying over the course of the chronicle.

Veteran of the Saddle

[Movie Still 18]

You have spent many long days with a mount's reins in your hand, making you an excellent horseman and cavalry soldier.

Requisite: Ride (Horse) 6+.

Effect: Your familiarity with horses grants you a +1 bonus to all Ride (Horses) tests. While riding a horse, you gain a +1 bonus to all Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests.

Improvement: Each additional pick increases the bonuses this edge provides by +1, to a maximum of +3.

Flaws

‘He had one eye blinded beyond cure, and he was halt with a leg-wound; but he said, “Good! We have the victory. Khazad-dûm is ours!’

— *The Return of the King*

While those who fight are amongst the most renowned heroes of the Free Peoples, not all of them are perfect. The flaws presented here cater to characters who focus on combat. Most simulate a specific shortcoming in a character's fighting style or training.

[Playtesters: I had to cut a number of flaws I didn't like from this section. Suggestions for replacements (and attendant mechanics) are welcome.]

Afraid of Blood

The sight of stuff that ought to be on someone's *insides* getting all over someone's *outsides* makes you downright queasy.

Effect: Anytime a character in your view takes more than 10 points of damage in one shot or sustains the bleeding condition (see page XX), you must make a TN 10 Stamina test or suffer a -3 penalty to all tests until you take a full-round action to do nothing but recover.

Afraid of Pain

Something about the possibility of getting hurt makes you seize up, rendering you unable to concentrate on the task at hand.

Effect: Whenever you attempt a test where a standard failure (as opposed to complete failure or disastrous failure) would result in you sustaining any number of Wound Points, you suffer a -2 test penalty. This includes parry and other similar combat tests. The Narrator may waive this penalty if your character is not aware harm could result from failure.

Flat-footed

When surprised, you are slow to recover your wits. While others act, you fumble for your weapon and struggle to take in the situation.

Effect: When surprised, you lose initiative and both of your actions in the next round.

Focussed Fighter

Multiple opponents confuse you. While you have trained extensively in one-on-one duels, the chaos and confusion of larger battles breaks your focus.

Effect: You suffer a -2 penalty to all tests when two or more enemies are in positions where they could launch hand-to-hand attacks against you.

Hot-blooded

You are impatient in battle and must restrain yourself from leaping into the fray at the first opportunity.

Effect: You must make a TN 8 Willpower test each time you attempt to use the delay or aim combat actions. If you fail this test, you must act immediately, either leaping into the fray or loosing your shot immediately.

Limited Training

In your youth, you were exposed to few weapons. While you are skilled with the ones you trained to use, others are beyond your knowledge.

Effect: Pick three weapon specialties that are familiar to your culture or that you received training in. You suffer a –2 penalty to all Armed Combat and Ranged Combat tests made with weapons other than those three.

Overconfident

You overestimate your combat abilities and consider your opponents too weak to threaten you. You pay little mind to your safety, never dreaming such weaklings could pose a threat.

Effect: Your Defence against foes who have fewer ranks in their best Armed Combat or Unarmed Combat skill than you do in yours is 2 less than normal. This penalty does not apply to ranged attacks against you.

Ponderous

You are accustomed to having a heavy suit of armour to protect you from foes. You are slow on your feet and have trouble dodging attacks.

Effect: You suffer a –2 penalty to all dodge combat actions.

Reliance on Manoeuvrability

Because your style of fighting relies so heavily on speed and manoeuvrability, wearing armour hinders you more than it does others.

Effect: While wearing armour, you suffer a test penalty equal to half your armour's damage absorption statistic to all Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests, as well as to any tests made when you use the dodge or parry combat actions.

Reliance on Weaponry

You are accustomed to fighting with weapons to such a degree that you have little ability in unarmed combat.

Requisite: Armed Combat 3+.

Effect: You suffer a –2 penalty on all attacks using Unarmed Combat. Furthermore, you must subtract 1 point of damage from each successful attack's damage result.

New Skill Triggers

'That was a mighty shot in the dark, my friend.'

– Gimli to Legolas, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Under the basic rules, only a few skills (Armed Combat, Stealth, and Unarmed Combat) offer free special abilities—called *skill triggers*—to those who gain a certain number of ranks in them. The following lists provide new skill triggers for more skills that are frequently used by barbarians and warriors. All of the skill triggers described become immediately available to any character who has 6, 9, or 12 ranks in the given skill.

Ranged Combat

6 Ranks: Using the aim action (see page 228 of the core rulebook) gives you a +4 test bonus instead of the usual +5.

9 Ranks: Using the aim action gives you a +5 test bonus instead of the usual +5. 

12 Ranks: You may fire two arrows against two different targets simultaneously, as one action. You must make two separate attack tests, however, and each suffers a –3 penalty.

Ride

6 Ranks: You may mount any willing creature that can normally be ridden as a free action.

9 Ranks: Any creature you ride that has the Trample special ability (see page 80 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*) has its trampling damage increased by 1d6 as long as you direct its actions.

12 Ranks: You inflict +3 damage when striking an unmounted opponent from the saddle.

Run

6 Ranks: You may make one free ‘walk’ movement action each round.

9 Ranks: You may make one free ‘jog’ movement action each round.

12 Ranks: You increase by 25% the distance you can travel at each movement rate (see page 214 of the core rulebook).

Jump

6 Ranks: You gain a +1 bonus to all dodge tests.

9 Ranks: You do 3 additional points of damage (after multiplication) when charging.

12 Ranks: You immediately recover from being prone (see page XX) as a free action.

New Elite Orders

‘[S]uch was their fortune and the skill and might of their arms . . . few indeed had dared to abide them or look on their faces in the hour of their wrath.’

– *The Return of the King*

The elite orders presented in the pages that follow cover a wide range of specialities common to the warriors and barbarians of Middle-earth. While a few are limited to a specific area or realm, most are generic enough to fit roles in many cultures. Players can use these orders to customise their characters, while Narrators can apply them to NPCs to create unique challenges for heroes.

Battlemaster

‘Thorin’s shield was cloven and he cast it away, and he hewed off with his axe a branch of an oak and held it in his left hand. . . .’

– *The Return of the King*

[Illustration 19]

Some of the most celebrated warriors are known not only for their skill at arms but also for their intelligence, inventive minds, and ability to think on their feet. The battlemaster excels at using his environment to aid him. He finds advantages in the smallest details, from a pile of rocks he uses as missiles to a broken tree branch that, in his hands, becomes a club capable of smiting a Troll. A battlemaster is not a master in the sense that he is the most talented at handling his armaments, though typically those who follow this elite order are skilled fighters. Rather, he is an expert at improvising weapons from his environment and crafting his own weapons from scratch.

Adventures

A battlemaster is a valued addition to any adventuring party. With his penchant for turning a disaster into a victory, he is capable of leading a party out of the direst circumstances. Battlemasters learn to utilise resources and factors that others overlook. They are flexible, quick on their feet, and creative. While others are frozen in confusion or stumped by a daunting problem, the battlemaster acts.

Background

Battlemasters come from all cultures, races, and regions. They are common among Dwarves, as those stout folk place a premium on metalworking and other crafts. Hobbits are surprisingly resourceful in a tight spot, making them likely to become battlemasters even if they do not normally consider themselves warriors.

Requisites

To become a battlemaster you must have Perception 7+, Wits 8+, Armed Combat 4+, and Smithcraft 8+.

Order Skills

The battlemaster's order skills are: Appraise (Wits), Armed Combat (Nim), Craft (Nim), Ranged Combat (Nim), Smithcraft (Str), and Stonecraft (Str).

Order Abilities

The battlemaster's order abilities are as follows.

Clever Tactician

By observing an opponent for a time during battle, you can learn his manoeuvres and anticipate his moves. To use this ability, you must spend three straight rounds engaged in close quarters fighting with an opponent. After these three rounds, make a TN 10 Observe test. If you succeed, you receive a +2 bonus to all Armed Combat tests against that foe for the rest of the encounter. This bonus increases by an additional +1 per round after the fourth round to a maximum of +5. This bonus does not carry over to later battles, as the change in terrain alters your plans and may change your foe's tactics.

Feint

With a quick, false move, you trick your opponent into blocking an attack that you alter at the last moment. Once per opponent per combat you may spend a point of Courage when you announce an attack. You do not gain the usual +3 attack bonus, but instead ignore the effects of any block/parry or dodge used in opposition to this blow.

Improvised Weapon

You have an intuitive sense for what makes a good weapon and know how to wield improvised items. Thus, you ignore all accuracy penalties associated with improvised weapons (see page XX). Furthermore, by making a TN 15 Search test in any environment, you can find an improvised weapon that will function identically to a close combat weapon or shield of your choice (within reason at the Narrator's discretion) for one combat. A handy rock, for example, might function exactly as a mace or a carpenter's hammer as a warhammer. When you make the Search test, declare what kind of weapon you wish to use. If no known item in the environment fits your needs, you notice a previously overlooked item. Your allies cannot gain the same benefits of the improvised weapons you find.

Beast Keeper

'[The dogs] won't harm you — not unless I tell 'em to.'

— *Farmer Maggot, The Fellowship of the Ring*

[Illustration 20]

From the riders of Rohan to the Hobbits of the Shire, a wide range of folk raise and train animals for war. Even the Orcs, who typically treat all living things with the same violent

contempt, keep wolves as hounds and mounts. The beast keeper specialises in this art, learning how best to prepare an animal for battle and training it to serve as a faithful companion and guardian. Some beast keepers fight alongside their charges, while others ride them into battle.

Adventures

A beast keeper's animals are a valued addition to any adventuring party. While the group sleeps, a keeper's hounds can keep watch. In battle they can harass an opponent, keeping him busy while the party's warriors move in to attack. When a keeper fights alongside his animals they form an impressive team that fights with more skill as a whole than the sum of their parts.

Background

Most beast keepers hail from rural areas where dogs, horses, falcons, and other animals are commonly employed as guards and workers. These beast keepers apply the skills they acquired raising animals for farm work to their adventuring careers. Others are specialists in the employ of kings and other nobles. These beast keepers raise horses and dogs for use in war and train their masters' most treasured steeds to make them better suited to warfare. Almost every group or culture that uses animals in any capacity produces beast keepers, from the *mûmakil* tenders of the Haradrim to the horse masters of Rohan.

Requisites

To become a beast keeper, you must have Bearing 8+, Perception 7+, Insight 4+, Lore (Animals) 8+ (or Lore/Wilderness: Domesticated Beasts 8+, if you are using the optional rules in *Paths of the Wise*), Ride 4+, and Teamster 4+.

Order Skills

The beast keeper's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Healing (Wits), Insight (Per), Lore (Wits), Ranged Combat (Nim), Ride (Brg), Teamster (Str), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The beast keeper's order abilities are as follows.

Beast-friend

You have an intuitive sense when dealing with animals, and they trust you without coercion. When dealing with an unfamiliar beast, whether domestic or wild, make an Insight test (TN 10) to win the animal's affection. Success prevents an animal from attacking you, leads it to treat you as a friend or ally, and makes it likely to obey simple commands it can understand. This ability may not be used against fell beasts, hostile creatures, animals you attack or have attacked, or in the chaos and confusion of battle.

Animal Training

You are skilled at teaching animals tricks and abilities from fetching sticks to keeping calm in battle. Several special abilities, skills, and commands can be taught. These include the standard special abilities Mount: War-trained and Mount: Steady (see page 79 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*); the creature skill Natural Weapons; and simple commands like coming when called, attacking a designated target, pretending to be dead, and so forth.

All training involves a test combining the trainer's Bearing modifier and the subject's Intelligence modifier. This roll is made at the end of the time period indicated on Table 2.X: Animal Training, at the TN specified. On a success the beast learns the relevant ability, skill, or command in the time period listed. Superior success halves this time and extraordinary success reduces it to one-quarter. On a failure the ability is not learned, but the trainer and subject may try again. On a complete failure the trainer may never again attempt to teach the same beast that special ability, and on a disastrous failure the beast can never learn that special ability from anyone.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 2.X: Animal Training

<u>Ability Being Taught</u>	<u>Base Time</u>	<u>TN</u>
Mount: War-trained	Month	10
Mount: Steady	Month	8
Natural Weapon (+1 rank)	Month	7 + current ranks
Simple Command	Week*	5*

*These may be modified by the Narrator depending on the command.

[[END TABLE]]

Battle Handler

You can fight in concert with a single trained animal that expects to receive commands from you in battle. So long as you are alive and within sight or earshot of this animal, it gains a +2 bonus to all Armed Combat and Willpower tests. If the two of you attack the same opponent during a given round, you gain a +2 bonus to your Armed Combat or Unarmed Combat tests as well. If you ride the animal, you also gain a +4 bonus to all Ride tests you must make.

These bonuses only apply to a single animal at a time, which you first must train in the new special ability Combat Companion according to the rules for Animal Training, above. This ability has a base time of one month and TN 10. If the creature you have trained dies, then and only then may you train another animal to take its place.

Requisite: Animal Training

Improvement: Each time you devote an additional pick to this ability you may apply its benefits to an additional animal at any given time. For example, if you devote two additional picks, a total of three animals could gain its benefits at once.

Berserker

'[H]is wrath redoubled, so that nothing could withstand him. . . . He scattered the bodyguard, and pulled down Bolg himself and crushed him.'

– *The Hobbit*

[Illustration 21]

Berserkers use their internal passions, rage, and fury to propel themselves in battle. Outside battle they can be peaceful, gentle souls, but when war is at hand they transform into terrible fighters who cleave through the enemy's ranks paying no heed to their personal safety.

Adventures

Berserkers do not necessarily love combat. Their inner rage is something they try to keep in check, but when the Shadow grows in power they are among the first to stand against it. Berserkers are slow to anger, but once moved they pursue their goals with relentless focus. In adventuring parties they serve as valued companions whose combat abilities can defeat the Shadow's mightiest servants.

Background

Most berserkers start as barbarians or have spent time in the wilds. Civilisation has a dampening effect on a berserker's potential, as raw anger is rarely socially acceptable. In the wilds, however, raw animal instinct is necessary to survive. Many Beornings are berserkers, though they prefer to save their wrath for their hated enemies, the Orcs.

Requisites

To become a berserker, you must have Strength 8+, Vitality 8+, Armed Combat 8+, and Unarmed Combat 6+.

Order Skills

The berserker's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Climb (Str), Intimidate (Brg), Jump (Str), Run (Str), Survival (Per), Swim (Str), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The berserker's order abilities are as follows.

Berserker's Fury

In battle, you can whip yourself into a terrible rage. Driven by your inner anger, you sunder your opponents' shields, snap their blades, and overwhelm them with the sheer force of your furious strength. You can enter such a state once per day by spending a full round action. Then, for the duration of a single battle, you gain a +2 test bonus to all Armed Combat tests and damage rolls. Furthermore, you ignore all test penalties due to injuries you have sustained. Unfortunately, you also suffer a -2 penalty to your Defence and all tests made to parry, block, or dodge. Once the battle ends, you immediately sustain one level of Weariness.

Requisite: Strength 7+, Vitality 7+.

Improvement: You may spend additional picks to improve this ability in two different ways. First, you may spend one pick to gain one additional use of this ability per day. This improvement may be chosen an unlimited number of times. Second, you may spend one pick to increase the Armed Combat and damage bonus this ability imparts by +1, to a maximum bonus of +4. The downside is that for each additional +1 imparted, an additional Weariness level is sustained at the end of the battle. You may choose, however, at the beginning of the battle, to limit the bonus you receive to less than you are entitled to avoid the increased loss of Weariness. For example, a berserker who has spent two picks to improve his potential bonus to +4 could, when activating this ability, choose a +2, +3, or +4 bonus for the duration of the combat. This choice would dictate whether one, two, or three Weariness levels are sustained at the end of the battle. A berserker who limits himself in this way may, later in the battle, spend a full round action to increase his bonus, up to his limit, without expending an additional per-day use.

Berserker's Energy

As you learn to control your anger you develop the ability to slowly ease yourself out of your battle fury and thereby preserve your strength. This order ability reduces the number of Weariness levels sustained by using the Berserker's Fury order ability by one.

Requisite: Berserker's Fury

Improvement: Each additional pick you devote to this ability further reduces the number of Weariness levels Berserker's Fury causes by one. Because Berserker's Fury can never cause more than three levels of Weariness loss, this ability can never be improved more than twice.

Overwhelming Rage

When a berserker leaps into the fray, his powerful blows send his enemies stumbling backwards. When he smites them, his momentum carries him forward, allowing him to cleave into even more enemies. If a berserker's attack slays an opponent, he may immediately move into that foe's space and make an additional close quarters attack against any eligible target. (If you are using the optional tactical combat system described in Chapter Three, you immediately move into the hex the slain opponent occupied and make an attack from there. When not using the tactical system, the movement should be

described in narrative terms as the berserker is carried into the enemy's ranks and additional attacks are made.)

Bodyguard

'You stand between me and my lord and kin. Begone, if you be not deathless! For living or dark undead, I will smite you, if you touch him.'

— Éowyn, *The Return of the King*

[Illustration 22]

When a king or chieftain rides to war, he depends on the warriors of his personal guard to defend him. Bodyguards are specially trained to protect their allies and thwart their opponents' attacks. While other fighters learn offensive tactics, the bodyguard focuses on defence. He learns to watch his lord's back, fend off his enemies, and parry blows meant for him. The bodyguard is by no means a poor fighter. He is skilled at arms and expects to fight alongside his lord in battle. Yet when he must choose between protecting his lord and garnering glory of his own he must always stand by his liege.

Adventures

Bodyguards must go wherever those they protect choose to travel, so they are found wherever danger harries the leaders of the Free Peoples. When working with a company of adventurers they often have a specific charge to protect, though when they do not, their abilities render them capable of keeping even the frailest members of their party safe from harm.

Background

Bodyguards come from a wide variety of places. Almost all cultures whose leaders ride to war train and field elite units of bodyguards to protect their nobility. While Hobbits have little need for bodyguards, the kings of Elves, Dwarves, and Men all count on them. Almost every bodyguard originally trained as a warrior, though in primitive cultures barbarians also become bodyguards.

Requisites

To become a bodyguard, you must have Vitality 7+, Armed Combat 8+, and the edge Arrow-breaker.

Order Skills

The bodyguard's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Healing (Wits), Jump (Str), Observe (Per), Ride (Brg), Run (Str), Siegecraft (Wits), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The bodyguard's order abilities are as follows.

Body Shield

You can throw yourself in front of an attack, absorbing with your own body a blow meant for an ally. By using an action you can place yourself between an ally who stands next to you and an attacker. You exchange places with your ally immediately and the attack is resolved against you rather than him. You may parry, block, or dodge this attack as normal. You may use this ability once per round.

Defensive Stance

By focusing your attention solely on defending your allies, you can shield them from your enemies' attacks and keep them from harm. By spending two actions you stand ready to block almost any attack. Each time an opponent attacks an ally who stands next to you, from any direction, you may attempt to block the attack using a shield you carry. Make an Armed Combat: Shield test ignoring all modifiers and bonuses aside from your skill ranks. The result of this test counts as your ally's Defence if it exceeds his current value. You must carry a large shield to use this ability. As you ignore your own safety to aid your friends, your Defence is reduced by 2 when you spend the actions to use this ability even if your allies suffer no attacks.

Improvement: For each additional pick allocated to this ability, you gain a +2 bonus to the Armed Combat tests made while using it. You may gain up to a +6 bonus to this ability by improving it in this manner.

Shieldman

In battle you can lend your shield to an ally, deflecting blows meant for him. You may use the parry/block action to defend any ally who stands next to you. Resolve the attack as if the attacker aimed for you, though if you fail to block the attack it hits the person you tried to protect rather than you. You may use this ability once per round.

Champion

'Three times Aragorn and Éomer rallied them, and three times Andúril flamed in a desperate charge that drove the enemy from the wall.'

— *The Two Towers*

[Illustration 23]

Standing at the forefront of every battle, the champion serves as a heroic beacon who instils hope in the hearts of his allies and terror in the souls of his enemies. With his great skill at arms and powerful personality, he sets the tone for a battle and leads his friends to victory.

Adventures

Champions are at their best in small battles like those adventuring bands face. They may lack a captain's tactical or strategic sense, but they more than compensate with their infectious enthusiasm and inspiring abilities.

Background

Champions hail from all cultures and peoples. Any person with the courage necessary to lift a blade and lead a charge can follow this elite order. Amongst Orcs, champions serve as leaders and commanders who use their influence to bully others. Men, Dwarves, Elves, and even Hobbits look to champions as heroes who lead the fight against the Shadow.

Requisites

To become a champion, you must have Bearing 8+, Vitality 7+, Armed Combat 6+, and Inspire 8+.

Order Skills

The champion's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Inspire (Per), Intimidate (Per), Ranged Combat (Nim), Ride (Brg), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The champion order abilities are as follows.

Inspiring Leader

In battle, you a gleaming beacon of hope and victory and your skill at arms and the force of your personality combine to make you an invigorating—or daunting—presence on the field. Whenever you spend a point of Courage on any Inspire or Intimidate test during combat, you gain a +5 bonus instead of the usual +3.

Fearsome Charge

When your charge the enemy, you instil such fiery enthusiasm in your allies that they follow you into battle in a single, overwhelming wave that can smash through the enemy's defences. Once per day, at the beginning of a combat round, you can announce that you are using this ability. Those of your allies who wish to participate in your charge do not make a Swiftiness test for initiative. Instead, they take their actions at the same time you do. When your initiative turn comes, you and your allies who take part charge forward. All participants who can charge at least three yards before striking gain a +3 bonus to Armed and Unarmed Combat tests and multiply the damage they inflict by 2, but suffer -3 to dodge and parry/block actions. Allies who cannot move far enough still gain a +2 bonus to their Armed Combat tests for this round.

Fell Captain

If you are the leader of an army fighting at the Skirmish scale and you choose to fight in the Heart of Battle, you may choose one formation in your army. That formation gains +2 Melee Combat and +2 Toughness for the remainder of this battle round. At scales greater than Skirmish the pure, personal force of your leadership is diluted too much by the sheer mass of combatants for you to use this ability. You should only select this order ability if

your Narrator intends to use the optional mass combat system presented in the *Helm's Deep* sourcebook.

Chieftain

'The old man's . . . voice was sullen with displeasure. "Wild Men are wild, free, but not children," he answered. "I am great headmen, Ghân-buri-Ghân."'

— *The Return of the King*

[Illustration 24]

While barbarians may not erect great cities, gleaming halls, or stone castles, they still rely on a class of leaders to guide them. These leaders may not array themselves in silk and gold and their palaces may be nothing more than huts, homesteads, or caves, but though they lack these typical signs of wealth and power, they are still formidable warriors and diplomats.

Adventures

Chieftains are born leaders. They improve the abilities of their allies and help direct their actions. They truly shine in battle where their skill at arms and keen tactical sense comes into play. As leaders of barbarian tribes, they excel in woodcraft, tracking, and other talents relating to wilderness survival.

Background

Chieftains hail from a variety of wild lands. Some come from the distant north and east, seeking to prove their skill and worth by returning to their people with tales of their adventures. Others are forced by events beyond their control—such as an invasion or a struggle for succession—to flee their homelands. Sometimes, a chieftain must lead his people to aid them, such as when Beorn fell upon the Orcs at the Battle of the Five Armies. By crushing the Orc army and slaying their leader, he helped make the land safer for his people.

Requisites

To become a chieftain, you must have Bearing 8+, Vitality 8+, Armed Combat 6+, Inspire 8+, Survival 8+, and Noble Mien.

Order Skills

The chieftain's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Debate (Wits), Inspire (Brg), Intimidate (Brg), Observe (Per), Persuade (Brg), Ranged Combat (Nim), Survival (Per), Track (Wits), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The chieftain's order abilities are as follows.

Commanding Presence

Even in dusty furs, worn travel clothes, and simple leather armour you carry yourself with the confident air of a king. While you may lead no more than a few dozen herders, hunters, or farmers, you can look a king in the eye and bargain with him on an even footing. You gain a +2 bonus to all Willpower tests. Furthermore, when resisting fear, you count your result as one category better than the actual test result. For example, if an Intimidate attempt leaves you panicked, you instead count as frightened.

Natural Leader

You direct your allies in battle, drawing on your experience in combat and your leadership skills to maximise their abilities. Once per round, you may spend an action to direct your allies. All of your friends who you can see receive a +1 bonus to their Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat tests. This bonus continues until the end of the round, until you fall in combat, or until you leave the area, whichever comes first.

Improvement: You can pick this ability multiple times. Each additional pick improves the bonus you grant with this ability by +1. You may improve this ability only twice, granting a maximum bonus of +3.

War Leader

You lead forces mustered from your homeland with a skill that can only come from intimate familiarity with your kin's strengths, weaknesses, and fears. If you are present at a battle where one or more units from your homeland are fighting, they gain +1 Melee Combat, +1 Ranged Combat, and +1 Toughness. If you are also the army's leader, they gain +2 Command as well. You should only select this order ability if your Narrator intends to use the optional mass combat system presented in the *Helm's Deep* sourcebook.

Shirriff

'Gave me a chance of walking around the country and seeing folk, and hearing the news, and knowing where the good beer was.'

— Robin Smallburrow, *The Return of the King*

[Illustration 25]

In the Shire, Shirriffs act as a police force, though in that bucolic realm few crimes need any attention. Most of the time, the Shirriffs chase down wayward cattle, keep watch for big folk crossing over the border, and help resolve disputes amongst the Hobbits. While they may seem the least formidable of warriors, their skills in learning the lay of the land, reading people to learn the true story behind their words, and keeping out of sight make them valued additions to any adventuring party.

Adventures

Shirriff's excel at getting to the truth of a matter, having learnt to observe people and read between the lines to arrive at the truth. Shirriff's are also expert at blending in with the locals. While a party of adventurers may find hostile glares and suspicion in an isolated village, a Shirriff knows the quickest way to win over the locals. In a fight he may lack the strength of bigger folk, but he knows how to turn those traits to his advantage.

Background

Shirriff's are amongst the boldest and most adventurous Hobbits of the Shire. Those who seek out such positions are usually young. While most of these youths are too respectable to look for adventure beyond the Shire's borders, some find that their tenure as a Shirriff has done nothing to slake their curiosity and wanderlust. Soon after their term ends, they head out on a great journey to see the world, perhaps—in the Fourth Age, anyway—inspired by tales of Frodo, Bilbo, and the One Ring. In earlier eras, such Hobbits often merely sought to find what stood beyond the borders of the maps they used to travel across the Shire.

Requisites

To become a Shirriff, you must have Bearing 7+, Vitality 7+, Armed Combat 4+, Inquire 6+, Observe 8+, Stealth 4+. Furthermore, only Hobbits may become Shirriff's.

Order Skills

The Shirriff's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Climb (Str), Inquire (Brg), Observe (Per), Persuade (Brg), Ranged Combat (Nim), Run (Str), Search (Per), Stealth (Nim), Track (Wits), and Unarmed Combat (Nim).

Order Abilities

The Shirriff's order abilities are as follows.

Authority of the Law

While in the Shire you are treated with respect and deference. Even if you no longer serve as an official Shirriff, you earned enough respect during your tenure that your fellow Hobbits remember you and defer to your expertise. You gain a +2 bonus to all social tests while dealing with Hobbits in the Shire.

Fellowship

You excel at inserting yourself into social situations. With a few well-chosen words, a small joke, and a round of drinks you quickly win over a crowd and make yourself at home. In any social situation, you gain a +2 bonus to all Inquire tests. In addition, with a successful Persuade test (TN 10) you can convince your hosts to give you and your

friends free food and lodging for one night. You cannot abuse this ability to stay with a host for multiple nights unless you otherwise strike up a friendship with him.

Surprising Strength

Due to your small size, your opponents often expect you to be a weak opponent they can easily overwhelm. However, you have experience fighting Men and animals much larger than you are and have learned to use your size—and your opponents' misapprehensions—to your advantage. When fighting someone larger than you, you gain a +2 bonus to Armed Combat and Unarmed Combat tests and a +2 bonus to damage (in addition to the standard bonuses for attacking larger foes).

Skin-changer

'He changes his skin; sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard.'

— Gandalf, *The Hobbit*

[Illustration 26]

Dwelling in isolated areas of the wilderness where few others venture, the skin-changers are ardent foes of Orcs and other servants of the Enemy. Gentle and kind to animals, they refuse to eat meat and count all natural creatures as their friends. Skin-changers have the ability to assume the form of animals and can speak with beasts in their own tongues.

Adventures

Skin-changers are capable woodsmen, tough warriors, and experts in handling and befriending wild animals. Orcs are their most hated foes, and they form quick friendships with those who share this loathing. In addition to using their abilities to protect their friends, skin-changers' skill at navigating the wilderness makes them invaluable assets in overland journeys.

Background

Most skin-changers are barbarians who hail from the lands east of the Misty Mountains and west of Mirkwood. Beorn is their chieftain, and while they are staunch foes of the Shadow they prefer to remain isolated from the daily concerns of Men, Elves, and Dwarves.

Requisites

To become a skin-changer, you must have Bearing 7+, Vitality 8+, Survival 8+, and Unarmed Combat 8+.

Order Skills

The skin-changer's order skills are: Armed Combat (Nim), Climb (Str), Inspire (Brg), Intimidate (Brg), Jump (Str), Run (Str), Stealth (Nim), Survival (Per), Track (Wits), Unarmed Combat (Nim), and Weather-sense (Per).

Order Abilities

The skin-changer's order abilities are as follows.

Beast Speech

You have the ability to communicate with a single species of animals, speaking in growls, roars, and whistles in the manner of beasts. This gives you the order skill Language: [Species] at +2 ranks, which you may continue to improve as a regular skill.

Improvement: Each additional time you select this ability, choose another animal species with which you may communicate.

Change Skin

You have the magical talent to take the form of a single natural animal, chosen when you take this order ability. The mechanics of your transformation are identical to those of the *Mastery of Shapes* spell described on page 183 of the core rulebook; you possess this spell as a magical ability, as described on page 171 of the core rulebook.

Improvement: Each time you devote an additional pick to this ability you gain five creature advancement picks (see pages 69–70 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*) that you can use to improve the characteristics of your beast-form. All such improvements, however, must be approved by the Narrator.

Weaponsmith

'The Sword of Elendil was forged anew by Elvish smiths, and on its blade was traced a device of seven stars set between the crescent Moon and the rayed Sun.'

— *The Fellowship of the Ring*

[Illustration 27]

The weaponsmith is an expert at creating magical weapons and armour enchanted with magical qualities. Through study and extensive practice, he learns to harness the subtle magic of Middle-earth and infuse it within his creations. Over time, he progresses from crafting swords and mail shirts of the highest quality to forging strands of magic into their very fibre.

Adventures

Weaponsmiths are valued for their talent in producing a wide range of useful items. Those travelling with one can count on a ready supply of the highest quality weapons and

armour. Even in the wilds, a weaponsmith's talents are invaluable. With a few minutes of work, a weaponsmith can give a sword a razor's edge or produce a few simple, temporary weapons from basic raw materials.

Background

Weaponsmiths come from all cultures, races, and regions. They are common amongst Dwarves, as those stout folk place a premium on metalworking and other crafts. The Elves produce many beautiful things, and while their weapons are wondrous to behold they are equally deadly in battle. The Men of Gondor and Rohan have longed practised the weaponsmith's arts to help thwart the Shadow's advances. Only the peaceful Hobbits produce few, if any, weaponsmiths.

Requisites

To become a weaponsmith, you must have Perception 7+, Wits 8+, Armed Combat 4+, and Smithcraft 8+.

Order Skills

The weaponsmith's order skills are: Appraise (Wits), Armed Combat (Nim), Craft (Nim), Games (Nim), Ranged Combat (Nim), Smithcraft (Str), and Stonecraft (Str).

Order Abilities

The weaponsmith's order abilities are as follows.

Forge Master

When creating weapons and armour from raw materials, you can produce armaments of exceptional quality. If you achieve an extraordinary success while crafting a weapon or suit of armour, you have crafted a masterwork item as per the craftsman order's Masterwork order ability on page 84 of the core rulebook.

Shape Weapon

Working with basic materials, a campfire, and some simple tools, you can craft a temporary weapon to serve almost any purpose. With two hours of work, you can produce one hand weapon of any size or twenty arrows, bolts, or similar pieces of ammunition. With three hours of work, you can produce any bow. These jury-rigged weapons are far from ideal, though, and all Armed Combat or Ranged Combat tests made with them suffer a -2 penalty. In addition, if the wielder of such a weapon rolls a 2 on 2d6 for any attack test, the weapon breaks (though it still deals damage as normal if the attack that broke it hits).

Sharpen Blade

Using nothing more than a campfire and some simple tools, you can temporarily grant a sword or other bladed weapon a deadly edge. With one hour of work and a successful Smithcraft test (TN 10), you can grant an edged weapon a +2 bonus to damage for one battle. After this battle, the weapon loses its edge and must be treated once again.

Weapon Enchantment

Your talent in creating weapons has reached such a level that you can instill them with magical qualities. After labouring over an item for many days and pouring your talent into it, it comes to life with magical power. You may produce enchanted weapons and armour as per the craftsman order's Enchantment ability. See page 83–4 of the core rulebook. Additional material relating to the creation of magical weapons is presented in Chapter Four of this book.

Chapter Three: Fell Deeds Awake!

‘Suddenly a sword flashed in its own light. Bilbo saw it go right through the Great Goblin . . . He fell dead, and the goblin soldiers fled before the sword. . . .’

— *The Hobbit*

Marital characters excel in martial situations, and so this chapter presents a wide variety of new rules to expand and enhance combat in your chronicle. The first half of the chapter, ‘Combat Options,’ contains many different rules, each of which can be adopted independently of the others. The second half, ‘Tactical Combat,’ is one set of rules for using miniatures or counters in your game, and if it is to be used, must be adopted as a whole. Because many options are presented in the pages that follow, players should consult their Narrators regarding which optional rules are being used and Narrators should inform their players when adopting an optional rule.

Combat Options

‘I have not brought you hither to be instructed by you, but to give you a choice.’

— *Saruman to Gandalf, The Fellowship of the Ring*

The following sections provide many optional rules that allow you to tailor combat to your style and preferences. As you consider each of the following options, however, keep in mind that new rules always represent a trade-off. While more effects, bonuses, and penalties allow more spectacular results, they can also take up more time at the game table.

As mentioned above, the combat options presented below can be adopted *a la carte*. Although some of the options refer to rules that other options introduce, it is not necessary for the second option to be adopted for the first to be used. For example, the called shots optional rules refer to the fell strikes optional rules to define what called shots can be attempted. This does not mean that the Narrator must allow fell strikes if he allows called shots. If the Narrator were using only called shots, it would simply mean that the only way the fell strikes effects could be accessed would be by making called shots. They could not be achieved simply by achieving superior (or better) success in combat, because the fell strikes rules would not be in effect. If this seems unusually complex, don’t worry. The situation will probably become perfectly clear as you read about the various combat options.

Fell Strikes

‘A swift stroke she dealt, skilled and deadly. The outstretched neck she clove asunder, and the hewn head fell like a stone.’

— *The Return of the King*

The core rulebook presents a number of effects that might occur when combatants achieve extraordinary successes. The rules that follow expand this idea into a complete

optional rule system for *fell strikes*. Fell strikes reward superior success, extraordinary success, and a new level of success, *heroic success*, with new effects that make combat a deadlier and more action-packed experience.

Heroic success occurs when an attacker's test result exceeds its target (usually the target's Defence) by 16 or more. The threshold for extraordinary success remains the same, at 11. Heroic success is only used with these rules for fell strikes. In all other instances where tests are performed, test results of 11–15 and 16+ all remain extraordinary success as described in the core rulebook on pages 220–1.

The basic idea behind fell strikes is similar to the existing rules for extra success in combat (see page 231 of the core rulebook). There are two major differences. First, instead of offering only one list of possible effects, these rules present nine. The list of effects consulted depends on two things: the type of attack being launched (Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, or Unarmed Combat) and the level of success achieved (superior success, extraordinary success, or heroic success). Second, each list of effects is organised so the result describes the body part wounded in addition to the effects of the strike. On each of the nine lists, for example, you'll find a 'head' effect, an 'arm' effect, a 'leg' effect, and so on. There are also fell strikes which do not correspond to body locations, but which instead give an advantage to the attacker. Finally, there are Narrator fell strikes, which are defaults for each list that the Narrator may choose when he does not want to slow the game down to make a more painstaking choice.

When the fell strikes option is being used, each time an attacker achieves a superior or better success in combat he simply chooses one of the options from the fell strike list that corresponds to the type of attack he launched and the level of success he achieved. A character who achieves extraordinary success may, at his option, choose two different superior success effects instead of one extraordinary success effect. Likewise, a character who achieves heroic success may choose two different extraordinary success effects or three different superior success effects instead of one heroic success effect. A character who achieves heroic success may not mix and match superior and heroic success effects, however.

An attacker may not choose to deliver a fell strike to a location that his target does not possess. It is impossible to deliver a fell strike to the head of a headless creature, for example. Likewise, it is impossible to deliver a fell strike against the weapon of an opponent who is unarmed. It is important to note that this rule makes it impossible to deal any location-based fell strikes to creatures that are Incorporeal (see page 78 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*).

There are a number of rules and definitions that apply to all nine fell strike lists.

- The word 'attacker' always describes the character or creature launching the attack, who made an Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, or Unarmed Combat test.
- The word 'target' or 'victim' always describes the intended target of the attack, who usually used his Defence to resist the attack test.
- 'Maximum damage' refers to the damage that would be inflicted with a given weapon on the best possible damage roll. A longsword that deals 2d6+5

damage, for example, would deal maximum damage of 17 points. Maximum damage does take into account any existing damage modifiers, such as from the attacker's Strength. A longsword-wielding Orc with +2 Strength, for example, would inflict maximum damage of 19 points.

- 'One round' means that the effect persists until all characters have acted in the action round after the one in which the fell strike was delivered.
- Some fell strikes inflict *permanent conditions* or *temporary conditions*. These appear in italics in the fell strike description and are described on pages XX-XX.
- The fell strike lists for Ranged Combat presume the attacker is using a bow. Other ranged attacks have the same effects, however, so substitute a different word for 'arrow' where appropriate.

The following describe, in general terms, the seven different location types of fell strikes common to all nine lists.

Head: The attack hits the target's head, or one of them, if the target has more than one head.

Chest: The attack strikes the target's chest, or similar centre of mass on creatures who are not humanoid.

Arm: The attack hits one of the target's arms. The attacker may choose which arm has been struck unless the target has a shield, in which case the opposite arm is struck.

Leg: The attack hits one of the target's legs. The attacker may choose which leg has been struck.

Weapon: The attack hits a weapon, shield, or any other item carried by the target of the attack. Where the target is carrying more than one such item, the attacker may choose which is hit.

Advantage: Rather than delivering additional damage to the target of the attack, the attacker turns the success to his advantage on further actions.

Narrator: This fell strike does not describe a location, but instead describes a generic effect that might be relevant to any hit location. It is intended to be used as the default fell strike when the Narrator does not want to take extra time to choose a more specific fell strike result. Players will quickly learn the effects of the various Narrator fell strikes so the Narrator can simply say 'extraordinary success' and move on to the next NPC attacker, with the players quickly applying the appropriate effects. Players can also choose Narrator fell strikes, if they wish.

Armed Combat Fell Strikes—Superior Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the weapon's normal damage.

Head: The target suffers a solid blow to the head. For one round, additional actions the target attempts suffer a -10 penalty rather than the normal -5.

Chest: The target sustains a solid blow to his midsection. The attacker rolls his weapon's damage again and inflicts that many additional points of damage.

Arm: One of the target's arms suffers a solid blow. He suffers a –3 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round.

Leg: One of the target's legs suffers a solid blow. He suffers a –3 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. Furthermore, movement actions (see page 214 of the core rulebook) that normally require no test require TN 5 Run tests for one round.

Weapon: The target must make a TN 10 structure reaction test (see page XX) for the item struck.

Advantage: If the attacker attacks the target again on his next action he gains a +3 bonus to the attack test.

Narrator: The target suffers –1 Defence for one round.

Armed Combat Fell Strikes—Extraordinary Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the weapon's maximum damage.

Head: The target receives a resounding blow to the head. He is restricted to taking one action on his next turn.

Chest: The target suffers a resounding blow to the chest. The attacker inflicts his weapon's maximum damage on the target again.

Arm: One of the target's arms suffers a resounding blow. He suffers a –5 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round.

Leg: One of the target's legs suffers a resounding blow. He falls *prone* and suffers a –5 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. Furthermore, movement actions (see page 214 of the core rulebook) that normally require no test require TN 10 Run tests for one round.

Weapon: The target must make a TN 15 structure reaction test (see page XX) for the item struck.

Advantage: The attacker may make one additional, immediate basic attack against the target, which costs no actions.

Narrator: The target suffers a –3 Defence for one round.

Armed Combat Fell Strikes—Heroic Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to double the weapon's maximum damage.

Head: The target receives a devastating blow to the head. He has Defence 0 and may not act until he succeeds in making a TN 10 Willpower test. He may attempt this test once per round.

Chest: The target suffers a devastating blow to the torso. The attacker inflicts double his weapon's maximum damage on the target again.

Arm: The target receives a devastating blow to one of his arms. He has a *broken arm*.

Leg: The target receives a devastating blow to one of his legs. He has a *broken leg* and immediately falls *prone*.

Weapon: The target must make a TN 20 structure reaction test (see page XX) for the item struck.

Advantage: The attacker may make one immediate, additional basic attack against the target, which costs no actions, and one immediate basic attack against any enemy adjacent to the target, which also costs no actions.

Narrator: The target loses all of his actions this round (if he has not yet acted) or next round (if he has already acted this round), and suffers –5 Defence for one round.

Ranged Combat Fell Strikes— Superior Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the weapon's normal damage.

Head: The arrow strikes the target's head solidly. For one round, additional actions the target attempts suffer a –10 penalty rather than the normal –5.

Chest: The arrow strikes the target's chest solidly. It becomes a *lodged arrow* (see page XX).

Arm: The arrow strikes one of the target's arms solidly. He suffers a –2 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round.

Leg: The arrow strikes one of the target's legs solidly. He suffers a –2 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. Furthermore, movement actions (see page 214 of the core rulebook that normally require no test require TN 5 Run tests for one round.

Weapon: The arrow strikes the hand holding the item. The target must make a TN 10 Stamina test or drop it.

Advantage: If the attacker attacks the target again on his next action he gains a +3 bonus to the attack test.

Narrator: The target suffers a –2 penalty to attack tests for one round.

Ranged Combat Fell Strikes—Extraordinary Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the weapon's maximum damage.

Head: The arrow lodges in the target's throat. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the target cannot speak and receives only one action per round until the arrow is removed.

Chest: The arrow pierces the target's chest and puncture vital organs. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the attacker inflicts his weapon's maximum damage again.

Arm: The arrow lodges in the target's arm. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the target suffers a –4 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round.

Leg: The arrow lodges in the target's leg. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the target falls *prone* and suffers a –5 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. Furthermore, movement actions (see page 214 of the core rulebook) that normally require no test require TN 5 Run tests for one round.

Weapon: The arrow strikes the item solidly. The target must make a TN 10 structure reaction test (see page XX) for the item struck.

Advantage: The attacker may make one additional, immediate basic attack against the target, which costs no actions.

Narrator: Target suffers a –4 penalty to his attack tests for one round.

Ranged Combat Fell Strikes—Heroic Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to double the weapon's maximum damage.

Head: The arrow lodges in the target's eye. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the target is *blind in one eye*.

Chest: The arrow pierces the target's chest and lodges in his heart. In addition to the normal effects of a *lodged arrow*, the target must make a TN 10 Stamina test or be killed.

Arm: The arrow lodges in the target's shoulder. The target has a *lodged arrow* and *broken arm*.

Leg: The arrow lodges in the target's thigh, opening a major artery. The target is *prone*, *bleeding*, and has a *lodged arrow* and *broken leg*.

Weapon: The target must make a TN 15 structure reaction test (see page XX) for the item struck.

Advantage: The attacker may make one immediate, additional basic attack against the target, which costs no actions, and one immediate basic attack against any enemy he can see, which also costs no actions.

Narrator: The target has a *lodged arrow* and receives no actions until he makes a TN 10 Stamina test, which he may attempt once each round.

Unarmed Combat Fell Strikes—Superior Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the attacker's normal damage.

Head: The target suffers a solid blow to the head. For one round, any additional actions he attempts suffer a –8 penalty rather than the normal –5.

Chest: The target suffers a solid blow to the stomach. The attacker rolls his damage again and inflicts that many additional points of damage.

Arm: One of the target's arms suffers a solid blow. He suffers a –2 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round.

Leg: One of the target's legs suffers a solid blow. He suffers a –2 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. The target must make a TN 10 Nimbleness test or fall *prone*.

Weapon: The target must make a TN 10 Nimbleness test or drop the item.

Advantage: The attacker receives +3 Defence against the target for one round and may make one additional action this round at a –3 penalty rather than the typical –5 penalty.

Narrator: The target suffers –1 Defence for one round

Unarmed Combat Fell Strikes—Extraordinary Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to the attacker's maximum damage.

Head: The target receives a resounding blow to the head. He is restricted to taking one action on his next turn.

Chest: The target suffers a resounding blow to the chest. The attacker inflicts his weapon's maximum damage on the target again.

Arm: One of the target's arms suffers a resounding blow. He suffers a –5 penalty on all actions that use that arm for one round. The attacker may, at his option, also grab the target without an additional test (see page 229 of the core rulebook).

Leg: One of the target's legs suffers a resounding blow. He suffers a –5 penalty on all actions that use that leg for one round. The attacker may, at his option, also knock the target *prone* and/or grab him without an additional test (see page 229 of the core rulebook).

Weapon: The attacker and target must make an opposed Nimbleness test. The winner grabs the item.

Advantage: The attacker receives +5 Defence against the target for one round and may make one additional action this round at a –2 penalty rather than the typical –5 penalty.

Narrator: The target suffers –3 Defence for one round.

Unarmed Combat Fell Strikes—Heroic Success

All of the effects below are suffered in addition to double the attacker's maximum damage.

Head: The attacker wrenches the target's neck. The target must make a TN 5 Stamina test or die and must make a TN 10 Nimbleness test or fall *prone*.

Chest: The target suffers a devastating blow to the stomach. The attacker inflicts double his maximum damage on the target again.

Arm: The target receives a devastating blow to one of his arms. He has a *broken arm*.

Leg: The target receives a devastating blow to one of his legs. He has a *broken leg* and immediately falls *prone*.

Weapon: The attacker grabs the item.

Advantage: The attacker may make one immediate, additional basic attack against the target, which costs no actions, and one immediate basic attack against any enemy adjacent to the target, which also costs no actions.

Narrator: The target loses all of his actions this round (if he has not yet acted) or next round (if he has already acted this round), and suffers –5 Defence for one round.

Called Shots

‘Keep your hands off your knife, or I’ll put an arrow in your guts.’

—*Snaga, The Return of the King*

Rather than launching an attack in the hopes of bringing general misfortune to his enemy, a character may make a *called shot* in the hope of causing some specific hurt. The attacker begins by choosing any single fell strike effect from a list that corresponds to the type of attack he plans to launch (Armed, Ranged, or Unarmed). He then makes his attack test normally, with a –3 penalty to his attack test if he is attempting a superior success effect, a –7 penalty to his attack test if he is attempting an extraordinary success effect, and a –12 penalty to his attack test if he is attempting a heroic success effect. If his modified attack test result (including any other relevant modifiers, such as for injuries or battlefield conditions) beats his opponent’s Defence, the attacker inflicts the effect he chose, in addition to his weapon’s normal damage, maximum damage, or double maximum damage depending on the level of the fell strike. If his modified attack test fails to meet the threshold, however, his attack has no effect at all.

Conditions

‘Behind him came Shagrat, a large orc with long arms that, as he ran crouching, reached to the ground. But one arm hung limp and seemed to be bleeding. . . .’

— *The Return of the King*

Characters take a great deal of punishment during combat, and any number of adverse effects can occur as a result. These effects are called *conditions*, and are separated into *temporary conditions* and *permanent conditions*. In the core book, a few such conditions, prone and stunned, are described. These rules present more detailed descriptions for the effects of these and other conditions a character may suffer during combat. Narrators can pick and choose from all of the conditions described, deciding to use (for example) the optional rules for being prone while disregarding the rules for being staggered.

Temporary Conditions

Each of the temporary conditions listed below is polar; a character is either suffering from the condition or he is not. It is not possible to become ‘staggered x2’ or be ‘bleeding twice.’ If a character is already suffering from a given condition and some new situation also inflicts that condition on him, there is no new effect.

Staggered: Whenever a character takes more points of damage (after applying damage absorption from armour, if applicable) from a single blow than his Health he is *staggered*

and must make a TN 10 Stamina test. Failure means the character loses all of his actions this round (if he has not yet acted) or next round (if he has already acted this round) while success means he may act normally, though he is still considered staggered for one round.

Prone: Characters who have fallen, tripped, or otherwise been knocked over are *prone*, though a character may voluntarily become prone as a free action. Prone characters cannot make Ranged Combat tests and suffer a –5 penalty to Armed Combat and Unarmed Combat tests. Prone characters are harder to hit at range and easier to hit in melee combat. Attackers using Ranged Combat suffer a –5 penalty to attack tests against prone characters while those attacking Armed Combat or Unarmed Combat enjoy a +5 bonus. It requires one action to stand from a prone position.

Bleeding: A bleeding character sustains one Wound Point at the beginning of each round until someone staunches his wounds. Regardless of how many attacks that cause bleeding are inflicted on a character, he only takes one Wound Point per round as a result. To stop a character from bleeding, any character—even the bleeding one—may use a full-round action to attempt a TN 10 Healing test. On a success the bleeding stops. On a failure it continues. A bleeding character may not perform any actions during a round in which someone else is attempting to staunch his bleeding.

Lodged Arrow: A character with an arrow (or other weapon) lodged in his body suffers a –3 penalty to all tests in addition to any other penalties he may suffer as a result of his wounds. The arrow can be yanked from the victim by the victim himself or any adjacent character with a single action, but if this is done, the character begins bleeding as described above. If the victim doesn't want an adjacent character to remove the arrow, he may make an opposed Nimbleness test to prevent it. The only way to avoid bleeding from the removal of a lodged arrow is for the character removing the arrow to spend a full-round action and make a TN 10 Healing test.

Permanent Conditions

Permanent conditions are polar like temporary conditions with the exception that it is possible (for example) to have both of one's arms broken. Permanent conditions are usually inflicted as a result of fell strikes, but they can also be the result of other events. For example, a Narrator might decide that a character who failed a test to leap from one galloping horse onto another must make a Nimbleness test to avoid breaking his leg.

Broken Arm: A character with a broken arm is incapable of using that arm to wield a weapon, carry a shield or other item, manipulate items, or perform similar tasks. A character with a broken arm suffers a –3 penalty to all Strength-based tests, or a –5 penalty if both arms are broken.

Broken Leg: A character with one broken leg has his movement rate reduced by half, cannot move faster than a walk, suffers a –5 penalty to all Nimbleness-based tests, and suffers a –3 Defence penalty. A character with two broken legs has his movement rate reduced by half, cannot move faster than a crawl, suffers a –10 penalty to all Nimbleness-based tests, and suffers a –7 Defence penalty.

Blind in One Eye: Characters who are blind in one eye suffer –3 Defence, –5 to ranged attack tests, –3 to other attack tests, and –3 to all Perception-related tests involving sight.

If you are using the optional rules for Tactical Combat described later in this chapter, a character who is blind in one eye can defend against only one opponent, and is considered Outflanked (see page XX) as soon as he's engaged in melee by more than one opponent.

Blind: Characters who are completely blind cannot see. They suffer –7 Defence and –10 to all test involving sight. Blind characters who move faster than the 'step' movement rate (see page 214 of the core rulebook) must make a TN 10 Perception test to avoid falling prone. Blind characters may also suffer other penalties and misfortunes based on the fact that they cannot see at the Narrator's discretion.

Healing Permanent Conditions

Though labelled 'permanent,' almost all of the conditions described above can be healed over time. The actions that must be taken to heal each given condition are described below.

Setting A Broken Limb: A broken limb must be set within 48 hours of being broken. Setting a broken limb requires a TN 10 Healing test. If successful, the broken limb takes one month to heal, after which the penalties for the broken limb are relieved. If unsuccessful, the broken limb takes 1d6 months to heal, though after that period, all of the penalties associated with the broken limb are likewise relieved. On a disastrous failure, however, the limb will never heal correctly and the character is permanently crippled after one month. Those whose broken limbs are not set within 48 hours are also permanently crippled after a month.

Characters with a crippled arm have their Strength permanently reduced by 2 and can never use their crippled arm to wield a weapon, hold a shield, or perform any but the most rudimentary tasks with that arm. Characters with two crippled arms suffer these penalties twice.

Characters with a crippled leg have their Nimbleness permanently reduced by 2, their Defence permanently reduced by 2, and cannot move faster than a walk. Characters with two crippled legs suffer these penalties twice and cannot move faster than a crawl.

Curing Blindness: Characters who are temporarily blind due to a spell such as *Blinding Flash* will eventually regain their sight. Characters who are permanently blind, either in one or both eyes, can only be cured by magic and the ministrations of skilled healers. To cure blindness in one eye or both eyes at once, a healer must cast the *Healing-spell* and make a TN 25 Healing test. Success means the blind character can see again in the eye(s) upon which healing was attempted. Failure means sight is not restored and a new healing attempt can only be made by a different healer with more ranks in Healing. At his option, a healer may attempt to heal only one eye of a character who is blind in both eyes so that, if he fails, he still has a chance to restore sight in the other eye.

Shield Skill

'Fili and Kili had fallen defending him with shield and body, for he was their mother's elder brother.'

— *The Hobbit*

Under the basic rules in the core rulebook, a character carrying a shield gains a bonus to parry and block attempts based on the size of the shield carried. Further, those who attempt ranged attacks against a character carrying a shield suffer a penalty. This is simple and emphasizes a character's own agility when defending.

Using this optional rule, however, a new skill—Armed Combat: Shields—is introduced to the Armed Combat skill group. This skill can be used in three ways. The first is that any character with Armed Combat: Shields who carries a shield can increase his Defence by an amount equal to the defence bonus of the shield he carries (see Table 3.X) or his ranks in Armed Combat: Shields, whichever is lower. His Defence is increased as long as he holds the shield and is aware of his surroundings (even if he is not aware of a particular attack). Second, a character can use Armed Combat: Shields to attack his enemies with his shield, bashing them and perhaps stabbing with them a spike or blades mounted on his shield. Third, a character can use his Armed Combat: Shields skill to parry his opponents' attacks, adding the shield's defence bonus in addition to his ranks in Armed Combat: Shields to determine his test result.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X Shields

Shield Type	Weight	Defence Bonus	Damage	Price
Large	5–12 lbs.	3	1d6+3	2 SP
Medium	5–10 lbs.	2	1d6+2	6 sp
Small	4–8 lbs.	1	1d6+1	1 SP

A spike may be added to any shield. This increases its damage by +1, its weight by 2 pounds, and its price by 50%. Alternately, blades may be added to any shield. This increases its damage by +3, its weight by 5 pounds, and its price by 100%. A shield may not have both a spike and blades.

[[END TABLE]]

Adding a new skill such as Armed Combat: Shields to a chronicle in mid-stream can cause difficulties, since existing characters have no ranks in the new skill no matter how much sense it makes for mighty warriors to already know how to use their shields. There are a number of solutions to this problem. First, Narrators can simply wait to introduce the new skill until he begins a new chronicle and new characters are created. This may not be satisfying, however, if the Narrator wants to begin using these optional rules for shields right away. Second, Narrators can allow players to transfer ranks from other Armed Combat skills into Armed Combat: Shields. This keeps characters balanced and makes a fair amount of sense, because ranks are being exchanged in the same general area of expertise. As a third option, the Narrator can allow players to transfer ranks from any skills they choose into Armed Combat: Shields. If this third option is allowed, however, care must be taken to make sure ranks are not removed from order skills and put into non-order skills (or vice versa) at the rate of one-to-one. Where ranks are

removed from order skills and put into non-order skills, every two ranks that are removed only give one rank in the new skill. Similarly, when ranks are removed from non-order skills and put into order skills, every rank removed only gives two ranks in the new skill.

Augmented Dodge

‘The place was full of goblins running about, and the poor little hobbit dodged this way and that. . . .’

– *The Hobbit*

The basic rules for dodging presented in the core rulebook presume that only extremely nimble characters can effectively dodge the attacks of their enemies. Narrators who want to make the dodge action accessible to more characters and add a more cinematic feel to their chronicle may add the following optional rule for augmented dodge.

When this optional rule is used, ‘augmented dodge’ replaces ‘dodge’ as an action cost 1 combat manoeuvre. An augmented dodge is resolved exactly the same way as a dodge under the basic rules, except that the dodging character adds +7 to his dodge test result, increasing the result his opponent must achieve to hit him.

Differentiated Parry and Block

Under the basic rules in the core rulebook, parry and block function identically. Narrators who want to differentiate these two types of defence should consider the following rule, which makes it more difficult—and bloody—to thwart armed attacks when the defender does not also have a weapon.

Under this optional rule, parry and block both remain one-cost actions that only apply to a single incoming attack. The differences, however, are as follows.

A character can attempt to use any Unarmed Combat skill to stop either an armed or unarmed attack against him. This is called a *block*. When rolling to block, the character makes an Unarmed Combat test, the result of which becomes the attacker’s TN to hit him (provided the test result is higher than the blocking character’s Defence).

A character can attempt to use any Armed Combat skill to stop either an armed or unarmed attack against him. This is called a *parry*. When rolling to parry, the character makes an Armed Combat test, the result of which becomes the attacker’s TN to hit him (provided the test result is higher than the blocking character’s Defence).

Side Effects

When using differentiated parry and block, there are a number of side effects that can result from unarmed characters blocking armed attackers and armed characters parrying unarmed attackers.

Blocking Armed Attacks: When a character attempts to block an armed opponent and his opponent achieves complete or better success anyway, the attacker may re-roll his damage dice once if he does not like the first result. On the other hand, if a character

attempts to block an armed attack, successfully increases the attacker's TN to hit him above the blocker's normal Defence, and the attacker suffers complete or worse failure, the blocker may immediately make a free attempt to grab his attacker. (See either 'Grab' on page 229 of the core rulebook or the 'Expanded Grappling' option on page XX.)

Parrying Unarmed Attacks: When a character attempts to parry an unarmed opponent, successfully increases the attacker's TN to hit him above the parrying character's normal Defence, and the attacker suffers complete or worse failure, the parrying character inflicts half the damage his weapon normally deals to the attacker.

Weapon Classes

"Murderers' and elf-friends!" the Great Goblin shouted. "Slash them! Beat them! Bite them! Gnash them!"

— *The Hobbit*

Under the basic rules in the core rulebook, weapons are largely differentiated from each other only by the damage and parry bonus statistics. This optional rule for weapon classes differentiates them further into three broad classes, each of which has its own characteristics. While the basic rule keeps things simple, Narrators can choose this option to increase realism and detail in combat.

There are four weapon classes to which a weapon can belong under this optional rule: the slashing class, piercing class, bludgeoning class, and entangling class. Weapons of each class have special effects that describe the damage they do. These special effects, which are described below, apply in addition to the regular damage done by a given weapon. Some weapons have more than one class, as they can inflict damage in more than one way. Most swords, for example, can either slash or pierce. When making an attack with such a weapon the attacker must choose which class he will employ; the effects of both classes cannot be used in the same attack. The weapon classes that apply to each weapon in *The Lord of the Ring Roleplaying Game* are listed on Table 3.X: Weapon Classes.

Slashing: Slashing weapons inflict long gashes on opponents, slicing flesh and muscle. Anyone who suffers 10 or more points of damage from a slashing weapon begins bleeding (see page XX).

Piercing: Piercing weapons leave relatively small entry wounds but stab deeply into an opponent, piercing internal organs. The damage done by piercing weapons ignores two points of damage absorption otherwise offered by the victim's armour.

Bludgeoning: Bludgeoning weapons deliver crushing blows, stunning opponents without leaving open wounds. Anyone who suffers 10 or more points of damage from a bludgeoning weapon must make an opposed test, pitting his Stamina against his attacker's Strength, or become staggered (see page XX). (If the suffered more Wound Points than he has Health, the victim must first make the usual test to avoid being staggered.)

Entangling: Entangling weapons hamper the movement of those they ensnare. Anyone who scores superior success or better with an entangling weapon has three options. First, he may knock the victim of the attack prone (see page XX). Second, he may give +5

bonus to any grab attack he or one of his allies makes against the victim for one round. Finally, he may effectively cripple his choice of his opponent's limbs. The typical effects of a crippled limb (see page XX) apply to the victim until the attacker releases the limb as a free action or until the victim escapes by succeeding in an opposed test pitting his Nimbleness or Strength against his attacker's Strength. Each attempt to escape costs the victim one action. Holding a limb effectively crippled also prevents the attacker from using his weapon for anything else until the victim escapes or is released.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.3 Weapon Classes

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Class(es)</u>
Arrow (any type)	Piercing
Axe, Battle	Slashing
Axe, Great	Slashing
Axe, Throwing	Slashing
Club	Bludgeoning
Crossbow Bolt	Piercing
Dagger (held or thrown)	Piercing
Dagger, Long Knife	Piercing, Slashing
Dagger, Orc	Piercing, Slashing
Flail	Bludgeoning, Entangling
Glaive	Slashing
Halberd	Piercing, Slashing
Hammer	Bludgeoning
Hammer, Great	Bludgeoning
Javelin	Piercing
Kick	Bludgeoning
Lance	Piercing
Long Spear	Piercing
Mace	Bludgeoning
Mattock	Bludgeoning, Piercing
Net	Entangling*
Pick	Piercing
Pick, Heavy	Piercing

Pikestaff	Piercing
Punch	Bludgeoning
Shield	Bludgeoning
Shield, spiked	Bludgeoning, Piercing
Shield, with blades	Bludgeoning, Slashing
Spear (held or thrown)	Piercing
Staff	Bludgeoning
Stone (thrown or slung)	Bludgeoning
Sword, Elf	Slashing
Sword, Great	Slashing
Sword, Longsword	Piercing, Slashing
Sword, Orc-longsword	Piercing, Slashing
Sword, Scimitar	Slashing
Sword, Short Sword	Piercing, Slashing
Warhammer	Bludgeoning, Piercing
Whip	Entangling

* A character who throws a net and achieves superior success may only choose between knocking his victim prone and giving a bonus to grab attempts against the victim. He may not choose to effectively cripple his opponent's arm. A character who uses a net in melee combat, however, may choose from among all three entangling options as normal.

Wear on Arms and Armour

'I beheld the last combat on the slopes of Orodruin, where Gil-galad died, and Elendil fell, and Narsil broke beneath him.'

— *Elrond, The Fellowship of the Ring*

The core rules make no provision for the beating a character's arms and armour suffer in combat. While this keeps things simple, the following optional rules simulate the degree to which a character's gear may be damaged in the course of combat. In addition to providing a new level of detail for combat, this option also provides craftsmen a new area of expertise within the game.

Structure Reaction Tests

Arms and armour degrade over time. At the end of any combat in which a character's arms or armour were used, the character must make a structure reaction test for each of these items. Arms which were not used in the combat need not be tested, nor do armour or shields of characters who were never the target of attacks. All other arms, armour,

and shields must be tested, however, even if all of a given weapon's attacks failed and even if the bearer of a given shield was never successfully struck.

To make a structure reaction test the character must roll 2d6, add the appropriate structure test bonus from Table 3.X, and compare the result to TN 5 (for weapons) or TN 10 (for armour and shields). If the test succeeds nothing happens. If the item fails the test, however, it moves from one category of wear to another. On a regular failure it degrades by one level of wear, on a complete failure it degrades by two levels of wear, and on a disastrous failure it degrades by three levels of wear. The categories of wear and their effects are described on Table 3.X: Categories of Wear.

Masterwork items gain a +3 bonus to structure tests. Enchanted items are almost always masterwork items as well as enchanted items, so they get the same bonus. There is no additional structure reaction test bonus because an item has been enchanted, however, unless the nature of the enchantment is to ward off the effects of wear.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X Structure Test Bonuses

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Structure Test Modifier</u>
Axe, Battle	+1
Axe, Great	+2
Club	+0
Dagger	+1
Dagger, Long Knife	+0
Dagger, Orc	-1
Hammer	+3
Mace	+2
Mattock	+3
Pikestaff	+1
Spear	+0
Staff	-2
Sword, Longsword	+1
Sword, Longsword, Orc	+0
Sword, Scimitar	+2
Sword, Short Sword (Eket)	+2
Whip	+3
Arrow, regular or Orc:	-4

Dagger, Thrown	-2
Javelin:	-1
Spear, Thrown	-1
Stone, Thrown	+3

<u>Armour</u>	<u>Structure Test Modifier</u>
Leather	+0
Scale Mail	+2
Chainmail, Ordinary	+4
Chainmail, Dwarf	+5
Chainmail, <i>mithril</i>	+7
Chainmail, Orc	+1
Chainmail with plate	+6
Shield (any)	+0

Characters using the piecemeal armour optional rules must make structure reactions tests for each component of their armour. Structure test modifiers for individual armour components are listed on page XX.

[[END TABLE]]

Levels of Wear

There are five levels of wear an item can sustain: used, worn, heavily worn, damaged, and useless. Each level has penalties associated with it. An item can also be unworn, in which case there are no penalties associated with it—it is like new. The effects of penalties for wear vary depending on whether the item is a weapon, suit of armour, or shield. Weapons have a penalty to the damage they inflict as they accumulate wear. Armour absorbs less damage as it becomes worn. Shields parry less well and are a lesser barrier to ranged combat. (When using the optional rules for shield skill on page XX, the penalty is applied to both the Defence bonus the shield provides and any Armed Combat: Shields test made with the shield.) The precise penalties from wear are shown on Table 3.X: Effects of Wear.

An item that is ‘broken’ (or is reduced to uselessness because it is subject to penalties greater than the benefits it normally provides) provides no benefits. The only exception is that weapons always deal at least 1 point of damage on a successful attack. It is important to note that a condition of uselessness is different from the ‘broken’ condition because the difficulty to repair the item is not (necessarily) the same.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.6: Effects of Wear

<u>Degree of Wear</u>	<u>Weapon Effect</u>	<u>Armour Effect</u>	<u>Shield Effect</u>
Used	-1 Damage	-1 Damage Absorbed	-1 Parry/Block/Defence
Worn	-2 Damage	-2 Damage Absorbed	-2 Parry/Block/Defence
Heavily Worn	-3 Damage	-3 Damage Absorbed	-3 Parry/Block/Defence
Damaged	-1 Die Damage	-4 Damage Absorbed	-4 Parry/Block/Defence
Useless	Broken	Broken	Broken

[[END TABLE]]

Example: A heavily worn longsword, which would normally deal 2d6+5 points of damage on a successful hit, would deal 2d6+2 points of damage. A damaged longsword would deal 1d6+5 points of damage.

Example: A worn suit of scale mail, which would normally absorb 4 points of damage, would absorb only 2.

Example: A used small shield, which would normally provide a +3 bonus to parry and a -3 penalty to ranged attacks against the holder, would provide a +2 bonus to parry and a -2 penalty to ranged attacks.

Repairing Wear

Any character with Smithcraft may attempt to repair any worn or broken weapon, armour, or shield. The specialties Armoursmith and Weaponsmith provide bonuses as appropriate. Each Smithcraft test requires the appropriate tools and one hour. The TN depends on the level of wear and is listed on Table 3.X: Repairing Wear. Marginal or complete success repair one level of wear, while superior success repairs two levels and extraordinary success repairs three levels at no additional cost in time.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Table 3.X: Repairing Wear

<u>Degree of Wear</u>	<u>Repair TN</u>
Used	5
Worn	10
Heavily Worn	15
Damaged	20
Useless	25

[[END BOX]]

Piecemeal Armour

‘A light helm of figured leather, strengthened beneath with hoops of steel, and studded about the brim with white gems, was set upon the hobbit’s head.’

– *The Hobbit*

Under the basic rules for armour in the core rulebook, the basic unit of armour is a complete suit of a given type. This system is both simple and easy to use. The optional rules for fell strikes presented earlier in this chapter, however, introduce the ability for combatants to directly attack each other in specific locations to achieve specific effects. The piecemeal armour optional rule can replace the ‘complete suit’ system, introducing armour components that specifically protect particular locations while at the same time allowing a character to outfit his character with individual pieces of armour to personalise his character’s equipment to a greater degree.

The biggest reason a character might forgo a given piece of armour is to reduce the amount of weight he must carry into battle. Narrators who use the piecemeal armour optional rule should strongly consider also using the optional movement and encumbrance system on page XX.

Piecemeal Armour Descriptions

The following sections describe various armour components and the effects of wearing them.

Helm: A helm is any piece of armour that protects the head. Variants include the full metal helm, chain coif (a hood made of mail), and leather cap. Helms provide defence against fell strikes to the head.

Corslet: A corslet is a piece of armour that protects the chest. Corslets come in two variants, the hauberk and habergeon. A hauberk is a full shirt of mail covering the shoulders and arms and extending past the groin. A habergeon is a chain vest, usually covering the shoulders (but not arms) and extending to the waist. Corslets provide defence against fell strikes to the chest.

Breastplate: A breastplate is a piece of armour that protects the chest. In the Third Age most breastplates in Middle-earth are made hard leather, but many Elves, and the Men of Gondor, still make plate (metal) breastplates. (Dwarves typically eschew such constraining armour). Breastplates provide defence against fell strikes to the chest, just as corslets do. It is not possible to wear both a corslet and a breastplate at the same time.

Bracers: Bracers are cuffs that fit over the forearms, protecting them from blows. Most bracers are leather, but plate bracers are also used among Elves, Dwarves, and Men of Gondor. Bracers come in pairs—one for each arm—and protect the wearer against fell strikes to the arms.

Greaves: Greaves ward off blows to the legs. Greaves come in two varieties: plate and leather. They come in pairs—one for each leg—and provide defence against fell strikes to the legs.

Combining Components

A character may only choose one piece of armour for each of his body locations. For example, one cannot wear a set of both plate greaves and leather greaves. For simplicity's sake, it is not possible to mix and match bracers and greaves by (for example) wearing a plate greave on one leg and a leather greave on the other.

Once a character's kit of armour has been assembled, the damage absorption (DA) from each element component is summed to give the character's total damage absorption. When a character takes damage from an attack, this total damage absorption is subtracted from the damage before it is sustained as Wound Points.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X Piecemeal Armour

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Helms				
Full Metal Helm	8 lbs.	2	-1	6 sp
Chain Coif	6 lbs.	1	-2	1 SP
Leather Cap	4 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Corslets				
Hauberk	23 lbs.	3	+0	10 sp
Habergeon	18 lbs.	2	-1	2 SP
Breastplates				
Plate Breastplate	25 lbs.	4	+1	6 SP
Leather Breastplate	10 lbs.	1	-2	1 SP
Bracers				
Plate Bracers	5 lbs.	2	-2	1 SP
Leather Bracers	2 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Greaves				
Plate Greaves	10 lbs.	2	-2	2 SP
Leather Greaves	4 lbs.	1	-4	1 SP

[[END TABLE]]

Armour Qualities

In addition to being available in various components, armour also exists in a variety of qualities depending on its manufacture or composition. Use Table 3.X: Armour Qualities to modify the armour components statistics from Table 3.X. Price modifiers are not listed

on this table, because armour with these qualities must be acquired in the course of the chronicle.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X Armour Qualities

Quality	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier
Elf	x3/4	+0	+0
Dwarf	x1	+1	+1
Orc	x1-1/4	-1	+1
<i>Mithril</i>	x1/2	+2	+3

Example: A breastplate of Elf-plate weights 19 pounds, absorbs 5 points of damage, and has a +1 structure test modifier.

Example: A *mithril* habergeon weights 9 pounds, absorbs 5 points of damage, and has a +2 structure test modifier.

[[END TABLE]]

Resisting Fell Strikes

When the optional rules for fell strikes are being used, being armoured in a particular location also reduces the severity of fell strikes that hit that location. Any time an armoured location is hit with a fell strike, its severity is reduced to the next lower level. For example, if a character wearing a helm is struck with a heroic success fell strike and the attacker chooses the head location, the extraordinary head fell strike effects are used instead. Superior success fell strikes that hit armoured location are not fell strikes at all, and simply deal normal damage.

Piecemeal Armour and Structure Tests

When using both the piecemeal armour optional rule and the wear on arms and armour optional rule, characters must make TN 5 structure reaction tests whenever an area of their body which is protected by armour is hit with a fell strike. This includes superior success fell strikes whose effects are nullified by the armour. These tests are made in addition to the tests that must otherwise be made for all of a character's weapons and armour at the end of a battle.

Full Suits

A *full suit* of armour consists of a helm, a corslet or breastplate, a set of bracers (one for each arm), and a set of greaves (one for each leg). Players who wish to outfit their characters with full suits of armour without individually considering each component may choose from among the following pre-calculated suits.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Example Full Suits of ArmourLeather

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Leather Cap	4 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Leather Breastplate	10 lbs.	1	-2	1 SP
Leather Bracers	2 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Leather Greaves	4 lbs.	1	-4	1 SP
Total	20 lbs	4	n/a	2 SP, 2 sp

Light Chain

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Chain Coif	6 lbs.	2	-2	1 SP
Habergeon	18 lbs.	2	-1	2 SP
Leather Bracers	2 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Total	26 lbs.	5	n/a	3 SP, 2 sp

Heavy Chain

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Chain Coif	6 lbs.	1	-2	1 SP
Hauberk	23 lbs.	3	+0	10 sp
Leather Bracers	2 lbs.	1	-4	2 sp
Leather Greaves	4 lbs.	1	-4	1 SP
Total	35 lbs	6	n/a	5 SP

Plate

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Full Metal Helm	8 lbs.	2	-1	6 sp
Plate Breastplate	25 lbs.	4	+1	6 SP
Plate Bracers	5 lbs.	2	-2	1 SP
Plate Greaves	10 lbs.	2	-2	2 SP
Total	48 lbs.	10	n/a	10 SP, 2 sp

Dwarf-chain

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Chain Coif	6 lbs.	2	-1	n/a
Habergeon	18 lbs.	3	+0	n/a
Total	24 lbs	5	n/a	n/a

Elf-plate

Component	Weight	DA	Structure Test Modifier	Price
Full Metal Helm	6 lbs.	2	-1	n/a
Plate Breastplate	19 lbs.	4	+1	n/a
Plate Bracers	4 lbs.	2	-2	n/a
Plate Greaves	8 lbs.	2	-2	n/a
Total	37 lbs	10	n/a	n/a

Orc-plate

Full Metal Helm	10 lbs.	1	-1	n/a
Plate Breastplate	31 lbs.	3	+1	n/a
Plate Bracers	6 lbs.	1	-2	n/a
Plate Greaves	13 lbs.	1	-2	n/a
Total	60 lbs	6	n/a	n/a

Orc-chain

Hauberk	29 lbs.	2	+1	n/a
Leather Bracers	2 lbs.	0	-4	n/a
Leather Greaves	5 lbs.	0	-4	n/a
Total	36 lbs	2	n/a	n/a

[[END BOX]]

Movement and Encumbrance

'[D]warves can carry very heavy burdens . . . [and] in spite of their rapid march, bore huge packs on their backs in addition to their weapons.'

— *The Hobbit*

The basic rules in the core rulebook present a very simple system for determining the effects of carrying an excessive amount of armour and equipment. Unless a given character is carrying a great deal, there is little need to keep track of encumbrance.

With new rules for piecemeal armour, however, Narrators may wish to emphasize the benefits of being lightly armoured and carrying very little. This optional rule introduces new levels of encumbrance and changes the way encumbrance affects a character's manoeuvrability. Rather than penalize the overall distance a character can move, greater levels of encumbrance inflict penalties to all physical tests (including attack tests) and sometimes impose a TN 5 test on the 'jog' movement rate. Table 3.X: Encumbrance defines these categories and summarises their effects.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X Encumbrance

Encumbrance	Load	Physical Test Penalty	Jog Test?
Light	Up to Str x2	0	No
Medium	Up to Str x5	-2	No
Average	Up to Str x10	-5	Yes
Heavy	Up to Str x20	-10	Yes
Very heavy	Up to Str x30	-15	Yes

Characters attempting to carry more than thirty times their Strength collapse and are prone (see page XX) until they abandon enough equipment to reduce their load.

[[END TABLE]]

Table 3.X: Sample Movement Rates replaces Table 9.1: Sample Movement Actions on page 214 of The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game. It incorporates errata included in the core rulebook's reprinting, makes slight modifications to the tests and TNs for various rates of movement, and makes explicit the difference between movement for Elves and Men and opposed to Dwarves and Hobbits.

Rates for jumping, climbing, dropping prone, and standing up are not included in this table. For information on how far character can jump, see page 128 of the core rulebook. For information on how quickly character can climb, see page 122 of the core rulebook. Dwarves and Hobbits jump and climb at two-thirds the rates specified on those two pages. For information on falling prone and getting back up, see page XX.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X: Sample Movement Actions

Action	Action Cost	Man/Elf Rate	Dwarf/Hobbit Rate	Test
Crawl/Step	1	2 yards	1 yard	No Test
Walk	1	6 yards	4 yards	No Test
Jog	1	9 yards	6 yards	*

Run	2	27 yards	18 yards	Run (TN 5)
Sprint	Full round	40 yards	27 yards	Run (TN 10)
Swim	1	2 yards	1 yards	Swim (TN 5)

* A TN 5 Run test is required only of characters carrying average, heavy, or very heavy loads.

‘Rate’ means that the character may move up to the number of yards listed in the number of actions specified.

‘Test’ specifies the skill and TN of the test that must be made if a character attempts that rate of movement in combat or another stressful situation. If the test succeeds the character may move up to the listed rate. If the test fails the character may only move one-half the listed rate. On disastrous failure the character falls prone before getting anywhere.

[[END TABLE]]

Grappling

‘Sam was on [Gollum] before he had gone two paces after his spring. Frodo coming behind grabbed his leg and threw him.’

— *The Two Towers*

The basic rules in the core rulebook present a brief description of what a character can do with a grab action. Characters with many ranks of Unarmed Combat, however, may desire greater flexibility and detail. These rules present more options and grant greater advantages to characters attempting to grapple their opponents. When used, they replace the existing rules for the grab action on page 229 of the core rulebook.

Under this optional rule, the grab action remains a one-cost action useful for incapacitating opponents and leaving them vulnerable to other attacks. When attempting to grab an opponent, the attacker makes an Unarmed Combat test whose TN is the target’s Defence (or dodge, parry, or block test result). If the grab test is successful, the target is *grabbed*. If it is unsuccessful, there is no effect.

When using the Tactical Combat system, attempting to grapple someone requires the attacker to drop his guard, though characters wielding ranged weapons cannot take advantage of this dropped guard to attack the grappler.

When a grab is attempted, the typical effects of mismatched size on the attack roll are the inverse of what they normally would be: for each size level the target is smaller than the attacker, the attacker receives a +2 bonus and for each size level the target is larger than the attacker, the attacker suffers a –2 penalty. For example, a large creature attempting to grapple a small character would enjoy a +4 bonus to his Unarmed Combat test.

Benefits of Grabbing

A character who has successfully grabbed another character has five options. He may attempt to crush his opponent, disarm his opponent, throw his opponent, maintain the hold, or release the hold.

Crush: A grappling character can attempt to crush his opponent, inflicting 1d6 points of damage plus his Strength bonus. A grappling character can attempt to inflict more damage by making an opposed Unarmed Combat test against his opponent. If the grappler achieves superior success he inflicts one extra die of damage and if he achieves extraordinary success he inflicts two extra dice of damage. If the grappler does not prevail in this opposed test, however, his opponent escapes the grab (though he has no option to reverse the grapple or flip the grappler, as described below). Each attempt to crush costs one action.

Disarm: A grappling character can attempt to force his opponent to drop whatever he's holding by making an Unarmed Combat test against a TN equal to the grabbed character's Stamina or Nimbleness attribute, whichever is higher. Success means the grappled character involuntarily drops whatever single held item his grabbing opponent designates. Superior or better success means the victim drops everything he holds. Each attempt to disarm costs one action.

Throw: A grappling character can violently release his hold by throwing his opponent into the ground or another solid surface. The victim suffers 1d6 points of damage plus Strength bonus, flies 2 yards, and becomes prone (see page XX), but, on the positive side, is no longer grabbed. Throwing a grabbed character costs one action.

Maintain the Hold: A grappling character can attempt to do nothing but maintain the hold. Each action spent doing this gives him a cumulative +3 bonus (maximum +9) in the next opposed Unarmed Combat test his opponent initiates to escape being grabbed.

Release the Hold: A grappling character can voluntarily release his hold as a free action.

Being Grabbed

A character who is grabbed cannot use medium or large weapons, suffers -5 Defence, and suffers a -5 penalty to all actions other than attempts to escape the grapple, which costs two actions. Each time the grabbed character attempts to escape the grapple, the grappler and grabbed must make an opposed Unarmed Combat test. If the grabbed character fails there is no effect. If the grabbed character succeeds he escapes and is no longer grabbed. If he achieves a superior or better success he can—in addition to escaping—reverse the grapple or flip the grappler. If he reverses the grapple, the formerly grappling character is now grabbed himself. If he flips the grappler, the formerly grappling character is thrown 2 yards, becomes prone (see page XX), and suffers 1d6 + Strength bonus points of damage.

Third Party Attacks on Grabbed Characters

Characters other than the grappler can attempt to attack a grabbed character, taking advantage of his reduced Defence. A character wishing to attack a grabbed character can

either make a normal attack test and risk hitting the character who started the grapple, or can voluntarily take a –5 penalty to his attack test to avoid this risk. Characters who successfully strike the grabbed character resolve their damage normally. Characters who take the penalty and miss their target inflict no accidental damage. Characters who forego the voluntarily penalty, however, and who miss their intended target must roll 1d6. On a 1, 2, or 3, they accidentally strike the grappler for full damage.

Tactical Combat

Down from the wall leapt Gimli with a fierce cry that echoed in the cliffs. ‘Khazâd! Khazâd!’ He soon had work enough.

– *The Two Towers*

Keeping track of the exact physical locations of the heroes and villains in a truly epic combat can be a daunting task. The optional rules for tactical combat, which comprise the remainder of this chapter, address this situation with a system of rules that allow you to use counters or miniature figures with a map to keep precise track of where everyone is in combat.

It is important to note that these rules apply only to combat situations. Narrators can even opt only to use them when combat turns particularly complex, and use the normal, descriptive rules when a small number of combatants are involved. In no case should these rules be used when dealing narratively with roleplaying situations. If the heroes are guests in Rivendell, for example, there’s no need to keep track of precisely where they are as they move from room to room.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Why Use Tactical Combat?

Introducing the tactical combat option involves learning more rules and keeping track of additional information during play. Some Narrators may want to know where the benefit of doing so lies. The benefits are simple. In combat-heavy chronicles, Narrators must describe the actions and relative positions of every NPC in sight and keep that information in mind when adjudicating the actions of each player character. That can be difficult in itself when the number of NPCs involved is large, but matters worsen since narrative descriptions can be ambiguous and players accidentally form inaccurate mental pictures of what’s going on. Narrators can suffer the same problem, mistaking what one player said he wanted his character to do, and this can lead to situations where—in order to be fair—the action must be ‘rewound’ to an earlier point in the game or altered so that previous actions make sense.

Using miniatures and a battle map keeps track of all that data for both the players and the Narrator. Essentially, the battle map stores all the positions and distances of everyone in the battle, allowing everyone the opportunity to survey the battlefield, examine their options, and think about what they intend to do. The battle map eliminates the need for either the Narrator or the players to restate where they are. Players no longer need ask ‘How far away is the Troll?’ or ‘Are they surrounding me?’ All the answers are

objectively there for anyone to see, allowing players to make plans on their own while the Narrator adjudicates other action.

[[END BOX]]

Hexes, Counters, and the Battle Map

The tactical combat system uses a *battle map* that depicts the characters' surroundings. The battle map is overlaid with a grid of hexagons ('*hexes*') that help govern movement and show distances on the map clearly. There is an example battle map on page XX that depicts a grassy area with a few rocks, trees, and patches of shrubbery. Although the scale of a battle map can vary (see page XX), each hex typically represents an area 1 yard across.

You can create battle maps in a number of ways. Page XX has a blank grid of hexes you can photocopy to create drawn maps of your own. Many such grids can be connected to create maps as large as you like. You could also photocopy the blank hex grid onto one or more transparency sheets and then lay them over maps drawn on plain paper. Finally, some game stores sell rolled mats of various sizes with hex grids pre-printed on them. You can draw terrain features on these mats with transparency markers and then erase the features with a wet cloth when the combat is over. Battle maps can be drawn very roughly, with simple pencil lines to designate important terrain features, or in great detail, with different coloured markers and artistically depicted features of the battlefield.

Each character, whether hero or villain, is represented in tactical combat by a *counter* or some sort. Each counter is located on the battle map in the centre of the hex the corresponding character occupies. Counters can be of any type, from otherwise unused dice to coloured glass beads to cardboard counters to metal or plastic figurines. On page XX you'll find a selection of cardboard counters that can be used to represent a wide variety of the heroes, villains, and creatures that might be part of a typical chronicle. More counters will appear in future *The Lord of the Ring Roleplaying Game* supplements like *Play of Word and Shadow: The Guide to Rogues and Minstrels*. A wide variety of fantasy miniatures are also available at many game shops, some representing characters from *The Lord of the Rings* and manufactured by Games Workshop.

No matter what kind of counters you use in your chronicle only two factors are essential. First, each counter must clearly show which way it is *facing*—that is, which way is forward. Second, it must be possible to tell the various counters apart from each other. Although it would be okay for a horde of identical Orcs to all be represented by small green stones, it would be a very bad idea if each player character's counter was the same, because there would be no way to tell them apart during play!

Terrain on the Battle Map

In real life, terrain features like rivers and roads wind and curve without respect to the neat hex-lines the battle map uses. When the battle map is created, the boundaries between such features can result in certain hexes containing more than one type of terrain—because a line has been drawn through the hex denoting the boundary between

dry land and a river, for instance. Mixed hexes like these are considered to comprise whichever terrain type the character moving through it desires. The exception to this rule is when concrete barriers like fences, building walls, and cliff faces divide hexes. When this is the case, each portion of the divided hex functions like its own full hex for purposes of movement and combat.

Example: Tolman Longhole is pursuing an Orc-brigand who attacked a caravan he was guarding. The Orc flees towards a river with the intent to leap into it and swim across. On the battle map, the line marking the boundary of the river cuts through several hexes. When the Orc's counter reaches a hex that is both ground and river the Narrator declares 'the Orc jumps in the river' and is, in that hex, in the river. He makes a swim test and the Orc moves off into the water. Brave though he is, when Tolman arrives at the river's edge he has no interest whatsoever in entering the water. The player controlling Tolman declares that the Hobbit is going to stand at the river's edge and fire his shortbow at the swimming Orc. Though Tolman stands in the same hex—half river, half dry ground—the Orc used as the beginning of the river, he treats it as ground.

Movement on the Battle Map

When characters move using the hexes printed on the battle map, they move from the centre of one hex to another until all their movement for the round is used up. Each hex a character moves through uses up one yard's worth of movement to which he is entitled. (Table 3.X on page XX summarises the yards of movement that correspond to various movement actions frequently used in combat.)

At any point in a character's turn he may move into any of the six hexes around him without regard for which direction he was facing before, but once a character is finished acting on his turn, he must choose which direction he will face until his next action.

Players are allowed to count hexes before they move, move a few hexes and then go back and change what they planned to do, or count hexes to an enemy to determine where they want to go or whether they are close enough for a ranged attack. If a player declares an action and then, as a result of moving his counter on the battle map, finds out that he cannot do what he wanted, he is allowed to change his action to suit the new information. As long as the player hasn't declared he's finished or made a test he can still go back and change his plan.

Example: Bronwyn is being played by Craig. Craig wants Tolman to attack an Orc-brigand a fair distance away with his bow, but wants to move into medium range before he launches the attack. Craig declares that Tolman will take a jog action to close the distance and then use his second action to fire at the brigand. He begins by moving Bronwyn's counter nine hexes, because that is the jogging rate for Men.

After that action, Craig counts the hexes to the target and discovers it is still outside medium range. Craig has several choices at this point. He could redo the movement action, using a speedier rate than jog to move more than 9 hexes. He could use his second action to jog again, closing another 9 hexes, and put off his shot for another round. He could even jog again and then fire this round at the -5 penalty for extra actions. The

reason Craig is allowed the option of redoing his first action of movement is because ‘rewinding’ will not affect the combat, as he has not yet made an attack test.

Contour

With the battle map and tactical movement comes the opportunity to track movement through three dimensions. Hills rise, valleys can trap enemies, and daring heroes can assault their foes from the tops of tables or carts. Changes in elevation can easily be depicted on the battle map with contour lines.

Ideally, contour lines should be drawn on the battle map in a different colour than other terrain features so players don’t mistake them for walls, rivers, or the like. It should also be made clear, where it might be confusing, which side of the contour line represents higher ground and which represents lower ground. This can be easily accomplished with ‘+’ and ‘-’ symbols drawn on each side of the line at some point along its length.

A contour line on the battle map represents a vertical increase or decrease of one-half of a yard. Moving uphill into a hex that contains a contour line costs one extra yard of movement. Moving downhill into a hex that contains a contour line has no additional movement cost. Moving into a hex that contains two or more contour lines (representing a full yard or more of vertical movement) costs even more yards of movement and may require a test. See Table 3.X: Moving Uphill and Table 3.X: Moving Downhill. Failing a test to move uphill results in the character using up the yardage specified but remaining in the hex he was moving from. Failing a test to move downhill results in the character becoming prone in the hex he intended to move into and taking damage according to Table 9.33: Falling Damage on page 245 of the core rulebook.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X: Moving Uphill

<u>Destination Hex Contains...</u>	<u>Total Yards Required*</u>	<u>Test Required</u>
1 Contour Line	2	None
2 Contour Lines	3	TN 5 Climb
3 Contour Lines	4	TN 10 Climb
4 Contour Lines	5	TN 15 Climb
5 Contour Lines	Full-round climb action	**

This table assumes a medium character is moving. For each size level the moving character is smaller than medium, the yards of movement required increases by one and the TN increases by +2. For each size level the moving character is larger than medium, the yards of movement required decreases by one (to a minimum of 1) and the TN decreases by -2.

Moving into a hex containing five or more contour lines requires a full-round (or extended, at the Narrator’s discretion) Climb test for medium characters. See ‘Climb’ on

page 122 of the core rulebook. Larger characters may be able to surmount such vertical distances by continuing the table's obvious progression, at the Narrator's discretion.

* Includes the regular cost to move one hex on level ground.

[[END TABLE]]

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 3.X: Moving Downhill

<u>Destination Hex Contains...</u>	<u>Total Yards Required*</u>	<u>Test Required</u>
1–2 Contour Line	1	None
3–4 Contour Lines	2	TN 5 Jump
5–6 Contour Lines	3	TN 10 Jump

This table assumes a medium character is moving. For each size level the moving character is smaller than medium, the yards of movement required increases by one and the TN increases by +2. For each size level the moving character is larger than medium, the yards of movement required decreases by one (to a minimum of 1) and the TN decreases by –2.

A character who moves downhill more than six contour lines is either climbing if he takes time to descend slowly or falling if he simply leaps off the precipice. See 'Climbing' on page 122 of the core rulebook or 'Falling' on page 245 of the core rulebook. Larger characters may be able to surmount such vertical distances without climbing or falling by continuing the table's obvious progression, at the Narrator's discretion.

* Includes the regular cost to move one hex on level ground.

[[END TABLE]]

Attacking from Above or Below

It's easier to attack enemies when you are on higher ground than they are. When attacking from higher ground—that is, when there is a downhill contour line separating you from your target—you gain a +2 attack bonus. When you attack from lower ground you suffer a –2 attack penalty. The bonuses and penalties are the same when there are two or three contour lines separating you from your opponent, but if there are four or more contour lines in the way, you are prevented from attacking at all—the difference in height is simply too great. The Narrator may rule, however, that creatures of sizes greater than Medium can attack over four or more contour lines. Bonuses for attacking up or downhill do not apply to ranged combat.

Facing

Each hex on the battle map has six sides, and each counter on the battle map must be aligned with one of these sides so it is clear which direction the character is looking. Generally speaking, characters are aware of, and able to attack and defend themselves against, anyone in front of them. They suffer a disadvantage, however, when attacked by someone who is directly behind them. A character attacked from behind loses the benefits of his shield, if he has one. Furthermore, the attacking character gains a +2 attack bonus.

It is easy to determine whether a given enemy is in front of or behind a given character when they are in adjacent hexes. The single hex directly opposite the character's facing is behind the character and the other five are in front of the character. Determining which area is directly behind a character can be confusing when ranged attacks are involved, however. Diagram 3.1: Facing clarifies the 60° swath that constitutes the larger area behind any character.

[[Diagram 3.1: Facing]]

Being Outflanked

These rules presume a character can defend himself against two opponents without suffering any unusual penalties. Once more than two opponents can attack a single character from adjacent hexes (ranged attacks do not contribute), however, the defending character can no longer adequately keep track of all his assailants. In such a situation, he is considered *outflanked*. An outflanked character suffers –1 Defence for each possible attacker past the first two, even if they do not actually launch attacks.

Example: Aukrad intercepts a small group of a dozen or so Orcs out raiding. He attacks and kills a scout, drawing the attention of the rest of the group. Only two Orcs can get to him in the first round. They do not outflank him as there are only two of them. On the second round a third Orc reaches him and joins the fray, attacking from the hex behind Aukrad. Aukrad's suffers –1 Defence against the attacks of all three. The one behind him gains a further +2 attack bonus and—were Aukrad carrying one—would ignore any bonus Aukrad was deriving from a shield. On the third round Aukrad is surrounded by six Orcs, the most that can attack him at once (because there are only six hexes adjacent to him). He suffers –4 Defence against all of them as the one behind him continues to enjoy his additional +2 attack bonus.

Keeping Your Guard Up

Combat is dangerous. It's hard to know when any given opponent is going to lunge in to make an attack. For that reason, characters in combat must *keep their guard up* by paying attention to their enemies and constantly adjusting their position in small ways to take advantage of their full Defence.

Some actions require a great deal of concentration and are difficult to carry out while keeping your guard up. These are actions that require *dropping your guard*, and include the following:

- Aiming a ranged weapon
- Casting a spell
- Changing weapons
- Mounting a steed
- Moving at a jog or faster
- Picking up an object
- Standing from prone

When a character drops his guard, any enemy in an adjacent hex who is not facing directly away is allowed to launch a free attack targeting the character who drops his guard. This includes enemies who are not adjacent to a moving character who drops his guard when he begins moving but who become adjacent to him as he moves.

Free attacks are resolved like normal basic armed attacks or punch/kick unarmed attacks. A given character may only make one free attack per round. In order to be eligible to make a free attack you must be capable of making an attack in the first place, meaning that your weapon (or fist) is ready. Characters using ranged weapons and long weapons (see ‘Reach Attacks’ on page XX) cannot take free attacks, nor can spells be cast as free attacks. Free attacks are resolved before the character who dropped his guard begins whatever action he is attempting, unless movement carries the character into free attack ranged, in which case it is resolved immediately when the moving character and attacker become adjacent.

Being hit by a free attack does not interrupt what the acting character was doing—characters hit by free attacks still cast their spells, mount their horses, or continue on their way. If the character dropped his guard to attempt something that requires a test, however, his test has +5 TN for each superior success scored against him with a free attack, +10 TN for each extraordinary success scored against him, and +15 TN for each heroic success scored against him (if the fell strikes combat option is being used).

Ultimately, it is up to the Narrator to adjudicate whether a character must drop his or her guard in order to perform some action. As a general rule, any attack action a character takes, including changing targets and defending against multiple opponents, does not require a character to drop his guard. All other actions—anything that requires a character to concentrate on something other than those opponents currently attacking him in hand-to-hand combat—usually require dropping one’s guard and permit free attacks.

Example: Narufindelin finds herself surrounded by three dangerous Southrons who mean to kill her. She knows that over the next rise her Elf-allies are waiting in ambush, their bows at the ready, but that in her current position they can see neither Narufindelin nor her enemies. She decides to make a break for the ridge, moving at a sprint. To do so she must drop her guard, which allows the three to make free attacks against her. She survives those attacks (two complete successes and one superior success), taking a number of wounds in the process. She makes her TN 15 Run test with a miracle roll. (Normally it would be a TN 10 test, but the superior success against her modifies makes the TN +5.) Beginning to trace her movement up a path of hexes towards the ridge, the

Narrator announces that she has passed within one hex of a fourth Southron who was hiding in some shrubbery. Since she has dropped her guard and moved into a hex adjacent to an enemy, he also gets a free attack against her.

Line of Sight

One of the most important things the tactical combat system can tell those involved in combat is whether a given combatant can see someone he'd like to attack, say with a ranged weapon or spell. Being able to see another combatant or feature of the battlefield is called having *line of sight*.

Line of sight can be of three types: *unobstructed*, *partially obstructed*, and *completely obstructed*. Having an unobstructed line of sight to a given target means that there are no obstacles to seeing or launching ranged weapons at it. It occurs when a straight line connecting the centre of the hex containing the looking or attacking character and the centre of the hex containing the target does not pass through any hex with an obstacle to sight or attack in it. Having partially obstructed line of sight means that a similar straight line passes through one or more hexes that are a partial obstacle to sight or attack. Having completely obstructed line of sight means that a similar straight line passes through at least one hex that contains a complete obstacle to sight or attack.

Partial and complete obstacles to sight and attack are listed on Table 3.X: Line of Sight Obstacles. It is important for Narrators, when they introduce elements of terrain by drawing them on the battle map, to inform the players what their characteristics are—whether a given clump of shrubs is light, medium, or heavy foliage, for example.

Each hex the straight line passes through which is occupied by one of the obstructions listed on Table 3.X causes the listed TN modifier to any Ranged Combat or Observe test that must be made to attack or see the target. If the straight line passes through more than one hex of obstruction, the TN modifiers are summed. If three hexes of light foliage and a hex containing a medium combatant intervene, for example, a TN +15 modifier applies.

Hitting Obstructions

When a character attempts a Ranged Combat attack through obstructions but fails, the obvious question that must be answered is whether the attack struck one of the obstructions instead. On a normal failure the answer is no. On a complete failure the Narrator rolls randomly among all obstacles to determine which one was hit. On a disastrous failure the Narrator chooses the worst obstacles that could have been hit, such as an ally of the attacker, if one obstructed the shot. Damage is dealt to the unintended target as it would be had it been the chosen target, even if that target has a Defence that would normally make it impossible for him to be hit by the shot.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Table 3.X: Line of Sight Obstacles

<u>Example Obstruction</u>	<u>Type of Obstruction</u>	<u>TN Modifier per Hex</u>
Little creature	Partial	+1 TN
Small character or creature	Partial	+3 TN
Medium character or creature	Partial	+6 TN
Large creature	Partial	+9 TN
Mammoth or larger creature	Complete	—
Light Foliage	Partial	+3 TN
Medium Foliage	Partial	+6 TN
Heavy Foliage	Partial	+9 TN
Pillar	Partial	+6 TN
Wall	Complete	—
Hill* (2 levels of contour)	Partial	+6 TN
Hill* (3 levels of contour)	Partial	+12 TN
Hill* (4 levels of contour)	Complete	—

* Tracing a line of sight over contour lines only impedes line of sight if the hill is in between the two points—that is, if the contour lines go up and then back down along the straight line from hex to hex. There is no penalty for simply shooting uphill.

[[END BOX]]

Other Unintended Targets

When the target of a ranged combat attack is standing adjacent to other characters—such as when they are in hand-to-hand combat with each other—these become potential accidental targets, even if the hexes they occupy do not obstruct line of sight. If a character misses such a target with complete failure and there are no other obstructions, a randomly selected adjacent target is hit. If a character misses such a target with a disastrous failure the Narrator chooses the worst adjacent target—typically an ally—to be hit with the errant projectile. If there are obstructions to the shot one of those is hit instead, according to the rules above. As above, damage is dealt to the unintended target as it would be had it been the chosen target, even if that target has a Defence that would normally make it impossible for him to be hit by the shot.

Firing Through Complete Obstructions

It is possible—though very difficult—to fire a ranged weapon through a complete obstacle in hopes of hitting an opponent hiding behind it. (It is not possible to see through a complete obstacle.) This calls for a TN +18 penalty to the attack test. Even if the attack test is successful, the projectile must then penetrate the obstacle before wounding the

intended target. See Table 9.18: Armour and Cover Protection on page 232 of the core rulebook for the damage typical obstacles can absorb. A projectile can only penetrate an obstacle if it deals damage equal to the damage absorbed and damage sustainable statistics. Any damage that remains carries over to the target of the attack. Good luck.

Reach Attacks

Especially long weapons can be used to attack opponents even when they are one hex past adjacent to the attacker. Such attacks are called *reach* attacks. Attackers making reach attack tests suffer a –2 penalty but gain the advantage that they can attack targets otherwise unavailable. (Weapons capable of making reach attacks can be used to make normal attacks against adjacent foes, and when used in this way, the –2 reach attack penalty does not apply.) Skilled attackers can make reach attacks even when the intervening hex between attacker and target is occupied by a character, creature, or object. This imposes a –4 attack penalty and forces the attacker to drop his guard. It is not possible to make a free reach attack in response to another character dropping his guard.

Large creatures wielding appropriately scaled weapons can also make reach attacks, though they are subject to the modifiers and restrictions described above. Mammoth or larger creatures may be able to make reach attacks at distances of three (or more) hexes, at the Narrator's discretion and depending on the situation.

Characters and creatures capable of making reach attacks can also attempt a new armed combat manoeuvre called *keep at bay*. This has action cost 1 and can only be attempted against opponents who are in the range of reach attacks (and no closer). If successful, the target of the attack suffers no immediate damage but may not move so he is adjacent to the attacker for one round without risking damage. (See the definition of 'one round' on page XX.) If he wishes to risk damage, on his action the target may announce any movement action and then make an opposed Run vs. Armed Combat roll against the character who is keeping him at bay. On a success, he may move into any adjacent hex he wishes without taking damage. On a failure, however, he wastes his movement action and takes one and one-half times the weapon's normal damage. (No attack test is made. The damage is simply rolled and applied.)

Chapter Four: Tools of the Trade

'It was rather splendid to be wearing a blade made in Gondolin for the goblin-wars of which so many songs had sung. . . .'

— *The Hobbit*

[Movie Still 28]

All the courage and skill in Middle-earth is little use without a strong sword and stout shield to back it up. This chapter introduces a variety of new resources your characters can use in their struggle against the Shadow.

Weaponry

'[A]mong them were several swords of various makes, shapes, and sizes. Two caught their eyes . . . because of their beautiful scabbards and jewelled hilts.'

— *The Hobbit*

As the variety of weapons available to martial character expands their options, the following section introduce statistics for many weapons not detailed in the core rulebook, rules for describing improvised weapons in play, and a mechanism for describing the magical and other special abilities possessed by some noteworthy weapons.

Additional Standard Weapons

*There beryl, pearl, and opal pale,
And metal wrought like fishes' mail,
Buckler and corslet, axe and sword,
And shining spears were laid in hoard.*

— *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The following section describes weapons familiar from our history but which are not detailed in the core rulebook. Narrators are free to restrict the use of any of these weapons in their chronicles if they do not meet with their own sense of what is possible in Middle-earth.

Axe, Throwing: A common ranged weapon amongst the Dwarves, a throwing axe is balanced to tumble end over end in flight.

Crossbow: Crossbows are slow to reload—a reload action with a crossbow costs two actions—but their bolts strike with enough force to pierce the heaviest armour plates. Once a crossbow is loaded, you can keep it at the ready and fire it when a target presents itself.

Flail: Consisting of a steel ball attached to a wood or iron handle by a length of chain, the flail is a difficult weapon to master but one that is versatile in combat. Although it can be

used normally with the full range of attack actions, and flail can also be used to entangle an opponent—as whips and nets can—if the optional rules for entangling found on page XX are being used in your chronicle.

Glaive: This polearm has a long, thick blade at its tip instead of a spear point. A character using a glaive who has at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms can use it to make reach attacks (see page XX). A character attempting to use this weapon who does not have at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms cannot do so, and furthermore, suffers a –4 penalty rather than the usual –2 penalty for being untrained.

Halberd: This poleaxe has a sharp spear point at its tip for piercing attacks as well as an axe head for slashing. A character using a halberd who has at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms can use it to make reach attacks (see page XX). A character attempting to use this weapon who does not have at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms cannot do so, and furthermore, suffers a –4 penalty rather than the usual –2 penalty for being untrained.

Hammer, Great: This massive sledgehammer is used to batter opponents senseless, smashing through their defences and pounding their armour to splinters. A great hammer's head, however, is so heavy that each blow pulls you off your balance, leaving you vulnerable to attack. When fighting with this weapon, you suffer a –2 penalty to your Defence and any Swiftness tests for dodging, parrying, or blocking. The great hammer requires two hands to use.

Lance: The preferred weapon of many mounted warriors, lances deals double damage (rather than one and a half times damage) when used with a charge action while mounted.

Long Spear: The simplest and most primitive of polearms, the long spear is simply a long shaft of wood with a pointed tip. A character using a long spear who has at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms can use it to make reach attacks (see page XX). A character attempting to use this weapon who does not have at least one rank in Armed Combat: Polearms cannot do so, and furthermore, suffers a –4 penalty rather than the usual –2 penalty for being untrained.

Net: A fighting net is similar to the fishing implement save that it is often set with sharp, barbed hooks to catch on an opponent's armour. While such a weapon may not be as impressive as a sword or a mace, in the hands of a skilled combatant it can quickly immobilise an opponent. A net can be used in three ways. First, it may be thrown. When thrown, the attacker uses the Ranged Combat: Net skill and may entangle his opponent if he achieves superior success or better (see 'Entangling' on page XX). Second, it may be used offensively in hand-to-hand combat. When used in this way, the attacker uses the Armed Combat: Net skill, inflicts the listed damage, and may entangle his opponent if he achieves superior success or better. Third, if the optional Shield Skill rules are being used (see page XX), a net may be used as a shield. If used in this way, the net modifies its wielder's Defence like a small shield under those optional rules (that is, it increases it by one) as long as it is being held at the ready and the wielder is aware of his surroundings.

Pick: A pick is a wood or iron haft topped with a long, beak-like metal spike used to pierce armour.

Pick, Heavy: This version of the pick is set with a heavier head on a longer, thicker haft. A heavy pick requires two hands to wield properly.

Shield, Medium: Medium shields are slightly larger and heavier than small shields, but not as heavy as large shields.

Sling: This simple weapon is a length of cloth or animal hide used to fire small rocks. While it lacks a bow or crossbow's strength, ammunition is almost always at hand. Many barbarian tribes that do not craft bows rely on slings as their primary ranged weapons.

Sword, Elf: These long, slender, curved blades have pommels that almost match their blades in length. An Elf-blade is specially crafted to allow for quick, deadly strikes. In battle, massed ranks of Elves can execute perfectly timed strikes that appear more like a choreographed performance than an attack. Elf-swords require two hands to wield properly.

[Movie Still 29]

Sword, Great: These long, powerful blades are terrible to behold in battle—a single stroke of a great sword can cut a man in two. A great sword requires two hands to use.

Warhammer: A useful weapon against heavily armoured opponents, a warhammer has a flat, heavy head used for crushing metal and bone opposite a long, sharp pick that can pierce the toughest protection. (The hammer described on page 206 of the core rulebook is referred to as a war-hammer, but is not of this type. The hammers described there have two flat heads rather than the hammer-and-pick arrangement described above.)

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

<3>Table 4.1: New Armed Combat Weapons

<4>Weapon	Damage	Parry Bonus	Size	Weight	Price
Axe, Throwing	2d6+3	+0	M	2 lbs.	2 SP, 3 sp
Flail	2d6+3	+2	M	6 lbs.	3 SP, 1 sp
Glaive	2d6+3	-2	L	13 lbs.	4 SP, 2 sp
Halberd	2d6+4	-2	L	12 lbs.	4 SP, 3 sp
Hammer, Great	2d6+8	+0	L	20 lbs.	3 SP, 2 sp
Lance	2d6+6	-2	L	18 lbs.	3 SP, 2 sp
Long Spear	2d6+1	-1	L	10 lbs.	3 SP
Net	1/2-d6	+3	M	3 lbs.	3 sp
Pick	2d6+2	+0	M	8 lbs.	2 SP, 2 sp
Pick, Heavy	2d6+4	+0	L	12 lbs.	3 SP
Sword, Elf	2d6+5	+2	M	6 lbs.	3 SP, 1 sp
Sword, Great	2d6+6	+1	L	10–15 lbs.	3 SP, 2 sp

Warhammer 2d6+4/ +0 M 10 lbs. 3 SP

[[END TABLE]]

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

<3>Table 4.2: New Ranged Combat Weapons

<4>Weapon	Damage	Range*	Weight	Price
Axe, throwing	2d6+3	5/20/50/100/+15	2 lbs.	2 SP, 3 sp
Crossbow bolt	2d6+5	5/25/50/100/+25	5 lbs.	3 SP, 1 sp
Net	1/2-d6	2/4/8/16/+2	3 lbs.	3 sp
Sling stone	2d6	5/20/40/80/+20	1lb.	2 SP

*Ranges are given in yards. Ranges are listed in the following order: point blank, short, medium, long, and extended increments.

[[END TABLE]]

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X: New Shields

Shield	Weight	Parry Bonus/Attack Modifier	Price
Medium Shield	5-8 lbs	+4 to parry/-5 to ranged attacks	6 sp

<2>Improvised Weapons

‘Even as he swooned he caught, as through a swirling mist, a glimpse of Strider leaping out of the darkness with a flaming brand of wood in either hand.’

– *The Fellowship of the Ring*

[Movie Still 30]

Sometimes warriors need weapons when sword, axe, or mace are unavailable. In these cases they must make do with whatever tools are at hand. ‘Improvised weapon’ is a term that encompasses any object that isn’t expressly designed to be used in combat but can be pressed into service as a weapon. Rather than attempt to cover every possible object that might be used in a fight, this section provides general guidelines for judging the combat-worthiness of any given item.

Any given object that could be used as an improvised weapon can be described by three traits: *size*, *weight*, and *durability*. Each is described below.

Size: An item’s physical size. Larger items are more difficult to handle but tend to do more damage. *Huge* items are those up to eight feet in their largest dimension, *bulky* items are three to four feet, *small* items are one to three feet, and *tiny* items are smaller

than that. A character cannot use an item more than eight feet long as an improvised weapon. These size categories should not be confused or compared with character and creatures size categories.

Weight: An item's raw mass. Improvised weapons may be of *light* (less than 5 lbs.), *medium* (5–20 lbs.), or *heavy* (20+ lbs.) weight. A character cannot use any item weighing more than his Strength x10 as an improvised weapon.

Durability: The solidity of an item. Items can be of *fragile*, *average*, or *stout* durability, determined using the Narrator's judgement. Durability determines the likelihood that a weapon will be destroyed when used to attack.

Table 4.3: Improvised Weapons summarises the various characterisations possible for each trait. To determine an improvised weapon's game statistics, simply sum the relevant table entries for each of the three traits.

Example: The Narrator decides a troll's cooking pot is huge (because it is greater than four feet but less than eight feet across), heavy (because it weights more than 20 lbs.), and stout (based on the Narrator's estimation). Thus, it has Damage 2d6+6, Parry Bonus +2, Accuracy –6, Weapon Size Large, and has a Breakage TN 3.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

<3>Table 4.3: Improvised Weapons

<4>Weapon	Damage	Parry Bonus	Accuracy	Weapon Size*	Breakage TN
Size					
Huge	+5	+1	–2	L	±0
Bulky	+2	±0	–1	L	±0
Small	±0	±0	±0	M	±0
Tiny	–2	–2	±0	S	±0
Weight					
Heavy	2d6	±0	–4	+1 category**	+1
Medium	1d6	±0	–2	no effect	±0
Light	1/2-d6	±0	±0	–1 category**	–1
Durability					
Stout	+2	+1	±0	—	+2
Average	±0	±0	±0	—	+4
Fragile	–2	–2	±0	—	+8

*Not to be confused with the size characteristic of an improvised weapon or creature, 'weapon size' is the statistic that determines what sorts of creatures can use them without

penalty. See page 206 of the core rulebook for information. Weapon size cannot be larger than Large or smaller than Small, regardless of an item's weight modification.

**For example, a tiny item that is heavy has a weapon size of Medium and a small item that is light has a weapon size of Small.

[[END TABLE]]

Since improvised weapons aren't designed for combat, they have a few additional statistics: *accuracy* and *breakage TN*. Each is described below.

Accuracy: Since improvised weapons aren't designed for use in combat, they are difficult to handle. Accuracy is a number—typically negative—that applies as a test modifier to all attack tests made with the item.

Breakage TN: Less durable items often break when used to strike blows in combat. Any time an object with a breakage TN is used to launch an attack, whether it inflicts any damage or not, 2d6 are rolled. The result must meet or exceed the breakage TN in order for the item to survive intact. Characters used as improvised weapons (tossed Dwarves, for example) do not suffer breakage. If used as an improvised weapon, a character suffers Wound Points equal to those inflicted by the improvised attack.

<3>Throwing Improvised Weapons

Poor as they are in melee combat, improvised weapons are even worse for ranged combat. Improvised weapons have range increments based on their weight as shown on Table 4.X: Throwing Improvised Weapons. Character use Ranged Combat to throw improvised weapons, but suffer double the accuracy penalties listed on Table 4.3.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X Throwing Improvised Weapons

<u>Weight</u>	<u>Range</u>
Heavy	1/2/3/4+1
Medium	3/6/9/12/+3
Light	5/10/20/40/+5

[[END TABLE]]

<3>Example Improvised Weapons

Four example improvised weapons are detailed below in terms of their traits and summarized on Table 4.4: Example Improvised Weapons.

Tankard: Tiny, light, fragile.

Chain: Small, medium, stout.

Boulder: Bulky, heavy, stout.

Stool: Bulky, medium, average.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

<3>Table 4.4: Example Improvised Weapons

<4>Weapon	Damage	Parry Bonus	Accuracy	Weapon Size*	Breakage TN
Tankard	1/2d6-4	-4	±0	S	7
Chain	1d6+2	+1	-2	M	2
Boulder	2d6+4	+1	-5	L	3
Stool	1d6+2	±0	-3	L	4

[[END TABLE]]

Poisons

‘[His brow] was drenched with sweat; but Faramir did not move or make any sign, and seemed hardly to breathe.’

— *The Return of the King*

While any character with Lore/Wilderness: Herbalism can bring forth the virtues of herbs by properly harvesting and preparing them as described in *Paths of the Wise* (see pages XX-XX), harmful poisons are the sole province of those with the Brew Poison order ability. Such characters use their intimate knowledge of the wild to gather the wide variety of materials necessary to produce poisons, then employ ancient techniques handed down from generation to generation to actually brew these baneful concoctions.

This knowledge, however, is valuable to many outside the primitive cultures where it is known. Many sages, herbalists, and even healers from more advanced cultures spend time among barbarians, studying their lore and applying it to their work. In game terms, these characters pay advancement picks to join the barbarian order and purchase the Brew Poison order ability. The character does not necessarily become a barbarian, culturally speaking. Rather, he spends the equivalent time and effort building the foundation of his poison lore.

The following sections expand the Brew Poison order ability described on page 81 of the core rulebook, and replace the description provided there. They also expand the poison traits described on pages 246–7 of the core rulebook, providing new traits as well as new ways traits can be combined.

<3>The Brew Poison Order Ability

Table 4.X: Brew Poison Improvements summarises the poison traits available to those with the Brew Poison order ability at various levels of improvement. This replaces the description of Brew Poison on page 81 of the core rulebook.

When preparing a poison, a barbarian may always choose a trait less powerful than those to which he is optimally entitled because of his improvements. For example, a barbarian with 2 improvements could choose an onset time of 1 hour, if he wished.

To actually prepare doses of a poison, a barbarian must first declare what type of poison he is trying to make by specifying values for each of the six poison traits. Then he spends four hours scavenging, combining ingredients, cooking them, and so forth. At the end of that time, he rolls 1d6. If the surrounding terrain is unlike that of his homeland, he subtracts between one and three (Narrator's discretion, depending on the level of difference) from the roll. The result is the number of doses produced. (In unfamiliar territory, it is possible for a session of poison-brewing to result in no doses.) Doses of poison can be preserved indefinitely.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X: Brew Poison Improvements

Brew Poison Improvements	Type	Onset Time	Potency	Treatment	Effect	Stages
0	Injury, ingested	20 minutes, 1 hour, 6 hours, 1 day	±0 TN	±0 TN	Basic Attribute Reduction	1
1	Contact, inhaled	1 minute	+5 TN	+5 TN	Improved Attribute Reduction, Damage	1/2-d6
2		1 round	+10 TN	+10 TN	One additional effect pick*	
3			+15 TN	+15 TN	Two additional effect picks*	1d6
4			+20 TN	+20 TN	Three additional effect picks*	
5				None	Four additional effect picks*	2d6
6+					One more additional effect pick at each level*	

*See 'Poison Effects' on page XX.

[[END TABLE]]

<3>Poison Effects

The following paragraphs detail all possible poison effects and secondary effects, clarifying some effects which are described on pages 246–7 of the core rulebook and adding some new effects. Barbarians with no improvements in Brew Poison can use only the Basic Attribute Reduction effect, as indicated on Table 4.X: Brew Poison Improvements. At one improvement in Brew Poison, they gain access to the Improved Attribute Reduction and Damage effects. Beginning at the third improvement to Brew Poison, the character gains one additional effect pick with each improvement to Brew Poison. Each one of these additional effect picks allows the character to choose an additional effect, such as paralysis or blindness, or to improve—according to its description— an effect he already knows, such as increasing the damage that can be done with the damage trait, or increasing the duration of one of the durations traits (see below) he already knows.

Each trait identified with an asterisk is a *duration trait*, meaning that its duration at each stage is 1d6 minutes. Additional effect picks can be spent to improve each individual duration trait as shown on table 4.X: Duration Improvements.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X: Duration Improvements

<u>Additional Effect Picks*</u>	<u>Duration</u>
1	2d6 minutes
2	1d6 hours
3	1d6 days
4	1d6 weeks
5	Permanent

* This is the number of picks spent past the first one, which gave the character access to that class of effect.

[[END TABLE]]

Basic Attribute Reduction: Each dose of this type of poison affects a particular attribute: Bearing, Nimbleness, Perception, Strength, Vitality, or Wits, which is chosen when the poison is brewed. The full effect of such a poison reduces the attribute in question by one point for each passing stage. The secondary effect of these poisons is that the attribute is unaffected.

Blindness*: This terrible, specialised poison renders its victim unable to see. The effects of blindness are described on page XX.

Damage: Damage poisons cause 1d6 points of damage at full effect and no damage as a secondary effect. The damage trait can be improved with additional effect picks per Table 4.X: Damage Effect Improvement.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X: Damage Effect Improvement

<u>Additional Improvements*</u>	<u>Effect Damage</u>	<u>Secondary Effect Damage</u>
1	2d6	Half damage
2	Full Wound Level	Half damage
3	2 Full Wound Levels	Half damage
4	3 Full Wound Levels	Half damage
5+**	4 Full Wound Levels	Half damage

* This is the number of picks spent past the first one, which gave the character access to that class of effect.

** Each additional improvement increases the number of full Wound Levels of damage by one. Secondary effect remains 'half damage.'

[[END TABLE]]

Daze*: Poisons with the daze effect cloud a victim's judgement and dull his reflexes. Victims lose one action each round.

Deafness*: Similar to the blindness poison described above, this poison affects its victim's ability to hear. This does not affect most physical tests, but may make many social and academic tests impossible even to attempt.

Improved Attribute Reduction: These poisons are the same as basic attribute reduction poisons, save that the effect is to reduce the attribute by 1d6 points. The secondary effect is to reduce the attribute by 1.

Nightmares: Though this poison has no immediate effect, when next the victim sleeps his dreams are twisted into horrible nightmares. He gains none of the benefits of rest that night and may see visions of relevance to the chronicle at the Narrator's discretion. This type of poison does not affect Elves and has no secondary effect.

Pain*: This poison effect amplifies the pain its victims feel, crippling them with agony from relatively minor wounds. Anyone who fails the Stamina reaction test to resist this poison triples the penalties he suffers due to injury or weariness. Apply the effects of any abilities or edges that reduce these penalties before tripling them.

Panic*: Panic poisons have a hallucinogenic effect, causing their victims to react to sights and sounds that exist only in their minds. A poison with this effect causes a victim to flee from his opponents in a blind panic and hide in the nearest convenient spot. The victim defends himself if attacked, but only fights if cornered.

Paralysis*: The victims of these poisons can take no physical action whatsoever, though they continue to be aware of their surroundings, breathe, beat their hearts, and otherwise sustain life.

Sluggishness*: When exposed to this poison effect, a creature's muscles grow unresponsive. This poison is useful for taking opponents alive without completely debilitating them. The victim of this poison tumbles limply to the ground, cannot move without assistance, and suffers a –10 penalty to all physical actions. He may still talk and use social or academic skills as normal.

Weariness: These poisons cause their victims to lose one Weariness level. The weariness trait can be improved with additional effect picks per Table 4.X: Weariness Effect Improvement.

[[BEGIN TABLE]]

Table 4.X: Weariness Effect Improvement

Additional Improvements*	Effect Levels Lost	Secondary Effect Levels Lost
1	2	0
2	3	1
3	4	1
4	4	2

* This is the number of picks spent past the first one, which gave the character access to that class of effect.

[[BEGIN BOX]]

Brew Poison Improvement Example

When he gains his first advancement, Thân-deri-Thân spends three of his advancement picks to choose the Brew Poison order ability. He can then make poisons of Type injury or ingested; Onset Time 20 minutes, 1 hour, 6 hours, or 1 day; Potency ± 0 TN; Treatment ± 0 TN; Effect Basic Attribute Reduction, and Stages 1.

After a few chapters of his chronicle he improves his Brew Poison ability, adding a single improvement. He adds to his repertoire the ability to craft poisons of Type contact and inhaled, Onset Time 1 minute, Potency +5 TN, Treatment +5 TN, Effects Improved Attribute Reduction and Damage, and Stages 1/2-d6. It is important to note that he does not *lose* access to the options he had before. Rather, he gains more options.

A few chapters down the line, when he improves Brew Poison once more, he gains access to Onset Time 1 round, Potency +10 TN, Treatment +10 TN, and one additional effect pick. He has many options for his additional effect pick. He could, for instance, increase the harm he can do with Damage poisons to 2d6/half damage (per Table 4.X: Damage Effect Improvement). Or, he could choose some new effect to learn, such as Daze or Panic.

As he progresses, he'll gain access to one more additional effect pick with each improvement to his Brew Poison ability, each of which can give him access to a new effect or improve one of the effects he already knows.

[[END BOX]]

Chapter Five: Combat and Storycraft

‘Shelob, with the driving force of her own cruel will, with strength greater than any warrior’s hand, thrust herself upon a bitter spike.’

— *The Two Towers*

Previous chapters have presented ways barbarians and warriors may be honed to martial perfection. Other chapters have introduced new rules to make barbarians and warriors more effective in combat. But how do you, the Narrator, address barbarians and warriors most effectively—and dramatically—in your stories? How can you make your chronicle’s tales engaging for martial characters and interesting for yourself as well?

This chapter is intended for you, the Narrator. It considers ways martial characters can fit into existing story arcs or create new ones, ways you can challenge such characters, and ways you can keep them guessing. It also provides story ideas specifically geared to martial characters, for you to use directly or draw inspiration from.

Always remember that no good story is entirely of one type. A good martial story will contain non-martial elements, just as a good non-martial story will still contain some violent activity. The key is blending these two effectively and in a proportion that is pleasing to all participants.

Martial Storycraft

‘By our valor the wild folk of the East are still restrained, and the terror of Morgul kept at bay; and thus alone are peace and freedom maintained. . . .’

— *Boromir, The Fellowship of the Ring*

The following sections provide many suggestions on structuring adventures and chronicles, tailoring them to the needs of martial characters.

Motivation

The simplest method for involving martial characters in your stories is to introduce armed conflict. Few such folk can resist the urge to draw their blades or bows and leap into the fray. But how does one get a martial character involved in conflict? What inspires them to participate?

Martial prowess is a physical characteristic, and martial characters frequently focus heavily on that aspect above all others. This striving for perfection in one particular area often makes martial characters fiercely competitive. They pride themselves on their martial capabilities and enjoy testing them against others. This does not mean that such characters are all conceited. Many leap at the chance to gain instruction from those they consider superior. But first they must be sure that person is in fact more skilled, and must also show what they already know, to avoid being taken for a novice or a stripling.

How does this help you motivate martial characters? Present them with opponents who are their matches or betters—a better swordsman, a better archer, a faster runner. PCs will be drawn to these individuals in the hopes of proving themselves against them or learning from them, either by mimicry or by instruction.

Martial characters are also often tempted by the chance for glory. These are men and women who live by their strength, speed, and skill. But in addition to prominence in the immediate term, barbarians and warriors are keenly aware their prowess can fade with age. Many see that it behooves them to gain renown early in life in the hopes of either dying young but living forever in song, or of retiring to a comfortable post—trainer, captain, commander—offered to them because of their reputation.

When motivating martial characters, remember that they deal in the immediate and the physical. Direct goals are most effective: protect this man, guard that door, escort this caravan. Such tasks are focused and do not require esoteric thought. This is not to say that martial characters are unintelligent, for many are canny strategists and clever tacticians, but their plans focus on the real and the physical. Martial characters should be tasked with figuring out how to do something, not whether a given thing should be done.

In summary, then, to best motivate a martial character, you must provide a clear task, both direct and active, which provides the opportunity for personal glory and also gives the chance to test skills against equals or betters.

Action

Motivation leads to action, and many types of stories lend themselves to the motivations of martial characters. In all of them, the most important thing to keep in mind is that all of the parties to any conflict—martial or not—must have objectives, and those objectives must make sense. Given objectives that make sense, what types of action will be of most interest to martial characters?

Stories of war are the most obvious. It is hard to imagine another type of story in which martial characters would be more at home. It is not easy to plan an entire war in your chronicle, however, with their vast scope and great stakes. Much thought is devoted to planning war in the chronicle in *Helm's Deep*, however, and Narrators interested in martial conflict on such a scale are recommended to that book. Happily, it is not necessary to stage an entire war to keep martial characters active in the chronicle. Dynamic, physical challenges are all that is required, and such challenges come in many forms.

Raids are excellent fodder for martial adventures. Typically, PCs should defend the victims of raids rather than launch raids themselves, as it is particularly unheroic to press attacks against those unable to defend themselves. Most barbarians and warriors among the Free Peoples will leap to aid of beleaguered farmers and townspeople. This is an opportunity for martial PCs to demonstrate their skill, gain experience in combat, slaughter the Enemy's minions, and protect those too weak to defend themselves. Barbarians who are especially aligned with their native folk are that much more likely to be motivated by attacks on their people. Even if the PCs arrive at the scene of a raid too late, this can be excellent motivation for martial characters. Upon seeing the burnt-out

remains of a house and the bodies of those slain in the attack, most martial characters will vow to avenge the fallen and insist on tracking down the raiders and raining death upon them.

Ambushes are also an excellent martial diversion, whether the PCs are to do the ambushing or suffer their opponents' ambushes. In either case, as always, the action must make sense. If the PCs suffer from an ambush, their opponents should be appropriate for the area and have a valid reason for being there. The goal of their ambush should also be clear (to you, if not to the players). Are the enemy trying to simply slaughter the PCs, gain control of some treasure they possess, or take hostages for use against the PCs' allies? The aftermath of an ambush is also important, for if the characters were ambushed by enemies who are completely new to them, they will want to find out who their attackers were, why they attacked, and whether more of them lurk nearby. If the PCs are to ambush their enemies there must be some point to the attack. What greater goal will the ambush further, and on whose behalf (if not their own) will the PCs' attack be launched? Again, goals are important. Will the PCs slaughter their foes? Attempt to steal an item or control of a location? Accomplish some other goal entirely?

Hunting is another potential task for martial characters. Mighty warriors should hunt appropriate prey, of course, and Middle-earth provides no dearth of beasts—both fell and natural—against which barbarians and warriors can test their mettle. Although many martial characters will seek prey to hunt out of a desire to prove their worth or better their skills, other motivations are clearly possible. A hunt might be undertaken to protect a peaceful people from the ravages of a beast who attacks their flocks or homes, for example. The beast itself might be the reward of a hunt. Just as mundane game provides food, more powerful game might be valuable for hides that can be used to make magical armour, claws that can be fashioned into powerful weapons, and other body parts that can be transformed into mighty artifacts to aid the Free Peoples in their struggle against the Enemy.

Even routine game hunting gives the martial characters a chance to stretch their legs and use their skills. Pursuing deer and rabbits is not like stalking Men and Orcs, of course, but it does require strength, speed, endurance, and skill with weapons. Hunting also serves two larger purposes. First, it provides food. Second, it gives the characters a better sense of their surroundings. Hunters might spy a place to camp for the night, a cliff against which their company could withstand an attack, or a path that leads through the valley on a more direct route than their current course. Even if the only target is a single rabbit and he is stalked with sling and knife rather than bow and sword, hunting lets the characters work out their aggressions and keep their senses and reflexes sharp.

As you plan dynamic physical challenges for your chronicle, keep in mind that not every physical challenge involves combat. Maintaining the pace over a long march is challenging, and certainly physical, even though it involves no foe and no bloodshed. Scaling a mountain is much the same, as is carrying a message to a far-off destination in a limited amount of time. Non-martial characters in the mix put even greater onus on the martial characters who must naturally protect and lead them in such situations. When the Company of the Ring climbed Caradhras, for example, it fell to Aragorn and Boromir to keep the group together and alive. Even Gimli, a stout warrior, had difficulty with the mountain passes and with the thick snow, and though Legolas could move without

hindrance he could not protect the hobbits from the cold. Ensuring that companions survive a journey safe and unharmed often involves planning and discipline more than it does combat, for even the most powerful warrior cannot directly battle a snowstorm or a mountain or a raging river. But his strength and stamina and speed will prove useful against such dangers, and can aid to those around him as well. Even when presented with copious non-violent physical challenges of varied nature, however, keep in mind that martial characters may grow sullen if kept from combat too long.

Finally, note that discipline plays a major role in the life of the martial character and may provide conflicts of its own. For martial character who command other fighters, maintaining discipline in their own ranks is a challenge when the forces of the enemy terrify lesser warriors and corruption sows bad seeds among good men. Martial characters who are members of forces commanded by those greater than themselves may also be presented with difficulties if they are ordered to do things that are against their nature or which do not seem wise.

Keeping Combat Interesting

When combat occurs, it is your job to make it dynamic, challenging, and interesting. Facing a party of Orcs on open terrain is exciting the first time, familiar the second time, and old hat ever after. Keep combats varied and find new ways to challenge martial characters each time. This does not mean simply throwing more Orcs at them, either. Tactical challenges can take many forms.

One way to challenge barbarians and warriors is to insist that combat be nonlethal. Being forced to avoid killing blows makes combat a good deal more difficult and provides a greater test of the characters' skills. For example, the party may be set upon by Elves who are simply protecting their home and do not recognise the party as allies. It would be unwise to kill the Elves, so the martial characters must fight to disarm and incapacitate even while their foes shoot to kill. Another reason to avoid killing one's enemies is to gain information from them. If a party falls victim to an attack of Haradrim at the Fords of Isen, for example, an obvious question arises: What are these folk from a land so far away doing there? Since dead enemies cannot answer such questions, one or more must be incapacitated rather than slain.

Different terrain can also make combat more challenging. An open field is the easiest place to fight, where warriors solid footing, clear lines of sight, and plenty of room to move. But what about fighting in the mountains, among crags and peaks, where pebbles can slide under foot and loud noises can bring a wave of rock and dirt down upon friend and foe alike? Or a narrow pass, where characters have no room to manoeuvre and cannot swing full blows without striking the rock or earth about them? Or a battle in a shallow stream or small river, where the water sways about the feet and legs, preventing rapid steps, and below the water is sometimes solid dirt, sometimes shifting sand, and sometimes sinkholes that can swallow a man to his shoulders—or higher? Remember also that vegetation can cause difficulties. Fields of wheat can hide an army, rows of corn are thick and resistant to men seeking shelter, and tree roots can trip even as low-hanging branches strike the unwary about the head and shoulders.

Weather is another obstacle. Fighting on a clear day is preferred, but if an enemy attacks during a rainstorm the characters must defend themselves. Rain turns hard dirt to mud, obscures vision, makes weapons slippery, creates distracting noises, and distorts shapes and distances. Snowstorms are worse: chill air bites the lungs and numbs the fingers, sun on snow dazzles the eyes, ice is slippery underfoot, and snowdrifts make walking difficult even as they hide enemies. Heat is not much better than cold, however. The body craves moisture, and without constant replenishment even the sturdiest warrior grows weak and dizzy. Sweat makes armour uncomfortable and fingers slick. The eyes blur and mirages may appear in the distance until sight can no longer be trusted.

Another way to challenge martial characters is to challenge their assumptions and training. Most warriors assume combat involves individuals, but this is not always the case. Working to break down a castle gate is essentially a combat, with the foe as the gate itself. This requires a different mindset, since the opponent is an object and not a person. Likewise, defence requires a different mindset than attack. Protecting a person or a group or even a place requires thinking not of victory but of survival. How many die beneath your blade becomes far less important than how many live behind your shield. The challenge to defend is particularly hard for characters who desire glory, for they usually focus on leaping into a battle and killing as many as possible. As a protector, such characters have to reign in their normal tendencies and stand fast, ignoring openings in order to stay and defend their charges. Defending several things at once is an added challenge, for the character must prioritise—is it more important to save the castle, the king, or the map that shows the way into Mordor?

It is important to remember, too, that not every martial conflict involves a single hero facing off against just one villain. Martial conflicts can take many forms, and should throughout the story. If, in every battle, the martial PC winds up fighting the leader of the opposition in single combat, the players (and their characters) will come to expect this. At the start of each combat, they will search for this foe and target him so that the conflict can be won more quickly. Certainly the PCs should face off against their opposite numbers at times, particularly during climactic battles. But at other times they should fight hordes with no clear leader, or have minor skirmishes against a troop while the general is far away. Some conflicts are too large to involve a single combat between leaders. A siege is fought against an entire structure, and the tactics must be focused on defending or breaching it rather than on locating and destroying the commander. A castle can be defeated even if its captain escapes unharmed, just as a castle may stand firm even though an arrow strikes down its king. To be distracted by personal desires is to lose sight of the goal, and to suffer from that wavering of attention.

Martial Play

‘But still we fight on, holding all the west shores of Anduin; and those who shelter behind us give us praise, if ever they hear our name. . . .’

— *Boromir, The Fellowship of the Ring*

One of the challenges in dealing with martial characters lies in creating their opponents. Wading through hordes of puny goblins may be amusing for a time, but soon enough the

PCs will want greater challenges. Since part of many players' fun is making their characters stronger and more deadly with every advancement, your chronicle's villains will also need to press every advantage they have. These advantages may be of two types: advantages based on the statistics you assign them and advantages they gain by their combat strategies.

The Foes of Heroes

'Easterlings with axes, and Variags of Khand, Southrons in scarlet, and out of Far Harad black men like half-trolls with white eyes and red tongues.'

—*The Return of the King*

Many Narrators have great familiarity with the CODA system and need no aid in creating martial NPCs. If you are not as comfortable with the rules yet and need to build capable antagonists in a hurry, however, the following tips should shorten your learning curve considerably.

The first thing you should understand is that you are not required to create villains whose advancements are commensurate with those possessed by the heroes. While you can use advancements to get a rough sense of the comparative power of PCs and NPCs, advancements do not tell the whole story. It is much more important that you think about how the struggle will play out—and how the each party's statistics will affect the likelihood of their side prevailing—than that you arrive at some equilibrium of advancements.

With that in mind, the following sections discuss the NPC elements you will have to address when you set about creating martial villains in your chronicle.

Attributes: Remember that you are building a martial opponent and concentrate on giving your antagonist high Nimbleness, Strength, and Vitality. Keep in mind, however, that attributes are generally less important than skills and other abilities when determining the overall potency of any given character in combat.

Skills: Focus on your martial antagonist's Armed Combat, Ranged Combat, and Unarmed Combat, of course. Antagonists are most dangerous to the PCs when they are overwhelmingly proficient in a single weapon rather than having moderate skill with many different weapons. After all, a given combatant can only attack with one weapon at a time. If you are using the optional rules for Armed Combat: Shields on page XX, don't neglect this important skill when creating chronicle antagonists.

Though you must focus on combat skills when creating martial foes, do not forget other skills that also often prove useful in combat. If the conflict will be in a mountainous region or among trees, choose Climb. On the plains, Ride or Run are useful. Jump is often helpful, and Swim a necessity if rivers or lakes are nearby. Siegecraft should be taken if the NPCs are attacking or defending a structure, and Intimidate can be useful not only against the PCs, but also against their lesser allies. Do not overlook Stealth if the NPCs will attack from ambush.

Edges: Although it is easy to forget about edges in favour of pumping up a given villain's skill ranks, traits are one of the only ways to increase a fighter's effective skill

total above +12, which is an absolute necessity once the PCs gain even a few advancements. The most useful edges for martial villains are Accurate (+3 to a given Ranged Combat weapon) Bold (+5 to physical tests for a point of Courage), Doughty (+1 to Strength tests), Hardy (reduce all injury penalties by 2), Warwise (+1 to Siegecraft and all combat skills), Wary (+3 to Initiative), and Weapon Mastery (+3 to a given Armed Combat weapon).

Flaws: Although you obviously do not make your antagonists more powerful by giving them flaws, doing so can make combat much more interesting. That way, part of the goal of the combat can for the players to find out what weaknesses their opponents have, then move to exploit them.

Courage: In order to provide a challenge you should always consider granting one or more points of Courage to martial antagonists who are above the level of mere footsoldiers.

Orders: Because you can assign skill ranks without taking particular care about how many advancements are required, the most important factor to consider when assigning orders to martial villains is what order abilities they will have access to. Favoured Weapon is not particularly useful to NPC warriors because of this very consideration, but the new order abilities in this book that require it as a requisite may make you want to consider it. Swift Strike, on the other hand, is a very useful order ability for martial villains, if they have the appropriate requisites. Enemy barbarians can make particularly good use of the Champion order ability if the PCs are their chosen enemies. Brew Poison can also make foes very dangerous if they are advanced enough to create potent poisons they can introduce in the course of fighting.

If you're uncertain which order to choose, you should also consider the situation. Who are these foes? Where did they come from? Are they wild men who live off the land, or men who live in houses and eat with knives and trim their beards?

Equipment: If they are to survive, martial opponents must be armoured. While armour should be appropriate for the villain's culture and circumstances, you can make a given opponent much more threatening simply by outfitting them with strong armour. If the villain is particularly mighty, he may have access to legendary or even magical weapons. Legendary weapons that can Intimidate opponents (see page 90 of *Fell Beasts and Wondrous Magic*) provide another obstacle for the entire company of player characters. Legendary weapons also give a sense that the villains are part of a world and story, as opposed to an abstract set of statistics against which the PCs' own statistics are matched.

The Strategies of Villains

'Some now hastened up behind the Rohirrim, others held westward to hold off the forces of Gondor and prevent their joining with Rohan.'

—*The Return of the King*

Creating villains with formidable statistics is only half the battle. It's the way you deploy these villains that poses the real challenge to the PCs. Even the strongest NPC warrior can be cut down easily if he's foolish enough to be on foot in the midst of mounted

enemies. But even the weakest warrior can take down a strong fighter if he is well-placed and has planned ahead.

Be smart about your fights. In Middle-earth the armies of Sauron and Saruman are disciplined and trained and canny. They implement clever strategies and often win by guile as much as by strength. Take this to heart.

Use the local conditions against the PCs. If the setting is arctic, your NPCs should be trained and equipped to handle such conditions, with Climb, Jump, heavy furs, and grappling hooks. If it is sweltering desert, your warriors should wear loose flowing robes and scarves to shield their faces from sand and should carry both water and salt to keep from dehydrating. If the NPCs are local forces they should know every aspect of the country around them. They'll know where the river can be forded, where fresh water can be found for horses, where campsites are located, and where the mountain pass can be entered. The locals should not be caught unawares by their own geography.

Think about racial advantages as well. If the company of heroes consists of Men and Dwarves, give your NPCs the Night-eyed edge and attack in the dark. Avoid attacking Dwarf-PCs in the mountains, or Elf-PCs in forests.

Look for higher ground. If local, the NPCs will know where best to stand and fight, and where to attack. Higher ground or any other advantageous position gives a -1 to -3 TN and the PCs a $+1$ to $+3$ TN. For Ranged Combat this increases to -5 and $+5$.

Ambushes can be deadly, especially if you are using the optional rules for fell strikes, which can disadvantage or even incapacitate the ambushed in a single attack. If unwary PCs fail TN 10 Observe tests, they lose initiative and one action in the first round of attack. To make the ambush more deadly, you should presume that all antagonists spent the round before the ambush aiming: this gives the NPCs $+3$ to Ranged Combat and $+1$ to Armed Combat.

Remember that ranged weapons can be used in close quarters even after the initial ambush. A bow has a point blank range of 5 yards, and within that range attacks are -2 TN. If the archers have Far Shot, their point blank range extends to 10 yards, and they can stand at that mark and fire with deadly accuracy.

While less powerful individually than player characters, NPC villains often outnumber the company of heroes. Take advantage of manoeuvres that let the NPCs gang up on their opponents. Grab is particularly good when using paired or grouped NPCs—one grabs the PC and the others attack while he is held.

Timing is also important. The most challenging fights will begin when the heroes are weary and not fully alert, or when the heroes have split up, to gather firewood, say, or reconnoitre the area around their campsite.

When trying to gain tactical advantage over the heroes, however, you should avoid using the knowledge you, as Narrator, have about the player characters if it would be unknown to the villains.

If one of the PCs is a wizard and has used his magic openly, the NPCs stalking him would know about it. But if he has concealed his skills and dresses as a merchant, craftsman, or warrior the NPCs would have no reason to suspect his magical skills.

Adventures

'[W]e have played another part. Many evil things there are that your strong walls and bright swords do not stay.'

— Aragorn, *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The realms of Middle-earth are troubled in this Third Age, as Sauron gathers his strength to assault the kingdoms of Elves, Dwarves, and Men. Martial characters are in their element, surrounded by conflict and violence and the need for sturdy folk with strong arms and sharp blades.

Dangerous Locales

'I am glad that I have shared in your perils — that has been more than any Baggins deserves.'

— Bilbo, *The Hobbit*

Though Middle-earth is a place of peril, not every place in Middle-Earth is equally dangerous, or possesses as many opportunities for a fighter to gain renown and experience. Some locations remain sheltered and relatively safe, nestled in valleys and hidden by groves. Others seem to attract the eye of the Enemy and are constant centres of strife. The following sections suggest areas of Middle-earth that may be particularly appropriate for martial adventures.

Mordor: The land of the great enemy, Sauron. This dark nation is awash in Orcs, Trolls, dark Men, and worse horrors. Only the bravest heroes dare venture past its black gates, for within this land villains and cutthroats are the standard and people of honour the despised rarity. The borders of Mordor, however, are areas of constant skirmishing as the soldiers of Sauron seek to extend their master's reach into the neighbouring kingdoms. Further, as the age progresses to its end, more and more of Sauron's forces march toward the dark land, trampling foes as they approach.

Minas Tirith: This noble city, the capital of Gondor, stands as one of the oldest surviving enclaves of Men not sullied, destroyed, or turned by the evil of Sauron. The City of Watch looks out toward Mordor, a beacon of light against the coming darkness, and it is here that Men gather against the coming war. The warriors of Gondor sally forth repeatedly, destroying any who would dare raid into their lands and holding back the dark forces as much as possible.

Osgiliath: Once one of Gondor's fairest cities, now Osgiliath is merely a ruin. It lies on the far side of the Anduin, betwixt Mordor and Minas Tirith, and is a bone of bitter contention between the two forces. Gondor seeks to reclaim the ruins and Mordor seeks to crush it utterly, the first step in reaching Minas Tirith.

Helm's Deep: The great fortress of Rohan, and one of the strongest keeps in Middle-earth. The Hornburg, the central keep of Helm's Deep, has never been taken by any foe. But that may change. For exhaustive information on Helm's Deep, refer to the *Helm's Deep* sourcebook.

Isengard: Home of Saruman the Wise, sorcerer and would-be king. Saruman has transformed this once-lovely vale into a land of hard stone and iron, a cruel place filled with smoke and chains and workers. His armies gather here for their strike into Rohan, and the sorcerer himself remains within his tower of Orthanc. Any who could wrest from him the keys to that ancient tower would win a mighty stronghold, and the gratitude of Rohan and her neighbours. Much information about Isengard can be found in the *Isengard* sourcebook.

Moria: The Mines of Moria are an ancient Dwarf-realm, carved deep beneath the Misty Mountains. Great treasures—and perils— still lie within the mines, and adventurers are often tempted to brave the goblins and their ilk for the chance at such wealth, and the glory of having won it. See the *Moria* boxed set for more information.

Adventure Seeds

'[Bilbo] had many hardships and adventures before he got back. The Wild was still the Wild, and there were many other things . . . besides goblins. . . .'

— *The Hobbit*

No matter where in Middle-earth you set your chronicle, situations can be found which will interest martial characters. The following paragraphs contain story seeds you can use, either as the basis for a complete plot or as a sub-plot in an existing story. Alter them as appropriate to your chronicle or use them as examples to create other stories along similar lines.

Battle at the Ford: Saruman has stirred up the old hatred of the Dunlendings toward the Rohirrim and now the wild hill people are on the move. They're marching east, toward the Gap of Rohan. If they make it through the Gap and across the Fords of Isen, they'll be impossible to stop without an army far larger than the Rohirrim can field. To make matters worse, Saruman's own army of Orcs are marching south from Isengard, to meet the Dunlendings at the Fords. Any defence will have to stop them there or before, or Rohan will be quickly overrun.

Into the Ruins: The heir of Dol Amroth has gone missing! He was leading a small scouting party, and apparently they were ambushed—only one of the scouts escaped. The prince might still be alive, however. His party was near Osgiliath and he may have found shelter within those ruins. But Sauron's forces are fast approaching. If the prince is to be recovered he has to be found and brought back quickly.

Weathertop Distress: Two Rangers of the North who were to have met Aragorn in Rivendell were last spotted by other travellers making for Weathertop to look out over the area, but just after, a pack of Orcs appears. At last report the Rangers were still alive, but who knows how much longer they can hold out? They need reinforcements desperately. Even a few men could force the enemies away long enough for them to escape—provided the men get there in time.

Under-mountain Siege: The Dwarves reclaimed their kingdom under the Lonely Mountain after Smaug was killed, and now it is one of their greatest strongholds. But Sauron wants the free races scattered and so his forces have attacked Lonely Mountain,

forcing not only the Dwarves but the Men of Laketown into its carven halls. If someone cannot break the siege soon those inside will perish and Sauron will be one step closer to final victory.

Safeguards: A lord in whose service one of more characters find themselves wishes to travel throughout his lands to hearten his people against the coming storm. The characters have been sent ahead, to make sure the roads are safe. But all manner of Men and monsters prey upon travellers, and all threats must be eliminated before the lord and his entourage arrive.

Bonds of Ice and Snow: The Men of the frozen lands of Forochel are said to be mighty barbarians, powerful in battle and expert at handling snow, ice, and cold. They could be valuable in the war against Sauron. Unfortunately, they only esteem strength and skill at arms, and will make no treaties with those they don't respect. Characters set to gain their aid will have to win their support by demonstrating their own valour and might.

In the River: Cair Andros was once a great fortress, and its location on an island in the middle of the Anduin makes it valuable as a lookout point, way station, and blockade. Unfortunately, the city was sacked decades ago and now it hosts dark creatures. The characters are set to clear out the unwanted residents and restore the place to its former might and utility.

Chronicle Seeds

“Ah!” said Gandalf. “That is a very long story. The beginnings lie back in the Black Years, which only the lore-masters now remember.”

— *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Martial storylines can connect many smaller adventures provided the goal is broad enough and requires enough time and planning to keep the characters involved for a longer period. Below are a few examples of larger stories for martial characters. They can form the basis of their own chronicles or as long sub-plots during an existing chronicle—something to keep martial characters occupied for an extended period.

Curse of the Corsairs: The Corsairs of Umbar are a major threat to every city along the coastline, and to those along the rivers as well. These vicious raiders appear in their sleek, fast ships, storm a town or city, and overrun it before its defenders can even mobilise fully. Supply ships and courier vessels are sunk frequently, sometimes without even an attempt to board them. For years the Corsairs have been a problem, but now they've become even worse. Some believe the Corsairs have allied with Sauron, and if that's the case, Sauron now possesses the most powerful navy in Middle-earth. Somehow, the Corsairs must be stopped.

Fighting the Corsairs presents many challenges. First, their likely targets must be better protected, or any attack will result in deadly retaliation. The cities along the coast and along the Anduin need stronger defences. Ideally, the river itself should be blockaded. But finding ships strong enough to withstand the Corsairs is difficult and moving them without drawing attention even harder—if Sauron detects the activity, others of his forces may step in to eliminate the vessels before they can even be launched.

The second problem lies in catching the Corsairs. Their speed is what makes them dangerous, and they barely stop long enough to loot the towns they crush before moving on. Predicting their next target or port is close to impossible, and they could be anywhere. Some system for detecting them must be created so they can be spotted before they strike and troops assembled to oppose their attacks.

To permanently eliminate the Corsair threat, an attack on Umbar itself may be necessary. That city lies well south of familiar territory, within the land of Harad, and is heavily defended by the Corsairs and their kin. Characters must travel to Umbar without being detected or detained, enter the city, examine it, and formulate a plan of attack. Only by destroying the city or controlling it can the Corsairs be denied their stronghold, and only then can the last of their ships be hunted down and eliminated.

Mark of Defence: Theoden King and his Eorlingas ride to aid Gondor in the final conflict against Sauron's army, but without them the Mark is all but defenceless. The characters are tasked with protecting it so Theoden and his Rohirrim will have a home to which they can return.

But Rohan is vulnerable. Though Saruman is defeated at Isengard, no one knows how many Orcs escaped into the warrens beneath Methedras, gnashing their teeth and hungering to wreak bloody vengeance on those who defeated them at Helm's Deep. To the west are the Dunlendings, still angry at Rohan for claiming their ancient lands. To make matters worse, many believe Sauron's forces will march through Gondor to harry the Mark from the east, as a distraction to Gondor and Rohan and the other Free Peoples arrayed against it. Defending such an open land from all directions will prove difficult, particularly with limited forces.

The difficulty of defending Rohan lies in the fact that the vast majority of Rohan's Riders have left the realm to aid Gondor. Though Rohan has many solid fortresses—Edoras, Dunharrow, and Helm's Deep, to name but three—there are barely enough warriors to defend one of these. Keeping the land of the horse-lords safe will require as much martial ingenuity as martial might.

Back to Moria: After the War of the Ring, a group of brave Dwarves have decided that the time has come to reclaim Moria once and for all time. Because of the ties between the Free Peoples, strengthened during the War of the Ring, a number of doughty Elves and Men have agreed to aid the Dwarves in this attempt. Such aid is not entirely selfless, as with Moria restored, passage between the kingdoms will be safer and easier, and borders more strongly protected.

Though the Balrog is no more, many Orcs and other creatures remain. These creatures must be ferreted out, every last one removed from the underground city. Then every entrance to the mines must be found and either sealed or guarded so no more of the foul creatures can enter. Every passage will require exploration before the city can be declared cleansed and the Dwarves can start rebuilding. The extent of the original Dwarf-mines is unknown in these times, and the Orcs have continued mining throughout their occupation of the Dwarf-hold. Nor is the Balrog necessarily the only ancient evil awakened, for many creatures have lain buried for ages and could have been unearthed since.