

CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE OUTPOST



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THE OUTPOST

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THE OUTPOST

THE OUTPOST is an adventure module for 3-6 player characters of 1st to 3rd level. The adventure involves breaking through a cordon of orcs in order to deliver messages to an encampment of elves. The adventure takes place in a forested environment and may require stealth, hiding, and outdoor skills. It is advisable, but not necessary, for the party to have at least one ranger, druid, or barbarian. A rogue may be helpful as well.

The adventure is designed for low level characters, however, as with many Castles & Crusades adventures, scaling the adventure is easy to do. Simply add more orcs to the encounters, or increase their hit dice and armor class in order to make them more challenging for higher level characters.

The Outpost stands upon a high ridge, overlooking the long, broken country of the southern Gelderland. It guards the main route between the lands of the Uthine orcs and the Fontenouq elves who dwell in small towers and fortified keeps in the north of that country. The Outpost is a key to the defense of the elven homeland, for from it messages are sent to the lords of that people, keeping them abreast of all that the orcs do. It is only lightly defended, for the orcs have not gathered in great numbers since the fall of the Horned God, so many years ago.

That is about to change. Under their warlord, Grom, they are massing, plotting to overwhelm the Outpost and plunge their arms into the lands of the Fontenouq, crushing the elves in a series of rapid battles, before they can gather their scattered peoples.

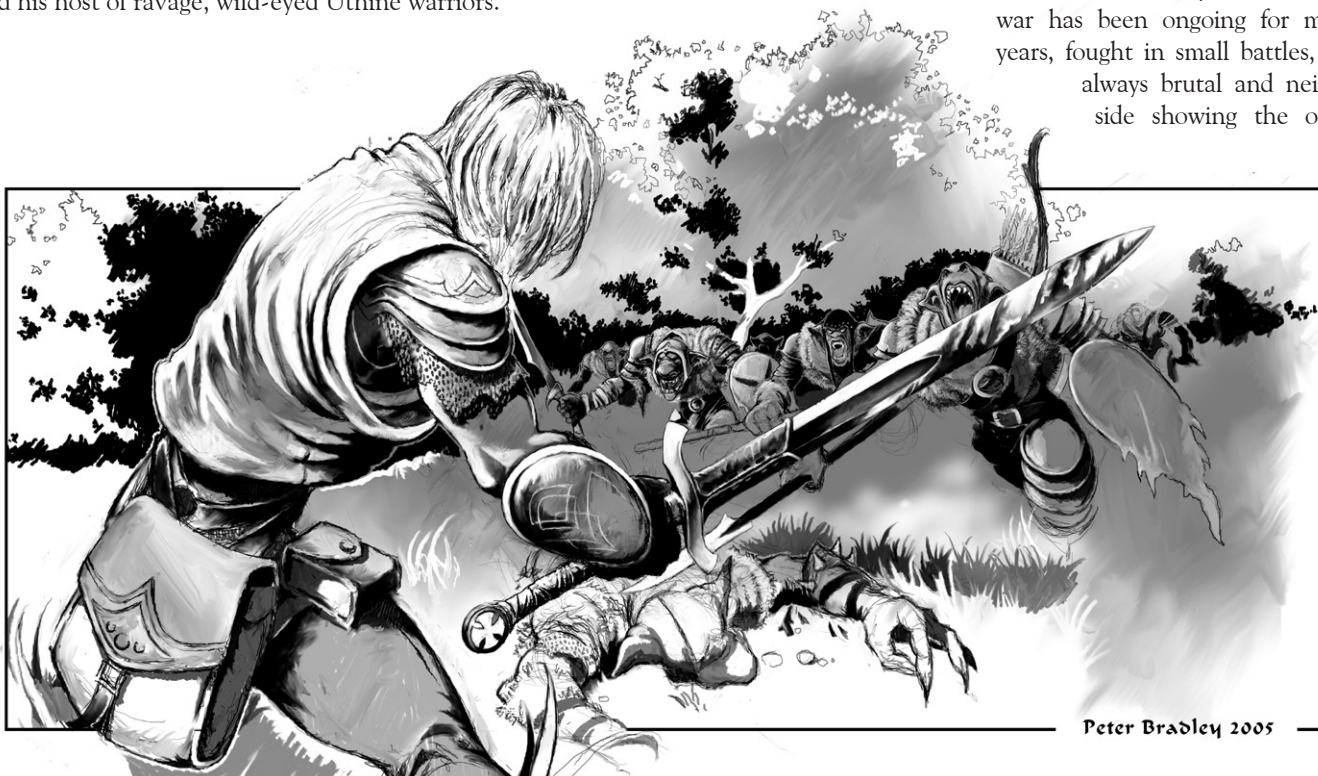
The elves at the Outpost, longer used to calm and quiet, know nothing of this, and unless news is brought to them quickly, they and many of their people will fall beneath the ravages of Grom and his host of ravage, wild-eyed Uthine warriors.

INTRODUCTION

The Uthine orcs have dwelt in the deeps of the Gelderland for many years, since before the fall of their dark master, the Horned God. Long they hunted the knotted forests, capturing the unwary and carting them off to their slave pits or cooking fires. They carved their dens from the hard earth, and rock-capped ridges of their wild land. They claimed it all for their own and spread the depredations of their evil to every corner. More than that, the orcs ranged far and wide in hunt of prey, sacking villages from as far away as the Lichtfield and the Twilight Woods. Those who fell afoul of the Uthines were carted back to the dens to face whatever horrors the orcs devised for their own pleasure.

Their power waned with the fall of the Horned God, for in those days the Fontenouq returned to the world. Elves of towering rage and a vengeful disposition, they made war upon all that had served the Horned God. They were pitiless and spared no evil the sword or fire of the wrath. They hated orcs and all their foul-hearted breed most of all. These elves, with high-brow helms, long spears, and wicked swords drove the orcs from their hunting grounds, burned their encampments and slew their people, old and young. They did this in sufferance for all the evil of their past.

The Gelder Wars, as men style them, the war between the Uthine and Fontenouq resembles little of the great cataclysmic battles of the past. It is more a guerrilla war than ought else. The orcs range out in small bands, hunting elves who stray too far from their towers, alone and unawares. For their part the elves leave their towers in small groups to track down their hated foe and slay them where ever they can. Thus the war has been ongoing for many years, fought in small battles, but always brutal and neither side showing the other



Peter Bradley 2005

mercy. At times the two peoples fight for years on end, with little respite, at others the tide of violence recedes and there is little blood or loss of life.

During the early years of the Gelder Wars the elves cleared much of the northern Gelderland of the orcs and they settled there, building high towers and small keeps in that lonely country. They claimed the land as their own, though in truth there are no borders, and it is a wild and dangerous place. The elves live in singular towers, separated by many miles from their nearest neighbor they have no central government. Each family rules itself, usually led by the most able of their group. The devote themselves to their pleasures, whether poetry, music, or some other art, but always war, the manufacture of weapons and armaments.

Recently the orcs, long grieving the loss of the north country, have decided to strike a major blow against the elves. Knowing that the towers of the Fontenouq usually accommodate only a single family of elves, and are built far apart, they intend to gather a great host and strike the elf holdings in rapid succession, with overwhelming force, so that they do not have time to group and call to their neighbors for aid.

PLACING THE OUTPOST

Place the Outpost in any forested or wilderness environment. The adventure takes place in and around a tall ridge and the valley it overlooks. The elves and orcs are interchangeable with any similar political groupings the Castle Keeper may have. In the world of Aihride, the Outpost is placed in the north-central Gelderland in the Braylun Valley, a wide stretch of forested country that serves as a natural avenue between the Gelderland and Fontenouq. The forest gives way in the valley to many open prairies, small lakes and clearings, allowing any on the overlooking hills to see what passes through the country.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

It should not be difficult to bring the Outpost to the table and involve the player characters. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) The characters are passing through the elf country into the Gelderland seeking adventure, gold and glory. They take a night's refuge in the Outpost. From there, they trek south where they encounter the first of the orc groups.
- 2) The orcs have been quiet as of late, and an elf lord hires the party to enter the Gelderland and scout the orc encampments, bringing back word of what they find.
- 3) The party has learned, erroneously, that there is a fortification in the wilderness that harbors tremendous knowledge on the lost wealth of the Gelderland. They travel to the Outpost to discover this is not true, but are then thrust into the middle of the war.
- 4) Rumors of bridge in the Braylun Valley that houses a treasure trove of magic and gems draws the characters to the contested region. This is at least true.

OVERLAND ADVENTURES

Almost all, if not all, of the action in the Outpost occurs outdoors in the forest. It involves the overland movement of several bodies of troops, as well as the characters. The Castle Keeper should track these movements on the map and allow for accidental encounters.

Normal encounters may occur but the orcs have moved into the valley in such numbers that most everything has fled.

MINIATURES

The adventure below includes a large number of set piece battles between groups of elves and orcs and the characters. It is highly recommended that you use the Chaos Wars miniatures as designed by Iron Wind Metals for these melees as the numbers are such that confusion may follow without them!

THE OUTPOST

The characters find themselves upon a trail that winds up a broad slope to a tree-lined ridge above. It is late in the afternoon, but in the failing light sings of the elven wall that guards the Outpost are clear for all to see. The trail leads up to the Outpost.

The forest gives over to a trail that winds its way up a gentle slope to a ridge that dominates the western horizon. It rises hundreds of feet above the valley floor until it ends in a broad shelf that overlooks all the country for many miles. There, on the shelf, stands the Outpost, the elves' fortified encampment. A tall wall guards the northern approach, whereas the other three sides are open and overlook a sheer drop of hundreds of feet. Several buildings stand out, at least their green shingled roofs, one of which you know is Green House, a comfortable Inn and hostelry.

It's only a few miles up the ridge, and the party should arrive by dark.

AMBUSH

A band of orcs, 11 strong, straddle the trail, set to ambush any who come and go from the Outpost above. As the party moves up the trail, the orcs spring the attack.

They are arranged on either side of the path, hidden in the rough tangle of brush and rock. Unless the characters are moving with stealth and making every attempt to hide their passage up the trail the orcs are forewarned of their coming.

They communicate with each other through a series of bird-like chattering. If there is any ranger, druid or elf in the party they are allowed a wisdom check (CL 4), if successful they do not recognize the bird calls. This may or may not alarm them and give them forewarning of the ambush.

As soon as the party has moved up, the orcs spring the trap, by unleashing a volley of 4 arrows as the rest of them rush forward.

The scout does not attack unless the party seems defeated. He lingers in the brush, hiding (CL 2). If his comrades are defeated, he tries to escape back to the south.

ORCS, SUB-CHIEF (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear scale armor, and carry small iron shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle, but prefer heavy weapons such as long swords and battle axes that do 1d8 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-12gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, ARCHER X 4 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather or hide armor. They prefer the short bow, but sometimes carry light crossbows. They shoot for 1d6 or 1d4 points of damage. They carry 12 arrows or bolts but are skilled and fashioning these on the road. They also carry long, curved knives for slitting throats that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting, stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, SCOUT X 1 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. The scout orc can move 40 feet per round. They have the following first level ranger abilities: conceal, move silently, scale, traps, survival, and track. They wear no armor. They never carry heavy weapons unless pressed and are able to pick them up from the battlefield. Normally they carry long straight daggers that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, WARRIOR, LIGHT X 6 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 14, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather armor, and carry small iron or wooden shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle: short swords, clubs, axes, hammers and maces that do 1d6 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

The trail continues to wind up the slope several hundred feet until it forks. The southern fork leads deeper in the valley, but the western fork climbs the slopes to the top of the ridge above. It is this latter fork that leads to the Outpost.

THE OUTPOST

The Outpost sits upon a rocky promontory that lies upon the southern end of a north-south ridge that flanks the Braylun Valley. The promontory, called the Meril, is flat, several acres in size and surrounded by cliffs on three sides. Only the north-facing side is walled. The wall is 12 feet high and several wide and has a single gate and towered gate house.

The gate house is always occupied by two elves and the gate is always closed.

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The trail winds up the slope until it caps the ridge where it veers to the south, leading to the edge of the promontory and the outpost that lies there. A short walk leads one to the treeline that ends a hundred feet or more from the 12 foot wall of the post. There a gate, closed, looms and a gate tower stands. Two elves, both in chain shirts and breastplates, with helms and spears visible watch you curiously as you approach.

The elves are friendly enough, but do hail the travelers, asking who they are and why they have come so deep into the Gelderland. Assuming the answer is not hostile or the party does nothing untoward they offer up the hospitality of the Outpost, opening the gate and directing them to the Green House.

Within the Outpost are 5 buildings: the guard tower, the Green House, an open pavilion, storage room, and a large circular building with wide windows, a porch and open ceiling. This last is serves the occupants as a barracks.

Several elves sit around on benches or beneath the shade of the porch, playing games of chance, drinking, eating, or arguing amongst themselves. The Outpost has never been attacked and they have long settled into a state of relaxation.

Anyone paying attention is allowed a wisdom check (CL 2), and if successful, quickly realizes the Outpost is in no way prepared to receive an attack. The walls are in poor shape, the garrison is relaxed and the buildings, aside from perhaps the Green House, have little or no defensive ability.

REPORTING THE AMBUSH: The captain is out with a raiding party and is not expected to return for a week or more. He has ranged to the west, hearing rumor that orcs were preparing a raid in that region. He took over half the garrison with him. He left his lieutenant, Nethael, in charge. Any comments about the ambush on the trail are directed toward her.

Nethael is an affable warrior and takes the report in stride, asking all the pertinent questions about where it happened, how many were involved, how were they armed, did any escape, etc. She comments that such things are not uncommon and it is best to move in the Gelderland with more caution than one might normally take.

"The orcs here are feckless and wild. They raid often, but never in strength, for their chiefs are always at war with each other. But do not mistake them for beasts of Aufstrag, but rather cunning hunters and a people you do not want to allow any advantage. Kill them when you see them, and look for them everywhere."

She directs them to the Green House and its many refreshments.

THE GREEN HOUSE

This large building dominates the rear section of the Meril. Its single story is several hundred feet long and wide, sports several staircases that allow for quick entry to the top, which in turn allows anyone there to see many miles south, east and west. Its open windows and door reveal a huge open room whose kitchen is set in the center of the room, where the foodstuffs, wines and beers are stored.

Round tables abound in the large room, arranged all around the central and circular kitchen area. In all the Green House can sit about 120 people.

ROOMS: There are no rooms in the Green House, but space is provided for travelers to bed down toward the northern end of the building, near the front door. Bedding is offered and consists of linens rolled tightly and bound with ropes. Elves do not sleep as others do, thus the rough accommodations. Travelers are encouraged to take their rest where they choose, many doing so on the roof of the Green House itself.

A sleeping mat costs a silver piece a night.

DINING: The Green House offers a wide variety of foodstuffs, despite its distance from civilization. There are several types of wines, beer, mead and other fermented drinks as well as fresh rain water and scented water as well. The food is copious, from fresh meats (usually boar and deer), to wild tubers, grasses, mushrooms and other delicacies taken from the forest. A heavy bread is baked in the style that elves prefer and offered up with cheese and butters.

A meal generally runs 1 silver, unless wine or beer is added then it is 2 silver pieces or more, depending on how much is consumed. Generally each mug or glass is about a silver coin.

GATE TOWER

The tower is small, 4 x 4 feet and allows for only two occupants. It has a clear vantage over the field before the wall and gates. It is covered with a small roof and siding can be put up to cover the openings. The siding is beneath the tower, leaning against the wall.

STORAGE ROOM

The storage room is 10 x 20 feet and filled with weapons. It is made of stone with a shingled roof. Within are the following: 12 long bows, 144 arrows, 40 spears, 20 longswords, 14 battle axes, 2 bearded axes, 4 man-catchers, 10 forked poles (for pushing ladders off the walls), 25 small iron shields, 15 helms, 10 suits of scale mail, 4 suits of chain mail.

There are also 400 days of rations and a well head that provides the garrison with fresh water.

PAVILION

The elves enjoy the open air, avoiding closed in, tight quarters as often as they can. The pavilion serves this purpose. The building is circular, with no walls. The floor consists of the stone of the ridge, polished smooth. An opening in the center of the building allows for more sun and even rain to enter the building. There are chairs here, mostly of carved wood, though some are stone and many small tables.

The elves spend a great deal of time here.

GARRISON HOUSE

This large circular building is set closer to the wall than the others and affords living quarters for the elves. Its wide windows

are open, covered only during the most violent storms. Its door too is open. Within are several rooms divided only by silk curtains or light linens. Within each are the personal accommodations of the occupants. These usually consists of packs and satchels brought here from their homes, for the garrisons often rotate out, one occupant leaving when another shows up.

The captain and lieutenant dwell here with their warriors, both men and women.

Strangers are not allowed to enter the Garrison House.

The Garrison itself consists of 1 lieutenant and 14 warriors.

NETHAEL (*This chaotic good 4th level fighter's vital stats are HP 34, AC 16. His primary attributes are strength and dexterity. His significant attribute is strength 16. He wields a +1 longsword in battle for 1d8 points of damage. He wears full chainmail and carries a shield and great helm. Nethael is a kindly elf, though fierce in battle, showing no mercy to enemies whether they are good or evil.*)

ELVES X 14 (*These chaotic good creatures' vital stats are HD 2, AC 16, HP 11. Their primary attribute are physical. They attack with longswords, bows or spears for 1d8 points of damage. They wear full chain, shields, and helms. They gain a +1 to hit when using longswords. They can move quietly and receive a +10 on any saving throws involving char and sleep.*)

SCOUTING

The elves are in no hurry for the characters to move on, though prolonged visits may exasperate them. However, after a day or so they pay little attention to party. They are, of course, always polite and kind, unless provoked.

Once the characters leave they can pick up the southern trail where they encountered it on their way up the ridge line.

The morning following their arrival Nethael approaches the party and offers them a job. He explains that his captain is off to the west, and took all of their scouts. The ambush from yesterday has aroused the lieutenant's curiosity and she wishes to know what is going on further south, if there are more raiding parties.

She offers each party member 7 days of hard tack, as well as a 25gp gem (for each) if they will range down to the Old Bridge and scout the road out, looking for signs that more orcs than the one band have crossed the bridge and entered the area.

Assuming the characters take her up on this, she supplies them each with a satchel of food. The gems will be paid upon their return. She then takes them to the top of the Green House and shows them the lay of the land. From here they can see far and wide. They spy the trail they came up on, where it forks and heads south. They can see about 15 miles down the valley the large stone bridge they are to scout to and all the country in between.

From the high roof of the inn, the country unfolds. The ridge you climbed yesterday juts out into a open land like a finger rudely thrust forward. The ridge tumbles down in steep slopes to the bottom of a wide valley, covered with

hundreds of small clusters of tangled trees. Wild grasses and flowers grow in the open space, and small ponds and lakes stand here and there about. The ground seems dry and rocky, offering a ready explanation for why the forest does not carpet the whole valley floor. The trail winds through all this broken, partially forested land until it comes to a slow moving stream whose origins lie in the east somewhere, and whose breadth is spanned by a stone bridge. The whole seems peaceful and quiet, with only a few birds flying on high, watching for whatever it is that birds seek. The characters can choose to work for the elves, or not, but moving on is the best choice.

BATTLE ORDERS

Assuming the characters move south in search of loot or take the job offered by Nethael they must head south down the ridge and to the fork in the trail. This is easily done in a few hours, a few more hours places them at the foot of the ridge and on the edge a wide open clearing. This is Braylun Valley.

Travel here is harder than it appeared from on high in the Outpost. The ground is dry and broken, though does manage to sport the growth of a tough, shallow-rooted grass, the fields of which were seen from above. Though these prairies are cut in many places by weathered rocks that slant, affording difficult purchase and that often break when climbed upon. The trail itself winds in a haphazard fashion through the broken land, occasionally passing through copses of trees, around rocks and lakes but ever southward until it reaches the Old Bridge.

The ground does offer plenty of places to hide, from the small tangled patches of woods to rocky escarpments dozens of feet high and hundreds long. If not for the site from above, whole armies could slip through the country unseen by those on the trail.

From the bottom of the ridge to the bridge it is roughly a two day trip on the trail, and a three day trip off it. Traveling off it is a little more dangerous as the ground is so broken. Plus there are many dozens of bands of orcs moving through the country.

GROM'S PLAN

The Warlord Grom has marshaled almost 500 orcs in his army, more if one includes the many other creatures that follow in his wake--wild, half-starved dogs, goblins, half orcs and the like. Several weeks previous he gathered his army together in a clearing and their broke it up into bands, assigning each a captain. He gave his captains a red plumed helmet to distinguish them from the others, the long tail of these plumes hanging down to their backside.

There were roughly 20 bands in all, each with roughly 25 orcs in. They included scouts, archers, warriors and their captains. The orcs were stripped of all wealth but their weapons and given 10 days each of hard rations and flasks of their foul-tasting juice. Each group was given a map of the valley and the route they were ordered to take. The routes started in the east and rolled west, allowing each band to take advantage of the natural terrain, trees and escarpments to keep themselves

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hidden during the day for they were ordered to only cross the country during the night.

As the characters leave the Outpost, Grom's bands are awaiting their orders to advance. They are presently 15 miles south of the Old Bridge.

They wait because Grom is leaving nothing to chance. He has sent out several small groups already, each with the task of watching the enemy (one of those the characters have already met). But he is sending a few more bands to scout out the terrain once more and make certain that the chosen routes will serve well enough. Each of these groups have maps of the country to help them mark the trail.

MEETING THE SURVEYORS

Each of the surveyor teams consist of 4 scouts, 2 archers 2 light warriors and a sub-chief. One of the scouts carries the map of the routes the orcs are planning on following. Though the sub-chief is in command, the scouts are directing the small band, leading it through the broken scrub.

NOTE: Orcs are generally a rough and tumble species, not known for the intelligence or quick thinking, their social order, being generally built upon power and force, than persuasion and problem solving. This is not always the case however, at times, leaders such as Grom rise to the fore. These are both intelligent and strong. However, this is not the case at all with orc scouts. This breed of the people is fierce, clever and often smarter than even their leaders. It comes from their craft and their need to understand the natural world around them. For this reason all scout orcs have the following first level ranger abilities: conceal, move silently, scale, traps, survival, and track.

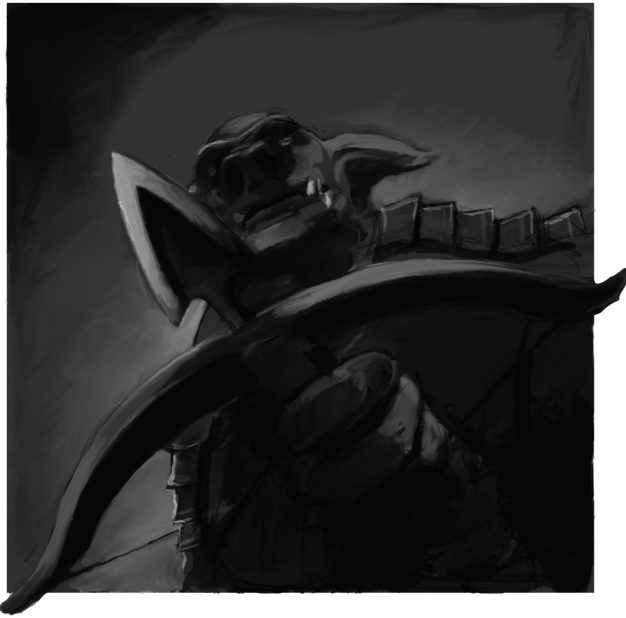
No matter which direction the characters take, whether they follow the trail or wander over the broken scrub, they are going to encounter one of the surveyor teams. The encounter occurs either at dusk or dawn, as the characters are setting up camp or breaking it down.

Off to your left, perhaps 500 feet, your eyes are drawn to movement. There a large scarp of rock rises from the plain, it broken flank layered as if a stack of dishes. Crawling up its height, its back plainly to you, peering over the rock in a westerly fashion is half naked orc. Its broad, bald head bobs a little, like a bird's, as it searches the horizon for what, you cannot say. It wears only a belt with a knife and small pouch on it. He holds a piece of parchment in his hand, and seems to be checking it against the country in front of him. He clearly does not see you.

Assuming the characters take cover the orc has little chance of spying them. Allow hide checks at a +5.

If they watch the orc for a few minutes allow a wisdom check (CL 3). If successful they spy the orc make a clear gesture to something or someone beneath him, hidden from view.

Of course the gesture is made to the rest of his team. He is presently looking for any alternative routes he may have missed and is paying little attention to what is around him, focusing rather on the distance.



Assuming the characters make a move against the orcs they are in for a fight, for the sub-chief understands the importance of keeping the whole mission secret and wishes to snuff out any opposition he finds in the valley. That and bringing back the first trophies of the campaign would mean tremendous honor.

If the characters do not attack, allow the orcs to cross their path, spying them, at some point, and fall upon them.

ORCS, SUB-CHIEF (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear scale armor, and carry small iron shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle, but prefer heavy weapons such as long swords and battle axes that do 1d8 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-12gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, ARCHER X 2 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather or hide armor. They prefer the short bow, but sometimes carry light crossbows. They shoot for 1d6 or 1d4 points of damage. They carry 12 arrows or bolts, but are skilled and fashioning these on the road. They also carry long, curved knives for slitting throats that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting, stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, SCOUT X 4 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. The scout orc can move 40 feet per round. They have the following first level ranger abilities: conceal, move silently, scale, traps, survival, and track. They wear no armor. They never carry heavy weapons unless pressed and are able to pick them up from the battlefield. Normally they carry long straight daggers that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, WARRIOR, LIGHT X 2 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 14, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather armor, and carry small iron or wooden shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle: short swords, clubs, axes, hammers and maces that do 1d6 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

THE MAP

One of the scouts, the one they originally spied upon the escarpment, has the map in his possession. He carries it rolled up in his fist, but sticks it in his belt when necessary to fight or run. If he falls the map falls into the hands of the characters. If he escapes the map goes with him, however, Grom is not so foolish as to place all his trust in the memory and wherewithal of one scout. He has ordered that a duplicate map be made and kept updated for the sub-chief. For this reason a second map stays on the field, assuming of course they've killed the sub-chief.

The map is made of some type of animal hide and depicts the route march of all 25 bands, where they are to hide and where they are to convene after their two night marches. It places all 500 orcs in the thick woods that lie at the base of the ridge, threatening the Outpost with almost certain surprise and extermination, particularly when the relative preparedness of the defenders is taken into account.

It is now up to the characters to return back to the Outpost to warn the elves or to move forward. If they move forward they come to the bridge in short order, where they will take whatever action they desire. Regardless of what they do, Grom's 500 warriors are across the bridge, hidden in the tree line. If they chose this path skip over to the bridge below.

A notation on the map marks the launch date for the attack for 3 days. Unbeknownst to anyone Grom is waiting for 3 ogres to join his small army and they are late in arrival.

SOUNDING ALARMS

The most logical course for the characters to take is to sound the alarm. To do this they must back track the Braylun and return to the Outpost and its 15 defenders. The journey back should be largely uneventful, the trek taking about a day.

The lieutenant agrees to see the characters in the Green House. She listens to their story quietly, takes the map and studies it for awhile. Her response to all the news is calm and measured. Her people are warlike and do not fear battle, no matter how long the odds. She takes his time to formulate a plan.

Read or paraphrase the following:

"We have over 300 feet of wall here and cannot hope to defend it with the force on hand. We can do little but harry them in the field for their numbers are too great. Though we might stop some, we would fail to stop them all and be overwhelmed in the process. Our only hope in stopping this invasion is to hold the bridge, or failing that, destroy it. That will delay the orcs long enough for us to raise the alarm and recall the garrison.

The bridge is well constructed with a barbican upon its northern shore and may be held by a few for many days, even though great force be thrown against it. I will send 10 of my warriors to defend it. And I would charge you, if you would take up the task, to lead them and hold the bridge against all who come, even though it be whole host of the Uthine.

If you do this service for my people, you will be paid in riches you cannot imagine."

If questioned why she does not lead the troop she explains that she is forbidden by the law of her people to leave this post. She must die here if necessary.

She intends on keeping 2 of her warriors to hold the gate against the orcs if the bridge should fail. A third she will send to recall the garrison and a fourth she goes north to warn her people in the lands of Fontenouq so that they make send aid.

If the characters take up the challenge she gives them a small magical stone. It is carved with elven runes.

"If all else fails and the barbican seems as if it will fall, take this stone and place it upon the keystone beneath the bridge and speak these words "Faelnar Ul Thun". This intonation will release the power of the stone and bring down the bridge. But do this only if all seems lost, for if the bridge is down, we cannot easily cross back over the river and hound our enemies."

RUNE STONE: The stone is inscribed with a rune of rending and once activated it destroys up to 14 cubic feet of stone and material, which will serve to bring down the entire central portion of the bridge.

KEYSTONE: The keystone of a bridge is that central stone that holds a span together. It is wedge-shaped and is inserted at the central portion of an arch, holding the whole together. Removing or destroying it brings down the entire bridge.

THE SECRET PATH: If the characters take up Nethael on her offer she shows them the secret path to the Outpost. If they are driven from the bridge or in any way cut off from the path that leads to the outpost they can circle around west and come to the ridge from that direction. A hidden path lies there and they can take it up to the outpost. It brings one to the edge of the cliff, just inside the compound, not far from the Green House. She points it out to them so they can find it upon their return.

THE LONG ODDS

The orcs are scheduled to cross the river in roughly two nights (the time frame may vary depending on how long the characters took to get back to the Outpost). The party has just enough time to get into the tower and fortify it before the orcs cross the river.

The elf garrison is roughly 2 days west of the Outpost and it will take them about 4-5 days to get word of the impending attack and return to valley to fight the orcs.

In all, the characters need to hold the orcs back for 2-3 days in order to allow time for the garrison to return.

The CK should track the movements of the various armies on a piece of paper, so that they know if and when they converge.

8 CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE BRIDGE

The journey to the bridge should be uneventful. A day or two should suffice to place the characters at the foot of the all too quiet bridge and the barbican that stands upon the northern end.

The trail slips over a low rise, trees to your left and right, and then slips down into a small bowl-shaped valley, flanked on the south by a wide, slow-moving dark river. A stone bridge spans the water, no more than 12 feet wide, with short lips on either ledge. A towered barbican straddles the north end of the bridge. Beyond the bridge, the forest springs up, gloomy, quiet and unrelenting.

The bridge itself spans the Deepfelt River in two large arches. It is 12 wide and 40 feet long. It stands about 10 feet above the river, ranging up to 12 feet at the center. It is made of cobbled stones. Both arches have keystones, and both are vital to holding the bridge intact. The south end of the bridge is open, the north guarded by the two-towered barbican.

Aside from this bridge there are no crossings of the Deepfelt for many miles in either direction.

Grom has not been idle. While waiting for the ogres due on the morrow, he set two scouts to watch the bridge from the treeline and sent forward a small troop to seize and hold the barbican. They are housed there now. Though instructed to be cautious and keep their presence quiet and unassuming, they have not succeeded as well as their chief would like. They have established a latrine a few feet from one of the doors and skinned several rabbits not far from that. He holds the rest of his army back in the forest, spread out in their groups. They are presently in encampments.

If the characters take a moment to observe the barbican before moving to it, they may spot the recent activity. Upon a successful wisdom check (CL 4) the characters spot the hordes of flies moving about the latrine and the splattered blood from where the orc skinned the rabbit. For every 10 minutes, they watch the area they gain a +1 on their check. If they watch it for over an hour they eventually spy one of the orcs exiting the building, crossing the bowl and urinating on the ground.

For their part the orcs are fairly relaxed, inside eating, gambling, and just generally wiling away the time. They are barely keeping watch.

Unless characters make a mad charge at the tower they have a good chance of approaching undetected. All hide and sneak checks are made with a +4 bonus.

ORCS, WARRIOR, HEAVY X 8 *(These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8+1, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear ring or scale armor and carry small iron shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle: short swords, clubs, axes, hammers and maces that do 1d6+1 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-8gp in assorted coin.)*

The door to both towers and gate is open. As soon as the characters attack the barbican the scouts across the river raise the alarm by sounding a warning horn. Horns begin to answer

and spread deeper into the forest. It takes Grom 20 minutes, after the alarm has sounded, to get his first troops across the bridge.

If the characters manage to enter the tower without being seen they may be able to overwhelm the garrison before the alarm is sounded.

MANAGING THE ELVES: The 10 elves that came down the road with the party are hell bent on battle. They want to attack, without stealth, immediately. They will obey orders even given directly. They will however, attack at the first opportunity. They do not retreat, preferring death.

THE DEEPFELT

The Deepfelt River has its origins in the high ridges to the east. It winds its way through that country, picking up strength from various streams and creeks. As it enters the valley its course follows the natural contours of the land, snaking back and forth through a deep cut channel it delved in the ground. Never a fast moving river, nor very wide, the Deepfelt is a languid water.

It is generally about 12-15 feet deep and ranges from 40 to 60 feet wide. The banks of the river are often crowded with reeds, thrush, small willows, cottonwood trees and other river vegetation. A host of animals make the river their home, from otters to some small alligators. There are fish aplenty in the water as well, though it is hunted by a species of large, fierce, fresh water gar.

It is not easy to cross the Deepfelt, as the bottom of the river is covered in a thick layer of clingy mud, and the overall depth is more than most can manage. It is easy enough to swim for those unencumbered and able to do so.

Aside from Old Bridge there are few crossings in this region. Two fords, one 9 miles upstream from the bridge, the other 13 miles downstream, afford a way across, but even these can be treacherous, as both have sections that are 5 feet deep. The bridge is the obvious crossing for anyone passing into and out of the Brayun Valley.

THE BARBICAN

The barbican is a square tower that sits astride the bridge with an accompanying round tower that serves as entrance and stairs. It was built several hundred years ago, but is still in good shape.

The tower is 45 feet high, however its stonework is such that it allows those skilled in climbing easy access to the roof above.

ENTRANCE TOWER AND STAIRS: There is one main entrance to the tower. It lies in the circular tower that abuts the main structure. The door is a heavy, iron bound door, set up a short flight of six steps. It faces north. The door itself has 60 hit points.

GATE: The main gate consists of two doors. It opens to the north and has a large wooden beam that can be set to lock it. Four posts to brace the gate are leaning against the wall in the First Floor room. The gate is not easy to batter down, each possessing 150 hit points. There are murder holes above the gate; these are angled, however, so that oil poured from above sprays on anyone attacking the gate, up to 12 feet out onto the bridge.

FIRST FLOOR

The first floor is a simple, square room with arrow slits looking out over the bridge. There are four metal cots in here, each attached to the wall via chains. The room is largely empty except for the four posts, each cut at angles to better brace the main gate below. There is also one large barrel of oil with eight gallons of oil in it.

The orcs had piled up enough wood for at least 1 day of good burn.

SECOND FLOOR

This floor is much as the first. Four metal cots are attached to the wall via chains. Beneath one is a large iron box. The room served as a barracks but also offered the occupants the only possible escape if they were over run. By using the secret hatch and ladder, one would have to go under water to escape the tower, but they could come out under the bridge.

HIDDEN PANEL: On the west wall, built into the stone work, is a hidden compartment. It is spotted on a successful check (CL 3). Within is a small space, but it contains a neatly folded robe, as well as two crystal vials and a scroll. The robe is a *robe of useful items*. There is one potion of *cure serious wounds* and one of *water breathing*. Each of the potions has 6 drinks in it. The scroll has a *lock* spell on it. There are also 2 *nord stones*. These magical stones flake; each flake, if consumed, heals 1-2 points of damage. Once a flake is removed, the stone must be placed in the sunlight for 1 hour, at which point it flakes again and the new piece may be consumed for another 1-2 hit points. If the whole stone is consumed it heals 3d8 hit points.

SECRET DOOR: A secret door lies beneath one of the cots. It is plain to see on a successful check (CL 4). Anyone doing a detailed search can find the door with a second check (CL 2). The hatch opens in the floor to a small shaft, only a few feet wide and a ladder. The ladder leads down to the water below and into it. Following the ladder beneath the water leads to an opening in the bridge barrel (part of the arch). Swimming out of the opening puts on underneath the bridge. It is the tower's only escape if the survivors are cut off.

ROOF

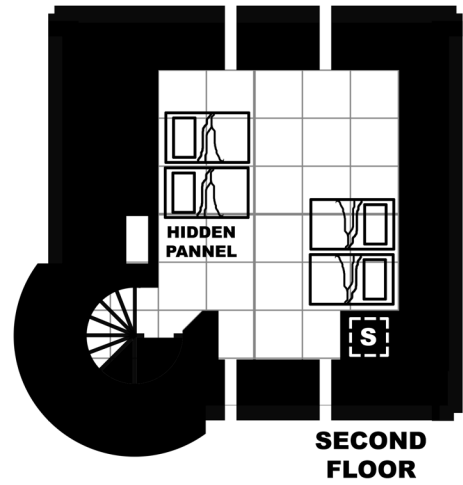
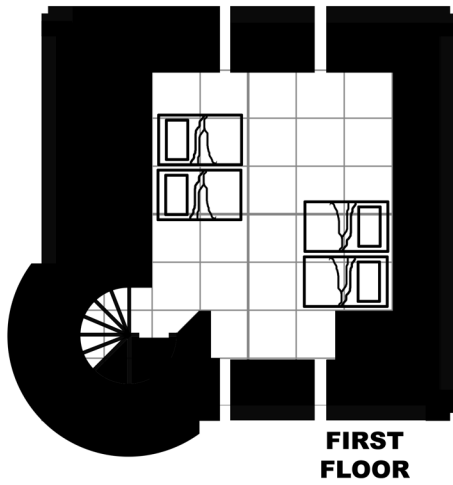
The roof is a simple open flat area. It has merlons all around it and connects with the round, stair case tower via a short step. There is a large brazier that serves as a fire pit up here. Hand frame and shank support a huge iron pot that allows the defenders to boil oil, water or whatever else they desire.

There are four murder holes here. They are broad and worn smooth. Oil is poured through these holes, into stone channels that run the height of the tower, so that they come out the openings below, spraying any on the bridge attacking the door.

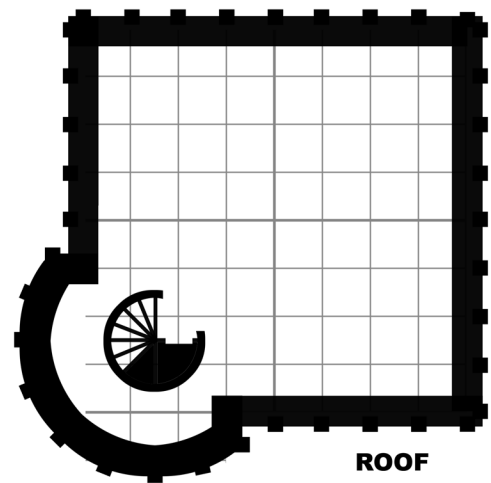
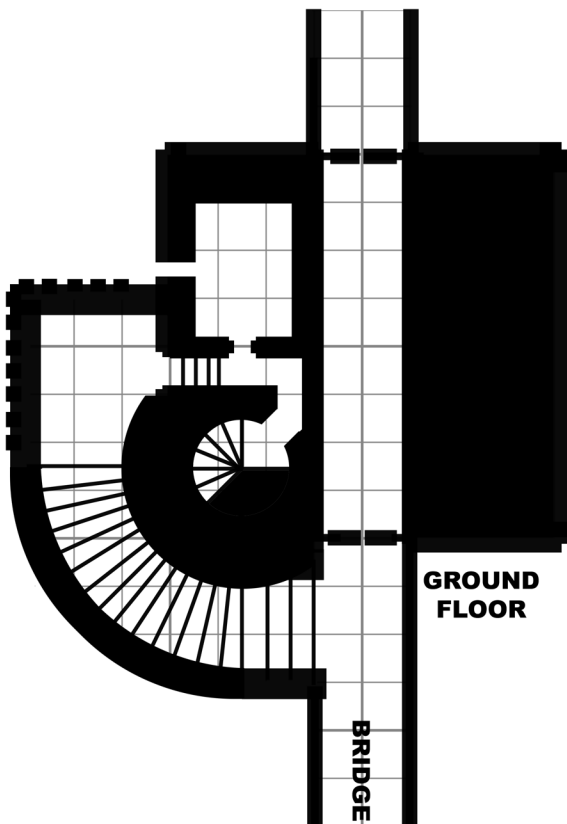
There is a pile of stones upon the roof that can do 1-10 points of damage if thrown on structures or people below.

ARMOR CLASS NOTE: Anyone defending the tower from the roof gains a +5 to their AC.

THE OUTPOST 9



THE BARBICAN



1 SQUARE = 5'

HOLDING THE TOWER

If the characters manage to attack the tower and take it without the scouts noticing they have several hours to prepare for the orcs. After four hours, Grom sends a scout forward to check on the state of things in the tower. At that point, he discovers that it is occupied and the horns sound.

If the characters are seen attacking the horns are sounded as noted above.

OIL: If the oil is boiled and poured down the murder holes at the top, it sprays out and over the bridge, striking everyone within 12 feet of the door. Anyone there suffers 1d6 points of burn damage, but can make a dexterity save (CL 4) for half. If the oil is ignited, it inflicts a further 1d8 points of damage. The oil can be used twice before the barrel is empty.

The elves take post on the tower walls, or wherever the characters see fit to place them.

FLEEING THE TOWER

If the party attempts to leave the tower, they will have to retreat across the valley to do so. The elves will hold the tower behind them, demanding the magical rune stone. They are rash however, and lust for battle so will summon the orcs to a fight, alerting Grom, if he has not already been alerted, that the bridge is held against him.

The elves will not last a few hours by themselves as in the heat of the battle they throw open the gate and attack the orcs upon the bridge.

Once Grom has taken the bridge, he sends out two bands of orcs to hunt anyone fleeing up the valley but begins his invasion of the valley that night.

Depending on how fast the characters are traveling they may, or may not, have a running fight on their hands.

CONDUCTING THE BRIDGE BATTLE

Assuming the characters stay and fortify the bridge, they will find themselves face to face with Grom's army. And the orc Warlord is not going to let them hold the bridge if he can at all help it.

CROSSING THE RIVER: The Uthine orcs fear water, cannot swim, and do not make boats. For this reason they will not cross the river anywhere but the bridge or one of the fords, and they would rather not do the latter.

TYPICAL BAND

ORCS, SUB-CHIEF (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 16, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear scale armor, and carry small iron shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle, but prefer heavy weapons such as long swords and battle axes that do 1d8 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-12gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, ARCHER X 4 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather or hide armor. They prefer the short bow, but sometimes carry light crossbows. They shoot for 1d6 or 1d4 points of damage. They carry 12 arrows or bolts, but are skilled and fashioning these on the road. They also carry long, curved knives for slitting throats that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting, stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)



ORCS, SCOUT X 2 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 13, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. The scout orc can move 40 feet per round. They have the following first level ranger abilities: conceal, move silently, scale, traps, survival, and track. They wear no armor. They never carry heavy weapons unless pressed and are able to pick them up from the battlefield. Normally they carry long straight daggers that do 1d4 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, WARRIOR, LIGHT X 12 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8, AC 14, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear leather armor, and carry small iron or wooden shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle: short swords, clubs, axes, hammers and maces that do 1d6 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-6gp in assorted coin.)

ORCS, WARRIOR, HEAVY X 6 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 1d8+1, AC 15, HP variable. Their primary attributes are physical. They wear ring or scale armor and carry small iron shields. They use a variety of weapons in battle: short swords, clubs, axes, hammers and maces that do 1d6+1 points of damage. Most carry a flask with a dry tasting stout juice in it as well as a day or two of hard rations. They each have 1-8gp in assorted coin.)

FIRST ATTACK

Within 20 minutes of the first horn sounding, Grom orders 2 bands of 25 orcs forward to take the bridge before the gates close. They have little in the way of siege gear, but two of them have ropes. See typical orc band below for stats.

The orcs rush the gate and if unable to break it down, and they have no way of doing at the moment, they attempt to climb the tower. The scouts taking the ropes, they begin to scale the barbican.

The battle for the bridge has begun.

The orcs scale and attack the wall as long as they are able. If they suffer a quarter of their number in casualties they fall back to the tree line.

SECOND ATTACK

If the first attack is repulsed Grom regroups, sending 4 bands of 25 orcs to gather in the woods at the foot of the bridge. The rest he employs building four large ladders.

His second attack unfolds several hours later and involves the 4 bands arrayed in the woods. They take the ladders and attempt use them to scale the tower. At best three of the ladders can fit, but whether one or two are used, the remaining are back up ladders in case the first are destroyed. While orcs go up the ladder, others will attempt to climb the outer wall.

They again retreat if a quarter of their number is slain.

THIRD ATTACK

The next attack takes place later that night. Grom orders a tree cut, limbed and spiked in order to use it as a battering ram. He also orders a small turtle constructed. This latter device consists

for four posts and walls and roof made of shields. It will serve to protect the attackers as they attempt to batter down the door. The turtle is wetted against fire.

The ram strikes the door every other round, dealing 2d6 points of damage to the door. It takes 10 orcs to wield the battering ram. The turtle can absorb 50 points of stone damage before it breaks, exposing 1-2 occupants within. If it takes 75 it exposes 2-4 occupants, and if it takes 100 points it falls apart, exposing all. It is highly susceptible to fire and if lit will suffer 1d8 points of damage per round for 4 rounds.

If the orcs break through the gate they immediately flood the gateway and sweep into the country behind, moving for the entrance to the tower as well. They will commence attacking the door immediately.

They retreat if a quarter of their number is slain or if the turtle is destroyed.

FOURTH ATTACK

The ogres arrive the next morning. If he has not taken the tower he awaits the ogres arrival. As soon as they are on the field, he sends them forward to attack the gate. He sends a group of archers, 15 in all to pelt the top of the tower with arrows, allowing the ogres time to break the gate down.

If they break through he unleashes four bands to immediately exploit the breach.

OGRES X 4 (These chaotic evil creatures' vital stats are HD 4, AC 16, HP 13, 17, 22, 22, 28. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with a weapon for 1d10+3 points of damage or their powerful fists for 1d10 points of damage (one attack, one damage). They have dark and twilight vision.)

BREAKING THROUGH

At any point that the orcs get through the gate, they immediately deploy all their ladders and ram to attack the entrance door and the tower from both sides. He deploys the full host of 500 to conduct this attack. As soon as the tower is taken, he leaves one band to hold it and gathers the rest of his army to march up the valley floor to the ridge above and the Outpost that guards it.

EVER AFTER

Grom does not let up. If he is driven off the tower by all the above attacks he repeats them, making more scaling ladders, or another turtle as he desires. Each attack takes 4-8 hours to develop, building the ladders or the turtle.

He throws his orcs against the tower until half his army is dead or wounded. If 250 of his men are killed, he calls off the attack and retreats back into the Gelderland.

BLOWING THE BRIDGE

If the characters manage to blow the bridge with the rune stone, it collapses into the water. But it only delays the orcs one day, as they quickly fill it in with logs, rock, and other debris gathered from the forest.

12 CASTLES & CRUSADES

BATTLE FOR THE OUTPOST

The next stage of the battle spills into the valley beyond the Deepfelt. The sequence of events unfolds depending on how long the characters held the orcs at the river.

Regardless it will take the orcs 1 full night to cross the valley and half the next. They attack the outpost on the second night after, around midnight, after they take control of the tower.

The characters can attempt to slow their progress up the valley by ambushes or other subterfuge. Each such attempt may break up one or two of the bands, but will allow the orcs of the other bands to swarm in behind the characters and rendezvous on the slopes of the ridge where the trail to the Outpost lies.

Single orc bands attacked do not stand and fight, if a quarter of their number is slain the turn and retreat back to the bridge.

A SHORT DELAY

If the orcs take the tower quickly, within a day or two, they should still be within the time constraints to strike the Outpost before the garrison returns. They sweep up the valley in their divided groups, to rendezvous at the base of the ridge. They attack the Outpost, hitting its 300 feet of wall with scaling ladders and the rope.

There should be at least 15-20 different areas the wall is struck at the same time. Grom orders them spread out in order to increase the chances of a breach. At no point do they attack the gate.

The lieutenant falls back to the Green House with any who survive the battle on the wall. From there, she fights to the death.

Once inside the compound the orcs sweep through the whole thing, slaying any and all they can find, sack it and burn it before they regroup and head up the valley in their war upon the elves of Fontenouq.

SECRET PATH: The orcs have no knowledge of the secret path that leads down to the valley floor; escape is possible if the characters make it that far. Any elves who see them attempting to break out shield them against attacking orcs in order to assist the characters' escape.

If it so happens that the Outpost is being sacked by the orcs, and the captain approaches during the battle or right after, he attacks the orcs and attempts to save anyone who remains.

THE LONG DELAY

If the party delayed the orcs even for a full day and night, by the time the orcs have crossed the valley the garrison should have returned or be very close, perhaps close enough to rescue the others inside the Outpost.

THE BOLD CHARGE

As soon as the captain returns, he gathers all his warriors (and the characters, if they will join him) on the slopes of the ridge overlooking the trail, planning on attacking the orcs as soon as they. He has 45 fresh men, plus whoever has survived from the earlier battles.

He does not allow the orcs to rally, launching the attack after he sees a significant number, estimate about 100-125, gathering on the slopes. He orders the whole of his troop to attack and route the orcs, before others arrive. His hope is to drive this first group into the ranks of those following, spreading the disease of defeat.

This happens quickly if the the orcs suffer even 10% casualties. If there is wizardry involved in the attack, the orcs break and run automatically.

THE CHAOS OF WAR

Beyond this point the war broils over. Whether it remains in the valley, in the Outpost, or spills back to the tower and bridge depend upon too many factors to relate here. Castle Keepers should take stock of how many orcs survived, how many elves, characters, their dispositions, and plan accordingly.

A few items of note:

- 1) Grom retreats from the ridge and into the valley if the pressure and loss are too great when/if the captain attacks. He knows his numbers will tell greater in open battle. In this case, as noted above, the elves pursue.
- 2) Grom does not intend to hold the Outpost. His only desire is to destroy it and put a token force there to guard against any elves who come that way and to keep the valley open for his retreat, if it should come to that.
- 3) Grom is not likely to quit the field entirely unless 75% of his men are dead. He knows it will be at least a few weeks before any force of elves gathers from the north, and even then it will only be a few hundred; the Fontenouq are not a numerous people and are scattered far and wide.
- 4) It will take the elves at least two weeks, probably three, to gather a force large enough to threaten the orcs. When they do, they enter the valley with a force of 80-120 strong. This can easily turn into a full scaled war.

REWARDS

Assuming the characters offered their aid to the elves, if there are any surviving, they will pay them well, regardless of whether they stay and fight in the ongoing war that is now boiled over in and throughout the valley between Grom and the lords of Fontenouq.

Each character receives a 25gp gem, as promised by the lieutenant at the outset. They are allowed to keep the *rune stone*, if they did not use it, and any items they picked up along the way (the *robe of useful items*, etc). Furthermore, each of them is given hospitality in the towers of the elves.

They are each awarded 250gp in mixed coin and gems.

Each is given a broad leather belt, crafted by the elves and set with precious stones and runes. The belt is magical, granting the wearer a +1 on any initiative roll that involves drawing a weapon from the belt and all are allowed to choose one expert weapon.

FRIENDS OF THE ELVES: They are named Friends of the Elves. If ever they should find themselves in the lands of Fontenouq, they may call upon them for safe housing, food and rest.

THE OUTPOST

WARREN HEIGHTS

MERIL

BRAYLUN VALLEY

OLD BRIDGE

DEEP FELT RIVER

PIERS RIDGE

