

It is in the high days of summer 2947 as you make your way back south toward the Woodman realm. The journey is uneventful and after a couple of weeks, you soon find yourselves neering Woodland Hall. You decide to head south toward the sanctuary of Rhosgobel. Midway between the two settlements, as you are making camp for the night, your lookout reports back that a group of 10 men are approaching your camp.

The group is armed as one would expect a company to be when traveling in Wilderland. They do not appear to be aggressive or threatening. The group of men bear the crest of a sun on their armor. As the group approaches, the leader waves and calls out, "Hail travelers! A word?"

I am Euric, of the Sunstead. We are emissaries of Ceawin. We hail from a small settlement of brave men and women, who aim to reclaim the East Bight for the free people of Middle Earth. We seek an audience with Ingomer and the other leaders of the Woodmen.

Ceawin the Generous

Ceawin is chieftain of a tribe of men who once lived the West Nether Vales of Anduin. When word reached them that the Dragon was dead, Ceawin's father led them east, around the southern edge of Mirkwood and through the Brown Lands to the East Bight. There, they have settled, and begun to farm. Ceawin is close friends with the Woodmen of Woodmen-town and Rhosgobel, and intends to unite his people with them. After the fashion of the Woodmen, he has built his hall under the shadow of the trees of the Narrows, and intends to wed the daughter of an elder of Woodmen-town.

Radagast warned Ceawin to stay away from Southern Mirkwood, but the young chieftain is determined to bring prosperity to his people. Men conquered the East Bight before, and lived well for many years — they can do so again under his rule! The company must choose whether to escort the group to Woodland Hall or wish them well and continue to Rhosgobel. At the end of the fellowship phase/start of the next adventure in 2-3 weeks time, they will be asked by Ingomer to bear a message inviting Ceawin to attend a folkmoot of the Woodmen in 1 year's time.

Ingomer

Ingomer gives the company a message written in his hand and signed by the Woodmen elders inviting Ceawin to a folk moot of the Woodmen in one year's time. It is to be held mid summer 2948. Along with the message, the company is given a chest as a sign of good faith. Ingomer warns them to take good care of the contents, among which are several small heirlooms of the woodland people, an opal ring, and an intricately etched dagger in a jeweled scabbard. He also asks the company to take note of this new settlement and bring back what information the company can collect about Ceawin and his followers as well as whether or not it is worth the Woodmen investing their time and resources in assisting the fledgling community.

Carrying the message

The group must choose a route to Sunstead. They can endure the dangers of the Narrows of the Forest, or they can take the much longer route around Southern Mirkwood.

Through the Narrows

The route through the narrows will take the company 2 stages. The First stage is 60 miles south through hard terrain. It takes 6 days and requires 1 Fatigue test at TN 14.

The second stage is a 70 mile trek through the Narrows of the Forrest. This will take 11 days and require 2 fatigue tests at TN of 18.

Southern Route

This route will take 2 stages.

The first stage is 70 miles though Moderate terrain

On foot, this will take 4 days and require 1 fatigue test at TN 14, On horseback, this will take 2 days and 1 fatigue test at TN 14. They will need to pass 3 corruption tests at a TN of 14.

The second stage will cover 480 miles through moderate terrain

On foot this would take 36 days and require 6 fatigue tests at TN 16. On Horseback, this will take 18 days and require 3 fatigue tests at level 16.

Ingomer will offer to give the group a guide. The Guide's name is Reginar. He is a hearty Woodman in his mid 30's. He knows the Forrest well and can assist the company on their travels.

Reginar

If Reginar is the guide, the company may reroll one failed fatigue test each time one is called for.

The western part of the Narrows is full of biting flies which will undoubtedly plague the company. Players could suggest means of dealing with them, such as a herbal mixture or such created by someone with Mirkwood Lore or Herb-lore.

A hazard might involve a fever brought on by the biting flies causing the loss of endurance.

The Forrest this far south is filled with evil things, most notably spiders and Wood-wights.

A hazzard in the narrows might see the company attacked by a group of 3 or 4 woodwights.

A Lost Soul

As the company nears Rhosgobel, the companions encounter a wounded man. He stumbles towards them, his face pale as a ghost, yellow-flecked spit welling up from the corners of his mouth. He was waylaid by Spiders in the woods, and their poison courses through his veins. He presses a crumpled note into the character's hands before falling unconscious.

Beran

Any Woodman companion hailing from Mirkwood (or anyone possessing the Trait Mirkwood-lore) recognise him as Beran the Watchful; he is a Woodman, and is known as one of Radagast's informants and watchmen. The note he carries warns that Beran saw Orcs in Fenbridge Castle, one of the outlying fortifications of Dol Guldur (Heart of the Wild, page 108). A

scrawled map notes the position of Fenbridge, and also marks a tower near the Narrows of the Forest (the Tyrant's Hill). The Enemy abandoned the castle after the White Council drove the Necromancer from Dol Guldur, but now the Orcs have returned.

Soon after Beran meets the company, a group of six armed warriors emerge from the forest, accompanied by as many huge snarling wolfhounds. They are clad not unlike the Woodmen of Mirkwood, but do not bear the marks of any known clan. They wear mail shirts, and carry helmets and shields on their back, but it is clear that they are not looking for a fight.

The leader of the group steps forward: she's a lean, broad-shouldered Northman woman, with dark hair streaked with white. She announces herself as Dagmar, servant of the Tyrant's Hill. Pointing at the poisoned man, she claims that Beran stole something from her, and arrogantly demands that he should be handed over to them. If questioned, Dagmar identifies herself as a free huntress of the forest, a follower of Mogdred, the Lord of the Hill. Her master, she tells them, claims the southern forest as his realm, and is a Woodman born of Mirkwood. She insists that they are friends to the Woodmen, but her demeanour says otherwise.

Dagmar is lying – she captured Beran in the woods, and forcibly escorted him to the Tyrant's Hill. Beran escaped but blundered into a Spider-web. Mogdred wants to keep news of the Orcs from the Woodmen for as long as possible, until he decides which side to support. If the companions point out the letter, Dagmar offers to bring Beran to Rhosgobel and deliver it personally.

Dealing with Dagmar

If the companions choose to fight Dagmar, use the statistics for Servants of the Tyrant's Hill, below. The warriors fight until reduced to half their starting Endurance or wounded, and then retreat. Dagmar does not want to kill the companions – Mogdred does not want to antagonise his neighbours – but neither is she overly solicitous of their health. If the company surrender or flee, she lets them go.

If the companions hand Beran over, then Dagmar and her followers vanish into the forest with the wounded man. He is never seen again.

If the companions insist on bringing Beran to Rhosgobel, then Dagmar offers to accompany them. "These woods are dangerous", she says, "Spiders and worse things draw near." On the way there, Dagmar looks for an opportunity to recapture Beran and the note. She might even attack the company as they sleep. If the heroes refuse Dagmar's offer, then she and her men follow them through the woods; if they are unable to escape her, she ambushes them before they reach Rhosgobel. By then, her frustration is enough to drive her to kill.

At Rhosgobel

At Rhosgobel, the company meet Radagast, who is deeply concerned by news of the Orcs at Fenbridge. He has been keeping a close watch over the ruins of Dol Guldur and the other outlying fortresses, and hoped that Mirkwood would enjoy a long time of peace before evil returned to the wood.

The Lord of the Tyrant's Hill

The companions may wish to know more about Mogdred, the so-called Lord of the Tyrant's Hill (Heart of the Wild, page 107). According to rumour, he commands many well-equipped warriors, and claims part of Southern Mirkwood and the Narrows as his domain. Some of the settlements in the southern vales pay him tribute. No one among his followers knows where Mogdred comes from, but his tower was once inhabited by Orcs and Men who bore the sigil of the Necromancer.

Having dealt with Beran, the company continues their journey to Sunstead.

Depending on the route the group takes several things may happen. If they take the southern route, then the trip is long but mostly uneventful through rolling hills and untamed uninhabited country. There are vestiges of old roads long abandoned where trade caravans once passed between eastern Rhovanion and the Aduin Vale. The group may encounter a pack of wild wolves should they have a hazard to deal with.

Preferably, the group will attempt the shorter but more dangerous passage through the Narrows of the Forrest.

The Narrows is not unlike the rest of Mirkwood. The terrain is relatively flat, the trees are thick and oppressive. This is a region that has long been under the shadow of Dol Guldor however and many evil things still haunt the wood. One this was a safer place and in places the players may catch glimpses of what one were elven paths through this part of Mirkwood. There is evidence of many spiders. This is also a place that now is under the control of the Lord of Tyrant's Hill. He has servants who regularly patrol these woods doing their lords bidding.

About midway through the crossing of Mirkwood, the companions find themselves surrounded by a group of the servants of Tyrant's Hill. Depending on the outcome of the earlier encounter with Dagmar and her group, these servants will be indifferent to outright hostile to woodmen in their realm.

If the group is not alert, they will be caught off guard. If their lookouts are wary, they may notice the servants before they can approach.

This group consists of 5 soldiers. They do not necessarily want to fight, but might, if there was profit to be made.

Once encountered, they ask the company's business in their realm. They claim that this is the Realm of Morgred. They then demand a toll for safe passage through the forrest. They can be bought off for a piece of treasure each. For a bit extra, they might agree to escort the company

the rest of the way to Sunstead. If the encounter with Dagmar ended in hostility, they may be more threatening and demand to see what goods the company carries.

A player could use persuade or awe to influence the encounter.

If they are very successful the company leaves and takes no toll.

Less successful encounters will result in paying a toll or outright hostility.

If the encounter turns hostile, or if they are made aware of the treasures sent by Ingomer, they will demand the treasure and attack if denied.

Should hostilities be avoided and the group gets an escort, they must keep a wary eye on Morgred's men, lest they be caught off guard and robbed or attacked in their sleep.

The Woodwight

As the next few days pass, you establish an uneasy truce with the Men of Tyrant's Hill. There is only a modicum of trust on both sides. While they show no signs of open hostility and help with the navigation of the forrest, you have no doubt they are watching you, trying to ascertain what they can about your group and its intentions. They seem to have no knowledge of your encounter with Dagmar, or her death. When pressed about Tyrant's Hill, they have little to say, other than that Morgred is a just ruler who has much in common with the Woodmen, although he thinks them naive if not grown soft since the fall of Dol Guldur.

On the fourth day from your encounter with the men, you wake to find them gathering their gear and making as if to leave.

Here the men will tell the group that they must take their leave and head back west through the forest. They assure you that the eastern eaves are just a day and a half further through the forest.

Even if the company pleads or persuades, the group refuses to continue with them. They seek to strike their own course.

You set out toward the east without the men of Tyrant Hill. The day starts out warm, the air almost becomes suffocating. What light filters through the leaves barely reaches the floor of the forest and paints the detritus a reddish, almost blood-like hue.

Toward late afternoon, the temperature suddenly seems to drop. As the darkness thickens, you begin to see the mist of your breath as you exhale. The cold seems to sink into your skin despite the effort of your exertions. You can almost feel icy fingers running down your spine. It is most unsettling.

You find what seems to be a secure, small clearing in the trees.

Exploring the area you find two ancient piles of stonework. This may once have been an archway over a path through the narrows. There is no evidence of spiders. There is to be exact, no evidence of any forrest life. The dark call of dark birds and hidden wildlife is now replaced with an eerie silence, you suddenly realize.

The group should make camp. If they choose to continue they soon are traveling in the pitch dark of the Mirkwood night. Either way the woodwight will attack. If they set up camp, they will at least have the possibility of a fire to use against the wight.

Daryl, Theobald, and Uilosson all begin to be overcome with an almost unshakable sense of dread. As the two men sleep, they dream unsettling dreams of something rising from the decay

of the forest. Uilosson (one of our player characters) almost thinks he can hear a voice calling to him. "Firstborn, so far from home. Do not think the forest safe. Your world is fading. Darkness is coming. Soon you will join me."

Daryl suddenly cries out. You notice that He is shaking, as is Theobald. They are not responsive. Uilosson, seems in a trance. He too does not respond.

The group may attempt a song or other acceptable skill roll to wake them. A success wake one, a great success wakes 2 and extraordinary success wakes all three.

Suddenly the fire dims and a dark voice laughs mockingly at the group from the air above them. Before you from the darkness emerges a shadowy figure. Rotted flesh hangs from ancient bones. It's bulk is made of decaying plants and shadow. A dull red glow stares at you from the empty sockets of a cracked skull. This is a woodwight of Mirkwood.

Sunstead

Leaving the Forest

The next morning the air begins to grow less oppressive. After an hour of walking the company can begin to see occasional needles of light piercing through the canopy of the forrest. Soon the group reaches the eaves of Mirkwood. The air tastes almost sweet compared to the stale atmosphere of the forrest. As they pass through the last of the trees they behold a verdant rolling plain before them, they have reached the East Bight. It is a beautiful land, if empty.

Suddenly there is a loud crashing sound behind the group. They turn to see a huge branch from an ancient tree falling from high above smashing into the ground on the spot where they had stood not a minute before. An icy cold wind blows outward from the trees whose branches creak and wave as if taunting the group.

A mile out of the forest, the company comes across a small farmstead. It is the home of a young farmer and his Wife along with their two daughters. If they choose to stop, the group will be invited to stay for dinner and will be offered a nights rest in the barn. This couple moved south from near the Long lake with Ceawin two years before. Life has been hard, but so far they are prospering. The fertile soil so long left to fallow is rich and the crops have been good. The company can gather information about Ceawin and Sunstead from the couple.

Olwin the Farmer

Avina

The people of Sunstead settled in this area 4 years ago. They are different from the Woodmen west of the forest originally living in the west nether vales of the Anduin north of Lorien. The village of Sunstead lies only a couple of miles to the east of their farm. It has been built on a large hill rising from the plain. There had once been a city built on that spot, but the centuries have eroded all but the stone foundations of the former buildings. It was on these foundations, that the people have begun building their town.

Ceawin is a kind and just leader.

Some had questioned his youth at first, although over the last two years he has earned their trust and respect. He sees great potential in the East Bight and sees this as an opportunity to open trade routes between the Woodmen and the men of Esgaroth, Dale, and Dorwinion, as well as the Dwarves of Erebor.

The couple on several occasions has seen groups of men under the eaves of the forrest. They appear to be Woodmen. The players may surmise, rightly, that these are servants of Morgred, checking on the new inhabitants of the East Bight. There has been no hostility between them and the people of Sunstead.

Entering Sunstead

From a distance , the company can see the hill upon which Sunstead stands. The village is small compared to the villages of the Woodmen on the west of the Forest. There are 15-20 small houses that surround a larger Long Hall built on the crest of the hill. There are a couple of guard towers that look out across the grassy plain. The hill is surrounded by a ring of wooden palisades with a central gate facing the south.

As the group approaches, they are met by a group of 10 or so armed men.

Sunstead Guard

This will be run as an encounter. Tolerance is set at the highest valor rating of the company and modified by one for each woodman in the group, including the guide. If the group still has the gifts from Ingomer, they gain an additional point of tolerance.

Once the group has the equivalent of 4 successful rolls, one of the men steps forward and introduces himself as Ceawin. Ceawin is eager to forge an alliance with the western Woodmen and so the encounter should go generally smoothly, unless the company rolls very poorly.

Ceawin

If the group is not very successful they are allowed to talk in private with Ceawin, but he seems to be somewhat restrained in his dealings with the group. If they are very successful, they are invited to stay as guests in the great hall.

A thief in the night

After several days in the village, Ceawin asks to speak with the company to seek their advice and help in a matter. North of Sunstead several Woodmen have been complaining of the theft of livestock. The suspect is Baldac the Hunter. At first he was an active part of the community, but as of late he has isolated himself and scarcely is seen in the village at all. Within the last month he has been involved in several altercations with some of the villagers and some of the farmers say they have seen him stalking around their farms at night. Several sheep and goats have gone missing and most suspect Baldac as the culprit. Ceawin asks if you would assist him in investigating the matter.

The group can talk with a couple of farmers who are accusing Baldac.

Gerold is a man in his 40's who claims to have been awoken by his hound barking one night. His sheep were making a lot of noise. He went to investigate and saw a figure in the midst of the animal. He called out to the person who fled in the direction of Baldac's camp. The next morning he noticed one of his sheep was missing. He immediately went to confront Baldac who denied everything.

Gerold

The second farmer, Oldo, woke one morning to find the gate to his goat pen open and the goats all scattered. He recovered them all but two. Later he found a pool of blood where it appeared an animal had been killed. There were human footprints in the area. He had spoken with his neighbor Gerold. He went to talk with Baldac and was told "Don't start a fire that you cannot put out. You don't know who you are dealing with."

Oldo

Baldac lives north of these farms. If the company goes to investigate, they soon discover the ruins of an ancient tower that is still partially standing. There are several small mounds of earth surrounding the tower. These are ancient barrows.

This is a blighted place and a corruption test must be passed or shadow points gained.

Baldac the Hunter

Baldac does not appear particularly extraordinary. There is something not quite right about him however. He seems very suspicious of the group. He is very secretive. He tries to dismiss the group outright. If Ceawin is with the group, he is more polite, but still not welcoming.

This encounter can be run using persuade, riddle, awe or any other skills that the group can employ. The goal is to discover as much about Baldac as possible. Baldac has become slave to a wight, the spirit of a prisoner of Dul Guldor who once was a leader of men in these parts. Baldac is not completely lost though and in fact doesn't realize what has happened to him. The goal of the company is to discover his secret and free him from the bondage of the wight, if possible.

Baldac's Story

Baldac discovered these ruins while out hunting and realized what the mounds were. He set up camp in the tower and began excavating the barrows. He has discovered some ancient treasures, long lost. What he didn't realize was that these treasures were cursed. A spirit of greed began to possess him and he started hoarding them and has kept them secret from the other citizens of Sunstead.

Several months ago, deep within a barrow, Baldac discovered a truly wondrous treasure. It is an ancient gem of black obsidian although when held in the hand it begins to glow with a deep purple light. Soon after taking it he began having nightmares. He would wake with vivid dreams of dark underground places full of screaming. In his dreams he was a great ruler of men who had lost all and been forced into service of something evil. His dreams were full of vengeful desire. By day he was the same as ever before, or so he thought, but a change was taking

place in him and he was yearning more and more for the gem and the powerful dreams. He is becoming resentful of the men of Sunstead and jealous of the leadership of Ceawin.

At first he still hunted by day to get food and furs to trade with the other settlers, but this was taking far too long and keeping him away from home and his hoard of gold. He began to fear the discovery of his treasure and has been spending more and more time at home guarding it. One night, he found a stray goat that had gotten lost from one of his neighbors. He killed it and ate it. After that, he began stealing here and there from the surrounding farms, because it was easier and quicker than hunting. In his mind, he felt they owed it to him, and so this is how he justified it to himself. He began to see himself as a man who should be a leader.

There is part of Baldac that is still good. He has thought of leaving gold to pay for the livestock he has taken, but greed takes over at the last minute as well as fear that others will discover his treasure if he starts circulating ancient riches. He is convinced that smashing the gem will end the dreams and has almost attempted to destroy it, but it now has too strong a grip over him.

It is possible with a series of very successful rolls to get a full confession from Baldac.

Less successful encounters will reveal part of Baldac's story.

The company's goal is the redemption of Baldac. If the group cannot persuade Baldac to confess, he will attempt to attack them, although he has no hope of success. As a last resort, Baldac will flee into the forest, with the obsidian gem, if possible.

If the gem is destroyed, Baldac wakes as if from a dream and feels genuine remorse for what he has done. He freely offers to repay those he has stolen from and to give the rest of the treasure to aid Sunstead.

The treasure is cursed, but could help the village. If the company asks for a share they must follow the rules for cursed treasure.

Leaving Sunstead

Having aided Ceawin, the company is in good favor with the leader. He agrees to the moot in one year's time. The group must now return to Ingomer and report on what they have seen.

Return to Woodland Hall

The first stage of the return trip is a 70 mile trek through the Narrows of the Forrest (seeve terrain). This will take 11 days and require 2 fatigue tests at TN of 18.

The next stage take the company from the narrows of the forest to Woodland Hall. The companions travel 110 miles by foot, over Hard terrain, through border lands in the summer. The journey takes 11 days. Each companion must make 2 Fatigue tests at TN 14.

Once in Woodland Hall, the companions must seek out Ingomer and report their findings about Sunstead and Ceawin.