Settings: Around the great river of Anduin (or any major river)

Requirements: 6-8 Medium - High level characters, no special requirements.

1.0 The Anduin Vale Spirit:

The Anduin Vale is a fertile and lively mark in Middle Earth. The strong waters of the river provide the folk there with every need, water, food, energy, transportation, and defense. The strong flowing waters have many times provided the folk with time to set up defenses, which has been in itself, rare. Recently though, strange things are beginning to happen. Unheard of river pirates are attacking random boats that travel the Anduin. This band of pirates is said to be led by a man who has thousands of faces. No one dares to talk about boat schedules or cargo in the open any more in fear that the illusionary man is listening. Local guards and mercenaries have been completely unable to track the man and his strange band. Yet another story that is haunting the inns and taverns is of a strange spirit being, half-alive and half-dead, that has been heard wailing at the full moon.

1.1 Ferocious River rides:

Although, all attempts to stop the masked Hillman have come to naught, one man has seen his face, and is able to see through his illusions. Houlash, a man that has lived his whole life getting into trouble, seeing things he should have not. He is now under Riverside guard watch, and in pretty good protection, but will not be remaining so. He is to travel to Gremshock, a city a little to the south, to give detailed descriptions of Argh’– to some men who are planning to hunt him down. Of course, the shadowy Hillman will try to put and end to the man who has seen his real face. Without guards to escort him to Gremshock, Houlash is left to find his own protection, and pray that the Shadow of the Anduin and his pack don't find him. Along with that whole ordeal, a mother and her two daughters are looking for a means of travel down to Gremshock. Shiela and her two daughters seek rest from all of their travels, and the lovely town of Gremshock is ideal location for rest. They search for the remains of their father, her husband, or what might be him. The only boat traveling at this time of the year? The Spinning Storm, and her captain and his son. The only boat strong enough to sail down the Anduin during the high winter, is loading for her last ride till spring. All hell will break lose when the Shadow and his pack find the boat.
1.2 The NPCs:

Argh:

Also known as the Shadow, Dunlending bard another Dunlending on this side of the mountains. This caniving thief is a true hassle to local villages. His small band of outrageous thieves began to take its toll on the local villages and even as far as Riverside. At that time, some local warriors got together, and with monetary incentive from rich merchants from Riverside, they hunted down and exterminated the small band of Duneldings. Argh—was captured, flogged and was set to be executed. With the help of his always-thinking mind, he managed to escape and dodge death this time. Two years since then, he has a new group of friends. And a lethal group it is. A small band of strange shadowy creatures, now led by the Dunlending is storming the Anduin Vale. But thievery is not their aim this time. A much darker and sinister plot is behind them. Related to Rhu’tag, this Dunlending has the same skills and abilities as his cousin, yet in contrast to Rhu’tag, he is fearless and inventive, only fleeing from battle when all options have been used. Even so, his tactics rarely involve battle, but ambushes, trickery and stealth. He is deadly with his daggers, and even more so with the poisons he usually puts on the tips of his daggers. He has strange magical abilities in which he can take the shape and figure of anyone, making it near impossible (-90) to detect his real identity, or that he just isn't who he says he is. He attacks with his +20 daggers at one time combining for one attack of +40. 50% of the time, the daggers are tipped with some of his poison (Uraana 30%, Dynallca 50%, Yllcala, his own make, 1-10 hit points and 3 rounds stun, 95%).

Shuooolt, Black Númenôrian wight:

Shuooolt, or Michean, as he used to be called, was a successful merchant near Umbar. He had managed to take over most of the main silk and spices business in a small route. He was happily married and had various children. He had just acquired a small mansion when he disappeared without notice. No one knew where he had gone or what had happened to him. Some said that he was attacked by bandits and killed, others say he fled with a sum of money, and yet others say he was seduced by some other source. None came near. He was attacked, but not killed. Instead, Michean was sold into slavery far north in Mordor. His frail human body finally withered out in the harsh Mordor land and died, but did not pass on. His spirit remained in this world, hungry for revenge, and for love. He wandered far into Mirkwood forest, where hunters and elves could swear they heard a voice that seemed like someone crying in anger. Since then, he has come Argh— and his band of illusionary half orcs. They do not recognize his alter state, and see him only as a man. His great powers and abilities have earned him a spot of importance among the group. He rarely talks with them, and this inspires fear. He will stay with them unless some other opportunity comes up. He continues his search to remedy his state, either with full life, or entire death.

Shuooolt, as those that have seen him in this state call him, is not a true wight. He has his physical body, but is not alive. His soul lingers, barely attached to his body. This state has left him with unimaginable powers, many he has not yet realized. He has full use of both channeling and essence magic, being able to use mage spells, as well as animist spells. His alter state also allows him to see in the shadow world, as well as in the living world. Invisible items cannot be hidden from him. He also “enjoys” from enhanced senses. He can see thrice as far as a normal human, hear 10x better and smell 5x better. He has unimaginable strength and incredible thinking skills. He is capable of split second thinking, and thus making him lethal in battle, being able to switch what he is doing without suffering any penalties. Unlike other wights, he is able to think freely, his soul still, in some manner, attached to his body. He will defend himself, and properly take care of his body. He will not reveal his state to anyone, and it is near impossible(-95) by normal manners (looking at him) to determine his true nature. Only on a full moon night, is it possible to see his soul floating just off of his body. He also has no shadow. Undead slaying weapons will not have any effect on him, as well as holy weapons, as he is not evil. He uses a long sword (+25 magical) that ignites on fire when taken out of the sheath. It is intelligent, and is the true bearer of the name Shuooolt. Michean adopted that name for himself when others saw his sword and fled in fear. He cannot be killed. His body can be destroyed, but it only heals and returns healthily within days. The only way to defeat him is to remove his marriage ring, the link that keeps him to this world. Should the ring be taken off, his body will dissipate, and his soul will shimmer in an extremely bright light, blinding anyone nearby for a while, and then shimmer out. Should he be reunited with his wife, his state will revert to normal, soul rejoining his body completely. He will have lost all his magical powers, but his physically enhanced state remains the same.

Shuooolt, or Michean, is a sad and distressed soul. He does not wish evil upon anyone. He will not talk to anyone unless approached very kindly. Many times, especially during a full moon, he will be seen weeping, sobbing. He is easily misunderstood, and has been many times attacked before due to the state he is in. He is to be feared, if you anger him. Pray you don't.
Shiela, Black Númenórian female bard:

Wife of Michean, she lost all of his property when he failed to appear. Without ways to pay for the newly earned wealth, she and her two daughters were thrown out into poverty, once again. Distressed with the loss of the man she loved very much, she set out with her two daughters to find out the truth behind his disappearance. Being the smart woman she is, she had set aside plenty of gold for an emergency, and now was one. After 4 years, she finally managed to find a lead that led them right into Mordor. She learned very quickly the ways of trickery and of charm, as she would need it in the harsh land. After hearing of his death at the hands of slave masters, she was about to head back south, having found out the truth, when she heard of the strange being known as Shuooolt. Having recognized that name as the name of her past husband's sword, she went after those leads in hope of finding something in relations to her past husband. 4 more years went by, and her journey led her from Mordor, into Mirkwood, and into the Anduin Vale, where she now remains. She has just about quit searching for this Shuooolt, and is deciding on staying in the Anduin Vale, a sharp contrast to the hot desert they came from. Throughout this whole time, her eldest daughter, Yevilin, became an expert swordsman, or better, swordswoman, while the youngest, Ersela kept her youthful affinity to animals, and enhanced her skills with the knowledge of the wood elves, whose trust they gained throughout their travels in the deep woods. In sharp contrast to most Black Númenórians, Shiela is a kind woman. Having been born in poverty, and having traveled through most of Middle Earth, she has lost the typical arrogance of the southern Númenórians. She no longer dresses brightly, favoring now more simple clothing. She uses no weapons, relying more on her charm and wit to defeat her enemies. She has some magical abilities, most in the realm of charming and influencing. She is now in her late 50s, but still enjoys from good physical shape. She is still as beautiful as when younger (AP 98) and always gets a look drawn towards her. She is a strong woman, but is noticeably getting tired.

Yevilin, Black Númenórian female warrior:

The eldest daughter of Michean and Shiela, Yevilin is a quick warrior. Having traveled through most of Middle Earth after her father, she learned various fighting styles from many different warriors who were charmed by her beauty. Having left Umbar when 12, she has only a few strong memories of that land, but her strong Númenórian blood still calls in her. She will never shy from a battle, and will never shy from any opponent. Yevilin's favorite weapon is a falchion (+5 non-magical) that she received from a lover somewhere in the eastern side of Mirkwood. She also uses a small metal shield (30% light +15 to AG), also a gift from some random lover. She is usually clad in chain mail armor, which she covers with a normal blue dress. Not as beautiful as her mother (AP 93) she still turns an eye, but rarely returns a smile. She is stern, and will not hesitate to attack should she feel her mother or sister is threatened in any way. Although quick to temper, she can be very loving, should the situation arise.

Ersela, Black Númenórian female bard:

The youngest daughter is almost an exact copy of the mother, yet much more innocent. A mere 17 years old, she is very beautiful (AP 100) and delicate. She is swift yet fragile. Ersela has the strange nature of understanding animals and being able to converse with them. So strong is their affinity that many have sworn that animals have defended her, even drakes and wolves. How much of this is truth, no one knows for sure, but that she is able to tame any animal is true. She also has one of the sweetest voices known to man. Like her mother, she is able to charm any one, especially any man, just by singing to him (RR vs. 9th level charm). Like her sister, she dresses in a light blue dress, but carries no weapons. She instead relies on her animal friends (can cast Summons V 3 times a day without expending PP). She is a very kind and enjoys talking to people. She is drawn to elves, and will always try to talk to any, especially Silvan Elves.
Uolgen, Eriadorian warrior:

Having lived on the Anduin River as long as he can remember, Uolgen got his boat, the Spinning Storm, from his father. An expert boatsman, he makes his living by transporting goods up and down the Anduin Vale, be they food goods, weapons, grain, or people. With the help of his son, Iliten, they have managed to make a decent living for themselves. Uolgen knows the Anduin River very well. Never has he seen anyone try to attack his boat, especially from land. Stories of pirates are unheard of here, at least on the river. Uolgen carries a dagger with him and there are various different spears on his boat. He loves nothing else than singing loud and strong on evenings on the river, all over a mug of ale, of course.

Iliten, Eriadorian warrior:

The only son of Uolgen, Iliten helps his father in every way, hoping one day to have the money making boat for himself. His only fear, is that since he works so much on the boat, that he will never find a bride for himself. He is a strong and healthy worker, and is decent with a short sword and expert with a spear, which he uses to fish.

Houlash, Eriadorian scout:

Always in the wrong place at the wrong time, Houlash has managed, yet again, to get into trouble. He is the only man alive, yet that is, that has seen the real face of Argh'. Of course, the Hillman thief is not going to let that remain that way. Since he is able to tell Houlash through his illusions, guards of Riverside have got him in their care to be able to identify him at any moment. Currently, though, he is needed farther south, to give a detailed description of Argh’ to a group of men that plan to hunt him down. But, there are no guards to escort him down there. He must rely on his own will to get there. Although not by nature a coward, the countless situations that he has been in has made him a very cautious man. He trusts nearly no one, but knows the worth of a few gold pieces. He is a shorter fat man, nearing his late 40s, who is always getting into trouble, one way or another (it's a curse).

1.3 Maps: Boatmap (See below)

1.4 The Task:

1.41 Starting the players:

It is quite simple. Houlash needs protection on his trip down. If the players just finished the mission for Elrond and Kildar, they will be known to Houlash, in which case he will offer them 300 gp to get them safely to Gremshock. Should the players just be new people in Riverside or Everwind, they will hear of the short fat man that is looking for protection.

1.42 Aids:

The only true aids will be once they get on the Spinning Storm. The trip to the boat will have to depend on their own skills, which shouldnt be too much trouble, as the Shadow only plans to attack his witness on the boat. The only problems they may encounter could be orc patrols or random bandits. Once on the boat, they have the aid of the three women, and of course, the ship’s captain, Uolgen, who is not about to let his boat get taken over.

1.43 Obstacles:

Other than random events, the only obstacles will be the Shadow and his group, Shuooolt, should he be attacked, and the orc patrols. Dealing with the Shadow should not be too hard if Houlash is willing to give a description to the players, in which case they will also be able to see through his illusions. The true obstacle will be the orcish patrols that are after Shuooolt. This is detailed more below.
1.44 Rewards:

The 300 gp offered by Houlash is more than a substantial reward. If everything goes well, they might gain the friendship of Uolgen, as well as of the reunited family, Michean and Shiela. The daughters might even join the group if asked, but Michean and Shiela will not.

1.5 Encounters:

The Encounters revolve around three main points. First of all is Argh’– and his band of assassins. The second will be the attack by the Stink Cloud orcs and lastly an attack by the Flame Sting orcs. At such a high point in the land's winter, random encounters should be almost none. Very few people travel except on ships like the Spinning Storm. The following details these three encounters.

The Shadow attacks:

The intelligent Dunlending has devised a strategy for attacking ships on the Anduin river. Since his strange illusion abilities are unoticable by anyone except Houlash, he is able to walk around any town without fear of being recognized. He has learned which ship the fat man is traveling on, and who is going to protect him. He will then follow the group secretly until they get on the ship. Then he will join his group and follow the ship from horse, always far enough behind not to let anyone notice he is behind them. Should he by a slim chance be seen, he will be mistaken for a normal person. At about the third night, at a point where the Anduin is the narrowest for a good while, he will attack by launching large ropes from large crossbows attached on land. With his 15 half orcs and Shuooolt, they will draw the boat to shore. Either Uolgen or Iliten will be sailing the ship that night, and it should take about 10 rounds to be able to round up everyone, should they awake. The Shadow and his group will take at least 20 rounds to get the boat to shore and then they will attack. Everything should be determined by how fast the players are able to wake up and arm themselves. Should they do this before they reach shore, the battle should be simple, very onesiided towards the players, as they have the advantage of being on the ship. Should the half orcs get on the ship before the players are fully aware of the situation, it will be an even battle. No matter what happens, two things are inevitable. First of all, should Shuooolt ever see his wife, he will attack the half orcs and the Shadow, ruthlessly at that. Second, as the boat was dragged onto shore forcefully, the bottom of it scraped against the bottom of the river at the shore and sprung various leaks. The boat will be useless, Uolgen and Iliten quite mad, and the whole group stranded, as the winter cold offers no help to anyone traveling by foot. This should lead to the next encounters.

Stink Cloud orcs:

This orc clan is as its name gives insight, very smelly. They are a younger group from Angband that is, as is the Flame Sting orcs, under orders to get the being known as Shuoooolt and bring him to Angmar. They have no indications of who this being is, but have nevertheless followed the Shadow and his group, learning that the being is with them. They are an inexperienced group, yet nevertheless dangerous. They make up for their lack of skills by attacking in sheer numbers. They are led by a strange orc, Urikao, a freak that has 3 eyes, yet can only use one of them. He is loud and boisterous, always screaming orders and obsceneties. They are much quicker moving than the Flame Sting orcs and henceforth find the stranded group first. They will not plan attacks, but will come shouting and screaming forth from everywhere to attack the group. There are 23 of them and should be easily handled if the players do not rush into their onslaught. A defensive stand will earn the players a victory. The orc colors are green and black.

Flame Sting orcs:

This clan is far more dangerous than the Stink Cloud clan. They are far more skilled, and much more careful about attacking large groups. They only number 17 in size, but have easily taken down as many as 20 Dunadan rangers at once. They carefully plan each attack and usually attack in complete surprise. They are led by an Uruk-hai warrior named Bugta who uses a +15 elf slaying sword. They love to use fire in their attacks and readily use fire in their arrows. They are not too fond of cold though, but highly resistant to fire. They know who the Shuoooolt being is and will try to take him alive. Should they capture him, they will quickly retreat. The Flame Sting clan's colors are red, orange and black, and they also have 3 wargs with them. They will probably attack 2 days after the Stink Cloud orcs attack, but in complete surprise if they can.
## 1.6 NPC stats:

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Key = weapons: da - dagger, ss - short sword, ls - long sword, fa - falchion, lb - long bow, sp - spear, sc - scimitar, cb - crossbow
1.3 The boatmap:

The Spinning Storm is a sturdy ship made to support the harsh winter conditions. As the Anduin rarely freezes completely over this far south, it is possible for stronger ships to pass through south. It is a very shallow ship, as to make the trip upstream easier, with the help of a main sail. Downstream is easier, as it just goes with the flowing current of the Anduin.

1. Main deck. The oddly familiar smell of a ship fills the nostrils of anyone that comes on. Many spears can be found up against the captain's deck. Ropes are tied up against the kitchen.
2. Captains deck. It is from here that Uolgen controls the ships rudder. He and his son also make this room their home.
3. Kitchen. Fish and grains is the main course every day. Iliten prepares most of the meals.
4. Stairs down.
5. Stairs up.
6. Rooms. These are the small rooms that people make their home for the trips up and down the river. Very few people ever travel upstream, as a horse ride is faster, but downstream Uolgen is guaranteed to have someone riding with him.
7. Storage room. Here Uolgen and Iliten keep many of the things needed on the ship. Oil flasks, food, equipment, etc.
8. Storage room. This room is used to transport goods up and down the river if the underdeck is full already.
9. Underdeck. This is the main storage area of the ship. It can be accessed from below or from a trapdoor above it.