Withdrawn to Mordor

This is a MERP adventure for any number of players up to 21, in which the PCs are minions of Sauron given a chance at redemption at the moment of their Dark God's death. Originally written as a two-to-three-session convention game, this can serve as a wonderful introductory adventure for an early Fourth Age campaign. Withdrawn to Mordor gives players a glimpse of the dark side of Middle Earth, and an excellent opportunity to prove that heroism isn't always born and bred in concert with goodness.

The Story:

The game starts with the characters celebrating the imminent fall of the West and the complete victory of Sauron. Things go downhill in a hurry when, in full view of the company, the Barad-dur collapses, Mount Doom erupts in fury, and the chief Variag priestess present announces that the God Tumrakhi, Tumrakhi who is Sauron, is DEAD...just before her head explodes. Earthquakes ensue. Towers and castles fall. The land fractures and remakes itself. Dust and shattered rock and blood get everywhere, and there's no cleaning people due for a long, long time.

The characters are now faced with series of choices. If the GM does a really fine job, some of them may well die during the decision-making process. They have a full complement of weapons and armor (after all, who goes ANYWHERE in Mordor unarmed?), but no food, no water, and no idea which way to go. It's the GM's job to keep them as confused as possible.

The choices the characters make will put them in dire peril regardless. (Ain't it fun bein' the GM?) They will have to deal with marauding bands of Orcs, insane Trolls, and even-more-insane refugees who refuse to believe that Sauron is no more. They will have to round up drinkable water, edible food, and maybe even help to carry their heavier sacks of plunder. Perhaps worst of all, they face danger from spirits of air, earth, fire, and water whose presence has been beaten down by the Will of Sauron and his Ring for more than five thousand years. These spirits will bring Mordor back into the true ecology of Middle Earth, but not without some kicking and screaming along the way...

Regardless of the choices of the players, their characters must be drawn along the path that leads to the pass of Cirith Ungol. The route South will be made deadly by the presence of the freed slaves of Nurn, now some 200,000 in number, armed and armored from the sack of Urlurtsu Nurn and unnumbered lesser fortresses, killing and slaying and killing and burning and killing everything in their path. The Mountains of Shadow are impassible to most of the characters, and the way North is blocked by the ruin of Orodruin and the presence of the army of Gondor at the Morannon. The sensible, the cowardly, and the pragmatic will agree that Cirith Ungol is the way to go.

There is one heck of a surprise waiting for the characters at the base of Cirith Ungol. The Mouth of Sauron has survived the wreck of the Morannon and has come South to gather the ex-minions of Sauron unto himself. He needs numbers and skills to establish himself out East, and he will latch onto the characters as just the kind of cannon fodder (Sorry, did I say that out loud?) he needs.

The remainder of the adventure takes the company, some by their own free will, and some by compulsion (the Mouth is a 50th level Mage, of course) to the Tower of Cirith Ungol. The Mouth believes he will find a significant store of goods, arms, and armor there, enough to support his fledgling army of Darkness in its quest for a new home. The characters will have to examine their loyalties and their newfound free will and see if the Mouth is someone to be followed...or filleted.
Creatures

- **Orc, Weak**: Level 1, Medium Speed, Hits 35
  Armor: None DB: +20 Attacking, +35 Fleeing
  MM: +10 OB: +35 (Mace)

- **Orc, Medium**: Level 3, Medium Speed, Hits 60
  Armor: Rigid Leather DB: +20 Attacking, +35 Fleeing
  MM: +5 OB: +60 (Scimitar), +45 (Short Bow)

- **Orc, Strong**: Level 5, Medium Speed, Hits 85
  Armor: Chain DB: +20 Attacking, +35 Fleeing
  MM: +5 OB: +60 (Scimitar), +45 (Short Bow)

- **Troll, Crazed**: Level 12, Medium Speed, Hits 180
  Armor: Rigid Leather DB: +30 Attacking, +45 Fleeing
  MM: +10 OB: +150 (Claws...Primary crit = Slash, no maximum, secondary crit = Puncture, maximum B)
  Note: Trolls take crits as Large creatures; use Tables CT-10 and CT-11. Also note: Trolls do NOT suffer bleed/stun crit results from nonmagical weapons, and characters have NO magical weapons at the start.

- **Giant Spider**: Level 5, Moderately Fast Speed, Hits 50
  Armor: Chain DB: +10 Attacking, +35 Fleeing
  MM: +20 OB: +60 (Pincer/Beak...Primary crit = Slash, maximum result 120, secondary crit = Crush, maximum result 120.)
  Note: Target hit for a crit must roll Poison RR vs. level 5 or be paralyzed for 10 minutes per 10% of RR failure. Failure of RR by 50+ means death in 6 rounds.

- **Average Refugee Infantry**: Level 2, Medium Speed, Hits 47
  Armor: Rigid Leather DB: +40 Attacking (includes Shield), +65 Fleeing
  MM: +5 OB: +55 (Broadsword), +40 (Longbow)
  Other Skills: Ambush +1, Climb +22, Ride +12, Track +12, Stalk/Hide +10, Perception +10.

- **Average Refugee Cavalry**: Level 2, Medium Speed, Hits 47
  Armor: Rigid Leather DB: +40 Attacking (includes Shield), +65 Fleeing
  MM: +5 OB: +60 (Scimitar), +45 (Short Bow)
  Other Skills: Ambush +1, Climb +12, Ride +47, Track +12, Stalk/Hide +5, Perception +10.

- **Refugee Subcommander**: Level 5, Medium Speed, Hits 86
  Armor: Chain DB: +40 Attacking (includes Shield), +75 Fleeing
  MM: +5 OB: +95 (Broadsword or Scimitar), +70 (Longbow)

- **Fell Beast**: Level 20, Fast Speed, Hits 210
  Armor: Chain DB: +20 Attacking, +55 Fleeing
  MM: +30 OB: +95 (Bite...Primary crit = Puncture, no maximum, secondary crit = Slash, maximum C)
  Note: Fell Beasts take crits as Huge creatures; use Tables CT-10 and CT-11 with a -10 modifier.

...and finally...

The Mouth of Sauron

Level 50 Mage

Stats: ST 76, AG 98, CO 84, IG 101, IT 99, PR 96

Armor: None DB: +40 Hits: 120

Melee OB: +70 Missle OB: +50 Skills: Acting +87, Ambush +11, Appraisal +79, Meditation +75, Perception +140, Public Speaking +175, Read Runes +90, Ride +110, Signaling +84, Sky-watching +89, Stalk/Hide +135, Trickery +95, Use Item +102.

Spells: 200 PP. Base Spell OB +70; Directed Spells OB +85. All base Mage, Bard, Open Channeling, and Open Essence lists to 10th level.

Principal Magical Items:

- Robes ("Cloak of the Abyss") - Enchanted to absorb light, these robes give +30 to DB, +80 to Hide maneuvers in relative darkness, and -50 to light-related attacks. At wearer's command, all within 50' who see the robes become dizzy and ill (-25 to activity, RR vs. level 50 to avoid).

- Necklace ("Voice of the Dark Tower") - Mithril and black laen amulet, able to greatly amplify the wearer's voice.

- Ring made of black steel - x6 PP multiplier for Mages/Sorcerors, stores six spells of 30th level or lower.
**Helm, black with black gems, in the old Numenorean style - Wearer adds 30 levels when resisting mental attacks; helm negates 25% of all head/neck crits.**

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**Encounters:**

**Chapter 1: "The Opening Salvo", or, "Heads, You Lose!"**

The game opens with the characters gathered at Barad-wath, a fortress on the Gorgoroth-Nurn border which serves as a center of Sauron-worship. There is a party going on. By "party", of course, I mean a combination of barbecue, orgy, concert, sacrifice, formal military celebration and drunken revel all rolled into one. Despite that small setback on the Pelennor Fields a few days ago, the armies of Sauron are prepared to deal the West a final, shattering blow. Yes, that was a bad business with the Witch-king dying and all, but cheer up, old fellow, it just means that there's an opportunity for promotion! Even now the signal fires are reporting that the trap has been sprung: The Easterling and Southron armies along with all those Orcs and Trolls have surrounded the pitiful remains of the army of Gondor just outside the Morannon, and the final victory of the God and King of Middle-Earth is mere moments away.

What could possibly go wrong?

(The characters are in the great meeting-hall of Barad-wath, whose huge, fang-toothed doorway looks out northward towards the Barad-dur, Mount Doom, and the victory of Sauron. Some are reveling and feasting, and some may be more reserved, based on their character descriptions. All, though, have a clear view out the door, and a clear view of the High Priestess of the Variags...)

The Variag High Priestess Dagharga is channelling the Will of Sauron as she does for truly momentous occasions, screaming unintelligibly in an unnaturally low voice clearly not her own. The sound of it rises above the shouting, blaring din of the celebration, commanding attention from even the least interested. Thus, when she suddenly stops in mid-screech and says, in her own tiny little voice, "I cannot feel Tumrakhi...He is gone!", the crowd gets a little upset.

(This is the Lapse of Will, that moment when Frodo claimed the One Ring for his own and all of Sauron's considerable mental energy is concentrated on the Crack of Doom and how fast the Nazgul can get there.)

This unsteady situation lasts for all of half a minute. If PC#15, Raisha, is present, she should consider drawing her sword and moving to the priestess. It has been her task, and her honor, to kill those priestesses who grow weak so as to hasten their reincarnation in the service of Tumrakhi, and this appears to be such a case.

As all watch and wait, a sudden earthquake rocks the tower. MM rolls are required (Hard -10) to keep their feet. The Barad-dur collapses, Orodruin belches fire, and the Variag High Priestess Dagharga loses her head, literally: It explodes into flaming, bloody ashes with a deafening report. Subtle characters (roll Perception, 111+) will hear a strong but distant voice intoning:

"The realm of Sauron is ended!
The Ring-bearer has fulfilled his Quest."

Characters will be encouraged to evacuate the tower via the close-by main door by the sound, growing louder, of the upper floors collapsing down towards them. (Think: crash-Crash-CRASH-CRASH... and you get the idea.) Feel free to require MM rolls or anything else your sadistic mind can think of in order to get the company successfully outside.

Now the dilemmas present themselves:

- Where do they go?
- Where can they find food or water?
- Whom can they trust?

...and many other questions. Keep them as confused as possible: You have to have your fun at this game, as well. Give them copies of the map if you haven't already, and be sure to point out the features that have fallen down, are leaning over precariously, or have been drowned in a sea of lava. And please, smile as you tell them they're doomed. A friendly smile is always appreciated.

Note: Players may inquire as to their proper rank in the Sauronic scheme of things, be it military or diplomatic. Use this handy listing to figure things out:

Sauronic Military Officers' Ranks:

- **Gonon** (Black Speech "Warlord"): supreme commander
- **Urdanuk** (B.S. "High Commander"): commander of 4000 to 10,000 troops
- **Afukaush** (B.S. "Commander"): assists the Urdanuki
• **Kritar** (B.S. "High Captain"): commander of 1000 troops
• **Drartul** (B.S. "Captain"): commander of 100 troops
• **Ujak** (B.S. "Sergeant"): commander of 10 troops

Assume that 6th- or 7th-level Warrior or Ranger characters will be at least Kritar, if not Afukaush rank: Lesser levels will have lesser rank. The players who take command with role-playing should be given preference in rank. Characters with strong subterfuge skills may be ranked as high as Kritar, though without true authority: These persons would be prized as "special forces" fighters.

Characters with largely non-combat skills would be ranked and addressed as **Gothu** (B.S. "Lord") and would exert authority according to their strengths. For example, the Dwarf Threlin, a 5th-level Warrior, would hold Gothu rank over smiths and weaponers rather than any military rank, while the Elf Elwen would hold Gothu rank over lesser members of the diplomatic and spy corps.

### Main Encounter sequence

**The Search for Supplies, or, "Okay, Who Packed a Lunch?"

Recent sumptuous meals aside, the players face a long march through the mountains and blasted plains of Mordor with very little in the way of potable water or food available to them. (They're looking at a trip of 7-10 days to the Tower of Cirith Ungol and the pass out of Mordor.) They will likely end up foraging for scraps from the wreckage of Barad-wath, knowing as they do that the kitchens were conveniently located one level below the main feasting area. Keep in mind that aftershocks continue, and the structure is marginally stable at best. Conjure up images of splintered beams as thick as your body, Sauron-worshippers ground to irrelevant meat by falling shards of stone, and a smell sure to attract any surviving Orcs from miles around...

Use the orc-old 1st floor map, ignoring the arrow-slit windows. A key follows:

- **Room 1:** Cold storage. Cuts of human-approved meats and perishables were stored here. All is smashed and ruined. 5 lbs. of meat may be salvaged for every 2 rounds of work, with a maximum of 30 lbs.; for every 4 rounds spent in this room, apply a 76-90 result from the Earth-spirit Attack Table (below) to simulate further collapse.
- **Room 2:** Slaughter/cooking area. The upper-right end of the room is engulfed in flames from collapsed timbers and cookfires gone wild. Feel free to inflict "C" fire crits on anyone foolish enough to get too close. 6 nicely-done lemon-tarragon roasted chickens may be salvaged from a tray beneath the body of a slave-server impaled through the upper back by a ceiling support rod.
- **Room 3:** Serving prep area. Now strewn with smashed crockery and utensils of little value, this room is remarkable only for its stairway down, out of which issues an ominous steam and distant shrieks. d10+10 rounds after the characters come to this room, a Troll will erupt from downstairs. It is insane, and will attack at full OB until well and truly dead.
- **Room 4:** Wine cellar. Collapsed as #1 above, with the same risks of entry. One bottle of average-quality wine may be salvaged every 2 rounds of searching, with a maximum of 6 bottles.

### The Random Damage Subtable, or, "Gee, Your Toxic Vapors Smell Terrific!"

This is a twenty-year roleplaying GM speaking: Random encounters are for fools. "Can't you see I'm telling a story here!? Like I gotta let DICE tell me what to throw at these losers!?"

YOU decide when you wanna throw stuff at 'em, and YOU decide what you're gonna throw. For those times when a little gratuitous violence might just be appropriate, I have included the following encounter idea.

Mordor has been Sauron's idea of paradise for more than six thousand years, ever since the end of the First Age. For that long Mister No-Visine-For-ME! has been suppressing the actions of all the other Maiar in his realm, molding the very earth to his specifications. The Maiar spirits of life, and of air and water, were the first to fall; the spirits of earth and fire were not totally crushed, but rather, were molded to Sauron's use. Thus, the Ephel Duath became impossibly sharp and impassable; thus, Mount Doom became the hottest fire this side of Anor itself.

Well, Sauron is dead, and a collection of Earth and Fire Maiar have some SERIOUS kinks to work out of their backs. The proper roles of all will one day be established, but, until then, chaos will reign. The GM is encouraged to roll once per day for each table, Earth and Fire, with a basic 1% per company member chance of an attack. Feel free to hit 'em where they live if they're tickling you off.

### Earth Maiar Attack Table

- **01-50:** Minor earthquake; all standing must make a Medium Movement/Maneuver roll to avoid falls.
- **51-75:** Severe earthquake; all standing must make a Very Hard MM roll.
- **76-90:** Rockslide; all in company are attacked at +50 OB on the 1-Handed Concussion table. Use only base DB plus shield, if any. Crits are Crush.
**Fire Maia Attack Table**

- 91-100: Eruption of boulders; as 76-90, but 1-4 attacks each at +75 OB.
- 01-50: Smoke and fumes; all make Poison RR vs. level 4 or suffer -15 to activity for 1-10 hours.
- 51-75: Toxic/caustic gas release; all make Poison RR vs level 8 or suffer -45 to activity for 1-100 hours.
- 76-90: Fireball; roll for each character on AT-8 (Ball Spells Attack Table), subtract base DB and apply damage and Fire crits.
- 91-100: Eruption of lava; roll for each character at +20 on AT-7 (Bolt Spells Attack Table), subtract base DB and apply damage and Fire crits.

These are cruel ways to die, but Mordor goin' all to hell is a pretty cruel place.

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**Fleeing Snaga-hai, or, "Piggy Feets, Don't Fail Me Now!"**

Gauge the effectiveness of company discipline, morale, and watchfulness as they make their way through the rough foothills of the Ephel Duath. If they look overconfident, or just plain stupid, ambush them with a band of Orc deserters. Everyone in the company will take an arrow at OB+35 with no DB applicable, then the Orcs will attack screaming in North Korean. Hit 'em with at least 150% of the company's numbers. Hit 'em while they're asleep, if they've been particularly lazy or you feel particularly cruel.

If the company has displayed competence and caution in crossing this treacherous terrain, have them come upon the Orcs in the open. Divide the Orc force into thirds, and have them notice and attack the company in three waves. By the third wave, their morale might well break...

(Note: Feel free to duplicate this encounter, perhaps in combination with the Orc warren map or Orc-hold map, at any time during the game. Mordor after the Fall is full of marauding bands of Orcs and Trolls, some insane, a few just looking for a quick meal and a way out of Dodge.)

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**Laughter of Uinen, or, "You Win the Wet Chainmail Contest!"**

Put the company in the mood to explore an Orc-Warren. Caustic black rain or perhaps a hot ash fall will work wonders. The warren will be unoccupied save for perhaps a foraging Troll if you're feeling whimsical. The real surprise doesn't come until the company has reached the deepest point in the warren, so lure them in with promises of hidden treasure, free food, or cheap long-distance service.

Successful Perception rolls will notice cooler-than-average temperatures and high humidity as the company reaches the passage leading to the Leader's Area. A faint blue-green phosphorescence will be seen as that cavern is entered. At this point have everyone make a Resistance Roll against Level 20 Essence. Most of 'em will fail and thus be happily entranced; pick the worst failure and have that character desperately need to explore the pool at the far end of the room, from which the phosphorescence comes.

That lucky character will see a staggeringly-beautiful female form under the water, clad in clinging silver and reaching out to be saved. Naturally, the charmed character will reach in and grab her hands...and thus will the "laughter of Uinen", the sound of fresh flowing water, be born unto Gorgoroth for the first time in more than six thousand years. This joyous event may not seem quite so joyous to the characters, who will have to escape the enthusiasm of Osse's wife, Maiar mistress of fresh flowing water...

The enthrancement over all but the "rescuing" character will be broken as soon as giddy laughter washes over them, along with a few thousand gallons of water. The pool will become a fountain in an instant, and the entire cavern complex, except for the Guardroom closest to the entrance, will be submerged inside of 10 rounds. Characters will need to total 500 or better on Medium MM rolls to escape the flooding, and they have 10 rounds to get those successes. An "F" result wipes out 100 points from anyone's total! Characters who choose to swim and roll successfully will find themselves buffeted (take 2d10 concussion hits) but carried to safety, thrown clear at the warren's entrance as the Duathduin (S. "Shadow River") is born.

Oh, and one more thing: We haven't forgotten the entranced soul who freed the avatar of Uinen. Unable, indeed, unwilling to save themselves, they must be rescued by others. They will not resist being carried or dragged along, but they will act as an impediment, making helpers MM rolls Hard instead of Medium. If not rescued, years from now, the entranced character will show up at his or her home subtly changed, unable to sleep without the sound of falling water nearby...

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**The Empty Shell, or, "Who Ordered the Fell Beast Well-Done?"**

This encounter should take place as the company gets fairly close to Cirith Ungol, or if they decide to move across the open plateau.

Successful Perception rolls will notice the stench at more than a half-mile: Sickly-sweet decay and worse, the poison fumes of Sauron's malice, carry far on the freshening breezes. As the company approaches, if they have the guts to approach at all, examination of the ground will reveal a very definite blast crater, as if something huge and white-hot...
smashed along the ground from northeast to southwest, ending in a wrecked heap that blasted itself nearly ten feet deep into volcanic rock. Examination will prove difficult, as the fumes of the corrupt, foul thing are highly toxic. All those getting close enough to search the remains must make RRs vs. level 12 Poison every round or faint, losing 1-10 points of Constitution permanently due to respiratory burns and suffering -20 to activity for 1-100 hours. From a safe distance, a smashed helm that vaguely resembles a Mumak head can be seen: This is the empty armor of Indur Dawndearth, Nazgul of Sauron, and the shattered corpse of the Fell Beast he was riding even as the One Ring was destroyed and the unlife of all the Ringwraiths was snuffed out in flames.

A Most Diplomatic Orc, or, "All I Sees Is You and a Few of Your Boys..."

Characters who might deserve to notice such things will see the company entering an area ideal for an ambush: High, steep slopes on each side of the trail, many sudden turns limiting visibility, lots of cover on both sides. Any attempt to circumvent this area will reveal that the company is indeed being watched, as Orcs clad in chainmail are seen vacating scouting positions high on the slopes well ahead of the company. Base your next move on the company's reaction to this news:

• "Oh, boy! Orcs! Let's kill 'em!" Any aggressive moves by the company should be met with a force of strong Orcs equal to twice their number, attacking from surprise on familiar terrain. They will show mercy, and will take prisoners to be interrogated by their Boss.
• "Orcs! Run for your lives!" If the company flees or retreats more than half a day's march, they will find no trace of the Orcs when they again move north.
• "Let's just move along cautiously and see what they want." If the company shows confidence, the Orcs' Boss will display his rather unusual restraint and will negotiate rather than attack. After all, humans in the service of Sauron are often sorcerors and warlords, individuals not to be trifled with, and this Boss is a damnabley intelligent representative of his species.

He is, of course, Shagrat, former captain of the guard of Cirith Ungol and the bearer of Frodo's possessions to the Barad-dur after that Hobbit's capture in the passages of Shelob's Lair. For his "loyalty" he was allowed to outfit himself in the armories of the Dark Lord, and he now bears black scale armor as light as air and a Numenorean bastard sword that glitters with deep red highlights. Near the fortress of Durthang when the Fall occurred, Shagrat turned south and began to implement his dream. If negotiating, he will reveal his plans to move "South, then East to the far mountains with my lads. Gonna set up where there's no big Bosses, a bit o' swag for the boys, some nice 'ard iron to mine, and no Elf-men to bother w' us." (Remember the Cockney accent that Tolkein used to simulate the "lower-class" Orc version of Westron.) He can summon fifty archers from the surrounding rocks with a raised hand, so the company knows he's serious, but he does NOT want to fight. Enlightened characters (or players) might see this as the beginning of a truly free Orcish race, one that might outgrow its aggressive tendencies in time.

Feel free to slaughter any member of the company who tries to get uppity with Shagrat. He is clearly negotiating from a position of strength. On the other hand, reward players for imaginative handling of the situation with offers to trade. Shagrat has food in abundance, having plundered the Orc-warrens of the Morkai on his way south, but he might appreciate knowing that a large source of fresh water lies in his path of march.

A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, or, "In Tents, Intrigue"

As the company approaches the base of Cirith Ungol and the much-less-spidery Cirith Morgul, two features become obvious: the Tower, which dominates this entrance to the mountain passes, and the small city of tents that blocks their way out of Mordor. Give the players a moment to contemplate their choices and then call for Essence RRs from all. Allow nothing to interrupt you as you say:

"You all hear a voice. No, not 'a' voice; you hear THE voice. All that you have ever known of rightful authority and true justice is promised by its syllables; your hopes for the future, for all your deepest dreams and idle fantasies, are contained in its words. It speaks in whatever language you understand best, with whatever dialect you know and trust. It speaks directly to your soul, saying this: "Children of the fallen Sauron! Lose not your faith! Out of disaster has always come again the rise of our Dark Lord in glory. This I have seen with my own eyes, and this I forsee. Let us strive together to keep His way alive through the lies of the West; let us live to see Him reborn to new power! Trust my words, for I am His servant, His herald and ambassador. Come to me, children of the Dark Lord, for I am the Mouth of Sauron!"

Now, go around the room asking for the players' RR totals. Anyone who fails vs. 50th level Essence by more than 50 will immediately move towards the tent city at best speed. Anyone failing by 01-50 will try to convince others of the truth of the message, and will leave for the tent city within 10d10 minutes. Those who succeed are unaffected by the Mouth's compulsion...but they'll probably go to the camp anyway.
Assume that anyone who flees on their own and tries to exit Mordor will be found and captured by the Mouth's troops, who number in the hundreds and are deployed to prevent any escape over the pass. Captured characters will be brought to the tent city and placed under the guard of characters who failed their compulsion rolls.

Special rules apply here for the "spy" characters, those who were never servants of Darkness. They are immune to the compulsion spell of the Mouth, but should find themselves in the Mouth's camp as if they were. After all, here is a powerful minion of Sauron still alive after the Fall, and something will have to be done about that...

The Mouth has assembled the following forces here:

- 550 footmen, with a variety of common arms but very short on armor and shields;
- 200 cavalry, mostly Variag warriors with a few Easterlings and Southrons, better-armed than the infantry but still short on armor and shields;
- 375 or so noncombatants, mostly Variag and Nurniag women, a mixture of servants, camp followers, priestesses, and slaves.

The Mouth will welcome the characters to his personal pavilion, a huge tent divided into smaller rooms outfitted with comfortable furnishings, fine wines, fresh fruit, and cool, dry air. He will offer positions of leadership to various characters based on profession and ethnicity (Variag warrior-type=Cavalry commander, fallen Dunedain scout=Spymaster, etc.) and he will treat them all with dignity...but none more than Elwen, should she be present.

(In truth, The Mouth has made mental contact with a Fell Beast, perhaps the last of the breed tamed by Sauron, which has returned to its nest high in the Tower of Cirith Ungol after the death of its brethren. The huge riding-drake sits masterless at the highest level of the Tower, and The Mouth sees it as his best chance to flee Mordor with his closest advisor Elwen, leaving all the rest of his army and followers to the depredations of Gondor and her allies.

Besides, the wine is running short and the fresh food supplies are nearly gone.)

(What, you thought he was going to be NICE?)

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(Do your best to have her included.) In Elwen, The Mouth sees an immortal lover with whom to share the long wait for Sauron's return. He knows that it has taken the Big Kahuna as much as a thousand years to reincarnate his ugly black butt after a whompin' by the West, so The Mouth plans to use the other characters, and his whole little community, to set himself (and Elwen) up someplace safe until Sauron rises again. If Elwen is not present as a character, make her an NPC who appears at this point in time. She can galvanize the "West-friendly" characters into action, and her death at the Mouth's hands in the final encounter can add true emotion to the scene.

In my experience, the players have spent a lot of time role-playing things here in the tent city. Let them indulge themselves as authority figures, perhaps organizing their little conspiracies against the Mouth, perhaps becoming truly loyal to him. After a few game-days of this, call for Perception rolls casually during a time when all the characters are together, perhaps for dinner with The Mouth. Anyone who succeeds should be told that they've had a sudden, and suspicious, revelation concerning The Mouth:

They are convinced that The Mouth was prepared for Sauron to fail!

Consider all the things he managed to "salvage from the wreck of Cirith Gorgor", as he puts it. The pavilions, the supplies of Dormwion's best vintages, crate after crate of fresh foodstuffs, the silk and satin everything: How could one fortress yield a ready-made stash of supplies seemingly designed for the comfort of The Mouth? The inescapable conclusion is that The Mouth was harboring thoughts at least disloyal, and at most traitorous, to the Will of Sauron. (Truth be told, he has seen his master fall before, and he is nothing if not prepared for any eventualty.)

This suspicion, when disseminated among the company, will have the effect of dispelling The Mouth's compulsion on all the characters. If anyone chooses to spread their theories among the camp, roll dice, add the character's Presence or Public Speaking bonus, and use the following table:

- Below -25: "Hmmm. Tell me more. Who else is involved with this?" Listener will seem to agree, but seeks out The Mouth at the earliest opportunity to betray the character(s).
- -25 to 04: "So what? Ya gotta be ready for anything, pal." Listener is unimpressed.
- 05 to 90: "Hey, I think you're right. But what can we do about it?" Listener's faith is shaken; no further effect.
- 91 to 110: "Hey, you're right!" Listener's faith is shattered; they will do nothing to aid The Mouth, and will desert at their first chance.
- Natural 100: "I was thinking the same thing. I'm open to suggestions." Listener is a subcommander, and can bring d10+10 soldiers to the company's side.
- 111 to 175: "Smoke and fire! You're right! What do we do?" Listener is impressed, and can be counted on for a single act of sabotage or violence as long as the risks aren't too great.
- 176+: "I was thinking the same thing." Listener has transferred loyalty to the character's side, and will take considerable risks to escape the camp or harm The Mouth.

The characters won't get much time to spread the word about The Mouth, because he announces plans at dinner that very night to march on the Tower of Cirith Ungol at first light. The camp has reached the manpower it needs to make the journey East, he declares, and, with the arms and armor siezed from the tower, "we will have the strength to resist those of both West and East who see fit to oppose us." He seems elated, bordering on the maniacal, and he will dismiss the characters, Elwen included, early to prepare their troops.

(In truth, The Mouth has made mental contact with a Fell Beast, perhaps the last of the breed tamed by Sauron, which has returned to its nest high in the Tower of Cirith Ungol after the death of its brethren. The huge riding-drake sits masterless at the highest level of the Tower, and The Mouth sees it as his best chance to flee Mordor with his closest advisor Elwen, leaving all the rest of his army and followers to the depredations of Gondor and her allies. Besides, the wine is running short and the fresh food supplies are nearly gone.)

(What, you thought he was going to be NICE?)
Ascent to the Tower of Cirith Ungol, or, "Gotta Cuppa Boilin' Oil We's Can Borrow?"

Promptly at dawn, The Mouth musters his troops with a true sense of military organization, sending skirmishers up the valley of the Morgai and cavalry scouts up the main Cirith Morgul road. The infantry he sets to two tasks: Most will go to set up roadblocks and escort the baggage train, while 50 picked men (the character's choice, of course) will forage in the Tower itself. The Tower is to the north of the main road, reachable by a winding, steeply climbing path exposed to fire from all south-facing levels of the fortification.

The Mouth will want to go into Cirith Ungol with as small a party as possible, since he is planning to betray them and flee with Elwen aboard the Fell Beast and he doesn't fancy fighting too many opponents. He is confident of the characters' loyalty, unless one or more have been betrayed earlier, and he will ask them to escort him inside in any event. He counts on the loyalty of the remaining few, and of Elwen above all, to keep the unbelievers at bay until he can make good his escape.

If the game is going quickly, or the players are not taking proper precautions, be sure to throw a few Giant Spiders at them in the Tower. After all, Shelob has been gravely injured, and her malice and pain have stirred up her brood into mindless rage. If there is no time for this kind of fun, assume that the Undergate, against which Sam Gamgee knocked himself unconscious at the end of Book IV, is still closed, and the spiders are safely locked away.

Ah, yes...the Tower of Cirith Ungol. Now, I can't exactly give each and every GM out there a precise map of the place, can I? Sure, you could pull out your handy copy of THE TOWER OF CIRITH UNGOL & SHELOB'S LAIR by ICE, copyright 1984, but heck, you probably haven't got one, after all these years and all.

(I've got two of 'em...)

Anyway, here's what you need to know about the Tower. (Be sure to redirect any player who gets too curious about unlisted rooms by any means necessary, including roof collapses, absence of floors, fires, or spaces filled entirely with slightly-vibrating, inch-thick spiderwebs.)

- Big-arse steel gates lying ajar, long hallway going straight in with open doors to left and right, lots of Orc-bodies decomposing and generally smelling better than they did alive. Very dim.
- 150' in, there's spiral stairs to the right going up and down. Up is clockwise. Many more Orc-bodies.
- Six levels up is The Mouth's destination, the large triangular roof of the main building and a round tower just large enough to hold the spiral stairway. Against the sheer cliff-wall that rises a further 300 feet behind the Tower, a shallow cave has been excavated. From this cave, the Fell Beast will waddle forth ominously. (Note to self: This may well be the first time that the words "waddle forth ominously" have appeared together in a sentence in the English language.)

The last set encounter of the game is rather free-form. Past player groups have...

...waited for The Mouth to try to calm the Fell Beast with spells, then clobbered him;...gotten lucky with an arrow, killing the Fell Beast (and its rider in the fall) just after The Mouth tried to fly away;...done nothing, and stood slack-jawed as The Mouth laughed and laughed and faded away into the East.

In any event, try to keep the players from The Mouth's throat until the Fell Beast is in sight, thus increasing the chances for true chaos and gamemaster delight. Keep them hungry for whatever special thing they think The Mouth is going upstairs for, be it magic or treasure or whatever. It'll be so much more fun when even the loyalists realize that they're to be left in the lurch.

The ending of this adventure may lead in several directions. The surviving characters, regardless of the survival of The Mouth of Sauron, have a relatively clear path through to Ithilien. The horror of Minas Morgul is lessened with the downfall of the Nine, and the foul grasses of Morgul Vale were set alight by the passing Host of the West some two weeks before. There will be patrols of Gondorian and Rohirric horse sweeping the countryside for pockets of resistance, but any company that sticks to the hills of South Ithilien should come through unmolested. This ending can lead to many new beginnings. The reign of Elessar is at hand: characters loyal to the West, even those whose loyalties are of a more recent vintage, may turn north and witness the homage Aragorn pays to the Ringbearers at the Field of Cormallen fourteen days after the fall of Sauron. With peace will come diplomacy, and soon, trade will flow South and East again. Yes, wars will be fought, but without the corrupting influence of the Lord of the Rings, men will find much less to fight over, and far more areas of commonality than many would expect. Adventure of a more honest kind awaits persons of all temperaments in the Fourth Age of Middle Earth!
Overview Map Details

I assume that my readers are familiar with most of the landmarks shown on the overview map: Barad-dur, Cirith Ungol, Orodruin, etc. Additional sites not mentioned in LoTR are drawn from ICE maps of the area; a description of each follows.

Barad-wath

One of the two fortresses that guard the vale between the tortured plateau of Gorgoroth and the more fertile fields of Nurn, Barad-wath was constructed by the kingdom of Gondor between T.A. 2 and T.A. 535 to guard against the return of evil things to Mordor. Not as stylized as some of Gondor's other barrier forts, this three-tiered fortress is a close copy of the tower of Cirith Ungol. Abandoned by Gondor in T.A. 1640 following the Great Plague, fell things rapidly occupied the tower. By T.A. 2000, Barad-wath was in use as a religious center for Variag and Nurniag tribal worship of Sauron's incarnations. As is common practice at strongholds of Sauron, human followers are housed within the structure's above-ground levels and Orc or Troll residents live in warrens below-ground.

Ostigurth

Built by Sauron in the mid-Second Age to control traffic between Gorgoroth and Nurn, this fortified city does not enter into the story by virtue of its complete collapse fifteen minutes into the adventure. It had a significant Orc and Troll population living in caverns beneath itself; those same caverns proved its undoing in the cataclysmic end of Sauron's realm.

Urlurtsu Nurn

South and slightly East of the southern edge of my map, Urlurtsu Nurn is a huge fortified city that dominates the slave-tended fields surrounding the Sea of Nurn. After the Lapse of Will, the slaves rose in revolt and sacked the city clean. Those slaves number some 200,000 and are armed with the best weapons and mail the fortress could yield. Their tendency to kill anything that crosses their path is a hint for the company not to seek escape from Mordor by this route.

General Notes

This map will seem a bad joke moments after game play begins. The One Ring will have been slam-dunked via the generosity of Smeagol, the Barad-dur will have collapsed into random Legos, and Mount Doom will be spewing toxins and lava enough to repave Rohan ten times over. Gorgoroth will NOT be pretty...not that it was a vacation getaway in the first place. It is vital that the GM provide constant updates on the truly hellish conditions to the north of Barad-warh at regular intervals, lest the players start to feel too comfortable.
Orc-warren Map Details

Possessed of shockingly bad manners, a cultural bias against personal hygiene, and a real talent for cruelty, Orcs for the most part live short, brutish lives of savage competition for power, prestige, and even basic resources such as food and water. Their tastes in interior design reflect their personalities, and the GM must call for regular Poison resistance rolls on the part of any character who wishes to avoid vomiting whilst exploring an Orc-warren.

Overview

Scale: The two parallel lines at the entrance are exactly 6’ wide. The narrowest point in the corridor is about 2’ wide. Contour lines start just inside the entrance. Each indicates a drop of 3’ over the previous line. In general, the warren angles downward away from the entrance.

Entrance

A hide screen is put in place over the doorway during daylight hours. Within Mordor, it is unlikely that any Orc-warren entrances will be trapped. At most a "door-bell" of sorts may (20%) have been arranged: Medium (0) to detect, a woven mat covers a 5’x5’ area dug 6” deep that has been filled with either sharp stones (50%), broken pottery (30%), or dung (20%), each of which is likely to provoke a vocal reaction on the part of an intruder. The first two options attack on the Tooth/Claw table with +10 OB (max. A critical), the last offends the senses and forces a MM roll (Light +10) or the target falls.

Guardrooms

If the warren is occupied, 3-6 common Orcs will be on duty in each of these rooms. Heaps of foul-smelling furs and the remains of what could once have been called chairs complement the decor.

Common Areas

During the day, 10-50 common orcs will be lounging, sleeping, gambling, or stabbing each other here. There are no females or young present...not that they would improve the atmosphere.

Storage

Nothing of value can be found here. Heaps of dead things that pass for Orc-food, Orc-clothing, and Orc-toys are the dominant motif. The store-room closest to the Leader's Area might be guarded (50% chance of 2 medium Orcs) if the warren is occupied; it will contain high-quality food and supplies (by Orkish standards).

Leader's Area

The bedding here is only slightly malodorous and generally lice-free, the random torch-light is a bit brighter, and the flayed Elf-skin on the wall lends a real homey touch. 1 strong Orc and 1-5 medium Orcs will be here during daylight hours if the warren is occupied. The tribe's wealth (0-99 of each coin: tin, copper, bronze, silver) will be found here (only 0-9 of each if the warren is unoccupied). It is hidden (Hard -10 to find) in the bedding.
Note: The grey area in the extreme end of the Leader's Area is a low pool of brackish, barely-potable water. This resource, so rare in Gorgoroth, is the leader's most valuable posession and the true source of his power.
Orc Hold main floor

Generic Orc-hold

1. Main Entry. If the hold is occupied, 2-6 medium Orcs will be on guard here. The doors are iron and, if locked, Hard (-10) to open.

2. Common Area. Usually empty at night; home to 10-60 weak Orcs during the day.

3. Armory. Spears, bows, and sheaves of arrows are stored here in case of emergency. If the Orcs are gone, this room will be empty.

Scale:
All doorways ( ) are 5' wide.
Walls vary between 4' and 6' thick, and are made from rough volcanic rock.
Interior walls are 6" thick wood.

4. Stairway. Goes up to the second level and down to the cellars. If occupied, both stairways are guarded by 1-4 medium Orcs with short bows in addition to any other weapons.

5. Leader's area. 1-4 strong Orcs will be here during the day if the hold is occupied, along with 1-100 tin, copper, bronze, and silver coins hidden in the bedding. Only 1-10 of each coin will be found if the hold is not occupied.
Up and Down floor

Orc-hold Upper Floor

1- Stairway down. Note details on guards on main Orc-hold map.

2- Supply Room. Various distasteful heaps of food and clothing are mingled with typically sturdy-but-ugly Orc gear.

3- Leader's Supply Room. Locked and Very Hard (-20) to open; contains good quality food, drink, and equipment.

4- Common Area. Usually empty at night; home to 10-30 weak Orcs during the day.

5- Ladder to Roof. A lightly-barred hatch, Easy (+20) to open from the outside, leads to the bare roof. A low wall with arrow slits offers some protection.

Orc-hold Cellars

1- Stairway Up. Note details on guards on main Orc-hold map.

2- Prison. Important persons are moved on to the nearest large stronghold in 1-3 days. The steel-bar door is Hard (-10) to pick (but Extremely Hard (-20) from the inside). Keys are kept in the smithy.

3- Store Room. Materials for room #4 are kept here.

4- Smithy. The keep's arms and armor are maintained here. 1-6 medium and 1-2 strong Orcs are here at all times. This area is also used for interrogating and torturing prisoners.