

Rescue on the Barrow Downs

by Neal Hyde

This chapter is intended as an introduction for players to Decipher's Lord of the Rings Role-Playing Game. Set in the village of Bree in the year 3000 of the Third Age, it assumes that characters have two or fewer advancements.

A Ruined Evening

Lightning flashes in the windows and thunder rolls in the distance, but the laughter and music of the Inn of the Prancing Pony, as well as a hearty fire and a pint of beer, keep the setting merry. Barliman Butterbur and his Hobbit assistants, Bob and Nob, are busy providing food and drink for a larger-than average crowd. A thick mutton stew bubbles in the kitchen and its aroma mingles with the heavy pipe smoke that hangs over the common room.

Suddenly, the front door slams open and a tall, thin, rain-soaked Hobbit runs into the room and hops on your table.

"There's been a kidnapping!" he screams, and promptly faints with a thud onto the table.

PCs that succeed at a Renown test for Dustor Proudfoot (see Appendix for full stats) will recognize the dripping and unconscious Hobbit. Once Dustor is brought back to consciousness, he will tell them that he went to visit his cousin to discuss a spot of business and found the door to his home wide open. Inside, he found Weldon's office in disarray and blood on the floor. After that, he ran to the Prancing Pony as quickly as his small legs could carry him.

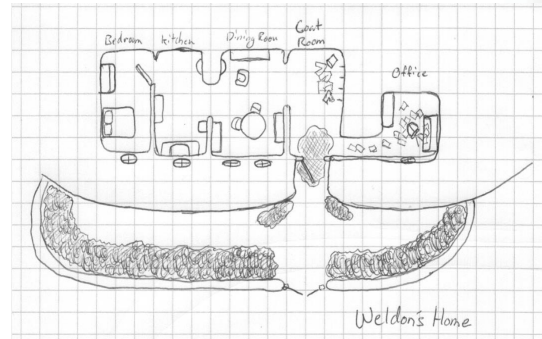
Dustor announces a reward of 15 Silver Pieces for the safe return of his cousin. He will offer half as much for the return of Weldon's body. Once the group has established that they will help, Dustor will lead them to Weldon's home.

The PCs may not require a reward. If so, grant them +1 Renown at the conclusion of the adventure for their generosity and heroic spirit.

Weldon's Home

If a PC succeeds with a Renown test for Weldon Proudfoot (see Appendix for full stats) he/she will know that Weldon Proudfoot is a well-regarded dye merchant in his mid-60s. He often travels outside the hedgerow

walls of Bree to trade and seek new dyes. He is also known to do a little treasure hunting, and is rumored to spend time in the dangerous Barrow Downs.



Hand out Player Handout #1: Weldon's Home.

Weldon Proudfoot lives in a typical Hobbit dwelling dug into the side of Bree Hill. Soft light glows through several round windows set into the grassy slope and the open doorway.

The narrow front garden is a riot of colorful flowers, many of which are collapsed in the mud. The front door to the home is open and a puddle of rainwater is collecting inside the entryway.

The Coat Room

The entrance to the home leads directly to the coatroom. Several well-made Hobbit-sized coats are torn from their hooks and lay on the floor. Many sets of Man-sized muddy boot prints mar the clean floor. A round opening to the left leads to the dining room, kitchen and bedroom. A smaller round opening to the right leads to Weldon's office.

The Living Area

The dining room, kitchen and bedroom are decorated simply and comfortably. The rooms are unremarkable and undisturbed.

The Office

The Office is in a state of chaos. Parchments, papers, books, and maps lay about as if the room were struck by a

tornado. Rainwater, ink, mud, and blood combine with the paper strewn about the floor to make a sticky and difficult to walk in. Weldon's desk is open and the contents scattered about as well.

A shelf on the wall opposite the desk contains map scrolls and some are still in place, but most are part of the muck on the floor.

A Routine (10) Search test of the office reveals a small dagger hidden under the papers on the floor. The blade is splashed with blood and bloody Hobbit-sized fingerprints can be seen on the hilt. Upon seeing the blood, Duster identifies the dagger as Weldon's.

If the PCs take the time to put the maps back in their labeled places on the shelf, they will discover that all are present except for one that covers the Barrow Downs.

If the PCs explore outside in the garden, they discover similar boot prints to those in the Coat Room and Office, although, they are rapidly being erased by the falling rain. The prints continue to the lane, and in the mud, the PCs can see the tracks of a handcart. If the handcart tracks are followed, they lead to Bree's main road and then become lost in the mud.

The PCs should deduce that Weldon was indeed kidnapped and that whoever took Weldon wanted to know about the Barrow Downs and probably left in that direction. There are three gates in Bree, but only the West Gate and the South Gate would allow the kidnappers easy access to the Barrow Downs.

The West Gate

The West Gate leads to the road from the Shire and is not as well traveled as the South Gate.

Approaching the West Gate in the rain, it first appears that it is unmanned. However, a cloaked figure emerges from the darkness of the makeshift gatekeeper's shelter and brightens his lantern.

"Who goes there?" he cries and pulls back his cloak to reveal a stout club.

The gatekeeper is a young Man who is in a mood to match the foul weather. Once he determines that the PCs are not ruffians or beggars he will relax and answer any questions. He has not had to open the gates for anyone that night, going in or out, and he hasn't seen anyone or anything suspicious.

The South Gate

The South Gate is Bree's busiest. However, in the night's rain, it is closed and securely braced.

Your party is alone on the dark street leading to the South Gates. The South Gate itself is shut and braced with a stout beam. A small lean-to stands a few feet off the road against the hedgerow. Inside, a grizzled old man in a woolen cloak tends a small but inviting fire against the pouring rain. He looks up as you approach and waves in a friendly manner.

The guard of the South gate, an old warrior who has taken the relatively soft job of gatekeeper, remembers Feyroth and his. He opened the gates about two hours before for seven Men pulling a handcart laden with a large trunk. One of the men seemed to stagger as he walked, but the gatekeeper chalked it up to too much of Barliman Butterbur's ale.

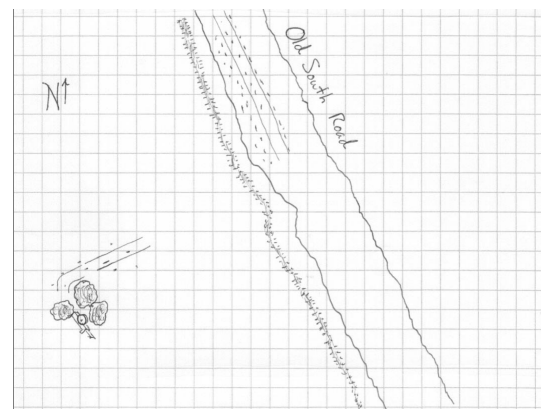
Leaving Bree

Feyroth and his gang left Bree via the South gate and followed the South Road. The PCs can follow their tracks with a Routine (10) for a while but then the tracks stop.

Off the Road

If the PCs take their eyes from the South Road, they can make a Challenging (15) Observe (Spot) test to see where Feyroth and his gang pulled the cart off the road and hid it among a small stand of trees.

From the cart, the PCs can more easily pick up the trail with a Routine (10) Tracking test.



As they follow the tracks westward, the land is filled with rolling hills and grassy plains, punctuated by small stands of trees, and the mist becomes thicker. However,

the closer they get to the Barrow Downs, the grass becomes shorter and fewer trees are seen.

The Barrow Downs

Entering the Barrow Downs, the rain slackens, and then finally stops. However, you find yourselves surrounded by a dense mist that limits your vision to a few dozen feet. The ground beneath your feet become increasingly rocky and barren, covered occasionally with patches of pale and sickly grass, and the tracks become very difficult to follow. The stench of rotting meat is carried on the wind and makes breathing difficult.

On the Barrow Downs, each PC must make a Routine (10) Fear test vs. the fear generated by the evil place.

The Climb

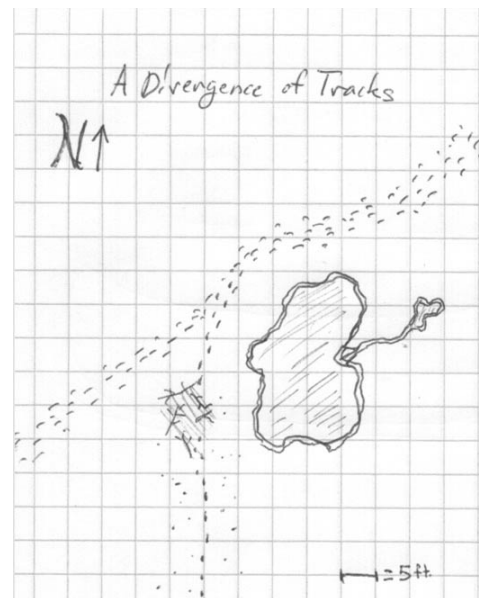
The PCs will soon find themselves on the edge of a sharp scarp face of a down. The edge seems to come out of nowhere and the lead PC should make a successful Routine (10) Observe (Spot) test to avoid falling.

You find yourself on a precipice, looking down a steep scarp face with bottom lost in the swirling mist. The white, chalky rocks of the cliff leave few handholds to grasp. The tracks end at the face, and you know the kidnappers went down this way, but it doesn't look easy.

The scarp is only about 50 feet tall, but the mist obscures the bottom and makes it appear much greater. The PCs must make 2 successful Climbing tests to get down the steep, crumbly rock intact. Those who fail suffer a short fall but will be able to make a grab for another handhold.

The Luckless Thug

As the PCs follow the tracks deeper into the Barrow Downs, they come upon a destroyed makeshift shelter by a brackish pool surrounded by stunted trees and fed by a narrow spring.



As you follow the increasingly difficult-to-find tracks, deeper into the Barrow Downs, you come upon a brackish pool surrounded by stunted trees and fed by a narrow spring that bubbles up from the ground with a sulfuric odor. You can easily see that a small makeshift shelter of branches has recently been destroyed. A few bloody strips of cloth lay torn and shredded on the ground. The prints of wild dogs are all around you.

Give out Player Handout #2: A Divergence of Tracks.

A Difficult (15) Tracking test reveals that the set of footprints divides here. One set of footprints remains at the pool, near the shelter and then go off to the South, followed by the dogs' prints. The larger group of footprints, five men and one Hobbit, move on to the Southwest. To follow these over the rocky terrain requires a Challenging (20) Tracking Test.

While the PCs investigate the area, they may hear the barking and howling of dogs and a faint cry for help in the distance (a Difficult (15) Observe (Hear) test) to the South.

If the PCs follow either the single man's prints or the sounds, they will travel for a few hundred yards before coming upon a set of decrepit ruins and a wounded man.

As you follow the man's prints, the sounds of barking and growling grow louder. A few hundred yards of travel bring you before a set of decrepit ruins. A wounded man with dark straggly hair and a scarred face stands on the few remaining stones of a wall, fending off a pack of bloodthirsty wild dogs with a club. Seeing you, he begs for help.

If the PCs enter the area, the wild dogs attack.

Once free of the menacing dogs, the man collapses to the ground. His legs and arms are bloody from multiple bites, but his greatest wound is in his abdomen. The man, who gasps that his name is Urian, struggles for breath and is near death. He will lose for 1d6 Health every minute unless the PCs can stabilize him.

Urian is extremely grateful to the PCs for rescuing and scornful of his master, Feyroth. He will gladly tell the PCs anything they ask. He will tell the PCs that Feyroth is the brutal leader of their little band. He knows that Feyroth and Urian and the others kidnapped Weldon so they could use his knowledge of the Barrow Downs to find the lost Barrow of Harslan (if a PC makes a successful Difficult (15) Lore: History test, give them *Player Handout #3: The Ballad of Harslan*). Urian also knows that Weldon told them that the Barrow of Harslan was located at the top of a down, at the joining of two dry riverbeds. Urian believes Feyroth is after the palantir of Aman Sul.

If the PCs have been able to stabilize Urian, they must make the choice of what to do with him. If they leave him, he will die. The PCs must choose between sacrificing Urian or to bear him as a burden. Should the PCs choose to leave him behind, or not offer any healing aid if they can, it will add a point of Corruption to their characters.

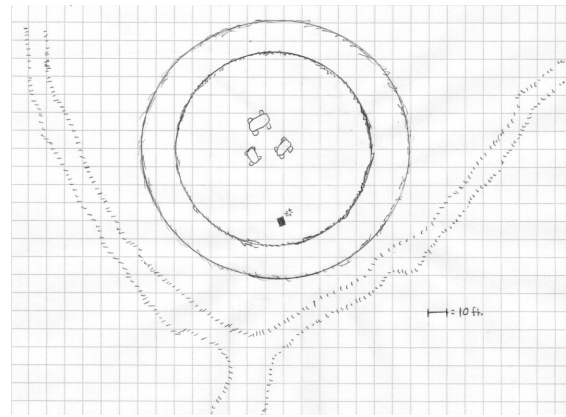
Outside the Barrow of Harslan

As the PCs follow the trail of Feyroth's thugs, or following the dry riverbed, the Barrow of Harslan appears out of the gloom.

The Barrow of Harslan appears suddenly out of the gloom, as if it were waiting for you to arrive. This rounded hill with a flat top and standing stones is perched on the edge of a scarp at the junction of the two riverbeds. It's covered in the same short grasses that populate the Barrow Downs. Its sides are steep but scalable.

Give out *Player Handout #4: Outside the Barrow of Harslan*.

The PCs can climb the Barrow of Harslan with a Routine (10) Climbing test.



Once the PCs approach the top of the barrow, they notice the dim light of a small fire near the standing stones. Feyroth has left a guard at the entrance to the barrow.

In the center of the broad, flat, top of the Barrow are three pair of large, gray, capped standing stones arranged in a circle.

You notice the dim light of a small fire at the southern end of the barrow. A guard sits at the entrance to the barrow and he has lit a small campfire for warmth and comfort against the cold and darkness. The guard, a thin and sickly man, huddles next to the fire and grips his rusty short sword tightly. He jumps at every sound and never ventures far from the little area illuminated by the fire.

The entrance guard is frightened and will flee screaming into the barrow to alert Feyroth if confronted by more than one opponent.

Near to the fire is a set of narrow stone stairs leading down into the barrow. The stairs disappear into the darkness and unless the PCs have frightened the guard into the barrow, no sound can be heard from below.

PCs entering the barrow are confronted with a Difficult (15) Fear test.

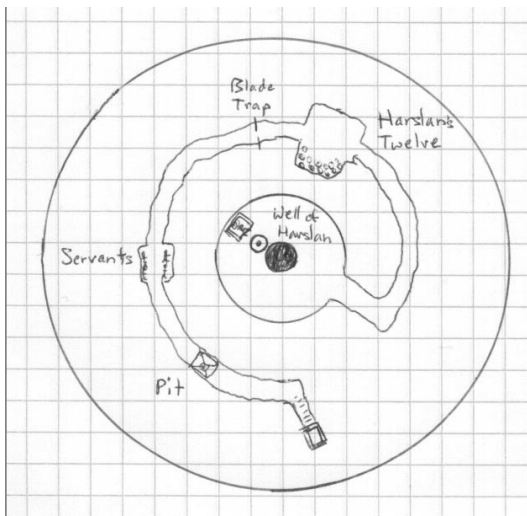
Near to the fire is a set of narrow stone stairs leading down into the barrow. A large carved square stone, obviously the cover for the stairs, lies inches away. The stairs disappear into the darkness below.

As you enter the barrow, a cold chill forms in the small of your back and runs up your spines. You know, without a doubt, that Evil lies within.

Inside the Barrow of Harslan

The narrow stairs come to a hallway that curves and descends to the left, with enough room to move two abreast. The low ceiling will prove difficult (+2 to all physical actions) for anyone over 5 feet tall.

When you enter the barrow, you find that the narrow stairs descend for about twenty feet and terminate at a hallway of made of rough-hewn stone. Thick wooden timbers support the roof and are carved with the images of horses, game animals, and fighting men. The hallway curves and descends to the left, with enough room to move two abreast. The low ceiling is difficult for anyone over 5 feet tall.



Murals

As the PCs enter the barrow, they come across murals painted on the walls depicting Harslan's life and death.

As you enter the barrow, you come across murals painted on the walls depicting the life and death of Harslan of Eriador. However, the murals have been defaced. Long, jagged claw marks are raked across the images. Despite the vandalism, you can still make out the story.

If the PCs have not yet identified the barrow as the barrow of Harslan, they can do so now with a Lore: History test, with a +3 modifier.

Blade Trap

A blade trap is located a few feet beyond the Murals. A trigger set into the floor activates a swinging blade carefully hidden in the wall. A Challenging (20) Observe

(Spot) test allows the PC to see the trigger for what it is. There is a 50% chance per PC that they will trigger the trap and be struck by the blade (2d6+5 damage).

Harslan's Twelve

A small rounded alcove set apart from the hallway contains the skeletal remains of Harslan's warriors.

A small rounded alcove set apart from the hallway contains the skeletal remains of Harslan's warriors who perished in his noble defense of his people. The bodies stand at attention, lashed to the wall by thick leather cords. They wear the armor and carry the weapons they possessed in life. Broken swords, cleaved shields and helms, and shredded mail are on or near the fallen heroes. The bodies of the Twelve show obvious signs of their violent demise, and yet the standing figures retain their nobility, even in death.

If the PCs count the bodies, they will find 13, not 12. The Barrow-Wight that occupies the tomb is hiding here, disguised by its corpse-like appearance. It will remain hidden until after the PCs leave, and then it will attack them from behind. If discovered, the Barrow-Wight will attack in full fury.

Most of the weapons, armor, and other items in the area are so badly damaged that they are worthless to the PCs. There are, however, a few items that can be made use of:

- 2 Dunadain daggers: Damage 2d6+2*; Parry Bonus: +0; Size: 1lb
- 1 Numenorian steelbow: as written in LOTR Core book [page 205], the bow has no string and requires a special string to be used. A steel wire must be manufactured specifically for the bow, a Difficult Smithcraft (Weaponsmith) test.
- 1 Dunadain spear tip: Damage 2d6+3*; this is only the tip of the spear and will require a stout stave to be fully useful. Without the stave, its damage is 2d6+1.
- 1 Numenorian helm: Weight 4 lbs; Damage Absorbed 7 (to head only); this beautiful helm, fashioned after an eagle in flight, is especially strong and light. Its distinctive shape provides a +2 to Intimidate vs. minions of The Enemy.

* +2 to Armed Combat vs. all of serve Sauron and Mordor, +3 vs. supernatural foes (including Barrow-Wights)

The Tomb of Harslan

Further down the narrow hallway is the final resting place of Harslan's body. The tomb is round, approximately 40 feet in diameter.

When the PCs reach the tomb of Harslan, Feyroth and his thugs are already there.

As you approach the tomb of Harslan, you see flickering torchlight and hear grunts and curses. You have little doubt that your quest is near an end. The tomb is round, approximately 40 feet in diameter. Opposite the entrance to the tomb, sits the desiccated body of Prince Harslan on an ornately carved wooden throne. Like his Twelve, he wears the tattered remains of his armor, still stained dark with dried blood, but on his head is a band of gold. On his lap lay the shards of his sword.

In front of Harslan, on a marble pedestal approximately two feet tall, is a black crystal globe. The globe is approximately two feet in diameter and rests in a depression in the pedestal.

Five tall, armed Men are attempting to use a crowbars and ropes to free the black orb from its resting place. One, who stands a full head taller than the others, wallops one of the men on the back of the head and commands him to pull harder.

A short, stout Hobbit, bound with crude ropes, lies dejectedly in the floor near the throne. Fear is in his eyes.

The Rescue

To rescue the Weldon and stop Feyroth from securing the palantir, the PCs must confront Feyroth.

During the confrontation, Siarl, the Barrow-Wight makes its move. It creeps up behind the PCs and attacks them while engaged in combat.

When attacking, the Barrow-Wight will howl its terrifying chant:

*Over dark and moldy bones,
Under gray and wretched stones,
Watch I and guard and keep,
Hated, loved, would-be King,
No hand shall touch nor disturb,
My ever-living deadly scourge,
Damned be you and damned be I,
Your flesh shall rend, bleed, and cry,
In this tomb forever mine.*

Chapter Rewards

After the PCs recover Weldon and stop Feyroth, they return to Bree as heroes. Weldon will pay the party the amount agreed upon by Dustor for their services.

Renown Rewards

The PCs may receive the following Renown rewards:

- Saving Weldon's life: +2
- Thwarting Feyroth's plans in the Barrow of Harslan: +1
- Destroying the Barrow-Wight: +1
- Additional Renown rewards can be made for bravery in combat, etc.

Experience Rewards

The Primary Goal of the chapter is the rescue of Weldon Proudfoot, with all his associated parts still attached. If the PCs are successful in bringing Mr. Proudfoot back to Bree Healthy, Dazed, or Injured, award the party 1000 points. If he is Wounded, Incapacitated, or Near Death, award the party 750 points. If Weldon Proudfoot is killed in the course of the chapter and the PCs can return his body to Bree, award the party 500 points.

The Secondary Goal of the chapter is stopping Feyroth from acquiring what he believes to be the palantir of Aman Sul. If Feyroth is captured or killed and the palantir remains in the barrow, award the party 500 points. If Feyroth escapes, but without the palantir, award the party 250 points. If Feyroth escapes with the Palantir, award no points. See the Appendix regarding the true nature of the palantir.