

TROUBLE AT EEL TARN

INTRODUCTION

It is the first night of the celebrations marking the 5th anniversary of the Battle of the Five Armies and Laketown is alive with thousands of revellers... including a great number of visitors who have travelled from far off to witness the spectacle of fireworks over the Long Lake. You and your fellows are ensconced around the best table in all of Esgaroth. You're outside the *Dragon's Fall*, a top notch drinking establishment right on the quay side near to the Town Hall quarter.



In a side street nearby the Master of Esgaroth, a charismatic middle aged nobleman, is locked in conversation with three others - the Watch Captain, the Guild-master of the Bowmen's guild and his tireless assistant, Quill.

"Gentlemen, I believe tonight represents a turning point for our little town on the lake, god knows it's not like we won't deserve it. We have guests here, noblemen, merchants and traders from leagues away in every direction, and they're all buying our food, drinking our ale, sampling the local merchandise, building good will and most importantly agreeing trade concessions... They'll tell tales of tonight's spectacle for years to come and rightly so, and come the morning our coffers will have swelled significantly and hopefully we will have finally reached a position where those in Dale, Wood and Mountain have a confidence in us that they never had under the previous incumbent, curse his weakness..."

Are the Watch ready to keep the peace? You have the extra men we agreed from the Guild - we should have enough, Yes?

(The men nod in agreement) - Yes my Lord.

And are our special guests been made comfortable?

Aye, my lord, the delegations from both Mountain and Wood find themselves pleased with the accommodations. And the Merchant Lords of Rhun have already agreed to preliminary negotiations in the morning - you will have a busy day tomorrow my Lord.

Excellent, excellent - well let us away to our various positions - and keep our fingers crossed those new-fangled fireworks prove as impressive as I have heard".

Fireworks

As the sun begins to wane over the lake, the Master of Esgaroth mounts a wooden stage at the water's edge and addresses the masses - welcoming them all. A noble speech is made, citing the great debt owed to the fallen of the Five Armies - and how the 5 years since the death of the Dragon and the great battle have seen a renewed hope, strength and positivity - a sense that anything is possible when Barding, Woodmen, Wood-Elf, Beorning and Dwarf join together to build a new future. The crowd roars it support and there is much clapping and cheering.

With the waving of a signal torch towards the dark waters of the Lake, and a special barge laden with fireworks, the spectacle begins and is truly awesome... The night sky becomes a great battlefield filled with explosions of colour. Great banks of smoke drift across the lake from the fireworks barge and curl into the streets near the water's edge. The master and a clutch of other local dignitaries watch on from the wooden stage, clapping enthusiastically at the big explosions, surrounded by the delighted crowd.

Amidst the revelry, you spot something - there is a disturbance near the Master's platform... a man has run up to the stage and is pleading with the Master about something, the Master is pretending he's not there and continuing to clap, whilst town guards move to calm the man and avert any scene.

An official and some of the guard are soon talking to the man at the side of the stage - the noise is so loud the men have to shout to hear each other. The distressed man looks really upset and is clearly in need of help of some kind.

The Upset Man



The man is Egwin, a local lakemen, and it turns out he is pleading with the town guard and Quill, assistant to the Master of Esgaroth, to send out a party to look for his son, Edor, who has not returned home - it is after dark and Egwin is distraught. Two encounters needed...

ENCOUNTERS - Party need to offer their services to the man and the watch which should involve some simple role-playing and a few rolls. Characters should make INTRODUCTIONS by some means to both the man and the guard - success meaning that they get the men's attention.

Once they have the group's attention they need then to make successful INTERACTIONS to make progress.

Success with the guard will get the guard on side. Great success might mean that the Master's assistant is sufficiently swayed to send a watchmen or two out with the group to look for the lad... an extra-ordinary success means that the group and the man are given proper attention and the Master's Assistant sends a patrol of 4 men out with the party - in each case the watch will sweep the town leaving the party to either accompany them or check other locations. Failure will result in the search being postponed until the morning in favour of waiting for the little rascal to come home of his own volition.

Success with the man will calm him down sufficient to press him for information. Great success or better will reveal more detail- maybe where his son's friends can be found. Failure will mean that they say the wrong thing and he runs off to look for his son on his own.

Egwin, a decent man who lost his wife and daughter during Smaug's destruction of the first Lake town, is so rattled that he is not thinking straight - his lad never stays out this late. He says he has already spoken to some of his son's friends and they said that they haven't seen him.

SKILL ROLL TN 14 - If the lad's friends can be found and asked properly it will transpire that the man's son fancies a local lass and he had said he was going to catch a basket of eels to impress her).

If pressed to think where his son might have gone Egwin, with help, might suggest that his son could have gone to the Eel Tarn. The area around the Tarn is dangerous after dark as that is when the wolves and other creatures come out to hunt. His son could

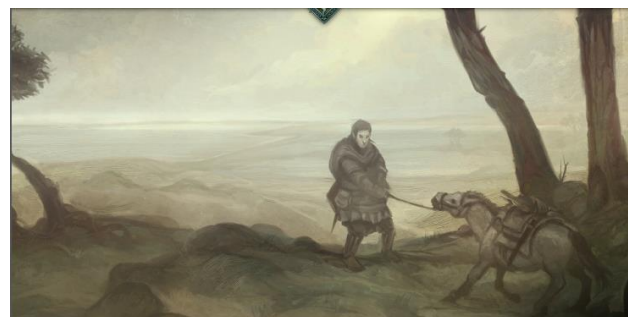
be in real danger.

Set a COMPANY OBJECTIVE at this point - something along the lines of finding the man's son.

ACT 1 - EEL TARN BY NIGHT

Wherein the party head into the hills to Eel Tarn and there find the body of young lad, Edor - and tracks suggesting Goblins might be in the area - and perhaps something else...

The party (and possibly the father) travel the mile or so to the tarn on the east side of Laketown, which involves trekking slowly up into the hills overlooking the lake.




When they get there, it is pitch black and they stumble over rocks and heather in the dark, eventually arriving at the still cold waters of the tarn's edge.

The tarn is easily approached on the side facing the lake (west) but at the back it is bordered by rough jagged rocks that form a kind of cliff. Children jump off these rocks into the water below. Ahead, by the water's edge there is a thin area of pebbles and rocks almost like a little beach - as the party near this area they see in the light of their torches the shape of a child who looks like he is sleeping/lying on the ground.

(play sad music)

It soon becomes apparent that this is the body of the missing boy, pale and lifeless. Time slows and the world fades to a blur as your focus is drawn to the tragic scene before you. Torch light reflects back off the stillness of the black water revealing your grim expressions in its reddening glow.

CORRUPTION test - any one rolling an  immediately gains a point of Shadow.

If the Father is with the group at the Tarn he becomes distraught... runs to the body of his son,



falls on his knees and grasps him up holding him close and wailing...

Confusing signs

As the players consider what to do next – let them either volunteer to make a SKILL test for Awareness or ask them if no one offers... the following interesting clues are evident around the Tarn. Any player can roll for any one or all (just once that night).

- TN 12 The lad Edor looks as though he has been beaten – there are scratches, blood and bruises about his face, arms, chest and neck. Only a successful Healing test will determine that the cause of his demise was strangulation.
- TN 14 The position of the body is strange – when discovered the body has been laid out almost like he was sleeping or at rest. When first found, headless eels have been left on his body. Insight tests will reveal that this would suggest regret, even compassion, and that an attempt has been made to leave a gift, an offering in the form of food.
- TN 16 A broken pendant rope lies a few feet away from the body on the pebbles. Whatever it held is gone...
- TN 14 High up behind the rocks that overlook the Tarn the remains of a small fire can be found – and some small cooked rodent bones. Hunting tests will reveal the presence of tracks of at least four bipedal creatures mixed in with some large animal tracks – possibly Goblins and large Wolf/Warg tracks - and the direction in which they left, south, following a stream bed across the moor. Great or Extraordinary successes reveal that the tracks are at least a day old, but that a second weird set of tracks can also been seen crossing over the first – almost human or hobbit like – perhaps a dwarf barefoot. Failure reveals only the tracks and the trail but no further detail.
- Auto - The lad's eel baskets have been pulled out onto the side and ripped up to get at the contents with frenzied strength.
- TN 18 - To realise that they are being observed - their lights have attracted the

attention of wolves out on the hills – and the moonlight can be seen reflecting off pairs of eyes at a distance from the Tarn. If the party investigate they will provoke a wolf attack by a pack of six normal wolves. The wolves are out on the moors following the scent of a Warg that they've picked up – it is making them extra jittery and aggressive. They will flee from brandished fire.

It is likely that, whether the party encounter the wolves or find anything, they will want to carry the boy's body back to Laketown.

Arriving back

As you bring the body through the gate into Laketown the celebrations are in full swing... at first no one but the guards notice but soon people are stopping and turning, the crowd parting as you walk on, each step taken in mute succession.

At some point you lay the body down and a group, consisting of the father and the Master's assistant, Quill approach, waving onlookers aside.

If the Father remained in Laketown - then when the party return carrying Edor, he becomes distraught... runs to the body of his son, falls on his knees and grasps him up holding him close and wailing...

Gripped by the madness of the moment, Egwin is lost to his own grief shouting his son's name over and over again as the fireworks continue to explode across the lake.

The party need to decide what to do next and adjust their COMPANY OBJECTIVE accordingly. Goblin-spies so close to Laketown is a grave development indeed – and on this of all nights.

Hopefully the party will attempt to track the goblins either that night or the next morning.

ACT 2 - 'OLD MAN OF THE MOOR'

Wherein the party follow the trail of what might be a small party of Goblins across the moors, encountering the hut of an injured old man, who shows them a Goblin arrow and points them in the direction of the local Crag and a place called the 'Scar' – a treacherous cleft in the rock that runs for about half a mile or so from the Crag.


The moorland, in which the tarn is situated, is rugged and open hills, cut by the jagged outlines of



crag jutting up through the earth. Once home to hill tribes dwelling in stone and turf round houses, it is largely unoccupied apart from the odd farmstead. The occasional copse, ruined hill dwelling or stone circle break up the purple and orange of the heather and bracken. A hardy breed of goats with black wool and curling horns roam the moors and they are one of the only creatures seen out during the day. The moor stretches 40 or so miles from the lake/river and runs for over 60 miles north south, running almost all the way up to Dale.

A single road, or rather track, cutting east from the Lake across the moor is the only sign of the trade that goes on with the distant Iron Hills. Small tumbledown huts made of stone, built by travellers and herdsmen, can occasionally be found by those wandering these windswept Marches.

Following the trail left by the Goblins it is clear that they have attempted to mask their presence – wandering across rocky areas and up little streams – but every so often a tell-tale print points a skilled hunter on.

In the first sequence of tracking requires three successful hunting tests – one at TN12, TN14 and TN16. Each player can only make one roll per hour of searching, they must be made in order, and any failure results in an hour lost. Any  symbols means a person has followed the wrong trail and they must return to the Tarn to try again.

When all three tests are passed the players find themselves skirting the bottom of a gentle slope. Have them make TN12 Awareness tests. If they pass then ahead they see a small circular mound, smoke wisps and a little light can be seen coming from its stone ringed portal. Around the strange hump are the crumbling remains of three large stone menhirs covered in lichen and swirling patterns.

Anyone who makes a successful Lore test TN 14 would identify this structure as an ancient and sacred round barrow – and it is most strange to see light and smoke coming from inside. The goblin trail skirts the edge of the mound carrying on towards a steep looking crag at the end of the small valley.

The players have found the home of the Old Man of the Moor (aka: Irfey the Goat, Iaur-Fae-o-Rhaw to the Elves) a mysterious and ancient figure known by many names and assumed by most normal folk to be a folk tale.

As they watch an old man, thick with scruffy furs emerges from the stone portal on his hands and knees carrying a small pot, walks to the stones, mumbling to himself and throws the pots contents onto the ground beyond the stones. He turns back to the doorway, but just before he goes inside, cries out... (Somerset accent)

"You lot coming in then? Or are you going to sit there all day like stinking 'blackwings', making me feel all spied on".

Blackwings might be a reference to the much hated Crebain – evil crows said to spy on travellers.

If the players decline and leave they will have no further contact with this strange figure. If they choose to stay then they are in for a strange treat.

The interior of the mound is alight with a warm glow and there's just enough room for the party, one at a time, to crawl along a short tunnel and enter the circular chamber beyond. It's quite smoky inside, enough to make the party cough.

Once inside the party see a small well-appointed fire, on which a larger pan of water is heating up. The old man in furs rummages away for herbs in his pockets and soon produces enough leaves to make a tea with...

"Sorry about the squeeze, don't mind them", he says moving a human jawbone from beneath his leg and tossing it behind him. The players notice that there are a lot of human looking bones scattered around the edge of this inner chamber. The old man seems unconcerned and the location feels strangely cosy despite clearly being a barrow.

"Rotten lot in their day this lot but they can't hurt you now – now who's for a brew?"

"Where's my manners, we haven't even done introductions – well my name is Ire'fey or Iaur-Fae-o-Rhaw to give you my full name but I haven't heard that name from another's lips in the longest time – who are you lot?"

"I've a mind I know what brings you to these parts – saw 'em myself the other day – one of the little ones fires this at me, narrowly missing my kettle."

Irefey produces a crude looking arrow, with a shaft of grey black wood, crude black feathered tail and vicious looking metal tip.

"This nasty arrow is the work of fell hearted goblin

armourers. From whence it originated I cannot say – but no doubt it'll be some stinking rats nest under a mountain somewhere...”

“What I can tell you though is where I saw them three Goblins heading to. At the end of this valley is a large Crag. They have headed up towards there. I should perhaps warn any town dwellers that it gets a bit tough on the old legs up there. Odds on they'll have made a place to camp beyond the Crag, perhaps in the Scar – you'll know it when you see it. Watch out for that place though as all sorts of nasty stuff ends up in there and the light of day is an unwelcome guest”.

The whole encounter with Irefey is very strange – calm in a bleak landscape. Irefey is at once both attentive and sometimes distracted – almost as if he forgets the party are there some of the time. There is something most unusual about him – but nothing the party will find out now. Irefey will not follow them after the Goblins – you get the sense he is unconcerned by them but happy to help anyone seeking to find them.

ACT 3 - CRAG AND SCAR

Wherein the party close in on their elusive Goblin prey, following their tracks down into Scar Cleft and eventually encountering the Goblin band and worse.

The small valley with the standing stones and the round barrow rises up gently to a great toothy crag of grey stone that runs for a quarter of a mile or so in each direction. The approach to the crag is covered in heather and bracken and if uneven to say the least – boggy pools and jutting boulders abound.

The crags look to be at best only 20 or so feet high and can be scaled halfway by careful climbing on the lower rocks. Only the last 10' or so requires any kind of athleticism. The crag face is split open like slices of a great cake – cracked and eroded by time. Rain has got down in these cracks and ferns and other plants grow here and there, jutting out of the rock face.

SKILLS – TN 14 Athletics rolls from party members to scale the Crag. Anyone with appropriate traits should be given automatic success if they invoke the trait. Anyone who fails can't get up. Anyone who get a **6** will be able to help one other person up per rune.



Once on top of the crag the party are afforded a windblown but amazing view of the surrounding countryside – 360 degrees in every direction. On a clear day people have said they can see the lonely mountain but today is overcast. You can however certainly see the Long Lake from here to the west and beyond the darker brown-yellow coloured ground that marks the beginning of the midge infested Long Marshes.

The crag top is treacherous being interspersed by great cracks and rents that travel deep into the rock. This highest part of the crag is flat enough and wide enough to afford numerous places in which to rest. At the back (south eastern) edge of the small plateau the rocks sweep down at a sharp angle and disappear into the ground. It is from this back edge that the feature, known as the Scar by locals, runs.

TN 14 HUNTING tests will indicate that the company's quarry has headed into the Scar.

The Scar

Caused by the same ancient shift in the rock plates the pushed up the Crag, the Scar is the very reverse. A deep channel between two bodies of rock that is in some places open to daylight and others covered over by giant wedges of rock.


A small muddy path leads down sharply into the darkness between the leaning rock walls of the scar. A little stream of cold water runs parallel to this pebble strewn path echoing into the inky black. Here there is plenty of head room and the channel is perhaps up to 10 feet wide rising to meet at a height of about 12-15 feet. Millipedes and tiny spiders clamber over the rocks crawling in and out of cracks – the place seems alive with insect life. Just near the top of path going down are a series of swirling marks on the rock walls. The long rotted bones of a goat lie broken just down the slope from the entrance.

SKILLS – TN 14 Awareness and Lore perhaps to



firstly spot the symbols and secondly notice their similarity to those seen on the menhirs around the barrow. No meaning can be ascertained.

Sensitive characters – perhaps those with insight as a skill should get an unsettling feeling about this place.

The Scar was once a tomb where ancient hill folk interred their dead – it has been hundreds of years since it was used in this way. The place is used now by evil creatures who wish somewhere to rest out of the sunlight as they move abroad. The Scar counts a blighted land and as such a CORRUPTION test must be made by all those who enter it, those who fail gain a point of **Shadow**. Those that get a  gain 2 points of **Shadow**.

No map is needed for the Scar as it is incredibly simple:

- Essentially it is a half mile long tunnel that runs south from the crag. There are no side branches but there are lots of little side crevices and holes for nasty things to hide in. After an initial sloped descent for 20 or 30 feet the floor levels out. The tunnel floor is muddy with boulders and the occasional deep puddle. A small stream follows the Scar the whole of its length – no more than a trickle.
- Most of the **tunnel is covered** over by the slanting rock faces of the tunnel walls – wet and cold to the touch.
- There are **three small chambers** fairly evenly spaced along the Scar's length – two of which are open to the sky like great sink holes. The third is the lowest and darkest of the chambers and this can be found quite close to where the Scar finishes (perhaps only 100 feet or so) – it has no sunlight. *The third chamber has a deep pool in it which leads to deep chambers and tunnel but needs to be swum through TN18.*
- The last few yards of the Scar opens out at the top of another valley in the hills which runs away to the south. Animal bones can be found all around this area, washed out of the tunnel by the rains.

Goblin Spies

Deep within the scar, in its second chamber, the

company will come across a small band of Goblin Spies from the Mountains of Mirkwood, sent to spy on Laketown. The group is led by a larger Goblin (known as the Messenger of Magog) and contains a single Warg, loyal to the leader. The remaining three goblins are simply scouts armed with bows made of horn. When the Goblins are encountered, whether it be day or night, they will active and are arguing over the carcass of a deer.


"[big goblin] Give it ear...I spots it so I'm having the largest bit and you scum can wait..."

"[small archer] oh that's the thanks me and the boys get for shooting it then..."

"[big goblin] You should count yourself lucky... if we hadn't found this I had me eye on ur juicy legs... get back in line..."

Messenger of Magog

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	
4	
ENDURANCE	HATE
18	5
PARRY	ARMOUR
4	2d
SKILLS	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
WEAPON SKILLS	
Heavy scimitar (2h)	2
Jagged knife	3
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Hate Sunlight	Snake-like speed
Commanding Voice	

WEAPON TYPE	DAMAGE	EDGE	INJURY	CALLED SHOT	NOTES
Bent sword	4	10	12	disarm	A one-handed weapon with a crooked and blackened blade, it is favoured by most breeds of Orcs as it is a nasty weapon in the hands of a crafty fighter.
Bow of horn	4	10	12	poison	A small but powerful bow made of wood, horn and metal, it is hard to bend by an archer lacking the terrifying strength of the long arms of Orcs.
Broad-bladed sword	5	10	14	poison	This wicked short sword forged by Orcs is primarily a stabbing weapon, created to viciously strike unprotected areas.
Broad-headed spear	3	10	12	Pierce	A short spear wielded with one hand mainly as a thrusting weapon, but used also to slash with sweeping swings. It is not balanced and thus cannot be shot from a distance.
Jagged knife	3		14	-	-
Heavy scimitar (2h)	7	10	14	break shield	A larger scimitar meant to be borne with two hands, it is a brutal, heavy blade, meant to literally hack enemies to pieces.

Goblin Scouts

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	
2	
ENDURANCE	HATE
8	1
PARRY	ARMOUR
2	2d
SKILLS	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
<u>Movement, 3</u>	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
WEAPON SKILLS	
<u>Bow of horn</u>	2
Jagged knife	1
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Hate Sunlight	Denizen of the Dark
Craven	

The Warg

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	
3	
ENDURANCE	HATE
12	1
PARRY	ARMOUR
5	2d
SKILLS	
Personality, 1	<u>Survival, 2</u>
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
<u>Perception, 2</u>	Vocation, 0
WEAPON SKILLS	
<u>Bite</u>	2
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Fear of Fire	Great Leap
Seize Victim	

WEAPON TYPE	DAMAGE	EDGE	INJURY	CALLED SHOT	NOTES
Bite	Attribute level	10	14	Pierce	Wolves possess powerful jaws filled with sharp fangs.

If the party make a lot of noise moving through the Scar then by the time they get to the goblin's chamber the Goblin's will have prepared an **ambush**.

An Uninvited Guest

During the skirmish with the goblins the fighting attracts the attention of a Cave troll sleeping in the

final chamber.

The noise of battle masks the **Cave Troll's** approach. The large brutish creature shamles into the chamber from the passageway beyond and roars.

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	
7	
ENDURANCE	HATE
76	8
PARRY	ARMOUR
5	<u>3d</u>
SKILLS	
Personality, 2	Survival, 2
<u>Movement, 2</u>	Custom, 0
<u>Perception, 1</u>	Vocation, 0
WEAPON SKILLS	
Bite	3
<u>Crush</u>	1
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Great Size	Hideous Toughness
Savage Assault	Thick Hide

Its muscular dark skin has a greenish hue, and is covered with tight, robust scales. Cave Troll!

Troll Weapons:					
WEAPON TYPE	DAMAGE	EDGE	INJURY	CALLED SHOT	NOTES
Bite	5	👁️	14	-	Trolls have fearsome fangs, sometimes so large that they protrude from their mouths.
Club	6	10	14	-	A Troll club can be anything, from a stout branch ripped from a tree, to a body part torn from a fallen enemy.
Crush	Attribute level	👁️	12	-	Weaponless Trolls use their weight and strength to pound relentlessly upon their enemies.
Heavy hammer	8	👁️	16	Break shield	Trolls clutch this huge, brutal weapon with a single hand.

Special get out clause

If the fight goes badly then Irefey will sudden appear from out of the Shadows shouting 'be gone foul creature, be gone' – the Troll recoils back at the sight of Irefey and flees away down the tunnel screaming...

After the fight - as a wind down, read the following...

EPILOGUE – THE CULPRIT ESCAPES...

Somewhere in the Scar, in the depths of a crevice's darkest recess, something stirs, patiently uncurling from its hiding place. Moments later, in the pale light of the moon, a small pale figure slips from the blackness of the southern cave mouth and half

crawls half walks across the rock strewn slope...
bending down it scoops up a handful of water from
the thin stream...

*"[Gollum] Urrrgh... whats this... what this... it's all
fulls of nasty orcsies blood... tastes horrible... not
nice, not nice at all... we's don't likes it... no we
donts...*

*[change to Smeagol]Smeagol doesn't minds it...
it reminds me of home... Smeagols sorry ...*

*[change to Gollum] Aarghh... (spits as if trying to
clear his mouth) I donts believes what I'm hearing...
You useless, miserable waste of space... you're
weak, weak weaksy... and we hates you..."*

