The Last Good Years: 2947-2950

These are the last years before the return of the Shadow. The Woodmen multiply, but they must deal with the scattered minions of Dol Guldur. In the north, the Elves savour again the joy of living under the dark boughs of the forest, but are later troubled by the Werewolf of Mirkwood and quarrel with the folk of Dale.

Year 2947

Events

Gollum passes through Mirkwood. The wretched creature crosses the Long Marshes just south of the Elf-path, then makes his way south-west, skirting away from any danger. In the autumn, he crosses into the Western Eaves, and survives by preying on the unwary and those who are too weak to defend themselves.

Ceawin the Generous (Heart of the Wild, page 103) sends messengers to Woodmen-town, Rhosgobel and Woodland Hall, asking for the clan elders to hear his plea. He wants to ally his followers living in the East Bight with the Woodmen, his distant kin. The elders agree to hear his request, and a folk-moot is arranged for the midsummer of the following year at Rhosgobel.

The companions may meet these messengers, or be sent to the East Bight with the reply of the elders. After several years of peace, the howl of the Werewolf of Mirkwood is again heard in the forest. It attacks a party of Dwarves from Erebor after they foolishly stray from the Elf-path.

Adventuring Phase: The Wizard’s Man

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

Any Woodman companion hailing from Mirkwood (or anyone possessing the Trait Mirkwood-lore) recognise him as Beran the Watchful; he is a Woodman, and is known as one of Radagast’s informants and watchmen.
The note he carries warns that Beran saw Orcs in Fenbridge Castle, one of the outlying fortifications of Dol Guldur (Heart of the Wild, page 108). A scrawled map notes the position of Fenbridge, and also marks a tower near the Narrows of the Forest (the Tyrant’s Hill). The Enemy abandoned the castle after the White Council drove the Necromancer from Dol Guldur, but now the Orcs have returned.

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

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

Dagmar is lying – she captured Beran in the woods, and forcibly escorted him to the Tyrant’s Hill. Beran escaped but blundered into a Spider-web. Mogdred wants to keep news of the Orcs from the Woodmen for as long as possible, until he decides which side to support.

If the companions point out the letter, Dagmar offers to bring Beran to Rhosgobel and deliver it personally.

Dealing with Dagmar
If the companions choose to fight Dagmar, use the statistics for Servants of the Tyrant’s Hill, below. The warriors fight until reduced to half their starting Endurance or wounded, and then retreat. Dagmar does not want to kill the companions – Mogdred does not want to antagonise his neighbours – but neither is she overly solicitous of their health. If the company surrender or flee, she lets them go. If the companions hand Beran over, then Dagmar and her followers vanish into the forest with the wounded man. He is never seen again.

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

Servants of the Tyrant’s Hill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute Level</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endurance</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hate</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parry</strong></td>
<td>4 + 2 (Shield)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armour</strong></td>
<td>2d + 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Survival, 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Vocation, 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weapon Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savage Hound</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Abilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beast-tamer</td>
<td>No Quarter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beast-tamer. A servant may spend 1 point of Hate to make one supplementary attack, using the Savage Hound skill score. Additionally, when a hero scores a Piercing Blow, the Loremaster may choose to eliminate one hound to cancel it. Each servant controls one hound.
Weapons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon Type</th>
<th>Damage</th>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Called Shot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sword</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Disarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savage Hound</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At Rhosgobel

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

If the company wish, they can try to gain Radagast as a patron (see page 115 of the Loremaster’s Guide).

The Lord of the Tyrant’s Hill

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

Fellowship Phase: Year’s End

This is one of the last good years before the Shadow returns – when rolling for the upkeep of a holding, add 2 to the roll result.

Year 2948 Events

Gandalf travels across Wilderland, with the intention of inviting one of the rulers of the North to become a member of the White Council. He visits the courts of Elves, Dwarves and Men, and is generally received with honour and a little suspicion – where the Grey Pilgrim goes, trouble follows. If Gandalf meets the company, he asks them questions about their rulers. Unless impressed greatly to the contrary, he resolves not to invite anyone to the White Council, not to compromise the fragile alliance that the North seems to be enjoying. He ends his journey in Rhosgobel, where he rests for a few days and confers with his fellow Wizard.

Representatives from all the houses of the Woodmen gather at Rhosgobel to hear Ceawin the Generous. See The Folk-moot at Rhosgobel, below.

Trespassers from Dale enter the Woodland Realm and cut down trees, including some silver beeches that are especially beloved of the Elves.

Una, a young merchant princess from Dorwinion, leaves her court in early summer to visit Dale for diplomatic reasons. A detachment of Barding warriors (possibly including the companions) is sent by King Bard to meet her caravan along the Running River; they reach the merchant convoy just in time to discourage a band of raiders from the East that was following them. When the princess finally arrives in Dale, everyone witnesses how King Bard is captivated by the sight of Una’s dancing during the feast held in her honour.

Adventuring Phase: The Folk-moot at Rhosgobel

Representatives from all the Houses of the Woodmen come to Rhosgobel at midsummer. This gathering also brings merchants and traders from far afield. Envoys and guests from other Free Folk are also welcome to attend the folk-moot, where many matters relating to the Woodmen are debated (characters who are not Woodmen may be given special missions or assignments by their rulers to bring up at the gathering).

Notable people present:

- Ingomer, of the House of Woodland Hall: Ingomer Axebreaker is the head of the council of elders of Woodland Hall (Heart of the Wild, page 92); he has
the loudest voice in the folk-moot and keeps order in the meeting. Ingomer greets the companions as they enter; he announces to the gathering any Woodman hero with a Standing rating of 3 or more, and any adventurer with a Valour score of 3 or more.

- **Hartfast, of the House of Mountain Hall**: Old and quarrelsome, Hartfast son of Hartmut is the chieftain of Mountain Hall. Unlike the other Woodmen, the strange folk of the hall always elect a chieftain to rule them and protect them from the Orcs of the Misty Mountains.

- **Fridwald the Runner, of the House of Woodmen-town**: Fridwald is a wiry old man who serves as chief messenger and runner between the three Woodmen settlements of Mirkwood since too many years to count. Despite his advanced age, he is still hale and hardy, and knows the paths of the forest better than anyone else. When the folk of Woodmen-town do not go to Radagast for counsel, they turn to old Fridwald. With him is his nephew Munderic, a lazy boy of ten who Fridwald is vainly trying to convince to be a messenger for the Woodmen too.

- **Radagast the Brown**: By ancient tradition, the Wizard attends all folk-moots as an honoured friend. Radagast says little, preferring to sit in a corner and amuse the children with his magical dancing mice.

- **Amaleoda, Shieldmaiden of the Black Tarn**: in charge of her family since her father’s death, Amaleoda and her kin live on the western shore of the Black Tarn. They are fishers and hunters. Of the Woodmen, they live closest to the Shadow of Dol Guldur.

Special guests:

- **Ceawin the Generous**: Golden-haired Ceawin is the young leader of a band of settlers in the East Bight,
on the far side of Mirkwood. Most of his followers are distant kin to the Woodmen.

• **Bofri, son of Bofur:** The Dwarf visits the folk-moot in search of brave warriors and scouts who can help him explore the remains of the Old Forest Road (*Heart of the Wild*, page 84).

Before the folk-moot begins, the company can meet friends, gather rumours or speak with Radagast. They may hear tell of recent events, learn old stories like the tale of Balthi, rumours about the River-maidens, or learn of the loss of Ingomer’s son in the forest. Ceawin’s followers are everywhere, offering gifts of food, drink and gold to win support.

At first, the folk-moot deals with trivial matters. The assembled elders discuss trade between their Houses and their allies. The traders of Mountain Hall complain about the tolls requested by the Beornings; the folk of Woodmen-town ask for more iron and tin; foreign merchants come to sell swords and spear-heads made by Dwarves in the north.

Next, the folk of the Black Tarn speak. Amaleoda says that the recent years brought wonderful harvests, that the lake is alive with fish, and the pestilent fogs that sometimes blew up from the south are gone. The Maiden of the Lake welcomes their presence. They invite more of the Woodmen to come south with them to the Black Tarn, for they intend to raise a longhouse and build a larger walled settlement. The Woodmen greet this prospect with enthusiasm, but Ingomer raises his hands for silence.

“One not of our people – though a kin from afar – asked to speak here. Come forth, Ceawin.”

**Ceawin Speaks**

Ceawin the Generous climbs up on a platform to address the crowd. “For those who do not know me,” and here he addresses himself chiefly to Hartfast, “my people dwell in the East Bight of Mirkwood.” Ceawin lists the virtues of the East Bight – the soil is fertile, it is close to the rich lands of Dale and Dorwinion, and it was the home of the Northmen of old. He has many followers and a sturdy longhouse. He asks to be counted among the Woodmen — his people need to learn how to survive in Mirkwood, and offers friendship and wealth in exchange.

The response to Ceawin’s speech is divided. Some are suspicious of newcomers; others, like Hartfast of Mountain Hall, recognise the wisdom of his request. Firienseld is, after all, even further from Woodmen-town than the East Bight, and they are counted among the Woodmen.

Just before Ingomer calls for the vote, one of Radagast’s birds flaps down and lands on the Wizard’s shoulder, cawing frantically. A moment later, the sound of horns echoes out of the wood.

**The Prodigal Son**

A dozen riders emerge quietly from the shadow of the trees. If the companions played through *The Wizard’s Man* (page 11), they recognise the garb of the men of the Tyrant’s Hill. All are armed, and their weapons seem both well-made and well-used. Two of them have big sacks tied to the back of their mounts. At their head rides a dread figure, wearing a helm made in the likeness of a dragon.

“Only Woodmen and their friends are welcome here,” declares Ingomer.

The stranger removes his helm. “But I am a Woodman, by blood and birth. Don’t you recognise me? You called me Ingold, your son, though men now call me Mogdred.” Shaken, Ingomer sits down.

Mogdred addresses the crowd. “For many years, I was a slave in the dungeons of the Necromancer! Now I am lord of the place you call the Tyrant’s Hill, and I command many men.” He points his sword at Amaleoda. “You and yours would be long dead if it were not for our protection. Darkness returns to the forest, had you but eyes to see it. There are Orcs in Fenbridge, and shadows stir in Dol Guldur.”

A warrior in the crowd wants to know what Mogdred asks of this folk-moot. He responds with scorn, “A seat in the councils of the Woodmen, tribute from the Black Tarn, wives for my warriors, gold from the mountains. That stranger — he points at Ceawin the Generous, “offered you trinkets and sweetcakes. My offer is of a more practical sort.”
His two followers up-end the sacks they brought with them. Dozens of Orc-heads tumble from them. “What say you?” he demands arrogantly.

**The Debate**

The Woodmen must choose how to respond. There are three proposals before them:

- **Welcome Ceawin’s people into the Woodmen:** On the one hand, they are wealthy and an alliance with them would make the Woodmen stronger. On the other, Ceawin is a stranger, and the East Bight is far away – if Orcs have come back to Southern Mirkwood, then maintaining trade with the East Bight will be perilous. Opinion on Ceawin’s proposal is divided roughly evenly among the Woodmen, but on balance they are currently in favour of it.

- **Build a new village by the Black Tarn (Black Tarn Hall):** Amaleoda’s folk are prospering, and establishing a new House would strengthen the Woodmen as a whole. The Black Tarn is rich in fish, and they have the friendship of the River-maidens. Virtually everyone supports Amaleoda on principle, but some fear that the new village is too close to the dangers of the south.

- **Welcome the Lord of the Tyrant’s Hill into the Woodmen:** Mogdred’s sudden appearance at the conclave means that few people are sure what to think. He strongly implied a threat – “If you’re not my friends, then you’re my enemies, and you already have more enemies than you know” – and that was not the act of a kind man. He demanded tribute instead of asking for friendship, and seemed to consider the Black Tarn part of his domain. However, is it not better to have his warriors as allies instead of enemies? If the Woodmen refuse Mogdred, then he could threaten both a new Black Tarn village and anyone travelling to the East Bight. Also, he is Ingomer’s son, and Ingomer was a good leader. His son clearly suffered in the dungeons, and he is not very polite, but is that a good reason to reject him?

The Woodmen are divided on this proposal, but more are against Mogdred than support him.

If the players wish, they can speak in support or against any of the proposals. A successful Awe, Courtesy, Inspire or even Song roll can rally opinion. The difficulty of any roll made to change opinions about Ceawin or Mogdred should be set at the default level (TN 14), while it is much harder to instill doubts about the proposal of Amaleoda (TN 18).

After some time, Ingomer calls for a vote.

**Judgement of the Folk-moot**

The decisions made here have repercussions long into the future:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Accepted</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ceawin</td>
<td>Over the next few years, several Woodmen families move to the East Bight to settle there. Ceawin names his main settlement the Sunstead, and it prospers for several years.</td>
<td>Ceawin returns empty-handed and angry. His people rapidly dwindle as many flee the forest to the safer land of the Bardings to the north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaleoda</td>
<td>Any Woodmen who wish to settle by the lake are welcomed in Black Tarn Hall. Many people from Woodmen-town and Rhosgobel go east to help its building.</td>
<td>Shocked and surprised, the shieldmaiden returns home to the lake. Her people continue to grow in numbers, but more and more of them turn to Mogdred’s men for protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mogdred</td>
<td>Mogdred’s men help protect the Woodmen’s southern border, but they cause lots of trouble. There is bitter fighting between the Orcs of Fenbridge Castle and the warriors of the Tyrant’s Hill.</td>
<td>Angered, Mogdred returns to his fortress. His warriors become raiders, attacking the Woodmen settlements and making travel through the forest even more dangerous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If both Amaleoda’s and Mogdred’s proposals were accepted, the two Houses watch each other suspiciously. If the Woodmen support Ceawin or Amaleoda (or both), but reject Mogdred, then the new Woodman settlements are virtually cut off by the men of Tyrant’s Hill, and travelling to those areas becomes dangerous.

**Fellowship Phase: Year’s End**

Companions spending the Fellowship phase in Dale or Esgaroth hear news of how King Bard is wooing fair Una of Dorwinion. Barding heroes of sufficient Standing may even play an important part in the king’s betrothal as amorous intermediaries, if they wish to intervene and be involved.

**Year 2949**

**Events**

Early this year, King Bard marries Una of Dorwinion. The bond reinforces the status of the kingdom of Dale as a rising power in the North, as Una comes with a rich dowry of gold and diplomatic relations. In December, Una gives birth to a male son, Prince Bain, making Bard a father at the age of 38.

Spiders attack a Woodman boat travelling down the Dusky River. The River-maidens intercede to save the Woodmen by guiding them out of the webs. One of the Woodmen reports seeing a gigantic Spider lurking in the shadows.

Gollum lingers on the fringes of the Western Eaves, stealing food from the Woodmen. One farmer tries to catch the chicken-thief; Gollum retaliates by terrifying the farmer’s cows, who trample the Woodman to death. Ingomer of Woodland Hall puts a bounty on the head of this ‘Bloody Ghost’.

Beorn visits Northern Mirkwood, and meets with the Elves. King Thranduil sends emissaries to meet with him. Elven heroes of high Standing who have good relations with the Beornings may be included in this mission.

Tensions with the Barding villages along the eastern border of the Woodland Realm continue, as the Bardings trespass into the lands of the Elves.

Balin and Gandalf visit Bilbo in the Shire. On the way, they speak of Moria and Balin begins dreaming of a return to that lost city.

**Adventuring Phase: The Questing Beasts**

For many years, King Thranduil has hunted the fabled white deer of Mirkwood, a race of enchanted beasts known to roam all of the forest. They are rarely seen, and some consider their appearance to foreshadow portentous events. Recently, hunters have spotted the creatures in Northern Mirkwood, and the Elvenking has called for a royal hunt.

Normally, only Elves of the Woodland Realm would be invited to participate in such a hunt, but the Elvenking declares that mortals may participate if they are friends of the realm. A few Woodmen and warriors from Dale and Lake-town are allowed to join in the hunt. If the heroes have good relations with the Woodland Realm, or have Thranduil as a patron, they receive invitations. Alternatively, if the characters have a different patron, then he may ask them to represent him at Thranduil’s hunt.

The hunt begins at the Elvenking’s Halls, then ranges out to the north and west. Thranduil and some of the Elves ride grey horses that seem to magically slip through the thickets and undergrowth without impediment, but most hunters are on foot. The hunt may take many weeks to complete, as the white deer wander far into Northern Mirkwood.

**Ruithel**

One of the hunters who sets out at the same time as the companions is an Elf-maiden named Ruithel, famed as a huntress and a tracker. She wields one of the treasures of the Woodland Realm, the bow Penbregol, strung with mithril by the Dwarf-smith Gamil Zirak in the depths of time. Ruithel was recently promoted to command the