

— the pearl — of kings

- **When:** This quest could be set any year beginning at 2946 after King Dáin has passed the Pearl of Kings onto his son, Thorin III Stonehelm.
- **Where:** This adventure takes place mostly in southern Mirkwood in the Demon's Tower and then at a strange house in the East Bight called the Hall of Ghosts.
- **What:** A quest is undertaken by the companions to recover the buried treasures of Thorin III and return them to the Lonely Mountain.
- **Why:** King Dáin has not authorised his youngest to return to the Demon's Tower to retrieve his treasure in fear that he might not return. Therefore, the companions are called upon to undertake the dangerous quest themselves.
- **Who:** The companions encounter a sorceress named Zimraphel, an Orc leader named Gothgash the Stingy, and many nameless black birds.

ADVENTURING PHASE

This adventure is divided into four parts, beginning in the dungeons of the Demon's Tower and ending in the Hall of Ghosts.

The Pearl of Kings

While getting much needed rest somewhere in Wilderland (perhaps Erebor), the companions listen to the story of the "Pearl of Kings" buried in southern Mirkwood. It is a precious stone of considerable wealth said to have been the gift of a raven, brought to Dáin Ironfoot shortly after he claimed the title King Under the Mountain (2941). A golden box was made for the pearl and King Dáin gave it as a present to his young adventurous son, Thorin III Stonehelm (born 2866), who would one day be king many years later. Dáin II would fall on March 17, 3019 during the War of the Ring.

When Thorin III led an expedition south to investigate a tower rumoured to have been built by the Necromancer, he took the Pearl of Kings with him. But when his company was attacked by black birds of sorcery in the thick, tangled

forest, the only option was to go underground in the dungeon caves beneath the tower. To protect the Pearl of Kings from being lost or plucked away, Thorin III buried it in a chamber, along with all the other gold and precious objects in the company's possession, intending to one day return and reclaim it all; but thus far, he has not found the courage and his father will not let him go...

As an opening to this adventure, the Loremaster may choose to play out a journey to the Demon's Tower in southern Mirkwood, or simply begin with the companions descending into the underground chambers of the tower after days of locating a cave entrance.

PART ONE – INTO THE DUNGEONS OF MINAS RAUG

The companions step down into the gloom of the tower's lower chambers. It is here that they search for the burial location of the Pearl of Kings. After awhile, they disturb a massive Cave-Troll. In the creature's chamber is hidden a small hoard valued at Treasure 20*. It is possible that one of the heroes finds the Axe of Dreadful Sounds (see below) or another famous weapon or armour. However, it appears this is not the buried treasure of Thorin III. They must keep searching...

An adjacent hall reveals a freshly dug hole and many footprints. Looking around, the companions may spot a giant Orc of great strength on an upper ledge, along with a few smaller henchmen. The Orc leader holds a golden box, open in his grasp, revealing the Pearl of Kings! He lifts the pearl up for the companions to see and speaks: "You have come for this, you filth! But you will not have it. Cowards will never find it." With that, the Orcs escape through a passage and disappear.

THE AXE OF DREADFUL SOUNDS

Type: Great Axe

Craftsmanship: Dwarven

Banes: n/a

Qualities:

1. Gleam of Terror
2. Runes of Victory
3. Superior Fell

Notes: This Axe, when swung, makes an awful booming sound to accompany the intimidation efforts of its wielder. This noise is particularly disturbing to all Shadow creatures, increasing in intensity the greater the display of passion by its wielder. Dwarven runes cover its surface.

PART TWO – ZIMRAPHEL'S SCHEME

Whether in the upper rooms of the tower or in a hollow in the woods, the player-heroes encounter Zimraphel, the Sorceress of Mirkwood (*The Heart of the Wild*, page 107). She is a mysterious figure and the company does not immediately know whether she is good or evil, for she seems to be obsessed with plans for stealing a Ring from the Enemy. But, for this encounter, she is friendly enough and can be questioned about the giant Orc and given information about his possible whereabouts.

Encounter Evaluation

This encounter is based on Wisdom.

0-1: Zimraphel acts strange and untrusting toward the player-heroes, but tells them the Orc's name: Gothgash the Stingy. He has been plaguing her with his nasty habit of robbing her dungeons. She saw him head north toward the East Bight and would love it if they would cut off his head.

2-3: Zimraphel laughs wickedly and tells the player-heroes the information above, and she gives them a route through Mirkwood that he often follows (making it easier to track the Orcs in the next Part).

4-6: As above, and she warns them of his traps and tells them to expect 10-15 Orc followers. Because of this, if the company pursues the Orcs, they cannot be ambushed and each member gains a free bonus Success die when determining combat advantages.

7+: As above, and she adds: “When you kill the Orc, you will not find the Pearl of Kings. It will have been taken to a hall on the edge of the forest as an offering. But, be warned, no man has ever survived that house, for they have never used fire to last through the night.”

PART THREE – JOURNEY TO THE HALL OF GHOSTS

If the companions choose not to track the Orcs through Mirkwood, but instead select a route around the forest to the East Bight, they should make the necessary rolls and skip the rest of this part.

The Orc Trail

The exact route of the Orcs can be found in the woods directly north of the tower. The companions must struggle to keep up, or lose the trail and face a possible ambush a few miles ahead as the creatures turn to attack them.

Once engaged in combat, battle events may include avoiding several Orc traps, designed to kill or capture unwary foes. These Orcs use concealed deep pits that have been dug and filled with thorny roots, as well as vine traps, that when tripped, release a hail of arrows toward unsuspecting victims.

Not every member of the Orc pack wants to die. Therefore, if more than half are killed, they will try to escape further north, deeper into the forest. All but Gothgash flee, who is wearing dark clothes wrapped around his head and neck, leaving space for only one yellow eye to peer at the companions. Sometime before the battle ends he sneers cruelly, “You fools! They have already taken it from me, and if you go into their hall, you'll never come out. You will die in there, maggots.”

If the player-heroes question Gothgash about who “they” are, he answers: “No one has seen them, only their nasty pet birds! Better if I kill you here and now than for you to suffer as I have.” With that, he removes his coverings, revealing deep cuts and wounds to his face, as if many birds tried to peck him to death. His right eye has been plucked out and he is coated in blood. He fights to the death.

To the East Bight

The rest of the journey is through the gnarled trunks and dead trees of southern Mirkwood. It should take several days before reaching the East Bight. The grey sky and canopy of blackened branches weighs heavily on the companions. The Loremaster should check to see if the area is blighted (*The One Ring*, page 223).

PART FOUR – FIRE AND BEAK

One evening, as they travel along the edge of the forest, the heroes spot an old and rustic longhouse. Smoke is rising steadily from a central chimney. An inviting porch welcomes them with the smell of fried potatoes and sausage. If they step onto the porch, a soft voice from inside the house beckons. “Come, come, you look hungry my darlings. It's time for supper! We have everything you want, just come and get it.” The voice sounds familiar in some way, but no one can place it exactly.

At this point, the companions can approach the house in several ways:

- They can enter it,
- They can try to burn it down,
- Or they can use wisdom and abandon the quest while they have a chance!

Entering the Longhouse

Any player-hero that steps foot into the house sees an illusion of a woman they know, such as a mother or sister, or friend. She has a kind smile and waves them in toward a round table in the centre of the room where she is filling plates from a frying pan. After a few moments, everything disappears as a swirling wind blows out the fire burning in the fireplace. The only thing remaining is the table, now old and covered in black moss. Upon it sits a few gold coins and the box containing the Pearl of Kings. A voice, different from before, and wickedly sharp, comes from nowhere. “It's

time. Come and get it!” This is followed by many ghostly cackles that fill the hall with dread.

Before the heroes can exit or take the pearl, the sound of squawking birds and the flapping of wings is heard coming from the chimney. The front door slams shut and the windows are suddenly covered by growing vines. There is no escape!

The companions must fight off an endless string of black birds, powered by some fell sorcery. This will continue through the night until daybreak. There is no way to survive, except one: the birds and their ghostly masters must be thwarted by fire. If the player-heroes use torches or build a fire in the house and can keep the fires sustained, the birds will be unable to attack. If they set the house on fire, they endanger their own lives; but when it catches in full, the ghosts let out an awful scream and the birds fly away as the house disappears, leaving the player-heroes in the field with fire all around them. The Pearl of Kings lays resting on the ground if they have not already grabbed it.

If anyone stayed outside and did not enter the longhouse, they witness the birds entering the chimney, and they hear the screams from within. They too, must decide what to do, and may even be attacked, for the birds are not an illusion.

Burning Down the House

If the player-heroes successfully set fires to the house through a difficult prolonged action, it will eventually disappear before their eyes! But to thwart them in the process, a swarm of sorcerous black birds comes to attack. As soon as the house vanishes, in its place lays the Pearl of Kings upon the charred ground. It is blackened and the gold box has melted, but it can be repaired.

EPILOGUE – RETURN TO EREBOR

If the companions recover the pearl, they should return it to Erebor where it belongs. They will never be the same again, for they have faced evil and have overcome it. New questions and revelations about the Demon's Tower, Zimraphel, the sorcerous birds, and the Hall of Ghosts are certainly enough to either stay away from southern Mirkwood, or to return one day to drive out the darkness.

— CREDITS —

Written by James R. Brown

The One Ring designed by
Francesco Nepitello and Marco Maggi



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If you have any questions or comments please contact James R. Brown at pastorjamesbrown@gmail.com.