

WEB ENHANCEMENT:

BORGNOK'S RAID

A Mastering Iron Heroes *free web enhancement* by Adam Windsor.

Requires use of Monte Cook Presents: Iron Heroes, published by Malhavoc Press.

Requires use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Third Edition Core Books, published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

This book utilizes updated material from the v. 3.5 revision.



Mastering Iron Heroes introduces two important new concepts to your Iron Heroes game: zones (areas of the battlefield which have special effects or grant you extra tactical options) and villain classes (which allow you to create quickly versatile enemies for your game).

Borgnok's Raid is a short encounter designed to demonstrate these new game features in action. This web enhancement is intended for a group of four 1st-level Iron Heroes characters. Suitable characters should take only a few minutes to generate using the starting packages in Chapter Three of Iron Heroes. Characters created for the Iron Heroes adventures *Dark Harbor* or *Song of the Blade* also could be used for this encounter.

The map in this adventure was created with Dundjinni software. For more information, visit <www.dundjinni.com>.

Feel free to fit this encounter into your home game, or use it as the start of a new Iron Heroes campaign. You don't need Mastering Iron Heroes to use this web enhancement, but you will find its rules on zones and villain classes helpful as you run *Borgnok's Raid*. Find out more about Mastering Iron Heroes at <www.montecook.com/Mastering>.

The layout of this web enhancement begins on page 2. There is no page 1.

BEGINNING THE ENCOUNTER

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The Skullcrag goblins have lived in the mountains west of human lands for decades. The older locals can remember several skirmishes with the Skullcrag goblins back in their younger days, but for the last thirty years or so the goblins have left your people alone.

All that has changed recently, however. A goblin raiding party has been striking at outlying farms, carrying off booty and slaying all who try to resist. The pattern of their attacks suggests that the next place they will strike is the Ramshorn Farm, and the local authorities have dispatched you to protect the Ramshorn family.

It seems you may have arrived too late. As you approach the farm, you catch sight of small, bandy-legged humanoids darting about the place. The high, chattering sound of goblin voices rises as the creatures catch sight of you, and the battle is joined. . . .

THE GOBLIN RAIDERS

The long peace with the humans wears thin the patience of Borgnok, warleader of the Skullcrag tribe. An ambitious goblin, Borgnok desires to become chieftain of the tribe, but he knows that to supplant the current chief he needs the support of most of the tribe's warriors. Thus, taking a handful of his most trusted followers, he has set out on a secret raid of the human lands against his chief's orders. Borgnok believes that if he returns from the raid with bags of looted goods, he will be able to challenge and replace the chief easily.

Unfortunately for Borgnok, making off with bags of looted goods requires that there be goods to loot, and few of the farmers have much of value. His raid has had to go on much longer than he intended, which has given the local authorities time to dispatch the player characters to stop him.

Borgnok; Male warleader; CR 3; Small humanoid; HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +5; Speed 30 feet; Defense 17 (+3 base, +1 Dex, +1 size, +2 light wooden shield) (DR 1d2/magic), touch 15, flat-footed 13; Base Attack +3; Grapple +0; Attack/Full Attack +5 melee (1d4+1/19–20; short sword); SQ Bootlicking toad-ies, dark-vision 60 feet, field commander, tyrannical leader;

SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +7, Diplomacy +9, Hide +5, Intimidate +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Ride +10.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Overwhelming Presence (mastery 1).

Languages: Common, Goblin, Orc.

Possessions: Short sword, leather armor, light wooden shield, 2d6+20 gp, copper urn stolen from the Ramshorn Farm.

As a field commander for a more powerful villain, the warleader is a warrior who commands the obedience and discipline of his followers through threats, intimidation, and other terror tactics. He makes an excellent opponent for low-level parties and serves as a useful bridge between a villain's flunkies and the actual villain. For more details on this villain class, see *Mastering Iron Heroes*, Chapter Three (page 23).

Warleaders gain abilities that allow them to use their followers to their own advantage. Borgnok has the following such abilities:

Bootlicking Toadies (Ex): Borgnok manipulates the weak but ambitious members of his raiding party and has groomed them into a fighting force carefully trained to protect him at all costs. Any of his allies within 30 feet of him can take actions to defend him. When their opponents provoke attacks of opportunity, they can replace their normal attacks of opportunity with the aid another action to give Borgnok a +2 defense bonus against the target of their aid attempt. Additionally, whenever Borgnok's allies use the aid another action to improve his defense or give him a bonus to attacks, they grant a +4 bonus. This does not apply to the special aid action used in place of an attack of opportunity.

Field Commander (Ex): Once per round during an ally's action, Borgnok can choose to grant a +1 bonus to an ally's skill check, defense, or saving throw. This ally must be within 30 feet of Borgnok.

Tyrannical Leader (Ex): Borgnok's glowering presence and intimidating style of command prove brutally effective. He grants a +1 bonus to all attacks made by his allies whenever they are within 30 feet of him and can hear him speak. If rendered silent, Borgnok no longer grants his allies this benefit.

Goblin Warriors (6): Male and female warriors1; CR 1/2; Small humanoids; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +1; Speed 30 feet; Defense 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size), touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Attack +1; Grapple -3; Attack/Full Attack +2 melee (1d6, 20/×3; spear) or +3 ranged (1d6, 20/×3; light crossbow); SQ Darkvision 60 feet; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +7, Jump -2, Listen +1, Move Silently +7, Ride +5, Spot +1.

Feats: Skill Affinity (Listen, Spot).

Possessions: Spear, light crossbow, bolts (10), 2d6 sp, sack of looted items from human farms.



ZONES: THE BASICS

Zones are powerful tools for creating interesting battlefields. A simple fight with a few thugs can be dull or difficult to spice up, but if you set the same battle in the midst of a sagging ruin during an earthquake, the action becomes far more intense and compelling. What was once a run-of-the-mill battle becomes a tense affair as walls crumble, the floor caves in, and chunks of rock fall from the ceiling.

The DM creates zones to make environments more interesting, and players should always be on the lookout for ways to use them to their advantage. When zones are present in an encounter, the DM should point them out to the players. The three types of zones are: condition zones, event zones, and action zones. Each involves a different battlefield feature.

A **condition zone** describes a specific effect that continuously functions within the battle area. While fighting in the arctic, the characters suffer damage from the frigid temperatures. The cold wears at them every round.

An **event zone**, in comparison, comes into play only when it activates. Event zones are tied to things in the environment that occur without the characters' interference. For example, the PCs might battle a group of trolls in a ruined temple. The temple altar occasionally emits blasts of energy that target the characters and trolls at random. Traps also are event zones. They activate in response to an action, such as a character stepping on a pressure plate or walking through a tripwire. (This encounter does not include any event zones.)

An **action zone** is a fancy way of defining how a character can interact with the environment during a battle. Usually, these options are a lot like stunts that require you to use the environment in some way. Most action zones offer benefits that are greater than or different from those offered in *Iron Heroes'* stunt rules. For example, a massive boulder perched at the edge of a steep slope might inflict more damage against a greater number of targets than the typical area attack stunt.

Zones are divided into three different types to make them easier to handle, but they use identical rules. In many cases, they draw on existing rules, such as those for weather, or they use rules you're already familiar with. The altar that blasts the characters with eldritch energy simply makes an attack roll or requires a saving throw to dodge its power.



TACTICS

The goblin warriors' starting positions are marked with "G"s on the map on the next page. If you have more than four players, add three extra goblin warriors for each player after the fourth. These additional goblins can start in whatever positions you choose. A "B" denotes Borgnok's location.

The goblins' initial reaction to the party's arrival is to hunker down and fire their crossbows. However, as soon as Borgnok emerges from the house, he calls on them to "slaughter the filthy humans" and presses forward into melee.

You should always keep at least one goblin within 10 feet of Borgnok so that it can threaten the same target as he does and aid another to give Borgnok a +4 bonus to either his attack rolls or his defense. It gives him the bonus to attack rolls until Borgnok falls to half his hit points or less, at which point it begins giving him the bonus to defense instead.

Borgnok is a tough opponent for 1st-level characters, but his effectiveness in combat is based largely on the bonuses he

gives to his allies and vice versa. Make sure to emphasize to your players how Borgnok barks orders that make the goblin warriors' attacks more accurate, and how the warriors in turn seem to help him land his blows (or dodge the heroes' attacks). This should help tip off your players that depriving Borgnok of his allies is the best first step toward defeating him.

Borgnok fights to the death: He must return from the raid with a glorious success, or he will be killed for disobeying the chief. His warriors fight to the death while he is alive, but they run as soon as Borgnok falls.

THE RAMSHORN FARM

Lying on the western edge of human settlement, the Ramshorn Farm consists of a single-story log home and a wooden barn. The farm, which is named after the family that owns it, gets its water from a well just south of the house.

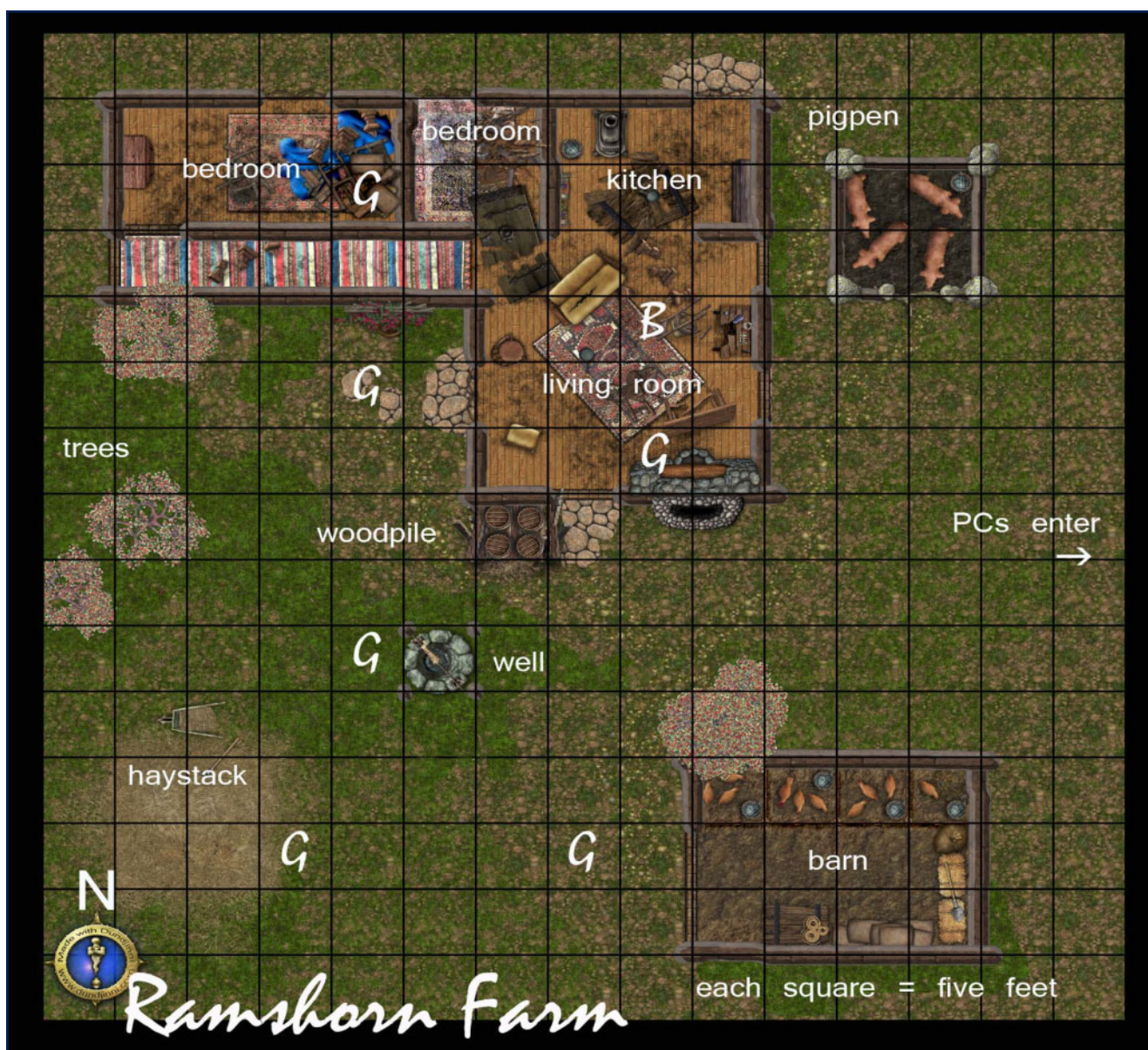
family provides for itself with poultry in the barn, apples from trees dotted around the property, a sty full of pigs, and several fields of wheat. The farmer and his family fled to the neighbors' place as soon as they saw the goblins approaching.

The areas below comprise the farm, and most of them feature one or more zones. For more details, see the sidebar on the previous page and see *Mastering Iron Heroes*, Chapter Four (pages 33 to 41). In addition, a zones preview is live online at www.montecook.com/ironheroes for your reference.

Remember to inform players of action zone opportunities when those encounter areas come up in play.

BARN

This single-story wooden building contains four chicken coops and an open main area where the farm tools are kept and where the pigs stay during winter.



FARMHOUSE

It is unlikely that combat will spill into the house itself, as Borgnok leads his followers into melee, but the interior layout of the building appears on the map in case it is required. The following zones apply within the house:

Action Zone (Ransacked): Reusable. The goblins have ransacked the building thoroughly, strewing all kinds of items on the floor. Every square not occupied with furniture contains several discarded objects. With a move action, a character can pick up one of these items to use as an improvised thrown weapon. The objects inflict 1d2 points of damage (plus Strength modifier), have a range increment of 10 feet, and suffer the usual attack roll penalties for being improvised weapons.

Condition Zone (Ransacked): The pieces of refuse on the floor not only can serve as weapons, they also make footing treacherous. Treat all non-furniture squares as difficult terrain. Remember that a character can use Tumble to negate the effects of difficult terrain, and a nimble hero could even navigate the area at full speed by jumping between furnishings.

HAYSTACK

This 10-foot-high stack of hay is used for bedding, animal food, and other farm purposes. It blocks line of sight and provides cover. It also offers a couple additional options in combat:

Action Zone (Flame On!): Usable once. The haystack can be set alight with a full-round action and some flint and tinder. Alternatively, it automatically bursts aflame if it suffers 1 point of fire damage (such as from burning oil or a torch). Once lit, it immediately blazes into flame and burns for 20 minutes. Any creature that enters one of the four squares the haystack occupies while it is on fire suffers 1d6 points of fire damage immediately. A creature that spends a full round in such a square suffers 2d6 points of fire damage instead.

Condition Zone (Treacherous Footing): The haystack has steep slopes, and the hay itself shifts and moves underfoot. Any creature entering one of the four squares the haystack occupies must make a Balance check or fall prone. The Difficulty Class of the check is 10 if the character entered the square voluntarily, but 15 if he did so due to the actions of another character (for instance, due to a bull rush).

PIGPEN

Within the low wooden fence of this pen are four large, heavy pigs. They become agitated when combat occurs, squealing and pawing at the fence.

Action Zone (Stampede): Usable once. If a character opens the gate on the southern side of the pigpen, she can then use a



REINFORCEMENTS

If you have a couple heroes with the Cleave feat and good dice rolls, Borgnok's goblin warriors might be dispatched very speedily. If so, feel free to reinforce him with additional warriors entering from the western side of the map. A number of goblins equal to the number of heroes should work well. Be sure to have these goblins enter in positions where the haystack and well action zones can be used against them.



Handle Animal (DC 5) or Intimidate (DC 10) check to cause the four pigs to stampede. The swine immediately charge 30 feet due south. Treat them as a single Large creature with Strength 15 and the Improved Overrun feat (mastery 3 and 7) for the purposes of determining their effects on any creature in the path of this movement. After charging 30 feet like this, the four swine split up in random directions, fleeing the battle.

TREES

Four apple trees grow around the area close to the house. They are 15 feet high and require a Climb check (DC 10) to scale them. Any character who climbs at least 10 feet up one of these trees is out of range of melee attacks (except those made with reach weapons) and can find a stable position from which to make ranged attacks.

WELL

The Ramshorns get their water from an artesian bore well located between the house and the barn. Encircling the well is a low stone wall approximately 1 foot high. A 10-foot-tall well house has been built over the well. The bucket and winch for retrieving water are fixed to this well house.

Condition Zone (Long Drop): Any creature that enters the well's square must make a Balance check (DC 10) or fall 20 feet to the water below. The check Difficulty Class increases to 15 if the creature entered the square involuntarily (such as through a bull rush). A creature falling into the well suffers 1d6 points of damage from the fall and then must climb out again (Climb check, DC 10).

Action Zone (Bucket-Swing): Reusable. The well's bucket dangles about a foot above the well wall at the end of a long piece of rope. A character adjacent to the well can use a standard action to swing the bucket in a wide arc. The hero can choose three consecutive squares that are adjacent to the well. You may make a melee attack roll against each creature within those squares, as if you were using a reach weapon to attack. Each creature you hit suffers 1d2 points of damage (plus your Strength modifier).

WOODPILE

The Ramshorns keep their woodpile close to the front door of the house. A wooden shelter with a flat roof protects the

chopped wood from rain, keeping it dry for use on the fire. Four barrels of dried apples have been placed on top of this roof (where the pigs can't get at them).

Action Zone (Roll out the Barrel): Usable once. By taking a standard action and making a Strength check (DC 10), a character adjacent to the woodpile can knock over the posts that support its roof. This causes the roof to drop down into a ramp, and the barrels to topple to the ground. The hero can choose four consecutive squares within 10 feet of the woodpile. A barrel falls into each of these squares. Any character in one of these squares must make a Reflex save (Difficulty Class equal to the hero's Strength check) or suffer 2d6 points of damage as a barrel lands on him.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Windsor is an Australian gamer and freelance writer who has credits with Clockwork Golem Workshop and E.N.Publishing. He's been playing roleplaying games for over 20 years and, despite his parents' many questions on the subject, has no plans to "grow up" any time soon.

Adam ran one of the playtester groups for the books in Malhavoc Press' *Iron Heroes* line. Look for his *Iron Heroes* official adventure *Dark Harbor* coming soon as a PDF exclusive product from Fiery Dragon Productions.



BORGNOK'S RAID: A WEB ENHANCEMENT BY ADAM WINDSOR

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For supplemental material, visit Monte Cook's Website:
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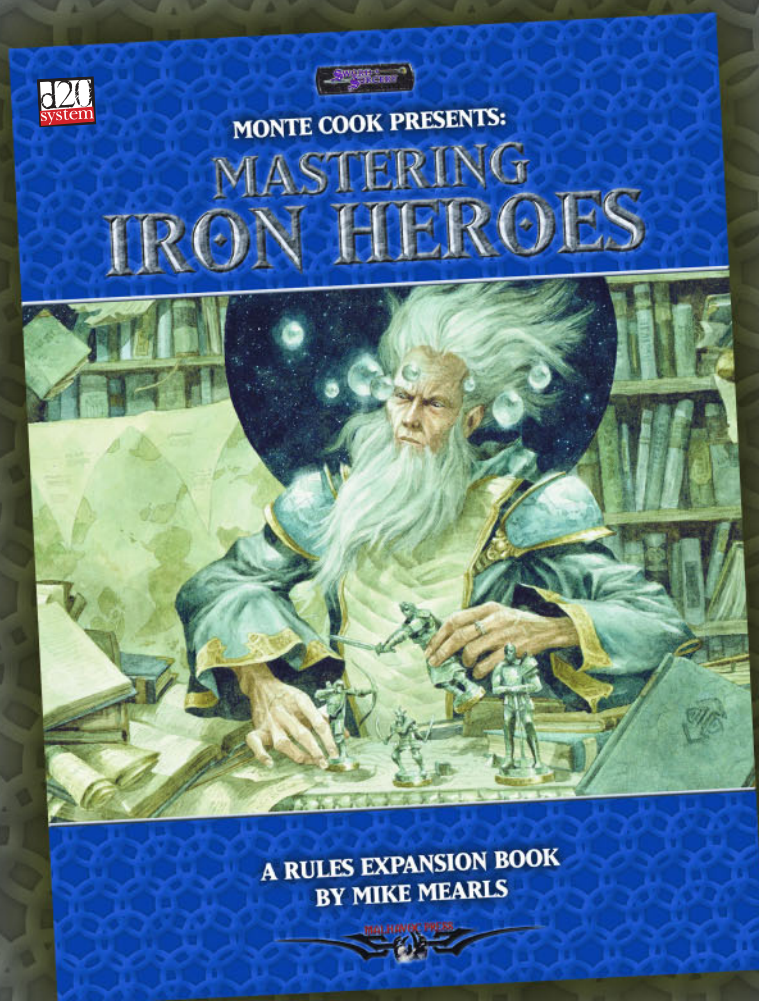
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