13TH AGE

HIGH MAGIC & LOW CUNNING:
BATTLE SCENES FOR FIVE ICONS

A *13TH AGE* ADVENTURE

BY **Cal Moore**

Pelgrane Press

13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
**Rob Heinsoo, Jonathan Tweet,
Lee Moyer, & Aaron McConnell**

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CREDITS

ORC LORD:
RAFTING RAZOREDGE GORGE

LEVEL RANGE: 1–2

The themes of this set of battles are fighting in a strange (and watery) environment, battling orcs, and the crazy things orcs will do to try to kill you. This set of battles works best in the wilds between points of civilization where orcs can prey upon travelers, and also where a river gorge makes sense.

The PCs have a problem: they need to get somewhere fast, faster than walking or even riding a horse will get them. There aren't any airships, amiable dragon mounts, or other flying options available either. And they're just not quite powerful enough to have access to reliable teleportation magic. So that leaves only one choice.

The heroes must take a boat or raft down the Razoredge River to get where they need to go, traveling through Razoredge Gorge in the process. And it's a dangerous place, infested by beasts and vicious humanoid raiders. They're going to be waiting for an easy meal, of course.

If that story doesn't work for the group, one of the other story openings might do the trick.

Whatever the reason, the PCs are at the small thorp of Waterwillow, where transport downriver just happens to be available.

Rafting Razoredge Gorge Story Openings

- **We Need to Get Downriver Quick:** The PCs need to be 80 miles downriver in two days to talk to a contact before that person leaves, to claim a reward, to catch a ship heading to one of the Seven Cities, or for some similar need.
- **A Test of Courage:** Before a local half-orc spiritcaller will reveal the location of the dragon boneyard, cairns of the ancestors, or some other place the PCs need to find and only he knows, they must pass a test of courage. The old half-orc tells them they must survive a trip down Razoredge Gorge and then return to him.
- **Into the Raiders' Den:** The PCs have been hired to put a stop to orc raiders harrying merchants on the south road, or perhaps heard about a reward for doing so. But going into the Razoredge Hills directly would be suicide. There is another option that should take the orcs by surprise, that won't give them time to prepare, and that will lead right to the raiders' camp. A raid of the PCs' own traveling by boat down the river through Razoredge Gorge.
- **Guard the Silver Shipment:** A small dwarven mining consortium needs to get their silver downriver to meet a delivery to a well-known Imperial jeweler. If they do, they'll have the contract with her. The problem, of course, is that their last shipment was attacked in transit by orc raiders. This time, they want to guarantee its safety, and that's what they've hired the PCs to do.

Alternate Icons

Dwarf King: Orcs are still an enemy of the dwarves, so these battle scenes work as written if the dwarves have hired the PCs to guard a shipment, or it could also be a test of the PCs' skills to see if they're capable enough to assault an orc stronghold. If you take the Dwarf King's route, you might want to establish that the Gorge ends up running into the underworld.

Great Gold Wyrm, Priestess, or Prince of Shadows: Have the PCs carry a plague cure that needs to get to a town downriver. The orcs could be demon-touched humanoids that started the plague (GGW), or just bandits looking to steal the cure and ransom it to the town (Priestess or Prince).

Icons in Play

Characters that have relationships (and story-guide advantages) with the Orc Lord, Dwarf King, Elf Queen, and High Druid, should be able to shine in these battle scenes. Moreso than PCs with other icon relationships, feel free to give such PCs extra knowledge about the opposition, make checks to pull off fun actions the players might suggest, and use their advantages to particularly good effect, such as negating or bypassing some of the advantages or abilities of the enemies.

Rafting Razoredge Gorge Overview

During their raft trip, the PCs will face three battles against orcs and their allies.

Battle 1 is against orc archers on the ridges and a swarm of warriors and berserkers with nets who are looking to bash the PCs.

Battle 2 involves zip-lining orc kamikazes, and fighting a running battle while navigating some rapids.

Battle 3 is a double-strength fight, as the raft hits dead water right by the main camp of the Razoredge raiders. Orcs pour forth to claim their kills as the PCs fight to gain the shore.

GM, feel free to expand upon these battles by adding additional locations and enemies the PCs encounter during their trip. The battles outlined here can take place over a few hours or a day or two of travel if you prefer to stretch things out. Since the Orc Lord is in play, we suggest flavoring descriptions and battle scenes with touches of brutal wilderness savagery, and tough, nasty enemies living in dangerous terrain.

See story endings after the final battle for options on what happens after the PCs finish the last battle.

BATTLE 1: CATCH OF THE DAY

So far so good. You've got the hang of navigating the "raft" you're using to travel through Razoredge Gorge. You've been in the gorge for an hour now, seeing only the sharp-edged canyon walls that give the place its name. But things are too quiet.

Location Description

The raft is actually two long, flat-bottomed boats tied and planked together at the middle. The surface area is 14 feet long and 10 feet across. With a lot of effort, someone could manage to cut and untie the lashings that bind the boats together, but that would create issues with stability and honestly wouldn't help the PCs get downriver at all. Treat cutting the raft in half as a bad idea with unpredictable consequences.

The boat is just swinging around a bend in the river where the canyon walls flatten out and the water slows. There's a large sandbar on the right that's 50 feet long and 15 feet wide, with lots of small, dry brush growing from it. On the far side, the river
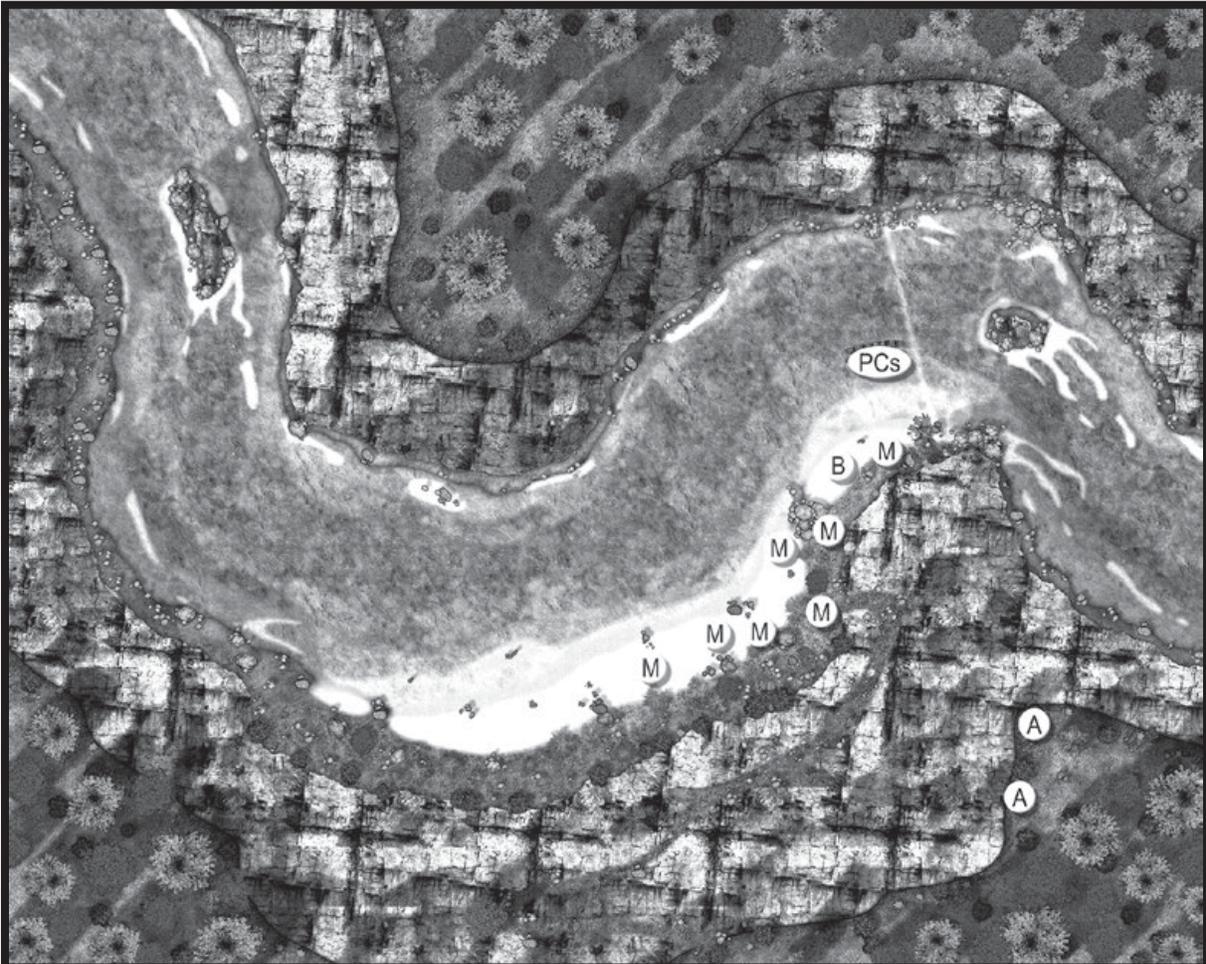
is still at least 20 feet deep, but near the sandbar, it shallows to about 4 feet.

A group of orc raiders have staked this area out, waiting for the next set of fools to come downriver. A few archers are hidden on ledges along the canyon walls, sending signals to others waiting by the sand bar. The orcs there wait to trap any craft moving down the river, while the rest go hack them up.

Have each PC roll a DC 15 Wisdom check to notice the ambush. If more than half fail, the orcs surprise them (see Tactics). Otherwise, the heroes realize the truth as the net goes up.

Terrain & Traps

Net Across the River: The orcs at the sand bar have secured a bundle of ropes to the stone on the far side of the river, forming a thick net. It stretches across under the water. On their side, they've sunk a post into the sand as a brace. When the raft gets near, two of them will haul on the ropes and lift the net into the air, then tie off the ends to secure it.

If the PCs are surprised, they will have no chance to react to the net. Otherwise, have the net go in initiative order exactly halfway between when the first PC and the last goes (if there's an odd number of PCs, it goes right after the middle PC).

When it's the net's turn, the raft slams into it and stops. Any PC on the raft must roll a DC 18 check (probably Dex or Str) to avoid flying off the raft into the net and water. Those who fall off take 1d6 damage and are dazed until the end of their next turn. Roll a die to determine which side of the boat they are on: even is sandbar side, and odd is the deep water side.

Note, if any PC who acts before the net tries to slow the raft down, move the net down in initiative order by one PC for each PC that spends an action to do so (see raft).

Cutting the ropes to the net to free the raft is difficult because there are so many ropes, some underwater. It takes three DC 20 skill checks to do so; decide if that means the PCs flee the battle and have a campaign loss like warning drums relaying their approach, or whether they used good strategy to get past quickly.

Raft: While hung up in the net, the raft will be tilted slightly and water will be pushing at it and spraying over the sides as it turns sideways. Each turn while fighting on the raft, a creature must roll an easy saving throw (6+) at the start of its turn. On a failure, it takes a −2 penalty to attacks, defenses, and skill checks involving Strength or Dexterity until the start of its next turn.

PCs acting before the net in initiative order can use a standard and move action to row the raft toward the sandbank, or only a move action with a successful DC 10 Strength check. For each PC who does so, reduce the net below the next PC down in initiative order. If the net goes after all PCs, then the heroes successfully row the raft to the sandbank. (For example, for 5 PCs, the net normally goes after the third PC in initiative order. If two of the first three PCs spends actions to row and are successful, the raft will reach the shore.)

In the Water: PCs in the water might have a tough time of it. If they are on the sandbar side, they can stand and fight easily unless small. But if on the deep water side, they will get pushed into the net at the end of their turn unless they succeed on a DC 15 Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity check.

During their turn, a PC can use a move action and roll a DC 10 Strength check to try to swim to shallow water. On a failure, they lose their move and get pushed into the net. While pressed against the net they are weakened until they can move away from it. In addition, the constant chum created by the orcs means that a nasty breed of giant biting crawfish lives in the area.

The orcs who move into the water to attack have ropes tied around their waist to avoid being pulled into a net. If their rope is cut, they have to roll a normal save to swim away.

Any PCs who drop while in the water get one less death save than normal.

Biting Crayfish: When a creature ends its turn trapped against the net, it takes 8 damage from the biting crayfish. These creatures aren't a direct enemy with hit points, so there's nothing to attack unless you want there to be (let the players know they are a terrain obstacle rather than enemy).

Rocky ledge: The ledge is only 4 feet wide and is 25 feet off the river level. There is, however, a natural ramp leading from the sandbar to the ledge. Anyone who wants to climb to the ledge instead must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check. A creature that falls from the ledge takes 3d6 damage.

Attempting to bypass an orc on the ledge to get at one behind it is a dicey move that requires a DC 15 check in addition to a successful disengage, with failure resulting in a fall.

Monsters

The orcish archers are on the sandbar side of the river, up on the ledge. They are nearby, but moving to them along the ramp will take two move actions due to following the terrain.

There are a mix of orc bashers and berserkers hiding on the sandbar by the post. All wear rough hides and bear warpaint made from the red rock dust of the canyon in a wavy river sign.

Additional Reinforcements: If you want to challenge the PCs more, include a giant hungry crayfish that rises from the river depths (see stats).

#/Level of PCs	Orc Archer (A)	Orc Berserker (B)	Orc Basher Mook (M)
4 x 1st level	1	1	7 (1 mob)
5 x 1st level	2	1	6 (1 mob)
6 x 1st level	2	2	5 (1 mob)
4 x 2nd level	2	2	6 (1 mob)
5 x 2nd level	3	2	8 (1 mob)
6 x 2nd level	3	3	10 (2 mobs)

Tactics

The archers will fire upon the PCs as long as possible, targeting foes who aren't engaged with the others at first. If anyone comes up the ramp, the archer closest to that enemy will switch to melee, but any others behind it will continue to fire.

The bashers and berserkers will rush out to attack the PCs in the raft or thrown into the water on the sandbar side, hoping the water will delay the rest. They attack in pairs, or groups of three.

GOING MORE HIGH FANTASY WITH YOUR RAFT

You don't have to use a raft or boats constructed from wood. If it plays better, perhaps it's the carcass of some beast, the slowly deteriorating stalk of a giant mushroom, the lashed together floating bones of giants, a thousand small elven baskets tied together, or whatever else you desire (or the players suggest off-handedly). Whatever it is, consider the benefits and disadvantages it might offer the PCs, and make sure it will float in water… at least most of the way down the gorge.

If they are losing badly, the orcs might cut the net ropes tied to the post, hoping the raft and their enemies float away. Of course, PCs on the sand bar might choose to do the same (but see Net in Terrain & Tactics).

LOOT

The orc raiders of the Razoredge tribe have had a few victories with their unorthodox method of ambush. There is a total of 40 gp in various coins and trinkets among them, in addition to the usual odd fare of orc belongings.

One of the archers is carrying an adventurer-tier *lethal strike* arrow unknowingly (+1d10 damage on a hit). (Of if you're feeling nasty, you could hit one of the PCs with another randomly selected magic arrow in the fight to foreshadow this find.)

ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Orc Lord could use one or more of them to intimidate some of the basher mooks by announcing their "battle name" or their "tribe," convincing one or two to flee while still alive.

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Emperor or High Druid could use one or more of them to automatically succeed on any skill check involving the raft or navigating the water during the battle.

ORC BASHER

"Bash and brawl. Smash and crawl."

1st level mook [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +5

Spiked club +6 vs. AC—5 damage
 Natural 1: The basher "accidentally" smashes another mook in its mob, if there's one also engaged with the target.

Bash and brawl: Orc bashers gain a +1 attack bonus with melee attacks for each *spiked club* attack that has hit the target that turn.

AC	16	
PD	16	**HP 7 (mook)**
MD	10	

Mook: Kill one orc basher mook for every 7 damage you deal to the mob.

ORCISH ARCHER

It takes patience to be a true archer. Orcs lack that. So they fire as many arrows as possible, hope for the worst, and work themselves toward a frenzy that demands the sword.

2nd level archer [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +5

Scimitar +6 vs. AC—6 damage

R: Short bow +6 vs. AC—7 damage
 Natural 1–5: Reroll the attack against a random nearby creature. If the rerolled attack is also a natural 1–5, the orcish archer takes 3 damage from sheer agonized frustration, but it doesn't get to make another attack.

Final frenzy: When the escalation die is 3+, the orcish archer gains a +3 bonus to melee attacks and melee damage.

AC	18	
PD	17	**HP 32**
MD	11	

ORC BERSERKER

2nd level troop [HUMANOID]
Initiative: +5

Greataxe +7 vs. AC—8 damage
 Dangerous: The crit range of attacks by orcs expands by 3 unless they are staggered.

Unstoppable: When an orc berserker drops to 0 hp, it does not immediately die. Ignore any damage in excess of 0 hp, roll 2d6, and give the berserker that many temporary hit points. No other healing can affect the berserker or give it more temporary hit points: when the temporary hp are gone, the berserker dies.

AC	16	
PD	15	**HP 40**
MD	13	

ADDITIONAL REINFORCEMENTS

GIANT CRAYFISH

2nd level wrecker [BEAST]
Initiative: +4

Snapping claws +7 vs. AC (2 attacks)—4 damage
 Natural 16+: The crayfish grabs the target unless it's already grabbing two creatures. It deals automatic damage (4) with one claw to any creature it's grabbing during its turn instead of making an attack.

AC	18	
PD	15	**HP 38**
MD	11	

Next Steps

Unless the raft ends up spilling downstream when the net is cut, the PCs should be able to get it to the sandbank safely and remove the net. The orcs have a small camp just up a gulley through the canyon ridge. It holds a few supplies, but looks like only a temporary camp.

After a quick rest, the PCs can continue down the river toward **Battle 2: Zip-lines and Wardrums**.

Map from High Magic and Low Cunning
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