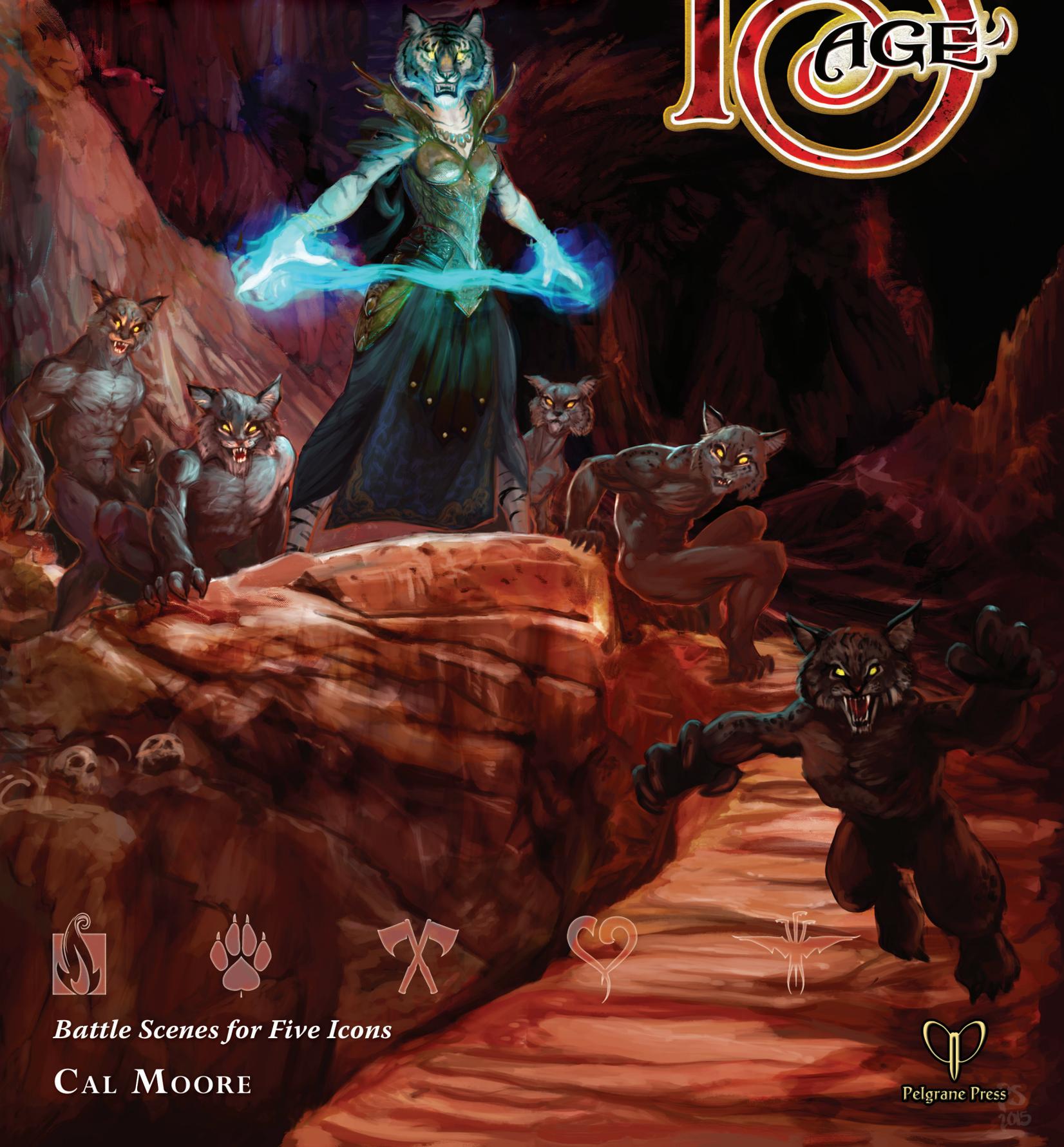


HIGHMAGIC & LOWCUNNING

15TH AGE



Battle Scenes for Five Icons

CAL MOORE



Pelgrane Press

2015

13TH AGE[™]

HIGH MAGIC & LOW CUNNING: BATTLE SCENES FOR FIVE ICONS

A 13TH AGE ADVENTURE

BY CAL MOORE



13TH AGE IS A FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
**ROB HEINSOO, JONATHAN TWEET,
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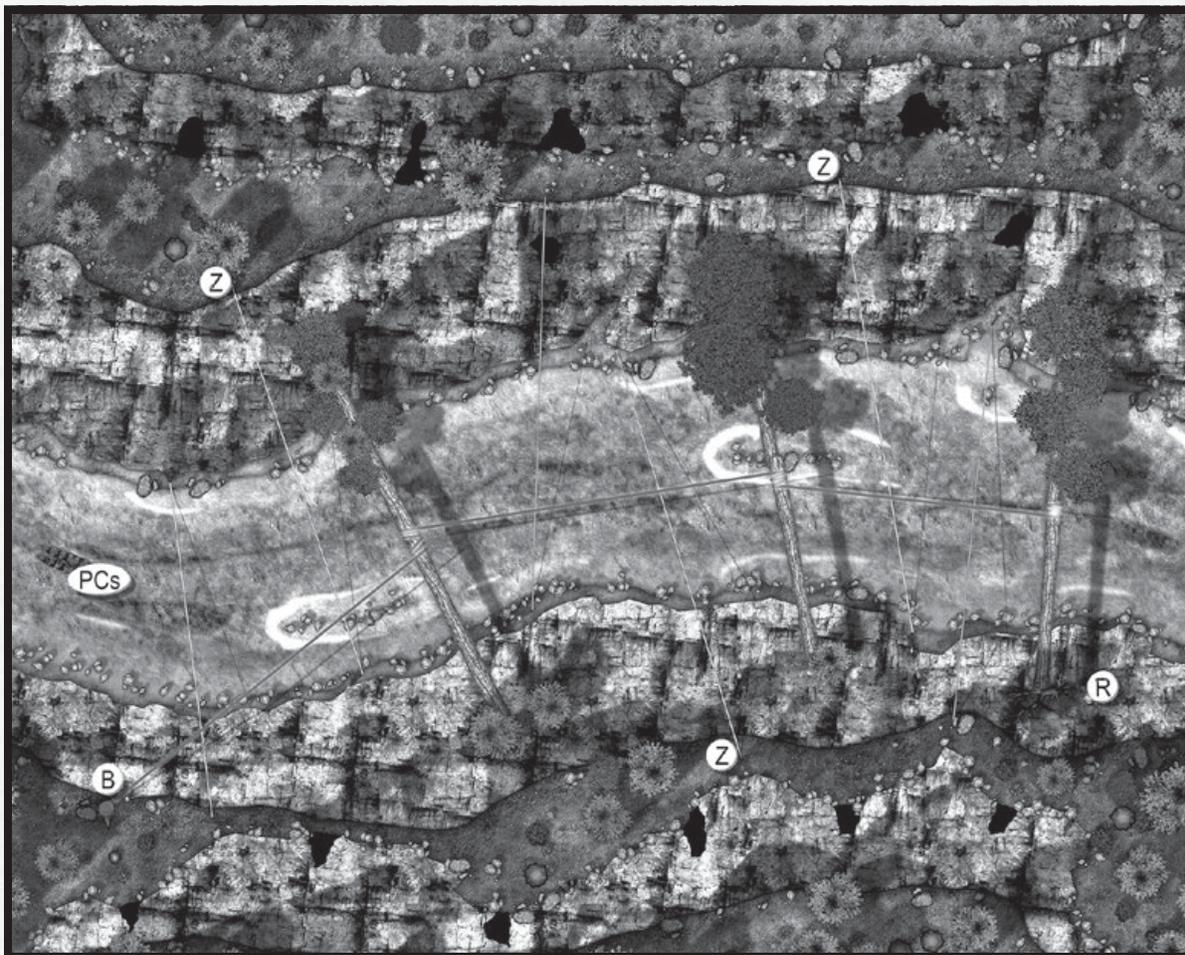
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BATTLE 2: ZIP-LINES AND WARDRUMS

The river begins to pick up speed as the gorge narrows around you. The sharp, rocky cliffs are riddled with small caves and low bushes that could hide almost anything. Higher up the canyon walls, you see a ridge of large pine trees, some of which have fallen into the gorge and wedged. As you go under one large trunk, you see a rope extending away from it downstream to another similar log. That's when the drumming starts.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION

This battle happens as the raft travels downriver. The current is strong and trying to stop would probably result in flipping the raft.

The gorge narrows to between 30 and 60 feet wide through this stretch, with the canyon walls climbing as high as 150 feet up. The caves are occupied by many cave orcs, who act more like a terrain obstacle than monsters as they throw rocks down at the passing raft, staying out of open daylight.

The real danger comes from three places: the river should anyone end up in the drink, an orc battle screamer in a large mobile basket-cage overhead that keeps pace with the moving

raft as it slides down a rope on a pulley-basket, and orc zip-liners that use zip-lines to land on the raft and attack.

Once the orc threat ends, they have one last parting gift for the PCs—a large boulder that will send them scrambling.

Note, there's a lot of moving parts to this battle, so it's a good idea to read through each of the Terrain & Traps sections a couple of times. Or, if you prefer, you can simplify it and just have the orcs zip-lining onto the raft without any other effects.

TERRAIN & TRAPS

Hurled Rocks from Cave Orcs: Once the battle screamer starts drumming, the cave orcs along the river gorge wake up and start hurling rocks at the raft. When the escalation die reaches 1, randomly choose two PCs at the start of each round and make the following attack against each:

Thrown rocks +7 vs. AC—5 damage

There's basically an unending supply of these cave orcs mooks, but the PCs can remove this threat each round by attacking them. Each one has the following stats: 7 hp; AC 15; PD 13; MD 11. If the PCs kill at least two during a round, the cave orcs don't make the two attacks during the next round as the PCs have cleared the way for the moment.

The Drummer's Basket: For the purposes of this running battle, there is only one battle screamer in a basket with a single stat block, but it's represented by multiple drummers. At the end of each round, the drummer's basket comes to the end of the

rope it's sliding along, stopping at a log wedged in the canyon. But then a drummer in a new basket on the other side begins following the raft.

The PCs can attack the battle screamer directly (it remains nearby as they travel downriver), or they can try to attack the rope the basket-cage is sliding along. Doing so will take a well-aimed ranged attack, however, due to the moving raft and height of the rope. The rope has an AC and PD of 20, and an attack must hit and deal 5 damage to sever the line. When this happens, the drummer plunges with a scream into the river.

But it's not as easy as that since the drummers keep trailing the PCs until the battle screamer drops to 0 hp. The first time the line is severed, reduce the battle screamer to its staggered hit point value, or deal 8 damage to it if it's already staggered. The second time the line is severed, it dies if it has 8 hp or less. Otherwise, reduce it to 1 hp. When the battle screamer drops to 0 hp, or has its line severed a third time, it's dead (no more drummers). Remember that all the drummers use a single battle screamer stat block.

If the idea of multiple battle screamers using a single stat block just doesn't work for you, feel free to make it a single screamer who slides down a rope then transfers a new hook to the next line and keeps going. Boost the rope's HP to 10 and say the PCs have to do all that damage in one turn to sever the rope or it resets due to a new rope. If the rope is severed, the battle screamer falls and dies.

Zip-lines: The zip-lines the orcs use to drop onto the raft are secured ropes angled steeply downward across the gorge from one side or the other, allowing them to use a leather strap to slide down the line. PCs who want to watch for these zip-lines can try to attack them ahead of time to disrupt a zip-liner's attack. The last PC in initiative order, or anyone readying an action to attack a zip-line, can roll a DC 15 Wisdom check; success means they spot a line being used (there are many, not all are being used). A PC who spots a line in-use can make a ranged attack against it to sever the line (AC and PD of 17, since they are closer to the river, and 1 hp).

When a line is severed, if it's a normal hit, the orc still makes it to the raft, but lands badly and is dazed (save ends). On a crit, the orc falls short and misses this battle.

The River: Anyone that goes into the river will get pulled along with the raft as it travels downriver, but where the flat-bottomed boats go over the rocks, creatures tend to smash into them. While in the water, at the end of a creature's turn, it must roll a save; on a failure, it takes 6 damage and is dazed until the end of its next turn from being smashed and drowned.

Getting out of the river into the raft requires a DC 13 check, or DC 10 if an ally reserves a move action to help.

Creatures fighting while in the river take a -2 penalty to attacks, defenses, and skill checks, and might not be able to do some actions (GM's call).

The Raft: The raft is fairly stable and there's not a lot of high boulders sticking out of the river to cause trouble for those on board. If someone throws the raft into a spin, or separates the two boats, things get more dicey. Each creature fighting on the raft must roll an easy save (6+) at the start of its turn; on a failure, it takes a -2 penalty to attacks, defenses, and skill checks.



MONSTERS

The battle screamer in the basket trolley above starts things off, waking the cave orcs as it paces the raft from above.

The orc zip-liners wait on the canyon walls to zip down to the passing raft, where they will jump on and attack. Instead of weapons, they wear leather gauntlets set with bone barbs that they fight with; the gauntlets help them hang onto the strip of leather they use to zip-line down.

The boulder roller orc isn't a normal enemy with a stat block. Instead, it's an orc waiting at the end of the canyon who will tumble a boulder at the raft as it passes out of their territory (see **Tactics**).

Additional Reinforcements: If you want to challenge the PCs more, have an orc tusker (*Bestiary*, page 157) drop down onto the raft from a zip-line too.

#/Level of PCs	Battle Screamer* (B)	Orc Zip-liner (Z)	Boulder Roller Orc** (R)
4 x 1 st level	1	3	1
5 x 1 st level	1	4	1
6 x 1 st level	1	5	1
4 x 2 nd level	1	4	1
5 x 2 nd level	1	5	2
6 x 2 nd level	1	6	2

* One stat block, even though there are multiple "drummers."

** No stat block, see **Tactics**.

TACTICS

The orc battle screamer plays a skull drum as it slides along in its basket-cage above the PCs. Each time it hits with the drum attack, it will either let an orc ally make an attack, or make an extra check to get into the raft from the river as a move action. Even though it begins drumming to start the battle, it will go last in the round to give the zip-liners time to get on the raft.

The orc zip-liners use straightforward tactics. Each round two of them will zip down their line as a move action and land on the raft, then attack with their bone gauntlets (to the maximum number of zip-liners in the battle). If the PCs do something (besides shooting the line) to make it harder for the orcs to land on the raft that round, make it an easy save (6+) or the orc lands badly and is dazed until the end of its turn. The zip-liners will look for opportunities to knock foes into the river.

Boulder Roller Orc: Once the battle screamer and zip-liners have dropped to 0 hp and the battle seems over, this orc has a last surprise for the PCs. It doesn't have a stat block; what it does is roll a placed boulder off the cliff toward the raft. The boulder doesn't hit the raft, but it does make a big splash. Each PC must roll a save; on a failure, they get thrown in the river and battered by rapids over a few minutes until they can get back into the raft, losing one recovery. If you're feeling nice, you could allow a DC 20 Wisdom check for the PCs to see the boulder coming and gain a +4 bonus to the save.

If there is a second boulder roller orc listed for the battle, that boulder comes in just after the first. Anyone still on the raft must roll another save, or go into the river (so no PC can lose more than 1 recovery this way).

BATTLE/TERRAIN EFFECTS PER ROUND

Escalation die	Effect
0	Battle Screamer starts drumming, 2 zip-liners
1	Rocks, 2 zip-liners (or remainder)
2	Rocks, 2 zip-liners (or remainder)
3	Rocks, Boulder?
4	Rocks, Boulder?
5	Rocks, Boulder?
6+	Rocks, Boulder?
End of Battle	Boulder

LOOT

Most likely, the only loot the PCs can get will come from zip-liner corpse on the raft, unless you're feeling generous and the battle screamer just happens to float by. Each zip-liner wears a special badge of courage in the form of a small amber disc amulet showing crossed arms in gauntlets worth 25 gp each.

GETTING PASTY WITH BOULDERS

If you've got a group that can handle orcs with ease and shows no fear, one way to ratchet up the tension is to instead start boulders rolling at the end of each round once the escalation die reaches 3. That'll give the PCs incentive to end the battle quickly. Once all the orcs are defeated, roll one last boulder that round and be done.

PCs that fail their save and go in the water while a battle is still going on are floating along with the raft and can still get back on it as normal, but they still lose the recovery from a bad fall.

ICONS

A PC that has relationship advantages with any icon could use one or more of them to help sever the drummer's line, giving a big bonus to the attack (+5) or not even requiring an attack with multiple advantages (yes, this is combat-related, but it seems like there could be many interesting stories why someone turns out to be a great shot in this situation).

A PC that has relationship advantages with the Orc Lord, Elf Queen, High Druid, or maybe the Archmage could use one or more of them to navigate the raft each turn as a standard action to avoid thrown rocks, or help them stay in the raft or get back in the raft without a roll.

ORC BATTLE SCREAMER

Some tribes have just enough culture to support pseudo-bards whose battle screams sound like marching hymns to orcish ears. They use skull drums and sharpened flutes made from the femurs of their enemies. You don't even want to know what they make bagpipes out of.

3rd level leader [HUMANOID]

Initiative: End of round

Sharpened flute or club-like drumstick +9 vs. AC—10 damage

Orcish Instruments: Choose ONE

R: Skull drum +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and as a free action, one nearby orc ally can move or make a basic attack (doesn't trigger special abilities)

R: Bone flute +7 vs. MD—8 damage, and one nearby orc ally deals +1d6 damage on a hit during its next turn

R: War bagpipes—1d3 nearby or far away enemies that can hear the bagpipes must immediately roll a normal save; on a failure, the target is hampered until the end of its next turn

AC 22
PD 15
MD 15

HP 33

ORC ZIP-LINER

With a yell, an orc whizzes towards you on a rope. You'd have to be crazy to try this! Yes.

1st level troop [HUMANOID]

Initiative: +5

Bone gauntlets +6 vs. AC (2 attacks)—2 damage

Natural 18+: The target is knocked off-balance; it must make an easy save (6+) or fall into the river.

Zip-line specialist: This orc uses zip-lines to reach the battle. During the round the orc uses its zip-line, if it rolls a natural

20 with the attack, it knocks the target off-balance (and into the river).

AC 16

PD 16

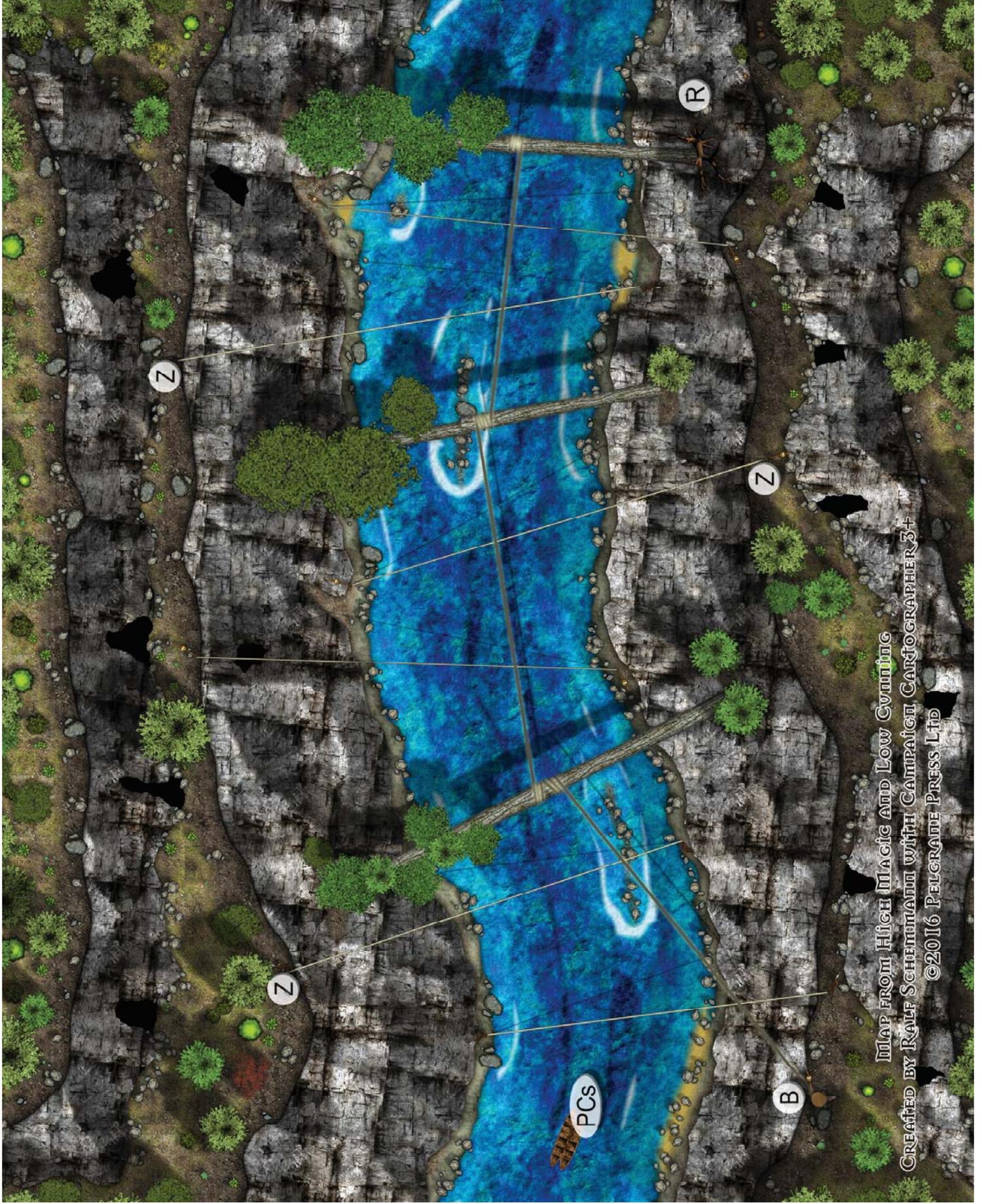
MD 10

HP 26

NEXT STEPS

This battle should put fear of orcs into the PCs, preparing them for worse. After they catch their breath and take a quick rest, they'll be ready for the big showdown with the Razoredge Gorge orcs in **Battle 3: Razoredge Orc Camp**.





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