

Love  
*in the*  
Time  
of Seið

Matthijs Holter & Jason Morningstar



## CREDITS

*Love in the Time of Seið* is a game by Matthijs Holter & Jason Morningstar. It is copyright 2010 by Matthijs Holter & Jason Morningstar and all rights are reserved. If you would like to do interesting things with this game, please contact us! We would like to help.

Graphic design and layout by Jason Morningstar.

Illustrations by Victor R. Lambdin and E. Boyd Smith, from *Viking Tales* by Jennie Hall (Rand McNally & Co, 1902) and *In the Days of the Giants* by Abbie Farwell-Brown (Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1902) respectively.

This game was playtested by Jone Aareskjold, Mark "Troll Man" Ben, Joel Coldren, Tor Kjetil Edland, Jessica-Marie Gidlund, Erlend Eidsem Hansen, Shane Jackson, Paul Jones, Maja H. Kvendseth, Håken Lid, Clinton R. Nixon, Chris Northan, Anders Nygaard, Dina Ramse, Roy "Ghostrider" Smallpage, Smudger and Øivind Stengrundet.

Special thanks to Steve Hickey and Matthew Gagan for thoughtful comments and advice, and to Brennan Reece for his expert layout critique.

In case you were wondering, ð is a voiced dental fricative like "th" in the English word "them".



## PLAY MATERIALS

On the following pages you'll find the materials you need for play. Please feel free to photocopy these.

The five characters each have an information sheet that provides some background. Each lists Themes, starting relationships, and three questions that can be answered during play. The upper end of each sheet can be folded into a little table tent, showing all the other players your character and her Themes. There's a space on each side for writing your character's name.

After the characters are Location cards - eight of them. Each has three suggestions for the specific Location's mood for your game, and each has five Events on the back.

Finally, there are eight resolution cards that can be drawn whenever someone says "I don't think it will be quite so easy." Put these aside as they are used, then reshuffle.

The book is set up so that, if you wish, you can cut these materials out for immediate use.



*Themes: The Gift & Rebellion.*

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# *The Princess,*

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# *The Princess,*

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*Themes: The Gift & Rebellion.*

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**Y**ou try to be an obedient daughter - but your will is strong, and often at odds with the rest of the world. You love the Knight passionately. You are getting lessons in magic from the Seiðkona, in hopes of becoming a seiðkona yourself one day - you have The Gift. Your power is strong but capricious and highly unpredictable.

- The Knight is the love of your life.
- The Earl isn't the man you love at all. He frightens you.
- The Seiðkona is your mentor and friend, whom you can tell everything.
- The King is your father, a remote and weary man. You loved him when you were little.

*What do you want out of life?*

*What is your true Gift?*

*What will you do with it?*

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## PHRASES *for the Princess*

### *More details!*

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...tells the player to make sure a situation or scene doesn't end prematurely. If someone tries to cut a tense scene and jump to the next one, for example - call "stay with it!" Embrace tension. Don't wimp out!

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Themes: Nature & Lycanthropy.

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# The Knight

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## The Knight,

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Themes: Nature & Lycanthropy.

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You are a spy in the pay of the Earl, serving in the court of the King. Your dalliance with the Princess was unexpected and her falling in love with you is a ... problem. You really love the Seiðkona, and dreams of running away with her to some faraway country. You are a skilled hunter, efficient and quick. You are also a werewolf.

- You've bedded the Princess now and again.
- The Earl is your secret master. You owe him something.
- You love the Seiðkona, and see her face in the night.
- You're the old King's aide-de-camp, spying on him for your master, the Earl.

*One animal you hunt is special - Why?*

*What do you owe the Earl?*

*What did you leave behind in far Gardariki?*

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*Themes: Treachery & The eastern kingdom.*

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*The Earl,*

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*The Earl,*

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*Themes: Treachery & The eastern kingdom.*

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**Y**ou want to cement your relationship with the King through the Princess, who is being instructed by your lover and personal seiðkona in the dark arts. Your spy, the Knight, is helping to position you to undermine the King's power and set him up for a challenge. You are middle-aged, fat, and wily. You can make powerful and deadly poisons.

- The Princess: is a silly young thing, a pawn in your game.
- The Knight is your spy, loyal because of what he owes you.
- The Seiðkona is also loyal to you - and she's your lover.
- The King's power is crumbling. Soon you can challenge him.

*What happened to your previous wife?*

*What have you promised the seiðkona?*

*How has handling poisons effected you?*

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*Themes: Sexuality & The Gods.*

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# *The Seidkona,*

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*Themes: Sexuality & The Gods.*

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**Y**ou are lover to both King and Earl and are playing your own power game - to be the power behind the throne, whatever throne that might be. You are the magical instructor to the Princess - who, in the future, might be Queen - and you are entirely unaware that the Knight, who has a puppy-dog crush on you, is a spy. You aren't beautiful, but can still have any man you want. You can help others with your potions and spells, but always at a price.

- The Princess is your pupil, and will be queen someday.
- The Knight is a handsome young man, nothing more.
- The Earl is one of your lovers, and a strengthening player in the game of power.
- The King is also one of your lovers, and a weakening player in the game of power.

*What have you promised the Princess?*

*Who is the child you sometimes see in visions?*

*Who do you really love?*

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*The King,*

*Themes: Ancestors & Law.*

**Y**ou want the best for your daughter, but must create an alliance. You are suspicious of the Knight, who was seconded to you as an aide-de-camp by the Earl, but not for the right reasons. You love the Seiðkona passionately and secretly, and hate the Earl. You are aging, but used to be strong as a bear. You can invoke the strength of dead kings by visiting the burial mounds.

- You love your stubborn daughter the Princess, but she needs to be tamed by someone.
- You're unsure of your new aide, the Knight — what does he want with your daughter?
- The Seiðkona is your secret lover.
- You hate the Earl. But you must keep him close, for the sake of the kingdom.

*Where is the Queen?*

*What have you promised the Ancestors?*

*Who or what did you destroy to become King?*

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# *The Queen's Garden*

## *Where the past yet lives*

First Visit: A ghost, tied somehow to one of the character's Themes, whispers a secret beneath the vine-choked moonlight.

Any time: One of the character's Themes is extinguished in their heart forever.

Any time: Lost in the garden, the character briefly stumbles into the past or future.

Any time: The character meets another, by design, to settle a disagreement permanently.

Any time: Something hurriedly buried in the garden is accidentally discovered.

# *The Frontier*

## *Where war is in the air*

First visit: One of the character's Themes suggests that they are a traitor to the kingdom.

Any time: A half-burned document is discovered, with the character's signature and seal affixed to it.

Any time: We learn that one of the character's Themes is overwhelmingly strong among the eastern kingdom's elite.

Any time: A border skirmish escalates into something more serious. Is it war, or worse?

Any time: Lights crackle on the high peaks, a message from the Gods.

# *The Swamp*

## *Where a corpse moulders*

First visit: The Gods speak through one of the character's Themes, pointing the way to the grim discovery of a sunken corpse.

Any time: We find out that the body was sunk by the character.

Any time: We learn that the body is related to the character by blood.

Any time: We find out that one of the character's Themes is the reason the body was sunk.

Any time: The Gods speak again, demanding the character enact harsh and swift justice.

# *The Thrall's Quarters*

## *Full of foreigners and foreign chatter*

First visit: We learn that the Thrall-keepers have abused their power in a way related to one of the character's Themes.

Any time: We discover that the Thralls know secret things connected to one of the character's Themes.

Any time: An enemy in disguise seeks to destroy the character.

Any time: The thralls have an object that the character cannot live without.

Any time: A Thrall begs the character to intervene on their behalf in some dangerous dispute.

## The Frontier

*Choose one:*

Lonely mountain trails above the snow-buried pass are marked with ominous and frequently moved boundary stones.

The frontier is a bustling port of call for every ne'er-do-well, criminal, and merchant prince the world over and where families are divided by an arbitrary line.

At the uncertain border, a pair of ugly fortresses squat across a silt-choked glacial river from one another like petulant children.

*Turn over for Events*

## The Queen's Garden

*Choose one:*

The garden is an overgrown thicket, long abandoned to the weeds, where secret meetings happen beneath rotting trellis and creaking gazebo.

The garden is a magnificent hot-house bursting with strange plants - poisonous mushrooms and hallucinogenic herbs.

The garden is a picture-perfect showcase with not a leaf out of place, toiled over endlessly by an army of servants.

*Turn over for Events*

## The Thrall's Quarters

*Choose one:*

The Thralls live in a squalid converted dungeon, a rat-infested hell filled with miserable pits and greasy nooks.

The Thralls enjoy bright and cozy dormitories next to the kitchens, decorated in the peculiar styles of their homelands.

The Thrall quarters form an entire neighborhood in the village below the manor, where the Thralls keep their own mysterious custom.

*Turn over for Events*

## The Swamp

*Choose one:*

A steaming no-man's-land of dead-end creeks and quicksand, the swamps are the last refuge of the desperate outlaw.

The swamp is a font of ancient magic, her moss-choked elms and ravenous beasts lit by strange lights in the night.

The swamp, the border between the demesne of King and Earl, is a lonely place where the poorest of the poor congregate.

*Turn over for Events*



# *The Guest House*

*Where strangers rest above  
a secret passage*

First visit: One of the character's Themes compels them to do something antisocial.

Any time: We discover that the purpose of the secret passage is related to one of the character's Themes.

Any time: We learn that the character was among those who dug the secret passage.

Any time: The character's current need can be met here - for a terrible price.

Any time: The character comes to seal the passage forever, invoking one of their Themes.

# *The Lover's Bower*

*The cave by the waterfall*

First visit: The character will see evidence of a lovers' meeting. We suspect but don't know for sure...

Any time: The character is followed here by someone who desires them.

Any time: Somebody is pregnant.

Any time: We see something from the character's past - the first time they visited this cave, with someone unexpected.

Any time: This location changes, physically. What is destroyed or hidden? What is created or revealed?

# *The Burial Mounds*

*More is buried here than ancestors*

First visit: The character will encounter someone unexpected communicating with the ancestors.

Any time: The character will be confronted by a long-dead relative with a terrible demand.

Any time: The ancestors gather to tell the character a secret from the past.

Any time: Something dreadful stirs and awakens.

Any time: One of the character's Themes threatens the sanctity of the burial mounds.

# *The King's Hall*

*Ominous and Foreboding*

First visit: The character sees something related to a Theme, which evokes memories of the hall's past.

Any time: One of the character's Themes threatens the physical structure of the hall.

Any time: The character finds an unexpected object in a hidden place within the hall.

Any time: The hall is suddenly warm and full of people. Why?

Any time: A clandestine meeting is disrupted.

## *The Lover's Bower*

*Choose one:*

The cave is sumptuous, decadent, and well cared for by a very discrete society within the aristocracy.

The cave is a rough bedchamber indeed, all sodden straw and mist from the boiling waterfall that covers the cries of eager lovers.

The cave is dry and mysterious, itself once a burial place of the oldest of the ancestors.

*Turn over for Events*

## *The Guest House*

*Choose one:*

The guest house, home to the Earl, is attached to the King's manor, and its guests stay under the watchful eyes of both retainers.

The guest house, home to the Earl, is a magnificent palace that puts the King's own manor to shame.

The guest house, home to the Earl, is a comfortable enough cottage in the village beneath the castle, and her master guards it well.

*Turn over for Events*

## *The King's Hall*

*Choose one:*

The Hall and its High Seat are ancient. Swords of dead kings line the walls. It is practically a tomb, and everyone dreads being there.

The Hall is little more than a sod hut, iron-hard timbers supporting cut turf in keeping with ancient tradition.

The Hall is a boarded-up ruin. The kingdom's business is conducted in the King's bedroom, when it is conducted at all.

*Turn over for Events*

## *The Burial Mounds*

*Choose one:*

The mounds stand high above the farmland, raised by ancient hands reaching toward the sky. From the tallest, one can look across the valley at the castle's highest tower, eye to eye.

The mounds are worn down with time, and it takes a keen eye - or someone steeped in dark arts - to find them amid the pine thicket of the King's parkland.

The mounds dominate the swamp that surrounds them, and the wicked things that slumber and moil within them are best left alone.

*Turn over for Events*

Yes, and...

The character succeeds, and achieves more than she expected. Perhaps even a bit too much....



Yes, but...

The character succeeds, but something completely unrelated goes wrong for the character or someone she cares about.



Yes, but...

The character succeeds, but the consequences of the success are completely different from what was expected.



Yes, but only if...

The character can get what she wants – but only if she chooses to make a certain sacrifice.



## Help is needed...

The character ends up understanding that she needs the help of someone not currently in the scene to achieve this aim.



## No, but...

No, but... The character fails, but another positive thing happens instead, unrelated to what she was aiming for.



## No, and...

The character fails, and something unrelated also goes wrong.



## Yes, but...

The character succeeds, but there's a tiny detail that doesn't go quite as planned.





