

JAMES M. SPAHN'S

SKALDIC SAGAS



heroic journeys
in the viking age



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DEDICATION

FOR STEVE FITCH
BROTHER IN BOND, IF NOT IN BLOOD.

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CHAPTER ONE



Heroes

*In his day, my father was a famous man,
A noble warrior-lord named Ecgtheow.
He outlasted many a long winter
And went on his way. All over the world
Men wise in counsel continue to remember him.*
-Beowulf

Rule Number One

The most important rule is that everyone playing the game should be having fun. The Narrator always has the right to modify the rules to facilitate this as they see fit. In fact, it's encouraged. There are gaps in the rules that were not filled on purpose. This is because one of the most valuable elements of classic adventure gaming is being able to make rules up as you need them and adapt them to those playing the game.

This could be as simple as “um, grab some dice, roll them, and tell me the number” or more complex homebrew charts for the smallest of details. The Skaldic Sagas has some areas labeled “House Rules” set in sidebars. These are optional rules which can be used in your Saga, if your Narrator allows it. If you're a player, make sure you double-check before assuming your Narrator is using a specific house rule. There's also an appendix in the back with a brief list of inspirational material the author found useful during the design of this game.

The Dice

The Skaldic Sagas uses several distinct kinds of dice. They are abbreviated according to how many sides they have. So, the four-sided die is called a d4, and if the game calls for someone to roll 3 of them, we say to roll 3d4. The six-sided die is a d6, the eight-sided die is a d8, the ten-sided die is a d10, the twelve-sided die is a d12, and the twenty-sided die is a d20. When a d100 is required, simply roll a ten-sided die twice, treating the first roll as the “tens” and the second roll as the



“ones.” So, if one were to roll a 7 and then a 3, that would mean a 73. A roll of 0 and 0 means a result of “100.”

Attributes

The basic attributes are numbers which represent the Might, Finesse, Resolve, Insight, Bearing, and Weal of the character.

Each player selects one “Primary Attribute” and rolls $2d6+6$ for that attribute. They select one “Diminished Attribute” and roll $2d6+1$ for that attribute. The remaining four attributes are rolled using $3d6$. Optionally, Narrators may allow players to roll all six attributes and place them as they see fit.

Most characters choose their Primary Attribute attribute based upon their Archetype, though this is not required. Dregnr typically choose Might, Lendrs typically choose Resolve, Skalds typically choose Bearing, and Vitki typically choose Insight.

MIGHT

Might is a measure of your character’s muscular capacity and physical strength. A high Might gives a character bonuses when attacking with a close combat weapon (called a “melee weapon”) and lets them carry more weight. Might is an important attribute for Dregnr and other Archetypes which choose to focus on melee combat.

Dregnr add their Might modifier to any Glory earned during a Recounting of Deeds.

A character’s Might modifier is added to all attack rolls made with melee weapons.

A character’s Might modifier is added to all damage rolls made with melee and thrown weapons.

FINESSE

Finesse is a combination of physical coordination and quick reflexes. A high Finesse score provides a character with bonuses when attacking with a bow or other ranged weapon.

Characters can add their Finesse modifier to modify their attack rolls with ranged weapons, but not to damage.

A character's Defense is modified by their Finesse modifier. A high Finesse results in a bonus to the character's Defense, while a low Finesse can result in a penalty.

A character's Finesse modifier is applied to their initiative rolls.

RESOLVE

Resolve represents a combination of a character's mental and physical fortitude, bodily endurance, psychological discipline, and sense of dedication. Resolve is an important for characters hoping to excel at enduring the hardships of wild places and facing down terrible servants of darkness.

Lendr add their Resolve modifier to any Glory earned during a Recounting of Deeds.

A character's Resolve modifier may be added to any saving throw made to resist mind-affecting magic, illusions, and Despair saves.

Characters can add their Resolve modifier to their Endurance at character creation, again when the character reaches 2nd level, and again at 3rd level. This means that the character will add their Resolve bonus once at 1st level, a second time at 2nd level, and a third time at 3rd level. This means that a negative Resolve modifier is applied as a penalty, though all characters gain at least one point of Endurance if the total Endurance earned is less than 1.

INSIGHT

Insight represents awareness, reasoning, and the ability to solve puzzles or understand difficult concepts. Insight is an important attribute for Vitki characters.

Vitki add their Insight modifier to any Glory earned during a Recounting of Deeds.

All characters apply their Insight modifier whenever they are attempting to listen for noises, search for traps, or locate secret doors

All characters can apply their Insight bonus to learn additional languages. You gain one extra language if your Insight is between 15 and 17, or a total of two extra languages if it is 18.



BEARING

Bearing represents a character's natural charm, personal charisma, and leadership capabilities – a kind of innate magnetism. A character's Bearing modifies the number of loyal non-player character hirelings they can have in their service and how loyal these hirelings are. A character can normally retain the services of three hirelings at any given time, plus their Bearing modifier. Bearing is important for Skalds.

Skalds add their Bearing modifier to any Glory earned during a Recounting of Deeds.

A character's Bearing modifier is applied to the number of maximum hirelings they may retain at any given time.

A character's Bearing modifier is applied to the Loyalty of all hirelings in their service.

A character's Bearing modifier is applied to their starting Frith, though no character can begin play with a Frith lower than 0.

WEAL

All people of the north are marked by the Norns, for better or worse. Whether touched by a great destiny or terrible doom, fate has an impact on their lives. This is reflected in the Weal attribute.

During a single session of play, a character may choose to have Advantage on a number rolls equal to their Weal Modifier . Characters with a Weal of 6 or less risk having the Narrator impose Disadvantage on a number of rolls equal to their Weal Modifier during each session of play. The player must declare Advantage before the roll is made, and the Narrator must declare Disadvantage before the player makes their roll.

Attribute Modifiers

Each attribute has the potential to modify what you can do. The Attribute Modifier (or just “modifier”) table below gives some numbers to consider:

Table 1-1: Attribute Modifiers

Attribute	Description	Modifier
3	Poor	-2
4-6	Below Average	-1
7-14	Average	-
15-17	Above Average	+1
18+	Exceptional	+2

This rules set encourages the use of the above table for all the attributes. Each Narrator can decide how and when the Modifier is used using the guidelines above and should feel free to tinker with the table if desired. For example, some Narrators prefer for the “average” range to be 9–12 and adjust the table accordingly.

Attributes Above 18

While it is conceivable that a character might possibly achieve an Attribute of higher than 18, such heights of ability are beyond the bounds of mortal beings. As such, they are not described here. If the Narrator wishes to permit a player character to achieve attributes of higher than 18, assume that the appropriate modifier increases by an additional +1 whenever an attribute reaches a new even number. Thus a 20 in any attribute would grant an Attribute Modifier of +3, a 22 would grant a +4, and so on.

However, it is assumed that player characters in The Skaldic Sagas are bound by mortal limits and achieving such levels of natural ability is impossible—even through magical means.

Community Trade

At character creation, each character rolls on Table 1-2: Community Trade to determine what their trade is in the community. When the character's trade could be of use during a session of play, the character receives Advantage to any appropriate rolls or checks they make in relation to that activity. In addition, every Community Trade provides an Income. This Income is represented by an Income Roll made at the beginning of each Althing. This represents how much revenue a character has generated since the last Althing, though it may be impacted by circumstances that have occurred since that previous Althing. Finally, characters are assumed to have a small homestead and all the appropriate tools necessary to perform their Community Trade.

Remember that though each player character is a hero of their own saga, they are also a member of the community. Most northfolk were defined by their trade first, engaging in irregular adventures at best. These exploits where player characters go off on raids, explore tombs, and face monsters are exceptional moments in their lives — not everyday occurrences.



Table 1-2: Community Trade

Roll (1d20)	Community Trade	Income
1	Aide to the Jarl	3d4
2	Beekeeper	1d4
3-9	Farmer	1d4
10-12	Fisherman	1d4
13	Herbalist	1d4
14	Hunter	1d4
15	Sailmaker	2d4
16	Shipwright	2d4
17	Smith	1d4
18	Tailor	1d4
19	Tanner	1d4
20	Woodworker	1d4

COMMUNITY TRADE DESCRIPTIONS

Aide to the Jarl: Whether as an advisor or a protector, you serve the jarl directly. This grants some measure of respect within the community, though you are expected to serve as a paragon of your people.

Beekeeper: You keep hives of bees and are a skilled brewer of mead. You are also capable of harvesting bee's wax to craft candles and other wax products such as sealant used to protect sails from moisture. The beverages you brew are served across the community.

Farmer: Like the majority of people in your community, you tend to a small tract of land and grow crops for consumption and trade. You are adept at reasonably predicting weather and storing your harvest to protect it from the elements.

Fisherman: You make your living fishing in nearby rivers or along coastlands. You know how to craft appropriate tools of your trade, including nets, and are able to cure and cook fish.

Herbalist: You know the properties of local flora and are able to make herbal concoctions to aid in everything from enhancing the flavor of food to composing a healing poultice. You are also able to identify which plants are poisonous and which are safe to eat.

Hunter: You are a skilled hunter and trapper, taking down both small game and wild boar. You know how to strip and dress an animal so its hide can be preserved and prepared by a tanner for use in leather or a tailor for crafting clothes. In addition you know how to salt and preserve meat.

Sailmaker: You are skilled at preparing wool and linen with wax and other protection agents then weaving it into a sail. In addition, you can mend sails and shear sheep as part of your expertise. Given the highly trained nature of your craft, you are a particularly valued member of the community.

Shipwright: More than a woodworker, you know how to craft, curve, cure, and assemble the necessary materials to craft a sailing ship. The sail itself is made by a sailmaker, but your expertise in all manner of shipcraft are highly specialized and critical to the community.

Smith: You are able to recover, prepare, and craft bog iron into tools, weapons, armor, and helms. Though you primarily craft nails, hand tools, and implements of daily life, you have the training necessary to make weaponry and tools of war.

Tailor: You are able to shear wool from sheep, prepare and preserve animal fur, and weave cloth all in an effort to create clothing. You are also able to create other textile-based items like blankets and bags.

Tanner: You know how to skin and cure animal skin and fur. You can craft leather products, including leather corselets, boots, backpacks, and a myriad of other products. This includes understanding the craft of boiling and hardening leather.



Woodworker: From the beams necessary to construct a hall to the shaft of a shovel and everything in between, you are a skilled woodworker. You are trained to chop down trees, prepare and treat wood, and craft it into a myriad of objects - including shields.

Glory

Unlike many other roleplaying games, The Skaldic Sagas does not use a traditional experience point system for character advancement. Instead, each character is judged by their Glory: fame and renown won in battle or through heroic deeds.

At the end of an adventure (or under other circumstances determined by the Narrator) the characters will attend an Althing or other large social gathering. They may then perform a Recounting of Deeds to earn Glory. In some cases a Skald may aid in this endeavor.

Characters may add a bonus to Glory earned in this fashion as determined by their Archetype's Key Attribute. A character's Key Attribute modifier is added to any Glory earned during a Recounting of Deeds.

Table 1-3: Key Attributes

Archetype	Key Attributes
Dregnr	Might
Lendr	Resolve
Skald	Bearing
Vitki	Insight

More information on the Recounting of Deeds during an Althing can be found on page 93.

Frith

Frith reflects the strength of a character's bond with family, the community, and other player characters. This is different from any sort

of fame or recognition. Instead it has a meaning more akin to the strength of one's relationship with the community. Your Frith is measured by a character's Frith Score. All characters begin play with a Frith of 1, plus their Bearing modifier. This can be modified by a character's ancestry in some cases. No matter what the character's Bearing modifier, no character begins with a Frith lower than 0. Your Frith can go as low as -15 or as high as 21 or more.

Frith is described in detail in Chapter Six: Frith, Community and the Althing.

Urðr

Every one of the northfolk has an immutable destiny known as their Urðr. At character creation, every player selects an Urðr for their character (see Chapter Five for more information) which grants modifiers in situations related to their selection. Once chosen this can never, ever be changed. Not by choice, nor by even the Gods themselves – Urðr is a force that binds a hero forever.

Urðr is described in further detail in Chapter Five: Urðr and Runes.

House Rule: You Skien Is Already Woven

Narrators and players looking to evoke one of the key elements of Norse storytellers may opt to, instead of simply choosing the Rune associated with their Urðr, for a different method of determining a character's rune. If the Narrator or any of the players has access to an actual set of Elder Futhark runes, the runes can be placed in a bag and each player could draw blindly from the bag to determine the rune of their character's Urðr.

If no one owns a set of Elder Futhark runes, a quick and simple set can be made using paper chits.

Family Legacy and Social Class

Society is broken in three broad social classes: Thrall, Jarl, and Karl. Thralls are slaves, bondsmen, or sometimes foreigners. Jarls are rulers and chieftains.

All player characters begin play among the social class known as Karl. Karls are freemen and make up the majority of northfolk society. They are traders, farmers, craftsmen, sailors, and other common professions. Most Karls are married, have children, and are part of both a larger family which is especially important to them.

No character stands alone and without a history. One of the northfolk is judged by the deeds of their ancestors, family, and their reputation in the community. At character creation, each player rolls 1d12 and consults the Family Legacy table to see how the deeds of their ancestors had an impact on their lives.



Living as a slave, bondsman, or indentured servant was an ugly fact of many ancient cultures and though here in the 21st century we recognize slavery for the vile and dehumanizing act that it is and was, there are some who choose to appropriate pre-Christian Scandinavian culture and its symbols to further an agenda of hate against others. They bastardize and twist the historic facts, as well as history's value in understanding an ancient culture.

Hate has no place among those who gather together to play Skaldic Sagas. This is a game about community, family, and the bonds we strengthen to deal with the monsters of the world. Those monsters, whether found in an ancient Edda or in a wholly evil ideology, have no place at the gaming table or anywhere else.

The author asks that if you choose to hold these vile views that you close this book, put it back on the shelf and walk away. It is you who are the outsider and you have no home in the pages of this game or at any table that plays it.

Let us be absolutely clear, in the strongest terms possible (while keeping our words fit for printing in a family oriented book): In no way do we endorse, support, encourage, or attempt to justify racial supremacy, white supremacy, nazism, or any similar practice. The use of Norse cultural symbols to further hate is wrong and runs counter to all records we have of Scandinavian beliefs and ideals.

If you believe in those foul ideas, this game (and any others we make) are not for you, nor will they ever be.



Table 1-4: Family Legacy

Roll (1d12)	Description	Effect
1	Shamed Ancestry: One of your ancestors was an oath-breaker or murderer. Shame mars your bloodline and you must bear the burden of their actions even to this day.	You begin play with a Frith of 0, regardless of any other modifiers.
2	Blood of the Gods: One of your ancestors had the essence of one of the Gods flowing through their veins. You carry on this legacy and responsibility.	Increase an Attribute of your choice by two points, to a maximum of 18.
3	Scion of Heroes: One of your sires was a hero of great renown. You are respected by all but are expected to accomplish deeds at least equal to those who came before you.	Increase your Frith by +1d6.
4	Renowned in Song: You have already performed some deed of note that is known to many.	You begin play with 1 Glory.
5	Married: Though young, you have already taken steps to further the line of your family.	You begin play with a spouse.
6	Giant's Progeny: Legends say that in generations past one of your ancestors was a jotun.	Your maximum Endurance is increased by three.
7	Sword Bearer: You own a finely crafted weapon which has been passed down in your family for generations.	You begin play with a Weapon of Note (see page 105).
8	Divine Heirloom: You own a small trinket believed to be blessed by the gods that has been passed down in your family for generations.	You begin play with an Enchanted Item (see page 105).
9	Járnsíða: Many in your line are said to have skin of iron and more easily shrug off blows than other northfolk.	Increase your Reduction Value by 1 even when unarmored.
10	Hermod's Swiftess: Your bloodline is said to have been touched by Hermod, swiftest of the Aesir, and have uncanny reflexes.	You have Advantage on all Initiative rolls.
11	Foreigner: You are not a native northfolk, but have been accepted as such and have resided for many years among them.	You speak three additional languages of choice.
12	Blessed Urðr: There is something uncanny about you, and you seem to survive impossible dangers with relative ease.	You have a permanent +2 to all Saving Throws.

Archetypes

There are four Archetypes in The Skaldic Sagas: Dregnr, Lendr, Skald, and Vitki. Your Narrator may also invent others or may allow optional character Archetypes from other roleplaying games. Many Archetype abilities refer to Advanage. You can find more details on Advantage and Disadvantage in Chapter Three: Playing the Game on page 43.

READING CHARACTER ARCHETYPE TABLES

Level: Refers to the level of prowess of the character.

Glory: This is the amount of Glory needed to advance to this level. Regardless of how much Glory a character has earned they can only advance a single level during an Althing.

Atk: This is the "Attack Bonus" added to any attack roll. This is detailed in Chapter Four: Combat and Conflict.

Endurance: At first level, every character begins play with an Endurance equal to the number shown on row one of their advancement table below. They add (or subtract) their Resolve modifier to this number, but always begin play with at least a single point of Endurance. When a character gains a level of experience, they add the listed amount to their Endurance. If a die type is listed, they roll that die (plus or minus their Resolve modifier) and add it to their maximum Endurance total.

Upon reaching 4th level, a character no longer rolls a die or receives a Resolve modifier, they simply add the listed number to their maximum Endurance with each new level gained.

So, for example, before advancing to 3rd level, a character has an Endurance total of 13 points. Upon reaching 3rd level their advancement table lists "1d8" in the Endurance column. So the player rolls a d8 and gets a 4. Their Resolve modifier is +1, so one is added to the total. Their Endurance total is now 18, because 13 (current Endurance total) plus 4 (d8 roll), plus 1 (Resolve modifier) is 18.

That same character advancing to 4th level with an Endurance listing of “+3” would simply increase their total Endurance by three points, since these modifiers are cumulative over the course of a character increasing in level and characters do not add their Resolve modifier to the number of Endurance gained from these flat modifiers after third level.

ST: This is the Saving Throw number for the character trying to avoid something terrible such as a dragon's fiery breath or the effects of evil magic.

Other Notes: Most Archetypes will have special abilities noted in their advancement table. This can include unique Archetype abilities or other special traits tied to a character's Archetype. Though most Archetypes are limited in what protective items they may use, no Archetype is restricted in their selection and use of weaponry.



Dregnr

Key Attribute: Might

You are a warrior. Whether you protect your community from the dangers that spill forth from the Nine Worlds onto Midgard, or you are a raider skilled at slaying foreign enemies, or a sworn spear to a great Jarl, there are none who can match you in battle. You have no fear of death, knowing that if you fall at war you will serve as one of the Einherjar in the Hall of Valhalla.

Table 1-5: Dregnr Advancement

Level	Glory	Endurance	Atk	ST
1	0	8	+1	15
2	2	1d8	+2	14
3	4	1d8	+2	13
4	8	+3	+3	12
5	16	+3	+4	11
6	32	+3	+4	10
7	48	+3	+5	9
8	64	+3	+6	8
9	80	+3	+6	7
10	96	+3	+7	6

ARCHETYPE FEATURES

Armor Restrictions: Dregnr are the fiercest, most battle-ready warriors of their people. They are not limited in their selection of armor. They may freely use shields and helms.

Fury of the North: When a Dregnr reaches 4th level they can make multiple attacks each round (up to a maximum of three), if they so choose. Before making their first attack roll each combat round, the Dregnr declares how many attacks they are making each combat round

and then divides their Attack Bonus among these attacks. Each attack must receive at least a +1 modifier from the Dregnr's Attack Bonus. The Dregnr still receives any bonus from a high Might to all Attack Bonuses made when attacking in this fashion.

For example, if a 7th level Dregnr with an Attack Bonus of +5 decided to make three attacks in a single combat round. He could make the first attack with a +3 modifier, and the other two with a +1 modifier each. If the Dregnr had a Might of 15, his total modifiers for these attacks would be +4 for the first, and +2 for each of the remaining attacks.

Welling With Sword-Blood: When a Dregnr reaches 5th level they may select one specific creature listed in Chapter Seven: Bestiary. When fighting that creature, all damage they inflict ignore that creature's Reduction Value. At 7th level they may select a second creature, and again a third may be selected at 9th level.

Saving Throw: Dregnr receive Advantage on all Saving Throws made to resist poison and extreme environments.



Lendr

Key Attribute: Resolve

You are a Lendr, a respected member of the community known for your sense of honor and generosity. Your dedication to that community knows no limits and though you do not seek war, you will not hesitate to shed blood in defense of your name, your ancestors, or your community.

Your absolute devotion to the community empowers you when standing in defense of your people, but when you set off on adventures into the wild realms of the world your voice is the one that reminds the kinfolk traveling by your side why it is such dangers must be slain before they ever can become a threat to you, your children, and your children's children.

Table 1-6: Lendr Advancement

Level	Glory	Endurance	Atk	ST
1	0	6	+0	14
2	2	1d6	+1	13
3	4	1d6	+1	12
4	8	+2	+2	11
5	16	+1	+2	10
6	32	+2	3	9
7	48	+1	+3	8
8	64	+2	+4	7
9	80	+1	+4	6
10	96	+2	+5	5

ARCHETYPE FEATURES

Armor Restrictions: Lendrs may only wear furs, and leather corselets as armor. They can use shields and wear helms.

Well-Regarded: Lendr begin play with one additional point of Frith. Each time they gain a level of experience they gain an additional point of Frith automatically, provided the player and the Narrator work together to come with a plausible means for this to occur within the saga. If, for any reason, a Lendr's Frith drops to 0 they no longer benefit from this ability unless they perform some remarkable deed in service of their community as defined by the Narrator.

Community Leaders: Lendr receive Advantage on all attempts to Petition the Jarl, Assist the Community, Bind a Runic Item, as well as any actions associated with the Courting, Marriage, and Sire Progeny action during an Althing. If a Lendr faces a Criminal Accusation (see pages 99) they impose a penalty on the Jarl's roll to determine guilt by 1, plus their Resolve modifier (minimum 1). If a Lendr is acting as a witness in another player character's Criminal Accusation, they increase the modifier they grant to that character by one. Thus if acting as an Average Witness they grant a -2 modifier, and if acting as a Reputable witness they grant a -3 modifier to the Jarl's roll to determine that player character's guilt.

Ferocious Defender: Whenever a Lendr is fighting while within sight of their community to defend it from harm or danger, they may add their level to their Attack Bonus to the damage of any weapons they are wielding.

Saving Throw: Lendr receive Advantage on all Saving Throws made while within the confines of their community or a community they are helping to establish. This includes any time they are attending an Althing or defending their community from intrusion or attack.



Skald

Key Attribute: Bearing

You are a Skald, keeper of immortality. Endlessness exists only in song for the northfolk. A scant few reside in the Halls of Valhalla, while others live on in verse and legend. You recount the stories of those who have come before and the legends of those who still walk Midgard today. But more than just a singer, a poet, and a historian, you are skilled in battle and will often sing as you slay.

By verse and song, you bring glory to your companions for their valiant deeds. Your voice drives them to undreamt of deeds and legendary heroics. Your toast, your voice, gives them a place in eternity.

Table 1-7: Skald Advancement

Level	Glory	Endurance	Atk	ST	Storyteller
1	0	6	+0	14	2
2	2	1d6	+1	13	3
3	4	1d6	+1	12	5
4	8	+2	+2	11	6
5	16	+2	+2	10	8
6	32	+2	+3	9	9
7	48	+2	+3	8	11
8	64	+2	+4	7	12
9	80	+2	+4	6	14
10	96	+2	+5	5	15

ARCHETYPE FEATURES

Armor Restrictions: Skalds may only wear furs, and leather corselets as armor. They can use shields and wear helms.

Storyteller: During an Althing, the Skald may attempt to recount the heroic deeds of themselves and their allies instead of each character

individually performing their own Recounting of Deeds. When doing so, they add the numeric value of their Storyteller ability to the amount of Glory earned by the player characters recalled during this Recounting of Deeds. This is in addition to any bonuses from a player character's Key Attribute.

More information on the Recounting of Deeds during an Althing can be found on page 93.



Heartened Song: The words of a Skald can inspire their allies to new levels of heroism. Whether shrugging off mortal wounds, dealing fatal strikes, or accomplishing impossible tasks, the Skald reminds his fellows that heroes achieve the impossible.

Three times per day, a Skald may inspire such greatness in their allies. They can spend a combat round reciting verse or singing a great lay. All allies within 120 feet of the Skald receive one of the following benefits, chosen by the Skald:

Heal 1d6 Endurance.

Advantage on any one saving throw made in the next hour.

Advantage on any one attack roll made in the next hour.

Advantage on any one damage roll made in the next hour.

The Advantage granted by this ability must be declared before the Saving Throw, attack roll, or damage roll is made.

Saving Throw: Skalds receive Advantage on all Saving Throws made when resisting any supernatural effect. The Narrator determines what exactly qualifies as a supernatural effect.

Vitki

Key Attribute: Insight

You are a Vitki, part sorcerer and part shaman – you understand the mysteries of the Runes and have a deep connection with the Nine Worlds. Whether speaking to Ancestor Spirits, making offerings to the endless Wights which influence all the realms, or casting runes to bend the very Urðr of mere mortals, your power is strange and dangerous.

Though you are capable in battle, it is your knowledge of Urðr and Runes that is your true strength. You know what cannot be known and see what cannot be seen.

Table 1-8: Vitki Advancement

Level	Glory	Endurance	Atk	ST	Special
1	0	4	+0	14	Wight Sense
2	2	1d4	+1	13	Casting of Runes
3	4	1d4	+1	12	
4	8	+1	+1	11	
5	16	+1	+2	10	
6	32	+1	+2	9	
7	48	+1	+2	8	
8	64	+1	+3	7	
9	80	+1	+3	6	
10	96	+1	+3	5	

ARCHETYPE FEATURES

Armor Restrictions: Vitki can wield any weapon in combat, but may only wear furs, and leather armor. They do not use shields but may wear helmets.

Wight-Sense: All Vitki can sense the presence of the spirits and Wights in the area simply by concentrating, to a range of 120 feet. They cannot necessarily see incorporeal beings, nor do they know their exact location, only whether they are present or not.

Beginning at 3rd level the Vitki can see and hear incorporeal beings. This allows them to converse with these spirits and interact with them if there is a shared language.

Once a Vitki reaches 5th level, he can physically interact with the spirit world. This means a Vitki can inflict damage on creatures in the unseen realm with mundane weapons.

Casting of Runes: At 4th level, a Vitki can sense which Rune is tied to a character's Urðr. By spending a single round concentrating and making a successful Saving Throw, the Vitki knows which Rune is tied to a character's Urðr, if one exists.

At 6th level, a Vitki may temporarily bend the Urðr of a target. The Vitki must spend ten minutes in ritual prayer and make a blood sacrifice (inflicting 1d4 damage on themselves, or the target of this ability). The Vitki must then succeed on a Saving Throw. If the Saving Throw is successful, the target of this ability temporarily gains an additional Urðr of the Vitki's choosing for one day. An individual can only benefit once per day from this ability.

Saving Throw: The Vitki receives Advantage on all attempts to use Casting of Runes and to resist the influence of any supernatural effect. The Narrator determines what exactly qualifies as a supernatural effect.



Personal Gear

All characters begin play with the following personal gear, plus any items appropriate to their Community Trade. The Narrator is free to modify this to suit their individual saga but should limit characters to a small selection of personal arms and armor as well as traveling and exploration gear, along with a few personal items.

Sword or spear (choose one).

Dagger.

A shield or helm (choose one).

Traveling Gear valuing no more than 10 total Trade Cost.

Personal Items (must be approved by the Narrator)

A Dregnr also receives the following gear in addition to personal gear:

One additional melee weapon of choice.

Mail armor.

A bow with 20 arrows or two hand axes (choose one of the two sets).

A shield or helm (choose one).

A Lendr also receives the following gear in addition to their personal gear:

Leather Corslet.

A set of fine clothing.

Additional Traveling Gear totaling no more than 5 Trade Cost.

A Skald also receives the following gear in addition to their personal gear:

Leather corselet

A musical instrument (pan flute, horn, lyre, harp, or lur – choose one).

A bow with twenty arrows or two hand axes (choose one of the two sets).

A Vitki also receives the following gear in addition to their personal gear:

Fur armor.

A set of runes.

Two hand axes or two daggers (choose one of the two sets).



CHAPTER TWO



Trappings

*We have seven halls, each of swords full,
My steed is swiftest, my sword is sharpest,
My bows adorn benches, my byrnies are golden,
My helm is the brightest, that came from Kjar's hall*
-The Poetic Edda

All heroes begin play with a specific set of equipment based on their Archetype. They will have the opportunity to trade for or acquire equipment during their adventures. Listed below are several pieces of equipment that can be acquired as they weave their deeds into legend.

Movement & Significant Items

Base movement for all characters is calculated on the table below in tens of feet per round, provided they are not carrying a number of significant items higher than their Might Attribute. A character can opt to move twice this distance in one combat round if they take no other action (this is a Running movement). A character carrying more significant items than their Might Attribute reduces their movement according to the table below. A character cannot carry more than twice their Might Attribute in significant items.

A significant item is a general descriptor for any piece of equipment carried by a character which takes up an ample amount of space, is weighty, or is bulky to handle. Most small, hand-held items (such as coins or a knife) are not considered to be a significant item unless a large number of them are carried as determined by the Narrator.

Most weapons, shields, and helms are considered a significant item, as is one container of ammunition for a ranged weapon (which usually includes twenty uses of the appropriate ammunition). This abstraction of

weight is vague by design, to allow the Narrator to use it as guidelines and keep play of the game moving quickly instead of getting bogged down in a number-crunching exercise.

One exception to the fluid nature of this system is armor. Mundane armor is always considered to be the equivalent of its Reduction Value in significant items. So fur armor is one significant item (it's light and mobile), while mail armor is four significant items (it's large, bulky, and heavy). Magical armor, unless otherwise stated, functions similarly, though certain magical properties might reduce a magical armor's weight and thus the number of significant items it represents. In the end, the Narrator should assume that most items larger or heavier than a bread box or weighing ten pounds or more are considered to be a significant item.

Characters moving at half speed are considered to be moving carefully and are more likely to notice ambushes, concealed enemies or other subtle dangers than those moving at their normal movement rate. Characters who are moving at double their movement rate, or running, are highly unlikely to notice these types of dangers. The Narrator may adjust any die rolls related to this as they deem appropriate.

Table 2-1: Equipment Weight & Movement

Items Carried	Movement Rate
Up to Might attribute	4
Up to 1.5 times Might attribute	3
Up to twice Might attribute	2

Trade Cost

An item's general worth and rarity is measured in its Trade Cost. This is an abstracted method of determining an item's worth to reflect both the value of precious objects and the barter economy of the setting. Each item has a Trade Cost. The higher the Trade Cost, the more value generally placed on that item. Whenever a character wishes to barter or trade for such an item and this should be accomplished through

roleplaying, using information found in Chapter Six (page 102) as a guideline. Narrators and players are encouraged to remember that the Trade Cost of all items is a very broad approximation and the Narrator should feel free to modify the Trade Cost of any item as they see fit to suit their saga.



Traveling Gear

Traveling Gear is a general term used for any equipment which might be carried by a hero when out exploring the wilderness or adventuring. Listed below is a collection of several items which would likely be available to characters at character creation and during their career. Other equipment may be available at the Narrator's discretion. All Traveling Gear is assumed to have a Trade Cost of 1.

While the weight of each item is listed in pounds, the Narrator should remember that as a general rule, one significant item is the equivalent of approximately ten pounds. The weight is listed as a guideline and the Narrator should feel free to declare certain items may count as a significant item even if they are under ten pounds due to being bulky or awkward.

Traveling Gear Descriptions

Backpack: A typical traveling pack held to one's back via straps. Made of leather or hide and capable of holding up to 30 lbs (or around three significant items).

Bedroll: A heavy blanket or sewn woolen sack with extra padding to provide warmth and comfort.

Beer: A common beverage brewed from fermented grains.

Clothing, Heavy: Heavy woolen clothing, fur-lined coats, and heavy boots help protect the wearer against cold weather.

Clothing, Light: A light woolen shirt, breeches, and soft leather boots provide protection from the summer sun.

Flint and Tinder: Used to help start fires for cooking and warmth.

Grappling Hook: An iron hook often tied to a length of rope. Used to assist in climbing and the boarding of ships.

Hammer: A small, hand-held hammer.

Herbs, Medicinal: A small bunch of herbs used to sooth pain and ease healing. These can be used after a battle to heal a character up to 1d4 Endurance but are expended when doing so.

Holy Symbol or Set Runes: A small holy symbol or token, typically made of wood, bone, or iron. Runes are made of similar material and are used primarily by a Vitki.



Horn: A hollowed animal horn typically used for drinking. Sometimes horns are used to signal to others by blowing upon them. Signal horns weigh the same but cannot also be used for drinking.

Ice Skates: Blades of bone (or in rare cases, iron) are strapped to the wearer's feet and allow swift travel over thick ice and frozen bodies of water, increasing their Movement by +2 (impacting their Running Movement appropriately), but prevent the wearer from moving at Cautious Speed while worn.

Mead: A favorite beverage of the northlands, made from fermented honey.

Oil: Often taken from animal blubber, oil is both a lubricant and an accelerant used to start or strengthen fires.

Pole, Wooden: A ten foot pole of wood, sometimes used as a makeshift oar or to prod on untrustworthy ground.

Pouch: A small belt pouch made of leather.

Rations: Dried or preserved food, suitable for consumption while traveling.

Rope, Hemp: A coil of thick rope used by both sailors and climbers. Capable of supporting up to 500 lbs. and sold in lengths of 50-feet per coil.

Sack, Small: A rucksack, often carried over the shoulder, that can be dropped at a moment's notice.

Sack, Large: Often carried over the shoulder, it is quite suitable for carrying any number of recovered treasures or heavy items.

Shovel: A wooden pole affixed with a broad, flat, iron blade at one end. Used for digging.

Skis: Made from long planks of wood, most often pine, these can aid northfolk travelers when traversing long, snowy landscapes. The speed they grant is often of great use to archers and hunters. Wearing skis while in appropriately snowy terrain increases the wearer's Normal Movement by +2 (impacting Cautious and Running speeds appropriately), but reduces the wearer's mobility, imposing a -2 penalty to their Defense. They come in pairs.

Snow Rackets: Sold in pairs, these aid in walking across deep snow by distributing the wearer's weight. They are made of wicker and typically negate any Movement penalties imposed by traveling through deep snow.

Spikes, Iron: Foot-long spikes used to secure rope or hold doors open. Typically traded in groups of 12.

Spikes, Wooden: Identical to iron spikes, but lighter and more prone to breaking because they are made of wood. Typically traded in groups of 12.

Sun Stone: Sometimes called a solar stone, this rare clear crystal was sometimes used to aid sailors in navigation when the sun was obscured by clouds and mist.

Tent: Made of animal skins and held in place using small wooden poles and twine, this provides protection for two to three travelers from harsh weather while in the wilderness.

Torches: Wooden sticks wrapped at one end with oiled rags. They provide illumination for one hour before being expended.

Waterskin: A preserved and sealed animal bladder that can hold up to one gallon of liquid.

Wine: A rare beverage among the northfolk made from fermented fruits and berries.



Exploration Gear

Exploration Gear is a collection of equipment necessary for long-range travel to distant lands. This includes ships, mounts, carts, and other requirements for extensive overland and seafaring voyages. Such items do not have an associated weight. Characters cannot begin play with any Exploration Gear and will need to either trade a hefty sum of wealth, treat with a wealthy jarl to rent or temporarily make use of a vessel, or find some other unusual means to acquire such equipment.

Table 2-2: Exploration Gear

Exploration Gear	Typical Crew	Trade Cost
Cart	1	3
Longship (Skied)	75	25
Merchant Ship, Heavy (Knarr)	20	20
Merchant Ship, Light (Byrding)	10	15
Horse	1	15
Raft	1	10
Rowboat (Faering)	4	12
Sail	-	15
Sleigh, dog	1	3

Exploration Gear Descriptions

Cart: An open-topped cart, typically pulled by one or two oxen. Capable of carrying up to 300 lbs.

Longship (Skeid): A flat-bottomed boat with a single large sail and between 70 and 80 oarsmen. Typically used for long voyages and raids on foreign lands. Some can be as large as 100-feet in length. They have a comparatively small cargo capacity of 10 tons because it is designed primarily to transport passengers. It has a movement rate of 40 nautical miles per day.

Merchant Ship, Heavy (Knarr): Measuring approximately 50-feet in length and relying primarily on square rigging sails for propulsion. A Knarr could carry up to 24 tons of cargo. It has a movement rate of 30 nautical miles per day.

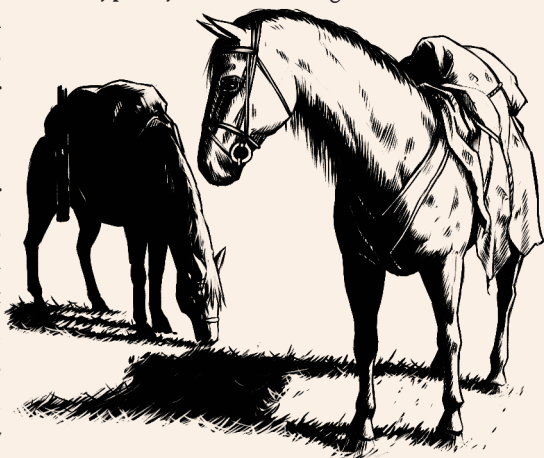
Merchant Ship, Light (Byrding): These light, fast, single mast ships could be crewed by a handful of sailors. They were very shallow on the draft and able to go up many rivers that could not be traversed by larger ships. They could even be lifted from the water and carried across land for short distances by their crew if the need arose. They were typically no more than 40 feet in length. It has a movement of 50 nautical miles per day.

Horse: Uncommon in the northlands, horses were recovered from foreign lands and valued as means of swift overland travel and beasts of burden.

Raft: A simple flat wooden boat capable of carrying no more than a handful of travelers. They were used by fishermen on small lakes and to cross rivers. They were typically no more than 10 square feet and were not designed for long distance seafaring. It has a movement rate of 10 nautical miles per day if forced into open waters.

Rowboat (Faering): An early rowboat, typically relying on between two and four oarsmen. It is not typically used for long-distance travel. If forced onto the open sea, it typically travels 20 nautical miles per day.

Sail: Except for faerings and rafts, all ships require a sail to function. Sailcraft is an expensive and lengthy process requiring specialized craftsmen. Thus, they are very expensive.



Sleigh, Dog: Made of wood, these sleighs are typically pulled by two or four dogs. When moving across appropriately snowy terrain, the rider and the dogs have a Movement of 15 and if four dogs are pulling the sleigh they are able to carry 100 lbs (around 10 significant items) of additional weight. The price does not include the cost of trained dogs. Trained sleigh dogs use the statistics found in Chapter Seven: Bestiary on page 116 and have a Trade Cost of 3 each, in addition to the cost of the sleigh itself.



Melee Weapons

Melee weapons are hand-held weapons which are used in face-to-face combat within arms' reach of a foe. Listed below are the damage values for each weapon, as well as its weight and several notes. All weapons can be used by any Archetype.

Weapon: The name of the weapon.

Damage: The dice and modifiers rolled when a character makes a successful melee attack. Might modifier adds (or subtracts) to damage total in melee combat. The cumulative total is reduced by the defender's Reduction Value if the attack is successful. The remaining amount is subtracted from the defender's Endurance.

Weight: The weight of the weapon. It is provided for general reference.

Trade Cost: The cost, in trade, for a newly crafted weapon.

Traits: Some weapons may be marked with specific traits. Thrown weapons may also be thrown, providing a short-range ranged attack. Characters wielding a Two-Handed weapon cannot also use a shield.

Table 2-3: Melee Weapons

Melee Weapon	Damage	Weight	Notes	Tradecost
Axe, Dane	1d10	7 lbs	Two-handed	3
Axe, Hand	1d6	3 lbs	Thrown	1
Cudgel	1d6	4 lbs	-	0
Dagger	1d4	1 lbs	Thrown	1
Spear	1d6	4 lbs	Thrown	1
Staff	1d6	3 lbs	-	0
Sword	1d8	4 lbs	Two-handed	3
Warhammer	1d6	5 lbs	Thrown	2

MELEE WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Axe, Dane: This long-hafted chopping weapon is heavy and deadly in combat. Because it requires less metal to craft it is more commonly used than a sword.

Axe, hand: Similar to a dane axe, but with a shorter haft and smaller head. It could be thrown and was as often a tool as it was a weapon.

Cudgel: Any weighted, blunt melee weapon—from wooden clubs to metal maces—is considered a cudgel. It is a quite common weapon and typically no longer than three feet, capable of being wielded one-handed. Makeshift weapons used by peasants, such as shovels and the like function identically to cudgels for mechanical purposes.

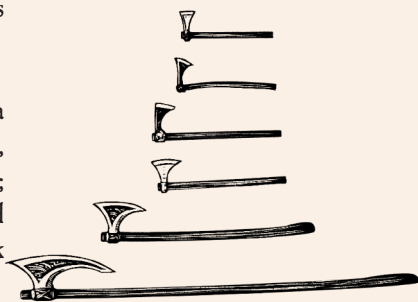
Dagger: A long knife, ranging in length from six- to nine-inches. As much a tool as a weapon, it was carried by all but the poorest of people.

Spear: A long wooden pole ranging from six to nine feet in length, either sharpened to a point or affixed with a metal head. Spears were cheap to produce and common among warriors.

Staff: A wooden walking stick typically between six-and-eight-feet in length. Used to assist in traveling and for inexpensive self-defense.

Sword: The sword most common to the northfolk had a blade under three feet in length. It was wielded with one hand and though it was double-edged, served primarily as a thrusting weapon.

Warhammer: Little more than a short-hafted blacksmith's hammer, these were rarely used in battle; though some warriors favored them for their ability to break bone and crush skulls.



Ranged Weapons

Ranged weapons typically fire a projectile allowing them to damage a target at a distance. Unless a ranged weapon is noted with the Thrown trait it cannot be used against a target that is in melee range. Ranged weapons listed as Two-Handed cannot be used while carrying a shield. In addition, ranged weapons cannot be used to attack adjacent foes. All weapons can be used by any Archetype.

Weapon: The name of the weapon.

Damage: The dice and modifiers rolled when a character makes a successful melee attack. The total is reduced by the defender's Reduction Value if the attack is successful. The remaining amount is subtracted from the defender's Endurance. Ranged weapons do not receive a bonus from the attack's Might modifier, unless they are thrown weapons.

Range: This is the distance between the attacker and the defender in which the weapon can be fired effectively. Ranged attacks may be made beyond this distance, up to twice the listed value, but are done with Disadvantage to the attack roll.

Weight: The weight of the weapon. It is provided for general reference.

Trade Cost: The cost, in trade, for a newly crafted weapon.

Traits: Some weapons may be marked with specific traits. Thrown weapons may also be thrown, providing a short-range ranged attack. Characters wielding a Two-Handed weapon cannot also use a shield.



Table 2-5: Ranged Weapons

Ranged Weapon	Damage	Range	Weight	Notes	Tradecost
Arrows	1d6	-	5 lbs	-	2
Axe, hand	1d6	10 ft	3 lbs	Thrown	1
Bow	-	60 ft	5 lbs	Two-handed	3
Dagger	1d4	10 ft	1 lbs	Thrown	1
Sling	-	30 ft	1 lbs	-	1
Spear	1d6	20 ft	4 lbs	Thrown	1
Stones	1d4	10 ft	1 lbs	-	0

RANGED WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

Arrows: Narrow wooden shafts with sharpened points, arrows were typically 18-inches long and had feathered fletching. The weight listed is for a quiver of 20 arrows.

Axe, hand: Not typically a ranged weapon, hand ax could be thrown short distances in extreme circumstances.

Bow: A typical bow was made of ash, elm, or yew and ranged from two to two-and-a-half feet long.

Dagger: Though not designed for throwing, daggers could potentially be hurled short distances in combat.

Sling: A long leather cord with a pouch at its center, slings were loaded with stones which were then hurled at their target.

Spear: These could be hurled surprising distances and inflict mortal wounds, but would often leave a warrior without their primary weapon.

Stones: Smoothed and polished rocks, often gathered along the shores of both rivers and seas, they were used in slings and could even serve as makeshift melee weapons if necessary.

Armor

Armor is used to protect a defender from the damage of a successful attack. All Archetypes can wear some form of armor or another.

Armor: The name of the armor.

Reduction Value: Whenever a character wearing armor is successfully attacked and suffers damage from an attack, unless otherwise specified, this damage is reduced by an amount equal to the armor's Reduction Value, down to a minimum of one point of Endurance loss.

Weight: The weight of the armor. It is provided for general reference.

Cost: The cost of the armor to purchase new, in gold pieces.

Table 2-5: Armor

Armor	Reduction Value	Weight	Trade Cost
Fur	1	10 lbs	2
Leather Corselet	2	20 lbs	4
Mail	4	40 lbs	8

ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

Fur: Only armor in the loosest sense, this consists of a heavy coat of batted wool or thick animal fur used to keep out the cold or ward off a wayward cut.

Leather Corselet: This jacket of treated leather is hardened in boiling oil. It protects the torso and shoulders, but leaves lower legs and forearms exposed.

Mail: A long-sleeved shirt of interlocking metal rings, mail armor is cumbersome. However, it offers significant protection.

Shields, and Helms

Shields and helms are used to protect a defender from an incoming attack, preventing the blow from ever being struck. They provide a bonus to the wielder's Defense – but do not grant any increase in Reduction Value.

Protective Item: The name of the protective item.

Defense Bonus: This is the bonus provided to the wielder's Defense, making them more difficult to hit. This is in addition to any other bonuses they might receive from a high Finesse or other beneficial effects.

Weight: The weight of the protective item. It is provided for general reference.

Trade Cost: The cost of the protective item to purchase as a trade.

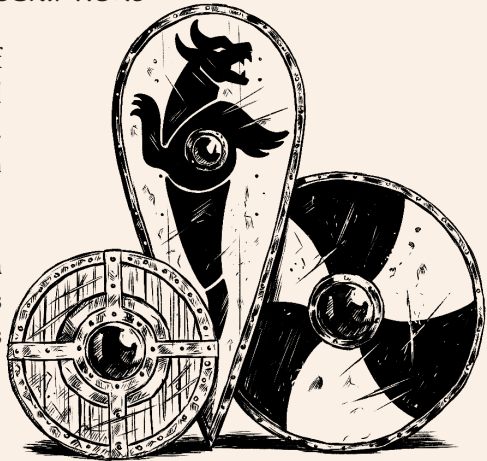
Table 2-7L Shields and Helms

Armor	Defense Bonus	Weight	Trade Cost
Shield	+4	10 lbs	2
Helm	+1	5 lbs	2

SHIELD AND HELM DESCRIPTIONS

Shield: A round shield of wooden planks bound together in a band of metal. It is often painted with fierce designs.

Helm: A cap of metal, often with a nose guard and flaps of leather to protect the ears and jawline.



CHAPTER THREE



Playing the Game

*Cattle die
kinsmen die
all men are mortal.
Words of praise
will never perish
nor a noble name.
-Havamal*

Once characters have been created, the Narrator describes their environment. The game might begin in a small fishing village nestled in a wooded valley on a fog-bound spring morning or at the entrance to an ancient barrow where a legendary warrior is buried, or at the closing of an Althing as the people disperse and return to their normal lives and duties. The possibilities are endless. From that point on, players describe what their characters do. Pushing aside the stone doors to the barrow, talking with the local villagers, tending to the fishing nets - all these kinds of actions are decided by the players. The Narrator then describes what happens as a result: The stone slowly rolls away and the scent of earth and decay fills their nostrils, the local villagers seem nervous after their jarl speaks of jotun patrolling the nearby hills, the fishing nets are filled with a fresh catch, etc. The rules are guidelines to handle combat, movement, healing, dying, and other important parts of the game.

Basically, players and the Narrator work together, with the Narrator handling the details of the dangerous northland, and players handling what their individual character does in it. The epic saga that unfolds is yours to create in the world the Narrator has set out before you.

Advantage and Disadvantage

Whenever a character has a distinct advantage when making a roll the Narrator can declare they have Advantage on the roll, in addition to any numeric modifiers. If this is the case, the roll in question is made using two dice of the same type, keeping the better result of the two dice to apply to the task at hand.

Disadvantage works in the opposite fashion. Whenever a character (whether controlled by a player or the Narrator) has a distinct disadvantage when making a roll the Narrator can declare they are at a Disadvantage on the roll. If this is the case, the roll in question is made using two dice of the same type, keeping the worse result of the two dice to apply to the task at hand.

If a character comes into a circumstance where they would have both Advantage and Disadvantage at the same time, these effects cancel each other out. In addition, a character can never benefit from multiple instances of Advantage or Disadvantage on the same roll.

Example: Largetha is attacking an opponent who is unaware of her presence, and the Narrator has ruled she has Advantage on her attack. She rolls two twenty-sided dice for her attack roll and gets a 3 and a 15. She uses the 15 and then adds any other modifiers.

Gaining Glory

Characters are awarded Glory during an Althing when their deeds are recalled before the community to be celebrated. Skalds are often employed in the telling of these tales. As characters gain Glory they advance in Level and many aspects of their character improve. Unlike many other roleplaying games, Glory is not earned directly for participating in combat and slaying monsters - though doing deeds of glory in battle are certainly worthy of tales told during an Althing. More details on gaining Glory can be found on page 11.



Time

The Narrator needs to make general rulings regarding the passage of time through the course of the game. Things like “A few hours later...” or “After several days of exploring the woods...” The Narrator’s common sense and judgment should govern these. There are three specific measurements of time that warrant distinction in The Skaldic Sagas—the “combat round” (sometimes simply known as a “round”), the “minute,” and the “hour.” Combat rounds are typically six seconds long and are used in battle and other situations where the action is quick and tension is high. Minutes and hours, though self-explanatory, most often come into play in reference to the duration of certain magical effects. There are ten combat rounds in a minute.

Character Movement

Base rate of Movement is calculated on the table below and is in tens of feet, allowing for one Running Movement per combat round or one Normal Movement and one other action in most cases. This is modified by how much weight a character is carrying in relation to their Might attribute. See Chapter 2: Trappings for more information on item weight and how that impacts a character’s Movement.

Table 3-1: Movement Type

Movement Type	Movement Rate
Running (8)	Twice Normal
Normal (4)	As Normal
Careful (2)	One-Half of Normal

Careful movement is used for exploring and searching for hidden things. Normal movement is used in almost all other cases. Running movement is used when a character is trying to get somewhere fast or get away from something dangerous. A character who is Running cannot perform other significant actions, such as attacking an opponent, unless approved by the Narrator.

Outdoor Movement

When traveling over long distances outdoors, characters can travel a number of miles each day equal to three times their Normal Movement. If the characters choose, as a group, to set a harsh pace they can increase this to four times their Normal Movement - though each day of doing this requires a Saving Throw or the characters traveling at this pace become exhausted and suffer Disadvantage on all Initiative rolls and attack rolls until they rest and recover for a period of time deemed appropriate by the Narrator. Typically this is one day of complete rest for every three days spent moving at a harsh pace. If characters have failed this Saving Throw they can still choose to maintain a harsh pace even with the above penalties, but each additional day of doing so while exhausted requires them to make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw at Disadvantage. Each time this Saving Throw is failed, everyone traveling at a harsh pace loses 1d6 points of Endurance as they push their body to its limits. This Endurance loss cannot be healed until the characters have taken the time to properly recover.

Wilderness Events

While traversing the rugged lands of the north, it is possible for characters to encounter wandering creatures, unexpected natural events, or to get lost as they try to find their way.

At the Narrator's discretion, there is a 1-in-1d6 chance of the characters having such an encounter once per day. If a 1 is rolled, the Narrator then uses the following chart to determine the nature of the Wilderness Event.



Table 3-2: Wilderness Events

Roll (2d6)	Wilderness Event
2	Characters are ambushed by a monster or band of dangerous creatures. Exactly what creatures are encountered are determined by the Narrator and should be suitable to the current terrain. The player characters are automatically surprised during the first round of combat.
3-4	The characters are waylaid by a natural hazard. This could include an avalanche when traveling in snowy mountains or a sudden summer torrent of rain. The exact nature and hindrances it creates are determined by the Narrator and should be suitable to their current terrain and season.
5-6	Characters encounter another band of travelers. This typically includes 2d6+2 Humans (Northfolk) (see page 128)
7-9	The characters become lost in the wilderness and must spend 1d4 days retracing their steps to continue their journey.
10-11	Characters encounter a monster or band of dangerous creatures. Exactly what creatures are encountered are determined by the Narrator and should be suitable to the current terrain. Neither side is surprised, and combat is not necessarily inevitable.
12	Characters encounter a monster or band of dangerous creatures. Exactly what creatures are encountered are determined by the Narrator and should be suitable to the current terrain. The characters can choose to set an ambush or bypass them entirely.

Harsh Environments

Characters will often be required to cross lands where the terrain and weather can be dangerous or even deadly. This includes being caught in trackless tundra, endless bogs and mires, oppressive and untouched forests, or deep snowy landscapes. The Narrator determines exactly when the characters are caught in such an environment.

Each day that a character is traveling across these dangerous areas they must make a Resolve-based Attribute saving throw. If that saving throw is failed, the characters travel only half their normal distance and each lose 1d6 Endurance that cannot be healed until the character can find shelter, warmth, and food. This Endurance loss is cumulative with any loss caused by traveling at a harsh pace.

In addition, Narrators may rule that simply being exposed to harsh environments without proper protection requires a character to make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw or lose 1d4 points of Endurance from exposure alone. Having proper provisions and protections may prevent the necessity to make this Saving Throw or in truly extreme conditions, only grant Advantage to such a roll.



Falling

When a character falls from a great height, they lose 1d6 Endurance for every ten feet fallen, to a maximum of 10d6 if they fall from a height of 100 feet or greater. At the Narrator's discretion this damage may be reduced by one half by landing on a reasonably soft surface (such as a large snowbank or hay pile) or completely nullified by landing in reasonably deep water. This damage is not reduced by an armored character's Reduction Value.

Seafaring Movement

Northfolk were skilled sailors and regularly plied the seas. Each ship type has a base movement rate shown below. In favorable winds that movement rate is increased by 50%, while unfavorable conditions such as traveling against the current and winds or facing serious storms, reduces this by 50%.

Table 3-3: Seafaring Movement

Seafaring Vessel	Nautical Miles Per Day
Byrding	50
Skied	40
Knarr	30
Faering	20
Raft	10

To determine the wind conditions each day, the Narrator should roll 1d6 and consult the Table 3-4 Seafaring Wind Conditions and compare it to the type of seafaring vessel in use.

Table 3-4: Seafaring Wind Conditions

Roll (1d6)	Wind Conditions	Effect
1	Favorable	Increase Nautical Miles per day by 50%
2-5	Normal	Normal Nautical Miles Per day
6	Unfavorable	Decrease Nautical Miles per day by 50%

Seafaring Encounters

At the Narrator's discretion, Seafaring characters may potentially have a random encounter once every 1d6 days. The Narrator rolls 1d6 once to determine the number of days that pass at sea before there is the potential of a random encounter. On the day rolled, the Narrator then rolls a second d6. If the second roll is a 1, then a Seafaring Encounter has occurred. A third roll is made on Table 3-5: Seafaring Encounters to determine the nature of the encounter, or the Narrator can simply choose an encounter.

Table 3-5: Seafaring Encounters

Roll (2d6)	Seafaring Encounter
2	Terrible Storms. The ship is tossed and turned and is most certainly off-course because of it. 10-60% (1d6 x 10%) of the ship's crew was tossed into the sea by its fury.
3-4	Dense cloud cover prevents navigation. One character aboard the ship must make a saving throw or the ship becomes lost at sea for 3d6 days. If the character has a sun stone, they receive Advantage on this saving throw.
5-6	A skied is encountered, with a full crew. It may be friendly (1-2 on 1d6), neutral (3-4 on 1d6) or hostile (5-6 on 1d6).
7-9	A merchant ship is encountered. It can be avoided, parlayed with, or attacked. It is not aggressive, but its crew will defend themselves. The Narrator determines the details of this ship and its cargo.
10-11	A strange monster is discovered and attacks the ship! The Narrator randomly selects this creature.
12	A previously undiscovered island or landmass is found! The Narrator determines the details of this new land.

SAILING AT SEA VERSUS SAILING ON A RIVER

One of the unique and most dangerous aspects of northfolk's seafaring capabilities is the fact that their ships were remarkably shallow on the draft and were capable of sailing up rivers. However, not all of their vessels were designed for sailing on the open seas. Faerings and rafts were designed specifically for coastal and river travel. When caught in a Terrible Storm per Table 3-5: Seafaring Encounters, all characters aboard either of these vessels must make a Saving Throw or be tossed overboard and risk drowning. If the characters are on a raft, this Saving Throw is made with Disadvantage.

Swimming and Drowning

Characters move at half their normal Movement whenever they are swimming through water. Characters carrying or wearing a number of significant items equal to one-quarter of their Might Attribute (rounded down) or more, run the risk of drowning. This means that a character with a Might of 10 can carry two significant items before they run the risk of drowning. A character in danger of drowning must make a Might-based Attribute Saving Throw every round to avoid drowning. This Saving Throw is made at Disadvantage if the character is trying to swim in very rough, storm swept, or dangerous seas. Once a character begins to drown, they suffer 1d6 points of damage each round regardless of any Reduction Value or other protections and they can take no actions, though they still make a Saving Throw each round to recover from drowning. Again, in particularly rough or dangerous waters this recovery Saving Throw is made with Disadvantage.

Once drowning, these Saving Throws to recover are always made with Disadvantage. Once a character has recovered from drowning, any Endurance lost from this state returns at the rate of one Endurance per minute that the character rests after being plucked from the water. Narrators can impose bonuses or penalties to a character's drowning Saving Throw, based on the circumstances. Characters and creatures that do not need to breathe cannot drown.

Underground Encounters

Many adventures will take place, at least in part, in an underground environment. These can include burial tombs, barrow mounds, natural underground caverns, literal dungeons, or any multitude of other locations both mundane and strange. Described below are a few rules to guide a Narrator when the player characters are traveling through such environments.

Tomb and Barrow Doors

Barrow doors are heavy and most often made of stone. Though they might be stuck from settling over the passage of time. On rare occasions, they are barred. Characters attempting to open a Tomb or Barrow Door that has become stuck must roll 1-2 on 1d6, though a positive Might modifier increases their chance of success on a 1-to-1 basis. Thus a character with a Might of 17 has a 1-3 chance of opening a Barrow Door. Opening a stuck door takes one full combat round.

Barred doors are more difficult to open. They reduce the base chance of success to 1-in-1d6, though again the character can attempt to apply their Might modifier as a bonus. However, barred doors usually take much longer to open and require three successful attempts to open them before they are fully breached.



Light

When traveling in a lightless environment, such as a tomb or underground cavern, characters will need to have access to something which provides illumination. Characters attempting to perform sight-based actions in the dark, such as attacks or Attribute Saves are made with Disadvantage. Other tasks may be penalized as the Narrator deems appropriate. The most common source of illumination are torches which provide illumination to a range of 30 feet.

Characters can fight in combat with a torch as a club, though every time they make an attack with the weapon they must make a Saving Throw or the torch is extinguished. Torches burn for one hour before going out. Oil can be burnt in small bowls, with one pint lasting four hours to provide similar illumination. However, burning oil is not easy to transport and this method is typically only used in stationary locations.

Players using a light source cannot surprise their foes, but they can still be surprised. It is assumed that all unnatural monsters encountered can see in the dark due to their magical nature. Mundane foes and natural beasts, such as other characters, hirelings, or animal companions are unlikely to have such a benefit.

Listening at Doors

Characters can press their ear to a door and attempt to listen for noise on the other side. They have a 1-in-1d6 chance of success, though they are unlikely to be able to make out the details of such noise unless it is particularly loud. They only know that they hear something on the other side. Characters with a high Insight may increase this chance by an amount equal to their Insight modifier. Thus a character with an Insight of between 15 and 17 (+1 modifier) has a 1-to-3 on 1d6 chance of hearing noise through a door or other obstruction and a character with an Insight of 18 has a 1-to-4 on 1d6 chance.

Secret Doors

Secret Doors are often found in tombs and barrows. They can be detected by any character who is actively searching for them on 1-2 on 1d6. It takes one turn for each 10-foot by 10-foot area searched. Characters with a high Insight may increase this chance by an amount equal to their Insight modifier. Thus a character with an Insight of between 15 and 17 (+1 modifier) has a 1-to-3 on 1d6 chance of discovering a secret door if one is present in the searched area and a character with an Insight of 18 has a 1-to-4 on 1d6 chance.

Traps

Most traps and pits are triggered on a 1-4 on 1d6 when any character passes over the triggering mechanism. Characters falling into a pit trap suffer 1d6 points of damage per 10 feet fallen. Pit traps are the most common, though other traps can include collapsing chambers, or hidden spears. The Narrator determines the damage for these traps, which can range from 1d6 for more common traps to as high as 10d6 for traps so cataclysmic that they destroy the very structures around them. Traps can be searched for and detected as if they were Secret Doors.



NOTE ON FINDING SECRET DOORS & TRAPS

Hopefully players will be descriptive enough during a search that they will automatically find a trap or secret door. For example, if moving a wall sconce opens a door, and the player says, "I examine the sconces on the north wall for anything unusual," a Narrator might automatically allow them to figure out how the secret door opens. If, however, they merely state "I search the north wall for secret doors," the Narrator can require a die roll. Some features might be so well-hidden that they always merit a die roll, or at least a roll with some sort of modification.

Hirelings

The northfolk often require aid when exploring the dangerous places of the world, traveling the seas with a hired crew, or on an errand at the order of the jarl. Hirelings are called upon sometimes to assist in these endeavors and can mean the difference between life and death.

Not counting hirelings assigned by a jarl, player characters can each retain the services of up to three hirelings at any given time. A player character's Bearing modifier can either increase or decrease this limit.

All hirelings have a Loyalty score, which represents their level of willingness to stand by the player characters in the face of danger and death. Once hired, a hireling's Loyalty score is increased or decreased by the hiring player character's Bearing modifier. No matter how loyal a hireling may be, however, it is always possible that they will abandon the player character if more is asked of them than is reasonable.

Hirelings will expect fair payment for their services in a reasonable amount of Trade Goods and if they see the player characters getting particularly rich from their aid most hirelings will request a share of this wealth. Most hirelings, whether they be hired swords, a crew of sailors, or even simple laborers, will require a minimum pay equivalent of 1 Trade Cost per week of service.

When a hireling is reduced to one-half of their Endurance or fails a Despair Saving Throw, they must make a Loyalty check by rolling 2d6 and scoring equal to or below their Loyalty value. Failure means they will flee combat and abandon their master. The Loyalty of a hireling is increased or decreased by the hiring character's Bearing modifier and potentially by their Urðr. In addition, if a hireling was sent to serve the character at the bidding of the jarl, their Loyalty rating is increased by +1. If the hireling is blood kin to the player character that hired them, their Loyalty rating is increased by +2. These bonuses are cumulative.

In most cases, hirelings are Human (Northfolk), though Human (Raiders) can be hired as well. Information for Human (Northfolk) can be found on page 128 and Human (Raiders) on page 130.

Table 3-6: Hireling Loyalty

Hireling and Circumstance	Loyalty or Loyalty Modifier
Human (Northfolk)	7
Human (Raider)	6
Service by Order of a Jarl	+1
Blood Kin	+2



CHAPTER FOUR



Combat and Conflict

*In the hilt is fame, in the haft is courage,
In the point is fear, for its owner's foes;
On the blade there lies a blood-flecked snake,
And a serpent's tail round the flat is twisted.*

-The Poetic Edda

Personal combat is battle between player characters and their adversaries, whether hand-to-hand or at range.

Personal Combat

When the player characters come into conflict with enemies and combat begins, the combat round is run as described below. Combat rounds are typically six seconds long and are used in battle and other situations where the action is quick and tension is high.

Initiative & Surprise

Initiative is a roll to determine the order in which participants in combat act. All player characters and each group of adversaries controlled by the Narrator roll 1d12 and adds any modifiers from a character's Finesse modifier to this roll.

The player character with the highest total roll may choose to either act first or "trade" their initiative roll with another player character, permitting them to act in their stead and taking that other player character's initiative roll as their own. This trading continues between player characters until everyone has determined their place in the initiative order. Adversaries controlled by the Narrator may similarly trade initiative rolls among themselves.

The only exception to this is if, on the first round of combat (only), a player character or Narrator-controlled adversary rolls a 1, 2, or 3 on their Initiative die they are surprised and may not trade their total with another

character. They are forced to act on the number they have rolled. Some characters have a reduced chance of being surprised or are incapable of being surprised at all.

Adversary groups controlled by the Narrator are typically defined by what type of creatures are in that group. So, for example, a group of three wolves would make one initiative roll. However, a group of three wolves fighting under the command of a jotun-wolf would require the Narrator to roll initiative once for the three wolves and again for their jotun-wolf leader.

If there is a tie in the initiative, all parties act simultaneously. The Narrator should use their judgment in these situations, but one thing is paramount: The damage inflicted by the combatants during any simultaneous initiative is inflicted even if one of the combatants dies during the round. It is possible for two combatants to kill each other in this situation.

Actions

The most common actions taken in combat are attacking or doing a running movement. Other actions are possible, but Narrators need to use their judgment to determine if they are feasible in the span of time taken in a single combat round.

Some characters may be able to take more than one action in a combat round due to an Archetype benefit, magical effect, or other modifier. Whether or not this is possible is detailed in the descriptions of those effects in their respective sections of the game. When a character can take multiple actions in a single combat round, they are all resolved on that character's personal initiative.

ATTACKING

To attack with a weapon, the player rolls a twenty-sided die and adds any bonuses to the result. The attacker's Attack Bonus is always included in this roll, but other bonuses may include a Might Modifier (for attacks with handheld weapons), a Finesse Modifier (for attacks with ranged

weapons), Archetype, and any bonuses from magic weapons. Additional situational modifiers may apply based on the circumstances of the attack. The player then subtracts any attack penalties they might have from their roll. It is important to note that characters can wield weapons outside their Archetype restriction but suffer Disadvantage on all attack rolls with such weapons. All numeric modifiers are cumulative. If the total of the attack roll meets or exceeds the defender's Defense (sometimes abbreviated "Def"), the attack is successful and hits the defender.

If an attack hits, it inflicts damage. The amount of damage inflicted is determined by the weapon's damage die, plus any modifiers. If any modifiers or Reduction Value would reduce the inflicted damage to zero (or lower), then a single point of damage is still inflicted. In melee combat, characters always apply their Might modifier. Melee attacks may only be made against adjacent targets. Unarmed or barehanded melee attacks inflict a single point of damage, plus the attacker's Might modifier.



Ranged weapons do not receive a damage bonus from a wielder's high Might unless they are thrown. Though characters can fire ranged weapons during melee combat or into an active melee combat between an adversary and their allies, they suffer Disadvantage on all such attack rolls and if an unmodified 1 is rolled on their attack roll, they have hit their ally!

Other modifiers may also apply to both melee and ranged attacks based on the character's Urðr or Archetype, whether they are wielding a magical weapon and other situational modifiers as determined by the Narrator. Before damage is inflicted, the defender's Reduction Value is subtracted from the total amount of damage. So a successful attack that does 8 points of damage against a target with a Reduction Value of 3 only inflicts 5 points of damage.

Any damage exceeding a target's Reduction Value is subtracted from the defender's Endurance. As noted above, if an attack is reduced to zero or less due to a defender's Reduction Value, they still suffer a single point of damage.

CRITICAL HITS

Any character who rolls a natural, unmodified 20 on their attack roll will inflict a critical hit. Critical hits automatically inflict the maximum damage possible (including the damage die or dice rolled, plus any modifiers) and ignore the target's Reduction Value.

House Rule: Heroic Damage

Narrators hoping to emulate a more heroic, mythic style of play can choose to allow Archetypes to increase their damage, based on level. Dregnr may add their level to all melee and ranged weapon damage inflicted with any weapon they wield. Lendr and Skalds may add half their level, rounded down. Vitki may add one third of their level, rounded down.

RUNNING MOVEMENT

Normally a character may make a Normal Movement and still take an action during a combat round. Characters can opt to make a Running Movement in combat, moving twice their Movement in that time; but if they do so they cannot take another action, unless the Narrator is using the Charge Combat Option detailed on page 64.

Defense

Defense represents how difficult a defender is to strike during combat. The higher the Defense, the more difficult a target is to hit. Normally, player characters have a Defense of 10. This can be improved if the character has a high Finesse, uses a shield, or is under the effect of items or other bonuses which grant magical protection. When an attack which requires an attack roll is made against a character, the attacker must roll a d20 and apply all appropriate modifiers (which typically include the aggressor's Attack Bonus and several others). If the total of the attack roll, with all its modifiers, meets or exceeds a target's Defense, the attack is successful.

REDUCTION VALUE

Whenever a character wearing armor is successfully attacked and suffers damage, unless otherwise specified (such as in the case of Critical Hits detailed above, which ignores Reduction Value), it is reduced by an amount equal to the armor's Reduction Value. If, after the Reduction Value is applied, the damage suffered is zero or less, the character still loses one point of Endurance. Reduction Value also reduces the damage taken when the wearer is targeted by most magical effects that inflict damage unless otherwise stated in that effect's description. In some instances, a Reduction Value may be granted by specific benefits or circumstances other than armor.

Narrator may rule that a character does not benefit from Reduction Value. This can include situations like damage taken from falling, since armor would not necessarily lessen the impact, or if the source of the damage

is something that is not affected by armor (such as poison).

Damage & Death

When a character is the victim of a successful attack or other damage source (such as a poison), this amount is deducted from their current Endurance (minus the victim's Reduction Value, in most cases). When a character reaches zero Endurance, they fall unconscious and suffer the effects of a grazing blow as described on Table 4-1: Grievous Wounds.

If a character suffers enough damage to drive their Endurance to a negative value no greater than their Resolve, they must immediately make a successful Saving Throw or they suffer a Grievous Wound. They suffer a penalty to that Saving Throw equal to the current negative value of their Endurance. If this Saving Throw is successful, they are knocked unconscious and cannot act until they are healed to 1 Endurance. This healing can be done through magical, mundane, or even natural means.



If a character ever suffers enough damage to reduce their Endurance to a negative number greater than their Resolve Attribute, they are immediately slain.

GRIEVOUS WOUNDS

A character that has failed their Grievous Wound Saving Throw rolls 1d6, minus the current negative value of their Endurance, and consults Table 4-1: Grievous Wounds. In addition to the effects described below, unless the character rolled a Grazing Blow on Table 4-1, they are unconscious and cannot act again until healed through magical, mundane, or even natural means.

House Rule: Lucky You're Not Dead

At the Narrator's discretion, characters may apply their Weal modifier when rolling 1d6 to determine the effects of their Grievous Wound.

Table 4-1: Grievous Wounds

Roll (1d6, minus negative Endurance)	Effect
1 or less	Dead: The character has been fatally injured in battle and is slain.
2	Lost an Eye: The character has lost an eye due to injury. They suffer Disadvantage on all ranged attack rolls and vision-based Attribute Saving Throws.
3	Marred: The character has lost an arm, whether crushed beyond healing or severed. They can no longer perform any tasks which require both arms and suffer Disadvantage on any rolls where a task is possible, but seriously hindered by this injury.
4	Lame: The character has lost a leg, whether crushed beyond healing or severed. They can only move at one-third their Movement until a prosthetic can be applied, typically a wooden leg. Even with a prosthetic, they may only move at one-half their Movement. They suffer Disadvantage on any rolls where a task is possible, but seriously hindered by this injury.
5 or 6	Grazing Blow: The character is unconscious and will awaken in 1d6 minutes with a single point of Endurance. They are injured, but nothing that cannot be recovered from with some rest.

Example: Torvid has been reduced to -1 Endurance after a particularly wicked blow from raider's axe. Because he is now below 0 Endurance, he must make a Saving Throw to avoid a Grievous Wound. This Saving Throw is made with a -1 penalty since his Endurance is -1. Torvid fails this Saving Throw and must now roll on Table 4-1: Grievous Wounds. He rolls 1d6, but subtracts one from this roll because his current Endurance is -1. Torvid then rolls a 6 on the die and subtracts 1, for a total of 5. It appears that the warrior lucked out and has only suffered a Grazing Blow.

House Rule: Combat Options

Described below are several combat options that can be employed with the Narrator's permission in order to make combat more dynamic and thematic.

Bent Helms and Shattered Shields: Shields and helms can do more than simply provide a bonus to their user's Defense. Any character wearing a helm that fails a Saving Throw to avoid a Grievous Wound may, instead of consulting Table 4-1: Grievous Wounds, choose to suffer a Grazing Blow (as described on the same table). If they choose to do so, the helm is destroyed.

In addition, whenever a character using a shield is struck by an attack specifically targeted against them (such as a melee or ranged attack from a weapon), that character can choose to suffer no damage from that attack. In choosing to do so, the character suffers no damage from that attack but the shield's Defense bonus is permanently reduced by one point. A shield reduced to a Defense bonus of zero is destroyed.

Charge: A character wielding a spear may choose to make a Charge. This is the only instance that a character may move at a distance greater than their Normal Movement and still make an attack. A character declaring that they are making a charge must move a distance at least equal to their Normal Movement

in a straight line towards their target, but cannot move a distance greater than their Running Movement. As long as this move brings them within melee range of their target and the attacker is wielding a spear, they receive Advantage on their damage roll if the attack is successful. After making the charge, the character suffers a -2 penalty to their Defense until the beginning of their next turn.

Cleaving Blow: Any character wielding a dane axe or sword in battle can choose to attempt a Cleaving Blow in an effort to destroy an opponent's shield. The attacker must declare they are doing so before rolling any dice. Once declared, the character, on their action in the Initiative, makes an attack against a Defense of 10, against an opponent making use of a shield. If this attack is successful, the attacker rolls damage normally. If that damage equals or exceeds a shield's current Defense modifier, the shield is destroyed.

Shield Wall: This combat option can only be performed by three or more characters at the same time. All of these characters must be wielding shields and must be adjacent to each other, forming an unbroken and straight line. All participants in a shield wall receive a +2 bonus to their Defense as long as they maintain this formation. In addition, anyone standing directly behind those who have formed a shield wall also receive this bonus and may attack any foes adjacent to the shield wall, provided they are wielding a spear. This attack is made at Disadvantage.

Despair

As player characters face foes both dark and terrible, they may often find themselves confronting seemingly impossibly evil adversaries or be forced into grief should beloved comrades fall in battle. This is known as Despair. A player character can suffer Despair under the following circumstances, though the Narrator is free to bring the effects of Despair in other circumstances as appropriate to their own saga.

When one of the situations described below has happened, player characters are required to make a Saving Throw. If the Saving Throw fails, a character has become overwhelmed by Despair and suffers Disadvantage on all attack rolls and Saving Throws until the source of the Despair has been resolved or is no longer present.

Fallen Allies: If any player character witnesses the death of another player character or other character they regard as a close friend or a kinsman, they must make a Saving Throw or suffer Despair. They remain under the effects of the Despair for 2d6 days, minus the Despairing character's Resolve Attribute Modifier.

Overwhelming Evil: Any time player characters face a foe that is obviously beyond their skill to defeat, they must make a Saving Throw or suffer Despair. This includes any creature whose Despair rating is five or higher than a player character's level.

Binding Wounds

Narrators can allow characters to take a breather and bind their wounds after a battle if they have Medicinal Herbs. Doing this recovers 1d4 Endurance. This takes several minutes and represents characters taking the time to clean and dress any wounds they've suffered, stop and catch their breath, and generally recover from the battle. Doing so expends one dose of Medicinal Herbs.

A character can only bind their wounds once after a battle, but is always able to recover two Endurance naturally each day as long as they get appropriate food and rest.

Invisible Opponents

An invisible opponent can only be attacked if its general location is known, though the attack is made at Disadvantage. More powerful supernatural creatures (those with sensitive smell, hearing, or those with 30 or more Endurance) frequently can detect invisible opponents. The Narrator should determine this based on the creature and the situation.

Negotiation & Diplomacy

Some battles can be avoided with a few well-placed words (or even lies). An adventuring party may elect to negotiate with, deceive, or attempt to convince a hostile foe they encounter that avoiding combat is in the best interest of all involved. Such attempts should be roleplayed, though attempting such peaceful discussions after the first arrow has been fired or sword has been swung is extremely unlikely to succeed in most cases.



Intimidate Foes

Instead of attacking or performing other significant actions, a character can attempt to Intimidate Foes by making a grand flourish with their weapon, a magnificent demonstration with their power, or other grand gesture. Doing so requires the character to make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. If the Saving Throw is successful, one enemy per level of the character is intimidated and suffers Disadvantage on their next attack made against the character. A character can only attempt to Intimidate Foes once per combat encounter.

Any adversary that imposes a Despair Saving Throw under the Overwhelming Evil effect noted above cannot be intimidated in this fashion.

Saving Throws & Attribute Saves

From time to time, a magical effect or some other kind of hazard (such as a trap) requires you to make a "Saving Throw." A successful Saving Throw means that the character avoids a threat or lessens its effect.

Each character Archetype has a Saving Throw target number which gets lower and lower as the character gains levels. To make a Saving Throw, roll a d20. If the result is equal to or greater than the character's Saving Throw target number, the Saving Throw is successful. Creatures can also make Saving Throws using the value listed in their individual descriptions in Chapter Seven: Bestiary.

Saving Throws can alternatively be used whenever a character wishes to attempt a task not normally covered by their background, Archetype, or Urðr. The player simply describes what they are attempting to accomplish and if the Narrator decides there is a reasonable chance of success, the character can attempt a Saving Throw. This is called making an Attribute Save. If the action being attempted is tied strongly to one of the character's Attributes, the Narrator may permit them to add the associated Attribute's modifier to the Saving Throw attempt. If the save is successful, the character has accomplished the task at hand.

If the task is particularly easy, or is tied to a character's background or Urðr, they receive Advantage when attempting an Attribute Save. Disadvantage may be imposed by the Narrator if a task has only a very slight chance of success or if circumstances have made the task particularly difficult.

Poisons

Some creatures, traps and special effects cause a target to become poisoned. A poisoned target must make a Saving Throw or perish within the next 1d6 hours. Particularly weak or potent poisons may modify this Saving Throw. At the Narrator's discretion, poisons may kill at a quicker rate, inflict damage directly to the character's Endurance or other effects. Poisons might also have effects other than damage or death such as drowsiness, hallucinations, or sickness.



Combat Example

A Dregnr, Siggs, is fighting three warriors in a dank burial tomb. We eavesdrop just as the encounter begins:

Siggs's Player: "I draw myself up to full height and proclaim that I am reclaiming this tomb in the name of my ancestors. Other warriors are right behind me, and these vermin better flee, or I'll kill them where they stand."

Narrator: "Um, no. They're not buying it. You're laden with a bag of riches you've already taken from the previous chamber, remember?"

Siggs's Player: "Oh, yeah. I forgot that."

Narrator: "Roll initiative." (Secretly rolls a d12 and gets a result of 6.)

Siggs's Player: "I rolled a 4."

Narrator: The warriors attack first. They're all more than 40 feet from you, and they move forward with their axes at the ready."

Siggs's Player: "They don't charge?"

Narrator: "Nope. None of them have spears."

Siggs's Player: "They don't get an attack because they closed in and are still out of melee range. It's my turn to attack, right?"

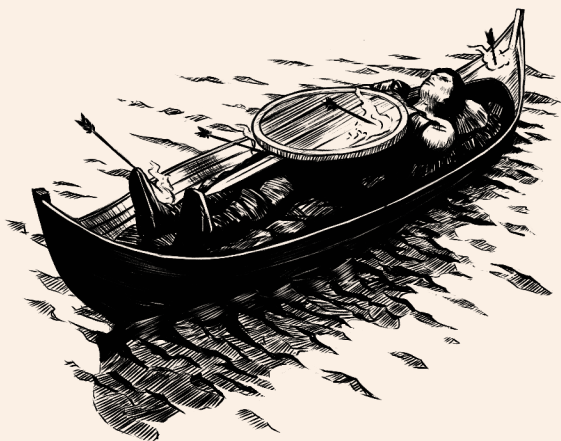
Narrator: "Yes."

Siggi's Player: "I knock an arrow and fire my bow. (Rolls a d20.) 16...sweet! Adding my Attack Bonus and Finesse Bonus gives me a total roll of 18!"

Narrator: (Notes that warriors have an Defense of 14) "You fire your bow at the leading warrior. Roll for damage."

Siggi's Player: "That's 1d6 (Rolls a d6.) Four points."

Narrator: (That's enough to kill him. The warriors had only 3 Endurance and was only wearing Furs for a single point of Reduction.) "Okay, so as he's moving forward, the warrior slips a little bit on a wet stone on the floor and practically steps into your shot. The other two are still attacking, but they look nervous now—obviously starting to reconsider this whole thing."



Nautical Combat

Combat can sometimes occur between the crews of two different seafaring vessels. In this case, characters will need to either board their enemy vessel or make attacks at range with ranged weapons such as bows.

Most northfolk ships designed for sea travel have the edge of their decks lined with shields. Any character using these shields for cover from incoming ranged fire receives a +4 bonus to their Defense as if they were wielding that shield themselves.

Another, more reckless option, is attempting to destroy an enemy's ship directly with a ranged or melee weapon. In these instances, all ships are considered to have a Reduction Value of 5 and have an Endurance equal to their Nautical Rate of Travel. Unlike characters, the Reduction Value of a seafaring vessel can reduce the damage of any successful attack to zero. Thus a Skied has an Endurance of 50, while a Raft only has 10 Endurance. For every point of damage suffered by a vessel, its Nautical Rate of Travel is reduced by one. If a vessel is reduced to zero Endurance it begins to break up and will sink in 2d6 minutes.

GETTING ABOARD AN ENEMY SHIP

Attempting to board an enemy ship can be done through a myriad of means. Whether it is leaping a short distance between vessels or climbing up the side of an enemy ship to stand upon the deck, these efforts always take at least a full round of actions (or more at the Narrator's discretion) and require an Attribute-based Saving Throw. Depending on the nature of a character's attempt, the Narrator should determine the appropriate Attribute. For instance, climbing up an enemy ship might require a Might-based Attribute Saving Throw, while leaping onto an enemy's deck might require a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw.

SETTING A SHIP ON FIRE

A particularly effective way to destroy a ship is through fire. Setting a vessel on fire requires a flame of equal or greater size than a torch.

Attempting to set a ship on fire requires an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw, though if a character applies oil to a large wooden area of the ship before hand (which typically requires at least one round of work), this Saving Throw is made with Advantage.

Less reckless arsonists may opt to fire flaming arrows at a ship or its sails. Assuming an open flame is available, it takes one round to light an arrow on fire. As long as the target ship is within range of the attacker, that attacker needs only to make an attack roll against a Defense of 10. If this attack is successful they may make an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw at Disadvantage. If the Saving Throw is successful, the ship has caught fire.

Once a ship is on fire it suffers 1d6 points of damage on the first round of combat that it set aflame. Fire damage ignores the Reduction Value of a ship. This damage increases to 2d6 on the second round, and 3d6 on the third round, up to a maximum of 5d6 after five rounds of being on fire. For every 1d6 of fire sweeping across a ship's surface, an area ten square feet wide is covered. Characters standing in an area that is burning suffer 1d6 points of damage.

Attempting to put out a fire is an ongoing and difficult process. A character can spend an entire round trying to put out the flames. Doing so requires an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. Success reduces the next fire damage roll by 1d6. If fire damage is reduced to 0d6 then the fire is extinguished. Failure means the fire continues to spread. Up to five characters can attempt to extinguish fire at any given time aboard a vessel.

House Rule: Targeting the Sail

At the Narrator's discretion, archers may use flaming arrows and target a ship's sails. Attacks against a ship's sail are made against a Defense of 14, but the Insight-based Saving Throw to ensure an accurate shot that catches fire is made without Disadvantage. However, characters attempting to put out a burning sail suffer Disadvantage on their own Insight-based Saving Throws to reduce the spread of the flames as noted above.

REPAIRING A DAMAGED SHIP

As long as a ship has not been reduced to zero Endurance it can be repaired. However, this is a long and difficult process. Until all damage is repaired, the ship will move at a reduced Movement as noted above. While all the crew participates in the repairs, one character is declared the Foreman. At the end of each day in which a ship is being repaired, the Foreman makes a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw. If this Saving Throw is successful, the ship has a single point of Endurance restored.

Remember

The Skaldic Sagas is a free-form roleplaying game, meaning that there aren't very many rules. The Narrator is responsible for handling situations that aren't covered by the rules, making fair evaluations of what the characters do and deciding what happens as a result. This is not a game in which the players are "against" the Narrator, even though the Narrator is responsible for creating tricky traps, dangerous situations, and running the supernatural creatures and other foes the PCs will encounter during the game. In fact, the players and the Narrator cooperate with each other to create a fantasy epic, with the Narrator creating the setting and the players developing the story of the heroes. If they aren't skillful and smart, the epic might be noticeably short. But it's not the Narrator's job to defeat the players—it's their job to provide interesting (and dangerous) challenges, and then guide the story fairly.



CHAPTER FIVE



Urðr & Runes

*Runes shalt thou find, and fateful signs,
That the king of singers colored,
And the mighty gods have made;
Full strong the signs, full mighty the signs
That the ruler of gods doth write.*

-The Poetic Edda

Urðr

The past cannot be changed. The present is always in motion. The future shall be what it shall be. All who walk the Nine Worlds, including Midgard, are bound by their Urðr. Aspects of their life, though not all of it, are bound and immutable. They are a northfolk's Urðr., their immutable fate. At character creation, each player selects an Urðr based on one of the Runes described below. This will color and influence that character's life, granting small bonuses or penalties. The Narrator is encouraged to incorporate a character's Urðr in subtle ways into an adventure as is appropriate.

Runes

Vitki spend their lives studying the nature of Urðr, seeking to harness the power of the Runes to gain insight and achieve their desires. Listed below are the Elder Runes, their aspects, and the benefits they grant a character to whose Urðr they are bound. Each entry also includes a brief description of the potential dangers of being bound to each rune. No specific game penalty is described. Instead the Narrator is encouraged to apply Disadvantage to any roll associated with the negative aspect of a character's Urðr as is appropriate to the situation and the rune in question. This usually manifests as Disadvantage on attack rolls, Saving Throws, damage rolls, or other specific character traits. Again, this is simply a guideline and the Narrator is the final arbiter over what is appropriate based on their saga and the rune in question.

F **Fehu:** Wealth. Your fate is tied to financial gains, whether those gains will lead to good or ill is up to you.

Modifier: You begin play with an additional weapon, suit of armor, or other item approved by the Narrator of a Trade Cost no higher than 5. When you Petition the Jarl for the use of a ship, you receive an Advantage on your Saving Throw.

N **Uruz:** Health. You are hale and hearty, and few illnesses or ailments can touch you. Those you hold dear may not be so gifted and you could be fated to watch your loved ones wither and die.

Modifier: You receive Advantage on all saving throws made to resist diseases, environmental effects (such as severe weather), and poisons.

T **Thurisaz:** Strength. You are physically strong and react with great force to any conflicts that cross your path. Careful that you control your destructive powers, lest they devour you.

Modifier: You receive Advantage on all attempts to force open doors and can carry an additional 20 lbs. of equipment or two significant items without penalty.

F **Ansuz:** Insight. You are a keen observer and much that falls under your gaze is revealed. But not all secrets are meant to be learned by mortals.

Modifier: You receive Advantage when searching for secret or concealed doors. You can also decipher strange languages with a 1-in-1d6 chance of success and may increase this chance to 1-2 on 1d6 if your Insight is between 15 and 17, and 1-3 on 1d6 if your Insight is 18.



R

Raidho: Travel. You shall walk upon the road, whether it be an earthly road or by the sea. But should you journey into dangerous realms, you may become defeated by what you face.

Modifier: Once per session, when your group is required to roll for a Wilderness or Seafaring Encounter, the roll is made twice and you choose which result occurs.

K

Kenaz: Knowledge. Wisdom reveals itself easily to you and you retain much of what you learn in life. Such understanding does not come without burdens or dangers and should be applied carefully.

Modifier: Three times per session, you may ask the Narrator to Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw to recall a useful piece of lore or knowledge regarding your current situation. The Narrator does not reveal whether the information recalled is truthful or not, as if the Saving Throw fails, the you recall incorrect information.

X

Gebo: Generosity. You are quick to give and in return are often given much. However, others may covet your wealth and seek to claim it as their own.

Modifier: When you donate recovered wealth to your community during an Althing, you receive an additional +1 Frith.

F

Wunjo: Fellowship. You will gain many allies in your days, though you must be careful not to garner many adversaries as well.

Modifier: You may retain one extra hireling beyond the number as determined by your Bearing.



N

Hagalaz: Wrath. Your passion is mighty and fierce, able to cow foes before you. But if left unchecked, those close to you may grow to fear you.

Modifier: You receive Advantage when making a Saving Throw to Intimidate Foes.

X

Nauthiz: Self-Reliance. You require little aid from others to survive but must take care not to become too withdrawn lest you find no Frith with your fellow man.

Modifier: When rolling 1d6 to determine the effect of suffering a Grievous Wound you suffer no penalty due to negative Endurance. For purposes of that roll (only) you are considered to have an Endurance of 0.

I

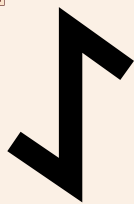
Isa: Ice. You are still and unshaken by what would cause others to cower or go mad. You must be wary that your cold certainty does not lead to others beguiling or betraying you.

Modifier: You receive Advantage on all Despair Saving Throws.

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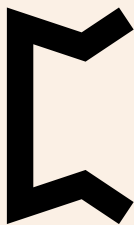
Jera: Prosperity. Your efforts often bear much fruit and you know the value of long labor. You must remain vigilant not to become stagnant and simply repeat the same deeds and fall into complacency.

Modifier: If you spend your time during an Althing aiding the community, you receive +1 additional Frith.



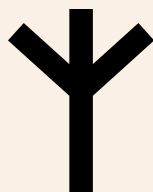
Eihwaz: Protection. You can be relied upon to protect those you hold dear but must not grow bitter when those weaker become reliant upon your shield.

Modifier: As long as you are carrying a shield, you may grant one adjacent ally a +2 bonus to their Defense.



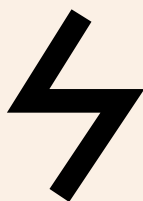
Perthro: The Hidden. Much of the supernatural is revealed to you and with it comes insight, but such knowledge can lead to isolation and even madness.

Modifier: You do not suffer a penalty when fighting invisible foes and are only surprised in battle on a 1 or 2 on 1d12



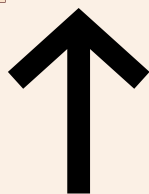
Algiz: Defense. You can easily defend yourself against the dangers of the world, avoiding harm more easily. But you risk drawing chaos and overwhelming danger down upon yourself.

Modifier: You receive Advantage on all Saving Throws made to resist a Grievous Wound.



Sowilo: Honor. You are seen as an honorable member of the community by your peers, and your deeds are boasted of by many. Wary though you must be to those who would beguile you or that the gods may strike you down for your pride.

Modifier: Whenever a Skald attempts a Recounting of Deeds on your behalf, you receive one additional Glory.



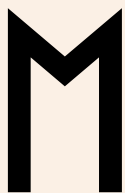
Tiwaz: Justice. You know the laws of your people and can easily discern truth from falsehood. Such a simplistic view can often make it difficult to notice social subtleties or impede communication.

Modifier: Once per day, you can immediately detect a falsehood. This could be a supernatural illusion, or a lie knowingly spoken in your presence.



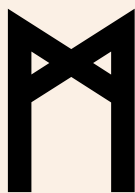
Berkano: Rejuvenation. Life endures and the promise of a better tomorrow follows you. However, your optimism can blind you to potential threats.

Modifier: You heal an additional point of Endurance each day that you rest.



Ehwaz: Movement. You are swift and fleet of foot, but your desire to remain in motion often means that you do not discern the details of the environment around you.

Modifier: You add +1 to your Movement, regardless of what type of movement you are making.



Mannaz: Mankind. You have a deep understanding of your fellow human and the dynamics of your community. Unfortunately this can blind you from the causes and suffering of individual people.

Modifier: All hirelings in your service have a +1 bonus to their Loyalty.



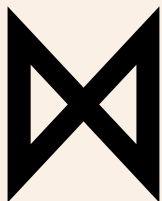
Laguz: The Sea. You have a kinship with the sea, a deep understanding of its mysteries, and the underworld. Pondering its strange depths and swirling froth can lead to madness if one is not careful.

Modifier: Once per session, you may re-roll the results of any Seafaring Conditions and choose which result is used.



Ingwaz: The Earth. You are in touch with the Earth and its simple, often overlooked wisdom. However, your simplistic outlook makes you susceptible to subterfuge and trickery.

Modifier: Once per session, whenever you would have a Wilderness Encounter, you may opt to ignore it and act as though the day passed uneventfully.



Dagaz: Daylight. Your eyes see with a piercing clarity and darkness is of little hindrance to you. This sharp vision means you are often over-confident that what you see is undoubtedly true.

Modifier: When using a torch or other light source for illumination, you can see 60 feet instead of the normal 30.



Othala: Inheritance. You know the true value of your ancestors and the legacy you now carry. But you are suspicious of outsiders and do not trust those who are unfamiliar to you.

Modifier: Up to three times per day, you may choose to receive Advantage on a Saving Throw when standing within 60 feet of three people who are blood relations.

One can not speak about the futhark runes without acknowledging that many of these symbols have been stolen by white supremacists and racists and used as symbols of hate, much to our sorrow.

Our presentation of these runes is solely in their historical and spiritual context, and we advocate against any co-opting of heritage, symbolism or religion by such abhorrent viewpoints as those espoused by racists and supremacists.

Racism is not part of the Viking or Norse ethos, and we violently reject it.

Runes and Treasures

Many magic items, most often weapons and jewelry, are inscribed with Runes. In most instances, the character need only wear the item and they now benefit from an inscribed Rune's modifier.

These Runic Items, however, must be bound to their wielder. This is done by a ritual which can only be performed during an Althing. Such a ritual usually requires a sacrifice of some sort on the part of the would-be wielder, whether this be riches or even in blood. The Narrator determines exactly what is required for this ritual – though if riches are sacrificed, they must be worth at least 100 Trade Cost. These riches are lost and cannot be used for any other benefit, such as donating to the community. In some cases, characters who perform a particularly memorable or heroic deed with a Runic Item may become bound to it, at the Narrator's discretion.

No character may benefit from more than three Runic Items.

CHAPTER SIX

Frith, Community and the Althing



*In thy home be joyous and generous to guests
discreet shalt thou be in thy bearing,
mindful and talkative, wouldst thou gain wisdom,
oft making me mention of good.
He is "Simpleton" named who has naught to say,
for such is the fashion of fools.*

-Havamal

Frith

Frith is most simply defined as security and peace. In the context of the society of the northfolk, it is a shared bond between the members of a given community. Naturally, the Frith between two kinfolk is going to be stronger than between those who simply live in a community together.

Nevertheless, Frith is the cornerstone of society for the northfolk. It is only by standing together with one's kin and with one's community, that safety can be ensured. Frith serves as a measurement of the strength of that bond. Heroes may gain or lose Frith based on their actions and how those actions impact their community.

A high Frith will result in the character being able to call upon their community for aid. Be it food during a harsh winter, arms to protect themselves, or even ships and men to sail across the sea. One is only as strong as their community and that is measured by his Frith.

Beginning Frith & Increasing Frith

All characters begin play with a Frith of one, plus other modifiers as detailed in Chapter One on page 11. The primary way a character increases their Frith is by being an active part of their community and acting in a manner regarded as honorable to their fellow northfolk, though Lendr automatically gain one point of Frith each time they gain

a level. A character can increase their Frith in any of the following ways, though other actions may grant an increase in Frith at the Narrator's discretion.

Donations: Characters can donate treasure they've recovered while adventuring or excess Income from their Community Trade to the community. While this most often includes Runic Items and riches, it can include other wealth such as foodstuff, cattle, or natural resources like substantial amounts of wood or stone, or even crafted resources. If the character donates 25 points worth of Trade Cost items they can increase a character's Frith by one. If donating Income, five points of Income earn a character a single point of Frith.

Assisting: An Althing requires the work of many community members. Feasts must be prepared, accommodations made, and space must be hallowed for the event. A character who spends their entire Althing Assisting can increase their Frith.

Justice: Those who have been named outlaw or kinslayer but have managed to escape the Jarl's justice must be hunted down and either brought to trial or put to the sword—depending on the circumstance. Characters who do this in service of the community can increase their Frith.

Heroism: If a character ever performs a truly heroic act that would likely mean their death in direct protection of the community, they may increase their Frith.

Losing Frith

Just as Frith may be gained by deeds worthy of admiration, so too can it be lost by committing acts grievous to the Urðr of the community and against the betterment of the community. Listed below are several examples of actions which result in the loss of Frith, though other deeds may result in the loss of Frith at the discretion of the Narrator.

Burdensome: Northfolk are expected to be resourceful and to actively contribute to the community. While the community as a whole will take care of one another, those who take advantage of this are seen as slothful or a burden on others willing to work hard to survive.

Insulting: While northfolk often boast of their own deeds and that of their ancestors, to insult another community member (especially kinfolk) is considered to be lowly and cowardly. Good-natured jests are one thing, but to call another man a liar or a coward will likely result in a loss of standing in the community, challenges for retribution, or lethal consequences.

Theft: To steal another community member's property (such as personal items, livestock, or even land) is considered cowardly and weak. Any character caught stealing is regarded as weak and spineless. In addition to losing Frith, there is a chance that the accused will challenge the character to personal combat (often to the death) to prove their mettle.

Kinslaying: No greater crime exists for the northfolk than to slay one's own flesh and blood. Such an act immediately reduces any who would commit such a deed to Outlaw status, and they can expect to be hunted unto death. In rare cases, such as defense of one's life, the charge of kinslaying may be avoided, but this is extraordinarily rare.

Murder. While avenging the death of one's kin publicly is acceptable to northfolk, to sneak in the shadows and put a knife in another person's back is shameful beyond reproach. If a man is to be slain, he has the right to face his attacker and any matter that would warrant such an action should be done without shame. Assassination is the method of cowards.

Solitary. All northfolk are expected to marry, have children, and be both active and present in the community. If they remain apart from such concerns others will look upon them with suspicion and distrust.

Table 6-1: Gaining and Losing Frith

Action	Frith Modifier
Assistance	Add 1 - 2 (1d4-2) (minimum 1) Frith
Donations	Add 1 Frith per 25 points of Trade Cost or 5 Income
Heroism	Add 1 - 3 (1d4-1) (minimum 1) Frith
Justice	Add 1 Frith per Outlaw brought to justice
Burdensome	Lose 3 Frith per 1 Income needed
Insulting	Lose 1d4 Frith; may be challenged.
Theft	Lose 2d6 Frith; may be challenged.
Murder	Frith Becomes 0
Kinslaying	Frith becomes -15; Automatic Outlaw
Solitary	Frith Reduced by 1 per year

FRITH SCORE

-11 or less (Outlaw): Character is exiled from the community and has no rights. They can be slain freely by anyone and are not welcome in the community. It is unlikely they will ever be welcomed again.

-1 – -10 (Thrall): Character is a second-class citizen and may have to pay wergild to those who are offended, whether this be in service, goods, blood, or in deed.

0 (Suspect): Though the character is a member of the community, they were either once an outsider only recently accepted or have deeds in their past that have made them untrustworthy.

1 – 10 (Karl): Character is well regarded in the community. They are likely to hold some land, either to maintain a craft or a farm. They are permitted to vote in and to participate in an Althing and may Petition the Jarl.

11 – 20 (Respected): Character is well-respected by both their fellow community members and the local jarl, they may Petition the Jarl during an Althing with a greater chance of success.

21 or more (Hero): Character is beloved by his community. They may Petition the Jarl during an Althing with a much greater chance of success and automatically receive extra resources if they are successful.

The Althing

Each community or village of northfolk is presided over by a Jarl and a Gothi. The Jarl is the senior official of the community, while the Gothi serves as a spiritual leader. In some cases, a single individual serves as both Jarl and Gothi.

In addition to serving as the community leader and final arbiter of the law (both corporeally and spiritually), Jarl and Gothi lead the Althing. The Althing is a regular gathering of members of the several local northfolk villages to resolve grievances, make official proclamations, and see to the well-being of those gathered.

Before an Althing begins, the Narrator should choose an Annual Event described below or roll on Table 6-2: Annual Events to determine what has transpired in the community since the last Althing. The Annual Event can impact many things in the community ranging from the Income generated by one's trade to an individual character's Frith based on the actions of their kin.

During an Althing there are a few mandatory events that occur. In addition, player characters are given the chance to engage in one Althing Action of their choosing, which represents how they are spending most of their time during this communal gathering. Different Althing Actions can provide different benefits to a character. Mandatory Events include Recounting of Deeds, Community Council, and Community Trading.

Narrators should note that while there are many rules and actions that can be taken during an Althing, it should also serve as a vehicle for roleplaying and political intrigue as much as an exercise in rules and mechanics. Whenever the rules of an Althing get in the way of a good story, feel free to modify or ignore them.



Roll (1d20)

Annual Event

1	Barren Bogs
2	Beneficial Trade Alliance
3	Brutal Winter
4	Bumper Crop
5	Disease
6	Fallow Fields
7	Fertile Husbandry
8	Flooded Rivers
9	Harsh Winter
10	Iron in Plenty
11	Long Summer
12	Mild Winter
13	Outcast Kinsman
14	Plague-Ridden Beasts
15	Poor Trade Alliance
16	Quelled Rebellion
17	Ravaged by Fire
18	Successful Rebellion
19	Unsolved Murder
20	Unsolved Theft

Barren Bogs: The lowlands and valleys yield little bog iron throughout the year. All Smiths suffer a -2 penalty to their Income roll.

Beneficial Trade Alliance: A trading agreement with another community has caused the local economy to flourish. All Income rolls are made with a +1 bonus.

Brutal Winter: Frost came hard and early this year, bringing with it long and heavy snows. The community was barely able to survive through to a late thaw. No Income is earned, no Income roll is made, and all player characters must make a Resolve-based Attribute Saving Throw or lose two points from their current Income score.

Bumper Crop: The fields were fertile in spring and summer. Harvest was both late and bountiful. All Farmers gain a +2 bonus to their Income.

Disease: An illness or plague swept through the community, killing many northfolk. All characters suffer a -3 penalty to their Income roll. Characters with a spouse or children must make a Weal-based Saving Throw or one of the immediate kin (determined by the Narrator) has died from this disease.

Fallow Fields: The crop yield this year was far lower than expected. Whether by a surprise frost, insect parasite, little rainfall, or some other malady, less food was produced. All Farmers suffer a -2 penalty to their Income roll and all Fishermen suffer a -1 penalty to their Income roll.

Fertile Husbandry: Sheep, cattle, and other livestock were robust this year and bred in abundance. All Hunters and Tanners add a +2 bonus to their Income roll, while all Sailmakers and Tailors add a +1 bonus to their Income roll.

Flooded Rivers: Rain fell in extraordinary amounts this year, with sustained downpours dominating many days or even weeks. Rivers teemed with fish, while many fields became oversaturated. All Fishermen gain +2 bonus to their Income roll, while Farmers suffer a -1 penalty to their Income roll.

Harsh Winter: Snow blanketed much of the ground in late fall and throughout early winter and it arrived earlier than expected. Though spring arrived when expected, growing was difficult. Beekeepers, Farmers, and Herbalists suffer a -2 penalty to their Income roll and Shipwrights and Woodworkers suffer a -1 penalty to their Income roll.

Iron in Plenty: A surprising amount of bog iron is discovered throughout the year. Smiths receive a +2 bonus to their Income roll.

Long Summer: Summer came early and stayed well into what are normally regarded as autumn months. It was a long and mild season. Beekeepers, Hunters, and Herbalists receive a +2 bonus to their Income roll, while Farmers, Shipwrights, and Woodworkers receive a +1 bonus to their Income roll.

Mild Winter: Winter laid but the lightest touch upon the community this year, with the briefest of frosts and barely a flake of snow touching the ground. Beekeepers, Fishermen, Farmers, and Herbalists receive a +1 bonus to their Income roll.

Outcast Kinsman: The player character with the lowest Weal has seen one of their kinfolk cast out from the village as an outlaw. The deeds of this relative reflect poorly on the character and they lose 2 Frith. At the Narrator's discretion, this Frith may be recovered if the character tracks down and brings their kinsman to justice before the community.

Plague-Ridden Beasts: A strange illness swept through the community's livestock, killing scores and making the necessary components for clothing, linen, and leather scarce. All Sailmakers, Tanners, and Tailors suffer a -2 to their Income roll.

Poor Trade Alliance: A trading alliance with another community has gone sour, impacting everyone and making resources more scarce than normal. All trades suffer a -1 penalty to their Income roll.

Quelled Rebellion: A small group within the community attempted to usurp the rule of the current jarl. Though their attempt was brief and bloody, it was unsuccessful. The jarl's resources are sorely stretched and

any Aide to the Jarl suffers a -5 penalty to their Income roll. However, if that Aide to the Jarl makes a successful Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw they gain 2 Frith.

Ravaged by Fire: Much of the community's stockpile of wood was ravaged by a fire which swept through the village. Shipwrights and Woodworkers suffer a -2 penalty to their Income Roll.

Successful Rebellion: A group within the community successfully usurped the jarl and a new ruler has taken their place. It was a tumultuous time of questioned loyalties and tested alliances. Aides of the Jarl make no Income roll and must roll a new Community Trade on Table 1-2: Community Trade (page 9), though they may roll Aide to the Jarl again. In addition, these characters must make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw or lose 2 Frith.

Unsolved Murder: A prominent member of the community has been murdered and the culprit has yet to be discovered. Suspicion hangs heavy over the community. All characters must make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw or lose 2 Frith.

Unsolved Theft: A string of thefts has plagued the village and the criminal remains at large. Accusations are whispered across the community. All characters must make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw or lose 1 Frith.



Community and Income

After the Annual Event has been resolved for the year, each character rolls their Income as determined by their Community Trade (see page 9), modified by the circumstances of that Annual Event. If that total is a negative number it is subtracted from the character's total Income. If it is positive, it is added to the character's total Income. Before a character makes their Income roll they can opt to spend up a Trade Cost equivalent of 15 to add +1 to this roll, though they must declare this before they roll and may only do so once per Annual Event.

A character must then reduce their Income by one point to represent the yearly expenses of maintaining their trade and taking care of their home and family. If a character's Income is reduced to zero or less, or for some other reason the character is unable to pay their upkeep cost, they can gain support from the community, but for every point of Income required from the community, the character loses 3 Frith. This means that it is possible for a character to fall into suspected status, or even bondsman or outcast if they are too burdensome on the community.

Mandatory Events

Mandatory events always occur during the Althing and do not count as a character's action during that time.

RECOUNTING OF DEEDS

One of the central events during an Althing is the Recounting of Deeds, where the noteworthy and heroic actions of individual community members are put into song and verse. This is done over the course of several nights, typically at times of feasting.

During an Althing, each player character will be given a chance to recount their deeds of glory and heroism before the community. The Narrator should ask the player to tell everyone at the table what heroic deeds their character has performed since the last Althing. The player can simply state any actions they've performed they believe to be noteworthy or

heroic and earns Glory equal to their current level, plus their modifier for their Key Attribute. This is always at least one Glory. However, they are encouraged to take this opportunity to get into the spirit of The Skaldic Sagas.

Players, this is your chance to really show off how awesome your character really is! Stand up from the table. Straighten your back. Project your voice. Recount in as prosaic or poetic a manner as you can the glorious, the brutal, the horrifying, and the terrible, and the magnificent things your character has done since the last Althing! Ham it up! You are literally weaving your own legend, setting your deeds in the hearts and minds of your friends and kinsmen for generations to come!

After each player has been given a chance to do this, then every other player at the table (including the Narrator), votes in secret for their favorite Recounting of Deeds that was told. Players cannot select their own recounting, but the Narrator can select any player character's recounting they choose. Write your choice on a slip of paper. The Narrator then collects the votes and counts them and reveals the totals to everyone present. The winner of the vote increases their Glory by one. In the event of a tie the character with the lowest current Glory total is declared the winner. If there is still a tie, then the character with the highest Weal is declared the winner.

House Rule: Boasts and Secrets

If all the players and the Narrator approves, instead of the vote being made privately, each player may publicly cast their vote for the best tale recounted. This public announcement is made by everyone at the table at the same time. If this is done a player may vote for their own character, but if a player votes for their own character and does not win the vote then they lose 1 Frith. If there is a tie and no one wins all voters lose 1 Frith. This rule can be used to reflect the sometimes backhanded nature of community politics and is not suitable for all groups.

A character can never gain more than one level during an Althing. If a character earns enough Glory to advance two or more levels during a single Althing, all excess Glory is lost and that character is left with an amount of Glory equal to one less than the amount needed to earn that extra level.

Skalds and Recounting of Deeds

Instead of individual player characters recounting their own deeds, Skalds (and only Skalds) may recount the heroic deeds of the group of player characters as a whole. When a Skald does this they recount the deeds of the party as a single, epic, interwoven saga. When this is done every player character (including the Skald) increases their Glory by an amount equal to the Skald's Storyteller ability, plus their own character's Key Attribute modifier. When this is done no vote takes place.

House Rules: Hiring a Skald

If the player characters do not have a Skald in their group the Narrator may permit them to hire one to perform the Recounting of Deeds. Hiring a Skald costs the equivalent Trade Cost of 5 per level of the Skald, and player characters cannot hire a Skald whose level is higher than the lowest level character in the party.

Instead of paying a price in goods, many Skalds will ask for favors to be repaid later. This can create complications, conflicts, and potential plot hooks for the Narrator to use in future sessions of play.

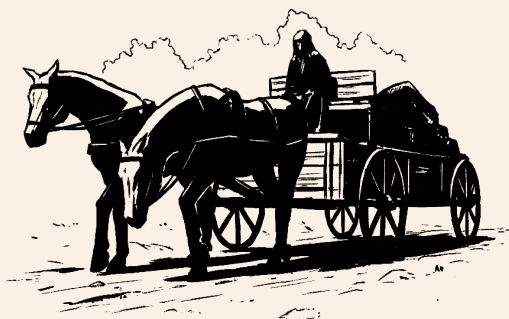
Community Council

At every Althing personal grievances and community concerns are brought before Jarl and Gothi for judgment so that the community can determine how to proceed in a manner that is most beneficial to all present.

While many different issues are brought to a vote during an Althing Community Council, for purposes of gameplay, each Althing features at least one major event which is voted on. This event can be determined

randomly by using Table 6-2: Althing Community Council Event.

At the Narrator's discretion, the player characters may bring a prominent issue related to their adventures up for a vote, or the events of an individual saga may mandate a vote relating to the events of the saga.



Roll (1d6)	Event
1	Pervasive Rumor
2	Petition to the Jarl
3	Criminal Accusation (Minor)
4	Criminal Accusation (Major)
5	Challenge!
6	Attacked!

Table 6.3: Allthing Community Council Event

PERVASIVE RUMOR

While the Althing is a grand social event filled with community discussions and gossip, a single rumor dominates the discussions this time. Perhaps a new tomb has been discovered in the wilderness, or people are nervous about the coming winter being particularly harsh. The Narrator determines the specifics of these events, and they should be used

to create new plot hooks for their saga and tailored to each individual group.

PETITION THE JARL

If this Community Council Event is rolled then a non-player member of the community petitions the jarl for their blessing and aid in a major endeavor, such as a long-distance sea journey, a raid, or establishing a new community that would be under the Jarl's jurisdiction. The Jarl will grant or deny permission, based on the specifics of the individual saga or the Narrator can roll 1d6 and on a 1 or 2, the Jarl will grant permission.

Player characters may attempt to petition the jarl as their individual action during an Althing in a similar manner. Player characters with a Frith of at least 21 or higher have a 1-4 on 1d6 chance of success, while characters with a Frith between 11 to 20 have a 1-3 on 1d6 chance of success, and those with a Frith between 1 to 10 have a 1-2 on 1d6 chance of success. If a player character has a Frith of 0 or less they cannot attempt to Petition the Jarl.

If the attempt to Petition the Jarl is successful, the Jarl provides the necessary resources to engage in the major endeavor, as noted below. The examples below are the most common Petitions and are regularly made by community members, and player characters may petition for other resources based on their needs and desires. The Narrator is encouraged to roleplay such encounters and provide resources based on these interactions.

If a player character with a Frith of 21 or higher successfully Petitions the Jarl, they can requisition an amount of additional items equal in cost to their level plus their Bearing modifier in Trade Cost. So a 4th level character with a Bearing of 15 (a +1 modifier) could get an amount of extra supplies with a Trade Cost of 5.

Instead of extra gear or supplies, a character with a Frith of 21 or higher can ask to retain the services of a number of additional Hirelings equal

Table 6-4: Petition Resources

Event Petitioned	Resources Provided
Establish Community	Between 10 and 60 (1d6 x 10) members of the community will be selected by the Jarl to travel 5 to 100 miles away (1d20 x 5) to establish a new community under the Jarl's rule. They will be provided with traveling supplies, such as food and trappings for the journey. There is a 1 in 1d6 chance the Jarl will ask the player characters to be part of the journey, though the leader of the expedition is always the individual who successfully petitioned.
Raid	Between 5 and 30 (5d6) Raiders (see page 130) are tasked with traveling to a foreign community and conducting a raid. They are provided with basic arms and armor and a sailing vessel. It is expected they will return before the next Althing with suitable riches to provide to the community. If this does not happen, then they all lose 1d6 Frith. Player characters are highly likely to be asked to participate in this raid, especially if they are at least 4th level or higher (1-4 on 1d6 chance), though the leader of the raid is always the individual who successfully petitioned.
Sea Journey	Between 10 and 60 (1d6 x 10) Raiders are sent along with a full crew of forty (40) oarsmen aboard a longship to make an exploratory sea voyage. This voyage will last anywhere between 2 and 12 months (2d6), during which time those participating are expected to discover new lands and chart their discoveries. It is also assumed that they will return with riches taken from foreign realms. If they fail to return with documentation of their exploration, all participants lose 1d6 Frith. If they fail to return with riches (at least Trade Cost 50), they lose an additional 1d4 Frith. Player characters are highly likely to be asked to participate in this exploration, especially if they are at least 4th level or higher (1-4 on 1d6 chance), though the leader of the raid is always the individual who successfully petitioned.

to their level plus their Bearing modifier. Thus the same character, being 4th level and having a Bearing of 15, could retain five more Hirelings (either Raider or Northfolk) assigned to them by the Jarl. These Hirelings, like others assigned to the player character by a Jarl, do not count against their normal Hireling limit as determined by their Bearing.

House Rule: Glorious Petitioner

With Narrator permission a player may choose to permanently sacrifice Glory in order to re-roll a failed attempt to Petition the Jarl. A single point of Glory is lost, and the character may re-roll their attempt to Petition the Jarl, though with a -1 penalty to their roll. This can be attempted multiple times if the first penalized re-roll fails, though each additional subsequent attempt incurs an additional one point penalty. So a second attempt is made at a two point penalty, a third at three point penalty, and so on. If a character's attempts reach the point where the penalty prevents success from being mathematically possible, they may not make additional attempts.

A character cannot permanently sacrifice Glory if the loss of that Glory would reduce them in level.

CRIMINAL ACCUSATION (MAJOR)

A member of the community is accused publicly of a major crime, such as kin-slaying or betrayal. There is a 1-in-6 on 1d6 chance that a player character will be the accused, whether they are guilty or not. At the Narrator's discretion, a player character may be accused of a major crime if they have committed one and there is evidence of their crime.

The Jarl will pass judgment. The Narrator rolls 1d6. If a total of 6 or higher is rolled (after all modifiers are applied), the accused is found guilty. Both evidence and witnesses can be brought forth before judgment is made and modify the Jarl's roll, based on Table 6-5: Accusations. No more than a total of three prosecuting witnesses and three defense witnesses can modify this roll. In some cases evidence may be so compelling that no roll is necessary to assert guilt.

Punishment for this crime includes, at the very least, loss of Frith as indicated on Table 6-1: Gaining and Losing Frith on page 86. Other punishments may be levied at the Narrator's discretion. Punishment for major crimes can include such things as exile or even execution.

CRIMINAL ACCUSATION (MINOR)

A member of the community is accused publicly of a minor crime, such as theft. There is a 1-in-6 on 1d6 chance that a player character will be the accused, whether they are guilty or not. At the Narrator's discretion, a player character may be accused of a minor crime if they have committed one and there is evidence of their crime.

The Jarl will pass judgment. The Narrator rolls 1d6. If a total of 6 or higher is rolled (after all modifiers are applied), the accused is found guilty. Both evidence and witnesses can be brought forth before judgment is made and modify the Jarl's roll, based on Table 6-5: Accusations. No more than a total of three prosecuting witnesses and three defense witnesses can modify this roll.

Punishment for this crime includes, at the very least, loss of Frith as indicated on Table 6-1: Gaining and Losing Frith on page 86. Other punishments may be levied at the Narrator's discretion. Punishment for minor crimes typically include the loss of individual property or some form of payment made to the aggrieved.

Table 6-5: Accusations

Evidence	Modifier
Accused has a Frith of 21 or higher	-2
Accused has a Frith between 11 and 10	-1
Accused has a Frith between 1 and 10	0
Accused has a Frith between 0 and -11	+1
Accused has a Frith of -12 or lower	+4
Strong Evidence	+2
Circumstantial Evidence	+1
Reputable Prosecuting Witness (Frith 11+)	+2 per witness*
Average Prosecuting Witness (Frith 1-10)	+1 per witness*
Reputable Defense Witness (Frith 11+)	-2 per witness*
Average Defense Witness (Frith 1-10)	-1 per witness*

*No more than three prosecuting witness and three defense witnesses can impact an Accusation.

CHALLENGE!

A member of the community challenges another person to single combat over a matter of personal honor. There is a 1-in-6 on 1d6 chance that a player character will be challenged. The challenger must provide evidence or witnesses to confirm their claim. Once confirmed, it must be accepted. The challenger and the challenged are expected to duel to establish guilt or innocence. This can be a duel to the death, but is more often fought to first blood, the breaking of three shields (see page 64) or until a Grievous Blow is inflicted.

See the Human (Challenger) entry on page 125 to determine the statistics for the one issuing the challenge.

ATTACK!

The Althing is interrupted by an attack on the village! The player characters are expected to aid in the village's defense. The attacker can

be either a raiding party or a supernatural creature (or group of them!) selected by the Narrator that will be a suitable challenge to the player characters. Raiding parties seek to damage the community and steal resources, while monsters typically just want to sow destruction.

COMMUNITY TRADING

During an Althing, player characters can attempt to find items they wish to trade. The Narrator should roll 1d6 and consult the table below to determine whether that item is considered scarce at the current Althing. Scarce items may have increased Trade Costs or even be unavailable.

If an item's Trade Cost is reduced to zero or lower, the purchaser can acquire two items of that type for the normal listed Trade Cost. When this happens, no more than two items can be purchased for the base Trade Cost of an item, no matter how low the Trade Cost goes.

Table 6-6: Trade Availability

Roll (1d6)	Availability	Trade Cost Modifier
1	Unavailable	Item cannot be acquired
2	Rare	+2 to Trade Cost
3	Scarce	+1 to Trade Cost
4	Common	No modifier
5	Readily Available	-1 to Trade Cost
6	Easily Found	-2 to Trade Cost

Individual Events

During the Althing, each player character may attempt one of the following Individual Events. Regardless of success or failure, only one Individual Event may be attempted per Althing.

ASSIST THE COMMUNITY

During the Althing (and the time that the character is not adventuring), the character assists in the well-being of the community. This can include repairing homesteads, helping tend lands, gathering resources, or any other action which will provide security and prosperity to the community. Doing so increases their Frith by 1d4-2 (minimum 1).

BIND A RUNIC ITEM

By consulting with the local religious leaders within the community and performing certain rituals, the character can bind a single Runic Item to themselves. The ritual requires the character sacrifice something of immense value (either riches valuing at least 100 Trade Cost or something of deep personal meaning). If the character has nothing of great personal value, they can instead choose to give their own blood. Giving of the blood is no simple thing, and the character permanently loses a single point from either their Might, Finesse, or Resolve.

Once the character has decided whether they are Binding through sacrifice of riches or blood, they must then make a Weal-based Attribute Saving Throw. If it is successful, then the character has bound the object to themselves and it will remain so until they are slain, or a new ritual is performed. A character cannot have more than 3 Runic Items bound to themselves at any one time.

COMPOSE BALLAD OF GLORY (SKALD ONLY)

A Skald of at least 3rd level can spend their Althing composing a Ballad of Glory. This is a tale, poem, or song that will be recalled and retold by all who hear it, sometimes for generations. When crafting a Ballad of Glory, the Skald selects several protagonists who are the focus of the Ballad. They then make a Bearing-based Attribute Saving Throw, though a -1 penalty is applied to it for each protagonist in the Ballad. If the Saving Throw is successful, the protagonists of the Ballad receive +2 to all Saving Throws during their next adventure. The act of successfully composing a Ballad of Glory increases the Skald's Frith by 1 point.

COURTING, MARRIAGE, AND PROGENY

During the Althing (and the time that the character is not adventuring), the character can attempt to court a spouse in the hopes of marrying. Each time a character selects this event, they make a Courting Check.

A Courting Check is done by rolling 1d20, adding their character level and applying modifiers for Level, Frith and Bearing on Table 6-7: Courting and Marriage. If the Courting Check is 15 or higher, the character has successfully courted and married.

Characters with a Frith of 0 or less cannot attempt this event. A character may only have one spouse at a time.

Table 6-7: Courting and Marriage Modifiers

Rating	Modifier
Frith 1-10	+1
Frith 11-20	+2
Frith 21+	+3
Bearing 3	-2
Bearing 5-6	-1
Bearing 15-17	+2
Bearing 18	+3
Character level	Bonus Equal to level

After being married, there is a 1-in-20 on 1d20 that the character's spouse will die before the next Althing. The player simply rolls 1d20 and if a 1 is rolled, the spouse has perished. The Narrator is encouraged to come up with the details of this death as potential motivation for future adventures. Over the course of time between Althings, a character may potentially have a child. If this event is selected they will sire or bear a child. It does not matter whether they are married or not, though if the character is not married and sires a child, this can create complications within the community at the Narrator's discretion.

House Rule: Unexpected Progeny

If the Narrator wishes to add an element of surprise and complication to the lives of the player characters, they may roll 1d20 during an Althing even if the Courting, Marriage, and Progeny action is not selected. If a 1 is rolled, the character is either with child or sired a child unexpectedly. This is not an event.

CRAFT WEAPON OF NOTE (DREGNR ONLY)

A Dregnr of at least 3rd level can spend their Althing attempting to craft a Weapon of Note. To do so, they must invest a suitable amount of valuables, which often include gold, jewels, bone dust from slain enemies, the scale of a dragon, or any other items deemed appropriate by the Narrator. Such rare items can only be recovered during an adventure and should be worth a Trade Cost of at least 20.

The Dregnr then spends the Althing attempting to craft a single melee weapon of their choice, though swords (sometimes known as ulfberht blades) are most common. The Dregnr expends the items required to make the Weapon of Note in the process and then attempts a Might-based Attribute Saving Throw. If the Saving Throw is successful, the Dregnr has crafted a melee weapon that grants them a +2 on all attack rolls when wielded.

If such an item is donated as a gift to the community, the Dregnr gains 1 Frith.

CREATE ENCHANTED ITEM (VITKI ONLY)

A Vitki of at least 3rd level can spend their Althing attempting to create an Enchanted Item. To do so, they must invest a suitable amount of valuables, which often include gold, jewels, bone dust from slain enemies, the scale of a dragon, or any other items deemed appropriate by the Narrator, or help from mystical creatures like dwarves. Such rare items

can only be recovered during an adventure and should be worth a Trade Cost of at least 20.

The Vitki then spends the Althing attempting to craft a single Enchanted Item of their choice. This most often takes the form of a worn item, such as jewelry or clothing. The Vitki expends the resources required to make the Enchanted Item in the process and then attempts an Insight-based Attribute Saving Throw. If the Saving Throw is successful, then a single Enchanted Item is created. Any character wearing an Enchanted Item receives a +2 bonus to their Defense, but they cannot wear more than one Enchanted Item at a time.

If such an Enchanted Item is donated as a gift to the community, the Vitki gains $1d4-2$ Frith (minimum 1).

PETITION THE JARL

A player character with a Frith of 1 or more may spend their Individual Event attempting to Petition the Jarl for aid, as detailed in the Community Council Event above on page 97..



The Passage of Time and the Althing

While there is no formula for the amount of time that passes during both adventures and Althings, it is generally assumed that a single year passes over the course of a single adventure and an Althing. During down time, the character is assumed to be tending their lands, aiding the community, and generally going about their life.

This means that over the course of a saga, player character could potentially reach old age and either retire or die. If this happens and the character has any progeny, their descendant can be played as a 1st level character of any Archetype.

If the dead or retired character had a Frith of 21 or higher, the descendant begins play with the Ancestry of Scion of Heroes automatically, thus beginning play with an additional +1d6 Frith, though they can forgo this option and still randomly roll their Ancestry if the Narrator permits it. At the Narrator's discretion descendant characters may also inherit some resources held by their progenitor.



CHAPTER SEVEN



Bestiary

It is harsh in the world,
whoredom rife
—an axe age, a sword age
—shields are riven—
a wind age, a wolf age—
before the world goes headlong.
-Poetic Edda

The Nine Worlds are filled with all manner of strange and dangerous creatures. This chapter describes just a handful of those, and Narrators are encouraged to draw additional inspiration from Norse mythology or adapt creatures from other classic adventure gaming products for use in their saga.

There's not a lot of detail given about the creatures beyond what is mentioned in their mythological sources because the more detail given the more your own mental image of these fantastic creatures than can be locked into a few lines of text. Specific details about creatures toss roadblocks in front of your imagination. Yes, details can also inspire the imagination, but we're making the assumption that if you're interested in the mythology of the northlands gaming in the first place, you've got a good imagination that doesn't need all of the details about something like a troll — you want to add your own!

Creatures and Attack Rolls

Creatures (sometimes referred to as supernatural creatures or monsters) attack just like player characters. If the Attack Roll is equal to or higher than the defender's Defense, the attack hits and does damage.

Reading Creature Entries

The following is a quick reference guide for how to read creature descriptions:

DEFENSE

“Defense” is explained earlier in the rules for combat in Chapter Four: Combat and Conflict.

ENDURANCE

Endurance is a measure of how long a creature or monster can survive in combat. Whenever a creature is targeted by a successful attack, the damage of that attack is reduced by their Reduction Value while the remainder is deducted from their Endurance total. Unless a creature is stated to be immune from a certain type of damage, all successful attacks inflict at least a single point of damage off the creature’s Endurance. Unlike player characters, when a creature is reduced to zero Endurance it is presumed to be slain.

REDUCTION VALUE

Some creatures have particularly tough hides or commonly wear armor, represented in their Reduction Value. This functions exactly as described in the armor section of Chapter Two: Trappings (page 41) and Chapter Four: Combat and Conflict.

ATTACK BONUS

All creatures have an Attack Bonus, just like player characters. It functions in the same manner, adding to any attack rolls made against their foes.

ATTACKS

“Attacks” lists the attacks a creature has and the damage they inflict.

SPECIAL

“Special” is just a “flag” of sorts for the Narrator that serves as a reminder that a creature has a special ability.

MOVE

“Move” is the creature’s movement rate and is handled like it is for player characters.

SAVING THROW

Like the player characters, all creatures have a saving throw. It is the number on the d20 the creature needs to equal or exceed to avoid a threat or lessen its effect.

DESPAIR RATING

This is a measure of how threatening, dangerous, and in some cases, supernaturally terrifying a creature can be. If a creature’s Despair Rating is five points higher than the level of the player character, then that player character must make a Despair Saving Throw upon first encountering the creature per the Overwhelming Evil description found on page 66. This is also a good measure of how dangerous a creature is when the Narrator is trying to create a challenging encounter for their players. In the cases of creatures that are not horrific or terrifying by nature, the Despair Rating can instead reflect other unearthly qualities that would leave mortals in awe or reverence at the majesty and strangeness of the being before them.

Creature Descriptions

Listed below are but a few examples of the many species which may populate the Nine Worlds. The Narrator has final say of what being and creatures are present in each saga.

AGLÆC-WIF

Defense: 12

Endurance: 40

Reduction Value: 3

Attack Bonus: +8

Attacks: Bite (2d4), and Claws (2, 2d6 each)

Special: Grievous Attack, Melt Weapon, Regeneration, Strong Swimmer

Move: 4 (Swim: 6)

Saving Throw: 11

Despair Rating: 10

The Aglæc-Wif is a terrifying female warrior-beast that dwells in watery regions and often makes its home in underwater caves. She appears as an inhuman creature with putrid, oily flesh, strands of lanky hair, bulbous eyes, and an impossibly large mouth full of razor-sharp teeth. She can swim at extraordinary speeds and breathe water as easily as she breathes air. She heals one Endurance per round, as long as she is in a natural body of water, even if reduced to zero Endurance. If in water, the only way to assure death is to decapitate her. Even then, when the Aglæc-Wif is slain, the attacker must make a saving throw or their weapon melts and is permanently destroyed; though Runic Weapons grant Advantage on this Saving Throw.

The Aglæc-Wif typically strikes by ambushing their target from a watery hiding place and when concealed in such an environment, they increase their chance to surprise foes by +3. Once in battle, the Aglæc-Wif focuses her efforts on dispatching one foe at a time with its whirling dervish of teeth and claws. When attacking, the Aglæc-Wif attacks with her mighty claws for exceptional damage as well as attacking with a bite. If she bites and rolls an unmodified 19 or 20, the target must make a Saving Throw or suffer a Grievous Blow.

The Aglæc-Wif is always solitary and tolerates no intruders or interlopers in her watery lair.

BEAR

Defense: 10

Endurance: 20

Reduction Value: 2

Attack Bonus: +3

Attacks: Bite (1d8) and Claws (2, 1d6)

Special: Overwhelm

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 17

Despair Rating: 3



Bears are commonly found in heavily forested areas and typically flee when humans and other outsiders draw near. Larger bears can be found in mountainous regions or in the frozen places of the world, though most encountered by travelers have black or brown fur. Bears are most often encountered when explorers intrude on their dens and in these cases,

Bears become aggressive—especially in defense of their cubs or mate.

Some hunters often seek out Bears and try to fell them with hopes to sell their fur, claws, teeth, and meat—all of which can fetch a fine price. When cornered and or aggressive, Bears attack with their bone-snapping bite and a swipe of each of their claws. In the event that a Bear successfully attacks a target with both of its claws in the same round of combat, it overwhelms the target and pushes them to the ground, where it pins them and all further attacks made by the Bear are made with Advantage until the victim can make a successful Might-based Attribute Saving Throw.

Bears are usually solitary but may be encountered in mated pairs. Legends say that great white bears dwell in Niflheim. They are twice the size of normal bears and are rumored to prowl the icy wastes of their homeland, following the scent of human blood.

BIRD OF PREY

Defense: 17

Endurance: 2 (4 for Eagles)

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Bonus: +2

Attacks: Talons (1 point) and Beak (1d4)

Special: Flight, Keen Eye

Move: 1 (Fly: 5)

Saving Throw: 19

Despair Rating: 0

The bird of prey is a generic name that describes several species of mundane predatory birds, either diurnal (hawk, harrier, kite, falcon, eagle, osprey, etc.) or nocturnal (owl). Their hunting technique varies: some fly high above the ground in search of prey, while others zoom just a few feet above it. But they all snatch their prey in their sharp talons with a lightning fast attack, and fly away to devour it in a secluded or elevated spot. It is not uncommon for some jarls to capture and train them as hunting companions.

The birds of prey's keen eyes grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their long range sight. It also allows them to target vulnerable areas such as the face and hands, and thus ignore up to 2 points worth of Reduction provided to the defender by any worn armor.

Birds of prey are usually solitary, but they can sometimes be found in pairs, especially during mating season.

BOAR

Defense: 13
Endurance: 16
Reduction Value: 2
Attack Bonus: +3
Attacks: Bite (1d4), Tusks (1d8+2)
Special: Keen Senses, Charge
Move: 5
Saving Throw: 16
Despair Rating: 2

Boars are among the most dangerous natural denizens of the woods, along with the mighty bears and regal stags, and as such have the respect of all hunters and rangers. Bringing wild boar meat on the table of a jarl is always seen as a demonstration of courage and prowess. These omnivorous creatures can be found in small herds of 2 to 12 individuals (2d6), half of which are usually juveniles fiercely protected by the adults. A boar's keen senses grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their senses of smell and hearing.

When provoked, a boar will charge at its target and attempt to gore them on its massive tusks. If a boar moves at least 20 feet in a straight line toward its target and attacks it gains Advantage on both the attack and damage rolls.

Note: Domesticated pigs have the same statistics as wild boars, with the differences that they can't charge, have no tusks (and thus, no tusk attack), an Attack Bonus of +0, and a Despair Rating of 0.

CAT

Defense: 16

Endurance: 3

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Bonus: +1

Attacks: Bite (1 point) and Claws (1d4)

Special: Keen Senses, Peer through the Veil

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 14

Despair Rating: 0

House cats (and their feral cousins) are a common sight all across the land. Kept as a pet, or used as a mouser, cats can be found in the houses of jarls and peasants alike.

A cat's keen senses grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their senses of sight and hearing. It also allows them to target vulnerable areas such as the face and hands, and thus ignore up to 1 point worth of Reduction provided to the defender by their armor.

Cats are creatures sensitive to the supernatural. As a result, they can sense and see incorporeal creatures as clearly as if such a being were an ordinary person or animal, even when they are invisible to others. Cats are almost always solitary creatures.

Note: These statistics can be used for any other small carnivorous mammal, such as the fox, weasel, ferret, raccoon, mink, or the like.



Dog

Defense: 14

Endurance: 6

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Bonus: +1

Attacks: Bite (1d4+1)

Special: Keen Senses, Pack Tactics, Steadfast and Loyal

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 17

Despair Rating: 0

Man's best friend can be found wherever their masters are settled. Sitting beside jarls in their longhouses, hunting with woodsmen, or shepherding in the pastures, dogs are everywhere, performing their duties loyally and tirelessly. When encountered, the number of dogs varies greatly depending on their function.

A dog's keen senses grant them Advantage on Initiative rolls and on any roll that tests their senses of smell and hearing. Hunting and guard dogs

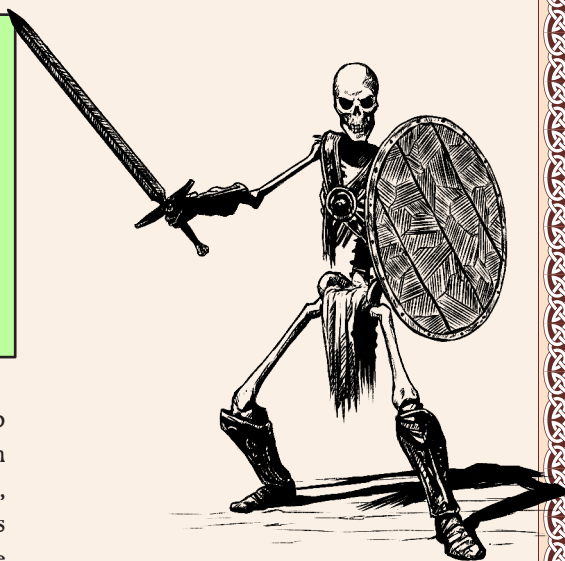


are taught to target vulnerable areas such as the face, throat, and hands, and thus ignore up to 1 point worth of Reduction provided to the defender by their armor. They are also trained to attack their prey from all angles as a pack, and as a result when 2 or more dogs attack the same target in the same combat round, all these attackers receive a +1 bonus on both their attack rolls and damage rolls.

When defending their homes or masters against aggressors, dogs are steadfast granting them a +2 bonus to their Defense, and +2 on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and Despair Saving Throws.

DRAUGR, CORPOREAL (UNDEAD)

Defense: 10
Endurance: 10
Reduction Value: 2
Attack Bonus: +2
Attacks: Slam (1d6)
Special: Relentless Dead
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 17
Despair Rating: 4



Draugr are corpses who have risen, most often appearing as bloated, blackened, hideous warriors reeking with the scent of decay. How exactly a Draugr comes into existence is unknown, but they typically defend burial sites and tombs by slaying with their preternatural strength any living being that trespasses in their domain. Whenever Draugr are fighting in tombs, on battlefields, or when within 120 feet of at least half a dozen corpses, they receive Advantage on all attack rolls.

Legends regarding Draugr are many and varied, and the Narrator is encouraged to add new and unique abilities and powers to Draugr encountered by the player characters, adjusting the statistics above accordingly.

Draugr are usually encountered in numbers ranging from a small band of less than half a dozen to as many as large companies of 30 (5d6).

DWARF

Defense: 14

Endurance: 10

Reduction Value: 4

Attack Bonus: +2

Attacks: By Magical Weapon

Special: Keen Senses, Magical Arms and Armor

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 17

Despair Rating: 4

The look of dwarves varies across many sagas. Some say they appear as elves with black skin, while others claim they are small, stout men with great beards. In almost all legends they are master craftsmen with a lust for treasure. This treasure can be gold and jewels but can also be mead or other treasures. While known for their craftsmanship, they are also quite skilled at making deals with mortals and gods alike. Legends even speak of dwarves who have lain in the beds of beautiful women and goddesses alike. They can see clearly in complete darkness and their magical weapons grant the wielder Advantage on all attack rolls in melee combat.

Dwarves dwell in the world of Svartalfheim and it is believed by some that they can be bartered with or tricked to acquire their magnificent crafts—though this is no easy task. They may be immune to damage from mundane weapons, and often carry enchanted weapons or other magical treasure.

In the rare event that a Dwarf is encountered beyond the realm of Svartalfheim, they are likely to be solitary or in small traveling bands (1d4). Most will avoid mortals, though a rare few may attempt to trade with humans for rare goods or strange favors. They will always be well armed and armored.



EINHERJAR

Defense: 16
Endurance: 20
Reduction Value: 4
Attack Bonus: +4
Attacks: By Weapon
Special: Fury of the North, Undying
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 15
Despair Rating: 5

The Einherjar were once mortal warriors. After being slain in battle they were taken by a Valkyrie to Valhalla, the Hall of Odin. There they feast and carouse among themselves and in the presence of the All-Father until

the time of Ragnarok. At the end of the world, they shall spill forth from Odin's Hall to do battle with the Jotunheim.

Because the Einherjar have already been slain and then chosen by Odin, they cannot be killed again until Ragnarok. As such, any slain Einherjar will simply rise again at dawn, refreshed and healed. Moreover, Einherjar benefit from the Fury of the North ability, just like the Dregnr Archetype (page 18). Finally, when engaged in combat against a wolf or jotun, all Einherjar have Advantage on both their attack and damage rolls.

Einherjar are not normally encountered on Midgard and if the Narrator introduces them in the mortal world, they should decide on a specific reason for doing so.

ELF

Defense: 15

Endurance: 35

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Bonus: +7

Attacks: By Elf-Weapon

Special: Blinding Radiance, Elf-Weapons

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 12

Despair Rating: 8

Elves are luminous beings, as fair and beautiful as the rising sun. They are master craftsmen, said to dwell under the lordship of the god Frey, though they make their home in the verdant wilderness of Alfheim. The exact nature of their relationship with Frey and details regarding their homeland of Alfheim are vague, though it is believed that Alfheim is both beautiful and peaceful, and to have been valued by or to even have been the original domain of the Vanir.

Because of their radiant, inhuman beauty, mortals who look upon elves must make a Saving Throw or be stricken blind for 1d6 rounds. Elves

are graceful in combat, though they are not aggressive by nature. Still, they will defend both themselves and their realm with merciless swiftness. Elves wield strange, radiant weapons that are highly effective in battle, granting the wielder Advantage on all attack rolls in both melee and ranged combat. These weapons still inflict normal damage.

Because so little is known about elves, the Narrator determines the number encountered and why they are traversing Midgard.

FOWL

Defense: 17

Endurance: 2 to 4 (see below)

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Bonus: +0

Attacks: Peck (1 point)

Special: Cowardly (except for geese, turkeys, and swans)

Move: 3 (Fly 4)

Saving Throw: 18

Despair Rating: 0

The statistics presented here for the fowl can be used for all small and medium-sized game birds and domesticated poultry, such as chicken, ducks, geese, turkeys, pheasants, partridges, grouses, swans and peacocks.

These birds are often omnivores, feeding off whatever they can find by scratching the soil or digging in the silt of ponds and rivers. They are gregarious, and often found in large flocks of 6 to 36 individuals (6d6). All fowl have 2 points of Endurance, except the turkeys and peacocks which have 3, and the geese and swans which have 4.

Easily startled, fowl have Advantage on all initiative rolls. Their cowardly nature serves them well in protecting them from predators, but it makes them very reluctant to fight. If they are cornered, fowl will defend themselves, but will suffer Disadvantage on all their attack rolls (except the notoriously aggressive geese, turkeys, and swans which suffer no such penalty).

GOAT

Defense: 11
Endurance: 8
Reduction Value: 1
Attack Bonus: +1
Attacks: Headbutt (1d4)
Special: Faint, Skilled Climber
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 19
Despair Rating: 0

Goats are cloven-hoofed quadrupeds found in mountainous regions of the world. They are skittish and flighty when encountering humanoids. Though herbivores by nature, goats will often nibble on anything they find out of curiosity. They are commonly domesticated, and their fur, horns, milk, and meat are all used by farmers in various everyday chores.

Goats are natural climbers, suffering no penalty to their Defense or Move when climbing. Fearful of physical conflict, goats will most often flee when threatened. A particularly startled goat may opt to “faint,” by falling over and playing dead for several minutes. When forced to fight, Goats attack with a surprisingly powerful charging headbutt from their horns.

When in the wild, a grip of goats can number anywhere from three or four to as many as twenty or more (3d8). Domesticated goats are kept in pens by farmers and are almost never solitary, as goats are social creatures by nature.



HABROK (HIGH HAWK)

Defense: 14

Endurance: 15

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Bonus: +3

Attacks: Bite (1d6) and Rake (1d4)

Special: Dive, Flight, Keen Senses

Move: 3 (Fly: 6)

Saving Throw: 14

Despair Rating: 2

These magnificent hawks are regarded in sagas and stories as the highest of hawks, the apex of aerial predators. Their features are perfect and their feathers pristine, with their lord dwelling in the highest bows of Yggdrasil. These great avians have a wingspan surpassing 10 feet and though they do not speak, save for their sky-piercing cry, they are as intelligent as a human.

In combat, the High Hawk is swift and deadly. They are capable of attack twice per round: once with their sharp beak and again with a rake of their talons. High Hawks have extraordinarily sharp vision and can see foes over a mile away, making them near-impossible to catch off guard – they are only surprised on a 1 on 1d12. In addition, if a Habrok makes a dive attack at a target after having moved at least half their flying movement, they receive Advantage on both their attack and damage rolls with both their bite and rake. High Hawks normally prey on animals and beasts, though it is said that in rare cases they serve as agents of the Aesir against those who have drawn their ire.

High Hawks are almost always solitary, though occasionally travel in flights of as many as half a dozen (1d6).

HARE/RABBIT

Defense: 18
Endurance: 2
Reduction Value: 0
Attack Bonus: +0
Attacks: Bite (1 Point)
Special: Cowardly
Move: 5
Saving Throw: 19
Despair Rating: 0

Hares often end up on the menu of hunters and travelers, as they are very common in the woodlands and wild places of the world. Easily startled, hares have Advantage on all initiative rolls, as well as any roll related to their hearing. Their cowardly nature serves them well in protecting them from predators, but it makes them very reluctant to fight. If they are cornered, hares will defend themselves, but will suffer Disadvantage on all their attack rolls.

HORSE

Defense: 11
Endurance: 8
Reduction Value: 0
Attack Bonus: +1
Attacks: Hoof (1d4)
Special: None
Move: 6
Saving Throw: 19
Despair Rating: 0

These statistics represent a traditional riding or work horse. Horses can be trained to serve as messenger steeds but are not commonly found in the realm of the northfolk.

Most horses will flee combat at the first opportunity to avoid danger, while wild horses tend to avoid outsiders and suspicious beings all together. Wild horses can be found in bands of five to 30 (5d6), particularly in untouched open plains where they can run and graze. Most often seized in raids on foreign lands, horses are valued for their speed and stout nature. They are often used by messengers carrying news between communities. Northfolk communities do not train them to serve as combat mounts, nor do they make use of cavalry.

HUMAN (CHALLENGER)

Defense: 15
Endurance: 24
Reduction Value: 4
Attack Bonus: +4
Attacks: By Weapon
Special: Brutal Combatant
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 15
Despair Rating: 3

This represents the typical statistics of a warrior likely to challenge the player characters during a challenge at the annual Althing. Challengers are fierce, experienced warriors, capable of slaying lesser men with ease. They are always armed with at least two weapons, one of which is almost always a spear. They always wear mail and a helm, as well as carry a shield (as reflected in their Defense and Reduction Value). Because of their brutal combat training, they have Advantage on all melee damage rolls —though only during a challenge.

Particularly experienced Challengers may have more formidable statistics at the Narrator's discretion.



HUMAN (JARL)

Defense: 10

Endurance: 25

Reduction Value: 1

Attack Bonus: +5

Attacks: By Weapon

Special: Lord of the Longhouse, Loyal Allies

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 14

Despair Rating: 5

A Jarl is the leader of a community of northfolk. He is the final arbiter of disputes and settles any disagreements within the community. Most, though not all, are men. Jarls are typically of middling age and well-regarded as warriors in their own right. A Jarl normally keeps $2d6+2$ Human (Raiders), and at least one Challenger in their presence at all times to act as his personal guard. These are loyal allies and receive Advantage on all attack rolls when defending their Jarl. In addition, because he is lord of the longhouse, those who are in the Jarl's favor receive a +1 bonus to all saving throws while under his hospitality and in his good graces.

Because Jarls are the leaders, they are almost always solitary save for their retinue of protectors.



HUMAN (FOREIGNER)

Defense: 10
Endurance: 10
Reduction Value: 2
Attack Bonus: +2
Attacks: By Weapon
Special: Varies
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 17
Despair Rating: 2

Foreigners are anyone not native to the northlands. This information represents as close to a “typical” outsider as can be codified. They are hardy, to have traveled the harsh northern realms, and typically well-armed and armored. Foreigners are likely to travel in large groups ranging from five to 20 (5d4) individuals. Only one in 20 of them (1 in 1d20) is likely to speak the tongue of the northfolk.

Most are armed with a melee weapon and wear the equivalent of a leather corselet, though some may be better armed and armored. Those with shields will have a Defense of 14. Foreigners, because they come from strange and distant lands could possibly have any number of special abilities similar to other humans or entirely new abilities as determined by the Narrator.



HUMAN (NORTHFOLK)

Defense: 14

Endurance: 12

Reduction Value: 2

Attack Bonus: +1

Attacks: By Weapon

Special: In Defense of My People

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 2

Despair Rating: 1



These statistics represent that of the average member of a northern community. These statistics assume they are prepared for combat and are wearing a leather corselet and carrying a shield. Most northfolk will be armed with a spear or cudgel. Sometimes they even carry a sword or even a dane axe. Those carrying a dane axe will not have a shield and thus have a Defense of 10. About half of these battle ready northfolk will have a bow and twenty arrows.

When fighting to protect their community or kinsmen, northfolk receive a +2 bonus on all attack rolls, saving throws, and loyalty. When player characters retain the service of hirelings they are almost always northfolk.

Northfolk are typically found in small traveling bands between five and twenty five people (4d6+1), which is the number necessary to crew a ship in the event that they are sailor, or in vast groups numbering anywhere from a few dozen to several hundred when they have formed a community.

HUMAN (OUTLAW)

Defense: 15
Endurance: 12
Reduction Value: 1
Attack Bonus: +2
Attacks: By Weapon
Special: Ambush
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 17
Despair Rating: 2

Outlaws are northfolk without Frith. They have no place in northfolk society and have been cast out. They live in the wild places of the world, surviving by what they can scrape from the cold, unforgiving land and – more often – by robbing and murdering members of their former community. Outlaws can be armed with any manner of weapon, and most often wear fur armor and either carry a shield or wear a helm. In some cases, Outlaws band together to form small raiding parties of their own

that range in size anywhere from five to 20 men (3d6+2). These raiding parties are typically led by an Outlaw King with an Endurance of 24, and an additional +2 on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws.

Outlaws typically strike via Ambush, and when prepared, they increase their chances of surprising an opponent by +5.

HUMAN (RAIDER)

Defense: 15
Endurance: 15
Reduction Value: 2
Attack Bonus: +3
Attacks: By Weapon
Special: Fierce Combatant
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 16
Despair Rating: 3

The statistics for a Raider represent a typical veteran northfolk warrior. Most often armed with a spear, a hand axe, and a dagger, they typically enter battle clad in leather, bearing both shield and helm (as shown in their Defense and Reduction Value). Raiders are fierce combatants, and once reduced to one-half of their maximum Endurance, they receive Advantage on all damage rolls. Raiders typically travel in small scouting parties of between 2 to 12 individuals (2d6) or large battle groups between 15 and 30 (3d6+12). Battle groups are always led by at least one Raider Chief for every ten men present. Raider Chiefs have an Endurance of 30, and an additional +3 on all attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws.



JOTUN, ICE

Defense: 10

Endurance: 50

Reduction Value: 5

Attack Bonus: +10

Attacks: Frozen Spear (3d6+4), or Fist (1d6+4), or Thrown Boulder (4d6)

Special: Frozen Breath, Icy Aura, Hurl Boulders

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 10

Despair Rating: 9

Massive and powerful, Ice Jotuns are native to Niflheim but sometimes can be found in the far northern reaches of Midgard. Plodding across snow-cloaked mountain passes and striding through icy wastelands, they hunt any warm-blooded creatures they can find, from massive beasts to wayward travelers, to slake a perpetual craving for blood. Hurling deadly spears nearly 20 feet in length and breathing frozen mist, they travel across places where that which is frozen never thaws, and live to see the steam of fresh blood rise to the sky in honor of their prowess in battle. Jotun stand almost 12-feet tall and can weigh several thousand pounds. Their skin is icy blue and extremely cold to the touch, while their twisted faces are framed by wild, wind-swept beards the color of snow. Their love of the cold means they often travel wearing little more than a loincloth, with a few pouches at their waist where they stash their plunder or store boulders for throwing.

When Ice Jotuns do engage in battle, they fight with long spears encased in ice. These spears allow them to make melee attacks against targets that are up to ten feet away from them. In addition, if they roll an unmodified 20 on their attack roll, instead of inflicting damage on their opponent, the Ice Jotun can opt to shatter a non-magical weapon or shield their opponent is wielding. Those able to close the distance and get within ten feet of an Ice Jotun will be caught in the nearly frozen air that radiates from them. Each round an individual is caught in this icy aura, they suffer 1d4 points of cold damage and must make a Saving

Throw or be forced to choose between moving or performing another action. Finally, though they wield massive spears in combat, Ice Jotuns sometimes ambush their opponents by hurling massive boulders with a range of 240 feet which can splatter a human to pulp.

Ice Jotuns are nomadic, wandering in small tribes that range in size from four to 24 (4d6), though occasionally scouting parties of one or two will wander off alone. These nomadic tribes leave death and destruction in their wake, craving the bloodshed that comes from unchecked slaughter.



JOTUN, SOUTHERN

Defense: 10

Endurance: 58

Reduction Value: 5

Attack Bonus: +11

Attacks: Flaming Long Sword (3d8+5), or Fist (1d8+5), or Thrown Boulder (5d6)

Special: Destroy Armor, Flaming Aura, Hurl Boulders

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 9

Despair Rating: 10

Like their northern cousins, these devourers native to Muspelheim are terrible foes to face in battle. Rarer than even Ice Jotuns, Southern Jotuns are found almost exclusively in Muspelheim, though some travel into the most southern reaches of Midgard. With strength beyond any mortal and a lust for carnage unimaginable, the Southern Jotun are kin of Surtr, the black Jotun from whose sword shall spring the fire which will consume all the world when Ragnarok comes.

They stand twice the height of a man and weigh well over a thousand pounds with ashen black skin and fiery orange manes and beards. In combat, they favor massive flaming two-handed swords suited to their size. These swords are scalding hot to the touch and too impossibly heavy for mortals to wield in combat. Though they dwell primarily in places too dangerous for mortal beings, scouting and raiding parties do occasionally venture north and set up camps and outposts in volcanic regions or desert wastelands.

Southern Jotuns naturally radiate a heat so intense that any being within 10 feet of one of them automatically suffers 1d6 points of heat damage unless they have some kind of resistance or immunity. Before charging into melee, Southern Jotuns typically lay in ambush behind massive caerns of piled stones, which they can hurl a distance of up to 360 feet to devastating effect (5d6 damage). Once in melee, their weapons can melt metal or incinerate armor with ease. Each time a Southern Jotun

makes a successful attack with their flaming sword, if their target is wearing mundane armor then that armor permanently loses a point of its Reduction Value as it begins to burn away or melt.

When traveling, Southern Jotuns move in raiding parties between three and six warriors (1d4+2), and rumors say that great cities in Muspelheim exist just beyond the southern reaches of Midgard with winding roads of obsidian, latticed with rivers of magma, and buildings of volcanic rock.

JOTUN-WOLF

Defense: 12

Endurance: 30

Reduction Value: 3

Attack Bonus: +8

Attacks: Bite (2d6+2)

Special: Ambush, Ferocious, Tearing Bite

Move: 6

Saving Throw: 12

Despair Rating: 7

Whether spawn of the Fenrir itself or strange wolfen creatures twisted by some other force, the Jotun-Wolf appears as a great gray-furred wolf with bristling fur, fiery red eyes, and blood-soaked teeth. Standing as tall as a man at the shoulder, it is a perpetually devouring and exceptional hunter that strikes from ambush – often after stalking its chosen prey for days. Once it sets upon a man, only death can stop it.

A Jotun-Wolf can follow the scent of man if it makes a successful Saving Throw with Advantage once it catches the smell of blood. It will stalk its chosen prey tirelessly for days, needing scant few hours of sleep as it is consumed by the lust for carnage. When in wilderness environments, it strikes from ambush, increasing the chance of surprising its prey by +4. Once wounded in battle (if reduced to an Endurance of 15 or lower), it becomes ferocious and even more deadly, receiving Advantage on all attack and damage rolls. Finally, its snapping maw is capable of ripping men limb from limb and if its bite attack inflicts 10 or more points

of damage, the victim must make a saving throw or suffer a Grievous Blow.

Jotun-Wolves are always found alone and are extraordinarily rare, though some songs speak of packs of these horrid beasts helping their master to devour the world when Ragnarok comes.

Ox

Defense: 10

Endurance: 22

Reduction Value: 3

Attack Bonus: +2

Attacks: Charge (1d8), Trample (Special)

Special: Irritable, Stampede

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 17

Despair Rating: 1

Oxen and cows can be found in most farms, where they are kept for their milk, their meat, and to aid in plowing fields or pulling carts. Wild cattle can be found grazing in the vast plains, woods, and wetlands of the north, where they travel in herds ranging in size from 10 to 50 individuals (5d10).

These large animals are normally placid, content to graze and be left alone. But if they are attacked or provoked, they can easily turn aggressive (especially the males) and attack with their large horns. When enraged, a bull will charge at its enemy, and if it is able to move at least 30 feet in a straight line toward its target in the same round as the attack, it gains Advantage on both its attack roll and damage roll.

When a herd is startled, it may panic and collectively flee in a random direction. Unfortunate bystanders often find themselves trampled to death. For every ten cattle in a stampede, 1d10 points of damage is inflicted by anyone caught in their wake. This damage ignores Reduction Value from armor. If a character failed to find shelter from a stampede,

they must make a Finesse-based Attribute Saving Throw with Disadvantage. A successful Saving Throw halves the stampede damage, and a character who rolled a total of 20 or higher has managed to steer clear of the stampede entirely.

RATATOSKR, THE BORE-TOOTH

Defense: 19
Endurance: 20
Reduction Value: 1
Attack Bonus: +4
Attacks: Bite (1d4)
Special: Climb, Infuriate, Linguist, Stealthy
Move: 4 (Climb: 8)
Saving Throw: 13
Despair Rating: 4

Appearing as a red-furred squirrel whose eyes dart back and forth, this perpetually chattering creature travels up and down the length of Yggdrasil as a messenger between the great eagle at that nests in its upper bows and the devouring serpent Nidhogg that dwells at its roots. Ratatoskr is the consummate rumormonger and mischief-maker. He is flighty, avoiding combat whenever possible.

Capable of speaking all languages of mortals, gods, and beasts, Ratatoskr will attempt to distract potential threats with an infuriating stream of gossip concerning his would-be foe in hopes of distracting them. Those who listen to Ratatoskr's chattering must make a Saving Throw or they accept his rumors as truth (whether they are or not) and seek retribution for these newly informed slights instead of attacking the Bore-Tooth himself.

Ratatoskr can climb at great speeds, moving at twice his normal movement when scurrying up and down trees, cliffs, or other vertical surfaces. He is capable of moving unseen in natural environments, remaining hidden and silent with a 1-5 on 1d6 chance of success whenever he wishes. Being a unique creature, Ratatoskr is always solitary.

RAVEN

Defense: 16
Endurance: 2
Reduction Value: 0
Attack Bonus: +1
Attacks: Bite (1 point)
Special: Flight, Mimicry, Speech
Move: 1 (Fly: 4)
Saving Throw: 19
Despair Rating: 0

These large black birds can be found in the wilderness, on farmlands, and even in villages and settlements. They seem almost ever present, as comfortable in the untamed places of the world as they are in the civilized realms. Ravens are sometimes taken as companions by amateur bird tamers or even Vitki and can be trained to serve as messenger birds. Patient handlers have even taught them mimicry and voice repetition. Not normally hostile, they only fight when cornered and instead prefer to flee from any threats they may face.

Northfolk regard Ravens as having strong ties to Odin the All-Father, who keeps two of them named Huginn and Muninn ("Thought" and "Memory"). As such, Ravens have a strong association with magic and warfare.

Though sometimes solitary, Ravens are more often found in a murder of anywhere between two and 24 (2d12) members.

SCEADUGENGA

Defense: 16

Endurance: 30

Reduction Value: 4

Attack Bonus: +6

Attacks: Bite (1d10) and Claws (2, 1d8 each)

Special: Fearsome Appearance, Shadow Dweller

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 15

Despair Rating: 7

With eyes that glow with an inhuman, ugly light, this terrible being is born of darkness and feels only hate. Flitting from shadow to shadow, and weaving a mist in its wake, it seeks to create carnage and devour human flesh with an all-consuming bloodlust. It dwells in foul swamps on the edges of northfolk communities, sometimes daring to attack outlying farms or, in rare cases, even a Jarl's longhouse.

The Sceadugengan are only active at night, and despite their immense size, they are remarkably stealthy. When standing still in wilderness environments they are effectively invisible and increase their chances to surprise a target via ambush by +8. In fact, they are so skilled at ambushing targets that if they have not been detected, they make their first attack during a combat with Advantage. They are terribly strong in battle, attacking with a fierce bite or bludgeoning fist. A Sceadugenga is so fearsome to behold that when seen in any illumination brighter than moonlight, all witnesses suffer Disadvantage on their Despair Saving Throw.

Sceadugengan are always solitary, lairing in putrid holes and foul hollows in festering swamplands near unsuspecting communities.

SEA SERPENT

Defense: 10

Endurance: 100

Reduction Value: 7

Attack Bonus: +13

Attacks: Bite (5d10)

Special: Swallow Whole, Water Breathing

Move: 0 (Swim: 6)

Saving Throw: 5

Despair Rating: 13

These massive sea-dwelling reptiles are sometimes known as Krakens and a plethora of stories and legends surround their true nature. In truth, they are massive aquatic beasts that can be as long as 60 feet and weigh several tons. Despite their size, they move through the water with amazing speed and grace, rising to the surface to terrorize sailors and destroy their ships. Being aquatic by nature, Sea Serpents can breathe water and withstand the pressures of the ocean depths.

Sea Serpents can pluck a man from the deck of a ship and swallow them whole, if their attack roll exceeds the target's Defense by four or more. Those who are swallowed whole suffer 5d10 points of damage each round as the Sea Serpent's muscles and digestive acids break them down; armor provides no Reduction Value when a being has been swallowed whole. Though they appear to be no more intelligent than any beast, Sea Serpents seem to take extraordinary joy in devouring fearful ocean travelers and destroying their ships.

Fortunately, Sea Serpents are always solitary, and legends speak to great dens on the bottom of the ocean where these beasts slumber and hoard the treasures lost at sea from their carnage.

SKIN-CHANGER

Defense: 16

Endurance: 18

Reduction Value: 4

Attack Bonus: +3

Attacks: Bite (1d8) and Claw (2d6)

Special: Savage Combatant

Move: 4

Saving Throw: 16

Despair Rating: 6

Skin-Changers are northfolk who have either been born under a strange Urðr or are somehow the product of a strange union between man and bear. By entering a trance or when they are asleep, a Skin-Changer can project forth a Spirit Bear, which is reflected in the statistics above. Otherwise, they have the statistics of a Human (Raider) when not projecting this strange spiritual being.

The spiritual form which appears during a Skin-Changer's trance or slumber fights with the brutality appropriate to a bear, attacking twice each round with a terrible combination of tooth and claw. Their attacks can damage incorporeal creatures and beings immune to mortal weapons. Finally the Skin-Changer's spirit form is immune to Grievous Blows.

While the Skin-Changer's spiritual form is active, the physical body of the mortal lays unconscious and can easily be slain if discovered.

TROLL

Defense: 10
Endurance: 20
Reduction Value: 2
Attack Bonus: +4
Attacks: Large Cudgel (2d6+2)
Special: Staggering Blow
Move: 4
Saving Throw: 15
Despair Rating: 4

Trolls are brutish human-like creatures that dwell deep in the woodlands and high in the mountains. They make their lairs in hidden mountain caves, or even sometimes in burial mounds. They are fierce in battle, slaying men so they can take them back to their lair where they devour torn flesh. Some say they are kin to the Jotun, while others claim they are angry nature spirits. Trolls typically stand around eight feet tall and weigh over five hundred pounds. Their body is covered with lumps of unnaturally bulging muscle and they often carry crude cudgels in their meaty fists.

In combat, Trolls take the direct approach, attacking with large tree limbs or stones to act as cudgels. If a Troll inflicts more than ten points of damage with a melee attack, their foe must make a Strength-Based Attribute Saving Throw or be staggered and suffer Disadvantage on any attack rolls made on the following round. Trolls often crave the flesh and uncooked meat from livestock and especially from humans. They make their lairs in hidden mountain caves, or even sometimes in burial mounds. Trolls have little concept of wealth or material value but do enjoy shiny trinkets. They will hoard wealth they find in their lairs, though have no understanding of the value of their plunder. Trolls are usually solitary, though sometimes dwell in larger caves as strange family units or clans of anywhere from 2 to 5 individuals (1d4+1)

Legends surrounding Trolls are varied and the Narrator should feel free to modify the statistics above to reflect that diversity.





VALKYRIE

Defense: 20

Endurance: 45

Reduction Value: 5

Attack Bonus: +11

Attacks: By Weapon

Special: Healing Mead, Flight, Incorporeal, Multiattack, Take the Dead

Move: 4 (Fly: 6)

Saving Throw: 10

Despair Rating: 10

Known as the Choosers of the Slain, these female warriors take half of those slain in battle to dwell in Valhalla with Odin as one of the Einherjar and fight in the last battle of Ragnarok.

Though ever-present during a battle, Valkyries are invisible and incorporeal to any living person unless they have been wounded and their Endurance is 3 or less. If a warrior is slain in battle in the presence of a Valkyrie, the Narrator should roll 1d6 and add the slain character's level. If the total of that roll is 7 or higher, the Valkyrie takes the slain

warrior to Valhalla where they become an Einherjar. Valkyries do not typically fight in battle themselves, at least not in Midgard—though it is possible. Valkyries are swift combatants, capable of flight and able to attack twice in a single round.

Valkyries sometimes take great heroes and warriors as lovers, appearing as beautiful women of surpassing beauty. They are clad in mail, bearing shining shields and perfectly crafted spears which they wield with deadly proficiency. Valkyries sometimes come to the aid of wounded warriors, bearing them a cup of healing mead that restores 5d6 Endurance when consumed in their presence. Whether or not they do so instead of allowing a wounded warrior to die should be determined by the Narrator as suits the needs of their saga.

WIGHT, NATURE (SPIRIT)

Defense: 14

Endurance: 5 (or more)

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Bonus: +1 (or more)

Attacks: Not Applicable

Special: Bless, Curse, Incorporeal, Natural Disaster

Move: 0 (Fly: 6)

Saving Throw: 19 (or lower)

Despair Rating: 4 (or higher)

Known as landvaettir (land spirits), sjovavaettir (sea spirits), and a few other names, these Wights protect and defend the natural realm. They remain incorporeal and invisible at most times, appearing rarely and in diverse forms. They are immune to mortal weapons and in most instances, they simply watch living beings and do not make themselves known.

If Nature Wights are angered, they can impose a curse upon those who have brought their wrath. Nature Spirits are angered when their domains are despoiled, treated disrespectfully, or trod upon by those who are not welcome. In such an instance, the Nature Spirits lay a curse upon the

offender. This curse often takes the form of Disadvantage on the offender's next Saving Throw to resist the effects of Harsh Environment, Disadvantage on the offender's next Wilderness Encounter roll, Disadvantage on the offender's next Seafaring Encounter roll, or in severe cases all three. On the other side of this, Vitki and other northfolk, will often make sacrifices to Nature Spirits to draw their favor. The nature and worth of these sacrifices are determined by the Narrator. Sacrifices that are well received may grant Advantage on the same rolls.

They do not engage in combat directly, instead watching and laying blessings or curses as they see fit. However, a collection of lesser Nature Spirits or a single powerful Nature Spirit may attempt to defeat a foe by calling forth a natural disaster, such as a powerful storm, avalanche, rockslide, or other cataclysmic event down upon an interloper.

WIGHT, ANCESTOR (SPIRIT)

Defense: 14

Endurance: 25

Reduction Value: 0

Attack Bonus: +5

Attacks: Spirit-Rend (1d4 Resolve)

Special: Bless, Curse, Incorporeal, Spirit-Rend

Move: 0 (Fly: 6)

Saving Throw: 14

Despair Rating: 7 (or higher)

Not all spirits are of the earth and the sea. Some spirits are those of the ancestors of the northfolk. They typically reside in burial mounds and other realms consigned to the dead. However, a rare few of these ancestor spirits linger quietly in the homes of their still living kin, bringing blessings and subtle guidance to their living family. Ancestor Spirits are almost always invisible, though they do rarely manifest as wavering, ghostly images of their living selves.

Ancestor Wights that dwell in a home and are given regular respect and homage may, sometimes, grant small blessings on their kin. This

typically takes the form of a +2 to all Saving Throws while their kin are upon the land of their home. In addition, they can seek to protect their living family, imposing a -2 penalty to those who would dare threaten their blood while in that home.

Ancestor Spirits tied to the realm of the dead are more fierce, capable of attacking any who would dare to plunder and profane the place where they and their kin rest. When attacking, these Ancestor Spirit appear as terrifying, spectral forms of their former selves and rend the very spirit of those who commit such crimes. On a successful attack, these Ancestor Spirits do not reduce a target's Endurance, but instead permanently reduce a victim's Resolve by a by 1d4 points with a successful melee attack. The victim may make a saving throw to ignore this effect each time they are attacked in this fashion. Those reduced to zero Resolve are forever slain, their spirit condemned to the realm of the dead. Some believe those destroyed by an Ancestor Spirit rise as Draugr some time after death.

Ancestor Spirits, in all their forms, are incorporeal and immune to damage from mundane mortal weapons.

WOLF

Defense: 11
Endurance: 6
Reduction Value: 1
Attack Bonus: +1
Attacks: Bite (1d6)
Special: Pack Tactics
Move: 5
Saving Throw: 18
Despair Rating: 1

Wolves are responsible for many woes that befall shepherds and farmers who maintain livestock, though these predatory canines hold a special place for the northfolk. It is said Fenrir, the great wolf, will devour the sun itself when Ragnarok comes. Typically, they prey on small game, but

will occasionally encroach on farms to procure food by slaying sheep, pigs, chickens, and other small livestock. They are not aggressive by nature, save during mating season or when protecting their young. Often, Wolves flee when confronted by humans or other civilizing beings they encounter. Still, if starved or cornered, Wolves can become a genuine threat to unsuspecting travelers. Most rural folk regard them as dangerous predators to be slain when encountered. Their fur is often valued for winter cloaks and other cold weather protections.

Wolves are, by nature, pack hunters. Should a Wolf be found alone it has almost certainly been cast out of its pack for either being overly aggressive or too weak to be accepted. In most cases, Wolves attack as a pack unit and are keenly adept at doing so. Whenever two or more Wolves attack the same target in the same combat round, both attackers receive a +2 bonus on their attack rolls. However, Wolves are not given to reckless action when fighting and will flee if there is any sign that their lives are at stake.

A Wolf pack ranges in size from six to as many as 15 (1d10+5). They make their dens in the slopes of hills, often near streams or other large bodies of water. It is here that they keep their cubs and they cast aside all sense of self-preservation when protecting their mates and their young.



WYRM (DRAGON)

Defense: 23

Endurance: 100

Reduction Value: 5

Attack Bonus: +18

Attacks: Venomous Bite (5d4, plus Poison)

Special: Fallow, Fearsome, Poison Breath, Swallow Whole, Venom

Move: 5

Saving Throw: 2

Despair Rating: 15

A great many serpents terrorize the sagas of the northfolk. Nidhogg is coiled at the roots of Yggdrasil gnawing at the corpses of kinslayers and oath-breakers. Jormungandr, the World Serpent, is so grand that he encircles all the seas of the world and holds them in place by consuming his own tail. It is said the World Serpent will slay Thor himself when Ragnarok comes to pass. Fafnir was once a Dwarf, corrupted by the ring Andvaranaut, and became a terrible dragon. Wyrms are massive, measuring 50 feet or longer, and slither about as gargantuan serpents. They have no wings, but still move with unnatural speed.

To face a Wyrms in battle is to die. Mortals suffer Disadvantage on all Despair Saving Throws when seeing a Wyrms. Those who fail are immediately consumed by fear and flee the battlefield at the utmost haste. When a Wyrms passes across natural land, it fallows and becomes corrupted, unable to bear crops or livestock for the next 1d6+4 years.

In combat, a Wyrms's bite automatically inflicts a Grievous Wound unless the victim of the attack makes a successful Saving Throw. In addition, those bitten must make a Saving Throw with Disadvantage or become poisoned with a lethal dram. Those who fail this saving throw die from this poison in 2d6 rounds. Worse still, Wyrms can breathe this poison out in a geyser from their mouth, and all who are caught in the line of venom that is 60 feet long and 10 feet wide must make a Saving Throw

as if they have been bitten. Fortunately, a Wyrms can only breathe in this fashion once per day. Finally, if a Wyrms makes a bite attack against a man-sized foe and beats their target's Defense by four or more, they swallow the target whole and that target is instantly slain.

Wyrms are always solitary, making their lair in terrible and blighted realms where they hoard great wealth and priceless treasures for their own enjoyment; though they have no way to spend this ill-gotten fortune.



CHAPTER EIGHT



Creating the Saga

*I remember yet the giants of yore,
Who gave me bread in the days gone by;
Nine worlds I knew, the nine in the tree
With mighty roots beneath the mold.*

—The Poetic Edda

This chapter provides Narrators with insight on running The Skaldic Sagas. It includes general tips for running the game and how to create a game with the distinct feel of a Norse saga or legend.

Running the Game

Running a game of The Skaldic Sagas is a lot easier than running most other roleplaying games, simply because there are not as many rules and your own discretion overrides them anyway. Most situations are handled by making “common sense” decisions concerning what happens next. For example, if there are a band of trolls around the next corner and the Players decide not to go around that corner, it’s up to the Narrator to determine whether or not it makes sense for the trolls to rush around the corner and attack—or whether their orders are to simply stay where they are. If a player decides that their character is going to run through a burning building with several bottles of flammable oil in their backpack, it’s up to the Narrator to determine whether they explode.

This means “making up” a lot of stuff on the spot. Just strike to be as creative and fair as possible. The Skaldic Sagas’ small ruleset frees up your creativity to create a Norse roleplaying experience completely different from the type of game that depends on a multitude of rules.

The Skaldic Sagas also frees up your creativity in terms of customizing the game. Unlike a more complex game, you can add house rules

wherever you want to without accidentally messing up something else buried in the rules. If you want to use optional rules you've developed personally that you believe improve the experience for everyone at the table, add them in. You won't break anything—there's not that much to break!

Designing an Adventure

Basically, the “adventure” is just the setting for the game—usually a map and then notes about certain locations on that map. As the Players tell you where their characters go and what they do, you're referring to the map and your notes to describe what happens as a result. Don't try to plan for all contingencies—it's guaranteed that the players will do something unexpected during the adventure and you'll just have to roll with it, thinking on your feet and making up new things as you go. Just as you challenge the Players with adventure, they challenge you to keep up with their collective creativity.

Creating a Saga

A saga is the collected and connected adventures of the player characters – the communities, tombs, fjords, forests, and sweeping seas of a Norse saga. The players will almost certainly want their characters to explore the wilderness, visit communities, and do all sorts of things in the Nine Worlds. At the beginning of the game, it is recommended that the Narrator sketch out a map of their home village or community and some of the surrounding area. (The location of the first adventure – a long abandoned tomb perhaps?) As the players move their characters around from adventure to adventure, you can expand the little map into an entire fantasy world with the continents, kingdoms, and sweeping landscapes at your disposal.

If you want to take a shortcut, you can set your entire saga in a fictional world created by the author of one of your favorite Norse-themed fantasy stories or even in the historic Viking age. These have maps and the authors of this material have already created the details and feel of the world for you.

Scale of Advancement

Narrators all have their own style of saga, and it would be silly for one author to impose needless restrictions on anyone playing the game. However, it is worth noting that this rules set was designed with the notion that 4th level characters are “heroic” and thus the advancement tables were capped at level 10. A Narrator who wishes to extend the tables to higher levels is encouraged to do so if it fits the style of the saga.

Norse Cosmology

At the center of the cosmos is Yggdrasil, the World Tree. Infinitely tall and with branches that encompass all of existence, reality springs from this great ash. Running the length of Yggdrasil are the Nine Worlds which make up most of reality. Each of the Nine Worlds is described briefly below. These descriptions are vague due to both the lack of extensive historical source material and to allow the Narrator to customize locations to suit their individual sagas. Narrators are encouraged to research the material provided in Appendix Two: Sources for more information and inspiration.

The Nine Worlds

The Nine Worlds which are set upon Yggdrasil comprise the whole of a northfolk’s reality. It is assumed that most of the actual play during a saga will take place on Midgard, also known as Earth. However, a summary of information for each of the Nine Worlds is provided below, should the Narrator wish to design adventures where their players will explore worlds beyond that of mortal man.

Niflheim – The World of Mist: Niflheim is the realm of primordial cold and ice. All rivers eventually find their source in its frozen waters and it rests on one of the three roots of Yggdrasil.

Muspelheim – The World of Fire: Muspelheim is a realm consumed by lava and fire. It is ruled by the giant Surtr who wields a flaming sword.

Asgard – The World of the Aesir: Asgard is the home of the gods. It is a fertile realm, filled with bountiful fields and beautiful buildings. The great hall Valhalla is found in Asgard. It is said that when the end of the world, Ragnarok, comes to pass, the doors of Valhalla will swing open. Then Odin's chosen warriors, the Einherjar issue forth to the last and greatest battle.

Midgard – The World of Mankind: Midgard is the realm of mankind, Earth. Far to the north of Midgard is Niflheim and far to the south is Muspelheim. It is also connected to Asgard via the Bifrost, a great rainbow bridge, though this bridge is ceaselessly guarded by the god Heimdall. Midgard came into existence when the gods slew the giant Ymir and is surrounded by a vast ocean. That ocean is contained by the serpent Jormungand, who consumes his own tail.

Jotunheim – The World of Giants: Set upon one of the three roots of Yggdrasil is Jotunheim. This realm is home to the devourers (sometimes called giants), or Jotun, adversaries of the gods. The King of Giants, Thrym, once ruled here, but was slain by Thor for stealing the god's hammer Mjolnir. The great stronghold of Uthgardr is in Jotunheim.

Vanaheim – The World of the Vanir: Vanaheim is the former home of the Vanir, the gods of fertility, nature, and wisdom. They have since gone to reside in Asgard with the other gods. Its exact location and further details are unknown.

Alfheim – The World of the Elves: Alfheim is the homeland of the Elves, or Alfar. Both Light Elves and Dark Elves dwell here. Dark Elves are said to dwell down in the earth and have flesh as black as pitch, while Light Elves are fair to look upon and find joy under the radiant sun.

Svartalfheim – The World of the Dwarves: This labyrinthine subterranean realm is a network of forges and mines where the dwarves always work to perfect their craft. It is said that the dwarves have crafted exquisite halls for themselves in these caverns and that mortals who journey deep into the bowels of the northern regions of Midgard might potentially find passage to Svartalfheim.

Helheim – The World of the Dead: Deep underground and impossibly northward of Midgard, lay Helheim. It is bordered by a great river of weapons which can only be crossed at a single bridge. Helheim is surrounded also by a great wall whose gate can only be passed through by the dead. While some mortals believe it a dark realm to punish the dead who were wicked in life, most northfolk simply regard Helheim as the primary residence of those who have passed from the world of the living and think of it as neither punishment nor reward.

The Gods

A brief overview of the gods most commonly worshiped by northfolk is provided below. It is important to note that there is no “clerical magic” in The Skaldic Sagas. That is because the gods rarely take such a role in the lives of mortals. While they are impossibly powerful, they also tend to be involved more in their own affairs than the lives of mortals.

The gods occasionally take an interest in the lives of mortals who are regarded with great renown or as heroes by their peers. In short, they should be used solely at the Narrator's discretion to drive the plot of the saga and never randomly interfere in the events of an adventure.

The gods are broken into two major categories: Aesir and Vanir. A brief overview of each god or goddess is provided below.

The Aesir

Baldur: Son of Odin, Baldur is the God of light and the summer sun. He is beloved and praised by all. It is his Urðr to be slain by Loki using a dart of mistletoe, which will signal the beginning of Ragnarok – the end of the world.

Frigg: Wife of Odin, Frigg is the goddess of foreknowledge and wisdom. Like her husband, she is said to have the gift of prophecy.

Heimdall: Watchman of the Gods, he stands vigilant at his post on the Bifrost bridge which serves as the entrance to Asgard. He is gifted with foresight as well as having keen natural senses.

Hel: The goddess of death, she is said to be apathetic and unconcerned with the affairs of the living and even the actions of other Aesir. She is the daughter of Loki and the giantess Agraboda.

Loki: A trickster God, Loki sometimes aids and sometimes opposes the other Aesir as well as the Vanir. He is a shapeshifter and the father of the wolf Fenris and mother to the steed Slepnir.

Odin: The All-Father and ruler of the Gods. His purview includes knowledge, battle, sorcery, and the runic alphabet, among other things. Unlike most other Gods, he often wanders Asgard in the form of an old man. He is rarely actively and directly worshipped in spite of his position as the All-Father.

Thor: Son of Odin, Thor is the God of thunder, lightning, storms, strength and protection. Wielding the legendary hammer Mjolnir, he is the relentless hunter and slayer of giants. Countless tales speak of his prowess in battle.

Tyr: God of law and heroic glory. Tyr has only one hand, after sacrificing his right hand when Fenris was bound. Some believe he is a son of Odin.

Ullr: The god of archery, skiing, sportsmanship, and games, Ullr was commonly worshipped by many northfolk.

The Vanir

Frey: Son of Njord, he is associated with kingship, virility, prosperity, and fair weather. He was given Alfheim as a teething gift by the other gods and wields a sword that can fight on its own accord. Freya is his twin.

Freya: Daughter of Njord and twin sister to Frey. She is associated with love, beauty, sex, and gold. Half of those who die in battle are said to come to her halls, while the other half goes to Valhalla.

Njord: God of fishing, the seas, and seafaring, he is the father of both Frey and Freya.

There are many other Germanic deities to be used in your campaign. The Narrator is encouraged to use whatever deities they discover from the sources listed in the Appendix to suit their individual sagas.

The Halls of the Gods

Both the Aesir and Vanir each keep grand halls which they call home. While some of these halls are located in Asgard, many can be found across the Nine Worlds. Below are a few great halls and what purpose they served to the god that rule them.

Bilskirnir (Thor's Hall): Located in Asgard, this is the greatest of all buildings ever made across the nine worlds. Thor dwells here with his wife Sif and their children in its 540 rooms.

Breidablik (Baldur's Hall): Crafted by Baldur himself, his hall is said to be a place where no evil can enter nor unclean can intrude. It is said to have the fewest baleful names of all places in the Nine Worlds. Its location is unknown, though it undoubtedly a holy place.

Éljúðnir (Hel's Hall): In the icy heart of Niflheim, encased in snow and ice, beyond a great pit of unimaginable peril, the goddess Hel sleeps on a bed of sickness and is surrounded by curtains known as Blikjandaböl, or gleaming disaster.

Fensalir (Frigga's Hall): Set around endless rolling fens, Frigga's hall is splendid beyond imagining. Known as the Sea Hall or Mist Hall, it is here that Loki came in disguise to discover why Baldur could not be slain and learned the truth of the oath sworn by all things, save mistletoe, never to harm him.

Sessrumnir (Freya's Hall): Contrary to common misconceptions, not all who are slain in battle go to Valhalla. Half of them go to Fólkvangr, a great meadow ruled over by Freya. At its center is Freya's beautiful hall known as Sessrumnir.

Valhalla (Hall of the Slain): The most well known of the godly halls, it is ruled over by Odin and is where half of all slain in battle go. There they feast and fight and slay, only to rise again. They are the Einherjar and when Ragnarok begins, the doors of Valhalla will open and they shall issue forth to battle.

Ýdalir (Ullr's Hall): Known as the yew dales, Ullr's hall is one of the few to reside in Midgard. Set among a great forest, this hunting lodge is made of bent wood akin to those used to craft Ullr's beloved bows.

The Norns

The fate of both Gods and mortals is ruled by the Norns. From their hall near the Well of Fate beneath Yggdrasil they tend to the World Tree so that its roots remain strong. Whether they carve runes into these roots or weave a great tapestry, none can say, but what is known is that though all beings are bound by their Urðr, the Norns impact the fate of all. Urð (What Once Was), Verdandi (What Is Coming Into Being), and Skuld (What Shall Be) are the names of these three women.

Jotun

Commonly known as giants, the Jotun work in opposition to the Gods. They are known as the devourers and as outsiders. Often, they are in opposition to the will of both the Gods and Mankind, though to call them evil is a gross simplification. The Jotun simply are as they are.

While it is typical for a Jotun to be a threat to both the Gods and to mortals, more than a few have forged alliances with them.

Other Inhuman Creatures

In Chapter Seven: Bestiary there are several inhuman creatures described in detail for use in your campaign. All have their roots in Norse mythology. Though it is important to note that such strange beings are rarely seen by most northfolk. In fact, the vast majority of them go their entire lives getting no closer to any such creature, save what they hear in songs and stories. It is only when the player characters get far into the wild realms, explore the tombs of the dead, or somehow cross beyond the borders of Midgard that these unearthly beings are encountered.

Ragnarok

Northfolk believe that their world will be destroyed in a cataclysm they call Ragnarok. The great wolf Fenrir will be loosed from his bonds, a great many of the Gods will be slain, and Yggdrasil itself will be consumed in flames set upon by the fiery sword of the Jotun, Surtr.

After all is done, only a handful of Gods will survive, and two humans will remain to repopulate a world reborn.

Northfolk Culture and Values

While no single book can detail all aspects of pre-Christian Scandinavian culture, having a basic understanding of their values and their day-to-day lives can help create a richer experience for players in a The Skaldic Sagas game. The Skaldic Sagas is not a traditional pseudo-medieval fantasy role-playing game. It is firmly rooted in the traditions and mythology of a people who existed in history. While Narrators should feel free to create whatever adventures they like, this game is designed to emulate the themes of that culture to tell stories that feel like they came out of the Prose Edda, Poetic Edda, and other sources of Norse Mythology. Appendix I: Inspirations provides some inspirational reference for Narrators looking to gain a better understanding of these people and their mythology.

One of the key elements of The Skaldic Sagas that separates it from more traditional fantasy role-playing games is the emphasis on the character's community and their place within that community. This is reflected in the rules for both Frith and the Althing, but Narrators are encouraged to detail other elements of the player characters' community. Just a few notes on the ruling Jarl, some prominent figures in the community, and the problems the community faces can inspire countless adventures and lead to years of satisfying gaming. The player characters are a part of their community, and their actions can lead to its prosperity or its destruction.



CHAPTER NINE



Treasures

*Then may again
wondrous
golden tablets
in the grass be found,
which in days of old
they had possessed.*
-The Poetic Edda

Material Wealth

Unlike traditional fantasy roleplaying games, The Skaldic Sagas does not use a standardized form of currency like gold coins or silver pieces. That is because in the era of The Skaldic Sagas, there is little evidence of any such thing. Most transactions were done on a barter system where goods were exchanged. That is not to say that things such as gold, silver, and jewels were not valued. Quite the contrary. Such items were status symbols and one who won riches by courage and glorious deeds was rich in more than just precious metals and shining stones.

This is not to say that gold, silver, jewels, and the like have no worth at all. Often they can be traded for goods and thus they do have an associated Trade Cost. They are simply not the cornerstone of the northfolk economy. Instead, they are little more than a status symbol.

Gold is found in the form of jewelry, cutlery, and ritual objects. Tiny gold objects, like a ring or brooch have a Trade Cost of 1d6. Larger items like goblets, arm rings, or small statues are typically worth 2d6 Trade Cost. Very large gold objects (like solid gold murals or similarly large ritual objects) have a Trade Cost of 5d6. Silver is much less valuable, with tiny objects being worth 1 Trade Cost, small objects being worth 1d4 Trade Cost, and large objects being valued at 2d4 Trade Cost. Jewels vary vastly in their Trade Cost value, which can range from one for a miniscule, flawed gem to twenty for a large and ornate piece (1d20).

Narrators should award these types of items as is appropriate and realistic to their own sagas, a general estimate is that a character should earn between a Trade Cost of between 5 and 10 (1d6+4) per character level over the course of gaining a level of experience. Thus a first-level character may only earn between 5 to 10 in Trade Cost worth of material wealth, while a seventh-level character could earn upwards of 70 in Trade Cost. A Narrator is free to limit or increase such material worth earnings as is appropriate to their saga.

Trade Cost

Instead, material wealth is measured in its Trade Cost. This is an abstracted method of determining an item's worth in order to reflect both the value of precious objects and the barter economy of the setting. In Chapter Two: Trappings a list of commonly traded items is described. Each item has a Trade Cost. Whenever a character wishes to barter or trade for such an item and this cannot be accomplished through roleplaying and using the rules presented in Chapter Six on page 102.

Narrators should remember that just because a character seeks an item for which they wish to trade, does not mean it is necessarily available. Althings sometimes occur during seasons where items and resources are scarce and this can impact the Trade Cost or availability of an item.

Trade Cost and Frith

A player character can choose to invest riches, jewels and other items of fabulous wealth into their community to earn Frith within that community. For every 25 points of Trade Cost given to their community in this fashion, the character earns a single point of Frith, as described in Chapter Six: Frith, Community and the Althing.

Runic Items

Runic Items are objects that have been crafted by mortals in ages past, but inscribed with runes that grant the bearer blessings when that item is used or worn. The secrets of how they are crafted have been lost to

the ages, so mortals can only benefit by finding existing Runic Items and binding these items to themselves. Runic Items can be bound as part of an individual event during an Althing, though they require an extraordinary sacrifice in wealth or personal value. In the case of Wealth, this is always at least 100 points in items worth of Trade Cost. Sacrificed wealth is lost and grants no other benefits. No character can benefit from more than three Runic Items at any one time.

While weapons are often inscribed with runes, jewelry, shields, and small trinkets such as necklaces are also commonly empowered in this fashion.

A Runic Item is inscribed with a single rune from the list in Chapter Five: *Urðr & Runes*, beginning on page 76. As long as a character is carrying a Runic Item that is bound to them, they gain the benefit associated with that rune even if it is not part of their *Urðr*. However, no character can benefit from the same rune more than once.

Runic Items are never discovered as part of “random” treasure and should be included in an adventure as the Narrator decides.

Treasures

Treasures are defined as powerful magical items that are told of in both song and saga. They are part of the legends of the Gods and other divine beings, as well as legendary heroes. They are beyond the ability of mortal man to craft and though they are powerful beyond imagination, they often carry with them a great curse for any mortal who dares to take hold of them.

Like Runic Items, they are never discovered randomly and are instead introduced by the Narrator as befits their own Saga.

ANDVARANAUT

Crafted by the Dwarf Andvari, this magical golden ring is said to drip gold. Every ninth day, Andvaranaut drips forth eight new rings, each with a Trade Cost of 20.

Unfortunately, the ring and all its progeny are cursed with misfortune. Any that bear such a ring suffer Disadvantage on all Saving Throws and become consumed with a lust for wealth. Fafnir, another dwarf, became so consumed with his desire to protect the ring and its covetous curse that he eventually transformed into a great and terrible Wyrn.

BODN, ODRORIR, AND SON

The three vessels in which is kept the Mead of Poetry, a mixture of honey and the blood of a man known as Kvasir. It is said any who drink from it become skilled in Skaldic verse, though is likely to draw the attention of the Gods... for good or ill.

Any character drinking from Bodn, Odrorir, or Son can perform a Recounting of Deeds as a first level Skald during the next Althing. Skalds add their level to their Storyteller value during their next Recounting of Deeds after taking a dram of the Mead of Poetry.

BRISINGAMEN

The golden and amber necklace of the Goddess Freya, crafted for her by four dwarves. It is of surpassing beauty, reflecting all light that falls upon it one hundred-fold.

Any character wearing Brisingamen can cause it to radiate light to a range of 120 feet as long as there is even the faintest light already present. However, most who see the necklace will covet it, especially those in the service of Freya, who values it deeply.

DAINSLEIF, THE SWORD OF DAIN

Crafted by the dwarf Dain, the sword Dainsleif is both deadly and cursed. Once drawn from its sheath it must kill a man before being returned. However, all damage from Dainsleif is permanent, and can never be healed.

ELDHRIMNIR

Eldhrimnir is the feasting cauldron of Valhalla. Each night, the boar Saehrimnir is cooked within its depths and served to Odin and the Einherjar of Valhalla.

Should a mortal be given a taste of the meat of Saehrimnir, they receive Advantage on all Attack Rolls and melee damage rolls for the next nine days.

GJALLARHORN

Gjallar is the Resounding Horn of Heimdall, Guardian of the Bifrost. It is said he will blow the horn when the Jotun bring forth their hordes and Ragnarok begins. This call will be heard across the Nine Realms.

Should such a horn ever be blown by a mortal, that man would be able to warn their kin of danger, regardless of distance between the two.

GLEIPNIR

Gleipnir is the silk ribbon which binds Fenrir, the wolf who will devour the sun when Ragnarok comes. It is light, though stronger than any iron chain, and is crafted from impossible components.

Lesser threads of Gleipnir may yet dwell in the Nine Realms as coils of rope. Such rope would be impossible to break, and able to hold any weight and resist any blow.

GUNGNIR

The spear of Odin crafted from the ash wood of Yggdrasil, Gungnir never misses its mark and slays any being it pierces. The haft of the spear is etched with runes carved by the All-Father himself.

Should this spear ever come to mortal hands, that warrior would instantly succeed in any attacks they make with the weapon and instantly kill their foe, though the wrath of the All-Father and the fact that he would undoubtedly come seeking his spear would deter even the most foolish from wishing to bear this weapon.

HOFUND

The sword of Heimdall, he wields it in protection of the Bifrost to drive out unwanted guests. Should similar blades of a lesser nature exist, they would grant a mortal wielder Advantage on all attack and damage rolls when defending their home or community from intruders

HRINGHorni

The longship of Baldur, it is said to be the finest sea craft ever built. It will be set aflame and Baldur's corpse placed in it when the God dies.

Hringhorni cannot be capsized by the wrath of the sea, nor destroyed by any beast or man of Midgard.



JARNGLOFAR

These are great iron gauntlets worn by the god Thor. They double his already amazing strength, and are often combined with his belt Megingjord, thus driving his physical power to unimaginable levels.

If worn by a mortal, that being gains a Might score of 18. If combined with Megingjord, the mortal still has a Might of 18, but receives an additional +3 to all melee attack and damage rolls on top of their Might bonus.

It is likely, though, that Thor would come seeking any mortal foolish enough to somehow come into possession of his gauntlets. He is not likely to ask questions before slaking his anger.

LAEVATEINN

Laevateinn, sometimes called “Damage Twig,” is the wooden sword of Loki. Some say it is crafted of mistletoe and will be used to slay Baldur. It lays in a chest bound with nine locks near the realm of death and under the guard of Sinmara, the consort of the jotun Surtr.

Should it ever be recovered from this chest, the weapon is likely to be mercurial and swift, granting its wielder a +4 bonus to their Defense and allowing the bearer to always act first in combat as if they’d rolled a 12 on Initiative. In addition the sword can be thrown as a dart to a range of up to 120 feet.

Unfortunately, anyone carrying the weapon is likely to become hunted by Sinmara, Baldur’s mother, the goddess Frigg, and even Loki himself.

MEGINGJORD

Megingjord, the Power Belt, is worn by Thor. It doubles his Might on top of the benefits granted by Jarnglofar.

If worn by a mortal, that being gains a Might score of 18. If combined with Jarnglofar, the mortal still has a Might of 18, but receives an additional +3 to all melee attack and damage rolls on top of their Might bonus.

It is likely, though, that Thor would come seeking any mortal foolish enough to somehow come into possession of his belt. He is not likely to ask questions before slaking his anger.

MJOLNIR

Arguably the most legendary weapon in northfolk society, Mjолnir is the great hammer of Thor. Its powers are many. It is said to be able to level mountains in a single stroke, send lightning bolts forth from its haft, be summoned back to the God of Thunder's right hand after being thrown, and even to revive wounded and dying men and animals. It can be shrunk to fit on a cord and carried beneath Thor's tunic. Many northfolk carry small hammers of iron on their person or worn as reverence for the Aesir or Thor in particular.

Mjолnir has been stolen by giants in the past, so while it is possible for the weapon to find its way into the mortal realm, there is no living man likely to have the strength to lift the mighty hammer — let alone wield it in combat.

SKIDBLADNIR

Crafted by dwarves and enchanted by Odin, Skidbladnir is a great longship of the gods. It can carry all the gods, their gear and trappings, and can easily traverse land, sea, and sky. The boat is also enchanted so that it can be folded and stored in a pouch or pocket.

Mortals are unlikely to come into possession of Skidbladnir, though they could inadvertently stumble upon it in its folded configuration or be somehow granted passage upon it by the gods.

SVALINN

Svalinn, sometimes called Shiver, is a shield used to protect the Sunna's chariot from the heat and fire of the sun as it moves across the sky.

Its bearer, whether mortal or god, is immune to all heat and fire and any damage from these sources.

APPENDIX

Inspirations

Listed below are just a few of the sources that inspired the creation of *Skaldic Sagas: Heroic Journeys in the Viking Age*. The author highly recommends you check them out, especially the books, to draw inspiration for your own games.

Beowulf. Arguably the most well-known epic poem in western civilization, *Beowulf* tells the tale of the Scandinavian man who would become the king of the Danes as he faces off against terrible monsters that range from the horrifying beast Grendel to a great dragon. Many translations exist, though the author favors the Seamus Heaney translation originally published in 2000.

The Penguin Historical Atlas of the Vikings. Published in 1995 by Penguin Books, this book provides a good (if a bit basic) understanding of historic northfolk and their travels.

The Poetic Edda. Many publishers have released countless translations of the Poetic Edda. This magnificent text is most commonly based on the translation by Snorri Sturluson in the 12th century. The Poetic Edda, along with the Prose Edda, serves as the backbone of both this book and our modern understanding of northfolk culture.

The Prose Edda - Like the Poetic Edda, the Prose Edda has been published and translated many times and most are rooted in the 12th century translation by Snorri Sturluson. Also like the Poetic Edda, it is all but required reading for any enthusiast of pre-Christian Scandinavian culture.

The Saga of the Volsungs. Like the Eddas, it has been published many times by many translators. This is, arguably, the most well-known of the Viking sagas and inspired many tales ranging from Wagner's *Der Rings des Nibelungen* to J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun*.

The Sagas of the Icelanders. Published by Penguin Books in 2001, this book collects the historic sagas of many Icelandic families in the 9th, 10th, and 11th century. It gives insight into how families lived in those times and the daily struggles they faced.

The Sea Wolves: A History of the Vikings, by Lars Brownworth - Published by Crux Publishing Ltd in 2014, this is less an in-depth investigation of northfolk culture and more an analysis of the impact they had on the future of Europe, this book is approachable and fascinating.

Visual Media

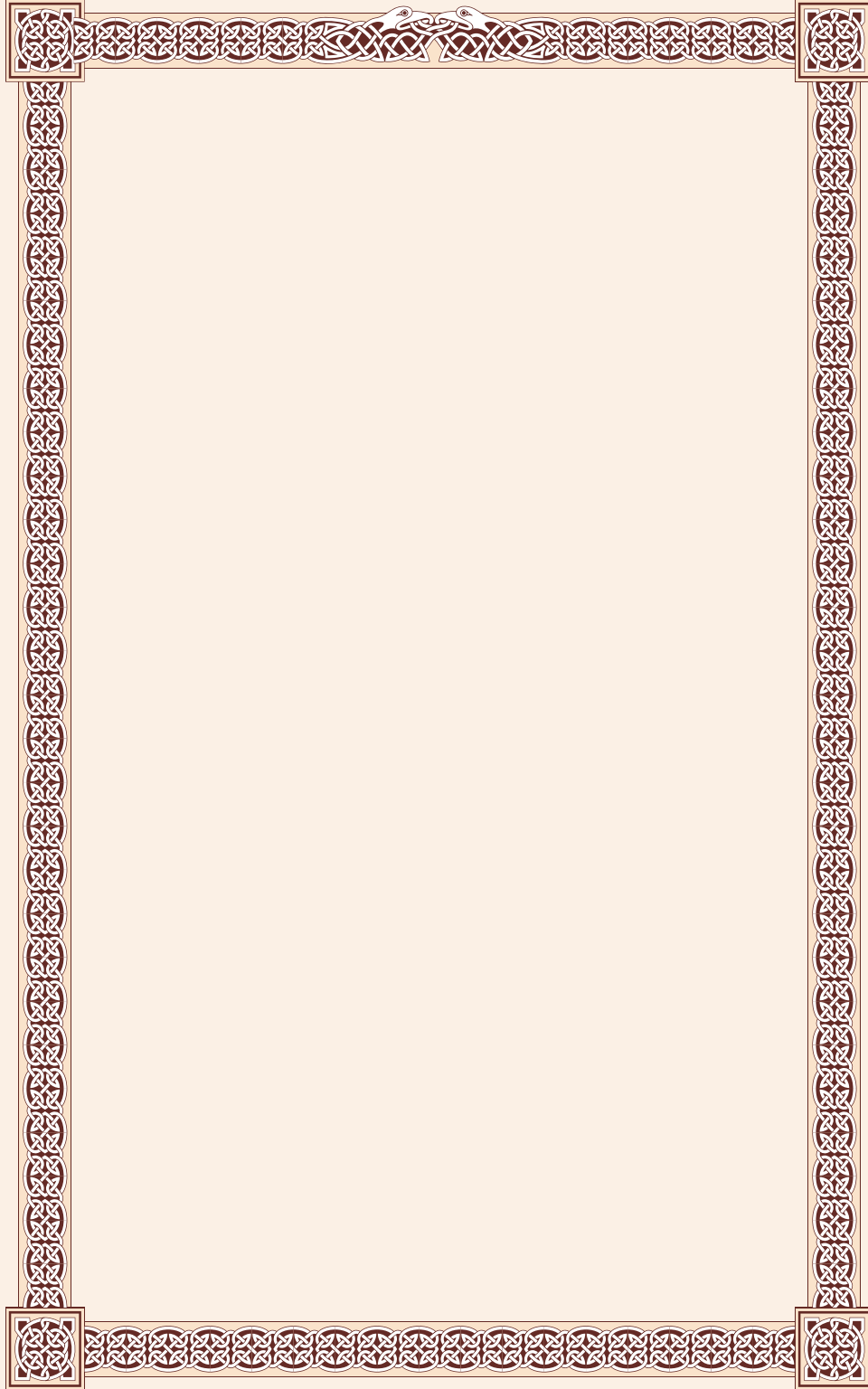
Jackson Crawford - YouTube - Dr. Jackson Crawford is an Old Norse specialist and translator who teaches at the University of Colorado. His YouTube channel explores many aspects of Norse culture, with a focus on linguistics.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXCxNFxw6iq-Mh4uljYvufg>

Vikings - TV Series - This History Channel television series explores the dramatized events of the real-life northman, Ragnar Lodbrok. While the show takes some liberties with historic accuracy, it is a notable example of the surprising subtleties and complexities that are present in northfolk society.

Music

Wardruna - Formed in 2003, this Norwegian band uses historic musical instruments to perform renditions of Norse legends and other historic sources. Their music is evocative and entrancing. As of the time of this book's publication, they have released four albums and the author recommends their 2018 album *Skald* in particular.



CHARACTER SHEET



NAME-
 ARCHETYPE-
 ANCESTRY-
 COMMUNITY TRADE-

URÖR-
 FRITH-
 GLORY-
 LEVEL-

MIGHT SCORE MOD

--	--

DEFENSE:

ENDURANCE

--

FINESSE

--	--

REDUCTION

SAVING THROW

--

ATTACK BONUS

--

VALUE

--	--

ARCHETYPE ABILITIES

RESOLVE

--	--

INSIGHT

--	--

BEARING

--	--

EQUIPMENT

WEAL

--	--

WEAPON	ATTACK MOD	DAMAGE	TRAITS	RANGE	NOTES
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ARMOR-SHIELD-HELM	REDUCTION VALUE	DEFENSE BONUS
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URÖR ABILITY

WEALTH

RUNE:
 BENEFITS:

FROM THE FURY OF THE NORTHMEN,
DELIVER US

Skaldic Sagas: Heroic Journeys in the Viking Age

is a roleplaying game rooted in the mythopoetic and cultural traditions of what is now called the Viking Age. Blending the history and the heroism found in the verses of Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, and Beowulf, it tells stories rooted in real-world mythology and archaeology to serve as a vehicle for telling your own stories where kin and community are as important as battle and bloodshed.

Though a complete stand-alone game, Skaldic Sagas is compatible with The Hero's Journey Fantasy Roleplaying, Second Edition.



OMMER