

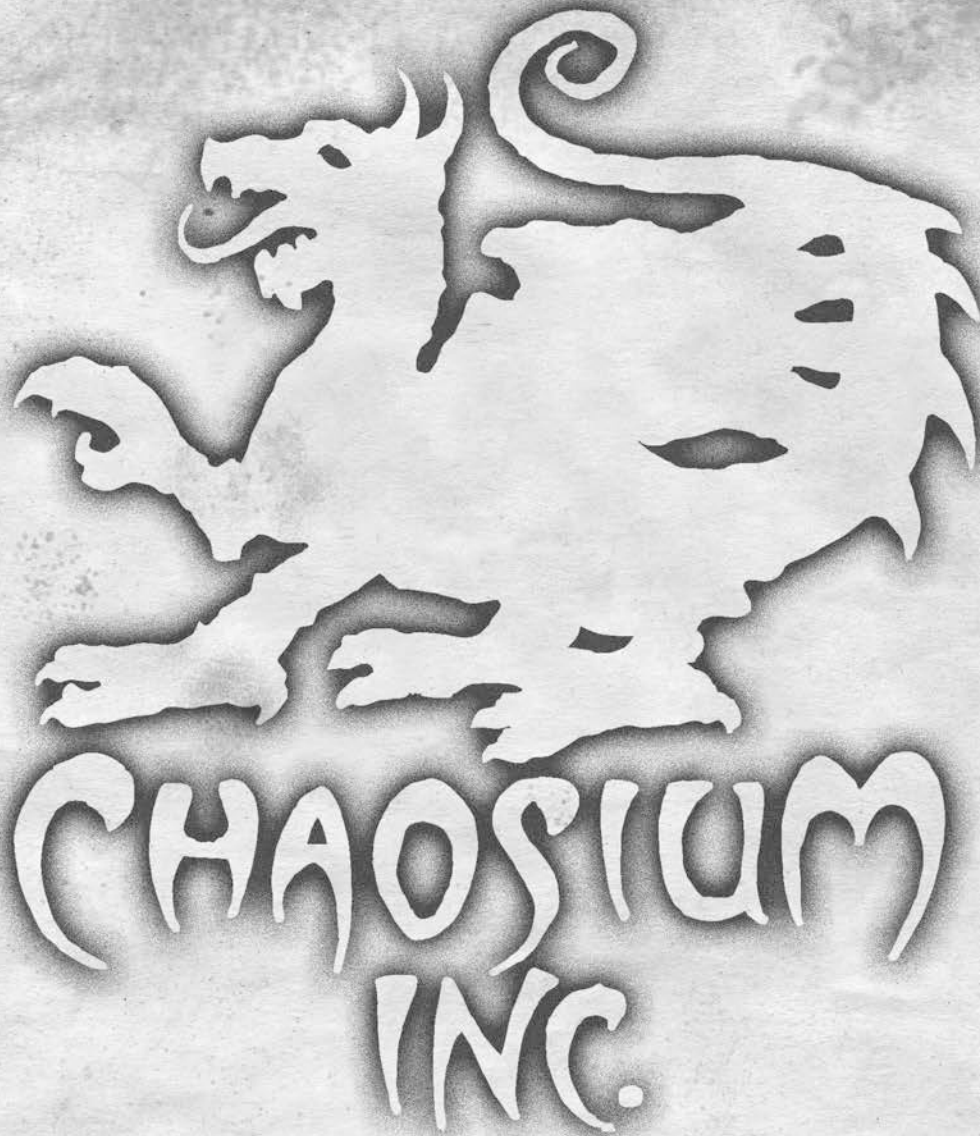
# Mythic Iceland

Legend & Adventure  
in Viking-Age Iceland



**Pedro Ziviani**





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# Mythic Iceland

by Pedro Ziviani

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by Pedro Ziviani

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ILLYSTRISS. AC POTENTISS.  
REGI FEDERICO II DANIAE,  
NORVEGIAE, SLAVORVM GO-  
THORVMQVE REGI ETC PRIN-  
CIPi SVO CLEMENTISSIMO  
ANDREAS VELLEIVS  
DESCRIBEB. ET DEDICABAT.



# INTRODUCTION

*On the west of Norway comes the island called Iceland, with the mighty ocean washing round it:  
a land very squalid to dwell in, but noteworthy for marvels, both strange  
occurrences and objects that pass belief.*

— *The Danish History*, by Saxo  
Grammaticus, 12th Century



This book aims to help gamers bring to life the world of the Icelandic Sagas and fairy tales.

The Nordic and Celtic peoples who settled Iceland in the 9th century came from lands with rich traditions of folklore, where the mythical and supernatural were part of daily life. They found an island of striking beauty, with inland valleys, richly grassed and forested lowlands, massive glaciers, and impressive volcanic mountain ranges. They also found the land to be teeming with spirits of nature and mythic creatures.

Iceland is unique in many ways. Even though it is roughly the size of England (103,000 square kilometers or 39,768 square miles), and bigger than Ireland, its geographic isolation meant that it was uninhabited until the Middle Ages. Being a geologically young island, it features volcanoes, earthquakes, and geysers. There are no native animals apart from the arctic fox and birds. The first settlers arrived fleeing high taxes imposed by the king of Norway, and built a unique form of government where no one man would rule the land and its people, but rather an assembly of free men would deal of matters of government and law. It is the only country in Medieval Europe to be ruled not by a king, but by law.

An important aspect of Icelandic culture, one that has defined it at a later age, is the strong literary tradition found in Iceland in the Middle Ages. This small country has produced the biggest body of medieval literature anywhere in Northern Europe — not bad going for an isolated island with a population numbering only few tens of thousands. Most important among those writings are the Sagas and the Eddas. The Sagas were written in the thir-

teenth and fourteenth centuries from stories passed down the generations about brave men, mostly living in the years between 850 and 1050, who went abroad in search of fortune as Vikings and who, at the same time, built in Iceland a unique system of democratic self-government. These men also fought and died in Iceland in the many inter-family feuds. Other important works of Icelandic Medieval literature are the *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda*, which tell stories about the Nordic gods and myths of pagan times, and are the main source for what we know today about these subjects.

*Mythic Iceland* is based on the period described by the Icelandic Sagas, a period full of adventure and wonder. The Iceland described in this book presents the common beliefs of Viking-Age Icelandic people as true, including the myths and fairy-tales they believed in.

Welcome to *Mythic Iceland*, land of myth and adventure.

## Sagas of Icelanders - Íslendingasögur

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, anonymous Icelandic writers produced remarkable works of literature describing events mainly taking place in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Written as a unique blend of historical information and fantastic story-telling, literary endeavor and family pride, these prose narratives are collectively known



as *Íslendingasögur*, “Sagas of Icelanders” — also frequently referred to in English as “Family Sagas.”

The Icelandic word “saga” means simply “a story,” long or short, old or new, true or fictitious. In this book, whenever the word “Saga” is used, however, it is as a short form of *Íslendingasögur*.

While Saga heroes may travel to foreign lands, the main action is centered in Iceland and is rooted in the ways that men feuded and resolved their conflicts, sometimes in bloody battles, and other times through Iceland’s unique judicial system.

There are some forty or so of these Sagas, and the aspiring gamemaster of a *Mythic Iceland* campaign is encouraged to read at least a few of them to get a better understanding of the flavor and pace of those stories. At the very least, it is recommended that the GM is familiar with *Njáls Saga* and *Egils Saga*.

## On the Word *Viking*

The early Icelanders themselves used the word “Viking,” but they did not employ it in an ethnic sense, as it is popularly done in modern times. Almost surely they would have understood the concept of a “Viking Age,” but to them the idea that Nordic society was a “Viking Society” would have been a misnomer. Throughout the Nordic world, a *vikingur* (pl. *vikingar*) meant a pirate or freebooter, and *Vikingar* were men who grouped together in

bands to raid from boats. The term applied both to those who honorably (in Norse eyes) sailed across the sea to raid and to those who robbed neighbors closer to home. It was common to say that one was to “go viking,” meaning to go abroad to raid towns and monasteries.

The word “Viking” is used in this book to indicate its original meaning as explained above. The term “Viking Age” is used to describe the time roughly corresponding to the period described in the best-known Icelandic Sagas, from the year 850 to around 1050.

## Mythic OR Historical?

This book is written to provide players with the experience of living and adventuring in the Iceland described in the Sagas and in the Icelandic fairy-tales.

In mythic Iceland, all the creatures of myth and all the magical aspects of life, which the early Icelanders believed in, really do exist, and they play a major role in people’s life. The elves, or hidden folk, exist hidden from the eyes of the common folk, but sometimes meddle in their affairs. Those travelling through the highlands risk being



WELCOME TO VIKING AGE ICELAND, LAND OF MYTH AND ADVENTURE!





# Language

Names of people, places and texts are presented here in the Icelandic nominative case form and using the letters of the modern Icelandic alphabet. You will find in this book names such as Snæbjörn, Njál, Guðrún and Óðinn, rather than Snaebjorn, Njal, Gudrun, and Odin.

In instances where the syntax of Old Norse and modern Icelandic words diverge, the modern Icelandic syntax has been chosen. One example is the name Leifur, which used to be written as Leifr in Old Norse, and as Leifur in Modern Icelandic — in this book you will find the latter. This choice is made because modern Icelandic syntax is easier for the uninitiated reader to pronounce, and also because the author cannot claim to be an expert in Old Norse linguistics.

The special letters of the Icelandic alphabet are easy to learn. The table below shows the sounds of Icelandic special letters and letter combinations.

## Icelandic Alphabet

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Á | B | D | Ð | E | É | F | G | H | I | Í | J | K | L | M |
| N | O | Ó | P | R | S | T | U | Ú | V | X | Y | Ý | Þ | Æ | Ö |
| a | á | b | d | ð | e | é | f | g | h | i | í | j | k | l | m |
| n | o | ó | p | r | s | t | u | ú | v | x | y | ý | þ | æ | ö |

## Special Vowels

| Letter | Phonetic (IPA) | Sound                  |
|--------|----------------|------------------------|
| á      | [aʊ]           | like “ou” in “house”   |
| é      | [je]           | like “ye” in “yet”     |
| í      | [i]            | like “ee” as in “peel” |
| ó      | [ou]           | like “o” in “sole”     |
| ú      | [u]            | like “oo” in “moon”    |
| ý      | [ʏfɪlɔn i]     | like “ee” in “feet”    |
| æ      | [æi]           | like “i” in “fight”    |
| ö      | [oe]           | like “ur” in “urgent”  |

## Special Consonants

| Letter | Phonetic (IPA) | Sound                   |
|--------|----------------|-------------------------|
| ð      | [eð]           | like “th” in “the”      |
| j      | [jɔð]          | like “y” in “yes”       |
| þ      | [θɔrɪ]         | like “th” as in “thing” |

## Special Combinations

| Letter | Phonetic (IPA) | Sound                                                        |
|--------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| au     | [oey]          | like the vowel in french “feuille,” similar to “oy” in “boy” |
| ey, ei | [ei]           | like “a” in “pale”                                           |
| fn     | [mt]           | like bn                                                      |
| hv     | [xv]           | like “qu” in “quick”                                         |
| ll     | [tl]           | like “ttl” in “settle”                                       |

attacked by trolls, and often curses and spells are laid on neighbors and enemies. That doesn’t mean, however, that these fantastic elements should always be the central points of your adventures. There is plenty of potential for conflict among the

Icelanders themselves, without the need of the supernatural to come to the foreground of your stories. Your adventures don’t always have to involve elves, trolls and magic.



A BURNING LAKE AND VOLCANO, DEPICTED BY OLAUS MAGNUS IN *History of the Nordic Peoples*, 1555

If you would rather like to base your mythic Iceland adventures on a historical view of Viking Age Iceland, without any magic or mythical creatures, this book is written with that in mind. At the end of many of the chapters, guidance can be found on how to use that chapter's information without mythical aspects.

Viking Age Iceland, and the wider Viking world, is rife with adventures, feuds, conflicts, and exploration to fuel many strictly historical adventures as well as those including elements from Icelandic fairy-tales.

## What Time Period Does This Book Cover?

*Mythic Iceland* focuses in the period starting in the year 930, when the first session of the Icelandic National Assembly was held, to the year 1050, when the first Christian Bishop of Iceland was chosen. This is the so-called "Icelandic Pagan Commonwealth Period."

However, those looking to base their campaigns in the earlier Settlement Age, or in the later Christian Age up to the Icelandic civil war years of the mid-13th century, will also find valuable information on this book that remains mostly accurate for the extended time period. Specific information regarding playing in those other eras can be found on the chapter **Running a Game of Mythic Iceland**.

## Historical Accuracy

This book does not try to be historically accurate in every aspect. This is not a course-book on Icelandic history by any means. In addition to the inclusion of magic and supernatural creatures, there are other elements in the mythic Iceland setting, which do not fit a strictly historical view of the period.

Enjoy *Mythic Iceland* as a fantasy setting with its roots in how Viking Age Icelanders saw themselves and the world around them. Feel free to make *Mythic Iceland* your own, changing or removing any elements in any way you like.

I hope you have as much fun gaming in the world of *Mythic Iceland* as I had writing this book.



# History of Mythic Iceland



*Many men say that writing about the settlement is unnecessary. But it seems to me that we would be better able to answer foreigners who censure us for our descent from scoundrels and slaves if we knew our true origins for certain. Similarly, for those men who want to know old lore or to reckon genealogies, it is better to begin at the beginning rather than to jump right into the middle. And of course all wise people want to know about the beginnings of their settlement and of their own families.*

— *The Book of Settlements*, Iceland, 13th century

## Mythic Times

*Of old was the age when Ýmir lived;  
Sea nor cool waves nor sand there were;  
Earth had not been, nor heaven above,  
But a yawning gap, and grass nowhere.*

— *Poetic Edda*

In the beginning, before the heaven and earth and the sea were created, the great abyss Ginnungagap (“yawning abyss”) was without form and void. In the northern region of that huge emptiness was a realm called Niflheimur (“Mist World”), packed with ice. In the south, there was Múspellsheimur (“Flame World”), a region that flickered with dancing flames. In the middle of Ginnungagap, where

the icy rivers that flowed from Niflheimur met the warm breath drifting north from Múspellsheimur, thawing drops appeared. From those drops was formed Ýmir, the first of the race of frost giants. Ýmir slept, falling into a sweat. Under his left arm there grew a couple, male and female giants.

As more of the ice in Ginnungagap melted, it became a cow called Auðhumla from whose udders ran four rivers of milk that fed Ýmir. After one day of licking salty ice blocks, the cow freed a man’s hair from the ice. After two days, his head appeared. On the third day the whole man was released from the ice. The man’s name was Buri, and he had a son named Borr. Borr married Bestla, the daughter of a giant, with whom he had three sons. Óðinn was the first, Vili the second, and Vé the third.

The sons of Borr grew to hate the brutal frost giants. At last they attacked Ýmir and killed him.

From the body of Ýmir the brothers made the world. They shaped the earth from his flesh, the mountains and rocks from his bones, and the seas from his blood. The skull of Ýmir was raised by the three brothers to make the sky, placed so that each of its four corners would touch the ends of the earth. The gods called this world Miðgarður.

From the flesh of Ýmir magical creatures appeared, crawling out over the earth. Those were the Elves, Trolls, and other mythical creatures both big and small.

The Gods gave the Elves a separate world for them to live in, shaped to have the same lands and seas as Miðgarður, but where magic forces remained strong and wild. They called that world Álfheimur (“World of the Elves”).





## Mythic Iceland is Created

When Miðgarður was still young, it was populated by great mythical creatures. One of the biggest and most powerful of those was the great dragon Svafnir, a gigantic fire-breathing beast that lived in the very bowels of Miðgarður, swimming in the molted rock.

One day, the dragon Svafnir decided to break out of the underground sea of molten lava. Again fly the skies of Miðgarður. His bursting out of the underworld was so violent that an enormous quantity of lava poured out behind him from the bottom of the ocean. So much lava flowed out to the surface that a large island was created in the northern sea.

The stone and the lava were charged with the inner magical energies of the young world of Miðgarður, and when they reached the surface they solidified and created an island rich in magic and mythical forces.

Svafnir flew around the whole of the world, but he found no better place to live than in that island formed in the very spot where he had burst out of the crust of the world. The lava had now solidified, but a great volcano still raged on that island. Svafnir entered the volcano and dove into the

lava. The dragon swam around in the molten rock under the island, forcing changes in the surface, molding the land to its like.

The violence of the great dragon's arrival to the surface of Miðgarður was so immense that it caused the very branches of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, to shake and its branches to shift position. With the new alignment of the worlds, now Svafnir's island now had pathways to other worlds, and among those worlds were Ásgarður, the home of the gods, and Álfheimur, the world of the elves.

The god Óðinn was enraged by the dragon's actions, and by the fact that his home world of Ásgarður was now accessible from Miðgarður by beings other than the gods. Óðinn saddled his eight-legged horse Sleipnir and rode down to Miðgarður intended on destroying this new island and its portals to the other worlds.

The great dragon learned from the serpents that crawl upon the branches of the World Tree that Óðinn was very angry, and that he was coming to destroy his chosen home, his island. He knew that by himself he was no match for Óðinn.

Svafnir flew north and met with Hrym, the chief of the frost giants of the North. He asked Hrym's help in fighting Óðinn. The ice giant



MYTHIC ICELAND IS CREATED





agreed, with the condition that if they were victorious he could then bring his family of giants to live with him in Svafnir's magical island. The dragon then flew west, where he spoke to the mighty giant eagle Vindsvall, who also agreed to help the dragon fight Óðinn as long as it too could use the island as its home. Lastly, Svafnir flew south and spoke with the Giant Grey Bull, and it too agreed to help Svafnir in the battle for his island.

When Óðinn arrived in Miðgarður and rode his horse in the direction of the island, Svafnir roared a battle cry that summoned all mythical creatures on the island to prepare for a mighty battle. Óðinn was not afraid. The ice giant Hrym froze the north seas, created a fierce ice storm and readied his feared clan of giants for battle. Still, Óðinn was not afraid and rode on across the skies. Approaching the magical island, he saw the gigantic eagle Vindsvall and all its family of giant birds soaring into the sky over the island, with wings so long that they touched the mountains to each side of the fjord. Still, Óðinn was not afraid. Then the ground shook with a great earthquake caused by the hooves of the giant grey bull, anxious for battle. Seeing the dragon, the giant eagle, the ice giant and the giant great bull united against him, Óðinn wisely decided to propose to the powerful land spirits that they could guard the island itself and the gates on the island that lead to Ásgarður and Álfheimur, for what worried him was that such gateways would be left unprotected.

The dragon Svafnir took home in the underground rivers of molten rock under the island. The great volcano Hekla is Svafnir's passage to the surface. An eruption always follows the dragon's wake, on the rare occasions when he visits the surface world. The ice giant and his clans live in the highlands in the center of the island. Once a year, in the winter, the ice giant chief walks around the island bringing blizzards and strong winds. The giant eagle protects the skies over the island. The Bull walks among the high mountains of the highlands.

This is the story of how mythic Iceland was created, how it became such a magical place, and how it came to be guarded by the Landvættir, the Land Spirits.



THE GUARDIANS OF MYTHIC ICELAND AND OF THE GATEWAYS BETWEEN WORLDS

## The Creation of Man

*The sons of Borr were walking along the sea coast, when they found two trees, and took up the trees and shaped men of them: the first gave them spirit and life; the second, wit and feeling; the third, form, speech, hearing, and sight. They gave them clothing and names: the male was called Askur, and the female Embla, and of them was mankind begotten, which received a dwelling-place under Miðgarður.*

— Prose Edda, by Snorri Sturluson, Iceland, 13th century



Long after the creation of Miðgarður, Álfheimur and the other worlds of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, along with gods Óðinn, Vili and Vé, created the first man and woman from the trunks of fallen ash and elm trees. Óðinn breathed into them the spirit of life, while Vili gave them sharp wits and feeling hearts, and Vé gave them the gifts of hearing and sight. The man was called Askur and the woman Embla, and they were given Miðgarður to live in.

## Ancient Times

Iceland remained untouched by man for much longer than anywhere else in Europe. The mythical creatures of the island had the whole land to themselves for millennia.

## Ultima Thule

*The farthest of all, which are known and spoke of, is Thule; in which there be no nights at all, as we have declared, about mid-summer, namely when the Sun passes through the sign Cancer; and contrariwise no days in mid-winter: and each of these times they suppose, do last six months, all day, or all night.*

— Pliny the Elder, Natural History, AD 77

In the year of 320 BC, a merchant ship coming from the lands in the South reached Iceland. One of the men in that ship was the Greek historian Pytheas.

The crew of the Greek vessel stayed only two nights in Iceland. They left with the certainty that this frozen land was uninhabited. They never saw any of the mythical creatures.

Five years later, Pytheas wrote about his visit to Iceland, a land he called Ultima Thule, saying of it: “the northernmost island of the world, six days by sea north of the British Isles and very near the frozen ocean.”

## Romans

*Theodosius's adventurous oars broke the surface of the northern seas. What avail against him the eternal snows, the frozen air, the uncharted seas? Thule lies icebound beneath the pole-star.*

— Roman poet Claudius Claudianus (d. AD 404)

Five centuries passed until men visited Iceland again. An ambitious roman governor of the province of Britannia assembled a military expedition entrusted with the mission of finding the northern island mentioned by the Greeks, and also spotted in the distance by a few Celtic sailors.

As soon as they arrived in the south of Iceland, the Romans started working on building a temporary fortress to act as a base to explore the rest of the land. They used timber from the forests that covered the low lands, and hunted seals.

During that summer they explored more of the vast island, and it was then that a small party of elves visiting mythic Iceland spotted the men. The elves were very curious. They had heard stories about the children of Óðinn who lived in other parts of Miðgarður but had never until then met any of them. They first observed the Romans from afar, and soon learned that the Romans could not see them. The elves found themselves to be invisible to human eyes, which are attuned to seeing creatures from Miðgarður but not from other worlds. Only by using innate elven magic, they could make themselves visible to humans.

Then the elves started playing mind games with the Romans. Soon the men in the small fortress started to grow uneasy with the strange events taking place in the seemingly uninhabited land. At first objects disappeared, simply vanishing when someone was not looking, only to return to a different place from where they had been stored. Occasionally someone would catch a glimpse of something or someone moving at the edge of vision, but there never was anyone there. Growing paranoid and fearful of what many of them believed to be ghosts, they turned on each other and none survived to take to Rome the news of this frozen land in the distant north.





## A Note on Elves in Mythic Iceland

There is actually very little in the way of writings about elves in the texts that have survived from the Viking age. Elves (Álvar) and their world, Álfheimur, are described in the Eddas written in Iceland in the 12th century, but these texts only briefly mention these magical creatures. The Sagas also speak very little of the elves.

This lack of information from the original sources is, at the same time, a blessing and a curse. In one hand, it allows for an original view of the elves and their interaction with the people of Viking Age Iceland, but on the other hand, it makes *Mythic Iceland* more personal to the imagination of the author. This may not please some people who have different ideas of how the elves should be introduced in a Viking game.

*Mythic Iceland*, in order to fill the gap of information about the Elves from the medieval texts, draws upon Icelandic fairy-tales of the late-medieval and modern periods whenever possible, and also introduces new elements to Icelandic elf myth.

The ruins of the wooden Roman fortress have since all but disappeared.

## Irish Hermits

Irish monks in the middle ages looked for isolated places in which they could serve the christian God in solitude. They began sailing the North Atlantic in their tiny skin boats, eventually discovering the Faroë Islands and finally reaching as far as Iceland.

A learned Irish monk named Dicuilus, wrote in his book *De Mensura Orbis Terrae* that he met some Irish monks who told him they had lived for a while in a remote country which they called Thule and said it was uninhabited. They also told him that in mid-summer there was bright daylight during both day and night, so much so that they could even pick lice from their shirts at midnight.

The monks initially lived in small groups in the southern coast. However, as they stayed longer they had some contact with the mythic creatures of Iceland and the elves. Fearing that the unseen peo-

ple and other strange creatures may actually be demons, the monks retired to a small island, now called Monks' Island (Papey), off the southeastern coast of Iceland, and avoided the main land at all costs.

The Irish monks finally abandoned Iceland when the first wave of Nordic settlers arrived around the year 870. They left in a hurry, leaving much of their belongings behind, and some of their most valuable treasures buried in secret spots which remain yet to be discovered.

## Norse Discovery

The first Norseman to discover Iceland was Naddoður, who was born in Norway and was one of the first settlers on the Faroë Islands. In the year 850, Naddoður became lost at sea and came upon a land he had never seen before. He climbed a mountain to look for smoke rising from fireplaces of any farms, but saw no sign of human habitation. As he returned to his ship to continue his journey to the Faroë Islands, it started snowing, and he called this new land Snowland (Snæland).

Ten years after Naddoður had discovered his Snowland, in the year 860, a Swedish man called Garðar Svavarsson was sailing from Denmark to the Hebrides and became lost in a storm at sea. The storm pushed his ship north until he found Iceland, which he had decided to explore. He was the first person to circumnavigate Iceland and establish that it was an island. He built a house in the south and spent the winter there. He named this new land Garðar's Island (Garðarshólmi, after himself) and once he had returned to Scandinavia, he praised this new land, and the story of Garðar's Island became known throughout the Scandinavian countries.

A Norwegian Viking, Flóki Vilgerdason, nicknamed Raven-Flóki, was the first Scandinavian who deliberately sailed to Garðar's Island. Taking his family with him, he set out to find the land that other Nordic explorers had seen in the far North Sea beyond the Faroë Islands. He had the intention of settling there.

Flóki also took with him three ravens. When he thought they were somewhere near land, he released the ravens one by one so that they could show him the way there. The first one flew back,





the second flew up and back to the ship again, but the third raven flew forward and led Flóki to land.

Flóki and his family settled in the south coast of Iceland for a year. They enjoyed a good summer but forgot to make any hay for the winter. Without any food in the cold winter months that followed, the animals died. When spring came and things began to improve again, Flóki climbed to the top of a mountain, and from the top all he could see was ice stretching down the fjords. He then gave the land the name of Iceland (Ísland), out of bitterness and frustration.

After another year in Iceland, he decided to leave the country. Arriving in Norway, he talked badly of the new land to the west, saying it was too cold and worthless. A few years later he changed his mind, and moved back to Iceland where he spent the rest of his life.

## Settlement Age

The first man to settle in Iceland was a Norwegian chieftain called Ingólfur Arnarson. On his way to that island, which he had only heard about from other seafarers, he threw overboard two carved pillars and vowed to settle wherever the gods took them. He found the pillars in a southwest peninsula and settled there with his family in 874. Many more Norse chieftains followed Ingólfur, taking their families, slaves, and animals to settle in Iceland.

The settlement was not a planned migration, a political movement, or an organized conquest. The settlers were not acquiring territory for sovereigns or for established hierarchies, but rather looking for land for themselves, far from the taxes and wars back in Norway.

Viking Age voyages were independent undertakings, part of a seaborne expansion that saw Scandinavian peoples settle in Shetland, Orkney, the Hebrides, parts of Scotland and Ireland, the Faroë Islands, Iceland, Greenland, and Wineland.

That was a time in which the Norse Vikings faced growing resistance in some parts of Europe. The native populations of England and Ireland were counter-attacking and, in many occasions, defeating the invading Vikings. This was also a

period of great transformation in Scandinavia, especially Norway, the homeland of most of the Icelandic settlers.

## Upheaval in Norway

Royal power was expanding in Norway. Haraldur Fairhair, the ruler of a kingdom in southern Norway, was challenging the long established tradition of local independence, and seeking to unify the country under his rule.

It began when Haraldur asked Gyda, the daughter of king Eiríkur of Hordaland, for her hand in marriage. She rejected him, saying she refused to marry Haraldur until he was the king over all of Norway. Haraldur vowed to unify the country and win over his bride, and to not comb his hair until he did so. For the next ten years he was known as Haraldur Tanglehair.

King Haraldur subjugated kings of petty kingdoms, local chieftains, farmers and free men all over Norway. To finance his conquests he taxed his subjects heavily. Most resentful of Haraldur were those who owned their lands and had not received them from a king, and thus had never before paid taxes.

Many landowners who were unhappy with Haraldur's rule chose to leave Norway, and many of those chose to go to Iceland, as well as to other Norse settlements in England, Scotland and Ireland.

A few of the displaced Norwegians living in the British Isles returned to raid the coast of Norway. Haraldur answered that challenge by mounting an expedition against those Viking settlements. This caused a new wave of migration to more distant Iceland.

## Land Taking and Unification

When the settlers arrived in Iceland they found a large country with no native population and plenty of land for everyone. Certain rules were agreed among those first settlers for the taking of land. A man was allowed to claim land inside a boundary defined by how many fires he could light within sight of each other in a single day. Women were allowed to claim land for themselves as well, but the rules for them were different — they were supposed







to lead a cow for one day from sunrise to sunset around the land they wanted to stake a claim.

During this time, lawlessness and warfare prevailed among the families in this new Viking settlement.

Soon the wisest of the leaders realized the benefit of having the same law everywhere and some kind of unified society in the country as a whole. This movement spread and eventually led to the unification of all the scattered chieftainships into one single nation. The outcome was the establishment of the independent Icelandic Commonwealth in AD 930.

By the year 930, all the usable land in Iceland had been taken, and the population of the country had grown to over forty thousand people.

## Law and the National Assembly

Once all the most powerful chieftains had agreed in uniting the country, it became obvious that they needed a law code that everyone in the country should follow. The Icelanders worked on their own laws, and wise men were sent to Norway to learn about laws in certain parts of that country and seek clarifications on legal matters the Icelanders were not so clear about.

At about the time the Icelandic code of laws was compiled, a farmer living in the southwestern part of Iceland was found guilty of murdering another man and was sentenced to forfeit his land, which became public property. This place was on the plains to the north of Assembly Plain Lake (Þingvallavatn), and it was agreed that this should become the site of the new National Assembly (Alþing), which gathered there for the first time in the year 930 and every year after that.

## Westward Expansion

### Greenland

In the year 981 a Norwegian man called Eiríkur the Red was banished from Iceland for three years

on account of a murder. Eiríkur then sailed 800 km (500 miles) west of Iceland, in search of a land that other Norsemen had said existed. He sailed past the southern tip of that island and sailed up the west coast, until he found an area that was ice-free and had conditions similar to Iceland. He spent the three years of his exile exploring that large island, and found it to be uninhabited.

Eiríkur named the new land Greenland, because he knew that the success of any settlement there would depend on the support of as many people as possible, and so he wanted to attract more people to settle there.

In 985, no longer an outlaw, Eiríkur returned to Iceland where he told stories of Greenland and convinced many people that moving there would be a great opportunity. That same year he returned to Greenland with a large number of colonists, and established two colonies there.

Eiríkur held the title of paramount chieftain of Greenland and became both greatly respected and wealthy. The settlement flourished, growing in size to many hundreds of farms.

## Wineland

The Norse started to explore lands to the west of Greenland only a few years after the Greenland settlements were established. In 986, while travelling from Iceland to Greenland, a Norseman named Bjarni Herjólfsson was blown off course and after three days sailing he sighted land west of Greenland. Bjarni did not explore the land, but described his discovery to Leifur Eiríksson who explored the area in more detail. Following Leifur's explorations, a man named Þorfinnur Karlsefni organized a large expedition taking 160 settlers intending to settle in Wineland.

## Conversion to Christianity

Most Norse settlers were followers of the Nordic gods, mainly Þor, Óðinn, Freyr and Freyja. By the 10th century, however, the political pressure from Norway was mounting for the Icelanders to convert to Christianity. Many missionaries were sent to Iceland but failed to convert the pagan population. Becoming more hostile, the king closed the





## Historical Notes

It is an easy task to fit the information contained in this chapter into a purely historical campaign by ignoring the references to elves and other mythical creatures.

With regards to Greeks and Romans reaching Iceland, modern historians are divided on exactly which land was visited by those ancient civilizations. Some believe that the Greek Pytheas visited and later wrote about Iceland, others believe that in fact he visited Norway and the Scandinavian Peninsula, which was long believed to be an island.

Other late classical writers and post-classical writers such as Orosius (384-420 A.D.) and the Irish monk Dicuil (late 8th and early 9th century), describe Thule as being north and west of both Ireland and Britain. Dicuil described Thule as being beyond islands that seem to be the Faroes, strongly suggesting Iceland.

In the early 20th century, Roman coins were found in excavations in southern Iceland, dating from around 300 AD. It is possible that Norse settlers brought those with them when they settled in Iceland in the 9th century, but it is also possible that they could have found the coins already in Iceland when they arrived. It is not much of a stretch to imagine that the seafaring people of the Roman Empire, perhaps from the Roman colonies in the British Islands, could have visited Iceland around 300 A.D.

Another interesting fact is that the maps drawn by the Roman cartographer Ptolemy, show the island of Thule (called then “Thile”) in the location of today’s Iceland, to the north of Scotland.

AN ANTONINIANUS OF DIOCLETIANUS, AD 284-305, FOUND AT HVALNES IN 1923. THE REVERSE SHOWS THE GOD JUPITER HOLDING VICTORIA.



A *Mythic Iceland* campaign could be built around the idea of an alternative historical setting in which the ancient Greeks and Romans actually reached Iceland and managed to build lasting settlements.





Norwegian ports to Icelandic traders, took hostage Icelanders in Norway and threatened to kill them if the country would not convert. Wishing to avoid a conflict with Norway, many prominent Icelanders accepted the new faith.

In the year 1000, the country was split between factions following the two religions, and civil war seemed unavoidable. It was then that one

of the chieftains, Þorgeirr Þorkelsson, was appointed to arbitrate over the issue. He decided that the whole country should convert to Christianity and remain under one code of laws, but pagans were still allowed to worship privately.

The first Icelandic bishop, Ísleifur Gissurarson, was consecrated by bishop Adalbert of Bremen, in 1056.



## Timeline

### Main events in Icelandic history during the Viking Age.

|      |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 700  | Irish monks began to seek solace in Iceland.                                                                                                                          |
| 850  | Iceland is visited by the norseman Naddoður.                                                                                                                          |
| 870  | Raven-Floki spends one year in Iceland, gives the country its name.                                                                                                   |
| 874  | Ingólfur Arnarson becomes the first Norseman to settle permanently in Iceland.                                                                                        |
| 891  | Skallagrímur Kveldúlfsson emigrates to Iceland ( <i>Egils Saga</i> ).                                                                                                 |
| 910  | Egill Skallagrímsson is born ( <i>Egils Saga</i> ).                                                                                                                   |
| 900  | Gunnbjörn Ulfsson, an Icelander, is the first man to spot Greenland when blown off-course.                                                                            |
| 930  | The Icelandic Commonwealth is founded with the establishment of the Alþing.                                                                                           |
| 978  | Snæbjörn Galti organizes an expedition and sailes to Greenland.                                                                                                       |
| 980  | Gisli Sursson, poet and outlaw, is killed in battle. ( <i>Gisla Saga</i> )                                                                                            |
| 981  | Eiríkur Þorvaldsson, a.k.a. Eiríkur the Red, is outlawed in Iceland, and sets sail to Greenland where he lives alone for the next three years. ( <i>Eiríks Saga</i> ) |
| 985  | Eiríkur the Red returns to Iceland and organizes a colonizing expedition to Greenland. Only 14 of 24 ships make the crossing from Iceland.                            |
| 986  | Bjarni Herjólfsson finds land to the west of Greenland, after being blown off-course, but does not make land there.                                                   |
| 992  | Gunnar Hámundarson, of Hlíðarendi, is killed in battle. ( <i>Njáls Saga</i> )                                                                                         |
| 1000 | Christianity is adopted by decision of Lawspeaker Þorgeirr Þorkelsson.                                                                                                |
| 1000 | Leifur Eiríksson organizes an expedition to the lands west of Greenland. He explores and names Slab-Land, Forest-Land and Wineland.                                   |
| 1001 | Þorvaldur Eiríksson explores Wineland, fights the skrælingar and is finally killed by one of the strange creatures they call 'One-Legged.'                            |
| 1006 | Þorfinnur Karlsefni arrives in Greenland from Iceland and marries Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir. She soon talks him into leading an expedition to Wineland.               |

Continued on next page





# Timeline

continued from previous page

|      |                                                                                                                                                   |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1007 | Þorfinnur Karlsefni and Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir embark with a 3-ship expedition to the Wineland, along with 160 settlers.                       |
| 1008 | Snorri Þorfinnson, son of Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir and Þorfinnur Karlsefni, is born in Wineland. He is the first European born in the New World. |
| 1010 | Njáll Þorgeirsson, his wife Bergþóra, two of their sons and a grandson are burned alive in their house. ( <i>Njáls Saga</i> )                     |
| 1011 | Guðrún Ósvífursdóttir, after being married four times, dies as the first Icelandic nun. ( <i>Laxdæla Saga</i> )                                   |
| 1015 | The 5th Court of the Alþing is established.                                                                                                       |
| 1024 | Bolli Bollason becomes is first known Icelander in the Byzantine Varangian Guard. ( <i>Laxdæla Saga</i> )                                         |
| 1031 | Grettir the Strong is killed in battle after living in Iceland as an outlaw for 20 years. ( <i>Grettis Saga</i> )                                 |
| 1056 | Ísleifur Gissurarson becomes the first bishop of Iceland. End of the Viking Age in Iceland.                                                       |



ILIVSTRISS. AC POTENTISS.  
REGI FREDERICO II DANIAE.  
NORVEGIAE. SLAVORVM. GO.  
THORVMQVE REGI. ETC. PRIN.  
CIPi SVO CLEMENTISSIMO.  
ANDREAS VELLEIYS  
DESCRIBED ET DEDICABAT.



# CHARACTER CREATION



This chapter discusses how you can create the characters for your own *Mythic Iceland* sagas. You will define your hero's strengths, weaknesses, and skills, as well as his or her background, motivations and personality.

Your character can develop and change over time. He or she will become more capable, wealthier and more powerful. This is a land of adventure and opportunity. Without a rigid social structure, a king or any kind of army or law enforcement, anyone with ambition may become one of the big movers and shakers in Icelandic society.

Instead of just trying to build the most powerful character possible, try to use the character creation rules to create characters with personality and motivations. The Icelandic Sagas are full of extraordinary, larger than life characters, and not only powerful warriors.

Character creation in mythic Iceland follows the instructions, and each of the steps, from **Chapter 2: Character** of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. In order to bring to the game table the same tone and style of the Icelandic Sagas, however, a few changes to character creation should be observed and are explained in this chapter.

fact, the great majority of people are a combination of all of those.

This is the Viking Age, but even Viking warriors have to tend to their farms when not traveling abroad in search of riches. Most of those who go raiding and pillaging during the summer come back home to their farms in Iceland for the rest of the year.

Icelandic society is small and spread out, with no towns or villages. This means that it lacks the conditions that allowed people in other parts of Europe to become specialized professionals in crafts and other activities. In Viking Age Iceland there are no professional blacksmiths or any kind of specialized craftsmen able to make a living solely from his or her craft.

To reflect this unique characteristic of Icelandic Medieval society, all player characters should be created using the Freeform Professions optional rule found on page 41 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. This does not mean, however, that all player characters will be the same. A player can still invest his skill points in a specific area of his or her choosing, so that their character may be skilled at making weapons, riding, navigating, etc, in addition to being a farmer, as is every Icelander.

## Professions

Mythic Iceland is a land of brave Viking warriors fighting to gain power and renown, of mysterious runemasters wielding magical powers that can shape the land, of great poets, and of farmers. In

## Step-by-step

The character creation steps listed below follow and modify those found on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook pages 16 to 25.



## Step 1

### Name & Characteristics

Many of the characters of the Icelandic Sagas have names that evoke the world and society they lived in. Your new character should have a name full of Viking flavor which tells something about your character's nature.

There are tables at the end of this chapter to help you choose a name. To use the name tables, first roll percentile dice on the appropriate Male/Female name table (pages 28-30) to pick the character's first name.

Roll a second time on the Male name table. This is the name of the character's father. The Icelandic naming tradition is patronymic, and that means that people don't have family names passed from one generation to the next, but instead have a last name which is comprised of the name of the person's father plus -sson for a man (replacing the -ur ending, if that exists in the name), or -sdóttir for a woman. The name of the Icelandic explorer Leifur Eiríksson, for example, means "Leifur son of Eiríkur," while his sister's name Freydís Eiríksdóttir means "Freydís daughter of Eiríkur," and their father's name Eiríkur Þorvaldsson means "Eiríkur son of Þorvaldur."

Next, you must choose a nickname for your character. If you already have a good concept for the character's personality and physical attributes, simply pick a nickname from the table that best matches that concept. If you don't have a good idea of your character's traits, rolling a D100 and consulting the Nicknames Table may give you a good starting point for developing a character concept.

Nicknames can be interpreted literally, but often they have an ironic meaning someone nicknamed "the Strong" may actually be not strong at all.

The player should try to come up with an explanation of the reason why his character got that particular nickname.

### Name Generation Example for a Male Character:

- ❖ **First name:** 63 on a D100 roll. The character's name is Njáll

- ❖ **Patronymic:** 29 on a D100 roll. The character's father is called Grimur
- ❖ **Nickname:** 3 on a D20 roll. The character's nickname is "The Learned"

Putting those two results together, the full name of the character is Njáll Grimsson: "The Learned."

When generating Characteristics, you can use either the rolled or point-buy methods described on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

EDU is not used.

## Step 2 - Powers

*Mythic Iceland* does not use Mutations, Psychic Abilities, Sorcery, or Magic as described on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

Magic-user characters in *Mythic Iceland* are called Runemasters, and they use a special magic system detailed later in this book, in the **Magic in Mythic Iceland** chapter.

## Step 3 - Age

The default starting age is  $20 + 2D6$ , old enough to be a settled farm owner even if a young one.

If you want to play with a younger or older character, feel free and use the aging rules found on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook pages 19-20, applying modifiers to characteristics and skills due to young or old age.

## Step 4 - Characteristic Rolls

Calculate your Characteristic Rolls as per instructions from the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

If your character is a Runemaster, please note requirements described on page 21.

After the initial Luck score is calculated (POW x5), any change of the POW characteristic during play does not affect Luck.

Make a note of your initial Luck score in the "Characteristics & Rolls," and also the "Luck Score" sections of the character sheet. Any changes to *Luck* during the game should be made to the "Luck Score" section only.





## A Note About Runemasters

Runemasters are those individuals who possess the knowledge of how to unleash the magical power of the runes by the means of carving magical rune scripts and bind-runes.

The knowledge necessary to be a runemaster is represented by the Rune Magic skill. This is the skill involved in learning new runes and in preparing magical rune scripts. Any runemaster needs to have points in Rune Magic.

### Other Requirements for a Runemaster:

- ❖ Allegiance to a god, any god, of more than 20% ahead of the character's other Allegiances.
- ❖ POW of 16 or higher.
- ❖ **Craft** (Wood) of 40% or higher, in order to be able to carve runes.
- ❖ **Literacy** (Runes) of 40% or higher.

For more information about the special use of Luck in *Mythic Iceland*, see page 204.

## Step 5 - Derived Characteristics

Calculate your Characteristic Rolls as per instructions from the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

The following optional rules are recommended to be used in all *Mythic Iceland* campaigns:

**Skill Category Bonuses** (*Basic Roleplaying* page 31). Skill bonuses for Mythic Skills are: Primary POW, Secondary INT.

**Hit Points per Hit Location** (*Basic Roleplaying* page 29). Make a note of the hit points for each body location on the area provided on the right-hand side of your character sheet. The first field under "HP" is your full hit point total for that body

location, while the value in brackets is your current hit point score.

### Fatigue Points (*Basic Roleplaying* page 32)

Major wounds and Sanity optional rules are not recommended to be used with *Mythic Iceland* characters.

## Step 6 - Personality and Animal Fetch

Personality type has a special meaning in *Mythic Iceland*. It defines the character's Animal Fetch — a semi-independent spirit, in the shape of an animal, that follows that person and also appears in dreams to give warnings about the future.

Choose, or roll randomly, a personality type, consulting the table below, and then choose an associated Animal Fetch.

- ❖ **1 - Physical force and brawn — Horse, Bear, Bull, Elk**
  - Give 20 skill points each to Brawl, Climb, Dodge, Grapple, Insight, Jump, Ride, Sense, Stealth, Swim, Throw, and to any two Weapon skills.
- ❖ **2 - Technique, craft, and expertise — Raven, Cat, Falcon, Seal**
  - Give 20 skill points each to Appraise, any one Craft, Disguise, Dodge, Fine Manipulation, First Aid, any one Knowledge skill, Navigate, Pilot Ship, Ride, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, and to any one Combat or Weapon skill.
- ❖ **3 - Outsmart an opponent — Fox, Weasel, Goat, Owl**
  - Give 20 skill points each to Appraise, Bargain, Disguise, Insight, Knowledge (Myths), Knowledge (Regional), Law, Listen, Sense, Spot, Stealth, Track, and any one Combat or Weapon skill.
- ❖ **4 - Persuading other people — Dog, Wolf, Mouse, Ram**
  - Give 20 points each to Appraise, Bargain, Fast Talk, Insight, Poetry, Perform, Persuade, Politics, Norse Language, Any other Language, Sense, Strategy, and any one Combat or Weapon skill.





Apply the Personality skill point bonuses above to your character's skills, and make a note of your Animal Fetch on the appropriate section of your character sheet.

New animals may be added to the list. The only limitations are that the animals are non-mythic creatures of land or air, and that it must be an animal that inhabits the Nordic countries. Characters born outside of the Nordic countries may have Animal Fetches found on their native lands.

For more information on how a character's Animal Fetch is used during a game of *Mythic Iceland*, see page 206.

## Step 7 - Skills

The standard power level for a *Mythic Iceland* campaign is *normal* — the player characters are only starting on their careers as Saga heroes.

Begin calculating the skill points by assigning Skill Category Bonuses (see optional rule on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 31). Make note of those values on the spaces on the character sheet in front of each skill category title.

The total number of skill points your character can distribute among his skills is 250 plus INTx10. You can use those points to raise any skill other than Status.

You can only assign points to Mythic Skills if your character has POW of 16 or higher.

If your character is a Runemaster, please note requirements described on pages 21, 86.

Don't forget to add the Personality skill bonuses from Step 6.

No skill should begin higher than 75%, even when counting with the Skill Category bonuses.

Cultural skills are not used.

For descriptions of the new skills and general guidance for skill use in *Mythic Iceland*, see page 25.

## Step 7.1 - Status

The Status skill is used in *Mythic Iceland* as a measure of social importance that can only be raised by actions during play. The standard starting score

for Status is 25%, and it cannot be raised during character creation.

For more information about the special use of Status in *Mythic Iceland*, see page 200.

## Step 8 - Distinctive Features

Distinctive Features optional rules (*Basic Roleplaying* page 34) are recommended. They are a great way to add flavor to your character.

## Step 9 - Profession

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, professions are not used for *Mythic Iceland* characters.

## Step 9.1 - Wealth

Newly created *Mythic Iceland* player characters start as small householders, owning farmland upon which stands one single building, a longhouse. A separate building in which to house animals in the winter only exists on much larger farms.

A starting character's farm is comprised of 20 hectares of land (nearly 50 acres, or 200,000 square meters). The farmland is capable of producing 20 tons of hay in a good year, which is enough to support 10 head of cattle or 20 sheep.

All farms in Viking Age Iceland are self-sufficient, producing all or almost all of the food consumed in the household. Trade is very limited. There are no organized markets, and surplus production is rare even on larger farms.

The table below determines the main activity at the character's farm.

### Roll 1D4

#### ❖ 1 – Dairy production (cattle)

- Farmland worth 4,200 vaðmal.
- Animals: two horses, seven cows, eight sheep with lambs.

#### ❖ 2 – Sheep wool and meat

- Farmland worth 4,200 vaðmal.
- Animals: three horses, two cows, sixteen sheep with lambs.





### ❖ 3 – Fishing (river)

- Farmland worth 4,600 vaðmal.
- Animals: two horses, three cows, six sheep with lambs.

### ❖ 4 – Driftwood (coastal farm)

- Farmland worth 4,700 vaðmal.
- Animals: two horses, two cows, six sheep with lambs.
- (Main source of food via trade of driftwood with neighbors)

The combined property value of all that a starting character owns is 5,000 vaðmal. Married and unmarried characters have the same amount of starting wealth. (See more about vaðmal and its value on pages 44-45).

Player characters start with no surplus money. See Vaðmal Production on page 44 for more details on how to calculate wealth produced at the farm each year after character creation.

Your character owns 1D3 slaves. They are used as farmhands, or perhaps as concubines, but they have no fighting skills. See page 39 for a detailed description of a slave's place in Viking Age Icelandic society. Once the number of slaves has been decided, the player should choose names for each of the slaves. In most cases they have exotic names from foreign lands. The player should also come up with brief description of each slave's appearance and personality.

## Step 10 - Allegiance

*Mythic Iceland* characters must select one god from the Norse pantheon that he or she worships, and is thus said to be allied to. The Allegiance rules from page 315 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook are used.

Many gods are worshiped in Viking Age Iceland. The vast majority of people are followers of one of the three gods that appear listed below in order of popularity.

- ❖ Þór - God of farmers and seafarers, presides over thunder and lightning, winds and rain, fair weather and crops.

- ❖ Freyr - God of fertility, rules over rain and sunshine, peace and prosperity.

- ❖ Óðinn - God of warriors, but also of poetry and wisdom, carries on wars and gives men valor against their enemies.

The **Religion** chapter lists many more gods, and discusses each of them in detail.

Choose the god your character is allied to, and make a note of the god's name on the Allegiance section of your character sheet. The initial Allegiance score with that god is  $25 + 1D6$  points. (This is a higher starting score than prescribed by the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, and the reason for that is to reflect the importance of faith in *Mythic Iceland* society.)

Notice that the name of the god Loki is already listed on the Allegiance section of your character sheet. This does not mean that your character worships Loki in any way, but rather it represents the dark path that the character may choose to follow and that leads away from the ideals embodied by the other, more honorable, gods. The starting Allegiance score with Loki is 1D6 points.

Your character will start already having a difference of 20 or more points between the two Allegiance scores, and that means he already enjoys some benefits from his stronger Allegiance with the god he chose to follow. Consult the list of Allegiance benefits for your god of choice in the **Religion** chapter, and make note of those benefits on the space provided on the character sheet.

See page 202 for detailed guidelines on how to use Allegiance in a *Mythic Iceland* game.

**Note for Runemasters:** The god a Runemaster worships has a direct effect on the actual selection of runes that a runemaster character knows. You may want to have a look at the group of runes associated with each god before you make a choice. See **Magic in Mythic Iceland**, page 84.

## Step 11 - Equipment

**Weapons:** A starting character may be skilled in many weapons, but he or she starts owning only





two weapons. You can pick any two weapons from the table on page 185, in the **Going Viking** chapter.

**Armor:** All characters may start with soft leather armor for abdomen and chest areas only. Armor is not commonly worn over arms and legs. Hard leather armor is not used. Chain mail is expensive and rare, and beyond the means of starting characters.

**Helmet:** Your character owns one metal light helmet. Be sure to make note of the skill modifiers for wearing a light helmet (see *Basic Roleplaying* page 259).

**Shield:** Every character may start with one Large Round Shield.

**Armor by Hit Location optional rules** (*Basic Roleplaying* page 262) are recommended.

There is no need to spend skill points on Parry during character creation — the Parry score of each weapon is the same as that weapon's Attack score. After the character creation is finished, however, the Attack and Parry scores for a weapon advance as separate skills — see Splitting Attack and Parry Skills on page 199 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

**Encumbrance Optional Rules** (*Basic Roleplaying* page 180) are recommended. Calculate the Encumbrance (ENC) of the character's armor and weapons, and subtract one Fatigue point for every point of ENC carried.

## Step 12 - Family

Family is a very important aspect of society in mythic Iceland.

An Icelander can count on his family, his kinsmen, for support in times of need. There is also a requirement to seek compensation or take blood vengeance in the case of the slaying of kinsman.

You should decide if your character is married and if he has any children of his or her own. Use the table below if you would like a random answer to those questions.

### Roll 1D10

- |     |                                             |
|-----|---------------------------------------------|
| 1-4 | Unmarried                                   |
| 5-6 | Married, no children                        |
| 7-8 | Married, one child of 1D4 years of age      |
| 9   | Married, two children of 1D6 years of age   |
| 10  | Married, three children of 1D8 years of age |

Roll age separately for each child. Children with the same age result are twins. Make a D100 roll to decide gender of any children, odd numbers result in boys and even numbers result in girls, there is a 50% chance of either gender.

The ages of the children are appropriate for the character starting age (see Step 3 above). If you picked a different starting age for your character, adjust children age appropriately — older characters, for example, may have more children.

Make a note of the names and ages of your spouse and children on the second page of your character sheet. You may also want to roll and choose their Animal Fetches.

If your character is married, there is a 30% chance that he or she is fostering the child of a friend or relative.

You character has 1D6 siblings. You should decide if any of them live with you on your farm.

The total number of kinsmen your character has is equal to 25 (the starting status score) + 2D10. If the character is married, add 3D6 kinsmen.

## Skills

For a complete list of the skills available to *Mythic Iceland* characters, see the character sheet at the end of the book.

### Notes on Skills from *Basic Roleplaying*

**Combat Skills**—The most common weapons used in Viking Age Iceland are: Broad Sword, Battle Axe (one-handed), Great Axe (two-handed), Sax, Long Spear, or Self Bow. The initial skill scores for these weapons can be found on the **Going Viking** chapter, page 185.





**Gaming**—Icelanders play a variation of chess called hnefatafl, which is a common past-time throughout the Nordic world. One player controls the king-piece located at the center of the board which is surrounded by other pieces representing its followers, with the objective of escaping the board via one of its corners. The opposing player controls twice as many pieces and tries to capture the king. It is not unheard of for great stakes to be bet on a match of hnefatafl.

To resolve a hnefatafl match, make an opposed roll of the Gaming skill scores of both players (see Opposed Skill Rolls on page 173 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook).

**Literacy**—Writing is a rare activity in Iceland during the Viking Age. The so-called Icelandic Age of Writing, during which the Sagas were written down, comes only after the Viking Age itself was already over.

**Literacy (Runes)**—Measures the character's ability to read and write using the runic alphabet. Runemasters need to have at least 40% in this skill.

**Literacy (Latin)**—measures the character's ability to read and write using the latin alphabet used in most of continental Europe outside of the Nordic world. Knowing the sounds represented by each letter of the latin alphabet does not, however, allow for the character to comprehend foreign languages.

**Navigate**—This is an important skill for those in mythic Iceland who hope to travel and become vikings abroad, or to reach the colonies of Greenland or Wineland, in their own ships. Saga Age navigators used the behaviour of birds and whales, as well as the position of the sun to find their way when out at sea.

**Politics**—A successful roll means the character understands the balance of power within a region and knows who are the goðar (chieftains) of that region. This skill can also be used to gauge understanding of the political system used within the assemblies, and the chances that a case has of succeeding if presented at the assemblies.

## New Skills

**Farming** (15%) [Manipulation]—This skill measures the character's ability to successfully run a farm, including the keeping of animals, cultivation of any crops, and the best possible utilization of the resources of the land such as rivers and sea fishing grounds. See page 201 for details on how the Farming skill influences a character's Status score.

**Knowledge (Myths)** (20%) [Mental]—Tales of mythic creatures are often shared among family members during the long winters, and between friends and neighbours during the assemblies. This skill measures the chance of a character remembering those stories. A Special or Critical success means that the character remembers what the folk tales say about a mythic creature's behavior, attack methods, and even possible weaknesses.

**Knowledge (Regional)** (INTx2) [Mental]—This skill measures a character's knowledge about the people living in his native region, as well as his knowledge of the geographical features of the land.





When checking if a character knows of a specific individual, the difficulty of the roll varies with the social status of that individual, as per the table below. The difficulty for skill checks pertaining to land features is always Average.

| Roll difficulty | People known            |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Easy            | Chieftain (goði), farms |
| Average         | Farmers and their wives |
| Difficult       | Slaves and children     |

The actual score on this skill defines the breadth character's knowledge in geographical terms, relative to the region where the character was born.

|        |                        |
|--------|------------------------|
| 0-20   | Chieftainship (goðorð) |
| 20-40  | Whole region           |
| 40-60  | Two regions            |
| 60-80  | Three region           |
| 80-100 | Entire country         |

Thus, a character with 30% in this skill has knowledge of people and places within his native region but not further afield. That character may make an Easy check of the skill in order to remember the names and some small details about goðar in his region, and also the names of farms and other geographical features. He must make a Difficult skill check in order to remember the names of slaves, as no one pays them much attention.

Someone with 80% and above in this skill has a good chance of having known, or at least heard of, the most prominent people in all of the country. He even has a moderately good chance of knowing the names of children and slaves living far away, or the name of a landmark in the other side of the country.

**Poetry (05%) [Communication]**—The skill to compose poetry is highly valued in Viking Age Iceland. Many of the greatest characters of the Icelandic Sagas, even some of the great warriors, were very skilled in poetry. In Mythic Iceland those skaldic poems and verses have actual power.

A character may choose at any time to use one action, inside or outside of combat, to com-

pose a poetic verse and recite it aloud. The player doesn't need himself to actually recite a verse, but should tell the GM and other players about the general subject of the poem. If the character's poetry is good (if he rolls a successful Poetry skill check), he enjoys a temporary bonus of 1D6 skill points on a chosen skill. If the character's poem praises his sword ability, for example, he earns a temporary 1D6 skill points bonus to his Sword skill. One Power Point must be spent by the character when reciting the poem, and that point is spent whether the Poetry skill check succeeds or fails. The temporary skill bonus lasts for one scene, such as one battle, a single conversation, a feast, a sea journey, etc.

If the player makes the extra effort to actually recite an original poetic verse, he or she gets a bonus of +20% to the Poetry skill check.

**Skiing (25%) [Physical]**—A common skill in Viking Age Iceland. For cross-country skiing, unmatched skis are used. On the left foot a long gliding ski is used, while a short, fur-covered kicking ski is used on the right foot. A single pole is used for balance. Skiing downhill for sport is rarely done.

## Mythic Skills

These are rare abilities — only those characters with a minimum of 16 points of POW are able to use Mythic skills.

The starting score for all Mythic skill is 0%.

**Second Sight** - Costs one Power Point to activate, lasts for one scene, and that cost must be spent even if the roll does not succeed.

On a successful roll of Second Sight, a character is able to see the animal fetches of people around him. If the roll is under half of the skill, it is possible to identify the individual animal if you have seen it before. For example, if an Animal Fetch was seen in a dream, and again when the person is awake, the person may be able to recognise it on a Difficult roll of Second Sight.

**Note:** All mythic creatures have 100% Second Sight, meaning they can always see other mythic creatures.





**Prophecy** - Allows the character to have a glimpse of a likely future. See page 206.

**Rune Magic** - Used by Runemasters to perform magic. See page 95.

### A Special Note about the Status Skill

The Status skill is used in *Mythic Iceland* as a measure of social importance and also as a measure of wealth. Every *Mythic Iceland* player character starts with 25 points of Status. For more information on how to use Status, see page 200.





## Male Names Table (D100)

|    | Name       | Meaning               |    | Name       | Meaning                   |     | Name        | Meaning             |
|----|------------|-----------------------|----|------------|---------------------------|-----|-------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Álfgeir    | Elf-Knife             | 34 | Hafsteinn  | Sea Stone                 | 69  | Regin       | Decision            |
| 2  | Arnpór     | Eagle-Thor            | 35 | Haki       | Hook                      | 70  | Sæmundur    | Sea Protection      |
| 3  | Atli       | Little Father         | 36 | Kolskeggur | Black Beard               | 71  | Sigfús      | Eager to Win        |
| 4  | Björn      | Bear                  | 37 | Hallbjörn  | Stone Bear                | 72  | Sigmundur   | Winner              |
| 5  | Bragi      | Poet                  | 38 | Halldór    | Pór's Rock                | 73  | Sigurður    | Protector           |
| 6  | Dufþakur   | Dark Haired           | 39 | Halli      | Rock                      | 74  | Skafti      | Handle              |
| 7  | Dýri       | Precious              | 40 | Haraldur   | Army Leader               | 75  | Skarpheðinn | Hardened Fur Wearer |
| 8  | Egill      | Intimidating          | 41 | Hari       | Chieftain                 | 76  | Skeggi      | Bearded             |
| 9  | Eilífur    | Ever-Living           | 42 | Haukur     | Hawk                      | 77  | Skorri      | Argumentative       |
| 10 | Einar      | Lonesome              | 43 | Hedinn     | Fur Wearer                | 78  | Sörli       | Armored             |
| 11 | Eiríkur    | Very Powerful         | 44 | Heimir     | Home                      | 79  | Sturla      | Crazy               |
| 12 | Erlendur   | Foreigner             | 45 | Helgi      | Holy                      | 80  | Sumarliði   | Summer Viking       |
| 13 | Erpur      | Brown                 | 46 | Hjálmur    | Helmet                    | 81  | Sváfnir     | Killer              |
| 14 | Fjörnir    | Life Protector        | 47 | Hjörleifur | Sword Gift                | 82  | Svanur      | Swan                |
| 15 | Flóki      | Entangled             | 48 | Hnikarr    | Pusher                    | 83  | Svartur     | Black               |
| 16 | Flosi      | Lady's Man            | 49 | Högni      | Protector                 | 84  | Sveinn      | Boy                 |
| 17 | Friðgeir   | Peaceful Dagger       | 50 | Hrafn      | Raven                     | 85  | Þorvarður   | Protected by Þór    |
| 18 | Friðleifur | Peace Heritage        | 51 | Hrappur    | Clever                    | 86  | Þráinn      | Longing             |
| 19 | Fróði      | Wise                  | 52 | Hreiðar    | Nest                      | 87  | Þjóðólfur   | Nation's Wolf       |
| 20 | Gaukur     | Cuckoo                | 53 | Hreinn     | Clean                     | 88  | Úlfur       | Wolf                |
| 21 | Geir       | Knife                 | 54 | Hróar      | Famous Soldier            | 89  | Valgarður   | Chosen Warrior      |
| 22 | Gellir     | Loud                  | 55 | Ísleifur   | Gift of Ice               | 90  | Veturliði   | Winter Viking       |
| 23 | Gísli      | Hostage               | 56 | Kári       | Curly-Haired              | 91  | Vöggur      | Little Man          |
| 24 | Gizur      | Guesser               | 57 | Ketill     | Kettle                    | 92  | Völundur    | Betrayer            |
| 25 | Glúmur     | Gloomy                | 58 | Kjartan    | Sailor                    | 93  | Ýmir        | Twin                |
| 26 | Gnúpur     | Steep Mountain        | 59 | Leifur     | Heritage                  | 94  | Þorbrandur  | Þór's Sword         |
| 27 | Grani      | Mustached             | 60 | Magnús     | The Great                 | 95  | Þórður      | Þór's Follower      |
| 28 | Grettir    | Frowning Man          | 61 | Már        | Sea Bird                  | 96  | Þorgrimur   | Þór Disguise        |
| 29 | Grimur     | Disguised             | 62 | Mörður     | Predator                  | 97  | Þorkell     | Þór's Kettle        |
| 30 | Guðmundur  | God's Gift            | 63 | Njáll      | Hero                      | 98  | Þóroddur    | Þór's Spear         |
| 31 | Gunnar     | Battle                | 64 | Ólafur     | Descendant                | 99  | Þórólfur    | Þór's Wolf          |
| 32 | Gunnlaugur | Source of Battle      | 65 | Ormur      | Worm                      | 100 | Þrymur      | Force               |
| 33 | Guttormur  | Protected by the Gods | 66 | Össur      | The One Who Gives Answers |     |             |                     |
|    |            |                       | 67 | Óttar      | Fearsome                  |     |             |                     |
|    |            |                       | 68 | Randver    | Shield                    |     |             |                     |





## Female Names Table (D100)

|    | Name       | Meaning               |    | Name        | Meaning             |     | Name       | Meaning           |
|----|------------|-----------------------|----|-------------|---------------------|-----|------------|-------------------|
| 1  | Æsa        | Goddess               | 34 | Guðrún      | God's Magic         | 69  | Ölrún      | Magic Rune        |
| 2  | Aldís      | Complete Goddess      | 35 | Gunnur      | Battle              | 70  | Ormfríður  | Beautiful Worm    |
| 3  | Álfdís     | Elf Goddess           | 36 | Gyða        | Godly Being         | 71  | Ormhildur  | Worm Battle       |
| 4  | Álfheiður  | Bright Elf            | 37 | Hallbera    | Feamle Stone Bear   | 72  | Ósk        | Wish              |
| 5  | Álfhildur  | Elf Battle            | 38 | Halldóra    | Þór's Rock          | 73  | Rannveig   | Powerful House    |
| 6  | Álfífa     | Gift of the Elves     | 39 | Hallgerður  | Rocky Road          | 74  | Reginleif  | Divine Heritage   |
| 7  | Álöf       | Descendant            | 40 | Heiður      | Honor               | 75  | Sælaug     | Sea Pool          |
| 8  | Arnþrúður  | Eagle Strength        | 41 | Helga       | Holy                | 76  | Sæunn      | Sea Lover         |
| 9  | Ásgerður   | Protected by the Gods | 42 | Herdís      | Warrior Goddess     | 77  | Sif        | Relative          |
| 10 | Áslaug     | Gods' Pool            | 43 | Hildigunna  | Battle              | 78  | Sigríður   | Winning Peace     |
| 11 | Ásta       | Love                  | 44 | Hjördís     | Sword Goddess       | 79  | Snæfríður  | Beautiful Snow    |
| 12 | Ástriður   | Passionate            | 45 | Hlaðgerður  | Decorative Headband | 80  | Sólbjört   | Bright Sun        |
| 13 | Auður      | Rich                  | 46 | Hlín        | Faithful            | 81  | Sölva      | Pale              |
| 14 | Bergdís    | Goddess of Salvation  | 47 | Hödd        | Hair                | 82  | Svanhildur | Swan Battle       |
| 15 | Berglind   | Water Spring          | 48 | Hrafnhildur | Raven War           | 83  | Sylgja     | Swallow           |
| 16 | Bergþóra   | Saved by Þór          | 49 | Hróðný      | Famous              | 84  | Úlfhildur  | Wolf Battle       |
| 17 | Birna      | Female Bear           | 50 | Hrund       | Pusher              | 85  | Una        | Comfortable       |
| 18 | Bót        | Repair                | 51 | Iðunn       | Movement            | 86  | Unnur      | Lover             |
| 19 | Brynhildur | Battle Armor          | 52 | Ingibjörg   | Royal Rock          | 87  | Valgerður  | Deadly Rock       |
| 20 | Dagbjört   | Bright Day            | 53 | Ingunn      | King's Lover        | 88  | Véfrejja   | Holy Lady         |
| 21 | Droplaug   | Pool of Drops         | 54 | Ingveldur   | Royal Battle        | 89  | Védís      | Holy Goddess      |
| 22 | Dúfa       | Dove                  | 55 | Ísgerður    | Frozen Cliff        | 90  | Vigdís     | Killing Goddess   |
| 23 | Eyr        | Protector             | 56 | Jófríður    | Beautiful Horse     | 91  | Ýr         | Ox                |
| 24 | Eyvör      | Island Protector      | 57 | Jórunn      | Horse Lover         | 92  | Yrsa       | Wild Sheep        |
| 25 | Finna      | The Finnish One       | 58 | Katla       | Container           | 93  | Þóra       | Þór               |
| 26 | Fönn       | Snow                  | 59 | Kneif       | Large Hook          | 94  | Þórdís     | Þór's Goddess     |
| 27 | Fríða      | Beautiful             | 60 | Kolbrún     | Dark Brown          | 95  | Þórfinna   | Finnish Þór       |
| 28 | Geirfríður | Beautiful Dagger      | 61 | Ljót        | Ugly                | 96  | Þorgerður  | Þór's Garden      |
| 29 | Geirþrúður | Powerful Spear        | 62 | Ljótunn     | Ugly                | 97  | Þórhalla   | Þór's Stone       |
| 30 | Gerður     | Garden                | 63 | Lofn        | Sweet               | 98  | Þórunn     | One Who Loves Þór |
| 31 | Gjaflaug   | Pool of Gifts         | 64 | Lofthæna    | Air Chicken         | 99  | Þrúður     | Strength          |
| 32 | Gróa       | Grower                | 65 | Mjöll       | New Snow            | 100 | Þuríður    | Þór's Beauty      |
| 33 | Guðmunda   | Gift of the Gods      | 66 | Nótt        | Night               |     |            |                   |
|    |            |                       | 67 | Oddfríður   | Beautiful Helmet    |     |            |                   |
|    |            |                       | 68 | Oddkatla    | Pointy Helmet       |     |            |                   |





## Nicknames Table (D100)

All nicknames listed below are from the Icelandic Sagas and other Icelandic medieval sources.

|    |                 |    |                    |    |                 |     |                     |
|----|-----------------|----|--------------------|----|-----------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1  | the Proud       | 27 | Greycloak          | 53 | the Careless    | 79  | the Troubled        |
| 2  | the Vile        | 28 | the Fair           | 54 | the Elegant     | 80  | The Timber-Quaker   |
| 3  | the Learned     | 29 | the Lucky          | 55 | the Walker      | 81  | Fairhair            |
| 4  | the Excellent   | 30 | the Quiet          | 56 | Shaggy-Breeches | 82  | Gold-Beard          |
| 5  | the White       | 31 | Longnose           | 57 | the Uninspired  | 83  | the Foolish         |
| 6  | the Unruly      | 32 | the Good           | 58 | Bow-Bender      | 84  | Broad-Bearded       |
| 7  | the Red         | 33 | Barelegs           | 59 | the Valiant     | 85  | Black-Beard         |
| 8  | the Black       | 34 | Silkbeard          | 60 | the Pock-Marked | 86  | the Far-Travelled   |
| 9  | the Powerful    | 35 | Snake-Tongue       | 61 | Horse-Head      | 87  | the Sharp           |
| 10 | the Mighty      | 36 | Long-Chin          | 62 | Skull-Splitter  | 88  | Red-Cloak           |
| 11 | the Grey        | 37 | Child-Sparer       | 63 | Half-Giant      | 89  | the Bow-Swayer      |
| 12 | the Ugly        | 38 | the Broad          | 64 | the Generous    | 90  | The Barker          |
| 13 | the Bald-Headed | 39 | Ale-Lover          | 65 | The Bellower    | 91  | Hawk-nose           |
| 14 | the Beardless   | 40 | Deep-Minded        | 66 | Foal-Brow       | 92  | the Fast-Traveller  |
| 15 | the Bounteous   | 41 | the Shifty         | 67 | the Lean        | 93  | the Horn-Breaker    |
| 16 | the Yeller      | 42 | the Rash           | 68 | Tree-Foot       | 94  | Coal-Brow           |
| 17 | the Wise        | 43 | Oxen-Might         | 69 | Night-Wolf      | 95  | the Great-Slasher   |
| 18 | the Tall        | 44 | the Peacock        | 70 | the Filthy      | 96  | the Thin-Bearded    |
| 19 | the Short       | 45 | the Coward         | 71 | Thunder         | 97  | Giant-Destroyer     |
| 20 | the Fat         | 46 | Cod-Biter          | 72 | Black-Tooth     | 98  | the Bristle-Bearded |
| 21 | the Slim        | 47 | the Unwashed       | 73 | the Unlucky     | 99  | the Dueller         |
| 22 | the Old         | 48 | the Smooth-Tongued | 74 | the Vicious     | 100 | The Poet            |
| 23 | the Squinter    | 49 | Hog-Head           | 75 | Crooked-Nose    |     |                     |
| 24 | Flatnose        | 50 | Tangle-Hair        | 76 | Swift-eyed      |     |                     |
| 25 | Forkbeard       | 51 | Hairy-Cheek        | 77 | the Clumsy      |     |                     |
| 26 | the Brave       | 52 | Half-Troll         | 78 | Crow-nose       |     |                     |





# MYTHIC ICELAND

PLAYER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal-Fetch: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Handedness: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Distinctive Features: \_\_\_\_\_

## CHARACTERISTICS

STR \_\_\_\_\_ Effort roll \_\_\_\_\_ %  
CON \_\_\_\_\_ Stamina roll \_\_\_\_\_ %  
SIZ \_\_\_\_\_ Damage Bonus \_\_\_\_\_  
INT \_\_\_\_\_ Idea roll \_\_\_\_\_ %  
POW \_\_\_\_\_ Luck roll \_\_\_\_\_ %  
DEX \_\_\_\_\_ Agility roll \_\_\_\_\_ %  
APP \_\_\_\_\_ Charisma roll \_\_\_\_\_ %

## HIT POINTS

00 01 02 03 04 05  
06 07 08 09 10 11  
12 13 14 15 16 17  
18 19 20 21 22 23  
24 25 26 27 28 29  
30 31 32 33 34 35

## SKILLS

### COMMUNICATION

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Bargain (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Disguise (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Etiquette (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Fast Talk (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Perform (15%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Persuade (15%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Poetry (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

Spoken Languages (Own, INTx5)

☐ Norse \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Teach (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### MANIPULATION

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Craft (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Farming (15%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Fine Manipulation (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Sleight of Hand (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### MENTAL

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Appraise (15%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ First Aid (INTx01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Gaming (INT+POW) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Knowledge (Myths) (20%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Knowledge (Reg.) (INTx2) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Law (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Literacy (Runes) (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Literacy (Latin) (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Medicine (00%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Politics (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Strategy (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### PERCEPTION

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Insight (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Listen (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Navigate (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Sense (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Spot (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Track (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### PHYSICAL

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Climb (40%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Dodge (DEX x02%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Hide (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Jump (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Pilot Ship (01%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Ride (05%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Stealth (10%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Swim (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Throw (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### MYTHIC

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Second Sight (0%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Prophecy (0%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Rune Magic (0%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

### COMBAT

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Brawl (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Grapple (25%) \_\_\_\_\_ %

(see **WEAPONS** below for more combat skills)

## WEAPONS

DEX Strike Rank: \_\_\_\_\_ SIZ Strike Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

### Weapon

Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Special type: \_\_\_\_\_ Strike Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Attack \_\_\_\_\_ % Critical \_\_\_\_\_ % ENC \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Parry \_\_\_\_\_ % Hit Points \_\_\_\_\_ Fumble \_\_\_\_\_ %

### Weapon

Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Special type: \_\_\_\_\_ Strike Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Attack \_\_\_\_\_ % Critical \_\_\_\_\_ % ENC \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Parry \_\_\_\_\_ % Hit Points \_\_\_\_\_ Fumble \_\_\_\_\_ %

### Shield

Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Special type: \_knockback\_ Strike Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Attack \_\_\_\_\_ % Critical \_\_\_\_\_ % ENC \_\_\_\_\_ %  
☐ Parry \_\_\_\_\_ % Hit Points \_\_\_\_\_ Fumble \_\_\_\_\_ %

### Missile

Damage \_\_\_\_\_ Special type: \_\_\_\_\_ Strike Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Attack \_\_\_\_\_ % Critical \_\_\_\_\_ % ENC \_\_\_\_\_ %  
ROF \_\_\_\_\_ Hit Points \_\_\_\_\_ Fumble \_\_\_\_\_ %

|                                                                              |                                                                              |                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HEAD</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 19-20<br>Missile 20      |                                                                              |                                                                              |
| <b>R. ARM</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 13-15<br>Missile 16-17 | <b>CHEST</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 12 + Missile 11-15      | <b>L. ARM</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 16-18<br>Missile 18-19 |
| <b>ABDOMEN</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 09-11 + Missile 07-10 |                                                                              |                                                                              |
| <b>R. LEG</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 01-04<br>Missile 01-03 | <b>L. LEG</b><br>AP _____<br>HP _____<br>( )<br>Melee 05-08<br>Missile 04-06 |                                                                              |

Armor Skill Modifiers: \_\_\_\_\_

## ALLEGIANCE POINTS

(your god) \_\_\_\_\_ %

Loki \_\_\_\_\_ %

Benefits, per number of points higher than next highest score:

**At 20+ points greater:** Can use up to 1/4 of current Allegiance score as temporary Hit Points, once per game session.

**At 30+ points greater:** Can use up to 1/10 of current Allegiance score as temporary Power Points, once per game session.

**At 40+ points greater:** Up to 3 times per session, use full Allegiance score as extra points for skills: \_\_\_\_\_

**At 50+ points greater:** \_\_\_\_\_

**At 80+ points greater:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Increasing Allegiance:** \_\_\_\_\_

## CURRENT LUCK SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ %

**Spending Luck:** pass skill check, pay 2D6 points of Luck.

• **Outside Combat:** player gets to describe lucky event.

• **In Combat:** health stabilizes at 0 Hit Points, bleeding stops.

**Dishonorable Behavior:** lose 1D10 points of Luck.

## GODI, KINSMEN, and FAMILY

Goði's name and nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Goði status score: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of Kinsmen: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Warrior Kinsmen: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's name and nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Concubine: \_\_\_\_\_

Children: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of slaves: \_\_\_\_\_

Slaves names and description: \_\_\_\_\_

## EQUIPMENT CARRIED

## EQUIPMENT AT HOME

## TREASURE AT HOME

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

## TREASURE BURIED FOR AFTERLIFE - ODIN'S LAW

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

Value (vaðmal): \_\_\_\_\_

## ENCUMBRANCE (ENC)

Armor ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

Helmet ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

First Weapon ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Weapon ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Weapon ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

Extra ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENC: \_\_\_\_\_

(ENC per Hit Location rules can be found in the Basic Roleplaying rulebook, page 262)

## FATIGUE POINTS

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

**Maximum Fatigue (STR + CON):** \_\_\_\_\_

Subtract total ENC from maximum Fatigue to find current Fatigue point score. Score goes down by one point per combat round.

**Recovering:** One point for every minute (5 rounds) in which fatigue points are not spent.

**STATUS SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_ %

0: Outlaw or vagrant 21-80: Householder

01-05: Slave 80-99: Goði (Chieftain-Priest)

06-10: Freedman 100: Lawspeaker

## POWER POINTS

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11

12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35

PP recovery: 1 per hour of sleep, 1 per 2 hours awake

## NOTES



# LIFE IN SAGA-AGE ICELAND



33

The first settlers to come to Iceland were men and women from Scandinavia and from the Viking settlements in the British Isles. They seized the opportunity to bring their families, their wealth and their livestock nearly one thousand kilometers (six hundred miles) across the North Atlantic in search of land. What they found was a mid-Atlantic uninhabited island of striking beauty and teeming with mythical creatures.

The majority of immigrants to Iceland were free farmers. Many were fleeing the heavy taxes imposed by the Norwegian king. Among them were a few small-scale chieftains who did not lead the migration, but came as independent settlers.

On the edge of the habitable world and separated from their homelands by a dangerous ocean, the ninth- and tenth-century settlers established in Iceland a social order unlike any other in Medieval Europe, one that esteems political flexibility instead of warfare.

## Geography

*Volcanic eruption at Hekla Mountain with great fall of ash and pumice and such large breaks in the earth that cliffs collided in the fires in such a way that it was heard almost throughout the whole land. It was so dark while the ash fall was at its greatest that there was not enough light to read books in those churches that stood closest to the source of the fire. Great*

*hunger. Great death of livestock, both of sheep and cattle, so that in the Travelling Days (at the end of May) and Peter's Day (1st August) alone eighty head of cattle from Skálholt's possessions died.*

— Entry in the *Annals of Skálholt* for the year 1341

The combination of glaciers and volcanic activity affects people living in Viking Age Iceland in many ways.

There are more than one hundred active volcanoes in Iceland. The Icelanders never know when the fiery mountains will next spill molten rock and ash over the land.

Volcanic activity under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull) frequently causes harm to the surrounding population who settled on the coast directly south of this very large glacier. Periodic eruptions occur underneath the ice cap. With those eruptions, the pressure builds up until millions of gallons of water mixed with volcanic ash breaks through the glacier ice and floods the south of the country with incredible force, destroying everything in its path.

Still, not all effects of the volcanic environment are negative. The settlers found a landscape with over two hundred natural hot springs, and plenty of readily-accessible hot water. People learned to utilize this resource in a variety of ways, included washing clothes, boiling and steaming foods, attending to personal hygiene and comfort, and socializing in the natural hot pools.

Due to Iceland's position near the North Pole, the country experiences bright sun light during both day and night during the summer months.



This is called the “night-less time” (nóttleysa) by the Icelanders. Conversely, during the cold winter months, there are only two or three hours of light during the day.

## Forests

*At the time, Iceland was overgrown with woods between fell and fore-shore*

— *Book of the Icelanders*

The Icelandic Sagas tell stories about the first settlers arriving in Iceland and finding a land rich in vegetation, with birch and willow forests that stretch in many places from the shoreline to the base of the mountains. One Saga in particular, *Egils Saga*, describes in rich detail a land that is so thickly forested in parts that travel is only possible along the coast and by the margins of the rivers.

In the following decades and centuries from the initial settlement, however, 90% of the native forests are destroyed. The need for fuel, building material, and the clearing of land for live-

stock grazing fields soon greatly reduced the size of these forests. The remaining woodlands are a valuable property.

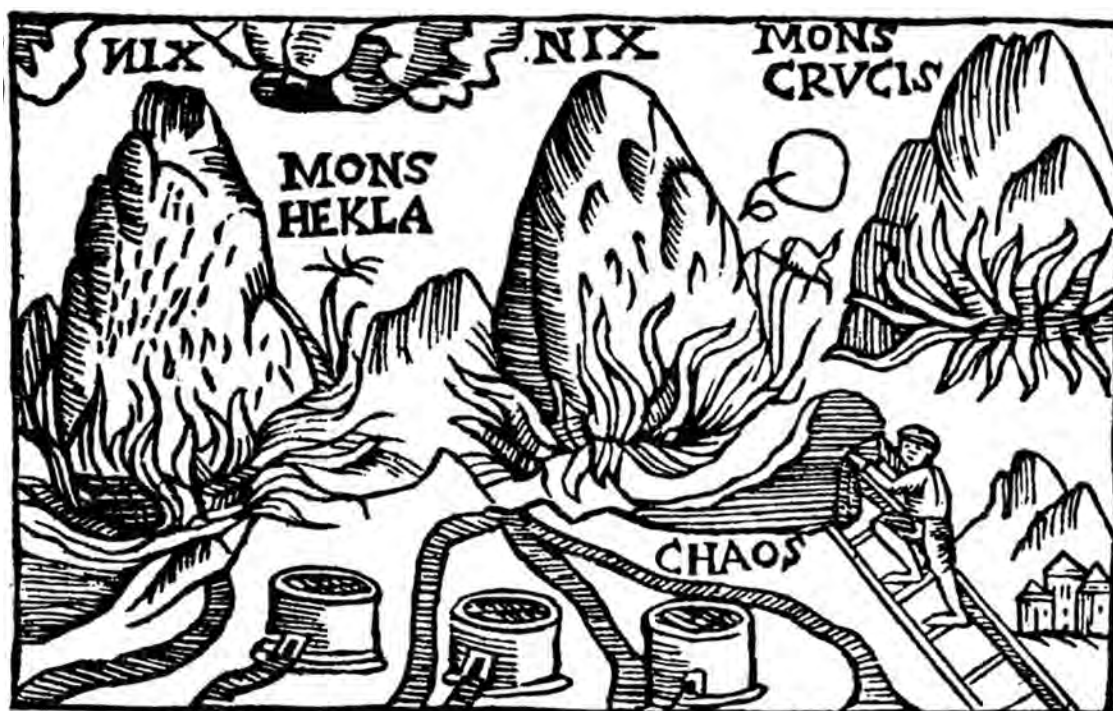
Good timber is mostly imported, and mainly from Norway. This significantly raises the cost of maintaining ships.

## Climate

The climate in Iceland now, during the Pagan Commonwealth Period, is colder than it used to be in the time of the settlement. Since then the climate worsened, becoming colder and wetter, and the glaciers expanded considerably.

Also, the incidence of drift ice off the coast of the country increased, and the steady northeastern winds that made for smooth sailing from Norway have been replaced by unstable western winds of a more violent and unreliable kind.

| Years    | Weather conditions   |
|----------|----------------------|
| 800-900  | Dry and warm summers |
| 900-1050 | Wet and cold summers |



THREE VOLCANOS: HEKLA, KREUSBERG, AND HELGAFJELL







## Driftwood

From the middle of the 10th century, after most of the native forests have been cut down, the main source of wood is driftwood.

The northern coastline of Iceland gets driftwood which originally is carried down the rivers of Siberia (Ob, Jenisej, Katanga, Lena and others) and out to the sea. The main tree species brought to Iceland this way are fir, larch, and some spruce and poplar.

Driftwood in the south coastline is less common, but some is deposited there by the Gulf Stream, coming all the way from the Gulf of Mexico. Driftwood is even scarcer along the western and eastern coastlines of the country.

The importance of driftwood means that coastal farms, especially in the north, are much more valuable property than those farms further inland.

## Animals

*If a man has a tame white bear, then he is to handle it in the same way as a dog and similarly pay for damages it does.*

— Grágás, the *Icelandic Book of Laws*

There are no predatory animals native to Iceland. When the settlers arrived, the arctic fox and the field mouse were the only land mammals on the island.

Sometimes solitary polar bears traveling on ice floes from Greenland arrive in northern Iceland. By the time the bears reach Iceland, they are so desperately hungry that they will attack anything and anyone, representing a great danger to coastal settlers. Whenever polar bears are spotted in Iceland, they must be hunted down quickly.

The settlers brought with them many animals, including dogs, cats, pigs, goats, sheep, horses and cattle. They also brought lice, fleas, rats, dung beetles, and other animal parasites.

## Icelandic Eruptions of 9th-12th centuries

|            |                                                                                                                        |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 870        | Ash and lava eruption in the Water Waves (Vatnaöldur) mountain range, Southern Highlands                               |
| 900        | Afstapa Lava Field formed, West Iceland                                                                                |
| 900        | Volcano under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull), South-East Iceland                                                          |
| 900        | Krafla volcano, East Highlands                                                                                         |
| 900        | Hallmundur's Lava Field (Hallmundarhraun) formed, West Iceland                                                         |
| 900        | Red Hill Lava Field (Rauðhálsahraun) formed, West Iceland                                                              |
| 905        | Volcano under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull), South-East Iceland                                                          |
| 920        | Eruption in the ocean, off the coast of South-West Iceland                                                             |
| 920        | Katla volcano, South Iceland                                                                                           |
| 934        | Katla and Fire Canyon (Eldgjá) volcanos                                                                                |
| 940        | Volcano under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull), South-East Iceland                                                          |
| 940        | Volcano in the Water Waves (Vatnaöldur) mountain range, South Iceland                                                  |
| 999 & 1000 | Pig Lava Field (Svínahraun) formed, South-West Iceland                                                                 |
| 1000       | Katla volcano, South Iceland                                                                                           |
| 1060       | Volcano under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull), South-East Iceland                                                          |
| 1104       | Very big eruption of Hooded Cloak Mountain (Hekla), South Iceland                                                      |
| 1151       | Eruption in Krýsuvík geothermal area lasts for 30 years                                                                |
| 1158       | Hooded Cloak Mountain (Hekla), South Iceland                                                                           |
| 1160       | Volcano under Water Glacier (Vatnajökull), South-East Iceland                                                          |
| 1160-1180  | Eruption in the ocean, off the coast of South-West Iceland                                                             |
| 1179       | Katla volcano, South Iceland                                                                                           |
| 1188       | Ptarmigan Hole Lava Field (Rjúpnadýngjuhraun) and Seagull Cliff Lava Field (Mávahlíðahraun) formed, South-West Iceland |





## Settlements

There are no towns in Viking Age Iceland, not even small villages. Society is entirely rural. The population is spread across the country, living in isolated farms.

When the settlers arrived, they found no native population apart from a few Irish monks. No hostile native inhabitants or anyone whom they had to fight with over the land. As Iceland is a very large island, the settlers had the luxury of settling in any location of their choosing. In this new frontier country they established scattered settlements mainly along the coastal areas and in a few sheltered inland valleys.

There are no farms in the central highlands, where the weather is too harsh and attacks by trolls and giants too frequent.

## Population Size

Iceland's second bishop, Gizur Isleifsson, carried out a census at the end of the eleventh century. At this period, at the close of the Viking Age, Bishop Gizur determined that there were 4560 farmers who possessed enough property to enjoy all rights in courts and at assemblies. Reckoning an average 10 people per householder's lands, a figure that includes tenant farmers, gives a rough estimate of around 45,600 people.

## Farming

In all regions of Iceland individual farmsteads are largely self-sufficient economic units. Farmers and their families live from the meat they get from their livestock, and dairy products produced at their farms.

Small-sized farms have around 10 heads of cattle; depending on the amount of hay the farm is capable of producing. Large farms have 20 to 40. Milk cows are kept to provide dairy products, especially cheese and skyr, an Icelandic dairy product similar to yogurt, which can be stored over the winter months when the cows stop producing fresh milk. Bulls are slaughtered after reaching puberty, when they are used for breeding, before they

start consuming large amounts of hay in the winter months.

In the summer the cattle can graze in the farmland, and are brought inside the farmhouse during the winter when they are fed from the stored stocks of hay. If a farmer is not able to store enough hay with which to feed all his cattle through the winter months, then the weakest animals are slaughtered before the winter starts. Each cow needs two tons of hay to survive the Icelandic winter.

The production of hay is of crucial importance for Icelandic farms, so they can maintain the farm animals over the winter. Hay is cultivated in the fields near the farm, and harvested using scythes, then raked and stacked against a wall for drying. As much hay as possible is stored indoors if space is available, and the rest is kept outdoors in stacks and covered in turf to protect it from the winter weather.

Large farms may have separate buildings that are used as barns where the hay is stored and the cattle are kept during the winter. On small farms, however, the animals are kept in stalls inside the longhouse, where they spend the winter along with the people.

Sheep are also raised for their fleece, milk and meat. Like cattle, the sheep are driven to the highlands where they are allowed to graze during the summer. In the fall, all the farmers from the region work together to round up the sheep and sort them by owner. Most sheep are allowed to spend the winter outside, but some are brought inside if the farm has available barn space.

Pigs and goats are also raised on Icelandic farms. Goats graze year around. Pigs are kept inside and slaughtered for home consumption.

Crop cultivation in Iceland is difficult and a farm cannot rely on crops alone. In fact, most farms do not attempt to cultivate crops. The ones that do cultivate mainly barley, oat and rye which are used for bread, porridge and ale.

## Horses

The original settlers brought with them small Scandinavian horses with thick coats. These small, strong and sturdy horses adapted well to the uneven terrain and weather conditions in Iceland. In







VIKING-AGE ICELANDERS LIVE IN TURF HOUSES

contrast, continental Europeans bred their horses with Arabian stock in the thirteenth century to produce larger animals.

Horses are raised not only for transportation but also because their meat is a common part of the diet of Icelanders. Horse meat is also eaten as part of religious ceremonies when horses are sacrificed to the gods.

Those horses that don't behave well and make a nuisance of themselves inside the longhouses, where they are kept during the winter, soon become food for the family.

## Turf Houses

The longhouse, or turf house, is the focal point of everyday life. The average household size is around 10 people, including the farmer's wife, children, other family members and, slaves.

Icelanders in the Viking Age have a limited amount of building wood available to them and thus depend on turf, grass with underlying sod attached, to construct their houses with heat-retaining walls. Two separate courses of turf bricks are used to build one wall, and a central cavity is filled with gravel to provide drainage. A finished wall is typically 2 meters thick.

The structural support for the house is provided by posts and beams of driftwood or imported wood. The turf walls don't support any of the weight. The wooden beams lock together using pegs

and notches. The roof is made of small tree branches supported by rafters, which are then covered with turf, and a layer of birch bark for waterproofing. Over that, goes another layer of turf, and finally a layer of living grass. The roots of the grass strengthen the roof, and most rain runs off the grass and into the gravel cores of the walls to drain. Above each fireplace is a smoke hole in the roof, allowing smoke to escape the interior. Sometimes sheep, and even cows, climb onto a roof.

The only sources of external light in a turf house are the smoke holes and a row of small holes at the base of the roof. Those small holes can be used as arrow slits in times when the house is under attack.

It is possible, in extreme circumstances, for the roof of a turf house to be peeled off. There are mentions of that in the Sagas, as a result of strong winds, an attacker trying to invade the house, or by the strength of mythic creatures.

The only entrance to a turf house is the front door. In fact, there are interior and exterior doors at the ends of the corridor made by virtue of the thickness of the wall. The external door is always kept bolted to secure the house from invaders. Both doorways are short, to force invaders to bend down and expose their necks to those waiting inside.

The inside of the house is divided into several rooms. The main room is a hall lined by wooden benches with a fire pit in the middle.

Over time, turf buildings tend to melt into the surrounding ground, looking like small hillocks from a distance.

## Social Ranks

### Goðar

*"As you well know, I am considered your goði. I judge it to be in the spirit of our relationship that each aids the other in just cases. You should support me against my opponents while I am to be your ally when your needs require it."*

— Valla - Ljóts Saga





At the top of Viking Age Iceland social structure are the chieftain-priests, called *goðar* (singular *goði*). They are political leaders who possess only a slight formal authority, and no means to forcefully repress the surrounding population.

A chieftaincy, or *goðorð*, is treated as a private possession. It is sometimes inherited, can be purchased, shared, or received as a gift. The number of chieftaincies in the country is limited to 39 after the year 960, and 36 before that.

The actual number of chieftains is more than the number of actual chieftaincies, because some chieftaincies are shared, and each of the men who share a chieftaincy can call himself a *goði*.

The main functions of the *goði* are to advocate or mediate disputes, and to represent the people settled on his chieftaincy at the Alþing, the National Assembly.

The members of this class of chieftain-priests also give spiritual guidance to the people living in their chieftaincy.

After the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000, many *goðar* exchanged their function as pagan priests for that of Christian priests. Having survived and partly engineered such a dramatic religious change, the *goðar* retained their traditional authority. Whether in heathen or Christian times, the *goðar* were a small-scale elite able to exert both ideological and political power.

With the position of *goðar* comes the chance to amass wealth. Farmers in conflict who are unable to enforce claims will often turn to the *goðar*, who will expect to be paid. Prestige and privileged access to the process of law are also very attractive to ambitious individuals.

Class distinctions do not constitute formal barriers to becoming a *goði*, and an ambitious, successful farmer could set his sights on that prize. Candidates compete for the supporters necessary to claim a chieftaincy.

Dissatisfied farmers can take authority from one leader and give it to another. This is done by the farmers coming themselves to the Alþing and presenting their case by the Law Rock. The other assembled *goðar* then judge if the chieftaincy being

## Pronunciation

goðorð [goth-orth]

goðar [goth-ar]

goði [goth-ee]

contested should be given to someone else, usually some successful and influential farmer living in that chieftaincy.

*Goðar* have no right to impose tax on their followers.

A *goðorð* cannot be compared to the petty kingdoms that flourished in early Viking Norway or early Ireland. The chieftaincy is not defined by a geographical area. Unlike Norwegian or Irish leaders, who lived surrounded by followers sharing a common loyalty, the *goðar* live interspersed among farmers who might be followers of other, sometimes rival, *goðar*.

Under Icelandic law, only hired hands and vagrants are denied the right to choose their own *goðar*.

A woman can transfer a chieftaincy if she inherited one, but women are not allowed to fulfill the position of *goði*.

## Householders

They are in many ways the dominant class in Viking Age Iceland, as only freeborn landowners can participate in assemblies and only they can become *goðar*. They also are able to make other people work for them, whether as tenants or slaves. Standard *Mythic Iceland* player characters are householders.

## Tenants and servants

These are free-born farmers who do not own their land, but rather rent it from the land owner or work the land of another farmer in exchange for room and board. They have most rights of a free man including the taking of vengeance and the collecting of blood money, but cannot take part in assemblies.

## Freedmen

Those former slaves who have been freed by their masters. They are often not completely free, as Icelandic law specifies that if a free man cannot maintain himself then the former master is required







to support him in exchange for becoming the legal heir if the freedman dies childless.

## Slaves

Most slaves are booty from raids on the Celtic nations, but some are debt-slaves. Female slaves serve as nurses and foster-mothers as well as concubines. They can inherit nothing, and leave nothing to their children. They cannot take part in any business transaction. They cannot carry weapons and are not allowed to defend themselves. A slave's only relation with the rest of society is through his master. In general, slaves are considered cowards who are unreliable and stupid.

In the late 10th century most slaves were freed, but some farms kept slaves until the 12th century. Slaves can keep income from any land they have been given by their masters, and with care, can save enough to buy their own freedom. Another way a slave can become a freedman is if a free woman or man wants to marry him or her. Children of slaves are free.

Slave owners are always careful to not give the slaves any advantage in numbers within the household, as slave revolts are common and often have fatal results.

A master can put any of his slaves to death without being prosecuted, and most do so when a slave is no longer capable of working, due to old age, disease, or injury.

## Vagrants

Those who have no residence and are not attached to any farm, and thus travel around the country surviving on the charity of others. According to Viking Age Icelandic law, vagrants are not allowed to marry, and anyone is free to kill a vagrant and take his belongings without penalty. Also, it is lawful to castrate a vagrant without penalty, even if death ensues.

## Feasts

The outward trappings of rank in Viking Age Iceland are so few that it is difficult to determine

whether a prominent individual is a chieftain or just a farmer. To assert their position, the *goðar* regularly hold feasts during which they try to display their wealth and imported items.

Such feasts, including weddings and funeral banquets, are carefully timed to happen during times of plenty, especially at the end of summer. They are important events in which relationships are formed or reinforced, and status can be gained or lost.

## Communal Units

The whole country is divided in communal units (plural *hreppar*, singular *hreppur*). These are geographically-defined associations of landowners, who are independent of the *goðar*.

Through cooperation among their members, the communal units organize and control summer grazing lands, communal labor, and provide an immediate and independent forum to settle disputes. Most importantly, they provide fire and livestock insurance for local farmers. If a farmer runs out of firewood for the winter, or if his livestock perishes, the members of the communal unit come to that farmer's help.

Other ways in which the communal units support the local community are the feeding and housing of local orphans, and the administration of relief to the poor people who are recognized as inhabitants of that area. People who cannot provide for themselves are assigned to member farms, which take turns in providing for them.

New people cannot move into a locality without recommendation and formal acceptance from the other members of the local communal unit.

The communal units and the spring assemblies (see **Law and Government** chapter) are independent institutions with overlapping membership. The spring assemblies are not territorial, while the communal units are. Once attached to a communal unit, a farmer's association cannot be changed, while a free man could switch attendance to a different spring assembly by switching support to a different *goði*.

Essentially, the communal units are non-political associations that address subsistence and





economic security needs. This is a unique aspect of Icelandic life, and cannot be found anywhere else during the Middle Ages.

## Honor

The common human concerns for the honor and ethics of the individual and his family play a significant role in Viking Age Iceland.

Honor is at stake in virtually every social activity: in gift exchanging, in feud and law, wealth, fighting skills, weaponry, clothing, and even (or maybe especially) in seating arrangements at feasts. In fact, feasts can be dangerous events. The host risks losing honor by inadvertently offending the guests, and guests risk offending each other and the host.

The Icelanders have a highly personal view of honor. It is more tied to maintaining life, property, status, or exacting revenge than it is to the more epic ideal of an individual sacrificing himself for obligations to liege lord, religion, or the defense of people.

It is often true that a person acquires honor at another's expense.

A violent attack to restore honor can happen at any place, against any man. For that reason, weapons are routinely carried at all times.

Ultimately, loss of honor suggests that the individual is incapable of defending either himself or his property. No goði will mediate his disputes and no punishment will be brought to those who harm that individual or take his possessions or land.

In *Mythic Iceland*, honor is measured by the Status skill. (see **Running a Game of Mythic Iceland**, page 200)

## Marriage

In Viking Age Iceland, marriage is a rather straightforward agreement linking two families into a wide, though fragile, support network. In giving a daughter into marriage a father and his family are investing into a new extended family alliance.

All marriages of the householder class are, to some extent, political. Some are overtly so, while others not as much. A woman's marriage is

arranged by her kinsmen, and her consent is not required by law. It is regarded as prudent, however, to get the woman's consent.

The betrothal involves the groom's family paying a bride-price to obtain the woman, and the father of the bride promising to pay a dowry at the wedding. The two parties shake hands in front of witnesses, and define a date for the wedding, usually within a year.

Weddings are elaborate festivities, usually taking place at the farmhouse of the bride's parents, with feasting and drinking going on for several days. The marriage is considered binding when six witnesses have seen the couple openly going to bed together.

The dowry that the bride brings with her remains counted among the woman's personal possessions, and is controlled by her. Children inherit the dowry property as part of the maternal inheritance.

Intermarriage between goðar and farmers is common. It is also common that a goði takes on a concubine from a farmer family.

## Divorce

If a marriage doesn't work out, a divorce can be easily obtained for a variety of reasons. It can be accomplished by the couple simply reciting a legal formula in front of witnesses.

Women can lawfully initiate divorce for many reasons including incompatibility, violence committed against her, impotence, and cowardice, in cases when the husband refuses to take revenge for the killing of kinsmen.

In some cases, divorce can result in severe economic hardship for the husband. Generally, the estate is split in half, but if the husband is found to be at fault, both the dowry and bride-price revert to the woman. A divorced man might find it extremely difficult to make these payments. In some of the Icelandic Sagas, women exploit this fear of financial burden by threatening to divorce their husbands, in order to spur men to action in taking blood revenge.

Many Icelandic women of the Viking Age marry several times during their lifetimes.







## Infidelity and Concubines

Wives often are not the only women in their husbands' lives. At the same time, husbands are not always the only men in their wives' lives either, although with women infidelity is less common. In such a small and disperse society, extra-marital affairs are seldom a secret.

Many married men, whether farmers or goðar, keep slave women as concubines. These women are called *frillur* (singular *frilla*). Even after slavery died out in the 11th century, many men continued to maintain *frillur*. These women come from families of equal status as well as, and more commonly from families of lower status than, the men with whom they live. Becoming a concubine of a prominent man often increases a woman's status and influence among her siblings and kinsmen, and men often treat male kinsmen of their concubines as trusted brothers-in-law.

"Better a good man's *frilla* than married badly" is an old Icelandic saying.

## Family Life

The composition of a household in Viking Age Iceland can vary greatly.

Icelandic law provides that everyone who is not a householder himself or herself must be formally attached to a household. Men over 16 and women over 20 years of age are allowed to make their own lodging arrangements. These arrangements are in the form of a contract, which are renegotiated annually in the spring. Even impoverished households have some servants, usually women. Wealthy households have a large number of servants.

The ranks of servants are drawn from different types of people. Some servants are the sons and daughters of independent farmers who must bide their time until the family farm is available or, in the case of girls, until a suitable marriage can be arranged. Many household servants are impoverished people who have become life-long servants; they do the work at the farm, and may also accompany the head of the family on journeys across the country.

There is an obligation by family members to support relatives who are unable to support themselves. The richer the head of the family, the more likely it is that poorer relatives lodge with him, usually in the position of a farmhand or servant. Conversely, the poorer the household the more likely it will be split asunder as its members abandon it to seek better positions as servants of richer people who are, in most cases, related to them.

Upon the death of a parent, surviving sons often divide the property and set up neighboring households.

## Children

When a child is born, the father has the right to decide whether it should live or not.

Unwanted children are taken outside and left to die of starvation and from the cold.

If allowed to live, the child is named by the father—usually after a dead relative, most often the paternal grandfather or grandmother, or close friend. It is believed that naming a child after a dead relative will give that child some of the character of the deceased.

The life of children is a combination of learning and play. Boys fight each other with model weapons, and play with other toys such as model boats and animals, imitating the activities of the adults. Ball games and outdoor activities are also common.

Violence by adults against children is considered shameful. If for any reason a child is injured in a fight, even if accidentally, most often the men from the region band together to hunt down and kill the person responsible.

Children are considered minors until the age of 16, although in some special cases boys can be given the responsibilities of an adult at age 12.

Not all children leave home after getting married. Sometimes a bride moves in with her husband's parents. Also, brothers will often move in with their married sisters while they wait for a long-lived father to die so that the family farm can become available.

Children are frequently sent out for fostering, both boys and girls. Fostering forges links between





households, is important in cases where a household simply has too many children for the amount of food available, and is also arranged so that sons can be trained in a craft or in a specific farm-related activity.

## Women

Icelandic women have an active role in the day-to-day life and politics of Viking Age Iceland. They have a degree of control over their own lives, including the right to own property independently.

Women spend much of their time during the summer taking care of the production of *skyr*, a coagulated milk high in protein, and an important food in the winter. Men are more concerned with the care and herding of animals, the maintaining of turf buildings, fishing, the gathering of natural foods and driftwood, and the transportation and storage of the *skyr*.

As servants, women provide the labor that keeps the household running: milking, sewing, weaving, nursing, cooking, looking after the children, laundering, etc.

Women are held accountable for their own actions and bear the same responsibilities as men for all infractions of the law.

One key role that women often play in the Sagas is that of inciting their men to act more aggressively than they would apparently like to.

## Language

The Icelanders and other Norse peoples call their language *dönsk tunga*, the “Danish tongue.” That language is referred to in this book as simply “Norse.”

The same language is spoken throughout Scandinavia and the Viking colonies such as Jorvik in Britain and Dublin in Ireland.

It is related to but different from the language spoken in Anglo-Saxon England. With some practice however, speakers of Norse and of Old English can understand each other, a factor that significantly broadens the cultural contacts of Viking Age Scandinavians, including Icelanders.

## Clothing

Clothes, including gloves, are cut from woolen cloth and sewn together. Woolen cloth, called *vað-mal*, is used not only for clothing but also, water-proofed with animal fat, for sailcloth.

Men wear a long shirt and trousers.

Icelandic women wear a long skirt, sometimes pleated. This dress is overlaid front and back by a long apron held in place by brooches attached to the front of the dress just below the shoulders.

Both men and women tend to follow the clothing styles of mainland Scandinavia.

Only the wealthy wear colored clothes beyond the natural brown, black, grey, and white of the sheep. Linen is rare, only within reach of the rich who can afford to import the expensive fabrics.

Everyone dresses in their best clothes for meetings in the National Assembly.

## Economy

The ownership of livestock is the main measure of wealth in Viking Age Iceland.

The main source of food is sheep, mostly in the form of dairy products but also as meat. Fish is considerably less important as a resource.

There are no coins minted in Iceland. With iron only available in the form of low-grade bog ore, and with wood for charcoal to create the steady heat necessary to work it increasingly scarce everywhere, no individual or region has any significant production of iron, silver, or any other metals.

### How Rare is Gold?

Gold is very rare in Viking Age Iceland. In fact, modern archaeologists have only found one single gold object in Iceland from the Viking Age — a small ball of golden string, which was originally used as an ornament hanging from a cloak. As for silver, only a few kilos worth of Viking Age silver have ever been found in Iceland in modern times. It is very plausible, however, to assume that many rich hoards lay buried and undiscovered in the Icelandic countryside.





## Prices

| Item                                        | Vaðmal      | Silver<br>(currency-grade) | Silver<br>(refined)    | Gold<br>(refined)    |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Wool cloak                                  | 8 ells      | 2 aurar (0.06 kg)          | -                      | -                    |
| One ell of broad linen                      | 4 ells      | 1 eyrir (0.03 kg)          | -                      | -                    |
| Hide of one fully grown cow                 | 26 ells     | 6.5 aurar (0.18 kg)        | -                      | -                    |
| Fox skin                                    | 4 ells      | 1 eyrir (0.03 kg)          | -                      | -                    |
| Sheep with lambs                            | 16 ells     | 4 aurar (0.11 kg)          | -                      | -                    |
| Goat with kids                              | 16 ells     | 4 aurar (0.11 kg)          | -                      | -                    |
| Cow                                         | 80 ells     | 20 aurar (0.56 kg)         | 2.7 aurar (0.07 kg)    | -                    |
| Horse                                       | 80 ells     | 20 aurar (0.56 kg)         | 2.7 aurar (0.07 kg)    | -                    |
| Pig with piglets                            | 80 ells     | 20 aurar (0.56 kg)         | 2.7 aurar (0.07 kg)    | -                    |
| Male slave                                  | 120 ells    | 30 aurar (0.84 kg)         | 4 aurar (0.11 kg)      | -                    |
| Female slave                                | 80 ells     | 20 aurar (0.56 kg)         | 2.7 aurar (0.07 kg)    | -                    |
| Farmland with standing farm                 | 4,200 ells  | 1,050 aurar (29.4 kg)      | 140 aurar (3.92 kg)    | 17.5 aurar (0.49 kg) |
| Knörr ship, including sail and oars         | 10,000 ells | 2,500 aurar (70 kg)        | 333.3 aurar (9.33 kg)  | 41.7 aurar (1.17 kg) |
| Dreki ship, 18 benches, incl. sail and oars | 16,000 ells | 4,000 aurar (112 kg)       | 533.3 aurar (14.93 kg) | 66.7 aurar (1.87 kg) |
| <b>Weapons and Armor</b>                    |             |                            |                        |                      |
| Spear                                       | 40 ells     | 10 aurar (0.28 kg)         | 1.3 aurar (0.04 kg)    | -                    |
| Sax                                         | 120 ells    | 30 aurar (0.84 kg)         | 4 aurar (0.11 kg)      | -                    |
| Shield                                      | 200 ells    | 50 aurar (1.4 kg)          | 6.7 aurar (0.19 kg)    | -                    |
| Battle Axe (1H)                             | 140 ells    | 35 aurar (0.98 kg)         | 4.7 aurar (0.13 kg)    | -                    |
| Battle Axe (2H)                             | 240 ells    | 60 aurar (1.68 kg)         | 8 aurar (0.22 kg)      | 1 eyrir (0.03 kg)    |
| Norse broad sword                           | 1,200 ells  | 300 aurar (8.4 kg)         | 40 aurar (1.12 kg)     | 5 aurar (0.14 kg)    |
| Chain mail shirt                            | 2,400 ells  | 600 aurar (16.8 kg)        | 80 aurar (2.24 kg)     | 10 aurar (0.28 kg)   |

The land allows only limited agriculture and produces little on which the outside world places a premium.

The main articles exported from Iceland are wool, tweed, sheepskins, hides, cheese, tallow, falcans, and sulphur. Those are traded for timber, tar, metals, flour, malt, honey, wine, ale, and linen.

Iceland is famous in the Scandinavian courts for one special type of export—poetry. From the tenth century onwards, most poets in the courts of the Viking World come from Iceland. Songs of

praise are often sold to earls and princes of Orkney, England, Dublin, and Scandinavia.

## Trade and Gift-Giving

Trade, where goods are sold and purchased, is not something that is done with a person of an equal social station. Among equals, goods exchange tends to be by gift-giving if they are in good terms, or by raid if the relations are bad.





The principle behind gift exchange among those of equal social standing is that a gift becomes, in effect, a challenge for the recipient to match or surpass the generosity of the giver. Giving someone a gift so great that it is beyond the means of the recipient to return in kind is considered a hostile gesture, an attempt to humiliate someone. Refusing a gift is considered an insult, as is reciprocating too quickly.

The exception is long-distance traders, regardless of personal status, whether they are Icelandic or Norwegian. Those traders periodically sail between Iceland and other parts of the Viking World, and are happy to take vaðmal as payment for the goods they bring from abroad.

## Money

Icelanders never had a sufficiently large or stable source of silver from which to make coinage. Instead of using silver as currency, Icelanders use commodities such as livestock, dairy products, and especially woolen homespun cloth called *vaðmal*. The standard unit of trade in Viking Age Iceland is one *ell* (the length from the elbow to the point of the second finger — around 50 cm, or 20 in) of vaðmal.

Imported goods are mostly paid in bulk vaðmal or animal skins. Icelanders going abroad take with them vaðmal and other goods to sell.

The unit of measurement for silver and other metals is the *eyrir*, pl. *aurar*, (ounce, equivalent to 28 grams).

The value of vaðmal could vary greatly according to supply and demand, but for the purpose of simplifying the GM's life, the vaðmal value recorded in the Sagas around the year 1000 is used on the tables below, and on the previous page.

### Vaðmal Value

- 1 eyrir of currency-grade silver = 4 ells of vaðmal
- 1 eyrir of refined silver = 30 ells of vaðmal
- 1 eyrir of refined gold = 240 ells of vaðmal

#### Other units of trade

- 1 mark = 8 eyrar
- 1 hundruðum = 120 ells of vaðmal

## Vaðmal Production

Enterprising players may wonder if they can raise sheep so that they have surplus vaðmal that they can then use as currency for trade.

As a rule of thumb, each sheep produces one unit of vaðmal per year.

There is a requirement for wool for the clothing of the people living in the farm. New clothes may be only required every few years, but the existing woolen clothes, cloaks, etc, need to be repaired and patched with new wool periodically. This means a requirement of two units of vaðmal per year per person in the household, including the character's wife, slaves, children, etc.

The number of surplus vaðmal produced by the sheep depends on the number of people living in the farm. For every two sheep over the number of people in the farm, the farmer gets one unit of surplus vaðmal per year.

Example: a farm with sixteen sheep, and six people living there, generates five units of surplus vaðmal per year.

## Roads and Travellers

The most-used means of transportation on this large island is, by far, the horse. Even for a journey down the coast people most frequently resort to long overland horse rides.

An extensive system of horse paths connects the whole island. These lead to almost every part of the country. Piles of stone as high as a man mark the way along each path. When a rider reaches one of these stone piles, the next one should be visible at a long distance.

There are no roads for wheeled carts to cross the highlands, and very few such roads in the valleys.

The main route crossing the central highlands is called *Kjölnur* (literally, the "keel") located between the glaciers Langjökull and Hofsjökull. This route is only useable during the summer, and is made only with large numbers of well-armed men, due to fear of encountering trolls, giants, and bands of outlaws living in the highlands.





Crossing the breadth of the country can take up to two weeks during the summer. During the winter, it can take twice as much time and can be very dangerous because of the extreme weather conditions.

An important aspect of land travel in mythic Iceland is the giving of hospitality. It is a matter of honor to offer shelter, a place by the fire, and food and drink to any traveler that knocks on the door of even the most modest farm.

*Egils Saga* tells the story of a farmer who did not provide good hospitality to Egill, who in return gouged out the eyes of his host and cut off his beard before departing in the morning.

Ocean-going ships, extremely expensive due to the lack of suitable timber, are only used for travels to Europe, Greenland, and Wineland.

## Foreign Relations

Icelanders remain in contact with events in the rest of the Viking world, and often individuals go abroad to join Viking or mercenary bands. Even so, Icelandic society remains distant from most exterior forces of change.

Beyond the consensus that it is wise to be on friendly terms with the Norwegian king, Iceland has no foreign policy and no defensive land or sea force.

During the Viking Age Iceland's main potential enemy, the kings of Norway, are too weak or too absorbed in their own wars and domestic problems to play more than a sporadic role in Icelandic affairs. Besides, no Scandinavian king is willing to risk their precious fleets by crossing the North Atlantic in order to reach Iceland.

Limited agricultural production, coupled with lack of organized fisheries, restricts Iceland's trade with the outside world.

## Warfare

During the Viking Age, there were no pitched battles in Iceland with casualties comparable to those that routinely took place elsewhere in medieval Europe. The social order in Iceland in this



VADMAL IS USED AS CURRENCY, TO PURCHASE SUCH THINGS AS MULES

period operates without regional or local military arrangements.

The country was never invaded, nor was it base of attacks against other lands.

## Death and Burials

When buried, the dead are given personal possessions, weapons, tools and household equipment, while animals such as horses are sacrificed to accompany them. The dead body is placed in an underground grave, which is topped with a mound. Rich individuals may also be buried with one of their boats.

It is very important to ensure that people receive the proper burial and are thus equipped for the afterlife. The Sagas mention times when people were allowed to return to a battlefield in the farmland of an enemy family, in order to give their fallen a proper burial. This matter is considered to be beyond family or individual rivalries.

Graves are sometimes raided for the weapons or other rich objects buried with their owners. This is considered to be a shameful act while there are still living descendants of the dead man. Grave robbing can also be dangerous, as the dead may rise to protect their grave treasures.





The burning of dead bodies, a common practice in other Norse countries, is very rare in Iceland.

## Time Keeping

The Icelanders call the day *sólarhringur*, or the “sun-ring,” and use that as the main unit of time keeping. The *sólarhringur* is divided in two halves, or *dægur*, meaning both night and day.

For practical purposes, the day is divided into *dagsmörk*, or “day-marks,” equivalent to the concept of hours in modern times.

| Hour        | Day-Mark                               |
|-------------|----------------------------------------|
| 6 am        | Hour of Rising ( <i>rismál</i> )       |
| 9 am        | Day Meal ( <i>dagmál</i> )             |
| 12 noon     | High Day ( <i>hádegi</i> )             |
| 3 pm        | Mid-Afternoon Meal ( <i>undorn</i> )   |
| 6 pm        | Mid-Evening ( <i>miður-aptan</i> )     |
| 9 pm        | Night Meal ( <i>nátt-mál</i> )         |
| 12 midnight | Midnight ( <i>mið-nætti</i> )          |
| 3 am        | Last Part of The Night ( <i>óttá</i> ) |

These times are not precise. In the winter, the Hour of Rising, meaning the hour the sun rises, is much later than 6 am.

The time indicator used by the Icelanders is mainly the position of the sun in the horizon, relating to known landmarks, while altitude of the sun is only used sporadically. During the night the hours can be inferred by the position of the stars. At each locality stars are chosen as leading stars, according to season.

## Days of the Week

One year is understood to consist of 52 weeks of seven days each. The days are named as below.

### English

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

### Old Icelandic

Sun day (*Sunnudagur*)

Moon Day (*Mánadagur*)

Tyr's Day (*Týsdagur*)

Odin's Day (*Oðinsdagur*)

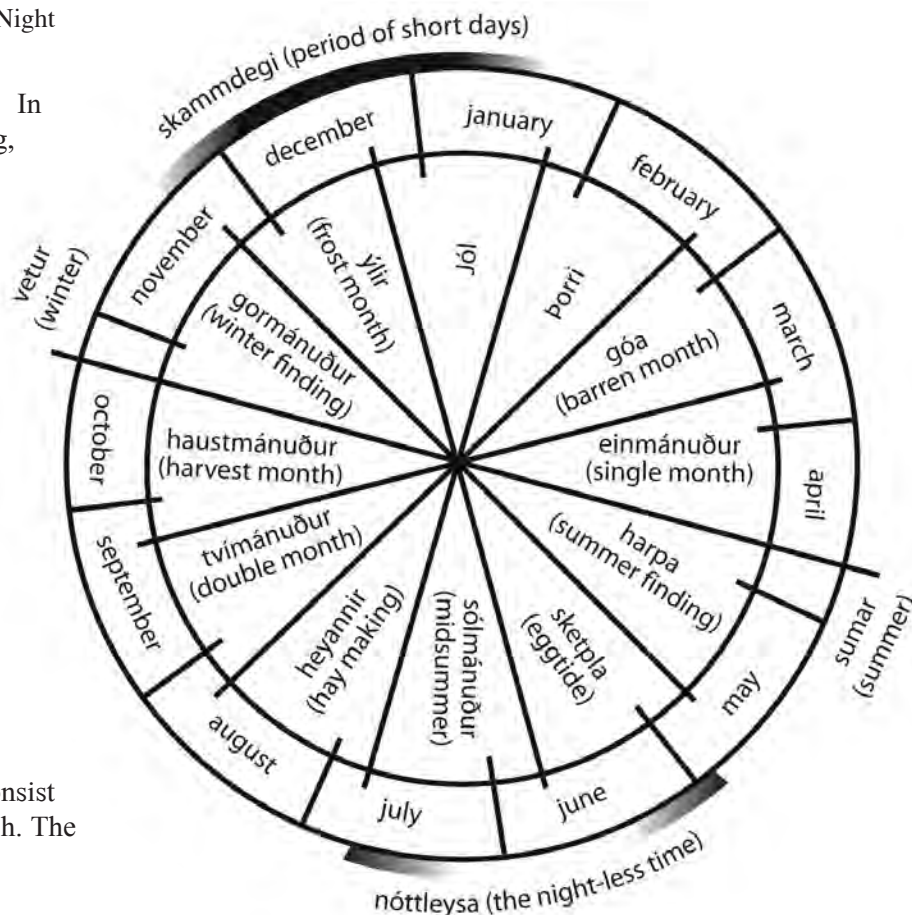
Thor's Day (*Þórsdagur*)

Freyja's Day (*Frjádagur*)

Washing Day (*Laugardagur*)

## Month Names

|                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Oct. 14th - Nov. 13th   | Winter Finding<br>(1st winter month) |
| Nov. 14th - Dec. 13th   | Frost Month                          |
| Dec. 14th - Jan. 13th   | Jól                                  |
| Jan. 14th - Feb. 13th   | Þorri                                |
| Feb. 14th - March 13th  | Barren Month                         |
| March 14th - April 13th | Single Month                         |







|                          |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| April 14th - May 13th    | Summer Finding<br>(1st summer month) |
| May 14th - June 13th     | Eggtide                              |
| June 14th - July 13th    | Midsummer                            |
| July 14th - August 13th  | Haymaking                            |
| August 14th - Sept. 13th | Double Month                         |
| Sept. 14th - Oct. 13th   | Harvest Month                        |

## Chronology

Viking Age Icelanders count years between important events, such as the year of death of a Norwegian king, or the year when some well-known settler arrived in Iceland.

The year starts at the beginning of the month of Summer Finding, a day which also marks the beginning of the summer season.

Another important chronological unit, and one which is readily understood by any Icelander, is the year of the establishment of each Lawspeaker. When talking about past events, Icelanders will most often refer to the time when this man or another was the Lawspeaker of the Alþing, the National Assembly.

Every five or six years, the Icelandic year of 364 days is adjusted by the addition of sumarauki, seven days added to the calendar in summer, on the same principle as the modern leap-year day.



# LAW AND GOVERNMENT



*Our land must be built with law or laid waste with lawlessness.*

— *Njáls Saga*, Iceland

The issues of law and government figure heavily in the Icelandic Sagas. Many of the Sagas follow important legal cases at the courts of Alþing, the National Assembly, and almost all of the Sagas touch on the relationship between law and justice, as well as the role of law in Iceland and the rest of the Viking world.

Before Iceland was settled, the Norse nations had a strong tradition of local freemen's assemblies that mediated disputes at a local level, sharing the same code of laws within each individual Norse kingdom. Those assemblies, however, had their power and influence limited by the king and regional warlords. The Icelanders expanded on this ancient concept. Using the freedom afforded by the absence of a king and of any royalty at all, they created a system of government and a body of laws that are entirely distinct from anything in Scandinavia.

Right after the initial settlement of Iceland, it became clear that establishing some sort of governmental system was very important to maintain social order and avoid regional fragmentation. The natural aspects of Iceland, with its uninhabitable interior, isolated fjords and remote valleys, made communication difficult, and there was from the beginning a danger that regionalism might grow and bring instability to the Icelandic society. The Alþing system of government by means of a national assembly, however, successfully countered

this danger and brought stability for centuries to come.

The accomplishments of the Viking Age Icelandic society in law and government are truly remarkable and unique in Medieval Europe.

## Conflict Resolution

There are many accepted forms of conflict resolution in Viking Age Iceland.

- ❖ Out-of-Court Arbitration
- ❖ Legal courts
- ❖ Duel
- ❖ Blood Vengeance
- ❖ Compensation

## Out-of-Court Arbitration

It is very common that the parties involved in a dispute will prefer to refrain from violence, while also preferring a less formal process than going to court. In that case they may choose to seek a third neutral party to investigate the circumstances and try to reach a settlement on the dispute. If both sides of the dispute live in the same region then the obvious choice is for the local goði (chieftain) to arbitrate the dispute. If they are followers of different goðar, then a neutral goði from another area of the country is consulted. If a satisfactory settlement is not agreed upon with the help of the arbitrator, then the matter should be taken to court at an assembly.







## Legal Courts

Disputes can be brought directly to the courts at either the Spring Assembly or the National Assembly. The choice of which court to bring the case to is open to the parties involved. Usually, if both parties live in the same region, then the dispute is brought to the regional Spring Assembly, if it has not yet taken place that year. Disputes can be brought straight into the National Assembly if they are very serious, or if the parties live in different regions, or in the case that the Spring Assembly date has past.

## Duel

*"For I have challenged you. Each of us will place his cloak under his feet, and each of us must stand on his cloak, not moving the thickness of a finger, and the one that moves will bear a coward's name, while the man that wins will be called a valiant man wherever he goes. Whoever is wounded or defeated can release himself from the duel by paying three marks of silver."*

— *Svarfdæla Saga*, Iceland



It is an ancient Norse custom that any man has a right to challenge another to one-on-one battle, whether he is the defendant or prosecutor in a dispute. Lesser offences, such as verbal insults, are most often settled this way, but duels are also common even in the most serious disputes.

The person being challenged may decline the challenge, losing two points of Status, and in that case the dispute gets settled in court at an assembly.

The Icelandic name for this formal duel is *hólmganga*, meaning "going to the island," as most duels are fought in small islands in order to prevent cowards from running away and to minimize any outside interference from third parties. One such island exists at the site of the National Assembly and duels often take place there. If not taking place in an island, then the duel area is fenced off with ropes tied to poles.

The weapon of choice for duels is, in most cases, the sword, but a fighter may choose another weapon if he likes. Each fighter may bring with him an unarmed shield-bearer carrying two extra shields to be used as the fighter needs them. A good strategy is to quickly destroy all three shields of the opponent. Once a fighter's three shields have been destroyed, he has to defend himself by parrying with his weapon. Dodging or running away are not allowed as methods of defense.

Before the duel, a cloak is laid on the ground which acts as a perimeter for the ensuing duel. If either man steps off the three-meters-square cloak, he loses the duel. Each fighter strikes a blow in turn, with the challenged party having the right to deliver the first blow. The give-and-take continues until one of the fighters is wounded and chooses to leave the duel, or until one is killed.

If either man's blood falls on the cloak, he is permitted to withdraw from the duel as the loser, if he agrees to pay 96 *vaðmal* (3 marks of currency-grade silver). In a duel that ends in such way, with one of the fighters withdrawing after first blood, the





loser takes a loss of 2D6 points of Status, while the victorious fighter wins 1D6 + 2 points of Status.

Attacking someone after he has chosen to withdraw from the duel is considered shameful, and as such gives no rights to payment or property of the loser in case of the loser's death. Anyone resorting to such dishonorable act loses 1D6 + 2 points of Status and 1D4 point of Luck.

If neither fighter decides to withdraw at first blood, and instead they fight to the death, then all property belonging to the loser goes to the winner. Relatives of a man slain in honorable duel may not seek any type of compensation. If the winner has killed the loser honorably in a duel to the death, he wins 1D8 + 2 points of Status for his victory.

A sacrificial bull is always brought to the dueling site, to be slaughtered by the winner after the duel. *Egils Saga* tells the story of how Egill killed Atli in a duel by grappling with him and biting through his throat, and Egill then gripped the bull's mouth and horn and twisted so hard that he broke the beast's neck.

This type of duel was abolished by the National Assembly in the year 1000.

## Blood Vengeance

Blood vengeance in Viking Age Iceland is perceived to be a legitimate response to a wide range of injury and insult, not just at the place and time of injury but nearly everywhere, anytime. The hot-blooded revenge, however, is looked down upon and causes loss of Status. Vengeance is not seen as a punishment for the person on whom it is inflicted, but rather, it is seen as reparation to the honor of the person who is being avenged.

Vengeance often drags on so that the power to terrorize and constrain the movements of the intended target can be enjoyed. Someone who has offended a member of a powerful household may live in fear for months or years, until vengeance finally comes knocking.

There is a sense of limit on the methods of revenge. Poison is unheard of in the Icelandic Sagas, as is torture. Similarly, burning someone inside his house is never justifiable. Women are never acceptable targets for revenge, neither are children,

although a boy of twelve might already have to start worrying.

No matter how legitimate the community feels a vengeance killing is, however, if it violates the structure of rights to kill as expressed in the laws, then the other side will likely bring a case to the court of law against the avenger.

Between two powerful households, instead of acting through the law, a revenge killing is often avenged with another revenge killing, which in turn is avenged with another, in true blood feud fashion. This goes on until someone gets tired of all the killing and decides to appeal in court for a settlement to the dispute, which involves counting how many were killed on each side and negotiate a payment in goods or slaves from the side with the lesser number of dead kinsmen to the side with the higher.

## Compensation

When the perpetrator of a crime announces he is willing to pay for compensation, the victim must refrain from blood-taking. The compensation offer may be for an amount specified by court at an assembly, by out-of-court arbitration, or may be a straight offer for payment by the perpetrator of a given amount. If the victim is not happy with the amount being offered, he may insist on taking the case to court.

In such cases when the court decides the amount to be paid in compensation from the perpetrator to the victim exceeds the wealth of the perpetrator, then the perpetrator is outlawed. Alternatively, he may become a slave to the victim's family, if both the perpetrator and the victim's family agree on that punishment rather than outlawry.

## The Assemblies

Assemblies (þing) are meetings of free householders at which the formal processing of disputes take place.

Icelandic assemblies meet outdoors, at a pre-determined meeting place. Courts of law are





formed during the assemblies, where the judges sit on rocks arranged in a circle.

## Districts and Quarters

The country is divided into quarters, one for each point of the compass. There are three district assemblies in each quarter.

Each district assembly is presided over by three goðar (chieftain-priests), making for a total of 36 goðar. In the year 960, one more district assembly is created in the Northern quarter, bringing the total number of that number of goðar presiding over assemblies to 39.

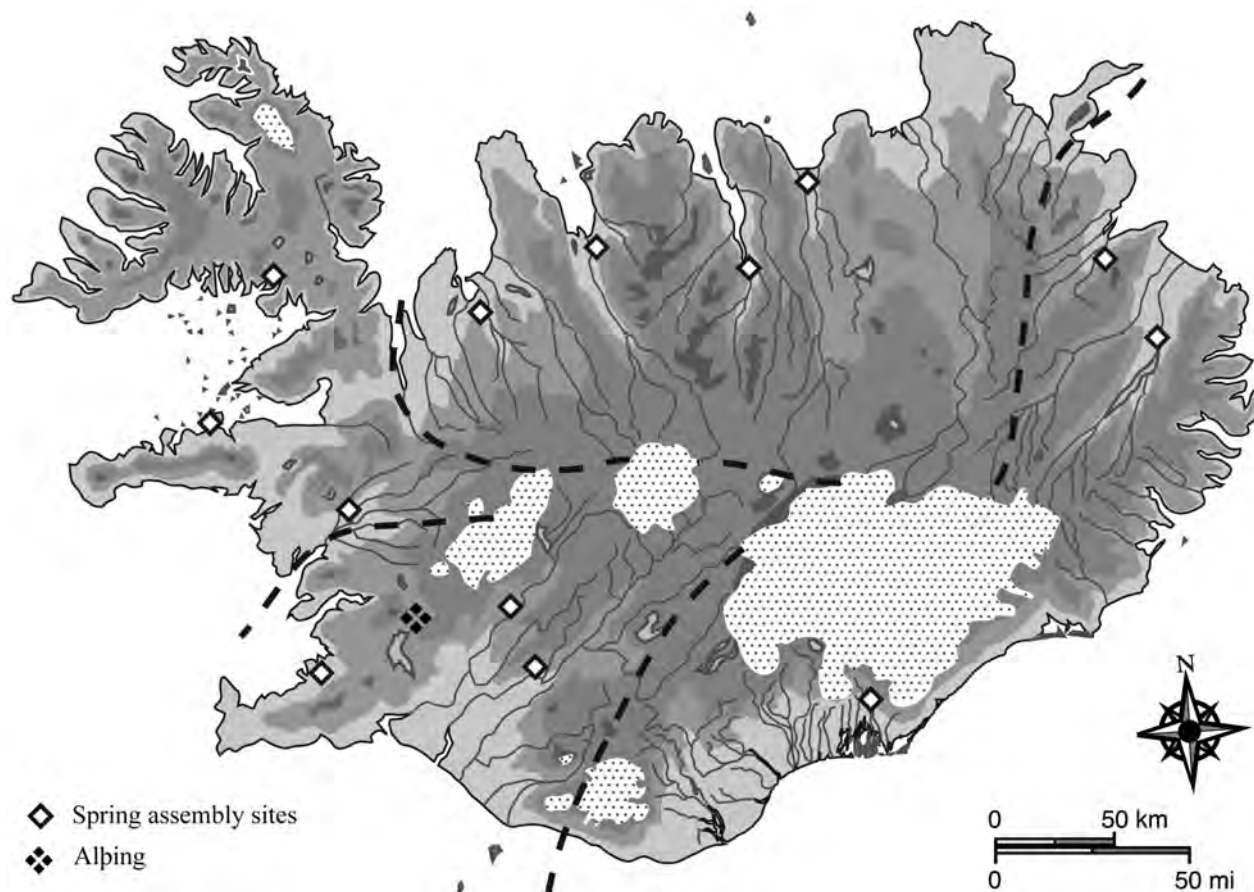
## Spring Assemblies

The goðar from each quarter of the country meet regularly at Spring Assemblies (vorþing).

Each quarter holds three Spring Assemblies; each is the responsibility of the three local goðar. By law, all the householders living within the chieftaincy of the three presiding goðar are required to attend. They meet each year in the second week of the month of Summer Finding, and the assembly meeting lasts for a week.

At these assemblies, cases of local farmers and goðar are tried, if they cannot be settled out of court.

At the beginning of each Spring Assembly, the three goðar name twelve free men from the area to act as a panel of judges. The chieftains themselves do not play any official role in the judicial process, and are even free to take sides in court debates or participate in out-of-court negotiations. Once the panel of judges has been chosen, the proceedings begin with hearings of the court of prosecution. Four days later, the court of payments is opened with people settling debts and putting values on goods traded within the district.





Seeking an advocate is a basic step in building partisan support for success at the assemblies. People often turn first to their goði to act as advocate.

## Alþing

At the core of the Icelandic government is the Alþing, the annual National Assembly of all goðar in Iceland, each accompanied by a number of his supporters. Any free man can choose to attend, and people from all over the country come to this gathering, which takes place at Assembly Plain (Þingvellir) in the southwestern part of the island.

Not only those interested in matters of government gather there at the margins of the Axe River, but also peddlers, brewers of ale, tradesmen, and young men advertising for wives. For the duration of the Alþing, the Assembly Plain becomes the national capital, where alliances are made or broken, friendships renewed, gossip and news exchanged, promises given and stories told. This National Assembly allows Iceland's sparse population to come together and get to know each other to a greater degree.

This national gathering takes place during the first two weeks of the month of Midsummer, when there is uninterrupted daylight and the mildest weather. Around a thousand people attend the Alþing every year. Most ride to the Assembly Plain, while some travel by ship. For those in the remote Eastern Quarter, the total time taken up by the Alþing, including travel time on horseback, is as long as seven weeks, a significant part of the short Icelandic summer season.

While attending, people live in booths with permanent stone foundations, which are topped over with a temporary roof. Each goði is required to provide booth space for his followers. The rock walls and grassy plains create a natural corral in which the horses can graze. The river and lake provide drinking water and fish for food. Nearby forests provide wood for fires.

All proceedings in Alþing, including the meetings of the Law Council, are public and held in open air. The only permanent buildings at the Alþing site are a small farm and, after the conversion in the year 1000, a church.

Those free householders who choose not to attend the Alþing are required to pay a tax to the goði to help pay for the travel expenses of those who do choose to attend the National Assembly.

Each of the goði is expected to argue in the courts of the assembly the cases of his supporters. In return, the goði may call upon his men for armed support in feuds with other goðar.

Three legal functions are performed at the Alþing: the laws are recited by the Lawspeaker; new laws are created by the Law Council; and the laws are judged by the Quarter Courts.

## The Law Council (Lögregta)

*We shall also have a Law Council and hold it here at the National Assembly each summer, and it is always to sit in the place where it has been long since.*

— Grágás, *Icelandic Book of Laws*,  
12th century

The Law Council is the legislative body of the Alþing. Every goði must attend the Law Council, and each must bring two advisers. Here the goðar make new laws and also act on foreign affairs such as making treaties with foreign nations.

During Law Council meetings, the participants sit on benches arranged in three concentric circles. The goðar sit on the middle circle while their advisers sit on the inner and outer benches.

## Fjórðungsdómar — the Quarter Courts

The four Quarter Courts hold trials at the Alþing on cases against individuals from each of the four regions of Iceland. Each court is comprised of 36 judges nominated by the goðar from each quarter region. The law says that in order to qualify as a judge a man must be free, with a settled home, capable of taking responsibility for what he says and older than 12 years old. Judges, witnesses and litigants all have to take a solemn oath on a blood-reddened ring.







Any individual may choose to bring an action directly to a quarter court at the Alþing instead of taking it to a local Spring Assembly, as long as the matter is of more than minimal consequence. Cases that have been deadlocked at local Spring Assemblies can be brought into the Quarter Courts.

All cases on the Quarter Courts are private suits and there are no public prosecutors. Cases are most often prosecuted by a goði or someone close to the injured party such as a family member. A man may want to act as a prosecutor because he might acquire wealth and fame by the successful prosecution of a case. If no one wants to take a case, then the case is dropped and the violation of the law goes unpunished.

Cases may not always be decided entirely on testimony, but sometimes on correctness of the legal procedure. If one side follows the correct procedure but the other does not, then the first side could win the case, regardless of the facts of the matter.

It is common that out-of-court maneuvers are used to influence the court's decision. Bribes, threats of violence and actual violence in court sometimes take place. *Eyrbyggja Saga* ("The Saga of the Inhabitants of Eyrr") tells of such out-of-court maneuverings. In the Saga, a goði, who wanted to prevent a man from coming to the assembly and presenting a case against him, first discourages the man from pressing the case, and when that fails he positions his armed supporters between the man and the assembly court. A battle ensues, with many deaths and many injured, and the case doesn't go to court. The goði and the man then agree privately on a settlement.

## The Fifth Court

In the year 1005 the Fifth Court is set up as a court of appeal for cases that ended in divided judgments in the Quarter Courts. Appeals are only permitted when questions are raised regarding the due process of law during the original court judgment, and when there is enough support among the goðar for the case to be re-trialed in the Fifth Court.

If your *Mythic Iceland* campaign takes place before the year 1005, then there is no court of appeal, and all judgments from the Quarter Courts are final.

## Violence at the Alþing

A truce is observed during the Alþing, with weapons laid aside or secured with peace straps. The Alþing ends with the taking up of weapons. Nevertheless, it is common for short battles to occur during the assembly.

A goði who is involved in a feud or contentious litigation often brings a large number of supporters, sometimes as many as 300 armed men, in order to back his negotiations with lethal force if need be.

Parties to a dispute that is approaching resolution often assemble large numbers of armed men. Although opposing sides often clash briefly, and a few men are killed, open battle is for the most part avoided. For the goðar, an open large-scale battle would be dangerous, as their followers are not dependable supporters. Also, the goðar lack the resources to feed, house, equip and pay followers for more than a brief period.

Rather than signaling the outbreak of warfare, a public display of armed support at Alþing reveals that significant numbers of men have chosen sides and are prepared to participate in working toward an honorable resolution.

Goðar who manage to stop a violent clash enhance their reputation.

## Lawspeakers

*It is prescribed that there shall be always some man in our country who is required to tell men the law, and he is called the Lawspeaker. He is required to recite all the law over three summers and the assembly procedure every summer.*

— Grágás, *Icelandic Book of Laws*,  
12th century

The Lawspeaker is elected by the Law Council every three years to act as its chairman.





## List of Law Speakers of the Alþing

|                                      |           |                             |           |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Úlfjótur                             | ca. 930   | Snorri Húnbogason           | 1156-1170 |
| Hrafn Hængsson                       | 930-949   | Styrkár Oddason             | 1171-1180 |
| Pórarinn Ragabróðir Óleifsson        | 950-969   | Gissur Hallsson             | 1181-1202 |
| Porkell máni Þorsteinsson            | 970-984   | Hallur Gissurason           | 1203-1209 |
| Þorgeir Ljósveitningagoði Þorkelsson | 985-1001  | Styrmir hinn fróði Kárason  | 1210-1214 |
| Grímur Svertingsson                  | 1002-1003 | Snorri Sturluson            | 1215-1218 |
| Skafti Þóroddsson                    | 1004-1030 | Teitur Þorvaldsson          | 1219-1221 |
| Steinn Þorgestsson                   | 1031-1033 | Snorri Sturluson            | 1222-1231 |
| Porkell Tjörvason                    | 1043-1053 | Styrmir hinn fróði Kárason  | 1232-1235 |
| Gellir Bölverksson                   | 1054-1062 | Teitur Þorvaldsson          | 1236-1247 |
| Gunnar hinn spaki Þorgrímsson        | 1063-1065 | Ólafr hvítaskáld Þórðarson  | 1248-1250 |
| Kolbeinn Flosason                    | 1066-1071 | Sturla Þórðarson            | 1251      |
| Gellir Bölverksson                   | 1072-1074 | Ólafr hvítaskáld Þórðarson  | 1252      |
| Gunnar hinn spaki Þorgrímsson        | 1075      | Teitur Einarsson            | 1253-1258 |
| Sighvatur Surtsson                   | 1076-1083 | Ketill Þorláksson           | 1259-1262 |
| Markús Skeggjason                    | 1084-1107 | Þorleifur hreimur Ketilsson | 1263-1265 |
| Úlfhéðinn Gunnarsson                 | 1108-1116 | Sigurður Þorvaldsson        | 1266      |
| Bergþór Hrafnsson                    | 1117-1122 | Jón Einarsson               | 1267      |
| Guðmundur Þorgeirsson                | 1123-1124 | Þorleifur hreimur Ketilsson | 1268      |
| Hrafn Úlfhéðinsson                   | 1135-1138 | Jón Einarsson               | 1269-1270 |
| Finnur Hallsson                      | 1139-1145 | Þorleifur hreimur Ketilsson | 1271      |
| Gunnar Úlfhéðinsson                  | 1146-1155 |                             |           |

Every year the Lawspeaker is required to stand on the Law Rock (Lögborg) and recite a third of the laws of the country. Over the course of a Lawspeaker's three-year mandate, therefore, he recites the entire law code. All goðar are required to attend this event, which is also open to anyone interested. All those watching are welcome to take part in discussions regarding any legal issues. The rock cliffs behind the speaker direct his voice, allowing him to be heard by all gathered around the Law Rock.

It is the duty of the law-speaker to announce publicly any laws passed by the Law Council.

The Lawspeaker is prepared to answer questions about laws from any of the courts taking

place during the Alþing, but only when asked. Thus, it is to the interest of the people involved in disputes to learn the right questions to ask and to have some degree of understanding of the law. This knowledge for most people comes from the stories told for generations about past disputes, feuds and legal cases settled in and out of court.

The Lawspeaker is the only official who receives a regular payment. He is an influential figure in Icelandic politics, but does not rule the country. The power remains in the hands of the goðar, who in turn are kept in check by their followers who can switch alliances with minimum formalities.





# Laws of Iceland

*Among them there is no king, but only law.*

— Adam of Bremen, 11th century,  
about Iceland

The Icelandic Viking Age code of laws touches virtually all aspects of life. It is extensive and covers many areas not only of criminal law but also court procedures and religious laws.

It is only in the year 1117 when the Alþing decides that all the laws should be written down. Prior to that year, all the Icelandic laws are recited by the Lawspeaker at the Alþing.

## The Laws

The laws listed here are from Grágás, the law book written in the 12th century. Most of the laws from Grágás existed in the 10th and 11th century as well. They are reproduced here mostly as they appear in the ancient law book. Only minor changes have been made to some of the descriptions for clarity and to make them fit the wider time span covered by Mythic Iceland.

## Avenging a Wounding or Killing

Blows that leave no bruises can be avenged at the time and place they occurred only.

A blow that leaves a bruise or causes bleeding can be avenged up to the time of the next Alþing, at which he is required to bring a case for the injuries. The same applies to everyone who has the right to avenge a killing.

The right to avenge belongs to the injured party as well as to those who accompany him.

## Penalties

It is prescribed that if men meet as they travel and one man makes assault on another, cuts a man, or swings a weapon with intention of harm, the penalty is lesser outlawry.

If a man inflicts major wounds on another, the penalty is outlawry. Major wounds include broken bones, the cutting of a man's tongue, poking out a man's eyes, knocking out a man's teeth, cutting off a man's ears, or castrating a man.

It is prescribed that if a man assaults another man, the penalty is outlawry. If men on both sides of the skirmish are wounded or killed, and three or more are wounded in all in the skirmish,



LÖGRETTA



a verdict of assault has to be given against the side from which the assault first came.

## Crimes

If someone leaves a man dead, he is to cover his corpse so that neither birds nor beasts may eat it. He is to say where it is. It is prescribed that if he does not cover the corpse the penalty is lesser outlawry.

If a man chases a horse with a rider so that he falls off, the penalty is lesser outlawry.

If a man startles a horse or ox in the direction of another man with the aim of getting him trampled or gored or struck, the penalty is lesser outlawry if the man falls.

If a man sets a fierce dog or a bear reared in captivity on someone, the penalty is lesser outlawry if no harm is done, but full outlawry if there is any visible mark of it or if he falls. If a man gets major wounds, death, or lasting injury from beasts, whether horse or ox, dog or bear, the penalty for the man who set them on to do harm is the same as if he himself had done it.

If someone capsizes a man's boat or wrecks his vessel in deep water, the penalty is outlawry.

If a man cuts hair from someone's head or makes him dirty anywhere in order to disgrace him or tears or cuts his clothing off him or takes anyone against his will the length of a bowshot or more, and for anything a man does to disgrace someone else, the penalty in every case is outlawry.

If a man takes another man's property and commits theft thereby, it is lawful for the one who owned that property to kill him.

If someone is outlawed in Greenland, then he is also outlawed here in Iceland.

## Killings

If a man kills someone, whatever age the person killed is, the penalty is outlawry.

There are six women a man has the right to kill for. The first is a man's wife; second is a man's daughter; third is a man's mother; fourth is his sister; fifth is his foster-daughter; and sixth is the foster-mother who brought him up. It is prescribed that if a man arrives to find another man forcing a

woman to lie with him there, a woman he has right to kill for, and the man has forced her down and lowered himself down upon her, then he has the right to kill on her account.

It is prescribed that if a man younger than twelve winters old kills someone, he is not under legal penalty for the killing but his kinsmen are to make restitution with kindred payments.

A man has no right to kill a woman with a live child in her womb even if she has forfeited immunity by her own act or she is outlawed. If she is killed, then there are two killing cases.

If foreigners are killed here in the country, Danish or Swedish or Norwegian, then in the case of these three kingdoms that share our language, the suit lies with the kinsmen of the dead man if they are here in the country. But cases of foreigners killed here but from all lands other than those that share our language, may be prosecuted here on grounds of kinship by nobody except the father or son or brother.

When a slave becomes an outlaw because of killing his master or mistress then those who capture him are to take him to the man who got that outlaw condemned, and he is to cut off the outlaw's hands and feet and let him live as long as he may.

The man who has killed an outlaw is to publish a suit on the next assembly, and he shall have his reward paid for by the goðar presiding over the assembly.

If a man kills another man's slave or concubine the penalty is lesser outlawry. The slave's master has the right to avenge the slave at the place of action where he is killed but not afterwards.

It is legal to avenge with death the killing of a slave only at the place and time the killing occurred.

If a master kills his own slave he is under no penalty.

A man may transfer a killing case to another man if he wishes, for full prosecution of settlement, and then the man who has taken it shall have charge of it just as if he were the rightful principal in the case.

A woman is under the same penalty as a man if she kills a man or woman or injures them, and so it is prescribed for all departures from the law.





If a man is killed in Greenland, that can be prosecuted here in our country.

## Inheritance

A freeborn, lawful heir is to inherit on the death of his father and mother. If a son does not exist, then a daughter is to inherit. If a daughter does not exist, then the father is to inherit, then a brother born of the same father, then the mother. If she does not exist, then a sister born of the same father is to inherit. If she does not exist, then a brother born of the same mother is to inherit. If he does not exist, then a sister born of the same mother is to inherit.

A man is not lawful heir whose mother's wedding is not celebrated, or who is not betrothed.

If a woman gives a slave of hers freedom because she wants to consort with him and have him in marriage, then the child is not a lawful heir.

If a male is younger than sixteen winters when inheritance falls on him, then when he is sixteen winters he is to take the inheritance and have care of it as well.

A girl has the right to take an inheritance when she is sixteen winters old and also the yield of her property but she is not to have care of either her own or anyone else's property and she is not to be responsible for her own domicile until she is twenty.

The man who married in some king's realm other than the king of Norway's and has wife in that country, then the child he gets there has no right to inherit here.

## Betrothals

If someone lies with the wife of a man who is abroad, then her closest kinsmen here in Iceland have the right to prosecute the case and the right to take compensation.

If on account of negligence a man does not sleep in the same bed as his wife for six seasons (one season equals six months), then any claim she has to property and to personal compensation lies with her kinsmen, but she herself has the right to take care of her own property.

If a pregnant woman is outlawed, then assistance to her carries no penalty and she does not forfeit her immunity until she rises from childbed.

## Property

Every man in our country shall have what belongs to him unless he has willingly made it a gift or payment.

If a man takes property from someone else, then the penalty is full outlawry. Another possible penalty is slavery.

## Sexual Assault

An explicit right to kill is given in cases of sexual assault of a man's daughter, wife, mother, sister, foster daughter, or foster mother, but the killing must be carried out at the time and place of the assault.

# Realities of the Law System

## Manslaughter and Murder

A clear distinction is made between manslaughter (víg) and murder (morð). Manslaughter is a killing publicly acknowledged by the perpetrator shortly after the act, and can be most times atoned via compensation. Murder is concealed and unacknowledged killing. If discovered, it is viewed as a very shameful act and is much more likely to result in full outlawry of the perpetrator.

## Group Liabilities

It is seen that taking revenge not on the perpetrator of the offending deed himself, but on a member of his family or household, is acceptable. This group liability gives a powerful incentive to groups to police the actions of its own members. If your uncle's jokes can get you killed, you will have more than a passing interest in his sense of humor.

In the give-and-take of family feuds, it is often a group's strongest man who is the target of a revenge killing for any wrongdoing of his kinsman, no matter if he was involved or not, or even





if he was in the country at the time of the wrongdoing or not. This has the effect of a preemptive strike — better to kill him now on your own terms than wait for him to come avenge the killing of someone else in the family.

## Penalties and Punishments

The most common sentence ruled by the Quarter Courts is that the guilty party should pay compensation to the injured party. The law provides for standard amounts of compensation depending on the injury.

Another common sentence is full outlawry. The guilty party who is sentence to full outlawry (*skóggangur*) is banished from society forever, his property is confiscated, and he cannot be sheltered or fed by anyone. As the individual no longer enjoys the protection of the law and can be killed without penalty by anyone who sees him, full outlawry most often amounts to a death sentence. If he succeeds in escaping from Iceland, he can never return.

A lighter sentence, lesser outlawry (*fjörbaugsgarður*), lasts for only three years and does not involve the confiscation of the guilty party's property, making it possible for him to return to society after those three years, if he manages to survive that long.

When an outlawry sentence is delivered, the person is given four-weeks-time to leave the country and not return for the term of his outlawry. After he leaves it becomes legal for anyone to kill the outlaw. Anyone helping or sheltering an outlaw could be sentenced to become an outlaw himself.

The life of an outlaw is extremely hard, living outdoors, without shelter, in the freezing countryside. There is the constant and real threat of violence and death from unrelated parties who seek to increase their own status by killing an outlaw. The many years without social contact can drive an outlaw insane.

There are many stories about the suffering of the outlaws. *Grettis Saga* is one of the best known of the so-called Outlaw Sagas. It tells the story of the outlaw Grettir who manages to find safety in

## Compensation According to Social Status

In cases of killing in which the prosecution calls for the payment of compensation rather than outlawry, the compensation is paid by the family of the perpetrator to the family of the victim, in amounts that grow smaller as the degree of kinship becomes more distant. This extends as far as fourth cousins, that is, to people sharing a great-great-grandfather.

The total compensation value expected for killings depends of the social status of the victim.

|                   |                                                                                 |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Householder       | 20x the victim's Status score in vaðmal, or equivalent in currency-grade silver |
| Tenant or servant | 240 vaðmal                                                                      |
| Slave             | 80 vaðmal                                                                       |

the remote and desolate highlands, where he lives for a while with a family of giants.

A pardon may be granted to an outlaw who kills three other outlaws. This law makes cooperation between outlaws unlikely, and adds to the sense of isolation and paranoia of anyone who has been outlawed but nevertheless has decided to remain in the country.

## Law Enforcement

One important aspect of the Icelandic system of law and governance is that the Alþing does not have an executive body. Once the court has decided that a person is guilty of breaking the law, the Alþing has no power to execute a sentence. There are no state sponsored armed forces or law enforcement agencies in Viking Age Iceland. Enforcing the sentence is up to the injured party, his or her family, or supporters.

It is common, in cases of an injured party that doesn't have enough support to enforce the sentence, for some ambitious individual to offer to buy the case and its sentence from the injured party, then enforce that sentence himself.







# Bringing the Legal Process to Life

The legal process figures prominently in most of the Icelandic Sagas, and as such it should be an important part of all but the shortest *Mythic Iceland* campaigns.

Just as the heroes from the Icelandic Sagas, the *Mythic Iceland* player characters will not only face bloody battles and mythical creatures, but also complex legal battles that open many opportunities for an ambitious individual to acquire power and influence.

This section aims to empower the GM with tools to make the legal process an exciting and fun part his *Mythic Iceland* campaign.

## When to Use the Legal System

The Icelandic code of laws may be extensive, but that does not mean that people in Viking Age Iceland live in constant fear of breaking the law and being prosecuted in the courts. In fact, the formal legal process, due to the high costs and risks involved in taking someone to court, is only used as a last resort when out-of-court arbitration has failed and there is no hope of a private settlement between parties.

Counting all the Icelandic family Sagas, there are 520 dispute cases altogether. Of those, 297 led to vengeance, 104 to arbitration without prior recourse to law, and 199 to lawsuits at the Alþing. Of the formal lawsuits, 50 were finally resolved by adjudication, 60 ended up in arbitration, and the remaining nine were inconclusive, usually because of violent disruption of the court. These numbers are admittedly inexact, but they still tell us that violence was a very common way of settling disputes. Also, arbitration was much more common than adjudication by a court. Still, both arbitration and adjudication were common enough that no feud can avoid going through some legal or arbitration phase.

The legal proceedings in the courts of the Alþing can be exciting, and also be a great opportunity to acquire power and influence, but they also

mean a great deal of risk. Someone who is not well prepared or who insists on taking to court a case which he has no chance of winning may end up losing a lot of his wealth, or worse, being outlawed or even killed. The GM should make sure the players understand the risks and the seriousness of taking such an action; this understanding will bring even more tension and excitement to court proceedings whenever the decision is taken to go down that route.

## Who Prosecutes and Who Defends

There are no such figures as a public prosecutor or a public defender in the Icelandic legal system. All cases brought to court are private suits and the defender must arrange for a legal representative to defend him in court.

The player characters, being in the position of either prosecution or defense, will have to hire someone to represent them. This representative could be a *goði* from the region where the PCs live or even from another region. The GM should prepare a list of three choices for representatives, which the PCs will learn about from interaction with NPCs, or by the means of a successful skill check of Knowledge (Regional) or Law.

Each of the options of legal representatives for the PCs can have a different level of Law skill, and bring their own prices. The choice of legal representative may mean not only different results to the legal case, but could also expand the PCs circle of influence and even introduce new possibilities for adventures. For example:

**Porgeir Kjartasson** – Law 60% - wants a large amount of money, in silver

**Olafur Jacobsson** – Law 50% - wants support from the PCs on a feud with a neighboring *goði*

**Snaebjorn Egilsson** – Law 70% - wants to marry his son to the sister of one of the PCs, who will need some convincing in order to accept that.

A successful check of Knowledge (Regional) skill may reveal how each of the options available to the PCs compare to the legal representative chosen by the opposing side in the legal case.





## Influencing the Outcome of Legal Battles

The legal battle takes place in one of the Quarter Courts, lasting many days and involving 36 judges. The fact that the legal proceedings have started does not mean, however, that the PCs can do nothing else but wait for the decision of the judges. The Icelandic Sagas are full of out-of-court maneuvers aimed at influencing the outcome of legal cases, such as bribes, threats, actual violence, etc.

In game terms, a legal battle is broken into four phases. Each of those phases usually consists of one day of court proceedings, but can stretch to a few days for more complex legal cases. This division in four phases is arbitrary within the rules system, aiming to offer the player characters with three windows of opportunity, one in between each of the phases. During each of these time windows, they can try to influence the outcome of the court case. It is also a simplification so that the legal proceedings don't take too long to be resolved during the game.

**Phase One** is when the legal representatives of the prosecution and defense present the core issue of the case to the judges and it is established which laws apply to the case. This phase also covers the journey that the court members make from their households to the Alþing.

**Phase Two** is when arguments are made by the legal representatives as to the facts pertaining the case.

**Phase Three** is when witnesses are brought into the court and give their testimony.

**Phase Four** is the final phase, when the representatives present their last arguments to the judges, and the judges' decision is announced.

## Legal Advantage Points

The outcome of the legal battle is decided by means of Legal Advantage Points. Each side accumulates these during the legal proceedings.

The legal representative who performs best during each of the phases earns one Advantage Point for his side. The PCs may also score Le-

### Maneuver Window One

#### Before Phase Two

- 1 - Preventing a judge who supports the opposition from reaching the Alþing
- 2 - Preventing a likely witness from reaching the Alþing
- 3 - Discovering a relevant loophole in the law, by talking to the current or a former Lawspeaker
- 4 - Bribing, killing or intimidating a judge or a likely witness

### Maneuver Window Two

#### Between Phases Two and Three

- 1 - Intimidating an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition
- 2 - Bribing an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition
- 3 - Fabricating a new witness, who will lie in exchange for money or favors
- 4 - Offering in marriage a member of a PC's household to a judge's immediately family
- 5 - Intimidating an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition
- 6 - Discrediting an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition, by involving him on a shameful case

### Maneuver Window Three

#### Between Phases Three and Four

- 1 - Intimidating a judge who supports the opposition
- 2 - Bribing a judge who supports the opposition
- 3 - Killing a judge who supports the opposition
- 4 - Removing a witness or judge from the Alþing, by causing an emergency at his household
- 5 - Discrediting an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition, by involving him on a shameful case





gal Advantage Points by the means of out-of-court maneuvers during each Maneuver Window. At the end of phase four, the side of the highest number of Legal Advantage Points wins the case.

## Winning Legal Advantage Points — Representative

In the Icelandic Sagas it is often true that cases are won on the basis of which representative best knows the laws of the land, rather than the actual facts of the case. Each one of the four phases of the trial is, therefore, a showdown between representatives on their mastery of the legal code, and is resolved with an opposed Law skill roll between the two representatives. The rules for opposed skills rolls can be found on page 173 of the *Basic Role-playing* rulebook.

Allow the players to make the roll for their legal representative.

The winner of each opposed roll of the Law skill wins one Legal Advantage Point. Thus, it is possible for a representative to accumulate four Legal Advantage Points during the whole of the legal process (more if a critical result is rolled, see below).

If a Fumble result is rolled by one of the representatives in an opposed Law skill roll, that means that a gross legal mistake was made by that representative. In that event, the case ends immediately with the opposing side winning the case regardless of any other facts.

If a Critical result is rolled by one of the representatives in an opposed Law skill roll, that representative wins one extra Legal Advantage Point for that phase. The court process continues as normal.

## Winning Legal Advantage Points — Maneuver Windows

The period of time between each of the four phases of the legal process is called a Maneuver Windows. It is during each of those Maneuver Windows, that out-of-court events may influence the outcome of the legal case.

The GM may suggest to the players any of the means listed above, via the PC's legal representative himself, or via any other NPC that the player characters trust.

Only one out-of-court maneuver may be attempted during each of the Maneuver Windows. For example, if the player characters decide to intimidate a judge during the feast in the evening after the day's proceedings, they may not attempt any other out-of-court maneuver until the next Maneuver Window.

The GM should make a judgment on whether each maneuver the PCs attempt is successful or fails, based on roleplay and relevant skill checks.

Each successful maneuver wins one Legal Advantage Point. Thus, the PCs may earn a total of three Legal Advantage Points by means of out-of-court maneuvers during the course of the legal case.

## Out-of-Court Maneuvers by the Opposition

It is not only the PCs who act behind the law to try to influence the court outcome. The other side will also be doing all it can to win the court case.

To establish the outcome of maneuvers by the opposition, the GM must first define the opposition's Idea score. This represents the capacity of the opposition to influence the court case. Use the Idea score of the main individual opposing the PCs in the court case, not his or her representatives. The GM then makes a Difficult roll of Idea for each of the maneuver windows. For each successful roll, the opposition earns one Legal Advantage Point. It is best to make those rolls one at a time, as the game progresses through the Maneuver Windows, that way the PCs have a chance



### Sentence Severity — Lighter to Harsher

- Minor compensation
- Major compensation
- Minor Outlawry
- Full Outlawry



to learn about the maneuvers of the opposition by rolling a successful Politics skill check.

## Winning the Case

At the end of phase four, the GM counts the total Legal Advantage Points won by each side of the dispute. Up to four points may be won by either side (maybe more if any side scored a **Critical** roll), one from each of the court proceedings phases; three more points may be won by each side, one from each Maneuver Window.

The side with the highest total wins the case. The losing side receives the punishment as defined by the law.

It is important to remember that there is no executive body of the Alþing and no law enforcement body in Viking Age Iceland, so it is up to the winning party and its supporters to enforce the sentence.

If the court case ended with both sides tied with the same number of Legal Advantage Points, this means that the judges could not agree on a final resolution, and the whole case is thrown out. Violence is not uncommon when a case is thrown

out under such circumstances. If there is enough support from the goðar at the assembly, such a deadlocked case may be taken to the Fifth Court, that serves as a court of appeal.

If the winning side reaches the end of the legal proceedings with an advantage of three or more Legal Advantage Points over the other side, that means a major victory and the sentence gets shifted one notch in severity (e.g. major compensation becomes minor outlawry, minor outlawry becomes major outlawry, etc).

An advantage of 5 points for winning side over the loser means that the winner may sue the losing side for some other crime that has become clear during the legal proceedings.

This system takes into consideration the importance of the legal prowess of the representatives while still allowing the PCs a chance to win a case even when they have a weak representative, provided they work hard at out-of-court maneuvers on their own. Another aim of this system is to bring uncertainty and excitement to the process of the courts even when the player characters have strong representation.





# NORSE RELIGION



63

The belief in the Norse gods is strong in Mythic Iceland during the Viking Age. Even after the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000, the old pagan religion remained still a strong faith among the Icelanders.

The creation of the world according to the Norse belief has been described in the **History** chapter, page 9.

## The Norse Deities

The gods live in a realm called Ásgarður, beyond and above the human world of Miðgarður. Ásgarður was originally inhabited by a tribe of gods known as Æsir, the sky and storm gods, most of them sons of Óðinn, King of the Gods. Another tribe of gods, called Vanir, gods of nature and fertility, existed in the separate realm of Vanaheimur. It was between these two tribes of gods that the

very first battle in the world was fought. The war was long and bloody, with each side laying waste to the other's territory. At last the two sides, tired of the destruction, agreed to meet and negotiate a truce, whereby they agreed to exchange hostages and that the Vanir should live peacefully in Ásgarður alongside the Æsir.

### Óðinn

*In Valland I was, and wars I raised,  
Princes I angered, and peace brought never;  
The noble who fall in the fight hath Oðinn,  
And Þór hath the race of the thralls.*

— Óðinn talks to Þór, “Hárbarðs-ljóð” Poem, *Poetic Edda*

The one-eyed god of war, magic and poetry. He is the king of the Æsir, and the father of many of them. Óðinn's position at the head of the pantheon is not that of an absolute ruler, but more like that of the Norse kings, the first among equals. When he travels in Miðgarður among mortals, he appears as a tall old man wearing a dark, wide-brimmed hat that casts a shadow over his face.

Óðinn is a complex god, and has many names that hint at his various roles and the numerous aspects of his character. He is also known as All Father, Father of the Slain, The Red Bearded One, God of the Hanged, God of Prisoners, and the God of Cargoes. Snorri Sturluson, the Icelandic chronicler, lists in his Edda another forty-nine names for Óðinn, such as High One, Masked One, Capri-



ÓÐINN



cious One, Inflamer, Swift Tricker, Father of Victory, Blind One, Shifty Eyed, One With The Magic Staff, Destroyer, and Terror.

Ever in search of wisdom, Óðinn is said to go to great lengths to further his magical powers. He pledged one of his eyes in payment for a drink from the well of Mimir, which is situated beneath a root of Yggdrasil, the World Tree. The water of the well gives inspiration and knowledge of the future to those who drink it. It was from that fountain that Óðinn learned the prophecy of the doom of the gods at Ragnarök. He also gained wisdom from the head of one of the gods, Mimir, 'The Wise One,' which he kept for himself after it had been cut off by the Vanir. The head is said to reveal to him many sorts of occult knowledge.

Óðinn only speaks in verse of the most inspired poetry. The gift of poetry among mortals is said to be a gift that he alone can bestow.

The stories say that Óðinn has the magical spear Gungnir, which never misses its target, and the magical gold ring Draupnir, from which every ninth night eight new rings appear. He has two raven companions, called Thought (Huginn) and Memory (Muninn), who fly around Miðgarður daily and report the happenings of the world to Óðinn in Valhalla at night. Óðinn rides a horse, named Sleipnir, that has eight legs. He also commands a pair of wolves named Geri and Freki, to whom he gives his food in Valhalla since he consumes nothing but mead and wine. From his throne, called Gate-bench (Hlidskjalf), located in the great hall named Shelf of the Slain (Valaskjalf), Óðinn can see everything that happens in any of the Nine Worlds.

Óðinn is a figure that inspires awe and fear, but rarely genuine affection.

Among those who worship Óðinn are the poets, leaders, and runemasters.

### Special Benefits of Allegiance to Óðinn

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: Rune Magic, any Mental skill, Poetry.

### Winning Allegiance Points: Óðinn

- Dealing the killing blow in battle
- Writing a great poem (Special or Critical result on Poetry skill)
- Act of great bravery

**50 points and higher** — *Berserker Rage*: The player character may choose to enter a frenzied state in which he has the following advantages: his hit points are doubled, all his attacks do maximum damage, he gains one extra attack per round, and ignores the CONx5 check for passing out from massive damage. There are disadvantages too, and those are: the character can no longer choose which body area he wants to attack, and he attacks anyone near him including his friends. Every round of effect, the character loses one Power Point, and he will eventually collapse once all the Power Points are used up. If the character wants to snap out of berserker state earlier, he may attempt a **POWx3** roll.

**80 points and higher** — *Calling Wisdom*: Once a day, the player character may ask a question aloud to the winds. After a few moments, Óðinn's raven named Wisdom will come flying down from the sky, land on the player's shoulder and whisper the answer to the question in the character's ear. The answer is often in rather cryptic form that may only make sense to the character at a later time.

### Þór

*"Þór is the most outstanding of the Æsir, he is the mightiest of all the Æsir and men. His dominion is a place called Þrudvangar, and his hall is called Bilskrinir, where there are 540 rooms; it is the largest hall ever built."*

— Snorri Sturlusson, Iceland,  
around 1220

Þór is the son of the god Óðinn and the giantess Jörd. He is a mighty figure of enormous strength, a huge red beard and thick brows over red glowing





eyes. The mightiest of the Æsir, he is the protector of Ásgarður and the slayer of giants.

He is the god of thunder and lighting. Thunder is said to be the sound of his chariot driving across the sky. Þór's power over storms means that his blessing is vital for anyone sailing across the seas.

Just as his father Óðinn is crafty and complex, Þór is straight-forward and physical.

Þór's wife is Sif of the golden hair, his sons are called Magni and Modi, and his daughter Þrúður.

Þór has three special possessions. His most prized possession is the hammer Mjöltnir, the chief weapon with which he dispatches the giants and enemies of the gods. Mjöltnir was created by the dwarfs Brokk and Eitri. His second most precious possession is a belt of strength, which doubles his already almighty god-strength whenever he buckles it on. Lastly, he has a pair of iron gloves with which to hold the hammer.

Þór is held in high regard among Icelanders, and is the most commonly worshipped god in Mythic Iceland.



ÞÓR

### Winning Allegiance Points: Þór

Þór is specially pleased with his followers who perform some of the actions listed below.

- Slaying a troll or giant
- Navigating safely through a sea storm
- Feat of great Strength

### Special Benefits of Allegiance to Þór

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: Navigation, any Physical skill, Brawl.

**50 points and higher** — *Light of Þór*: The character raises his weapon above his head, and lighting descends from the sky and hits it in a blinding flash of light. Character is unaffected. Anyone standing within 50 meters of the character must roll Luck or is blinded for 1D4 rounds. See Darkness in *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 220.

**80 points and higher** — *Þór's Hammer*: Once a day, the character raises his empty hands up towards the sky, asking Þór for help. Lighting from the sky then strikes the character's arm, and a shining hammer appears in his hand. Þór's Hammer does 2D6 + db damage plus electric stun (see *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 232) damage. Other stats are the same as a regular Great Hammer (see *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 253). The char-







acter may use his highest weapon skill with the hammer, without any penalty. The hammer vanishes at the end of the combat scene.

## Freyr

*Njörður in Nóatún begot afterward two children: the son was called Freyr, and the daughter Freyja; they were fair of face and mighty. Freyr is the most renowned of the Æsir; he rules over the rain and the shining of the sun, and therewithal the fruit of the earth; and it is good to call on him for fruitful seasons and peace. He governs also the prosperity of men.*

— Poetic Edda

The god of agriculture, the weather, and fertility. Freyr is the son of the sea god Njörður, brother of the goddess Freyja. He decides when the sun shall shine or the rain come down, and with that he rules over the produce of the earth. It is good to call on him for peace and plenty.



FREYR

Freyr rides the dwarf-made boar Golden Bristles (Gullinbursti), which has bristles in its mane and glows in the dark. He possesses the ship Wood Leaf (Skíðblaðnir), capable of traveling over both land and sea, and which is large enough to hold the whole host of Ásgarður, but can also be folded like a cloth and carried in a pouch.

When the nine worlds were created by Óðinn and his brothers, Freyr was given the world of the elves, Álfheimur. Almost all of the elves in Álfheimur worship Freyr, as do most of the elves that have moved to Miðgarður to live as hidden people among men.

Freyr is the third most popular deity among Icelanders. Those who choose to dedicate their lives to farming rather than going on raids abroad are especially likely to be worshippers of Freyr, whom they expect will bring prosperity to their farms.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Freyr

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill

#### Winning Allegiance Points: Freyr

- Dedicating a horse to Freyr, so that no one may ever ride it
- Bringing peace to a conflict
- Helping an elf or hidden person





points that can be added to the following skills: any Manipulation skill, Track, Ride.

**50 points and higher** — *Freyr's Steed*: A ghostly shape of a horse appears around the character. The character gains the strength and speed of a horse. The character become unable to hold any object in his or her hands, but can use any of the horses attacks as described on *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 336.

**80 points and higher** — *Weather Change*: Once per day the character can call upon Freyr to change the weather in whatever way the character desires.

## Loki

The god Loki appears in the Icelandic Eddas as handsome and charismatic, but nonetheless one of the most wicked of the gods. Ever the trickster, this vengeful god is also often depicted as being a coward, a liar, a thief and a murderer. He represents the negative forces of chaos, destruction, and the erosion of all that is honorable.

He is a shape-shifter, able to assume the shape of any man or woman, and even of animals.

Loki is the father (and sometimes the mother) of many monsters, such as Fenrir, the wolf that is destined to slay Óðinn at the time of Ragnarök; Miðgarðsormur, the great sea serpent that encircles Miðgarður, biting on its own tail; and Hel, the ruler of the realm of the dead. Also, while in the form of a mare, Loki gave birth to Sleipnir, the eight-legged steed of Óðinn.



LOKI

## Winning Allegiance Points: Loki

- Lies of serious consequences
- Theft of something of great value
- Cowardice

Loki is not openly worshipped in Mythic Iceland. It is recommended that only NPCs should be Loki worshippers, as the introduction of player characters that are Loki worshippers would take the mood of the game away from the Sagas and fairy-tales that *Mythic Iceland* aims to emulate.

## Benefits of Allegiance to Loki

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: Any communication skill, Sleight of Hand, Hide.

**50 points and higher** — *Loki's Mask*: The character may take the appearance of another person of the same sex. The voice of the character is also changed to match the person. Those close to the subject may attempt an opposed skill roll of Insight vs. Perform to notice that something is wrong about the person. The character does not gain memories or any knowledge from the person he is impersonating. The effect lasts until the next morning when the sun comes up.

**80 points and higher** — *Loki's Lie*: Once a day, the character may tell a lie and cause it to become real. The lie must be about an event that has occurred on the same day, and must be within the realms of possibility. The GM has the final word on what is acceptable.

## Freyja

She is the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. Freyja is the most beautiful of all goddesses, with long blonde hair and blue eyes. Those who seek happiness in love pray to her. She is also associated with wealth, magic, war, prophecy, and wealth.





FREYJA

Freyja rules over the plants of the Earth, the trees and animals of the forest, love, female sexuality, and magic. She is the goddess of love between men and women.

She wears a magical necklace called Glowing Jewelry (Brísingamen), made of amber. She travels through the worlds wearing a cloak of falcon feathers, in a chariot pulled by cats.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Freyja

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Communication skill, Insight, Appraise.

**50 points and higher** — *Freyja's Aura of Beauty*: Such is the beauty of the character that no one can bring him- or herself to physically hurt the character in any way. If the character physically threatens or attacks anyone, the effect is broken.

**80 points and higher** — *Freyja's Love Charm*: Once a day, eyes meet and the subject of this effect immediately falls in love with the character in such a strong way that he or she must express that love

### Winning Allegiance Points: Freyja

- Special or Critical on a Charisma roll when trying to seduce someone
- Reuniting lovers
- Promoting love

and try to win over the object of his or her affection. The first day after, the subject can attempt a roll of POWx1 to snap out of love. On the second day, an attempt can be made at POWx2, and so on until the effect is broken. Only one person at a time can be under this effect. If the character makes a second person fall in love, the spell over first one is broken. Someone who is already under this effect cannot be targeted again while the effect lasts.

### Njörður

He controls the path of the wind, the calm seas, and the summer. Njörður is invoked for seafaring and fishing, and is also said to grant wealth in land and valuables to those who request his aid. He is the father of the gods Freyr and Freyja.

Njörður had a tumultuous marriage with the goddess Skadi, goddess of winter. Skadi personifies ice and cold and preferred to live in the snowy mountains, while Njörður personifies the summer warmth and the seas and preferred to live by the sea. The couple tried to resolve this difficulty by spending nine nights in the mountains and nine nights on the coast. This alternation explains the changing seasons.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Njörður

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Perception skill, Swim, and Pilot Ship..



NJÖRÐUR





### Winning Allegiance Points: Njörður

- Special or Critical on a Navigate roll at sea
- Special or Critical on a Pilot ship roll
- Exploring seas where few have gone before

**50 points and higher** — *Njörður's Gust of Wind*: The character can create a powerful gust of wind simply by drawing breath and blowing it out in the desired direction. Anyone within 10 meters from the character must make a Difficult Effort roll or fall and become prone. Any mounted characters within the affected area must make a Difficult Ride skill roll.

**80 points and higher** — *Favor from the Sea*: Once a day, the character may plunge his head under water and call any sea creature for one single favor. Within a few moments the creature arrives ready to lend a hand, or a fin, as it were. For example, a whale could help push a disabled ship. A Nykur (see **Creatures of Mythic Iceland** — page 214) could ferry the character to land. The GM has the final word on what favors are acceptable.

## Sif

She is the goddess of grain, harvests, fertility and farming, and the wife of the god Þór. A most beautiful woman, Sif is famous for her very long, very golden hair, which is said to represent the wheat of summer that is shorn at harvest-time.



SIF

### Winning Allegiance Points: Sif

- Acquiring a large farm
- Significantly expanding your own farm
- Acquiring a gold item

Once, Sif had her hair cut by Loki. When her husband Þór heard of this, he grabbed Loki and was about to break every bone in his body, but Loki promised to have the black elves make a head of hair for Sif from gold, one that would grow like real hair.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Sif

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Manipulation skill, Knowledge (Natural History), Bargain.

**50 points and higher** — *Sif's Blessing*: The character's farm becomes especially prosperous — his crops produce a harvest every year no matter how bad the Icelandic weather gets. This means that the character has a bonus of +50% to his **Farming** skill.

**80 points and higher** — *Sif's Growth*: Once per day, character may cause a group of plants to grow in a few seconds as much as they would in a year. The area of effect is 10 hectares.

## Tyr

He is the boldest and most courageous of the gods, and has power over victory in combat.

When the gods tried to persuade the monstrous wolf Fenrir to allow the fetter Gleipnir to be placed on him, the wolf did not believe that they would later set it free. So Fenrir would only accept to be bound if a god would put his right hand in Fenrir's mouth. The brave god Tyr agreed and put his hand into Fenrir's mouth as a pledge. Then,





### Winning Allegiance Points: Tyr

- Dealing the killing blow in battle
- Victory in a large battle, of 20 people or more
- Special or Critical on Sword skill roll



when the gods would not let the wolf loose, Fenrir bit off Tyr's hand.

The fetter Gleipnir is a thin cord made by the black elves and has six ingredients: the sound of a cat's footfall, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain, the sensibilities of a bear, spittle of a bird, and the breath of fish. For this reason, we no longer hear a cat's footfall, women have no beards, mountains have no roots, bears no sensibilities, fish no breath, and birds no spittle.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Tyr

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Combat skill, Strategy, Throw.

**50 points and higher** — *Hand of Tyr*: In the character's right hand, any weapon, no matter how exotic, becomes familiar, giving him or her a score equal to their highest weapons score -10%.

**80 points or higher** — *Tyr's War-Cry*: Once per day, the character may yell a war-cry asking for Tyr to aid him and his companions in battle. The

character and anyone fight on his or her side is inspired by Tyr and receives a +20% bonus to all **Combat** skills until the end of the battle.

## Ullur

He is the god of skiing, archery and hunting. Ullur is such a good archer and ski-runner that no one can rival him. He is Sif's son and Þór's stepson.

Ullur is beautiful to look at, and he has all the characteristics of a warrior. It is considered good to call on him in duels.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Ullur

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Physical skill, Track, Bow.

**50 points and higher** — *Ullur's Aim*: For one action, the character can ignore range penalties while firing a bow. As long as the character can see the target he should be able to make an attack roll without any range penalties no matter how far the target is.

**80 points and higher** — *Ullur's Shield*: Once a day, the character's shield become surrounded by a glow, and moves very fast as if by its own will, with the character's arm, so that it covers any body part that happen to be targeted by an attacker. Add half of the shield's armor points to all of the character's body areas for the duration of the battle.

## Frigg

As the wife of Óðinn, Frigg is one of the most important goddesses. She is the patron of mar-



TYR

### Winning Allegiance Points: Ullur

- Special or Critical with a Bow in combat or when hunting
- Special or Critical on a Craft roll when creating a shield or skis
- Hunting an exotic animal





ULLUR



FRIGG



HEIMDALLUR



riage and motherhood, and also represents female wisdom. She has a reputation of knowing every person's destiny, but never unveils it.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Frigg

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Communication skill, First Aid, Fine Manipulation.

**50 points and higher** — *Frigg's Wisdom*: The character may call upon the goddess for some piece of information which is known by a woman, any woman, in the land or country where the character finds himself or herself at the moment.

**80 points and higher** — *Vision of Death*: Once per day, the character may ask Frigg how anyone is going to die, and then receive a vision or dream of that person's death. The manner of death should be chosen by the GM, and is the only possible future and cannot be changed. It is also possible to use

this gift to reveal how someone who is already dead has lost his life.

### Heimdallur

He is the guardian of the gods and of the link between Miðgarður and Ásgarður, the Bifröst Bridge. He is also regarded as the god of singing and music.

Heimdallur sits at the end of Ásgarður, to guard the bridge from giants. He needs less sleep than a bird, and can see a hundred leagues in front of him by night as well as by day.

He can hear every sound from Miðgarður, even the growing of grass on earth and of wool on sheep. He has the trumpet known as Gjöll, that he will sound upon the onset of Ragnarök, to warn the gods of the end of the world.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Heimdallur

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Manipulation skill, Poetry, Perception.

#### Winning Allegiance points: Frigg

- Successfully delivering a baby
- Marrying people
- Special or Critical on Idea for a woman

#### Winning Allegiance Points: Heimdallur

- Perceiving danger before it strikes
- Special or Critical on Perform roll
- Protecting someone from harm



**50 points and higher** — *Heimdallur's Performance*: Anyone within hearing distance of the character must make a Listen roll; and those who succeed must stop whatever he or she is doing and watch the character perform or sing. In case the performance is a dance, the skill roll should instead be Spot. The effect lasts for as long as the character keeps up the performance. Don't forget to apply the correct modifiers to perception skills for those wearing helmets. No Perform skill roll is necessary.

**80 points and higher** — *Rainbow Bridge*: Once per day, the player character may call upon Heimdallur to create a rainbow-bridge in the fashion of Bifröst, the bridge that links Midgarður to Ásgarður. The bridge spans the character's present location to any other location that the character has visited previously. The number of people who can cross the rainbow-bridge is equal to the player character's POW, and they travel across the bridge at the speed of light. To onlookers, the bridge looks like a regular rainbow, and the travelling players are turned into colorful flashes of light that then travel up the rainbow.

## Baldur

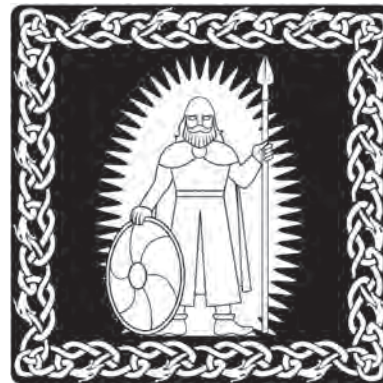
He is the god of light, purity, peace, innocence, and forgiveness. Son of Óðinn and Frigg, Baldur is loved by both gods and men and is considered to be the best of the gods. He has a good character, is friendly, wise and eloquent.

His mother, the goddess Frigg, made everything in existence swear never to harm Baldur, except for the mistletoe which she found too young to demand an oath from.

Baldur's death is foreseen to be the first in the chain of events which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the gods at Ragnarök.

### Winning Allegiance Points: Baldur

- Bringing peace to a conflict
- Forgiving someone who did you or your family a great wrong
- Special or Critical on a First Aid roll



BALDUR

## Benefits of Allegiance to Baldur

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: Any Communication skill, First Aid, Insight.

**50 points and higher** — *Baldur's Healing Hands*: The character may restore one person to full health, healing any wounds and curing any disease or poison effects. Crippled limbs can be fixed by this effect, but not severed limbs. All that is required is that the character touches the subject while his hands glow with power. No skill roll is necessary. For complete rules and limitations on using this Allegiance Power, see page 203.

**80 points and higher** — *Baldur's Second Chance*: Once per day, the character can reverse any permanent penalty or loss of limb or body part suffered by anyone. A radiant aura appears around the subject and the damaged body part is restored to full health.

## Forseti

The god of justice, Forseti is the son of the god Baldur and his wife Nanna. He is considered to be the wisest and most eloquent of the gods. Forseti rules in the beautiful palace Glitnir, with a roof of silver that is supported by pillars of red gold, which serves as a court of justice for the gods.

While the god Tyr presides over the seeking of justice by the means of bloody revenge, Forseti presides over disputes resolved by mediation. He





FORSETI

### Winning Allegiance Points: Forseti

- Resolving a dispute by mediation
- Helping bringing someone to justice
- Special or Critical on Law roll

is so respected, that only the most solemn oaths are uttered in his name.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Forseti

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: Any Mental, Persuade, Etiquette.

**50 points and higher** — *Forseti's Eye*: The character only needs to touch a person, and any crimes that person has committed flash before the character's eyes. The GM may add colorful descriptions of the events. The character also knows if reparation has been made for the crimes, or if the person has otherwise been brought to justice. To be considered a crime, the act must have been against the law in the place where it happened.

**80 points and higher** — *Locate Outlaw*: Once per day, the character can point to the direction (north, south, east, or west) where a specific person who has been outlawed finds himself or herself at the moment.



HÖÐUR

## Höður

He is the blind god of darkness and winter, son of the god Óðinn and his wife Frigg. Before Ragnarök, Höður is tricked by Loki and unintentionally slays his brother Baldur.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Höður

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Perception skill, Climb, Knowledge (Regional - High Lands).

**50 points and higher** — *Höður's Sight*: The character gains the power to see clearly in even absolute darkness.

**80 points and higher** — *Winter's Embrace*: For a day, cold weather no longer presents any danger to the character, who now feels comfortable even in the coldest of winters. Also, the character is able to survive by eating nothing more than snow and ice.

### Winning Allegiance Points: Höður

- Living in the cold highlands for a season (half year)
- Making your way through a large dark area
- Critical or Special on Sense roll





VÍÐARR

## Víðarr

The son of Óðinn and the giantess Gridur, Víðarr is the god of silence, stealth and revenge. He is very strong, second only to the god Þór. He is said to wear a very thick shoe, made of the material collected throughout all the ages from waste pieces cut from the toes and heels of people's shoes.

At Ragnarök, Víðarr will kill the monstrous wolf Fenrir with his bare hands. He will press the one foot with his very thick shoe on Fenrir's bottom jaw, and will take hold of his other jaw and tear the wolf apart. By killing Fenrir, Víðarr will stop the wolf from destroying the whole of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, and the world can then be restored after the destruction resulting from Ragnarök.

### Benefits of Allegiance to Víðarr

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Physical skill, Craft (Leather), Grapple.

#### Winning Allegiance Points: Víðarr

- Enacting revenge on behalf of someone else
- Feat of great strength
- Special or Critical on Stealth roll

**50 points and higher** — *Viðarr's Steps*: The character makes absolutely no noise as he or she moves, even when wearing armor.

**80 points or higher** — *Seen but Unnoticed*: Once per day, the character can make himself unnoticed by anyone. This is not true invisibility, as the character is still visible but is ignored unless he or she does something to draw attention to himself or herself. Animals are not affected.

## Hel

One of the children of Loki, Hel is the ruler of Niflheimur, the realm of the dead. She is a horrible hag, half alive and half dead. Her face and body are those of a living woman, but her thighs and legs are those of a corpse, mottled and moldering.

It is told that when she was born, disease first came into the world. She is said to sweep through







### Winning Allegiance Points: Hel

- Causing a warrior's death outside of battle, so that he will not go to Valhalla
- Helping disease to spread
- Special or Critical when making poisons

towns and cities bringing plague; if she uses a rake, some survive; if a broom, none do.

Hel is one of the three children of the god Loki and the giantess Angrboda, along with the wolf Fenrir and the serpent Jörmungandur. Once Óðinn found out that these children were being brought up in Jötunheimur, the land of giants, he sent the gods to gather them and bring them to him. Óðinn then threw Hel into Niflheimur, and bestowed upon her the duty to “administer board



HEL

and lodging to those sent to her, and that is those who die of sickness or old age.”

Hel is not openly worshipped in mythic Iceland. It is recommended that only NPCs should be Hel worshippers, as the introduction of player







characters who are Hel worshippers would take the mood of the game away from the Sagas and fairytales that *Mythic Iceland* aims to emulate.

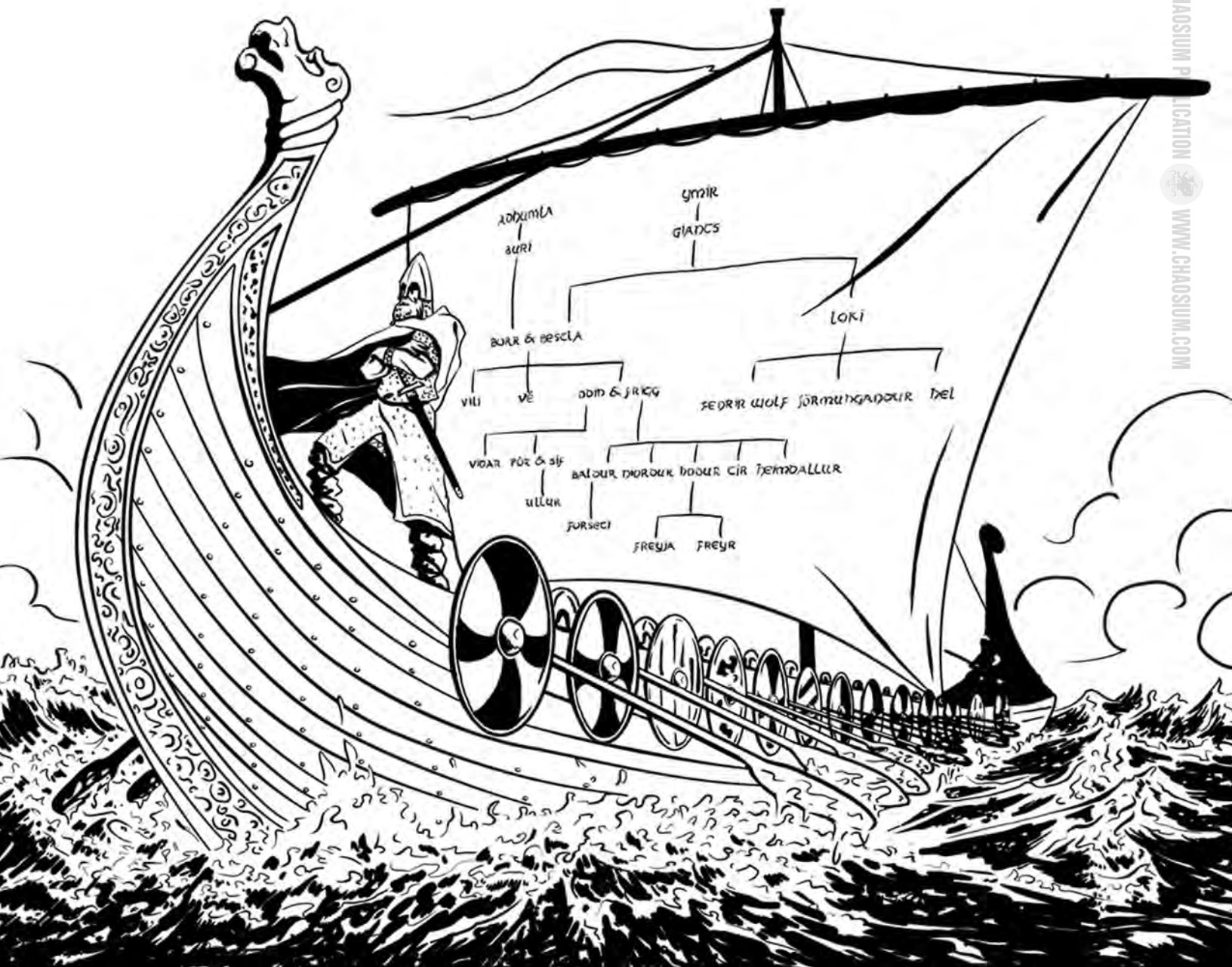
## Benefits of Allegiance to Hel

**40 points and higher** — Up to three times per session, the player character can use up to his entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to the following skills: any Mental skill, Stealth, Craft (Poison).

**50 points and higher** — *Hel's Curse*: One person the character touches acquires a deadly dis-

ease which will kill him or her within a day unless cured by magical means. Details of the disease are up to the GM.

**80 points and higher** — *Raise Draugur*: The player character can raise the body of anyone who has gone to Niflheimur (someone who has not died in battle and therefore not gone to Ásgarður) and give it one task to complete. The Draugur does the task to the best of its abilities and is then free to do as it pleases and is no longer obliged to follow orders. After it is free, the Draugur will not harbor any grudge against the character.







## Temples and Rituals

*"That man who was to take a temple-oath took in his hand a silver ring which was reddened in blood of the sacrificed ox, and which had to weigh not less than three ounces."*

— *Víga-Glúms Saga*, Iceland,  
13th century,

At the early stages of the Settlement Age, whole temples were moved from Norway to Iceland when the gods sent messages to some of their most devout worshippers, demanding the temples to be moved across the sea.

When the Alþing, the National Assembly, was established in the year 930, special regulations were made in regards to temples. The island was divided into quarters, and there were to be three places of assembly in each quarter, and three chief-temples in each assembly-district. A man, most often a goði (chieftain-priest) was chosen at each district to take the position of hofgoði (temple priest) and take care of the chief-temples.

All men are bound to attend all major ceremonies held at the chief-temples in the district where they have their farms.

The chief-temples are places of worship for all Norse gods, but usually one god is considered the chief-god of that temple, and his image stands in the center, in front of a tapestry hung on the wall behind the altar, with the other gods standing on each side.

The main part of the building of a chief-temple serves as a hall in which are held entertainment after the sacrifices. As in ordinary halls, there are fires in the middle of the floor and wooden sitting benches down each side. Over the fires hang large pots in which the flesh of sacrificed animals is boiled and eaten by worshippers after being consecrated by the temple priest.

The inner part of a chief-temple is a more sacred place, where stands the altar with an iron plate on the top, on which a fire is kept constantly burning. A silver armband and a bowl for the sacrificial blood also lie on the temple's altar. Each temple priest must wear this armband on his arm



at all times while conducting religious ceremonies or any assemblies, having previously reddened the ring in the blood of an animal that he himself has sacrificed at the temple. Any man who wants to do any legal business at a law court must first take an oath on that ring.

Every ceremony involves the sprinkling of the sacrificial blood upon the faithful, by the temple priest, using sacrificial twigs.

There are private temples erected to only a single god. Those are most often located at the home of a goði, who will welcome there any men living in his district to worship with him.

There are restrictions that apply to all temples and holy places. Weapons are forbidden inside temples, and those who defy that custom will be warned by the temple priest that he will come under the wrath of the gods unless he makes amends for his mistakes. Amends usually involve making a donation to the temple.

Human sacrifices at temples in Iceland are very rare, and only resorted to in extreme cases. The crisis resulting from the conflict between the Norse religion and Christianity was one of those extreme cases, when two men from each quarter of Iceland were sacrificed in the year 1000, so that the gods might prevent Christianity from taking hold in the country. Curiously, the Christian converts, not wanting to be outdone by the dramatic sacrifices made by their heathen enemies,





also sacrificed many men and called it “a gift for victory to our Lord Jesus.”

## Direct Influence in Miðgarður

The gods live in Ásgarður and very rarely visit Miðgarður, the realm of the mortal and mythic creatures and the realm where mythic Iceland is located.

*Mythic Iceland* campaigns should feature only indirect influence from the Norse gods. Even though it is said that they sometimes walk among mortals in Miðgarður, their direct influence in the affairs of men is very rare indeed.

## Christianity

Christianity embraces forgiveness and condemns revenge, in ways that are incompatible with the legal system of Viking Age Iceland. Furthermore, Christianity is associated with the Norwegian king, who is viewed as a tyrant by the Icelanders.

## Missionaries

*“Þór lives only at the will of the Christian God. Without my God’s permission, Þór would be nothing but dust and ashes.”*

— Pangbrand the missionary, in  
*Njáls Saga*

*“Frightened at the Christians’ success, the heathens at Kerlingardale hired a sorcerer named Hedin to kill their leader Pangbrand. The sorcerer accordingly went to the Arnarstakk Heath where he conducted a great sacrifice. At the time Pangbrand was riding westwards, and the ground suddenly opened up beneath his horse. The horse disappeared into the earth, but Pangbrand miraculously pulled himself to safety.”*

— *Njáls Saga*

During the reign of King Ólafur Tryggvason, between the years of 995 to 1000, the efforts to convert Iceland to Christianity were intensified. Early in his reign, the Norwegian king sent an Icelander named Stefnir Þórgilsson home to convert his fel-







low countrymen. Stefnir's methods were so confrontational and violent, involving the destruction of temples and images of the old gods, that he was outlawed and banished from Iceland. This caused a backlash against Christianity, and the Alþing passed a decree instructing families to take action against the Christians among them if they blasphemed the old gods or attacked the old religion in any way.

King Ólafur was not deterred by this initial setback, and sent a second mission in 997 headed by a German priest called Þangbrand. On his way to Iceland from Norway, Þangbrand's ship, called the *Bison*, was wrecked when reaching the Icelandic coast. Many at the time claimed that this shipwreck was caused by the god Þór, who had struck the Christian ship with his giant-killing hammer, thus proving that Christ was powerless to confront a challenge from the Norse god.

Þangbrand did survive the shipwreck, however. He was not only a preacher but also a fierce warrior who used methods no less confrontational than those used by his predecessor. He travelled across the countryside accompanied by his converts, pausing here and there to preach, and sometimes even killing those who refused to convert to the new faith. Still, Þangbrand returned to Norway in 999 without having converted the whole of Iceland.

## A Peaceful Conversion

*"And then when the men went to the booths, Þorgeir lay down and spread the cloak over him, and rested all day and the night after, and did not speak a word. But the next morning he sat up and gave the word for men to go to the Law-Rock."*

— *Íslendingabók*

After the failure of the two missionaries in converting Iceland, the Norwegian king decided to increase the pressure, becoming more aggressive toward Icelanders. He closed Norwegian ports to Icelandic traders, banning Icelanders from trading with Norwegians for as long as they remained pagans. Several Icelanders who were in Norway at

the time were taken hostage by the king, among them sons of prominent Icelandic chieftains. The hostages were threatened with death unless Iceland accepted Christianity. These hostile actions by the Norwegian king soon had effect in Iceland, where people put a high value on good relations with Norway, and Christianity grew stronger in the country.

A delegation of important Christians travelled to Norway and managed to convince the king to release the Icelandic hostages, by making a promise that they would try to convert the whole country. Iceland was now split between those who followed the two rival religions. The danger of civil war loomed. Worse still, it looked as if two separate states with different religions and different laws and government might be born in Iceland.

In the summer of the year 1000, a major war seemed to be about to break out between pagans and Christians at the Alþing. It was then that something very typical of Viking Age Iceland happened: mediators intervened, and the dispute was submitted to the parliament for arbitration. The elected Lawspeaker at the time, Þorgeir Þórkelsson, was chosen for the delicate job of settling the dispute. Þorgeir was a pagan goði (chieftain-priest), but had strong ties with Christians and thus was regarded as acceptable by both sides, who declared they would abide by his ruling.

Þorgeir retired himself, spending a full day lying under his cloak, in order to hear the voice of his own consciousness as well as seeking for divine guidance. During that time, both pagans and Christians prayed, and both religious groups performed sacrifices to the gods, including human sacrifices. The next day, at the Law-Rock, Þorgeir declared to be law that all people should be Christian and receive baptism. Against the will of the Christians, however, he did not ban the eating of horsemeat, the sacrifices to the old gods, or other pagan rituals, as long as those were performed in private. The most important ruling of all, Þorgeir stressed, was: "We cannot live in a divided land. There will never be peace unless we have a single law. I ask you all — heathens and Christians alike — to accept the one law that I am about to proclaim."

All agreed, pledging under oath to abide by his judgement. In that way, civil war and division





of the country were prevented by the established Icelandic system of conflict resolution.

## Priests and Goðar

After the conversion, the goðar, the pagan chieftain-priests, took on the role of Christian priest. This happened literally overnight after the Lawspeaker's decision that the whole country should convert to the new religion. It is easy to imagine that most goðar did not have much knowledge about the Christian faith or indeed the will to champion it over the pagan beliefs of his followers.

Many goðar kept both roles, sometimes baptizing a baby into the Christian faith in the morning and later the same day presiding over a pagan sacrifice to Þór.

Even those goðar who completely abandoned the old faith to exclusively preach the Christian religion, still felt that Iceland was too far away from Rome for them to have to obey some of the restrictions imposed on priests in other countries. Thus most Icelandic Christian priests still married, kept on killing men in battles, took part in viking raids, and still got involved in legal disputes as arbitrators.

## Organization of the Early Church

One of the factors that helped the spread of churches across Iceland was that any farmer who built a church in his land was able to collect donations from the faithful. Because of that economic advantage, the possession of farms with churches on them quickly became an important source of income for farmers.

A formal church structure only began to take shape in the mid eleventh century. In 1056, the first bishop of Iceland was elected at the Alþing. He encountered serious difficulties as people showed him little respect or obedience. It is recorded that among the problems he encountered were lack of faith, disobedience and immorality between his subjects — the Lawspeaker at the time, for exam-

ple, was married to two women, a mother and her daughter.

Iceland's second bishop, Gizur Leifsson, was more successful by ensuring the support of the goðar even when it was necessary to bypass church law in order to do so. He finally managed to acquire some land for the Church, convincing a number of farmers to transfer their property to the Church upon their death.

The rise of the economic power of just a few families, by the means of acquiring many farms with churches, is one of the main factors that led to social unbalance in the late 11th century. That is also what ultimately led the country to the civil war that ended the Icelandic Commonwealth in 1275.

## The Holy Grail in Iceland?

Some modern scholars have come up with theories involving a plot to hide the Holy Grail in the highlands of Iceland. The main force behind these theories is the Italian cryptographer Giancarlo Gianazza, who believes poems by Dante and artwork by Leonardo da Vinci and other Renaissance painters hide important clues as to the whereabouts of the Holy Grail.

### Gianazza Theory — The Evidence

Dante's masterpiece is a coded account of an actual trip the great Italian poet made to Iceland in 1319. The description of the journey is coded into canto XXVII of the *Purgatory*. Here, Dante passes through Luni, Sarzana, the Stura Valley and Colle della Maddalena; he enters the territories of the French king at Macon, passes through Reims and Amiens, boards a ship at Strouanne and arrives in Dover, carries on to Stirling Castle in Scotland and then to Iverness, where he boards a boat to the Shetland Islands and finally to Iceland. When he eventually reaches the amphitheatre of the White Rose of the Blessed, he observes it "as a pilgrim redeeming himself as he beholds the temple he has pledged to visit." Dante is referring to the natural amphitheatre near the Jökulfjall River. In the amphitheatre there is a very particular stone, shaped







just like a throne — the seat of Beatrice. In another tercet Dante tells us that about 20 meters behind the stone there is a secret chamber: the Temple. The image depicted in Dante's verses corresponds to the natural amphitheatre near the Jökulfjall River. During his final quest in Iceland, Dante did indeed find that natural amphitheatre and much more.

Finally, hidden in the profiles of the characters of Leonardo's *The Last Supper* is a map showing the course of the Jökulfjall River. The map can be discovered only by correctly decoding the path along which Dante follows Matelda to Beatrice in the Garden of Eden.

Still on Da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the bread that Jesus indicates with his left hand is not made in accordance with Hebrew dictates. Leonardo wanted to draw attention to the bread; in it, he concealed three indications. These indications, decoded on a cartographic basis, show three European locations: the Greek island of Kythira, Mount Cardou (France) and a place in the heart of Iceland. The ratio of the distances — expressed in degrees — between Mount Cardou and Jerusalem and between Iceland and Mount Cardou is such that you can indicate the position of these locations with two adjacent squares the sides of which are in a two-to-three ratio. These two adjacent squares are the summation of a secret: the exact position of the location in Iceland in relation to Jerusalem.

## The Knights Templar

An Icelandic architect named Þórarinn Þórarinsson has elaborated further on Giancarlo Gianazza's theory by linking it to some medieval texts which mention that in the year 1217 the Icelandic politician and poet Snorri Sturlusson brought with him to the Alþing assembly "eighty men from the East, all dressed and armed in the same manner." Snorri Sturlusson was elected the Lawspeaker that year.

It could be possible, the theory goes, that the "Eastmen" that accompanied Snorri Sturlusson into the Alþing in 1217 were in fact a group of the Knights Templar. They would have travelled to Iceland and backed the election of Snorri Sturlusson in exchange for his support in the building of a secret chamber to be filled over the years with sacred books and objects from the Temple of Jerusalem.

## Using the Holy Grail in Your Saga

The idea that the Knights Templar visited Iceland during the Free Commonwealth period, and that they had brought with them the Holy Grail, opens up many interesting possibilities for a *Mythic Iceland* GM. Pagan player characters would want to stop the knights from using Iceland as a hiding place for such an important Christian relic. Conversely, Christian player character would be honoured to be chosen amongst those enlisted to protect the Grail during its journey to the highlands.

One particularly interesting twist could involve a group of hidden people that have converted to Christianity long ago who decide to steal the Grail, because they don't trust humans to protect it. The disappearance of the Templar treasure could spark a major conflict in Iceland and abroad with Christians accusing pagans of that blasphemous theft.

Feel free to move the date of the Templars visit to Iceland to suit your campaign. It is unlikely that the knights would have come to Iceland any time before the conversion, as a pagan land would not be chosen as the resting place of the sacred relic. Any time after the conversion in the year 1000 would be feasible, however. Just remember to check who the Lawspeaker is that year and use that name instead of Snorri Sturlusson (see page 54).

Any possible mythic powers that the Grail may possess are left up to the GM to imagine.





| God name | Winning Allegiance points                                                                                                                                                                            | Realms                                                      | benefits at 40 points over Loki Score                        | benefits at 50 points over Loki Score | benefits at 80 points over Loki Score |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Óðinn    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing the killing blow in battle</li> <li>Writing a great poem (Special result on Poetry skill)</li> <li>Act of great bravery</li> </ul>                    | war, magic and poetry                                       | Rune Magic, Poetry, Any Mental skill                         | Berserker Rage                        | Calling Wisdom                        |
| Þór      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slaying a troll or giant</li> <li>Navigating through a sea storm</li> <li>Feat of great Strength</li> </ul>                                                   | thunder and lighting                                        | Navigation, Brawl, Any Physical skill                        | Light of Þór                          | Þór's Hammer                          |
| Freyr    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicating a horse to Freyr, no one else may ever ride it</li> <li>Bringing peace to a conflict</li> <li>Helping an elf or hidden person</li> </ul>           | agriculture, the weather, and fertility                     | Track, Ride, Any Manipulation skill                          | Freyr's Steed                         | Weather Change                        |
| Loki     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lies of serious consequences</li> <li>Theft of something of great value Cowardice</li> </ul>                                                                  | chaos, destruction and the erosion of all that is honorable | Sleigh of Hand, Hide, Any communication skill                | Loki's Mask                           | Loki's Lie                            |
| Freyja   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special or Critical on a Charisma roll when trying to seduce someone</li> <li>Reuniting lovers</li> <li>Promoting love</li> </ul>                             | love, beauty and fertility                                  | Insight, Appraise, Any communication skill                   | Freyja's Aura of Beauty               | Freyja's Love Charm                   |
| Njörður  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special or Critical on a Navigate roll at sea</li> <li>Special or Critical on a Pilot ship roll</li> <li>Exploring seas where few have gone before</li> </ul> | wind, calm seas, and the summer                             | Swim, and Pilot Ship, Any Perception skill                   | Njörður's Gust of Wind                | Favor from the Sea                    |
| Sif      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquiring a large farm</li> <li>Significantly expanding your own farm</li> <li>Acquiring a gold item</li> </ul>                                               | grain and farming                                           | Knowledge (Natural History), Bargain, Any Manipulation skill | Sif's Blessing                        | Sif's Growth                          |
| Tyr      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing the killing blow in battle</li> <li>Victory in a large battle, of 20 people or more</li> <li>Special or Critical on Sword skill roll</li> </ul>       | victory in combat, justice by blood                         | Strategy, Throw, Any Combat skill                            | Hand of Tyr                           | Tyr's War-cry                         |





| God name   | Winning Allegiance points                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Realms                                          | benefits at 40 points over Loki Score                 | benefits at 50 points over Loki Score | benefits at 80 points over Loki Score |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ullur      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special or Critical with a bow in combat or when hunting</li> <li>Special or Critical on a Craft roll when creating a shield or skiis</li> <li>Hunting an exotic animal</li> </ul> | skiing, archery, shields and hunting            | Track, Bow, Any Physical skill                        | Ullur's Aim                           | Ullur's Shield                        |
| Frigg      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully delivering a baby</li> <li>Marrying people</li> <li>Special or Critical on Idea for a woman</li> </ul>                                                                | marriage, motherhood, female wisdom             | First Aid, Fine Manipulation, Any Communication skill | Frigg's Wisdom                        | Vision of Death                       |
| Heimdallur | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceiving danger before it strikes</li> <li>Special or Critical on Perform roll</li> <li>Protecting someone from harm</li> </ul>                                                  | singing, music and protection                   | Poetry, Perception, Any Manipulation skill            | Heimdallur's Performance              | Rainbow Bridge                        |
| Baldur     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bringing peace to a conflict</li> <li>Forgiving someone who did you or your family a great wrong</li> <li>Special or Critical on a First Aid roll</li> </ul>                       | light, purity, peace, innocence and forgiveness | First Aid, Insight, Any Communication skill           | Baldur's Healing Hands                | Baldur's Second Chance                |
| Forseti    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolving a dispute by mediation</li> <li>Helping bringing someone to justice</li> <li>Special or Critical on Law roll</li> </ul>                                                  | justice by mediation                            | Persuade, Etiquette, Any Mental skill                 | Forseti's Eye                         | Locate Outlaw                         |
| Höður      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living in the cold highlands for a season (half year)</li> <li>Making your way through a large dark area</li> <li>Critical or Special on Sense roll</li> </ul>                     | darkness and winter                             | Climb, Knowledge (Regional), Any Perception skill     | Höður's Sight                         | Winter's Embrace                      |
| Viðarr     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enacting revenge on behalf of someone else</li> <li>Feat of great strength</li> <li>Special or Critical on Stealth roll</li> </ul>                                                 | silence, stealth and revenge                    | Craft (Leather), Grapple, Any Physical skill          | Viðarr's Steps                        | Seen but Unnoticed                    |
| Hel        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causing a warrior's death outside of battle, so that he will not go to Valhalla</li> <li>Helping disease to spread</li> <li>Special or Critical when making poisons</li> </ul>     | the dead, disease                               | Stealth, Craft (Poison), Any Mental skill             | Hel's Curse                           | Raise Draugur                         |

# MAGIC IN MYTHIC ICELAND



In the Old Norse language the meaning of the word *rún* is “whisper” or “secret, hidden lore, mystery.”

In mythic Iceland and throughout the Viking World, the runic alphabet is used to write simple everyday messages, but in the hands of runemasters the secrets of the runes can be unlocked to reveal tremendous magical power.

## Origin

Beneath the roots of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, there are three wells. One of those is the Well of Fate.

The Well of Fate and the World Tree ensure that past deeds determine what happens in the present. The World Tree is the present, and the dew from the tree, which gathers in the well, represents the past. The reflections of all things that have ever happened shine in the waters of the Well of Fate.

Three Norns, who are named Urður (Past), Verðandi (Present) and Skuld (Future), spin the threads of fate at the foot of Yggdrasil. These powerful maiden giantesses draw from the Well of Fate every morning and water the roots of the World Tree, thus ensuring that past deeds determine what happens in the future.

The runes represent the mysteries most ancient, most deep in the Well of Fate. By using these mysteries of the ancient past, and thus manipulating the very laws of cause and effect in the universe, it is possible to affect the present.

## Óðinn Grasps the Runes

*I know that I hung on that windy tree  
spear-wounded, nine full nights,  
given to Óðinn, myself to myself,  
on that tree that rose from roots  
that no man knows.*

*They gave me neither bread nor drink from  
horn,*

*I peered below.*

*I clutched the runes, screaming*

*I grabbed them, and then sank back.*

— The god Óðinn tells of the origins of the runes, from the Norse poem “Hávamál”

The god Óðinn discovered the runes while hanging upside down from a branch of the mighty World Tree, Yggdrasil, sacrificing himself to himself. After spending nine days without water or food, Óðinn looked down at the Well of Fate, which contains all the of past and the knowledge associated with it, and grasped the meaning of the runes, the secrets of the universe. Óðinn then revealed that knowledge to those men who he thought most worthy.

The runes had existed before then, but Óðinn was the first to win their knowledge.

Most often, but not always, runemasters are worshippers of Óðinn.





# Laws of Rune Magic

The Law of Similarity states that like produces like. This means that a runemaster wishing for rain must use the rune that has a meaning closely related with water or the weather.

The Law of Contagion states that once two things are in contact, they remain magically connected even once separated. There is no distance limit to that magical connection. This means that a runemaster wishing to affect someone with magic at a distance might use something that has been in contact with that person, such as an article of clothing, a weapon, or a strand of hair.

The Law of Effect Singularity states that no two scripts may stack up similar effects on the same target. This means that if a specific characteristic of an individual (*e.g.* a specific skill, Armor Points, Hit Points, STR, CON, etc) has already been raised or in anyway affected by magic, it is not possible to further raise or affect that characteristic again by means of a new magical rune script. Any single characteristic can only be raised or otherwise changed by magic once, and any further attempt will fail. The same applies for elements in the game world other than characters; *e.g.* a storm brought about by magic cannot be made worse by a second magical rune script.

## Affecting Someone's Mind

Any rune magic that targets a person's mind, such as trying to force someone into doing something, can be resisted by an opposed POW roll on the resistance table.

## Multiple Meanings and Powers

Each rune has multiple meanings, and a runemaster may be able to use different powers from each rune at different times. Each rune in a script, however,

represents only one single meaning that is decided when the *galdur* is sung. To invoke two different powers of a single rune, the runemaster must carve the rune twice in a rune script, and so on.

## Magic Duration

Rune magic in *Mythic Iceland* always has the duration of one scene. A scene is defined as the specific event or situation that the runemaster intended to affect. It could be a battle that lasts a few minutes, a wedding party that lasts for hours, a journey that lasts for weeks, or a harvest that lasts for months from planting to harvesting.

A scene, for the purpose of establishing the duration of magical effects, can be established by the runemaster when singing the *galdur* (see *Magical Rune Scripts* section, page 89) that activates the rune script. It cannot exceed one cycle of the Moon's phases, or 30 days, per rune in the script. When the *galdur* does not establish the duration of the magical effect, the magic takes effect immediately and affects the current scene in which the runemaster is participating at the present moment, such as the current journey, battle, feast, etc.

Those Hit Points that go beyond a character's maximum Hit Point score vanish when the magic expires at the end of the scene. Extra points boosting characteristics such as CON, STR, etc, only last for the duration of the affected scene.

## Magic Range

The runemaster must touch that which he wants to affect with the magical power of the runes. The one exception to this rule is the Law of Contagion, as described above.

## The Ætts

The runes used in *Mythic Iceland*, the Elder Futhork, are arranged in three sets called *Ætts*. Each ætt is associated with a number of the Norse gods.





## Runes as Magic and Language

The runic alphabet known to Icelanders is the same one used throughout the Viking world. It is sometimes used to write simple messages but not very often. Mostly, rune scripts are used for marking important landmarks or for magical purposes.

Very few people in Viking society know how to read and write the runes. That knowledge is even less common in Iceland, where the short distances and lack of a centralized government, and no major wars, greatly diminishes the need for written records.

The use of runes in Mythic Iceland is mainly associated with magic. When someone is said to be well versed in rune lore, what is meant is that the person in question knows how to unlock the magical power of the runes. Those who do possess that knowledge are very rare indeed, and respected but also feared for the power they command.

## The Runemaster

There is no such a thing as a 'typical runemaster.' Some are hardened warriors of many Viking raids, who have used harmful magic against their opponents. Others are farmers who seek the magic of the runes to bring prosperity to their farms. There are women who, perhaps unknowingly to everyone else, have mastered the runes and use their power to curse those people who — in their view — are a threat to them or their families.

The path to becoming a runemaster is not an easy one, and it is only open to a few individuals. The magic power of the runes is only revealed to those who hold a strong belief in the Nordic gods, and who are strong of mind. In game terms, every runemaster character must have an Allegiance to a god, any god, of more than 20 points ahead of the character's other allegiances. Also, for a character to become a runemaster he or she needs to have a POW characteristic of 16 or higher, at least 40% in **Literacy** (Runes) and at least 40% in **Craft** (Wood).

In the Norse poem "Hávamál," Óðinn mentions the knowledge necessary to control the magic of the runes.

*Know you how to write?*

*Know you how to read?*

*Know you how to dye?*

*Know you how to put through trial?*

*Know you how to pray?*

*Know you how to send?*

*Know you how to sacrifice?*

The aspiring runemaster could thus interpret these questions in the following manner:

- ❖ Know you how to write — The runemaster must be familiar with the shapes of the runes and with how to carve them.
- ❖ Know you how to read — As each rune has a particular set of meanings, the runemaster must to know how to correctly interpret them.
- ❖ Know you how to dye — Dyeing the runes in the correct way, usually with the runemaster's own blood, charges them with energy.
- ❖ Know you how to put through trial — The runemaster must know the proper ritual involved in awaking the magic of the runes. He or she must know how to ask for the desired affect. A *galdur*, a poetic verse, must be intoned.
- ❖ Know you how to pray — When creating a rune script or bind, it is necessary to call upon the gods for guidance. The runemaster must have a strong allegiance with a god and know how to pray to that god.
- ❖ Know you how to send — The runemaster must know how to send the magic of the runes towards the intended target.
- ❖ Know you how to sacrifice — Rune magic requires a sacrifice, usually in the form of the runemaster's own blood, used to dye the runes. The runemaster needs to know how to properly perform the sacrifice.

There is much to learn, and there is always the danger that a rune script or bind, when not created correctly, may have adverse effects.





In *Mythic Iceland*, the knowledge of this complex process is measured by the score a character has in the Rune Magic skill.

## Becoming a Runemaster

Any runemaster knows the shapes of all 24 runes, the sounds they represent as a written alphabet, and how to use them for writing simple messages. Knowing how to unleash the magical power that each rune carries, however, is a different matter entirely. There are many secrets to be learned in order to become a master of each of the runes, and they must be learned one rune at a time.

## Starting Number of Runes

Every runemaster player character in *Mythic Iceland* starts out knowing one ætt, one of the three groups of eight runes. That initial knowledge may have been acquired through a religious experience such as in a dream or during prayers and meditation under a cloak, or may have been learned through the teachings of an already accomplished runemaster.

The ætt known by the beginner runemaster is that one associated to the god he or she worships.

### The First Ætt — Freyr's Ætt

Gods: Freyr, Freyja, Óðinn, Njörður, Sif, Höður  
(Creation, Destruction, and Renewal)

### The Second Ætt — Hagal's Ætt

Gods: Loki, Heimdallur, Ullur, Heimdallur, Víðarr, Hel  
(Human elements)

### Third Ætt — Tyr's Ætt

Gods: Tyr, Þór, Frigg, Baldur, Forseti  
(Reaching a state of enlightenment)

## Law and Society's View

The Icelandic law code of the Viking Age condemns magic only when it is used to harm others. Society as a whole takes a similar view on run-

emasters, who are only condemned or seen as bad people when it is believed they have used magic in harmful ways.

Still, there are some people who, for one reason or another, have taken a dislike to anyone who is involved with rune magic, and are openly hostile to any runemaster they meet. This is not a widespread attitude, but common enough that most runemasters prefer to not talk openly about their magical skills.

## Learning More Runes

There are a few ways in which a runemaster may advance his or her magical knowledge and learn the magical powers of more runes.

## Mound Sitting

Many of the Icelandic Sagas refer to “sitting on a mound” (“sitja á haugi”), that is, sitting atop a grave mound, as a way to gain esoteric wisdom.

In *Flateyjarbók*, the largest of Icelandic medieval manuscripts, there is a story about a man called Hallbjörn, who sat atop the mound of the scald Þorleifur wishing he could compose poetry for him. For many nights Hallbjörn failed to come up with a poem, but one night the spirit of the dead skald rose from his grave mound, and taught him a verse, and said that if he could memorize it and recite it in the morning, he would be a great poet. Sure enough, Hallbjörn recited the verse the next morning and after that never had trouble with poetry.

In order to learn new runes by mound sitting, the runemaster must sit atop another runemaster's burial mound for a full night. If the player succeeds on a roll of half of his Luck, the spirit of the deceased runemaster appears to the character during the night. Note that the spirit is not obliged to share the rune magic lore he had in life with the man sitting atop his grave. If the deceased and the player character never knew each other in life, the player must succeed on a Persuade roll in order to





talk the spirit of the dead runemaster into teaching the player character the secret of one rune. If the deceased was a friend or relative of the player character, the Persuade skill roll can be made with a +30% bonus.

It is possible that the spirit could ask the runemaster for a favor in exchange for the knowledge he seeks, something that only a living person can achieve.

After convincing the spirit of the runemaster to reveal its secrets, the player must make a successful Rune Magic skill roll. On a failed result, the player character cannot fully remember in the morning most of what was revealed to him during the night, and thus has failed to actually learn a new rune.

Before the spirit of the deceased reveals any knowledge, it will always warn the runemaster that he should never come disturb this grave again. This means that a runemaster cannot learn more than one rune from the same spirit, and any attempt to coerce a spirit for a second time to reveal more magical knowledge may have disastrous consequences.

## Going Under the Cloak

In Viking Age Iceland it is generally believed that a good way of gaining hidden knowledge, receiving divine inspiration from the gods, and seeing what others can't see is to sit under one's cloak for an extended period of time. Many Icelandic Sagas mention this method for seeking guidance when in times of trouble, or simply to seek inspiration for poetry.

The style of cloak used at this time is usually made of woolen cloth, thrown over the shoulder and fastened in front with a brooch or pin.

To learn new runes via this method, the runemaster must sit somewhere quiet and cover his head and body with his cloak. He must stay there in complete solitude, without food or water, for at least 24 hours. At the end of that period, the player may attempt a roll of his Rune Magic skill. If the result of the roll is lower than the runemaster's current skill, this means that the runemaster

receives the divine inspiration necessary to learn how to use one new rune.

The GM decides which rune is revealed to the runemaster.

There are only two chances per year for a runemaster to learn new runes by going under the cloak. The first chance is on the first day of the month of Summer Finding, at the beginning of the summer season. The second chance is on the first day of the month of Winter Finding, at the start of winter. Going under the cloak on days other than those may reveal some other kind of guidance or inspiration, but never magical rune knowledge.

## Rune Magic Skill Increase

The Rune Magic skill can be raised via standard skill experience checks as described in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. That is, when a player character rolls a critical result on a Rune Magic skill roll, or when he make a successful roll which is of vital importance during an adventure. In either case, the player may tick the box by the side of the Rune Magic skill of the character sheet. At the end of the adventure, the player can try to increase the Rune Magic skill as with any other skill, by attempting to roll above the current skill score, for an improvement of 1D6 points.

Another way of raising the Rune Magic skill is by studying under another, more experienced runemaster. The teacher must have at least 50% in Rune Magic. This is a long process, lasting one full season (six months), and can be undertaken during the character's spare time when he is not tending to his farm. If the student goes away from the country for more than two months within that six-month period, the teaching process must be restarted from scratch. At the end of the full learning season, the teacher must make a successful Teach skill roll. See the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 82 for guidelines on handling Teach skill roll results. On a Special or Critical result, the student learns the magical use of one new rune, to be chosen from the ones known by the teacher.





## Magical Rune Scripts

The process of creating a magical rune script can be summarized as such:

- 1 - Choosing the right runes
- 2 - Carving the runes upon an object
- 3 - Dying the runes
- 4 - Singing a galdur stating the purpose of the magical rune script
- 5 - Evaluating success of Rune Magic skill check

### Step 1 - Choosing the Right Runes

The very first step in creating a magical rune script is choosing the runes that will be part of it.

In order to unleash the power of the runes by the means of a rune script, it is necessary to combine at least three runes into a magical formula. It is possible to use more than three runes in one script, but it is necessary to always use an odd number: three, five, seven or nine runes.

In game terms, this means that the player must look at the runes his runemaster character knows, and how they can be combined in ways that describe the desired magical effect. The descriptions of the runes in this chapter present ideas on how each rune can be used within a script, but the players should feel free to re-interpret and improvise in creative ways. The GM has the final word on what is acceptable.

The greater the number of magical runes used, the greater is the number of effects that a rune script can have. However, it is important to remember that adding more runes means an increase in the time spent during the process of carving the rune script. (See Evaluating Success, page 90.)

When a player chooses a rune in order to bring about change to the game world, it is said that the *Narrative Meaning* of the rune is being used. One typical example would be to use a rune associated with water in order to bring forth rain. Each rune may have several different narrative meanings associated with it, which means that each rune can be used to cause a wide range of effects. It is even possible to use the same rune several times within the same script, as long as it is used with a different meaning each time.

Alternatively, the player may choose a rune to use in the script based on the rune's *Mechanical Effect*, as described in the Rune Description section towards the end of this chapter. It is said that a rune is being used for its Mechanical Effect when the literal meaning of that rune (such as water, wealth, mouth, fire, etc.) is not important or being manifested in the game world. Rather, Mechanical effects affect parts of the rules system or the numbers on someone's character sheet. Examples of Mechanical Effects would be bestowing STR or CON points, boosting skill scores, providing temporary hit points, causing direct damage, etc.

Whenever using runes for their mechanical effect in the game's rules system, rather than their narrative meaning, it is important to take into consideration that a limitation exists to the number of those mechanical effects according to the size of the script. See table below.

|                    |                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Three runes script | maximum of 1 Mechanical Effect  |
| Five runes script  | maximum of 2 Mechanical Effects |
| Seven runes script | maximum of 3 Mechanical Effects |
| Nine runes script  | maximum of 4 Mechanical Effects |

The same rune script may feature a number of runes with narrative effects, and others with mechanical effects. Often, there is one rune with a mechanical effect, and the other runes are there for the purpose of providing narrative meaning so a meaningful galdur can be composed.

### Step 2 - Carving the Runes Upon an Object

The next step in creating a magical rune script is to carve the runes upon an object. Most commonly, a piece of wood or a bone fragment is used for this purpose, along with a carving knife.

The time required for carving a script of up to five runes is one combat round. Longer scripts require two combat rounds.





### Step 3 - Dyeing the Runes

After the carving of the runes on an object is completed, the next step is dyeing the runes with the blood of the runemaster. This act infuses the runes with life essence and activates the power contained in them. This is when the character's Power Points are invested on the magical script (See Power Point Cost below).

It is also possible to dye the runes in other ways, such as using red ochre as a symbolic replacement for blood. Fire can also be used. Whenever a runemaster uses such alternative ways of dyeing runes, the Rune Magic roll should be made with a -20% modifier.

There are many mentions in the Icelandic Sagas of the dyeing of the runes as part of the ritual to bring forth their magical power. In *Egils Saga*, when Egill creates a rune script to protect him from being poisoned, he cuts the palm of his hand and then uses his blood to dye the runes he carved on a drinking horn. In *Grettis Saga*, when Þúriður uses rune magic to curse Grettir, she first carves the runes and then dyes them with her own blood.

### Step 4 - Singing the Galdur

With the runes carved and dyed, it is necessary to intone a galdur, which is a short verse mentioning the desired magical effect. This must be done while touching the target or something that has come into direct contact with the target in the past, as per the Law of Contagion (see Laws of Magic, page 85).

The player of a runemaster character does not need to compose a poetic verse, but needs to at least compose a sentence or verse that describes the desired effect of the rune script and say it aloud.

The galdur should be as specific as possible. It should mention the desired effect, the target, and a time period or scene (if not intended to be implemented immediately). Runemasters often call upon their favored god as part of the galdur.

As a general guideline, the galdur must contain proper nouns instead of pronouns, should be clear enough that a stranger could understand its meaning, and must mention directly the runes that have been carved. A rune script containing the runes Auroch, Hail, and Jera should be accompa-

nied by a galdur containing the words "protection," "harm," and "warrior" (or related rune meanings) somewhere in the verse or sentence.

If the player makes an extra effort to produce an original poetic verse, the GM should award him with a +15% bonus on the Rune Magic skill roll.

### Step 5 - Evaluating Success

Creating a rune script is not an easy task, and there is always the chance that the runemaster it will simply fail to unlock the power of the runes.

In rare instances, a magic effect may still take place, albeit one different from what the runemaster had planned.

Once the runemaster has completed all the steps for creating a magical rune script and the galdur has been recited, it is time to judge whether the script has worked or not. This is done through a Rune Magic skill roll.

## Rune Magic Skill Roll Results

**Fumble:** All of the Power Points invested on the magical rune script are lost. You should make a Luck roll: success indicates that the magic just fizzled and does not work, while failure indicates that the magic acts in a directly opposite way than intended by the runemaster. It is also possible that an unintended target is affected (an innocent bystander, an ally, valuable equipment, the runemaster himself, etc.)

**Failure:** The magical rune script doesn't work, but doesn't cause any harm or complications. One Power Point per rune in the script is expended. A new script, or the same one again, can be created starting in the next round, carving of the runes, dying them, and then singing the galdur.

**Success:** The magical rune script works just as the runemaster intended it to. The requisite Power Points are expended.

**Special:** The magical rune script works with increased effectiveness. The effect may be more extreme, cause more damage, or last longer — whatever seems appropriate according to the spe-







cific effect the runemaster wanted to bring forth. The requisite Power Points are expended.

**Critical:** The magical rune script works extremely well. If the magic causes damage, it causes double that damage. If the magical script does not normally cause damage, the GM should determine an appropriate aspect (or aspects) of the magic effect and double its effectiveness. If the script was meant to provide protection, its effectiveness is doubled. If the script has an intended long duration, it will last twice as long. The requisite Power Points are expended.

A good way of settling fumble and critical effects is to present to the group as a whole the question of what exactly happens — whatever the group, with the participation of the GM, agrees is the most fun or interesting effect, and the one which fits the story the best, is what takes place. The GM has the final word.

## Creating Magical Rune Scripts During Combat

Preparing a magical rune script from scratch is time consuming and requires precise work with a carving knife. In normal circumstances, the character is able to take his time. In the heat of battle, however, his carving skill is put to the test.

During combat, a Craft (Wood) skill roll determines the time required to carve the runes of a rune script.

**Fumble** - Triple the carving time.

**Failure** - Double the carving time.

**Success** - Standard carving time (one combat round for a script of up to five runes, double that for longer scripts).

**Special** - Half the carving time.

**Critical** - One third of the carving time.



## Power Point Costs

Some of the runemaster's own magical energies must be invested in the rune script in order to awaken the power of the runes. In game terms, this is represented by an investment of Power Points.

Before the runes are dyed, the runemaster must decide if he wants to create a weak or strong rune script. Weak scripts cost one Power Point per rune in the script. Strong scripts cost double that amount, but all runes in a strong script are twice as powerful.

| Script Length | Strength | PP Cost | Max Mech. Effects | Sample Mech. Effects                |
|---------------|----------|---------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3 runes       | Weak     | 3       | 1                 | +10% to Sword skill                 |
| 3 runes       | Strong   | 6       | 1                 | +20% to Sword skill                 |
| 5 runes       | Weak     | 5       | 2                 | +10% to Sword skill, + 2 AP         |
| 5 runes       | Strong   | 10      | 2                 | +20% to Sword skill, + 4 AP         |
| 7 runes       | Weak     | 7       | 3                 | +10% to Sword skill, + 2 AP, + 4 HP |
| 7 runes       | Strong   | 14      | 3                 | +20% to Sword skill, + 4 AP, + 8 HP |

Magical rune scripts containing only narrative effects and no mechanical effects also follow the same rules as above for determining Power Point cost. The GM has the final say on whether a weak script is enough to bring about the effect the runemaster wishes, or if a strong script is necessary.

As described on page 30 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, if your character reaches 0 Power Points, he or she falls unconscious. If the runemaster wishes to create a strong script with as many effects as possible, and still remain active, he should not spend all his Power Points.

The Power Points are invested when the rune script is dyed. Those Power Points are only recovered when the script is destroyed (see Destroying the Rune Script).



Once the runes have been successfully carved, they must be dyed with the blood of the runemaster. Dyeing the runes takes one combat round, and the Power Points are invested at this point.

Reciting the *galdur* takes another combat round.

If the runemaster is wounded during the process of preparing a magical rune script, that combat round does not count, but the runemaster does not have to start the entire ritual over again.

If the Craft (Wood) roll is failed, it is not possible to carve the same script again until the end of the current scene. Carving a different script can be attempted in the next combat round.

## Magical Rune Script and Order of Initiative

The magical effect takes place in the same combat round when the *galdur* is sung. Consider this to be at the runemaster's DEX minus the number of runes in the script. If using the Strike Rank optional rules from *Basic Roleplaying*, the effect takes place at SR DEX modifier + number of runes.

### Example:

A runemaster, who has DEX 15, is preparing a three-rune script in the middle of a large battle. The player makes a roll of Craft (Wood) and gets a success. This means the carving will take one combat round. Dyeing the runes takes one more combat round, which he does by cutting his thumb with his carving knife and spreading the blood over the carved runes. In the third combat round he sings the *galdur*, makes a Rune Magic skill roll, and if successful the rune magic takes effect at DEX 12 (or SR 6, if using Strike Rank rules).

## Destroying the Rune Script

After the runemaster has finished the creation of the rune script, and the magical effect has taken place, he must destroy the script and thank the gods for the power of the runes. Only then, he may recover the Power Points that were invested in the

script, at the standard rate as detailed on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

If the magical effect intended by the runemaster lasts for a long time (up to 30 days per rune in the script), that magic remains in effect even if the script itself is destroyed. The runemaster recovers the Power Points as normal after the script has been destroyed.

Destroying the script may be accomplished by throwing the wooden tablet or stick into a fire, breaking the bone, or scratching the script off the surface of the object, or another way which renders the script unreadable. This must be done no matter if the Rune Magic skill roll was successful or not, whether the spell effect actually worked or not.

If the rune script is not destroyed, the Power Points are never recovered. For this reason, runemasters are always very careful not to have their carved and dyed scripts lost or stolen, or they will never recover the magical energy (Power Points) invested in them.

## Preparing Rune Scripts in Advance

Sometimes a runemaster may not be able to afford the time to stop whatever he is doing and dedicate all the time required to prepare a magical rune script from scratch just when the effect is needed. Often the necessary tools are not available, or the environment is not best suited to the task, such as when travelling aboard a longboat in rough weather or during combat. Many situations do not allow for the kind of concentration necessary for carving runes, dyeing them, and performing a *galdur*.

It is possible to prepare a rune script in advance — to a degree. A runemaster may, ahead of time, carve the rune script on an object, dye the runes, and save the last part of the ritual, the singing of the *galdur*, for later. When the *galdur* is finally sung, the magic takes effect. It is not possible to wait for too long, however, only until the next sunrise.







Each morning the goddess Sól, in her flight from the wolf Sköll, drives a chariot across the sky illuminating the world with the sun, which is in fact an ember from the fiery world of Muspelheim. In dispatching the shadow of the world with the light from Muspelheim, Sól also dispels and renews afresh the magical energies of Miðgarður. The morning sun dispels any unreleased magical energies in rune scripts. The Power Points in the script are still bound to the carved object until the script is destroyed. During the month of Midsummer, when the sun never goes down, rune scripts can retain their magic for longer, until there is night and the sun comes up in the morning.

A cautious runemaster who is expecting to find trouble in the near future always has a few rune scripts pre-prepared. (see Rune Script Sheet.)

It is only possible to prepare in advance a number of rune scripts equal to one for every 20% of the runemaster's Rune Magic skill score. Thus, a runemaster who has 60% score on his Rune Magic skill may have at any time only three scripts in this pre-prepared state. If more than that is attempted, the magic exceeds the control of the runemaster and is lost without any further effect.

## Bind-Runes and Talismans

Bind-runes are essentially a combination of runes carved in such a way that they share some common lines and make up an entirely new design. Each bind-rune is unique. Even when two runemasters create a bind-rune using the same runes as its base, each runemaster will combine them in a different way, resulting in a different final shape.

A bind-rune is used to enchant objects, lending magical power to anyone who carries that object. Unlike rune scripts, however, the magic on bind-runes does not fade with time, instead lasting for as long as the object itself remains whole and the bind-rune shape is clear and undamaged.

The most common type of object that may carry a bind-rune is a talisman, such as necklaces, brooches, and rings. Weapons such as swords,

axes and spears can also be enchanted with bind-runes.

An object carved with a bind-rune can be used by anyone, and is not tied to the runemaster or to any one specific individual.

## Costs

Creating a magical effect that can potentially last forever requires a sacrifice of the runemaster's own innate magical power in the form of permanent points of POW. Because this sacrifice is so great, items enchanted with bind-runes are not so common. Bind-runes are generally only created in extreme situations, mainly when a runemaster





wants to protect someone from harm who he cares greatly about.

## Creating a Bind-Runes

A bind-rune shape is not exactly created by the runemaster as much as it is revealed to him. The first step in creating a bind-rune is to “go under the cloak” (see page 88) meditating and communing with the gods for as many days as the number of runes in the bind-rune, without food or drink. At the end of that period, the runemaster emerges from under his cloak having had a vision of the bind-rune shape.

The runemaster must then make a Rune Magic roll to establish whether he has fully comprehended the design that was shown to him during his trance. If the runemaster fails this skill roll, it means that he is uncertain of the important connecting lines of the bind-rune and as a result he is unable to carve it correctly. He may try again after resting for a number of nights equal to the number of runes in the bind-rune.

Each bind-rune design may only be carved once. Further attempts to carve a bind-rune that has already been carved on another object will result in no magical effect. Additionally, an object may only carry one single bind-rune — if a second bind-rune is carved on an object, all bind-runes on that object lose their magic power.

Just as with rune scripts, a bind-rune can be built with any odd number of runes, with a minimum of three. The character can only create a bind-rune from the runes that he has already learned.

Just as with rune scripts, only one rune out of three, two runes out of five, three runes out of seven, and four runes out of nine, can have an active Mechanic Effect — these are called the active runes — the other runes that combine with the active rune or runes to form the bind-rune are present only to complete the combined magical shape.

The effects of bind-runes are limited to Mechanic Effects only. That is, bind-runes cannot affect or change the environment in any way, or cause any extreme change on a person. Only one Mechanic Effect is possible per active rune in a

bind-rune. The effect is only active while the character is touching, carrying or using the object.

- **Three runes** - 1 active rune / 1 Mechanic Effect  
- 1 permanent POW.
- **Five runes** - 2 active runes / 2 Mechanic Effects  
- 2 permanent POW.
- **Seven runes** - 3 active runes / 3 Mechanic Effects  
- 3 permanent POW.
- **Nine runes** - 4 active runes / 4 Mechanic Effects  
- 4 permanent POW.

The table below shows the possible Mechanic Effects of each active rune in a bind-rune.

- Increasing/decreasing a Characteristic (STR, DEX, INT, etc) by two points. This affects only Characteristics and Characteristic Rolls, and does not affect Derived Characteristics such as Hit Points, Damage Bonus, etc.
- Increasing/decreasing one skill by +15%.
- Bestow protection from physical harm in the shape of +4 Armor Points to the area of the body directly in contact with the object, and +2 Armor Points to other areas. (E.g. A ring or bracelet give +4 Armor Points to the arm wearing it, plus +2 Armor Points to all other body areas). These are not cumulative with armor worn.
- Increasing the total number of hit points by +6.
- Increase damage caused with weapon by 1D4+2.
- Healing 1D6 Hit Points (See Life Stones, page 110).

## Engraving

Engraving a bind-rune on an object is a much more complex task than carving a rune script on a piece of wood. To translate that into game terms, the runemaster must pass a **Craft** skill check in order to properly engrave the bind-rune in a shape that does not disturb the flow of the magical power of the runes. A failure on this roll means that the shape created does not carry any magical power, and the permanent point of POW is not expended. The runemaster may try again after a number of days equal to the number of runes in the bind-rune without the need to go under the cloak again.

Once the bind-rune is engraved on the object, the runemaster must dye them with his blood, just







as with rune scripts. Unlike a script, though, singing a galdur is not necessary, as a bind-rune is not tied to a scene, event, or person.

## Analyzing a Bind-Rune

It is possible for a runemaster, with a successful Rune Magic skill roll, to recognize if a bind-rune was properly made and what power it carries.

This evaluation can be performed with bind-runes that the runemaster himself has created or with bind-runes created by anyone else.

## The Runes

The following section outlines the 24 Elder Futhork runes used by runemasters in mythic Iceland. Each rune is described here along with the powers they possess.

The runes are divided into three equal groups of eight, called ætts. Each of those groups are named after the runes with which they begin, which also reflect the gods they are most associated with: Freyr's ætt, Hagal's ætt, and Tyr's ætt.

The first ætt is about the cycle of creation, destruction and renewal. The second ætt is about human elements, while the third ætt is about reaching a state of enlightenment.

Magic uses are presented here in two sections for each rune: Narrative and Mechanic.

A rune is used in a Narrative manner when it affects elements of the game world, or the narrative, but not the game rules directly. The scope of those effects should be evaluated according to the strength of the rune script, whether it is weak or strong.

Each rune description also brings guidelines for Mechanic use, when the runes affect the rules system directly or change characteristic scores of a character in the game. Again, the scale of the magical effect depends on whether the script is being created as a weak or strong script.

When multiple possible effects are described in this section, Narrative or Mechanic, the player must pick one effect only. This is decided by the runemaster during the process of singing the gal-

dur, so it can be changed after the script is carved and dyed but not after the galdur is sang.

The magic uses suggested here are by no means exhaustive. Runemasters are encouraged to come up with creative interpretations of the meanings and possible uses for the runes. The final word on what is possible and what is not possible to achieve with every rune rests with the GM.

## The First Ætt — Freyr's Ætt

### ᚠ (Fé)

**Meaning:** Wealth, cattle

**Areas of power:** Wealth, fertility, domesticated animals

*"Wealth is a source of discord amongst kin  
and fire of the sea  
and path of the serpent."*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The central meaning of the rune Fé is wealth, or more specifically mobile wealth in the form of cattle. During the Viking Age cattle is one of the main forms of wealth, and this is even more true in Iceland, where there is no widely used currency. This is the rune of Freyr, the god of fertility.

**Narrative Magic Use:** This rune can be used in rune scripts that aim at generating wealth, either through investment or chance finding. The wealth generated by this rune could in the form intended by the player, but it doesn't have to be — that is up to the GM to decide. A strong script generates more wealth.

Fé can also be used to bring fertility. Women trying to become pregnant, or men hoping to impregnate women can also employ this rune.

**Mechanic Magic Use:**

Increases the target character's **Farming** or **Brawl** skills by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

### ᚢ (Úr)

**Meaning:** The Great European Wild Ox, the auroch, and the drizzling rain





**Areas of Power:** Strength, endurance, bravery, willpower, health, aging, nature-given wealth

*“The auroch is proud and has great horns;  
it is a very savage beast and fights with its  
horns;*

*a great ranger of the moors, it is a creature  
of mettle”*

— Anglo-Saxon rune poem

*“Rain is lamentation of the clouds  
and ruin of the hay-harvest  
and abomination of the shepherd.”*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Úr carries a large range of meanings. It represents the auroch, a large and powerful breed of cattle commonly found in Scandinavia in Viking times. These bulls stand as tall as a man and symbolize strength of both body and spirit, and stamina. It also symbolizes manhood and male sexuality.

This rune represents the sacred drizzle that flows over the branches of Yggdrasil toward the worlds that hang from the World Tree. In that, it represents wealth, as Fé does, but the wealth that Nature provides to humanity as a whole rather than the more individualistic wealth represented by the rune Fé.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Úr can be used in a rune script to affect someone’s strength or endurance. It can also be used to protect someone against magic. Runemasters wanting to bring about wealth through the forces of nature, such as bringing forth just the right amount of rain to a crop field, can find that power in this rune. In addition, Úr has healing properties, and can be used to heal both physical and mental ailments, including wounds as well as diseases.

#### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character’s STR or CON characteristics by 2 points (Strong script: 4 points). Stamina also increases as a result. Fatigue Points, hit points, and other stats are not affected.

- Gives a modifier of +10% on the resistance table to resist magic effects (Strong script: +20%).
- Heals 4 hit points, on any hit location (Strong script: 8 hit points).

## Þ (Þurs)

**Meaning:** Protection, a thorny vine

**Areas of Power:** Active defense, plants, anger, lust

*The thorn is exceedingly sharp,  
an evil thing for any knight to touch,  
uncommonly severe on all who sit among  
them.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Named after a race of giants, the rune Þurs is the power of defense and destruction symbolised by thorny vines, which provide a defense against invaders. Depending on how it is used, Þurs can represent an active defense or an attack against adversaries. The god Þór is closely associated with this rune.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Þurs can be used to provide protection against enemies. Just how exactly this rune provides protection depends on whether the rune script was created as weak or strong, and depends on what other runes are used along with it on the rune script. Additionally, this rune could be used as protection against, or a way to avoid, lust.

#### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character’s **Parry** by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character’s **Dodge** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

## Ǫ (Ǫss)

**Meaning:** The God Óðinn

**Areas of Power:** Knowledge, wisdom, communication, the mouth, travel, divination, magic, mythic creatures







*Óðinn was born aged  
and prince of Ásgarður  
and lord of Valhalla.  
chief Jupiter*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The meaning associated with the rune Áss in the old rune poems revolves around the concept of communication, extended to include the god who gave us the runes. This is Óðinn's rune, associated with the spoken word, song, poetry, and magical knowledge.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Áss can be used in a rune script to benefit speech or communication. This rune can be used so that it will affect someone's actual mouth or tongue. Scripts for divination are also likely to use Áss.

**Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character's score in any one **Mythic** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's score in any one **Knowledge** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increase a target character's **Poetry** skill by +10% (Strong script: 20%).

## ᚱ (Reid)

**Meaning:** Ride

**Areas of Power:** Movement, riding, travel, journey

*Riding is joy of the rider  
and a swift journey,  
and the labor of the horses*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Reid governs travel and represents at once the act of moving and the vehicle that contains what is moved. Travel of all kinds, journeys, vehicles, roads, cargos and travellers may all be represented by Reid in the right context. It can also indicate an unexpected or enforced journey or indeed the change of circumstances that breaks

a deadlock, because that, too, is a kind of journey in itself. Journeys require planning, and as such this rune is associated with strategy, thought, and people working together.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Reid can be used to influence journeys or movements of any kind. The journey can be by any means of transportation; being by boat, horse, or cart. This rune can be used to provide protection for travelers and vehicles. Additionally, Reid may be used to find lost possessions or people, or to speed up the course of any proceedings, such as legal wrangles, long-running disputes, and negotiations that drag on without ever reaching a conclusion.

**Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character's **Ride** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's **Navigate** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's **Pilot Ship** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases MOV by 2 (Strong script: 4).

## ᚲ (Kaun)

**Meaning:** Sore, Fire

**Areas of Power:** Fire, sore, craft, destruction for the purpose of creation

*Sore is the bale of children  
And a scourge,  
And the house of rotten flesh*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Kaun symbolizes controlled fire, and destruction for the purpose of creation. It also means creativity and craftsmanship, shaping things by control over fire, forcing dissolution of the old in order to reshape it. It is the rune of unmaking for the sake of remaking.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Kaun can be used to produce the light or heat as if from a fire. The intensity of the effect is determined by the runemaster. The light can be temporarily blinding and the heat





can burn the flesh of enemies, or alternatively, if the runemaster wishes, it may be just enough to illuminate the way ahead at in darkness and keep someone warm during cold weather. This rune can also be used in a script to produce actual fire.

The heat or fire produced by a weak script using Kaun is alike that of a small bonfire. For strong script, the light intensity is doubled.

#### Mechanic Magic Uses:

- Causes painful burn wounds to appear on the target character's body, causing 1D8 hit points damage (Strong script: 2D8).
- Damages an object or building, causes 2D8 hit points damage (Strong script: 4D8 hit points).

## X (Gjöf)

**Meaning:** Gift, generosity

**Areas of Power:** Peace, love, aid, balance, trust

*Generosity brings credit and honour, which support one's dignity;*

*it furnishes help and subsistence*

*to all broken men who are devoid of aught else.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Gjöf symbolizes a gift that originates and results from the connection between people. In Mythic Iceland society, accepting a gift means taking on the obligation to give something in return. Often a gift is met with a similar gift, so that neither party is indebted to the other. Therefore, Gjöf is the rune of giving and receiving. Through this system of give-and-take, everything balances out. Gjöf also represents contracts, agreements and alliances, and any interactions where material wealth or honor is exchanged.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Gjöf can be used to create a link between forces or to bring balance into any kind of situation. It can also be used for influencing agreements and negotiations at an assembly. Another use could be to make someone more likely to come to the runemaster's aid. When used

to represent love, Gjöf is associated with new relationships rather than an existing one, thus it can be used to aid in courtship.

#### Mechanic Magic Uses:

- Increases the target character's score in any one **Communication** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Heals 4 hit points, on any hit location (Strong script: 8 hit points).

## Þ (Vend)

**Meaning:** Bliss

**Areas of Power:** Happiness, relationship, hope, kinship

*Bliss he enjoys who knows not pain,*

*sorrow nor anxiety, and himself has*

*prosperity and bliss and a good enough house.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Vend is the rune of happiness in a social setting. It is not about the solitary ecstasy, but a joy that comes from relationships, especially those relationships that involve linking people through familial, sexual, or emotional bonds. Vend is linked to bliss such as one experiences in a great feast surrounded by family and friends in the hall. It can also be used to aid in offsetting negative emotions.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Vend can be used to aid in situations involving happiness and joy, be it the courting of young women or men, or the killing of monsters. The happiness in question need not be of the runemaster only, but can be of anyone's. This rune can also be used to offset negative emotions.

#### Mechanic Magic Uses:

- Increases the target character's score in any one **Communication** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's Charisma characteristic roll by 10% (Strong script: 20%).







## The Second Ætt - Hagal's Ætt

### ᚷ (Hagall)

**Meaning:** Hail

**Areas of Power:** Destruction, transformation, weather

*Hail is cold grain  
and shower of sleet  
and sickness of serpents.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Hagall is the rune of disruption in preparation for change, or blight and destruction. It symbolizes at the same time the unpredictable and destructive sides of nature, such as sudden weather changes and hailstorms.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Using Hagall in a rune script allows the runemaster to awaken the harmful and destructive side of another rune, reversing that other rune's meaning — even in ways in which it may then be used for harming an opponent.

When Hagall is used with its literal meaning of a destructive hailstorm, it is capable of causing damage similar of that of being hit by a large hailstone. It is also possible to use Hagall to manipulate the weather. See page 235 of *Basic Roleplaying* for guidelines on how weather conditions may affect characters.

#### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Damages an object or building, causes 2D8 hit points damage (Strong script: 4D8 hit points).
- Harms a person or creature as if hit by a large hailstone, causing 1D8 hit points damage (Strong script: 2D8 hit points).
- Causes a character to slow down as if struggling against strong winds. The character's movement rate is halved (Strong script: MOV is lowered to 1/4).

### ᚠ (Nauð)

**Meaning:** Necessity

**Areas of Power:** Endurance, trouble, deliverance

*Necessity is grief of the bond-maid  
and state of oppression  
and toilsome work.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Nauð is the rune of necessity and constraint. Whereas Vend is a rune of change, Nauð is nearly the opposite. It is representative of the stresses, struggles and ordeals, but also gives the strength of will and ability to overcome those ordeals. Therefore, Nauð symbolizes both trouble and deliverance.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Nauð can be used to help overcome hardships, including illness or grief.

#### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the character's CON by 4 points (Strong script: 8 points), but only for the purpose of resisting poison. For more information about poisons, see page 229 of the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.
- Increases the target character's Fatigue points by 4 (Strong script: 8).
- Increases the target character's Stamina characteristic roll by 10% (Strong script: 20%). As described in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, a Stamina roll might determine whether or not your character can stay awake all night, or endure seasickness, ill-prepared food, or strong drink with no ill effects.
- Increases the target character's Effort characteristic roll by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

### ᚱ (Íss)

**Meaning:** Ice

**Areas of Power:** Cold, calming a situation down





RUNE STONES ATOP HILLS

*Ice is bark of rivers  
and roof of the wave  
and destruction of the doomed.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Íss symbolizes ice, not only in its physical form but also in its characteristics of solidity, contraction, stillness, calmness and immutability.

**Narrative Magic Uses:** Íss can be used in its literal meaning, in combination with other runes, to produce ice or to cool down an area. It can also be used to calm down a situation, “cooling down” the spirits of all affected and thus reducing tension. It could even be possible to use Íss to cool down a relationship, such as the bond between a chieftain and his closest followers, to the point that it may reach its end.

Íss could be used for creating an amount of ice; a weak rune script creates the equivalent in volume to twenty liters of frozen water, whereas a strong rune script creates double that volume. The ice can appear in any form that the runemaster de-

sires, from a sheet of ice on the ground, to shapes or people or objects. Creating something like an ice statue that resembles someone is only possible with a Special or Critical roll, otherwise the likeness may not be obvious.

If Íss is used to create a sheet of ice under the feet of the enemy, he or she must make a successful **Agility** roll to keep from slipping and falling. If the runemaster scored a Special or Critical success on his Rune Magic skill, that Agility roll must be made as Difficult. (See Slippery or Unstable Surfaces on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 231).

#### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character’s score in any one **Communication** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the rate of Fatigue point loss of a target from one point to three points per combat round of activity (Strong script: 6 points per round) — as if the character was experiencing freezing cold weather conditions.





## ✧ (Ár)

**Meaning:** Year, Harvest

**Areas of Power:** Harvest, marriage, justice

*Harvest is a blessing to men  
and good summer  
and fully ripe crops.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Ár is the rune of harvest, of the reaping of one's labors. It is also the rune of divine aid or the cooperation of the forces of nature. It is the marriage of the sky and the earth, the rain and the soil that along with labor of men bring about a fruitful harvest. This meaning goes beyond agriculture, however, and extends to nearly any undertaking in life, any long-term plan, a relationship leading to marriage, or the birth of a child.

**Narrative Magic Uses:** Ár can be used to secure a good harvest. This rune can also be used in any magical script involving a married couple, but never to harm the relationship of that couple.

The literal meaning of "year," interpreted as a long stretch of time, can be used with the effect of doubling a rune script maximum duration from the standard 30 days to 60 days per rune in the script. That way, it is possible to affect a long scene without the need for a strong script that would cost more Power Points.

### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increases the target character's **Farming** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's **Law** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).



## ŷ (Yr)

**Meaning:** Yew-Tree

**Areas of Power:** Patience, death, the dead

*The yew is a tree with rough bark,  
hard and fast in the earth, supported by its  
roots,  
a guardian of flame and a joy upon an  
estate.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

*Yew is bent bow,  
and brittle iron*

*And Farbauti (a giant) of the arrow.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Yr symbolizes the Yew-Tree, which is an evergreen, and the longest-lived of European trees. Even though this tree is not native to Iceland, the Norse settlers still associate the Yew-Tree and the rune Yr with eternal life. Trees have long been regarded as a link between the earth and the sky, and the long-lived Yew-Tree extends this link to the world of the dead as well.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Yr can be used to aid in any task that requires patience.

Yr is associated with death, and it can be used in a rune script to increase the likelihood that the target will die, not as direct result of the script magic but rather as a result of any dangerous pursuit.

Yr can also be used to communicate with the dead. The runemaster must hold in his hand soil from the grave of the deceased, and he must know the dead person's name. If the Rune Magic skill roll is successful, the spirit appears and may answer one question for every 20% of the runemaster's Rune Magic skill score. The spirit is not compelled to speak the truth, and does not know anything beyond its own personal knowledge at the time of death. Yr cannot be used to contact the souls of those who have received a full Christian burial.





### Mechanic magic use:

- Increases one target character's skill that depends on patience, such as **Craft**, by 10%, (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases someone's chance of rolling a fumble on any skill by 3% (Strong script: 6%).

## ᚦ (Peorð)

**Meaning:** Fate

**Areas of Power:** Mysteries, gambling, luck, detecting poison, concealment

*Games of chance are a source of recreation  
and amusement to the great,  
where warriors sit blithely together in the  
banqueting-hall.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Peorð is the rune of the powers of fate, the power of the Norns to determine the fate of every man, woman and child.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Peorð can be used to manipulate luck, and the overall probability of a given event coming to pass. Rune scripts that ask for an unlikely event to occur, or that would only normally be considered to be a very lucky event, can become more likely when the rune Peorð is used.

This rune can also be used to detect the hidden purpose behind a seemingly harmless situation, such as detecting poison in a drinking horn at a feast.

### Mechanic Magic Use:

- Increase (or decrease) a target character's **Luck** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%). These points cannot be spent as normal Luck points can.
- Increase a target character's **Knowledge** (Myths) skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increase a target character's **Hide** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

## ᚷ (Elgur)

**Meaning:** Elk

**Areas of Power:** Defense, protection

*The Elk-sedge usually lives in the fen,  
growing in the water. It wounds severely,  
staining with blood any man  
who makes a grab at it.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Elgur (also called Elhaz outside of Iceland) is primarily a rune of defense. It is the rune of sacred ground, of sanctuary. Its protection is passive but brings forth painful results. It is somewhat related to the rune Burs, both being defensive runes. The difference is that Burs provides an active and offensive protection, while Elgur is oriented towards passive protection in connection with all that is sacred.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Elgur can be used in a script to invoke the force of the runes for protection.

### Mechanic Magic Use:

- Provides a magical protection against physical attacks. Adds 3 Armor Points to all hit locations (Strong script: 6 AP). Not cumulative with armor worn.

## ᚱ (Sól)

**Meaning:** Sun

**Areas of Power:** Light, heat, triumph

*Sun is the shield of the clouds  
and shining ray  
and destroyer of ice.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Sól represents the sun and its light defeating darkness, and the victory of good over evil. It also represents the lighting bolt that links heaven and earth.





**Narrative Magic Use:** Sól can be used in the general sense of victory over evil. Also, the runemaster can call upon the more literal meaning of the sun, of warmth or light.

The light and heat produced by a weak script using Sól is alike that of a torch. With a strong script, the light intensity is double that. An object may be made to glow as the light source, and it will glow for the duration of the scene.

Temporarily blinding an opponent with a flash of light can only be done with a strong rune script. Everyone, including any player characters, in a 10-meter radius, would be blinded for 1D3 rounds.

When used to generate heat, it is possible to heat up a standard-size farmhouse or a similar area with a weak rune script, but any bigger building would require a strong rune script. Fire cannot be started with Sól, as fire is associated with the rune Kaun. It can be used to negate the effects of extreme cold.

**Mechanic Magic Use:**

- Increases the target character's score in any one **Combat** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases someone's chance of rolling Special and Critical results on any skill by 3 percentiles (Strong script: 6 percentiles).

## Third Ætt - Týr's Ætt

### ↑ (Týr)

**Meaning:** The God Týr

**Areas of Power:** Danger, warrior, battle, honesty, justice

*Tyr is a one-handed god,  
and leavings of the wolf  
and prince of temples.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The first rune of the third ætt represents the god Týr, god of war, sacrifice, and truth. Týr sacrificed his right hand to allow the binding of the Fenrir wolf that threatened the cosmic order.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Týr can be used to represent battle, a warrior, and the dangers that warriors put themselves in. It can also be used to influence legal proceedings and generally bring out the truth in all matters. Another use of this rune can be to force someone to speak the truth.

This rune can also be used to influence and aid a warrior in battle.

**Mechanic Magic Use:**

- Increase a target character's **Law** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases the target character's score in any one **Combat** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

### 𐌗 (Bjarkan)

**Meaning:** Birch

**Areas of Power:** Childbirth, rebirth, growth, health, healing, regeneration

*Birch is a leafy twig  
and little tree  
and fresh young shrub.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Bjarkan represents the many of qualities associated with the birch tree in the Norse world, such as purification, healing, and the warmth of spring returning after the winter months.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Bjarkan can be used to affect children or childbirth, as well as to aid in healing wounds. It can be used to prevent pregnancy, but not to end an existing pregnancy. A script affecting a child can also use this rune.

**Mechanic Magic Use:**

- Heals 4 hit points, on any hit location (Strong script: 8 hit points).
- Using the associated meaning of growth, this rune can be used to increase the SIZ characteristic by 2 points (Strong script: 4 points). For a direct translation of SIZ score to height and weight, see *Basic Roleplaying* page 26. Other characteristics connected to SIZ such as Damage Bonus and hit points are not affected.





## M (Eykur)

**Meaning:** Horse

**Areas of Power:** Horses, travel, loyalty, pride

*A steed is the joy of aethlings or eorls,  
a horse proud of hoof, where men about It,  
wealthy, on stallions, swap speech,  
and to the unquiet is ever a solace.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Eykur is associated with movement, but unlike the rune Reid, it concerns the vehicle of movement, the horse and all the symbolism surrounding it. It also concerns the partnership between horse and rider, the loyalty of the horse to the rider, and the pride in that partnership.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Eykur can be used in a rune script to affect a horse, or the concepts of loyalty and faithfulness.

### Mechanic Magic Use:

- Increases a horse's Movement rate by 4 points (Strong script: 8). A horse standard Movement Rate is 12.
- Increases a horse's hit points by 6 points (Strong script: 12 points).

## ᚱ (Maður)

**Meaning:** Mankind

**Areas of power:** Society, human qualities, human flaws, mortality

*Man is delight of man  
and augmentation of the earth  
and adorer of ships.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Maður represents the basic human qualities we all have, whether male or female. It signi-



A WITCH DEVELOPS A TERRIBLE STORM BY EMPTYING HER POT WITH MAGIC POTION INTO THE SEA





fies the shared experiences of us all, and represents the social order and the idea of mutual support.

**Narrative Magic Use:** Maður can be used to affect society in general or society's reaction towards the runemaster or any one other person. It can be used to reveal knowledge, by allowing the runemaster to tap into the pool of knowledge at the Well of Fate.

This rune can be used to give the affected character any human quality or flaw, such as making someone more honest, greedier, braver, or cowardly, etc. (As with any magic script affecting someone's mind, this would require a POW vs. POW opposed roll).

**Mechanic Magic Use:**

- Increases a target character's score in any foreign language by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increases a target character's score in any **Mental** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

## ǫ (Lögur)

**Meaning:** Water

**Areas of Power:** Ships, sea journey, mutability, water, treasure, rapid change

*Water is eddying stream  
and broad geysir  
and land of the fish.*

— Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Lögur is another journey rune, this one of the sea. It represents water and the seas. Also, for Icelanders, the seas are a road to adventure and treasure.

**Narrative Magic Uses:** Lögur can be used to affect the sea or any other body of water. A small lake or creek can be affected with a weak rune script, for a large lake it is necessary to use a strong script. Additionally, this rune can be used to aid with sea journeys.

Yet another use for Lögur would be to add speed to any kind of change or transformation.

**Mechanic magic uses:**

- Increase a target character's **Navigate** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increase a target character's **Swim** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).

## <> (Ing)

**Meaning:** The God Ing (Freyr)

**Areas of Power:** Fertility, pregnancy, health, peace, safety

*Ing was first amidst the East Danes  
so seen, until he went eastward  
over the sea. His wagon ran after.  
Thus the Heardings named that hero.*

— Old English Runic Poem

The rune Ing refers to the god Freyr, and therefore to fertility, health, peace, and safety. Ing can be used to improve the chances of a woman becoming pregnant.

**Narrative Magic Uses:** Ing can be used to promote fertility and peace.

**Mechanic Magic Uses:**

### BUT I HEARD OF DIFFERENT MEANINGS!

The Elder Futhork runes had many varied meanings and names during the Viking Age, and in the many centuries since then they have been given even more meanings by modern rune enthusiasts. This book tries to keep the rune meanings closest as possible to how they were interpreted in the Viking Age, but reliable historical information is hard to find when it comes to magical traditions. The meanings you find in this chapter are considered the best suited for a *Mythic Iceland* campaign.

If you have heard of a different meaning of any of the runes, and you like that meaning better than what is presented in this book, by all means go ahead and use the meanings and interpretations that you like best.





- Increases the target character's score in any one physical skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increase a target character's Medicine skill by +10% (Strong script: 20%).

## Y (Óðal)

**Meaning:** Possession

**Areas of Power:** Inheritance, estate, possession

*An estate is very dear to every man,  
if he can enjoy there in his house  
whatever is right and proper in constant  
prosperity.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Óðal represents possessions and property, especially in connection with family. It is associated with both the family home and the virtue of loyalty toward one's family.

**Narrative magic uses:** Óðal can be used to represent a whole family, or the family home. It can also be used to influence decisions on inheritance, or to protect grave goods.

### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increase a target character's **Appraise** skill by +10% (Strong script: 20%).
- Increase a target character's **Bargain** skill by +10% (Strong script: 20%).

## H (Dagur)

**Meaning:** Day

**Areas of Power:** Day, time, light, joy, unexpected luck

*Day, the glorious light of the Creator, is  
sent by the Lord;  
it is beloved of men, a source of hope and  
happiness to rich and poor,  
and of service to all.*

— Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Dagur is associated with the concept of time and the cycle of day and night, and also the light and warmth which come with each new day. It is connected to luck in the sense of a joyous surprise.

**Narrative Magic Uses:** Dagur can be used to manipulate the passing of time in relation to an event, making it last longer or shorter by 50% for a weak script, and double that for a strong script.

This rune can also be used to bring about a lucky and unexpected event.

### **Mechanic Magic Uses:**

- Increase a target character's current **Luck** skill by 10% (Strong script: 20%). Only affects Luck rolls. These temporary points cannot be spent.

## Examples of Rune Scripts

### Y F X (Fé + Áss + Gjölf)

**Meanings:** Domesticated animal + Communication + Trust

**Galdur:** "Allow Snæbjörn to *speak* (Áss) to his *sheep* (Fé) and have them *trust* (Gjölf) him so he can lead them back to his farm."

Fé can represent any domesticated animal, in this case sheep. Áss is used with the meaning of speech, which fits its communication area of power. Vend is used to build a relationship of trust. All the runes in this script are being used in a Narrative manner, as they are affecting the setting only, and not the rules system directly.

If this was a weak rune script, it would allow the farmer Snæbjörn to speak to, and be fully understood by, a handful of sheep. To allow him to speak to his whole flock, it will be necessary a strong rune script.

If the sheep are scared a strong script would be needed to get them to trust the farmer.







## Rune Power Limits

The very fact that each of the runes carry multiple meanings, and that they can themselves be interpreted in different ways, make their magical use very flexible. Indeed, it is not possible to cover all different interpretations and possible uses of all the runes in this book. The scope of what is possible to achieve with rune magic is only limited by the imagination of the players.

There are, however, limits to the amount of power that can be unlocked from each one rune. That limit is different for weak scripts and strong scripts.

In order to help the *Mythic Iceland* Gamemaster and runemaster players evaluate the power level of creative combinations of runes, below is a set of guidelines for rune magic Mechanic Effects.

|                               | Weak   | Strong |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Skill Points:                 | +10%   | +20%   |
| Temporary Hit Points:         | +4 HP  | +8 HP  |
| Healing:                      | 4 HP   | 8 HP   |
| Armor Points:                 | +3 AP  | +6 AP  |
| Damage to creature:           | 1D8 HP | 2D8 HP |
| Damage to object or building: | 2D8 HP | 4D8 HP |
| Damage bonus to weapon:       | +1D4   | +2D4   |
| Characteristic increase:      | +2     | +4     |

### Notes:

- Weak scripts cost one Power Point per rune in the script.
- Strong scripts cost two Power Points per rune in the script, but are twice as powerful than weak scripts.
- Armor Points bestowed by magic are not cumulative with armor worn.
- All effects that boost a skill or characteristic, or that give extra hit points beyond your maximum hit points, are temporary and vanish at the end of the scene.

The scene here, and thus the duration of the magic effect, is clearly defined as the time period it takes until Snæbjörn may get his sheep back to his farm, as many days as it takes but no longer than 90 days.

The target character here is the farmer Snæbjörn, therefore the runemaster needs to touch him, or hold something of his when he or she sings the galdur.

### <<< (Kaun + Kaun + Kaun)

**Meanings:** Fire + Sore + Destruction for the purpose of creation

**Galdur:** “Bjargmundur the Strong has done me wrong, and for that he must pay with the *destruction* (Kaun) of his farmhouse by *fire* (Kaun) which will *injure* (Kaun) him and allow me to build a new farm for myself where his farm once stood.”

This script uses the same rune, Kaun, three times, but each time with a different meaning. One of the runes in this three-rune script, the third one in this case, has Mechanic effect (remember, a three-rune script can only have one Mechanic effect), “sore” causing damage of 2D8 in a weak rune script.

A strong rune script could create a larger fire that could cause more damage to the farmhouse, and more damage to Bjargmundur the Strong inside it.

The scene here is the creation of the fire, everything else happens as a consequence of that. The duration of the magic effect is therefore contained within the moment in which the flames appear and take hold on the house.

The actual consequences of the fire, whether the house is completely burned down or not, whether the rune master will get his wish taking over Bjargmundur’s land, is a matter for the GM to decide and depends on many factors such as the efforts of the occupants of the house to contain the fire. Re-



member that the fire itself is not magical; it was only started with magic.

The target here is the farmhouse of Bjargmundur, therefore the runemaster needs to touch the farmhouse when singing the *galdur* and completing the magical rune script ritual. Alternatively, it is also possible, according to the Law of Contagion, to instead be holding some object that was once part of the house or was once in contact with it.



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### (Hagall + Lögur + Úr + Hagall + Lögur + Hagall + Óðal)

**Meanings:** Weather + Change + Strength + Hail + Sea + Destruction + Possession

**Galdur:** “Tonight the *weather* will *change*, a *strong hail storm* will come, and the *seas* will raise, *destroying* the longship *belonging* to Þórbjorn the Bald.”

This is a seven-rune script, which can be very powerful by the virtue that it can enact many magical effects, and can last longer.

There is only one Mechanic effect in this particular script, represented by the destruction or damage caused by the rune Hagall. The other runes all have narrative meanings.

The direct damage caused by Hagall to objects is limited to 2D8 hit points in a weak script, and to 4D8 in a strong script.

The other runes in the script, which have narrative effects can indirectly affect the ship in many ways that can be suggested by the player, blown out to sea, journey delays, someone may be thrown out of the ship, sails can rip, small damage to the steering apparatus.

The target here is the longship belonging to Þórbjorn the Bald, therefore the runemaster needs to touch the longship itself when singing the *galdur*, or something that has been aboard the ship.

### ᚷ ᚫ ᚱ (Gjöf + Ár + Vend)

**Meanings:** Love + Marriage + Happiness

**Galdur:** “I ask Freyja to intervene so that Guðrún, the daughter of Helgi the Brave, *love* me and accept my *marriage* proposal, making me a very *happy* man.”

These three runes all have Mechanic effects that may help with courtship. Gjög may give a boost to the character’s Persuade skill. The rune Ár may increase the Status skill; and Vend may increase any one skill when the result will be happiness, or still Vend may also increase the Charisma characteristic roll. All of those could potentially help the runemaster, or the target of the script, in getting the adoration of the girl. The choice of the exact effect is up to the runemaster. However, only one of those effects may be picked, as a three-rune script has a maximum limit of one Mechanic effect — this limit could be made higher in a five-rune script, in which case the runemaster can pick two Mechanic effects. The desired result of the script, the acceptance of the marriage proposal, is never a certainty though, as it only increases the love-stricken man’s chance of being loved and accepted as a prospective husband.

Another way of interpreting this script would be to consider all the runes as having Narrative effects only. In that case the runemaster would be seeking to affect the girl’s feelings, and as this would be a mind-altering effect it would require an opposed POW vs POW roll. A strong script will be required if she is opposed to the idea.

The duration of the effect would be, as always, one scene only. As the scene is not specified on the *galdur* it takes effect immediately in the current scene. The runemaster has until the end of the current event, be it a feast or assembly, to ask the girl for marriage with improved chances.

### ᚱ ᚠ ᚱ (Íss + Nauð + Sól)

**Meanings:** Ice + Trouble + Triumph

**Galdur:** “With the blessing of the gods, I command a sheet of *ice* to form on the ground so as to put my assailants in *trouble* and lead to my *triumph*.”

This script will have immediate effect, as it doesn’t define a later time in the *galdur*. The opponent must make a successful **Agility** roll in order to avoid slipping and falling. In the case that the run-





emaster rolls a Special or Critical success on his Rune Magic skill, the **Agility** roll must be made as Difficult. (See Slippery or Unstable Surfaces on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 231). A strong script can create a larger ice sheet.

## Ÿ 1 Ł (Elgur + Yr + Peorð)

**Meanings:** Protection + Death + Poison

**Galdur:** “May the power of the runes *protect* me from those who seek to cause my *death* with *poison*.”

The three runes are combined in this script with the purpose to protect someone from being poisoned. The GM is free to use the Mechanic description of the protection against poison offered by the rune Peorð (increasing the character’s CON characteristic) or the GM may decide to go with a Narrative effect such as the shattering of the drinking horn containing the poisoned drink (that effect may require a strong script). This script is perhaps similar to the one used by Egill in Egils Saga to protect himself, with exactly the effect of shattering the drinking horn, when Queen Gunnhild of Norway offered him poisoned ale.

## Ð M Æ (Dagur + Eykur + Bjarkan)

**Meanings:** Luck + Horse + Health

**Galdur:** “I ask the gods to allow me the *luck* to find a *healthy horse*, so I can ride home and leave the glacier behind before its cold kills me.”

As the “luck” meaning of the rune Dagur is really in the sense of “unexpected luck,” even if the runemaster has tried to ask for something specific like a healthy horse, the GM should surprise him with some unexpected twist to the appearance of the horse — maybe it is an elven horse, or a horse that is being attacked by a troll, or perhaps the horse is carrying a dead man and the character may become involved in the circumstances of his death. If the GM is feeling particularly mischievous, the horse could be in fact a Nykur (see **Creatures of Mythic Iceland** chapter).

## × Æ ƿ (Gjöf + Maður + Lögur)

**Meanings:** Trust + People + Sea journey

**Galdur:** “I call upon the power of the runes to help me gain the *trust* of the *people* at Borgafjörður,



A SOOTHSAYER AND A KING



## Life Stones (Lyfsteinn)

A life stone (Lyfsteinn) is a stone that has been carved with a bind-rune that gives it healing properties. Touching a life stone to a wound heals 1D6 Hit Points. This magical power can only be used once a day.

Only runemasters can create a life stone. It is necessary that the runemaster knows a rune with healing powers, and that one permanent point of POW is invested on the rune-bind.

Life stones can also be attached to swords, requiring a successful roll of **Craft** (Weapons) in order to maintain the proper balance of the sword, otherwise it incurs a -5% penalty on the **Sword** skill. Wounds inflicted by such a weapon can only be healed by magic, either by magical rune scripts or by life stones.



even though I have been outlawed, so that they may allow me to *travel* with them to Greenland.”

If this is a weak script, not all members of the community living in Borgafjörður may trust the runemaster, potentially resulting in conflict within that community. Creating a strong script would certainly make things smoother.

This is a completely narrative script with the effect of making the runemaster more trustworthy.

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(**Purs + Fé + Elgur + Úr + Týr**)

**Meanings:** Active defense + Domesticated animals + Passive defense + Battle + Mythic creature

**Galdur:** “I trust the runes, the gift from Óðinn to mankind, to protect me with *speed of a cat* and *toughness of a bull* in the *battle* against the *troll* as I enter his cave to rescue the wife of my brother who was stolen by the monster.”

This script concentrates in giving two mechanic advantages to the runemaster, an increase in Dodge skill and a number of armor points, during the scene defined as the raid on a troll’s cave. If this is a strong script, it will increase the runemaster’s Dodge skill by 20%, and give him protection equal 6 AP (non-cumulative with armor worn).

< < ᚱ (Kaun + Kaun + Hagall)

**Meanings:** Sore + Fire + Hail

**Galdur:** “I call upon the gods to give Þórbjorn the Ugly the *sores* he deserves for wronging my wife. May he feel my wrath with *fire* and *hail*.”

The vengeful runemaster, making this a strong script, and choosing one mechanic effect, will hit Þórbjorn for a total of 2D8 hit points. If Þórbjorn survives all this damage from the burns that appear from seemingly nowhere, he will most likely be even more deserving of the nickname “the Ugly.”

## Examples of Bind-Runes

Remember, bind-runes are combination of runes sharing common lines, making up a new, unique design. They are used to enchant objects. See the Bind-Runes and Talismans section earlier in this chapter.

**Purs + Úr + Fé**

**Active rune:** Purs (Defense)

**Effect:** +15% to **Dodge** skill

The central rune here is Purs, and it is a rune of active protection, which matches an increase in the Dodge skill.

**Purs + Úr + Fé**

**Active rune:** Úr (Endurance)

**Effect:** +3 to CON characteristic, and +15 to Stamina

This bind-rune combines the same runes as the previous one, but in a different shape which makes Úr the central and active rune instead of Purs, shifting the effect from increasing the Dodge skill to increasing the CON characteristic, and the Stamina characteristic roll, but not other characteristics connected to CON such hit points, etc.

**Gjöf + Vend + Nauð + Peorð + Ár**

**Active rune:** Gjof (Love) and Vend (Relationship)

**Effects:** +15% to **Persuade**, and +3 points to APP





# Rune Magic Cheat Sheet

## Rune Magic Fundamentals

### Building a Simple 3-Rune Script

- Think of what you want to affect with your magic, and in which way (positive/negative, etc)
- Look at the runes you know
- Pick one rune that can be used to bring out the effect you want
- Choose two more runes to form a sentence with the first — this is the *galdur*

## Full Magic Rules Reference

Creating a magical Rune Script:

- 1 - Choose the runes
- 2 - Carve the runes upon an object (time required: one combat round for a script of up to five runes, double that time for longer scripts).
- 3 - Dye the runes with blood (time required: one combat round)
- 4 - Sing a *galdur* stating the purpose of the magical rune script (effect takes place in this combat round)
- 5 - Roll Rune Magic skill

Steps 1, 2 and 3 may be done in advance. Step 4 and 5 can be done at a later time, up to the next morning.

Effect can take place during a time specified by the *galdur* or immediately.

When singing the *galdur*, it is necessary to touch the target (or touch something that has been in direct contact with the target).

Number of runes in a script: three, five, seven, or nine.

## Power Point Cost:

- Weak scripts cost one Power Point for each rune in the script
- Strong scripts cost two Power Points for each rune in the script, but the magical effects are twice as powerful

## Runes Can Have Two Uses in a Script:

- Narrative Meaning: the meanings associated with the runes are used for manipulating the reality of the game world. e.g. using the water rune to bring forth rain. Runes can also appear in a script just to complete its meaning.
- Mechanical Effect: affecting the rules system itself, such as boosting STR, skill scores, etc.

The player gets to choose which rune or runes in the script has a mechanic effect, if any.

## Mechanical Effect Limits:

- Three runes script - maximum of 1 Mechanical Effect
- Five runes script - maximum of 2 Mechanical Effects
- Seven runes script - maximum of 3 Mechanical Effect
- Nine runes script - maximum of 4 Mechanical Effects

Order of initiative for magical effect: 1 Strike Rank point for each rune in the script (or +1 to DEX rank, if not using SR).

**Comment:** The owner of this item will be quite successful with the ladies.

## Peorð + Sól + Óðal

**Active rune:** Peorð (Luck)

**Effects:** +15% to Luck skill

This is a perfect bind-rune to be carried by a man who likes to push his luck. However, these Luck points cannot be spent as normal Luck points can.

## Sól + Kaun + Bjarkan + Týr + Da-gur

**Active runes:** Sól (Heat), and Kaun (fire)

**Effects:** +15% to **Sword** skill, and +1D4+2 damage

A weapon engraved with this bind-rune will feel perfectly balanced, and will allow the character using it to deal extra damage.





## Scorn Pole (Niðstöng)

*Here I place this Scorn Pole, and turn it against King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhild — I turn this against all the spirits of the land, that they may all be lost, not finding their homes, until King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhild are driven out of the country.*

— Egils Saga

There are times when a man's anger runs so deep, when he is so disgusted at an enemy's actions, that he will even turn to Hel, the goddess of Death and Pestilence, in an attempt to get his vengeance.

A Scorn Pole (Niðstöng) is a magical way of disrupting and angering the land spirits inhabiting the ground where a farm is located. The result is a type of curse, where the accursed farm performs poorly for as long as the Scorn Pole stands. Animals go sick and die over time, and crops always fail. In game terms, the character who owns the farm has a penalty of -50% on his seasonal **Farming** skill check, and thus could lose much of his Status over the years (see page 201 - Farming and Status). After many years of hardship and misery, the farmer could even be forced to sell or abandon his accursed farm.

The ritual to create a Scorn Pole may be performed by any man or woman, and no Rune Magic skill is necessary. The magical power lies in knowing the proper ritual and performing it, with the correct sequence of runes being engraved and the correct words of power being intoned. This ritual is not widely known.

### Creating a Scorn Pole

First, a 3-meter high pole needs to be carved with the correct runes, covering much of the pole. Secondly, the head of a horse must be put on the top of the pole, facing the direction of the farm to be cursed. Lastly, it is necessary to intone the correct words of power, invoking the destructive forces of Hel, to complete the ritual and activate the curse.

Making a Scorn Pole results in 1D6 Allegiance Points with Loki, for invoking his daughter's name.

### Destroying a Scorn Pole

It is well known that Hel does not take kindly to those who disrupt something that was consecrated to her. Taking a Scorn Pole down will result in being cursed to unluckiness by the goddess of Death — in game terms, the character loses 1D4+2 points of Luck. The only exception is when the person who created the pole removes it himself, in which case there is no ill effect in doing so.

It is wise, therefore, that someone who has been targeted with a Scorn Pole would seek out the person who created it and force that person to take it down.







## Rune Script sheet

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Runes: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ \_\_\_\_\_

Galdur: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Weak / ☐ Strong

Mechanical Effect, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_



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## First Ætt / Freyr's Ætt / Creation, Destruction and Renewal

Associated with gods Freyr, Freyja, Óðinn, Njörður, Sif, Höður

| Name | Shape | Meaning                     | Areas of Power                                                                           | Suggested Narrative Uses                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Suggested Mechanic Uses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------|-------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fé   | ƿ     | Wealth, cattle              | Wealth, fertility, domesticated animals                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generates wealth</li> <li>Brings fertility</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Farming</b> or <b>Brawl</b> skills</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Úr   | ᚢ     | The Wild Ox, drizzling rain | Strength, endurance, bravery, willpower, health, aging, willpower, nature-given wealth   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects strength or endurance</li> <li>Protects against magic</li> <li>Wealth through the forces of nature</li> <li>Heals physical and mental ailments</li> <li>Cures diseases</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 2 (Strong: 4) to CON or STR. <b>Stamina</b> is affected, but Fatigue Points, Hit Points, etc, are not.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) on the resistance table to resist magic effects.</li> <li>Heals 4 hit points (Strong: 8) of damage.</li> </ul> |
| Purs | ᚢ     | Protection, a thorny vine   | Active defense, plants, anger, lust                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protects against enemies</li> <li>Affects plants</li> <li>Protects against lust</li> </ul>                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Parry</b> or <b>Dodge</b> skills</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Áss  | ᚱ     | The God Odin                | Knowledge, wisdom, communication, the mouth, travel, divination, magic, mythic creatures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits speech or communication</li> <li>Affects actual mouth or tongue</li> </ul>                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to one <b>Mythic</b> skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to one <b>Knowledge</b> skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Poetry</b> skill.</li> </ul>                                                                       |
| Reid | ᚱ     | Ride                        | Movement, riding, travel, journey                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influences any journey or movement</li> <li>Finds lost possessions or people</li> <li>Speeds up proceedings</li> <li>Aids in strategy and planning</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Ride</b>, <b>Navigate</b> or <b>Pilot Ship</b> skills.</li> <li>Adds 2 (Strong: 4) to MOV.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                         |
| Kaun | <     | Sore, Fire                  | Fire, sore, craft, destruction for the purpose of creation                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces light or heat</li> <li>Produces fire</li> <li>Temporarily blinds an opponent with a flash of light</li> </ul>                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inflicts 1D8 (Strong: 2D8) hit points damage to a person or creature.</li> <li>Inflicts 2D8 (Strong: 4D8) hit points damage to objects or buildings.</li> </ul>                                                                                            |
| Gjöf | ᚨ     | Gift, generosity            | Peace, love, aid, balance, trust                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influences agreements</li> <li>Aids in courtship</li> </ul>                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to one <b>Communication</b> skill.</li> <li>Heals 4 (Strong: 8) hit points of damage.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |
| Vend | ᚢ     | Bliss                       | Happiness, relationship, hope, kinship                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offsets negative emotions</li> <li>Aids in any tasks that brings joy</li> </ul>                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Charisma</b> characteristic.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to one <b>Communication</b> skill.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                    |







## Second Ætt / Hagal's Ætt / Human Elements

Associated with gods Loki, Heimdallur, Ullur, Heimdallur, Víðarr, Hel

| Name   | Shape | Meaning       | Areas of Power                                           | Suggested Narrative Uses                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Suggested Mechanic Uses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------|-------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hagall | ⚡     | Hail          | Destruction, transformation, weather                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awakes harmful side of another rune</li> <li>Brings about a destructive hailstorm</li> <li>Manipulates the weather</li> <li>Transforms an object into something else of same base material</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inflicts 1D8 (Strong: 2D8) hit points damage to a person or creature.</li> <li>Inflicts 2D8 (Strong: 4D8) hit points damage to objects or buildings.</li> <li>Slows down a person or creature to 1/2 of MOV (Strong: 1/4).</li> </ul> |
| Nauð   | †     | Necessity     | Endurance, trouble, deliverance                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcoming hardships, including illness or grief</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 4 (Strong: 8) to CON, against poison only.</li> <li>Adds 4 (Strong: 8) to Maximum Fatigue.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Stamina</b> or <b>Effort</b> characteristics.</li> </ul>                                        |
| Íss    | ❄     | Ice           | Cold, calming a situation down                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates Ice</li> <li>Cools down the temperature of an object or of the air in an area</li> </ul>                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% to one <b>Communication</b> skill (Strong: 20%).</li> <li>Increases Fatigue loss to 3 (Strong: 6) points per round of combat or physical activity.</li> </ul>                                                                |
| Ár     | 🌾     | Year, Harvest | Harvest, marriage, justice                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secures a good harvest</li> <li>Doubles a rune script duration time</li> </ul>                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Farming</b> skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Law</b> skill.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |
| Yr     | 🌳     | Yew-Tree      | Patience, death and the dead                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aids in task that requires a patience</li> <li>Increases likelihood of death</li> <li>Communication with the dead</li> </ul>                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to any skill requiring patience, such as <b>Craft</b>.</li> <li>Increases chance of a Fumble result by 3% (Strong: 6%).</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| Peorð  | 🎲     | Fate          | Mysteries, gambling, luck, detecting poison, concealment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manipulates luck and probability</li> <li>Uncovers the hidden purpose</li> <li>Detects poison</li> </ul>                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases or lowers <b>Luck</b> by 10% (Strong: 20%).</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Knowledge</b> (Myths) skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to <b>Hide</b> skill.</li> </ul>                                             |
| Elgur  | 🦌     | Elk           | Passive defense, protection                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protects from enemies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 3 (Strong: 6) Armor Points to all hit locations.</li> <li>Not cumulative with armor worn.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                             |
| Sól    | ☀     | Sun           | Light, heat, triumph                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes victory over evil</li> <li>Produces light or heat</li> <li>Negates the effects of extreme cold</li> </ul>                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% to one <b>Combat</b> skill (Strong: 20%)</li> <li>Increases chance of Critical and Special results by 3% (Special: 6%)</li> </ul>                                                                                            |





## Third Ætt / Tyr's Ætt / Reaching a State of Enlightenment

Associated with gods Tyr, Þór, Frigg, Baldur, Forseti



| Name    | Shape | Meaning             | Areas of Power                                                | Suggested Narrative Uses                                                                                                                                   | Suggested Mechanic Uses                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------|-------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Týr     | ↑     | Hail                | The God Tyr                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influences legal proceedings</li> <li>Brings out the truth</li> <li>Aids a warrior in battle</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to Law skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to one Combat skill.</li> </ul>                                          |
| Bjarkan | ⚡     | Birch               | Childbirth, rebirth, growth, health, healing, regeneration    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects children or childbirth</li> <li>Aids in healing wounds</li> <li>Prevents pregnancy</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heals 4 hit points (Strong: 8) of damage.</li> <li>Adds 2 points (Strong: 4) to SIZ. Damage Bonus and Hit Points are not affected.</li> </ul> |
| Eykur   | M     | Horse               | Horses, travel, loyalty, pride                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects the partnership and loyalty</li> </ul>                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases a horse's MOV by 4 points (Strong: 8).</li> <li>Increases a horse's hit points by 6 (Strong: 12).</li> </ul>                        |
| Maður   | ⚡     | Mankind             | Society, human qualities, human flaws, mortality              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects society in general</li> <li>Reveals knowledge</li> <li>Gives a human quality or flaw</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to any foreign language skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to any Mental skill.</li> </ul>                         |
| Lögur   | ⌋     | Water               | Ships, sea journey, mutability, water, treasure, rapid change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects any body of water</li> <li>Speeds up any kind of change of transformation.</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to Swim or Navigate skills.</li> </ul>                                                                                 |
| Ing     | <>    | The God Ing (Freyr) | Fertility, pregnancy, health, peace, safety                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotes fertility</li> <li>Promotes peace</li> </ul>                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to any Physical skill.</li> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to Medicine skill.</li> </ul>                                   |
| Óðal    | ⚡     | Possession          | Inheritance, estate, possession                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects loyalty to family</li> <li>Influences inheritance proceedings</li> <li>Influences family matters</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to Appraise and Bargain skills.</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| Dagur   | ⚡     | Day                 | Day, time, light, joy, unexpected luck                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manipulates the passing of time</li> <li>Brings about a lucky and unexpected event</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adds 10% (Strong: 20%) to Luck skill.</li> </ul>                                                                                              |





# A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO MYTHIC ICELAND



This chapter takes you on a tour of mythic Iceland, along the established horse paths and the less travelled routes and unexplored areas. We travel to all corners of the island and have a closer look at places of importance in the West, the West Fjords region, the North, the East, the South and finally the Central Highlands.

Each location is described with great care to present an image of how they must have looked during the Viking Age, according to descriptions found in the Icelandic Sagas and other Icelandic Medieval manuscripts.

As well as looking at the landscape around mythic Iceland, we also look at the myths and fairy-tales associated with each region. Iceland has a rich tradition of folklore and fairy-tales, and just about every place in the island is associated with an interesting story.

Vegetation cover is described in this chapter as it would have been around the time of settlement and in the early period of the Pagan Commonwealth. After the year 1000, forests have diminished in number and extension considerably — but it is the Gamemaster's choice whether to bring that element of environmental change into his campaign or not.

Place names are given here in English and Icelandic. Norsemen gave great importance choosing a name for a place, and did so as a solemn ceremony dedicating the land to a god. The names of places always reflect a distinctive feature of the region, the name of the original settler, or some special event in the early history of the settlement.

Finally, you will find adventure seeds for every one of the locations mentioned in this chapter, inspired by the regional myths and stories.

## West

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### 1 – Whale Fjord

Whale Fjord (Hvalfjörður) is about 15 km north from Smoky Bay (Reykjavík) where Iceland's first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, built his farm. The fjord is long and wide, stretching 30 km from beginning to end, and 5 km across. This area is covered by forests, with steep cliffs at the head of the fjord. To the east there is very deep lake called Whale Lake (Hvalvatn).

**History:** In the *Saga of Hörður* and the *People of Hólmur* (*Harðar Saga og Hólmverja*), one of the Icelandic outlaw Sagas, important events take place on the small island, Geir's Island (Geirholmi), in Whale Fjord. An outlaw named Hörður becomes the leader of a band of outlaws numbering up to 180 people. The group defies authority and sets up an alternative society with its own rules, basing themselves in Geir's Island, living there for three years before they are all finally killed in a bloody battle.

**Myth:** The story goes that once a fisherman got lost on a fishing trip in bad weather, and his friends believed him dead. A year later, however, he returned safe and sound. The man explained





that in the period of his absence he had been living with the hidden people, and that they took great care of him. Some time later the local hofgoði (temple priest) found a cradle at the temple's door with a note asking that the child be blessed and identifying the father to be that man who recently went missing for a year. When confronted, however, the man denied having fathered the child. At that moment a woman appeared as if from nowhere, and cursed him saying, "I cast a spell on you, that you shall become the worst of evil whales in the sea and wreck many ships," then she took the cradle and vanished without a trace before many peoples' eyes. The man ran towards the sea, having become mad, and jumped off a cliff. Upon hitting the water he was transformed into a whale. Ever since, the whale has proved to be a great scourge, sinking many ships and hurting many people. And so the area became known as Whale Fjord.

## Adventure Seeds

1. The player characters need to find a way to kill the evil whale to avenge the death of a friend or relative who died when he had his ship wrecked by the creature. It will be necessary to somehow revert the magic of the hidden people that transformed the man into the whale. They could seek to speak directly with the hidden people and ask for help. They will, however, ask something from the characters in return for help, and also ask that they still provide some kind of justice for the man who refused to acknowledge he was the father of the child.
2. The events from *Harðar Saga*, as described in the History section above, make for an exciting *Mythic Iceland* campaign. The player characters could be part of the outlaw group trying to survive in this region, or they could be hunting down the outlaw group described in the Saga, so they can collect the reward being offered for their heads.



THE WEST

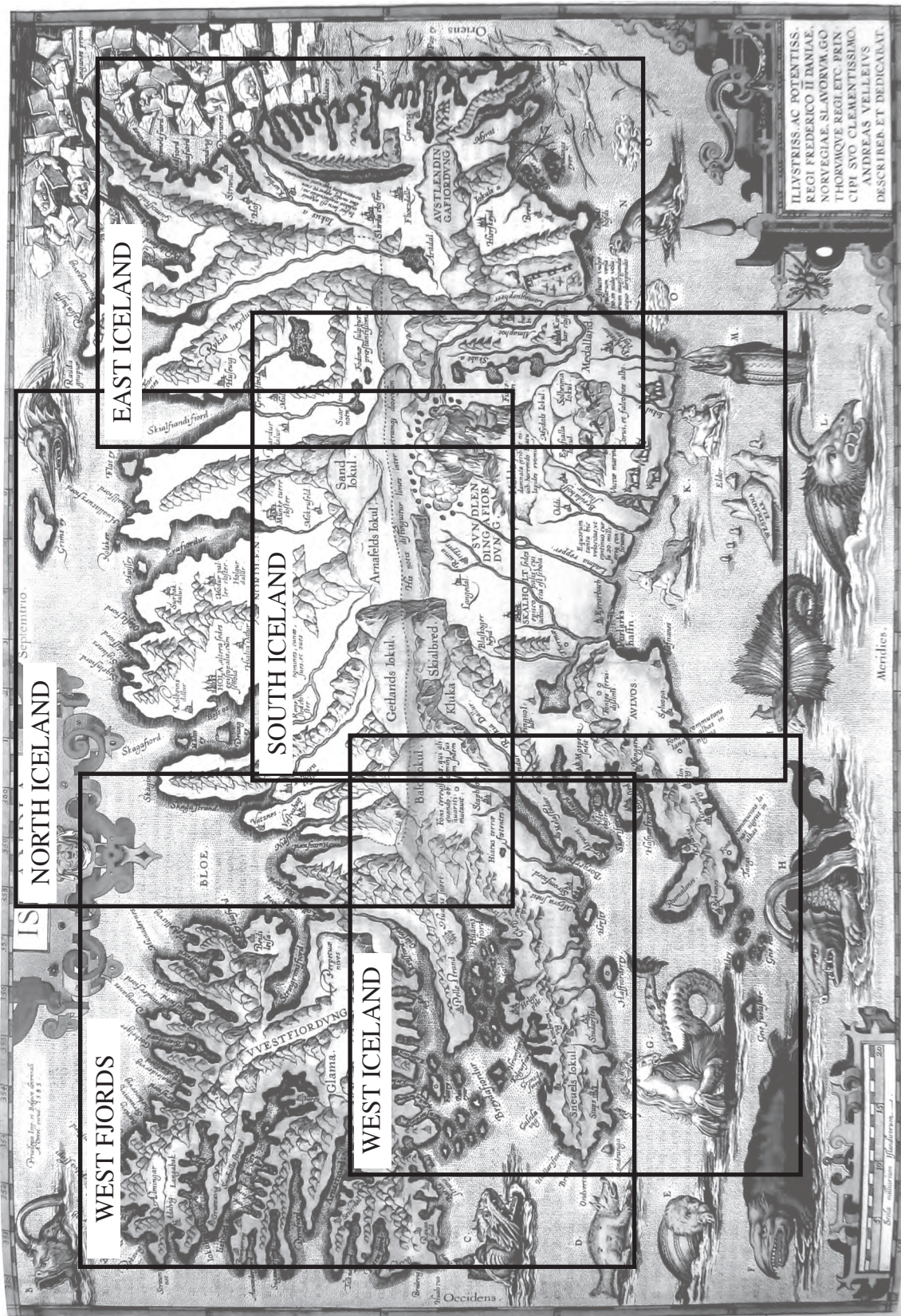
## 2 – Children's Falls

The landscape here is one of lava fields and birch woods. The White River (Hvítá) cuts the lava fields and flows deep into a narrow canyon. In the winter, spray from the river forms ice bridges linking the narrowest parts of the canyon; crossing these is extremely risky. The point where the river falls from the highlands is known as Children's Fall. There are various caves in the lava fields in this region, which are sometimes used as refuge by outlaws.

**History:** This region was first settled by Skalla-grímur Kveldúlfsson, father of Egill Skallagrímsson (from *Egils Saga*), when he arrived in Iceland in the year 891. He established a farm here, which he called Stronghold (Borg), and thus the region became known as Stronghold Fjord (Borgarfjörður). The main events from *Egils Saga* happen in this region.

**Myths:** Two young boys were left alone at home while their mother visited the local goði. She had warned them to not leave the house, but they ignored her warning. They walked down to White









River and tried to cross it via a stone arch that touched both sides of the river. Looking down at the narrow canyon and the waterfall below, they grew dizzy and fell from the bridge into the river and drowned. Their bodies were never found. It is said that the ghosts of the boys haunt this place. After the death of the boys, the waterfall became known as Children's Falls (Barnafoss).

Among the many caves in the lava fields of Stronghold Fjord is the cave known as Surtur's Cave (Surtshellir). People who set out to explore the depths of this cave never return. This cave leads into Múspelheimur, a world of fire ruled by the jötunn (giant) named Surtur. Some believe that other deep caves in this region may lead to Niflheimur, where the goddess Hel rules over those who did not die a heroic death.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters are searching for an outlaw who was last seen around this region. They suspect the outlaw is hiding in the lava caves. When they start inspecting the caves they are confronted by the ghosts of the dead boys who curse them unless they can find their bodies and give them a proper burial. Finding the bodies will be tricky, and could require some help from mythic creatures. Things could get further complicated by outlaws stalking the PCs, waiting to attack them one by one so he can stay in this area without fear of capture.

## 3 – Under the Glacier

This region is known as Under the Glacier (Undir Jökli). It is dominated by the Snow Mountain Glacier (Snæfellsjökull), which is in fact an active volcano covered by a glacier. The slopes around the glacier are formed of lava and bare of any vegetation. Tall rock pillars rise out of the sea along the shore. Nearby is a vertical cliff known as Swallow Tussock (Svalþúfa).

**Myth:** It is said that a man named Kolbeinn once made a wager with an evil monster. Both sat on the cliff under the glacier exchanging verses. They should each start a verse for the other to finish in rhyme. The first one to fail would have to jump off

the cliff and be from that day at the mercy of the other. Kolbeinn managed to trick the monster, who then was so taken aback that it fell from the cliff down into the waves that broke below.

### Adventure Seed

The monster, actually a Draugur (see page 215), has been bound to this area since he lost his wager with Kolbeinn and fell from the cliff. That was many years ago and the Glacier-Poet is now an old and sick man, and when he dies he fears the monster will be free to roam the land and exact vengeance upon the poet's kinsfolk. Kolbeinn contacts the player characters and tells them his story, asking them to protect his family when the monster comes for them.

## 4 – Þór's Headland

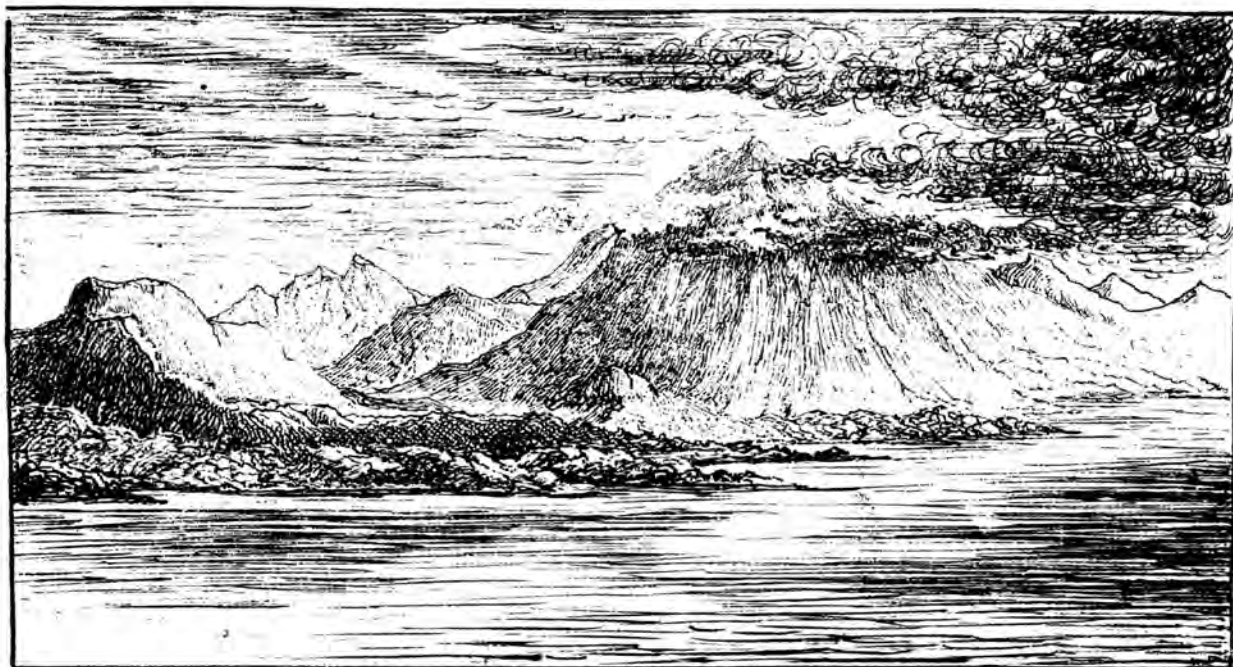
*"He settled land on the south side, near the middle of the Firth. There he found Þór cast aland, upon a point of land which is now called Þór's Headland, on that account. They landed further up the ness in the bay, which is now called Temple Bay (Hofsvík). There he reared his home and there he built a large temple, and consecrated it to Þór, and now the place is called Temple Stead (Hofstaðir).."*

— The Book of Settlement

The landscape here is impressive, ragged and with strange rock formations. There is varied bird life and the Snow Mountain Glacier can be seen from here to the South.

**Myth:** One of the first settlers to come to Iceland, Þórolfur Örnólfsson, had custody of a temple dedicated to Þór in the southwestern coast of Norway. Þórolfur fell out with King Haraldur of Norway, and he asked Þór whether he should make peace with the king or leave the country. Þór gave him a sign that he should go to Iceland. Þórolfur pulled down the temple, and took with him most of the timber and the earth from under the pedestal on which the image of Þór had been seated. When his





ship approached Iceland, he threw overboard the two chief pillars of the temple, on one of which the image of Þór was carved, and declared he would settle wherever Þór made these come ashore. He found the Þór pillar on a headland, to which they then gave the name of Þór's Headland (Þórsness). Þórolfur rebuilt the temple there, the largest temple to Þór ever to be built in Iceland.

## Adventure Seed

In pre-conversion times, Þórolfur's temple may figure as somewhere the player characters can go for support or to have their wounds treated, or curses removed. During the time of the conversion, the great temple has come under attack from goðar who have already converted to the new Christian faith, and the player characters must help defend the temple.

## 5 – Holy Hill

*Þórolfur settled land from Stafa river, inwards to Þór's river (Þórsar), and called all that part Þór's Headland (Þórsnes). He had so great a reverence for that fell which stands on the ness, and which he called*

*Holy Hill (Helgafell), that he enjoined that thither should no man unwashen look, and there was so great place hallowedness that nothing should be destroyed on the mountain, neither cattle nor people, unless they should go away on their own accord. That was the belief of them, that they should die into the mountain.*

— *The Book of Settlement*

Holy Hill (Helgafell) stands on the northern side of the Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellsnes). The hill rises majestically from the flat lowland valley, but is not very tall, measuring just under 100 meters.

**Myth:** Holy Hill is the holiest of all pagan sites in Iceland. It is believed that the gods live on top of the mountain, and also that the souls of the dead will go into the mountain after death. In *Mythic Iceland*, both of those myths hold true. Holy Hill has portals linking Miðgarður to the other worlds that hang from the branches the mighty Yggdrasil, the World Tree — including to Ásgarður, the world of the gods, to Álfheimur, the world of the elves, and also Niflheimur, the land of the dead and the place where Yggdrasil has one of its roots. The portals are hidden from human eyes by powerful magic placed there by the gods, and even



mythic creatures have a very hard time getting to any of the portals, which are guarded by one of the mightiest mythic creatures in all of Miðgarður, the Giant Eagle called Vindsvall.

As a result of the strong magic put upon the hill, it so happens that no one can be hurt at this place. All creatures standing on the mountain are effectively immortal until they leave the hill area.

Those who reach the top of Holy Hill on their first attempt at climbing the mountain are granted three wishes by the god Þór, as long as they climb in silence and come down without looking back. The wishes must be made with goodwill, must not be harmful to anyone and must not be repeated to anyone. The climb itself is not so difficult, but the climbers are taunted by the powerful magic of the place and its connection to the realms of the dead and those worlds beyond Miðgarður. Voices from dead friends and relatives can be heard coming from behind; begging the climbers to turn around and talk to their dead loved ones. Those with enough determination and willpower to get to the top still have a big hurdle to overcome, Vindsvall, the Great Eagle who will dive from the skies to protect the portals from any intruders.

## Adventure Seed

Someone dear to the player characters is on his deathbed. There is nothing that can be done to save him from his illness (or perhaps he or she is suffering from a nasty battle wound). The only hope is for a miracle from the gods, and the only way to guarantee one is to climb to the top of Holy Hill. The player characters must face temptation in the form of dead people they knew in life begging them for contact, and they must fight mythic creatures that cannot be harmed on the mountain. The fact that the player characters cannot be harmed themselves either should make for an entertaining yet challenging situation. Upon reaching the top of the mountain, there is the matter of dealing with the Great Eagle. Perhaps they could have a chance if they had some way of preventing being blown away by the powerful winds made by the flapping of the Eagle's gigantic wings. Is it possible that the hidden people could know of some magic capable

of keeping the characters' feet on the ground; but if they do, it would certainly come with a price.

## 6 – Tongue Rock

In the Dalir region stands an impressive rocky outcrop called Tongue Rock (Tungustapi). There are also many heated pools in this area that are used for bathing.

**Myth:** A man named Sveinn had disappeared during the winter. His brother, Árnor, knowing that Sveinn spent a lot of time by the Tongue Rock, went to search for him there. To his surprise, he found a doorway on the rock. Going inside, he saw people celebrating some kind of religious ritual, and Sveinn was among them. Fearing that the hidden people may never allow his brother to return to the world of men, he shouted out. The hidden people were furious with the disruption, and cursed Sveinn so that he would die if he ever set eyes on that rock again. The two brothers ran out of the rock-temple, with the hidden people on hot pursuit. Árnor was run over by the elven in and died in the place that is now known as Death Slope (Banbreka). Sveinn moved away from the area. One day, however, when visiting his father, a powerful wind blew the door open and he looked out at the rock, and fell dead on the spot.

## Adventure Seed

The player characters are travelling in the Dalir region and see two young men running down a hill, looking very frightened. Nothing can be seen behind them, but the clattering of hooves can be heard. The two men, Árnor and Sveinn, see the player characters and run to them, shouting a plea for help against the hidden people. Just as they reach the player characters, the riders become visible. They must do something quickly before they too are run over by the strong elven horses. Runemasters among the player characters can use rune magic to keep the riders at bay, or they may simply use their shields to protect them from the charge. Be that as it may, they have now interfered with the affairs of the hidden people, and promptly will have a curse put upon them, one that can only be







broken by finding someone else who is willing to leave behind the world of man and be a priest for the hidden people in the place of Árnor's brother Sveinn. This matter is not going to be an easy one to fix — resourceful players may seek people who are known to have close relationships with hidden folk and try to persuade them to move to the hidden world, or some other creative solution may be found — let the players sweat on this one!

are strong warriors, however, and it looks like this hunt for the monster will end in tragedy. The player characters must persuade the farmers to hold back on their plans, or join their group and protect them. By themselves, or along with the farmers, they must first search the cliffs to find the caves on the cliff side, then manage the difficult climb, and finally hunt down the troll inside the complex of inter-linked caves. Use the troll statistics from the **Creatures** chapter, but remember that this troll has Climb 90%, and due to its chameleon-like ability to blend with the background, it can only be spotted with a successful Spot skill roll.



## West Fjords

### 1 – The Death Cliffs

The vertical walls of the Death Cliffs (Látrabjarg) rise high above the sea and extend for over 14 km of shoreline. These are the most impressive cliffs in Iceland, 500 meters tall at the highest point. Several gullies cut into the cliffs and are rich in vegetation. From the sea, many caves can be seen on the cliffs.

**Myth:** A fearsome monster lives in the Death Cliffs. Those brave enough to climb down the cliff for birds' eggs rarely return with their lives. That monster is actually a particularly old and strong troll who is not happy at all with humans roaming his cliffs. This troll is an excellent climber, and is very good at blending himself with the rocky background. Also, people here talk about often seeing vessels of the hidden people fishing off the coast.

### Adventure See

A relative of a player character owns a farm in Broad Fjord (Breiðafjörður), near the Death Cliffs, and has invited all the player characters to a feast at his farm. Upon arriving there, they discover one of the farmer's sons dead near the cliffs, his body torn to pieces. The men in the surrounding farms are talking about assembling a search party to find the monster that has been killing people near the cliffs. None of the farmers

### 2 – Örn's Fjord

Örn's Fjord (Arnarfjörður), named after its first settler, is a long and wide fjord enclosed by tall mountains. It forks into two narrower fjords at its head. At the northern tongue of the fjord is the impressive waterfall Thunderer (Dynjandi) which



THE WEST FJORDS





plumets over the edge of a tall cliff. Birch woods cover the lowlands and the mountainsides.

**Myth:** The Örn's Fjord region is notorious for the various kinds of sorcery and witchcraft in the times after the conversion. Even in pagan times, many of the most powerful runemasters in Iceland live in this area. In all of mythic Iceland, this is the region where hidden people are most commonly seen and have the most constant contact with people — probably because of the high concentration of active magic users here who can see into the hidden world.

### Adventure Seed

Örn's Fjord can be used in a campaign whenever the player characters are in need of magical help or need someone who can help them in contacting the hidden people.

## 3 – Bay of Logs

Coastal mountains stand guard over Bay of Logs (Bolungarvík). There are rich fishing grounds at the mouth of the fjord known as Ice Fjord Deep (Ísafjarðardjúp). The landscape of the Bay of Logs is spectacular, with abundant forests and an impressive view across the fjords. This area can only be reached by sea.

**Myth:** The *Book of Settlements* tells of Þuríður the Strait-Filler, who came from northern Norway and settled in the Bay of Logs. Þuríður had remarkable magical powers, and it is said that before she left Norway, at a time of famine, she used magic that filled all the straits with fish, hence her nickname Strait-Filler. It is also said that, once in Iceland, she and her brother had a disagreement and put a magical spell on each other, as they were both skilled runemasters. Þuríður used her magic on her brother so that he would spend eternity as a monolith on which all birds would leave their droppings. He retorted that she should become a rock in the place where the strongest winds blew.

### Adventure Seed

One of the player characters falls victim to a curse from the hidden people, giving him extreme bad luck “until the day Þuríður Strait-Filler walks the land again.” He and his group of friends must uncover the legend of what happened to Þuríður, must find the rock and restore her to life. Things get complicated when it turns out that another family of hidden people have erected a house at the exact place where the rock stands, and thus no magic can take effect on the rock until the hidden folk move their house. The player characters may have the idea to move the rock, but that will damage the elf house and they will have to deal with the fury of the hidden folk, and most likely collect







another curse in the process. Also, the nature of the magic used by the brothers is such that when one of them is freed from its rock form, so will the other, and the player characters now will be in the middle of a magical battle and must be careful with which side they take on this conflict.

## 4 – Main Bay

At the northernmost point of the West Fjords lies Main Bay (Aðalvík), a small bay only accessible by sea. The southern end of the bay is marked by Sea Gull Mountain (Ritur), while Stream Headland (Straumnes) rises to the north, steep and impressive. The extensive lowlands at the head of the bay are covered in woodland.

**Myths:** It is told that in Main Bay there once was a man who was very skilled in carpentry and also a powerful runemaster. One day he carved runes onto a rod of wood so that anyone reading it would go blind. He threw the rod into the sea and let it drift to where one man named Snorri was sitting. Snorri who was unaware of the trick, read the runes and immediately went blind. But Snorri, who was also a runemaster, was able to create a rune script to restore his vision. Then he scraped all the runes off the rod and flung it to sea, saying “Go back to your master and you shall cause his death, if he intends to use you for evil purposes again.” The carpenter saw the rod and grabbed it. He was planning to carve it with such powerful runes that the pastor would die. But the knife slipped off the rod and into the farmer’s chest, up to the hilt, killing him.

Another tale concerning this region tells of three boys who were playing outside near a lake known as Place Lake (Staðarvatn), when they saw a grey horse. Two of the boys climbed on the horses back, and asked the eldest to join them. When the boy refused, the others called him a ninny. That was when the horse reared up with a shriek, and galloped into the lake with the two children on its back. The boy who stayed behind went home and told the tale of what happened, and people knew the other children would never return, for they had been taken by a Nykur (see page 220).

## Adventure Seeds:

1. A skilled runemaster has gone mad in the Main Bay region, and has been using his powers to cause all sorts of harm and even death to the people living in the neighboring region. He has enslaved a couple of trolls, and forced them to carve giant runes on the mountainsides so that people looking at them would be cursed. The player characters must find a way to reach the mad runemaster without looking at the giant runes on the mountain and must then defeat the trolls and their master. After that, the giant runes must be erased from the mountains, but they will need some magical help to accomplish that.

2. The player characters are travelling near Place Lake when they see a magnificent grey horse. The creature approaches them in a friendly manner and waits to be mounted. As soon as anyone climbs on its back, the horse gallops into the lake leaving the other companions only a few moments to react. Having saved their friend or not, at the next farm the player characters arrive they will be told that the Nykur have claimed the lives of many good men and many children. Something must be done about this menace.

## 5 – The Coasts

The region of The Coasts (Strandir) is one of the most remote areas in Iceland, and is known for the inhabitants’ knowledge of magic. The landscape of this region is far from uniform, the low hills of Ram Fjord (Hrútafjörður) in the south gradually change to high mountains rising straight from the coast in the northern part. Steingrímur’s Fjord (Steingrímsfjörður) is the largest fjord in the region, at about 28 km long and 7 km across.

**Myth:** There is an old story that says that long ago three trolls tried to dig a ditch across the neck of land between Steingrímur’s Fjord and Wide Fjord (Gílsfjörður) on the other side of the peninsula, in an attempt to separate the West Fjords region from the main land. They never completed the task, but the rocks they excavated from the tunnel were thrown out to sea and formed many island on the fjords. One of the three troll women was turned to





## THE NORTH



stone by the sun light, and is now the rock known as Kerling.

### Adventure Seed:

One of the most powerful land spirits of Mythic Iceland, the Giant Bull, stopped the trolls from completing their ditch. The land spirits protect mythic Iceland, and would never allow anyone or anything to separate any region from the mainland and claim that region for themselves. The Giant Bull killed two of the three trolls and cornered the third until day came and the troll was turned into stone by the sun light. The Bull then used massive rocks to cover the ditch. Many centuries after that, the Norse colonizers came to Iceland, unaware of this tale. The ditch has been covered, but a tunnel still exists underground. Now trolls have been plotting again to split the land. Their plan is to complete the tunnel, and only then collapse its ceiling all at once, so that not even the land spirits will have time to intervene. Hidden people living in the West Fjords have found out about the plan, and ask the player characters for help with stopping the trolls and finding a way to seal the tunnel forever so that no one may try again to divide Iceland.

## North

### 1 – Kola's Canyon

Under the twin waterfalls named Kola Falls (Kolu-fossar) is the Kola's Canyon (Kolugljúfur). The canyon is one kilometer long and 50 meters deep, with vertical rock walls in many places.

**Myth:** Kola's Canyon is named after the gigantic troll woman who is said to live there. On the western side of the canyon is a grassy hollow, called Kola's Bed (Kolarúm), and this is where Kola is said to lay at night when she wants to sleep. At the front of that hollow there are two thin rock pillars, which are called Bed Posts (Bríkur). Between them is a gap, below which there is a cliff down to Wide River (Vídíðalsá), which flows through the canyon. When Kola wants breakfast, she can reach down through the gap and into the river, which is teeming with salmon. It is also said that she has treasure buried in a nearby hill.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters hear that a relative of a dear friend went to Kola's Canyon looking to steal the troll woman's gold. This was three days ago and he has not returned. The friend asks the player characters to travel to Kola's Canyon to investigate. When they arrive there, they will have to sneak around in order to avoid being discovered by the troll. Kola has captured the greedy man who was looking for her gold, and plans to cook him for a meal very soon. The player characters must succeed in freeing the man and escaping, and possibly in finding the gold, without being killed by the gigantic troll woman.

### 2 – Lake Valley

Lake Valley (Vatnsdalur) is dotted with a cluster of mounds and hillocks. Many small rivers flow down into the valley from the highlands in a series of waterfalls and through a large canyon to form Lake Valley River (Vatnsdalsá), which is teeming with salmon.





Thick woods surround the river canyon. Landslides and avalanches are common in this area.

**Myth:** There is a story about a girl who worked at a farm in Lake Valley. The owner of the farm was a wealthy man, but refused to share anything with others, and he cruelly turned away all those who came in search of help. The harsh winters were very difficult for the animals that had to be outside, and many of them perished. The girl threw out of the farmhouse as much food as she could, for she was kind of heart and wanted to help the animals and the ravens, which pecked at any refuse that was thrown out. One raven grew so fond of her that he followed her wherever she went outside the house. The girl would always give the raven something to eat in the mornings. On one Sunday morning, however, the raven refused the food and flew a little distance away. The girl followed the raven, trying to feed him, but he always flew up and went farther and farther away. She followed him until she was some distance south of the farmhouse. At that moment she heard a roaring in the mountain, and turning around she saw a landslide that completely destroyed the house.

### Adventure Seed

Icelandic fairy tales often tell of intelligent animals that help those who are kind to them. In some of those tales the animals can speak, in others they cannot. You can bring that idea into your adventure. Introduce a raven, or perhaps a fox, or another animal that seems adequate, which follows the player characters. If they are kind to that animal it may come to their rescue at a difficult moment, revealing then its intelligence and even some magical power it may possess. Conversely, if the player characters are unkind or try to kill a hungry animal, it may reveal its mythical nature to them and flee — next time he shows up, however, it will mean trouble for the player characters, and it will be at the worst possible moment.

## 3 – Wide Valley and the Citadel

The Wide Valley (Víðidalur) is covered in birch forests. Through the valley flows Wide Valley

River (Víðidalsá). The most prominent landmark here is a natural fortress named Citadel (Borgarvirki); standing upon a hill 180 meters above sea level, it dominates the surrounding region. There is a circular hollow on the top of the hill, which is surrounded by 15-meter-tall basalt columns and man-made walls with only one exit to the east.

**Myth:** The first Christian missionaries to visit Iceland, Bishop Fridrik and Þorvaldur the Far-Traveller, stayed at a farm in Wide Valley in the 10th century. They were met with fierce resistance from heathen Icelanders, some of whom gathered forces to attack the farm, intending to burn the companions to death. But just as their forces were approaching the farmhouse, a flock of birds flew up, startling the horses, so that many men were thrown and injured. The attack was abandoned.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters are asked by their goði to do something about the Christian missionaries who came to the country hoping to convert the Icelanders to the Christ faith — he means, of course, that he wants them dead. Their supporters have taken the missionaries to Citadel. On the way to that natural fortification, the player characters are warned by some friendly mythical creature, perhaps a hidden person who is a friend, or by that friendly raven from Lake Valley (North — number 2), that the missionaries have used their magic to take control of the animals in the area and they plan to use the birds, foxes, and even a polar bear — recently arrived from Greenland on floating ice — against anyone trying to do them harm. This should be an important conflict for the player characters, in which they must prove to themselves and to everyone else that the Norse gods watching upon them are stronger than the god of the Christians. They must prevail. Let them plan their attack. Storming the Citadel should not be easy. One interesting outcome would be if the player characters fail to defeat their enemies — will they then convert to the new religion themselves and face the fury of the pagan goðar?





## 4 – Peninsula Fjord

Between two peninsulas, one called Peninsula of Trolls (Tröllaskagi), and the second one known simply as Peninsula (Skagi), is Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður). The valley at the head of the fjord is West Valley (Vesturdalur), and is an area of great grasslands, ideal for farming.

**Myth:** At the southern region of West Valley is a narrow hilltop known in the old times as Lava Tussock. It is said that in the times after the conversion to Christianity, an abbot took a boy up on the hilltop to help him bury a valuable hoard of silver. After the treasure was buried, the abbot pushed the boy over the edge so no one would ever know its location. Since then the cliff has been known as Holofernishöfði (Holofernishöfði).

### Adventure Seed

The myth connected to Holofernishöfði can easily be changed so that the story may have happened in pre-conversion times. The player characters hear a tale about a ghost that haunts Lava Tussock, a hill in West Valley; and that the ghost talks about buried treasure. The promise of treasure should be enough to spur the players characters into action. They will have a hard time climbing the hill, and upon getting there they will have to deal with the ghost of the dead boy, who has gone mad and now mistakes everyone that climbs to the top of the hill with the man who pushed him over the edge. Needless to say, the ghost is not going

to be happy to see a few copies of his killer (“I see you are using some wicked magic!”) coming after his treasure.

## 5 – Rock Pillars Island

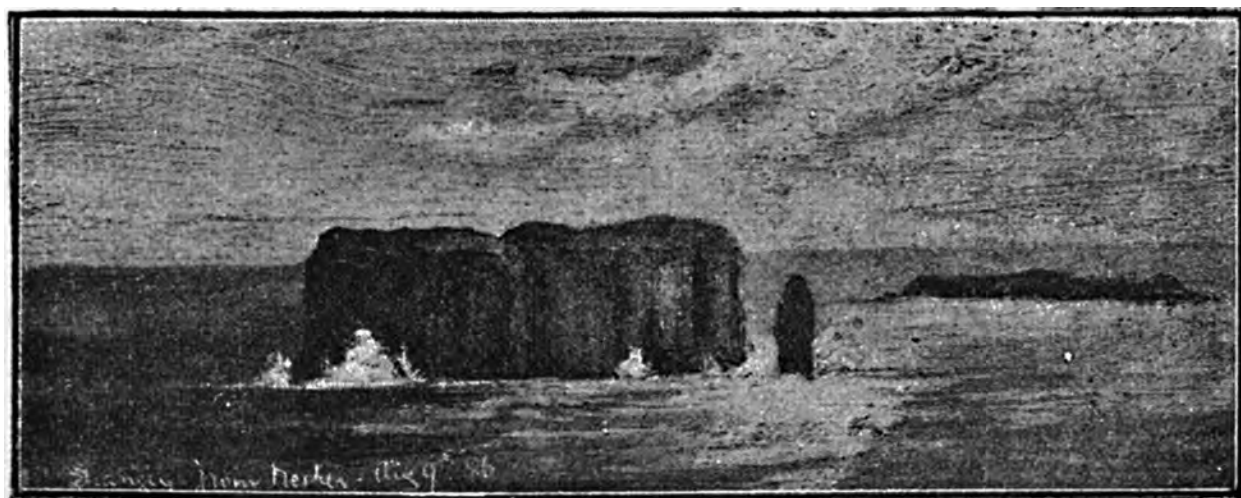
*“There is an island,” Guðmundur said, “in Peninsula Fjord, called Drangey. It is excellent for defence; no one can get up to it without a ladder. If once you can reach it there is no chance of any one attacking you there with arms or with craft, so long as you guard the ladder well.”*

— *Grettis Saga*, Iceland

Rock Pillars Island (Drangey), a massive rocky fortress standing 108 meters high, is located at Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður). The climb to the top is very difficult. The top of the island is flat and grassy. There is a large population of birds, and plenty of eggs can be collected here.

**History:** Rock Pillars Island was never inhabited. However, *Grettis Saga*, written in the 13th century, tells the story of Grettir Ásmundarson and his brother, who in 1028-1030 survived on the island as outlaws until they were finally slain there. When the brother’s fire had gone out on the island, Grettir is said to have swam ashore, a distance of nearly 7 km, to fetch embers.

**Myths:** There are many myths connected to Rock Pillars Island. One tells of the origins of the is-







land: two trolls were travelling across Peninsula Fjord, taking their troll-cow with them. But they had only gone a short distance out into the fjord when dawn broke in the east and they were all turned into stone by the sunlight. The enormous troll-cow became the island, the troll-wife became the rock pillar named Kerling (Old Woman) at the southern end of the island, and the male troll became the rock pillar known as Karl (Old Man) on the northern end.

### Adventure Seeds:

The player characters hear that someone is paying a reward for the killing of an outlaw. After searching for the man for many weeks, they discover that the outlaw has been living in Rock Pillars Island. This presents an opportunity for the players to do some tactical planning, as the island is very easy to defend and very difficult to climb. Alternatively, the player characters could be the ones who have been outlawed for something they have done during a previous adventure, and must defend Rock Pillars Island against people trying to hunt them down and kill them for a reward.

## 6 – Þórður's Headland

There is an ancient volcano in this area called Þórður's Headland (Þórðarhöfði), with a crater in its summit. The volcano is 202 meters high. Its highest peak is Warrior Women Rock (Herkonuklettur). The hollows on the headland are called Troll-Wife's Footprints (Skessuspor).

**Myths:** The story behind the Troll-wife's Footprints hollows is that a certain troll-wife once took a shortcut across Peninsula Fjord to go visit her sister, leaving her footprints behind. On the southern side of the headland is Camp Slope (Búðarbrekkur), where several large rocks stand, which are, in fact, farmhouses of hidden people.

There is another folk tale connected to this region. It is said that a farmer named Þorður once got lost during a blizzard in the winter time. He then saw such tall buildings that he was astonished, and through windows he saw people dancing and heard music playing. He knocked on the door and was

welcomed in by the family living in the building. He was given food and shelter, and in the morning after he slept he was given presents to take to his wife and children. When the farmer asked why they were being so kind to him, the man of the family told him that this was his reward for saving his son when his life was in danger. The farmer did not remember saving any children from danger, but the man explained that one day when the farmer was travelling across the country he stopped by some youngsters throwing stones at a large rock. If he had not done that, the man said, his son who was resting below the rock would have died. It was then that the farmer realized that these were hidden people. Þorður then said his goodbyes and left the house. A little while after starting his journey to his farm, he looked back and saw that the buildings were gone, and only rocks stood there.

### Adventure Seed

The GM can use a variation of the folk tale above to introduce the player characters to the kind nature of the hidden people, and perhaps to introduce an ally. The player characters are travelling across the country during the winter, and find themselves lost in a blizzard. When they are convinced they will die, they then find a group of buildings they had never seen before.

## 7 – Metal Island

At the mouth of Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður), near the eastern shore and farther out than Rock Pillars Island (Drangey), is a small island named Metal Island (Málmey). This green and fertile island stands low from the sea level at its southern end, and rises higher to the north, reaching 156 meters at its highest point.

**Myth:** No married couples can live on the island longer than twenty years or the wife will disappear. One farmer, not being able to find his wife, sought advice from a goði (chieftain-priest). The goði used magic to find where the farmer's wife was being kept. Determined to save the woman, they rode to Angelica Valley Cliff (Hvanndalabjarg), a 600-meters-high precipice. There the goði





knocked on the sheer rock. It opened up and there stood a grim giant and the farmers' wife, who had become much bigger and very ugly. The farmer lost all interest in his wife and both men fled before the giant could get to them.

## Adventure Seed

A friend of the player characters sends a plea for help. Upon arriving at Metal Island, their friend explains that in one week it will be exactly 20 years that he has been married to his dear wife. He does not intend to leave his farm, and wants the player characters to stand guard so that whatever dreadful end met by the women on this island will not happen to his wife.

The truth behind the story is that a giant who lives inside Angelica Valley Cliff has learned some magic and learned how to brew potions that can transform a woman into a giantess wife for him, but the potion will only work on women who have been married for over 20 years. Inside the cliff, the giant lives with his many monstrous wives, and his magic allows for the cave to be sealed so that there is no entrance from the cliff side.

On the night the player characters' friend completes 20 years of marriage, the giant will use a magic spell to come to the woman in her dream and command her to walk to the cliff side. She will do this as if she is sleepwalking. If the player characters prevent her from leaving the farmhouse, the giant will grow tired of waiting and will come fetch her himself. Even after the giant is killed, the player characters will still have plenty of problems, as his four current wives, local women turned into monstrous giants, will go insane without their giant husband, and will rage across the island destroying everything in their path, and killing anyone they see.

## 8 – Sacrifice River Valley

Sacrifice River Valley (Hörgárdalur) is a long valley to the west of Islands Fjord (Eyjafjörður), with many farms near its mouth since settlement time, enclosed by high mountains with permanent snow-drifts.

**Myth:** A deacon at Dark River (Myrká), in Sacrifice River Valley, invited Guðrún, a young woman from a distant farm, to the Christmas festivities. Unfortunately, he drowned in the river when he was on his way to meet Guðrún, and was buried the week before Christmas. Despite this, someone on the deacon's horse rode to her farm, where they had not heard of the deacon's death. She climbed behind the man on the horse and they set off for Dark River. As they rode the moon shone on the back of his head so Guðrún could see his white skull under his hat. She realized she was riding with a dead man, but gave no sign until they reached Dark River, where the deacon tried to drag her into his grave, which he had left open when he left on this journey. She managed to get ahold of the rope of the lych-gate bell and ring it, as he grabbed her coat with such force that it tore and he fell into the grave. For two weeks after that night, the undead deacon came every night to haunt Guðrún, always repeating her name over and over again as Garún, because it could not speak the name of God (Guð) in Guðrún's name. Finally, a sorcerer was brought from Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður) in the west, and he managed to lay the deacon to rest with a great spell.

## Adventure Seed

Just change the Christian references on this myth above so they fit pagan times — the deacon becomes a goði, and Christmas becomes Jól, the winter festival. Travelling in the countryside during the winter, the player characters seek shelter at a farm, but the people inside are very frightened and will not open the door. Around them in the blizzard they can hear a inhuman voice repeating "Garún, Garún!" After a few moments the faint outline of a man with half of his skull exposed can be seen not far from the player characters. This is a draugur (see page 215), a powerful warrior who has returned from his grave.

## 9 – Grimur's Island

Grimur's Island (Grímsey) is the northernmost island off the coast of Iceland, at 41 km from the







mainland. It has an area of 5.3 square kilometers and reaches a height of 105 meters above sea level at its highest point. All but the southern shoreline consists of steep cliffs. The climate is relatively mild and there is rich vegetation cover of forests and marshlands.

**History:** The *Sagas of the Norwegian Kings* (*Heimskringla*) relate how King Ólafur of Norway asked for the island as a gift, but the Icelanders rejected his request, since the king would have an army stationed there and this would be a threat to Iceland's independence.

**Myth:** Sealskin maidens are frequently seen in the waters around Grimur's Island. Other unusual types of visitor to this island are polar bears, which come ashore on drift ice from Greenland. The best known folktale that takes place on Grimur's Island concerns one such bear. The story goes that during a severe winter all fires had died on Grimur's Island so that no fires could be lit in any farm. Three men were sent ashore, walking over the ice to the mainland. When they reached a gap in the ice one of the men was afraid to jump across and decided to walk along the gap, hoping to find a place to cross. The ice began to break up and the man found himself on an ice floe being carried out to sea. In the evening he reached a tongue of ice and jumped onto it. There he met a polar bear with two cubs. The bear motioned for him to lie down next to her and allowed the man to suckle her milk. For the next few days the man stayed there with the bear, recovering his strength. When he was strong enough the bear allowed him to mount on her back and she then swam to Grimur's Island. The man was so thankful that he took the bear home. There he had two of his finest sheep slaughtered, tied them together and hung them across the bear's back. Then the bear swam out to sea, back to her cubs.

## Adventure Seed

Grimur's Island is the perfect place to put your players in contact with polar bears. This encounter could result in a fight against the massive beasts, or could be something more along the lines of the myth mentioned above, with the player characters

being helped by a bear. The bears they meet could also be native intelligent polar bears (see **Creatures of Mythic Iceland**, page 214), instead of the bears that come floating on ice from Greenland.

## 10 – Waterfall of the Gods

This is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the country, 12 meters high and 30 meters wide. It is situated in the 175 km long Trembling River.

**History:** In the year 1000 the Law Speaker Þorgeir Þorkelsson, himself a chieftain and priest of the old Norse gods, spent a night in silent meditation under his cloak and decided that Iceland should become a Christian nation. To set an example, he removed all the idols of the old gods from his temple and flung them into the water at the waterfall. The gods, angry with this great insult to them, shook the earth and split the waterfall in two. Since then, this site with the twin falls has become known as Waterfall of the Gods (Goðafoss).

**Myth:** *Grettis Saga* tells the story of the outlaw Grettir Ásmundarson, who when hiding at a farm near the Waterfall of the Gods was attacked in the night by a troll. The creature did its best to haul Grettir down to the river canyon and throw him over the cliffs, and almost succeeded, but Grettir managed to chop off the troll's arm and the troll fell into the canyon. Suspecting that there were more trolls in the area, Grettir decided explore the river canyon a few days later. He jumped off the cliff and into the waterfall. Diving under the waterfall he found a passage into a huge cave. He entered the cave and saw a great fire and a fearsome giant sitting there. Grettir and the giant fought, and when Grettir finally managed to slay the giant, the river ran red with the giant's blood. It is said that Grettir found considerable treasure in the giant's cave.

Many other tales say that a great number of hidden people live in the rocks and cliffs in this area.

## Adventure Seed

This one is taken straight from the story as told in *Grettis Saga* and summarized above, with only





a few changes to adapt the story for a group of heroes. The player characters hear that there are trolls terrorising the people of Bárður's Valley (Bárðardalur), and one of them has family members living there. When the player characters spend their first night in a farm near the Waterfall of the Gods, they are attacked by a large troll. After slaying the creature, they hear stories of more trolls living in the river canyon. They must dive into the river and down the waterfall, to look for caves where trolls may be living. The cave is only reachable via an underwater passage. Once inside the cave, they will have to fight more trolls and, finally, a giant. Only then may they claim the giant's treasure.

The GM could introduce an interesting twist in this adventure, where the player characters are helped by a man who was hiding inside the giant's cave when they arrived. It turns out that this man is an outlaw. They must now decide if they fight and capture this new ally or if they choose to remain friends. Such an alliance could in the future get the player characters into some serious trouble with those hunting down the outlaw.

## Cast

### 1 – Njarðvík Cliffs

Njarður's Bay (Njarðvík) is the northernmost bay of the East Fjords region. Mountains embrace the valley and forests cover the lowlands. Along the coast there are vertical cliffs, which have numerous caves accessible only from the sea. These are known as Njarður's Bay Screens (Njarðvíkkur-skriður). The seas are often agitated and the loud noise of the waves crashing against the cliff walls can be heard from far away.

**Myth:** A monstrous creature, with the upper body of an animal and the lower body of man, attacks those people who travel through this area, especially during the dark months of winter. The creature is known as Gnawer (Naddi), because of the gnawing (*nadda* in Icelandic) sound he makes while



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moving, and is said to live in a cave in Gnawer's Gully (Naddagil) to the north of the cliffs.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters are travelling through this area and hear stories from the local farmers about the monster that has killed many of the people of who dare to travel along the coast of Njarður's Bay. The local goði (chieftain-priest) offers a reward to those who can defeat the monster, but for many years no one has been brave enough to attempt to win the reward, after several contenders were killed by Gnawer. The player characters must devise a plan to reach the cliff sides from the sea and attempt the perilous climb at Gnawer's Gully to find their way into Gnawer's Cave, if they want to surprise the monster. Alternatively, they may prefer to send someone travelling alone at night, as a bait to attract Gnawer, and wait in hiding to attack the creature when it shows itself. Be that as it may, the GM should present Gnawer as a





formidable foe, one that is at the same time very strong, intelligent and agile. Gnawer can climb the cliff face with ease. As for the monster's actual appearance, the folk tales are vague as to which animal constitutes the top half of the beast, so the GM can choose anything that seems suitable, such as a bull (which would make Gnawer very similar to a minotaur) a bear, or any other animal.

## 2 – Eastern Stronghold Fjord

At the northernmost reaches of the East Fjords highlands is Eastern Stronghold Fjord (Borgarfjörður Eystri), and at its head is a valley covered by thick forests and surrounded by mountains of dark rock. The impressive Door Mountains (Dyrfjöll) rise up at the end of the valley, owing its name to the large gap in its highest peak, which looks much like a gate or door.

**Myth:** Many people traveling in this region speak of seeing hidden people, and many believe that a rocky hill in the middle of the valley, known as Elf Stronghold (Álfaborg), in fact marks a settlement of the hidden folk. It is also believed that the hidden people living in the region attend church in Kækjudalur, a narrow valley inland from Eastern Stronghold Fjord. In that valley stands a huge rock shaped like a building, which the local settlers have named Church Rock (Kirkjusteinn).

In mythic Iceland, there is truth in those myths. The first elf to settle in Eastern Stronghold Fjord did so after observing and later befriending one of the first Norse settlers in the area, who was a Christian. This Norwegian farmer took it as his mission to convert his friend to the new faith, and so he did. During the next hundred years, more of the hidden folk joined the original settler in Eastern Stronghold Fjord, and this became one of the larger hidden folk communities in Iceland. It is also a very special community, being the only one to be almost entirely Christian. That first hidden man who was converted by his Norwegian friend over a hundred years ago is the leader of the community and a priest at the hidden Christian church at Church Rock.

## Adventure Seed

The hidden people are peaceful beings and fight no wars over religious matters. The Norse men and women born in Iceland, however, are often willing to resolve religious disagreements with a blade, even if the disagreement is with the hidden folk. An idea for an adventure involves the characters and a goði who has a farm near Eastern Stronghold Fjord and who is a strong believer in the Norse gods. This goði has been harassing and killing Christians in the area with the intent of eradicating the East Fjords of the new religion. Growing more confident with each victory against Christian converts, and with each burned-down farm, he decides to take his little religious war into the realms of the hidden folk. He is not a stupid man, however, and knows that the elves have powerful magic to protect themselves with, and thus he needs the help of brave warriors and runemasters — enter the player characters. They must destroy the Elf Stronghold and drive away the Christian hidden folk. The GM should run this adventure in a way that presents a real moral dilemma. When the hidden people allow themselves to be seen, so that they can fight their attackers with their magic, the player characters will see that the people they are fighting are actually much like them. Their women and children look at them with terrified faces, while the unarmed hidden folk try to protect their families and farms the best they can. The player characters will soon find out as well that even if unarmed, elves can be formidable adversaries who can lay devastating curses on them. They must choose whether to destroy this community of peaceful people, or join them in their fight for the right to live in peace.

## 3 – Liquid River Lake

Between the coastal highlands of the East Fjord and the ice-covered peaks of the Central Highlands lies a long green valley, covered by lush forests of birch and mountain ash. Cutting through the middle of this valley is Liquid River (Lagarfljót), which broadens at one point to form a lake 35 km long and about 2 km across. The waters of the lake are a murky brown, and bubbles can often be





seen bursting on the water surface. The lake rarely freezes during the winter.

**Myth:** A monster lives in the depths of Liquid River Lake. The story of the origins of the serpent says that it all began when a young woman living in a farm near Liquid River received from her mother a gold ring. Her mother said that the gold would multiply if only the ring was placed beneath a heather-serpent. The girl did as her mother suggested, and stored both ring and serpent in her linen chest. After several days the serpent had grown so big that the chest was bursting apart. The girl was very frightened, so she took the chest and threw it into the river. Some time later, having reached a gigantic size, the serpent started killing people and horses that approached the lake. The serpent is also known for stretching its head out of the water and onto the lake banks, and spewing a terrible poisonous gas.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters are contacted by a friend living on a farm near Liquid River. Several of his livestock, along with people from the area, have been killed by the serpent. He will pay a hearty sum to anyone who can defeat the monster. They may also keep for themselves the serpent's gold ring, which is said to have magical powers, if they can find it. The serpent is, in fact, impossible to kill while it has its treasure. The only possible way to help the local people is to fetter the serpent to the bottom of the lake, but that should prove to be quite a challenge for even the most experienced group of fierce warriors.

## 4 – Decoration Island

The largest of the fjords on the East coast is Whale Fjord (Reyðarfjörður). At the mouth of the fjord is Decoration Island (Skrúður), a rocky island rich in bird life. This island is not inhabited, but men sometimes go there to collect bird's eggs. A few farmers also take their sheep to the island to graze during the summer months.

**History:** Whale Fjord is the place where the first Norseman to come to Iceland made landfall. The

seafarer Noddadur was traveling from Norway to the Faroe Islands but lost his way and made landfall at this spot in Iceland around the year 850. He sent some of his men up on Whale Mountain (Reyðarfjall) to look for signs of habitation. Having found no one in this new land, he called it Snow Land (Snæland) and sailed away.

**Myth:** A troll lives on Decoration Island, deep in the depths of a huge cave. This creature is responsible for the disappearance of some of the finest sheep on the island, and many more problems. The story goes that the daughter of a local goði in Whale Fjord disappeared, and was never found despite a thorough search on land and sea. Some time later, during the winter, a ship got into very bad weather in the fjord and took shelter below the cliffs of Decoration Island. The crew of the ship stood together on a ledge of rock on the cliff, cold and wet, and started to sing to pass the time. The rock wall then opened and a huge hand emerged, holding a big dish of porridge, and a voice said, "Now my wife is amused. Now I am not amused." The men were hungry so they decided to eat the food, and after they were done the dish vanished into the rock. The next day they got to the mainland safely to tell the story, and everyone believed that the wife the monster mentioned was the goði's missing daughter.

### Adventure Seed

The local goði at the Whale Fjord region asks the player characters to go to Decoration Island and rescue his daughter from the hands of the troll living there. It has been many years since she disappeared, but the goði has not lost hope of ever seeing her again. After hearing the tale of the men who spent a night on the island (see Myth above), he is convinced that his daughter is indeed being held captive inside the rocky hills of the island. The player characters must learn a song, then travel to the island and sing it by the rock face. When the rock opens again with food, they must seize the opportunity to gain access to the inside of the cliffs. Alternatively, they may choose a different course of action altogether, such as a direct assault down the cave on the island, or even something more creative such as disguising themselves in







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sheep hides and waiting for the troll to show itself on the grazing fields of the island.

## 5 – Skafti's Mountains

The Skafti's Mountains (Skaftafell) are located just southwest from Field River Glacier (Skeiðarárjökull), and the shifting sands below the glacier. Here two glacial tongues extend down into the lowlands from Isolated Glacier (Öræfajökull). Nearby is Iceland's highest point, Angelica Valley Peak (Hvannadalshnúkur), at 2,119 meters.

**Myth:** There was a farmer at the valley down from Skafti's Mountains named Bjarni, who was an excellent craftsman. In a cave above the Skafti's Mountain woods lived a troll woman who was friendly towards Bjarni, she guarded his sheep in the mountains and his driftwood on the shore. Bjarni built a door for her cave, with all the door fittings, so she would be more comfortable there. One winter she said to Bjarni that a ship had run aground on

the shore. All the men aboard were dead but one. The only survivor was a fearsome warrior who would destroy all the farms in the east of Iceland unless he were slain. Then she took up an axe and went with Bjarni to the shore, where she did battle with the warrior and slew him.

## Adventure Seed

The player characters find themselves lost in very bad weather for a couple of days. Hungry and tired, they spot a sheep and have no choice but kill it for food. When they attack the sheep, they are surprised by a troll woman who climbs up from a crack in the glacier ice. She tries to protect the sheep and scare the characters away. If the player characters seriously injury her, she will flee by jumping into a deep crack in the ice and cannot be followed. The next day the weather is still bad and the PCs reach Bjarni's farm. The farmer is most distressed upon hearing about the injuries that his troll friend has endured in the hands of the player characters. They must be diplomatic in order to avoid a bloody fight

with the farmer, one which could result in the PCs being outlawed. Bjarni finally reveals that the troll woman had told him, just a few hours before her encounter with the PCs, of the dangerous warrior who came ashore earlier that day. The only hope of defeating this dangerous man is to bring the troll woman back to full health so she can help in the fight. If the player characters don't have any runemaster with them capable of magically healing wounds, they must find one, then climb the Skafti's Mountains, and find the troll. They may then fight the menace alongside the troll woman.

## South

### 1 – Katla of Kötlugjá

The forest known as Noisy Woods (Dyngskógar) spreads along the margins of Hjörleifur's Fjord





(Hjörleifjörður). At the head of the fjord is Swamp Valley Glacier (Mýrdalsjökull), and beneath the glacier is the volcano Katla, which erupts every 80 years or so.

**Myth:** Once upon a time, a woman named Katla worked at a farm in the area. She was skilled with magic, and owned a pair of magical breeches that allowed anyone who wore them to run very fast and without ever growing tired. Many people were fearful of her and of her magical powers. One day a shepherd in the farm named Barði wore Katla's breeches, so he could run faster and find all the farm's sheep before sundown. When Katla realized that Barði had used her breeches, she was furious. That same day she secretly drowned him in a barrel of whey. After the winter passed and the level of the whey dropped in the barrel, Katla knew that her wickedness would soon be discovered, so she put on her breeches and ran northwards toward the glacier, where she was believed to have flung herself into a gully. Soon after, there was a flood from the glacier heading for the farm. The people of this region came to believe that the volcanic eruption and the resulting flood were caused by Katla's magical powers. The gully in the glacier was named Katla's Gully (Kötlugjá), and the wasteland left over by the floods was called Katla's Sands (Kötlusandur).

## Adventure Seed

The player characters are visiting a farm of a friend or relative for whatever reason, when suddenly a devastating glacial flood hits the land, destroying the farm and the land around it. The first challenge for the PCs will be rescuing as many people as possible from the floods. After the waters have subsided, their friend or relative tells them the story of Katla, a servant who used to work at the farm but fled north a few months ago shortly before another servant was found drowned in a barrel of whey. Katla is feared for her magical powers. The friend begs the PCs to hunt down the wicked woman and avenge the deaths of those who perished in the flood. Hunting down Katla on the glacier and slaying her should be quite a challenge, as she can use her breeches to run very fast over the snow and never grows tired. Also, she is a very

skilled runemaster, and has allied herself with an evil giant that lives atop the glacier.

## 2 – Swamp Valley

The Swamp Valley (Mýrdalur) region has relatively mild climate but gets a lot of rain in the warmer months of the year. In this valley there is a river called Foul Stream (Fúlilækur), named after the strong smell of sulphur from the geothermal sources upstream. Foul Stream is a fast running river that has claimed many lives. Facing inland, on the left of the river is Sun-Home Glacier (Sólheimajökull), sliding down to the lowlands. On the right side of Foul Stream is a desert of black volcanic sands all the way to the sea. At the head of the valley are the Swamp Valley Mountains, a tall mountain range, and Pétur's Island (Pétursey), a flat solitary hill rising 300 meters. Nearby on the valley is Islands Hill (Eyjarhóll), which is 200 meters tall and strangely shaped like a pyramid.

**Myth:** A farmer at Swamp Valley wanted to build a temple on his land but was short of timber for the structure. One day a man he had never seen before came to him and offered to build the temple. The man wanted no payment for his work, but he told the farmer that he was to say what his name was before the construction was completed. If the farmer failed to say the man's name he would have to hand over his only son, who was aged five years old at the time. They agreed, and the stranger started work on the temple foundations. The man worked with astonishing speed, and in a few days he was almost finished. The farmer now grew very worried as he had been enquiring in the neighboring farms about the stranger, but no one knew his name. Early on the morning of the very day when the temple construction was to be finished, the farmer lay down on a hillock on his land from which he could see the man working on the building. He then heard a woman singing, and realised it was coming from inside the hillock: "Finnur soon will come, your father from Swamp Valley, to fetch his darling son." The farmer now ran back to the temple, hoping to get there in time. The builder was about to nail the last board in place, finishing the building, when the farmer came to the doorway and said: "So you are almost done, Finnur." The







man was so surprised that he dropped his tools and vanished, and he was never seen again.

The wide and flat Pétur's Island hill, and the pyramid-shaped Island's Hill are both believed to be homes of hidden people.

## Adventure Seed

The player characters meet a farmer in Swamp Valley who tells them about the stranger who is building a temple for him, and he tells them and about the deal he struck with the stranger (see Myth above). The farmer offers a few pieces of silver to the PCs if they can discover the name of the stranger, but warns them against hurting the man in any way, as he doesn't want to be outlawed or worse. Let the players now devise their plans on how they may find out the man's name. If their plans fail, let them hear the chanting from inside the hillock just as in the folktale. GMs wanting to introduce hidden folk friends to the player characters may have the stranger show them his hidden farm and explain to them that he and his wife would love to have a child but they can't conceive on their own. Will the player characters set out to bring them an orphaned child? That choice could pose an interesting dilemma, especially when the player characters are unsure of what it would mean for a child to grow up with the hidden people.

## 3 – Forest River Fall

*Richly stacked is Prasi's chest  
under Forest's waters cold.  
Whosoever goes there first  
will find wealth untold.*

— Old Icelandic verse

Twenty or so waterfalls cascade down the mountains slopes on the course of Forest River (Skógá). The biggest of these waterfalls is Forest River Fall (Skógafoss), which is 60 meters tall and 25 meters wide. The sheer volume of water falling, and the resulting spray cloud, makes it a very impressive view. On fine days, when the sun is shining, there is often a rainbow above the waterfall. This

whole region, named Forests (Skógar), is covered in woods of birch and willow.

**Myths:** The first settler in this region was Prasi Þórólfsson, a rich goði who was also a powerful warrior and skillful runemaster. He once got into a dispute with another runemaster, one Loðmundur the Aged, who lived east of Glacier River (Jökulsá). Both men used their magical skills, one after the other, to divert the river over to their lands, which ended up creating the wastelands of Sun-Home Sands (Sólheimasandur) and Forests Sands (Skógasandur). Finally, they agreed to let the river run the shortest route to the sea. The river was renamed Forest River, and Prasi Þórólfsson settled near the newly created Forest River Fall.

Before his death, Prasi is said to have sunk a chest full of gold and silver coins in the deep pool beneath Forest River Fall. Many have tried to retrieve the chest without success. Once a young man managed to get a rope through a ring on the end of the chest, but the ring suddenly came off its fastenings and the chest vanished into the depths. He only retrieved the ring, which was later used for a temple door.

## Adventure Seed

The promise of a chest full of gold should prove enough to draw the interest of any group of ambitious adventurers. The catch here is that the pool under the waterfall is not only extremely deep, and the chest very heavy, but there is a Water Serpent living in its depths, magically bound by Prasi to forever guard the treasure chest. Anyone with the **Swim** skill may try to dive down to the bottom of the pool, which is a Difficult action. A **Spot** skill roll is necessary to spot the chest once the swimmer gets to the bottom. The Water Serpent will attack anyone who gets to the bottom of the pool.

## 4 – Westman Islands

The Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar) are an archipelago of fourteen islands, situated just off the southern coast of Iceland. Steep sea cliffs dotted with caves surround many of the islands.





**History:** The *Book of Settlements* tells the story of Ingólfur Arnarson and his sworn brother, Hjörleifur, at the very start of the settlement of Iceland. The two brothers had just arrived in the country and were searching for a place to settle, when Irish slaves belonging to Hjörleifur rebelled and killed their master, then fled to the offshore islands. Ingólfur soon chased the slaves and killed all of them. The islands were from then on known after the Irish or “west men” slaves killed there.

**Myth:** Gannet Reef (Súlnasker) is a small rocky island in the Westman Islands archipelago, and is so called for its large gannet bird colony. The island stands up out of the sea on four rock pillars, so high that it is possible to row under it if the sea is calm. No one has ever managed to climb up to the island, but a few of those who tried and fell on their way up were saved by a large, mysterious man. This same man has been seen at times waving to islanders from the island, to warn them of bad weather. No one knows the identity of that man, or if anyone else lives on that island.

## Adventure Seed

The mysterious man living on the island of Gannet Reef is actually one of the hidden folk, living there in solitude worshiping the god Freyr. He has achieved Apotheosis (see *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook page 318), and is the greatest servant of Freyr in Mythic Iceland. Instead of adventuring throughout the known world, however, he prefers isolation and solitude where he may commune with his god undisturbed. The GM may use this powerful yet reclusive figure in a campaign that directly involves religious themes.

## 5 – Blue Mountain

An old turf mountain, formed during an eruption beneath a glacier, Blue Mountain (Bláfell) reaches a height of 1,200 meters. On the top of the mountain is a plateau, from where it is possible to see all the glaciers and rivers in Southwest Iceland.

**Myth:** According to folk legend, at one time a dangerous giantess lived on Blue Mountain. The Keel (Kjöllur) route that crosses the central highlands

of Iceland had become impassable, as travellers either got killed by the giantess or went insane as they were hunted down. Large numbers of farmers’ sheep also disappeared. The giantess, in fact, proved to be an elf woman under a magical spell. To be released, a male human would have to call her by name. The man who finally managed to do so was called Ólafur, and the last that was known of him was that he deserted the world of man to go live among the hidden people.

## Adventure Seed

The player characters are traveling from South Iceland to the North and they plan to use the Keel route across the highlands. When they reach a farm near Blue Mountain, a farmer warns them that the highland route has become impassable because of the threat of the giantess. It is obvious to the PCs that the local farms have been badly affected by the loss of their sheep, and by the many deaths of brave men in the region who dared to go up the mountain to face the giantess and have never returned. Having accepted the challenge to kill the monster, the player characters find themselves in a tricky situation after they meet her for the first time and recognize the evil giantess’ true nature. The discovery can happen in many ways, a player character with magic skills may recognizing the nature of her condition, or the troll’s cave can be found bearing the signs of the creature’s former life as one of the hidden people. Now the characters should know that slaying the cursed woman would probably mean swift retribution from the hidden folk in the form of curses put upon them, or worse. They also may see here an opportunity to be in the gratitude of the hidden people, which they can use to their benefit. There is still the chance that the woman may give them some magical reward if they manage to break her curse. They must first understand the nature of the magic and then how to dispel it, which may be easy if they have a runemaster among their ranks, otherwise they will need to find someone skilled in runes to help them. To find the name of the woman, they will need to talk to the hidden folk themselves, or to someone with Sec-







THE HIGHLANDS

ond Sight who may have known the woman in the past. The last bit of the challenge is to find the cursed woman and call her by her name, before she sneaks around and attacks them.

## 6 – Hooded Cloak Mountain

*The renowned fiery cauldron, which men call Hell's chimney ... that cauldron is affirmed to be like a small furnace compared to this enormous inferno.*

— Herbert of Clairvaux, *Liber De Miraculis*, 1180

The perpetually snow-covered volcano known as Hooded Cloak Mountain (Hekla) is dormant throughout the entire Pagan Commonwealth period. It erupts not long after that, in the winter of 1104, and every 50 years or so after that. Before the 1104 eruption, the slopes of Hooded Cloak Mountain are covered in lush forests of birch and

willow. When not erupting, the peak is always covered in snow and a small glacier.

**Myth:** Hooded Cloak Mountain is believed to be the gateway to Hel's realm of the dead, Niflheimur. Some Christians also believe the volcano to be the prison of Judas, or a gateway to Christian Hell.

## Adventure Seed

An important ally of the player characters is dead, taking to the grave an important secret. The player characters must find the entrance to the tunnel in Hekla that leads to the realm of the dead, face the dangers on the way, and finally convince Hel, the ruler of Niflheimur to allow them to talk to the dead man. Hel is a wicked being and will not allow it without asking them for something in return, maybe asking them to arrange the death of some powerful individual in Iceland by any means but battle, assuring that he comes to Niflheimur and not Valhalla after death. If the player characters enrage Hel in any way, that may result in a powerful volcanic eruption of Hooded Cloak Mountain.

# Highlands

## 1 – Cold Valley

Cold Valley (Kaldidalur) is a mountain pass over the Western Highlands. The track starts near Assembly Plain, the site of the National Assembly, passes between Þóri's Glacier (Þórisjökull) and the volcano known as Ok, and leads up north. The scenery along the route is varied, being in turn grand and desolate. The way over the pass is only open in the summer, is difficult, full of debris and stones, with cairns being the only route markings along the way. The highest point of the route is at 727 meters.

**Myths:** Old folktales say that all Iceland's trolls gather in this valley to play games, while troll spectators watch from the surrounding mountains.





Another folk tale tells the story of a man named Skúli who had been sentenced as an outlaw at the National Assembly for some serious offenses he had committed. Before anyone could kill him, he mounted his steed Sörli and fled. A large number of people pursued him from Assembly Plain all the way up Cold Valley. Skúli escaped and reached his home but his horse fell down dead from exhaustion. To honor his excellent horse, Skúli held a funeral wake. A large section Cold Valley is now known as Skúli's Run (Skúlaskeið)

A few scholars in modern times have suggested that the holy grail is hidden in Cold Valley (see **Religion** - page 63).

## Adventure Seed

The story of Skúli can be used by the GM whenever the player characters have brought someone to the courts at the National Assembly for any crime that carries the punishment of outlawry. Once the PCs think they've done their job and that justice has been served, the GM may surprise them with the outlaw fleeing to this desolate area of the country on a very good horse. They will have to face not only the perils of traveling through the highlands and the threat of mythic creatures living there, but also fierce competition from other men wanting to kill the outlaw and keep his treasures. And when it comes to treasure and to being able to claim a reward, competition can get brutal and bloody.

## 2 – The Keel

The highland region between Long Glacier (Langjökull) and Temple Glacier (Hofsjökull) is called Keel (Kjölur). Ever since the first Norse settlers began exploring Iceland, the Keel mountain route has been an important link between the North and South regions of the island. Green meadows in the South change to barren sand deserts close to the mighty glaciers. Between the glaciers, 420 meters above sea level, is a large and deep lake known as White River Lake. Further north along the Keel route, the rugged terrain gives way to sheltered green valleys. At the northern end of the route near the headwaters of the Mixing River (Blanda), the hot springs of Hot Spring Valley (Hveravellir)

provide a warm oasis. The Keel route is only open during the summer months.

**Myth:** Many people have died of exposure when trying to cross the Keel mountain route, and the trail is haunted by the undead (see Draugur, page 215). Outlaws are believed to live in this area as well.

*Gettis Saga* tells the story of how the outlaw Grettir the Strong spent a winter on the valley between Long Glacier and Temple Glacier, under the protection of a giant named Þórir, and of his romance with the giant's daughters.

## Adventure Seed

The Keel path will likely be the first choice of route for player characters wanting to travel between North and South of Iceland in the summer months. The journey will take many days, and they will have to deal with the undead, trolls, and giants living in the highlands along the mountain path. An interesting moral question may be introduced when the player characters are in need of food and water, and to their surprise they find a shack where a farmer and his wife scrape a hard living from a few sheep. They welcome the player characters and give them all the help they can, even though they don't have much themselves. It is only after they become acquainted that it becomes obvious to the player characters that these are famous outlaws. If confronted, the farmer and his wife plead and beg that the player characters have mercy on them. If they take the outlaws back to the lowlands or kill them here, and take proof of their killing with them, they will likely be paid a reward. Leave that choice up to them, but be sure to include in your campaign the consequences of such choices.

## 3 – Goose Sands

This mountain route is the longest road across the Central Highlands, and it reaches higher altitudes than the Cold Valley and Keel routes. The name Goose Sands (Gásasandur) is a reference to the pink-footed geese that breed in summer in the highlands. This route has had a bad reputation since the early times of the settlement of Iceland, for danger, bad weather, and the dryness of its lava desert.





### GOOSE SANDS

**Myth:** There are many stories about the undead walking corpses (see Draugur, page 215) of those who perished trying to make the treacherous journey across the highlands via the Goose Sands. Also, many outlaws take advantage of the remoteness and bad reputation of Goose Sands to hide in this region of the highlands, attacking and robbing travelers along the mountain route.

### Adventure Seed

The player characters are asked to travel along Goose Sands in the summer, to look for the bodies of two men from a farm in the south. The men tried to travel north through the route in the early summer, but never arrived at their destination. The bad weather and blizzards should be a surprise to the player characters. They find the bodies of the two men, too decomposed to be able to establish cause of death. Soon after that discovery they begin being haunted by what appear to be the spirits of the

deceased — they hear bone-chilling noises and are hit by stones that are thrown by something unseen. Their horses get scared and gallop away, leaving the player characters to make the long journey back through Iceland's most dangerous mountain route by foot. The GM should play these as terrifying events. In fact, what has been haunting the player characters is not a ghost but rather an outlaw who has been living in the highlands for a few years. He is trying to split the group so he can sneak up on each of them alone and kill them, one by one. This adventure could be made even more interesting by adding a mythic touch to the story in the form of a giant who the player characters and the outlaw run into when they finally realize what is going on and give chase to the outlaw. Under the threat of a giant, and having to deal with the worsening weather, the player characters' only hope now is to work together with the outlaw, who knows the area very well, if they ever want to get out of the highlands alive.

# ELVES AND THE HIDDEN PEOPLE



Icelanders of the Viking Age believe that there are two nations living in Iceland, the nation of the Norse settlers, and the nation of the hidden people.

## What People Know

Since the arrival of the first Norse settlers in Iceland, many have met the hidden people. Everyone in mythic Iceland has heard of the stories of this brother-race to humankind.

It is said that they are kind beings, never seeking to cause direct harm to anyone, and often help those in need. Many people in dangerous situations have been saved by the hidden folk.

For example, a well-known story from the East Fjords tells of a young farmer who was sent by his father to the hills to look for a sheep that was missing from the farm. After searching far and wide, the young man found the missing sheep on top of a steep hill. He climbed that hill and saw that the sheep was distressed because its lamb had gotten stuck on a ledge on the cliffside. The young farmer felt he had to rescue the lamb. He carefully lowered himself on to the narrow ledge and lifted the lamb to safety, but he found that he could not climb back up the cliff wall and was stuck there. No one knew he had climbed that steep hill, so he knew that when the night came and he was overcome by exhaustion, he would most certainly fall to his death. In despair for his life, the boy shouted out for help even though he knew there was no one around to hear him. To his surprise, however, he heard a girl's voice shouting back, and saw the

face of a beautiful young woman looking down at him from the top of the cliff. He had never seen her before, so he asked her for her name and where she was from. The girl told him her name and added that she was one of those whom his people call the hidden folk. The boy was startled, not knowing if he was imagining her, and not knowing if she was a ghost trying to trick him into releasing his grip and falling to his death. The girl offered him her hand, which he grabbed, and it felt real enough. She was strong and pulled him up to safety. Once on the top, he saw that she was kind and fair, and she pointed to a farm house on the slopes of a nearby hill, saying she lived there. The young man had never seen the farm before. The girl said goodbye and walked away before he could ask any more questions. She disappeared right in front of his eyes, and so did the farmhouse.

There are many stories like this, from all over Iceland. Many farmers, chieftains, women, and slaves alike have seen the hidden people, and some have been helped by them. Help sometimes comes as warnings about extreme weather in the future, which have saved the lives of many fishermen that would otherwise be lost at sea.

Sometimes the hidden people make no secret of what they are. At other times, a person only realizes the true nature of the stranger after he or she has disappeared.

It is also said that the hidden people should be respected as they can bestow curses and use magical powers that can ruin even the most powerful of men. Not long after the time of Settlement, a powerful farmer, just back from a Viking trip, saw a farmhouse on the countryside which was not there the day before when he had passed through





the same place. He realized this must be a house of the hidden people. He had heard the cautionary stories about curses and magical powers, but he had also heard the stories of the wondrous gifts that the hidden folk often given to people. Thus, he imagined the many riches inside that house, and decided that he was not afraid of what looked to be simple farmers. He would rob them and become a rich man after he sold his booty. A child who was tending to a farm animal saw the warrior approaching, and ran inside the farmhouse. A man came out the house and warned the warrior to go away, but he was ignored. When the greedy warrior raised his sword to strike the man, everything went black. He was forever blind, and no one could ever find that farm again.

Children are a case apart. Boys and girls below ten years of age can, most of the time, see into the hidden world of the elves. They often become friends with the children of the hidden people and will play with them inside their houses. It is common for children to have friends that their parents cannot see. Still, the parents never question the

existence of their childrens' hidden friends. The friendship is even welcomed, as the hidden friend may come to the aid of the boy or girl in times of need, even many decades later.

## Seeing the Hidden People

Those who are skilled in magic and rune lore often see and communicate with the hidden people. There is rune magic that can enable someone to see into the hidden world for a limited period of time. That magic doesn't always work, however.

There are also those who have been born with the gift of Second Sight (See Skills, page 26). Those people can sometimes, but not always, see the hidden folk and their hidden houses and hidden farms and animals as just as easily as those of man. Most often, those blessed with this gift become friends of the hidden people. Many will seek the advice of those who are known to have hidden people as friends, for they have access to magical



knowledge about nature and even about events in the future.

It is not only those who know the magical arts and those who are born with the gift that can see the hidden folk. Normal people also see them, but only when the hidden folk want to be seen. The exception is in times of true despair, such as when one's life is in danger. At those times it is possible to see into the hidden world, even if the hidden folk nearby don't want themselves to be seen.

Seeing the hidden folk, in whatever circumstances, is considered a blessing by most. The followers of the Christian faith however, believe that the hidden people are some sort of demon and those who see and consort with them are heretics.

## Appearance

The hidden folk look exactly like humans. They have the same size as normal men and women. They are almost always very beautiful, of very fair skin and of fair hair. They dress themselves as farmers, with the same clothing as the Norse farmers.

The hidden people never carry weapons, unless out on a rare hunting expedition. There are no warriors among them, as they are peaceful people who only want to live their lives in peace.

The only distinguishing marks that the hidden people have are a ridge instead of a groove in their upper lip, and no obvious division between their nostrils. Anyone meeting a member of the race of hidden people may attempt a Difficult Spot skill roll to notice these features, and a Knowledge (Myths) skill roll in order to understand that these features indicate he or she is meeting one of the hidden people.

## Houses and Farms

The hidden houses of the hidden people appear to normal people as large rocks. In the hidden world however, they look like normal farmhouses just like those of any farmer in Iceland — made of mud and stone walls and a turf roof.

The hidden folk choose to build their houses where large rocks exist in the world of man be-

cause those places have a stronger connection with the forces of nature. Also, this prevents people from walking through the space occupied by the house in the hidden world, which is something that disturbs the flow of energies in that world.

Most houses of the hidden people are poor, even by the standards of the Norse settlers. That is because the elves do not value expensive goods and other luxuries as normal people do. They have no need to clutter their houses with anything that is not essential. The house interior has a central fireplace, raised wooden platforms with beds, and chests for personal belongings, and usually nothing more.

The hidden people, just like normal people, make a living by farming and fishing. They have farm animals — cows, sheep, etc — that are hidden animals, invisible to normal people. It is said that the hidden animals produce milk which can cure any disease and the wool from the hidden sheep can protect against the harshest winters and lasts for many generations.

Human children often go into houses of the hidden people, to play with friends, and most stories about the interior of their houses come from what those children tell their families.

## Magic of the Hidden People

The stories of those who have met the hidden people tell of the wondrous magical powers they possess. They are especially skilled at magical curses. Some of them can have glimpses into the future, and can speak to people in their dreams.

The hidden folk have a strong connection with nature, and can predict the weather conditions accurately for many days in the future. In a place such as Iceland, where extreme weather is common and the weather changes with little warning, this is precious knowledge. Fishermen who have the gift of Second Sight, and who see a fishing boat of the hidden people going out to sea, take it as a sign that the weather is going to stay good that day and that the catch will be plentiful.

In game terms, elves have very powerful magic at their disposal, beyond anything human runemasters have access to. This book does not go







into detail regarding the magic of the hidden people. Beyond the sample selection of magic spells listed later in this chapter the GM should make their magic as powerful as it fits the campaign that the group is playing.

## Gifts From the Hidden People

Those who have helped the hidden people, and those who have befriended them, often receive gifts from them in gratitude. These gifts are not powerful swords or other weapons, as they don't commonly use weapons, but are mostly common household or farming items, or items of clothing, which are always of very high quality and often have magical powers.

Gifts from the hidden people can be things such as light clothes which can protect from extreme weather, saddles from which the rider can never fall, horse shoes which allow horses to run very fast, etc.

## Moving Over to the Hidden World

The hidden people are very beautiful to look at, kind hearted, and many would say charming, so it is of no surprise that more than a few times men and women of mythic Iceland have fallen in love with one of the hidden folk.

This kind of romantic relationship may last for a long time, many years even, in-between worlds. A young man or woman at first spends as much time he or she can with their hidden lover. However, the hidden people cannot spend too much time in the world of men, and as relationships grow stronger it becomes harder and harder to be separated by this invisible wall.

Hidden people cannot permanently move to the world of men, but they have magical powers that may allow a normal man or woman to move into the hidden world. When that happens, that person is forever invisible to normal people, as the magic that the hidden people use to make them-

### About the Term "Hidden People"

There is no written evidence that the Icelanders of the Viking Age used the term "Hidden People" (Huldufólk). This term does not appear in any of the Icelandic Sagas or any other extant medieval text. In fact, the first recorded use of this term in Iceland dates from fairy-tales written in the 14th century.

The use of the term "Hidden People" in this book is as a result of the concept of combining the Viking Age Sagas with the later fairy-tales to create a unique setting for Mythic Iceland.

The people of Mythic Iceland know of the elves of legend, who emerged from the flesh of the giant Ymir when the world was created, and now live in a world called Álfheimur. They also know, from stories from the first settlers and perhaps from their own experience, that there are people living in Iceland who look very much like them but are invisible most of the time. Some may suspect that there is a connection between the elves of Álfheimur and the invisible folk, the hidden people, but none are sure that they are one and the same.

selves visible does not work on them. The only possible communication with those left behind is through dreams, and those who have gone to the other side often appear in the dreams of family members to reassure them that he or she is alive and well. Those with the Second Sight skill, however, are able to see those humans who have crossed over to the hidden world, but only on a successful Difficult roll of the Second Sight skill.

A family that learns that one of their sons or daughters has fallen in love with a hidden person must thus come to terms with the possibility that he or she may one day leave the world of man, to join their beloved in the hidden world. Still, it is considered lucky to have a son or daughter living among the hidden people, because they are believed to live a very good life in the hidden world and that they watch over their family from there.





# The Hidden Truth

The following information is beyond the knowledge of the vast majority of people living in mythic Iceland.

It is also for Game Master's eyes only. Players, look away now!



## The Nature of the Hidden People

The hidden people have not always lived in Miðgarður, the world of man, nor have they always been a peace-loving people. They are actually elves who have decided to leave Álfheimur, the world of the elves, to live in Miðgarður as refugees in this world.

For more information about Álfheimur and the elves living there, see the **Álfheimur** chapter.

## The Great Rift

Álfheimur and Miðgarður were created as worlds mirroring each other, with the same landmasses and seas.

When mythic Iceland was created in Miðgarður by the rise of the dragon Svafnir (see Mythic Times, page 9), a similarly shaped island appeared in the northern ocean of Álfheimur, also infused with magical energies like the island in Miðgarður. The magic of that island in Álfheimur was considered wild and unstable and the elves initially kept away from it, but after some time the island was colonized and a new elven kingdom was founded there.

For millennia, elves from that island in Álfheimur travelled to mythic Iceland in Miðgarður via the portals that link the islands in both worlds. Those journeys happened only sporadically, by small groups of elves. They explored mythic Iceland and interacted with its native mythical creatures.

Thousands of years passed.

Then humans came to mythic Iceland—first the Romans who only stayed briefly, and then the Norse settlers in large numbers, and the elves took notice. They had never seen or had any contact

with the race of men before. They found that the humans could not see them, and took advantage of that to watch them closely, but in secret.

After a decade or so, some of the elves became more and more fond of the humans they observed from afar. They admired the society the humans built in mythic Iceland; a society free of the politics and back-stabbing of the elven royal courts. They also became interested in how the humans lived—not from magic like the elves in Álfheimur had always done—but instead from working the land, from their farms, and from fishing. It seemed to be a life much closer to nature than the elven court politics back in Álfheimur. Those men, those children of Óðinn, just seemed to them to be happier.

That small group of elves decided to abandon Álfheimur and go live in Miðgarður, in mythic Iceland. They built farms that closely resembled human farms, and used their magic to change some of the animals from Álfheimur to look like and act like the animals the humans kept on their farms. They prospered and decided to stay in Miðgarður and sever their connection with Álfheimur forever. Over the next years, more elves joined them, in a migratory movement that became known among the elves as the Great Rift.

Soon, a sizable portion of the population of this elf kingdom in Álfheimur had relocated to Miðgarður, settling in mythic Iceland, where they built farms to work the land — these are the “hidden people.”

Just as the humans had decided that they did not want to have a king in Iceland, so did the elves. They were tired of the royal courts of Álfheimur. Communal units were created similar to the Hreppur (see page 39) of the Norse. They did not create any assemblies or legal courts, however, as they intended to live a peaceful existence, and have so far avoided getting into blood feuding, as the Norse settlers do.

## Contact with Humans

Having discovered that they were invisible to humans, elf contact with humans was initially restricted to meetings with those born with the gift of Second Sight, who could see them. They also found that





in moments of true distress, humans expand their perception and can see the elves. Over time, as the stories of encounters spread, the elves came to be known among humans as the “hidden people” — in recognition to the fact that there are people living in Iceland hidden from human eyes.

It wasn't long before the elves learned how to use their magical abilities to make themselves visible to humans, both to individuals and to groups of humans. This, however, requires a great deal of magical energy, and thus can only be maintained for a short time, usually no more than a few hours.

The children of the hidden people who have been born in mythic Iceland, in Miðgarður, can become visible to human children at will, without any special skill or magic spell. This does not mean they can become visible to human adults, however. When those elven children become adults, they lose their easy connection to human children, and as the first migrants from Álfheimur did, they have to learn to use magic to become visible to humans both young and old.

There is no formal code of laws among the hidden people of mythic Iceland, and more specifically, no laws among them defining exactly how they should behave towards humans. There is however, a generally agreed opinion among all hidden people that, given the violent nature of the race of man, the elves should keep contact with them to a minimum.

## Beliefs of the Hidden People

The hidden people mostly pray to their god Freyr, who rules over their home world of Álfheimur. However, Freyr has far less influence among the hidden people in mythic Iceland than he does with the elves in Álfheimur.

A number of the hidden people have taken on the worship of Þór, Óðinn and the other Norse gods as well, as the connection of those gods with their new home world of Miðgarður is strong. A small group has even taken on Christianity, having learned it from Christian settlers.

After the conversion to Christianity in the year 1000, the hidden people, just like the humans, slowly convert to the new faith. After that time,

stories are common of a mysterious stranger coming to a church carrying a newborn baby and asking for it to be baptized, but after the baptism the priest finds out that no one else in the church could see the stranger or the baby.

## Family and Children

Most hidden people, just as it is the case with the humans who share mythic Iceland with them, live in their farms as married couples and many have children. It is rather more difficult for them, however, to have children of their own.

Women of the hidden people who become pregnant in Miðgarður almost always have complications during the final weeks of pregnancy. This is because it is not natural for an elf to be born outside of Álfheimur, and the child needs some energy native to Miðgarður to “anchor” itself to. For that reason, hidden people often need the help of human midwives to bring their children into the world.

There are many well-known stories across Iceland of midwives who are asked by a hidden person to come to his wife's aid and help with the birth of the child. Those midwives recount that no help was required from them other than simply touching the pregnant woman's belly during labor. A tingly sensation, they say, can be felt running down their arm, as if energy was flowing from the midwife to the mother and child. The hidden people are always very thankful for the help of human midwives, and thank them with gifts.

## Life and Death

Elves don't age in Álfheimur, but they do in Miðgarður. Their life span is much longer than that of humans, but still they get old, and eventually die of old age.

## Society

There are many similarities between the society of the hidden people and that of the Icelanders. This should not be a surprise, as they observed humans for a long time before deciding to settle in Miðgarður,





and in doing so they tried to model their dwellings and lifestyle on those of the Norse settlers.

The farms of the hidden people are scattered across mythic Iceland, also on the highlands, where the Icelanders did not settle because of the harsh weather conditions. The hidden people living in those places can shield themselves from the worst of the weather by the use of their magical abilities. The farms are isolated and there are no villages of the hidden people.

The hidden people number only a few thousand in mythic Iceland.

## Love Between Humans and Hidden People

Hidden people admire many things about the humans of Miðgarður, and consider it a joyous event when a human decides to marry a young elven man or woman and to permanently move into the hidden world.

It has become clear, however, that the children of such a union are born sick, and most die before completing one year of age. Still, a few half-elves have grown to be adults and have themselves taken on an elf husband or wife and have had their own children. Only by the third generation are the children born completely healthy and strong.

Half-elves can walk freely between the world of man and that of the hidden people, spending any amount of time on either side. They can always see the hidden folk and their houses and farms, and can also spend as much time visible to humans as he or she wants, without having to resort to magic spells in order to make themselves visible.

## Using the Hidden People in Your Game

A *Mythic Iceland* GM may choose to make the hidden people an important factor in the campaign, introducing individuals among them who have an agenda and will only help the player characters if they have a good reason for doing so. Conflicts between settlers and hidden people, and among factions of hidden people, are good starting points for campaigns.

Alternatively, *Mythic Iceland* GMs may use the hidden people as a plot device, a way of moving the story by giving the player characters clues, help, or advice they need. As such, the GM may treat them as benevolent but mysterious NPCs who have magic powers capable of just about anything.







# Hidden People

## Characteristics

|     |       | Average |
|-----|-------|---------|
| STR | 3D6+3 | 12      |
| CON | 3D6+1 | 11      |
| SIZ | 2D6+6 | 12      |
| INT | 3D6+3 | 12      |
| POW | 3D6+4 | 14      |
| DEX | 2D6+6 | 12      |
| APP | 3D6+3 | 14      |

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 11

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** None

## Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/4   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/4   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/4   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/5   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/3   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/3   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/4   |

| Weapon      | SR  | Attack | Damage               |
|-------------|-----|--------|----------------------|
| Long Bow    | 3/7 | 45%    | 1D8+1+½db (bleeding) |
| Short Spear | 7   | 40%    | 1D6+1+db (impaling)  |

Hidden People do not use weapons in combat. When needing to defend themselves they always resort to magic, especially curses. They do use weapons, however, for hunting birds and seals, just as humans do.

**Skills:** Climb 70%, Craft (Wood) 45%, Dodge 40%, Farming 50%, First Aid 65%, Jump 40%, Language (Norse) 40%, Language (Elven) 80%, Listen 55%, Persuade 30%, Poetry 50%, Prophecy 70%, Sense 65%, Spot 60%, Stealth 70%, Swim 50%, Track 60%.

**Allegiance:** Freyr 50 (Average); Loki 10

**Magic Spells** (from *Basic Roleplaying*) - Dispel 60%, Light 100%, Perception 60%, Resistance 50%, Vision 60%, Speak to Mind 40%.

## New Magic Spells:

**Curse (80%):** This very powerful and flexible spell allows for magical curses to be placed on any living creature. Common effects include turning someone into an animal or into stone, causing someone to go blind, etc. An escape clause that completely dispels the magic must always be part of the curse; it must be something difficult to accomplish but within the realm of possibility, and that must be announced to the victim when the spell is cast. There is nothing that the victim can do to resist this spell, but it can be dispelled by anyone with the Dispel magic spell, or by a runemaster capable of creating a strong five-rune magical script that dispels magical effects. This is a powerful spell, but the caster must pay a high price: 2 permanent points of POW.

**Become Visible to Humans (80%):** This spell allows elves to become visible to normal men and women. Power Point costs: 5 per hour.

**Speak in Dreams (70%):** This spell allows the caster to enter someone else's dreams and to communicate with that person inside the dream. The caster must be within 30 km (20 miles) from the target.



# Álfheimur



## Origins

After slaying the giant Ýmir, the gods created many worlds. Among those were Miðgarður, the world of men, and Álfheimur, which were built as mirror images of each other with similar continents and seas.

The elves, which had sprung from the very flesh of the primordial giant, were given Álfheimur to live in, under the watchful eye of the god Freyr. Unlike Miðgarður, Álfheimur was filled with wild magic that constantly altered everything.

Elves spread far and wide in Álfheimur, even as many lives were lost to the unstable nature of magic in those times. Still, great nations were founded and wars raged among them for control of the sites with the strongest magical energies. When finally the wild magic was tamed, it heralded a new era for the elven nations of Álfheimur — an era of prosperity and security. Over millennia, the spells that tamed the old wild magical energies were all but forgotten.

For the next few thousand years the elves developed an intricate system of nobility, one in which nearly every elf is part of a royal house and every elf's main concern is with his or her own social position within those courts. Political ladder-climbing and backstabbing became the norm. Position or rank within the local court became entangled with each elf's own existence, to the point that when an elf lost his or her social standing to another elf ascending the social ladder, the social loser is literally reborn — magically transformed into a child, his or her memories of the previous life erased, ready to start life again at that lower social rank.

When mythic Iceland appeared in Miðgarður (see Mythic Times, page 9), so great were the magi-

cal forces unleashed by the great dragon Svafnir, that an island appeared also in Álfheimur, similar in size to that in Miðgarður. The new island was filled with wild magic, and the elves were afraid that dangerous magic would spread through Álfheimur once again and threaten the elven kingdoms. A powerful elven house was enlisted to tame the island using tattered tomes and fragmented texts containing the only spells still in existence that could tame the wild magic. Although many lives were lost to the wild magic, the elven house was successful in their mission, managing to contain the wild magic and in doing so, they acquired new knowledge that made them very powerful. The other elven nations warned them not to leave the island, fearing that their new power could destabilize the delicate balance between nations. Thus a new elven kingdom with its own noble court was born on that island, in exile from the all other elven kingdoms in Álfheimur.

Queen Bóthildur rules over the elves on the island in Álfheimur. She has held that position since the new elven nation was established, and is the only one who remembers the time before the island was created and the wild magic was tamed. The traditional political backstabbing of the elven courts goes on there too, and is even more vicious than in the other nations.

## Álfheimur Elves in Mythic Iceland

A magical pathway, or portal, created by the force of the dragon's violent arrival to the surface in Miðgarður, connects the sister-islands in the two worlds. On the Miðgarður side, the portal is protected





## Álfheimur Elf

(The elves from Álfheimur, which the player characters are likely to meet in Miðgarður, are from the more militaristic and bellicose royal houses, who insist in the continued exploring of mythic Iceland and Miðgarður despite the dangers.)

| Characteristics |       |    | Average |  |  |  | Hit Points per Hit Location: |             |              |       |
|-----------------|-------|----|---------|--|--|--|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
|                 |       |    |         |  |  |  | D20 Melee                    | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
| STR             | 3D6+3 | 12 |         |  |  |  | 01-04                        | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 6/4   |
| CON             | 3D6+2 | 11 |         |  |  |  | 05-08                        | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 6/4   |
| SIZ             | 2D6+6 | 12 |         |  |  |  | 09-11                        | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 6/4   |
| INT             | 3D6+3 | 12 |         |  |  |  | 12                           | 11-15       | Chest        | 6/5   |
| POW             | 3D6+6 | 15 |         |  |  |  | 13-15                        | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 6/3   |
| DEX             | 3D6+6 | 15 |         |  |  |  | 16-18                        | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 6/3   |
| APP             | 3D6+3 | 14 |         |  |  |  | 19-20                        | 20          | Head         | 6/4   |

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 11

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** 6-point, includes helmet, looks like darkened hard leather

**Fatigue:** 20

| Weapon      | SR  | Attack | Damage               |
|-------------|-----|--------|----------------------|
| Long Bow    | 2/6 | 70%    | 1D8+1+½db (bleeding) |
| Short Sword | 7   | 60%    | 1D6+1+db (Impaling)  |

**Skills:** Climb 40%, Dodge 70%, First Aid 65%, Hide 45%, Jump 60%, Knowledge (Myths) 70%, Language (Norse) 20%, Language (Elven) 80%, Listen 45%, Persuade 30%, Sense 65%, Spot 60%, Prophecy 30%, Stealth 60%, Swim 50%, Track 60%.

**Allegiance:** Freyr 60 (Average); Loki 20.

**Magic Spells** (from *Basic Roleplaying*): Dispel 60%, Light 100%, Frost 60%, Illusion 40%, Perception 60%, Resistance 50%, Wall 60%.

**New Magic Spells:** Curse 40%, Become Visible to Humans 30% (see page 149).

by the Land Spirits (Landvættir), which will not allow anyone to enter it.

Throughout the centuries, many expeditions were sent via the portal to explore the island in Miðgarður. Dealing with the guardians of the portal on the way back to Álfheimur, however, was always a very dangerous undertaking, and prohibited large-scale exploration of Miðgarður.

With the coming of the children of Óðinn, the humans, to Mythic Iceland, big changes took place in the isolated elven nation. With the so-called Time of the Great Rift (see *The Hidden Truth*, page 146), a few thousand elves decided to abandon traditional elven court politics to live a simpler life in Miðgarður. They settled in mythic Iceland and became known as the hidden people by the humans.

Exploratory missions from Álfheimur didn't stop after the Great Rift. Expeditions are undertaken by the most militaristic royal houses, which continue to visit mythic Iceland, are now also interested in keeping an eye on the elves who have settled there, whom they see as betrayers of the elven kingdom. There has been some conflict between the two groups, and also between the elven expeditions and the humans on the island. Some of the elven settlers fear that if the Land Spirits ever stop guarding the portal, a large military invasion could be launched and they would certainly suffer.



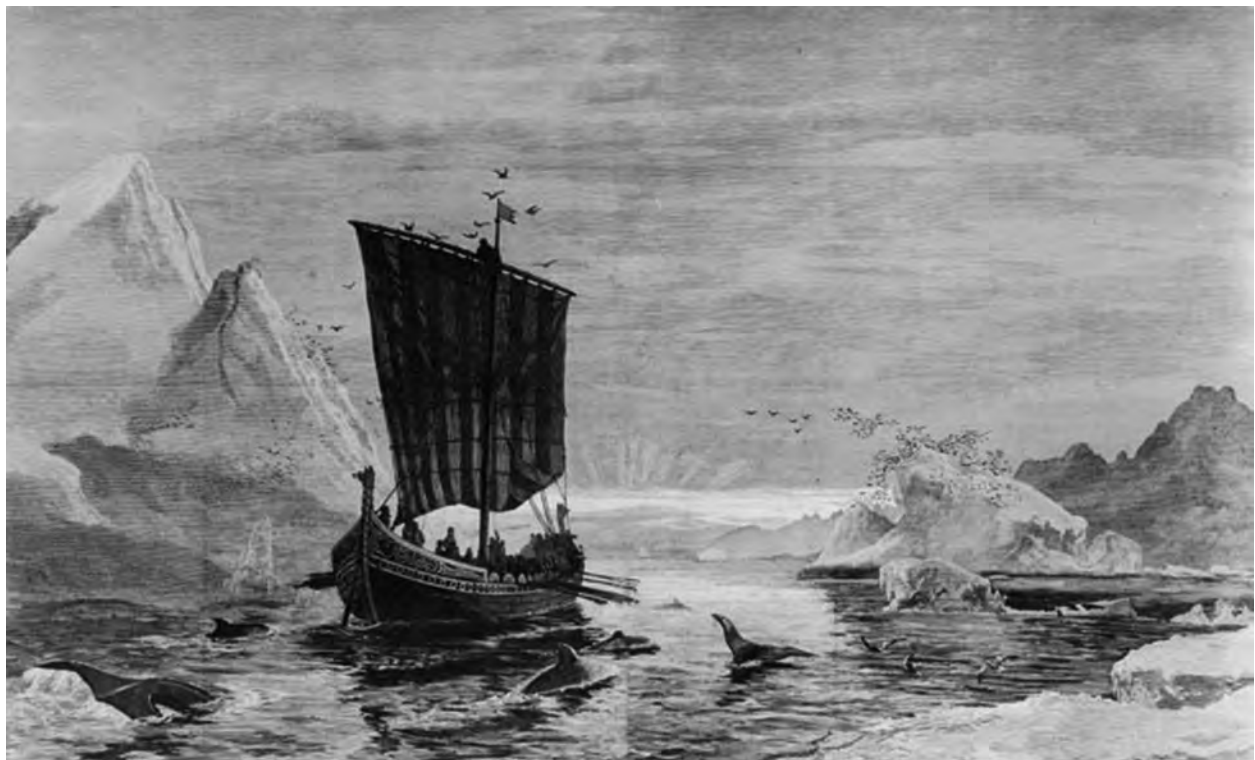
# THE LANDS TO THE WEST



*The country that is called Greenland was discovered and settled from Iceland. A man called Eiríkur the Red from Breiðafjörður (Broad Fjord) went there from here and claimed the land later called Eiríksfjörður. He called the country Greenland, saying that men would be encouraged to go there if it had a good name. They found human settlements, fragments of boats, and stone artifacts. From these remains it could be concluded that the same type of people*

*had lived there as had settled in Wineland — the ones whom the Greenlanders called Skrælings. Eiríkur began the settlement fourteen of fifteen winters before Christianity came here to Iceland, according to what a man, who himself followed Eiríkur the Red on the Voyage, told Þorkel Gellisson in Greenland.*

— *The Book of Icelanders*, by Ari Thorgilsson The Learned, Iceland, 12th Century







## Greenland

Just as with the Norse discovery of Iceland earlier, the discovery of Greenland was accidental.

Traveling in the year 900 from Norway to his native Iceland, a man named Gunnbjörn Úlfsson was driven off-course by strong winds and swept into unknown waters far to the west of Iceland. He came upon a group of rocky islands, which he named after himself — Gunnbjörn's Skerries — and he also caught glimpse of land further to the West.

It would be many years later, in the year 978, before anyone would again attempt to find the land spotted by Gunnbjörn. By that time, the whole of Iceland was fully settled, and many people were ready to jump at the chance to find new lands they could claim as their own. An Icelander named Snæbjörn Galti organized an expedition and sailed to Greenland that year with a shipload of prospective colonists. They landed on the eastern coast and spent a harsh winter there, then trouble broke out among the men that resulted in violence and murder. The survivors returned to Iceland to face bloody vengeance.

No one attempted the crossing to Greenland again for the next four years, until the travels of Eiríkur the Red. Like Iceland's first settler, Ingólfr Arnarson, Eiríkur and his father had immigrated to Iceland in 980 because of some killings committed in Norway. Eiríkur's bad temper soon got him in trouble again, and in 981 he was declared an outlaw as a result of a number of killings on the west coast of Iceland. With a vengeful band of enemies on his heels, Eiríkur decided he would attempt to find the land that Gunnbjörn Úlfsson had sighted, and he set sail alone from Iceland due west.

After traveling 800 kilometers (500 miles), Eiríkur found the eastern coast of Greenland. Mindful of the disastrous winter that Snæbjörn Galti's expedition had spent in that same region four years earlier, Eiríkur decided not to attempt to land at that spot, but to instead turn south and round the southern edge of the country. He spent three years exploring the western coast of Greenland, sailing along the coast during the summers and camping in different locations each winter. Al-

though Eiríkur found some signs that people had lived in Greenland before, he never met anyone and it was clear that those who had lived in that land must have long ago moved on to some other place.

In the year 985, Eiríkur returned to Iceland for a final confrontation with his enemies, and to organize a colonizing expedition. In order to attract more people to move to the country he had

## Greenland in the Sagas

The Saga writers had a keen interest on life in Greenland, and many Icelandic Sagas mention events taking place there.

*Grœnlendinga Saga* (Saga of the Greenlanders) and *Eiríks Saga* give a detailed account of the exploration and colonization of Greenland and Wineland.

The story of the failed first expedition to Greenland is told in *Snæbjörn Galti's Saga*, which is no longer extant, but a condensed summary of that saga is incorporated in *Landnámabok*.

*Fóstbræðra Saga* (The Sworn Brother's Saga) tells the story of an Icelandic poet who travelled to Greenland seeking to avenge the death of his sworn brother, and gives a good description of the hardship of life in the country.

In *Kroka-Ref's Saga*, a man outlawed in Iceland goes to live in Greenland.

*Flóamanna Saga* tells the story of a man called Porgils who sets sail to Greenland with the intention of settling there. His ship runs into difficulties in the frozen sea, the crew faces starvation, and his wife gives birth to a son and later is brutally murdered. Porgils manages to keep his newborn son alive until they finally make land in Greenland. Life there is far from what he had expected though, and disillusioned, he goes back to his old farm in Iceland.

The **Story of Einar Sokkason** describes how the first Greenland bishopric was founded in 1126, and gives a good description of life there.

*Poet-Helgi Saga* also deals with events taking place in Greenland.





explored, he gave it the name Greenland. As a result of that attractive name, and of the accounts of a country with plenty of resources and free land, Eiríkur found no shortage of volunteers in Iceland to answer his call. In the summer of 985, Eiríkur led a fleet of 25 ships sailing west to Greenland, carrying several hundred settlers. The ships encountered very bad weather, and only 14 reached

their destination, with the others being forced to returned to Iceland, and a few lost at sea.

Two settlements were established on the west coast of Greenland. Most of the settlers established themselves in the Eastern Settlement, with 190 farms loosely grouped around Eiríkur the Red's large farm, which he named Steep Slope (Brattahlíð), in Eiríkur's Fjord (Eiríksfjörður). Those settlers acknowledged Eiríkur's authority. Another





group of colonists pushed 300 kilometers further northwest, and established the Western Settlement, with 90 farms.

## Traveling to Greenland

The route considered the safest to Greenland is the so-called “Eiríkur’s route,” that begins westwards from the Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellsnes) on the west coast of Iceland, then shifts southward and around the southern tip of Greenland. This journey, on a knörr-type ship, takes three to six (1D4 + 2) days with favorable winds and a steady speed of about 10 knots.

A broad band of ice lies along Greenland’s east coast, forcing ships to follow the coastline from afar and to be very careful in order to avoid the larger pieces of floating ice that may damage the ship.

When making the crossing in particularly good weather, it is possible to see both Iceland and Greenland from the middle of the Greenland Straight.

The travel time on a knörr-type ship between the Eastern and Western settlements in the west coast of Greenland is around two days with favorable winds. If the conditions are not favorable, and the journey is made by rowing instead, it takes six days to travel between the settlements.

See Navigation (page 187) for details on how to interpret the different result on a Navigate skill roll. On a crossing from Iceland to Greenland, a failure may mean that ship finds Wineland instead.

## Climate and Landscape

The climate in Greenland during the Viking Age is similar to Iceland’s. The winters are harsher and longer, but still manageable for the Norse settlers. In the interior of the country, however, the temperature never climbs above freezing.

The landscape in Greenland is rather more dramatic than the landscape the Icelanders know from their home country. Great glaciers cover most of Greenland, and only a narrow strip along the coastline allows for human settlement. Bare moun-

tains of grey granite stick out of the ice sheets in most of the country.

There are considerable birch woods in parts of the southern coast, where grass and willow bushes cover some of the hills.

North of the Western settlement, beyond Bear Island (Bjarney), the icecap approaches the sea until it merges with the arctic ice.

## Life in Greenland

To Icelanders, Greenland holds a certain fascination as an exotic country. The truth, however, is that life in Greenland is not very different from life in Iceland.

The turf houses are built the same way in Greenland as in Iceland. There is sufficient grassland on the coastal strip between the sea and the great glaciers of the Greenlandic interior to allow for animals to graze in the summer and for enough hay to be collected for the animals to eat during the winter.

The fjords and rivers of Greenland are full of fish. The settlers also hunt reindeer, seals, walrus, and polar bears. Beached whales are more common here than on the coast of Iceland, and one whale can provide food for several families for a few months.

Driftwood is more abundant in Greenland than in Iceland, making it possible for the Greenlanders to build bigger houses.

Trade between Greenland, Iceland, and the settlements in Wineland is frequent. The Greenlanders depend on foreign trade for many major necessities, such as wheat, timber, and iron. In exchange they export walrus ivory, skins, hides, furs, and ship ropes made of walrus hides.

Walrus tusk is the main commodity of the Greenlanders. It is in great demand in Europe as a substitute for elephant ivory used to carve decorative objects. The ivory trade during this period has been disrupted by conflicts with the Islamic world.

The total population of Greenland during the Viking Age is between four and five thousand people at its peak. Nearly all Greenlanders are either born in Iceland and settled in Greenland, or born





in Greenland to Icelandic parents. There are also a small number of slaves from Ireland, Scotland, England, and from Wineland.

Christianity was introduced to Greenland from Iceland, shortly after the year 1000. The first bishop of Greenland was established much later though, in 1126.

## Greenland Law and Government

Greenland is an independent nation, separate from Iceland and from the other nations and kingdoms of the Viking world, with its own code of laws, modeled after the Icelandic laws.

The Greenlanders have an annual National Assembly, meeting at a place called Stronghold (Garðar) in the Eastern Settlement, with legisla-

tive and judicial authority, presided by a Law-speaker, just like the Alþing, the National Assembly of Iceland.

## Eastern Settlement

This is the larger of the two settlements on the west coast of Greenland. This is the place where Eiríkur the Red chose to build Brattahlíð, his large farm, comprised of four barns and more than forty head of cattle. The colonists who arrived with Eiríkur in 985 built their farms roughly around Eiríkur's farm, numbering 190 in total. The total number of farms in this region increased over time, reaching as many as 500 farms by the end of the 12th century.

Until Eiríkur's death in the year 1002, all those living within the settlement area acknowl-



THE EASTERN SETTLEMENT





edged his authority over the Eastern Settlement. After that, there is no central power figure, but rather the rule of law through the Greenland National Assembly.

## Western Settlement

Located 300 kilometers further northwest from the Eastern Settlement, the Western Settlement is about half the size of the first. The farms here are further apart, taking advantage of the large and flat valley where the settlement is located.

The Greenlanders from the Western Settlement are keen explorers of the northern reaches of the country, organizing regular expeditions to the regions within the Arctic Circle.

## Creatures of Greenland

### The Bear-Wolf

This beast looks like a gigantic wolf, as large as the largest of polar bears. It has mixed characteristics of both wolf and bear. The head and jaw is that of a wolf, while the paws are as large and powerful as a bear's.

Unlike common wolves that hunt in packs, the Bear-Wolf is not a social animal and hunts alone. It is active at night and is known for hiding in the woods near the Eastern Settlement, waiting to attack anyone foolish enough to leave the safety of the farmhouses at night.



THE WESTERN SETTLEMENT



## Characteristics Average

|     |        |       |
|-----|--------|-------|
| STR | 3D6+24 | 30-34 |
| CON | 3D6+10 | 20    |
| SIZ | 3D6+21 | 31-32 |
| INT | 5      | 5     |
| POW | 3D6    | 10    |
| DEX | 3D6+2  | 12-14 |

**Move:** 15 (7 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 26

**Damage Bonus:** +3D6

**Armor:** 4-point fur

**Fatigue:** 54

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite   | 7  | 55%    | 1D12+½db (bleeding) |
| Claw   | 6  | 60%    | 1D8+db (bleeding)   |
| Slap   | 7  | 45%    | 1D4+db (crushing)   |

A Bear-Wolf attacks once with its enormous jaws. If it manages to bite the enemy, it will hold on and tear at it with its claws. On a successful bite attack, a character must succeed on an opposed STR roll or be vulnerable to two claw attacks on the next round. The victim may attempt to break free every round, but cannot attack, until he or she is ripped to shreds by the bear-wolf's powerful claws.

**Skills:** Climb 40%, Listen 80%, Sense 80%.



THE BEAR-WOLF

## Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 4/7   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 4/7   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 4/10  |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 4/10  |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 4/7   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 4/7   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 4/9   |

## Wineland

### History

In the year 986, an Icelandic man named Bjarni Herjólfsson returned to Iceland from Norway, where he had spent the winter. He was wealthy and had his own merchant ship. Upon arriving in Iceland, Bjarni was told that his father had sold his farm and emigrated to Greenland with Eiríkur the Red. This news came as a shock, and Bjarni decided to depart immediately to Greenland to meet his father. None of the crew had ever sailed the Greenland Sea before.

Instead of following "Eiríkur's route" from the Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellnes) on the west coast of Iceland, Bjarni and his crew sailed west from the region of Islands (Eyrar) on the south coast of the country in an attempt to save time, as it was already late in the summer season. Fog set in early and they could not see the sky for days. They trusted a rule of thumb known to them from their journeys between Norway and Iceland: in foggy conditions the wind blows south. However, they were unfamiliar with the different weather patterns in the Greenland Sea. As a result Bjarni steered his ship too much to port and thus missed the southern tip of Greenland.

After seven days lost at sea, without knowing for sure if they had yet travelled far enough west to reach Greenland, the fog lifted and they saw land. But this land was wooded and with low hills, and clearly not Greenland, where there were said to





be huge glaciers. The crew all said they wanted to make land there, but Bjarni insisted that they had plenty of water and wood and had no time to waste, so they put to sea again. After two more days, they saw land once more. It was flat and wooded, and Bjarni again said this was not Greenland and that they should not make land there. They continued sailing north, and saw a third land, this one mountainous and covered by a glacier. Bjarni said he thought it to be worthless and still not Greenland. They sailed for a further four days, and saw land once more. This time Bjarni confirmed it tallied with what he had heard of the Greenland coastline. They found the farm where Bjarni's father now lived and made land there. Bjarni gave up trading and settled with his father in Greenland.

## Leifur Eiríksson Explores Wineland

Bjarni's story about new lands to the west sparked great interest, but it was another 15 years until an expedition was put together to explore those lands. Leifur, the son of Eiríkur the Red, went to see Bjarni, bought his ship, and engaged a crew of thirty-five. Eiríkur the Red was going to join his son's expedition, but on the way to the ship his horse stumbled and he was thrown, injuring his leg. A fall from a horse is considered a very bad omen for a journey, so Eiríkur decided to stay in Greenland.

Leifur and his crew set out to sea, and the first landfall they made was the land that Bjarni had sighted last. He sailed right up to the shore and landed. This was the moment when Leifur became the first European to set foot in North America.

This first land was flat and covered with great glaciers. It seemed to be a worthless country. Leifur gave this country the name Slab-land (Helluland).

They then set out to sea again and after some time they came to another land. Once again they went ashore. This country was flat and wooded, with white sandy beaches and land that sloped gently down to sea. This country Leifur named Forest-land (Markland).

Setting out to sea again, they sailed for two days southwest-bound until they sighted land again. Leifur decided to have large houses built and to spend the winter there. During the winter months they survived on fishing and hunting, as the rivers were full with the biggest salmon they had ever seen. They explored the land widely and found vines and grapes, and after those plentiful resources Leifur named the land Wineland (Vínland).

After spending the winter in Wineland, Leifur and his crew returned to Greenland. On the way they came upon a wrecked trading vessel that had crashed on reefs not too far from the Greenland coast. He rescued the castaways, an Icelandic man named Þórir, and his crew. After rescue Leifur received the nickname "the Lucky," because he got to keep Þórir's cargo.

## Þorvaldur Eiríksson Explores Wineland

Þorvaldur, Leifur's brother, thought the new lands to the west had not been explored extensively enough, so he borrowed Leifur's ship and returned to Wineland with a crew of thirty.

For a whole year Þorvaldur and his crew explored Forest-land and Wineland. The next summer they ran into a strong gale and their ship was driven ashore with such force that the keel was shattered and they had to stay at one place for a long time. There they found a group of natives, and killed every one of them but one, who escaped in his boat. Some time later, a great number of natives returned, shooting arrows from their skin-boats. One of those arrows hit Þorvaldur under the arm, and he died.

After Þorvaldur's death, the rest of the crew spent the next winter in Wineland, before returning to Greenland with a cargo of vines and grapes.

## Þorfinnur Karlsefni and the Wineland Colony

A few years after Þorvaldur Eiríksson's death, an Icelandic man named Þorfinnur "Karlsefni" ("the





## Modern names for Wineland sites

**Slab-land (Helluland)** - Baffin Island, Canada

**Forest-land (Markland)** - Labrador, Canada

**Leifur's Camp** - L'Anse Aux Meadows, Newfoundland, Canada

**Bear Island (Bjarney)** - Anticosti Island, Quebec, Canada

**Keel Point (Kjarlanes) Cross Point (Krossanes)** - Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada

**Land of the One-Legged (Einfætingaland)** - Gaspé Peninsula, Quebec, Canada

**Wonder Beaches (Furdustrandir)** - Eastern coast of Nova Scotia, Canada

**Stream Fjord (Straumsfjörður)** - Bay of Fundy, Canada

**Stream Island (Straumsey)** - Grand Manan Island, Bay of Fundy, Canada

**Leifur's Wineland** - Quebec City, Canada

**The Lagoon (Hóp)** - Upper Bay, New York harbor, USA

Promising") Þórðarson married Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, Leifur Eiríksson's sister. Þorfinnur decided to organize a large expedition aimed at building a permanent settlement in Wineland. The expedition was comprised of three ships and about 160 settlers, taking with them various kinds of livestock.

They sailed along the coast of Greenland to the Western Settlement and then to Slab-land and Forest-land. They spent the first winter at Leifur's houses in the northern part of Wineland. The next summer they had their first encounter with the natives, when a great number of them emerged from the wood one day. They traded milk with the natives in exchange for animal skins. They also encountered vicious One-Legged humanoid creatures, which killed a few of the Icelanders with their poisoned arrows. That summer the large group of settlers took on land in several parts of the coast of Wineland, with the largest concentration of farms built in the area they called Stream Fjord (Straumsfjörður). Þorfinnur himself settled, along with a many other settlers, in the southern part of the area of Wineland that had so far been explored, in a place they named The Lagoon (Hóp).

## Traveling to Wineland

The crossing from Greenland to Wineland is not an easy journey. The wind patterns and land forms

are not as well known here as those encountered on the crossing from Iceland to Greenland. Because of that, all Navigate skill checks should be made with a penalty of -20%.

See Navigation (page 187) for details on how to interpret the different result on a Navigate skill check. Additional information pertaining specific to interpreting results when navigating to Wineland can be found below.

**Fumble:** the ship crashes on a reef and is too damaged to proceed, leaving the travelers stranded on the reef or ice sheet, at the mercy of fate and of the gods. Perhaps they will be found by another Norse ship, or by a skræling skin boat.

**Failure:** the ship gets lost at sea for 1D6 days, after which a new skill check can be attempted. After ten or more days lost at sea, the ship is forced back to Greenland by unfavorable winds.

**Success:** the ship arrives at the southernmost point of Slab-land after 2D4+1 days of sailing from Greenland's Eastern Settlement.

**Special:** the ship is successfully steered southward and arrives in Forest Land, right by a pleasant white-sanded beach, in 1D4+1 days after departure.





**Critical:** smooth sailing in perfect weather and favourable winds. The ship arrives at one of the northern settlements in Wineland, in 1D4 days after departure.

From southern Slab-land, or northernmost Forest-land, to Keel Point in Wineland, the distance is six days sailing.

## Wineland Climate

The lands south of Forest-land are collectively called Wineland, after the wild grapes that grow in abundance from north to south.

The climate can vary widely between northern and southern parts of Wineland. In the North, where Keel Point and Stream Fjord are located, the winters can be as harsh as in Iceland, with summers only slightly warmer.

In the southern parts of Wineland, around the settlement of The Lagoon, summers are warmer than anywhere in Iceland or Greenland. During the winter, livestock can graze freely, as the grass only withers very slightly. The temperature never falls below freezing.

Spring comes relatively early in this region, several weeks earlier than in Iceland or Greenland.

## Key Locations in Wineland

Below is a list of all locations in Wineland described in the *Vinland Sagas*. In the world of mythic Iceland, there are a total of about 200 farms in Wineland.

**Leifur's Camp** — This site, located on a large island, was where Leifur Eiríksson built the first Norse houses in Wineland. The place was chosen for being easy to find by boat, having a good natural harbor, and having no natives living nearby. The animals that can be found here are the black bear, caribou, otter, beaver, muskrat, fox, and lynx.

**Bear Island** (Bjarney) — There is a large population of black bears in this island, which is located in a bay leading to Leifur's Wineland.

**Keel Point** (Kjarlanes) — The northernmost point of a peninsula with a long shoreline and sand flats.

The weather is often stormy and violent. Many wrecked boats rest upon this shore.

**Wonder Beaches** (Furdustrandir) — Lengthy and beautiful white-sanded beaches on the peninsula leading to Keel Point. Wild wheat and grapes grow along the shoreline.

**Cross Point** (Krossanes) — Þorvaldur Eiríksson's settlement, on the eastern side of the same large island where Wonder Beaches and Keel Point are located.

**Stream Fjord** (Straumsfjörður) — A fjord with an island near its mouth, where there are strong currents. There is a pleasant landscape with fields of tall grass and mountains, and plenty of animals to hunt.

**Stream Island** (Straumsey) — This island, located at the mouth of Stream Fjord, is home to a large colony of thousands of seagulls, making for a great source of eggs. The only other animals on the island are mice. The island also has good grassy fields for grazing. Stranded whales are common here.

**The Lagoon** (Hóp) — The southernmost Norse settlement in Wineland, located at the mouth of a river forming a lagoon at the coast. Wild wheat covers the low-lying areas, and grapes grow on the hills. Every stream is teeming with fish. There are deer and many other kinds of animals in the surrounding forest.

**Leifur's Wineland** or **Wineland the Good** — The southern site where Leifur Eiríksson first found grapes. Here the settlers found the largest salmon they have ever seen.

## Life in Wineland

The turf houses built by the Norse settlers in Wineland are very much like those in Greenland and Iceland. Due to the ready availability of good quality wood and plenty of land, some farmers built larger houses, supported by a greater number of beams, and thus sturdier than those in Iceland.

There are plenty of grasslands for animals to graze, and in the southern settlements they can be allowed to graze outside all year round.





The settlers hunt moose, deer, seal, bear, and other animals. There is plenty of fish in the rivers, including salmon.

Wineland is considered an independent nation, not subject by the laws of Greenland or Iceland. There are, however, no assemblies or other governmental structures in Wineland. There is no formal code of laws. This situation has resulted in a great degree of lawlessness, with many individuals taking courses of action here with impunity, which would have resulted in them being outlawed in Iceland or Greenland.

The main aspect that makes life in Wineland different from other Norse lands is the constant threat of attacks from skrælingar. The natives are sometimes friendly and ready to trade, but are also quick to take offense and can become violent without warning. For that reason, tall wooden fences protect most Norse farms in Wineland, and the settlers only venture into the woods beyond their farms in well-armed groups.

## Other Key Locations

### Northern Lands

**Slab-land** (Helluland) — The northernmost of the Western lands. This land is like a single flat slab of rock, covered by large glaciers. There is no grass to be found anywhere on this large island. Among the animals that can be found here are caribou, polar bear, fox, hare, and wolves.

**Forest-land** (Markland) — This is a flat land covered by great forests that slope gently seaward. White-sand beaches and calm seas make for easy landing for Norse ships. Many types of animals live in the forests here, such as the arctic fox, bald eagle, lynx, fox, wolf, caribou, moose, wolverine, walrus, black bear and on the northern coast, polar bears.

There are no Norse colonies in either of these lands. Slab-land is too cold and inhospitable, and in Forest-land it would be necessary to cut down

a large number of trees and prepare the land for pastures for the livestock. Wineland, further to the south with its mild climate and extensive grassed lowlands, looks a lot more attractive to the Norse settlers.

## Skrælingar

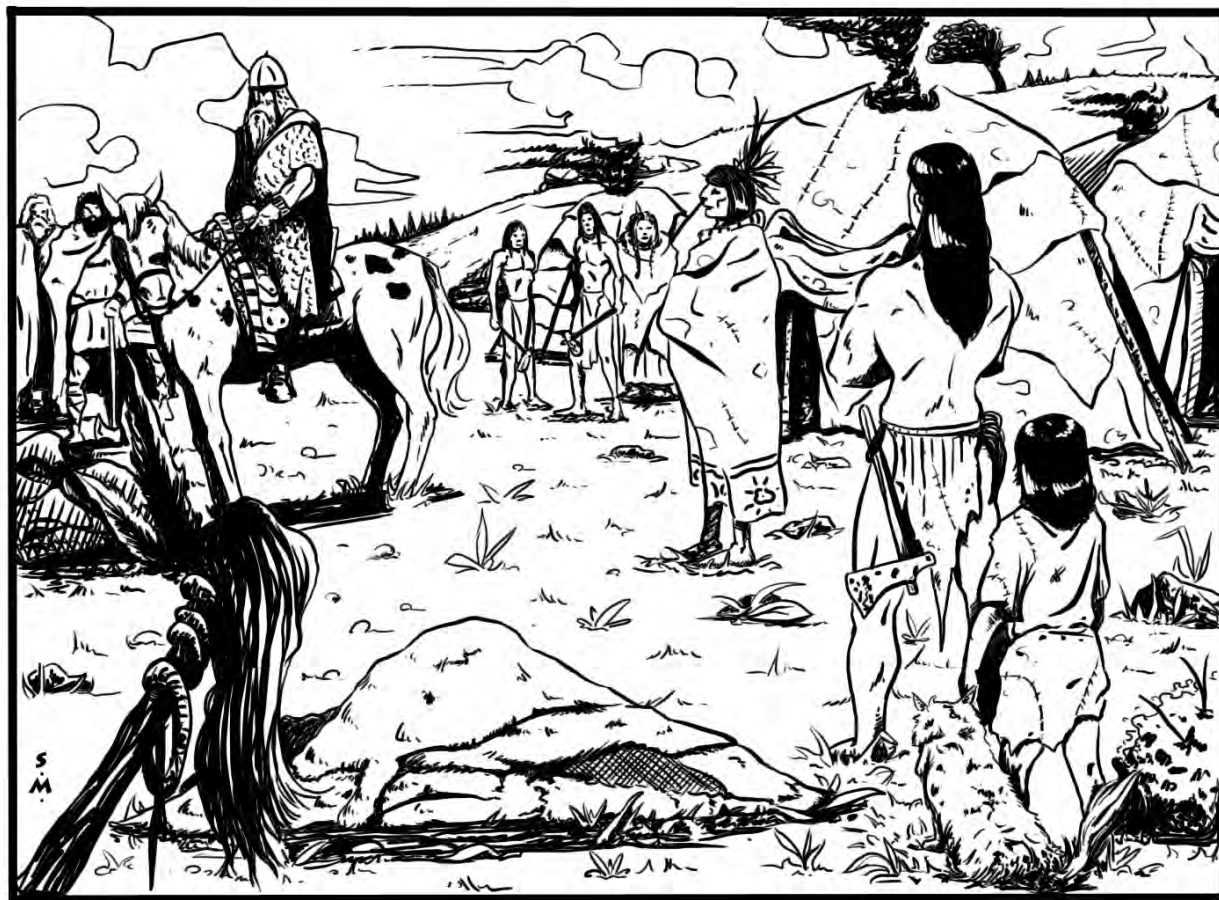
*Now, when they sailed from Wineland, they had a southern wind, and reached Forest-land, and found five Skrælingar; one was a bearded man, two were women, two children. Karlsefni's people caught the children, but the others escaped and sunk down into the earth. And they took the children with them, and taught them their speech, and they were baptized. The children called their mother Vætildi, and their father Uvægi. They said that kings ruled over the land of the Skrælingar, one of whom was called Avalldamon, and the other Valldidida. They said also that there were no houses, and the people lived in caves or holes. They said, moreover, that there was a country across from their own land, where people dressed in white fur, uttered loud cries, carried long poles with patches of cloth attached, and wore fringes. This was supposed to be The Land of the White-Fur People. Then they came to Greenland, and remained with Eiríkur the Red during the winter.*

— *Eiríks Saga*

The Norse explorers and settlers of Wineland call the native inhabitants of those lands *Skrælingar* (singular *Skræling*), meaning “man dressed in skins.” The name is derived from the Norse word *skrá*, for dried or withered skin.

There are two types of *Skræling* in Wineland. The first Native American people the Vikings encountered were the Dark-Fur *Skrælingar*, who told them about the second type, the White-Fur *Skrælingar*, whom they would meet later.





## Dark-Fur Skrælingar

These people have a darker complexion, and wear clothes made of sealskin with the dark fur on the outside — thus the name “Dark-Fur.”

They live in underground caves, three meters deep into the ground, where they also keep dogs living alongside with them. Each underground dwelling has many entrances connected to the surface by tunnels, which they use to their advantage to “sink down into the earth” when being pursued by enemies.

## White-Fur Skrælingar

These natives generally wear light-colored clothes, especially white furs, or other furs with the leather side out which then appears light-colored.

The land of the White-Fur Skrælingar is located inland, stretching from Forest-land down to the Norse settlement known as The Lagoon,

and perhaps even further south. There appear to be many different kingdoms among them. They prefer to live in inland valleys, but often travel along the coast in skin boats made of two or three moose skins sewn together and propelled by paddles. Their homes are wigwams — dome-shaped houses made of poles tied together at the top and covered with bark or mat, and with a hole at the top for smoke to escape.

White-Fur Skrælingar are masters of intimidation, often standing a long way off from the enemy, giving out an ululating war-cry, and brandishing bloody weapons before melting into the wilderness to attack guerrilla style — something the Norse are not used to facing.

They don’t have metal weapons but mainly use a type of stone-headed axe they call a tomahawk.

One habit of the White-Fur Skrælingar that shocked the Norse settlers is their practice of scalping fallen enemies. As soon as an enemy has fallen, a Skræling will run up to him, thrust



his knee in between the enemy’s shoulder blades, seize a tuft of hair in one hand and, with their knife in the other, cut around the skin of the head and pull the whole piece away. They regard the scalp as a symbol of a man’s alliance with the sun, and the victorious warrior will lick from the scalp while it is fresh to symbolize the devouring of the enemy by the sun. The scalps of enemies are taken back to their camp, where the warriors scrape the flesh and blood from the scalps, dry them by the fire, and then decorate them by the way of dressing them with feathers and painting them. The decorated scalps are then tied to poles as trophies. Although extremely painful and often leading to health complications and later death, being scalped alive was not always fatal.

Trade

There is some trade between the Norse settlers and the skrælingar. Mainly, the natives purchase red cloths and milk from the settlers in exchange for animal pelts.

The Fate of the Wineland Colonies

*Grænlandia Saga* and *Eiríks Saga* both say the Norse settlers realized that, despite everything that the Wineland country had to offer it was not worth the constant trouble with the natives. Consequently, they decided to abandon Wineland and return to Greenland and Iceland.

In the mythic Iceland setting however, we assume that there was a greater impetus for the colonization of Wineland and that the colonies established there were larger than the expeditions described in the Sagas. In greater numbers, the Norse settlers were able to stand ground and fight back against the Native Americans, and the mythic One-Legged. This does not mean, that the Norse have an easy time living in Wineland — they are brave men and women exploring and settling a new land that is full of surprises, all the while battling the dangerous natives. This is frontier territory at its most dangerous and exciting.

Tomahawk Stats

A Tomahawk is a type of axe used by the White-Fur Skrælingar as a hand-to-hand or a thrown weapon. The axe head is made out of polished soapstone, which is sharpened on both sides and is fastened to a wooden shaft by splitting the wood and tying the head into the crevasse. Great care is taken to create a balanced weapon for maximum throwing precision, and some are richly decorated with painted feathers.

| Weapon            | Skill | Base | Dmg       | Attk | Special  | Rng    | Hands | HP | Parry | STR/DEX | SIZ/Enc | SR    |
|-------------------|-------|------|-----------|------|----------|--------|-------|----|-------|---------|---------|-------|
| Tomahawk          | Axe   | 15   | 1D6+1+db  | 1    | Bleeding | Medium | 1H    | 10 | Yes   | 8/10    | 0.5     | 2     |
| Tomahawk (thrown) | Axe   | 10   | 1D6+1/2db | 1    | Bleeding | 30     | 1H    | 10 | No    | 9/11    | 0.5     | 1/ SR |







## Sample Dark-Fur Skræling Warrior

STR 16 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 12  
POW 10 DEX 14 APP 10

**Move:** 8

**Hit Points:** 13

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Armor:** 2-point fur armor on torso, 1-point soft leather armor on legs and arms

| Weapon      | SR  | Attack | Damage              |
|-------------|-----|--------|---------------------|
| Stone Knife | 8   | 65%    | 1D3+1+db (impaling) |
| Light Club  | 7   | 60%    | 1D6+db (crushing)   |
| Short Spear | 3/9 | 75%    | 1D6+1+db (impaling) |

**Skills:** Brawl 50%, Climb 40%, Dodge 60%, Grapple 50%, Hide 65%, Jump 45%, Listen 40%, Sense 50%, Spot 60%, Stealth 60%, Swim 30%, Throw 60%, Track 60%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 1/5   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 1/5   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 2/5   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 2/6   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 1/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 1/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/5   |

### Dark-Fur Skrælingar Shamans

**Sample Magic Spell Selection:** Conjure Elemental 30%, Dull 60%, Frost 50%, Protection 50%, Sharp 40, Wound 20%.

## Conflict

Since the first Norse journeys of exploration in Wineland, there has been on-and-off conflict with the skrælingar natives.

In one famous episode described in *Eiríks Saga*, Freydis Eiríksdóttir beat her bare breast with a sword and prepared to defend herself against attacking skrælingar, who were terrified at that sight

## Sample White-Fur Skræling Warrior

STR 17 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 12  
POW 10 DEX 13 APP 10

**Move:** 8

**Hit Points:** 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Armor:** 2-point fur armor on torso, 1-point soft leather armor on legs and arms

| Weapon      | SR  | Attack | Damage              |
|-------------|-----|--------|---------------------|
| Tomahawk    | 7   | 75%    | 1D4+db (bleeding)   |
| Self Bow    | 3/9 | 65%    | 1D8+½db (bleeding)  |
| Short Spear | 3/9 | 60%    | 1D6+1+db (impaling) |

**Skills:** Brawl 40%, Climb 75%, Dodge 50%, Hide 35%, Jump 45%, Listen 55%, Ride (horse) 40%, Sense 50%, Spot 45%, Stealth 50%, Swim 60%, Throw 55%, Track 70%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 1/5   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 1/5   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 2/5   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 2/6   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 1/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 1/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/5   |

### White-Fur Skrælingar Shamans

**Sample Magic Spell Selection:** Change 60%, Enhance 40%, Heal 40%, Illusion 30%, Wall 40%, Ward 40%.

and ran away. It is taboo among the natives to fight against women, and the Norse settlers have used this knowledge more than once to scare them off.

## Unexplored Lands

The lands to the south of the settlement of The Lagoon, or west from Leifur's Wineland, have





not been yet explored by the Norse settlers. The population of the Wineland settlements is still small, and there is no population pressure yet from new settlers to look for new lands beyond those already explored.

Life in Wineland proves to be dangerous, not only because of the conflicts with the skrælingar but also because of the threat represented by strange beasts like the One-Legged. Therefore, any expedition aiming to explore new lands must be carefully planned, and should expect to find trouble.

Still, the Icelanders and Greenlanders are keen explorers, and there is much talk of mounting expeditions to explore lands further south. Will your player characters be the brave ones to take on this dangerous undertaking?



## Land of the One-Legged

*True it was  
that our men tracked  
a one-legged creature  
down to the shore.  
The uncanny fellow  
fled in a flash,  
though rough was his way,  
hear us, Karlsefni!*

— *Eiríks Saga*

The One-Legged are savage humanoid creatures who can hop at great speed even though they only possess one thickly-muscled leg.

In the very first encounter the Norse explorers had with these strange creatures men lost their lives to their poisoned arrows. Since then, many more Norse men and women have fallen prey to the One-Legged, either being killed by one of their arrows or simply torn to pieces by their powerful claws and sharp teeth.

The Land of the One-Legged is located southeast from Bear Island, on the east bank of the river leading to Leifur's Wineland. They do not have an organized society, but each clan of about twenty members follows the strongest and largest male in



their midst. The leader fathers all the young within his clan. The clans fight each other for food and for access to females, often resulting in deaths.

They do not build dwellings, but live in caves or holes in the ground. Even though they seem to possess some kind of grunted language that they use to communicate between themselves, they are not known to speak any human language.

Of somewhat shorter stature than a human, their body is covered in thick fur that protects them from cold. Their arms are hairy, ending in articulated hands similar to a human's, but larger and ending in long claws. They are carnivores, and eat seals, elk and deer, but seem to especially enjoy eating human flesh.

Attacks from One-Legged are fast and vicious, most often ambushing prey. They usually attack in small groups, and try to capture live humans to take back to their caves. Most captured humans are immediately devoured by the One-Legged clan, with the victim being bitten to death,





## One-Legged

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 3D6+8  | 18-19   |
| CON             | 1D6+12 | 15-16   |
| SIZ             | 2D4+3  | 8       |
| INT             | 2D6    | 7       |
| POW             | 2D6+3  | 10      |
| DEX             | 3D6+3  | 14      |
| APP             | 2D6    | 7       |

**Move:** 14

**Hit Points:** 12

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Armor:** 3-point fur

| Weapon   | SR  | Attack | Damage                                  |
|----------|-----|--------|-----------------------------------------|
| Bite     | 8   | 55%    | 1D8+½db (bleeding)                      |
| Claw     | 7   | 60%    | 1D4+db (bleeding)                       |
| Self Bow | 3/9 | 50%    | 1D6+1+½db (piercing)<br>+ Poison POT 12 |

A One-Legged can attack twice in a round using two separate claw attacks, or one claw and one bite attack. If attacking with bow and arrow from a distance, they can fire twice per round, once at SR 3 and once again at SR 9. Their arrows carry a poison POT 12.

**Skills:** Hide 50%, Stealth 30%, Dodge 60%, Sense 40%, Spot 45%, Listen 50%, Climb 30, Jump 60%, Dig 40%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 1-5       | 1-4         | Leg          | 3/4   |
| 6-11      | 5-10        | Abdomen      | 3/4   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 3/5   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 3/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 3/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 3/4   |

but a few are kept as slaves for a period of time before being eaten.

The skrálingar natives are terrified of these savage beasts, and their camps are always guarded by armed warriors ready to defend their people against attacks from the One-Legged.

a Thunderbird captures a whale, it takes the whale back to its mountain home to eat.

They are capable of shape-shifting into human form by simply removing their skin and fathers, as if removing a blanket. The skin-blanket is kept somewhere safe. If they are attacked in human form, they will hurry to put back on their skin-blanket. Some families of Thunderbirds in human form live in the plains in huts much like those of the White-Fur Skrálingar.

## Creatures of Wineland

### Thunderbird

Very large birds respected and feared by the White-Fur Skrálingar tribes. They are intelligent and proud creatures.

Thunderbirds live on the top of mountains in Forest-land and Wineland. Their favorite food are orcas, which they hunt along the coast. Once

#### Characteristics

|     | Average |
|-----|---------|
| STR | 6D6+30  |
| CON | 4D6+15  |
| SIZ | 6D6+25  |
| INT | 2D6+6   |
| POW | 1D6+12  |
| DEX | 3D6+10  |

**Move:** 20 flying

**Hit Points:** 40

**Damage Bonus:** +5D6

**Armor:** 6-point thick hide

**Fatigue:** 90





| Weapon          | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|-----------------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Bite            | 7  | 30%    | 1D8 + ½db (bleeding) |
| Talons          | 5  | 70%    | 2D10 + db (crushing) |
| Lightning bolts | 6  | 50%    | 5D6 (electric)       |

**Skills:** Spot 100%, Dodge 50%.

#### Powers:

**Create Wind:** The beating of its enormous wings can stir the wind and cause storms and thunder as it flies.

**Shapeshift:** Can shapeshift into human form.

**Lightning:** Can shoot lightning from under its wings.

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01          | Right Claw   | 6/9   |
| 03-04     | 02          | Left Claw    | 6/9   |
| 05-07     | 03-06       | Abdomen      | 6/17  |
| 08-09     | 07-11       | Chest        | 6/17  |
| 10-13     | 12-15       | Right Wing   | 6/9   |
| 14-17     | 16-19       | Left Wing    | 6/9   |
| 18-20     | 20          | Head         | 6/14  |

## Bakaak

White-Fur Skrælingar believe that this malevolent creature has its origins when a warrior and hunter leaves the trail and becomes hopelessly lost on the darkest winter days. On the verge of death and starvation, angered by not being able to enjoy his life and the glory to which he is due, the warrior swears that his spirit will never leave his remains. That anger brings him back from his unmarked grave, even after his body has decomposed, and he walks the land craving for the killing, hungry for the flesh of warriors like he himself once was.

This terrible creature appears as a human skeleton with translucent skin and glowing red points for eyes. It retains the same strength it had in life, but is far more agile, being free of the limitations of heavy muscle and flesh. It prefers to hunt at night, moving silently through the woods and the darkness. The only way to sense an impending attack from a Bakaak is by hearing the cracking sounds made by its bones.

A Bakaak only preys upon warriors. Although it sometimes uses a war club to bludgeon the victim to death, it prefers to use its magical bow, which shoots invisible arrows tipped with a poison that induces sleep. Once the victim is unconscious, the Bakaak uses a small knife to cut open the victim's abdomen. It then removes the liver and eats it. After it has finished feasting, the Bakaak shoves a rock into the victim's empty cavity and sews the wound with an invisible magical thread that leaves no superficial sign of the incision. The unsuspecting victim wakes up the next day in the middle of the woods, most of-



THUNDERBIRD





ten with no memory of the attack. The victim may live for several days unaware that he has lost a vital organ to this terrible creature, until he becomes suddenly sick, feeling terrible and in incapacitating pain, inevitably wasting away and dying.

### Characteristics      Average

|     |       |       |
|-----|-------|-------|
| STR | 3D6   | 9-10  |
| SIZ | 2D6+6 | 12-13 |
| INT | 2D6+6 | 12-13 |
| POW | 3D6   | 10-11 |
| DEX | 6D6   | 19-20 |

**Move:** 12

**Hit Points:** 26

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** None

**Fatigue:** 23

| Weapon           | SR | Attack | Damage                   |
|------------------|----|--------|--------------------------|
| Invisible arrows | 7  | 70%    | 1D6 + Poison (see below) |
| War club         | 5  | 40%    | 1D6                      |

### Powers:

**Move Silently:** The Bakaak makes no noise as it hunts down its prey in the forests of Wineland.

**Poisoned arrows:** The Bakaak uses a magical bow which shoots invisible arrows tipped with a poison that induces sleep. The victim must make an opposed roll of CON vs. POT 20 or fall asleep.

**Erase Memory:** After the Bakaak has eaten the liver of its unconscious victim, and has sewn back the abdomen of the victim with a magical needle that leaves no marks or scars, it manipulates the memory of the victim so the he has no recollection of the attack.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/9   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/9   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/9   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/11  |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/7   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/7   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/9   |



UKTENA

## Uktena

A great snake, as thick as a tree trunk and three times as long as any snake. It has horns, and embedded on its head is a large diamond-shaped crystal that is almost transparent but has a flashing red streak within. The scales of the Uktena glow like sparks of fire.

They dwell in isolated places, hiding in deep pools of rivers and in deep passes in the mountains.

Many White-Fur Skrælingar warriors have tried, and failed, to slay a Uktena in order to take possession of its blazing diamond, which is rumored to have great magical power.

### Characteristics      Average

|     |        |       |
|-----|--------|-------|
| STR | 5D6+12 | 28-29 |
| CON | 4D6+6  | 19    |
| SIZ | 7D6+6  | 23-24 |
| INT | 5      | 5     |
| POW | 3D6    | 10-11 |
| DEX | 2D6+6  | 13    |





**Move:** 5 (4 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 20-21

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 4-scaly armor

**Fatigue:** 48

| Weapon      | SR | Attack | Damage                                |
|-------------|----|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Bite        | 7  | 65%    | 1D6+½db (impaling)<br>+ poison POT 16 |
| Poison Spit | 4  | 35%    | poison POT 16                         |

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-06     | 01-08       | Tail         | 4/7   |
| 07-14     | 09-17       | Body         | 4/9   |
| 15-20     | 18-20       | Head         | 4/7   |

## Mishipeshu

These creatures live in the deepest parts of lakes and rivers. Often called “underwater panther,” it has features from many animals, including the horns of bison, snake scales, bird feathers, and the body and tail of a panther.

Mishipeshu are territorial, protecting their lakes and rivers, and killing anyone swimming in them.

The White-Fur Skrälingar have learned that those wishing to safely cross a lake or river located within the domain of this creature must make an offering of tobacco to appease the Mishipeshu.

The horns of a Mishipeshu are made of copper, and are rumored to have magical properties.

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 2D6+12 | 19      |
| CON             | 3D6    | 10-11   |
| SIZ             | 3D6+6  | 16-17   |
| INT             | 8      | 8       |
| POW             | 3D6+6  | 16      |
| DEX             | 2D6+12 | 19      |

**Move:** 12 (15 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 14-15

**Damage Bonus:** +1D6

**Armor:** 2-point skin

**Fatigue:** 30

| Weapon      | SR | Attack | Damage                         |
|-------------|----|--------|--------------------------------|
| Bite        | 8  | 30%    | 1D6 + ½db (bleeding)           |
| Claw        | 5  | 60%    | 1D6 + ½db (bleeding)           |
| Horn charge | 6  | 40%    | 1D10 + db (impale + knockback) |

**Skills:** Dodge 60%, Hide 80%, Jump 65%, List 70%, Sense 60%, Spot 65%, Stealth 80%, Track 25%.

### Powers:

**Create Rapids:** If an offering is not given to the Mishipeshu, this creature can create destructive whirlwinds on the surface of lakes and churn rivers into dangerous rapids in order to punish those who have angered it.

**Melt Ice:** In the winter, Mishipeshu can cause the ice coating the surface of lakes and rivers to melt, plunging disrespectful intruders into the icy waters to drown.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 2/4   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 2/4   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 2/6   |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 2/6   |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 2/4   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 2/4   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 2/5   |

## Wendigo

A malevolent cannibalistic spirit that can possess a person who eats human flesh, turning that person into a creature obsessed by an overpowering desire for more human flesh.

A Wendigo-possessed person takes on an appearance like that of a gaunt skeleton recently disinterred from the grave. The skin is pulled tight over its bones, its complexion like the ash gray of death, and its eyes are pushed back deep into its sockets. Their hunger for human flesh consumes their every thought, and they must keep seeking new prey.

The Wendigo wreaks destruction in its pursuit of its chosen prey. It crashes through the forests, all the while uprooting trees, causing game animals to stampede, and causing whirlwinds. The monster is often thought to be the cause of ice storms, torna-





WENDIGO

does, and violent winds. All of these weather-related phenomena are believed to signal the Wendigo's presence.

Whenever a Wendigo eats another person, it grows larger and more powerful.

| Characteristics |        | Average                       |
|-----------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| STR             | 3D6+6  | 15-16<br>(+1 for each victim) |
| CON             | 4D6+4  | 16-17                         |
| SIZ             | 2D6+6  | 12-13<br>(+2 for each victim) |
| INT             | 9      | 9                             |
| POW             | 2D6+8  | 14-15                         |
| DEX             | 2D6+10 | 17-18                         |

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 14 (+1 for each victim it has consumed)

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** None

**Fatigue:** 33

| Weapon   | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|----------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Bite     | 4  | 55%    | 2D6 + ½db (bleeding) |
| Claw (2) | 6  | 65%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding)  |

**Skills:** Dodge 55%, Hide 60%, Jump 65%, Listen 75%, Sense 90%, Spot 60%, Track 80%.

A Wendigo can attack twice per round with its claws. If it strikes the two claw attacks, it also gets to attempt to bite the victim at the end of the combat round.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/5   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/5   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/5   |
| 12 11-15  | Chest       | 0/6          |       |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/5   |

### Large Wendigo (having eaten 10 people)

| Characteristics | Average |       |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| STR             | 3D6+16  | 25-26 |
| CON             | 4D6+4   | 16-17 |
| SIZ             | 2D6+26  | 32-33 |
| INT             | 9       | 9     |
| POW             | 2D6+8   | 14-15 |
| DEX             | 2D6+10  | 17-18 |

**Move:** 15

**Hit Points:** 25 (+1 for each victim it has consumed)

**Damage Bonus:** +3D6

**Armor:** None

**Fatigue:** 43

| Weapon   | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|----------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Bite     | 4  | 55%    | 2D6 + ½db (bleeding) |
| Claw (2) | 6  | 65%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding)  |

**Attacks:** Bite 50%, damage 1D6+½db (bleeding)

**Skills:** Dodge 55%, Hide 60%, Jump 65%, Listen 75%, Sense 90%, Spot 60%, Track 80%.





### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/9   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/9   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/9   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/11  |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/7   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/7   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/9   |

## Adlet

A bloodthirsty race of dog-like humanoids, said to be the offspring of a Dark-Fur Skræling woman having mated with a ferocious giant red dog.

Adlets are covered in red fur, walk on hind legs, possess sharp talons on hands and feet, and have a mouthful of dagger-like teeth. They have a wolf-like head, including pronounced snouts, pointed ears, and eerie yellow eyes. These creatures are not shapeshifters.

They hunt in large packs, attempting to overwhelm prey through sheer strength of numbers. Merciless killers, they stalk their prey through the wilderness. The pack's approach is marked by their piercing, mournful howls.

| Characteristics |       | Average |
|-----------------|-------|---------|
| STR             | 6D6   | 21      |
| CON             | 3D6+6 | 16      |
| SIZ             | 4D6   | 12-13   |
| INT             | 2D6+6 | 13      |
| POW             | 2D6+6 | 13      |
| DEX             | 3D6+6 | 16      |

**Move:** 12

**Hit Points:** 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1D6

**Armor:** 3-point fur

**Fatigue:** 37

| Weapon   | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|----------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Bite     | 7  | 50%    | 2D6 + ½db (bleeding) |
| Claw (2) | 5  | 60%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding)  |

An Adlet can make one bite attack and one claw attack each round.

**Skills:** Climb 75%, Dodge 65%, Hide 60%, Jump 80%, Listen 75%, Sense 90%, Spot 70%, Track 90%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 3/5   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 3/5   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 3/5   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 3/6   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 3/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 3/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 3/5   |

## Akhlut

This vicious, dangerous beast can take a form of a large wolf or that of an orca. Its tracks can be recognized because they are wolf tracks that lead to and from the ocean.

### Wolf Form

| Characteristics |       | Average |
|-----------------|-------|---------|
| STR             | 2D6+8 | 15      |
| CON             | 3D6+2 | 12-13   |
| SIZ             | 2D6+4 | 11      |
| INT             | 8     | 8       |
| POW             | 3D6   | 11      |
| DEX             | 2D6+8 | 15      |

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 12

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Armor:** 2-point fur

**Fatigue:** 28

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage                |
|--------|----|--------|-----------------------|
| Bite   | 6  | 40%    | 1D10 + ½db (bleeding) |

**Skills:** Dodge 50%, Listen 80%, Sense 90%, Spot 65%, Stealth 80%, Track 85%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 3/3   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 3/3   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 3/5   |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 3/5   |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 3/3   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 3/3   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 3/4   |





## Orca form

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 6D6+30 | 51      |
| CON             | 3D6+25 | 35-36   |
| SIZ             | 6D6+40 | 61      |
| INT             | 8      | 8       |
| POW             | 3D6    | 11      |
| DEX             | 2D6+3  | 10      |

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 49

**Damage Bonus:** +6D6

**Armor:** 12-point blubber

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite   | 6  | 60%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding) |

**Skills:** Spot 60%, Jump 70%.

## Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location  | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| 01-03     | 01-04       | Tail          | 12/17 |
| 04-08     | 05-08       | Hindbody      | 12/21 |
| 09-13     | 09-12       | Forebody      | 12/21 |
| 14        | 13          | Right Flipper | 12/13 |
| 15        | 14          | Left Flipper  | 12/13 |
| 16-20     | 15-20       | Head          | 12/17 |

## Black Bears

Use information on *Basic Roleplaying* rule book page 334.



# The Wide World



*To the North of Norway lies Finnmark; from there the land sweeps north-east and east to Bjarmaland, which renders tribute to the king of Russia. From Permia there is uninhabited land stretching all the way to the north until Greenland begins. To the south of Greenland lies Slab-Land and then Forest-Land; and from there it is not far to Wineland, which some people say extends from Africa.*

*England and Scotland are islands but separate kingdoms; Ireland is a large island. Iceland is also a large island, to the north of Ireland.*

— Icelandic Geographical Treatise, 12th century

People living in this remote corner of the North Atlantic, despite the geographical isolation of their island, have never cultivated isolation. No other people in the Middle Ages are as widely-travelled as the Icelanders, some of which have traveled from Wineland to Jerusalem and back to Iceland.

Most Europeans of this age confine themselves to sailing along coastal areas, fearing the open ocean. Icelanders, on the other hand, do not fear traveling across the Atlantic Ocean, which they see as being in fact a very large lake. They believe that northern Scandinavia is connected to Greenland and to Slab-land, Forest-land and Wineland via a land bridge somewhere in the North Arctic Sea. Similarly, it is believed that southern Wineland connects with Africa. The At-

lantic Ocean, the Viking Age Icelanders believe, is surrounded by land.

To Icelanders of the Viking Age, the sea is a road rather than a barrier.

This chapter covers the main events and the general outlook of the lands of the known world during the Viking Age, following the historical outlook presented by the Icelandic Sagas.

## Norway

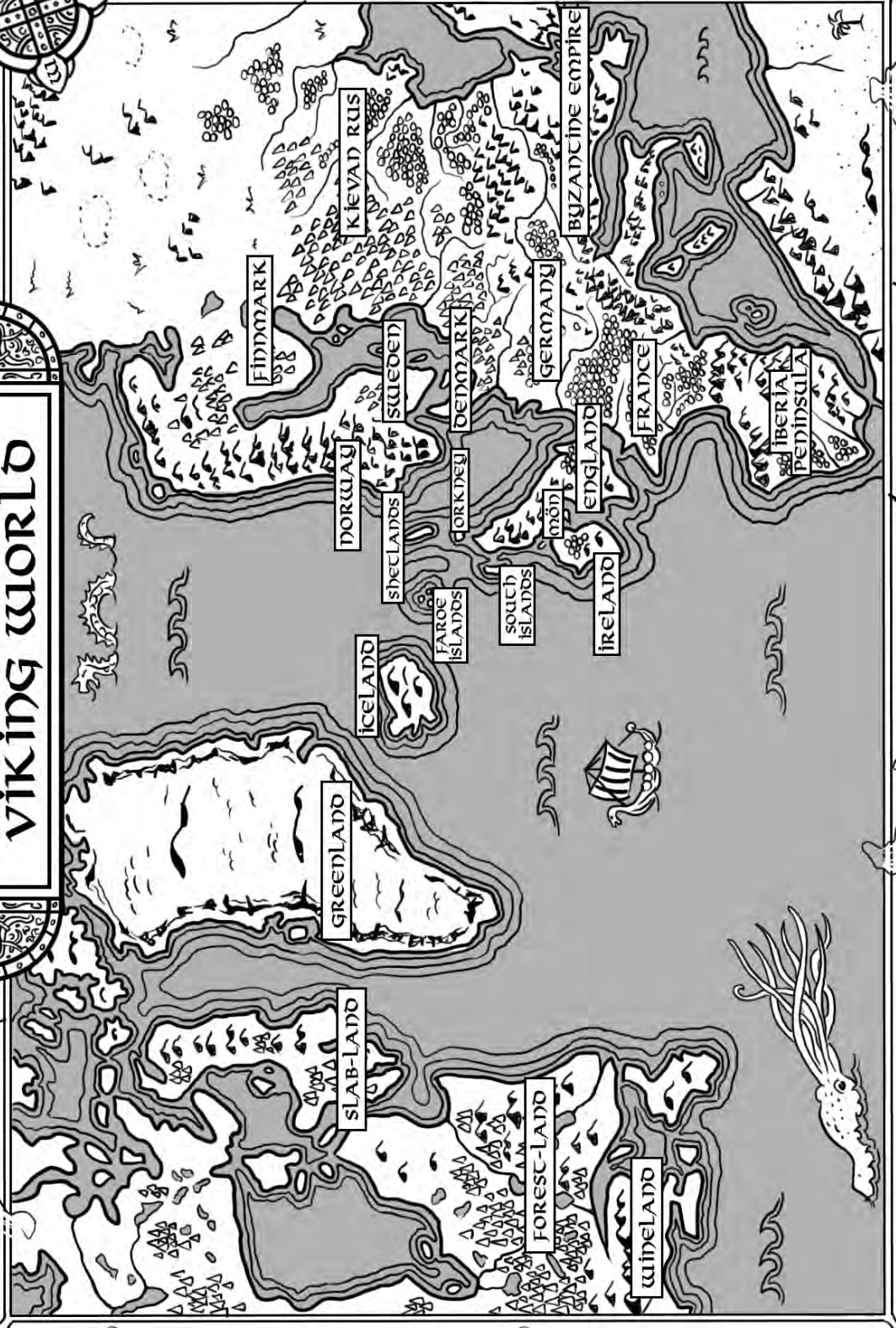
Most of Norway's territory is occupied by mountains. The steep mountains rise abruptly from the sea, leaving only a few areas with gentle slopes, and they turn the faces of its population toward the sea.

The land is indented with a great number of fjords; many of those are long and narrow. There are also a total of 150,000 islets along the coast. Most of the population is concentrated in the southern part of the country.

The history of Norway during the Viking period begins with Haraldur, who succeeded his father Halfdan the Black in 860 as the ruler of several small kingdoms in southern Norway. After having his marriage proposal rejected by the daughter of the petty king of Hordaland, Haraldur swore that he would become the sole king of Norway. Furthermore, he swore that until that day he would not comb or cut his hair. From then on known as Haraldur Tanglehair, he went on to make a series of conquests. Finally having become the first king to rule over all of Norway, he then became know



# VIKING WORLD





## Timeline of Viking-Age Norway

**793** - The plundering of England's Lindisfarne monastery marks the beginning of the Viking age.

**850 to 870** - Incited by Princess Gýda, King Haraldur unites Norway into one kingdom under his rule.

**931** - Eiríkur Bloodaxe becomes King of Norway and King of Northumbria.

**934** - Haakon the Good becomes King of Norway.

**961** - King Haakon the Good is mortally wounded at the Battle of Fitjar. His son, Haraldur Greycloak becomes king of Norway.

**970** - Haakon Sigurðsson rules Norway as a vassal of Haraldur Bluetooth, King of Denmark.

**995** - Ólafur Trygvason becomes king of Norway. He builds the first Christian church in the country.

**997** - King Ólafur Trygvason founds the town of Kaupangen as his seat of government.

**1000** - Battle of Svolder fought between King Ólafur Trygvason and an alliance between Denmark and Sweden. The Norwegians are annihilated, and King Ólafur dies. The victorious leaders split Norway into

areas of control.

**1015** - Ólafur II Haraldsson defeats other claimants to the throne and declares himself King of Norway.

**1028** - King Ólafur II Haraldsson is forced to flee Norway by Knútur, King of England and Denmark, who invades Norway with 50 ships from England. At an assembly at Kaupangen, Knútur is crowned King of Norway. King Knútur installs Hákon Eiríksson as a vassal ruler of Norway.

**1029** - Hakon Eiríksson, the Regent of Norway, is lost at sea. Ólafur II Haraldsson, the deposed king, tries to recapture the kingdom but is killed at the battle of Stiklarstaðir. King Knútur installs his son Sveinn Knútsson as King of Norway.

**1030** - King Sveinn Knútsson introduces strict laws. No man is allowed to leave the kingdom without his permission, or his property would become the king's. Taxes are raised, which leads to popular resistance against the king.

**1035** - King Knútur dies. The son of the deposed king Ólafur II Haraldsson, Magnus I, is invited to return from Russia to Norway by supporters of his father. King Sveinn Knútsson flees to Denmark where he dies a short time later. Magnus I

becomes king of Norway at age 11.

**1040** - King Magnus I launches a campaign against Denmark.

**1041** - The kings and noblemen from Norway and Denmark meet at Götta River and agree that the countries should reunite. Peace is made, and the kings agree that the first one to die would be succeeded by the other.

**1042** - King Harthaknútur of Denmark dies, and King Magnus I becomes king of united Norway and Denmark.

**1046** - King Haraldur Sigurdsson Hadrada ("The Hard Ruler") become co-king of Norway, alongside King Magnus I

**1047** - King Magnus I drowns when preparing a ship for a campaign against England. Haraldur Sigurdsson Hadrada becomes the sole king of Norway, and launches a long campaign against Denmark.

**1066** - With 300 ships and 15,000 men, King Haraldur invades England. The Battle of Stamford Bridge proves to be a disaster, and the king is killed in battle. Norwegian losses are considerable, and fewer than 25 ships return to Norway. This defeat marks the end of the Viking Age in Norway.

by the name that would accompany him for the rest of his life — Haraldur Fairhair.

Haraldur's campaign to unify Norway caused large numbers of his opponents to flee to Iceland and to the Scottish Islands. Haraldur was forced to make an expedition to Scotland to kill some of his opponents hiding there. Iceland, however, re-

mained independent and out of Norwegian control for the next few centuries.

As Haraldur grew old, he handed control of the country to his favorite son Eiríkur Bloodaxe. After Haraldur's death the unity of the kingdom was not preserved, and for the next century the kingdom was ruled, wholly or in part, by descen-







dants of King Haraldur or by earls under the suzerainty of Denmark.

Norway's conversion to Christianity was a long and painful process. King Haakon I (c. 920–961) was the first king to adopt Christianity, but it was only by the reign of King Ólafur Haraldsson in 1015 to 1028 that acceptance of the new religion was enforced.

## Major Trading Center: Skíringssalur

The largest trading town in Norway is Skíringssalur (“The Shining Hall”), situated on the west side of the entrance to Viksfjörður in the southeast of the country. The main crafts are metalwork and soap-stone vessels. The town is not fortified.

## Denmark

The Kingdom of Denmark comprises the peninsula of Jutland, a large area of the southern region of the Scandinavian peninsula, as well as the large islands of Fyn and Sjælland, and 500 smaller islands. The Kingdom is protected by a series of earthworks, known as Danevirke, in which a single gap exists for the passage of the Army Road. This road links northern Jutland peninsula to Holstein, a frontier region to the south.

Denmark is a flat country. More than half of it stands less than 30 meters above sea level. The highest point in Denmark is 173 meters, contrasting with the 2,560 meters of Norway's highest point. More than 75% of Denmark lies below 100 meters (330 ft) and is flat or gently undulating. The country is extensively wooded with oak and beech.

The Danes control all the trade between Western Europe and the Baltic region, for all sea-trading routes pass through the archipelago between Jutland and Skane, right through Danish lands.

At the beginning of the Viking Age, many Danish petty kingdoms existed. In 980 Haraldur “Bluetooth” Gormsson united them under the Kingdom of Denmark. During Haraldur's reign he built many fortified castles in many parts of his

kingdom, all following a circular design with gates opening to the four corners, and a courtyard divided into four areas which held large houses set in a square pattern. Haraldur was the first Danish king to convert to Christianity.

In 987, one of Haraldur Bluetooth's sons, Sveinn Forkbeard, led a rebellion against his father. Haraldur was killed trying to fight off the rebellion. Sveinn Forkbeard, however, was forced by his father's allies to go into exile. King Eiríkur the Victorious of Sweden took control of Denmark for the next seven years until his death in 994, after which Sveinn Forkbeard returned from exile and reclaimed the throne of Denmark.

In 1002, news reached Denmark that King Æthelred “the Unready” of England had ordered that every Dane living in England be put to death, in an attempt to rid the country of anyone supporting Viking raids from Scandinavia. In the ensuing massacre in which thousands died, the sister and brother-in-law of the Danish king were also killed. Enraged by this, King Sveinn Forkbeard launched many raids against England in the following years, culminating on a full-scale invasion of England in the year 1013 that the king personally led. Sveinn Forkbeard was accepted as King of England following the flight of King Æthelred to Normandy late that same year. Sveinn died in early 1014, having ruled England unopposed for only five weeks.

After the death of King Sveinn Forkbeard the English nobility rebelled, forced the Danish forces to abandon England, and had their king Æthelred the Unready return. In Denmark, Haraldur II, son of Sveinn Forkbeard, became king. His brother Knútur became the commander of the Danish fleet. In the summer of 1015, Knútur launched a new invasion of England with ten thousand men in two hundred ships. In the fourteen months following, the Danish-led forces crushed the English resistance, and in late 1016 Knútur was crowned king of England.

With the death of his brother King Haraldur II in 1018, Knútur was crowned king of Denmark. Ten years later, in 1028, Knútur set off from England with a fleet of fifty ships to Norway. Arriving in the Norwegian city of Kaupangen, he forced King Olafur II Haraldsson to flee Norway. Knútur was crowned king of England, Denmark, Nor-





## Timeline of Viking-Age Denmark



**710** - Angantyr becomes the first of the “old kings” of the Danes. He is known for being “more savage than any beast and harder than stone.” He builds the Danevirke, a series of earthen defenses at the base of the Jutland peninsula.

**760** - King Angantyr dies. His son Sigfred becomes king.

**770** - Founding of the town of Heiðabýr.

**804** - King Sigfred dies. His son Gotrik becomes king. He reinforces the Danevirke fortifications.

**808** - King Gotrik’s forces attack the German town of Reric, burn it down and order the town merchants to re-settle in Heiðabýr.

**810** - King Gotrik leads a force of 200 ships to plunder the Frisian coast, and claims Northern Frisia as Danish territory.

**810** - King Gotrik is assassinated. His nephew Hemming becomes king.

**811** - King Hamming dies, and Horik Gotriksson becomes king. Haraldur Klak Haraldsson also claims the title of king of Denmark.

**814** - Charlemagne dies. Charlemagne’s son, Louis the Pious, begins a campaign against Denmark.

**819** - Haraldur Klak Haraldsson becomes co-ruler of Denmark, alongside Horik Gotriksson.

**826** - King Haraldur Klak Haraldsson adopts Christianity.

**827** - King Haraldur Klak Haralds-

son is driven out of Denmark for good, and is given a fief in Frisia by the Franks.

**845** - Danish Viking Ragnar “Hairy-Breeches” leads a raid on Paris with a fleet of 120 ships. He only refrains from burning the city when the French King Charles the Fat agrees to pay a ransom of 3,000 kg (around 6,600 lb) of silver.

**845** - King Horik Gotriksson despatches a fleet of 600 ships to the Elbe and seizes Hamburg. For two days the Danes plunder the town until being forced out by a Saxon army.

**854** - King Horik Gotriksson is murdered by a nephew whom he had driven into exile. After a brief civil war, Eiríkur “the Child,” thus nicknamed after being the single royal child left alive, becomes king and is known as Horik II.

**864** - Pope Nicholas writes to King Horik II encouraging him to become a Christian. He refuses.

**865** - The Danish Viking Ragnar “Hairy-Breeches” is killed by the Northumbrian king, Aelle. Taking revenge for Ragnar’s death, his sons Halfdan Ragnarsson, Ubba Ragnarsson, and Ivar the Boneless take the Great Heathen Army to England.

**866** - The Great Heathen Army conquers the Kingdom of Northumbria.

**867** - King Horik II dies. Bagsecg becomes king.

**870** - The Great Heathen Army con-

quers the Kingdom of East Anglia.

**871** - King Bagsecg leads the Great Summer Army to England and adds his forces to the Great Heathen Army. King Bagsecg dies in battle.

**874** - The Great Heathen Army conquers Mercia.

**871-877** - Many kings rule parts of Denmark in quick succession: Halfdan Ragnarsson (871-877), Sigfred (873-891), Gotrik (880s), Helgi (890s), Ólafur (890), Gyrð and Gnupa (900), Sigtrygg Gnupasson (900s).

**878** - King Alfred of England defeats the Great Heathen Army at the Battle of Ethandun.

**916** - Harthaknútr Ragnarsson deposes the young king Sigtrygg and rules over most of Denmark.

**936** - Gormur Harthaknúts-son becomes King of Denmark.

**958** - Haraldur “Bluetooth” Gormsson becomes King of Denmark.

**987** - Sveinn Forkbeard leads a rebellion against his father king Haraldur Bluetooth, and is exiled.

**995** - King Eiríkur “the Victorious” of Sweden dies; Sveinn Forkbeard returns to Denmark and seizes the throne.

**1002** - English King Ethelred II launches a massacre of Danish settlers in England.

**1003 to 1012** - Series of Danish raids on England.





## Timeline of Viking-Age Denmark Continued

**1013** - King Sveinn Forkbeard launches a full-scale invasion of England, and is crowned King of England after the English king flees to Normandy

**1014** - King Sveinn Forkbeard dies. The English nobility rebels and forces the Danish to abandon England.

**1014** - Haraldur II, son of Sveinn Forkbeard is crowned king of Denmark. His brother Knútur is made commander of the Danish fleet

**1015** - Knútur launches a new invasion of England, with 10,000 men in 200 ships.

**1016** - Knútur is crowned king of England.

**1018** - With the death of his brother Haraldur II, Knútur is crowned king of Denmark.

**1028** - Knútur sails to Norway from England with a fleet of 50 ships, deposes king Olafur II and is crowned king of Norway.

**1035** - King Knútur dies, having been king of Denmark, England, Norway, and part of Sweden. Knútur III is crowned king.

**1042** - Magnus I, king of Norway, is crowned king of Denmark.

**1050** - Heiðabýr perishes in a conflict between King Haraldur Sigurdsson of Norway and King Swein Estridsson of Denmark. The town is raided by Haraldur's forces and burned to the ground.

way, and part of Sweden. Knútur died in 1035 in England. His burial was in Winchester, the English capital. In Denmark he was succeeded by his son Knútur III, who fought a long war against Magnus I of Norway that caused him to lose his claim to the throne of England.

### Major Trading Center: Heiðabýr

The town of Heiðabýr was founded around 770. During the Viking Age it is the largest town and most important trading market in all of Scandinavia.

Its position at the base of the Jutland peninsula gives the Heiðabýr merchants control over the most important trading routes between Western Europe and the Baltics. More importantly, goods arriving from Western Europe can be disembarked at Hollingsted, on the opposite side of the peninsula, and transported the short distance of eleven miles by land, avoiding the dangerous coastal route and falling under the protection of the Dan-evirke fortifications, to Heiðabýr, where they can be traded with merchants arriving from the East.

King Gotrik of Denmark raided and burned down another important merchant town named Reric in 808, forcing the merchants there to move to Heiðabýr. That move made Heiðabýr the unrivaled trading market of the North Sea.

## Sweden

The Sweden of the Viking Age is limited to the central-eastern territory of the Scandinavian peninsula. It borders Gautland to the south and Norrland to the north. Gautland remains a separate kingdom until later in the Middle Ages, and similarly Norrland becomes part of Sweden in the 15th century.

The large lakes Väner, Vätter, Hjälmär, and Mälär dominate the middle of Sweden, which is also dotted with thousands of small lakes.

Many petty kingdoms existed in Sweden, Gautland and Norrland during the viking period. The first undisputed king of Sweden was Eiríkur "the Victorious," who became king in 970.

King Eiríkur's first great challenge to his reign was an invasion from the south organized by his nephew Styrbjörn the Strong. Styrbjörn had made a sacrifice to Þór, but the red-bearded god showed himself angry and foretold a great defeat. Eiríkur, on the other hand, sacrificed to Óðinn. In the form of a tall man with a blue cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, Óðinn appeared to Eiríkur, gave him a cane and told him to throw it over the assembled warriors and to say "I give all of you to Óðinn." Eiríkur obeyed the god's command and a hail of arrows fell on his enemies, giving Eiríkur the victory over the invading forces.





## Timeline of Viking-Age Sweden



**800** - Birka is founded on island of Björkö.

**829** - The first Christian missionary arrives in Sweden — the Benedictine brother Ansgar, accompanied by a helper, Witmar. They are attacked by vikings, lose their holy books, but finally arrive in Birka on foot and penniless.

**830** - King Bjorn allows Ansgar to build a church in Birka, of which he become the minister. Ansgar converts Hergeir, the prefect of Birka. Hergeir donates land for the church and becomes a staunch Christian.

**831** - Ansgar is made bishop of Hamburg, with ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Birka. Pope Gregory IV names him, jointly with Ebo of Rheims, papal legate to all the Northern Peoples, including the Swedes, Danes, and Slavs. Little or no impact is made on the pagan belief in Birka at this time.

**860** - King Eiríkur Eymundsson

of Uppland conquers many of the local petty kingdoms, creating the largest of the Swedish kingdoms of the time. Swedish Vikings attack Constantinople.

**866** - King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway conquers parts of Sweden.

**882** - Björn Eiríksson becomes King of Sweden.

**960** - Lake Mälars water level begins to drop, making the waterway that provides communication with Birka more and more shallow.

**970** - Gautland becomes a thriving center of trade, and begins to capture trade formerly belonging to Birka due to its better location on the Baltic trade route.

**970** - Eiríkur Björnsson “the Victorious,” becomes King of Sweden.

**980** - King Eiríkur defeats the armed forces led by his nephew Styrbjörn the Strong at the Battle of Fýrisvellir.

**987** - King Eiríkur becomes King of Denmark after the death of Haraldur Bluetooth.

**995** - Ólafur Eiríksson becomes king of Sweden, loses control of Denmark, and also loses rights to tribute from Estonia and Latvia.

**1000** - King Ólafur, in alliance with Sveinn Forkbeard, King of Denmark, defeats King Ólafur Tryggvason of Norway in the naval Battle of Svolder.

**1022** - Önundur Ólafsson becomes King of Sweden.

**1026** - Knútur the Great of Denmark attacks Swedes and Norwegians at the Battle of Holy River; Knútur is victorious and takes control of south and east Sweden.

**1050** - Æmundær the Old becomes King of Sweden.

In 987 King Haraldur Bluetooth of Denmark was killed while trying to fight off a rebellion led by his son Sveinn Forkbeard, who then was exiled by his father’s allies. After that, King Eiríkur of Sweden, with support from the Danish nobility, became king of Denmark.

After the death of King Eiríkur in 995, his son Ólafur Eiríksson becomes king of Sweden. Ólafur lost control of Denmark to the Danish prince Sveinn Forkbeard, but joined him in battle five years later against the king of Norway and was victorious.

In 1026, King Önundur Ólafsson joins the Norwegian King Ólafur Haraldsson in battle against the invading forces of King Knútur the Great of Denmark. The combined Swedish and Danish forces are defeated, and Knútur becomes

the ruler of South and East Sweden until his death in 1035.

The first of the Swedish kings to convert to Christianity was Æmundær the Old. It wasn’t until the reign of Eiríkur the Saint in 1055, however, that the Church of Sweden was established.

### Major Trading Center: Birka

The town of Birka was established around the year 800. It is located at Birch Island (Björkö), at the entrance of Lake Mälars, where water routes from south and east converge.

The town is governed by a representative of the king, and has its own assembly. In the tenth century, Birka has a population of around one thousand





inhabitants. It is a well-defended town, since it is no doubt a tempting and rich target for raiders.

A Viking Age visitor approaching the island of Björkö first sees a fortress and a place of refuge to be used in times when the town is attacked, surrounded by a rampart of earth and stones 8 meters to 15 meters across, oval in plan and with three gates: one facing north, one south, and one facing east towards the town. Outside the northern gate is the garrison that mans the fortress.

The fur trade is the main source of Birka's wealth. The fur is obtained by trade, or by raiding, from the Lapps, Finns, and from Russia, and then shipped to Heiðabýr in Denmark for onward transport to Western Europe, or across the Baltic and down the Russian rivers to the Eastern Caliphate of the Arab Empire in return for silver.

Many Swedish goods are also traded in Birka and mainly exported to Heiðabýr, such as iron, reindeer antler, items made of antler such as hand-carved combs, walrus teeth, amber, and honey.

## Ireland

Ireland of the Viking Age is divided into many petty kingdoms and clans locked in wars against each other. Vikings established the first cities of Dyflinni (Dublin), Hlymrekur (Limerick), Veigsfjörður (Wexford), Veðrafjörður (Waterford), Vikinglo (Wicklow) and in the marshes at Cork. These are used as trading centers, ideally situated for trade between many Norse settlements in the North Sea and the markets to the South such as France and the Arabs in Spain, and also as bases for plundering.

The native language outside the Viking settlements is Irish.

## England

England was the site of the first Viking raid. In 793 the monastery at Lindisfarne was sacked, marking the start of the Viking Age.

In the earlier period of the Viking Age, England consisted of many Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

In the 9th century a large army of Vikings, called "The Great Heathen Army" by Anglo-Saxon chroniclers, pillaged and conquered much of England. The army had many thousands of warriors divided into smaller groups who would rarely fight together, and sometimes targeted each other.

In late 866, Viking forces conquered the Kingdom of Northumbria, followed in 870 by the Kingdom of East Anglia, and in 874 they conquered the kingdom of Mercia.

In 878, Alfred the Great, king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, was victorious against the Vikings and strengthened the defenses of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms. His sons unified the country.

The Viking attacks in England started again at the end of the eleventh century. In the first half of the eleventh century, England was part of a large empire which included Denmark and Norway. In 1016, King Knútur of Denmark was acknowledged as king of England. However, his empire did not last very long and the English line of kings was restored in 1042.

In 1066 the king of Norway (now also independent from Denmark) invaded England. King Harold of England defeated the invaders at the battle of Stamford Bridge. Within days, however, King Harold's army was itself defeated by a new invader, William of Normandy, at the battle of Hastings.

The native language of England is English.





## Scotland

The first Viking raid in Scotland took place in 795 when the monastery on the island of Iona was plundered. During the 9th century the Vikings settled the Shetlands, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides. Vikings also settled in Caithness and Sutherland.

In 893 the Danes waged a major offensive in Scotland in which many members of the Pict nobility were killed. The resulting succession crisis allowed Cináed mac Ailpín, king of the kingdom of Dál Riata on the west coast of Scotland, to unify the remaining Scots and Pictish peoples. Soon after, parts of the Great Heathen Army attacked eastern Scotland, and Viking raiders based in the Orkneys raided into Moray Firth. By the

year 900, the Vikings had captured the fortress of Dunottar, south of Aberdeen. King Indulf of Scotland was killed by Vikings in 962.

The Danish king Knútur led an army into Scotland in 1031, but peace was made between the Scottish king Máel Coluim and Knútur through the intervention of Richard, Duke of Normandy, brother of Knútur's wife Emma.

The languages of Scotland are Gaelic and Pictish.

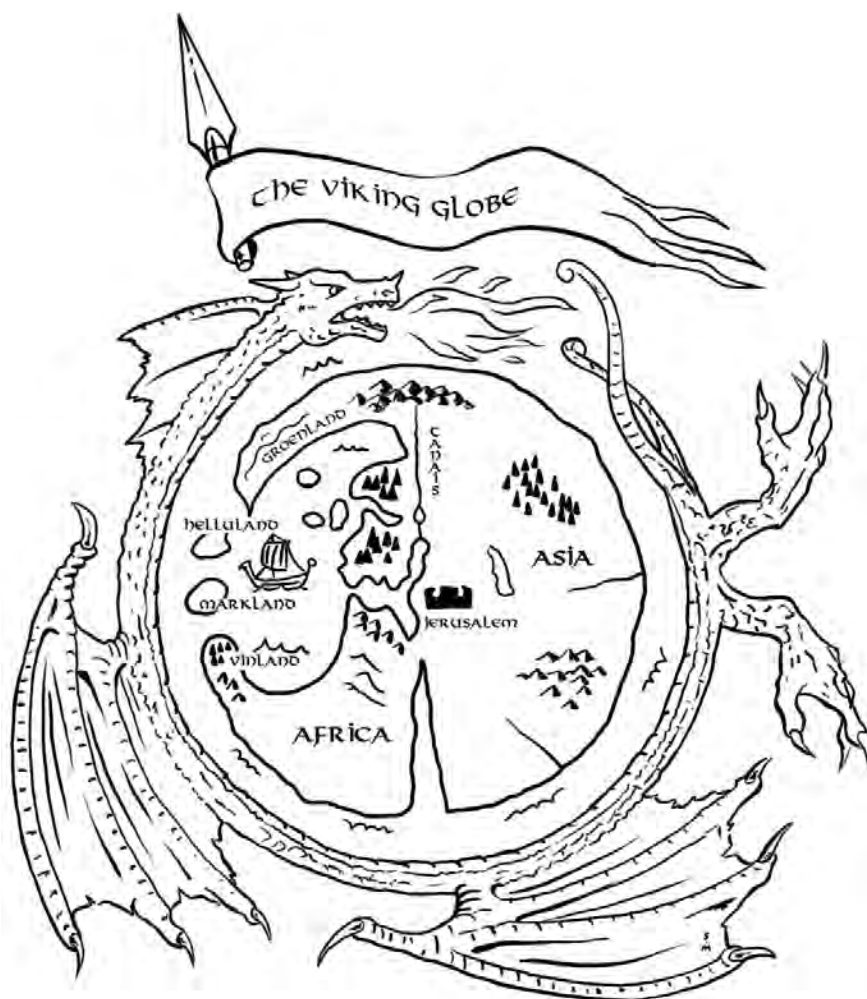
## France

France is a decentralized state during the Viking Age. The authority of the king is more religious than administrative, with effective control of little more than the region around Paris.

The first large-scale Viking raid in France took place in 841 when a fleet sailed up the River Seine, took the city of Rouen, and burned it down. The loot was enormous. The Vikings continued penetrating the Seine, plundering and burning the rich Jumiègue monastery. The nearby monastery of Fontenelle was also assaulted and held for ransom. In this expedition, sixty-eight captives were taken and then returned on the delivery of payment of a ransom by the monks of Saint-Denis. In 845 a fleet of 120 Viking ships sailed up the Seine and besieged Paris. King Charles the Fat paid handsomely in order for Paris to be spared.

During the 9th and 10th century Paris and other parts of France are raided many more times by Vikings.

The native language is French.







## Byzantine Empire

This vast empire to the East stretches over huge areas of the Balkans and Asia Minor. It is common for Norsemen to go to Constantinople to work as mercenaries.

The capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, is the largest city the Vikings know of, and they call it The Great City (Miklagarður). Three parallel walls, 7 km long, surround the city. The inside wall is 12 meters high. There are 100 towers along the wall, each tower 18 meters high. On the outside there are moats, and also several kilometers of walls along the seaside, plus a heavy iron chain that blocks the harbor — The Golden Horn.

The Vikings plundered The Great City for the first time in 860. After much destruction, the emperor was forced to offer them a great treasure in gold so that the city would be spared. For many years after more tribute had to be paid in order to avoid further plundering.

In 980 emperor Basil II requested military assistance from Vladimir I of Kiev to help defend his throne. Vladimir sent an army of 6,000 Scandinavian-Russian Vikings to Basil in exchange to the hand for the Emperor's sister in marriage. He incorporated them into his own army as a single unit. It became known as the "Varangians" (The Sworn), and they were renowned for their huge double-edged axes. They are the best-paid troops in the empire, and are allowed to keep booty they manage to scrape up from the battlefields and towns they conquer. Many Icelanders serve in the Varangian Guard.

The native language of the Byzantine Empire is Greek.

## Finnmark

The heavily forested land of Finnmark is home to a small population of diverse tribes without a central government. The Finns are famous for their powerful shamans, and also for the furs they export. Vikings occasionally raid the villages on the coast of Finnmark.

The native language is Finnish.

## Iberia Peninsula

The Kingdom of Asturias, in the north of the Iberia Peninsula, suffers from Viking attacks from the mid-tenth century to the end of the Viking Age. Abductions of nobility and rich individuals for ransom are a common Viking practice in the Spanish kingdom.

In 861 a group of Vikings ransomed the king of Pamplona, whom they had captured the previous year, for 60,000 gold pieces. Small Viking settlements have been established on the Portuguese coast.

The Islamic south of the Iberia Peninsula also suffers from Viking attacks. In the year 844, Vikings sacked Lisbon, Cadiz, and Medina Sidonia, then captured Seville for a few weeks before being defeated by a Muslim counterattack. In 859 Vikings sailed through Gibraltar and raided the Moroccan kingdom of Nekor. The king's harem had to be ransomed back by the emir of Cordoba.

The native languages in the north are Spanish and Galician-Portuguese. The language in the Muslim-occupied territories is Arabic.

## Germany

The Germanic peoples (Franks, Saxons, Swabians and Bavarians) of the former Carolingian Empire were united under King Henrik the Fowler in the early 10th century. The Germans often clash with the Danes to the north, and just as often Danes raid Hamburg and other German cities.

The native language is German, in many different dialects.

## Kievan Rus

Swedish Vikings known as the Rus founded Kievan Rus (Kiev) in 880. It became the capital of an empire consisting of a vast portion of Eastern Europe, which also included Holmgarður (Novgorod).

The native languages of Kievan Rus are Norse and Slavic.





## Normandy

The Vikings began raiding the coast of Normandy at the end of the 8th century, pillaging in the summer and going back to Scandinavia during the winter. From 851 they began to stay in the lower Seine Valley for the winter.

In 911 the Danish Viking leader Hrólfr the Walker forced Charles III, king of France, to sign the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, under which the French king gave a large area of North-West France to the Vikings, establishing the Duchy of Normandy. Mainly Danish settlers colonized Normandy, but also some Norwegians and Swedes. With a series of conquests, the territory of Normandy gradually expanded in the next centuries. In 1066, the Normans invaded and conquered England.

The language is French before 900, Norse until 1000, and French again after that.

## Orkney and Shetlands

At the end of the 8th century a great number Norwegian Vikings settled in the islands of Orkneyjar (Orkney) and Hjaltland (Shetlands). They took over farms and settlements, killing nearly every male member of the native Pictish population in the process.

The islands are used as bases for Viking raids in Scotland and Norway, and are a refuge for many of the enemies of the Norwegian king.

In 875 King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway set sail with a great fleet to kill his enemies in Orkneyjar and Hjaltland, annexing them to Norway. King Haraldur later gave the islands to Rognvald Eysteinnsson, the Earl of Møre, as reparation for his son being killed in battle in Scotland.

The language is Norse.

## South Islands

The South Islands (Suðureyjar - Hebrides), to the North-West of Scotland, are often plundered by Vikings from Orkneyjar (Orkney) and Mön (Man).

After 900, the islands were settled by Norwegians fleeing persecution from King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway.

The language is Norse.

## Mön

In the first half of the 9th century, Vikings came to Mön (Island of Man) mainly for plundering. In 850 they settled on the island, and it became part of the Viking Kingdom of Dublin. In 990 it became part of the Earldom of Orkney.

The native language is Welsh, with Norse-speaking overlords.





# GOING VIKING



*“Here is a ship called Stigandi [High Stepper] which we consider the best ship of all upwind under sail and a better voyaging ship than any of the others, and this is the one which I chose for you. It is a fine vessel, though not a large one.”*

*Ingimundur thanked the king for the gift. He then took his leave with many tokens of friendship.*

*He soon discovered how fast a ship Stigandi was.*

*Then Ingimundur said: “The king’s choice of ship for me was a good one, and rightly it is called Stigandi, stepping through the waves as it does.”*

— *Vatnsdæla Saga* (The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal)

The Norse people of the Viking Age are accomplished shipbuilders and sailors. No other European people enjoy, at this time, such overwhelming military advantage from superiority in naval techniques.

Although very few ships are built in Iceland, due to wood being increasingly scarce, ships are a common sight all around the country. Most are bought in Scandinavia by Icelanders, mainly by the *goðar* (chieftain-priests), or received as gifts from Scandinavian kings or other nobles.

The owner’s word is absolute while he is on-board his ship.

## Viking Ships

### Knörr

The Norse settlers coming to Iceland traveled the North Atlantic aboard cargo ships called *knörr* (pl. *knerrir*), bringing with them farming animals, horses, timber, and anything they could afford to carry.

These single-mastered, square-sailed merchant ships are built for long ocean-going journeys, and are used on the sailing routes between Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and Wineland.

A *knörr* is built by fixing overlapping horizontal planks on either side of a strong keel. This gives the ship its flexibility, allowing it to move with the batter of the waves rather than taking their full force. The deck is composed of loose planking laid on the ship’s frame, allowing for the planks to be easily lifted for bailing or to retrieve anything stored below-deck. Stem and stern rise high out of the water. As the ship sails in rough seas, it cuts through the top of the waves rather than climbing them to the top.

It is a shorter and broader vessel, compared to a *dreki*, the Viking warship. There is a cargo hold amid-ship, with decking and oar ports only in the fore and after parts, and with a firmly seated mast designed to be unstepped (taken down) only rarely.

Although a typical *knörr* is capable of transporting up to one hundred people, these ships can be crewed by relatively few men: a helmsman, a lookout, someone bailing, and a number of others



sufficient to handle the sail. A crew of twelve is considered the minimum for an ocean-going knörr. The maximum cargo capacity on a knörr ship is 60 tons of cargo with a minimum crew.

Basically, it is still an open boat, with cargo covered by skins, and the crew exposed to the elements. Seamen, merchants and passengers sleep where best they can on deck between the thwarts, covered with hides or in sleeping bags. During long sea journeys food is mainly dried, pickled, salted, or smoked fish and meat, with bread. For drinking, water is carried in skin bags, and ale and sour milk in tubs. These supplies are carried under the half-decks. Cats are commonly kept on-board to protect the cargo from rats and mice.

Taking into consideration the travel times and distances mentioned in the Sagas, a knörr can sail an average of 150 nautical miles per day, with wind from all directions. This is equivalent to an average speed of 6.5 knots (nautical miles per hour). A nautical mile is 1,852 meters. The maximum speed with optimal wind conditions may reach up to 12 knots.

## Dreki

Named after the Norse word for “dragon,” due to the frequent use of a carved dragon-head at the prow, a *dreki* (pl. *drekar*) is a warship built for speed and for its ability to sail semi-independently of the wind and the weather in general. Its shallow draft allows it to be beached, making it ideal for coastal Viking raids.

The main source of power of the dreki is the oar, with the mast unstepped to reduce wind resistance and to improve stability. It has no deck, and has a greater number of oars than the knörr. Also longer and thinner than a knörr, it is not suited for ocean-going sea journeys and can venture into deeper water only during relatively calm seas.

In severe weather the mast can be removed and laid parallel to the keel, on supports. Then a sail can be

stretched over the length of the mast like a tent, for temporary cover against the elements.

These warships vary considerably in size, and are measured by the number of rowing benches they accommodate. The smallest such ship considered suitable for war has 13 benches on each side, for a total of 26 oars. The most common size is 18 benches, measuring around 28 meters in length. Occasionally ships of over 30 benches are built, but those are not common. The largest dreki-type warship built during the Viking age was the *Great Dragon*, constructed in Norway in 1062 and belonging to King Haraldur Hardrada — it had 35 benches, making for a total ship length of 36 meters and carrying up to 300 men.

This is not a transport ship for settlers or merchants. All crew are seaman at sea and soldiers on land. A typical dreki carries a crew of thirty to sixty rowers, up to 150 warriors maximum.

A dreki is normally rowed one man to an oar, with a second man joining in during battle to help with ship speed and maneuverability.

When being rowed into battle, the crew's shields are positioned in slots in the timber rail attached to the outside of the gunwale, in order to protect the rowers from arrows. During other times, the shields are stored elsewhere inside the ship so they don't run the risk of being lost at sea or of being damaged by salt water.

Taking into consideration the travel times and distances mentioned in the Sagas, a dreki can sail an average of 180 nautical miles per day. This is equivalent to an average speed of 7.5 knots. The







maximum speed with optimal wind conditions may reach up to 14 knots. Rowing speeds for short periods on calm water can reach up to 15 knots.

## Ship Names

The prows of Viking ships are usually fitted with the carved heads of animals, particularly dragons. Such figure-heads usually give the ships their names, such as *Great Dragon*, *Bison*, *Crane*, *Elk*, *Man's Head*, etc.

## Navigation

Icelanders and other Norse seafarers of the Viking Age employ many different ways of traveling safely across the ocean.

During high summer around Iceland and Greenland the stars cannot be seen at night, as the sun never sets. That makes the position of the sun in the sky the main navigational aid used by sailors. Also, Viking seafarers know of a correlation between weather conditions on the well-travelled sea routes and the direction of the wind. That way, they can estimate the wind direction with some accuracy even when the sun is not visible and the sky is overcast, which can happen for days at a time.

Other navigational aids used by the Norse sailors include seabirds, the use of birds set free from ships, the direction of the waves, changing color and temperature of the sea, and cloud formations.

When possible, it makes sense to island-hop, keeping within sight of islands and other landmarks as much as possible along the way, even if it means sailing a longer distance.

## The Navigate Skill

In *Mythic Iceland*, the skill Navigate governs the navigator's success at safely finding the intended destination on sea journeys.

The navigator must make a Luck roll before setting out to sea. Failure on that roll indicates that weather and wind conditions are not favorable, the travel times increase by a factor of 50%,

## Ship Game Stats

### Knörr

**Skill:** Pilot Ship  
**Rated Speed:** 3  
**Handling:** -  
**ACC:**  $\pm 1$   
**MOV:** 18  
**Armor:** 10/-  
**SIZ:** 80  
**HP:** 60  
**Crew:** 12  
**Passengers:** up to 100  
**Cargo:** up to 45 tons (with minimum crew)  
**Value:** 10,000 vaðmal, or 125 cows

### Dreki

**Skill:** Pilot Ship  
**Rated Speed:** 4  
**Handling:** -  
**ACC:**  $\pm 1$   
**MOV:** 20  
**Armor:** 10/-  
**SIZ:** 100  
**HP:** 50  
**Crew:** 36 rowers, up to 150 warriors maximum  
**Passengers:** 20+  
**Cargo:** up to 20 tons (with minimum crew)  
**Value:** 16,000 vaðmal, or 200 cows

### Fishing Boat

**Skill:** Pilot Ship  
**Rated Speed:** 2  
**Handling:** -  
**ACC:**  $\pm 1$   
**MOV:** 10  
**Armor:** 4/-  
**SIZ:** 18  
**HP:** 35  
**Crew:** 2-3 men  
**Passengers:** 4  
**Cargo:** up to 2 tons (includes crew)  
**Value:** 800 vaðmal, or 10 cows





## Approaching Iceland

It is law in Viking Age Iceland that all figure-heads used at the prows of ships should be removed when approaching Iceland, before coming within sight of land. This is so as to not scare the spirits and mythic creatures of Iceland.

and Navigate skill checks are made with a -20% penalty. If the crew decides to wait for more favorable weather conditions they must wait for 1D6 days but another Luck roll is not necessary.

Once the ship sets out to sea, the helmsman must make a Navigate skill roll. Consult the guide below to find out how that roll affects the sea journey.

**Fumble:** the ship crashes on a reef or a floating sheet of ice and is too damaged to proceed further. With a successful Craft (Ship-building) skill roll, or a Difficult successful Craft (Wood) skill roll, the ship can be fixed well enough to reach the nearest landmass. If the crew cannot fix the ship, they are stranded and at the mercy of the gods.

**Failure:** the ship misses the intended destination and is lost at sea for 1D6 days. After that, a new Navigate skill roll can be attempted. In case of a second subsequent skill roll failure, the ship arrives at another land other than its intended destination, after another 1D6 days lost at sea.

**Success:** traveling in varied weather and wind conditions, the ship arrives at the destination within the estimated amount of time.

**Special:** speedy crossing with mostly good weather, cutting travel time by 25%.

**Critical:** the gods have blessed this journey with perfect weather and optimal winds, cutting travel time by half — this will be talked about for years!

**Note:** The Prophecy skill can provide help in bad weather conditions by providing a bonus to the Navigate skill.

## Ship Handling

Whenever the player characters find themselves in a sea storm, the ship's captain must make a Pilot Ship skill roll.

**Fumble:** Your character loses control of the ship. He or she must make a successful Luck roll to avoid crashing into a large wave that causes 1D10 points of damage to the ship. Even if the ship is not damaged, your character's next Pilot check should be made at -20%, and he or she may suffer additional complications such as crew members being thrown overboard.

**Failure:** Your character fails to handle the ship in a safe way through the storm, to make the desired maneuver, or runs into some other kind of trouble. He or she must make a successful Luck roll in order to avoid loose cargo or crew on deck being thrown overboard.

**Success:** Your character manages to control the ship during the storm and avoids damage to the ship or loss of cargo or crew.

**Special:** Your character easily maneuvers the ship through the storm, and gains a bonus of +10% to his or her next Pilot Ship roll.

**Critical:** Your character not only finds a quick way out of the storm, but also uses the strong winds to propel the ship far away from the bad weather area. The character gains a bonus of +25% to his or her next Pilot Ship roll, or attack roll made in naval combat.

## Landing the Ship

When landing the ship at a beach, the ship's captain must make a Pilot Ship skill check.

**Fumble:** Sudden strong winds blow the ship away from the coast. Another Pilot Ship skill roll can only be attempted again in 1D4 hours.

**Failure:** The ship hits a sandbank while still relatively far from the beach. You need to wait 2D6 hours for the tide to rise for the ship to be released. The crew may choose to swim to land or use a small boat if they there is one on the ship.





**Success:** The ship lands well on the sand at the intended location.

**Special:** The landing spot is just perfect. If the crew is going for a raid, they have a good chance of catching the locals unawares.

**Critical:** The ship lands well into the sand beach, in perfect position for the intended purpose, and doesn't need to be dragged for a long stay. Locals are caught unawares.

## Travel Times

- ❖ From Stad in Norway to the Faroe Islands: two to four days.
- ❖ From Stad in Norway to Horn in East Iceland: seven to fourteen days.
- ❖ From Snæfellsness Peninsula in East Iceland to the Greenland settlements: three to six days.
- ❖ From Reykjanes in South Iceland to Scotland: three to six days.

The journey times listed above assume optimal weather and wind conditions throughout the journey.

Sea journeys may take longer, in some cases much longer, due to unfavorable winds and weather conditions.

For travel times to Greenland and Wineland, see **Lands to the West** chapter.

## Weapons of Choice

### Sword

Viking swords are double-edged, designed to be used single handed, and with blades carefully balanced for maximum slashing effect. Great care is taken of these weapons, and some have very elaborate hilts.

In Iceland, swords are rare and expensive, costing as much as 1200 vaðmal, or fifteen cows. A sword is likely to be the single most expensive item a man owns, after his farm.



The blade of a Viking sword is typically 4-6 cm wide (1.5-2.3 in), and 60 to 90 cm (24-36 in) long.

Swords are often heirlooms, given names and passed from father to son for generations. The loss of a sword is regarded as a catastrophe.

### Spear



The spear is the most commonly used weapon in the Viking Age. It is often the weapon of choice for someone who cannot afford a sword.

Viking spears are 2 to 3 meters long, with a blade 20 to 50 cm long. A spear can be thrown at the enemy, or be used as a two-handed thrusting weapon.

The fiercest warriors are known for their accuracy when throwing two spears at the same time, one with each hand, killing two enemies in one move. Such a maneuver can be attempted by splitting the Spear combat skill for right hand and left hand.

### Battle Axe

Battle Axes of the Viking age are light, fast, and well balanced. It is often the weapon of choice for the poorest among Viking warriors.

Axe heads are made of iron and single edged. The blade is crescent-shaped and measures from 22 to 45 cm (9 to 18 in). Smaller





blades were common in the early Viking period. The axe shaft is made of wood and can be as long as 1.5 m (60 in)

Axes with smaller heads have shorter shafts and are used one-handed, whereas longer-shafted axes are used two-handed.



## Bow

Although the Icelanders and Norse warriors in general favor close combat, the use of bows is common both on land and at sea.

Viking bows are made from a single piece of the wood of a yew, although ash or elm wood are also used. Arrowheads are made from iron, in a variety of shapes and sizes.

One of the most famous warriors of the Sagas, Gunnar of Hlíðarendi, was known and feared for his skill with the bow. His enemies only managed to kill him in an ambush after his bowstring was broken, and Gunnar's wife, reminding him that he had slapped her earlier, refused to give him a lock of her hair to mend the bow.

## Sax

*Kolskegg turned sharp round, and strode towards Kolur, and smote him with his sax, and cut off his leg, and said, "Did that get you or not?" Kolur replied that it was what he deserved for not shielding himself. So he stood a while on his other leg and looked at the stump. Kolskegg said, "You don't need to look, it's just as it appears: the leg is gone." Then Kolur fell down dead.*

— *Njáls Saga*



A sax is a one-handed, single-edged knife-like weapon with a blade length ranging from 30 to 60 cm (12 to 24 in).

Compared to swords, saxes typically are crudely made, with heavier and thicker blades. The hilt is usually made of wood, bone, or horn, and there is no cross-guard.

A sax is carried in a sheath suspended horizontally from the belt.

This is a very common weapon in Iceland, and also in the other Norse countries.

Some people favor the sax over a sword for fighting. In *Grettis Saga*, it is said that the famous outlaw Grettir Ásmundarson favored his sax, named *Kari's Gift*, which he had taken from Kári's grave mound.



## Atgeir

*"Well, is Gunnar at home?" asked Gizur. "Find that out for yourselves," said Porgrim; "but this I am sure of, that his hewing spear is at home," and with that he fell down dead.*

— *Njáls Saga*

A hewing spear (Atgeir) is a type of pole-arm resembling a glaive, with a blade fitted at the end of a long wooden shaft. It can be used as a thrusting or cutting weapon.

## Armor and Shield

Armor other than soft leather is not commonly worn in mythic Iceland. Only very wealthy householders and the goðar (chieftain-priests) have access to chain mail shirts, and those are almost always short sleeved. Chain mail is considered too





# Weapons Names

Viking warriors often name their favorite weapon. A named weapon can become famous in its own right, and be so strongly associated with the man that carries it, that the reputation of the warrior is boosted for as long as he carries that weapon.

*Mythic Iceland* player characters gain a 2 point bonus to the Status score as a direct result of owning a named weapon. That weapon, however, must have earned its name in battle. A player cannot simply come up with any name that has a good ring to it; rather, the name must come from an actual event. For example, a sword that scored a critical hit that severed an opponent's leg in a single blow could be named *Leg Cutter*.

If the named weapon is lost, this is considered to be very shameful. In addition to losing the 2 points of Status that were granted by owning the weapon, the character also loses an additional 4 points of Status due to the shame of losing it. If the named weapon is subsequently recovered, however, the character recovers all lost Status points.

Below is a list of weapon names found in the Icelandic Sagas, and that you can use for inspiration.

## SWORDS

|                          |                                |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bastard (Bastarður)      | Gamli's Gift (Gamlanautur)     | Kári's Gift (Kársnautur) | Villain (Níðingur)            |
| Mail Biter (Brynjubítur) | Grey Side (Grásíða)            | Long (Lang)              | Pruning Knife (Sniðill)       |
| Foot Broad (Fetbreiður)  | Grettir's Gift (Grettisnautur) | Leaf (Laufi)             | Peace Breaker (Sættarspillir) |
| Life Taker (Fjórsváfi)   | War Flame (Gunnlogi)           | Leg Biter (Leggbítur)    |                               |
| Foot Biter (Fótbítur)    | White One (Hvítingur)          | Adder (Naður)            |                               |

## AXES

|                                    |                              |                          |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Drip Water (Droplaugar)            | Pommel (Hjalti)              | Black Leg (Svartleggja)  |
| Hel (Name of the goddess of death) | Steinn's Gift (Steinsnautur) | Cutting Blade (Sveðja)   |
| Heaven Scraper (Himintelgja)       | Star (Stjarna)               | Tent Spar (Tjald-sperra) |

## MAIL COATS

Old Faithful (Full-trúi)  
Sigfúss's Gift (Sigfússnautur)

## STAVES

Chastiser (Hegnuður)  
Land Explorer (Landkónnuður)

valuable to be buried with a dead warrior, and is passed down the generations.

When in Viking raids, those who can afford a chain mail shirt will wear one, but most raiding Vikings wear soft leather armor.

Helmets are always worn in battle. Those who can afford them use iron helmets, and others wear a leather cap. Light helmets are used much more often than heavy helmets.

The main means of defense for a Viking warrior is his shield, which consists of a

circular wooden board between 80 and 100 cm in diameter, bound around the edges with iron, and with a central iron boss to protect the hand. They are generally painted, most often in red color but also sometimes with designs of mythic creatures such as dragons.

Armor and shield names as found in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook pages 259 and 263 are:

Soft Leather, and Chain Mail (protecting Torso and Chest locations only). The shield type is Large Round.





# Weapons Table

| <i>Weapon</i>          | <i>Skill</i> | <i>Base</i> | <i>Dmg</i>    | <i>Attk</i>    | <i>Special</i>      |
|------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Battle Axe (1H)        | Axe          | 15          | 1D8+2+db      | 1              | Bleeding            |
| Battle Axe (2H)        | Axe          | 15          | 2D6+1+db      | 1              | Bleeding            |
| Dagger                 | Dagger       | 25          | 1D4+db        | 1              | Impaling            |
| Broad Sword            | Sword        | 15          | 1D8+1+db      | 1              | Bleeding            |
| Sax                    | Sword        | 15          | 1D6+1+db      | 1              | Bleeding            |
| Long Spear             | Spear        | 15          | 2D6           | 1              | Impaling            |
| Atgeir                 | Polearm      | 15          | 3D6           | 1              | Bleeding            |
| <b>Missile Weapons</b> | <b>Skill</b> | <b>Base</b> | <b>Dmg</b>    | <b>Attk</b>    | <b>Special</b>      |
| Self Bow               | Bow          | 10          | 1D6+1+1/2db   | 1              | Impaling            |
| Rock (thrown)          | Throw        | Throw       | 1D2+1/2db     | 2              | Crushing            |
| Sling                  | Sling        | 05          | 1D8+1/2db     | 1              | Crushing            |
| Long Spear (thrown)    | Spear        | 05          | 1D10+1+1/2db  | 1              | Impaling            |
| <b>Shield</b>          | <b>Skill</b> | <b>Base</b> | <b>Damage</b> | <b>Special</b> | <b>Locations</b>    |
| Large Round            | Shield       | 15          | 1D4+db        | Knockback      | Abdomen, Arm, Chest |

## Sharpening

Sword, sax, and axe blades require periodic sharpening, as with heavy use over time they can become so dull that they no longer cut. Most men sharpen their own weapons, using whetstones imported from Norway.

## Battle Tactics

When groups of Icelandic warriors meet on land, the fight usually starts with both sides throwing stones at each other, sometimes also throwing lances or shooting arrows if those are available to either side. Finally, one group will tire of the stone throwing and will charge the other.

The accepted way of fighting a battle is on foot. Viking warriors may ride to battle, but always dismount from their horses before engaging the enemy.

In larger battles between armies, the Vikings favor the shield-wall, with a large numbers of men standing side-by-side several ranks deep, with the better armed and armored men forming the front rank. The shield wall is initially interlocked, to re-

ceive the impact of the enemy's first charge, and then it loosens up to provide more elbow space for weapon swings.

The shield-wall is also used in a circular formation, with archers, spear-throwers and rock-throwers remaining in the open center and firing their missiles overhead at the enemies.

Another battle formation used by the Vikings, said to have been created by the god Oðinn himself, is the "swine-array," a wedge-shaped offensive formation comprised of two men in the first rank, three in the second and five in the third.

Surprise attacks during times of the year when the enemy is not expecting Viking forces to be active is another preferred tactic. Those times include the winter and religious festivals.

The Sagas also tell of more unusual tactics such as commanders feigning death in order to gain entry to a besieged city, claiming the need for burial.

## Naval Battles

Most major battles of the Viking period take place at sea. Even so, care is taken to make naval battles







## Weapons Table Continued

| <i>Weapon</i>          | <i>Rng</i>   | <i>Hands</i> | <i>HP</i>      | <i>Parry</i> | <i>STR/DEX</i> | <i>SIZ/Enc</i> | <i>SR</i> |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|
| Battle Axe (1H)        | Medium       | 1H           | 15             | Yes          | 9/9            | 1.0            | 2         |
| Battle Axe (2H)        | Medium       | 2H           | 15             | Yes          | 10/9           | 2.0            | 1         |
| Dagger                 | Short        | 1H           | 15             | Yes          | 4/4            | 0.5            | 3         |
| Broad Sword            | Medium       | 1H           | 20             | Yes          | 9/7            | 1.5            | 2         |
| Sax                    | Medium       | 1H           | 20             | Yes          | 5/5            | 1              | 2         |
| Long Spear             | Long         | 2H           | 15             | Yes          | 10/9           | 2.0            | 1         |
| Atgeir                 | Long         | 2H           | 25             | Yes          | 13/9           | 3.0            | 1         |
| <i>Missile Weapons</i> | <i>Rng</i>   | <i>Hands</i> | <i>HP</i>      | <i>Parry</i> | <i>STR/DEX</i> | <i>SIZ/Enc</i> | <i>RF</i> |
| Self Bow               | 80           | 2H           | 6              | No           | 9/9            | 0.5            | 1/SR      |
| Rock (thrown)          | 20           | 1H           | 20             | No           | 5/5            | .05            | 1/SR      |
| Sling                  | 80           | 1H           | 2/12           | No           | 7/11           | .01            | 1/CR      |
| Long Spear (thrown)    | 15           | 1H           | 15             | No           | 12/10          | 2.0            | 1/SR      |
| <i>Shield</i>          | <i>AP/HP</i> | <i>Yes</i>   | <i>STR/DEX</i> | <i>ENC</i>   | <i>SR</i>      |                |           |
| Large Round            | 22           | Yes          | 11/9           | 5.0          | 3              |                |           |



as much like land battles as possible. Ships are roped together to form large floating platforms, with the largest ships in the middle in a way that their often-armored prows extend out in front of the battle line. Often the largest ships have iron spikes around the prow designed to open a hole on enemy ships venturing close enough to board.

Individual ships flank the floating platform and engage in skirmishes with the enemy, also attacking their floating platform if they have formed one.

Masts are lowered for battle, and all movement is by oar. The loss of oars in a collision effectively cripples a ship's mobility.

The main naval tactic is simply to row against an enemy ship, grapple and board it, and engage in battle before moving to the next ship. A shower of arrows, spears, and stones usually precedes boarding. Often oarsmen are protected by a second man with the sole job of protecting him from incoming missiles with his shield. When about to be boarded, all men grab shields and hold them overhead forming a protective wall against the initial onslaught.

## Raiding

*When Þórólfur was about twenty years old he made up his mind to go on a Viking expedition, so his father gave him a longship. Eyvind and Aulvir joined him with another longship and a good number of men, and they spent the summer plundering. There was plenty of loot so each man got a good share. That's how things were for a number of years — every summer they'd go on Viking expeditions and every winter they would stay at home with their families and parents. Þórólfur brought his parents a lot of valuable things; thus they were well-to-do both for possessions and honour.*

— *Egils Saga*

Icelanders and other Norse peoples see a raid as something entirely distinct from theft. Stealing someone's belongings is always regarded as shameful in Viking society. Raiding, on the other



hand, is regarded as an honorable challenge to a fight, with the winner keeping all of the spoils.

This is well-illustrated by a passage in *Egils Saga*, where Egill and his men have been taken prisoners. They manage to free themselves, grab some of their captor's treasure and head back to the ship. Along the way, however, Egill realizes that he is acting like a thief. Ashamed, he decides to right his shameful behavior. He does what he thinks is the honorable thing, goes back and kills every single one of his captors. Returning to the ship with the treasure, now he is regarded as a hero because he fought and won the battle and can rightly claim the booty.

Raiding, and consequently bringing rich treasures home, raises the status of a man in Norse society. It is, however, a part-time occupation. Icelandic men may go raiding in the summer, but they come back home to tend to their farms for the rest of the year.

Viking raids may seem like a chaotic bloody affair to those who hear the terrifying stories. Bloodthirsty, frenzied warriors arriving as if from nowhere, wreaking havoc, killing and pillaging, each man acting for himself with little organization between them. The truth, however, is that Viking raids are always carefully planned in advance. Targets are chosen based on how isolated they are, what defenses they have, the distance from a navigable river or coastline, and the booty to be had.

With their broad bottoms, Viking ships allow for landing on any sandy beach without need for a harbor or pier. Indeed, many victims are surprised to see a Viking ship landing where it was

regarded as impossible for any ship to do so. That surprise factor plays a crucial role in a successful raid, as it allows the Vikings to arrive somewhere where defenses have not been prepared, to quickly pillage and then leave before any kind of resistance can be organized.

When raiding small coastal villages, Vikings most often run the ship through the surf, disembarking and forming up almost as soon as the ship has stopped moving, ready for the fight.

The preferred tactic against bigger and more ambitious targets, however, is to beach the ship on a small island or isolated spot on the coast, or in the curve of a river, and build up a fortified encampment, throwing up a stockade on any side that can be approached by land. A garrison is left behind, guarding the camp and the ship, so as to make sure there will not be any bad surprises if a quick retreat is needed. Also, these fortified camps can be used as a refuge in case they meet a superior enemy force.

Another common tactic is to capture horses in coastal areas, and then use them to raid locations further inland. This means it is possible to attack

## Shield Rules Clarification

A shield can be used as a parrying weapon, using the character's full Shield skill score. In situations when the shield parry attempt is successful, but damage still goes through (usually because of the attacker scoring a critical attack), the shield will add 1/2 of its AP score as armor points to the hit location being hit. On the other hand, if the parrying attempt is unsuccessful, the shield's AP/HP should not be used, as it is assumed that the character has moved the shield away from a defensive position in the failed attempt to parry the attack, and thus the attacker's weapon strikes clear of the shield.

If the shield is not used for parrying in a combat round, then 1/2 of the shield's AP/HP should be counted as effective armor points covering the character's torso, chest and left arm (in the case of a large round shield).

If the shield is damaged and loses hit points, every hit point lost should be reflected as a lost armor point.





anywhere, even in places where a Viking attack was, until now, unthinkable.

The size of a raiding party can vary from a small crew of twenty on a single ship, to over a hundred men on two or three ships. In a few cases, especially when Scandinavian kings themselves are involved in organizing the raids, the numbers can reach dozens of ships carrying a few thousand men.

Once at the target, if not expecting strong resistance, the Vikings spread out, every man for himself. The goal is to grab as much valuable booty as possible before an effective defense can be raised. Anything of value is a fair game, especially if any silver or gold can be found. Also, attractive young women are often captured and taken away as slaves, concubines, or even as prospective brides. Men and children are also sometimes captured as slaves and taken to Iceland or to other parts of the Viking world. Horns are used for signaling instructions to the dispersed Vikings during raids, communicating when to assemble, and when to retreat back to the ship.

Even if the defenders give chase to the Viking ships, there is little chance they will catch the raiders. With their combination of sail and oar, under favorable conditions, the Viking ships are faster than any other contemporary sea vessel.

## Danegeld

Those Viking kings and great leaders who can attract a large number of followers can potentially become very rich by extorting protection money from other European kings. That protection money is often of greater value than whatever booty they could have plundered.

The so-called “Danish Tax” (Danegeld) is a tax raised in order to pay a tribute to Vikings to save the land from being attacked.

The Danes were paid Danegeld many times over in order to spare English, French and German cities from being raided and burned. The Danish king Knútur alone collected over 30 tons of silver in just a few years. The Swedes also received Danegeld from Finnmark and the Baltic countries.

## Running a Raid

When player characters are taking part in a raid, the GM should keep in mind the type of resistance they will meet, and the type and amount of loot they can acquire, depends on the of target they are raiding.

The best way to run a raid is to describe to the players what their chosen target location looks like, and then let them plan accordingly. The player characters must decide if they want to attack any specific part of the location, or if they want to pillage random houses of a village, random rooms of a monastery or buildings of a stronghold.

When the raid starts, consult the table below to find the number of armed defenders that each of the player characters will face. Make the roll individually for each player character and take note of the number, then throw the defenders at them few at a time. In order to make the action more engaging for all players, don’t run the combat separately with each player but rather let them all act one after the other, at each combat round, as if they were together, but yet reminding them that they are each fighting on their own.

| Target         | defenders per raider | loot (roll once for each player character) |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Small Village  | 1D6 defenders        | 1D6-1 eyrir of refined silver              |
| Larger Village | 2D6 defenders        | 2D6+1 eyrir of refined silver              |
| City           | 1D10 defenders       | 4D6+2 eyrir of refined silver              |
| Monastery      | 1D4-2 defenders      | 2D10+1 marks of silver                     |

Player characters wanting to capture a young woman to take home, or a slave of any kind, can do so by forgoing half of his loot. If the result of the loot roll above is zero, that means the village offers no suitable women or slaves.

## Monastery: A Layout

Monasteries are a perfect target for a raid. They are isolated, have no organized defenses, and hold





lots of loot. Medieval monastery life consists of a schedule of worship, reading, and manual labor.

### The following rooms are common in Medieval monasteries:

- Abbot or Prior's house
- Almonry — where food is distributed to the needy by the almoner
- Bakehouse
- Brew House
- Buttery — a storage area for ale and wine.
- Calefactory — a warming room
- Cellarium — a cellar used for storage.
- Cemetery
- Chapels
- Chapter House — generally located on the eastern wing of the cloister, this is a room where monks meet daily, after morning mass, to discuss business and to listen to a reading of the monastic rules. At the end of the meeting the monks publicly confess their sins or denounce others' anonymously.
- Church
- Cloister — an open area, often grassy, sometimes with a fountain in the center, surrounded by covered walkways with a colonnade on the outer side and a series of windows on the inner side.
- Corn mill
- Dorter — the sleeping quarters of the monks. Sometimes the monks sleep in isolated rooms called cells.
- Farm
- Fish ponds
- Fraterhouse — dining room where all monks eat together.
- Garden
- Garderobes — a lavatory consisting of a hole in the ground surrounded by a wooden seat.
- Guest Houses
- Infirmary — the sickroom of the monastery, often with its own chapel and kitchens. Houses

the monks who are too sick or old to take part in the normal monastic life.

- Kitchen — where food is prepared and cooked. It is generally in a separate building because of the risk of fire.
- Lay brothers dormitory — the lay brother is not a full-fledged monk. He took religious vows, but focused on a life of manual work, allowing the monks to spend more time in scholarship and contemplation.
- Library — where precious books and manuscripts are stored, often chained to desks.
- Locutory — a room for conversation, also a place where monks might meet with people from the outside world.
- Night Stairs — permitted passage from the dorter to the church for night services.
- Piggery
- Prison cells — a monk or lay brother might be confined in a cell for major transgressions.
- Quarry
- Reredorter — Small rooms at the rear of the dorter (dormitory) with seats and running water.
- Smithy — Located away from the main buildings because of the risk of fire.
- Stables
- Workshops

## Village: A Layout

Anglo Saxon villages are usually small. The largest villages have no more than a few hundred people living there. The villages are built near natural resources, often in coastal areas, and usually near rivers and woodlands.

Houses are made mainly of wood, with roofs thatched with straw. The biggest house in an Anglo Saxon village is the Hall, the chief's house. Among the other houses in the village are stonemason, bakers, potters, leatherworker, weavers, carpenters and blacksmiths.







## List of Viking Raids

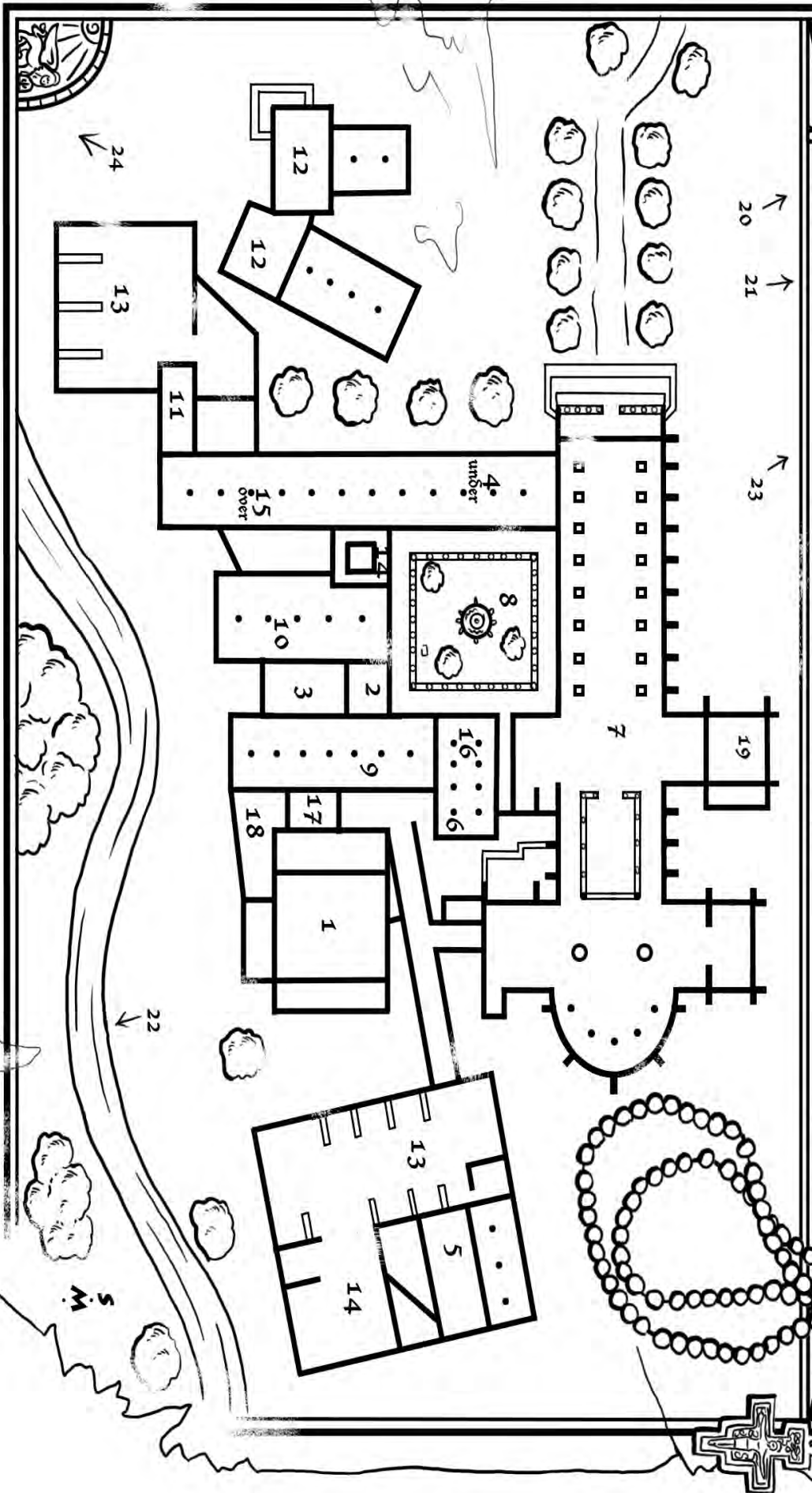
Below is a chronological list of major viking raids and battles. This list is not comprehensive, but illustrates how widespread Vikings raids were.

|     |                                                   |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------|
| 793 | Lindisfarne, England                              |
| 795 | Isle of Skye, Scotland                            |
| 795 | Ionia, Scotland                                   |
| 799 | Aquitaine, France                                 |
| 799 | St. Philibert, France                             |
| 802 | Ionia, Scotland                                   |
| 804 | Lyminge, England                                  |
| 806 | Ionia, Scotland                                   |
| 808 | Slav town of Reric, citizens transfer to Heiðabýr |
| 810 | Frisia                                            |
| 820 | Flanders                                          |
| 820 | Aquitaine, France                                 |
| 825 | Faroes Islands                                    |

|                       |                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 832                   | Arnagh, Ireland                                                                                        |
| 834 - 837             | Annual raids on Dorestad, Frisia                                                                       |
| 835                   | Isle of Sheppey, England                                                                               |
| 840                   | Dublin, Ireland                                                                                        |
| 841                   | Dublin, Ireland (permanent Viking settlement)                                                          |
| 842                   | Quentovic, France                                                                                      |
| 842                   | Hamwic, England                                                                                        |
| 843                   | Frisia                                                                                                 |
| 848                   | Nantes, France                                                                                         |
| 849                   | Périgneux, France                                                                                      |
| 844                   | Several cities in the Iberian Peninsula (Lisbon, Cadiz, Seville, Medina Sidonia, Algeciras and Asilah) |
| 844                   | Various Irish Monasteries raided                                                                       |
| 845                   | Hamburg                                                                                                |
| 845                   | Frisia                                                                                                 |
| 845                   | Paris, France                                                                                          |
| Continued on page 199 |                                                                                                        |

# The monastery

- |                 |                 |                           |              |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| 1 Prior's house | 7 Church        | 13 Infirmary              | 19 Tower     |
| 2 Buttery       | 8 Cloister      | 14 Kitchen                | 20 farm      |
| 3 Cafefactory   | 9 Porter        | 15 Lay brothers dormitory | 21 Corn mill |
| 4 Cellarium     | 10 Fraterhouse  | 16 Library                | 22 Smithy    |
| 5 Chapels       | 11 Barderobes   | 17 Prison cells           | 23 Stables   |
| 6 Chapter house | 12 Guest houses | 18 Reredorter             | 24 Bakehouse |







|           | Continued from page 197                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 848       | Bordeaux, France                                             |
| 851       | Canterbury, England                                          |
| 851       | London, England                                              |
| 853       | Abbey of St. Martin in Tours, France                         |
| 859       | Nakur, North Africa                                          |
| 860       | Winchester, England                                          |
| 865       | Fleury Abbey in St. Benoit, France                           |
| 865       | Poitiers, France                                             |
| 865       | Great Army lands in East Anglia, England                     |
| 867       | York, England                                                |
| 869       | Armaugh, Ireland                                             |
| 870       | Dumberton, Scotland                                          |
| 871       | Wessex, England                                              |
| 873       | Repton, England                                              |
| 876 - 877 | Wessex, England                                              |
| 877       | Gloucester, England                                          |
| 878       | Edington, England (Vikings defeated)                         |
| 881       | Rhine valley (Aachen, Cologne, Lège, Utrecht)                |
| 885, 886  | Paris, France                                                |
| 866       | London, England (Vikings defeated)                           |
| 891       | Leuven, France (Vikings defeated)                            |
| 900       | Various sites in Northwest England                           |
| 902       | Dublin, Ireland (Vikings expelled from area)                 |
| 911       | Seine Valley, France                                         |
| 912       | Battle of Tettenhall, England (Vikings defeated)             |
| 912       | Brittany, France                                             |
| 915       | Battle of Corbridge, England                                 |
| 917       | Second Battle of Corbridge, England                          |
| 917       | Dublin (Vikings recapture city)                              |
| 918       | Dunblane, Scotland                                           |
| 919       | Kingdom of York established by Vikings, in England           |
| 934       | Germania (Vikings defeated)                                  |
| 937       | Limerick, Ireland                                            |
| 937       | Battle of Brunanburh (Viking and Scottish alliance defeated) |
| 954       | Battle of Stainmore, Enland (Vikings defeated)               |
| 980       | Various sites in England                                     |

|           |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 991       | Battle of Maldon, England                                                                                             |
| 991       | Folkestone, England                                                                                                   |
| 994       | London, England                                                                                                       |
| 994       | Elbe Valley, Germania                                                                                                 |
| 997       | 1002                                                                                                                  |
| 999       | Battle of Glenmama, Ireland (Vikings defeated)                                                                        |
| 1006      | Large fleet invades England                                                                                           |
| 1016-1035 | England under rule of Knútur                                                                                          |
| 1030-1035 | Most of northern Scotland conquered                                                                                   |
| 1042      | End of Danish rule in England                                                                                         |
| 1043      | Constantinople                                                                                                        |
| 1066      | Battle of Fulford                                                                                                     |
| 1066      | Battle of Stamford Bridge (Vikings defeated)                                                                          |
| 1066      | Normans, Vikings that settled in northern France, led by William the Bastard (later "the Conqueror"), invade England. |





# RUNNING A GAME OF Mythic ICELAND

## Status

The Status skill is tremendously important in *Mythic Iceland*. It measures the respect a character inspires in their fellow Icelanders, his renown, his wealth and place within the society, and is a broad measurement of honor.

Status is earned by the person who possesses it, granted by the community around him who observes and judges his behaviors. When travelling, a man's Status is conveyed by his reputation, and the good name of his family.

The Status skill starts at 25 points for a standard *Mythic Iceland* campaign where the player characters are small householders. As the player characters participate in adventures and earn renown for their deeds, and accumulate wealth, their Status may increase, opening new possibilities for them in Icelandic society. As a character's standing in Icelandic society improves, so does his Status score.

The table below shows the amount of Status skill points necessary to enter each Social Rank (See Social Ranks, page 37).

### Status and Social Rank

|       |                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| 0     | Outlaw or vagrant                  |
| 01-05 | Slave                              |
| 06-10 | Freedman                           |
| 11-20 | Tenant                             |
| 21-80 | Householder                        |
| 80-99 | Goði (chieftain-priest; pl. goðar) |
| 100   | Lawspeaker                         |

Changes in a character's Social Rank don't occur automatically once that character reaches the Status score level associated with that rank. For example, a character who has just reached 80% in Status is not automatically made a goði and given a chieftaincy. Rather, it means that the character has the necessary social standing and is potentially able to garner enough support to be accepted for that position, if the opportunity arises.

Remember that there is a fixed number of 39 (36 before the year 960) chieftaincies in the country. In order for someone to become a goði, it is first necessary that a chieftaincy becomes available either because the previous goði has died or because he has decided to sell his post on to someone else.

Also, there is only one Lawspeaker in the country at a time, with a three-year mandate. Only characters with 100% Status are able to garner the support to become a Lawspeaker.

## Status Rolls in Game

The GM may ask a player to make a Status skill roll whenever a player character is trying to use his social standing as a tool towards achieving something. He may be trying to persuade someone to offer help, or trying to intimidate someone by reminding him that injuring someone of a high social standing may bring about heavy consequences.

Because Status depends on knowledge of the character's past deeds, the score is only valid within the country where the character was born or has spent most of his life. Only characters with 70% or





higher Status may attempt to use that skill abroad, and even so the roll must be treated as Difficult.

## Increasing Status

The Status score cannot be increased by means of an experience check roll. This means that a Critical result on a Status roll does not award a chance to have that skill raised.

Status is increased by completing adventures and performing worthy deeds that bring the character renown in the eyes of Icelandic society. At the end of each adventure, the GM should award between 1 and 4 Status points to each player character in the group, provided that their heroic deeds become well-known.

Another way to increase Status is by gathering wealth (see below).

Once the Status score reaches 100%, it cannot be increased further. It means the character is now one of the few most renowned and respected people in Iceland, and his name is known even by the kings of other Norse countries. Be mindful, however, that even characters with 100% can lose Status points if acting in dishonorable ways.

## Wealth and Status

Status in mythic Iceland is deeply connected to how prosperous and wealthy a person has become. If fact, the main drive to acquire wealth in a country where no markets exist, and where everyone is a self-sufficient farmer, is to gain a higher social standing. Icelanders use every opportunity to flaunt any treasure they possess, wearing silver or gold armbands and other valuable items at all social gatherings such as assemblies and feasts. When not being used, valuable objects are either stored safely at the farmhouse, or buried (see Oðinn's Law, page 204).

For every 200 ells of vaðmal value of wealth acquired after character creation, the character can raise the Status score by 1 point. That wealth can be in the form of silver, actual ells of vaðmal, a ship, a farm, etc.

## Farming and Status

Those who can keep a successful farm are highly respected in Icelandic Viking Age society, and that is reflected on the character's Status score. Whenever the farmer does well, his Status increases; conversely, if the farmer does badly, his Status skill decreases.

At the end of each season (remember, there are only two seasons in Iceland, summer and winter, each lasting half a year), every character must make a Farming skill roll, and modify his Status skill as per the table below.

**Fumble** - subtract 2 points of Status

**Failure** - subtract 1 point of Status

**Success** - add 1 point of Status

**Special** - add 2 points of Status

**Critical** - add 3 points of Status

## Giving Wealth Away

One of the most effective ways of improving someone's Status is by giving wealth away. In Viking society, and by extension in *Mythic Iceland* society, gift-giving is a powerful way to display power and wealth. It is always expected to be a two-way act. Giving someone a valuable gift amounts to a challenge for that person to reciprocate with at least the same wealth-value, or to do even better. For that reason, giving someone a very valuable gift, one clearly beyond that person's means to reciprocate, can be seen as an insult.

Anyone who cannot reciprocate a gift within a year, with another gift of the same value or better, is seen as acting shamefully, causing a loss of 1D3 points of Status.

For every 150 ells of vaðmal of value that a character gives away, his Status score increases by 1 point. Notice that this is a higher rate of Status points per vaðmal than simply acquiring and keeping wealth, which means it is more advantageous to give wealth away than keep it to oneself — at least in terms of Status.

Receiving a gift does not result in a Status score increase, as it is not perceived as something the person has achieved in his or her own merit.





Similarly, giving away a gift that you received from someone else does not result in Status score increase.

## Losing Status

No matter how high a character may climb the social ladder, it is always possible to fall, and sometimes all the way to the bottom.

Any dishonorable act that becomes well known, and for which the character has not paid compensation, causes loss of Status. Public displays of cowardice cause a loss of 1D3 Status points. Serious crimes that go uncompensated, such as killing someone outside of a fair fight or sexual assaults, cause a loss of 1D6 points of Status. Burning someone's house while there are people still inside is regarded as an even more heinous act, and will cost the perpetrator 2D6 points of Status as well as points of Luck (see Luck further into this chapter). The GM should use his best judgment when evaluating if any action, upon becoming known to society at large, will cause loss of Status, and how much of a loss.

Being found guilty of a crime by an assembly and paying the compensation amount stipulated by law does not incur loss of Status, as long as the full amount of compensation is paid.

Anyone sentenced to outlawry has his or her status score immediately lowered to zero. (See Life as an outlaw, page 211).

## Allegiance

The characters of the Icelandic Sagas give great importance to religion, and most often base their code of honor and behavior on the god they worship. The great feats of heroes are sometimes attributed to a god having smiled upon them in return for their worship.

In order to bring those aspects of the Sagas into the *Mythic Iceland* setting, the Allegiance optional rules from page 315 from the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook are used. These rules also give players motivation for acting in a way consistent with the heroes of the Sagas.

All player characters must select a god they worship and are thus allied to. Every character also has an Allegiance score with the god Loki, but this does not mean that the character actively worships Loki in any way. Rather, it represents all that is frowned upon in Norse society and all that is contrary to the god the character has chosen to worship.

For information on the initial Allegiance score for new player characters, see **Character Creation** chapter.

The Allegiance rules in this section replace any conflicting rules found on the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook.

## Allegiance Benefits

Once a character has an Allegiance score to another god greater than at least 20 points above his or her Loki Allegiance score, he is truly allied to that god and receives certain benefits as a result of that Allegiance.

The list below shows the privileges received, according to how many points higher the Allegiance score is when compared with the character's Allegiance score towards Loki.

**With an allegiance score 20 points or greater than the Loki allegiance score** — the player character can use up to 1/4 (25%) of his or her current Allegiance score as temporary Hit Points, once per game session. These hit points are expended before the player character's normal hit points, and are not regenerated or restored in any way if lost. At the end of the game session, any hit points in excess of the character's regular hit point total disappear.

**At 30 points and over above the Loki Allegiance score** — Once the player character's Power Points reach zero, he or she may use up to 1/10 (10%) of his or her current Allegiance score as an extra reserve of Power Points. These extra points must be drawn immediately after the last of the player character's normal Power Points are spent. When they run out, the player character falls unconscious. This privilege can be used up to three times during the course of a game session.

**At 40 points and over above the Loki Allegiance score** — the player character can use up to his or





her entire current allegiance score as a reservoir of extra skill points that can be added to existing skill points for specific rolls. This can be done up to three times per session. See the **Religion** chapter for the list of skills each god can benefit.

**At 50 points and over above the Loki Allegiance score** — this privilege is a special gift, unique to each god, bestowed upon the faithful. Using this gift always costs 1D6 + 2 Power Points. This power can be used more than once a day, as long as the character is able to pay the Power Point cost. See the **Religion** chapter for details of gifts provided by each god.

**At 80 points and over above the Loki Allegiance score** — this is a truly awesome gift, only bestowed by the gods upon those who are most faithful and loyal. This gift can only be used once a day. See the **Religion** chapter for the details of gifts provided by each god.

## Increasing the Allegiance Score

The actions and behaviors favored by each god that can bring an increase to a character's Allegiance score are detailed in the **Religion** chapter.

Whenever a player character has acted in a manner that is favored by a god with which he or she has an Allegiance, the player may attempt a roll of the current Allegiance score. As described in *Basic Roleplaying* page 316, this roll is performed in the same way as a regular skill experience check. That is, if the experience roll is above the current Allegiance score for that god, the score can be increased by 1D6.

Only one Allegiance increase check may be performed per major scene or event. *Example:* if during a battle, a follower of Tyr has scored a Critical hit with his sword, and also dealt a killing blow, he gets only one chance to increase his Allegiance score.

It is important to keep in mind that an action or behavior only has a chance of raising the character's Allegiance score if that character has consciously dedicated the act to the god. This means, for example, that a player character doesn't nec-

essarily have to add points to an allegiance with Freyr just because he happened to bring peace to a conflict — unless the character consciously dedicated that act to Freyr.

The only exception to the 'conscious dedication' rule described above is with regard to the Loki Allegiance. Every time a character behaves in a way that the god Loki would approve of, such as by spreading serious lies, thieving, displaying cowardice, etc, or acts in direct conflict with the ways favored by the god that the character has main Allegiance with, the player must then roll 1D4 and add the result to the Loki Allegiance score. In the case of Loki only, the action does not need to be consciously dedicated to the god, and an Allegiance roll is not necessary — the score increase is automatic.

## Apotheosis

Once a character has reached a score of 100 in an Allegiance, that means he has reached Apotheosis (see *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, page 318).

The effects of Apotheosis in *Mythic Iceland* are listed below, and replace those detailed in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook. The effects are the same regardless of what god the character is allied to.

- ❖ The character's total hit points, and hit points per hit locations, are doubled.
- ❖ The skills associated with the god are doubled.

## Earning Allegiance by Conducting Burial

Giving people a proper burial is very important, even when the bodies are those of your enemies. It is common for people to return to the site of a battle in order to arrange for the bodies of their enemies to be properly buried.

When someone close to the player character dies, and no proper burial is being otherwise arranged, the player character should be rewarded with an Allegiance experience check and the chance to raise his Allegiance skill if he or she arranges for the burial to be properly performed.





The presence of a goði or any other type of priest is not required, but only that the dead is put to rest in a burial mound with his main weapon, and that a few words are said to the gods, asking them to welcome the dead man's soul.

## Awarding Allegiance Points

When designing adventures, the GM is encouraged to take care to ensure the all player characters in the group have similar chances to increase their Allegiance scores throughout the adventure. It is useful to make a list of the ways each of the players can earn Allegiance points, and to think of situations and events that can be inserted into the adventure to ensure that everyone gets a chance to act in ways that are favored by their gods. No single player should have a much easier time than the rest of the group when it comes to earning Allegiance points.

If any player is dissatisfied with the ways described in this book by which the followers of a given god may earn Allegiance points, feel free to discuss that issue, and make changes so that everyone is happy. The list of actions that award Allegiance checks is to be used only as a set of guidelines that can be changed and expanded as needed. If something is not in the list but a player feels strongly that it should be, the GM should listen to the player's argument and make a final judgement on the issue.

It is also important to remember that only one check can be made per major event or scene in the game.

The GM has the final word on whether an action is deserving of an Allegiance check and a possible increase on the Allegiance score or not.

## Allegiance and NPCs

Only named non-player characters, those who have some importance in the story, have Allegiance scores and can use Allegiance benefits.

Unnamed NPCs, such as followers, kinsmen, the victims of a Viking raid, or other characters of no fundamental importance in the adventure plot, have no Allegiance scores or benefits.

## Oðinn's Law

In mythic Iceland, and in other Norse countries, it is believed that any treasure that a person has buried in the ground will accompany him or her to the afterlife. This belief is known as "Óðinn's Law."

Any valuable items that a person would like to take to the afterlife do not necessarily need to be buried in the person's grave. Some prefer to bury their treasures while they are still alive. According to Óðinn's Law, the location of the buried objects is not important, as long as they are underground and undisturbed, and that the person has buried them him- or herself.

Burying your treasure while you are still alive is a good way to ensure there are no nasty surprises in the afterlife, such as finding yourself in Valhalla but without your favorite silver armband because your family had a change of heart and considered it too valuable to bury with you in the grave. Furthermore, adhering to Óðinn's Law in life may prevent grave robbing, as everyone will know that the grave has no treasures that would make it worth robbing.

It is a common habit to bury treasures in secret locations in Iceland before going on a Viking expedition abroad. That way, if you are killed in battle while away from the country, your treasure will be with you as you arrive in Valhalla to feast and fight until Ragnarök.

Because buried treasure cannot be displayed at feasts and other occasions, it only affords the character half as many Status points (see Status section above) — that is, one point of Status for every 400 ells of vaðmal value.

In addition, for every 400 ells of vaðmal of value that has been buried, the character receives one point of Allegiance to the main god he or she worships. The gods favor those who plan and prepare for the afterlife.

## Luck

The Luck skill is used in *Mythic Iceland* to reflect the Norse view of luck (hamingja). Luck has a far greater importance to Icelanders of the Viking Age than it does in most other cultures. At times when







an especially lucky event happens in someone's life, it is understood that this person has used up some of his or her innate amount of luck. There is a firm belief that an individual is born with a finite amount of luck, which can never be increased. It is possible, however, to run out of luck and become luckless.

There are two ways to use your pool of Luck points in a game of *Mythic Iceland*:

- 1. Luck points can be spent in order to cause a lucky event to happen. First the player must make a successful roll of Luck, and then he must pay 2D6 points of Luck. What actually happens is up to the player, who gets to narrate the lucky event. That event must be within the realms of possibility, must benefit his own character directly or indirectly, and must not happen within a combat scene. The GM's word is final regarding what can be changed in the current scene.
- 2. Spending Luck points can prevent a character from dying when he or she has reached zero hit points or lower. The player must make a successful roll of his current Luck score, and then he must spend 2D6 points of Luck. If successful, the player character is unconscious but stable, with zero hit points, and all bleeding stops. Any limbs that have been severed or otherwise destroyed are still lost though.

Once Luck points are spent, they can never be recovered. If the Luck roll is failed, no lucky event takes place, and no Luck points are lost.

## Losing Luck by Dishonor

Another way that Luck may be lost is through dishonorable conduct. The slaying of kin, killing someone without giving them the chance for a fair fight, killing someone and not publicly acknowledging the killing, violating a Norse woman's honor, and burning a house with people inside are all ways in that Luck points may be lost. Whenever a player character behaves in such a way, he or she loses 1D10 points of Luck — this happens automatically, no skill check is necessary. Once those points are lost, they can never be recovered.

Acting dishonorably may cause loss of both Luck and Status, for different reasons. Status points are lost when society as a whole becomes aware of the shameful act. In the case of Luck, points are lost for the act itself, independently of anyone else becoming aware of it. Some situations may call for a loss of both Status and Luck, for shameful, dishonorable acts that have become well known.

## Becoming Luckless

Someone who has used up or lost all Luck points is seen as a luckless individual. That person is considered to have lived through his or her fate, and thus must be close to dying.

People tend to shun any individual believed to be luckless, as his or her lucklessness will certainly attract disaster and death.

In play, a luckless character automatically fails any called-for Luck roll in a scenario.

## Experience

Character advancement in *Mythic Iceland* can happen in three ways.

- **Experience Rolls** — As described in the *Basic Roleplaying* rule book. Any time a character achieves a Critical success on a skill roll, or a success which is very important in moving the story forward, he or she earns a checkmark in the small box next to the skill name on the character sheet. At the end of the adventure, the player can attempt an Experience Roll. If the result of that roll is higher than the current skill percentage score, the player may add 1D6 percentile points to that skill.
- **Status** — The Status skill is used in *Mythic Iceland* as a measure of social importance. (see page 200).
- **Allegiance** — Player characters who have pleased the gods they worship may increase their Allegiance score, and as a result earn Allegiance privileges. (see page 202).





## Animal Fetches

*"Many things now flit before my eyes," said he; "I see many Animal Fetches of Gunnar's bitter foes, and what is very strange is this, they seem to be mad with rage, and yet they fare without plan or purpose."*

— *Njals Saga*

Viking Age Icelanders and other Norse peoples believe that every person has an Animal Fetch ("fylgja" from the verb meaning "to follow"). The Animal Fetch is an expression of an individual's self, an aspect or part of his own soul. It can wander independently, but cannot act independently. It does not always follow, but often precedes the person it is attached to, in order to look into the future and foretell what is to be.

An Animal Fetch may come to the character in his dreams or in visions to warn him or her about future events. See *Prophecy* for more details.

A person's Animal Fetch reflects their personality. See page 19, **Character Creation** step 6, for a few examples of Animal Fetches linked to personality types. The Animal Fetch can be chosen randomly, or picked according to the player's character concept.



Most people know, or at least have a strong suspicion of what type of Animal Fetch they have. This knowledge comes from having seen that animal many times, especially during childhood.

It is possible to see a person's Animal Fetch on a successful roll of the Second Sight skill. If the roll is under half of the skill, it is possible to identify the individual animal if you have seen it before. For example, if an Animal Fetch was seen in a dream, and again when the person is awake, the person may be able to recognise it on a Difficult roll of Second Sight.

## Prophecy

The heroes of the Icelandic Sagas often have prophetic dreams or visions offering glimpses of the future. Sometimes, these revelations are of the character's own future, and other times they are of someone else's fate. Most people will only rarely have a prophetic dream or vision, but some people are known for having them quite often. The visions rarely have a clear meaning, but most times are in the form a cryptic message that lends itself to many different interpretations.

The future that is revealed through prophecy is not the only possible future. Rather, it is the most likely outcome of forces that have already been set in motion. Changing a future that has already been foreseen is not impossible, but it is very difficult.

A prophetic dream or vision is almost always in the form of the Animal Fetch of the character revealing something about the future. A scene plays out entirely, with people being represented by their Animal Fetches, but without any spoken words. For example, a player character may have a dream in which a lone bear is surrounded by wolves and fights a losing battle. That may signify that, in the near future, the character will be ambushed by his enemies and will be defeated if he is alone.

## The Prophecy Skill

*Mythic Iceland* uses a "Prophecy" skill to bring an element of prophetic dreams or visions into the





## Power Point cost

### for Using Prophecy

**1D3** - The prophecy affects only the player character himself or herself

**1D6** - The prophecy affects one person other than the player character

**1D8** - The prophecy affects a group of people

**+3 points** - Actual people are seen in the prophetic dream or vision, instead their Animal Fetches

**+1D6** - The prophecy involves some misfortune, or a shameful, disastrous event

**+1D8** - The prophecy involves death

game. This skill has a starting score of 0%. Only those characters with POW of 16 or above may increase this score during character creation.

Player characters may attempt a Prophecy skill roll at any time.

**Fumble:** The character has a prophetic dream or vision of his impending doom — his own death or some other terrible fate.

**Failure:** No glimpse of the future is revealed.

**Success:** The character has a prophetic dream or vision about an event in the future. See comments below.

**Special:** The prophecy includes some more specific details.

**Critical:** The character has a clear vision of the future.

## The Prophecy

Upon succeeding on a roll of the Prophecy skill, the player is free to use his imagination and create a prophecy that affects his character or any other PC or NPC.

The player is free to say anything as part of the prophecy, which can be expressed either through Animal Fetches representing the people

involved, or as a simple and direct vision of a future scene. Prophecies that use the symbolism of Animal Fetches are less taxing to the character (they cost less Power Points).

Players who insist in foretelling excessively positive fortunes for their own characters, such as “I shall become king of the whole of Iceland” can be allowed to do so, but the GM should secretly plan a twist of fate that makes that fortune not as overwhelmingly positive as it first might have appeared. For example, it could so happen that the character is declared “King of Iceland” by the Norwegian king in total disregard to the social order in Iceland, and without any kind of recognition by the Icelandic National Assembly, turning the so-called ‘king’ into a mortal enemy of just about every Icelandic chieftain who wishes Iceland to maintain its independence.

It is up to the player himself to make the prophecy come true, or not, by the actions of his or her character. However, once someone has made a prophecy, his thread of fate becomes much more likely to be woven in the predicted way. Any actions that move the plot forward toward the fulfillment of the prophecy have a +20% bonus. Similarly, any actions attempting to prevent the prophecy from coming true, or that set events in motion contrary to the prophecy, have a penalty of -20%. These modifiers apply only to the player character who made the prophecy himself and no one else — he is the agent of the fate he has prophesied.

It is only possible to have one “active” prophecy at a time. Prophecies without a clear date to happen expire in 1D10 months if the conditions for it to become true don’t present themselves within that time limit.

In the Icelandic Sagas, a doomed man often considers it a matter of honor to face his future with bravery, instead of trying to alter his fate. If a player character becomes known for accepting a prophecy that will ultimately bring him harm or even death, the GM should award a the character 1D10 Status skill points.

**Example of Prophecy:** While riding to a battle, a player character makes a prophecy. He has a vision of a wolf with the tail between its legs, its head bowed in submission, as it is surround-





ed by bears. If the Prophecy skill check is successful and the player spends the required Power Points (1D6 for affecting one person + 1D6 for a shameful act of surrender), then attempts by the player character to use his Persuade skill to try to convince the enemy to surrender rather than fight will have a bonus of +20%.

**Optional:** A prophecy can be in effect for each of the player characters right from the beginning of the game. This optional rule provides the GM with hooks for adventures in which all PCs have strong personal reasons to participate. Also, each prophecy created by the players for their characters tell the GM exactly what elements they want to see included in the campaign.

## Prophecy as Gamemaster Tool

Prophetic dreams or visions can be a valuable tool for the GM to use whenever he or she feels it necessary to introduce a plot detail or to communicate a clue to the player characters.

The player character with the highest Prophecy skill in the group is always the one who receives the prophetic dream. If more than one PC have the same Prophecy score, then both have the same prophetic dream. If the vision or dream is considered to be very important, at the GM's discretion, all player characters may receive it.

It is not necessary to ask for a Prophecy skill roll or to pay Power Points for prophetic dreams introduced by the GM. Prophecy skill rolls should only be made when the player wants to introduce a Prophecy into the game himself. Also, unlike player-introduced prophecies, GM-introduced ones do not grant skill bonuses or penalties.

Dreams or visions that are introduced by the GM are most often in the form of Animal Fetches trying to communicate some kind of warning to the character. Every person and creature in the dream or vision is represented by his or her respective Animal Fetch. Let the player characters try to interpret the dream and guess who is represented by each animal.

Mythic creatures in prophecies are represented by Animal Fetches with something strange about them — monstrosly deformed bears may represent trolls, while exceptionally beautiful animals with a faint glow surrounding them may represent elves.

## Völva

A Völva is a prophetess, most often an elderly woman, who travels the land with a small group of young followers.

Usually summoned in times of crisis, they command great respect and can charge well for their services.

In game terms, a Völva's gift is different from the standard Prophecy skill accessible to player character. The future foreseen by a Völva does not depend of the prophetess herself to be an agent of that fate. Still, it is only the most likely future and can be changed, although that should prove to be difficult.

The *Mythic Iceland* GM might use a Völva as an NPC who provides important clues about the future, or even as the source of a prophecy of doom that the PCs then must do all they can to prevent it from becoming true.

## Weather

The weather in mythic Iceland can be very unstable due to the influence of the mythic forces and land spirits over the island. The beating of the wings of the mighty eagle Vindsvall often generates strong winds, and fierce snow storms are created by the Ice giant Hrym walking the land.

Winds, even in bright summer days, but especially during the winter, can reach speeds of up to 200 km-per-hour. Extreme weather conditions usually do not last long, as the land spirits usually are quick to settle down from periods of intense activity. It is not uncommon to experience bright sunshine, rain, and snow in the same day.

Only two seasons are really distinct in Iceland. Summers are short, fairly mild and calm. Winters are long, very windy, and wet.





Summer temperatures average 10 degrees centigrade (50° Fahrenheit) in the lowlands, but on rare hot days it can reach up to 30 degrees (86° Fahrenheit). Blizzards during the summer are not unheard of.

At the height of the summer, for about six weeks, the sun never goes down.

In the dark winters, temperatures average 0 degrees centigrade (32° Fahrenheit) but can drop as low as -40 degrees centigrade (-40° Fahrenheit). Storms occur nearly every week during the winter. In mid-winter, there is only about two or three hours of sunlight per day.

The weather in the highlands can be even more unstable and unpredictable.

### Random Weather Table 1 — Winter roll three times a day

|          |                               |        |        |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------|--------|
| 01%      | Blue sky, no wind             | 12° C  | 54° F  |
| 02%-10%  | Blue sky, no wind             | 7° C   | 45° F  |
| 11%-50%  | Cloudy, windy                 | 3° C   | 37° F  |
| 51%-60%  | Snowing, no wind              | 0° C   | 32° F  |
| 61%-80%  | Snowing, strong winds         | -5° C  | 23° F  |
| 81%-90%  | Heavy snowfall, strong winds  | -15° C | 5° F   |
| 90%-100% | Snow storm, very Strong winds | -25° C | -13° F |

### Random Weather Table 2 — Summer roll twice a day

|          |                                |       |       |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 01%      | Extremely hot weather, no wind | 30° C | 86° F |
| 02%-15%  | Blue sky, no wind              | 20° C | 68° F |
| 16%-50%  | Blue sky, no wind              | 12° C | 54° F |
| 51%-65%  | Blue sky, windy                | 8° C  | 46° F |
| 66%-75%  | Cloudy, strong winds           | 7° C  | 45° F |
| 76%-85%  | Rain, strong winds             | 4° C  | 39° F |
| 85%-98%  | Rain, very strong winds        | 2° C  | 36° F |
| 99%-100% | Snowstorm, very strong winds   | -4° C | 25° F |

## Cold Weather Effects

Icelanders who travel outdoors during the winter know to always wear warm clothes. Even during the summer, when taking long journeys across land, it pays to be prepared to deal with the unpredictable weather.

Those who travel outdoors during the winter without adequate warm clothes must make a Stamina roll every hour or suffer 1 point of damage. Additionally, the rate with which Fatigue points are lost is doubled.

During snowstorms, all visibility is reduced to near zero. Anyone exposed to the storm must make a Difficult Stamina roll for every hour or suffer 2 points of damage.

In strong wind conditions all movement rates, of both men and horses, are halved.

## Alcohol Effects

*"I counsel thee ...*

*I pray thee be wary ...*

*Be wariest of all with ale."*

— Ódinn's council, from Hávamál  
("Sayings of the High One"),  
*Poetic Edda*

Barley is the only grain grown in Iceland, and it is used for the purpose of brewing ale and for making bread. Because of the harsh weather, however, the local production is not enough to cover the country's consumption, and grain is a valuable commodity brought to Iceland by traders.

Brewing ale is the work of women, requiring much attention and also prayers to the gods.

Large quantities of ale are consumed at feasts and assemblies. At Alþing, the National Assembly, ale is brewed on the spot, and only there it is done by men, as few women attend the assembly.

Wine is rare and very expensive. Shipments of grapes sometimes arrive from the settlements in Wineland, but they demand a high price. Mead is also not common, as there are no honeybees in Iceland.





## Alcohol Effects in the Game

Alcoholic beverages have each a potency score which reflects its alcoholic content per half-liter (pint). Continuous drinking means that the potency points accumulate.

### Beverage Potency

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Watered beer / ale | 1 |
| Weak beer / ale    | 2 |
| Strong beer / ale  | 3 |
| Mead               | 5 |
| Poor wine          | 3 |
| Average wine       | 6 |
| Best wine          | 9 |

\*potency may vary by as much as 3 points depending on brewer.

Drinking too much may result in the character becoming sick or passing out. Each time the accumulated alcohol potency points exceed a multiple of the player character's average of CON and SIZ, the drinker must make a Stamina roll. Note that this roll may have modifiers if the character has already failed a Stamina roll before (see table below). Also, each subsequent Stamina roll after the first has a cumulative -10% penalty.

Each failure shifts the character one condition from Sober to Lightheaded to Inebriated to

Drunken Stupor to Unconscious. For example, if a character has CON 14 and SIZ 16, the average is 15. Each time the accumulated alcohol potency points passes a multiple of 15, that character must make a stamina roll; a failure results in an increase in condition.

A fumble result on this roll shifts two levels: Sober to Inebriated, Lightheadedness to Drunken Stupor, or Inebriated to Unconscious.

### Drunkness Effects

|                |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Lightheaded    | -20% to all skills, -5% to Idea and Stamina rolls       |
| Inebriated     | All skill, Idea and Stamina rolls are made as Difficult |
| Drunken Stupor | All skill, Idea and Stamina rolls are reduced to 1/5    |
| Unconscious:   | -                                                       |

Once Drunken Stupor condition is reached, the character must make a Difficult roll of Stamina (half of normal Stamina score) or become sick. If this roll is fumbled, the character becomes sick and passes out.

**Unconscious:** A character that has passed out because of too much drink will remain unconscious for 1D10+2 hours, during which time it is nearly impossible to wake him up. After that time, he will pass on to a normal sleeping state for additional 1D10+2 hours. After waking up, the character must make a Difficult roll of Stamina or suffer from the effects of a hangover (see below).

**Recovery:** When a character who is Lightheaded, Inebriated, or in a Drunken Stupor condition has stopped drinking or gone to sleep, subtract the character's CON from the number of ingested alcohol potency points. The remaining number of points will then decrease at the rate of one per hour of rest, during which time the character will suffer from hangover.

**Hangover:** A character who wakes up the next day after having reached Drunken Stupor or Unconscious levels of alcohol effects the night before, or still having active potency points, will suffer from headaches, nausea, and general body aches. The





character must make a successful Stamina roll or suffer a penalty of -10% to all skills for the whole day. Any sudden movements or strenuous activity require an additional Stamina roll or the character becomes sick.

## Drinking Contests

Drinking contests are common among Vikings, and consist of drinking large amounts of alcohol, usually ale or mead, until there is only one man left standing.

When running a drinking contest, the GM must first take note of the average of CON and SIZ of every participant, as well as the potency of the beverages they are drinking. Every time the accumulated number of alcohol potency points consumed by one character exceeds his average of CON and SIZ, he must make a Stamina roll, with the appropriate modifiers, and a cumulative -10% penalty each time after the first. Failing four of those rolls means the character is Unconscious and has lost the contest. Becoming sick does not disqualify a character from the contest. The last character standing is the winner.

## Living as an Outlaw

The Icelandic Sagas tell of many men who were outlawed, sentenced by an assembly court to be banished from society because of crimes they have committed. Most often, they flee to the uninhabited highlands in the central region of the country.

Life is extremely hard for an outlaw in Iceland. There is the constant fear of being killed, not only by enemies but also by those who hunt down outlaws at all times of the year. Killing an outlaw is seen as an honorable act and thus improves a man's status, and is also seen as a fair way of becoming wealthy by keeping the loot outlaws may have gathered over time. Even cooperation among outlaws is rare, as the law says that an outlaw who kills three other outlaws can be forgiven of his crime. As if this wasn't enough hardship, there are the challenges of surviving the unpredictable and harsh weather of the highlands.

Those outlaws who manage to survive for many years despite the odds stacked against them, however, often become celebrated by storytellers for their heroism and independence.

No food grows in the wastes of the Central Highlands. Apart from very few valleys between the high mountains, which are unknown by most people, there is only glaciers and snow all year around.

The key for the survival of an outlaw is stealing from the law-abiding folk of the lowlands. Stealing sheep is the most common survival technique, as sheep are allowed to graze freely and often go up on the mountains looking for new patches of grass. Stealing directly from farmhouses is less common, as outlaws don't want to give too much reason for killing parties to be assembled. Kidnapping of young women by outlaws to serve as wives is a sure way to enrage the local population, but it happens from time to time.

Outlaws in mythic Iceland are also sure to meet many mythic creatures in the highlands, such as hidden people, trolls, giants, ghosts, and others. Without some degree of cooperation and friendship with the mythic creatures, one is bound to perish in that unforgiving environment.

Another important factor to consider is that the many years of extreme isolation and paranoia can drive many outlaws insane.

## Player Characters as Outlaws

If your player characters have committed a crime, for example a murder that they did not publicly announce, and are sentenced to outlawry, there is no reason to consider those characters finished and removed from the game. On the contrary, this could be only the beginning to an exciting period of adventures.

Always give the players the choice between leaving the country and staying in mythic Iceland as outlaws. Make sure they understand exactly what each option means. Leaving Iceland may bring many adventures abroad in Europe or in the new lands to the West, that is, Greenland and Wineland. Staying in Iceland means discovering a whole new side of the country and dealing with new challenges.





If they decide to stay, be strict about weather effects (see pages 208-209) and the dangers they will encounter. Trolls, giants, ghosts, hunters of outlaws, other hostile outlaws and are all in the cards for them.

One reason your players may be tempted to stay in Iceland is so they may try to prove their innocence, in cases where they were sentenced for a crime they didn't commit. Even if they did commit the crime they were found guilty of, there is always the chance of being pardoned if they manage to kill three other outlaws — adventures based around the premise of outlaws hunting outlaws in the wastes of the mythic highlands can be truly exciting.



## Adventures in Pre-930

This book focuses on the period starting with the first session of the Alþing, the National Assembly, in the year 930. However, any GM interested in running an adventure in *Mythic Iceland* in an earlier period can do so without a whole lot of extra work.

The Settlement Period starts in the year 874, when the first Norse settler, Ingólfr Arnarson, arrived in Iceland. Over the next 56 years up to the year 930, tens of thousands of settlers immigrate to Iceland with their families, animals, possessions, and slaves. Adventures in this era can be centered on exploring the country, naming geographical features no one has seen before, and land taking.

Land taking methods in the Settlement age differed for men and women. Men could claim any land around which they could light fires while keeping all fires within eyesight. Women could claim land around which they could lead a cow within a day. By 930 all the land in the country was taken by settlers.

An adventure could be built around the player characters being settlers having to deal with Irish monks living in the lands they chose to take for themselves.

It is important to remember that before 930 there is no code of law, and there are no legal

courts. In that sense, this is a period on the edge of lawlessness and chaos, in a country of geographically isolated individual farms.

On the Mythic side of the setting, much is different in the years before 930. The elves of this period are not used to contact with humans, they do not live in Miðgarður, but only occasionally explore it from their mirror-image island in Álfheimur. Only later a group of elves will decide to depart Álfheimur and move permanently to Iceland to become what the Icelanders would come to call the Hidden People. Interesting game plots can develop from these first interaction between elves and humans in pre-930 mythic Iceland.

## Adventures in Post-1050

Big changes take place in mythic Iceland after the year 1050. The main game-changing factor is that Christianity takes hold and starts re-shaping society.

Pagan beliefs, held privately, never completely die off until modern times in Iceland. However, most Icelanders do become faithful worshippers of the Christian god. This happens to such an extent that, in Iceland, a country by this time almost completely devoid of trees, the biggest wooden building anywhere in Europe is a cathedral, using timber imported from Norway. Monasteries are also built around the country, and become politically influential institutions.

Magic, which in pagan times was seen with a mix of fear and respect, now becomes a social taboo and is outlawed. Runemasters are persecuted and in some cases killed for their blasphemous beliefs. Paradoxically, many Icelandic stories and fairy-tales tell that Icelandic Christian priests of this period have a deep interest in the black magic traditions that come from the European continent.

There are dramatic changes in vegetation cover. The early settlers arriving in Iceland found a country covered by native birch forests extending from the sea to the mountains. By the end of the 11th century, however, those forests have all but disappeared, having been cut down to be used





as fuel for fires, and to build houses and boats. The treeless land suffers from erosion that reduces the amount of grasslands available for grazing. This brings great strain on the society and times become very hard for the population in general. From this period onwards, the previously prosperous island now suffers periodically from famine and sickness. The situation in the Greenland colony is even worse.

The year 1200 marks the beginning of the period known as the Age of the Sturlungs. During this period, two families come to own most of the chieftaincies in the country, one of them being a powerful family headed by a man named Sturla Þórðarson. Seeking help in battling against the enemy family, the Sturla family become vassals of the King of Norway. Hostilities between the two families escalate into a full-blow civil war that lasts for decades, and at the end of which the chieftains agree to accept the sovereignty of the King of Norway, ending Icelandic independence for the next seven hundred years.

Adventures based in this period could explore the themes of hardship and the civil war.

## List of BRP Optional Rules

Below is a list of the optional rules found in the *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, which are recommended for use in *Mythic Iceland* games.

- Hit Points per Location (BRP pages 20, 29)
- Fatigue Points (BRP pages 20, 32)
- Distinctive Features (BRP pages 34-35)
- Freeform Professions (BRP page 41)
- Skill Category Bonuses (BRP pages 20, 31, 48)
- Encumbrance (BRP page 180)
- Splitting Attack and Parry Skills (BRP page 199)
- Strike Ranks (BRP page 199)
- Armor By Hit Locations (BRP page 262)
- Damage and Hit Locations (BRP pages 204-205)
- Allegiance (BRP page 315)
- Personality Traits (BRP page 294)



# CREATURES OF MYTHIC ICELAND



*King Haraldur told a warlock to hie to Iceland in some altered shape, and to try what he could learn there to tell him: and he set out in the shape of a whale. And when he came near to the land he went to the west side of Iceland, north around the land, where he saw all the mountains and hills full of guardian-spirits, some great, some small. When he came to Vopnafjörður he went in towards the land, intending to go on shore; but a huge dragon rushed down the dale against him with a train of serpents, paddocks, and toads, that blew poison towards him. Then he turned to go westward around the land as far as Eyjafjörður, and he went into the fjord. Then a bird flew against him, which was so great that its wings stretched over the mountains on either side of the fjord, and many birds, great and small, with it. Then he swam farther west, and then south into Breidafjörður. When he came into the fjord a large grey bull ran against him, wading into the sea, and bellowing fearfully, and he was followed by a crowd of land-spirits. From thence he went round by Reykjanes, and wanted to land at Vikarsskeið, but there came down a hill-giant against him with an iron staff in his hands. He was a head higher than the mountains, and many other giants followed him. He then swam eastward along the land, and there was*

*nothing to see, he said, but sand and vast deserts, and, without the skerries, high-breaking surf; and the ocean between the countries was so wide that a long-ship could not cross it. Then the Danish king turned about with his fleet, and sailed back to Denmark.*

— *The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway*, Snorri Sturluson,  
Iceland, year 1230

All creatures in this chapter appear in Icelandic Sagas, or in Icelandic fairy-tales and legends of old.

## TROLL

Icelandic trolls live in mountains, caves, and cliffs, especially bird cliffs. Like humans, they live together socially in small groups or as family units. They fish, cultivate land, and keep giant versions of farm animals.

Although considered by humans to be fearsome and cruel creatures, they often live in mountains near human farms without causing any trouble. They treat people as they are treated and return favors for favors, but will exact vengeance if harmed.

Trolls are nocturnal creatures, and turn to stone if exposed to sunlight. Many strange rock formations rising above lava plains of mythic Iceland are in fact trolls that have stayed out too late into the night and were turned into stone by the





morning sun. The animals they keep are also susceptible to being turned to stone by the sun's light. A dead troll always turns to stone.

An average Icelandic troll stands three meters tall, but a few can be much bigger. For very large trolls reaching SIZ 40, change the characteristics below by adding 10 extra hit points, and change the Damage bonus to +3D6.

| Characteristics |          | Average |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| STR             | 3D6 + 15 | 25      |
| CON             | 4D6 + 12 | 18      |
| SIZ             | 4D6 + 18 | 30      |
| INT             | 2D6      | 7       |
| POW             | 3D6      | 9       |
| DEX             | 2D6+3    | 10      |
| APP             | 1D6+1    | 4       |

**Move:** 8

**Hit Points:** 24

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 2-point thick skin

**Fatigue:** 43

| Weapon     | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|------------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Fist smash | 6  | 40%    | 1D6 + db (crushing) |
| Club       | 8  | 50%    | 1D8 + db (crushing) |
| Rock Throw | 9  | 30%    | 1D10 + ½ db         |

A troll can make one attack per round

**Skills:** Climb 70%, Spot 40%, Sense 90%, Dodge 20%, Stealth 20%.

## Powers:

- **Night Vision:** Trolls can see perfectly in the dark.
- **Regeneration:** Trolls are able to regenerate 2 hit points of damage each combat round, unless that damage was done by fire.
- **High Stamina:** Trolls do not go into shock due to massive hit point loss or due to severed limbs. They will keep fighting until dead.

## Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 2/8   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 2/8   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 2/8   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 2/10  |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 2/6   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 2/6   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 2/8   |

## Draugur

A draugur is an animated corpse that comes forth from its grave-mound, or one that shows restlessness on the road to burial. They spend their undead existence inside the mound, watching jealously over their possessions. Sometimes a draugur will leave its earthen home and haunt the surrounding countryside, attacking any beast or man it finds.

These slain corpses have hideous strength that greatly exceeds that of living men, and their skin is as black as death. As a rule, they are swollen almost to the size of an ox.



TROLL





DRAUGUR

They prefer to wrestle in combat, but sometimes can use the weapons that have been buried alongside them.

In order to be permanently destroy a draugur, it is necessary to first decapitate it and then burn the body.

| Characteristics |         | Average |
|-----------------|---------|---------|
| STR             | 5D6 + 3 | 20-22   |
| SIZ             | 4D6 + 5 | 23      |
| INT             | 2D6 + 6 | 13      |
| POW             | 3D6 + 7 | 16-17   |
| DEX             | 3D6     | 10-11   |

**Move:** 7

**Hit Points:** 28

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 0

**Fatigue:** Cannot tire

| Weapon     | SR | Attack | Damage                  |
|------------|----|--------|-------------------------|
| Right claw | 6  | 60%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding)     |
| Left claw  | 7  | 60%    | 1D6 + db (bleeding)     |
| Grapple    | 9  | 50%    | see BRP pages 60-61     |
| Sword      | 9  | 70%    | 1D8 + 1 + db (bleeding) |

A draugur can make two claw attacks per round, or one grapple or sword attack

**Skills:** Sense 60%, Listen 50%, Track 40%.

### Powers:

- **Night Vision:** Can see perfectly in the dark.
- **Hard to Kill:** Slashing, crushing and impaling weapons do half damage. Fire does full damage.
- **Special Destruction Condition:** A draugur does not go into shock due to massive hit point loss or due to severed limbs. It will keep fighting until its hit points are reduced to zero, at which time the draugur will collapse. In 1D12 hours after having been hacked to zero hit points, the draugur will return, with all hit points restored, unless the head is severed and the body is burned.
- **Diseased Touch:** Every time a character is struck by a draugur's claw or grapple attack, he or she must make a resisted check of CON vs. the draugur's POW or contract a disease that spreads through the body and rots the flesh. First symptoms appear after 1D12 hours. The disease is considered of Acute Severity and causes Disfigurement (see *Basic Roleplaying* page 221).
- **Rune Magic:** If the draugur was a runemaster in life, he retains his knowledge of runes and may create magical rune scripts.





#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/10  |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/10  |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/10  |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/11  |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/7   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/7   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/10  |

**Power Points:** 23

**Damage Bonus:** +5D6

**Armor:** 2-point thick skin, plus 2-point leather armor

**Fatigue:** 64

| Weapon      | SR | Attack | Damage                          |
|-------------|----|--------|---------------------------------|
| Club        | 4  | 60%    | 3D6 + db (crushing + knockback) |
| Kick/Stomp  | 5  | 45%    | 1D6 + db (crushing + knockback) |
| Thrown Rock | 5  | 45%    | 2D6+ 1/2 db (crushing)          |

A jöttunn can make two attacks per round

**Skills:** Climb 50%, Spot 60%, Sense 50%, Dodge 40%.

## Jöttunn

The jöttunn, also called giants or frost giants, are mythic creatures with superhuman strength that often stand in opposition to the gods, but also mingle and inter-marry with them. The homeland of the jöttunn is Jötunheimur, one of the nine worlds that hang from the branches of Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

Those jöttunn who emigrated to Miðgarður from Jötunheimur did so a very long time ago, during a time when the world of giants was thrown into anarchy by the death of King Þrymur, who ruled over that world. King Þrymur had stolen Þór's hammer in an attempt to extort the gods into giving him the goddess Freyja as his wife, but that plan was foiled by the knowledge of Heimdallur, the cunning of Loki, and the strength of Þór.

There are only a few jöttunn in mythic Iceland, living in solitude in halls inside cliffs or in caves. They prefer to keep to themselves in their mountain homes up in the highlands. They are bigger and more intelligent than trolls, and some are wise and kind with those who befriend them.

| Characteristics | Average     |
|-----------------|-------------|
| STR             | 3D6 + 25 36 |
| CON             | 4D6 + 16 28 |
| SIZ             | 3D6 + 50 60 |
| INT             | 3D6 + 15 24 |
| POW             | 2D6 + 18 23 |
| DEX             | 3D6+5 14    |
| APP             | 3D6 10      |

**Move:** 16

**Hit Points:** 44

#### Powers:

- **Create Blizzard:** A jöttunn can create a fierce snow storm that lasts for 10 minutes for every Power Point invested in this power. For more details about weather condition effects on player characters, see pages 208-209.
- **Size Change:** A jöttunn is able to reduce its size to a normal person's size and be completely indistinguishable from a human.
- **Female Beauty:** jöttunn women are extremely beautiful, and many great heroes and even gods have fallen in love with female giantesses.

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 4/15  |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 4/15  |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 4/15  |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 4/18  |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 4/11  |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 4/11  |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 4/15  |

## Polar Bears

People living in the north of the country avoid travelling alone over the mountains, because of the danger of meeting polar bears. These huge beasts arrive in Iceland on big blocks of ice coming from





POLAR BEARS FIGHT A FROST GIANT, WHILE THE KING OF BEARS WATCHES

Greenland. They are so starved when they arrive that they will attack any animal or person they see.

The *Book of Settlement* tells the story of the first man to meet a polar bear in Iceland, in the year of 890. A man called Ingimundur the Old met with a female polar bear and her cubs while travelling through the north of the country. Ingimundur barely escaped with his life, but he managed to capture one of the bear cubs, and he later gave it to the king of Denmark as a gift. Men in Scandinavia had never seen a polar bear before. Since that event, the lake in that valley where he met the bears has been called Cub Lake (Húnavatn).

What most people don't know, however, is that not all polar bears encountered in Iceland come from Greenland on blocks of floating ice. In fact, a colony of polar bears exists in the central highlands of Iceland, and these are especially intelligent bears. The bears attack anyone coming near their colony, and will do anything to protect the secret of its location. Many men

who are thought to have fallen to seemingly random attacks from polar bears have actually been attacked because they ventured too close to the bears' colony.

These are very large animals. Most males weigh about 350-650 kg, and are about 3 meters long. Some grow to even larger sizes.

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 3D6+21 | 28-32   |
| CON             | 2D6+6  | 13      |
| SIZ             | 3D6+21 | 31-32   |
| INT             | 9      | 9       |
| POW             | 3D6    | 10-11   |
| DEX             | 3D6    | 10-11   |

**Move:** 14 (8 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 23

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 4-point fur

**Fatigue:** 45





| Weapon    | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|-----------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite      | 9  | 45%    | 1D10+½db (bleeding) |
| Claws (2) | 6  | 60%    | 1D6+db (bleeding)   |
| Slap      | 6  | 45%    | 1D3+db (crushing)   |

Bears can attack twice in a round, using either two separate claw attacks or one claw and one bite attack.

**Skills:** Climb 40%, Hide 60%, Listen 75%, Sense 75%, Sneak 60%, Swim 80%.

### Powers:

- **Human Speech:** Some bears can understand and speak human Norse language.
- **Hide in Snow:** The bears can blend in with the snowy surroundings, and can only be noticed with a successful Spot roll.

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 4/6   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 4/6   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 4/9   |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 4/9   |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 4/6   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 4/6   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 4/8   |

## King of Bears

Few people know about the polar bear colony in mythic Iceland, and fewer still know about the King of the Bears (Bjarn Dýrakóngur) who rules over mythic Iceland's polar bears. He is the largest of all polar bears, being in fact the offspring of a female bear and a walrus. His cheeks are red, and a single horn extends from his forehead.

The horn of the King of Bears can magically shine with a strong light that illuminates a large area. The king often uses this power when guiding his followers through the darkness of the long winter nights.

The King of the Bears has great wisdom, and is fully able to communicate in the human Norse language. If angered, or when the bear colony is in

danger, he fights using his sharp horn and powerful claws.

### Characteristics

|     |    |
|-----|----|
| STR | 40 |
| CON | 18 |
| SIZ | 34 |
| INT | 17 |
| POW | 18 |
| DEX | 16 |

**Move:** 16 (10 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 26

**Damage Bonus:** +4D6

**Armor:** 4-point fur

**Fatigue:** 58

| Weapon    | SR | Attack | Damage             |
|-----------|----|--------|--------------------|
| Bite      | 9  | 65%    | 1D6+½db (bleeding) |
| Claws (2) | 6  | 80%    | 1D6+db (bleeding)  |
| Slap      | 6  | 55%    | 1D3+db (crushing)  |
| Horn      | 7  | 70%    | 1D8+db (Impaling)  |

Just as with standard polar bears, the King of Bears can attack twice in a round, using either two separate claw attacks or one claw and one bite attack.

**Skills:** Climb 70%, Command 70%, Hide 70%, Listen 80%, Sense 80%, Sneak 70%, Speak Human Language (Nordic) 30%, Swim 90%.

### Powers:

- **Human Speech:** Fluent in Norse human language.
- **Light:** The horn of the king has an effect equal to the magic spell Light at level 5 (see *Basic Roleplaying* page 99).

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 4/6   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 4/6   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 4/10  |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 4/10  |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 4/7   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 4/7   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 4/9   |





## Nykur

Nykur are horse-like creatures found in practically every bottomless pond or larger lake of great depth, as well as in rivers all over mythic Iceland.

On the surface of frozen lakes, sometimes a booming noise can be heard, caused by the horsehide dragging along the bottom of the ice cover. They live in herds under the surface of lakes and rivers, but will sometimes emerge out of the water, and if the lake is frozen, it will break the ice with enormous force.

They strongly resemble a normal horse, usually grey in color, with a luxuriant mane and tail. The hoof of a nykur also resembles the hoof of a normal horse, but it has a hollow underneath to help with swimming. The front of the legs have long hairs, while the back of the legs have shorter hairs, sometimes giving the impression that the hoof is turned the wrong way round.

Nykur are known for tempting people onto their backs in order to plunge into the nearest water, drowning the victims and eating them under the water. It is also considered dangerous to lie by holes in the ice to fish after nightfall, as a nykur may break up the ice and drown those lying on it.

Some stories say that nykur can also shape-shift into the forms of any land or sea creature.

The only sure way of causing the nykur to flee back to its watery home is to shout out its name — “nykur” or “nennie.”

| Characteristics | Average |       |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| STR             | 3D6+20  | 30-31 |
| CON             | 3D6+5   | 13    |
| SIZ             | 3D6+12  | 22    |
| INT             | 7       | 7     |
| POW             | 3D6     | 11    |
| DEX             | 3D6     | 14    |

**Move:** 12 (14 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 19

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 2-point fur and hide

**Fatigue:** 46

| Weapon          | SR | Attack | Damage             |
|-----------------|----|--------|--------------------|
| Bite            | 5  | 40%    | 1D3+½db (bleeding) |
| Kick            | 5  | 35%    | 1D8+db (crushing)  |
| Rear and Plunge | 7  | 50%    | 2D6+db (crushing)  |



NYKUR

**Skills:** Dodge 45%, Listen 70%, Sense 60%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 2/5   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 2/5   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 2/7   |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 2/7   |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 2/5   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 2/5   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 2/6   |

## Shell Monster

The shell monster (skeljaskrímsli) is a four-legged beast inhabiting the seas around mythic Iceland. They occasionally come ashore, attracted by sources of light, and to visit fresh-water sources.





This creature is about the size of a very large horse, but is very broad and muscular. It has a tail with a lump at the end. The legs are stout and short, the footprints nearly circular. Its eyes are red. Its trunk is covered by a layer of dark-blue scales that shine under the moonlight.

A shell monster only comes out of the sea under the cover of darkness, and is always accompanied by a clattering noise, produced by the friction of its enormous claws rubbing together and also by the rattling armor of shells.

Few people have survived an encounter with a shell monster, and none have spoken of actually managing to kill one of these beasts. They are very fast in combat, using the tail to attack, as well as biting with its long and powerful jaws and very long teeth, which are always illuminated by a phosphorescent glow. The extremely long claws, kept turned inwards when the creature walks on land, can also be used to attack an enemy to devastating effect.

| Characteristics | Average |       |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| STR             | 6D6+20  | 28-32 |
| CON             | 4D6+8   | 20    |
| SIZ             | 5D6+20  | 31-32 |
| INT             | 3       | 3     |
| POW             | 3D6     | 10-11 |
| DEX             | 4D6+6   | 16-17 |

**Move:** 12 (10 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 26

**Damage Bonus:** +2D6

**Armor:** 6-point shell armor on trunk, 5-point hide on legs and head

**Fatigue:** 52

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite   | 5  | 50%    | 1D10+½db (bleeding) |
| Claw   | 5  | 60%    | 1D8+db (bleeding)   |
| Tail   | 6  | 65%    | 1D8+1+db (crushing) |

Shell monsters can attack twice in a round, using either two separate claw attacks or one claw and one bite attack, or two tails swings. The blood of a shell monster contains contact poison POT 18.

**Skills:** Hide 20%, Track 60%, Sense 50%.

Causing extreme pain, impaired vision and convulsions within 5 combat rounds.



SHELL MONSTER

### Powers:

- **Poisonous Blood:** The blood of a shell monster contains a deadly poison. A character fighting one of these creatures must make a successful Luck roll after each time any damage is dealt to the monster, in order to avoid being splattered by the poisonous blood.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 5/7   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 5/7   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 6/10  |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 6/10  |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 5/7   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 5/7   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 5/9   |

## Merfolk

These creatures are half-man, and from the waist down, half-seal. They have large heads and broad hands.



Mermen and merwomen live along the southern coast of Iceland, in under-sea houses built out of corals. They live from hunting fish and other sea creatures, farming seaweed, and of milking Sea Cattle (see pages 225-226).

One well-known story tells of a fisherman who caught a merman in his net and tried to force it to reveal his magical lore, but it refused. What the merman did instead was laugh at the actions of the fisherman — when he kissed his wife, kicked his dog, tripped over a tussock and cursed it heartily, and laughed when he bought shoes with very thick soles. The fisherman made a deal with the merman, that he would free him if the merman would tell him the reason for all his laughing. After being freed, the merman said: “I laugh at your own stupidity, farmer. Your dog loves you as dearly as his own life, but your wife wishes you were dead, and she is cheating on you. The tussock you cursed covers a treasure destined for you. That was why you had no sense, farmer, and why I laughed. And the black boots will last you all your life, for you haven’t many days to live — three days, they’ll last you three days!”

| Characteristics |          | Average |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| STR             | 4D6+ 1   | 15      |
| CON             | 1D6 + 10 | 13      |
| SIZ             | 1D6 + 6  | 9       |
| INT             | 2D6 + 6  | 13      |
| POW             | 3D6      | 10      |
| DEX             | 3D6      | 10      |
| APP             | 3D6      | 10      |

**Move:** 15 (swimming)  
**Hit Points:** 11  
**Power Points:** 10  
**Damage Bonus:** none  
**Armor:** 3-point thick skin from the waist down  
**Fatigue:** 27

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Fist   | 7  | 65%    | 1D3 + db (crushing) |

A merman can make one attack per round  
**Skills:** Hide 70%, Sneak 40%.



MERMAN

**Powers:**

- **Reveal Truth:** Facts that are hidden to most people are clear to the eyes of the merfolk, who can instinctively see the true intention of individuals, hidden treasures, etc.
- **Absolute Prophecy:** Merfolk can predict the future with absolute accuracy.

**Hit Points per Hit Location:**

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-06     | 01-05       | Tail         | 3/5   |
| 07-11     | 06-10       | Abdomen      | 3/4   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/4   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/3   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/3   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/4   |





## Sealskin

Sealskins are intelligent seals that live all along the Icelandic coast, and have the ability to turn into humans by removing their seal skin. When in human form, they are stunningly beautiful.

It is said that if a man manages to steal a skin from a sealskin while she is distracted and in human form, that man can have himself a very loyal and loving wife. However, if the wife ever has the chance to recover her seal skin, no matter after how many years living on land, she will eagerly put it on, transform back into a seal and disappear into the sea.

| Characteristics |       | Average (human form) |
|-----------------|-------|----------------------|
| STR             | 2D6+2 | 9                    |
| CON             | 3D6   | 10                   |
| SIZ             | 2D6+4 | 9                    |
| INT             | 3D6+6 | 17                   |
| POW             | 2D6+6 | 13                   |
| DEX             | 3D6+3 | 14                   |
| APP             | 3D6+7 | 18                   |

**Move:** 10 (on land)

**Hit Points:** 10

**Power Points:** 13

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** 0 or per armor worn

**Fatigue:** 19

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Fist   | 8  | 35%    | 1D3 + db (crushing) |

A sealskin can make one attack per round

**Skills:** Swim 90%, Sense 80%.

### Powers:

- **Shapeshift:** A sealskin's natural shape is that of a seal, but they can change into human form by removing their seal skin. If the skin is lost, a sealskin can never change back to its seal form, and must live forever as a human.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 0/3   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 0/3   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 0/3   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 0/4   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 0/2   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 0/2   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 0/3   |

## Intelligent Ravens

These large black birds are very common in Iceland. They do not travel south for the winter but stay in the country, often complementing their diet with leftovers from human farms.

Icelandic ravens are very intelligent and wise, even more-so than people realize. They in fact have a structured society and their own laws. They congregate at specific locations twice a year, mid-summer and mid-winter, and at these gatherings they lay the ground rules for their society and to settle disputes.



FLOCK OF RAVENS

Human farmers have at times observed those gatherings, and call them “raven assemblies” (hrafnathing).

Most Icelandic ravens are capable of understanding and speaking the human Norse language, but tend to hide that fact from humans.

| Characteristics |          | Average |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| STR             | 1D3      | 2       |
| CON             | 1D4      | 3       |
| SIZ             | 1D2      | 1-2     |
| INT             | 3D6      | 10-12   |
| POW             | 2D6 + 6  | 13      |
| DEX             | 3D6 + 10 | 21      |

**Move:** 1 (11 flying)

**Hit Points:** 4

**Power Points:** 13

**Damage Bonus:** -1D6

**Armor:** None

**Fatigue:** 5

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Claw   | 7  | 40%    | 1D4 - db (bleeding) |
| Bite   | 10 | 30%    | 1D3 - db (impale)   |

A raven can attack twice in the same combat round.

**Skills:** Dodge 65%, Spot 80%, Prophecy 70%, Second Sight 100%.

## Powers:

- **Speech:** Ravens in mythic Iceland can speak the Norse language of the humans, as well as the language of the elves and their own raven language.

## Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-20     | 01-20       | Body         | 0/4   |

## Apparitions

Although most tales of the undead in Iceland concern the corporeal undead such as the draugr (see page 215) and others brought back to life by magic, incorporeal spirits are also known to haunt the living in this country.

Use the Ghost details from *Basic Roleplaying* rulebook, page 342.

## Fingal

The offspring of a tomcat and a vixen, this creature is extremely fierce and aggressive. There is no greater threat to a farmer's sheep. They are also known as ghouls, after their habit of digging up dead human bodies and eating their rotten flesh.

Powerful in appearance and dark of hue, a fingal has a thick coat of fur and a long tail. The creature resembles a very large cat, almost the size of a sheep, with a head that blends features of both cat and fox. It is shy and alert, and very fleet of foot.

They are very intelligent and can speak human language, as well as communicate with cats and foxes.

A fingal's skin is very valuable for the fact that it cannot be cut or pierced in any way by steel, only by silver — perfect for the making of armor that will protect the wearer from anything save weapons made of silver. It is very dangerous to hunt a Fingal, however, as their gaze can kill any man. Popular wisdom says that the only way they can be killed is by magic or with silver-headed arrows.

| Characteristics | Average |       |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| STR             | 2D6 + 5 | 12    |
| CON             | 3D6     | 10-11 |
| SIZ             | 1D6 + 2 | 4-5   |
| INT             | 2D6     | 7     |
| POW             | 3D6     | 10    |
| DEX             | 3D6 + 6 | 17    |





**Move:** 12

**Hit Points:** 8

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Armor:** 2-point fur against silver weapons. Steel weapons cannot harm a Fingal.

**Fatigue:** 22

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|--------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Bite   | 5  | 60%    | 1D8 + ½db (bleeding) |
| Claw   | 5  | 60%    | 1D6 + ½db (bleeding) |

**Skills:** Dodge 85%, Hide 70%, Jump 80%, Listen 60%, Sense 60%, Spot 65%, Stealth 80%, Track 50%.

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-leg | 2/2   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-leg  | 2/2   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 2/3   |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 2/3   |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-leg | 2/2   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-leg  | 2/2   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 2/3   |

#### Powers:

- **Magical fur:** A fingal can only be hurt by silver weapons.
- **Death gaze:** Anyone looking into the eyes of a fingal must resist a POW vs. POW contest or immediately lose 4D6 hit points to a sudden massive heart attack. Each victim is only susceptible to this attack once. Those trying to avoid looking at the fingal while at the same time fighting it must succeed on a POWx5 roll or they succumb to the temptation to look at the beast.

## Sea Cattle

Sea cattle live underwater, in the seas around Iceland. They possess a type of bladder in front of their nostrils that affords them a long breathing time under the water before they need to resurface.

If that bladder is ever burst, they become unable to return to the depths of the sea and must spend the rest of their lives on land.

When it ventures overland it is often in herds, mainly to entice the bulls and cows belonging to the human population to follow them



FINGAL





SEA CATTLE

into the sea. They do that under training by mer-  
men, so that the land animals can be drowned and  
then eaten by the merfolk.

They have a larger body than the land vari-  
ety, are slicker, have a long tail, large ears, and  
yield more milk.

| Characteristics |          | Average |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| STR             | 4D6 + 26 | 40      |
| CON             | 2D6 + 10 | 17      |
| SIZ             | 3D6 + 28 | 39      |
| INT             | 4        | 4       |
| POW             | 2D6      | 7       |
| DEX             | 2D6      | 7       |

**Move:** 9

**Hit Points:** 30

**Damage Bonus:** + 4D6

**Armor:** 4-point hide

**Fatigue:** 57

| Weapon      | SR | Attack | Damage                                    |
|-------------|----|--------|-------------------------------------------|
| Horn charge | 6  | 40%    | 1D10 + db (impale +<br>knockback)         |
| Trample     | 5  | 75%    | 3D6 + db (crushing)<br>to downed foe only |

**Skills:** Listen 30%, Sense 40%.

### Powers:

- **Breathe underwater:** Sea Cattle can stay un-  
der water for up to four hours at a time.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right Hind-leg | 4/10  |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left Hind-leg  | 4/10  |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 4/10  |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 4/12  |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right Fore-leg | 4/9   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left Fore-leg  | 4/9   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 4/10  |

## Ocean Mist (Kraken)

An eight-legged octopus, and considered the worst  
sea monster of them all. The name *ocean mist* (haf-  
gúfa) comes from the hot vomit and unclean vapor  
that the creature belches out with the intention of  
attracting prey. Those who have seen this monster,  
describe it as being more like a piece of land than a  
living animal. This creature is also known in other  
lands by the name *kraken*.

An encounter with this creature in the sea usu-  
ally begins with a ship encountering a foul-smell-  
ing mist in a patch of ocean covered by steaming  
bits of fish and parts of other sea creatures. The  
ship then eventually finds a piece of land that looks  
featureless and desolate. It is very dangerous to  
walk over the land, as it can disappear at any mo-  
ment, taking the men with it.

Another tactic of this creature is to lie still at  
the surface of the sea in such way that it looks like





OCEAN MIST

a piece of land with a fjord, when in fact the ship sails right atop the mouth of the creature, which then snaps it shut in a one sudden move.

The ocean mist can produce a terrible roar that causes boats to tremble to the point of falling apart.

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 15D6   | 50      |
| CON             | 2D6+10 | 17      |
| SIZ             | 30D6   | 105     |
| INT             | 6      | 6       |
| POW             | 3D6    | 10-11   |
| DEX             | 2D6+12 | 19      |

**Move:** 18 swimming

**Hit Points:** 70

**Damage Bonus:** +8D6

**Armor:** 3-point hide

**Fatigue:** 57

| Weapon   | SR | Attack | Damage               |
|----------|----|--------|----------------------|
| Tentacle | 7  | 50%    | 1D10 + db (crushing) |
| Bite     | 8  | 75%    | 4D6 + db (impale)    |

The ocean mist rarely attacks with its tentacles, preferring to set up a trap to position the prey right

above its mouth. When attacking with tentacles, it can attack up to eight times per round. Any individual struck by a tentacle must make a STR vs. STR roll to avoid being grabbed and dragged under the water.

**Skills:** Hide 80%, Swim 100%.

### Powers:

- **Foul-Smelling Mist:** The ocean mist can belch a mist that obscures vision to a 2-meter visibility reach. Anyone breathing the mist must make a roll of Stamina or become sick.
- **Roar:** The Ocean Mist can emit a terrible roar that weakens the structural integrity of ships by making the wooden planks vibrate, causing 2D6 hit points of damage to the ship per round.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01          | Tentacle 1   | 4/15  |
| 03-04     | 02          | Tentacle 2   | 4/15  |
| 05-06     | 03          | Tentacle 3   | 4/15  |
| 07-08     | 04          | Tentacle 4   | 4/15  |
| 09-10     | 05          | Tentacle 5   | 4/15  |
| 11-12     | 06          | Tentacle 6   | 4/15  |
| 13-14     | 07          | Tentacle 7   | 4/15  |
| 15-16     | 08          | Tentacle 8   | 4/15  |
| 17-18     | 09-13       | Head         | 4/23  |
| 19-20     | 14-20       | Body         | 4/23  |

## Seal-Mother

Seals are a common sight along the Icelandic coast, and seals have been hunted since settlement times. Hunting seals is not without danger, as some of these animals can weight as much as 300 kilos and have a very strong bite.

When the seals' large bulk is not enough to ward off attacks, they can resort to calling the Seal Mother. Whenever seals are being viciously attacked, the seal mother may sense that as well, and





come to the help of the seals. They can use their large fins as legs to walk on land.

The seal mother is shaped like a normal seal, but is of enormous dimensions. It will ferociously attack anyone who is hunting seals. It is imbued with a measure of intelligence, and it is known to destroy traps that farmers have set up in order to capture seals.

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 4D6+20 | 24      |
| CON             | 3D6+8  | 18-19   |
| SIZ             | 3D6+30 | 40-41   |
| INT             | 7      | 7       |
| POW             | 3D6    | 10-11   |
| DEX             | 4D6+5  | 19      |

**Move:** 12 (10 swimming)

**Hit Points:** 30

**Damage Bonus:** +3D6

**Armor:** 4-point skin and blubber

**Fatigue:** 41



SEAL-MOTHER

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite   | 6  | 40%    | 2D8+½db (bleeding)  |
| Claws  | 9  | 50%    | 1D10+½db (bleeding) |

The Seal Mother can attack once per round.

**Skills:** Hide 30%, Track 70%, Sense 80%, Swim 80%.

**Hit Points per Hit Location:**

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location   | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-------|
| 01-02     | 01-02       | Right hind-fin | 4/7   |
| 03-04     | 03-04       | Left hind-fin  | 4/7   |
| 05-07     | 05-09       | Hindquarters   | 4/11  |
| 08-10     | 10-14       | Forequarters   | 4/11  |
| 11-13     | 15-16       | Right fore-fin | 4/7   |
| 14-16     | 17-18       | Left fore-fin  | 4/7   |
| 17-20     | 19-20       | Head           | 4/10  |

## Wicked Whales

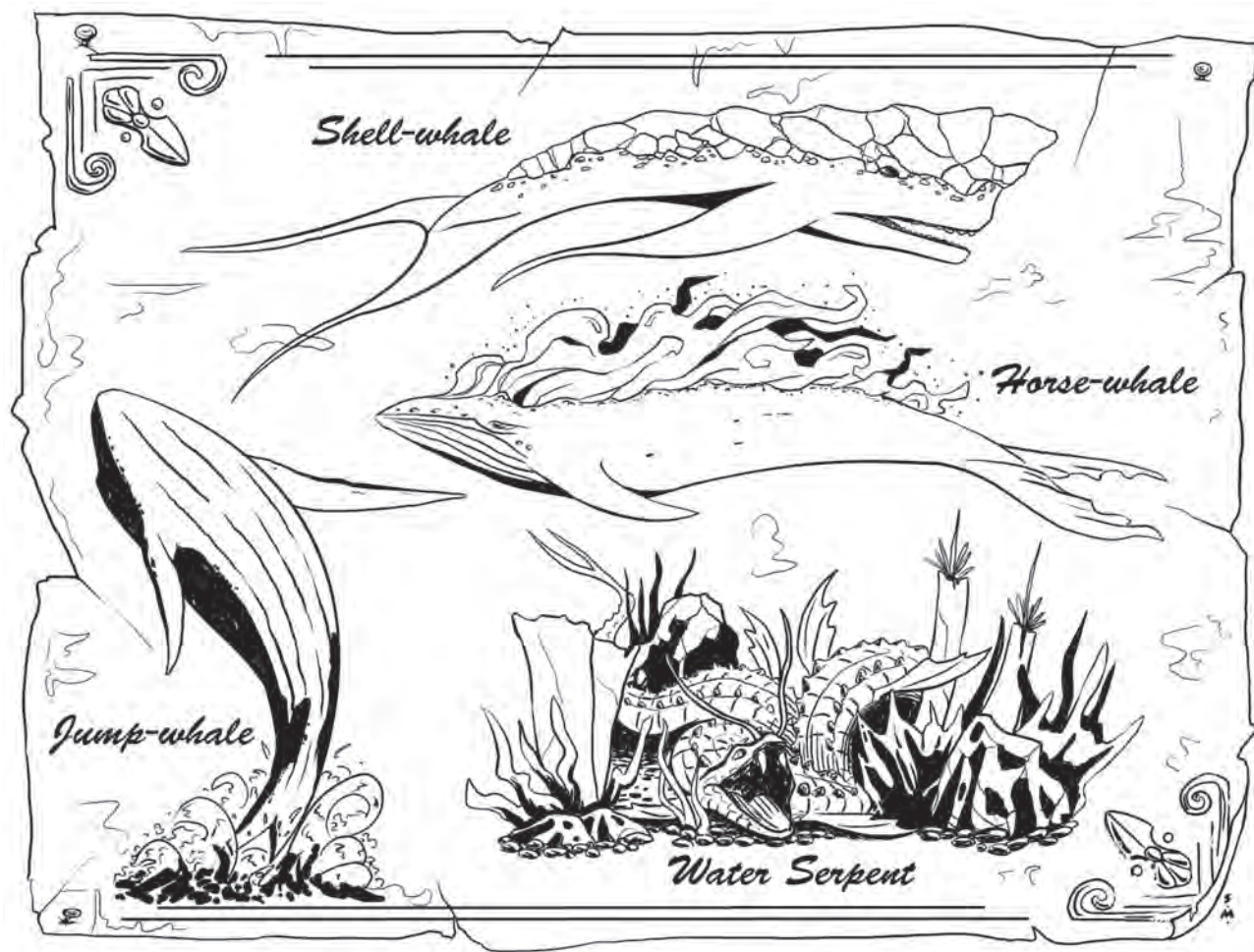
There are many stories of strange whales living in Icelandic waters, which hold a great hatred for ships, hunting them and attacking them at every opportunity. These whales are all of similar sizes, around 25 meters long.

It is unwise to eat the meat of any of these wicked animals.

**Horse-Whale:** This one-eyed sea creature, with a flowing red mane, can often be encountered on the southern coast of Iceland, ploughing through the surface of the sea hell-bent on destruction. Whenever it finds a ship it tries to overtake and wreck it by leaning its own weight against it. This evil whale is said to have a thirst for human blood that can never be satisfied. Its red mane is home to bacteria that cause any open wound it touches to putrefy, leading to the eventual death of its prey.

**Mouse-Whale:** This toothed whale has large dorsal fins resembling huge ears of a mouse. Instead of ordinary fins, it has front legs. It will attempt to destroy any boats and ships it encounters, and its favorite method is to press down on the gunwale with its short legs, causing the vessel to capsize. It can traverse skerries and shallows with ease and





in this way chase prey up to the very shoreline. It has great gaping jaws so wide apart that there is more than enough space for a boat between them. A mouse whale can swim very fast, causing the sea to foam at its chest.

**Ox-Whale:** This wicked whale receives its name from the terrible bull-like bellowing that it bursts into when hungry, with such violence that the entire area is shaken by the very echo. Any cows hearing this bellowing become very agitated and will eventually dash to the sea in a fit of madness if not prevented, and there be devoured by the ox-whale.

**Shell-Whale:** This toothed whale is covered by a strong armor of multi-colored shell plates. Its flippers are huge, and it has powerful jaws. It strikes by putting its massive body in front of ships in a way that they have no choice but to sail straight into it, then it tosses the ship up in the air and breaks it to smithereens.

**Jumper-Whale:** This wicked whale kills other whales and destroys ships by jumping out of the sea, high up in the air, and crashing down on them. It is grey in color, with a white belly. It has a small fin in the middle of its back. On the front of its head is a bony ridge covered in skin, and when the whale attacks a boat these rip and flake off so the skin flaps in front of its eyes. For that reason, it cannot see well out of the water, but its eyes are unimpaired underwater as the sea washes the ripped skin away from its eyes.

| Characteristics | Average  |       |
|-----------------|----------|-------|
| STR             | 12D6     | 42    |
| CON             | 4D6 + 10 | 24    |
| SIZ             | 16D6     | 56    |
| INT             | 7        | 7     |
| POW             | 3D6 + 2  | 12-13 |
| DEX             | 2D6 + 6  | 13    |

**Move:** 11 swimming



**Hit Points:** 40

**Damage Bonus:** +5D6

**Armor:** 5-point skin and blubber; 12-point shell armor for Shell-Whale

**Fatigue:** 64

| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Ram    | 5  | 50%    | 2D6 + db to ship    |
| Bite   | 5  | 70%    | 3D6 + db (crushing) |

The ramming action may be different for every whale type. See each whale's description for details.

### Powers:

- **Red Mane Disease (Horse-Whale)** — This wicked whale will play with its prey before eating it. If anyone is lucky enough to escape after being tossed around the sea surface, and before being eaten, there is a 35% chance that open wounds on the victim may have come into contact with the whale's red mane, which is full of dangerous bacteria. Infected wounds inflict 1D4+1 hit points of damage per day, until healed with a successful Medicine skill roll.
- **Leg Press (Mouse-Whale)** — The mouse-whale will try to capsize boats by pressing on the gunwale with its legs. The only hope to prevent this from happening is for the crew to attack the legs of the whale and cause at least 6 hit points of damage to both legs within one combat round, before the whale can capsize the ship.
- **Ship Swallow (Mouse-Whale)** — This wicked whale has such an enormous mouth that it can attempt to bring a ship inside its mouth and then crush it with its jaw. This attack has 30% chance of succeeding, can be avoided with a Difficult roll of the Pilot Ship skill, and causes 12D6 damage to the ship.
- **Cow Calling (Ox-Whale)** — Any cows hearing the bellowing of the ox-whale get agitated and after 1D4 minutes will run to the sea, where the ox-whale will be waiting in the water, ready to eat any cows that answer its call.
- **Solid Wall (Shell-Whale)** — This wicked whale's favorite form of attack is to put itself in front of a ship so it will sail right into it. At the moment of impact, the whale will try to

toss the ship in the air with great force. The combined damage from this attack is 10D6. In order to avoid the crash, the captain of the ship must make a successful Difficult roll of the Pilot Ship skill.

- **Jumping (Jumper-Whale)** — The jumper's preferred means of attack is to jump high up in the air and come crashing on a ship or on other whales, causing a devastating 18D6 damage.

## Water Serpent

These creatures inhabit several rivers and lakes in mythic Iceland. They all have in common their great size, elongated necks and large jaws.

A water serpent can live for long periods of time at the bottom of lakes, feeding on vegetation and animal carcasses that sink to the bottom. To facilitate swallowing of larger chunks of food, it must uncoil its long neck and extend its head above water.

They represent a great danger to those living near the lakes and rivers it inhabits, as water serpents will attack and eat any man who swims in its waters, and even those who merely approach the edge of the water during the periods in which the serpent is actively hunting for food.

They are capable of stretching themselves onto the riverbanks, and can spew a deadly poisonous gas in great amounts.

Water serpents can travel between lakes through networks of underground tunnels, and have even been reported to attack ships at sea.

| Characteristics |        | Average |
|-----------------|--------|---------|
| STR             | 10D6   | 35      |
| CON             | 4D6    | 14      |
| SIZ             | 6D6+30 | 51      |
| INT             | 3      | 3       |
| POW             | 3D6    | 10-11   |
| DEX             | 3D6+6  | 16-17   |

**Move:** 8 swimming

**Hit Points:** 33

**Damage Bonus:** + 5D6

**Armor:** 6-point scales

**Fatigue:** 48





| Weapon | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Bite   | 2  | 60%    | 1D8 + db (impaling) |

A Water Serpent can attack once per round.

**Skills:** Hide 60%, Swim 70%, Dodge 40% (head and neck only).

### Powers:

- **Poisonous gas:** A water serpent can spew a noxious cloud of poisonous gas (12 POT) from its mouth. This poisonous cloud spreads fast. In the first round it affects anyone within 10 meters from the head of the serpent, and a further 10 meters is added to the range every round up to until 2D6x10 meters. The cloud dissipates after 3D6 rounds, or faster if in windy weather.

#### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01 01     | Tail        | 6/8          |       |
| 02-03     | 02          | RH Paddle    | 6/11  |
| 04-05     | 03          | LH Paddle    | 6/11  |
| 06-08     | 04-09       | Hindbody     | 6/13  |
| 09-11     | 10-15       | Body         | 6/13  |
| 12-13     | 16          | RF Paddle    | 6/11  |
| 14-15     | 17          | LF Paddle    | 6/11  |
| 16-20     | 18-20       | Head/Neck    | 6/11  |

When only the neck and head of the creature are exposed above water, do not roll the above chart.



# A MYTHIC ICELAND SCENARIO

## THE TROUBLE WITH NEIGHBORS



This short introductory adventure contains some of the fundamental elements of the Icelandic Sagas and fairy tales. There is the conflict with neighbors that starts small and soon gets out of hand, there is the need for revenge, a supernatural threat, and friendly hidden people.

The GM should strive to show the players that they have many choices to make throughout the adventure. The characters should feel free to explore their options and to get to know the setting.

One of the player characters must take the part of a victim at the opening of the adventure, and is from now on referred to as the "Victim PC." The choice of which player character to play that part should be made by the GM, ideally choosing a PC with many family members living in his household, as it is the death of one of those family members that is the catalyst that sets things in motion in this adventure.

This story takes place at the southwestern region of the Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellsnes), but can be easily relocated to anywhere else in the country.

### Synopsis

Arriving from an assembly meeting, the PCs discover that a troll has attacked the farmhouse of one of them. Most of the animals have been killed, the farmhouse has been partially destroyed, and inside it they find a dead family member. This troll has never caused problems before, but clearly something must be done. Revenge must be taken.

The PCs travel towards the mountain where it is said the troll has its cave. When camping on a lava field on the way to the mountain, they encounter a wounded boy, barely conscious, pleading for the characters take him to his home. They don't recognize the boy, but take him to the place where he says his father's farm is located. Arriving there they are well received. The boy recovers fast from his wounds and tells them the tale of what he has seen. He says a man has climbed up to the troll's cave in the mountain, and from the entrance of the cave the man shouted that the Victim PC had sent him there to slay the troll. After the PCs leave the house, when looking back, they can no longer see the farm where it stood just moments before. If there were still any doubts, now they are sure that they have just visited a farm of the hidden people.

Arriving at the mountain, they climb up to the flat stone platform where the boy said the troll's cave was located. Just outside the cave, they find a dead body, obviously crushed to death. They recognize the dead man as being one of Skorri Fjörnirsson's slaves. The next surprise is that not only one troll lives here, the cave is inhabited by two trolls. Having heard the PCs arrival, they come out of the cave, hungry for the kill.

After slaying the trolls, the PCs go to Skorri Fjörnirsson's farm intending to take revenge. Skorri, however, is well prepared, and accompanied by several well-armed men. A fierce battle ensues.

Having killed Skorri and his kinsmen, and announced the killings, the PCs find out that Skorri's kinsmen intend to bring the case to Alþing, the National Assembly. There, they need to find someone willing to represent them in court. One





of the potential representatives proposes a dangerous bargain.

## Background

The Victim PC was born and grew up on Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellsnes), where his farm stands today. The same is true of Skorri Fjörnirsson, who lived all his life on a neighboring farm. The Victim PC and Skorri were friends as children, and even though Skorri grew up to be a bully in his teen years, the two had remained on good terms. That was until a few years ago, when a series of quarrels between the two neighbors and their friendship rapidly broke down. At first it was Skorri complaining about the Victim PC's cattle grazing on his land, then one of the Victim PC's slaves was found dead. Things got very heated after that, and the Victim PC made a formal case against Skorri for the killing of his slave at the last spring assembly.

The player characters are all based in this same region, and are close friends. They have attended the spring assembly together. There was no satisfactory conclusion to the case brought at the assembly, and everyone rode home feeling frustrated. In fact, if it weren't for the goði's intervention and mediation, blood would have been spilt at the assembly.

One of the player characters (one other than the Victim PC) decides to invite his friends for a feast at his home — as his home is in such a location that it is the first one they arrive at when traveling back from the spring assembly site. They stay there for a few days, drinking, feasting, and planning the possible legal action at the Alping.

As for Skorri Fjörnirsson, he rode straight back to his farm from the spring assembly. On the way, looking at the mountains at the end of the valley, he had an idea of how he could get rid of his neighbor without raising suspicion. He waited for a few days, to make sure that his neighbor would by now have reached home, then ordered one of his slaves, a young Scottish man, to ride to the mountains. The slave should then climb and find the cave of the troll that is said to live there. Skorri ordered him to throw rocks into the cave and shout

out that the Victim PC had sent him there to slay the troll. As soon as the enraged troll came out of his cave, the slave was to run away, making sure he was not followed, and get back to Snorri's farm.

The slave did as his master order him. On the way to the mountain, he made sure that no one saw him. What he didn't know, however, was that one of the hidden people, a young boy who was out playing near the Sea Fjord River (Haffjarðará), saw him on his horse and out of curiosity decided to follow him. Invisible to human eyes, the boy was never noticed.

The slave, followed by the hidden boy, climbed up the mountain. Just as night fell, they reached a flat platform on the mountainside where a cave entrance could be found. The slave then did as Skorri had instructed him, threw rocks into the cave, teased the troll with insults, and shouted that the Victim PC had sent him here. The slave, who had never seen a troll before and was himself no brave warrior, was paralyzed with fear at the sight as it walked out of his cave. It was huge, about twice as tall as a man, with tough skin, freakishly long arms, and altogether very ugly. The slave turned and ran for his life. Upon reaching the edge of the platform, he hesitated as to how he was going to climb down, and that moment of hesitation cost him his life. The troll crushed his body with one blow of its fist.

The hidden boy, frightened by the fury of the troll, started making his way down the mountainside, all the while hoping that the troll had not seen him. Shaking with fear, he lost his grip and fell down the mountain, hurting himself badly. As he tried to stand up at the base of the mountain, he saw the troll walk past him in the direction of the farms in the valley, and heard it swearing that it was going to kill a man. The troll repeated



SKORRI FJÖRNIRSSON





that man's name over and over again in its terrible grunting voice. Wounded, the boy stumbled through the lava fields, trying to reach his home.

Later that night, at the farmhouse of the Victim PC, a great crashing noise broke the silence of the night. The whole house shook. The beams that bear the weight of the roof cracked and started to give way. As everyone hurried to get out of the turf house, the roof collapsed. One family member did not manage to get out in time and was crush by the falling wooden beams. The troll then attacked one of the slaves who escaped the house, while the other people ran into the night. When that slave came to his senses hours later, the sun was rising and all he could see around him were dead animals and a half-destroyed house. He tried to move, but felt pain everywhere in his body. He was lucky to have survived the night, but all he could do now was to sit by the ruined house and wait for help to arrive.

## After a Feast, a Dream

The adventure begins as the PCs are preparing to depart next morning to the Victim PC's farm, as he wants to thank his friends for their support with a feast of his own, and insists that they all must come.

That night, anyone with the Prophecy skill has the following dream:

"You see a mouse squealing by the side of a big hole on the ground. From the hole rises a great bear, one unlike any you have ever seen. This bear has a strangely shaped head, has almost no fur, and very long arms. The mouse keeps squealing, as if teasing the monstrous bear. Finally, the bear rushes forward, opening its maw in a clear sign of rage. In one mighty move, it crushes the mouse with its paw. The bear is still angry. A fox with golden fur watches these events, unnoticed. After a moment, the bear sees a \_\_\_\_\_ (Victim PC's Animal Fetch) in the distance, and moves toward its direction, preparing for one more kill. You wake up sweaty and with your heart racing."

## A Victim

The next morning, the player characters ride together to the Victim PC's farm, only a few hours away on horseback.

The scene they encounter is one of utter destruction. A large section of the farmhouse lies in ruins, as if smashed from above with great force. A dead cow lies near the house, almost ripped in half. As the PCs dismount from their horses and hurry to the farmhouse, they find a slave sitting against one of its external walls. The slave is wounded, and very frightened — he shouts and cries incoherently about a troll smashing and killing everything in its path.

The worst surprise awaits the PCs inside the house. They enter via a gap in the collapsed wall, or through the front door, which still stands. Inside they see one of the Victim PC's family members (the GM should choose which — a brother, foster-brother, sister, son, etc) underneath the collapsed roof. He or she is dead, having had the lower body crushed by the fallen roof-supporting beams.

After giving the wounded slave some water and first aid, he calms down and can tell what happened. A troll, he says, came in the middle of the night and attacked the house in a mad fury. He







could hear the troll calling the Victim PC's name in his monstrous voice, swearing to kill him.

The PCs have all heard of a troll living on the south side of a mountain range at the end of the valley, called the Mountains of the Light (Ljósufjöll). However, this troll has never caused trouble before.

The remaining slaves and kinsfolk have fled into the night, and must by now have found shelter at a neighbor's farm.

## The Journey to the Troll's Cave

It is very likely that the Victim PC will want to hunt down the troll that left his home in ruins and killed his blood relative. This troll clearly has become a menace to the region, and revenge must be taken. It's handy that a group of brave warriors is already gathered!

The journey to the mountain where the troll lives should take just over a day on horseback. After that, they need a half-day of careful climbing.

On the night after the first day of travel towards the mountain, the PCs set up camp near large lava boulders that give them a measure of protection against the winds. Late into the night, those who make a successful **Listen** skill roll can hear something moving in the darkness, and then a weak voice carried on the wind. They can't see anyone, and the voice seems to come from no specific direction. The group may start to wonder if a ghost is visiting them. Finally, a boy in his early teens can be seen stumbling forward and collapsing to the ground near the PCs camp.

They do not recognize the young man, and conclude he must be from another region of the country. The boy is badly wounded and barely conscious. With much effort, he manages to tell them that his name is Hogni Eilifursson. He begs the characters to take him to his father's farm, located in woodlands not far away. A successful Easy roll of **Knowledge (Regional)** reveals that there is no known farm at that location or any farmer living in this region by the name of Eilifur. The boy falls unconscious after begging them once more to take him to his father's farm.

## The Hidden Farm

The player characters travel in the night for a few hours, towards the woodlands where the boy says his father's farm is located. As they approach that area, they do indeed find a farm standing there. As they dismount from their horses, the front door of the farmhouse opens. A tall and slim man

with flowing golden hair runs outside. He introduces himself as Eilifur, and immediately asks what happened to his son and where they found him. He carries the boy inside the house and invites the PCs to follow him inside.

Ask the PCs to make a Difficult roll of **Spot** skill in order to notice that Eilifur has an unusual facial feature — his nostrils



THE ELF BOY

are joined together. Those who have noticed that feature may attempt a **Knowledge (Myths)** skill roll, to know that this is a mark of the hidden people, and that stories say that it may not be safe to enter their houses.

The house has a simple interior, but is well constructed. Wooden platforms line the two long walls, and a fire burns in the center of the earthen floor. Two small children gather around a beautiful woman. The man introduces them as his wife Eyr, and his daughters Sölva and Gyda.

Ask for another **Spot** skill roll, to notice that, oddly, there are no weapons to be seen inside the house.

Eilifur lays the boy on a bed mounted on top of one wooden platform, and tries to make him comfortable. His wife reaches inside a cabinet, fetches a glass container with a white liquid, and gives the flask to his husband. Eilifur wets a rag with the liquid and puts that on top of the boy's worst wound. Finally, he carefully offers the liquid to the boy to drink. After a few moments, the boy's condition seems to improve and he opens his





eyes. Eilifur explains to his confused son that he was found by the men now standing next to him.

When questioned about what happened, the boy says:

“I saw a man riding towards the mountain where the troll lives. I was curious and decided to follow him. The man climbed the mountainside up to the entrance of the cave, and then he shouted insults and threw rocks inside, all the while saying that he had been sent by [Victim PC’s name] to kill the troll. When the troll came out of the cave roaring with rage, the man tried to flee, but the troll killed him with one single blow. That was when I decided to climb down before the troll could see me. I was frightened, my foot slipped and I lost grip, and then everything went black. The last thing I remember was hearing the troll swearing to kill [Victim PC’s name] and all his family. When I woke up, I tried to walk the best I could, and after a while I heard voices of a group of men, and I knew that they were my only hope to find my father’s farm again. Thank you so much for bringing me to my father. You have saved my life.”

Eilifur thanks the player characters and offers them food. If the PCs ask for something that can help in the battle against the troll, Eilifur explains that they have nothing of use against such a powerful creature, but offers them a vial of the potion he used on the boy, which he says can help them if they get hurt. The flask holds three doses of a magical potion, each dose provides an extra 1D6 hit points healing when used in conjunction with a successful **First Aid** or **Medicine** skill roll.

If at any point the PCs ask if they are hidden people, Eilifur will confirm their suspicion, adding that they live here in Miðgarður, wishing for a peaceful existence.

When the player characters leave the farm and ride towards the mountain, they look back to the farmhouse, and to their surprise it is no longer there. In its place stands only a large rock.

## Meeting the Family

Climbing the mountain is not hard, as the troll has dug footholds on the rock, and can be accomplished with an Easy **Climb** skill roll. Those fail-

ing that check still manage to climb up, but get 1 HP from light wounds acquired during a near-fall while climbing.

It is nighttime when they finally arrive at the stone platform projecting out of the mountain wall. The platform is about 15 meters wide and 10 meters deep. Near the edge of the platform they find the dead body of a man who they recognize as one of Skorri’s slaves. It all becomes clear now. Skorri must have sent his slave here to entice the troll against the Victim PC.

They can see in front of them the entrance to a cave, which is about six meter high. A few moments after they arrive on the platform they hear the heavy footsteps of the troll, coming closer. Not only one troll comes out of the cave entrance, however, but two — a large and strong troll, and his ugly troll-wife!

The trolls are angry and ready for a fight. Use the same stats for both trolls (See **Creatures of Mythic Iceland** chapter).

If the PCs chose to time their arrival at the cave so that they get there during the day, the trolls will not come out of its cave, and the PCs will have to go inside the cave in order to fight them. The trolls will not, under any circumstance, step out of the cave during daytime, as they know that sunlight would turn them into stone.

## To Fight a Neighbor

After defeating the trolls, the PCs will most likely want to take revenge on the troublesome neighbor who is to blame for all of this trouble.

By this time Skorri has heard the news about what happened at the Victim PC’s farm. Knowing that the Victim PC himself was not at the farmhouse at the time of the attack, Skorri is expecting revenge to come knocking. He calls for some of his kinsmen to join him at his farm and be prepared for battle.

Skorri’s farm is of average size. Following the standard Norse design, his farmhouse has walls made of piled stones, and the roof is made of turf supported by wooden beams. This house has one distinctive feature, however — there are window-slits below the beams that bear the roof, and they







are fitted with shutters. No other building exists on the farm apart from this main farmhouse.

Skorri and his kinsmen (numbering one for each player character) have been taking shifts watching the area around the house. As soon as they see the PCs approaching, they run inside the house. Skorri then starts shooting arrows at them from inside, through the window-slits.

The only way to convince Skorri and his men to leave the house and fight them outside is to make a Special or Critical roll of **Persuade**, convincing them that the honorable thing to do is to fight in the open, as men. Challenging Skorri personally to a duel will only be successful with a **Persuade** roll result.

There are large lava rocks scattered around 50 meters from the farmhouse, which the PCs can use for cover. Running or galloping on horseback to the house from those rocks will expose the characters for one combat round, giving Skorri and his men the chance to shoot two arrows each. The PCs may try to parry the arrows using their shields.

If the PCs come up with the idea of burning down the house while the people are inside, the GM should remind them that this is considered to be a very dishonorable thing to do, resulting in loss of **Luck** as well as **Status**, and would almost certainly get them outlawed at the next assembly.

The PCs must get creative in order to find a way to force Skorri and his followers out of the house, or to break in.

They could damage the roof enough to open a hole that would allow them to climb down and jump inside the house. Any character wanting to climb onto the roof needs to make a successful Easy roll of **Climb**. Once on the top of the roof, it is necessary to deal 18 hit points of damage to open a hole large enough for a man to jump down through. While on the roof there is a danger, once per round, that someone inside the house will successfully use a spear through the roof and hit the assailant, but that is only possible with a Special or Critical roll.

Still, the roof can be damaged or destroyed by magic, or by tying ropes to it and pulling it down from the house.

Breaking through the two-meter-thick stone walls would require 40 hit points of damage to a wall section.

Breaking down the door is an option, however it is a risky one. The door leads into a two-meter long corridor between the two wall sections, leading into another door. Each door is only one meter-and-a-half tall, so that anyone entering the house must bow down and thus offer his bare neck as a target to those waiting inside. Furthermore, Skorri is waiting at the back of the house, with his bow in hand, ready to shoot arrows at anyone coming through the door.

Skorri and his followers will fight to the death, while Skorri's wife and his 5-year-old son scream for clemency. The GM should remind players that killing the woman and child would be a very dishonorable act, resulting in loss of **Luck**, as well as **Status** should the act become well-known.

After the battle is over, the PCs must announce the killing to their goði. If that is not done immediately after the battle, they lose **Status**, become fair targets for Skorri's kinsfolk, and will have a much harder time at the assembly courts.

## At the Assembly

Come summer it is time for the PCs to attend the National Assembly, the Alþing, at the Assembly Plains (Þingvellir), along with their goði and the other men from their region. This year's Alþing will be especially important to the PCs, as the extended family of the late Skorri Fjörniðsson will be taking action in the law courts against them. The accused are all the PCs who took part on the attack at Skorri's farm. As the case is complex, involving accusations that are hard to prove, with stories involving hidden people no less, a victory for the characters is far from certain.

The PCs must first find a representative who can defend them at the law courts. Their goði has chosen to remain neutral on this particular case, as both sides belong to his chieftaincy and he does not want to pick sides and risk losing support from either family.

Skorri's family has paid a man named Sigfus Volundursson to represent them. He is well-know





for his knowledge of law and is well respected. His Law skill score is 65%. Don't tell that score to the players, but only that their opponents' representative is a well-regarded expert in law.

A few men who are respected for their knowledge in law have come forward to offer their support as representatives. The PCs' choices of representative are as follows.

**Grimur Kjartasson** (Renowned Expert - Law 80%) — wants lots of money, beyond the PCs' ability to pay. He is willing to cut a deal, however. (See *Plundering the Dead* section below)

**Olafur Jacobsson** (Experienced - Law 60%) — wants armed support in battle from the PCs on a feud with a neighboring goði. This sounds like a bad idea, as the enemy in questions has a great number of followers.

**Snæbjörn Egilsson** (Young but experienced - Law 50%) — wants to marry his son to the sister of the Victim PC, who will not be easily convinced into accepting this arrangement.

Whoever the PCs choose as their representative, he advises them on ways they may influence the outcome of the trial.

See page 48 of the *Law and Government* chapter for the rules on how to judge the outcome of a legal case at the courts.

Below is a list of important people that the PCs may want to delay, threaten, bribe, discredit, remove due to an emergency at their farm, kill, or otherwise creatively affect in some way during each Legal Maneuver Window. The GM should feel free to expand on this list. Each success in a maneuver window affords the PCs' side one Legal Advantage Point. Each action can be suggested to them by their legal representative, by any friend or ally, or they can, of course, come up with something themselves.

**Birna Hjálmuersdóttir** — Skorri's widow. She may be convinced, via a Difficult Persuade roll, or by payment, to confirm to the court that the PCs did not attack the farm in any dishonorable way (like burning the house or attacking unarmed people), provided that's actually what happened. Actually, Skorri's family does not care for her, and never have. She is now afraid that they will take

her son and farm from her, and banish her back to her father's farm. If the PCs promise to protect her and her son from Skorri's kinsmen, she is much more likely to cooperate.

**Kari Frodisson**, The Proud — A judge in this assembly. He is neutral on this case, and may be persuaded to support the PCs if they offer him some interesting proposition or bargain.

**Þorbrandur Kjartansson**, the Unruly — A former friend of Skorri's, but who never liked the man much anyway. He says Skorri told him about his plans regarding getting the troll to kill the Victim PC. He says he is willing to testify to that in court, but only if one of the characters can beat him in a drinking contest. He is a big and strong man, with CON 16, and SIZ 16. (See *Drinking Contest Rules* on page 211)

**Hafsteinn Þrymursson**, the Light-Footed — one of the remaining slaves belonging to Skorri's family. If the PCs find a way to persuade him to aid them, perhaps by buying his freedom from Skorri's family via an intermediary, or maybe if they just threaten him enough, the slave may confirm to the court that he saw Skorri order his fellow slave to ride to the troll's cave in the mountains.

Other judges who are impartial may be bribed to take the PCs' side. It is also possible that the PCs may come up with the idea of fabricating a witness to the enticing of the troll, in place of the hidden boy.

Remind the PCs that killing any of those people during the assembly, or anyone at all, may get them into further trouble if they are found out.

In order to resolve the outcome of the legal case, make an opposed **Law** skill roll for each of the representatives in each phase. Tell the PCs who won the last phase, so that they know which way the trial is going and how much effort they must put into out-of-court maneuvers. To resolve the actions taken by Skorri's family during each of the Legal Maneuver Windows, assume an Idea score of 70%. For each successful Difficult roll of **Idea**, make note of one Legal Advantage Point for Skorri's family. If any of the PCs succeeds on a roll of the **Politics** skill, they may learn about the opposition's maneuvers the next day.





When you add up all the Legal Advantage Points at the end of the trial, and compare the scores to define who own the court case, remember to count all points from each legal phase and add the points from out-of-court maneuvers from each Legal Maneuver Window — for both sides. If the PCs win the case, they are ruled innocent. If they lose, the sentence is lesser outlawry. This sentence may be made harsher if the PCs lost by a large number of Legal Advantage Points.

See the complete rules for legal proceedings on page 59.

## Plundering the Dead

The goði Grimur Kjartasson, who is well-known for his extensive knowledge of the law and experience in court, is willing to represent the PCs on the trial, but he wants to be paid very well, and in silver. When negotiating with the PCs, he suggests a way in which they may be able to find enough silver to pay him. There is a burial mound, Grimur explains, not very far from the site of the assembly, dating back to the settlement days. The man buried there is Gisli Guðmundsson, a wealthy chieftain from Norway who died shortly after arriving in Iceland. It is very likely that treasures have been buried with that man. Grimur wants the PCs to ride to the mound during the night, break in, and bring to him some valuable object of silver or gold — a bracelet, pin, or anything of good value — and the PCs can keep the remaining objects or weapons for themselves. As the old dead chieftain has no living descendant or relative in Iceland, Grimur says, there is no one to accuse them of grave robbing or to take revenge for that act.

What Grimur has failed to tell the PCs is that the dead body of Gisli Guðmundsson has not rested in peace since it was buried, and has turned into a draugur, often attacking animals and people in the region. No one so far has been brave enough to break into the burial mound and destroy Gisli's body. Grimur is not actually so interested in silver as much as wanting to be rid of this undead menace that has caused so much trouble and loss of life in the farms within his chieftaincy.

The PCs can ride to the burial mound in three hours, following Grimur's instructions on how to find it.

After about two hours of work, they can dig into the mound using their hands and weapons, and using shields to shift the dirt. The digging reveals wood planks, and under them a drop of about two meters down into the earth. They will need torches in order to see down into the chamber under the mound, even during the day. Going down into the darkness, they find a wooden door STR 20. Breaking the door or forcing it open, a great stench overwhelms them, and they find a chamber measuring 15m x 10m. Inside that chamber is a ship loaded with treasures. Sitting on the ship, they see a man, bloated and with black skin, covered in ghastly wounds and utterly horrible to look at.

With a terrifying voice from beyond the grave, the draugur of Gisli the Goði says: "Why do you break into my house? You will pay for this!"

The draugur will not listen to anything the PCs have to say. It will immediately attack them unless they turn away and leave the mound at once.

See the stats for a draugur on page 215.

After slaying the draugur, the PCs can find on the boat a treasure of silver objects. The most valuable piece is one large silver armband, which should be suitable to be given as payment to Grimur. They also find smaller silver items, one for each player character in the party, worth 300 ells of vaðmal each.

## Following Up

What happens next depends on the outcome of the trial at Alping.

If the PCs won their court case, they are free to get back to their lives. They may win some good money from the accusers as compensation, and with that money may decide perhaps to buy places on a Viking expedition.

On the other hand, if the PCs lost the legal case they may find themselves forced to leave Iceland, or spend years living as outlaws in the highlands.

Either outcome is full of opportunities for adventure.





## Skorri Fjörnirsson

STR 18 CON 16 SIZ 17 INT 9 POW 11  
DEX 16 APP 10

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 16

**Damage Bonus:** +1D6

**Armor:** 1-point leather armor, 4-point light helmet

Large Round shield protecting left arm, chest and abdomen, when not parrying with shield (1/2 of shield AP of 22).

| Weapon       | SR | Attack | Damage                 |
|--------------|----|--------|------------------------|
| Broad Sword  | 5  | 70%    | 1D8+1+db (bleeding)    |
| Self Bow     | 2  | 60%    | 1D6+1+1/2db (impaling) |
| Round Shield | 6  | 60%    | 1D4+db (knockback)     |

*Skorri can shoot arrows with his Self Bow twice per round, once at SR 2, and then again at SR 7.*

**Skills:** Appraise 45%, Bargain 35%, Brawl 70%, Dodge 65%, Gaming 40%, Grapple 60%, Insight 15%, Jump 50%, Language (Norse) 55%, Listen 60%, Navigate 35%, Pilot (ship) 45%, Ride (type) 50%, Spot 55%, Status 28%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 1/6   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 1/6   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 1/6   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 1/7   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 1/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 1/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 4/6   |

## Skorri's Followers

STR 15 CON 14 SIZ 15 INT 11 POW 11  
DEX 13 APP 12

**Move:** 10

**Hit Points:** 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Armor:** 1-point leather armor, 4-point light helmet

Large Round shield protecting left arm, chest and abdomen, when not parrying with shield (1/2 of shield AP of 22)

| Weapon       | SR | Attack | Damage              |
|--------------|----|--------|---------------------|
| Broad Sword  | 7  | 60%    | 1D8+1+db (bleeding) |
| Long Spear   | 6  | 40%    | 1D6+1+db (impaling) |
| Round Shield | 8  | 50%    | 1D4+db (knockback)  |

**Skills:** Brawl 55%, Dodge 40%, Grapple 35%, Insight 15%, Jump 25%, Listen 40%, Spot 35%, Status 25%.

### Hit Points per Hit Location:

| D20 Melee | D20 Missile | Hit Location | AP/HP |
|-----------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| 01-04     | 01-03       | Right Leg    | 1/5   |
| 05-08     | 04-06       | Left Leg     | 1/5   |
| 09-11     | 07-10       | Abdomen      | 1/5   |
| 12        | 11-15       | Chest        | 1/6   |
| 13-15     | 16-17       | Right Arm    | 1/4   |
| 16-18     | 18-19       | Left Arm     | 1/4   |
| 19-20     | 20          | Head         | 4/5   |





# Cthulhu Dark Ages Iceland



Saga Age Iceland is a great setting for *Cthulhu Dark Ages* stories. It is a far off land, at the edge of the known world, with long and dark winter nights that can chill the soul of even the bravest of warriors.

In this short appendix you will find an exploration of elements from the darkest Icelandic fairy tales, mixed with elements of the Cthulhu Mythos.

The Iceland described in the appendix is a different setting from the Mythic Iceland of the previous chapters of this book. There is much in common, however, and most of the information regarding *Mythic Iceland* remains valid for *Cthulhu Dark Ages* Iceland, and can be used without modification. Other parts of the setting, such as the nature of the elves and some of the historical information, are given a new treatment to best suit the dark Lovecraftian setting of *Cthulhu Dark Ages*. Also, the historical period covered here is broader, starting at the beginning of the Viking age through the end of the 12th century.

## Hyperborea and Tscho Vulpanomi

Three million years ago the civilization of the serpent people came to an end. One of their slave races, a dog-like race of people called *voormis*, became free and colonized what is now Greenland.

The voormis developed a primitive culture and worshipped the god Tsathogghua, the sleep-

er of the dark below, and called him Zoth-Aqqua. They built crude cities among the forests of pre-historic Greenland, and spread across the large island. After a period of war and strife, and as the ice ages came and went, the Voormis civilization in Greenland declined.

Around one million years ago, the first humans arrived in Greenland. They were an offshoot of the *Homo* genus and were as evolved as the *Homo Sapiens* that would appear 900,000 years in the future.

Those humans built the great civilization of Hyperborea in Greenland and surrounding islands, while the Voormis culture continued to decay, becoming fewer in number and more savage. The Voormis withdrew to the high peaks of the mountains, and were almost forgotten by the Hyperboreans.

The Hyperborean civilization grew to be the greatest upon the Earth. The two great cities of Commorion and Uzuldaroum were places of high culture. Great wizards, such as Eibon, the greatest wizard of this time, lived in those and in other cities. They worshipped many gods, mainly Yhoun-deh, the elk-goddess.

An outpost was established in a land the hyperboreans called Tscho Vulpanomi. Scholars and wizards of the time had great interest in the many active volcanos there, which belched rivers of flame over the land. Among those who visited that land grew a cult to the fire god Cthugha. The outpost was later abandoned. The Cthugha cult, however, lived on.

Eventually, the cold returned and a new ice age began. The advancing glaciers started to cover



the central plateau of Hyperborea, and the people were forced to flee their doomed cities. Many hyperboreans and the surviving tribes of voormis fled to North America. Smaller groups fled to Tscho Vulpanomi, the land that would come to be called Iceland by the Norse thousands of years in the future.



## Elves

The hyperboreans tried to establish new settlements on the coastal areas of Iceland, where one of their outposts had once stood. It soon became clear to them that the cold of the ice age was too fierce for them to survive in the open countryside. To make matters worse, they discovered that groups of voormis had also migrated to Iceland and had taken to hunting down anything they could eat, including humans.

As their numbers dwindled, the religious fervor of the hyperboreans became stronger. The Cthugha priests found hot springs on this volcanic island, and considered them sacred places and proof that their fire god could provide them with heat from the bowels of the earth. With control of the hot springs, the Cthugha cult influence grew and their faith spread among those still faithful to other gods.

However, the hot springs alone were not enough to protect the hyperboreans from the bitter cold, and their numbers kept falling. In desperation, the Cthugha priests offered human sacrifices to their god, throwing people into active volcanoes. In return, they received magic that allowed them to open doors through the very stone of the fiery mountains. Inside the volcanoes they found vast networks of heated chambers and tunnels carved by ancient lava flows. From then on the hyperborean would live inside those mountains, and only venture out for hunting and fishing.

At times when it was necessary to face the cold outside, the priests used magic to cover the bodies of hyperborean men and women with volcanic rock that protects them from the cold winds. That rock skin allowed them to blend in with the surrounding lava fields to such a degree

that, when standing still among the lava boulders, they became practically invisible.

They have lived this way for thousands of years. Even with the end of the ice age and the coming of warmer summers to Iceland, the hyperboreans continued to live inside the mountains and volcanoes, where they felt closer to their fire god, and where they were safe from attacks from the descendants of the voormis.

When the Norse settlers arrived, the hyperboreans did not care for mixing with them. The Norse had steel weapons, much stronger and deadlier than the stone knives and spears of the hyperboreans. They also numbered in the tens of thousands, while the hyperboreans remained only a few hundred. The hyperboreans feared that any direct conflict between the two groups would end up with them being wiped out.

Still, there was limited contact with the Norse settlers. Mostly, they approached outlaws and offered them the chance to join their communities inside the mountains where they could be safe, and in that way they also hoped to grow the worship of Cthugha.

Over the decades following the Norse settlement, the Icelanders noticed strangers who would mysteriously disappear, or who seemed to vanish into rocks. They came to associate this with their own myths of elves, who are supposed to live in rocky hills and mounds. These stories spread, and the Norse began to believe that there were, in Iceland, a great number of elves who live inside the rocks and mountains. These are, in fact, the hyperboreans.

## Appearance

The hyperboreans are short and slender, have light blond hair and gray eyes. They do not have a division between their nostrils, a fact that can be noticed with a successful **Spot Hidden** skill roll. They have their own language, and a few have learned some Norse language.





## Elves (Hyperborean Humans)

| Char. | Rolls | Averages |
|-------|-------|----------|
| STR   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| CON   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| SIZ   | 2D4+4 | 9        |
| INT   | 2D6+8 | 15       |
| POW   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| DEX   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| EDU   | 3D6+2 | 12-13    |
| APP   | 3D6+3 | 13-14    |

**Move** 8

**Hit Points** 10

**Damage Bonus:** None

**Weapons:** Stone knife 30%, damage 1D4+db  
Spear 30%, damage 1D8+db

**Armor:** None

**Spells:** Many Hyperboreans know the spell Enter Mountain (see below).

Priests and wizards know Rock Skin (see below) and 1D10 additional spells.

**Sanity Loss:** Seeing an elf causes no sanity loss.

## Rock Skin

**Range:** Touch    **Duration:** 1 hour for every 2 MP

**Cost:** variable    **Sanity:** 0    **Resistance Table:** No

The caster must first find warm volcanic rocks, which must be just below the temperature at which they would burn skin. This spell allows the rocks to be magically attached to a person's skin, covering the person's body completely. The rocks are magically kept warm for the duration of the spell, and after that time the whole rock skin hardens and the person inside is trapped and cannot move. Anyone who knows this spell can use it to remove the rock skin from another person.

The rock skin will keep the individual comfortably warm at even sub-zero temperatures. When in a lava field or rocky outcrop, the person under the effect of this spell becomes very difficult to be spotted, requiring a successful check of half of the observer's **Spot Hidden** skill.

As the rock is brittle and easily breakable, the whole of the rock skin crumbles after taking 4 hit points of damage.

## Enter Mountain

**Range:** Touch    **Duration:** 3 combat rounds

**Cost:** 5 MP    **Sanity:** 0    **Resistance Table:** No

The caster causes a section of a rock wall to become liquid, but the rock stays in a suspended state, and does not change shape unless pushed by a physical body. A person walking into the rock can pass right through it, as if going through a wall of water, and can pass into any tunnel or chamber behind it. To an observer, it seems as if the caster had become insubstantial and vanished into the rock. The hyperboreans use this spell to gain entrance to the heated chambers inside volcanoes, and underground tunnels, where they live.

## Trolls

The ugly humanoid beasts that the Icelanders call trolls are in fact descendants of the Voormis, the dog-like race of people who inhabited Greenland millions of years ago, before the arrival of the humans. The Voormis were hunted down and nearly exterminated by the human hyperborean civilization, but survived in frozen caves in the high mountains.

With the arrival of the great ice age, they too fled Greenland, and some came to Iceland. Finding conflict with the hyperborean humans once again, they took to living in caves in the mountains of the central highlands.

Over the thousands of years in Iceland, they have become bigger than their Voormis ancestors.

They mainly worship a god they call Zoth-Aqqua, born from the bowels of the earth. Zoth-Aqqua, in fact another name for ancient Tsathoggu, lies in a secret cave in the bowels of Mount Voormithadreth, an extinct volcano in the central Greenlandic plateau.

Among the trolls there is also a cult to Aphom-Zhah, the cold-flame god.





## Trolls (Voormis descendants)

| Char. | Rolls | Averages |
|-------|-------|----------|
| STR   | 4D6+6 | 20       |
| CON   | 4D6+8 | 22       |
| SIZ   | 4D6+6 | 20       |
| INT   | 1D6+4 | 7-8      |
| POW   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| DEX   | 3D6   | 10-11    |
| APP   | 1D6   | 3-4      |

**Move** 10

**HP** 20

**Damage Bonus:** +1D6

**Weapons:** Bite 45%, damage 1D4+db  
Claws 50% damage 1D8+db.

**Armor:** 2-point thick skin.

**Spells:** Troll priests have 1D6 spells.

**Sanity Loss:** 0/1D6.



## Post-1000 AD SORCERERS

The sorcerers of Dark Ages Iceland use magic based on a mix of traditions, combining ancient texts, pagan rituals, magical bind-runes and staves, and the black magic used in other parts of Europe.

Interestingly, most sorcerers in Iceland in the years following the conversion in 1000 AD are Christian priests. They have access to learning and to books from overseas, and have plenty of time to spend in translating and studying ancient tomes.

There is a firm belief that if you learn enough about the ways of the Devil, it no longer has power over you. Within that point of view, the clergymen are fully justified to study the dark arts as a way of defeating the Devil in its many forms.

### Skálholt and Hólar

The only centers of learning in Iceland are the two cathedral seats of Skálholt in the South, and Hólar in the north of the country, founded in 1056 and

1106 respectively. Many young men come to these important centers of religion and education in order to study and become Christian priests.

Skálholt and Hólar have the only sizable libraries in Medieval Iceland. After the founding of these religious schools, the chieftains and priests from all over the country sent to them books and scriptures they found, some so old as to be written in unrecognizable runes. Among the books, a few are mythos tomes and books of magic.

Located at such a great distance from Rome, and in a society still deeply rooted in ancient pagan beliefs, Skálholt and Hólar secretly became centers for the study of the occult and the dark magical arts.

### Black School

Sæmundur the Wise is a great sorcerer, and also a priest of the Christian faith. In his youth he spent many years abroad, and while travelling in those foreign lands he studied at a secret place of learning called the Black School. Sæmundur believed that the mysterious man teaching there was the Devil himself, but he never actually saw the man, as all the time he spent there was in darkness. He spent three years at the school, learning much about esoteric knowledge, the dark arts of magic, and the ancient gods of forgotten eons.

There were other students at the school as well, from many parts of the world. It had become known to them that the mysterious teacher would snatch the last student to leave the place, and consume his soul. On the last day of class, Sæmundur put a cunning plan in motion. He threw a big black cloak over his shoulder, but did not do up the buttons. When he had climbed the stairs and was almost out of the underground dungeon that was the classroom, the shadowy teacher tried to grab him, but Sæmundur threw off the cloak and ran up the stairs. Just as he arrived at the heavy iron door at the surface, he felt his teacher right behind him, so he used a magic spell to turn his shadow substantial and to detach it from his body. The mysterious teacher grabbed the shadow and Sæmundur managed to escape. He was quite insane from then on, however, and never got his shadow back.





When Sæmundur finally returned to Iceland from his years at the Black School, he took a position of priest in Wrong River Fields (Rangárvellir) in the south of Iceland. Through the years, many heard of his wondrous skill with magic. One after another, priests from all over the country came to Sæmundur asking him to teach them some magic. Finally, Sæmundur decided to establish his own Black School, where he would teach all the secrets he had learned from the Devil.

The mysterious teacher of the original Black School was in fact Nyarlathotep, planting the seeds of chaos through perverting the minds of priests and other influential people with mind-shattering blasphemous knowledge. Far from being tricked, the dark god got exactly what it wanted, that Sæmundur and the others spread his teachings in their own lands. Even though they may think they are using Devil-given magic in the name of goodness and Christ, their warped minds follow the designs of Nyarlathotep, especially in the case of Sæmundur who remains connected to the Crawling Chaos via his shadow that it still possesses.

### Joining Sæmundur's Black School

The location of Sæmundur's Black School is beneath a lava rock formation known as the Black Castles (Dimmuborgir), in the north of the country. In the underground caverns below, Sæmundur teaches his students, most of them young clergymen, all manner of dark knowledge and magic.

Sæmundur only takes students who come to him of their own accord, only those he can trust, and whom he believes have strong enough minds to handle his teachings. There is no fixed term of class, or a strict schedule, but classes usually take place during the summer. When Sæmundur wants to teach, the students receive his call in their dreams.

The existence of this Black School is a close-guarded secret, and the students are warned that they will pay with their lives if they ever tell anyone about it, or allow someone to follow them to the caves.

## Loki Cults

The Norse god Loki, one of the many forms of Nyarlathotep, is not openly worshipped in Viking Age Iceland. However, there are those who secretly offer sacrifices to the god of chaos, destruction, treason, and murder.

Because of the need for secrecy, Loki worshippers organize themselves in regional cults that meet at secret times for their dark rituals. The meetings are always in caves, far from any well travelled paths.

The dedication of Loki's worshippers is fueled by their god frequently coming to them in dreams and visions, sometimes instructing them to accomplish devious acts, other times offering magical knowledge, and always tempting them with the promise of power and blasphemous pleasures of the flesh.

While the gods Þór, Óðinn and Freyr rarely demand human sacrifices, and are understood to be pleased with the traditional sacrifice of an ox, Loki demands human blood. The victims are usually chosen among vagrants and slaves, so as to not arouse suspicion among the local population. In the darkest rituals, when many victims are gruesomely beaten and sacrificed, Loki himself may grace his followers with his presence, coming out of the shadows of the bottomless caves.

The conversion to Christianity in 1000 AD had little effect in these cults, which go on worshipping Loki for centuries after.

## Volcano Cults

There are at least two volcano cults active in Viking Age Iceland and in the centuries after the conversion.

### The Bringers of Fire

This cult has its origins in ancient Hyperboria. They worship the Great Old One named Cthugha. Their rituals are always performed at the top of volcanos, their holy places connected to this god of fire. Active volcanos are especially sacred to them, seen as glimpses into the fiery world of Cthugha.





Whenever there is a volcanic eruption, which happens every few years in Iceland, they make offerings to their god by throwing human victims into the mouth of the volcano, in an attempt to summon Cthugha and its full terrible glory.

Membership of the cult is divided into ranks. Low-ranking members don't know the identity of the cult leaders, who always appear in rituals wearing masks made from wood darkened by fire. Some say that there are elves among the top ranks of this cult.

## Cult of Ghatanothoa

This small but dangerous cult was founded by clergymen from Skálholt cathedral, who were driven mad by reading the tome *Greyskin* and performing the detailed rituals described. The cult aims to set free Ghatanothoa, a Great Old One trapped beneath the volcano Yaddith-Gho on the lost continent of Mu. They believe that if they can cause all volcanoes in the world to erupt, their god will burst free and start a new and glorious age.

## Insanity

Insane characters in a *Cthulhu Dark Ages* campaign set in Iceland have very few options of treatment. There are no insane asylums, healing men or shamans.

Any normal person who starts displaying strange and unusual behavior is believed to be under the effect of some sort of a magical curse. People close to an insane man will most likely search for someone to blame, and take revenge on. Only then will magical healing be sought.

There are spells and rune staves that can help an insane man recover his wits, but knowledge of these is very rare.

## Finding the Mythos in Other Lands

Icelanders exploring the lands to the west can run into many unknown and dangerous creatures and cults.

The settlers in Greenland, still exploring their new country, often encounter great stones with un-

known carvings and ancient and mysterious artifacts. It is only a matter of time until they encounter caves leading into tunnels connecting to the ruins of the hyperborean cities under the glaciers, and the terrible secrets kept there.

In Wineland, entire tribes of skrælingar regularly sacrifice to Ithaqua. The priests of that Great Old One are powerful and dangerous madmen who are completely immune to the cold arctic temperatures.

## Mythic Iceland Creatures and Sanity Loss

Some of the creatures described in the chapter *Creatures of Mythic Iceland* cause loss of sanity to any *Cthulhu Dark Ages* character seeing them.

Draugur - 1D3 / 1D6 SAN

Jötunn - 1/1D8 SAN

Shell Monster - 2/1D6 SAN

Ocean Mist (Kraken) - 1D6/1D20 SAN

Seal Mother - 0/1D4 SAN

Wicked Wales - 1D4/1D8

Water Serpent - 1D4/1D10

## Greenland and Wineland creatures

Bear-Wolf - 0/1D4 SAN

Thunderbird - 1D6/1D10 SAN

Bakaak - 1D3/1D6 SAN

Uktena - 1/1D4 SAN

Wendigo - 1D4/1D8 SAN

Adlet - 1/1D4 SAN

## New Mythos Tomes

### Redskin (Rauðskinna)

Compiled by Bishop Gottstalk the Cruel, the greatest Icelandic sorcerer of his day. It is a compilation





of fragments of several magic treatises from heathen times, a few of which contain knowledge dating back to the Hyperborean era. The book is written in golden letters and magnificently illuminated. It contains several spells as well as many powerful bind-runes and staves created by runemasters in Iceland and by powerful shamans from Finnmark.

**Current Location:** This book lies buried alongside the body of bishop Gottstalk the Cruel, at Hólar. After the death of the bishop there were attempts to burn the book, but it refused to be damaged by the flames. It was then buried along with the dead bishop so that it would not cause harm to anyone else.

**Language:** Norse (both runes and latin characters).

**Spells:** Contact Formless Spawn of Tsathoggua, Contact Cthulhu, Contact Ghatanothoa, Contact Yog-Sothoth, Create Gate, Deflect Harm, Levitate, Send Dreams, Voorish Sign, Wither Limb, Shadow Servant, Wake the Dead, Create Tilberi, Create Tree-Man, Necropants, Invisibility, Love spell, Cause Fear, Calm Mind, Dark Strength, Dream Gate, Death Rune, Prison of Sleep, and any other spell the keeper chooses.

**Sanity loss:** 1D8/2D8 SAN; Cthulhu Mythos +16 percentiles; average 48 weeks to study and comprehend.

### Greyskin (Gráskinna)

There was once a reverend who, along with a few students of the Skálholt school, woke up the dead of a whole region of Iceland just to get their hands on a magic book that had been buried along with a sorcerer at an unknown location. They had to deal with a great crowd of the walking dead, until finally the dead sorcerer came to them. They wrestled with him but only managed to get the beginning of his book. From the pages they managed to save they compiled *Greyskin*. This volume describes the worship of Ghatanothoa on the lost continent of Mu, and includes the description of many spells and rituals of volcano worship aimed at waking this Great Old One.

**Current location:** At the secret section of Skálholt library.

**Spells:** Contact Ghatanothoa, Deflect Harm, Levitate, Send Dreams, Shadow Servant, Wake the Dead, Create Tilberi, Necropants, Dark Strength, Prison of Sleep.

**Sanity loss:** 1D4/2D4 SAN; Cthulhu Mythos +8; average 24 weeks to study and comprehend.

### Silverskin (Silfurskinna)

A great volume, bound in the silver skin of some unknown creature. It is said to have been written by the elves. Legend says it was recovered from a madman who said he had spent years living among the elves but was now fleeing because of a crime he committed against those magical beings. The man brought this book to Skálholt, begging in exchange to be protected by the bishop. He was allowed to stay on the church grounds and work as a servant, but he caused much trouble as his mind was truly gone, so he was thrown out of the church and was never seen again. Only small sections of this book have been translated by students at Skálholt.

**Current location:** At the secret section of Skálholt library.

**Spells:** Call/Dismiss Cthugha, Cause Blindness, Cloud Memory, Dream Vision, Enter Mountain, Look to the Future, Summon/Bind Fire Vampire, Rock Skin.

**Sanity loss:** 1D4/1D8 SAN; Cthulhu Mythos +12; average 52 weeks to study and comprehend.

## New Spells

All spells listed here are from the few Icelandic magic grimoires that have survived to modern times, or based on Icelandic fairy-tales.

### Shadow Servant

**Range:** Self      **Duration:** Until next sunrise  
**Cost:** 8 MP      **Sanity:** 1D4      **Resistance Table:** No





TILBERI

The sorcerer can detach his own shadow from himself and have it perform any deeds that a normal man is capable of. The shadow is two-dimensional and so it is able to pass through even the smallest cracks or under doors. It cannot speak. If the shadow cannot return to its owner before the next sunrise, it is gone forever and the owner no longer has a shadow.

## Flying Steed

**Range:** Touch **Duration:** Ten minutes per Magic Point

**Cost:** Variable **Sanity:** 1D3 **Resistance Table:** Yes

This spell allows the caster to enchant a bridle so that when it is put on a person it grants the power of flight. It is possible then for the caster to ride on the back of that person, and to fly long distances at great speed. The target cannot move his body or speak, but is conscious for the duration of the spell.

## Wake the Dead

**Range:** Touch **Duration:** Until the body decomposes  
**Cost:** 12 MP **Sanity:** 1D6 **Resistance Table:** No

There are many tales in Iceland of up-walkers, dead men wakened by sorcerers, put to work stealing any treasure from farms, killing anyone who stand in their way. This spell raises the body of a dead person and puts it under the command of the sorcerer. The method required to raise a corpse and have it obey any orders is not for the faint of heart. The sorcerer must first dig up a body that has been dead for no longer than seven days, then he or she must lick the whole corpse, from head to toe, occasionally pausing to intone calls to Loki for help.

The animated corpse has no memory of its previous life, and will obey any simple order from the sorcerer. It speaks only by grunting.

## Up-Walker (Uppvaknfngr)

| Char. | Rolls | Averages |
|-------|-------|----------|
| STR   | 3D6+6 | 16-17    |
| CON   | 3D6+6 | 16-17    |
| SIZ   | 2D6+6 | 13       |
| INT   | 6     | 6        |
| POW   | 1     | 1        |
| DEX   | 3D6   | 10-11    |

**Move** 6

**Hit Points** 15

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Weapon:** Bite 30%, damage 1D4  
Fist 50%, 1D3+db

**Armor:** Impales do only 1 point of damage; other attack results do half of rolled damage, round up any fractions.

**Skills:** Ride 50%, Sneak 70%, Climb 40%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1D8 Sanity points to see an up-walker, 1D4/1D10 if the undead person was known in life.

## Create Tilberi

**Range:** Touch **Duration:** Permanent

**Cost:** 8 MP **Sanity:** 1D6 **Resistance Table:** No





A tilberi is a small creature that can only be created by women, usually for stealing milk from neighbors. In order to make a tilberi, a woman must go to a graveyard on a night of the full moon, and steal a rib from a freshly buried dead body. The rib then must be wrapped in grey wool and be preserved between the woman's breasts for three weeks. Every seven days, the woman must spit mead or wine on the bundle between her breasts, and intone the magical words. Wine or mead that has been consecrated in a Christian church or pagan temple works best. At the end of the three weeks the tilberi comes alive, and cannot be kept between the breasts any longer. The woman must now draw blood from her thigh using a knife, which creates a teat. From then on the tilberi will hang from her thigh and suck blood whenever it is at home.

The creature has two small and ugly heads at each end of the bundle, and is capable of speaking. It can be ordered to steal milk from farm animals. Once full, it returns home and can be ordered to vomit the day's loot, that then can be drunk by the sorceress or churned into butter.

A tilberi is a versatile creature, and can also be ordered to steal wool and small objects.

### Tilberi

| Char. | Rolls | Averages |
|-------|-------|----------|
| STR   | 2D6   | 7        |
| CON   | 3D6   | 10       |
| SIZ   | 1D4+1 | 3-4      |
| INT   | 2D6+3 | 10       |
| POW   | 2D6   | 7        |
| DEX   | 3D6+4 | 14-15    |

**Move** 8

**Hit Points** 7

**Damage Bonus:** -1D4

**Weapon:** the creature's saliva has a numbing effect so that the victim does not feel the sucking.

**Armor:** 1-point wool

**Skills:** Hide 80%, Sneak 70%, Dodge 60%, Speak Norse 20%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1D6 Sanity points to see a tilberi.

### Create Tree-Man

**Range:** Touch    **Duration:** Permanent

**Cost:** 13 MP    **Sanity:** 1D4    **Resistance Table:** No

This spell allows the sorcerer to create a man out of driftwood. He is very strong, and able to seek out and attack the sorcerer's enemies. The ritual is long and complex, and requires that all driftwood be of the same kind and in good condition. The sorcerer must succeed in a **Craft (Wood)** skill check in order to correctly construct the wooden body. Lastly, it is necessary to put inside its chest cavity a man's heart that is still warm and beating.

The wooden man can be given simple tasks, and is not well suited for any gentle or fine jobs. It cannot speak or act of its own accord. When sent out to kill someone, it will use its immense strength to punch its target to death. If reduced to zero hit points its wooden parts will sink into the earth and disappear forever.



TREE-MAN





## Tree-Man

| Char. | Rolls | Averages |
|-------|-------|----------|
| STR   | 6D6+4 | 25       |
| CON   | 3D6+6 | 16-17    |
| SIZ   | 2D6+6 | 12       |
| INT   | 8     | 8        |
| POW   | 1     | 1        |
| DEX   | 3D6+3 | 13-14    |

Move 9

Hit Points 15

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapon: Fist 65%, 1D3+db

Armor: None

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 30%.

Sanity Loss: 1/1D4 Sanity points to see a Treeman.

## Necropants

Range: Touch Duration: Permanent

Cost: 11 MP Sanity: 1D6 Resistance Table: No

This spell is a rather complex way of making money. The sorcerer must strike a deal with someone while he is still alive, to use his body for this spell after he dies of natural causes. Once that person is dead, the sorcerer must dig up this body and carefully skin it from the waist down. Then it is required to steal a coin from the man's widow and carve on the coin the necessary magic symbols. With all these components in hand, the sorcerer must put the coin in the scrotum, and step into the dead man's leg skin, as if they were a pair of pants. The skin will fuse of the sorcerer's own and may never be removed. Every seventh day, the sorcerer may reach down into the necropants' scrotum and find new coins that magically appear there.

## Invisibility

Range: Self Duration: 1 hour

Cost: 15 MP Sanity: 1 Resistance Table: No

The sorcerer can use this spell to become invisible to men or women. Animals and supernatural

creatures are not affected. The main ingredient of this spell is the head of a black cat, that must be burned to ashes. The ash is then sprinkled over the head and nose of the sorcerer, while he recites magical poetry asking for Þór to fog the eyes of those people around him. If the sorcerer uses violence on anyone, the spell is broken and he becomes visible.

## Magic Staves

These are incantations which were once simple bind-runes but have changed over time, both in shape and in power, until they each became glyphs of unique power. It is no longer possible to discern the runes that once were combined to produce the original bind-rune.

Magic staves work just like spells, but they always require the sorcerer to carve or draw the design in order for the magical power to take effect. Just as with spells, they must be learned through careful study. Simply copying a stave you found carved somewhere is not enough to unlock the magical power contained in the shape.

## Love spell

Range: Line of Sight Duration: Immediate

Cost: 5 MP Sanity: 2 Resistance Table: Yes



If the sorcerer desires the affection of a woman, he can carve this stave on her bedpost and besmear it with his blood and let no one sit there before her so he is the first to approach her.

The girl makes a POW vs. POW opposed roll. If the roll is failed, she falls in love with the sorcerer.

## Cause Fear

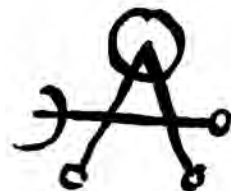
Range: Line of Sight Duration: 1D4 rounds

Cost: 7 MP Sanity: 2 Resistance Table: Yes





If the sorcerer wishes to make an enemy fear him, he may carve this stave on lead with his eating knife and carry it under his left arm.



The victim must succeed on a POW vs. POW opposed roll, or is frozen with fear for 1D4 rounds. Only effective once, against the first enemy the sorcerer meets.

## Calm Mind

**Range:** Touch **Duration:** Immediate

**Cost:** 13 MP **Sanity:** 1 **Resistance Table:** Yes



To soothe anger or another person's episode of madness, this stave should be written in blood and put under the person's tongue.

On a successful POW vs. POW opposed roll, it calms down anyone suffering any temporary insanity effects.

## Dark Strength



**Range:** Self **Duration:** 2D6 rounds

**Cost:** 6 MP **Sanity:** 2 **Resistance Table:** No

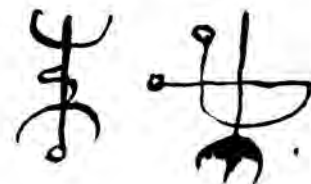
A sorcerer carves this stave on his shoes with human bone, and says: *I send the Dark One himself into his breast and bone that wrestles with me in your names, Þór and Óðinn.* The sorcerer receives a bonus of +4 to STR.

## Dream Gate

**Range:** N/A **Duration:** One night

**Cost:** 8 MP **Sanity:** 2 **Resistance Table:** No

Carve the staves on silver with steel, when the sun is at its highest. If the staves are put under a person's head while they sleep, the world of dreams will be opened to them. The dreamer can be someone else than the sorcerer.

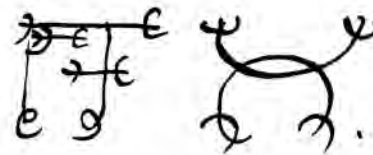


There is a chance equal to POWx4 that the target of this stave will travel into the Dreamlands during sleep, and remember the experience the next day.

## Farmer's Despair

**Range:** N/A **Duration:** 1D3 days

**Cost:** 8 MP **Sanity:** 3 **Resistance Table:** No



Carve these staves on a man's land on an oak branch with steel, and any four-legged animal that walks over it will die. Also can be used in a doorway, even if covered with earth.

Does not affect mythos creatures.

## Prison of Sleep

**Range:** N/A **Duration:** Until removed

**Cost:** 7 MP **Sanity:** 2 **Resistance Table:** No



If the sorcerer wants to put a man to sleep, he can carve these staves on oak and put the stave under the target's head. He will not wake up until the staves are taken away.



# Cthulhu Dark Ages Scenario



This is a short, non-linear adventure, set in South Iceland around the year 980 AD, in the time before the conversion to Christianity. The many acts can be completed in any order, but they appear here in the most likely order of events.

## Synopsis

The PCs arrive for a feast at the farm of Halldór Ísleifsson, the chieftain (goði) of the Swamp Valley (Mýrdalur) region. They enjoy themselves, eat heartily, and drink ale until late into the night. In the next morning, Halldór is found dead, completely drained of blood.

Investigations reveal that three other men have recently been found dead, in similar circumstances. People of the region suggest that the killer could be Randveir, a vagrant who was accused of kidnapping the chieftain's daughter and who was killed as a result. Randveir could have come back from the grave to avenge his death. It is pointed out that this should not be possible, as his head was cut off prior to burial. Every night, one more man dies, again drained of blood.

Further investigation reveals that Randveir's body is missing from his grave, and that all the men who have died were part of the attack on Randveir in his cave.

Visiting the cave, the characters find a barrel. Inside they find the abhorrent form of the half-living body of Randveir, which attacks them.

When they confront Ingibjörg, the chieftain's daughter, about their findings in the cave, the girl attacks them in a fit of rage and the PCs are forced to kill her. They discover a nipple on her thigh, which is recognized by the locals as a tilberi-feeding nipple. There is confusion, as tilberi should not be able to suck blood from people, but only milk from farm animals.

Berglind Halfarsdóttir, Ingibjörg's mother, orders the body of the girl to be put inside the temple building alongside the body of Halldór. She sends for a temple priest, who should arrive in a few days, to consecrate the bodies before they can be buried. No one is allowed to stay in the temple with the bodies during that wait.

The morning after Ingibjörg's killing, the PCs find a large hole in one of the walls of the temple. The bodies of Ingibjörg and Halldór are gone. There is suspicion that the two could have come back to life as disease-ridden undead known as draugur.

The truth is that a perverted type of tilberi has completely consumed the bodies of the girl and her father during the night, and has grown monstrous in size. From now on, it will kill and eat the body of one person every night, growing in size and power each time. The PCs must track the creature down and destroy it before it eats every single man and woman in the region.

If the PCs fail to stop Ingibjörg's plan to resurrect her dead lover Randveir, he will come back to life as the powerful high priest of the Cult of Loki, bent on forcibly converting all people of Iceland to his unholy cult.





## Background

One day, when Ingibjörg Halldórsdóttir was up in the mountains herding sheep, she met Randveir Greycloak, a vagrant who lived in a cave up on the side of Island's Hill (Eyjarhóll). People in the region shunned Randveir, as vagrants are not considered to be part of society, and it is even legal to kill them without penalty.

Ingibjörg was curious about Randveir, and approached him. She found him to be a bright and kind man, and took a liking to him. After that first meeting, she used any excuse to go up to the mountains for a chance to meet Randveir. This went on for the whole of the summer and fall.

The winter came early that year, and one day when Ingibjörg was out on the mountain she found that it was no longer possible to make her way back to her father's farm. Randveir insisted she stay in his cave. The bad weather lasted for many months. During that winter, Randveir and Ingibjörg's relationship grew closer, and they became lovers.

Ingibjörg's parents were very concerned with the disappearance of their daughter. A search party was assembled to look for her, but the bad weather didn't allow them to go far up onto the mountains. As the long winter continued, they had to face the fact that a young girl by herself could not survive out there, and that she must have died of exposure.

When spring finally arrived, and the snow on the mountains melted, the animals were once again let out to pasture on the slopes. One day, a shepherd boy named Þóroddur saw a woman on the hills. Thinking it might be one of the elves; he hid and watched silently, as the woman walked past his hiding place. He then recognized her as Ingibjörg, the lost daughter of Halldór the chieftain. She was not walking down to her father's farm, however, but rather was going up the mountainside, carrying a bucket of water. The boy followed her and saw that she came to a cave. At the entrance a man in a grey cloak warmly greeted her, and they went inside. The boy ran back home and told his parents what he had seen. The father of the boy promptly informed Halldór that his daughter was in fact alive, and living in a cave with the grey-cloaked vagrant Randveir.

Shocked and infuriated, Halldór declared to his followers that the girl must be under an evil spell cast by that despicable man, who must certainly be a sorcerer. He rounded up all the men he could find on short notice, telling them to bring their weapons. The group of seven armed men went up the mountain, with the boy showing them the way.

In the cave, they found Ingibjörg alone. Her father confronted her and demanded that she leave and come home with him immediately. When she refused, her father told the assembled men that her refusal was further proof that she must be under some sort of evil sorcery. At that moment, Randveir Greycloak arrived, carrying two dead foxes that he was going to skin for their pelts. Halldór and his men immediately attacked Randveir, accusing him of bewitching his daughter. Unarmed, the vagrant could do nothing against the many sharp blades.

Watching her beloved meet such a gruesome end, Ingibjörg went into shock. The men wrecked the interior of the cave, breaking anything they could find. Before they left, taking Ingibjörg with them, Halldór cut off Randveir's head. The men took the body to be buried, but left the severed head at the end of a spear, standing at the entrance of the cave, as a warning to any other vagrants or evil sorcerers.

For a week after that, Ingibjörg did not speak. She seemed to be barely conscious of people around her, and ate sparingly. Hearing her father time and time again blame her dead lover for bringing shame upon her, and calling Randveir a Loki worshipper, Ingibjörg decided to become a true Loki worshipper herself. She



HALLDÓR





hoped that the god of chaos would grant her the means to get her revenge on the men who killed her lover.

Nyarlahotep took notice of the girl's desperate prayers and came to her in dreams, masked as Loki. The dark god, answering her prayers, told her that it was possible to bring her beloved back to the land of the living. Randveir's soul, he explained, had not gone to Valhalla, but was in Niflheimur, the kingdom of the dead, which is ruled by his daughter, the goddess Hel. Loki then taught her the spell to bring Randveir back to life. Along with the correct incantations, she was to place Randveir's remains in a barrel, and fill that barrel with blood from the seven men who killed him. Furthermore, Loki provided her with a spell to create just the tool she needed in order to collect the blood.

The next day, she snuck out of her father's farmhouse, recovered the body of Randveir and took it back to the cave. There, she emptied a barrel that had been used for food storage, and put the body and head inside. Before leaving the cave, she took a rib-bone from Randveir's body, and teeth from the dead foxes that Randveir had brought home the day he was killed. On the way back to the farmhouse, she collected wool from black sheep.

As instructed by Loki, she wrapped the rib-bone in black wool, then placed the fangs of the foxes at both ends, and kept the bundle between her breasts for three full weeks. Every seven days, she took mead from her father's temple and spit it onto the budding creature. At the end of the three weeks she had created a perverted type of tilberi (see Create Tilberi spell, page 248), this one a blood-sucking tilberi.

In the days after, three of the men in the region were found dead, one each day, completely drained of blood.

## Timeline

Below is a timeline of events, as they would happen if the player characters do not interfere.

Unless stopped, day after day, Ingibjörg sends her blood-sucking tilberi to kill each of the men who took part in the killing of Randveir Greycloak.



Finally, when blood of all seven has been collected, Ingibjörg can complete the ritual to bring her dead lover back to life, with dire consequences to the people of Swamp Valley.

### Four Months Ago

Ingibjörg Halldórsdóttir meets the vagrant Randveir Greycloak. Bad weather forces her to take refuge in his cave. They fall in love.

### Six Weeks Ago

Randveir is killed by a group of seven men, including the chieftain Halldór Ísleifsson, Ingibjörg's father.

### Five Weeks Ago

Ingibjörg has a dream, sent to her by Loki (Nyarlahotep), showing how to bring Randveir back to life.







Ingibjörg begins the ritual to create the blood-sucking tilberi. She also collects Randveir's remains and puts them in a barrel at his cave.

## Two Days Ago

Ingibjörg's blood-sucking tilberi matures. She sends the creature out to kill its first victim. It kills Flosi Helgasson, a local farmer, drains his blood, and spits it all in the barrel where Randveir's remains are stored.

## Yesterday

The second victim, Svartur Sigurdsson, is found dead.

## Day One — Scenario Starts

In the morning, the third victim, Gnúpur Hauksson, is found dead in the field next to his farmhouse.

The player characters arrive at Halldór's farm for a feast.

## Day Two

The chieftain Halldór Ísleifsson is found dead in the morning. He is the fourth victim of the blood-sucking tilberi.

By now, people have realized that the men being killed are those who attacked Randveir six weeks ago. Rumors spread that the vagrant must have risen from his grave and is taking his revenge.

## Day Three

The fifth victim, Geir Ketilsson, is found dead.

## Day Four

The sixth victim, Hrappur Sigfusson, is found dead.

## Day Five

The seventh victim, Gisli Frodisson, is found dead.

With blood of the seven killers filling the barrel where Randveir's remains are resting, Ingingjörg can complete the spell. Randveir comes back to life, tainted by Loki.

## Day Six

Randveir Blackcloak confronts the player characters and the people from neighboring farms. He gives them two choices: to join him in the Loki cult, or be killed.

## Day Seven

The temple priest arrives to give the dead their funeral rites.

## Act 1: A Feast

It is the beginning of Single Month (Einmánuður), when the winter ice and snow are mostly gone, and the long nights are getting shorter.

The player characters are going to a feast at the house of a chieftain in the region of Swamp Valley (Mýrdalur), in South Iceland. They could be followers of this chieftain, family members, or simply friends and allies. There is no special occasion being celebrated; this is just one of the periodic feasts held by Halldór Ísleifsson in order to maintain his high status in the region.

When the PCs arrive they are very well received, and are invited to join the other guests in the farmhouse. About twenty people are assembled there, seating around a long table and on benches by the walls. There is plenty of good meat and ale on the table.

There is a cheerful atmosphere, with many laughs, jokes, and people reciting poetry. With a successful **Psychology** skill roll, however, the PCs notice that some of the guests seem nervous and a few could be described as acting paranoid. If any of the guests are asked the reason for their unease, the PCs are told that a few good men have died in recent days. They refuse to elaborate on the matter. If Halldór is asked, he will not speak of the matter during the feast and will react angri-





ly if pressed. Berglind and Ingibjörg are also unwilling to speak of the deaths as they don't want to anger Halldór. To talk about tragedy during a feast, they say, brings bad luck.

Make sure to introduce the characters to the host family. Halldór, the chieftain, is a large and powerful man who welcomes the characters with open arms and drinks alongside them, asking them for news about their farms and about the important people in the region where they live. The chieftain's wife, Berglind Halfarsdóttir, appears to be the perfect wife, kind of heart and of fair features. Berglind brings a seemingly endless supply of ale to fill the PCs' drinking horns through the night. The couple has a teenage daughter, Ingibjörg, who is helping her mother serve the guests. It is important to display the girl in a good light during the feast; she is shy but friendly and kind.

If any of the player characters boasts about his drinking ability, Halldór challenges him to a drinking contest (see rules on page 211).

## Act 2: A Murder

The morning after the feast, the player characters are sleeping on the wooden benches in the hall of the farmhouse, having drunk large amounts of ale the night before. They are woken by a piercing scream of terror from a woman.

Looking around they see Berglind, the chieftain's wife, at the far end of the farmhouse, struggling to stay on her feet, grabbing at one of the wooden poles in order to steady herself while looking at something in horror. When the PCs approach, they see Halldór lying before her, looking as pale as new-fallen snow. His eyes are open and unmoving, his face frozen in an expression of utter horror, and his lips are blue. He is dead.

Examination of Halldór's body indicates that it has been drained of blood. Strange bite marks can be found on his chest. Around the bite marks are small pools of dried blood.

The other guests gather around the dead chieftain's body, and there is much speculation about what could have caused the man's death.

The dead body is moved to the small temple building near the farmhouse, and put on a long flat stone altar facing a statue of the god Þór. Berglind, his wife, tells the PCs that she is sending for a temple priest from a neighboring region to come perform the rites before the body is buried in a mound. As Halldór was the temple priest for this region, there is now no one to perform the rites for him. The priest should arrive in five days. No one is allowed inside the temple during this wait.

Berglind inherits the chieftaincy, but as defined by the Icelandic code of laws, a woman cannot act as a chieftain and must choose a man to act in her place. She will delay that decision until after her husband has been buried.

Since the feast is over and there clearly is something dangerous out there, the assembled guests leave Halldór's farm later in the day to go check on their own farms. They will be back for Halldór's funeral rites whenever the priest arrives.

The truth behind this killing is that Ingibjörg waited until everyone had fallen asleep, then she ordered her blood-sucking tilberi to kill her father. The tilberi bit him while he slept. Halldór did wake up, but was paralyzed and could do nothing but watch in horror as the creature drained his blood. The girl then let the tilberi out via the front door, ordering it to go to the cave in the mountain and spit out her father's blood inside the barrel where the half-living remains of Randveir are being kept.

## Act 3: Investigation

There are many lines of investigation the player characters can follow, and there is much they can learn by talking to the assembled guests and to the other people in the region.

Below is a list of the main clues they can uncover.





## Victims' Link

All the men who have died so far, including Halldór, were part of the attack against the vagrant Randveir Greycloak a few weeks back. Any one of the people in the region can tell them the story about Ingibjörg having disappeared during the winter, how she was found at Randveir's cave, her refusal to go back home with her father, and the killing of Randveir. If the PCs mention to anyone the realization of the connection linking all the victims, they will hear theories that the wicked Loki-worshipper vagrant must have come back to life as a draugur, an unquiet dead — but then, his head had been cut off before being buried, so that shouldn't be possible according to legend.

## Talking to Ingibjörg

She pretends to be in shock and to be very distressed by the death of her father. A successful **Psychology** roll from the PCs suggests that she is hiding something. If pressed on the matter, all she says is that the men who are dying should not have killed her beloved Randveir, and that in having done so they have themselves become luckless. Everyone knows that luckless men soon find the end of their lives. She denies being involved in any way with the deaths.

## Randveir's Grave

It may occur to the investigators to check the grave of Randveir Greycloak. His burial mound is at the foot of the hill where the cave he used to live in is located. They will find the grave to be empty, as it was recently excavated by Ingibjörg. It is not possible for the PCs to tell whether it was dug from the outside, or if the body dug its way out from inside the mound.

## Enemies

Halldór was involved in a feud with a neighboring chieftain called Ólafur Þórbjórnsón. Both parties involved in the feud have killed slaves belonging to the other, and it is possible, though far fetched,

that the recent deaths are actually an escalation of this feud. This is a red herring.

## Bite Marks

With a successful **Natural World** roll, the bite marks on Halldór's chest and on the bodies of the other victims can be identified as belonging to a fox. If the character scores a roll lower than half of his **Natural World** skill, he realizes that the teeth seem oddly positioned, but still they definitely match those of a fox. There are two bite marks to be found on each victim's body, as the blood-sucking tilberi has two heads, one on each end of its cylindrical body, and is able to suck blood with both mouths.

## Tracking

Whatever or whoever attacked Halldór at night, came into the house and left without being noticed, while the drunk men and the tired women slept. With a successful **Track** skill roll, a character can tell that some sort of creature, roughly the size of a small dog or a cat, dragged itself along the room and through the front door. It is not possible to tell if the track is coming into the house or going out, or both. No one is able to guess what kind of creature may have made the track. From outside the door of the farmhouse the track continues in the direction of the mountains and hills inland, but a lava field makes it impossible to follow the track any further. If the PCs visit the houses of the other dead men, they find similar track marks.

## Act 4:

## Randveir's Cave

Sooner or later, the player characters will realize that there is a connection between the recent killings and the death of Randveir Greycloak. At that point they will probably want to visit the cave where the mysterious vagrant used to live.

Anyone living in the region can point the PCs towards the hill where Randveir Greycloak used to





live in isolation. His cave is halfway up Island's Hill (Eyjarhóll), a 200-meters-tall hill strangely shaped like a pyramid. There is a path leading to the cave, which requires no real climbing.

The interior of the cave bears signs of someone having lived there for many years. There are cooking utensils, clothing, and personal items scattered across the small cave. Signs of destruction and struggle are everywhere. Clearly, there was a fight here recently, and someone attempted to wreck the interior of the cave. Everything that could be broken and ruined lies in pieces.

At the back of the cave stands a wooden barrel, of the type commonly used for storing food. It bears marks of axe blows, but it seems to have withstood attempts to destroy it. Some repairs have been made to the barrel recently, and a spiraling line of runes has been carved on its sides. A successful **Occult** roll reveals that the runes are related to rebirth and to Hel, the ruler of Niflheimur, the kingdom of the dead (0/1D3 SAN loss). The barrel has a wooden lid sitting on its top, with a hole in it, and a rock on top of the lid.

Inside the barrel are the half-living remains of Randveir Greycloak, being brought back to life by his lover Ingibjörg by means of a magic spell taught to her by the god Loki in a dream. Randveir's remains lie partially submerged in blood. Every day, since the day of the first killing, the blood-sucking tilberi comes to the cave and spits liters of blood into the barrel. On the seventh day from the first killing, when the barrel is filled with blood from all seven victims, Randveir's body will be fully restored to a new, unholy life.

If the PCs remove the rock and the lid from the barrel, the blasphemous form of the half-living hermit inside the barrel will immediately attack them. It is a mass of flesh and bones and oozing blood. Its one unblinking red eye stares at the player characters as it rises up from the barrel. Its twisted limbs extend outwards as it lunges forward with a gurgling unnatural scream of pain, rage, and insanity.



## Thing in the Barrel (Half-Living Randveir)

| Characteristics | Value |
|-----------------|-------|
| STR             | 12    |
| CON             | 08    |
| SIZ             | 10    |
| INT             | 10    |
| POW             | 11    |
| DEX             | 14    |

**Move** 7 crawling/jumping

**HP** 9

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapon:** Claw 65%, damage 1D6

**Armor:** 0

**Spells:** None

**Sanity Loss:** 1D6/1D10 Sanity points

**Skills:** Jump 50%, Climb 20%.

If at any point the PCs tell Ingibjörg that they plan to visit Randveir's cave, or that they have already done so and have destroyed his half-living form, the girl will go mad with rage and try to kill them. See the next act below.

## Act 5: Confronting Ingibjörg

The player characters are likely to confront Ingibjörg at some point, most likely after finding the half-living abomination in the barrel at Randveir's cave.

Ingibjörg denies any accusations, and reminds them that it is dishonorable to raise such accusations against a woman without proof. It would be an utterly shameful act to attack or wound a woman. They may even be hunted down and killed for doing so, she says.

If Ingibjörg learns that Randveir's half-living form has been destroyed by the characters, she will succumb to a fit of murderous rage, and will attack the closest PC with a knife that she keeps hidden under her apron. She fights to the death.

If somehow restrained, she will start speaking in a strange language,





her eyes rolling back. At this point, any NPC standing near her will recognize the signs of some evil sorcery being cast, and will attempt to kill her before she can finish it. If still she survives, she will wait until she can escape and then do everything in her power to hunt down and kill all the player characters one by one, with or without the help of her tilberi.

Whenever this confrontation takes place, the tilberi will not be with Ingibjörg, and she will have to fight alone. The creature is on its way to the next victim's farm.

If Ingibjörg is killed, a successful **Spot Hidden** roll by anyone looking at her dead body means that the nipple on her thigh is noticed. Old people from the region promptly tell the PCs that this is a clear sign of a tilberi having been created, and they can explain the nature of the creature (see page 249). They will say, however, that such creatures only steal milk from farm animals, and never kill people or suck blood.

Remember that if the PCs kill Ingibjörg without having witnesses that can confirm they acted in self-defense, they may face tough questions from the people in the region. They could even be attacked by men from neighboring farms, or taken to the courts of law at the next assembly on a charge of murder.

Ingibjörg's mother, Berglind, insists that Ingibjörg's body be placed in the temple, by the side of her father's body. This is done no matter what accusations are made against the girl. Berglind says that when the priest arrives he will choose how her daughter's body should be buried or disposed of. No one is allowed inside the temple until the priest's arrival in a few days' time.

## Act 6: From Blood-Sucking to Corpse-Eating

The blood-sucking tilberi can smell its creator from a long distance. It will come for her in the night, as it always does. Catching the trail of her scent leading to the temple, the tilberi digs under the walls in order to get inside.

Once inside the temple, and realizing that its mother is dead, the blood-sucking tilberi no longer has a purpose and goes insane.

Hunger and madness drive the creature to eat the corpses of both Ingibjörg and her father Halldór. Its powerful jaws can break even bone. In the early morning, having completely consumed the two bodies, and having grown massively in size, it makes its way out by knocking a large hole through one of the temple walls.

When the PCs wake up next morning, they notice the big hole in the temple wall. Debris lies scattered outside, indicating that it was knocked-out from inside. Both bodies are gone. The people of the region swear, without a doubt, that the bodies of Ingibjörg and Halldór must have come back to an unnatural life. The draugur, the unquiet dead they say, can be very strong and could have done that damage to the wall.

A successful **Spot Hidden** roll reveals a hole on the ground right next to one of the walls on the outside. There is a corresponding hole outside the temple building. With a successful roll of **Natural World**, a player character can tell that it looks like the type of holes dug by foxes.

## Act 7: The Hunt is On

After the corpse-eating tilberi has consumed the body of its creator and her father, it will attack and eat one victim per day. It may attack anyone in the region, at any time of the day or night, whenever it finds someone alone. This menace must be stopped.

If the PCs attempt to track the creature from the farm of one of its victims, a successful roll of **Track** with a penalty of -25% due to the unusual nature of the track marks is necessary. The track leads to the ruins of an abandoned farmhouse not too far away. Any of the neighboring farmers can inform the PCs that this farm was abandoned many years ago, after a landslide turned the land there into sandy desert incapable of sustaining livestock. There is a 50% chance that they find the corpse-





eating tilberi inside the ruins. Even if the creature is not there, the multitude of tracks near the house indicate that this place is its lair. A successful **Idea** roll means they realize they can hide here and wait for the monster to come back.

Another possible plan the PCs may come up with involves setting a trap for the creature. One of the PCs would be alone, perhaps doing some farm work to keep up appearances, while the others hide nearby. There is a 40% chance during every 24-hour period that the corpse-eating tilberi will fall for the trap and attack the character that is seemingly alone.

If the PCs fail to locate the creature, it will kill and eat the bodies of all men, women, and children in the region, getting bigger and stronger with each victim it consumes. Then it will come for the PCs. Even if they travel away from this region it can track them and find them by their scent.

## What if Ingibjörg is Not Stopped?

If the player characters never stop Ingibjörg's plan to use the blood-sucking tilberi to collect enough blood to complete the resurrection spell, then Randveir comes back to life.

However, the Randveir that rises from the dead is not the same man he was before. He is now forever tainted by Loki, and is a channel for chaos and wickedness to spread over the land. He knows many spells, given to him by Loki, the god he now feverishly worships.

Ingibjörg loves Randveir no matter what. She is blinded to any of his faults, and to his new dark nature after coming back to life. She sticks by her lover's side even as he plans to forcibly convert all the population of Iceland to the cult of Loki.

That same night when the spell is completed, and Randveir comes back to life, he will use his unholy powers to raise the dead bodies of the men who had killed him, calling them to his side. He will then visit the farm where the PCs are staying, taking with him Ingibjörg and his undead army. He now calls himself Randveir

Blackcloak, as his old grey cloak has become dark with the stains of his blood. Randveir announces to the people on the farm that they have only two choices: to join him and bow to Loki, or to die. If they refuse to follow Randveir and join the cult, he summons a huge blood-red hellish dragon (a Shantak) and attacks the farm with all the power he's got.

## NPCs

### Halldór Ísleifsson, 45, chieftain (goði) and fourth victim

STR 18 CON 15 SIZ 16 INT 14 POW 10  
DEX 13 APP 09 EDU 11 SAN 60 HP 16

**Damage Bonus:** +1D6

**Weapons:** Long Sword 70%, damage 1D8+db  
Large Shield 60%.

**Skills:** Dodge 50%, Insight 40%, Natural World 60%, Own Kingdom 50%, Ride Horses 65%, Status 70%.

A big and burly man, with black hair and a well-groomed beard. He is usually a warm and friendly person, but quick to anger. Can be stubborn and reckless at times.

Halldór's grandfather was a chieftain in Norway who immigrated to Iceland with the first wave of settlers, right when king Haraldur Fairhair started his wars seeking to unify the country. The family settled in South Iceland and became powerful and influential.

As a young man, Halldór went on many successful Viking expeditions, on a ship supplied by his father. The spoils he brought from raids helped him achieve the status to take over his father's chieftaincy of the Swamp Valley region.

Even though he never had the son he hoped for, Halldór loves his daughter and is very protective of her.

### Berglind Halfarsdóttir, age 38, Wife and Mother

STR 09 CON 09 SIZ 12 INT 16 POW 16  
DEX 12 APP 17 EDU 13 SAN 65 HP 11





**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Knife 25%, damage 1D6.

**Skills:** Brew Ale 68%, Dodge 24%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 70%, Listen 50%, Natural World 70%, Occult 40%, Own Kingdom 40%, Ride Horses 20%, Spot Hidden 50%, Sneak 30%.

A beautiful woman, with long and straight golden hair, and striking blue eyes. She is kind and patient.

Berglind was born into a poor family that owned only a small farm of little value. After her father saved the life of the local chieftain in a battle, she was given the opportunity to marry the chieftain's son, who was soon to become chieftain himself. She married Halldór Ísleifsson at age 19. The marriage has, for most part, been a happy one, even though she knows Halldór is frustrated with the fact that she has not given him a son.

She loves her daughter Ingibjörg Halldórsdóttir very much and will protect her even if it is proven that she has caused harm to other people.

### **Ingibjörg Halldórsdóttir, age 16, Loki worshipper and sorcerer**

STR 10 CON 08 SIZ 09 INT 14 POW 10  
DEX 13 APP 10 EDU 12 SAN 15 HP 09

**Damage Bonus:** +0

**Weapons:** Knife 25%, damage 1D6.

**Skills:** Dodge 26%, Fast Talk 60%, Insight 40%, Listen 50%, Natural World 30%, Occult 25%, Own Kingdom 20%, Ride Horses 40%, Spot Hidden 50%, Sneak 60%.

**Spells:** Create Blood-Sucking Tilberi.

A small and slender girl, with long curly black hair. She didn't inherit her mother's beauty or her father's size, but instead got her mother's kindness and her father's stubbornness.

The only daughter of the local chieftain, Ingibjörg had a happy childhood and never had to go hungry or work hard on the family farm. The vagrant Randveir Greycloak was her first love.

When this scenario starts, Ingibjörg has lost most of her sanity to the recent brutal events, and has become a worshipper of Loki. She will stop at nothing to bring her dead lover back to life.

### **Randveir Greycloak, age 30, vagrant and hermit**

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 12  
DEX 10 APP 14 EDU 09 SAN 55 HP 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Weapons:** Axe 35%, damage 1D6.

**Skills:** Bargain 30%, Conceal 30%, Dodge 40%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 50%, Natural World 50%, Ride Horses 20%, Sneak 70%, Spot Hidden 50%.

A man of well built stature, with brown hair and green eyes. Although he has known hardship in his life, he still shows kindness to others even if he gets none in return.

Randveir's mother died when giving birth to him. His father, a wealthy farmer, was killed during a duel when Randveir was only 17 years of age. The winner of the duel, a long-time rival of his father, got to keep the farm and all property belonging to Randveir's father, as per duel rules.

Randveir had no siblings and no other family willing to take him, so he was forced into living life as a vagrant, traveling from farm to farm, begging for food in exchange for whatever work there was to be done. Life was not only hard but also dangerous, as vagrants have no protection of the law, and can be killed by anyone with impunity.

Finally, a few years ago, while travelling through Swamp Valley in South Iceland, Randveir found a cave on Island's Hill (Eyjarhóll). People from the region stayed away from that place, as they believed that the hill, strangely shaped like a pyramid, was the home of elves. Randveir made the cave his home, living off the fish from a nearby river. He left the farmers alone, and they did likewise.

Even though he was believed to be a Loki worshipper, he was never a man of strong religious convictions. When times were particularly hard and he went hungry, he prayed to Freyr for better times.

### **Randveir Blackcloak, age 30, high-priest of Loki**

STR 14 CON 12 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 16  
DEX 10 APP 14 EDU 09 SAN 0 HP 12

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4





**Weapons:** Axe 35%, damage 1D6.

**Skills:** Bargain 30%, Conceal 30%, Dodge 40%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 50%, Natural World 50%, Ride Horses 20%, Sneak 70%, Spot Hidden 50%.

**Spells:** Contact Loki/Nyarlathotep, Create Draugur (Zombie), Death's Breath, Enthrall, Fear, Flesh Ward, Shield, Shrivelling, Summon/Bind Dragon (Shantak), Winds of Desolation.

If Ingibjörg is allowed to complete the ritual to bring Randveir back to life, her dead lover rises as a changed man. He now calls himself Randveir Blackcloak — after the fact that his old grey cloak is now blackened with his dried blood from when he was killed.

Coming back from the dead has changed not only Randveir's personality but also his appearance in subtle but unsettling ways. His jet-black eyes are the first sign of obvious change, they seem to pierce your very soul. Whereas the old Randveir was a kind man, Randveir Blackcloak is arrogant and overbearing.

The dark ritual of rebirth has warped Randveir's soul, driving him utterly insane, and forever tainting him with the mark of Loki. He comes back to life as a mad and fanatical follower of the dark god of chaos, and knowing many spells sent to him by Loki/Nyarlathotep.

He plans to create a Loki cult that will one day take over the whole of Iceland, then beyond. Ingibjörg is the first convert to his cult, but she will not be the last.

### Blood-Sucking Tilberi

| Characteristics | Value |
|-----------------|-------|
| STR             | 9     |
| CON             | 10    |
| SIZ             | 4     |
| INT             | 9     |
| POW             | 7     |
| DEX             | 15    |

**Move** 8

**HP** 7

**Damage Bonus:** -1D4

**Weapon:** Bite 60%, damage 1D4 hit points  
Spit 50%, paralyzes victim for 1D4 rounds.

*It can attack twice in a round, once with each head on each end of its body*

**Armor:** 1-point wool

**Skills:** Hide 80%, Sneak 70%, Dodge 60%, Dig 60%, Speak Norse 20%, Fast Talk 40%, Jump 50%.

**Sanity Loss:** 1/1D6+1 Sanity points.

A blood-sucking tilberi is a perverted version of the tilberi of legend (see page 249), which is capable of stealing people's blood instead of milk from farm animals. This variation of the creature has, on both heads, fangs that once belonged to foxes.

The saliva of a blood-sucking tilberi can paralyze a target for 1D4 rounds when spat from a distance. The creature is able to spit at targets from as far as five meters away.

The blood-sucking tilberi can suck a victim dry of blood in ten combat rounds when using both its mouths; its belly expanding to store all of its harvest. While the tilberi is attached to the body, the victim is paralyzed. If the tilberi is detached from the victim before it has sucked the victim's blood for four rounds, the victim regains the use of its limbs after 1D4 rounds. A loss of blood greater than four rounds (40% of total blood volume) means that the victim is dead.

If the victim is sleeping when attacked, the person will wake up but be in a paralyzed state, unable to do anything but watch the creature sucking his or her blood to the last drop.

Since the tilberi can speak, it can try to lure people away but mimicking the voice of a child screaming for help.

### Corpse-Eating Tilberi

(after eating its first two victims)

| Characteristics | Value |
|-----------------|-------|
| STR             | 17    |
| CON             | 16    |
| SIZ             | 12    |
| INT             | 9     |
| POW             | 9     |
| DEX             | 15    |

**Move** 12

**HP** 14

**Damage Bonus:** +1D4

**Weapon:** Bite 60%, damage 1D8+db hit points; Spit 60%, paralyzes victim for 1D6 rounds; Roll-over 50%, damage db x2





*It can attack twice in a round, once with each head on each end of its body*

**Armor:** 1-point wool

**Skills:** Hide 80%, Sneak 70%, Dodge 60%, Dig 60%,  
Speak Norse 20%, Fast Talk 40%, Jump 50%

**Sanity Loss:** 1D4/1D10 Sanity points

The blood-sucking tilberi turns into corpse-eating tilberi after it is driven insane by the death of its creator.

With each victim that the corpse-eating tilberi eats, the creature grows bigger and stronger, gaining +2 points in STR and SIZ, and +1 hit points.

When in combat, the corpse-eating tilberi will try to first paralyze its adversaries by spitting

at them. Once paralyzed, the creature then eats them alive, while the victims are conscious but unable to move.

A corpse-eating tilberi can completely consume a person's body, flesh and bones, in ten combat rounds. If a paralyzed victim recovers the use of his muscles while it being eaten, he can try to break free from the jaws of the monster with an opposed STR vs STR roll. That roll can only be attempted once. Flesh that has been eaten away cannot be healed.

While the corpse-eating tilberi is consuming a victim with one of its heads, it is still able to fight with its second head.



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