

A close-up of a woman's face with red hair, wearing a holly wreath with red berries and green leaves. She is looking upwards with a tearful expression. The background is a snowy landscape with a Christmas tree and falling snow.

LAMENTATIONS
of the
FLAME PRINCESS
ADVENTURES

MIDWINTER

KELVIN GREEN

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of the
FLAME PRINCESS
ADVENTURES

MIDVINTER

Or, A Long Night in the War on Christmas
by Kelvin Green



Printed for the first time in English for James Edward Raggi IV and to be sold at his emporium in Helsinki, Finland, at the Winter Solstice, 2019.

(Sorry, Swedish people, for getting everything wrong about your fine country.)

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WHAT THIS ADVENTURE IS ABOUT

It's about €20. Ho ho ho.

The basic idea of Midvinter is that a secret pagan doomsday cult is trying to lure the characters into a ritual, just like *The Wicker Man*.

The twist is that what the cult wants, what it really, really wants, is to die.

The cult believes that every eighty-seven years on the winter solstice a sacrifice must be made to Odin and the Æsir so that winter will end, and spring will come, and for complex theological bullshit reasons, the sacrifice must be the cult itself. To this end the cult has arranged for a group of adventurers to visit the cult's village just before the solstice, in the hope that the adventurers will go full on 'murderhobo' on the cult and its members, and so complete the sacrifice.

Unless your players are dullards, they should suspect the community of malfesance right from the outset. This is good, this is what we want. If not, there will be plenty of clues pointing towards the cult's not-very-secret activities and intentions. The cultists want to die at a specific time, on the night of the winter solstice, and making sure they expire then and there, and not a moment before will be your challenge.

The joke is that the cultists are delusional and none of what it does has any effect whatsoever on the seasons.

When is Midwinter?

Sweden adopted the Gregorian calendar – the one we use today – in 1753. In 1630, the winter solstice was on the 21st of December according to the Gregorian calendar. According to the Julian calendar, the historical and local calendar of the time, the date would have been the 11th of December.

(Although see AFTERMATH (page 40) for an option if you want them to be right.)

I will describe the cult community and their ritual, then I will explain some of the expected twists and turns in the adventure, and how to respond to them. I will then explore some of the potential outcomes of the adventure and what could happen next, with a look at the cult's global reach. There will be some random tables, because everyone sensible likes a random table.

The adventure is set in the South Swedish Highlands in late December 1630, while King Gustavus Adolphus is off being a superhero in the Holy Roman Empire. The cult's ritual takes place at midwinter – a surprise, I know – so you want the characters to get involved at least a couple of days before that.

You may want to wear a festive hat while running the adventure. And a big white beard. Find a playlist of traditional Swedish Jul songs on Spotify or YouTube and put that on while you play. Anachronistic, yes, but we're going more for mood than strict historical accuracy.

REASONS TO GO UP INTO THE HILLS

The cult wants people just like the characters – dangerous sociopaths eager for money and/or violence – to visit its community, so cult agents have been out and about, disseminating gossip and propagating rumours. Any of these could provide sufficient reason for the characters to get involved, and you may decide to give each player character a different motivation; that's what I did in playtests.

Aside from the disappearance of Edwina Wood, which is 100% a cult stitch-up, there is a 1 in 10 chance that any given reason for investigating the cult is legitimate.

The Disappearance of Edwina Wood.

English travelling merchant Harrison Wood is distraught because his daughter Edwina is missing! They were visiting the village when Edwina disappeared. Harrison is convinced that the villagers know where she is and wants someone to go up the hill and investigate. He is not rich but promises to pay the characters everything he has if they will help him. Harrison is a cult agent and while Edwina is his daughter and she is indeed up the hill with the cult, she is quite safe. If all goes according to plan, both father and daughter will pop up again later.

Nobody expects the Lutheran Inquisition!

The Church has had reports of unorthodox religious activity up in the hills and wants someone to go in and have a nose around. If this is a legitimate request, then the characters will be asked to provide intelligence only; otherwise, the characters will be given special dispensation to deal with any

blasphemous activities uncovered. This may seem odd to some of the characters, but any reservations will be handwaved away by some waffle about “...*Events in the Holy Roman Empire*” and it being important to “...*Keep an eye on rogue elements during this difficult period of spiritual strife.*”

My wife/husband/brother/friend/cat has joined the cult! Please bring them back!

Whether this is an authentic request or not, the missing family member is going to want to stay with the cult – unless they are Geoff (page 29) – which will make for an interesting challenge.

My friend Geoff has gone missing up in the woods!

On the subject of Geoff, he probably has friends who are missing him and will know that he was in the area. The cult is unlikely to use this as bait on its own, but may combine it with the disappearance of Edwina Wood to suggest that the area is a hotspot of dodgy activity.

THE HUNDEN OCH JÄVELN

This small tavern sits at the base of the hills and is an excellent place for characters to pick up these rumours if just passing through. If the characters are coming from further afield, the tavern is the last safe place to stop before heading into the wooded hills. At this time of year there are a handful of regulars drinking brännvin to stave off the cold. These are all grizzled fur-wearing hill folk who claim to have no truck with those awful people up there. Except Björn. Björn is okay.



GETTING TO THE VILLAGE

There are two main ways to the cultist community from the nearest settlement, either following a rough path through the snowy, wooded hills or travelling upriver.

The path can accommodate horses in single file, but is too narrow and bumpy for carts or other vehicles. The village is about 20 miles into the hills so an unencumbered party should manage the hike in just under two days of normal travel, assuming no sightseeing or other distractions.

On the subject of distractions, you should check for encounters twice per day; once during the sunlit hours (a 2 in 6 chance) and once at night (a 4 in 6 chance). At this time of year daylight lasts from about 08:50 am to 14:50 pm. If there is an encounter, roll another 1d6:

1-4: 2d6 WOLVES: *Armour 14, Move 180', 2 Hit Dice, 9hp, bite 1d6, Morale 8*

5: 1d2 BROWN BEARS: *Armour 15, Move 120', 5 Hit Dice 22hp, claw (x2) and 1d4 bite (1d8), Morale 8; if both claws hit, the target is given a special hug – not that kind! – for a further 2d8 damage.*

6: Snow Storm: The storm reduces distance travelled by a third for 1d8 hours, visual distances are halved, and characters not in appropriate cold weather gear must make a saving throw versus Breath Weapon or lose 1d8hp.

If the characters get into trouble while fighting the animals, then Björn will burst out of the forest and scare off the bears by making a lot of whooping and clattering noises. We may see these bears again (see Bear with Björn, page 30) but for now, three cheers for good old Björn!

Björn, big beardy cheerful chappie: *Armour 14 (leather), Move 120', 2nd Level Fighter/3rd Level Specialist, 38hp, spear 1d6 or hand axe 1d6, Morale 12, Constitution 16, Strength 16, Bushcraft 3, Climb 2, Search 3, Stealth 2; can attack three times per Round; saves as a 5th Level Fighter.*

Backpack, hand axe, leather armour, rope, shovel, spear, winter clothing, 16sp.

Björn is jolly and friendly. He smiles almost all the time, does lots of back-slapping, and calls everyone “friend”. He is not a werebear, although if you like, you could go to lengths to suggest it.

Björn is, however, a cultist and will insist on accompanying the characters to the community, particularly if they have been injured.

Rowing upriver will take just over a day and there is no chance of encountering bears or wolves, although storms can of course still occur on a 6. A small jetty marks the point where the river runs closest to the village; there is a 1 in 10 chance during the day that a cultist is there, conducting some minor repairs to the jetty.

THE RUNES

Whatever route the characters take, as they approach the village, they will pass through a rough ring of Norse runes carved into stones and trees. The cult has carved these in order to create a kill zone within which their ritual sacrifice must occur; see The Ritual (page 34).

The same three runes are repeated at each point in the circle: first the rune for Odin, then the rune for death, and then the rune for ice or destruction. A Languages roll at -2 translates them, or -1 if the character is Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish. There are 642 runes in total within the ring.

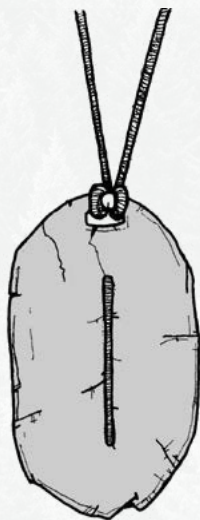
Option: The adventure assumes that the cult is deluded, and all their incantations and rituals are bollocks, but if you decide that they are right and they are the one thing saving everyone from a frozen hell, then the runes will give off a faint magical aura if *Detect Magic* is cast.



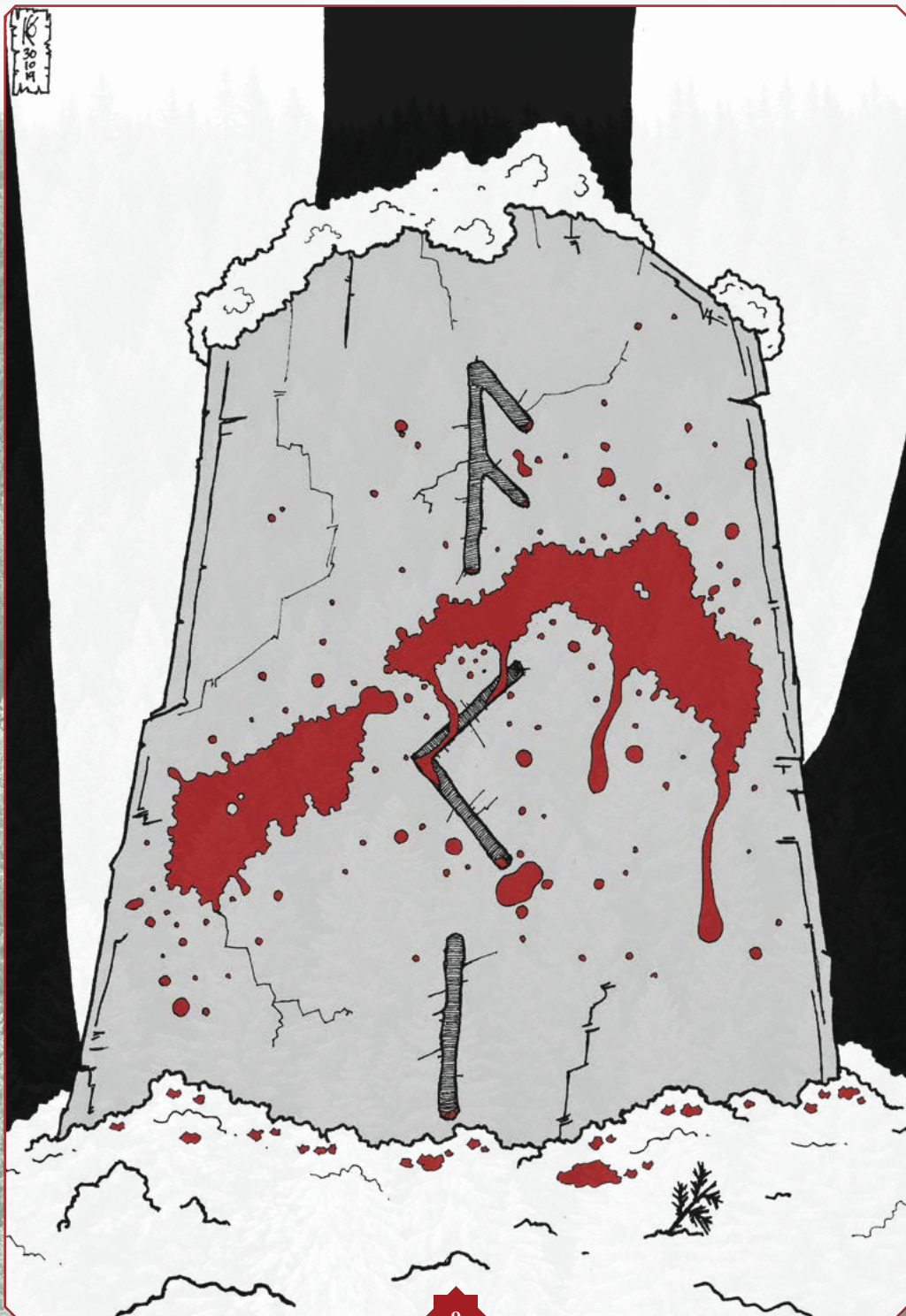
Odin



Death



Ice







HOW THE CULT WORKS

Think of the stereotypical jolly Scandinavian person. Then think of the stereotype of the happy clappy religious type. Combine the two and that's what this lot are like. Most of the cultists in role-playing adventures are sinister and creepy, but these ones are so jolly that the characters will want to punch them. Which is, of course, the point.

This is just one branch of the cult; its job is to die for the cause, but there has to be someone left behind to organise the next sacrifice in eighty-seven years. See AFTERMATH (page 40) for more details on the rump of the cult. Everyone who is currently a member of the cult is dedicated to saving the world from encroaching Fimbulwinter, but it might just be the case that the Left Behind lot are a bit less devout when push comes to stab.

The members of the sacrificial branch are all – well, almost all, see Carl Olafsson (page 18) – devoted to the idea of dying to save the world. Some are attracted to the idea for the nobility of the sacrifice. Some are deranged. Some have been browbeaten. A tiny minority have been drugged or subject to sensory deprivation. Some are descendants of previous generations of cultists, brought up in the creed and certain in their beliefs because the group has been active for a long time and the endless winter has not happened yet, has it? And that is because of the efforts and sacrifice of their ancestors, right?

The cult is overt in talking about its mission, but there are roughly three tiers to this overtness:

1. “We strive to prevent the eternal winter.”

A character does not have to be a Cleric to know that this is not standard Lutheran doctrine, but everyone seems really nice about it.

2. “To prevent eternal winter, sacrifices must be made.” Yep, that is a bit dodgy.

3. “We must sacrifice people to save the world!” And now, we are in Bat Country.

The cultists will move from 1 to 3 depending on whether the characters are getting the hint. Remember, the cultists want the characters to kill them, but only on the solstice.

If asked outright about missing people, like Edwina or Geoff, the villagers will feign confusion and ignorance. “There’s no one missing here!” or that sort of thing. They do not want anyone found too early.

Jens Paulsson (page 20) is the leader of this branch of the cult. He is very excited about the Midwinter celebrations and is eager to welcome the characters into the village!

THE CULT

The majority of the cult members are 0 Level humans, of various woodsy occupations. There are eleven households in the village and the family members are detailed below. For each villager there is an odd event that may occur when the characters interact with them, as well as what the villager says or does if they are killed during the Ritual (page 34).

1. MOTHER, FATHER, THREE GIRLS, ONE BOY.

A couple of hours after the characters enter the village, **Ann Persdotter** brings them a pie. She says that it is the characters' favourite. If pressed on the ingredients Ann says that the flavour will be a 'surprise'. It is a mixed berry pie and is very bitter.

Death: *"I hope you enjoyed the pie."*

Ove Eliasson follows the characters around the village. He maintains a distance but is always there, watching them. If the characters split up, he follows the character with the highest Charisma; roll to break ties, if necessary.

Death: He tries to embrace his killer, which is fun if he is on fire.

Alma (8), Hilda (9), and Lise Ovesdotter (9)

Hilde and Lise are twins. They and Alma are heard singing a cheerful song that mentions the end of the world and includes the characters' names. If asked to repeat the song they will sing it again, but this time with different lyrics and no mention of the characters' names.

Death (Hilde, Lise): when one twin is killed the other drops dead, even if unharmed. If they are together, they embrace as they die.

Death (Alma): She stares at her killer and refuses to look away.

Petter Ovesson (11) tries his best, with what is available in the village, to dress like the character with the most distinctive appearance.

Death: He will try to get killed by the character he is copying.

2. MOTHER, FATHER, TWO BOYS.

Anna Eriksdotter asks the characters all about their families and what they would do if their loved ones were murdered by strangers. She pushes for detail, long beyond what anyone would consider politeness and good taste.

Death: *"You must not blame yourself!"*

Rudolf Hansson is quite chatty and will engage the characters whenever possible, to the extent that Jens may take him aside to tell him to back off. He is fond of innuendo and will say things like, *"This year's celebration is going to be a killer!"* or *"You look like death!"*

Death: *"I told you so!"*

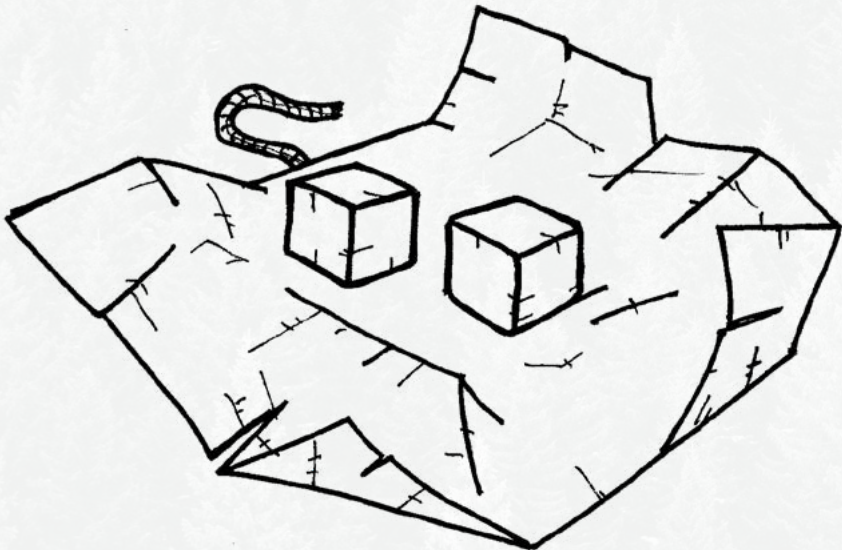
Evald Rudolfsson (12) is spotted running off to bury something in the woods just outside the village. It turns out to be a dead bird that he found. Evald's parents say that he is a sensitive boy.

Death: Evald looks off into the distance as if he sees something, and smiles.

Oswald Rudolfsson (5)

Every night, Oswald sneaks out and leaves a pile of spruce cones on the doorstep – or otherwise nearby – wherever the characters are staying. If asked about this behaviour, the boy says that it is, *"A payment, because I have no money."* His parents smile and shrug.

Death: *"Thank you!"*



3. MOTHER, FATHER, ONE GIRL, ONE BOY.

Pelle Jakobsdotter presents each of the characters with crowns made of winter berries and spruce leaves and tells them that, "You should wear the crowns at all times. For good luck."

Death: "*Happy holidays!*"

One night after the characters have retired to bed, **Noah Olsson** will be spotted watching them through a window. "I'm just checking all is well," he will say before running off home.

Death: He attempts to give his killer a firm left-handed handshake.

Sofi Noahsdotter (6) throws snowballs at the character(s) with the lowest Charisma and runs off giggling. She repeats this whenever she sees the character(s).

Death: She tries to throw one last snowball.

Hans Noahsson (8) sneaks into the characters' accommodation and rearranges their belongings into circles on the floor. He will try to do this while they are elsewhere and occupied, and will deny everything, even if caught red-handed.

Death: "*Let's go!*"

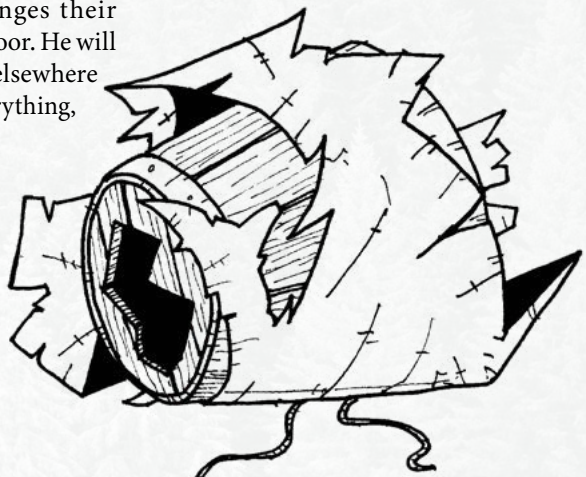
4. MOTHER, ONE ADULT SON.

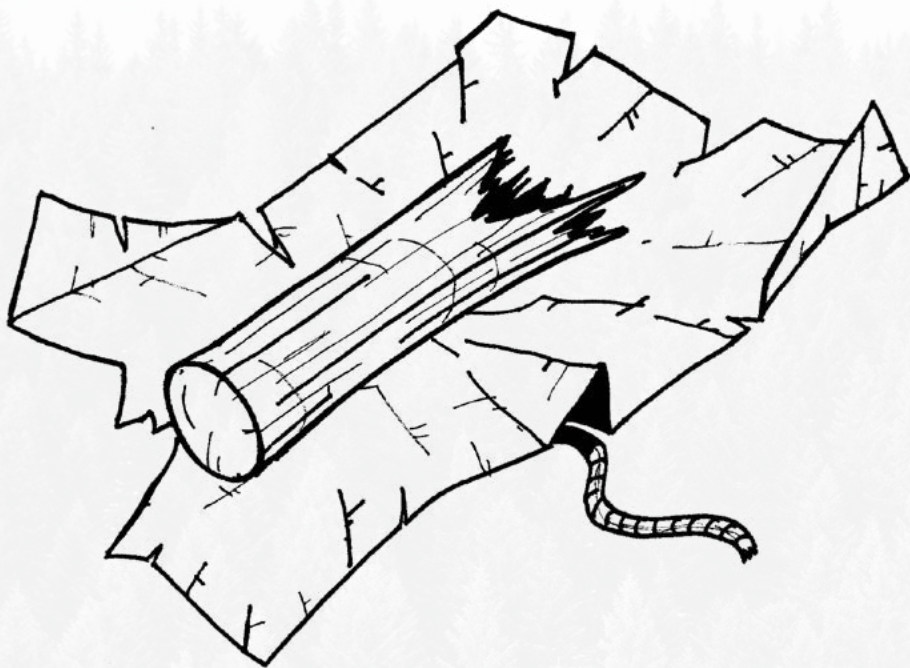
Kim Carlsdotter smiles at the characters, but will never speak to them. She can be seen speaking to other villagers, but will refuse to engage with the characters, running off if necessary. "She is shy around strangers," the other villagers will explain if asked about her behaviour.

Death: She continues to smile, even as she dies.

Dennis Kimsson offers to clean or repair the characters' weapons the moment they are settled in the village. He is quite insistent. "You should keep these in good order. You never know when you will need them."

Death: "*Valhalla, I am coming!*"





5. MOTHER, FATHER, ONE TEENAGE DAUGHTER.

Pelle Andersdotter says, “I won’t be needing this” and gives the characters an ornate – and definitely not local – necklace of greenish silver, worth about 61sp to a collector. If pressed on what she means, Pelle smiles and winks.

Death: “*Blessings of Odin be upon you!*”

A former mercenary – if you like he can be a 1st Level Fighter with 6hp – **Ove Mattsson** offers to train with the characters and give them tips on the most efficient ways to kill people. He does all this in a jolly sing-song voice and with a big grin. If pressed on why

he is offering, he claims it is because he does not get much opportunity to practise his old skills. He has kept his old sword wrapped up in his home, but does not bring it to the Ritual (page 34).

Death: “*I knew you could do it!*” before giving a big, cheerful thumbs up.

Ann Ovesdotter (15) approaches the party Cleric, or if there is no Cleric, the character with the highest Intelligence, and asks far too many questions about death and the afterlife. What lies beyond? Does death itself hurt? The sorts of things a gothy teen might ask.

Death: She cries tears of joy.

6. MOTHER, FATHER, THREE BOYS.

Clara Thomasdatter asks the characters about the worst things they have done, whether they feel remorse for their actions, would they kill a baby if it would save the world, and so on. She is trying to judge their worth as potential executioners and will report her findings to Jens. If the characters seem at all Lawful Goody about it, she will treat them with sneering dismissal, but if they seem like the sort of people who will get the job done Clara will treat them with respect and even friendship. She is Ingrid's (page 20) sister. They look nothing alike.

Death: Either "*At last you found your backbone!*" (if Lawful Goody) or "*Good work, my bloody-handed warriors!*" (if not)

Brynolf Ekström sneaks out into the woods every night and returns after an hour or so. He is having a sneaky affair with Maja Gustafsdatter – see below. They have been attracted to each other for a long time, but with their impending deaths, have decided to act upon it.

Death: "I love them both!"

Frans (7) and Olof (5) Brynolfsson build effigies of the characters out of snow, plus another figure that the children describe as, "*Your friend, the Shadow, that follows you.*" The parents explain that the boys are fond of assigning imaginary friends to people and that everyone in the village has one.

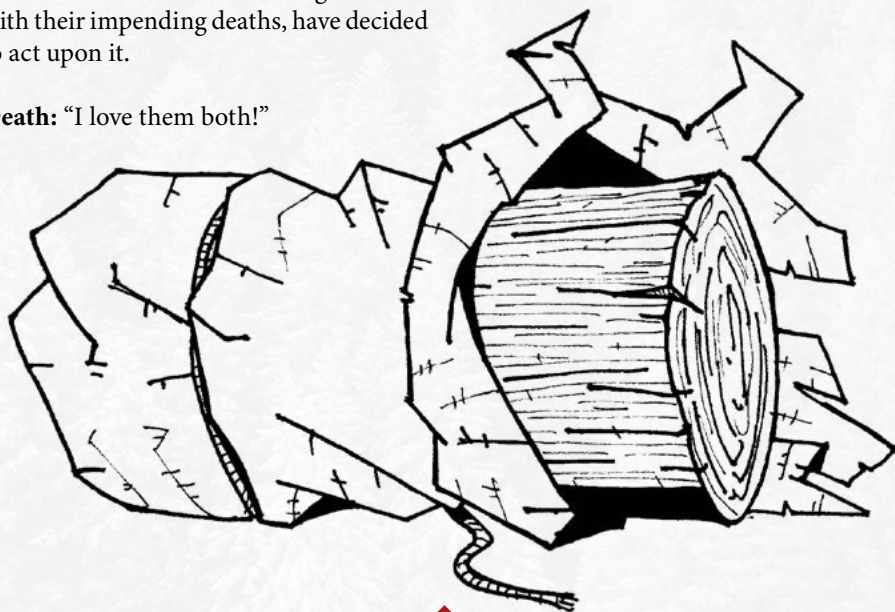
Frans' death: His lip wobbles and he cries, but Frans tries to stay brave.

Olof's death: He dies quietly.

Karl Brynolfsson (9)

Karl tries to steal a character's weapons, which may put him in conflict with others like Hans Noahsson or Dennis Kimsson. He hides the weapons in his special place, a hollow tree trunk just outside the village; there is a handful of other stolen weapons in the tree. Karl likes weapons.

Death: He watches his own killing with wide, hungry eyes.



7. CARL OLAFSSON AND HIS FATHER, OLAF JÄGERHORN

Carl (see page 20). If killed his dying words are an enraged, “NOT LIKE THIS!”

Olaf is blind, but claims he can see invisible trolls and that the entities are telling him that the characters are people of “great and mighty destiny” and that they will “reveal the hidden truth”. He seems quite serious and may be quite convincing, but is just taking the piss. If found out, he will think his little joke is the funniest thing ever.

Death: Olaf laughs until his last breath leaves his old, battered body.

8. FATHER, ONE BOY.

Lars Mattsson

He approaches the character with the highest combined Charisma and Wisdom – roll for ties – with a dog at his heel. He introduces the animal as Thor and asks the character to take ownership because, “He will need someone to look after him.” If the character accepts, Lars runs off, holding back tears. If the offer is dismissed or otherwise questioned, then a dejected Lars trudges off and on the afternoon of the ritual forces a confused Thor to run off into the woods.

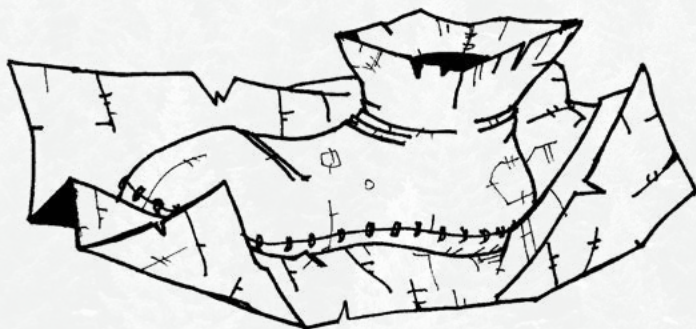
Death: “*Look after my boy!*” He doesn’t mean his son.

THOR, a good boy: *Armour 14, Move 150’, 1 Hit Dice, 4hp, bite 1d4, Morale 10.*

Generate a new Loyalty/Morale on 1d6+6 if a character takes ownership of Thor.

Patrik Larsson (8) says he recognises the characters and is certain that they have visited the village before. He refers to them with names that are not theirs. The boy has learning difficulties and has confused the characters with other, previous visitors.

Death: “*Will I see mama now?*”



9. MOTHER, FATHER, GRANDMOTHER, TWO GIRLS, TWO BOYS.

Maja Gustafsdotter sneaks off into the woods every night for a quick fumble with Brynolf Ekström – see above. She despises Gunner and is unrepentant, but has kept the secret for the good of their respective families.

Death: She sighs in relief as if a great burden has been lifted.

Gunner Jakobsson comes across as clingy and desperate to be accepted by the characters. He will follow them around, butt into their conversations, and act as if he is their best friend. He is needy and pathetic.

Death: *"I'm glad it was you."*

Lena Eriksson is Maja's mother, a jolly old woman with a big smile. She offers to tell the characters' fortunes by casting runes*. She urges – with a cheeky twinkle in her eye – the characters to promise not to tell Jens as, *"He wouldn't approve."* All of her predictions seem to involve blood, death, or blood and death, although Lena claims that she cannot confirm whose: *"Such is the way of the runes!"* She has no powers of divination and it is all an act, as *Detect Magic* will confirm.

Death: *"I told you so!"* (Cackles)

** I know is an anachronism, but this is for fun not a history degree.*

Alma (9) and **Lena Gunnersdotter (6)** walk around hand in hand and always talk in unison, like the non-twins in *The Shining*. Everyone in the village thinks this is very strange and that it has never happened before. In fact, the girls have been put up to it by the mischievous Olaf Jägerhorn.

Alma's death: *"Winter is not coming!"*

Lena's death: *"Did I do well?"*

Augustus Gunnersson (7) is precocious and clever beyond his years, with the self-awareness and vocabulary of an adult. He watches the characters and questions their every action, with comments like, "Are you sure that is wise?" and "Why do it that way?"

Death: *"Winter is not coming!"*

Benjamin Gunnersson (1) is too young to play along with the cult's plans.

Death: He screams, because he does not understand.



10. BJÖRN (page 7) AND HIS SON.

Björn's dying words are "I've had worse."

Valentin Björnsson (10) avoids the characters, leaves whenever they approach, and will be surly and dismissive of them if forced to interact. Other villagers will apologise on Val's behalf and say that such behaviour is normal for the boy. Some worry that he has spent too long alone in the woods.

Death: He sneers and spits at his killer.

There are thirty-nine cultists, plus Edwina and Harrison Wood, for a total of forty-one. Cult dogma states that the winter sacrifice must be at least twenty-one individuals in order to appease Odin. See The Ritual (page 34).

Björn spends most of his time in the woods and is detailed on page 7. Edwina Wood hides underground (page 29) until the solstice and is unlikely to be encountered wandering around the village. Other notable cultists include:

CARL OLAFSSON, the enemy within:

Armour 13, Move 90', 2nd Level Fighter, 12hp, hand axe 1d6 or dagger 1d4, Morale 10.

Buff coat, dagger, hand axe, walking stick, winter clothing.

Carl is grumpy and morose and says he worries about whether the cult will succeed in its goals. In truth he is tired of the world and thinks Ragnarök is a good idea, so will attempt to undermine the cult at any opportunity, including telling the characters the whole story. In other words, he's a true believer, he just thinks the cult is wrong. He is probably the only cultist that will defend himself if attacked during the Ritual (page 34). Carl's leg is twisted from a badly-healed break in his youth; the other villagers say this is why he is so ill-tempered.

11. JENS PAULSSON – SEE BELOW – AND HIS WIFE, INGRID THOMASDOTTER.

Ingrid is Clara's (page 17) sister, although you would not know it by looking at the two of them. She is friendly and wants to make sure that the characters have everything they need because, "you have to be ready," but for what, she will not specify.

Death: "I accept your gift..."

JENS PAULSSON, always smiling: *Armour 13, Move 120', 0 Level Cultist, 4hp, no attacks, Morale 12, Charisma 16 Wisdom 14; if his glasses are lost or broken, he will be at -4 to all sight-dependent rolls.*

Buff coat, glasses (worth 25sp), winter clothing, wooden crucifix with the rune for Odin scratched into the back.

Jens is a softly-spoken smug Scandinavian polo-necked web developer start-up type. Imagine the nicest, but most annoying person you know. That's Jens.

Option: You may decide that Jens is an actual Cleric, in which case he is a 6th Level worshipper of the Æsir with 27hp. He often has *Augury*, *Purify Food and Drink*, *Remove Fear*, and *Resist Cold* prepared.

THE VILLAGE

The village has no name. The villagers refer to it as “*our home*” and locals call it “*Jens’ community*” or “*That weird place in the woods*”.

Jens will give the characters a brief tour of the village. His descriptions of the various important locations follow, along with notes if the location isn’t detailed elsewhere.

Jens’ House (page 24)

“My own humble home. There’s nothing of interest there, ho ho!”

Björn’s House (page 24)

“Björn likes to live a little apart from everyone else. He’s a little, heh, eccentric, but we love him.”

Church (page 26)

“Our church. Quite simple, but quite beautiful. Such lovely wood! That’s where we will have our special Jul celebration. Will you join us, I wonder?”

Long Hall (page 27)

“We often gather there for meals and celebrations. We will be there in a few days to observe, hrm, the solstice.”

Oil Storage

“We store the lamp oil in there. You should stay away. It’s, heh, very dangerous.”

It is indeed dangerous. There is enough lamp oil stored in barrels to burn down most of the village.

Food Stores

“We keep the village’s food in there. No sneaking in for a snack! Ho ho!”

This large but simple one-room shed is set into the ground by a few feet. Stored inside are pickled fish and vegetables, potatoes, cheeses, spices, and a number of barrels of ale. A secret door at the rear of the building leads underground (page 29).

Big Spruce Tree

“Such a lovely old tree!”

A decorative blanket has been wrapped around the base of the trunk. Under the blanket, the runes for Odin, death, and ice or destruction (page 8) have been carved into the trunk.

Disturbed Earth

“We tried growing some crops there, but it didn’t work out. Such a shame. There’s nothing of interest there.”

The characters may suspect that these are shallow graves, but digging will reveal nothing but a lost ring worth 2sp. Nobody in the village will be able to identify the ring or knows where it comes from, although the characters may think otherwise.

Workshop

“That’s where we make things. It can be a bit dangerous if you don’t know what you’re doing.”

A tool shed, workshop, and small forge, suitable for woodwork and simple metalwork and repairs.

Empty Houses

“No one lives there anymore. They moved away. I don’t know why. It’s lovely here! Ho ho!”

Two empty houses that the villagers will make ready for the characters to use.





JENS' HOUSE

Jens loves to read and has a small library of books. It is an eclectic mix of mythology and religious texts, but all mundane and harmless. Or as harmless as any religious text can be, I suppose. Ooh, social commentary! There is a total of thirteen books, including *The Book of Concord*, *the Edda*, *The Bible*, an incomplete and heavily frost damaged copy of the *Liber Ivonis* in Latin, *The King's Donkey* (a book of humorous short stories about a bumbling tax collector, not at all biographical, by Mathias Pouke), plus various collections of mythological and theological essays.

A secret compartment in one wall contains Jens' cult robe, a somewhat gaudy blue and white garment emblazoned with the runes for Odin, death, and ice or destruction (page 8), and his unwieldy ceremonial helmet.

Winter berry poisoning

Holly: Consuming holly will force a saving throw versus Poison. If failed, the character will, after an hour, be incapacitated with diarrhoea and vomiting for 2d6 hours. If a 1 is rolled, the character dies. Children have their save modified by -2.

Mistletoe: Characters consuming mistletoe must make a saving throw versus Poison or will, after an hour or so, suffer blurred vision, diarrhoea, and vomiting for the next 1d8 hours. If a 1 is rolled, the character has a cardiac arrest or a seizure and must save versus Poison again. If this second roll fails, the character dies.

BJÖRN'S HOUSE

This largeish cabin looks small and cramped when Björn and his similarly hench-son are present. The main room is full of animal pelts worth a total of 8d6sp, and there is a partial set of hand-carved chess pieces on a shelf; all of the white pieces are there, but only the king and queen have been completed for black. There is a secret door to the underground complex (page 29) in the floor.

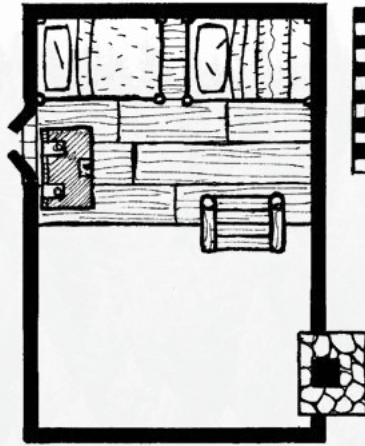
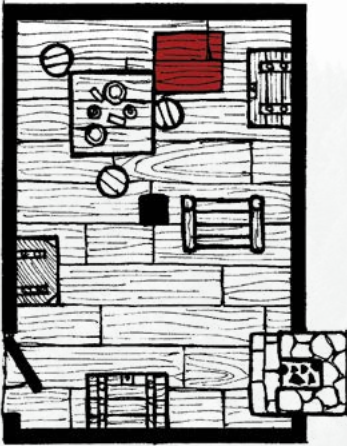
An Odin/Jultomten costume hangs in one corner of the bedroom alongside a sack of useless junk (see The RITUAL, page 34). When not out hunting with Björn, his dogs Freki and Geri can be found sleeping by the fire.

FREKI AND GERI, loyal hunting dogs:

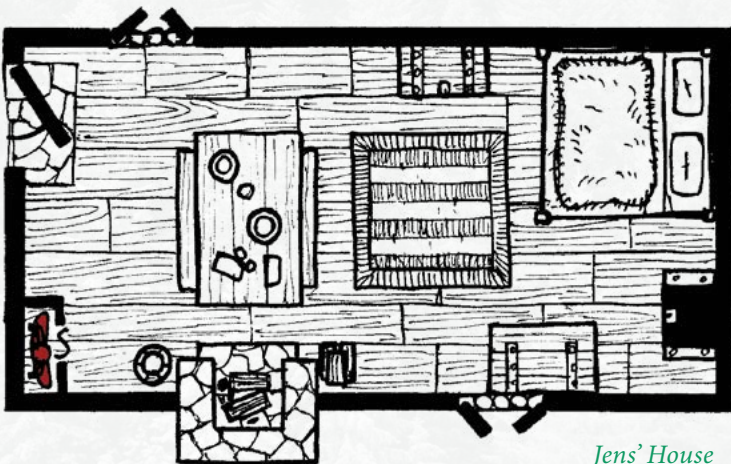
Armour 14, Move 150', 1 Hit Dice, 6hp, bite 1d4, Morale 10/12.

Both dogs will protect Björn with their lives and have Morale 12 while he is alive.

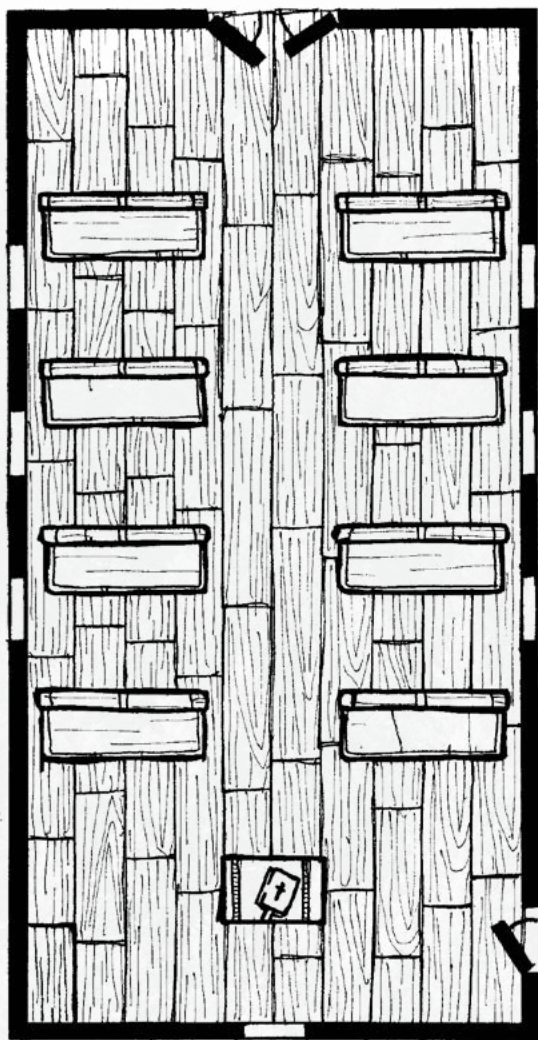




Björn's House

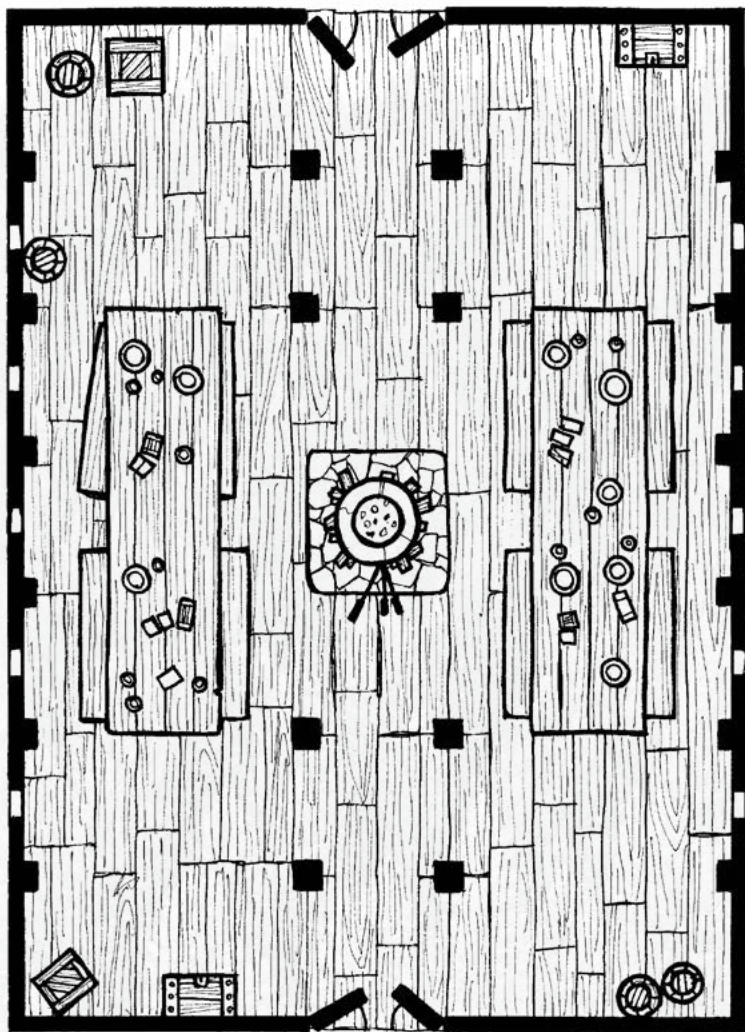


Jens' House



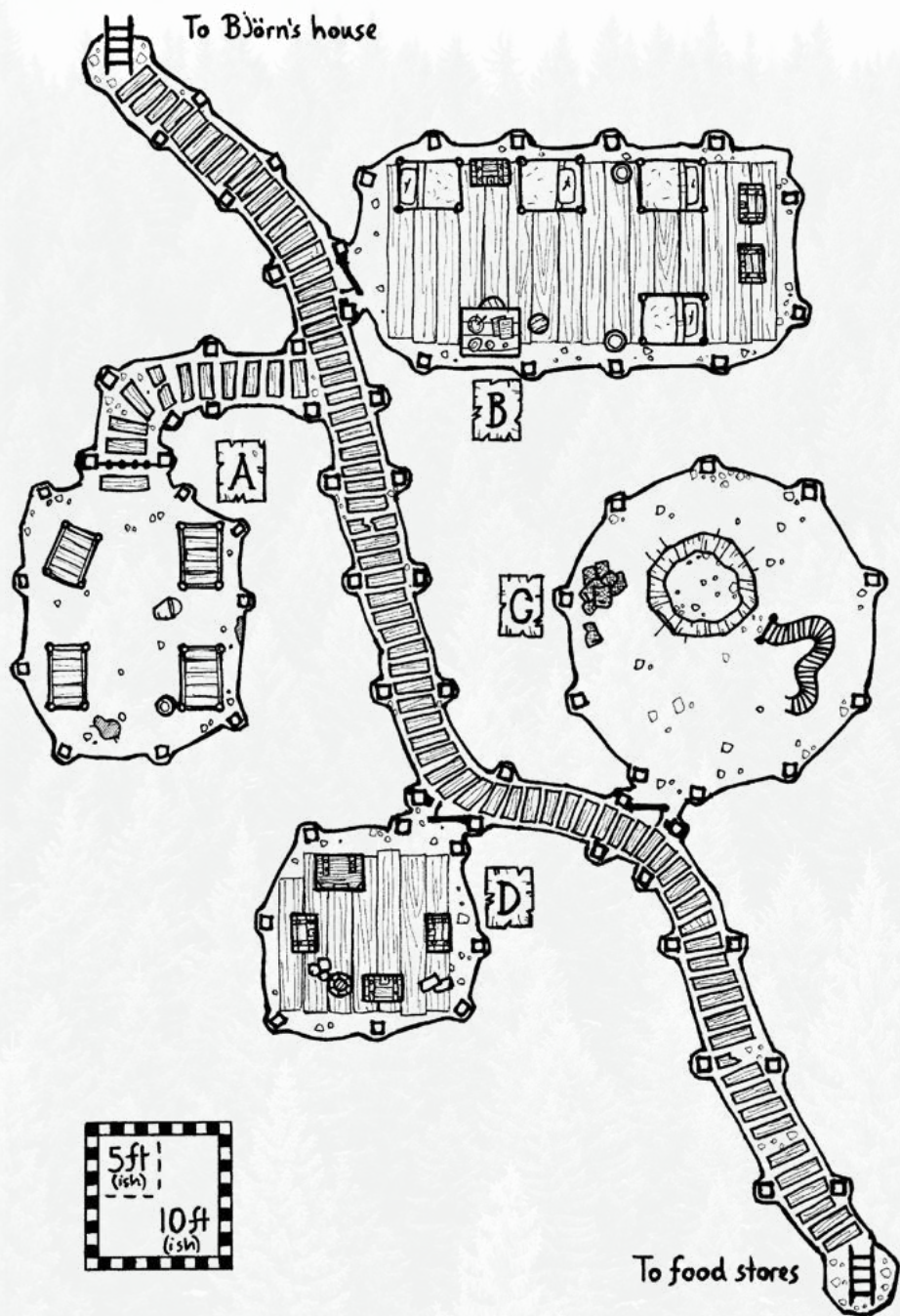
CHURCH

The church is a simple but large wooden building with a single room. There are two rows of pews and a table serving as an altar. The religious paraphernalia is Lutheran, but modest, spartan even. The walls are covered in carvings of Odin and the wild hunt.



LONG HALL

This is a big, sturdy wooden building with doors at each end. Two long tables run the length of the hall and there is a large fire and cauldron for cooking big, hearty meals. A few sacks have been stacked in one corner; these are full of spruce leaves, and holly and mistletoe berries, for use in the villagers' solstice costumes. As an aside, holly and mistletoe berries (page 24) can be poisonous if ingested in large quantities.



GOING UNDERGROUND

The cult has a small hidden complex dug into the frozen earth, entered through secret doors in Björn's house (page 24) and the food storage (page 21). The passage walls and ceilings are propped up with thick wooden beams and the rooms have been finished with wooden ceilings, floors, and walls. The complex is lit by oil-fuelled lanterns.

A: This room is used to keep the cult's occasional long-term, involuntary guests. The iron barred gate is locked; the key is kept on a nail in room B. The cult's current guest is an Englishman called Geoff, who was passing through the area and was kidnapped to be used as potential bait. He has been treated well, but would of course prefer to be free.

GEOFF, cult prisoner: *Armour 12, Move 120' 1st Level Fighter, 4hp, no weapons, Morale 9.*

Geoff is an average bloke with a strong sense of right and wrong.

B: Edwina Wood is staying here until the solstice celebrations. Also here is a ring of keys to rooms A and C.

EDWINA WOOD, damsel in distress except not: *Armour 12, Move 120', 0 Level Child, 3hp, no attacks, Morale 12, Charisma 18, Intelligence 16.*

Winter clothing, little stuffed doll

Edwina is eight years old and much cleverer and more manipulative than she appears. She does lots of watery-eyed, trembly-lipped business with the aim of convincing people that she is in trouble and needs urgent help.

C: This room is used by the cult to subject members to sensory deprivation if they need any extra persuasion as to the cult's aims. There is a deep pit at the centre of the room and a rope ladder nearby. In one corner is a pile of rough sacks that the cult uses as hoods. The key to the sturdy wooden door is in room B.

D: This small room contains the cult's supply of opium – sometimes used in cult indoctrination – and its money. The opium is worth 200sp and a small wooden chest contains the equivalent of 250sp in various coins from across Europe and beyond. The wooden door tends not to be locked – the cult trusts its members – but the key is in room B.

COUNTDOWN TO MIDVINTER

A big winter solstice celebration does not happen all by itself and the villagers will be busy preparing for the big day. If the characters are snooping around the village in the run-up to the solstice then they may find themselves observing or becoming involved in some of the following activities.

Bear with Björn! The village hunter is worried about some bears that he has been tracking the past couple of days; the characters may have already encountered the animals (GETTING TO THE VILLAGE, page 7). Björn does not want the bears to blunder into the village and spoil celebrations, and he thinks a successful hunt will bring luck. Björn asks the characters to join him on his hunt; in most cases he takes men from the village, but he can tell the characters are adventurous sorts who can handle themselves in a scrap. If he encountered the characters on their hike up into the hills (page 7) then he will say either that he knows how good they are in a fight, if they did well against the bears or wolves, or suggest that they may want to redeem their honour, if they did not.

The hike takes about an hour. Along the way characters will notice a number of small wooden carvings hanging from branches; most of the carvings depict bears or wolves in exaggerated poses, but some are more sinister and take the form of skulls or strange inhuman things. Björn says that he does not know the origin of the carvings, but that

he has been finding them from when he was a small boy.

Björn carved them himself, of course, and is trying to spook the characters. If they have seen Björn's chess set (page 24) the characters will recognise the technique as similar.

After some time, Björn spots two bears. Björn suggests that he and his dogs circle around to draw one animal away while the characters take on the second, then he can return, and they can go after the first bear together. This will obviously not happen as the characters are all self-destructive fools.



Björn, big bearded cheerful chappie: *Armour 14 (leather), Move 120', 2nd Level Fighter/3rd Level Specialist, 38hp, spear 1d6 or hand axe 1d6, Morale 12, Constitution 16, Strength 16, Bushcraft 3, Climb 2, Search 3, Stealth 2; can attack three times per Round; saves as a 5th Level Fighter.*

Backpack, hand axe, leather armour, rope, shovel, spear, winter clothing, 16sp.

Björn is jolly and friendly. He smiles almost all the time, does lots of back-slapping, and calls everyone “friend”. He is not a werebear, although if you like, you could go to lengths to suggest it.

Björn is, however, a cultist and will insist on accompanying the characters to the community, particularly if they have been injured.

BROWN BEARS: *Armour 15, Move 120', 5 Hit Dice 22hp, claw (x2) 1d4 and bite (1d8), Morale 8; if both claws hit, the target is given a special hug – not that kind! – for a further 2d8 damage.*

FREKI AND GERI, loyal hunting dogs: *Armour 14, Move 150', 1 Hit Dice, 6hp, bite 1d4, Morale 10/12.*

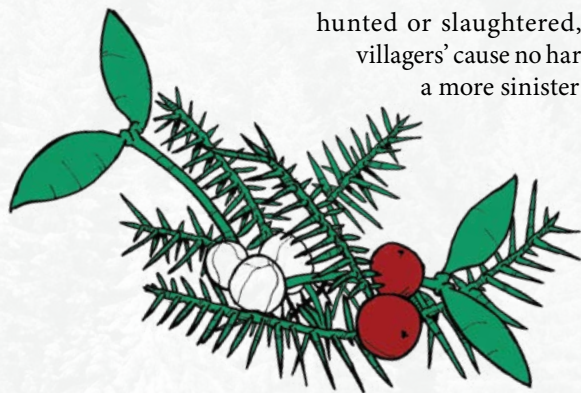
Both dogs will protect Björn with their lives and have Morale 12 while he is alive.

Helping out. There is a lot to do in the days before Midwinter. Food needs to be prepared and costumes need to be made, and the villagers will be happy to accept help from the characters. This is an excellent opportunity for the characters to get to know the villagers, or more likely, to snoop around.

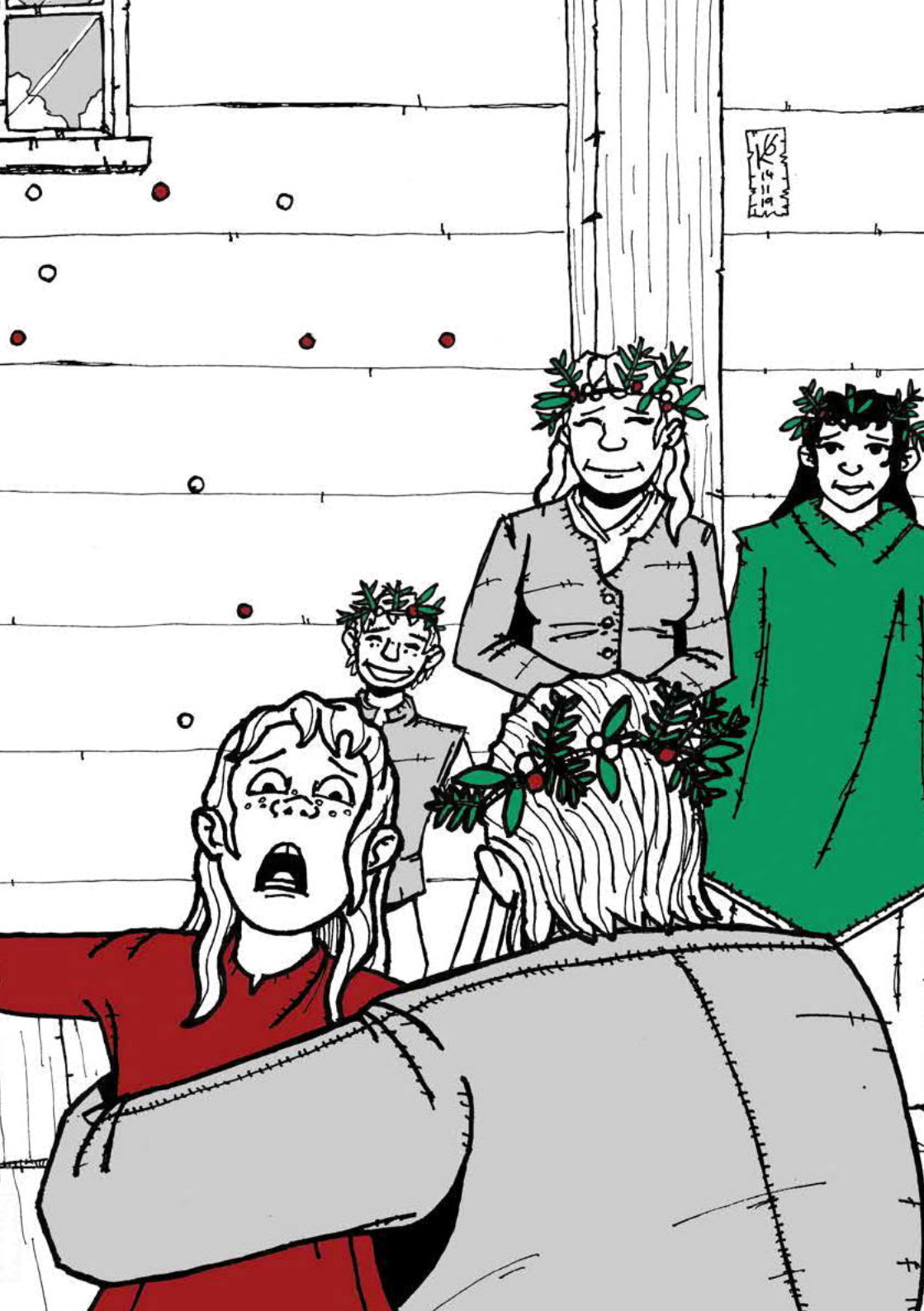
Decorating the tree! The night before the main event, a small group of villagers decorate the big spruce tree in the village centre. They trudge over with steaming buckets and drape the contents of over the tree's branches while singing jolly festive songs. The garlands are intestines and other guts!

If asked about this odd form of ornamentation, the villagers will respond with puzzled expressions and comments like, “It's tradition”, “We've always done it like this”, and “How else would you decorate a tree?” They ask the characters in turn if they want to help with the festooning.

If asked about the origin of the decorations, the cultists will be both evasive and suggestive. They will not say that they got the guts from human sacrifices, but they will not deny it either. In truth, the organs have all been harvested from animals that have been hunted or slaughtered, but it does the villagers' cause no harm at all to suggest a more sinister origin.







THE RITUAL

On the night of the solstice, heavy snow begins to fall. Of course. Should it become relevant, visual distances are halved.

Assuming the characters have not already scuppered the cult's plans, the evening proceeds as follows.

The villagers all get dressed up and put on crowns of spruce leaves, mistletoe, and winter berries. Jens puts on his special robes. (This means he is not wearing his glasses, so will be at -4 to all sight-dependent rolls.) Everyone then gathers in the long hall (page 27) for a feast.

A great barrel of ale is brought out, tapped, and drinks are passed around as songs are sung. Then everyone tucks into a course of pickled fish and spiced potatoes. There is more singing.

Then there is more ale! Someone will go and fetch another barrel if necessary. Cold meats are served alongside cheese, pickled vegetables, and bread. At some point Björn sneaks out and goes to his house to get changed.

A final course of warm meat and potato stew is served with bread. The meat tastes unusual and if the characters are present and ask about it, the cultists reply that the taste is "probably the spices" or something along those suspicious lines. Are the cultists also cannibals? No, it is slow-cooked pork (and definitely not slow-cooked 'long pork').

During the final course, Björn returns, dressed as an odd mix of Odin and Jultomten,

with an eyepatch and an obvious fake beard; this is where you should don your festive hat and big white beard, if not already so attired. Björn/Odin/Jultomten hands out gifts from a sack. These gifts are all stupid and useless and everyone has a great time laughing at what they get (roll 1d8):

- 1: A log
- 2: A rock
- 3: A left boot
- 4: A broken tool
- 5: A bucket with a hole in it
- 6: A candle without a wick
- 7: A set of dice with no pips
- 8: A bar of soap made from fish bits

After another quick round of ales, the villagers all then trudge out into the snow and head for the church (page 26). As everyone gets settled in seats, a couple of cultists head underground (page 29) to fetch Edwina Wood.

Jens then launches into the ritual proper. Standing before a carved wooden bowl filled with 642 mistletoe berries, he speaks of the dark nights, the cold, and the long winter to come. He talks about the return of the sun and warmth and life, and that the only way to guarantee this is to give life. He will throw handfuls of berries into the air. He may say something about the needs of the many being more important than the needs of the few. It is all death this and sacrifice that, but the tone is cheerful, even jolly.

At this point Edwina Wood is brought in. Assuming the characters are present, Edwina makes a show of being dragged in against her will. She struggles and screams and

looks at the characters with pleading eyes. Jens draws a knife as the girl is brought to the altar. Someone bars the church doors.

If they have not done so yet, things should kick off at this point. If not, then you may need to have a good look at the sort of people with whom you are playing these games.

If the characters make no move to stop the sacrifice, then Jens shrugs and the cultists rush forward to attack them. Almost all are unarmed aside from Björn/Odin/Jultomten and Jens. They aim to get the characters to fight back and kill them, or at least twenty-one of them, because that is enough death to draw Odin's blessing and forestall Fimbulwinter.

The cultists are trying to die so *mêlée* attacks upon them hit on anything other than a 1. Their own attacks miss, unless they roll a 20.

MIDWINTER CULTIST, big fans of daylight-saving time and one-eyed Norse gods:

Armour 12, Move 120', 0 Level Cultist, 4hp, knife or improvised club 1d4, Morale 12.

Winter clothing, knife, possibly a log.

JENS PAULSSON, always smiling: *Armour 13, Move 120', 0 Level Cultist, 4hp, no attacks, Morale 12, Charisma 16 Wisdom 14; if his glasses are lost or broken, he will be at -4 to all sight-dependent rolls.*

Buff coat, glasses (worth 25sp), winter clothing, wooden crucifix with the rune for Odin scratched into the back.

Jens is a softly-spoken smug Scandinavian polo-necked web developer start-up type. Imagine the nicest but most annoying person you know. That's Jens.

Option: You may decide that Jens is an actual Cleric, in which case he is a 6th Level worshipper of the Æsir with 27hp. He often has *Augury*, *Purify Food and Drink*, *Remove Fear*, and *Resist Cold* prepared.

ODIN/JULTOMTEN, spirit of the season, definitely not Björn: *Armour 12, Move 120', 2nd Level Fighter/3rd Level Specialist, 38hp, spear 1d6, Morale 12, Constitution 16, Strength 16, Bushcraft 3, Climb 2, Search 3, Stealth 2; can attack three times per Round; saves as a 5th Level Fighter.*

Big red hat, big white fake beard, eyepatch, sack of gifts, spear, winter clothing.

Odin/Jultomten is a big jolly sprite with a twinkle in his (good) eye. He chuckles and roars like Brian Blessed and is a completely different person to Björn, honest.

If Carl Olafsson is present, he will break cover an attempt to stop the slaughter.

CARL OLAFSSON, the enemy within:

Armour 13, Move 90', 2nd Level Fighter, 12hp, hand axe 1d6 or dagger 1d4, Morale 10.

Buff coat, dagger, hand axe, walking stick, winter clothing.

Carl is grumpy and morose and says he worries about whether the cult will succeed in its goals. In truth he is tired of the world and thinks Ragnarök is a good idea, so will attempt to undermine the cult at any opportunity, including telling the characters the whole story. In other words, he's a true believer, he just thinks the cult is wrong. He is probably the only cultist that will defend himself if attacked during the ritual. Carl's leg is twisted from a badly-healed break in his youth; the other villagers say this is why he is so ill-tempered.



26
10
19

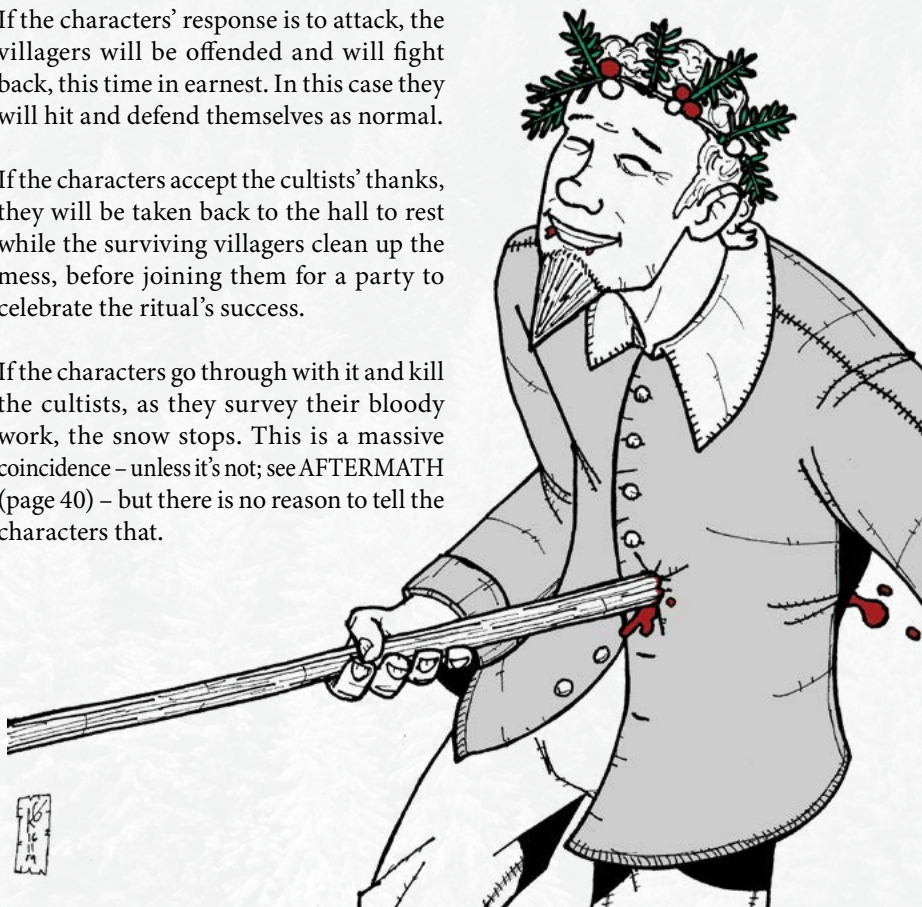
TWENTY-ONE (IS THE MAGIC NUMBER)

Once the cultists are confident that twenty-one of their number have been killed by the characters, they will stop fighting – if they were doing so – and will fall to their knees in joy. Some will weep, some will sing, all will be happy beyond measure that they have saved the world from icy death. Overjoyed and with tears of gratitude in their eyes, they will try to give the characters a big hug to thank them.

If the characters' response is to attack, the villagers will be offended and will fight back, this time in earnest. In this case they will hit and defend themselves as normal.

If the characters accept the cultists' thanks, they will be taken back to the hall to rest while the surviving villagers clean up the mess, before joining them for a party to celebrate the ritual's success.

If the characters go through with it and kill the cultists, as they survey their bloody work, the snow stops. This is a massive coincidence – unless it's not; see **AFTERMATH** (page 40) – but there is no reason to tell the characters that.





WHAT IF THE PLAYERS TRY TO BREAK THE ADVENTURE?

Players are tricky creatures and will try their hardest to break any adventure you run. That's why you hate them. Here are some suggestions for some of the most likely attempts at scuppering things.

What if the characters refuse to get involved and walk away? The cult isn't going to force the characters to kill them as that sort of power relationship makes no sense whatsoever. If the characters walk away, they miss out on the rewards, but on the plus side, they haven't murdered anyone. Also, see AFTERMATH (page 40).

What happens if Edwina is rescued before the ritual, and the characters try to escape? Assuming the characters have not yet discovered the underground complex (page 29), Edwina will tell them there are more people to be rescued and will urge them to go back.

What if the characters try to kill the cultists before the solstice? If there's a chance of a non-violent outcome the villagers will try to convince the characters that they have got it all wrong and to just wait and see. If the characters are bent on slaughter, then the cultists will scatter into the woods and return on the day of the solstice, in the hope that the characters will still be there.

Okay, fine, but what if the cultists do not get away and are all killed early? The ritual fails. See AFTERMATH (page 40).

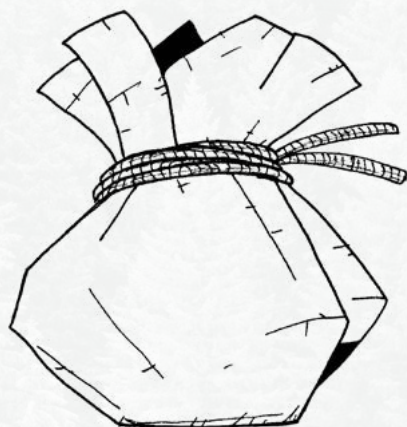
What if not enough cultists are killed in time? Again, the ritual fails. See AFTERMATH (page 40).

What if the characters refuse to fight the villagers? The cultists will attack them to force their hand. Literally, I suppose.

Why doesn't the conspiracy just send its own heavies to complete the sacrifice? Complex theological bullshit reasons, obviously. The killing must be done at the hand of outsiders.

What does Carl Olafsson do? He will attempt to stop the characters from killing the cultists however he can. If they burn the church, he will attempt to extinguish the fire. If they go to attack cultists, he will stand in their way and shout something like, "Stop! It's what they want!" or something similar.

What if Jens is absent during the ritual? Not a problem as the ritual itself is less important than the sacrifice. Someone else, probably Jens' wife Ingrid, will take over and lead the service.



AFTERMATH

The adventure does not end with the ritual. Depending on what the characters did and if the sacrifice went as planned, a few things can happen.

What if the sacrifice does not go as planned?

Nothing unusual happens. Spring comes along as normal, then summer and autumn and winter again, and so on. The cultists are deluded, and their murderous tradition is a big, steaming pile of nonsense with no relation to reality. Maybe some of them lose faith but most of them assume that Odin has saved them anyway, despite the failure of the sacrifice, and the cult carries on. In this case the characters receive no reward for their part in the midwinter ritual, other than the moral superiority that comes from not murdering a bunch of weirdoes in the woods.

What is that about a reward?

Ah. Read on, Macduff.

One option is that the northern hemisphere suffers a mini-ice age as winter goes on for the next eighty-seven years. The ground freezes. Crops fail. Animals die from cold and hunger. Famine sets in. People fight over scarce resources. There is a mass migration south in search of warmer, more habitable lands. Since people live there already, there will be more fighting. It all gets a bit apocalyptic and the characters may start to think, “We really should have killed those mad Swedes.”



What if everything goes to plan and the characters kill the cultists?

The cult is sort of stupid in the sense that its core beliefs are bonkers, but even so, its leadership has enough nous to think about what happens after the core members are all killed. The cult has agents around the world, supporters who are not part of the Chosen Few, but still work to promote the cult and, perhaps most important of all, ensure that there are enough cult members around in eighty-seven years to do the whole thing again.

About six weeks after the butchering of the cultists, the characters will start to see things going well for them. Doors will open for them, surprising opportunities will arise, and it will all seem like the characters are experiencing a streak of luck, were it not for hints that something is awry.

Some suggestions:

- ✿ The next retainer the characters hire will accept 75% of the standard fee with no modification to Loyalty, and the Referee should roll 2d6+6 for the retainer's Loyalty/Morale. This retainer speaks Swedish in addition to whatever other language is appropriate, and greets the characters with a weird hand signal every morning.
- ✿ The characters need a letter or similar document in order to cross a border, or enter a city, or something similar. The necessary document arrives later that day in a sealed envelope marked with the Odin rune.

✿ An innkeeper/madam/merchant flashes the characters the cult's hand signal, and grants them a 20% discount on all goods and services.

✿ A character's investment (see *Rules & Magic*, p54) is treated as having an accountant involved for that year. If the character already employs an accountant, then the investment is treated as having two. The investment report has an Odin rune stamped upon the reverse.

These benefits occur in 1 in 100 instances in Scandinavia, 1 in 1000 times in northern Europe, and 1 in 10000 occasions elsewhere. You may decide that the same probabilities also apply to determining the cult membership of any future important non-player-character.

If the characters look for the people that suggested they investigate the cult in the first place, then those people are nowhere to be found. They probably used false names and paid off the right people in order to cover their tracks.

It is possible to track the cult back to its leaders via agents like the merchants and others above. Here are some details on how the global cult is organised:

- ✿ The cult is organised as a series of 642 local cells, each with a leader, or sometimes, two co-leaders.
- ✿ There is no centralised command.
- ✿ Individual cells have no formal contact with each other, and often do not know the identities of members of other cells.

Continued on next page... 

- ✿ Contact between cells is conducted at the leader level.
- ✿ The cult is more or less egalitarian, and a member's status in the outside world has no bearing on their status within the cult. It's possible that a shopkeeper may be the leader of a cell that includes a king, for example.
- ✿ Some cells are large, and some have only one or two members. In general, the closer to Scandinavia, the larger the cell.
- ✿ There is one guy in Rome, Marco, who is not having the most successful of times in promoting the cult, but is trying his best.
- ✿ Cell leaders are aware of the cult's mission, but individual cell members may not be; some believe they are part of some secret society of mutual benefit, some may not know they are involved in anything dodgy at all, just that they are sometimes asked to do favours for obscure reasons.
- ✿ Each cell leader is ready to create a new sacrificial community and has identified a location and potential initial members; upon activation – as in, the sacrifice of the previous group – this community becomes its own unique cell and is responsible for growing itself.

I AM THE LAW!

As noted above, it takes about six weeks for the cult to start rewarding the characters for their service. Until then, there is the small matter of a massacred village. Someone is going to notice and assuming that at least one of the reasons for sending the characters to the village (page 5) is authentic, then

someone knows they went there.

The characters will be wanted – posters and everything – within the Kingdom of Sweden and soldiers will be sent to apprehend them for trial and – unless they mount an excellent defence, and it will have to be next-level John Grisham excellent, because they have killed a bunch of women and children – execution. If the characters have fled the country, then a generous bounty will be placed on their heads, something like 642sp for the group.

If legal proceedings take around six weeks then the cult will probably take notice and try to arrange some sort of rescue, whether literal or legal. Here are some suggestions:

- ✿ The characters are supplied with a hotshot lawyer who manages to win the court over with their clever rhetoric and sharp legal arguments.
- ✿ New evidence is presented that confirms that the characters were not in fact anywhere near the village, so could not have had anything to do with the killings.
- ✿ Or perhaps it was a bear attack, as is obvious to anyone with any experience of living in the hills. Duh.
- ✿ The executioner is a cult agent and arranges for the act to be done in private, so that a switch can be made. The characters can never return to Sweden, at least not under their own names, but they have their lives.

❧ On the way to prison, or to the execution, highwaymen – cult agents or employees – attack and in the confusion the characters escape. The characters will remain wanted – unless the robbers have brought some spare corpses – but they will be free.

❧ The judge is a cult member and throws the case out for being frivolous and spurious at such a crucial time for Sweden, what with there being a war on and everything.

You may decide to apply the 1 in 100 chance of a cult intervention discussed above if you do not want the characters to, um, get out of jail free.

What if the characters somehow piss off the cult?

The cult is not in the business of revenge because the general theological point is that if the sacrifice does not go according to plan, everyone dies in an endless winter anyway and notions of vengeance look a bit silly when everything is frozen under thick sheets of ice.

That said, if the characters cock up the cult's plans and also leave someone alive, there is a chance that the survivors may take things personally and look to get their own back.

These suggested interventions should be subject to the same chances as the beneficial ones: 1 in 100 in Scandinavia, 1 in 1000 in northern Europe, and 1 in 10000 elsewhere on Earth. After about a year the cult gives up as they decide to focus on their main mission again.

❧ The characters are assaulted by thugs who flash the cult's hand signal just before they attack.

❧ If the characters have property, cult agents try to burn it to the ground.

❧ A merchant, innkeeper, or someone along those lines refuses to serve the characters.

❧ Do the characters have pets or mounts? Not anymore. They have been butchered and their innards arranged into the shape of the Odin rune.

❧ Character investments do not go well, as the cult puts pressure on businesses and other investors. When it is time for the annual return, roll twice for investments and apply the worst result.

❧ An employee leaves the characters' service, with no reason given.

❧ The characters are held up at the city gates, or the port, or when trying to see someone important, as there is a sudden burst of unnecessary bureaucracy.

❧ The characters are accused of a crime they did not commit. Or, the characters are accused of a crime they did commit, but thought they had gotten away with.

THEY FORGOT ABOUT GEOFF!

Whatever happens to the villagers, a day or two after the solstice, a cult agent will visit the village and free Geoff (page 29). He will be given some warm clothes, food, and 642sp, then will be sent on his way, with thanks.

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU

To generate the name of a random Swedish person, roll d20 once for a surname and again for a forename. I have created tables similar to this in my other adventures and in each case, I have drawn the names from actual documents from the era and location in question. I did not do that this time. The first person that contacts me with the correct origin for these not-so-random names will win a drawing of their choice.

<i>d20</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Forename 1</i>	<i>Forename 2</i>
1	Anvegård	Anna	Albin
2	Augustinsson	Benite	Anders
3	Björn	Birgitta	Emil
4	Claesson	Elin	Filip
5	Dahlkvist	Hanna	Gustav
6	Ekdal	Hedvig	Jakob
7	Forsberg	Jessica	Karl-Johan
8	Glas	Jonna	Kristoffer
9	Helander	Julia	Lars
10	Krafth	Kristin	Ludwig
11	Jakobsson	Lina	Magnus
12	Johansson	Marta	Markus
13	Larsson	Mia	Mikael
14	Lindahl	Nathalie	Niklas
15	Martensson	Nilla	Olof
16	Olsson	Olivia	Oskar
17	Persson	Pia	Per
18	Rubensson	Sofia	Robin
19	Sveningsson	Stina	Sebastian
20	Svensson	Ulrika	Viktor

If generating families, bear in mind that at this time Sweden used a patronymic system, so the son of Jakob Claesson would have been Robin Jakobsson, and Robin's daughter would be named Julia Robinsdotter, and so on. In some fringe cases – a child born outside marriage, or if the father was unknown – a child was named after their mother instead. Women did not tend to take their husband's surname when they married.

During the 17th century, the clergy and nobility dropped the patronymic system. Members of the clergy would often use a Latinised version of their birthplace as a surname. This practice spread to non-religious scholars.

The Swedish nobility was formalised in 1625 and from that point onwards, noble families developed new surnames, often based on their coats of arms. For example, Björn (*bear*), Cronhelm (*crown-helm*), Gedda (*pike*), or Hammarskjöld (*hammer-shield*).

MONSTER AND NON-PLAYER-CHARACTER INDEX

Some Referees like to have all their character and monster data all in one place. If you are one of those Referees, then gosh, I have some exciting content for you!

Björn, big bearded cheerful chappie: *Armour 14 (leather), Move 120', 2nd Level Fighter/3rd Level Specialist, 38hp, spear 1d6 or hand axe 1d6, Morale 12, Constitution 16, Strength 16, Bushcraft 3, Climb 2, Search 3, Stealth 2; can attack three times per Round; saves as a 5th Level Fighter.*

Backpack, hand axe, leather armour, rope, shovel, spear, winter clothing, 16sp.

Björn is jolly and friendly. He smiles almost all the time, does lots of back-slapping, and calls everyone "friend". He is not a werebear, although if you like, you could go to lengths to suggest it.

BROWN BEARS: *Armour 15, Move 120', 5 Hit Dice 22hp, claw (x2) and 1d4 bite (1d8), Morale 8; if both claws hit, the target is given a special hug – not that kind! – for a further 2d8 damage.*

FREKI AND GERI, loyal hunting dogs: *Armour 14, Move 150', 1 Hit Dice, 6hp, bite 1d4, Morale 10/12.*

Both dogs will protect Björn with their lives and have Morale 12 while he is alive.

GEOFF, cult prisoner: *Armour 12, Move 120' 1st Level Fighter, 4hp, no weapons, Morale 9.*

Geoff is an average bloke with a strong sense of right and wrong.

CARL OLAFSSON, the enemy within: *Armour 13, Move 90', 2nd Level Fighter, 12hp, hand axe 1d6 or dagger 1d4, Morale 10.*

Buff coat, dagger, hand axe, walking stick, winter clothing.

Carl is grumpy and morose and says he worries about whether the cult will succeed in its goals. In truth he is tired of the world and thinks Ragnarök is a good idea, so will attempt to undermine the cult at any opportunity, including telling the characters the whole story. In other words, he's a true believer, he just thinks the cult is wrong. He is probably the only cultist that will defend himself if attacked during the Ritual (page 34). Carl's leg is twisted from a badly-healed break in his youth; the other villagers say this is why he is so ill-tempered.

MIDWINTER CULTIST, big fans of daylight-saving time and one-eyed Norse gods: *Armour 12, Move 120', 0 Level Cultist, 4hp, knife or improvised club 1d4, Morale 12.*

Winter clothing, knife, possibly a log.

ODIN/JULTOMTEN, spirit of the season, definitely not Björn: *Armour 12, Move 120', 2nd Level Fighter/3rd Level Specialist, 38hp, spear 1d6, Morale 12, Constitution 16, Strength 16, Bushcraft 3, Climb 2, Search 3, Stealth 2; can attack three times per Round; saves as a 5th Level Fighter.*

Big red hat, big white fake beard, eyepatch, sack of gifts, spear, winter clothing.

Odin/Jultomten is a big jolly sprite with a twinkle in his (good) eye. He chuckles and roars like Brian Blessed and is a completely different person to Björn, honest.

JENS PAULSSÖN, always smiling: *Armour 13, Move 120', 0 Level Cultist, 4hp, no attacks, Morale 12, Charisma 16 Wisdom 14; if his glasses are lost or broken, he will be at -4 to all sight-dependent rolls.*

Buff coat, glasses (worth 25sp), winter clothing, wooden crucifix with the rune for Odin scratched into the back.

Jens is a softly-spoken smug Scandinavian polo-necked web developer start-up type. Imagine the nicest but most annoying person you know. That's Jens.

Option: You may decide that Jens is an actual Cleric, in which case he is a 6th Level worshipper of the Æsir with 27hp. He often has *Augury*, *Purify Food and Drink*, *Remove Fear*, and *Resist Cold* prepared.

THOR, a good boy: *Armour 14, Move 150', 1 Hit Dice, 6hp, bite 1d4, Morale 10. Generate a new Loyalty/Morale on 1d6+6 if a character takes ownership of Thor.*

WOLVES: *Armour 14, Move 180', 2 Hit Dice, 9hp, bite 1d6, Morale 8*

EDWINA WOOD, damsel in distress except not: *Armour 12, Move 120', 0 Level Child, 3hp, no attacks, Morale 12, Charisma 18, Intelligence 16.*

Winter clothing, little stuffed doll

Edwina is eight years old and much cleverer and more manipulative than she appears. She does lots of watery-eyed, trembly-lipped business with the aim of convincing people that she is in trouble and needs urgent help.

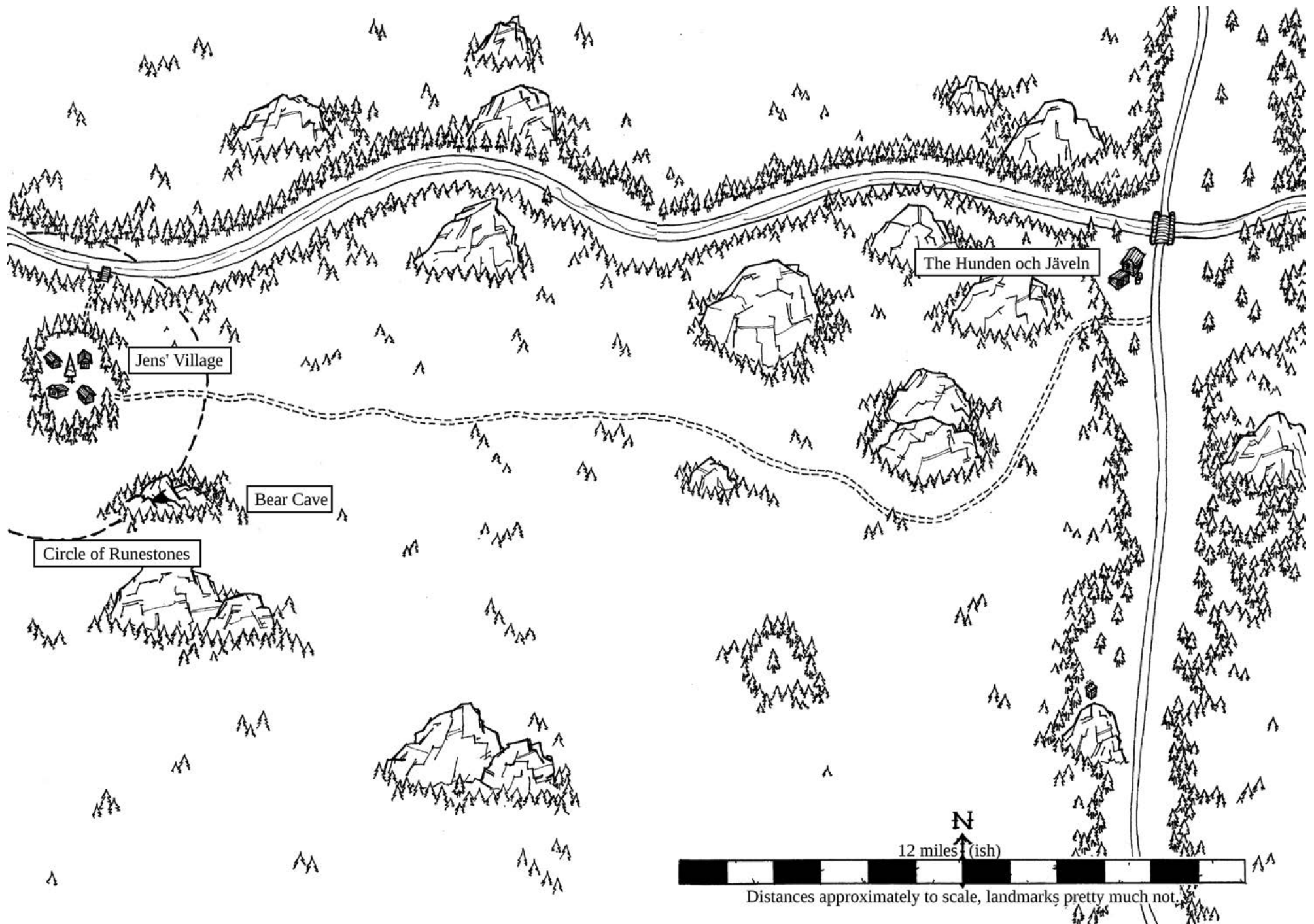


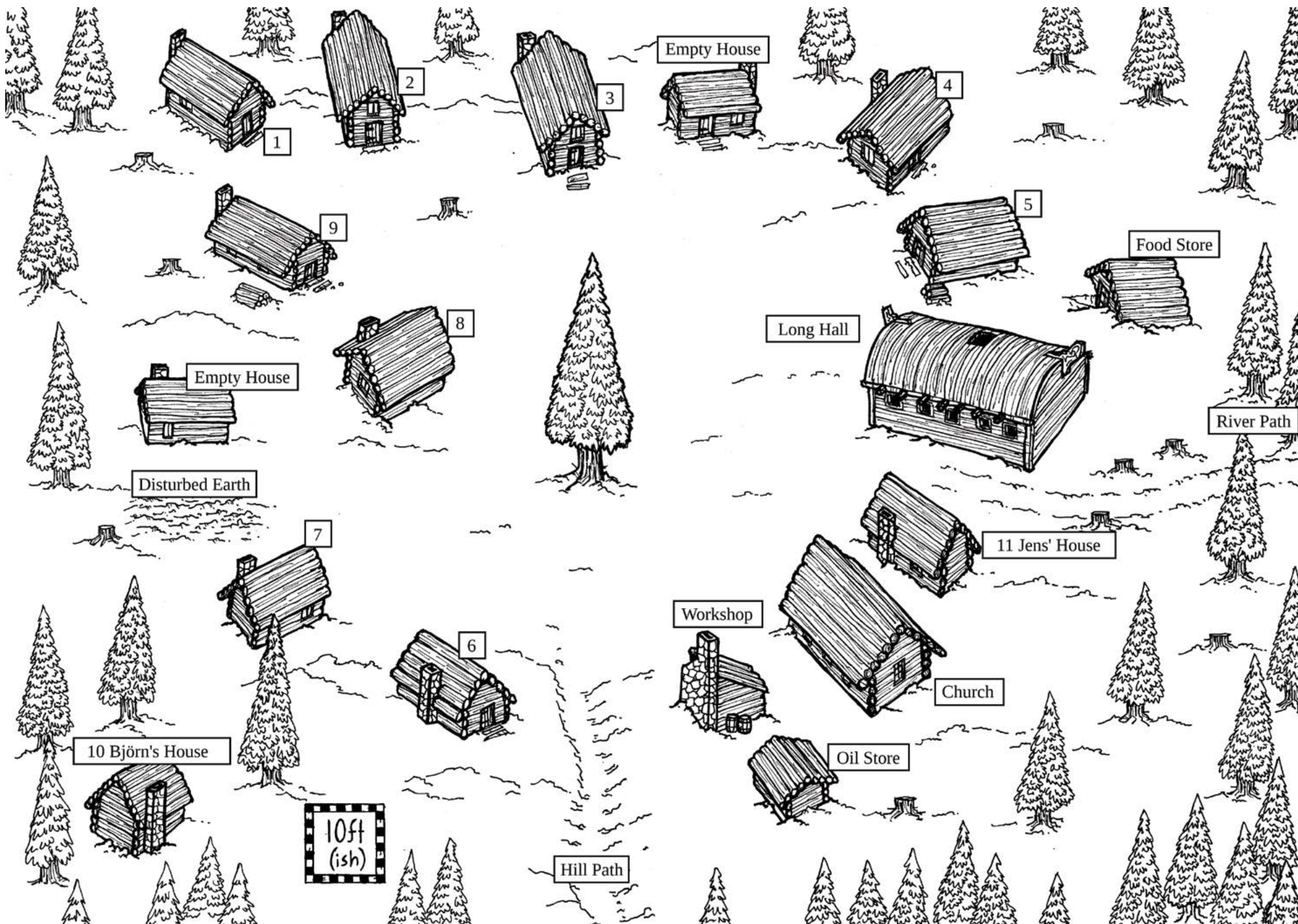


WILDERNESS MAP PLAYER'S HANDOUT



Be seeing you...





MIDVINTER

A Festival of Folk Horror

December 1630. Up in the South Swedish Highlands a small religious community is getting ready for a very special winter solstice celebration. The food is cooked, the ale is poured, and the tree is decorated.

Oh, and the human sacrifices are ready to be gutted in the name of Odin.

Happy holidays!

*Midvinter is written and drawn by Kelvin Green, who also did *Forgive Us, Fish Fuckers*, and *More than Meets the Eye*, and drew *Death Love Doom*, *Slügs*, *The Squid*, *the Cabal*, and *the Old Man*, *Thulian Echoes*, and *Barbarians of Orange Boiling Seas*.*

*Midvinter is an adventure for characters of all levels, for use with *Lamentations of the Flame Princess: Weird Fantasy Role-Playing* and other traditional role-playing games.*

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