

# THE WYRD OF STROMGARD

STORY PROMPTS AND HOOKS  
INSPIRED BY NORSE MYTH

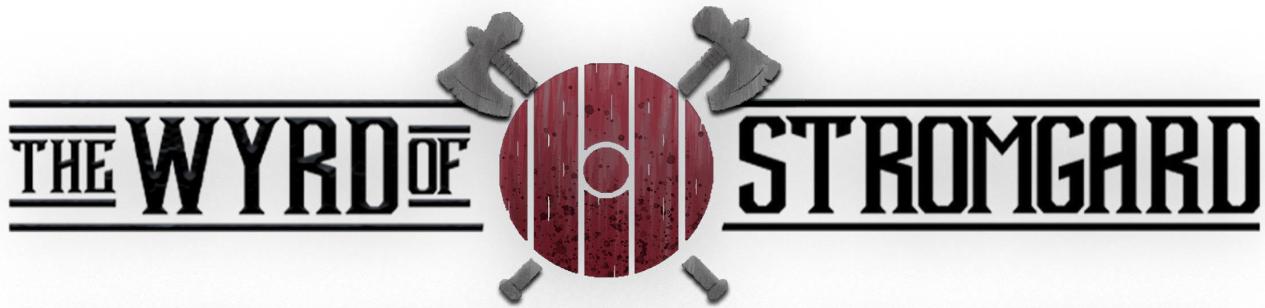
SAM GUNDAKER



## A Note:

The prompts contained herein are intended to inspire GMs and help them get their creative flow moving in terms of coming up with interesting and buildable foundations for games. They're best used as detailed springboards that GMs and their players can extrapolate and build upon, branching off to explore their own interests as they come up. These prompts and hooks could be easily tailored to fit both one-shots and longer campaigns, or even chained together for a longer, more in-depth story.

Most of these prompts have been taken straight from Norse myth and the Eddas, though there are several that are Stromgard Exclusives, for lack of better wording. **Since there are 50 prompts, you could easily randomize the choosing of them by rolling 1D100 and dividing by 2 (rounding up).** This is a really fun strategy when you're stumped for game night- for dramatic effect and to put your improv chops to the test, gather your players and roll immediately before playing. Alternatively, these prompts could all withstand a heavy-duty level of pre-planning as well so how you utilize these is really up to whatever style suits you best. While some of these prompts are chunkier than others, I've tried to keep them succinct as much as I could so that they remain easy to alter and build upon. Feel free, of course, to trim them down or expand on them as much as you care to.



# STORY PROMPTS AND HOOKS

## INSPIRED BY NORSE MYTH

1. Appointed by Odin during the creation of Midgard, four Dvergr were tasked to hold up each corner of the sky forevermore. While honored and revered in dwarven culture, it has been taboo to speak of them as living entities or interact with them in any capacity for many generations now. Not many are know why exactly contact is strictly forbidden, only that these beings are awe-inspiring and godlike in their burden, frozen in immortal perpetuity to bear the world,
2. Odin asks the dwarves to procure a legendary resource to create the first humans with. He requires something strong but flexible and since he intends humans to be civil and honorable, asks that upstanding and valorous warriors be the ones to bring it to him.
3. In the ancient days of Asgard, Freya, a goddess and powerful seidr, traveled from village to village, delivering prophecy and oracular services to any who could offer tribute. When she came before the gods, they were awed by her power and ravenously sought her terrible knowledge. When they realized that Freya's gifts were causing them to act like rabid animals some of them turned on her in an effort to be

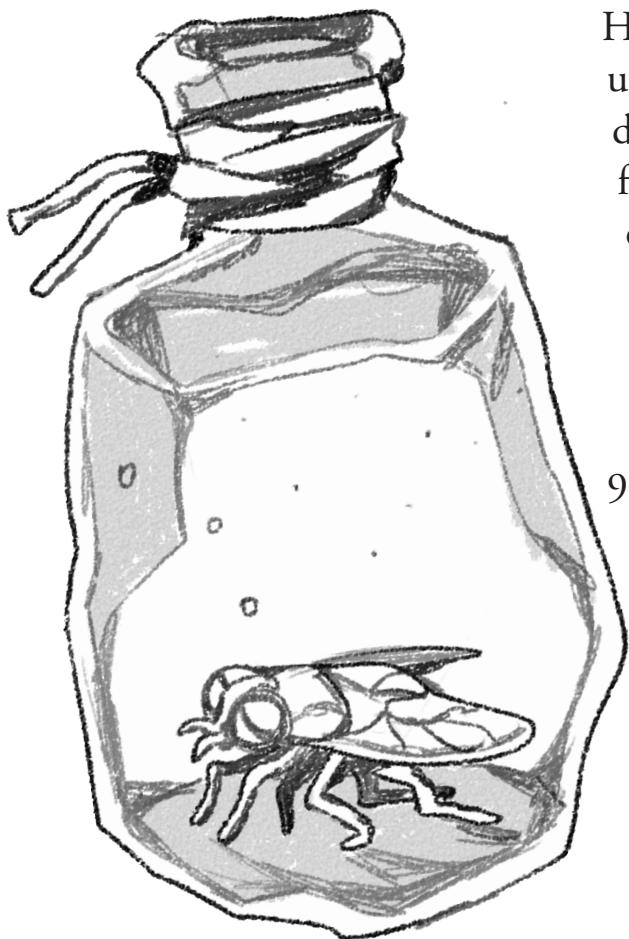
rid of temptation. Those who carried out the attempted murders- they tried to burn her alive no less than three times- became known as the Aesir. Those that opposed the direct assault became the Vanir. Eventually, terrible war erupted between both groups over philosophies of chaos and order, might and magic- all sparked by Freya, who had done nothing wrong. Now, after ages of skirmishing and war the battered Vanir are willing to enter talks with the stronger Aesir to end the fighting- under the condition that both tribes pay tribute to the other in the form of hostages. The Aesir tentatively agree to relinquish Hoenir and Mimir in exchange for Freyr, Njord, and Freya herself. While this is a decent first step, a party of neutral background will be needed to oversee the transaction and finalize the deal.

4. Between the fiery plane of Muspelheim and the frozen wastelands of Niflheim, a great, empty chasm cuts a rift through space where flame and ice meet. Silent, black as pitch, and unmoving, the Ginnungagap is said to be the crevice that birthed Ymir, the first being and seers claim it is the hole that will swallow the world during Ragnarök. It is said that mortals who lay eyes on it go mad, and that gods are driven to despair by the inevitable trek towards entropy.



5. There are wells of knowledge scattered across Yggdrasil, usually clustered by its roots and guarded by Norns- shadowy, inhuman manifestations of truth that guard these sacred waters. A single drink from one of these wells imparts unbelievable cosmic wisdom though the guardian Norn typically charges a steep price for knowledge.

6. To gain understanding and mastery of mystic runes, Odin stabbed himself with his spear and fasted- while hung from a tree- for nine days. It has since become customary to equate answers and wisdom with terrible sacrifice. Most especially for those looking to learn how to read runes.
7. The dwarven city of Vel was erected under the waves just past the glacial cliffs. Encased in a crystal bubble painstakingly carved by talented artisans, it is a city of ingenuity and magic. There's a shadow at the edges of the city's light, though, something huge moves just unseen in the depths just far enough away to obscure itself. The dwarves don't know what it is but it haunts their periphery like a lurking nightmare. Expeditions to identify and possibly slay the beast have proven fruitless, and the mental strain of constant paranoia and fear is taking a toll on the city itself.
8. Valhalla is not the only place warriors go on death. Folkvangr is the marching-field of Freya and those who end up there are to be the first warriors dispatched during Ragnarök. Dying at sea generally sent the valiant to the goddess Ran and her underwater kingdom at the bottom of the ocean.



Helheim is where the majority of the dead go, to toil under the goddess Hel until end-days. For the dishonorable dead, Niflheim awaits- a blasted, frozen hellscape populated with tormented and distorted souls. Hel has direct control over these last two realms and is at once fond of and torments her charges.

9. A conquering raid returns with wild artifacts and riches from a society like the rest of Stromgard has never heard of. Among the pile of riches is a disconcerting golden idol in the shape of some kind of animal no one can identify. It brings terrible luck to whoever claims it and, unbeknownst to all, summons the beast it represents each bloodmoon.

10. Loki cut Sif's golden hair off while she slept as a prank. When she awoke she was inconsolable over the loss and Thor threatened to tear Loki apart for the insult. Under threat of death, Loki agrees to meet with the dwarves of Svartelfheim to barter a replacement. He has no intention of paying up, however, and in fact has every intention to leave with as many dwarven treasures as he can scam off them.

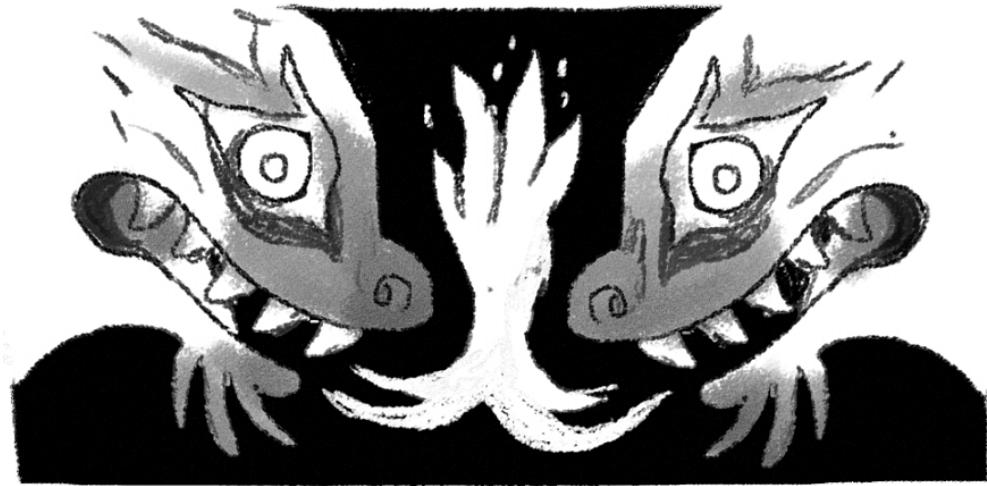


11. Always a fan of wagers he can exploit, Loki once contrived a bet with the dwarven craftsmen Sindri and Brokkr and said that he would bet his head that they couldn't make treasures to the same caliber as the famed folding ship, Skidbladnir. The two dwarves accepted immediately and despite Loki's attempts to interfere, created the ring Draupnir, the hammer Mjolnir, and the golden boar, Gullinbursti. Loki took these gifts (and others) to Odin, Thor, and Freya for favor but when the dwarven brothers came to collect on the wager, Loki gleefully reminded them that he'd only promised his head, not his neck, so they couldn't remove it. The dwarves, with Odin's permission, settled for sewing his mouth shut. Unable to remove the stitches on his own, the trickster god and liar was forced to find someone to aid him. Loki in need of a favor is a dangerous- but extremely lucrative- situation for someone with an opportunistic streak to exploit.

12. Outcasts and outdwellers worship Loki as a deity who is defiant to social norms and beholden to no one. When in trouble or in need of a bridge to freer lands, they usually call upon him for aid. Loki is, for his part, typically quite receptive to his worshipers but never fails to demand a staggering price for favors. Usually the price is something far beyond mortal riches. To his credit, however, the more chaos he can cause by subverting civilization, the more eager he is to help. Loki is more than a simple trickster. His actions- again and again- seek to undermine the order and rule the gods of Asgard have placed upon the world. This makes him especially sympathetic (most of the time) to the Jötnar struggle for freedom and independence.

13. More than anything else, Odin craves wisdom. If a devotee were to make a worthy sacrifice to gain his attention, the leader of the gods is usually willing to make an exchange of knowledge- provided the mortal can provide something of worth, which is admittedly rare.

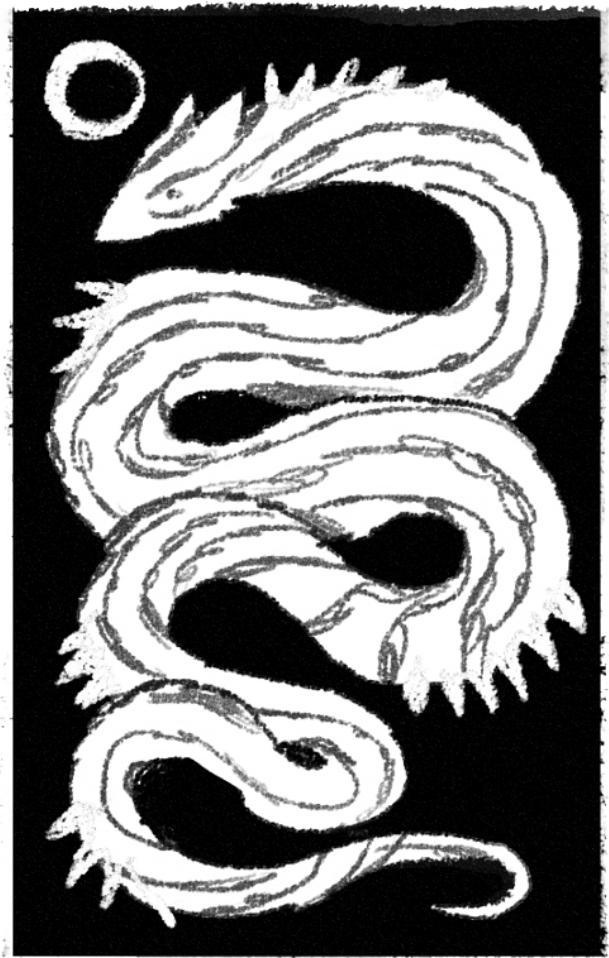
14. Even from the beginning, the gods knew that Fenrir was destined to eat the world. As it grew to monstrous proportions, new chains had to constantly be put on the beast. The gods tricked the massive wolf into letting them approach and bind him by claiming that each newer, stronger set was a test of strength and they would inevitably be forced to smile and applaud and praise him each time one was broken. When the dwarven craftspeople of Svartalfheim were finally able to make a set that held, Fenrir became suspicious (it had the appearance of simple ribbon, which was a wild turn from the hefty manacles before) and only consented to remain still if one of the gods put their hand in his jaws as insurance. Tyr volunteered grimly, for the good of all and for the sanctity of a bargain held, sacrificing his hand when the wolf became enraged that he could not tear the ribbons away.



15. Loki once entered an eating contest with a Jötun. A large board of meat was set on the table and the contestants were put on either end. The point was to see who could eat everything on their way to the middle first. Loki reached it first, of course, but the Jötun had eaten the meat, bones, and even the board. The Jötun was clearly

the victor and played Loki at his own game of twisting the words of others. Loki was delighted by this, rather than furious, and quickly showered praise on the crafty giant.

16. Loki, causing Thor grief as was his wont, once put the mighty god up to the simple task of lifting a small cat before a crowd of giants. Thor boasted mightily about what a stupid, simple task it was and immediately wrapped his hands gently around the little beast to heft triumphantly. Only he couldn't, no matter how hard he tried. The cat could not be lifted and the entire congregated group was laughing hysterically at his attempts. Loki had secretly enchanted a portion of the World Serpent, Jormungandr, to look like a cat which was why Thor was not able to lift its massive weight.



17. Prophetic dreams are a major omen and method of communication for the gods. Powerful messages or images are often experienced by multiple people or a wide area depending on who conjured and the need for their message to get across.

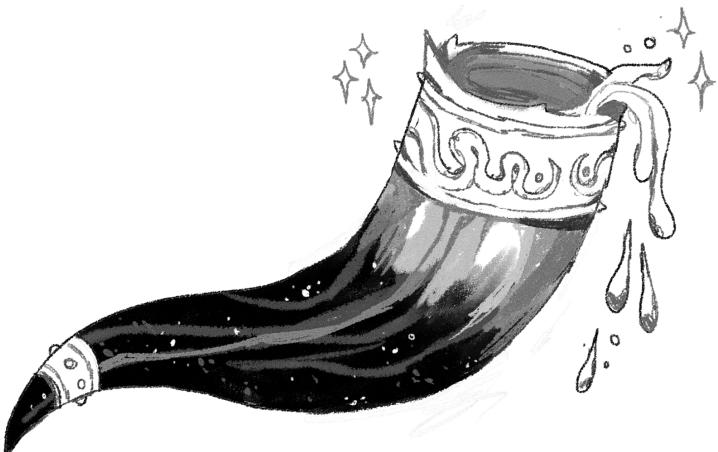
18. Halflings are famed for their hospitality and general amiability, though many believe that their kindness invites exploitation- or worse. The halfling village of Lauf was recently ransacked by bandits and a great number of lives were lost- most of its inhabitants were largely defenseless during the assault. The halflings mourn their dead but their allies- other villages of warriors spanning all races- vow to track down and bring the bandits to justice. Kindness and hospitality aren't weak or foolish, they forge powerful alliances and protective friends.

19. Odin's spear- Gungir- is massive in size and covered with runes. Made by the dwarves of Svartelheim, most can only guess what these markings mean but one can be certain that highly desirable, secret magic is written into the shaft. If only someone learned in runes could get close enough to know its secrets.

20. Idun is the goddess that minds the orchards of Asgard. The berry brambles she tends keep them young and ageless. As such she and the fruit she tends are considered highly desirable by the gods' enemies and a hugely exploitable weakness.

21. Thor 's chariot of choice was a sleek cart pulled by goats. These beasts could be eaten as it pleased him and brought back to life the next morning by hammering their cleaned bones beneath their hides. A greedy dinner guest once broke several bones to get to the marrow inside beforehand, however, and those goats were unable to be successfully revived. Much to Thor's fury.

22. A bow made from a cutting of Yggdrasil by a banished Jötun is unimaginably powerful in the hands of the mortal or semi-mortal that wields it. The gods are after it though and are violently seeking the one who wields it so that they can claim its power for themselves.

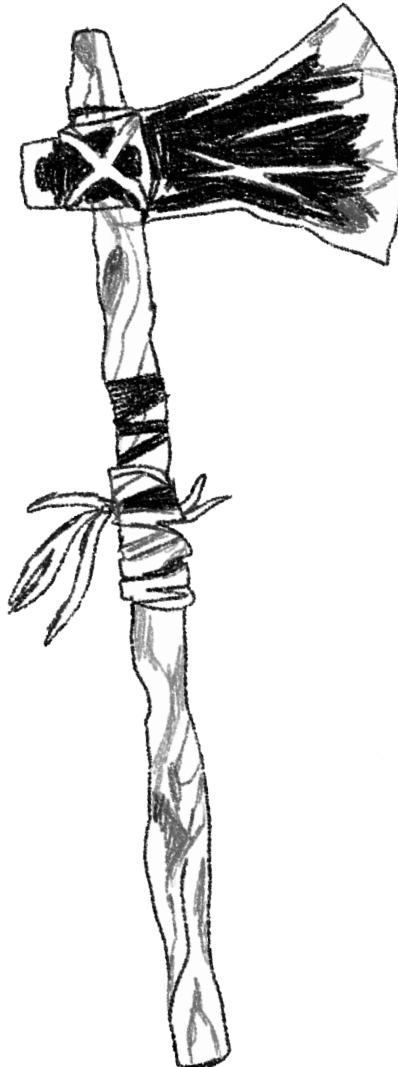


two dwarves slew him and discovered that his spilled blood still contained the essence of immense wisdom and wit. The dwarves brewed mead from it and created the Mead of Poetry, a magic brew that could make any dullard into a poet. A substance like this is practically invaluable, of course, and there are countless

23. After the long and arduous Aesir-Vanir War, the truce was sealed by all of the attendant gods and goddesses spitting into a vat. This liquid took on a humanoid form and mind, going by the name of Kvasir. This being was incredibly intelligent and could solve any problem passed before him. In an effort to do good, Kvasir left Asgard to aid the peoples of other realms. Unfortunately,

parties who could take it from a pair of vicious but naturally average dwarves. Odin particularly would like to obtain the Mead of Poetry and will stop at nothing to find it.

24. It is commonplace for people to accept reparations for the killing of a loved one in battle rather than swearing vengeance. The Jötun Skadi was given reparations for the murder of her father by the Asgardians- this included casting her father's eyes into the sky as stars, tasking the gods to make her laugh (at which only Loki succeeded), and she was permitted to take an Asgardian husband as long as she chose him by his legs and feet alone. Mortal affairs aren't usually quite so outlandish but the concept is the same. Likewise, refusing reparations by the offending party can be seen as impractical and bloodthirsty.



25. A Jötun with a grudge steals a body part from the one aggravating them. Operating without it will be an inconvenience, of course, but not as difficult as retrieving it

26. Holmgang is the Norse trial-by-combat, wherein conflicts are decided by the victor. Many warriors made a living by working as Holmgang champions, representing their clients in the ring and taking part of the restitution awarded to their client as payment. Because victory in the holmgang is the final and total deciding factor in legal right, champions are well paid and well respected. Until they lose, of course.

27. Someone has called Holmgang- you must now defend your honor and prove your innocence by dueling the person who made the call- or their much stronger champion. Losing this fight will brand you guilty and craven and the winner is entitled to a portion of their opponent's wealth in restitution.

28. Vikings must partake in an involved cleansing ritual when they return home from sea voyages. It is said to wash away the capricious and cruel dangers of the open ocean and help separate the worlds of battle and of hearth and home. It also stands as a ceremonious way to welcome returning spouses and lovers, or to find new paramours. When the ritual is neglected, however, dire circumstances will have a ripple effect across the area.

29. The goddess Freya was said to be fond of cats, so much so that they were her steeds and messengers of choice. Because of their association with this goddess, cats were typically treated very well and the unannounced appearance of cats were usually treated as though they were messengers sent to convey information.

30. Jötnar are typically content to live and let live but occasionally, more vicious Jötnar make themselves known by attacking settlements and often eating their victims alive.



31. In early frosts, a strange phenomenon called Ghost Berries occurs. As winter frosts coat berry bushes; ice freezes around the fruit, which rots away, leaving a perfect ice replica in its place. In lore, these were considered a sign from the gods that the coming winter will be abnormally harsh.

32. For the learned, crafting a personal set of runes is a task of great ceremony and importance. Shell, bone, wood, glass, metal... No matter what material is used, it must be valuable (in some way) as the more personal meaning this substance has the more powerful the runestones become.

33. One of the most terrible curses for a skald is the sigil of Fjöldöystave, a runic symbol that encourages compulsive lying. The power of the rune grows as the bearer lies and the consequences for the lies builds tremendously, typically ending in the skald's painful, public death.

34. A powerful warrior, grown bored from lack of challenge, becomes obsessed with the foreign phrase "fear gives you wings". Convinced this may be their shot to re-kindle the fire within them, they set about trying to experience fear in order to gain the power of flight.

35. A conquest party traveling south plans to raid the churches and farms of the defenseless villages found there. Your raid commander has a specific treasure in mind, even if it is unorthodox, and has issued clear orders to bring it to him unscathed and that the conquest isn't over until he has it.

36. At sea, a group of warriors on their way home from conquest drag a bedraggled humanoid figure aboard to save it from drowning. It is unlike anything has ever seen- purplish, rubbery skin, tangled seaweed-green hair... There are many

arguments as to its origin (most believe it must be jötnar related) until something much bigger than it breaches the surface, demanding its runaway child back.



37. While embroiled in dangerous activities, a hasty funeral must be performed to send a fallen warrior to Odin. Tradition dictates that their belongings be placed

with them and everything either burned or sunk into the ocean (or both) for the funeral to be proper and the soul of the deceased to be protected from Hel. There is little time to perform the rite, however, and fewer supplies in which to carry it out. To make matters even worse, the deceased belongings could serve the living warriors tremendously, were they to commit the ultimate dishonor of keeping them.

38. A Nithfir- a distant relative of the immortal Alfir elves- has been spotted in one of the lower realms of Yggdrasil. The Nithfir have been isolated for ages, since the end of the Aesir-Vanir conflict when the world was young. There are rumors that their resentment against Asgard makes them allies of scheming Jötnar, which certainly can't bode well.



39. Dying in Stromgard is rarely the end of your story and where your soul winds up is a vital issues for most warriors. If you ever broke a promise, if you ever committed a dishonorable murder, if you ever promised yourself to someone and then betrayed their trust in the bed of another... Any of these acts brand you dishonorable in death and the lady Hel will place you in a special area. Known as Nastrond, this once-rocky shoreline is now a mountain of corpses, creating treacherous dunes that stretch towards the permanently dark sky. Terrible legends say that the dragon Nidhoggr lives here as well, blindly burrowing through the mountains of desiccated bodies and gnawing on the bones.

40. Caught in a terrible cycle, a small island battered on all sides by rough seas is the site for a terrible, unending ritual. Once, long ago, a Jarl's daughter was kidnapped while he was away on conquest. Upon his return, he immediately set out for his beloved girl and it took the poor Jarl nearly two full years to locate her. She had been captive on this island but had, in the interim, fallen in love with the young Jarl there. While at first he had kidnapped the girl as a bargaining chip, he had come to love her dearly and treated her with respect, as did his warriors. When the girl's father arrived on the island, she desperately tried to broker peace between her husband, her father, and their armies. She offered a valuable necklace as a token but her father's sword had already been drawn. The armies fought to the last man and the girl, distraught and wrecked with grief at losing everything, resurrected everyone only to have the battle resume once again. The battle rages on, even still, and every time the last man falls dead, the Jarl's daughter restores them because she cannot bear the pain of loss.

41. The ring of Advari is a terrible, sentient artifact and it seduces those who wear it with whispers of power. Unfortunately, the ring is interested only in bringing bloodshed and grief, cursing all who cross its path with incredible tragedy.

42. A powerful warlord from lands far south is locked in conflict with a nation that is often a victim of conquests coming out of Stromgard. The warlord and their riders have drawn all the attention to their sieged border, leaving the coast an easy target. A raid on this vulnerability is sure to produce plentiful resources and perhaps even an opportunity to see just how mighty this horse lord is first hand.

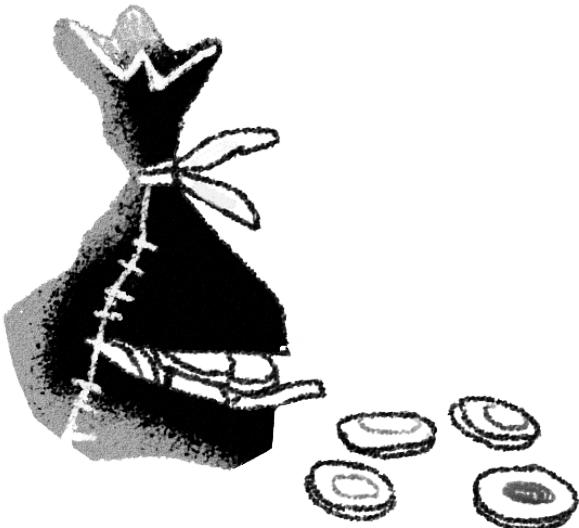


43. Witches are a strange sort and while they can be found selling their charms in any major settlement, one must do business with caution. One of the more common tales is that of various adornments for the body- earrings, bangles, rings- made out of the flesh and bone of previous victims. They say they can work strange magic like this- make earrings out of pieces of ears and let the wearers hear each other across any distance, rings made from finger bones that let the wearer transfer the sensation of their touch elsewhere... Valuable, useful skills if one were able to produce the raw materials.



44. In Stromgard, all bonds of kinship are considered sacred but the Oath of Félag is considered the most solemn of all. To invoke Félag with another is to declare that you are as close as blood brothers, partners in financial matters, and honor bound to each other. If one participant of a Félag is deemed craven, the other is as well by default. Typically, the Oath of Félag was undertaken to bestow honor or convey immense trust between warriors or to declare that they will make decisions regarding wealth as a team. Most commonly, fleet captains on conquest tend to be bound to one or more of their crewmen- this showed unity during the long months at sea and ensured there was a clear chain of loyalty and order down the line. To break or dishonor a Félag is one the gravest crimes one could commit.

45. In dire times, a special sacrifice was performed to appease angry gods, spirits, ancestors, and other forces. Called the Blót, this ritual involved building a dais, appointing an overseer (sometimes a crowd of people, sometimes just a single person), and deciding on an appropriate sacrifice. Usually, it was livestock sacrificed but in grave situations or after multiple failed Blótr, men, women, and children were sometimes used in combination in a desperate attempt to appease the misfortune.



Monsters or beasts of particular strength were sometimes used, depending on the type of situation being faced. The sacrifices were cleaned, anointed with oil or balm made of herbs, and blood would be drawn in a ceremonial, nonfatal wound before committing the victims to pyre.

46. Erected for a single deity, spirit, or other entity, Hörgar were sacrificial mounds made from stones and other materials for people to worship. The Hörgar were

usually on the small side and a single settlement could have many, each one dedicated to a different god or spirit, and open to the sky above. While many rites or ceremonies could be performed at one, arguably the most important ritual to take place at a Hörgar is the act of building one. Each stone must be chosen with care, anointed with alcohol, and etched with an appropriate runestone or stave- an arduous undertaking even for a well-equipped village. To damage one of these markers is to invoke a terrible offense from whatever it was erected to honor.

47. Most are well aware of what it means to fling the insult of *ergi* around, even though it has gone out of fashion and isn't quite as offensive these days. If you really want to offend someone and watch a meadhall go dead silent, invoke the insult of *nîth*. Calling someone *nîth* will have a likely-instant effect. In essence, you're calling your target a thrall, a happy slave, someone with no agency or mind of their own. It undermines their honor and their personhood with all the sharpness of a good blade. *Nîth* is rarely used as it is such a seriously offensive concept and it practically always results in honor-duels to the death.



48. With life so tremulously clinging to the rugged realm of Stromgard, the birth of children is a particularly in-depth affair. Missteps here could doom the child to poor health or a dishonorable disposition, cause undue burdens for the rest, or taint a once-honorable bloodline forever. After birth, an infant remains nameless for nine days- this is a symbolic number that relates to Odin's sacrifice for knowledge in the hopes that, during this time, the mother and child recuperate from the birth and, along with the family, go introspective, contemplating what role the child could play.

After nine days have passed, the child is splashed with seawater, wine, milk, or honey, depending on the region, and one of the parents formally announces the name to attendant relatives and neighbors. Names were equally important in this ceremony as it was commonly thought that bestowing names tangibly linked entities together. It is for this reason that most children were named for a deceased ancestor or god so that their blood would be tied to something. There are many sad tales of this ritual not being completed properly and leaving the child in question to suffer all sorts of horrific abnormalities or otherwise bring terrible curses to those around them.



49. Land wights- or Landvættir, as they are traditionally known- are spirits tied down to specific locations all over the nine realms. They are usually quite peaceful, dedicated to keeping the land under their power flourishing and pristine. Some learned in magic say that the land wights are souls of certain dead, allowed to remain near the living world for providing some unknown service to the goddess Hel. Normally invisible, those who have certain sensitivities are able to see the vaguely humanoid figures of these nature spirits. Usually benevolent, land wights were also known for sometimes dispensing wisdom or other boons to those who prove themselves worthy of such rewards.



50. The gnomes of Stromgard craft with tools the way witches craft with magic. Both are equally dangerous of course, and even though most of Stromgard tries to give gnomes a wide "safety-zone" sometimes their wild creations can escape their creators' control. Two summers ago it was the giant automaton cat built from wood and bark and powered by something equal parts awful-smelling and incredibly explosive. Its hard to say what the next thing they accidentally unleash will be but the flashing colored smoke rising from their villages or the sounds of bellows can't be a good sign.