

# Middarmark



# Credit Due



## **Middarmark Concept**

Thor Olavsrud

## **Middarmark Design**

Thor Olavsrud

## **Middarmark Development**

Luke Crane, Radek Drozdalski, Topi Makkonen, Jared Sorensen

## **Art**

**Dejan Mandic:** The Lay of the Land, New Traits

**Doug Kovacs:** Rules for the Middarmark (The Battle of the Sakki Downs)

**Elisabeth Alba:** Political Map of the Middarmark

**Jayna Pavlin:** Portraits (Astrid Yngesdottir, Eyvind the Stout, Giera the White Bear, Gorm the Boneless, Halla Bårdsdottir, Hjördis, Mjoll, Svana Goldnose), Portrait Frame, Boasting

**Jordan Worley:** Back Cover, Human Skald, Of Trolls and Men

**Kurt Komoda:** Cover, Folios, Spot Art, The Lady of Battles, Ice Giant, The Middarmark, Traditions, Towns and Villages, Lairs and Harrowing Places, Destined to Die, Calling upon Your Fylgja, New Gear, The Rites of Hospitality, Seasons and Weather, In the Shadow of the Horns

**Matthew Ray:** Prayers

**Maxime Plasse:** Middarmark Map

**Michael Prescott:** Adventure Map

**Nathan Pride:** Portraits (Nain, Orgoth Bloodeye, Otkell, Ring Boarhound, Stigand, Throin, Ulf, Una the Cat, Valla Lightborn), Bjorningsaga

**Stefan Poag:** Religion, Settlements, Artifacts and Dweomers

## **Editing**

Luke Crane, Topi Makkonen

## **Copy Editing**

Patrick Riegert

## **Layout**

Radek Drozdalski

## **Art Direction**

Thor Olavsrud

## **Project Management**

Nathan Black

## **Cave Troll**

Andy Action

## **Playtesters**

Luke Crane, Erik Darcey, Donovan Drane, Radek Drozdalski, Mishka Ferguson, Anthony Hersey, Antto Jokela, Amy Joscelyn, Tommi Kangasmaa, Shane King, Eric Klein, Topi Makkonen, Jarkko Nieminen, Matti Rustanius, Ville Peltoniemi, Jared Sorensen, Rich Soto, David Turner, Mike Uy, Sam Weber, Jonathan White

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to Bob Dougherty. You are hugely missed.



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# MIDDARMARK

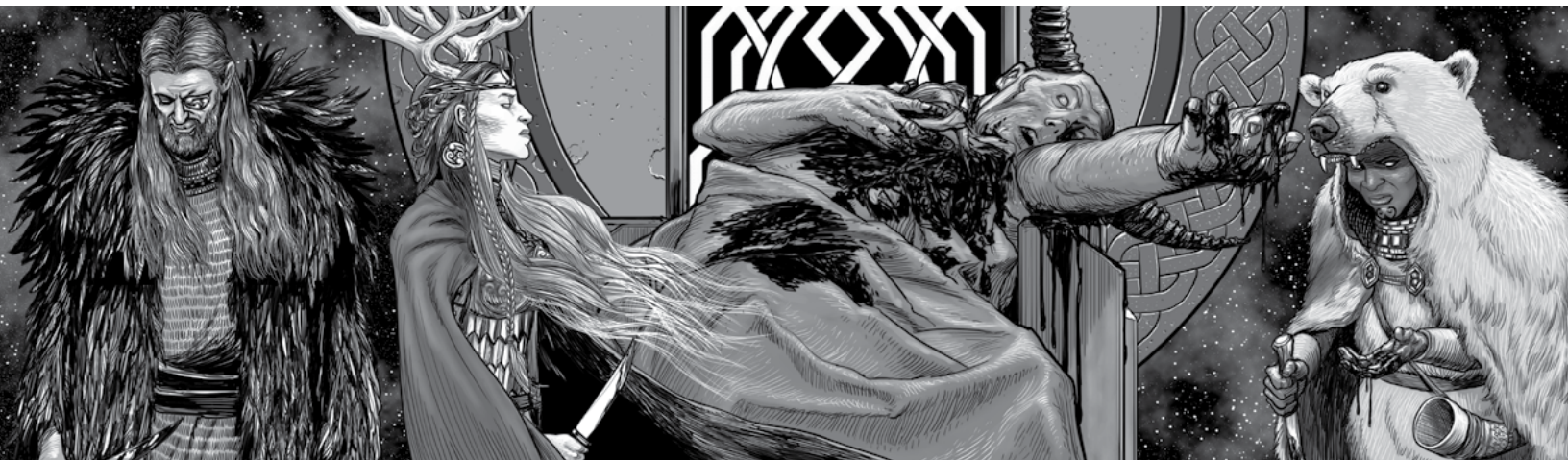


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# Introduction



**T**here is a center to all things, and so it is with worlds. Between Hel and the Dry Lands, Aether and the Endless Ice, the Shining Realm, fair Alfheim and the other worlds sits the world of mortal men and women. And the crossroads of all is the Middarmark: a harsh land of stark beauty concealing the crumbling bones of countless civilizations that have sought to tame it and failed.

The land is lashed by rain during its short, cool summers and swallowed by snow and ice during its long, deadly winters. Malevolent forests, troll-haunted, shroud the land. Deathly fogs choke its craggy shores, hiding savage, pitiless raiders that slip forth from their uncharted skerries to pillage and enslave. Dragons, burning with gold-lust and gnawed by eternal hunger, roost in glacier-blanketed mountains that themselves seethe with stony hate for fleshy things. Wights and spirits of the air prey upon fools caught on the downs when the Burning Lord gives way to night. Even the soil of this unkind land is not particularly fertile.

Most people of the Middarmark huddle behind stout walls, whisper prayers to the Lords for succor and hope the monstrous and hungry denizens of the dark will prey upon some other unfortunate soul. But braver (or more foolhardy) folk do not lie down before the darkness. The land's bones are shot through with veins of silver, and broad-backed miners descend into the forbidding deeps to seek it. Its abundant peat bogs hide nodules of bog iron that

the industrious gather with turf knives and brow-sweat. Its forests yield timber ideal for building ships, and its churning seas boast a treasure trove in fish, whales and ambergris to be wrested from the terrible serpents.

Ruined cities, forgotten grottoes and lost temples and shrines lie buried in the earth or hidden in the hills and mountains, concealing untold ancient treasures. Alagablettur, places of power where the Shroud of Worlds has frayed, lie hidden throughout the Middarmark, drawing power-hungry magicians, would-be Immortal Lords and their worshippers and chthonic and celestial spirits that would walk the worlds.

The mighty can wring wealth and power from this hostile land. Others like you and I who wish to thrive have only one option: to plumb the depths of the past with fire and sword, to seek the treasures of our forebears who sought to tame this land and failed. Perhaps you, brave adventurer, shall be the hero that drives back the darkness...if you live.

## History

### From the Void

Before time began, an endless void lay between the worlds. There, Aurgelmir, first and oldest, progenitor of giants, ruled over a wicked brood from a vast throne of ice. After an interminable age, three siblings among the Old Ones—the

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first Immortals, still worshipped as the Lords of Creation—determined to end Aurgelmir’s evil. They gained Aurgelmir’s presence by stealth and fell upon the giant, slaying it.

The Old Ones then formed the land from Aurgelmir’s flesh, the oceans and seas from its blood, the mountains from its bones and the trees from its hair. Above all they set Aurgelmir’s skull as the skydome.

They set the newly formed earth spinning in the void, that it might serve as a crossroads of sorts for those that would travel the worlds. And at its axis was the Middarmark and Midmeither, the World Tree. At last, the Old Ones departed. Aurgelmir’s wicked children, maddened with rage and fear, found the secret places of the earth to hide and plot their revenge.

The Asar—Immortals who claimed lineage from the Old Ones—built a great fortress in the Shining Realm beyond earth that they might defend against Aurgelmir’s brood.

Long ages have passed and many have come to call the earth home: the immortal alfar, exiled from fair Alfheim; the dvergar, said to be shaped of the maggots that infested Aurgelmir’s dead flesh; the huldufolk, hidden and unassuming; and humans, youngest and most numerous of the peoples of earth.

In all that time, the Middarmark has been awash in blood and strife, held by one people or another for a time—even long centuries—but always fitfully.

## The First People

None now living, save perhaps some among the Young Lords or perhaps a handful of spirits with keen memories, know who the first human inhabitants of the Middarmark were. Even the Sakki and the Skyrnir traveled here from distant lands in ancient times.

Some scholars call the first ones the Ylfarings, and claim that they mastered magics far beyond the ken of the fallen people of today. Mysterious Ylfaring artifacts are still hidden throughout the land, awaiting discovery by the brave—or the foolhardy.

## The Lost Ages

Long years after the disappearance of the Ylfarings, the Skyrnir and Sakki first arrived in the Middarmark. The legends say they crossed the Endless Ice, following their herds. The Skyrnir remained in the north, while the Sakki ranged ever south. The Sakki befriended the spirits of the land, who taught them many secrets, and they grew deep in the spirits’ lore. As they moved south, they encountered a

strange people whose name has since been forgotten. The Sakki waged bloody war upon them and drove them into the sea, claiming their farms and settlements as their own.

The Skyrnir befriended the elves of the north and grew wise and strange to other humans. They wander, still, after their herds.

Long centuries passed, and a new people appeared on the Middarmark’s southern shores. They called themselves Grælings, and their ways were strange to the Sakki, but they claimed ancient ties to the dwarves, for the Kingdom of Nidavellir can be reached from many places. Hesitant to anger the Lords Under the Mountain, the Sakki gifted the newcomers with land and made treaties with them.

The peace would not last, for the lands given to the Grælings were rich and that went hard with many Sakki in lean times. Nor were the Grælings satisfied with their allotment; they were and still are builders and growers who desired ever more land with each passing year.

Centuries of war and bloody raids followed, and even the Skyrnir felt the sting as Sakki chieftains raided Skyrnir reindeer herds to feed their warbands as their farms fell fallow.

## The Coming of the Bjornings

As recorded in the Bjorningsaga, nearly 300 years ago, a sea king and reiver called Bjorn Longfarer descended upon

## Pronunciation Guide

### Individual Letters

<b>a</b>	Like <a> in “hard”
<b>e</b>	Like <e> in “bed”
<b>g</b>	<g> as in “girl” but silent at end of words ending in “ig”
<b>i</b>	Like <ee> in “see”
<b>j</b>	Like <y> in “yes”
<b>o</b>	Like <o> in “note” or <oo> in “school”
<b>r</b>	Rolled slightly on tip of the tongue.
<b>u</b>	Like <oo> in “foot” or <u> in “duke”
<b>w</b>	Like <v> in “violin”
<b>y</b>	Like <i> in “pin” or “machine”
<b>æ</b>	Like <a> in “bad”
<b>ø</b>	Like <i> in “bird”
<b>â</b>	Like <aw> in “saw” or <o> in “note”

### Diphthongs

<b>ai</b>	Like <ai> in “kaiser”
<b>ei</b>	Like <ei> in “eider”
<b>au</b>	Like <au> in “sauerkraut”
<b>øy</b>	Like <oi> in “boil”

### Consonant Combinations

<b>Gj, gj</b>	The <g> is silent
<b>Gn, gn</b>	<gn> as in “bologna”
<b>Kj, kj</b>	A combination of <h> and <ch>, as in “loch”
<b>Ng, ng</b>	<ng> as in “song”
<b>Sj, sj</b>	<sh> as in “shoe”
<b>Th, th</b>	The <h> is silent.

### Example Pronunciations

<b>Fylgja</b>	(Fill yah)
<b>Nidfjoll</b>	(Need fyall)
<b>Regn</b>	(Rein)

## The Twilight of the Immortals

The First Act of Law, the creation of the earth, was predicated on the act of murder. Aurgelmir's eldest children, the Jotnar, gathered beneath Midmeither and demanded justice. But the Lords of Law, birthed through the Old Ones' act of creation, declaimed to the gathered Asar and Jotnar that there could be no justice for there had been no crime—Law had not yet come into being when Aurgelmir was slain.

The Jotnar howled in rage and anguish. If they could not have justice, they would set themselves against the Asar in blood feud, win back Aurgelmir's body and burn it, as is fitting for funerals. Thus, they became the Lords of Chaos.

the Middarmark with dragon-prowed ships beyond number. With sword, axe and witch-fire, the Bjornings carved a bloody swathe across the land, claiming the Middarmark for their own. The Skyrnir and Græling tribes bent their necks to the Bjornings and sued for peace or fled in exile to Vestreyjar, Valland and Svanland, but the Sakki, proud and warlike, refused. They were driven from their ancient holdings and are no more, though their hidden shrines and the barrow mounds of their ancestors remain, overbrimming wells of malevolence that draw monstrous, evil creatures like lodestones.

Following his great victory, Bjorn raised the mighty hall Drekansreir on the Rik Bay of the Rimfjord and gathered about him his peerless warriors. He showered them with rings and treasure and feasted them for a long season, proving to one and all the strength of his words and deeds. His warriors ranged far and wide in the Middarmark.

### The Conquests of Sigrun Shieldbreaker

Bjorn's daughter and champion, Sigrun Shieldbreaker, extended her father's power. In time, kings and queens from the Skyet Sea in the east to the Regn Sea in the west and from Vanskr in the north to Stortmarke in the south fell before her warhost and paid tribute to King Bjorn the Victorious, acknowledging him their overlord and acclaiming him high king of the Middarmark.

When Bjorn passed to the Hidden Halls in the Dry Lands, the hersar of the Middarmark elected Sigrun to be high queen, though the conquered petty kings and queens chafed under Bjorning rule. Sigrun negotiated a wary peace with the dwarven kingdom of Nidavellir and set her sights across the sea to Svanland in the south and Holmsea in the west.

The kings and queens of those lands could not stand before the legendary warrior and sued for peace, agreeing to pay tribute.

But while High Queen Sigrun's attentions were diverted, the petty kings and queens of the Middarmark saw their chance to be free of the Bjorning conquerors. The high queen hurried home. Her longships fell upon Stortmarke first, and the warhost then swept north, reconquering the recalcitrant kingdoms. The rebellious kings and queens were swept aside, and in their place Sigrun made jarls of her shield-brethren. The conquered lands became known as the Jarldoms of Dreikdal, Jeilirdal, Mærgdal, Sudstrond, Vanskrdal and Vargstrond.

For a brief, shining moment, it seemed that Sigrun would be able to lay aside her sword. But it was not to be. Sigrun's warriors were bloodied and war-weary, and Ukho the Head-taker, last of the Sakki chiefs, chose that time to reclaim the Sakki's lost lands.

Flooding forth from their hiding places in the Ironwold, the Sakki and their monstrous allies met Sigrun's host in the fog-shrouded Battle of the Sakki Downs. Sigrun and Ukho destroyed each other, and the downs were stained red with the blood of their warriors.

Sigrun's body and her runesword—Skofnung—were lost to the bottomless depths of the lake that bears her name: Sigrun's Mirror. In the centuries since her death, her hero cult has become widespread among Bjornings, and legend holds that if one looks upon the waters of Sigrun's Mirror under the full moon at midnight, she will appear in the waters and grant a blessing of war-magic.

Ukho's household warriors are said to have carried his shattered body and his runesword Tyrfinng into the great barrow at the center of the Downs, where they sealed themselves in along with Ukho's consorts and slaves. The legend says they called down a powerful curse that would fall upon any who violated the tomb.

### The Death of Bjornar the Grim

Had he lived, Sigrun's son, Bjornar the Grim, would surely have been elected high king upon his mother's death. But it was not to be. Even as his mother's host marched north from Sudstrond to put down the rebellious tribes, Bjornar was in embassy with the dwarves at Frostfast Hall, aiming to keep the dwarves from throwing their weight behind the rebel kings and queens.

As Ukho's hosts spilled forth from the Ironwold, an even greater threat made itself known in the form of Ofnir the

## A Note on the Sakki

The power of the Sakki was broken at the Battle of the Sakki Downs, and most Bjornings speak as if they are gone from this earth. But the Sakki made many bargains with the spirits of the Ironwold, and that terrible place is vast. A great multitude could still be hiding in the Ironwold's embrace, nursing ancient grievances and learning ancient secrets from fell powers.

**Black Wyrn.** The dragon emerged from its lair near Fjalar's peak, laid waste to the countryside, pillaged treasures and burned villages.

With the spear Teineigin, forged by the dwarves in the fires at the heart of the world, Bjornar climbed the mountain to face the wyrn and end its scourge. They both met their doom that day. Among the Bjornings, the mountain has been known as Bjorngrim's Folly ever since.

## The Ebbing Tide

With the deaths of Sigrun and Bjornar, Bjorn Longfarer's line failed. In time, the jarls and hersar would elect a new king, but the damage was done. The power of the Bjorning high kings has ebbed ever since.

First, Svanland and Holmsea ceased their tribute. Not long after, Mærgdal and its jarls and people were swallowed by the Ironwold and disappeared from all knowledge. The witchfolk of the black spire of Svarttårn that arose there years later bend their necks to none save their deathless master, Gorm the Boneless.

The jarls of Dreikdal and Jeilirdal have long since styled themselves kings and queens, paying only lip service to Rimholm's rule, save when it comes time to elect a new high king or queen. They are far from the reach of Rimholm's warriors and turn ever inward.

Vanskrdal and the lands north of the Vargstrondfjord fell to the ridders of the Gott warhost some 20 years ago, and only the icy waters of the fjord and the Vimur River have kept them from pressing south.

Just nine years past, the Scefing sea kings of Toskarinn broke the power of the jarls of Sudstrond, allowing the Græling clans of the city of Stortmarke to claim independence. The pirates of Toskarinn exact heavy tribute from them and harass shipping through the Skera Strait.

The jarls of Vargstrond remain loyal to the crown, but their eyes turn ever north and west to maintain watch against the threat of the Gott warhost and the ever-present dangers of the Ironwold.

# A Brief Glossary of Terms

## ∴A∴

**Alagablettur:** Places where the Shroud Between Worlds has frayed or torn, allowing passage into the realm of Aether. Weird things happen in the vicinity of alagablettur, and spirits, monsters and magical folk are drawn to them.

**Alfheim:** The Otherworld realm from which the elves came to the Middarmark. The elves long for their homeland, but they are exiled due to a terrible crime of which none will speak.

**Asar:** The tribe of Immortal Lords who claim direct or spiritual lineage from the Old Ones.

**Aurgelmir:** First and oldest. The giant that ruled the void from a throne of ice before time. Aurgelmir was murdered by the Old Ones, and its body and blood were used to create the waters, earth and sky.

## ∴B∴

**Bjornings:** A tribe of humans whose ancestors, led by Bjorn Longfarer, conquered the Middarmark nearly 300 years ago. They are inveterate sailors. The high queen and the jarls of the Middarmark are Bjornings. Bjornings can be found all over the Middarmark, but are most common near the city of Rimholm.

**Blot:** A holy day and festival that culminates in one or more sacrifices. Four blots are celebrated in the Middarmark: Jolblot on the winter solstice, Disablots on the vernal equinox, Sigrunblot on the summer solstice and Haustblot on the autumnal equinox.

**Bragarfull:** The promise-cup. A drinking horn or cup with which an individual makes a ritual boast or vow.

## ∴C∴

**Cottar:** An impoverished freeman or freewoman that does not own land or stock (cattle, horses or oxen) and so must live as a tenant and labor for someone else. Cottars are expected to maintain javelins, slings or a bow for use with the leidangr.





**Disir:** A collective name for the Lords of Plenty and Want, and the Lords of Fate, particularly Sigrun, Freydis and Ondurdis.

**Draumkona (pl. draumkonur):** Elven seers that interpret the dreams of the *drömmere* and express their will to the elves in the waking world.

**Drömmere:** Elves that spend most of their time dreaming so their minds might walk the Vale of the Dreamer. Considered the wisest among the elves.

**Drømmerendal:** The Vale of the Dreamer, an Otherworld realm thought to border on Alfheim. The *drömmere* endlessly quest in *Drømmerendal* for the path to the Tower of Seven Dreams.

**Dry Lands:** The realm of the dead.



**Endless Ice:** A realm to the north of the Middarmark that extends into the Otherworld and the Jotnar homeland of Jotunheim.



**The First Act of Law:** The Old Ones' creation of the earth from Aurgelmir's flesh. This act gave birth to the Lords of Law.

**Forn Sith:** The old custom or old religion, focused on ancestor worship and the worship of *landvættir* and other spirits.

**Fylgja (pl. fylgjur):** A guardian spirit or fetch, usually in the form of an animal, that accompanies a person and guides them toward their destiny. *Fylgjur* usually guide their people through dreams, though sometimes they appear in waking visions. *Fylgjur* often reflect the character of the person they represent: A strong, plodding person might have an ox, while a sly person might have a fox. Berserkers often have a bear, boar or wolf as their spirit animal, while some sorcerers can shapeshift into their *fylgja*.



**Godi / gydja (pl. godar / gydjur):** Among the *Grælings*, *godi* (if male) and *gydja* (if female) are chieftains and priests acclaimed by their communities because they are well-respected householders with the political power to

settle disputes and make others consider their opinions. They serve as caretakers of the cult statues of the *Asar*, *Jotnar* and ancestors, and are responsible for performing the proper sacrifices at the ordained times.

**Gotts:** A human tribe that invaded the north of the Middarmark 20 years ago and is now pressing south into *Vargstrond*. They are related to the *Bjornings* and *Scefings*, but whereas those peoples are sailors, the *Gotts* are peerless horse warriors. Most *Gotts* in the Middarmark are found in *Vanskrdal*.

**Gottmark:** The name the *Gotts* give *Vanskrdal*.

**Greve:** *Gott* high nobility that serves as companion to the warchief. Equivalent to a *jarl*.

**Grevskap:** An administrative district overseen by a *greve*. There are five *grevskap* in *Vanskrdal*, the land in the Middarmark held by the *Gott* host.

**Grælings:** *Græling* farmers and fisherfolk are the most widespread humans of the Middarmark. In many places, they are subject peoples under *Bjorning* or *Gott* overlords, but they have reasserted self-rule in the prosperous *Regn Coast* of the southern Middarmark.



**Havn League:** A confederation of cities in *Gottland*, *Holmsea*, *Valland*, *Svanland* and the *Regn Coast* of the Middarmark that seek to encourage trade and protect shipping in the *Regn Sea* from the *Scefings*.

**Hero-forming:** The act of calling upon the power of one's *fylgja*. Some magicians and clerics know the secrets of taking hero-forming even further, allowing them to shapeshift into their *fylgja*.

**Hersir (pl. hersar):** Among the *Bjornings* and *Scefings*, *hersar* are men or women chosen by their communities to settle disputes, lead in raids or defense, perform the sacred rites and organize and manage the community's labor. *Hersar* have traditionally controlled voting blocs in the legislative assemblies called *Things*, but monarchs have begun pushing them aside in favor of appointed royal officers called *lendermenn*.

**The Hidden Halls:** The halls of the dead in the *Dry Lands*.

**High king/queen:** The *Bjorning* ruler of the Middarmark, elected by the *jarls* and *hersar* at the *Thing of All Middarmark* following the death of the previous high king or queen. Monarchs draw warriors to their halls with the power of their reputation and generosity.

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**Hof:** A cult temple, usually made of timber and built on a sacred hill or other holy place.

**Hogr:** An open-air altar or shrine made of piled stones, usually built on a hilltop.

**The Hungry Time:** A common term for the period in late winter and early spring before the winter rye and winter barley crops are ready to harvest. It is a lean time for most folk of the Middarmark and starvation is not rare. The youngest and the elderly are often hit hardest.

**Huskarl:** The hand-picked household warriors of jarls, monarchs and royal officers like lendermenn. Huskarls typically maintain weapons, helmets, armor and horses with which to serve their lords.



**Jarl:** Chieftains that rule extensive territories on behalf of kings and queens. Some jarls in the Middarmark no longer recognize the power of the high king or queen and style themselves kings and queens instead.

**Jarldom:** An extensive territory of the Middarmark ruled by a jarl. The six jarldoms of the Middarmark are: Dreikdal, Jeilirdal, Mærgdal, Sudstrond, Vanskrdal and Vargstrond. Of those, Dreikdal and Jeilirdal have all but declared themselves independent kingdoms, Mærgdal has been lost to the Ironwold, much of Sudstrond has been seized by independent Græling Rath and Vanskrdal has been conquered by the Gott host. Only Vargstrond remains whole and loyal to the high queen.

**Jotnar (sing. Jotunn):** Giants, trolls, spirits and the Immortals that descend from Aurgelmir. The greatest among them are also known as the Lords of Chaos.



**Karl:** Freemen and freewomen with enough means to own some farmland, some stock or both. Karls are expected to maintain a weapon—a sword, spear or axe—and a helmet, and serve in the leidangr.

**Kenning:** A poetic device, much beloved in the Middarmark, which uses compound, figurative terms as a circumlocution. For example, ‘dew of slaughter’ and ‘battle-sweat’ are common kennings for blood, while the ‘skerry of incantations’ is a kenning for the teeth in a sorcerer’s mouth.

**King/queen:** Ruling in the Middarmark is not about controlling territory—though that certainly provides wealth; it’s about commanding a warband. Any warlord

that can win a band of loyal warriors to their side with a reputation for valor and generosity is a king or queen in the Middarmark.



**Lan:** Used to designate a fief in the Gottmark. A lan generally consists of one or more villages, a manor and pastures for stock. Ridders are awarded lan either from a greve or directly from the Gott warchief and pledge their service in exchange.

**Landvættir:** A collective term for the chthonic spirits of the Middarmark—the spirits of field, rock, forest and stream. The spirits are everywhere, for those who know how to look.

**Leidangr:** The local levy, composed of karls and cottars, led by a hersir, to defend their communities or raid others. Coastal leidangr are expected to maintain a ship in addition to their weapons. Lendermenn, jarls and monarchs can call up leidangr to defend lands or for expeditions, but expeditions are expected to be short—no more than a month or so—so the farmers can return to their fields and animals.

**Lendermann (pl. lendermenn):** Royal officers appointed by a jarl or monarch to govern two or more steadings (in place of the local hersar), or a village or city. A lendermann’s primary duty is to collect taxes on the jarl’s or monarch’s behalf (making them quite unpopular in most cases; taxes themselves are a recent concept in the Middarmark).



**Old Ones:** The Immortals that slew Aurgelmir and created the earth. Also known as the Lords of Creation.

**Otherworld:** A collective term for the realms beyond earth, including Alfheim, the Dry Lands, the Endless Ice, the Shining Realm and more. The domains of spirits and Immortals.



**Rath:** A Græling council that governs a territory. Composed of local godi and gydja.

**Ridder:** A knight. Low Gott nobility.



**Sakki:** The Sakki people were once common in the central Middarmark but bore the brunt of the Bjorning invasion 300 years ago. Those that survived fled to the Ironwold Forest, where legend holds they struck bargains with malign landvættir that dwell there. Most Bjornings only know them from folktales, where they take the roles of mad spirit-binders and witchfolk.

**Scefings:** The Bjornings and the Scefings were once a single tribe. The Scefings are descended from those who followed Scef Serpenteeye south to Toskarinn after his brother, Bjorn Longfarer, was acclaimed high king. Today, the Scefings are feared pirates and slavers that prowl the Skera Strait.

**Shaman:** Skyrnir seers and blacksmiths that interpret dreams and convey the will of the landvættir to their people. They lead religious rites, and the Skyrnir look to them to settle disputes. The Skyrnir shamans first learned their craft from the draumkonur of the elves. Many have awakened their fylgjur and are shapeshifters.

**Shining Realm:** The domain of the Asar beyond earth. It is home to a great fortress, which they hold strong against the Jotnar.

**Skald:** A poet and storyteller. Skalds are much respected by all peoples throughout the Middarmark. Lendermenn, jarls, kings and queens all compete to attract the greatest skalds to their halls, for reputations for greatness and generosity are what draw huskarls to one's warband, and the greatest skalds can make or break one's reputation. Skyrnir skalds are widely considered to be the greatest in the Middarmark.

**Skyrnir:** These nomadic herders range the far north of the Middarmark. Once, they roamed as far south as Vanskrdal, but the Gotts claim those pastures now for their horses and cattle, and they do not tolerate the wandering folk. Skyrnir storytellers are famed throughout the land.

**Sortjern:** The sortjern, unique to the Ironwold, are knotted and twisted trees, with venous bark as black as night. Hard as the stony bones of the land from which it springs, the sortjern blunts axes and stubbornly resists flame.

**Steading:** An isolated and fortified farm composed of one or more extended families and their thralls (if they can afford them). Most people of the Middarmark, particularly karls and cottars, live in steadings rather than towns.

**Styrmann:** A noble dwarf who leads a community.



**Tax farmer:** A derogatory term for a lendermann's agents. Lendermenn auction off the rights to collect a particular tax in a region. Those who win the bid are charged with collecting the tax, but must make up any shortfall. However, they may keep any amount they raise over the set amount.

**Thegn:** Noble dwarven retainers and warriors that serve styrmenn and higher dwarven nobility.

**Thing:** The yearly legislative assembly of a region. A lawspeaker opens the Thing by reciting one-third of the laws (so that each attendee hears the full set of laws every three years). Any freeman or freewoman who owns a weapon and a helmet has a right to speak and vote at the Thing. The Thing settles lawsuits and disputes that cannot be resolved by a hersir, godi/gydja, lendermann, jarl or monarch.

**Thrall:** A slave. Thralls are usually people captured in Valland or Svanland. Their lives are hard and sad, but their children are born free. The law requires that owners provide their thralls with adequate shelter and food. The law also specifies that thralls be given two days a week to work for themselves so they might eventually buy their freedom. Of course, slaves have no right to speak at a Thing, and few free people would press claims on their behalf.

**Twilight of the Immortals:** A prophecy of the end times, when the Jotnar will rise up as one, seeking vengeance for Aurgelmir's murder and burn the earth to lay Aurgelmir's spirit to rest at last.



**Urd:** One's doom or destiny. Fate.

**Warchief:** The ruler of the Gott host in the Middarmark. The warchief is supported and advised by five companions known as greves.

**Weregild:** A blood price paid to a clan (ætt) in restitution for the death or maiming of one of its members. Such payments are generally made to prevent an escalation to blood feud between two families.

**Ættir:** Among all the peoples of the Middarmark, ætt are a clan or bloodline that shares a common ancestor. The clan ancestral mother and spirit, who serves as the clan's guardian in the Otherworld, is its ættir.

# Traditions



## Folk of the Middarmark

### Alfar

The alfar, or elves as humans often call them, are exiles. The eldest among this immortal folk awakened before this earth was wrought and arrived here soon after its creation, fleeing some terrible crime. Long have they wandered the earth learning its secrets. They are a shy and retiring folk, and they hoard wisdom beyond the ken of mortal men and women, but they are terrible when wrath.

Tall, slender and possessed of an otherworldly beauty, the alfar delight in song and have a natural affinity for magic.

The alfar have no rulers as such, but the *drømmere*, or dreamers, perhaps come closest to that role. The *drømmere* are elves—usually ancient but not always—who have largely forsaken the waking world to walk the *Drømmerendal*, unfettered by the limitations of flesh. *Seeresses* known as *draumkonur* interpret their counsel and share it with the rest of the alfar.

It is said that should the *drømmere* all awaken at once, it will herald the Twilight of the Immortals.

### Dvergar

The dvergar, or dwarves, are said to have been born from the maggots that grew in Aurgelmir's dead flesh, but they

scoff at such talk. They say they were born whole from the alchemy of the transformation of Aurgelmir's dying blood and bone into life-giving mead and soil.

This, they say, is the root of their compulsion to build and shape, for beauty and value are born of violence and struggle. To the dvergar, nothing is more noble than to take something base and without order or form—be it uncut jewel, ore or history—and impose one's will upon it until it is precise and beautiful without peer.

The dvergar are, on the whole, a jealous and secretive people. They are builders and organizers of grand vision and supreme craft, but petty hatreds and pride often poison their work. They find contests of skill irresistible.

Short by human standards, they tend to be broad and strong, with surprisingly dextrous fingers; some tend to fat. They have pitch-black skin and blonde, red or black hair. They favor beards.

### Huldufolk

The sons and daughters of Bjorn often refer to the huldufolk as halflings due to their diminutive stature. They are a small, stout people known for their love of dancing, good food, good drink and good cheer. Most huldufolk are wanderers—extended families of several dozen individuals that settle in a place for a few years before moving on. Indeed, some say that centuries ago, the huldufolk gained the displeasure of a sorcerer who cursed them with wanderlust.

## A Note on Race and Tribe

The human tribes of the Middarmark are cultural institutions, not racial ones. The idea of “racial purity” doesn’t exist in the Middarmark; if a person speaks the same language as you, holds similar values and reveres the same immortals, they are like you, regardless of their skin color, eye color or hair color. However, newcomers are not expected to abandon their old values and gods. That would be considered strange and alarming.

While the people of the Middarmark value tradition and the ways of their ancestors, most are not automatically afraid of new things: New foods, new ways of doing things and even new immortals will be accepted and assimilated into the culture if they prove interesting or effective.

This process is reflected in the Græling Nature questions, which, in effect, allow you to choose between being a steadfast traditionalist (sticking with all Græling Nature questions) or a Græling who has been either partially or fully assimilated by the Bjornings or Gotts.

Each tribe is composed of ættir (bloodlines or houses, but also the ancestral spirit of the family) that are bound together by familial connections and a common ancestor, but it is accepted and normal for people to love or wed individuals from outside the tribe. If such people respect the tribe’s cultural mores, they are accepted as members of the tribe—especially if the unions result in children. Marriage in the Middarmark is a ritual in which the ancestral mother of the house adopts the newcomer as a member of the family. Likewise, divorce involves the severing of such familial ties.

Many of the humble people of the Middarmark consider the arrival of huldufolk families a blessing, for it is believed that good fortune and good harvests come with them. Some families even leave offerings of food and drink for the huldufolk during the Jolblot festival. Other people tell of raucous and wild huldufolk gatherings in the dead of winter that consume all of a steading’s stores before the huldufolk move on, leaving the people to starve.

On the whole, the huldufolk dislike towns and cities.

## Astrid Yngesdottir, High Queen of the Middarmark

Astrid is the daughter of wealthy Bjorning landholders from Vargstrond, and cousin to Jarl Una the Cat and Grandmaster Ring Boarhound of Jernkloster. She wed High King Bård Sygtrigsson as part of the political horse-trading that put him on the throne eight years ago.



There were many rumors at the time that little love was lost between them, but they made strong allies. Bård was beloved by his fearsome huskarls, and Astrid had a genius for political maneuvers under which the high king began to reclaim some of the power that had been lost in the decades since the death of High King Stein Sigurdsson when his ship sank on the Gott Coast. Then it all teetered on a knife’s edge when Bård was killed in a fall from his horse while hunting two years ago.

But Astrid had not been idle in the intervening years. She had forged many strong alliances, and with the support of her cousin Una, she was acclaimed high queen at the Thing of All Middarmark two years past. Since then, she has moved to consolidate her power and extend her hand over Jeilirdal and Dreikdal, much to the dismay of King Eyvind and Queen Mjoll.

More worrisome to some, she has begun laying plans for her daughter, Halla, to succeed her as hereditary high queen, contrary to the ancient Bjorning traditions of elected kingship.

## Humans

### Bjornings

The Bjornings are the descendents of the people that followed Bjorn Longfarer and his daughter Sigrun Shieldbreaker in the conquest of the Middarmark nearly 300 years ago. Legend holds they sailed to the Middarmark from the Otherworld, though most chroniclers think it more likely the tribe was pushed west by rivals in Gottland or Ostergard.

The Bjornings are a tall people that have a tendency toward fair skin and blonde or red hair, though brown to black skin

## The Middarmark

and hair are not rare. They are known for a dour and stoic disposition and a tendency to respect hard work, though they can become wild and uninhibited when deep in their cups.

## Gotts

The Gott tribes are close cousins with the Bjornings, and their language, customs and hero cults share many similarities. But whereas the Bjornings are sailors born, the Gotts are horse lords. They organize in hosts around a warchief.

While Bjorning ships dominate the Skyet Sea, the Gotts, under Warchief Otkell, managed to land a host in the lands north of Vargstrondfjord some 20 years ago. With their peerless cavalry and razor-sharp lances, the host conquered Vanskrdal and carved much of it into pasturelands for their cattle and horse herds. Otkell has given a great deal of captured land to the ridders of his host, but they now have many landless sons and daughters, and there is a great deal of pressure to expand holdings to the south.

Like their cousins, the Bjornings, the Gotts have skin that ranges from fair to black. Most have brown, black or auburn hair, though some have blonde or red hair. Many Gotts have a distinctive, rolling gait born from lives lived on horseback.

## Grælings

The Grælings are an earnest, hard-working people that delight in drink, song and cleverly crafted things when their work is done. Still, they are a litigious folk, jealous of their rights and famous for the blood feuds and kinstrike that can destroy whole clans when justice fails.

Long a conquered people, the Grælings of the Regn Coast began to reassert their independence after the warband of the jarl of Sudstrond was shattered in the Battle of Sølvsfjord nine years ago. The Græling towns and cities of the Regn Coast have reestablished Rath to rule themselves, and their prominent position in the Havn League trading network has made many Græling merchants extremely wealthy. A number of these merchants have begun recruiting mercenaries to resist Jarl Stigand of Sudstrond's inevitable attempt to take back what he considers his.

The Grælings tend to be shorter than Bjornings, with fair skin and fair, brown or dark hair. However, generations of intermarriage with Bjornings, Gotts and Skyrnir mean individuals can have any combination of skin and hair color.

They are the most widespread among the peoples of the Middarmark and can be found nearly anywhere, though generally as subject people in Bjorning or Gott lands.

## Scefings

**B**jorn Longfarer was not the only sea king among the reivers that conquered the Middarmark. Among them was Bjorn's brother and rival, Scef Serpenteve. When Bjorn was acclaimed high king following the conquest, Scef was enraged that he was sleighted and swore vengeance. He led his people south, where they settled in the islands and skerries of Toskarinn, using them as a base for piracy and raiding. To this day, their cousins, the Bjornings and Gotts, consider them dangerous, bloodthirsty barbarians—more wolves than men and women. While the tribes of the Middarmark are no strangers to thrall-taking and the slave trade, few Scefings fish, farm or raise stock. Instead, they survive on plunder and the capture and sale of people from Valland and Svanland.

Most sell their captives at the great slave market in Stortmarke, though some fare east to the distant markets of Ostergard, where the demand is seemingly endless.

## Skyrnir

The Skyrnir have called the Middarmark home longer than any extant human people, save perhaps the Sakki, should any of that tribe still survive. They are, for the most part, nomads who follow the reindeer herds. They primarily roam the lands to the north and west of the Nidfjoll Mountains, though small bands journey in Vanskrdal from time to time.

They are respected among the alfar, while dverggar find their unsettled ways disquieting. Among the Bjornings and Gotts, Skyrnir skalds are held in high esteem, and any nobleperson who can attract a Skyrnir skald to their hall gains great respect in return.

The Skyrnir tend to have fair to ruddy skin, though some have darker brown complexions. Most have blonde or brown hair.

## Languages of the Middarmark

The Bjornings, Gotts and Scefings all speak distinct dialects of Skapr. Given time and patience, speakers of different dialects can understand each other. The Bjorning and Scefing dialects are quite closely related, though Scefing frequently uses archaic phrasings. Gott is further removed but still mutually intelligible.

The Sakki and Skyrnir tongues are similarly related. Both either descend from elvish or borrow heavily from it.

Græling is a heavily modified form of dwarvish, though dvergar tend to scowl when they hear it, considering it ugly and unmusical. The dvergar tongue is surprisingly sweet, and it's spoken with a sing-song quality and much clever word-play.

The huldufolk have their own cant that they use with each other, but typically speak Skapr or Græling with other peoples.

## Runes & Glyphs

Most magical inscriptions and enchantments in the Middarmark are made using dwarvish or elvish runes and glyphs. Most non-magical writing, however, uses a script erroneously called Oster. The Oster alphabet made its way to the Middarmark by way of Ostergard, but did not originate there.

## Politics and Law

### Among the Bjornings

The rugged terrain of the Middarmark makes it difficult for the powerful to control wide swathes of land, except along the coasts and navigable rivers, even if they boast many warriors. Travel is simply too slow.

As a result, most folk in the Middarmark organize in clannish communities known as steadings, isolated but fortified farms composed of one or more extended families and their thralls (if they can afford them). These communities often look to one man or woman to decide matters, settle disputes and organize labor. These leaders are called hersar. Those communities that can't settle on a single leader tend to split and go their own way, with or without bloodshed.

Hersar lead their communities in defense or on raids and take the role of priest or priestess for local sacrifices and rites to the Immortals.

Any disputes that cannot be settled by the local hersar are taken to the Thing, local assemblies held in each jarldom. Every free man or woman with a weapon and a strong hat (helmet) has a right to speak and vote at the Thing, though most hersar worth the name use their followers as a voting bloc.

The Thing settles lawsuits and questions of fishing rights, farming rights and the like. In general, people abide by the decisions of the Thing, but it is not unheard of for bloodlines that feel they did not receive justice to swear a blood feud upon those they think wronged them. Blood

feuds are never undertaken lightly, nor are they started by individuals (individuals who try generally find themselves outlawed instead). Instead, they are started and waged by extended families and clans. They invariably lead to years of bloodshed, strife and terror.

Each regional Thing also selects a number of individuals to accompany their jarl to the Thing of All Middarmark, held in Rimholm during the Disablot festival in spring. Queen Mjoll of Dreikdal, King Eyvind of Jeilirdal and the cities of the Regn Coast rarely send representatives these days, unless the Thing will be used to elect a new high king or high queen. Even as they distance themselves from Rimholm's power, they jealously guard the right to participate in that election.

In the past few decades, the kings and queens of the various kingdoms of the Middarmark, including the high kings and high queens at Rimholm, have been attempting to exert more regional control by supplanting the hersar with royally appointed lendermenn who are set to govern a handful of steadings, a village or city on the monarch's behalf. The lendermenn are also charged with collecting taxes, a relatively new concept imported from Valland.

These lendermann often hire tax farmers to collect the funds—resourceful individuals contracted by the lendermann to collect a certain amount of tax. The tax farmers keep anything collected beyond that amount, but are contractually obligated to make up the amount in the event of a shortfall. The scheme has proven popular with monarchs but stoked simmering resentments in the countryside.

In the past two years, High Queen Astrid has begun appointing lendermann to portions of Jeilirdal and Dreikdal in an effort to bring those lands back into the fold of her rule. To date, King Eyvind's warriors in Jeilirdal and Queen Mjoll's warriors in Dreikdal have blocked these royal officers from exerting power in their lands. Tensions are mounting, and Mjoll and Eyvind have begun exchanging representatives over the matter. They may soon decide to throw off all pretense and declare their independence from Rimholm, provided they can trust each other.

### Among the Gotts

In Vanskrdal in the north, it is the aging Gott Warchief Otkell that holds sway. He has divided the land into five administrative districts called grevskap, each ruled by one of his greves. Each grevskap is further divided into lan awarded to ridders. Each greve commands their grevskap's levy and ridders in war and provides administration in peace. Otkell holds ultimate authority in the Gottmark, though his greves advise him.

## Among the Grælings

The Grælings of the Regn Coast have reclaimed self-rule. They choose godi or gydja to lead bloodlines. The godar of local regions gather in councils called rath that rule on lawsuits, settle questions of fishing rights and farming rights and attempt to resolve any feuds that erupt before they destroy entire clans.

## Among the Skyrnir

The Skyrnir live in nomadic bands of one or more extended families, led by a shaman. Shamans can be male or female. They know the secrets of blacksmithing, and the landvættir speak to them and reveal their secrets. The shamans express the spirits' will and warnings to their people. The Skyrnir bands follow their reindeer herds as they range the north of the Middarmark. When two or more bands of Skyrnir meet, they settle for a week or more to hold markets, arrange marriages and allow the shamans to hold council. Disputes may be brought to the shamans for consideration during this time. A conclave of no less than nine shamans is required to send the Skyrnir people to war, though individual bands may choose to raid each other or their southern neighbors without such formalities.

# Hospitality

With a few exceptions, the Middarmark is not a land of cities and towns. Most people live in isolated steadings and communities. The land is unforgiving and travel is difficult, but people still need to trade and relay news. As a result, the Rites of Hospitality are held sacred across the Middarmark. Generous hosts are honored in the Middarmark, much as great warriors or renowned poets.

It is customary for a host to generously welcome and provide food and shelter—even clothing—to any passing travelers who ask for it, regardless of the travelers' financial or social status. A good host will provide simple food and drink, and a place by the hearth to travelers. An exceptional host will offer travelers beer, wine or mead, prime joints of meat, the finest bread and a blanket—perhaps even vacate his or her bed so the travelers may sleep in comfort. Meanwhile, guests are expected to be polite and appreciative toward their hosts and other guests, typically offering goods, services or labor in return. If the household is threatened, guests are expected to aid their host in defending it.

Of course, just because hospitality is held sacred doesn't mean the precepts are always upheld. Treachery, violence and murder happen from time to time. Such is the fallen

nature of the world in which we live. Surely the ancestors will punish such despicable villains and their houses with calamity.

When approaching a strange place in hopes of hospitality, it is polite to lay aside one's weapons, declare your name and ask for shelter, pledging to respect the sanctity of the host's home. The host offers a pledge of shelter and security in return. This process involves a ritual of reciting names and bloodlines, invoking each party's ancestors and ættir to punish the bloodline of anyone who violates the oath.

If travelers cannot or will not provide their names, the householder is not obligated to provide shelter, as the full Rites of Hospitality cannot be completed. Even then, many householders will provide hospitality anyway, because turning away travelers in need is unthinkable to them.

The folk of the Middarmark love good tales above most things, and there are many variations of a highly popular tale in which an Immortal Lord or Lady dons a disguise and wanders the land as a poor vagrant. Commonly in these tales, the Immortal supplicant is turned away from the houses of the mighty, while the poor and bereft provide the last of their food and fuel to feed and warm their guests, lamenting the paucity of their offering while knowing full well that their families will starve or freeze as a result. In the tales, the vengeful Immortal brings calamity upon the houses of the faithless and powerful, while luck and wealth are heaped upon those who gave all to their guest.

While there are sagas in which travelers invoke the Rites of Hospitality under false names, it is a wicked and dishonorable thing to do. It is essentially the same as breaking an oath, and it can bring down the wrath of the ættir.

## What Is a Steading Anyway?

A steading is a small farm, often quite isolated, that consists of a longhouse, several outbuildings (dairy, barns, pens, food storage, tool storage, outhouses and a workshop and forge) and a sturdy palisade. Impoverished steadings may consist of just the longhouse, which contains all the work areas and stalls for animals. Many steadings are built in high locations, providing drainage and the ability to spot potentially hostile visitors from a distance.

The householder, extended family and thralls often share the longhouse. Tenants may share it or have their own nearby.

Fields and pastures lie beyond the palisade. Shoulder-height walls of sod or stone often surround the fields to keep animals out. Maintaining these walls is a time-consuming chore each year. Steadings are almost always built near a swift-running stream or river, though a few might have a well.



# The Lay of the Land



**K**ings and queens may claim to rule the Middarmark, and humans and other peoples may be scattered across its face, but the Middarmark remains a vast, untamed and wild land that hides secrets beyond number. Most of the Middarmark has neither been explored nor cataloged, but some things are known.

## Blodveien

Nearly 70 years ago, High King Haakon Haraldsson of the Middarmark, eager to increase trade with the dwarves at Frostfast Hall, sent forth warriors of his household to carve a path north through the Ironwold. It took 15 years, and too many lives were lost to the monsters, demons and evil spirits that haunt the terrible wood, but the heroes were successful. They carved a narrow, forbidding road that twisted endlessly around the impossibly hard sortjern trees, all the way to Frostfast Hall: the Blodveien, named after all the blood spilled during its blazing.

The Blodveien was completed with much fanfare and those who participated in its creation were hailed as heroes. But even with the road, the journey proved treacherous. Keeping the monsters at bay was difficult, and all but the most intrepid or desperate merchants came to consider the route too dangerous, opting instead to travel to Vanskrdal by sea and travel inland from there. The road acquired a sinister reputation, and traffic slowed to a trickle.

With the Gott conquest of Vanskrdal nearly 20 years ago, however, things have changed. The Gotts extort exorbitant tolls from Bjorning merchants who wish to use the safer route to Frostfast Hall's markets. The more courageous Bjorning merchants are once again chancing the Blodveien and have a constant need for valiant men and women to guard their goods.

## The Chalk Horse

This stylized, eight-legged horse was cut into the upper slopes of Hvitmarr Fell in the Sakki Downs by some ancient, long-lost people. None today know its significance, but the Sakki are said to have performed strange, sinister rites upon Hvitmarr Fell. Witch-folk and others sensitive to the Otherworld say weird, primeval magics linger there, and that alagablettur—tears in the Shroud Between Worlds—appear irregularly in its presence.

## Dalveien

This rutted road barely deserves the name, as the kings and queens of Jeilirdal and Dreikdal have done little to maintain it for the past hundred years. It runs from the city of Rimholm in the east through passes in the Trollfjells and Steinkjerne Mountains in the west, providing access to Jeilirdal and Dreikdal. The path once extended all the way to Mærgdal,

## The Middarmark

but that way was lost long ago when the Ironwold swallowed that valley. Fords provide treacherous crossings of both the Jeilir and Dreik Rivers.

Once, fortified wayhouses were situated about a day's travel apart along the length of the route. The vast majority of them have fallen to ruin or, worse, been seized as forts by bandits, brigands, goblins and the like. The most famous of the still-extant wayhouses is Veihus, which has grown into a small town. It is situated in the Ornstiggen Pass through the Trollfjells, at the crossroads of the Dalveien and Sølvveien.

Furs, lumber, iron and other goods flow fitfully east along the Dalveien to Rimholm. Parts of the Dalveien—generally those closest to Rimholm—are suitable for wagons and carts, but most merchants use mules or packhorses to carry their goods. When the snows come, many merchants rely on sleds instead.

## Dreikdal

This river valley runs northeast to southwest between the Steinkjerne and Trollfjell ranges in the center of the Middarmark. It is home to numerous lakes and relatively rich farmland, though the growing season is short and winters are hard and long. And, of course, there is the ever-present danger of monsters descending upon the valley from the Trollfjells and Steinkjerne mountains.

It is a long and difficult journey from the valley to Rimholm and the high king or high queen's reach, and the jarls of the valley began calling themselves kings and queens long ago, a tradition proudly upheld by the present Queen Mjoll. The folk of Dreikdal, primarily a mix of Bjornings and Grælings, are a sturdy, independent-minded folk.

Travel in Dreikdal is difficult due to a lack of roads and frequent rapids along the Dreik River.

## Idavoll

It is said that on this plain, the Old Ones first set foot upon the newly forged earth and held council with the Asar. For time immemorial, a circle of standing stones has stood where the new Lords of the Earth gathered. At its center is an ancient and much worn horgr, an altar of piled stones.

Three times in all, it is said the Immortals will gather in council at the shrine. The First Council was held when the earth was new. The Second Council was long ages ago, when the alfar fleeing Alfheim negotiated with the Lords of the Earth for a new homeland in exile. The Third Council,

## Mjoll, Queen of Dreikdal

Barely into her twenties, the Bjorning Queen Mjoll already has a reputation as a canny warleader, having led numerous successful raids against the goblins, gnolls and wildmen that lurk in the mountains. Some people grumble that she should take the fight to High Queen



Astrid's tax farmers, whom they consider no better than bandits. For now, her huskarls capture them and exile them from Dreikdal, but it's only a matter of time before things escalate.

Mjoll is unmarried and seeks a consort that will increase her power and standing in the Middarmark.

so the prophecies say, will be held by the Asar and the free peoples of the earth upon the advent of the Twilight of the Immortals. The most hopeful of the Twilight Prophecies claim that those who survive the Twilight shall found a new and shining city on the field of Idavoll in the time of the new earth.

For now, however, a profound and sacred quietude lies upon Idavoll. No evil willingly enters that place, and beasts—hunter and hunted alike—may find succor there, free from all fear and harm.

This tranquility is disturbed only once a year, on the night of Jol. As the Wild Hunt thunders across the sky, the elves of Alfås and dwarves of Frostfast Hall gather upon Idavoll to hold a market and exchange gifts to maintain the sometimes tenuous friendship between the two peoples.

## The Ironwold

The seafaring Bjornings of old were renowned for their savage, adventurous spirit and reckless abandon, but only the hardest and most fearless of their descendants are willing to venture within sight of this ancient and sinister forest. Legend holds that it was here that the last of the Sakki people fled the coming of the Bjornings and swore a pact with ancient and malign powers that have held dominion over this land since before the birth of men.

### Eyvind the Stout, King of Jeilirdal

As a young man, King Eyvind the Stout of Jeilirdal was a warrior of renown among the Bjornings. Now, grey-whiskered and with a great belly of which he is immensely proud, Eyvind prefers his mead hall to the battlefield. Outwardly jovial and convivial, he is cunning as a viper and just as ruthless where his wealth and power are concerned.



Currently, Eyvind finds himself in desperate straits between the increasing depredations of the Goatriders' Horde and the Brotherhood of Plunder on one side and High Queen Astrid's attempt to exert her power over Jeilirdal on the other.

Anyone who travels within sight of the Ironwold can feel a twisted and brooding presence that lingers in dreams long nights after one has left it. Even the elves shun the forest's dominion.

The Ironwold clings to the rocky foothills and lower slopes of the Bjorngrims and spreads south and west along the fertile valleys of the Jeilir and Dreik rivers, where doughty farmers wage a slow but ceaseless war against the devouring forest. It is not unheard of for these folk to go mad, ripping up the least blade of grass along the verges of the wood, lest the trees march forth in the wake of their scouts. Within living memory, nearly a hundred steadings have been lost to the Ironwold's inexorable advance.

Tales describe tortured and rocky terrain, icy tarns, long-forgotten stone circles the size of giants and crumbling ruins whose masters even the elves don't remember, hidden in the shadowy, claustrophobic embrace of the pines, firs, larch and sortjerns.

## Jeilirdal

This long, narrow river valley runs north to south in a gap in the Trollfjells. Despite a shortage of arable land, the Jeilirdal is more populous than the Dreikdal to the west, owing to trade along the Sølveien and long, navigable stretches of the Jeilir River.

The villages and towns of Jeilirdal are a frequent target of raids by trolls, goblins and orcs that descend from their lairs in the Trollfjells when the days grow short and the nights

long. In recent years, a new terror has made itself known: the Goatriders' Horde, a warhost of orcs and goblins mounted upon nightmarish hell-goats, that streams out of the Trollfjells to pillage, slaughter and burn.

The high kings and high queens in Rimholm have been unable to offer much in the way of protection for nearly a century, so the people of Jeilirdal have long since looked to their own kings and queens and held themselves apart from the rest of the Middarmark. But the horde seems to grow with each passing year. The household warriors of the current king, Eyvind the Stout, are finding themselves hard-pressed.

## Midmeither

Somewhere in the Middarmark—perhaps on the peak of Bjorngrim's Folly—stands Midmeither, the mighty World Ash. Its roots and branches extend to all other lands and worlds. It was here the Jotnar came to ask justice for Aurgelmir's murder at the dawn of days. They have vowed to water its roots with Asar blood.

## The Nidfjoll

These fell mountains are called the Nidfjoll by the dwarves and Grælings, but most folk of the Middarmark call them the Bjorngrims. They dominate the north of the Middarmark. Fjalar, tallest and most treacherous of their brotherhood, is their chieftain and wears a crown of snow year-round. Dainsleif, Althjof and Galar stand at his flanks and are said to be his match in wickedness, if not in height. Others, like Fal the Red Pillar, Ginar and Modvitnir, surround them.

The dwarves of Frostfast Hall say that Fjalar and his clan were giants who offended the Old Ones with their evil and grasping ways. They were cursed to become mountains, standing for all time, while others burrow in their flesh for their treasures. Legend says treasure hoards beyond imagination lie hidden at their roots, but the brothers guard their treasures jealously and seek the destruction of any who would plunder their depths, especially the dwarves for whom they reserve a special hatred. Only Nihd, youngest of the brothers, slumbers deeply enough that the dwarves have established Frostfast Hall, an outpost of their kingdom, Nidavellir, there. The craftsmen and miners of Frostfast Hall sing a never-ending stream of lullabies as they work so that Nihd's slumber remains undisturbed.

Dragons, trolls, goblins and other monsters lurk amid the Nidfjoll's glaciers and snowy crags, descending down into

## The Middarmark

the Ironwold, which lies like a green and black skirt upon the mountains. The headwaters of the Jeilir, Mærg, and Dreik rivers hide among the Nidfjoll and have never been found by mortal men or women.

## Mærgdal

The valley of the Mærg River was once the most pleasant land in all the Middarmark. When Sigrun Shieldbreaker apportioned lands to her companions, she gave that land to her most beloved shield-brother, Mærg Bearslayer, as jarl. On an island in the river, Mærg raised the great fortress Erobring.

For a time, the jarldom flourished. Then the Ironwold swallowed the whole of the valley and every village and person in it. The jarldom disappeared overnight. Some intrepid adventurers over the years have claimed to have spotted the ruins of Castle Erobring on its island in the Mærg River, but no one who has dared seek that dread place has ever returned.

Devils and monsters roam the valley now, and few people, other than seekers after Svarttårn, the black tower of sorcery, dare enter that terrible place.

## Fjalar

The greatest of the Nidfjoll, Fjalar, or Bjorngrim's Folly, as the Bjornings call him, is an impossibly high mountain that towers above all the Middarmark. The mountain is known for its savage and deadly weather as well as its great height. Storms on its upper reaches can last for days. Scathach the glacier lies upon his shoulders and is known for her life-stealing ways.

It is here upon the mountain that Bjornar, son of Sigrun, met his end while slaying Ofnir the Black Wyrn. Legend says the wyrn's venomous blood turned Bjornar's body and his great spear Teineigin black as night and poisoned any who laid hands upon them. Bjornar's household is said to have piled grave goods around the fallen hero and his noble weapon, which some whisper was imbued with the might of the dragon. Many tales say that Bjornar the Grim but sleeps and one day shall return to lead his people. Darker tales say that Ofnir survived Bjornar's terrible blow and lurks still upon the mountain, nursing his wound and dreaming dragon dreams of vengeance upon the descendants of Bjorn.

Fjalar cares not.

## Throin, King of Nidavellir

The King of Nidavellir is said to be more than 300-years-old and to have met the Bjorning hero Bjornar the Grim when he sought the forge at the heart of the world. Despite that, the elderly dwarf professes no love for the surface peoples. Several times, in pique, he has suggested that he should seal Frostfast Hall and let the surface peoples rot.

Perhaps he has instead sealed the road to Nidavellir from Frostfast Hall, for no messenger or missive from Thoira has reached Frostfast Hall in seven years. Or perhaps something darker has befallen the deep kingdom. Some whisper that Thoira began to exhibit signs of madness years ago.



## Nidavellir

Somewhere deep in the bones of the earth, close to Hel itself, lies Nidavellir the Great, the kingdom of the dverg, of which Frostfast Hall—the most populous city in the Middarmark—is but a mining and trading outpost.

The streets of the cities of Nidavellir are said to be paved with pearl and gold, and its soaring palaces constructed of lapis and silver polished brighter than mirrors. Some say something evil has awakened in the kingdom, for no word has been heard from King Thoira or any of his subjects in the deeps for years.

## Perleveien

It is said this great underground highway, formed of glittering gems fitted tightly upon every surface, is the road to Hel. It begins at the tower of Nain, son of Nyr, Styrmann of Frostfast Hall, and winds toward the center of the earth and through the holdings of Nidavellir.

## Regn Coast

The southern and western coasts along the Regn Sea are the richest, most fertile lands of the Middarmark. While the soil is poor compared with the fields of Valland, the Regn Coast produces more cereal grain—oats, barley, rye, millet, buckwheat and spelt—than the rest of the Middarmark

## Common Trees

<b>Alder</b> (grey and black)	<b>Ash</b>	<b>Aspen</b>	<b>Beech</b>
<b>Birch</b> (downy, dwarf, mountain and silver)	<b>Cherry</b> (bird)	<b>Chestnut</b> (horse)	<b>Elm</b> (spreading and wych)
<b>Fir</b>	<b>Goat Willow</b>	<b>Hawthorn</b>	<b>Hazel</b>
<b>Holly</b>	<b>Juniper</b>	<b>Larch</b>	<b>Linden</b>
<b>Maple</b>	<b>Oak</b>	<b>Pine</b> (black and mountain)	<b>Rowan</b>

combined. The land's timber is only mediocre compared with some other parts of the Middarmark, but it boasts much in the way of furs, resin, flax, honey and silver.

The towns of the coast, a key component of the trading network of the Havn League, are ideally situated to trade with other League cities in Holmsea, Valland, Svanland and Vestreyjar. The Free City of Stortmarke, in particular, has grown fat as the center of the slave trade in thralls from Svanland and Valland.

Officially part of the Jarldom of Sudstrond, the Græling clans of the Regn Coast have maintained their independence since most of the warriors of the House of Sudstrond drowned or fell to the axes and witch-fire of the Scefings in the Battle of Sølvsfjord nine years ago.

## Rik Bay

The outermost portion of the Rimfjord, where it meets the Skyet Sea, the Rik is a deep-water bay that serves as the homewaters of the high queen's fleet. Her warriors work hard to keep the bay clear of sea serpents and other terrible beasts of the deeps.

## Rimfjord

This sheltered inlet provides the city of Rimholm with access to the Skyet Sea, from which it dominates access to the wealthy ports of Gottland and Ostergard. To this day, lines of foreboding teeth—the dragon prows of the ships that sailed with Bjorn Longfarer some 300 years ago—stud the shores of the fjord, seemingly impervious to weather and rot. Perhaps they are a remnant of some magic worked by the conquerors long ago.

## Rimstrond

The lands between the Sakki Downs in the north and the Trollfjells in the southwest comprise Rimstrond, held directly by High Queen Astrid. It is a moderately fertile land and well-ordered within a day's travel of Rimholm.

Farther from the reach of the high queen's huskarls, it becomes wild country, dotted with steadings and fishing villages along the coast. The high queen has spent the past several years bringing these lands under her dominion by displacing local hersar with her lendermenn.

Chaos cultists and trolls still lurk in the forests and hills, but the steadings and villages now fill the high queen's stores from their meager harvests and catches.

## The Sakki Downs

These fog-shrouded, open chalk hills north of Rimholm are studded with countless barrows of Sakki chieftains and heroes, many of whom are said to sleep uneasily. It is here that the hosts of High Queen Sigrun Shieldbreaker and Ukho the Head-taker, last of the Sakki chiefs, destroyed each other.

The people of Rimholm say evil spirits roam the downs, cursing the invaders that took their land.

## Scathach

This glacier, sometimes called the Lifestealer or the Devourer, has consumed the north of the Middarmark and moves slowly south with each passing year. Some stalwart adventurers claim to have seen vast, cyclopean cities trapped under crystal-clear ice. Others claim to have stumbled upon the Rimveien, the road to Jotunheim, the realm of Endless Ice.

## Skera Strait

These narrow, treacherous waters between the Toskarinn and Svanland connect the Regn Sea and Skyet Sea. Scefing pirates prowl the Skera Strait, seeking prey. Worse, the Kraken frequently hunts these waters.

## Skyet Sea

The deceptively placid waters of the Skyet Sea are the key to Rimholm's wealth, providing fish, whale fat and ambergris.

## The Middarmark

But they also hide sea serpents of awesome power and the terrible Kraken, which has proven to be the doom of many a stout ship.

In late autumn, winter and early spring, sudden squalls of immense strength sometimes sweep across the Skyet Sea, turning the calm waters into a surging hell. Few sailors caught on open water in these rare storms survive to tell the tale.

## Sølvveien

This road in Jeilirdal follows the Jeilir River, connecting the crossroads town of Veihus with the city of Stortmarke on the Regn Coast. In truth, most goods flowing down to Stortmarke make use of the Jeilir River, at least as far as the town of Sunnås, though it is necessary to portage around rapids with some frequency. Merchants and peddlers going in the other direction make heavy use of the Sølvveien itself, taking goods to Sunnås or deeper into Jeilirdal. Although some goods flow in both directions between Stortmarke and Rimholm, it is faster, if not necessarily safer, to transport such goods by ship through the Skera Strait.

King Eyvind the Stout of Jeilirdal has established a lendermann (Svana Goldnose) at the Gull Pass between Sunnås and Stortmarke to collect tolls from those making use of the Sølvveien. Worse are the river pirates, mixed bands of orcs and men that exact their own tolls along the Jeilir's length. The most terrible of these pirate bands is the Brotherhood of Plunder, led by Orgoth Bloodeye, a massive orc that has proven himself to be an impressive warleader.

There seems to be a great deal of animosity between the Brotherhood of Plunder and the Goatriders' Horde. Encounters between the two marauding bands end in blood and death.

### Common Sea Fish

<b>Cod</b>	<b>Flatfish</b> (flounder, sole, turbot, halibut, etc.)	<b>Haddock</b>	<b>Herring</b>
<b>Ling</b>	<b>Mackerel</b>	<b>Pollock</b>	<b>Porpoise</b>
<b>Saithe</b>	<b>Seal</b> (not prized; eaten by peasants)	<b>Smelt</b>	<b>Whale</b> (primarily trapped in inlets and run aground or killed with poisoned arrows)

## Stigand, Jarl of Sudstrond

Stigand, not yet twenty, is the last survivor of the once powerful House of Sudstrond. He was just ten when his parents fell at the Battle of Sølvsfjord, and he was forced to flee his family's ancestral holdings with just a handful of loyal huskarls. Serious and driven, he has vowed to win back his family's lands and honor from those who have usurped it.



He has established a new court at the castle Valborg, which controls the western end of the Gull Pass. He hopes to use taxes on all trade flowing between Sudstrond and Jeilirdal to gather the wealth needed to attract ambitious men and women to his warband.

## Steinkjerne Mountains

This mountain range forms the western boundary of Dreikdal, separating that valley from Mærgdal. It is a place of giants, wildmen and dangerous beasts. Hidden somewhere in its crags is the half-legendary temple and burial hall of the twin cults of Hyresti, Lord of Mercy, and Miskunna, Lady of Valor.

Persistent folklore claims that the artifact known as the Steinkjerne, the beating stone heart of the mountains, is hidden deep below the burial halls behind potent wards.

## Sudstrond

This jarldom encompasses the whole of the southern tip of the Middarmark below the Steinkjerne and Trollfjell Mountains, including the Regn Coast. But the power of the jarls of Sudstrond was broken nine years ago by the Scefings at the disastrous Battle of Sølvsfjord.

Barred from Stortmarke and the other cities of the Regn Coast, Jarl Stigand, last scion of the much-diminished House of Sudstrond, has pulled his household back to the castle Valborg, which dominates the western side of the Gull Pass into Jeilirdal. He plots to bring the cities of the Regn Coast to heel once more and then smash the power of the Scefings.

## Common River and Lake Fish

Bream	Cockles	Eel	Mussels
Oysters	Perch	Pike	Roach
Rudd	Salmon	Scallops	Winkles

While the position of his house seems dire, there are men and women among the powerful families of the Regn Coast that chafe under the heavy tribute exacted by the Scefings. Some whisper cautiously to each other that things were better under the jarls.

## Trollfjell Mountains

The rugged Trollfjells divide Jeilirdal from the rolling plains and foothills that surround Rimholm. The crags are haunted by trolls, and marauding bands of goblins, orcs and evil men lair in the many hidden places among the mountains. Some in Jeilirdal believe these groups have begun banding together under the banner of the Goatrider's Horde.

Rumors claim that a hobgoblin king has raised a city and fortress somewhere in the mountains. With a pet magician at his side, he is drawing the creatures of the Trollfjells into the horde. When the time is right, he will loose them upon the land and claim it for his own.

## Vanskrdal

Vanskrdal in the northeast of the Middarmark is separated from the Jarldom of Vargstrond to its south by the Vargstrondfjord and the Vimur River, which drains into it. To the west, it is bordered by the Ironwold and the Nidfjoll Mountains.

Twenty years ago, Vanskrdal was overrun by Gott horselords under the command of Warchief Otkell. The Gotts now call the land the Gottmark. Much of the farmland has been turned into pasture for the Gotts' horses, cattle and sheep, tended by Gott karls brought across the Skyet Sea from Gottland. Still, Bjorning and Græling peasants, now subject to their Gott overlords, continue to till what farmland remains. Most of the land has been divided into fiefs called lan and distributed to Otkell's faithful ridders, but now a new generation of sons and daughters clamor for lands of their own, placing tremendous pressure on Warchief Otkell and his greves to capture more territory.

## Una the Cat, Jarl of Vargstrond

The Jarl of Vargstrond is widely considered one of the greatest wrestlers in the Middarmark. She is called 'the Cat' because not a single challenger has managed to throw her from her feet. Her huskarls love her fiercely and ensure that only worthy challengers contest with her.



Una is cousin to High Queen Astrid and Grandmaster Ring Boarhound of Jernkloster. She is High Queen Astrid's greatest ally; it was her support that put Astrid on the throne two years ago. And it is Una's skill as a warleader that has held the Gott host north of the Vimur River.

For now, the levers of power in the Middarmark move as Una wills, but she knows that will only last as long as she can hold back the Gotts. Should Jeilirdal and Dreikdal choose to seize independence by force, her position would quickly become dire.

For now, the icy waters of the Vargstrondfjord and Vimur River, not to mention the fighting order at Jernkloster, hold them at bay.

## Vargstrond

The lands between the Sakki Downs in the south and the Vargstrondfjord and Vimur River in the north comprise the Jarldom of Vargstrond. Proximity to the Ironwold, and the more recent threat of the Gotts, has taught the Vargstronders to be ever watchful and prepared. Even among peoples that pride themselves on fearlessness and martial ability, the people of Vargstrond are considered doughty warriors.

Vargstrond is ruled by Jarl Una the Cat, a fearsome warrior in her own right, and High Queen Astrid's closest ally.

## Common Game Animals

Aurochs	Bear	Beaver	Boar
Deer	Duck	Elk (moose)	Goose
Mountain Goat	Otter	Pigeon	Plover
Pigeon	Swan	Reindeer	Red Squirrel



Political Boundaries  
of the  
**MIDDARMARK**

E.A1DA





# Towns and Villages



**M**uch of the Middarmark remains unexplored, but humans and other peoples have left their stamp on the place. This list is far from exhaustive, but these are some of the most prominent settlements of the Middarmark.

## Alfås

This secret enclave of the elves is hidden beneath mounds and hillocks in the foothills of Bjorngrim's Folly along the outskirts of the Ironwold. It is home to some 300 souls.

Each young elven wizard of Alfås spends years laboring on the never-ending arcane rituals that keep it hidden from the powers that dwell in the Ironwold so the rest of the elvenfolk may focus their attentions upon their true passion: the crafting of songs of such beauty and delicacy that mortal men and women have been known to weep with despair when they end. Many elven adventurers encountered in the wider Middarmark have fled such responsibilities. The elves of Alfås value their privacy and solitude. They look with disfavor upon those of their number who seek the excitement of the world beyond and with outright scorn

upon those seekers who would abandon their duties to the rituals to discover the dark secrets of Svarttårn. They wish to be left to the peaceful pursuit of their art and have difficulty understanding those of their kind that wish for more.

According to ancient tradition, the elves of Alfås meet the dwarves of Frostfast Hall each solstice at the field of Idavoll and trade their songs and elvencrafts for precious stones and metals. The elves consent to the custom, for it blunts the edge of the dwarves' desire to discover the path to their hideaway to access the elven wares directly. The dwarves are often vexed by the reticent nature of their neighbors, distrustful and suspicious of their secrecy.

## Doalrode

Most huldufolk clans wander the paths and ways of the Middarmark incessantly. Some do so in trains of oxen and wagons; others travel more lightly. Doalrode is an example of the former. Roughly four score halflings and other wanderers call Doalrode home at any given time.

## The Middarmark

Doalrode has been traveling the length of the Sölvveien for centuries, stopping here and there for several months before moving on to the next site. Doalrode stops outside other settlements and steadings along the way—though never for much more than three days—to hold a market and entertain the locals.

The huldufolk of Doalrode have a tenuous understanding with Orgoth Bloodeye and the Brotherhood of Plunder. They willingly pay modest tribute when they pass through lands controlled by the Brotherhood and spend three days entertaining the orcs and men with tales, song and dance. In return, the Brotherhood keeps harassment of the people of Doalrode to a minimum.

The Goatrider's Horde is a different tale. Several times in recent years, small bands of Goatrider's have raided Doalrode, slaying, burning and looting. The huldufolk elders know something must change, for it is only a matter of time before a larger band falls upon Doalrode and destroys it utterly.

## Frostfast Hall

Dug into the roots of Nihd, least of the Nidfjoll, lies bustling Frostfast Hall, legendary for its fat veins of silver and the Perleveien, a great underground highway.

Nihd is the least wakeful of the Nidfjoll, but the dwarves know that he would seek their destruction should he ever stir. Thus, the picks and hammers of Frostfast Hall's miners and craftsmen fall with a never-varying rhythm, and they sing an unceasing stream of lullabies as they work to ensure the mountain's continued slumber.

Of all the settlements that comprise the dvergar kingdom of Nidavellir, Frostfast Hall lies the closest to the surface and has become the center of their dealings with men and their cousins among the elves.

To the dvergar, Frostfast Hall is a mere mining and trading outpost. To men, it is a city beneath the mountain, vast and of such grandeur that the fallen men of today cannot hope to match it. Some ten thousand dwarves and others live in Frostfast Hall.

## Jernkloster

To honor the sacrifices of the heroes that constructed the Blodveien, High King Stein Sigurdsson, Haakon's grandson, founded a great fortified temple complex of iron and stone at the southern end of the Blodveien and dedicated it to the

### Nain, Styrmann of Frostfast Hall

Nain, son of Nyr, is a venal, middle-aged dwarf concerned only with his own pleasures and the maintenance of the strict stratification of dwarven society. He considers most folk of the Middarmark little better than unkempt barbarians, barely capable of feeding themselves, especially in the light of the glory of dwarven works. Of late, his pleasures ring hollow and his concerns grow, for no messenger has come up the Perleveien from Nidavellir in seven years. Nor have any of the thegns he has sent to investigate ever returned.

It is becoming increasingly clear that something terrible has befallen the deep kingdom. Nain continues to ignore the matter, hoping it will resolve itself. Some among his subjects chunter and grumble that something more must be done. Nain has declared such talk treasonous, and anyone caught at it is walled up in the living rock for the crime.



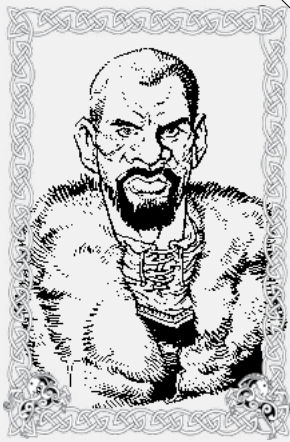
Lords, calling it Jernkloster. Beneath it, he dug catacombs and a great ossuary, where all the heroes of the Blodveien whose bodies could be recovered were laid to rest. In the 50 years since, the survivors also went to sleep the endless sleep beneath Jernkloster, and myth holds that should Jernkloster be about to fall, the Grandmaster's horn could summon those mighty heroes for one last battle. King Stein had a tomb prepared for himself there, but it is presumably empty, for Stein's body was lost in the churning waters of the Skyet Sea when his ship was sunk on the Gott coast.

The clerics of Jernkloster, grim-faced men and women called to that somber place by the Lords, swear a vow to keep the Blodveien open and defend the people of the Middarmark from the ravages of the terrible monsters that pour forth from the Ironwold like an unrelenting stream. It is a thankless task, and one seldom remembered by Stein's heirs, but the order survives on tithes paid by the few grateful merchants courageous or desperate enough to use the road.

Today, the clerics of Jernkloster, led by Grandmaster Ring Boarhound, increasingly find their services are required to help guard Vargstrond from incursion by the Gotts. Una the Cat, Jarl of Vargstrond, supplies them handsomely for

**Ring Boarhound,  
Grandmaster of  
Jernkloster**

Recently named Grandmaster of Jernkloster, Ring is grizzled and scarred, though he has barely seen thirty summers. He is a cousin to Una the Cat, Jarl of Vargstrond, with whom he was raised as a youth before the Lords summoned him to serve them at Jernkloster. He also counts High Queen Astrid a cousin.



Ring is an earnest cleric who takes seriously the order's mission to patrol the Blodveien and contain the monsters of the Ironwold. Yet it is easier said than done: It takes wealth to keep the monastery-fortress in repair and the members of the order equipped and fed. Faced with this reality, the pragmatic Ring has begun accepting his cousin's coin in exchange for sending bands of the order to guard the realm's northern border against invasion by the Gott host.

Many clerics and paladins of the order see such work as a betrayal of the order's purpose. With each passing day, discontent grows.

these duties—supplies much needed by the impoverished order to keep the monastery in repair. Yet every moment spent watching that border is time away from patrolling the Blodveien and guarding against the threats of the Ironwold.

Jernkloster houses about 50 clerics and paladins of the order and another 350 or so others.

**Oarjeværri**

The high fell of Oarjeværri stands in the lee of the Nidfjoll Mountains. Dozens of small sacred sites and natural shrines dot the barren landscape of this high moor. For centuries, Skyrnir holy men and women have visited the place to commune with spirits and to hold their sacred rites. Skyrnir skalds seeking to perfect their craft spend long weeks in Oarjeværri, listening to the tales of the hermits and shamans. Even elvenfolk visit from time to time.

The arrival of the Bjornings pushed many more Skyrnir to the north and gradually made Oarjeværri a more or less permanent settlement. For most of the year, only a small assortment of shamans, outcasts and traders call the place home. In summertime, the surrounding Skyrnir clans drive

their herds to the high moor and gather for trade, diplomacy and carousing. A great Thing is held if there are matters requiring the attention of all the clans. On those occasions, you can find several thousand Skyrnir in attendance.

Since the Gotts invaded the Vanskrdal, the Skyrnir tribes in the area have lost much of their summer pastures and have been pushed westwards. At the last great Thing, the high shaman Giera barely managed to prevent an all out war by hastily persuading six of the nine leading shamans to speak against it. Next time, he may not succeed.

**Rimholm**

Rimholm was born in blood and fire nearly 300 years ago. It is said that on the day of its birth, the dragon-prowed longships of Bjorn Longfarer and his followers—men and women as lean and hungry as wolves—appeared in scores from the frosty dawn mists on Rik Bay as if from a dream. They dragged their ships upon the shore of an ancient fishing village and, with axe and spear, they drove the Sakki before them, claiming the land for their own. Within but a few years, the Sakki would be no more, and the remaining peoples of the Middarmark would bend their necks to their new overlords.

**Giera  
the White Bear,  
High Shaman of  
the Skyrnir**

At more than 120 years old, Giera is the eldest and wisest of the Skyrnir shamans. He is the closest thing the Skyrnir have to a king, though it would be more precise to say he is the first among the council of shamans. He also leads



the Bear Cult, a society of Skyrnir shapeshifters whose fylgjur is bear. Despite his advanced age, Giera is still an imposing and powerful man. He wears the skin and fur of a white bear as a robe, with the bear's head as a hood.

Giera is struggling to hold the Skyrnir together. More and more young men and women are urging their bands to raid south into Vanskrdal. Once, the Skyrnir would follow their reindeer herds into Vanskrdal each winter, but the conquering Gotts have turned much of that ancestral Skyrnir land into pastures for their horse herds and cattle, and violently defend it from any who would trespass.

## The Middarmark

With timbers from their mighty ships, the Bjornings raised a city upon the bones and ashes of the nameless fishing village. They mounted the dragon prows upon the shore, facing Rik Bay and the icy waters of the Rimfjord, a warning to others who might seek to take what they had paid for in blood.

In the centuries since, Rimholm has become the seat of the Bjorning kings and the wealthiest city of the Middarmark, rivaled only by Stortmarke upon the Regn Coast. The city is known for its tall, timber-framed houses painted in bright oranges, reds and yellows, reminiscent of the longships of old. Rimholm trades in furs, lumber, silver, iron, salt and other goods along the Dalveien—the road that connects Rimholm to the Jeilir and Dreik valleys in the west—and by sea. Its fishing fleets brave the awesome and terrible sea serpents of the Skyet Sea to harvest the sea's bounty, especially valuable whale fat and ambergris. Its ships purchase grains from the Regn Coast, Svanland and even distant Ostergard and sell salted fish, furs, whale oil and more.

The people, though tall and bright-eyed in the way of their ancestors, tend to the stolid and reserved, unless deep in their cups. They have a reputation for hard work and steely-eyed trade. Some 8,000 people dwell in Rimholm.

Despite its wealth, some say a darkness lies upon Rimholm and all who dwell there—a creeping shadow that haunts the frost-rimed streets when the sun sets. Lore claims ill-luck flows from the barrow mounds around the Chalk Horse in the downs north of the city, where ancient Sakki chiefs sleep the endless sleep in barbarian splendor, guarded for eternity by ghost fences made from the heads of their enemies. Few adventurous souls willingly go there.

If a curse does infect Rimholm, there is no doubt the Bjorning high kings and queens have felt its bite. Few indeed, beginning with Bjorn Longfarer himself, have died old in their beds. Tragedy and ill-chance dog them: King Bård Sygtrigsson broke his neck in a fall from his horse while hunting but two years past. The jarls and lendmenn elected Astrid Yngesdottir, Bård's wife, as high queen.

## Stortmarke

Situated at the mouth of the Dreik River, the Free City of Stortmarke was already an old trading center of the Græling clans when the Bjornings conquered the Middarmark. After the conquest, High Queen Sigrun Shieldbreaker made the city the seat of the jarls of Sudstrond, who grew wealthy beyond imagining by making Stortmarke the key port in the northern slave trade. Raiders would capture

### Hjørdis, Gydja of Sunnås

Hjørdis is a hard, middle-aged Græling woman that rules the village of Sunnås and serves as high priestess of the cult of Freydis, Lady of Reaping, centered there. She pays homage to King Eyvind the Stout but sympathizes with the independent Grælings of the Regn Coast.



Sunnås has increasingly become a target of the depredations of the Goatrider's Horde. Hjørdis has paid the Horned King tribute several times, but knows the horde can only be held back with silver for so long. About a year ago, King Eyvind appointed a lendermann to oversee Sunnås and several other nearby villages. At first, Hjørdis gritted her teeth and accepted the imposition if it meant aid against the Horde, but the past months have shown the lendermann is far more concerned with accruing wealth than defending her 'subjects.'

Hjørdis seeks an alternative way to deal with the Horde.

thralls in Valland and Svanland and sell them at the great slave market in Stortmarke to traders who would take them east to Ostergard and beyond.

It was the Scefing pirates of Toskarinn—the Tusks—that broke the power of the Sudstrond jarls nine years ago in a naval battle on the Sølvsfjord. The Regn Sea swallowed the better part of the House of Sudstrond, and the Scefings gained control of the slave trade. The Græling clans saw the chance to throw off the yoke of their overlords, though in truth they have but exchanged one for the other.

In the years since, Stortmarke's wealth has waxed on the back of the invigorated slave trade, and it has grown to become a power in the Havn League, a confederation of cities in Gottland, Holmseas, Valland and Svanland that seek to encourage trade and protect shipping in the Regn Sea from the Scefings. Slaves, copper, iron and finished armor and weapons come from Svanland; herring and cod from Holmseas; slaves, fabrics and grain from Valland; and horses and salt from Gottland. Stortmarke exports goods including timber, furs, resin, flax, honey, slaves and silver.

About 6,000 people call Stortmarke home. The majority are Grælings, but some Bjornings remain.

Ostensibly still subject to the high kings and queens in Rimholm, Stortmarke answers only to itself, though it

pays punishing tribute to the Scefings to encourage them to raid its neighbors (and other League cities) rather than the wealthiest target on the Regn Coast. Most years, the Scefings oblige.

## Sunnås

Sunnås is a prosperous village in Jeilirdal, situated on the Sølveien tradeway between Stortmarke and Veihus. Its fields are fertile and its people well-fed and happy, which they attribute to the blessings of Freydis, Lady of Sowing and Reaping.

Sunnås is an important cultic center for the cult of Freydis, and some have even taken to calling it Freydishof these days for the great timber hof that dominates the central hill of the village. Hjørdis is gydja—priestess and chieftain—of Sunnås. Under her rule, the village's fields yield great quantities of grain, its cattle produce an abundance of sweet milk and calves, and its pigs are fat and happy. All would be well if it weren't for the constant threat of the Goatrider's Horde.

Sunnås is home to some 400 souls.

## Svarttårn

In the days after the Ironwold swallowed the upper reaches of the Mærg Valley and, with it, Castle Erobring and the House of Mærg as if they had never been, a strange black tower with no doors or windows appeared on an escarpment overlooking the valley. For seven years it stood forlorn, a needle piercing the sky, showing no signs of life or occupancy. But on the seventh anniversary of its appearance, wizards, witches, sorcerers and all manner of unsavory magical folk received summons to enter the tower and hold audience with its master, Gorm the Boneless.

Reputedly the bastard of Jarl Gandalf Mærgsson and a Sakki witch, the wizard's name was already one that inspired awe and dread across the Middarmark, even before his disappearance with the rest of the House of Mærg. His seeming return from the dead evoked horror in the hearts of his enemies, and they were not few.

One by one, men and women of power made their way to the tower in answer to Gorm's summons. None but those involved ever learned what took place during those audiences, but the legends say one and all bent knee to Gorm the Boneless and acknowledged him their master. Within the year, many brought their libraries to the tower and took up residence.

Svarttårn, as the tower became known, grew to become a mighty center of magical learning, and all who studied the craft came to look upon the few that earned their mastery at Svarttårn with fear and respect. These increased with equal measure when the Ironwold marched forth to swallow the escarpment upon which the tower stood, but it came no closer to Svarttårn than a mile on any side. Even the spirits of that fell forest feared the tower's secrets.

To this day, young men and women with the gift, and even elves fleeing their homeland, make their way through the terrors of the Ironwold to study with the wizards of Svarttårn. Few ever speak of the tower's secrets, but persistent rumors claim that Gorm the Boneless still rules them with an iron fist from beyond the grave.

About 20 magicians and a handful of elven rangers study at Svarttårn. Another 150 or so people live in hovels clustered near the tower to support them.

## Tårn Tanleth

In the north of the Middarmark, the lonely village of Tårn Tanleth huddles in the craggy foothills of the Bjorngrims along the verge of the Ironwold in the Gottmark. The village, hidden behind a stout stockade, is a collection of rude wooden houses with turf roofs and hard-eyed men and women who scratch a living from this difficult land with grim determination. The children, as resolute and hard-working as their elders, are serious and suspicious of strangers. Most of the people of Tårn Tanleth herd goats and the blue-fleeced sheep whose fine wool brings a hefty price in the markets of

### Ulf, Lord of Tårn Tanleth

Ulf is a Gott ridder in his mid-thirties that holds the impoverished village of Tårn Tanleth and its Bjorning and Græling cottars directly from Warchief Otkell. He's not cruel, but he's more concerned about his horse and cattle herds than his villagers.

Ulf desires to clear the ruined wizard's tower from the hill west of the village to turn it into additional pasture, but the villagers refuse to go near it.



## The Middarmark

Gottren in Gottland for the merchants willing to brave the dangers of the Skyet Sea to obtain it. Little of that wealth makes its way back to Tårn Tanleth.

The village of Tårn Tanleth is the lan of Sir Ulf, a ridder that owes homage to Otkell, warchief of the Gott tribes that crossed the Skyet Sea more than 20 years ago to claim the Vanskr Hills as their own. The karls and cottars are a mix of about 120 Bjornings, Gotts and Grælings.

Tårn Tanleth takes its name from the tumbled and ruined tower perched on a hill to the west of the village. Thirty-seven winters past, the tower of the wizard Tanleth consumed itself in terrible green flame that the old-timers say continued to lick at its remains for days. Only two servants of the tower, Kafli and Juti, escaped the conflagration. Juti was struck deaf and dumb by the experience and took his own life several months later. Kafli went mad, and he has been cared for by his daughter Letta ever since. The people of the village believe the ruins to be haunted and steer well clear of the site.

## Veihus

Away from the coasts, the peoples of the Middarmark live in fortified but isolated steadings and villages, a series of beaten and rutted paths and byways that snake through the wilds often their only tenuous connection to civilization. Common fireside travelers' tales speak of lonely steadings, or even whole villages, unvisited for a season or more, that are empty when the next tinker or traveler passes through. Worse yet are the tales of places that are simply gone, as if they never were.

All but the bravest or most foolhardy folk seek relative safety behind stout doors when dusk falls. But bold men and women do what they must when there is trade to be had. When the Blodveien was finally finished, King Stein established a series of fortified wayhouses and hostels in desolate places throughout the Middarmark to shelter travelers and encourage trade.

For a time the wayhouses flourished. However, the profits of the Blodveien and increased trade with the dwarves of Frostfast Hall was not all that had been hoped. The way was still too dangerous for most. Stein's heirs had better uses for their silver, and most of the wayhouses have fallen into ruin and disrepair or become havens for bandits and highwaymen who use the fortified houses as strongholds from which to extort tolls from all who would pass—or simply to murder and rob.

Veihus, situated at the crossroads of the Sølveien and the Dalveien, is one of the few houses that has continued to thrive. These roads connect Rimholm with the cities of the Regn Coast, as well as the Jeilir and Dreik valleys. Veihus has grown into a small but bustling town. It boasts a sturdy palisade within which is a common house, a stable that can accommodate up to 12 horses, a smithy, a wheelwright and a well. It is a haven for merchants and less reputable travelers, and hosts a monthly market for farmers, trappers and prospectors within a day's journey. In all, about 300 people call Veihus home.

Rumor holds that Veihus was built upon a site once held sacred by the Ylfarings. The tales say they buried an ancient treasure there before they disappeared, but no one has ever found it, and the people of Veihus frown upon those who would dig indiscriminately among their homes.


### Otkell, Warchief of the Gott Host

Twenty years ago, Otkell, renowned for his mastery of war, crossed the sea from Gottland with his host, landed on the shores of Vanskrdal and carved out a new home for his people that they call the Gottmark. They seized the safest route to the markets of Frostfast Hall and set about securing their new kingdom. Several years later, at the height of his victory, Otkell learned the depths of despair, for his son Othmar and daughter Oda were slain by Agmund's huskarls as they sought to seize the banner of the fallen jarl of Vanskrdal.

Otkell built the fortress of Hrossgard to command his newly won dominion, and distributed lands to his loyal followers. Then, childless, he brooded. Now in his sixties, his sword arm is weaker than it was, and he is weary of war. But his followers have many sons and daughters, even if he does not, and there is not enough land in the Gottmark to sate them. If the kingdom that he created is to survive, it must expand south into the land the Bjornings call Vargstrond. Otkell, master of war, stirs.

Perhaps, in the conflagration to come, one of his warriors will single themselves out as worthy, and he will adopt a new heir.





# Lairs and Harrowing Places



**T**he Sakki, Skyrnir and Grælings were not the first people of the Middarmark, and the Bjornings and Gotts almost certainly won't be the last. Each new civilization of the Middarmark rests on the bones of the civilizations that preceded it, whether they know it or not. Lost places, crumbling ruins and foetid caves are everywhere.

## The Burial Halls of the Twin Lords

Nestled somewhere in the Steinkjerne Mountains is the ruined temple and burial halls of the twin cults of Hyresti, Lord of Mercy, and Miskunna, Lady of Valor. For centuries, long before the coming of the Bjornings, clerics and paladins of the order were laid to rest there, charged in death with guarding the order's relics and powerful artifacts of Chaos seized from the Jotnar. Legends claim that deep below the

temple, behind potent wards, rests the Steinkjerne, the beating stone heart of the mountains—one of the artifacts used by the Old Ones in the First Act of Law.

The Jotnar and their servants have long sought the Halls and the mighty weapons hidden there.

## Castle Erobring

Mærg Bearslayer raised this mighty fortress on an island in the center of the Mærg River in the river valley that bears his name. To this day, most castles and forts in the Middarmark are made of wood, but Mærg insisted that Erobring have walls of stone that it might stand until the Twilight of the Immortals.

Mærg placed his treasure-house in the heart of the castle. The stories say it was filled with the wealth he won while at Sigrun Shieldbreaker's side—plunder from Svanland, Holmsea and all of the Middarmark. It may even have held Mærg's most cherished possession, the fabled Horn of Dreng, a massive

### Gorm the Boneless, Master of Svarttårn

Though few have ever seen him, the deathless wizard of Svarttårn casts a terrifying shadow across much of the Middarmark. It is said he is the bastard son of the Bjorning Jarl Gandalf Mærgsson and a Sakki witch, and that he alone of all the people of Mærgdal survived when it was devoured by the Ironwold several centuries ago. The rumors claim he is tattooed from head-to-toe in strange sigils and that he is a master of Sakki witchcraft.



Now, he commands his apprentices to go forth and find the hidden magical secrets and artifacts of the Middarmark.

drinking horn made from the horn of an aurochs and inlaid with silver and pewter. The legends say that water poured into the horn becomes sweet, refreshing mead.

Scant years after the fortress was completed, the trees of the Ironwold marched forward, consuming the valley and everyone and everything in it. It was as if the wood had been in that place since the dawn of the world. Castle Erobring was lost. To this day, some claim that the land was cursed by a Sakki witch—Jarl Gandalf Mærgson's jilted lover and the mother of Gorm the Boneless, the deathless master of Svarttårn.

Some brave (or foolhardy) folk who have dared the Ironwold in Mærgdal claim to have spied the castle from afar. All say that a black shadow seemed to rise from it and press upon their minds, turning their blood to ice and causing them to flee.

## Giznad's Lost Dining Hall

The legend has it that Giznad spent his last hours dining in a hall of magnificent structure and wealth. Prior to his mysterious disappearance, Giznad would entertain his guests for hours, performing somber musics and asking stirring philosophical questions relating to the nature of life and death.

## Ofnir's Lair

It is said that near the peak of Bjorngrim's Folly, amidst the swirling snow, there is an ancient ruin—a place of many pillars and steaming waters made by a forgotten people. For ages beyond counting, it was the lair of Ofnir the Black Wurm, heaped with treasures from the terrible dragon's depredations.

It was in that place that Bjornar the Grim and the wurm met in ferocious battle and destroyed each other. The wurm's blood covered Bjornar and Teineigin, his magic spear made by dwarven master armorers at their forge at the heart of the world. The black blood carried a poison so potent that touching the body was death. Unable to bring Bjornar home, his household laid his treasures around him, within the ruins, Teineigin at his side. Legends maintain that they left the dragon's hoard as well, for it, too, had been poisoned by the wurm's black blood.

Ofnir's vast bulk is said to lay twined around the ruins, still and uncorrupted.

## Sigrun's Mirror and the Great Barrow

In the mist-shrouded Sakki Downs are the countless barrows of ancient Sakki kings, warded with ghost fences—rings of spears planted in the earth, upon which were set the heads of their enemies, bound to guard the tombs for all eternity.

At the center of the Downs, beside a barrow larger than all the rest, is a pool as smooth as shining glass, said to be bottomless. The pool is so still that one who looks into its depths will see a perfect reflection of the sky above. When the Bjorning and Sakki hosts clashed in the Battle of the Sakki Downs, Sigrun Shieldbreaker and Ukho the Head-taker joined battle beside the pool, their runeswords crackling with aetheric lightning. Sigrun's sword, Skofnung, proved Ukho's bane, but not before his own blade, Tyrping, found Sigrun's heart's blood.

According to legend, Ukho's warriors carried their slain chieftain and his blade from the field of battle and into the great barrow, prepared for this purpose before the battle was joined. Sigrun's warband could not follow them past the ghost fence that guarded the tomb, and none who entered were ever seen again. A terrible chill seems to emanate from the place and none dare approach it.



Sigrun's warriors erected a many-chambered howe for their valiant high queen and warchief near the waters of the pool where she had conquered, surrounded by her fallen warriors. Skofnung was laid upon her breast. In the years that followed, the land upon which the howe had been raised fell away and collapsed into the waters, leaving a jagged scar at the pool's edge. Ever after, the pool has been known as Sigrun's Mirror.

Persistent legends claim that should a hero in great need call upon her by Sigrun's Mirror, the Lady of Battles will appear in the waters and grant a blessing of war-magic.

## The Temple of Black Skulls

The Jotnar may not yet be ready to face the Asar at the Twilight, but they are not without places of power. Terrible stories are told of the Temple of Black Skulls, an unholy fastness of the Cult of Hrym, Captain of the Dead Ship that Sails Between Worlds, Lord of Undeath. The tales speak of evil rites, blood sacrifices and the binding of malign, chthonic powers.

Some rumors hold the temple is hidden in the Ironwold; others say the Trollfjells. More worrisome is the possibility that there is more than one.

## The Tower of Seven Dreams

Deep in the Drømmerendal—a strange and twisted reflection of our world—is a vast spire that pierces the heavens, surrounded by mazes and walled gardens of unearthly beauty and dangers beyond imagining. It can be seen from every place in the Drømmerendal, but reaching it is another matter.

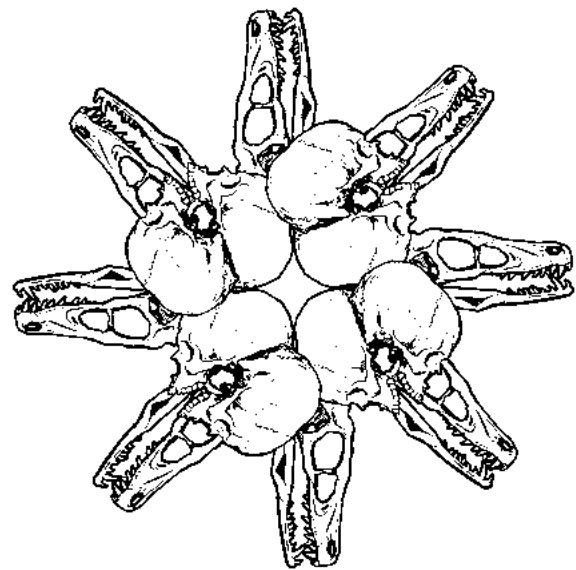
It is believed that the drømmere of the alfar seek the way to the Tower of Seven Dreams and the secrets of its many chambers. From the tower's heights reigns the Erlking, who can grant the quester's deepest wish, even lifting the elves' exile.

### Valla Lightborn, draumkona of Alfás

There is no discernible hierarchy among the draumkonur that interpret the will of the drømmere of Alfás, but Valla is the one to whom the other draumkonur turn when they are uncertain. Born in the cloud city of Ljossalheim in the Otherworld, she traveled long in the realms beyond earth before joining her kin in Alfás, and she knows the secrets of dreaming while waking.



Even to other alfar, she seems strange and detached, almost ethereal in nature. But at her core, she is a driven woman, determined to provide the seekers among the drømmere with the guidance they need in their quest to find the Erlking and end the exile from Alfheim. As far as she is concerned, this world is of little substance.





# Religion



**T**wo religions stand side-by-side and deeply intertwined in the Middarmark: the Forn Sith, or Old Custom, and the Lords. Most folk attend to both.

## The Old Custom

The Forn Sith is a domestic religion that focuses on the family and the ancestors, and governs the Rites of Hospitality. Each ætt has its own deity, called the ættir, which lives in the coals burning on the communal hearth altar at the center of each longhouse, farmstead or village. The sacred fire is the locus of a family's fortune, fecundity and moral order. It is closely related to the family's ancestors, who watch over the family, defend it, and send it fortune and increase.

The female head of the family, the ættmor, is the sole priestess. She must provide the sacred fire with sacrifices of ale, oil, grain, fruits and offal at meals, or when a family member goes forth on a journey or returns safely. She is responsible for banking the coals upon the altar at night and awakening it with pure fuels in the morning.

Once a year, at the end of Jolblot, the hearth and all other fires must be extinguished and reignited without benefit of flint and steel. Should the sacred fire ever be extinguished outside the context of such a ceremony, or should the

ættmor fail to reignite the fire during the ceremony, a curse descends upon the family, and its ancestors turn their backs upon it.

As part of her duties as priestess, the ættmor is also responsible for the offerings and sacrifices to the ancestors, who surely have the ear of the Lords of Plenty. She must maintain the family shrine and bring the sacred feasts of honey, oil, milk, ale, fruit and the blood of a freshly slaughtered animal and place them on the horgr before the ancestors. Ancestors who are not given such care become angry and will visit calamity upon the family.

## The Immortal Lords

The ancestors watch over the smaller and more personal needs of home and family, but it is the Lords that shoulder the burden of the primal powers of the Nine Worlds. The people of the Middarmark rarely refer to gods, except perhaps in relation to the Old Ones, the most ancient of Immortals, who no longer attend to Creation. Instead, they make obeisance to the Immortal Lords—mortal kings, queens, and great heroes and villains who attained immortality through the greatness of their deeds and the worship of others.

The cults of the Young Lords, or hero cults, tend to be individualistic, guided by the personality and vision of the Lord they favor. Indeed, a newly ascended Lord's nature and deeds in life are often central to the growth of his or her cult. These cults rise and fall like the tides; few endure more than several generations beyond the ascension of their hero before sliding into obscurity and eventually oblivion.

Young Lords that survive the vicissitudes of their followers gradually shed their individuality and personality to become one with the primal forces they champion, each a mask of the multitude. For instance, most Bjornings of the Middarmark worship Sigrun Shieldbreaker, the Lady of Battles, who inspires warriors who fight for Law, standing between civilization and the ravaging hordes of Chaos. Eventually, though, worship of Sigrun may fade, she will become one with the Lords of Battle.

Whereas the Lords are generally worshipped collectively—though prayers are often made to specific powers based upon need—the hero cults of the Young Lords favor temples dedicated to their patrons. Still, even these temples tend to hold shrines to the other powers.

The people of the Middarmark don't ignore the Jotnar or Immortals that may seem 'evil.' Instead, they offer them propitiatory worship in the hopes that it will soothe their desire to inflict harm.

### **The Immortal Lords include, but are not limited, to:**

**The Lords of Light and Darkness.** These powers are often granted a measure of individuality with names like the Burning Lord (for the Lords of Light) or Lady Darkness (for the Lords of Darkness). They are also sometimes collectively called the Two-Faced Lord or Veiled One. In representational art, the Two-Faced Lord is most frequently depicted as an individual composed of two halves conjoined at the back. One side is composed of light and the other of darkness.

**The Lords of Life and Death.** In spring and summer, the Lords of Life are depicted and referred to as female, and the Lords of Death are depicted and referred to as male. When the Constellation of the Seven Swords rises in autumn, the Lords of Life and Death switch places. Most temples hold festivals at this time, which involve painting the female statues of the Lords of Life in the colors of Death and the male statues of the Lords of Death in the colors of Life.

**The Lords of Law and Chaos.** These powers are most frequently depicted in cult idols of the Young Lords

## The Tide of Time

The people of the Middarmark divide the year into 12 months and four seasons, with each season marked by a sacrificial holiday. The year is often divided into six months of "Short Days" and six months of "Nightless Days."

### **The months of the Short Days are:**

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| ☉ Gormånad<br>(slaughter month) | ☉ Torrimånad<br>(frozen snow month)           |
| ☉ Frermånad<br>(frost month)    | ☉ Disamånad<br>(month of the Disir)           |
| ☉ Jolmånad<br>(Yule month)      | ☉ Einmånad<br>(lone month<br>or single month) |

### **The months of the Nightless Days are:**

- |  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| ☉ Harpa (in honor of<br>Harpa the Shining<br>One, the Vår Maiden)  | ☉ Solmånad (sun month)          |
| ☉ Sigrun (in honor of<br>Sigrun Shieldbreaker,<br>the Lady of Battles;<br>formerly known<br>as Winnimånad,<br>"pasture month") | ☉ Heyannir (haying time)        |
|  | ☉ Tvimånad (second<br>month)    |
|  | ☉ Haustmånad (harvest<br>month) |

in the current age (see below). Ancient peoples depicted these Lords as two statues, each with many faces, locked in a titanic struggle.

**The Lords of Plenty and Want.** The Lords of Plenty are most frequently represented by the Young Lords, Freydis, Lady of Reaping; and Yngve, Lord of Sowing. At Haustblot (see Holy Days of the Middarmark below), their gaily painted idols are paraded through the village or steading on an ox-drawn cart and then given place of honor in the hall or upon the crown of a sacred hill. They are bedecked with garlands of asters and surrounded by the fruits of the harvest. After Haustblot, the idols of the Lords of Plenty are hidden away, and the idols of the Lords of Want, shrouded, are placed in a shadowy alcove of the longhouse. A bit of every meal is given to them in propitiation. At Distingblot, the Lords of Plenty and Want are worshipped together.

**The Lords of Valor and Terror.** Sometimes collectively called the Lords of Battle, these immortals of war are worshipped at Sigrunblot (see the Holy Days of the Middarmark section in this chapter) and frequently

## The Middarmark

accompany warbands in a ceremonial chariot or carried by oxen. At sea, the idol is affixed to the prow of the ship, turning it into a shrine.

**The Lords of Fate.** The Lords of Fate are usually depicted as a triple goddess—maiden, mother and crone—who spin, weave and cut thread, respectively. Some are more martial in appearance. Freydis, Lady of Reaping, is accounted among their number.

In most communities, hersar (or godar among Grælings) are responsible for performing the proper sacrifices at the ordained times. In places where a monarch, jarl or lendermann holds sway, he or she will assume those duties.

## The Young Lords

These are some of the most common hero cults of the Middarmark.

### Sigrun Shieldbreaker, Lady of Battles

Even in life, High Queen Sigrun was hailed as the greatest warrior of the Bjornings. With her death at the Battle of the Sakki Downs, she apotheosized. Bjornings across the Middarmark placed wooden idols of her in their temples and offered them sacrifice. Today, her cult is one of the most popular in the Middarmark—at least among the Bjornings. Others, especially Grælings, are more circumspect, noting the Lords of Battle are most often associated with the Jotnar.

Bjornings call upon her as a patron of Law, a bulwark of civilization against Chaos.

Sigrun's high holy day is the Sigrunblot at the opening of summer, when communities across the Middarmark sacrifice to her for war-magic. Her idols show her armored and helmed, her great sword held point-down before her.

### Harpa the Shining One, Vår Maiden

Harpa's epithets include the Shining One, Vår Maiden and Lady of the Sun. Her mortal tale is long-forgotten, and her cult is much diminished today, but she was once widely revered among the Grælings and Skyrnir, who taught the Bjornings her ways. The alfar still worship her together with Yngve.

The daughter of Sol the Day-Star, she is born anew from the Darkness each year after Jolnir secures Sol's release from Hel. In the month of Harpa, her gentle light awakens the earth from its torpor and growing things rise to greet her. She is the patron of spring, hope and new beginnings.

Harpa's idols depict an adolescent girl, hair not yet bound in adult braids, adorned with a crown of wildflowers.

### Freydis, Lady of Reaping

While most hero cults fade over time, the cult of Freydis, the Lady of Reaping, is an ancient one. It was old among the Grælings long before the coming of the Bjornings, and even the Bjorning conquerors have come to revere her.

She is foremost among the Lords of Plenty, for she oversees the harvest and fertility of the land. But she wears many guises; for instance, as Chooser of the Slain, she reaps warriors as well as wheat. Many fighters sacrifice to her on the eve of battle, praying that she overlook them on the morrow.

Freydis's idols are many and varied: In some, she is a young woman with a basket overflowing with food, and in others, she is a grim-visaged warrior brandishing a spear.

### Ondurdis, Lady of the Winter Hunt

A Skyrnir hero, it is said that, in life, Ondurdis dared the Wild Hunt one Jolblot, moving with such skill and cunning that even Jolnir and Halle could not track her. They were forced to acknowledge her worthiness instead.

Ondurdis is the patron of hunters and all who seek to feed their families when snow shrouds the land. She is also called upon by those who hunt the beasts of Chaos during the Short Days.

Ondurdis is often depicted carrying a bundle of skis, a spear and a bow.

### Bjorngrim the Dragonslayer

Few men and women, save adventurers and other undesirable vagrants, give regular worship to Bjorngrim the Dragonslayer, as Bjornar the Grim is remembered. However, the dwarves of Frostfast Hall remember him fondly and tend to be sympathetic to his cultists. He is usually worshipped collectively as part of the cult of his mother, Sigrun Shieldbreaker.

Bjorngrim is the patron of monster-hunters, lost causes and heroic last stands. He is called upon at need by those who stand between their loved ones and harm.

Idols of the Dragonslayer portray a man painted black and carrying a spear.

### **Hyresti, Lord of Mercy, and Miskunna, Lady of Valor**

Known as the Twin Lords, these Græling heroes founded a holy order dedicated to the principles of valor and mercy. The clerics and paladins who followed them sought to defend the people from the depredations of the Jotnar and to selflessly tend the peoples' hurts and illnesses. Their cult was old when the Bjornings arrived in the Middarmark and is all but gone now, save for one old priest that wanders among the cities of the Regn Coast, living on alms. The last grandmaster of their order disappeared some years ago on a quest to find the Burial Halls of the Twin Lords.

The twin idols stand side by side: one a man bearing a drinking horn, the other a warrior with sword and shield.

### **Njor, Lord of Winds and Sailors**

The Scefings and Bjornings revere Njor, a hero said to have sailed to the edge of the world and back. He is the master of weather and winds, and the patron of sailors.

Njor's idol is a sailor with a cloak made of feathers.

### **Sigtyr, Lord of Victory**

Considered the ruler of the Young Lords of the Asar, this cult is well known among all the peoples of the Middarmark, though the Bjornings often call him Sigbjorn, or simply Bjorn the Victorious. He is the patron of rule and victorious war and is most called upon by rulers and warleaders; the common folk have little need of him.

Idols of Sigtyr depict him upon his throne, a sheathed sword across his knees.

### **Yngve, Lord of Sowing**

The brother of Freydis, Yngve is an ancient Græling patron called upon when tilling soil and planting seeds. He is also a lover, petitioned by those desirous of children and the curing of impotency. He is especially beloved among the elves, who call him the Lord of Beginnings. They worship him side by side with Harpa.

Yngve is depicted as a boar, or a naked man with pronounced genitalia.

## **Chaos Lords**

There are many Jotnar with an interest in the Middarmark. The following are among the most active.

### **Hrym, Captain of the Dead Ship**

One of the eldest and most terrible of the Jotnar, Hrym is the Lord of Undeath. In his dread Palace of Skulls, he collects the nails of dead men and women, which he uses to build the Dead Ship, a vast longship with which the Jotnar will sail to battle come the Twilight of the Lords. The common folk propitiate Hrym at funerals.

Hrym's cult is active across the Middarmark, recruiting in secret, summoning the dead and binding malign spirits to spread terror across the land.

### **Svikr the Stalking Beast**

This Jotunn is the dread wolf, who stalks and slays without pity or remorse. It was she that devoured Sol the Day-Star, plunging the land into the Darkness while giving birth to Death. On Jol, Jolnir the Hunter and the Wild Hunt seek her, but they are not destined to meet until the Twilight. Gnolls, especially, revere her.

Shepherds commonly utter appeasements to Svikr when night falls and the wolves howl.

### **Vafrudnir, Lord of Whispers**

Vafrudnir is the Lord of Corruption. He wears a kindly face, but ever he works to poison hearts and minds. He may be found wherever ambitions and deceitful whispers lurk.

Vafrudnir is offered propitiation as part of the Rites of Hospitality and as part of the opening rites of a Thing.

### **Vali the Kinslayer, Lord of Slaughter**

Vali is a jotunn beloved of orcs, for he slew all his kin to seize rule of his tribe and then led his people on a frenzied orgy of death and destruction. He is the Lord of the berserk rage and delights in the slaughter of innocents.

Vali receives nominal supplication on the eves of battle.

## **Holy Days of the Middarmark**

### **Jol and the Jolblot**

Jol is the liminal time when the old year dies with the sun and is born anew. It is both timeless and outside time, when the dead walk and the draugr claim the land. On Jol, the darkest day, men and women huddle in their homes, for the Wild Hunt goes forth. Jolnir the Huntsman and Halle

## The Middarmark

the Huntress lead their terrible host of riders and hounds in a furious ride across land and sky in madness and despair at the treacherous murder of Sol the Day-Star by Svikr the Stalking Beast. Woe betide any who cross the Hunt's path.

On the day of Jol, folk within a day's journey gather at the local temple, the longhouse of the local hersir or lendermann, or the king's hall for the Jolblot sacrifice. They come with all the food and drink they can carry, for they will bar themselves indoors for the next three days. Fires are lit at the center of the hall and great cauldrons placed on them.

The hersir, lendermann, king or queen takes up the religious mantle of priest or priestess and presides over a sacrifice of livestock—horses, cattle, sheep, goats and pigs—catching the blood in a special bowl, the hlautbolli. He or she then dips the sacrificial twigs, the hlautteinar, in the blood and uses them to sprinkle it upon the idols of the Lords and ancestors, the walls of the temple and the people.

The meat of the sacrificial animals is then boiled in the cauldrons. The priest or priestess parades a great horn of mead around the fire and pronounces a blessing upon it and the sacrificial meat. A three-day feast and drunken revelry follows, with many toasts to Sigtyr the Lord of Victory, Freydis the Lady of Reaping, Ondurdis the Lady of the Winter Hunt, Yngve the Lord of Sowing and Njor the Lord of Winds and Sailors.

Children conceived by unmarried women during the Jolblot revels are considered the sons and daughters of Sigtyr the Lord of Victory. The mothers of these children are much honored, for it is known that each of Sigtyr's children carries a powerful destiny; their deeds, be they fair or foul, will shake the pillars of the earth.

## Disablot and the Disting Market

The vernal equinox marks the last day of Disamånad and the transition from winter to spring. It is the time of the Disablot sacrifice, when the people of the Middarmark give thanks to the Disir for allowing them to survive the Hungry Time.

The sacrifice is held in a field or sacred grove to awaken the land from winter's slumber and bless the vår planting. Traditionally, the Disablot rituals are only led by women, though men may act as attendants to the priestess. In communities with a male hersir, jarl or king, his wife, sister or mother takes the role of priestess.

Stallions, bulls and boars are the traditional sacrifices. They are usually hanged, decapitated or drowned. If times are dire, as in a famine, the Disir must drink more potent blood.

At such times, the sacrifices are human, preferably criminals, prisoners of war or thralls, but in times of greatest need, only a chieftain, king or queen will do.

The Disablot is followed by the Disting Market, a great three-day annual market and fair at Rimholm that coincides with the Thing of All Middarmark. It is a time to renew old friendships, settle old debts and feuds and court new lovers.

## Sigrunblot and Raiding Season

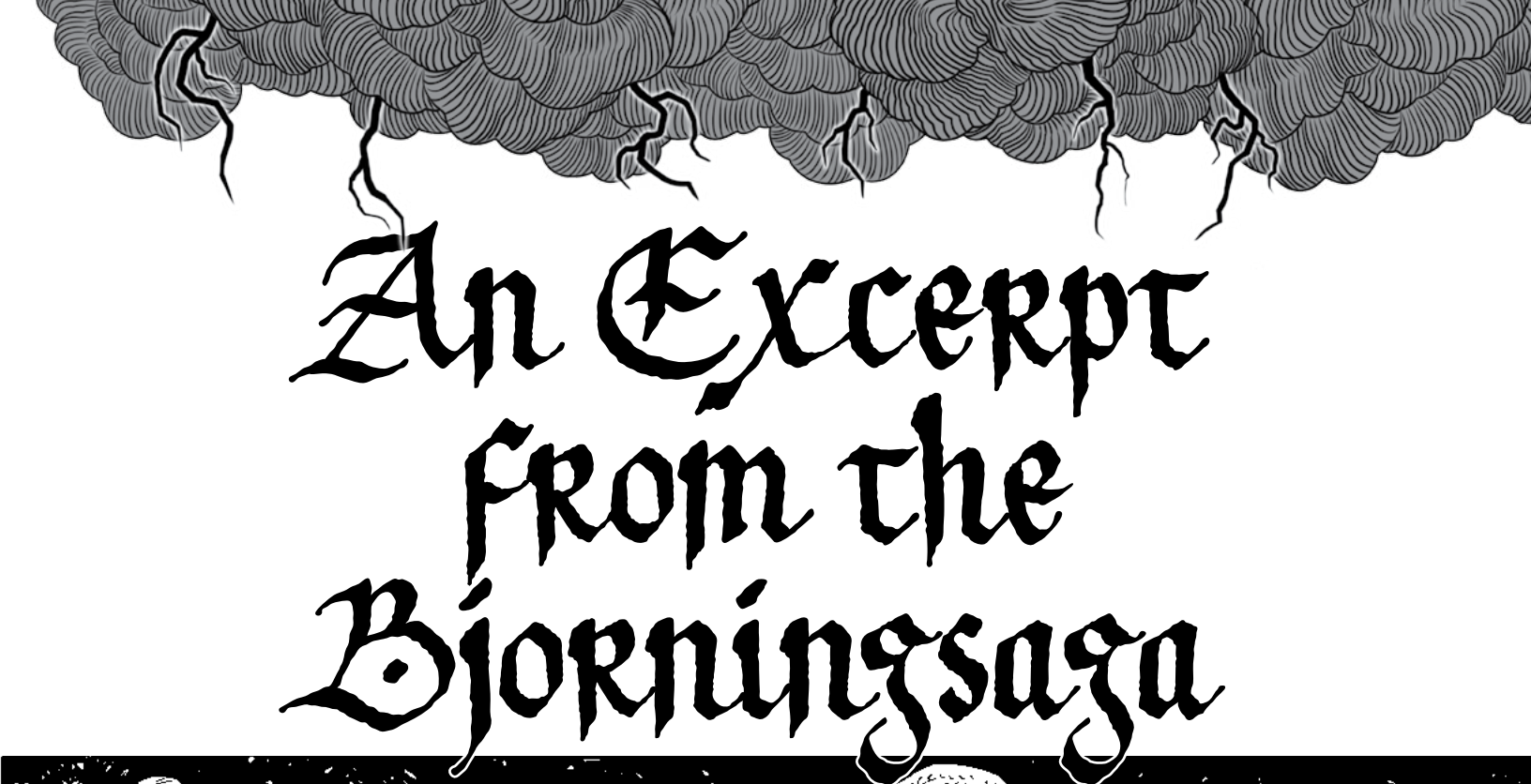
The weather in summer is pleasant, but summer is also the time of blood. The Sigrunblot is held on the last day of Sigrun to celebrate the solstice and in honor of Sigrun Shieldbreaker, the Lady of Battles and the first Bjorning High Queen of the Middarmark. The following day, the first day of Solmånad, marks the beginning of summer, which opens the war and raiding season, when the hersar and lendermenn call on their neighbors to raise warbands and raiding fleets. It is a time for cattle-raiding, prosecuting blood feuds and a bit of piracy or pillaging of distant steadings, towns or richer targets in Svanland and Valland. The raiding season ends no more than two weeks into Heyannir, as failing to make sufficient hay will make it impossible for the stock animals (or the people that depend upon them) to survive winter.

The Sigrunblot raises the community's war-magic and is marked by sacrifices of horses and trophies of war: captured weapons and harness, equipage and the heads of enemies. At the ritual, the leidangr (the levy of local free men and women that will go raiding) brandish their war gear and clash their weapons against their shields in the vopnatak to acclaim their leader and please the war spirits for whom the clash of arms is sweet. This is a time of great boasts, when men and women declare the deeds of glory they shall attain in the raiding season.

## Haustblot

The autumnal equinox marks the mid-point of Haustmånad, when the harvest has been brought in and stored. At this time, the folk of the Middarmark celebrate the Haustblot with a great three-day feast made from the fowl, cattle, goats and sheep sacrificed to the Lords and ancestors in thanksgiving for the harvest and in hopes of a gentle winter. Sheaves of the first corn of the harvest—oats, barley, rye, millet, buckwheat and spelt—are burned as offerings, and libations of milk and mead are spilled.

The Haustblot is generally the most joyous of the great holy days. Friends and lovers exchange gifts and tokens of affection, and dalliances are common.



# An Excerpt from the Bjorningsaga



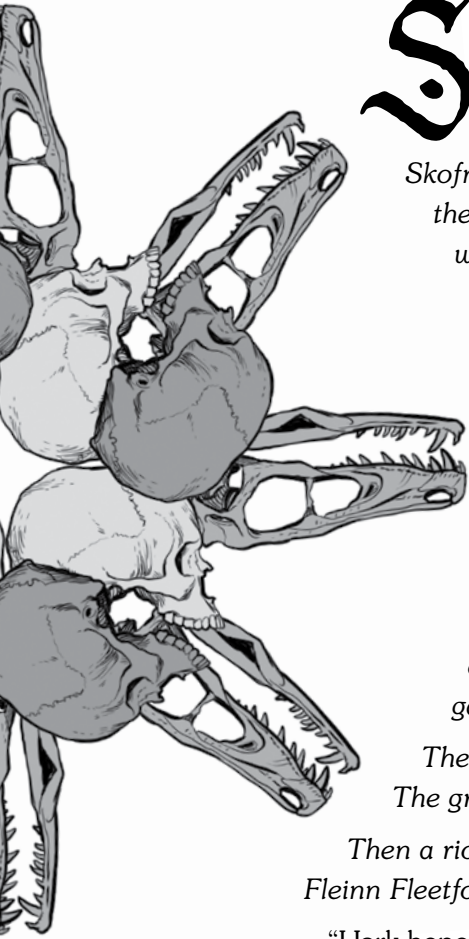
## What is the Bjorningsaga?

**A**long with the *Blodveinsaga* and *Steinsaga*, the *Bjorningsaga* is the defining collection of tales of the Bjorning people and is a popular addition to the repertoire of skalds in Bjorning halls. It details the lives and deeds of the Bjorning dynasty.

The saga consists of roughly three parts. The first part concerns the early voyages of Bjorn Longfarer and his brother Scef Serpenteye, their arrival in the Middarmark, subsequent conquests and the rivalry that divided them. The second part concerns Bjorn's daughter, Sigrun, and the wars she waged to pacify the Middarmark and surrounding lands. It concludes with the Battle of the Sakki Downs, excerpted below. The final part deals with the many deeds of Bjornar, son of Sigrun, culminating in his death while slaying Ofnir the Black Wurm.

## Origin of the Bjorningsaga

**T**he origin of the *Bjorningsaga* is not certain, though many attribute it to Olvir Skallagrimsson, court skald to Bodny Shipwright, who was acclaimed high queen after Sigrun's death. This fragment, which details the Battle of the Sakki Downs and the deaths of Sigrun Shieldbreaker and Ukho the Head-taker, is an example of the epic style employed by the skalds of the Middarmark. Note the generous use of kennings to ornament the otherwise straightforward tale—the poet uses eight different kennings for the word 'blood' alone.



**S**igrun, *Shieldbreaker, Lady of Battles*, daughter of Bjorn the Victorious, wiped the dew of slaughter from her brow and wrung the battle-sweat from her red locks. The weather of weapons was ended and the rebel kings and queens cast down.

*Skofnung, Light-of-Battle*, was set to rest above her couch in *Drekansreir the Great*, mead hall of her father. A rich feast was laid, and Sigrun's war-weary shield-brothers and shield-sisters gathered, laying aside their war-gear and placing their broad shields against the walls of the hall. The skald took up the chant-wood and spread their battle-deeds before them like pearls that the Lords of Valor might savor them. Many rings Sigrun gave, and much treasure.

To *Mærg, the Bearslayer*, son of *Gylfi Gaptooth*, she gave the utmost west, the fairest of lands. To *Dreika the Gray*, daughter of *Brynhild*, and *Jeilir the Young*, son of *Brynhild*, she gave the middle valleys. The northern march she gave to *Vanskr the Stout*, son of *Alar*. *Vargstrond, the wolf-shore*, she gave to *Bodny Shipwright*, daughter of *Ærinndis*. Finally, to *Ageir the Raven*, son of *Vigbjorn*, she gave *Sudstrond*.

There was laughter of warriors, voices rang pleasant, words were cheerful. The great queen's attendants came forth to fill the mead-horns.

Then a riotous clamor arose. To *Drekansreir's* entrance came their shield-mate, *Fleinn Fleetfoot*, his war-corselet torn and streaming raven-wine.

"Hark honored heroes, stay thy mead horns  
A storm of spears howls, the strife of shields is upon us  
Take up thy war-moons and don the hammer-woven shirts of battle  
Upon the Sakki Downs you will find the slaughter-gate.  
The old foe, the harm-crew of the forest, comes calling."

With those words, the river of spears ran dry, and *Fleinn* found the sleep of the sword. The host carried him from the hall and did him much honor, though ravens assembled in the lindens and brave warriors shivered at the ill omen.

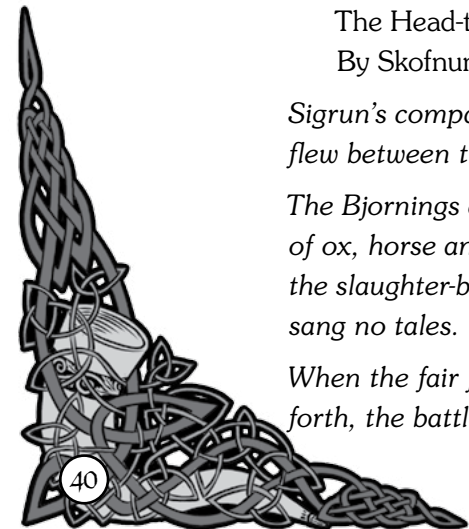
Then Sigrun gathered them, raised her horn high and boasted.

"Slaughter-weary are we, ready to sail the hearth-ship,  
But once more must we attend an assembly of the fire of the sword-dale.  
Come, feeders of ravens! Take up battle's dangerous tools and follow!  
The Head-taker's skull will I claim! His huskarls shall fly before me!  
By *Skofnung* shall his standard fall and ruin find him!"

*Sigrun's* companions heard her proud words and cheered. Oaths and boasts flew between them like the grey birds of corpses.

The *Bjornings* consulted the Immortals on the plain and made the goodly sacrifices of ox, horse and man. War-gear of the vanquished, too, they offered, to call down the slaughter-blessing. Throughout, the ravens stood watch from the lindens but sang no tales.

When the fair jewel of the high storm-house first glittered, *Sigrun's* host marched forth, the battle-verses ringing.





**U**pon the Downs they found the old foe, Ukho's painted host, and their trolls and spirits, arrayed for battle and thirsty for the wolf's wine. Like an endless wave they stood, corpse-scathes gleaming. Amidst the wide-gabled cloud halls, thunder threatened.

Shield walls formed. The furious rain of sword-points and the din of helmets began. Spear-points were broken when, in that war game, shield clashed against shield, and the foe refused ground. Then the Fates of the shield sang and the stained strongholds of the sword-hilt splintered and failed. The red weapon-foam pooled upon the earth, the tide of swords, and victory-heaps were scattered all about.

Between a shimmering pool and the great barrow, the Head-taker's standard flew, a gull of gore, surrounded by sword-cloven slaughter-food piled in heaps.

The power of her boasts surging in her veins, Sigrun rushed to meet them, Skofnung's battle-light streaming. The bright wolf of the hall lit her eyes as she reached Ukho's huskarls, howling. The fence of battle stood before her, but she was aptly named. The battle-boards she sundered and the slaughter-boars cleaved till the corn of the swan of blood lay scattered at her feet.

Ukho, Head-taker, Master of the House of Devils, was before her, his fell blade Tyrfing alight with the temple-wolf. Curses streaming from the witch-king's lips, the two blades met with a clash of thunder.

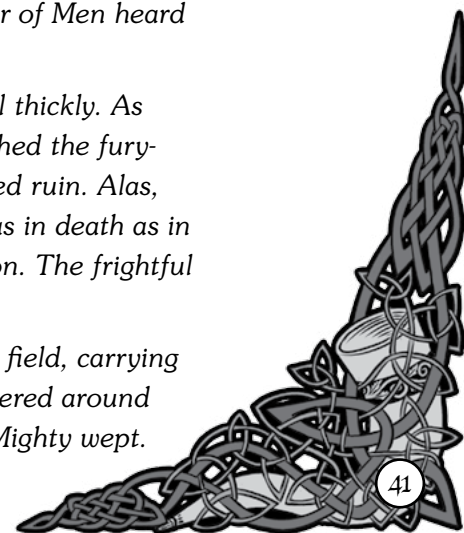
Now did the Ghostbinder and the Shieldbreaker meet in the rain of steel, the Hewer of Men and the Lady of Battles, and a fell reaping followed. Fierce was the strife and all about the Bjornings were pressed beneath the claws of the carrion bird.

The Lady of Battles heard their cries but saw that she was ringed all about, between the Mirror's edge and the great barrow. The Head-taker's lips parted to reveal the skerry of incantations, and the souls of the damned wailed from his dragging ghost chain.

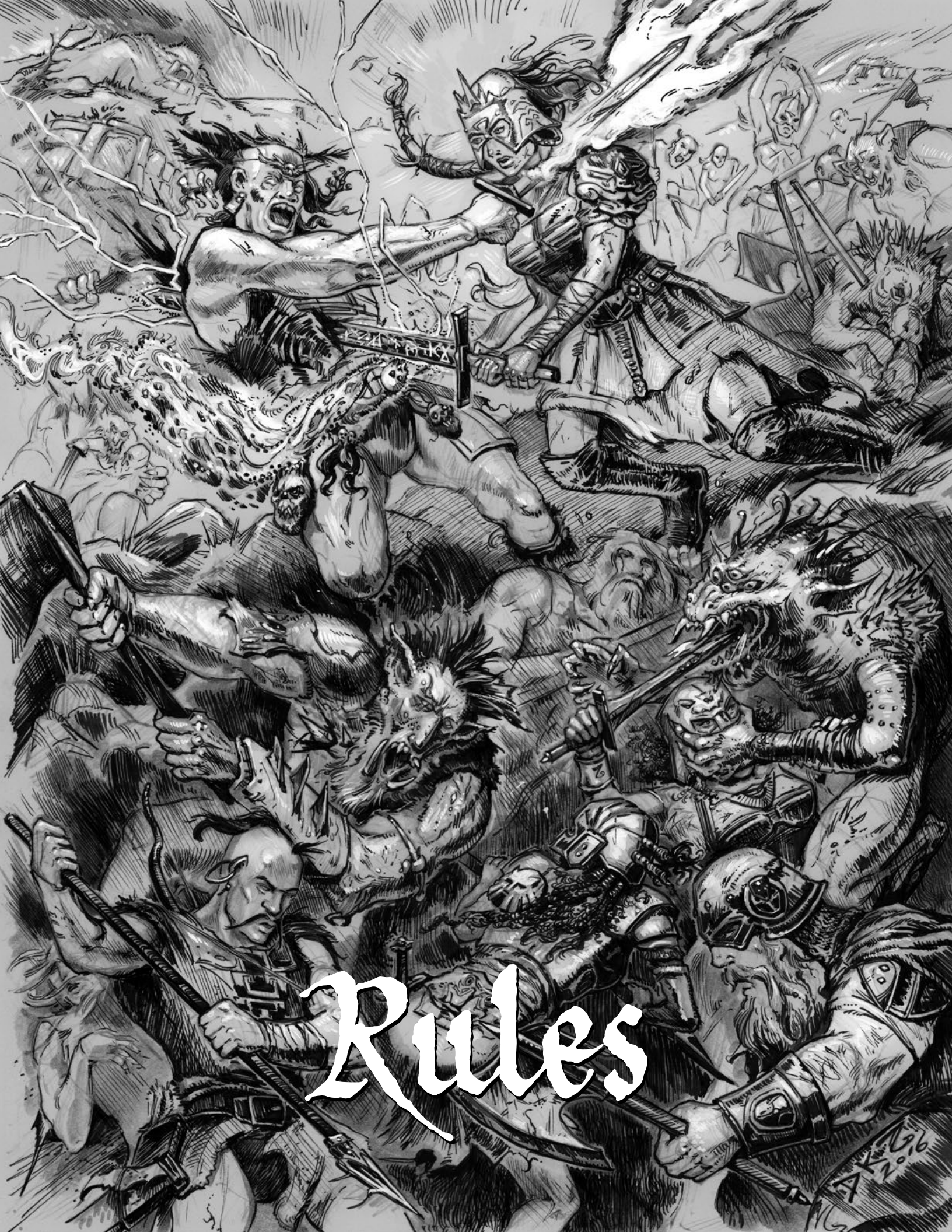
Briefly, the Shieldbreaker's courage faltered, and she fell back before the press, but the Lady of Battles recalled the smile with which Bjorn Longfarer, her father, had set his feet toward the Hidden Halls. The woman of the Bjornings, enraged as she was, let a word break from her breast. Stout-hearted, she shouted, her voice went roaring, clear in battle, among the gray stones. Joy was stirred, and the Hewer of Men heard that voice and knew. No more time was there to sue for peace.

Then the storm-shrine unleashed its full fury, and the cloud-gravel fell thickly. As heaven's hammer burned the sky, Sigrun, her strength failing, unleashed the fury-stroke and made the Hewer of Men, last Witch-King of the Sakki, a red ruin. Alas, ever had Ukho been ordained the Bane of the Bjornings, and so it was in death as in life, for with his dying breath, Tyrfing found Sigrun's head's foundation. The frightful corpse-sea pooled about her, and Sigrun Shieldbreaker was no more.

And yet the tide of war had turned. The Head-taker's chosen quit the field, carrying their slain lord to their new hall beneath the earth. Sigrun's jarls gathered around the queen of the Bjornings, tribute-bringer and ring-giver. Mærg the Mighty wept.



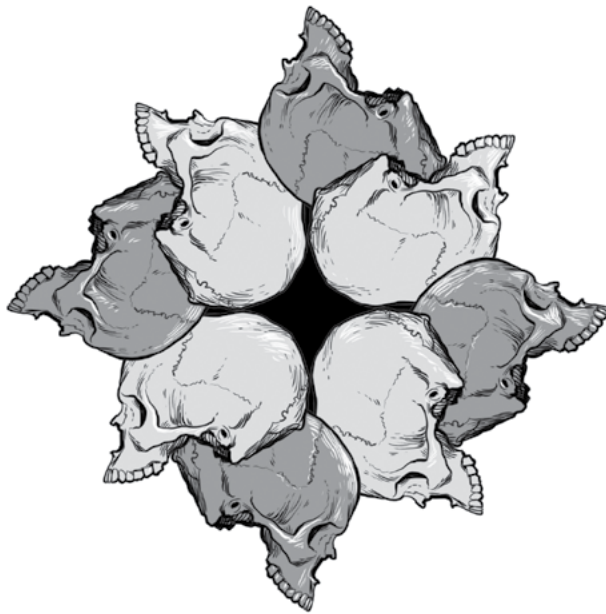




# Rules

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# The Order of Things



The Middarmark is a hard land full of possibilities for adventure. The following sections contain new rules and character options to help bring those possibilities to life.

Destined to Die provides a revised and updated procedure for creating a Torchbearer character, integrating new rules from The Middarmark. Settlements features 11 new towns from which characters can hail, and two new town locations. New Traits offers more than 40 additional traits for Torchbearer characters.

Each character in the Middarmark is born with a spiritual companion called a fylgja that influences their lives, and Calling upon Your Fylgja details rules for these spiritual companions. The New Gear section adds some equipment

useful to adventurers in the Middarmark. Boasting shows how characters with the Boasting Nature descriptor can use boasts to win fame for their deeds. The Rites of Hospitality delves into using steadings for the Town Phase.

Seasons and Weather details the weather of the Middarmark, with rules for 16 weather types. Spells and Prayers features a handful of new spells and prayers for the Middarmark, along with the favored prayers of various popular hero cults. Artifacts and Dweomers offers 13 new magic items, including artifacts fit for legendary heroes. Of Trolls and Men provides more than 20 new monsters and foes to spice up your game. Finally, In the Shadow of the Horns is a new adventure set in the Middarmark.



# Destined to Die



Creating characters for the Middarmark differs slightly from creating standard Torchbearer characters. The following procedure replaces Creating an Adventurer in Torchbearer, but draws from it.

## Creating an Adventurer

To create an adventurer in the Middarmark, you'll take the following steps:

- ☉ Roll randomly for your fylgja, a spirit animal or immortal that will guide your character from birth to the Halls of the Dead (see Which Fylgja Is Your Spiritual Companion? below)
- ☉ Choose class and stock (see Choose Your Class and Stock, Torchbearer, pages 14-15); characters of human stock should add Peasant to the list of special human skills they choose from (see Special Human Skill, Torchbearer, page 15); if you're playing a human, choose which tribe you hail from: Bjornings, Gotts, Grælings or Skyrnir
- ☉ Choose your home from Settlements of the Middarmark in this book or new settlements created by the GM
- ☉ Choose social graces (see What Are Your Social Graces?, Torchbearer, page 15)
- ☉ Choose a specialty (see What's Your Specialty?, Torchbearer, page 15)
- ☉ Choose wises (see How Are You Wise?, Torchbearer, page 15)
- ☉ Determine your Nature (dwarf, elf and halfling characters see Nature, Torchbearer, pages 16-17; human characters see Middarmark Nature Questions below appropriate to your tribe)
- ☉ Determine who your character knows (see Circles and Relationships, Torchbearer, pages 17-18)
- ☉ Record your resources (see Starting Resources, Torchbearer, page 18)
- ☉ Choose your gear (see Choose Adventuring Gear, Torchbearer, page 18)
- ☉ Choose a weapon and armor (see Choose Your Weapon and Starting Armor, Torchbearer, pages 18-19)
  - Clerics, elves and magicians determine starting spells and prayers (see Starting Spell and Prayer Choices, Torchbearer, page 19)
- ☉ Pick an alignment (see Choose Alignment, Torchbearer, page 19)
- ☉ Record Beliefs, Instincts and Goals (see Beliefs, Instincts and Goals, Torchbearer, page 19-20)

## The Middarmark

- ☉ Record your level and starting rewards (see Level and Starting Rewards, Torchbearer, page 20)
- ☉ Give your character a name (see Names in the Middarmark below, or create your own)
- ☉ Choose an age for your character from the appropriate stock:

Dwarf	30-51
Elf	60-101
Halfling	26-31
Human	14-21

- ☉ Check off the fresh condition! It's the last time you'll feel this good for a long while.

## Which Fylgja Is Your Spiritual Companion?

Long ago, the Skyrnir and Sakki learned from the elves that upon birth, each child gains a spirit companion or fetch that serves as their representative in the Otherworld. Fylgjur usually take the form of animals—perhaps a raven, goat, pig or swan—though some rare individuals (particularly the sons and daughters of Sigtyr, conceived during the Jolblot revels) have Asar or Jotnar for their fylgjur. The animal or Lord is always appropriate to the person, so that the great and powerful might be accompanied by a black bull or whale, while a sly person might be accompanied by a fox. Some Skyrnir sorcerers are even said to be able to assume the shape of their fylgjur. Those with the knack can learn much about a person simply by looking upon the person's fylgja.

Fylgjur sometimes appear in visions and dreams, bearing portents from the Otherworld.

The very first step of creating a character in the Middarmark is to roll 2d6 on the table on the next page to determine whether your character's fylgja is a beast of the air, beast of the wild, beast of the fields, beast of the waters or a child of the Lords. An additional roll on each subtable will determine which fylgja from that group is your companion. Each fylgja provides a trait at level 1 (traits are described in the New Traits section). This trait is in addition to other traits gained in character creation. Don't worry about the descriptor and additional descriptors now. They'll come into play later.

# Classes in Middarmark

## Dwarf Adventurer

Most dwarves in the Middarmark hail from Frostfast Hall, though some other settlements do have small enclaves of dwarves. Frostfast Hall and the Kingdom of Nidavellir have

a rigid and stratified culture, with little patience for individuals who seek to go their own way. Adventurers tend to be black sheep—unwanted and unwelcome. Perhaps they come from a disgraced line, or they failed their apprenticeship or were unable to secure one. Many adventurers spend their time seeking out ancient ruins and artifacts or take on work as mercenaries and engineers. Others are motivated by greed or revenge.

## Elf Ranger

Most elves in the Middarmark come from Alfás, though many rangers have adopted other communities. Rangers are seen as strange and untrustworthy by other elves because they have fled their duties to the rituals. Rangers who have adopted Svarttárn as their home are viewed with outright hostility by other elves, for they are considered to be seeking power for its own sake. Rangers are extremely uncommon in the Middarmark, but can be found exploring the wildlands, investigating alagablettur like the Chalk Horse and hunting Jotnar that prey upon the defenseless.

## Halfling Burglar

Halflings are clannish wanderers, but even among the huldufolk, some are considered rootless and given to flights of fancy. They wish to escape ever-present clan ties and expectations, and, as such, tend to bring disgrace to their families. Burglars are curious about the hidden places of the earth and are desirous of adventure.

## Human Cleric

Clerics in the Middarmark are not necessarily priests. Priest or priestess is a political role served by community leaders: hersar, godar, lendermenn, jarls and monarchs. Instead, clerics are holy warriors that have been touched directly by the divine, for good or ill. They are called to serve as agents of the Immortal Lords in the Middarmark and are granted power to do the Lords' will. Many people see their calling as strange or even misguided. All human tribes of the Middarmark produce clerics in roughly equal measure.

## Human Magician

Magicians are feared and respected in the Middarmark. Lendermenn, jarls, kings and queens all seek to bring powerful magicians to their halls to bolster their reputations and frighten their enemies. But those with the gift of magic who lack such backers often draw a mixture of suspicion, scorn and awe from the common people, if they reveal their abilities. Even among magical folk, magicians who have studied their craft at Svarttárn have a reputation for power and dark purpose. All human tribes of the Middarmark produce magicians, though the gift is most common among the Skyrnir.

Roll (2d6)	Type	Fylgjur	Trait	Descriptor	Additional Descriptors	
<b>2-3</b>	Beasts of the Air (Roll 2d6)	2.	Raven	Secretive	Stealing	Flying, Speaking
		3.	Owl	Wise	Ambushing	Flying, Listening
		4.	Goose	Loud	Warning	Flying, Swimming
		5.	Lark	Mellifluous	Singing	Flying, Digging
		6.	Cormorant	Greedy	Fishing	Flying, Diving
		7.	Gull	Opportunistic	Scavenging	Flying, Saltwater Drinking
		8.	Magpie	Clever	Mocking	Flying, Imitating
		9.	Swan	Elegant	Preening	Flying, Swimming
		10.	Falcon	Agile	Seeing	Flying, Hunting
		11.	Osprey	Constant	Snatching	Flying, Fishing
		12.	Eagle	Regal	Inspiring	Flying, Hunting
		<b>4-6</b>	Beasts of the Wilds (Roll 2d6)	2.	Serpent	Cold-blooded
3.	Mouse			Meek	Hiding	Foraging, Climbing
4.	Squirrel			Thrifty	Climbing	Burrowing, Sneaking
5.	Deer			Skittish	Foraging	Hiding, Herding
6.	Fox			Sly	Tricking	Learning, Stalking
7.	Reindeer			Surefooted	Migrating	Grazing, Herding
8.	Boar			Fierce	Charging	Goring, Rooting
9.	Wolf			Keen Nose	Hunting	Running, Playing
10.	Elk (Moose)			Aggressive	Intimidating	Grazing, Migrating
11.	Bear			Crushing Strength	Smashing	Hunting (and Fishing), Climbing
12.	Aurochs			Massive	Goring	Grazing, Herding
<b>7-9</b>	Beasts of the Fields (Roll 1d6)			1.	Cat	Sensual
		2.	Dog	Loyal	Guarding	Working, Running
		3.	Pig	Intelligent	Evading	Rooting, Scenting
		4.	Goat	Canny	Rutting	Escaping, Browsing
		5.	Horse	Proud	Running	Grazing, Herding
		6.	Ox	Steadfast	Hauling	Grazing, Herding
<b>10-11</b>	Beasts of the Waters (Roll 1d6)	1.	Pike	Voracious	Surviving	Swimming, Fighting
		2.	Eel	Slippery	Escaping	Swimming, Burrowing
		3.	Salmon	Sacred	Swimming	Spawning, Leaping
		4.	Seal	Playful	Diving	Fishing, Detecting Vibrations
		5.	Porpoise	Protective	Leaping	Swimming, Fishing
		6.	Whale	Wise	Imposing	Swimming, Fishing
<b>12</b>	Child of the Lords (Roll 1d6)	1.	Sigrun, Lady of Battles	Champion	Conquering	Marching, Inspiring
		2.	Ondurdis, Lady of the Winter Hunt	Tireless	Skiing	Hunting, Scouting
		3.	Bjorngrim the Dragonslayer	Heroic	Dragonslaying	Defending, Climbing
		4.	Vafrudnir, Lord of Whispers	Schemer	Poisoning	Deceiving, Sneaking
		5.	Vali, Lord of Slaughter	Bloodlust	Slaughtering	Terrifying, Oppressing
		6.	Choose One			

## Human Paladin

Like clerics, paladins in the Middarmark are not necessarily priests. They strive to be paragons of the Asar, to live and act as the heroes of the past. Most choose a particular Young Lord to embody. Their calling sets them apart from ordinary folk. Paladins seek to

protect the people who live in the civilized world from the horrors that lurk in the darkness, even if those people spit on them as Immortal-crazed vagrants. They seek the places where Chaos Cults gather that they may cleanse them. All human tribes produce paladins, but they are most common among the Bjornings and Gotts.

## The Middarmark

### Human Skald

Skalds are warrior-poets, wanderers and diplomats. The greatest among them are much sought after by kings and queens, who consider it a mark of honor to employ the best poets to extol their deeds. Others travel the length and breadth of the Middarmark, seeking secrets and tales with which to make their reputations. All human tribes produce skalds, but Skyrnir skalds are considered the very best.

See detailed description of this class at the end of this chapter.

### Human Thief

Thieves are outsiders, folk of the underworld. But even the underbelly of society has its hierarchies and nets of duty and obligation. Thieves stand outside this hierarchy, and it can be dangerous to ply one's trade without knowing the right people. Ancient temples, hidden ruins and forgotten tombs draw thieves like moths to a flame. All human tribes produce thieves, but many come from among the Grælings.

### Human Warrior

Most people of the Middarmark will fight if the need is great, but warriors excel at violence; it is their stock-in-trade. Those with reputations find work as huskarls for the powerful or lead warbands. Others turn to banditry and raiding, or hire on with merchants to protect their goods on land and at sea. Still others find the ancient and lost places of the Middarmark to their liking and seek forgotten treasures with which to make their names. All human tribes of the Middarmark produce warriors in roughly equal measure.

## Nature Questions

### Bjornings

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Demanding, Sailing

**Boasting:** Do you sit by the hearth at night drinking and boasting of your great deeds, or do you spend those chill nights quietly preparing for the dark times to come?

- ☉ If you boast of your exploits, real or imagined, increase Nature by one.
- ☉ If you quietly prepare, you may increase or replace your home trait with Thoughtful or Loner.

**Demanding:** When the elves and dwarves voice their concerns, do you demand to be heard as an equal, or do you bow your head and listen to the wisdom of your elders?

- ☉ If you demand your rights, increase Nature by one, but reduce Lore Master or Scholar by one if you have those skills, or Will if you do not.

- ☉ If you listen to the wisdom of the elder ones, no ratings change.

**Sailing:** Do you yearn to live by the sea and spend your days among the billows and breakers, or have you forsaken your heritage to sleep with stones as your pillows and branches as your blankets?

- ☉ If you yearn to live by the sea, increase your Nature by one.
- ☉ If you prefer the call of land, you may replace or increase your home trait with Wistful or Early Riser.

### Gotts

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Demanding, Riding

**Boasting:** Do you sit by the hearth at night drinking and boasting of your great deeds, or do you spend those chill nights quietly preparing for conquests to come?

- ☉ If you boast of your exploits, real or imagined, increase Nature by one.
- ☉ If you quietly prepare, you may increase or replace your home trait with Cold-blooded or Secretive.

**Demanding:** When the elves and dwarves voice their concerns, do you demand to be heard as an equal, or do you bow your head and listen to the wisdom of your elders?

- ☉ If you demand your rights, increase Nature by one, but reduce Lore Master or Scholar by one if you have those skills, or Will if you do not.
- ☉ If you listen to the wisdom of the elder ones, no ratings change.

**Riding:** Do you live and die on your mount, riding beneath the azure vaults, or do you secretly dream of being carried forth in a chair borne on the shoulders of slaves?

- ☉ If your mount is your life, increase your Nature by one.
- ☉ If you prefer a more civilized life, you may replace or increase your home trait with Jaded or Extravagant.

### Grælings

**Descriptors:** Farming or Fishing (choose one), Suing, Feuding\*

**Farming or Fishing:** Do you spend your days in eternal battle with land or sea to feed your family, or do you yearn for the freedom of the road and adventure?

- ☉ If you eke out your existence from the land and sea, increase your Nature by one.
- ☉ If you yearn for adventure, you may increase or replace your home trait with Outcast or Rover.



**Suing:** When a neighbor harms you or yours by action or inaction, do you seek redress within the law and courts, or do you seek private retribution?

- ☼ If you sue your claims in courts of law, increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If you seek private retribution, you *must* replace or increase your home trait with Vengeful or Petty.

**Feuding:** If a member of your clan is wronged, do you declare feud upon the family of the wrong-doer and make them pay the price, or do you seek a peaceful way to resolve transgressions and crimes between your clan and others?

- ☼ If you settle your debts through feuds, increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If you seek peace and resolution, you may increase or replace your home trait with Forgiving or Compassionate.

\*Grælings may replace any or all of their descriptors with Boasting, Demanding, and Sailing or Riding (depending on whether they hail from Bjorning or Gott lands). If you choose to replace a descriptor, you must answer the appropriate question for that descriptor from the relevant stock; for example, if you choose the Boasting descriptor, you must answer the Boasting question from the Bjorning stock.

## Skyrnir

**Descriptors:** Storytelling, Skygazing, Herding

**Storytelling:** On cold nights, do you sit by the fire and spin tales of your grandmother's great spells, or do you spurn such yarns as fables and prattle of a lost people?

- ☼ If you spend your nights spinning tales, increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If fables are beneath you, you may replace or increase your home trait with Bitter or Proud.

**Skygazing:** Would you wander with the sun as your lantern and night as your cloak, drinking from the clouds, or would you protect your friends and family behind stout walls and under strong roofs?

- ☼ If you wander beneath the sky increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If you live under a roof and behind walls, you may increase or replace your home trait with Defender or Stubborn.

**Herding:** Were you born a herder, destined to tend animals, or have you forsaken the simple ways of your people for the allure of town, fancy clothes and shoes?

- ☼ If you were born to tend the herds, increase Nature by one.
- ☼ If you have forsaken the herding tradition, you may increase or replace your home trait with Fat or Well-Dressed.

# NPE Nature Questions

The Scefings and the Sakki are primarily presented here for the GM's use. Use of these stocks by players is at the discretion of the GM.

## Scefings

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Enslaving, Sailing

**Boasting:** Do you sit by the hearth at night drinking and boasting of your savage deeds, or do you spend those chill nights quietly tending to your weapons?

- ☼ If you boast of your exploits, real or imagined, increase Nature by one.
- ☼ If you quietly prepare, you may increase or replace your home trait with Schemer or Loner.

**Enslaving:** Are you deaf to the cries of your captives as you sell them into servitude in far-off lands, or does compassion run in your veins as you set your captives free (taking only their worldly goods)?

- ☼ If you are deaf to the suffering of your captives, increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If you feel keenly the travails of your victims, take the Empathic trait at level 1.

**Sailing:** Do you spend your days astride the sea-steed among the frothing waves, or have you been bound to the soil like a thrall?

- ☼ If you live a life at sea, increase your Nature by one.
- ☼ If you live a life bounded by the shore, you may replace or increase your home trait with Aggressive or Rough Hands.

## Sakki

**Descriptors:** Climbing, Skiing, Spirit-binding

**Climbing:** When trouble comes, do you take refuge in the craggy hills, hiding in your ancestral fastness until danger has run its course, or does your tribe hurl barbs and spells, and meet their enemies in the valleys?

- ☼ If you seek safety in the hills, increase your Nature by one.

## The Middarmark

- ☉ If you would confront your enemies in the lowlands, you may increase or replace your home trait with Fierce or Stubborn.

**Skiing:** Do you hunt in winter, despite the cold and danger, or do you keep warm by the fire, sharpening your weapons and planning for your springtime raids?

- ☉ If you risk the ice and snow to feed your kin, increase your Nature by one.
- ☉ If you sharpen your weapons and dream of the future, reduce Survivalist or Hunter by one if you take them or Health by one if you don't.

**Spirit-binding:** When your will is questioned, do you speak the ancient names and bind the spirits to do your bidding—regardless of cost or danger—or do you seek wisdom in the old ways and humble yourself before the might of ancient ones?

- ☉ If you know the ancient names of spirits, increase your Nature by one.
- ☉ If you respect and fear the spirits as is proper, you may replace or increase your home trait with Wise or Devout.

## Human Skald

<b>Class</b>	Skald
<b>Raw Abilities</b>	Distribute 8 points between Will and Health; neither stat may have a rating lower than 2 or higher than 6.
<b>Skills</b>	Orator 4, Manipulator 3, Fighter 2, Lore Master 2, Scholar 2
<b>Trait</b>	Voice of Thunder
<b>Weapons</b>	Battle axe, dagger, hand axe, sling, spear and sword
<b>Armor</b>	Leather, chainmail and helmet
<b>Skill</b>	Choose one of the following skills and give it a rating of 3: Criminal, Haggler, Pathfinder, Peasant or Survivalist
<b>Starting Weapon</b>	Sword
<b>Starting Armor</b>	None

### Human Skald Leveling Rules

When they gain a level, skalds either choose between two level benefits or between a level benefit and a spell, depending on the level.

## Skald Spellcasting

Skalds who gain spell slots can only learn spells from mentors or through instruction. Instead of traveling spell books, they store their spells in small idols and rune-covered musical instruments. Skalds inscribe runes using the Scholar skill.

### Level 1

**Skald:** You can wear leather or chainmail armor and a helmet. You cannot use a shield. You can wield battle axes, daggers, hand axes, slings, spears and swords.

### Level 2

**Flyting:** Deliver a searing insult in verse in any verbal conflict. Add +1s to any tied or successful Feint action when you do so. In a verbal conflict, add one to your hit points after the conflict captain distributes the disposition points.

**Runecaster:** Gain one 1st Circle spell slot.



### Level 3

**Welcome in Every Hall:** Skalds are well received everywhere. When requesting hospitality via the Rites of Hospitality, gain +1D to your Orator. This may be used at a steading or in town. The level of accommodation the skald seeks must be available in that settlement for the skald to benefit from it.

**Deep Mind:** Skalds know nearly everyone and a bit about everything. You may dig for leads using any method once per town phase without raising your lifestyle obstacle.

### Level 4

**Master of Kennings:** Skalds can play emotions as skillfully as they recite poetry. When a skald chants poetry in camp, listeners gain +1D to recover from angry and afraid.

**Seer:** Gain one 1st Circle spell slot.

### Level 5

**Apprentice:** You gain an apprentice who helps you with abilities native to your class. Add +1D to your roll when your apprentice is helping. In a conflict, assign one of your hit points to your apprentice. If there are no extra hit points, then your apprentice can't help. Apprentices never act on their own.

**Skaldic Reputation:** As your reputation as a poet grows, not only are you welcome in every hall, but so is your retinue. When you successfully request hospitality by the Rites, your companions may reduce the lifestyle cost of that same level of accommodations by one.

### Level 6

**Runemaster:** +2D to the Scholar skill to decipher runes, symbols and strange languages. The skald may now learn spells from scrolls.

**Cunning Man (or Woman):** Gain one 2nd Circle spell slot.

### Level 7

**Bragman (male) or Bragwoman (female):** A skald who has learned the Arcanist or Ritualist skills may use the skills to cast from spell or prayer scrolls, respectively. You may also scribe scrolls using the Scholar skill.

**Warrior-Poet:** Your help in battle, kill, drive off and convince conflicts adds an additional +1D: when you help another player, you grant +2D instead of +1D.

### Level 8

**Master of Word and Deed:** Use level instead of Will as base disposition for drive off and verbal conflicts.

**Seidmann (male) or Seidkona (female):** Gain one 3rd Circle spell slot.

### Level 9

**Heroic Ability:** Choose Manipulator, Orator, Persuader or Will. The chosen skill or ability becomes "heroic." When rolling this skill, 3-6 indicates a success (rather than the standard 4-6). This ability does not affect Will as used as a base for conflicts.

**Transformed:** Change one Nature descriptor to one of the following: Lawgiving, Soothsaying, Declaiming.

### Level 10

**Shapeshifter:** A skald who has awakened their fylgja may transform into the form of their fylgja for one turn every adventure phase. This does not require a test and you always retain your mental faculties.

**Wordsmith:** Increase your rank cap for Manipulator, Orator or Persuader from 6 to 7. You may advance the chosen skill rank to 7 with seven successful tests and six failed tests.

## Optional Rule: Weapon Proficiency

In the Middarmark, characters may learn to use weapons beyond what their level 1 class benefits allow. Those class benefits still govern which weapons classes may use by default, but others may be learned in the course of play.

Characters who wish to learn to wield new weapons must first open the Fighter skill. Once opened, characters must seek out an instructor who knows how to wield the weapon they wish to learn to use. Each weapon must be taught individually.

The instructor uses the Mentor skill to teach the student. Tests equal to the learning character's maximum Nature are required to learn a new weapon. These tests do not count toward advancement of the Fighter skill.

For example, Luke wants his character Sammas the Thaumaturge to learn how to use a sword. Dro's character Bromwald recently taught Sammas the Fighter skill. As a warrior, Bromwald is proficient in all weapons, so Sammas asks Bromwald to instruct him again. The next time the group camps, Dro uses a check to have Bromwald begin Sammas's lessons. Bromwald picks a more or less straight stick off the ground, pushes it into Sammas's hands and begins showing him the forms.

Sammas's current Nature is 1 and his maximum Nature is 2. Dro rolls Bromwald's Mentor 4 against Ob 1 (Sammas's current Nature). He succeeds, and Luke marks a test toward learning the sword on Sammas' sheet. Luke just needs one more test from instruction and Sammas will learn to use a sword.

# Names

## Alfar

### Female

Agda, Alda, Arora, Bara, Branddis, Bryndis, Dis, Edda, Einrun, Eydis, Februn, Fjola, Freydis, Geira, Gestrun, Gita, Gudrun, Hadda, Halldis, Hilma, Ina, Isdis, Isold, Jara, Jona, Jorunn, Kaja, Katinka, Koldis, Lara, Laufey, Lindis, Maeja, Maidis, Malen, Myr, Nenna, Noa, Oda, Olena, Pala, Peta, Ran, Rikka, Runa, Salka, Sigyn, Soldis, Svana, Toka, Tru, Ulfrun, Una, Vala, Valdis, Von, Yja, Yrsa

### Male

Addi, Annar, Asmar, Baldur, Bardi, Barekur, Baugur, Daggeir, Dyri, Eivin, Erlendur, Erling, Fleinn, Floki, Frar, Galdur, Geiri, Gylfi, Haki, Hjalmtyr, Hrafn, Huginn, Iri, Iseldur, Issi, Jondar, Keran, Kjalar, Kvistur, Larus, Leiknir, Liljar, Melkior, Mir, Muninn, Mordur, Narfi, Njall, Nori, Oddi, Ormur, Pall, Rey, Runar, Siggeir, Sigmar, Sindri, Skari, Sverrir, Thorir, Toki, Tyr, Ulfgeir, Unnar, Valtyr, Vestar, Vigtyr

## Bjorning

### Female

Adis, Afrid, Almveig, Arnfasta, Astrid, Baugeid, Bergdis, Birna, Brynhild, Dageid, Dagmær, Dyrfinna, Dyrhild, Erna, Eydis, Eylaug, Fasta, Finna, Freydis, Frida, Gerda, Gisla, Gudrun, Gylla, Halla, Helga, Hjordis, Ingeborg, Jora, Kara, Karolina, Ljufa, Mæva, Mjoll, Moda, Olrun, Ormhild, Ragna, Ragnfrid, Runa, Saldis, Sæunn, Sida, Signy, Sigrun, Solveig, Svana, Toka, Tola, Tora, Una, Vedis, Ærinndis, Ætta

### Male

Abjorn, Ageir, Agmund, Alar, Amundr, Arngrim, Bard, Beigan, Berg, Bjorn, Borggeir, Bragi, Dagfinn, Drengi, Egil, Erlend, Eysteinn, Falgeir, Farald, Farulf, Fleinn, Geirmund, Greipr, Grima, Hagni, Hakon, Hall, Harek, Halfr, Holmbjorn, Kafi, Kare, Leif, Mani, Modolf, Nefgeirr, Njall, Oddi, Olaf, Orn, Otkell, Ragnar, Reidarr, Runolf, Sigbjorn, Snorri, Stein, Steinkell, Stygg, Styrbjorn, Svein, Thor, Toki, Torre, Trygg, Tyrvi, Ulfgeirr, Vagn, Vermundr, Yngvarr

## Halla Bårdsdottir, princess of the Middarmark



Halla is the precocious six-year-old daughter of Bjorning High King Bård and High Queen Astrid. For her first several years, her closest friends and companions were the hardened huskarls of her father's warband. But since her father's untimely death two years ago, the high queen has kept Halla close, insisting the girl learn to wield men and women as adroitly as the huskarls wield axe, spear and sword. Halla complies grudgingly. She would much rather be racing horses through the countryside or wrestling on the green.

## Dvergar

### Female

Alva, Alvdís, Asfritha, Astrid, Aud, Benta, Birgitte, Borgdis, Borghild, Daga, Drifa, Dyveke, Fride, Frøydis, Geira, Geirfrid, Gulldis, Haldri, Hallveig, Holmdis, Hunna, Idunn, Ivaldis, Jørunn, Lofnheid, Lyngheid, Malmfrid, Mundgjerd, Nora, Nyrdis, Oddlaug, Olfrid, Ormhild, Ragna, Reidi, Solveig, Svanlaug, Thorrdís, Thyri, Trinke, Ulfdís, Ulrike, Umma, Unnveig, Urda, Valdis, Varda, Vigdis, Yngveig, Yrsa

### Male

Ai, Alfr, Althjofr, Alviss, Anarr, Aurvangr, Bafurr, Bifurr, Bomburr, Brokkr, Buri, Dainn, Dolgthrasir, Dori, Durinn, Dvalinn, Eikinskjaldi, Eitri, Fafnir, Fili, Finnr, Fjalar, Frar, Fundinn, Galar, Gandalf, Ginnar, Gloinn, Hanarr, Har, Haugspori, Hlevangr, Hreidmar, Ivaldi, Jari, Joruvollr, Kili, Lofarr, Loni, Motsognir, Nainn, Nali, Nidi, Nipingr, Nori, Nyi, Ori, Otr, Reginn, Skafidr, Skirvir, Sundri, Thekk, Thorinn, Thrainn, Thror, Veigr, Vili, Vindalf, Virvir, Yngvi

## Gott

### Female

Adelais, Amelina, Auda, Austrechildis, Basina, Berchildis, Clotildis, Deuteria, Ermenberga, Erminhilt, Faileuba, Frida, Geretrudis, Gerhild, Godeliva, Hadewig, Helewidis, Helga, Herleva, Hildegard, Ida, Ima, Inga, Ingoberg, Ishildis, Linza, Mahthildis, Marcatrude, Merofled, Nantechildis, Oda, Raganhildis, Radegund, Romilda, Rosamunda, Saxa, Swanahilda, Theudechildis, Veneranda, Wisigard

**Male**

Adalbert, Ademar, Agobard, Aigulf, Asselin, Baugulf, Berno, Bertulf, Cheldric, Clovis, Dagobert, Drogo, Eadric, Ekkebert, Fredegar, Fridwald, Fulk, Gereon, Godobald, Grimald, Gunthar, Hagen, Helmut, Hincmar, Ingomar, Ingulf, Jocelin, Leodegar, Merovech, Notker, Odalric, Odger, Orderic, Pancras, Raban, Rothad, Samo, Sigimund, Tancred, Tescelin, Theodoric, Ulf, Ulrich, Vulfgang, Walaric, Zwentibold

**Græling****Female**

Agat, Aidnu, Aliinna, Alva, Avra, Bavla, Bierga, Bikka, Birgget, Cuvje, Darja, Diinna, Duiiri, Duoja, Elsa, Erva, Gaddja, Gearda, Hanna, Njaves, Henna, Hilla, Iinna, Isa, Karoliinna, Kearte, Lavra, Leja, Lieddi, Lilja, Lohtta, Maddja, Maila, Mavdna, Meret, Milja, Nienna, Oaja, Piija, Raija, Ravna, Ruhte, Saddja, Sanna, Sealgga, Seljo, Siinna, Siru, Soaba, Solla, Sunna, Suoinna, Tilda, Tua, Ulla, Unni, Vera

**Male**

Abrran, Aillon, Ammon, Artor, Bannos, Bedar, Bierrelas, Cuivi, Curtnas, Davgon, Duvre, Egel, Eidnar, Elejas, Feles, Gaivvas, Gallagas, Hanno, Haral, Herko, Irjan, Iskko, Ivvar, Jagat, Jago, Jarre, Kalle, Karral, Lagon, Laras, Lejo, Lemek, Maden, Mavnos, Mures, Nahkol, Nainnas, Nanit, Oavan, Olet, Orddot, Raidner, Ranso, Sahkar, Sala, Savlos, Siiggur, Simit, Uddi, Uhkku, Valljas, Vide, Vigg

**Huldufolk****Female**

Adela, Alba, Aleit, Anke, Antje, Asta, Bertha, Dieuwke, Edda, Emma, Elke, Femke, Fenna, Frida, Gunda, Heike, Hilda, Ida, Ima, Imma, Inka, Irma, Jeltje, Jeltsje, Lorelei, Linda, Linza, Lys, Minke, Nienke, Nynke, Romilda, Roza, Sunnifa, Thora, Tyra, Wiebke, Wobbe

**Male**

Adde, Aghi, Alfher, Bertram, Bjarni, Cord, Dieuwer, Dudda, Egino, Eilert, Etzel, Fedde, Friso, Fulco, Gasto, Gebbert, Gero, Gislin, Heiko, Herman, Hidde, Huppert, Ing, Ivo, Jelle, Jurre, Kai, Klaes, Lammert, Lanzo, Lubbert, Meine, Milo, Norbert, Pippin, Preben, Rein, Roan, Rokus, Siet, Sikke, Sjoerd, Tielo, Tjeerd, Watse, Wob

**Sakki****Female**

Aili, Aino, Enni, Hilja, Ilmatar, Ilta, Impi, Kielo, Kiira, Kyllikki, Lilja, Louhi, Meri, Mielikki, Oili, Orvokki, Pilvi, Rauha, Ritva, Satu, Sisko, Suvi, Taika, Taimi, Taru, Tuuli, Ulla, Vanamo, Varpu, Vellamo, Venla, Virva

**Male**

Aatos, Ahti, Ensio, Hannu, Heikki, Ilari, Ilmari, Jalo, Joukahainen, Kaleva, Kauko, Lemminkainen, Otso, Pekko, Sampo, Seppo, Sisu, Tapio, Tarmo, Topi, Torsti, Ukko, Urho, Vaino, Veli, Voitto

**Scefing****Female**

Alfhildr, Arnbjorg, Asa, Asdis, Aslaug, Adalbjorg, Audhildr, Bergljot, Bjorg, Brynhildr, Dagny, Dagrun, Grimhildr, Gulla, Gunnbjorg, Gunnvor, Gudridr, Gudrun, Hlif, Ingibjorg, Ingridr, Mangnhildr, Myrgjol, Ragnhildr, Signy, Svanhildr, Torny, Torveig, Unnr, Valdis, Vigdis, Yngvildr

**Male**

Agmundr, Alfarr, Arni, Arndorr, Asbjorn, Asketill, Birgir, Brandr, Brynjarr, Bui, Dagfinnr, Dagr, Danr, Eileifr, Finn, Fritjof, Gautstafr, Gudmundr, Hallr, Halldorr, Hjalmar, Hrafn, Hroaldr, Ingi, Ivarr, Kari, Kettill, Oddr, Radulfr, Stigr, Sverrir, Torgeir, Tryggvi, Ulfr, Valdimarr, Yngvarr

**Skyrnir****Female**

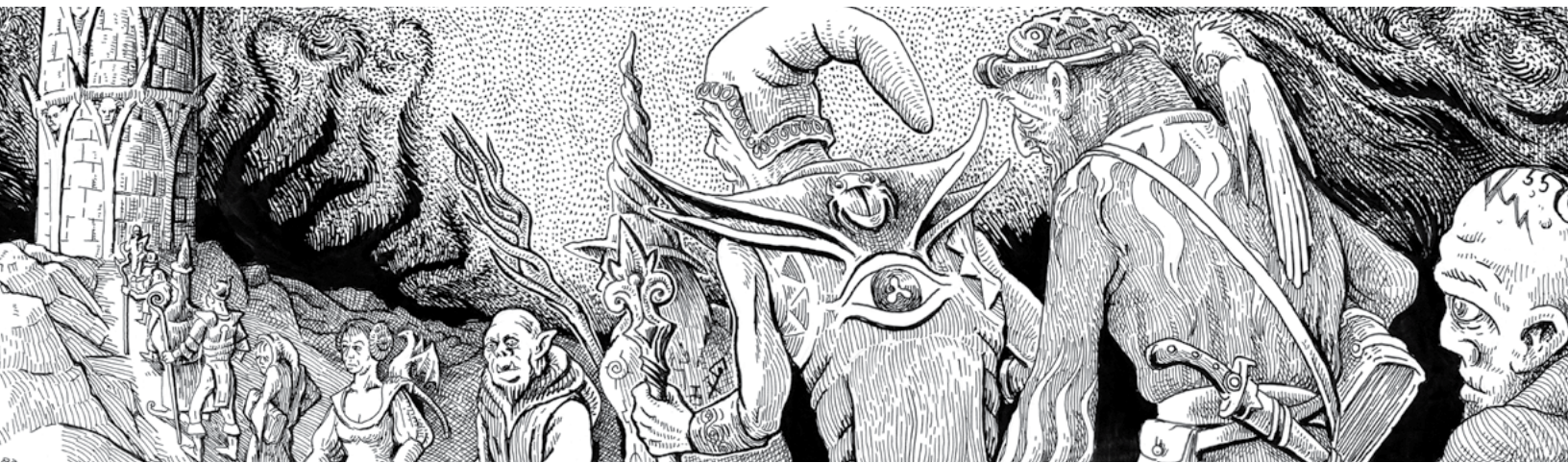
Aidna, Aile, Avra, Biella, Davdna, Duiiri, Duoja, Eira, Erva, Geala, Giera, Golla, Helbme, Juoksahkka, Kearte, Laila, Lieddi, Nasti, Nienna, Oaja, Oggi, Ravna, Ruvsu, Saibmi, Seara, Seiggo, Siru, Sunna, Suoinna, Tua, Uksahkka, Unni, Varva, Vuohkku

**Male**

Aggi, Apmot, Aslak, Baza, Biera, Dearsu, Dutta, Eaddji, Eiven, Gaivvas, Gavgu, Giera, Haral, Ilsko, Ilbmar, Jalbmar, Jongu, Karral, Lemma, Mielat, Mokci, Nainnas, Njulg, Ommut, Ovla, Peivas, Ribma, Ruigi, Sabbe, Sarra, Skarild, Uddi, Uhkku, Vallju, Vigg, Vulle



# Settlements



The settlements in *Torchbearer* are meant to be generic templates that you customize for your setting with their own names and character. The following 11 settlements are examples of settlements in the Middarmark, complete with available locations and current laws.

## Using These Settlements in Play

When creating characters for the Middarmark, use the settlements below rather than the settlements listed in *Where Is Your Home?* (*Torchbearer*, p. 15). You can, of course, also use the settlements below as templates for creating your own settlements throughout the Middarmark.

## Alfás

A hidden elven settlement in the foothills of Fjalar where the alfar stand vigil over the drømmere who walk the Drømmerendal.

### Town Rules

**Skills:** Mentor, Lore Master, Healer

**Traits:** Dreamwalker, Quiet

The location of Alfás is a closely guarded secret, and it may only be entered by elves who were raised there. All others are forbidden, save by express invitation of the drømmere.

Remove the afraid condition for free without rolling if you enter Alfás as a friend of the alfar.

### Available Locations

Tavern, Stables, Home (equivalent to Inn or Hotel, based on station of owner), Market

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 5

### Current Laws

- ⊗ Unless it is your home, entering Alfás without the invitation of the drømmere is a criminal act. Punishable by death.
- ⊗ The words of a draumkona in trance may not be gainsaid. Punishable by exile and outlawry.

## Doalrode

A transient camp of the huldufolk that travels along the Sólveien between Veihus in the north and the Stortmarke in the south. Other folk occasionally call Doalrode home for a time.

### Town Rules

**Skills:** Cook, Orator, Peasant

**Traits:** Extrovert, Slippery

## Available Locations

Cookfires (as Tavern), Home (equivalent to Flophouse or Inn, based on station of owner), Market (only when outside another settlement or stading), Portable Forge, Oxen Pickets (as Stables), Shrine, Tents (as Flophouse), Workshop

The workshop and portable forge provides the Use Facilities function of a guild hall, but only for the following skills: Armorer, Carpenter, Cook, Peasant and Weaver.

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 2

## Current Laws

- ☉ Everyone must add something to the pot each night.
- ☉ Newcomers must share a new story around the cookfire.
- ☉ To take the life of another is forbidden. Punishable by retaliation or wergild.

# Frostfast Hall

An industrious dwarven citadel in the Nidfjoll dedicated to mining and craft, the dwarves of Frostfast Hall have a tempestuous relationship with the elves of Alfás.

## Town Rules

**Skills:** Armorer, Laborer, Stonemason

**Traits:** Stubborn, Lyrical

## Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Flophouse, Inn, Hotel, Home (equivalent to Flophouse, Inn or Hotel based on station of owner), Market, Guild Hall

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 3

## Current Laws

- ☉ Theft is a criminal act. Punishable by loss of limb or facial branding.
- ☉ Sedition is a criminal act. Punishable by incarceration or execution.
- ☉ Defamation of the ruling class is a criminal act. Punishable by incarceration or whipping.
- ☉ One may not wear fashionable shoes above his or her station. Punishable by three days in stocks or a fine (Ob 2 Res test).
- ☉ One may not wear fashionable clothes above his or her station. Punishable by seven days in stocks or a fine (Ob 3 Res test).

- ☉ Arranged marriages enforced. Failure to marry punishable by public humiliation.

# Jernkloster

A temple complex dedicated to the Immortals of the Middarmark. The clerics of Jernkloster are determined to contain the monsters of the Ironwold.

## Town Rules

**Skills:** Survivalist, Commander, Theologian

**Traits:** Defender, Stoic

## Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Stables, Flophouse, Home (equivalent to Inn or Hotel, based on station of owner), Temple, Market

**Alignment:** Law

**Haggling:** Ob 3

## Current Laws

- ☉ Belonging to a Chaos cult is a criminal act. Punishable by death.
- ☉ Failing to report for watch duty is a criminal act. Punishable by whipping.
- ☉ All young persons ages 10-16 must train in spear and shield. Failure to do so is punishable by public humiliation.
- ☉ To defile a tomb is an offense before the Immortals. Punishable by execution.

# Öarjevapri

A mostly seasonal Skyrnir settlement in an upland moor (the high fell) northwest of the Nidfjoll Mountains. The high fell has few permanent residents, but you can always find a handful of shamans and outcasts in the makeshift settlement. In the summer months, the place sees considerable activity as the Skyrnir converge on the holy site for their midsummer rites and market.

## Town Rules

**Skills:** Hunter, Lore Master, Orator

**Traits:** Wise, Skinny

## Available Locations

Ditch (as Street), Flophouse, Home (equivalent to Stables), Market (only in summer), Shaman's Circle (as Temple), Tavern

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 3

## The Middarmark

### Current Laws

- ☼ Defiling a sacred site is an offense to the landvættir. Punishable by branding and exile.
- ☼ Stealing a reindeer is a criminal act. Punishable by fine or branding.
- ☼ Killing or wounding another during the summer gathering is a criminal act. Punishable by weregild or exile.

## Rimholm

A busy trading city. Bustling with merchants and shipbuilders, Rimholm is the seat of the high kings of the Middarmark.

### Town Rules

**Skills:** Steward, Carpenter, Sailor

**Traits:** Tall, Jaded

### Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Stables, Flophouse, Inn, Hotel, Home (equivalent to Flophouse, Inn or Hotel based on station of owner), Temple, Market, Guild Hall, High Queen's Hall (equivalent to hotel)

**Alignment:** Law

**Haggling:** Ob 4

### Current Laws

- ☼ Theft is a criminal act. Punishable by loss of limb or facial branding.
- ☼ Defamation of the High Queen is a criminal act. Punishable by incarceration or whipping.
- ☼ To defile a tomb is an offense before the Immortals. Punishable by execution.

## Stortmarke

The Free City of Stortmarke is the most powerful of the Havn League cities on the Regn Sea. Though nominally subject to the Bjorning kings and queens of Rimholm, the Græling clans of Stortmarke are a proud and fiercely independent folk. The city sits at the mouth of the Dreik River and the terminus of the Sølveien, which connects the Regn Coast with Rimholm in the east. Its ships command commerce with Holmsea, Valland, Vestreyar and Svanland.

### Town Rules

**Skills:** Haggler, Laborer, Sailor

**Traits:** Industrious, Proud

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 4

### Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Stables, Flophouse, Inn, Hotel, Home (equivalent to Flophouse, Inn or Hotel based on station of owner), Temple, Market, Guild Hall, Havn League Hall, Slave Market

### Current Laws

- ☼ Theft is a criminal act. Punishable by loss of limb or facial branding.
- ☼ Piracy is a criminal act. Punishable by hanging until dead.
- ☼ Failing to report for watch duty is a criminal act. Punishable by whipping.
- ☼ All magicians and elves must wear conical hats. Failure to do so punishable by whipping or a fine (Ob 3 Resources test).
- ☼ Magicians may not testify before a judge.
- ☼ To cast a spell upon another is forbidden. Punishable by execution.

## Sunnås

A village on the Sølveien between Stortmarke and Veihus, known for its hof to Freydis, Lady of Sowing and Reaping.

### Town Rules

**Skills:** Carpenter, Peasant, Theologian

**Traits:** Devout, Rough Hands

**Alignment:** Law

**Haggling:** Ob 3

### Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Stables, Flophouse, Home (equivalent to Flophouse or Inn based on station of owner), Temple, Market

### Current Laws

- ☼ Cursing is a criminal act. Punishable by branding.
- ☼ Belonging to a Chaos cult is a criminal act. Punishable by death.
- ☼ A tithe to the Cult of Freydis is required (1D of cash per person). Failure to pay punishable by whipping.

## Svarttårn

Many are the stories concerning this tower of sorcerers and wizards, both magnificent and black as night. It is said that few libraries can boast of containing greater lore than the scrolls and codices hidden away in its archives.



## Town Rules

**Skills:** Alchemist, Scholar, Cartographer

**Traits:** Skeptical, Curious

## Available Locations

Stables, Flophouse, Inn, Home (equivalent to Flophouse, or Inn for magicians), Temple, Market (This market is held four times a year. Roll 2d6 when entering town; market is available on roll of 10-12.)

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Haggling:** Ob 4

## Current Laws

- ☼ To touch the body of a magician without consent is forbidden. Punishable by public flogging.
- ☼ To take a life is forbidden. Punishable by retaliation or compensation.

# Farn Farnleth

A small border village in the Gottmark known for the quality of its wool; ruled by a petty knight.

**Skills:** Hunter, Peasant, Weaver

## Town Rules

**Traits:** Early Riser, Rough Hands

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 3

## Available Locations

Tavern, Street, Stables, Flophouse, Home (equivalent to Flophouse), Market, Manor House (equivalent to Inn)

## Current Laws

- ☼ Riding ahead of your betters is a criminal act. Punishable by whipping.
- ☼ One may not wear fashionable shoes above his or her station. Punishable by three days in stocks or a fine (Ob 2 Resources test).
- ☼ All peoples are forbidden to bear arms greater than a knife or dagger in town. Punishable by confiscation of arms and fine (Ob 2 Resources test).

# Veihus

A market town that grew around the crossroads of the Dalveien and the Sølveien, known for its market and travelers' hostel.

## Town Rules

**Skills:** Pathfinder, Haggler, Cook

**Traits:** Cunning, Quick-Witted

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Haggling:** Ob 2

## Available Locations

Flophouse, Guild Hall, Home (equivalent to Flophouse or Inn based on station of owner), Inn, Market (This market is held once a month. Roll 2d6 when entering town; market is available on roll of 9-12.), Stables, Street, Tavern, Temple

## Current Laws

- ☼ Brawling is a criminal act. Punishable by public humiliation.
- ☼ Digging without the permission of the landowner is a criminal offence. Punishable by branding.
- ☼ All peoples are forbidden to bear arms greater than a knife or dagger in town. Weapons may be left with guards upon entering town (increase lifestyle cost by one). Punishable by loss of arms and fine (Ob 2 Resources test).

# New Town Locations

## Havn League Hall

The Havn League is a powerful merchant guild that monopolizes trade in member cities in Gottland, Holmsea, Valland, Svanland and the Regn Coast of the Middarmark. At the Havn League Hall, you may secure loans and hire help.

## Securing a Loan

Havn League agents are occasionally willing to invest in risky schemes if the return seems promising.

## Find an Investor

Securing a loan requires finding a league agent willing to listen to you. Make a Circles test to find an interested league agent. Gain an advantage die for each lead you've uncovered for the adventure you intend to undertake.

Handing drunken adventurers cash is never a good idea, so League agents provide loans in the form of gear and material.

Securing a loan factors (start counting at 2): gear worth an Ob 5 Resources test, gear worth Ob 6, gear worth Ob 7, gear worth Ob 8

**Securing a Loan Lifestyle Cost:** +1

### Debt

The Havn League's reach is long and its pockets are deep. It expects its loans to be repaid. A character's debt is equal to the obstacle of the gear from the loan; e.g., if you took gear worth Ob 5, your debt is 5. Until the loan is repaid, raise the obstacle of the indebted character's lifestyle tests by half the debt, rounded down. Each successful test reduces the debt by one. In addition to any other consequences, failed lifestyle tests while indebted increase the debt by one.

Adventurers can also pay off their loans using cash dice at a rate of 3D cash for 1 debt.

League agents will also accept goods in lieu of cash. Objects worth an Ob 4 or greater Resources test reduce debt by one. Objects worth an Ob 8 or greater Resources test reduce debt by two.

If the indebted character's lifestyle is higher than his or her Resources and available cash, the Havn League hires a party of adventurers to extract payment or at least teach the debtor a very painful (possibly even deadly) lesson.

### Hiring Help

At the Havn League Hall, you can hire carpenters and sailors to assist you on jobs. You must be at least level 2 to hire help. All such services must be paid in advance and thus add to your lifestyle cost.

Carpenters have the Carpenter skill and will help (+1D) with all tests related to that skill in port or at sea. Sailors will help you with Sailor (+1D) at sea.

Only one group of each type of help may be hired by the group at one time.

### Putting Out the Word

To find these useful hirelings, test Circles against the appropriate obstacle determined by the factors below.

**Hire Help Factors:** sailors, carpenters

**Hired Help Lifestyle Cost:** sailors +1, carpenters +2

### Slave Market

Stortmarke is a key port in the commoditization of misery for the northern slave trade. Raiders capture men, women and children in Valland and Svanland and sell them as thralls in the great slave market. Debtors in the Middarmark also sometimes sell themselves, their children or their apprentices to raise funds to repay their debts. Some thralls are kept in the Middarmark, but the majority are sold to traders who take them east to Ostergard, where the demand for thralls is seemingly endless.

### Selling People

People are worth 2D of cash. Add 1D if the person has one or more of the following skills:

- ☉ Carpenter
- ☉ Healer
- ☉ Sailor
- ☉ Cook
- ☉ Laborer
- ☉ Weaver
- ☉ Haggler
- ☉ Peasant

Add 2D if the person has one or more of the following skills:

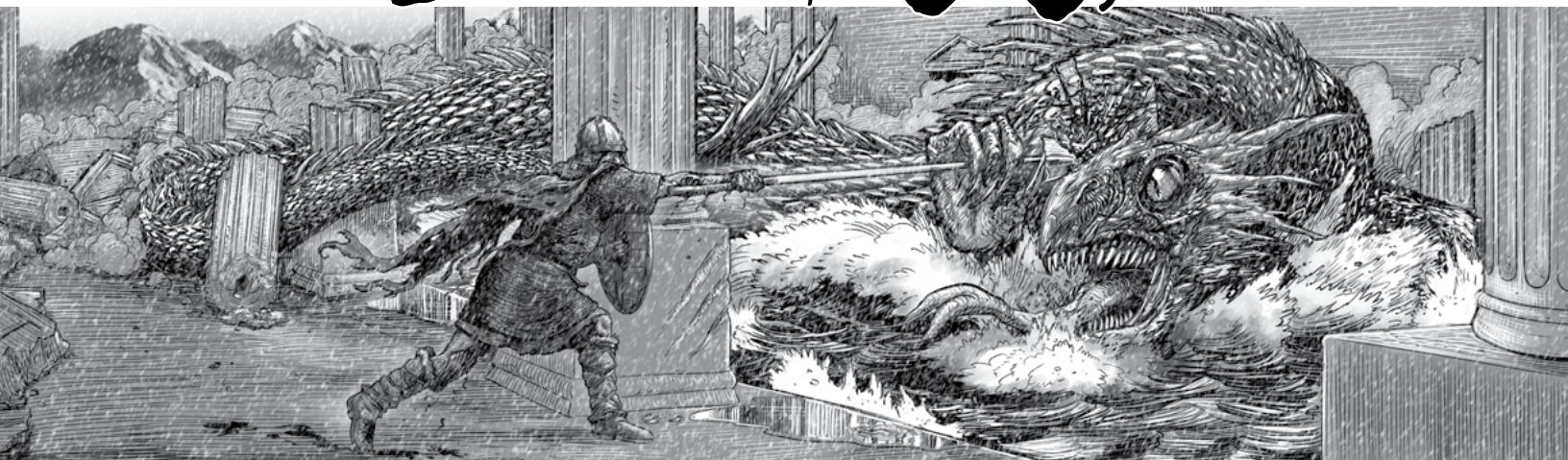
- ☉ Alchemist
- ☉ Lore Master
- ☉ Stonemason
- ☉ Armorer
- ☉ Scholar
- ☉ Theologian
- ☉ Cartographer
- ☉ Steward

**Slave Market Lifestyle Cost:** 0





# Calling upon Your Fylgja



**F**olk who are in tune with their true selves may call upon the power of their fylgja to aid them. Adventurers, particularly those with an Immortal for their spirit companion, sometimes call this process hero-forming.

First, you need to understand your true nature. This requires identifying your fylgja with the help of the Eye of Omens spell or the Vision of the Lords of Chaos and Law prayer. The obstacle is based on the level of the trait granted by your fylgja. By default, your character starts with a level 1 trait from their fylgja, though the trait level can be increased through Winter Tales in the Winter Phase as normal.

Once you've identified your fylgja, there is a ritual known among the Skyrnir and Sakki that allows one to tap into the spirit's power. Anyone who knows the ritual may teach it with a Mentor test.


## Hero-forming

Once per session, make a Ritualist test with an obstacle equal to 8 - your current Nature rating.

If successful, you gain your fylgja's descriptor as one of your Nature descriptors for a turn. You may spend margin of success on the test to gain additional turns.

Anyone capable of seeing the Otherworld can see the energies gathering around the character, but on earth, the effect is subtle, though it can enable incredible feats.

A more profound transformation is available to those capable of casting spells or invoking prayers (see New Spells and Prayers).



# New Traits



**T**his section describes more than 40 new traits to individualize your character. The entries offer suggestions on how to use the trait, both to benefit you and get you into trouble.

## **Aggressive**

Aggressive people are bold and assertive, with the ability to go for what they want. They can sometimes be too pushy or respond with maximum force when a more delicate hand is required.

## **Agile**

Agile individuals are nimble and well-coordinated, but sometimes their trust in their agility is so ingrained they put themselves in dangerous situations without thinking about the consequences.

## **Bloodlust**

Some people have a capacity for mayhem and killing that makes them all but unstoppable in violent confrontations, but leashing the lust for death in other situations can be a struggle.

## **Canny**

Canny people are sagacious and knowing, to the point where some might think they have occult powers. Sometimes they pretend to see and know more than they actually do.

## **Champion**

When all seems lost, champions look deep inside themselves to find a means of victory. Champions can struggle to acknowledge others as their superiors in something.

## **Clever**

Clever people are quick to understand and devise new ideas, but they have a tendency to make intricate, complex plans when simple, direct action will do.

## **Cold-blooded**

Pain and emotional trauma rolls off cold-blooded people because they can separate themselves from their emotions, but they can be so dispassionate that they have trouble connecting with anyone or anything at all.

## **Compassionate**

Some people can't help but care for others in need. Their mercy and charity can reach the most jaded souls, but they often don't realize when opportunistic people take advantage of them.

## **Constant**

Some people are always faithful to their loved ones, drawing strength from this conviction. They are also more vulnerable to infidelity and betrayal.



## Crushing Strength

Some are possessed of power beyond that of most people, allowing them to perform nearly superhuman feats of strength. Sometimes, they don't know their own strength.

## Devout

Some people believe in the precepts of their chosen Young Lord without question, giving them a powerful faith. Some take that faith so far that they become closed-minded and dogmatic.

## Dreamwalker

The Alfar are as much creatures of the Drømmerendal as they are of the waking world, and they can slip between the two with ease. They are known for their lucid, often prophetic dreams. Some find it difficult to discern the dream from waking life.

## Elegant

Some people are naturally graceful and dignified no matter the situation. They hate to be made to look a fool.

## Empathic

Some people are able to put themselves in others' shoes and use that to forge connections with people. These feelings can cause them trouble when hard hearts are needed.

## Fat

Rich living can make people stout or even a bit portly. These people have an air of prosperity and a cushion against the rigors of life in the wild. They may have trouble squeezing through tight spaces and can get winded easily.

## Fierce

Fierce people have a menacing and savage mien and are capable of violent intensity at the slightest provocation. They can struggle to be calm and soothing.

## Forgiving

Some people are able to turn the other cheek despite strong provocation. The power of their forgiveness can halt feuds before they begin, but some might see their clemency as a weakness to be exploited.

## Greedy

Greedy people are intensely acquisitive, which can lend them additional drive when something they want is on the line. They struggle to behave altruistically.

## Heroic

Heroes are bold, altruistic and determined, capable of performing great deeds beyond that of ordinary people. But they can sometimes seem flamboyant and extravagant.

## Industrious

Industrious people are diligent and hardworking, taking enormous pride in their tireless efforts. They can sometimes have trouble relaxing or being still.

## Intelligent

Intelligent people have keen minds and good judgment, but grow frustrated when others can't understand them. Worse, those others might think them fools.

## Keen Nose

People with keen noses can detect smells at great distances and discern what causes them. Powerful odors can impair them.

## Loud

Loud people can make themselves heard in a gale or across a battlefield. They find it difficult to stay silent and unobtrusive, and can come across as boorish in some situations.

## Loyal

Loyal people remain faithful and true through all hardships. That faithfulness can make them vulnerable to betrayal and encourage them to overlook faults in the object of their loyalty.

## Lyrical

The picks and hammers of Frostfast Hall's miners and craftsmen fall with a never-varying rhythm, and they sing an unending stream of lullabies to ensure Nihd the Giant never awakens. The habit has become so ingrained in the people that live there that mellifluous word and song flow from them with the ease of breathing. Some will nervously fill any silence with song.

## Massive

Massive people have the weight and size to push through obstacles and go wherever they want to go. They take up a lot of space and tend to break things.

## Meek

The meek are humble, patient and gentle. Timid animals are drawn to them, and people tend to like them and open up to them without knowing why. They find it difficult to stand their ground against the dominant and powerful.





## The Middarmark

### **Mellifluous**

Some people have a knack for creating sweet, smoothly flowing phrases and songs. They can find it difficult to be gruff or threatening.

### **Opportunistic**

Some are quick to adapt their actions based on what is expedient or effective, regardless of ethical principles. They're great at seizing the moment, but friends and comrades are frequently disgusted by the choices they make.

### **Outcast**

To be outcast is to be severed from the bonds of kith and kin. Outcasts are not bound by the strictures of clan and tribe but nor do they enjoy the protection of family.

### **Petty**

Some people can't leave slights unanswered, no matter how insignificant they seem. They can persist where others would give up and sometimes seemingly inconsequential things turn out to matter. Other people tend to lose patience with petty folk quickly.

### **Playful**

Playful individuals are fun and frolicsome. They make friends easily and know how to bring out people's smiles, but they sometimes have trouble being serious when the time for play ends.

### **Protective**

Protecting your friends from harm is ingrained in you, but your actions often put yourself in danger.

### **Proud**

The proud carry an unmistakable air of confidence and superiority. Sometimes, it can come across as arrogance.

### **Regal**

Regal individuals are stately and proud. They expect to be heard and many people follow them without a second thought. Regal people can come across as imperious.

### **Rover**

Rovers find it difficult to stay in one place for any length of time. They've been every place once or twice and are experts on life on the road. Their reluctance to plant roots can make them blind to the bonds that tie communities together.

### **Sacred**

Some people have an ineffable quality—a connection to the Otherworld that causes others to venerate them and their

words. Others expect such people to behave in a particular way, and things can become messy if their actions make it clear that they are people, not divine beings.

### **Schemer**

Underhanded plots and intrigues delight schemers. They're good at it. Sometimes, though, they cause trouble for themselves by scheming, even when they don't need to.

### **Secretive**

Some are naturally reticent about letting people in on what they're up to. They keep everything hidden and concealed. At times, their secrecy means they keep from people things that really should be shared.

### **Sensual**

Some people take particular delight in the gratification of the senses, catching others up in their materialistic and carnal appetites. Sometimes, they come across as lewd, and other times their dissipated ways simply catch up with them come morning.

### **Skittish**

Some people are apt to simply shy or start. Their nervous ways mean they are often already darting away before most others recognize danger has arrived. Often, they jump at their own shadows.

### **Slippery**

Slippery people just seem to have a knack for wriggling out of tight spots, escaping bonds and escaping responsibilities. They're often seen as shifty and undependable.

### **Sly**

Some folk are cunning and wily. They're good at getting things done furtively. Sometimes their mischievous and roguish nature gets them into trouble.

### **Steadfast**

Steadfast individuals are resolute and unwavering. They find it difficult to change their minds or admit they've chosen the wrong course.

### **Stubborn**

Stubborn people are so confident in themselves and their positions that they refuse to give in or surrender to opposing viewpoints or threats. At times, they dig in their heels even when they know they're wrong.

**Surefooted**

Some people can unerringly walk on ice and wet, lichen-covered rocks. They just instinctively know how to shift their weight to keep traction. It's easy to take it for granted that others can follow in your footsteps.

**Thrifty**

Some people are just naturally frugal, always putting something away for times of scarcity. It pains them to lay out coin for extravagant or frivolous things, or to part with their equipment or tools.

**Tireless**

Tireless folk are seemingly indefatigable—able to push on well past the point where others drop. They can easily push themselves and others too hard if not careful.

**Vengeful**

Vengeful folk are driven to redress the wrongs they have suffered, no matter the cost to themselves or others. Their need for vengeance can give them the strength to persevere against the toughest odds. They often harm others in the pursuit.

**Voice of Thunder**

Skalds can project their voices across bustling halls and tumultuous battlefields, and pride themselves on their elocution. At times, they seem to be in love with the sound of their own words.

**Voracious**

Some people are insatiable; they want to consume more of everything, whether food and drink, or songs and lore. It can come in handy when you need to devour something quickly, but such people rarely know when to stop.

**Well-dressed**

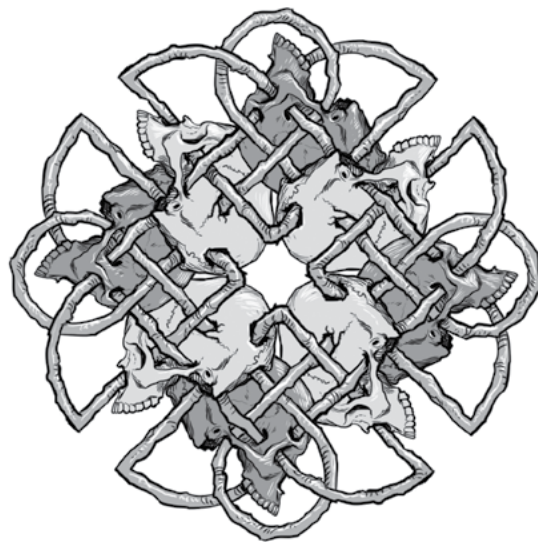
The clothes make the person. Sharply dressed individuals tend to command respect but some might see them as foppish.

**Wise**

Some people are naturally discreet, judicious and erudite. Others often seek their advice and opinions. They can become peeved if their words are not received with the respect they believe is due to them.

**Wistful**

Some people yearn for better days long gone and find it easy to inspire themselves and others by recalling the heroes of yesteryear. They are prone to daydreaming and pessimism.



# New Gear



Every Torchbearer adventurer knows that the right gear can make the difference between life and death. This chapter provides rules for some additional gear useful to the folk of the Middarmark, including cost, inventory and special modifiers.

## Clothing

### Hat

A fur-trimmed hat keeps the head warm and dry in all sorts of weather, while a wide-brimmed hat can keep one cool in hot weather. Hats provide +1D to Health tests for resisting cold (or heat if wearing a wide-brimmed hat in summer). Wearing just the right stylish hat may provide +1D to Orator, Persuasion or Manipulator tests.

## Containers

### Pulk

A pulk is a low-slung toboggan without runners, attached to the waist of a skier with a belt and two wooden poles. Pulks have six slots. Wearing a pulk counts as a factor in Fighter tests, Scout tests to remain hidden and chase and flee conflicts. Using a pulk also increases fatigue (see Fatigue, Torchbearer, page 77).

Item	Cost	Inventory Slots
<b>Clothing</b>		
Hat	Ob 1	head/worn 1
<b>Containers</b>		
Pulk	Ob 2	belt 2 (belt/weapon and belt/pouch)
Sea chest	Ob 4	—
<b>Equipment</b>		
Ice skates	Ob 2	feet/worn 0 (worn over shoes on ice) or pack 2
Skis	Ob 2	feet/worn 0 (worn over shoes in snow) or hands/carried 2
<b>Light Source</b>		
Candle lantern	Ob 2	hand/carried 1 or pack 2
<b>Magical and Religious Equipment</b>		
Idol	Ob 3	neck/worn 1 or pack 1
Musical Instrument	Ob 4	hand/carried 2 or pack 3
Runestone	Ob 2+	pack 1
<b>Weapons</b>		
Staff	Ob 1	Carried 1; in combat hand/carried 2



## Sea Chest

This is a wooden chest with rope handles on the ends. It doubles as a rowing bench on a longship or boat. Sea chests have six slots. Carrying a full chest requires both hands (or two carriers using one hand each) and an Ob 2 Laborer test.

# Equipment

## Ice Skates

These skates are made from the metatarsal bones of horses or cattle, made very flat and smooth on the bottom, and tied to the feet using leather thongs. A wooden pole with an iron spike on the bottom is used for balance and propulsion. Skates provide +1D to tests involving moving across ice.

## Skis

These skis are wood, with leather thongs for bindings. One ski is short and covered in fur, while the other is long. The short ski is used to push, while the long ski is slathered with animal fat and used to glide. A single stout, wood stick is often used for balance. Skis provide +1D to Hunter and Pathfinder tests in snow, as well as any other tests that involve moving across snow at speed.

# Light Source

## Candle Lantern

A candle lantern is a metal enclosure for a candle, often with a ring at the top to allow you to suspend it from a stick or staff. A candle lantern provides bright light for one character and dim light for another character for four turns. A candle lantern requires a candle for fuel. The candle must be acquired or purchased separately. Unlike candles, candle lanterns may only be snuffed or broken as a twist.

# Magical and Religious Equipment

## Idol

A stone or wooden carving of an Immortal. An idol contains two slots for skald spells (spells require a number of slots in the idol equal to their circle). Once a spell is inscribed in an idol, it may not be changed.

## Musical Instrument

A drum, harp or pipe inscribed with runes and symbols. Musical instruments provide +1D to Oratory tests related to declaiming poetry or singing songs. An instrument may contain three slots for skald spells (spells require a number of slots equal to their circle). Once a spell is inscribed in an instrument, it may not be changed.

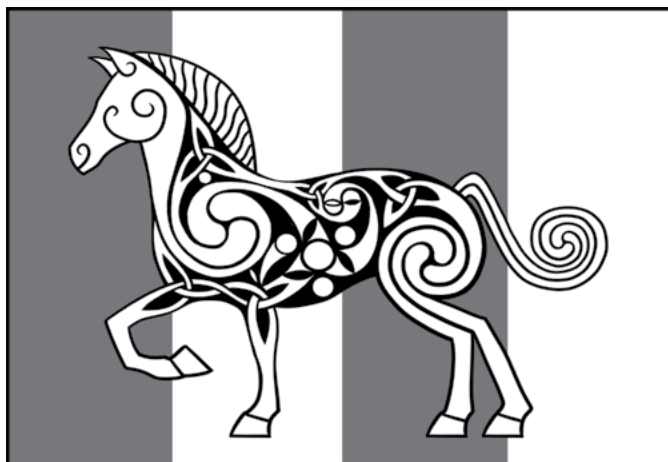
## Runestone

A stone inscribed with the runes of a spell. Runestones count as skald spell supplies, which add +1D to a particular spell. They are only expended as the result of a twist. Base price for 1st circle spell, +1 Ob per circle.

# Weapons

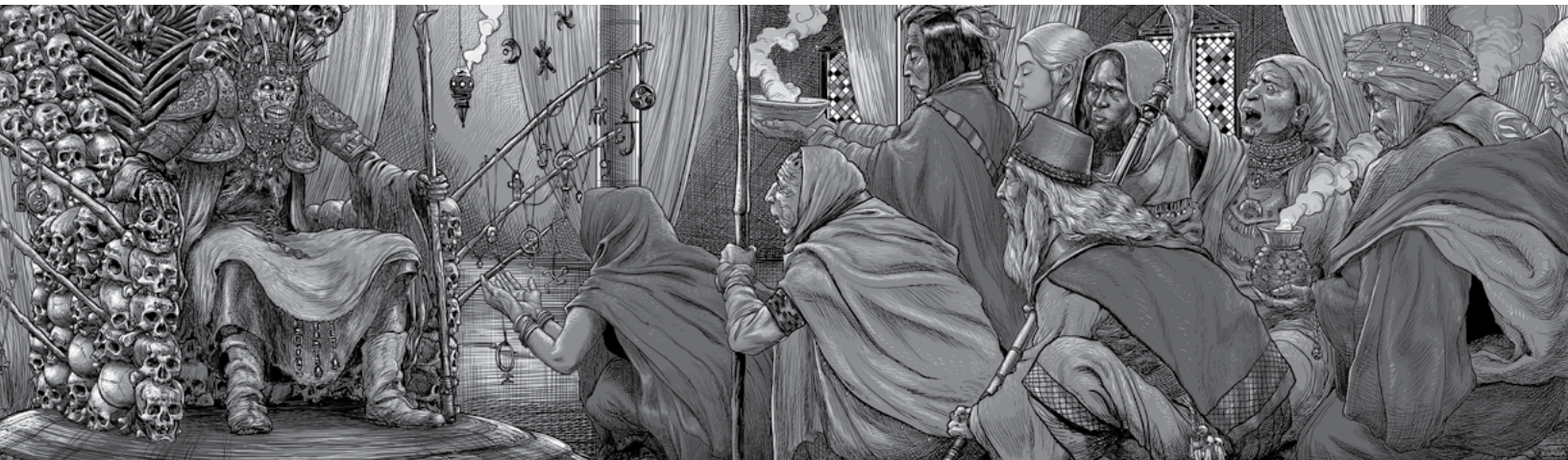
## Staff

A staff is a useful tool. It grants +1D to Defend in capture, drive off and kill conflicts. It also grants +1D to tests involving hiking or climbing.





# The Rites of Hospitality



Cities, towns and even villages are few and far between in the Middarmark. Yet, few folk can survive this land on their own. As a result, the Rites of Hospitality have become a sacred tradition upheld across the land—weary travelers can request succor at any steading or lord's hall they happen across and expect shelter and sustenance, at least for a time. Even some giants and trolls, hungry for news and diversion, have been known to grant hospitality.

The Rites take the form of a ritual contract, upheld by the ættir of the parties involved. Treachery, violence and murder do happen from time to time, even when the Rites have been observed. The Rites cannot prevent it, but these base actions will call down the fury of the ættir involved. Pity outlaws and outcasts with no family or clan, for they have no ættir to protect them.

When approaching a strange place in hopes of hospitality, it is polite to lay aside one's weapons, declare your name and ask for shelter, pledging to respect the sanctity of the host's home. The host offers a pledge of shelter and security

in return. This process involves a ritual of reciting names and bloodlines, invoking each party's ancestors and ættir to punish the bloodline of anyone who violates the oath.

To request hospitality in the proper way, use these Orator factors:

**Attitude of Household:** Pious, proud, suspicious, miserly  
**Number of Travelers (one is free):** Two, small party, warband

Success in this test doesn't ensure that both parties will uphold hospitality, but it does mean that the parties' respective ættir will seek retribution against the violators.

### Suggested failure results (twists):

- ☼ The pious householder stints on nothing to provide for the guests. If nothing is done, his or her family will starve come winter.
- ☼ Your enemy is already enjoying your host's hospitality. Can you both maintain the peace while bound by the laws of hospitality?

- ⊗ A dangerous adversary threatens your host's household. Hospitality demands you aid in the defense.
- ⊗ Your friend (or mentor) threatens your host's household. Hospitality demands you raise your arms against your friend in defense of your host, but surely your friend has a good reason ...
- ⊗ You discover your host is a witch or monster engaged in terrible, evil deeds upon others, but is the perfect host to your party.

## Steading as Town?

It's inevitable that adventurers will want to use a steading as a town. Steadings are essentially Remote Villages, but even more limited. Steading limitations include:

- ⊗ The characters must request and be granted hospitality to use a steading as a town.
- ⊗ A steading cannot be used two town phases in a row; they do not have the resources to support visitors for so long.
- ⊗ Players cannot level their characters in a steading.
- ⊗ Steadings have no market, and characters may not haggle when entering.

When rolling for town events, consider any result other than Disaster to be Peaceful Town.

## Steading

A small, isolated farm settlement that is home to a self-sufficient extended family.

### Available Locations

Stables (barn), Home, Shrine, Workshop and Forge

The home location is the equivalent of a flophouse in a poor steading or an Inn in a well-to-do steading. The workshop and forge provides the Use Facilities function of a guild hall, but only for the following skills: armorer, carpenter, cook, peasant and weaver.

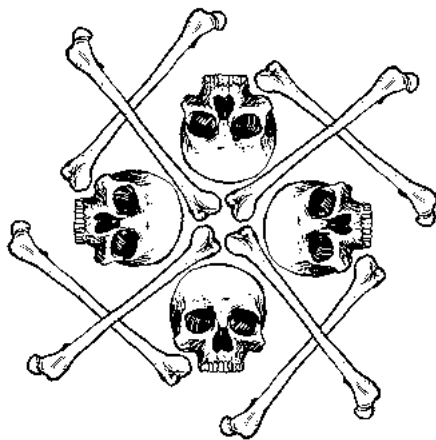
**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

### Suggested Laws

- ⊗ To take a life is forbidden. Punishable by retaliation or compensation.
- ⊗ Theft is a criminal act. Punishable by compensation and banishment.

### Paying Your Bills in a Steading

While the folk of a steading won't turn their noses up at a bit of silver, work is often much more valuable to them than lucre. Only one character in a group may pay their lifestyle cost with Resources and/or cash dice. The rest should add up lifestyle as normal, but test one of the following to pay their bills: Carpenter, Healer, Laborer, Peasant, Steward, Stonemason or Weaver. Note: Characters that use a skill to pay their bills are not eligible to gain the fresh condition.





# Seasons and Weather

The weather of the Middarmark can be as terrible an enemy to an adventurer as any dragon, but it is not without its charms.

Determine weather after every three camp phases, three days traveling and after every town phase. Roll 3d6. Add a -1 modifier early in the season, no modifier at the height of the season and a +1 modifier late in the season. Total the result and consult the table appropriate for the season.

## Vår (Spring) Weather

Spring begins on the first day of Einmånad, the day after the Disablot sacrifice and the Disting market. The Disablot is held in thanks of the Lords of Plenty and Want, and the Lords of Fate, who have a prominent place in the shrines of all longhouses, for seeing the family through another winter.

Spring tends to be cool, wet and windy. Toward the end of the season, as Harpa gives way to Sigrun, the days become clearer and warmer, though nights remain cool and snowstorms are not unheard of—especially in the mountains. The melting snow and glacial ice cause rivers and streams to swell, and waterfalls become common—

all causing the ground to become waterlogged and muddy. Trees begin to flower, and every field and meadow becomes carpeted with wildflowers in a riot of vivid colors.

3d6 roll	Vår (spring) weather
2	Cold Snap
3	Thundersnow
4-5	Snow
6	Fog
7	Gale
8	Blustery Wind
9-10	Rain
11-16	Clear and Cool
17-18	Storm
19	Heatwave

## Sumar (Summer) Weather

Summer in the Middarmark is brief but glorious. Summer tends to be warm, breezy and often rainy. The days become very long in the southern Middarmark. In the north, the

sun sets for but an hour or two a day. It is a time when the Middarmark is bursting at the seams with life; the land becomes a vibrant green as plants (and insects) seek to squeeze a year's growth into the short span.

Summer gives way to autumn at the end of Heyannir or, at the most, two weeks into Tvimånad.

3d6 roll	Sumar (summer) weather
2-4	Blustery Wind
5-9	Clear and Cool
10-12	Warm and Bright
13-14	Rain
15	Heatwave
16-17	Storm
18-19	Fog

## Haustr (Autumn) Weather

Autumn can arrive as early as the beginning of Tvimånad. Even though the days are getting shorter and the work is hard (even the lendermenn, jarls, and tribal kings and queens work the harvest in Haustmånad), it is a joyous time, for there is plenty to eat.

After the respite of the Haustblot celebration, the slaughter month begins. Steadings throughout the Middarmark consult their stores of hay and grain and determine how much of their livestock they can feed through the winter. The rest are slaughtered and preserved throughout Gormånad to see families through the cold, dark days to come.

Autumn days are beautiful. The landscape is painted red and gold, save for the purple and white of the mountain peaks.

3d6 roll	Haustr (autumn) weather
2-4	Rain
5-8	Clear and Cool
9-11	Blustery Wind
12	Gale
13	Fog
14	Frost
15	Ice Storm
16-18	Snow
19	Thundersnow

## Calendar

### Months of the Short Days

- ☼ Gormånad
- ☼ Frermånad
- ☼ Jolmånad
- ☼ Torrimånad
- ☼ Disamånad
- ☼ Einmånad

### Months of the Nightless Days

- ☼ Harpa
- ☼ Sigrun
- ☼ Solmånad
- ☼ Heyannir
- ☼ Tvimånad
- ☼ Haustmånad

## Vetr (Winter) Weather

Winter is long, dark and bitterly cold in much of the Middarmark, particularly inland and in the north and the east. It is milder in the southwest along the Regn Coast. Winter generally begins with the frosts of Frermånad, though sometimes the snows come early, signalling that it will be a particularly difficult winter. Winter holds the Middarmark in its icy grip through Disamånad and sometimes later.

In the south, the days are very short. In the north of the Middarmark, the sun may show its face no more than an hour or two a day—assuming it can be seen through the clouds or harsher weather.

The wise and the fortunate take to their longhouses when winter comes visiting, with the intent of spending the next four months working on indoor tasks, eating, drinking and telling tales.

Poor farmers spend the rest of the year in a non-stop race to stockpile enough food and supplies to see their families, dependents and animals through the Hungry Time.

While only the brave or desperate dare to travel great distances in winter, overland travel with the right equipment can actually be more rapid than during any other season, as rivers, streams and boggy lowlands freeze.

Note, the normal Winter Adventure rules (Torchbearer, page 102) apply in the Middarmark.



3d6 roll	Vetr (winter) weather
2-3	Thundersnow
4-5	Frost
6	Ice Storm
7-8	Fog
9-10	Snow
11-14	Crisp and Cold
15	Extreme Cold
16-18	Gale
19	Unseasonably Warm

## Weather Types

### Blustery Winds

Spring can bring strong, cold winds that can chill to the bone and turn simple tasks into seemingly monumental challenges. It's excellent sailing weather, though. These winds tend to grow quiet in summer but roar back with a vengeance as autumn takes hold.

- ☼ In blustery winds, lighting a fire (including torches and lanterns) without shelter from the wind requires a test, even if you have a tinderbox.
- ☼ Blustery winds are a factor for all social tests made outdoors due to difficulty of hearing.
- ☼ In blustery winds, Sailor tests are +1D.

### Clear and Cool

Spring weather is often harsh and unpredictable, but the weather tends toward clear and beautiful as the season draws to a close. The days when the sun is shining, the winds are quiet, and the wildflowers and fruit orchards are blossoming are among the most beautiful in the Middarmark. Summer and autumn have their share of these pleasant days, as well.

- ☼ Characters are +1D to recover from angry or afraid.
- ☼ In clear and cool weather, Scavenger tests for forage are +1D.

### Coldsnap

Unseasonably cold temperatures keep rivers frozen and snow on the ground. Reroll on the winter weather table with a +1 modifier for the late season.

## Weather in the Vicinity of Fjalar

Fjalar makes his presence known throughout the nearby countryside, bringing storms and other savage weather. When near Fjalar:

- ☼ When rolling for weather in summer, use the autumn weather table with a +1 modifier.
- ☼ When rolling for weather in autumn, use the winter weather table with a -1 modifier.
- ☼ When rolling for weather in winter, use the vetr weather table unmodified.
- ☼ When rolling for weather in spring, use the vetr weather table with a +1 modifier.

### Crisp and Cold

Autumn and winter weather isn't all dreariness; some days dawn clear and biting cold, granting the Middarmark a raw-boned beauty under icy blue skies. Rare travelers from warmer climes, usually shivering in their boots, are often stunned by how much the people of the Middarmark seem to enjoy these days, referring to them as "brisk" and "invigorating."

- ☼ Characters are +1D to recover from angry or exhausted.
- ☼ In crisp and cold weather, Hunter tests to catch game are +1D.

### Extreme Cold

Some winter days are so cold that your bones ache and your lungs burn with each breath. Any exposed flesh that hasn't been smeared with animal grease is at risk.

- ☼ Extreme cold is a factor in any tests that involves fine motor control.
- ☼ The injured condition (frostbite) is an appropriate consequence for any failed test in extreme cold.
- ☼ Characters who become wet in extreme cold and cannot immediately get to shelter and warmth must make an Ob 4 Health test. Suggested failure result: sick condition (hypothermia). Characters under the effect of the Breath of the Burning Lord prayer do not need to make this test.

## Fog

At times, particularly in late autumn, winter and early spring, dense fogs settle on the Middarmark, drastically limiting visibility and muting sounds. Traveling in unfamiliar lands is treacherous under such conditions.

- ☉ Fog is a factor in all Pathfinder tests, skirmishes, battles and any action that depends upon characters seeing any great distance, like perceiving foes sneaking toward them.
- ☉ When characters fail tests in a fog, the GM may choose to make them lost or separated, in addition to the twist or condition imposed.

Characters in fog are +1D to any actions that involve sneaking or stealth.

## Frost

In autumn and winter, clear nights offer their own special danger: blankets of hoarfrost and rime. Beautiful to be sure, but potentially deadly if care is not taken to prevent one's clothes and gear from taking the wet.

- ☉ Frost, in the form of rime, is a factor in all Sailor tests, as boats, ships and their rigging become unwieldy from the weight of ice.
- ☉ Adventurers who camp when frost occurs must make an Ob 2 Health test when leaving camp. Suggested failure result: twist (clothing wet) or condition (exhausted or injured (frostbite)). This Health test may be avoided by creating shelters or proper camp placement using Survivalist.

## Gale

At times, blustery winds turn into violent blows that can bring down branches from trees, pluck a person from the side of a mountain and break masts laden with too much sail. At these times, it's best to find shelter.

- ☉ It is impossible to light a fire without shelter in a gale and spoken communication is extremely difficult.
- ☉ Gales can factor into any outdoor skill or ability tests, as appropriate, particularly Sailor tests and Dungeoneering tests (to climb).
- ☉ The GM may require characters that spend any significant amount of time in a gale to make an Ob 3 Health test. Suggested failure result: condition (exhausted or injured) or twist (item lost).

## Heatwave

Occasionally, spring will bring warm weather early and suddenly. While the warmer temperatures are often welcome, the rain and rapidly melting snow and ice can lead to floods and other extremely dangerous conditions. Avalanches become likely in mountainous areas, and settlements and fords can be washed out by swollen rivers. In summer, the heat can become oppressive.

- ☉ Factor in any test involving fording rivers or streams in spring.
- ☉ A heatwave is a factor for recovering from the exhausted condition.

## Ice Storm

The freezing rains of ice storms can be a deceptive killer. The glaze of ice that covers everything is eerily beautiful, but it hides many dangers. Being caught at sea in an ice storm is especially perilous.

- ☉ Ice storms can factor into any outdoor skill or ability tests, as appropriate.
- ☉ Add an additional factor to Sailor tests as the decks become slick with ice and the vessel and rigging dramatically increase in weight due to the ice.
- ☉ It is extremely difficult to spend any length of time outdoors in freezing rain without getting soaked to the skin. Adventurers that become wet in this way must make an Ob 3 Health test. Suggested failure result: sick condition (hypothermia). Characters under the effect of the Breath of the Burning Lord prayer do not need to make this test.

## Rain

Later in Einmånad and as the season progresses, the snow tends to give way to rain. These rains are typically cold and heavy and can last for days. The rains continue through summer and then tend to dry up as autumn takes hold.

- ☉ Rain can factor into any outdoor skill or ability tests, as appropriate, particularly Pathfinder and Scout tests. Cartography tests are impossible in the rain without shelter of some sort.
- ☉ At his or her discretion, the GM may require players of any characters that work or fight in the rain without wearing a cloak to make an Ob 2 Health test. Suggested failure result: exhausted condition. Characters under the effect of the Breath of the Burning Lord prayer do not need to make this test.

## Snow

Heavy, wet snow is common in the Middarmark in spring, winter and fall, particularly in early Einmånad. In spring, it seldom lingers on the ground more than a day or two after the fall, but it can make being outdoors for any extended period of time a misery. The snows return in late autumn, usually in Frermånad, and become increasingly common through winter, shrouding the land until the spring melt comes.

- ☉ Snow can factor into any outdoor skill or ability tests, as appropriate.
- ☉ A few tests, like using Scout to track someone or something, may actually benefit from the snow to the tune of +1D.
- ☉ The exhausted or sick conditions are an appropriate consequence for any failed test in the snow.

## Storm

Late in spring, the Middarmark is sometimes rocked by violent storms, which include thunder, lightning and/or hail. It is generally too wet for lightning strikes to cause fires, but the winds and lightning make activity outdoors hazardous. Even if they don't involve lightning, these storms carry the risk of flash flooding. The storms return in late summer and, with them, the risk of wildfires.

- ☉ Storms factor into any test made outdoors, as appropriate.
- ☉ Suggested failure result of tests made in storms: injured condition.

## Thundersnow

This is an incredibly dangerous type of storm. These storms are unusual, but most frequently occur in late Disamånad and early Einmånad. Thundersnows are thunderstorms that combine blizzard conditions with heavy winds, lightning and hail or graupel. Anyone caught in the open by thundersnow is at risk of injury or death.

- ☉ Thundersnow is a factor to any test made outdoors during the storm. Cartography tests and using scrolls is impossible without shelter of some sort.
- ☉ Going anywhere outdoors requires a Pathfinder test, even when you have a map. Maps do count as tools if you can find landmarks, but consulting the map requires shelter of some sort.
- ☉ Any turn spent outdoors forces everyone doing so to make an Ob 4 Health test. Suggested failure result: injured or sick condition.

- ☉ Death is on the line. Suggested failure result for anyone who is injured or sick, no matter the test: dead.
- ☉ Spending time out of doors in thundersnow is a factor to recovering from angry, exhausted, afraid, injured or sick. This factor fades after one phase.
- ☉ Twists during thundersnows should be catastrophic.

## Unseasonably Warm

Late in winter, Harpa the Shining One, Lady of the Sun, sometimes begins to stir early. When she does, she blesses the land with warmth. There are few things as joyous to those who have been sequestered in their steadings over the long, cold winter months, but such weather is not without its dangers. Rapidly melting snow and ice can create deep mud, swollen rivers and lead to the occasional flash flood, mudslide or avalanche.

- ☉ Factor in any test involving fording rivers or streams.
- ☉ When traveling, certain complications are much more likely: mud, flash floods, washed-out bridges, washed-out fords, mudslides, avalanche.
- ☉ Characters are +2D to recover from angry or afraid.

## Warm and Bright

Even in a grim land like the Middarmark, the warm, bright days at the height of summer are a reminder to all that it is a joy to live in the Sunlit Realms. The days are long, the sun is warm upon the skin and the crops reach toward the sky.

- ☉ Characters are +2D to recover from angry, afraid or exhausted.
  - ☉ In warm and bright weather, Scavenger tests for forage are +1D.
  - ☉ In warm and bright weather, Survivalist tests are +1D.
- Seasonal Rites

## Seasonal Rites

Players, being players, are likely to involve their characters in the sacrificial ceremonies surrounding the four great holidays of the Middarmark: Jolblot, Disablot, Sigrunblot and Haustblot.

To perform the sacrificial rites, make a Ritualist test: Ob 3 for Jolblot and Haustblot, Ob 4 for Disablot and Sigrunblot. Then roll on the Seasonal Sacrifice Events Table. If successful, you may choose to keep the result that you roll or the next higher result. If you fail, subtract your margin of failure from your result.

A truly magnificent sacrifice may count as supplies for the Ritualist test.



Seasonal Sacrifice Events Table (3d6)	
<b>3</b>	Wrath of the Immortals: The results of the sacrifice are disastrous to the community. Roll on the Town Events Disasters Table, Torchbearer, pages 94-95.
<b>4</b>	Cursed: All participants in the rite are cursed. The curse is a factor in all tests until removed.
<b>5</b>	Spoiled Feast: All participants in the rite take the sick condition.
<b>6</b>	Divine Displeasure: The community gains a powerful new enemy.
<b>7</b>	Ill Omens: All participants in the rite take the afraid condition.
<b>8</b>	Botched Reading: All participants in the rite take the angry condition.
<b>9</b>	Mixed Signs: The Immortals are deaf to your sacrifice.
<b>10</b>	Catharsis: The spirit of togetherness washes over the community. All participants remove the angry or afraid condition, if they have it.
<b>11</b>	Community Ties: The Immortals and ancestors bind the community together. Take +1D advantage to Circles until the next sacrificial rite.
<b>12</b>	Prosperity: The Immortals are pleased and send you weal. Take +1D advantage to Resources until the next sacrificial rite.

Seasonal Sacrifice Events Table (3d6)	
<b>13</b>	Companionship: The community gains a powerful new friend.
<b>14</b>	Reassurance: The Immortals and ancestors are watching out for you. All participants in the rite recover all taxed Nature. If current Nature is already at maximum, you may choose to increase current and maximum Nature by one.
<b>15</b>	Boon: Curses are broken, afflictions cured and injuries mended. Remove a curse or the sick or injured conditions. If you are not cursed, sick or injured, take the fresh condition.
<b>16</b>	Blessed: The Immortals smile upon you. All participants gain +1D advantage to one skill or ability within the Immortal's idiom until the next sacrificial rite.
<b>17</b>	Insight: The Immortals mark you for something special. All participants permanently increase the rating of one skill or ability within the Immortal's idiom to a maximum of 4 (if you already have a rating of 4 or greater in the skill or ability, mark a pass or fail instead).
<b>18</b>	Immortal Incarnation: All participants replace one of their Nature descriptors with a descriptor appropriate to the Immortal's idiom until the next sacrificial rite.



# Spells and Prayers



## New Spells

### First Circle Spells

#### Horse-trader's Friend

The magician calls upon the spirit of the fox to help divine a merchant's weaknesses, allowing her to drive the hardest bargain possible.

- ☉ Supplies for Horse-trader's Friend: a lucky charm
- ☉ Lore Master Ob to Learn: 2
- ☉ Scholar Ob to scribe as a scroll: 2
- ☉ Scholar Ob to scribe into traveling spell book: 2

#### Horse-trader's Friend Factors

**Advantage (start counting at 2):** +1D, +2D, +3D

**Target:** Self, other person

#### Horse-trader's Friend Effect

Provides advantage to a Hagglers roll.

### Otherworld Sentry

The magician binds a spirit to rove a camp or household and provide warning against attackers and others with hostile intention.

- ☉ Supplies for Otherworld Sentry: a cat's eye agate
- ☉ Lore Master Ob to Learn: 1
- ☉ Scholar Ob to scribe as a scroll: 2
- ☉ Scholar Ob to scribe into traveling spell book: 2

#### Otherworld Sentry Factors

**Danger:** Typical camp, unsafe camp, dangerous camp

#### Otherworld Sentry Effect

Successfully casting this spell provides +1 to the Camp Events roll in addition to any other bonuses (e.g., an elf ranger's Wilder level benefit).

## Third Circle Spells

### Mantle of the Fylgja

Intoning the name of their fylgja in the language of spirits, the magician pulls a cloak of aether around themselves and assumes a new form.

- ☼ Supplies for Mantle of the Fylgja: a feather, scale, bit of fur or symbol appropriate to the fylgja
- ☼ Lore Master Ob to Learn: 3
- ☼ Scholar Ob to scribe as a scroll: 2
- ☼ Scholar Ob to scribe into traveling spell book: 3

#### *Casting Mantle of the Fylgja*

Arcanist Ob to cast: 8 - current Nature

#### *Mantle of the Fylgja Effect*

The caster transforms into the form of their fylgja, replacing his or her own Nature descriptors with the descriptor and additional descriptors of their fylgja. The effect lasts for one turn, and the duration may be increased by one turn per margin of success. The caster keeps her mental faculties and skills but may only perform skills of which the new form is capable. Note: This spell is only possible so long as one has a fylgja. Should the trait granted by the fylgja ever be lost, this spell no longer functions. Learning and casting this spell requires that characters first awaken their fylgja.

**Suggested Failure:** Caster transforms, but her mental faculties are lost for one turn.

## Second Circle Prayers

### Boon of the Otherworld

Calling upon her connection to the spirits and the Immortals, the cleric dons a new form.

- ☼ Supplies for Boon of the Otherworld: a feather, scale, bit of fur or symbol appropriate to the fylgja
- ☼ Alignment: Any
- ☼ Scholar Ob to scribe as a scroll: 3

#### *Casting Boon of the Otherworld*

Ritualist Ob to cast: 9 - current Nature

#### *Boon of the Otherworld Effect*

The cleric transforms into the form of their fylgja, replacing his or her own Nature descriptors with the descriptor and additional descriptors of their fylgja. The effect lasts for one turn, and the duration may be increased by one turn per margin of success. The cleric keeps her mental faculties and skills, but may only perform skills of which the new form is

capable. Note: This prayer is only possible so long as one has a fylgja. Should the trait granted by the fylgja ever be lost, this prayer no longer functions. Invoking this prayer requires that characters first awaken their fylgja.

**Suggested Failure:** Caster transforms, but her mental faculties are lost for one turn.

## Third Circle Prayers

### Blessing of the Lord of Winds

Calling out to the heavens, the cleric supplicates Njor, Lord of Winds, to send more favorable weather.

- ☼ Supplies for Blessing of the Lord of Winds: a drum or knot
- ☼ Alignment: Unaffiliated
- ☼ Scholar Ob to scribe as a scroll: 3

#### *Blessing of the Lord of Winds Factors*

**Current Season:** Autumn, spring, winter, summer

**Desired Weather:** Seasonable, unseasonable

**Result (start counting at 2):** Change upcoming weather, change current weather

#### *Blessing of the Lord of Winds Effect*

For seasonable weather, success allows the cleric to adjust the weather by one step in either direction on the appropriate weather table. For unseasonable weather, roll on a weather table one step removed from the current season, of the cleric's choice. This roll may not be further influenced.

## Sworn to the Young Lords

Some adventurers in the Middarmark choose to dedicate themselves to particular hero cults of the Young Lords. They still venerate the Immortal Lords as a whole, but they seek to emulate the life and deeds of one particular hero, with the ultimate goal of becoming an avatar of that hero's will in the mortal realm. Clerics gain particular benefit from joining a hero cult, but characters of any class may do so. Apart from the cult of Harpa, few elves join the hero cults of humans.

## Seeking a Master

Swearing oneself to a Young Lord requires seeking out someone who has authority in that Young Lord's hero cult. You can either meet one in the course of play, or make a Circles test using the 'someone in a position of power' factor. Conditions are always appropriate consequences of

## The Middarkmark

failure for such tests, but twists can also be fun, especially if the new master is secretly a chaos cultist seeking to lure the character down a dark path.

Before you can swear yourself to your chosen cult, you must convince your new master of your devotion to your chosen hero. In some cases this may involve simple tests or a donation to the cult. Frequently, the master requires a quest of some sort: a journey to a particular place, driving monsters from a lost holy place, retrieving an artifact or recreating a deed from the life of your chosen hero.

## Taking Orders

Once your master has agreed to accept you into the deeper mysteries of the hero cult, you must undergo an initiation ritual. Initiation requires a Ritualist test, Ob 2 (GMs are encouraged to apply Evil GM Factors to obscure cults or cults that are very selective in their membership). Again, conditions are appropriate consequences for failure here, but the Prayer Twists (Torchbearer, page 130) should provide suitable inspiration for twists.

## Benefits and Obligations of Membership

### Mentorship

When visiting a town with a temple or shrine dedicated to their hero cult, a cultist in good standing can find a mentor associated with the cult that can teach the Scholar and Theologian skills, as well as a special skill associated with the cult. Make a Resources test using the factors below (mentorship is free if the cult member is unskilled). Success allows you to mark one test toward advancement of the skill in question (pass or fail, your choice). Only one test for advancement may be gained in this manner per town phase.

**Scholar (current skill):** Current skill rating 1 or 2, skill rating 3, skill rating 4

**Special Cult Skill (current skill; start counting at 2):** Current skill rating 1 or 2, skill rating 3, skill rating 4

**Theologian (current skill, start counting at 3):** Current skill rating 1 or 2, skill rating 3, skill rating 4

Note, characters with skill ratings of 5 who desire additional training must seek out a master to mentor them. Such training is outside the scope of the cult's normal teaching.

### Quests

Hero cults always have missions that must be undertaken. Cultists can go to a temple or shrine dedicated to their Young Lord for a job with a bit of research thrown in; no need to dig for leads. The GM provides a job—escorting a

fellow cultist to another location, smiting enemies, retrieving relics, etc.—along with two details that could be had from Asking Around or Doing Research. Any further information gathering is up to the adventurers.

### Succor

If a character is in a town with a temple or shrine dedicated to the hero cult, and the character is demonstrably in desperate need, the cult will provide that character with food and/or accommodation if it has the means.

Additionally, cult members in towns with a temple dedicated to their Young Lord may reduce the Resources obstacle of Religious services (see Torchbearer, page 90) by one.

### The Hero's Blessing

The Young Lords all have prayers they favor. If a cleric sworn to a particular young Lord fails a Theologian test to memorize prayers, and the GM elects to choose which prayers are granted to the cleric, the GM should choose among that Young Lord's favored prayers first. See Favored Prayers below.

### Tithes

Maintaining good standing in the cult requires tithing. As long as a character is a member of a cult, Lifestyle cost in towns with a temple or shrine are increased by one. In some hero cults, leaving the cult without the master's permission and blessing can be hazardous to one's health.

## Favored Prayers and Cult Skills

The Young Lords all have prayers they favor. If a cleric swears himself or herself to a particular Young Lord, the GM should consider that Young Lord's favored prayers first when choosing which prayers are granted to a character that fails the Theologian test to memorize prayers.

### Sigrun Shieldbreaker

#### Lady of Battles

**Alignment:** Law

#### Favored Prayers:

Benison of the Lords of Valor

Evocation of the Lords of Battle

Favor of the Lords of Valor

#### Special Cult Skills:

Commander

## Harpa the Shining One

### Vår Maiden

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Favored Prayers:**

Balm of the Lords of Serenity  
Benediction of the Lords of Creation  
Spring of the Eternal

**Special Cult Skills:**

Healer

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## Freydis

### Lady of Reaping

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Favored Prayers:**

Grace of the Lords of Plenty  
Evocation of the Lords of Battle  
Divination  
Mudra of the Lords of Fate

**Special Cult Skills:**

Weaver  
Peasant

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## Ondurdis

### Lady of the Winter Hunt

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Favored Prayers:**

Breath of the Burning Lord  
Prayer to the Lords of Silence  
Supplication to the Saints of Good Fortune  
Guidance of the Lord of Paths and Ways

**Special Cult Skills:**

Hunter

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## Bjorngrim

### The Dragonslayer

**Alignment:** Law

**Favored Prayers:**

Sanctuary of the Lord of Shields  
The Cloak of the Lord of Forges  
Favor of the Lords of Valor

**Special Cult Skills:**

Fighter

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## Sigtyr

### Lord of Victory

**Alignment:** Law

**Favored Prayers:**

Vision of the Lords of Chaos and law  
Divination  
Favor of the Lords of Valor  
Litany of the Lord of Rule

**Special Cult Skills:**

Orator  
Steward

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## Yngve

### Lord of Sowing

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Favored Prayers:**

Benediction of the Lords of Creation  
Grace of the Lords of Plenty  
Blessing of the Lord of Labor  
Tongue of the Lord of Beasts

**Special Cult Skills:**

Peasant  
Laborer

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## Njor

### Lord of Winds and Sailors

**Alignment:** Unaffiliated

**Favored Prayers:**

Breath of the Burning Lord  
Invocation to the Saint of Sailors  
Blessing of the Lord of Winds

**Special Cult Skills:**

Sailor

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## Hyresti and Miskunna

### Lord of Mercy and Lady of Valor

**Alignment:** Law

**Favored Prayers:**

Balm of the Lords of Serenity  
Favor of the Lords of Valor  
Contingence of the Lords of Creation

**Special Cult Skills:**

Healer  
Fighter

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## Hrym

### Captain of the Dead Ship

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Favored Prayers:**

Hands of the Lord of Entropy  
Communion of the Black Gate  
Inspiritment of the Black Goat

**Special Cult Skills:**

Sailor  
Lore Master

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## Svikr

### The Stalking Beast

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Favored Prayers:**

Malison of the Lords of Terror  
Prayer to the Lords of Silence  
Tongue of the Lord of Beasts

**Special Cult Skills:**

Hunter  
Scout

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## Vafrudnir

### Lord of Whispers

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Favored Prayers:**

Blessing of the Lords of Light and Darkness  
Execration  
Vision of the Lords of Chaos and Law  
Litany of the Lord of Rule

**Special Cult Skills:**

Manipulator  
Steward

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## Vali the Kinslayer

### Lord of Slaughter

**Alignment:** Chaos

**Favored Prayers:**

Malison of the Lords of Terror  
Chains of Fate  
Evocation of the Lords of Battle

**Special Cult Skills:**

Fighter

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# Boasting



**A**mong many of the tribes of the Middarmark, particularly the Bjornings, Gotts and Scefings, a boast is considered a sacred vow to perform a deed of impossible heroics. Traditionally performed in the mead hall at banquet before a battle or adventure—though strong drink of any type and an audience is the only true requirement—boasting typically begins with a recitation of grand stories of one’s past glorious deeds leading up to a pledge to perform a deed of valor in the adventure to come. The pledge might be to take a renowned sword from an enemy warrior as spoils, to deliver the killing blow against a terrible beast, to climb an unconquered mountain and so on. The oath is completed by draining the bragarfull, the promise-cup, to the dregs.

Once acclaimed, the boaster stands to gain tremendous glory from accomplishing the feat, though ignominy and derision shall be heaped upon the names of those that fail.

## Boasting Rules

To make such a vow, test Oratory (or Boasting Nature) using the following factors:

### Boasting Factors

**Location of Boast:** Village tavern; hall of a jarl, sea king or petty king; hall of the high king

**Pledge:** Feat of Strength or Fortitude, Act of Bravery or Love, Prowess in Battle or Feat of Skill, Defeat of Powerful Enemy

If successful, replace your Goal with a new Goal about accomplishing your boast. Until the boast is accomplished (and as long as you don’t change your Goal), all tests made in pursuit of the Goal are considered to be within your character’s Nature. If you accomplish your boast and live to tell the tale, gain +1D or +2D to Circles tests in the place where you made the boast based on the enormity of the task.

### Suggestions for failure:

Failure for boasting should be commensurate with the magnitude of the boast and location in which the boast was made. A far-fetched boast in the village tavern may get you laughed at. But a boast to kill the king—in the hall of that very king—will get you banished right quick. The GM should choose a failure result appropriate to the situation or invent one that fits better.

- ☼ You have made a new enemy who insults you until you leave. No further effects.
- ☼ You are laughed out of this location and may not return during this town phase. No further effects.
- ☼ You are laughed out of town. End town phase. No further effects.
- ☼ Suffer a factor in all tests in town where you made the boast until you perform the deed you pledged to perform (pursuit of the Goal is not considered to be within your character’s Nature).

# Artifacts and Dweomers



**M**agic and spirits are common in the Middarmark, though it is dangerous to play with forces one only partially comprehends. The Middarmark is littered with objects of power, both wondrous and terrible.

## Vafurdnaut

This gleaming golden arm ring draws the eyes of all who look upon it, for it is wondrous in its beauty. The stories say that the dwarf king Otr, legendary for his pride and wealth, once slighted the Jotunn Vafurdnir at a feast.

In revenge, Vafurdnir labored for years in secret places to craft this cursed ring. Wearing a disguise, he presented the ring to Otr as a gift. Otr became enamored of the ring and never set it down, for the cunningly crafted thing would drop pure gold duplicates of itself each day. Otr's treasury soon doubled, then doubled again. But misfortune and calamity dogged him for the rest of his short days.

He died alone and unmourned, locked in his treasure vault, surrounded by the only thing he loved. In the ages since, Vafurdnaut has periodically surfaced in various hands. Misery and misfortune ever follows in its wake.

**Effect:** Vafurdnaut has multiple effects:

Before you make a Resources test, roll 2d3. The result is the value, in cash dice, of the ring Vafurdnaut drops. These rings may be spent freely but carry a curse if given to another as a gift: The recipient of the gift begins to dream of the master ring and suffers a permanent factor to recovery from the exhausted condition until they obtain it.

**While in possession of Vafurdnaut,** all failed tests result in twists—the unluckiest, most painful twist possible.

**While in possession of Vafurdnaut,** gain the Gold Lust trait at level 2. If you already have four traits, Gold Lust replaces one of them. Individuals with Gold Lust seem to draw treasure to them, but they are loathe to give any up. Dwarves with the Greed level ability get an additional turn (or check) when using that ability.

Giving up Vafurdnaut requires a Will test, Ob 6. Success destroys the ring's power. It forever loses its magic and becomes an ordinary gold ring worth 6D of treasure.

**Inventory:** Hand/worn 1

**Type:** Magical ring



# Eldhrimnir

Eldhrimnir is one of the great treasures of the Shining Realm, a great black cauldron used by the Asar to cook their feasts. Anything placed in the dwarf-wrought cauldron becomes a delicious and nourishing meal. Beasts slaughtered and placed in the cauldron are alive and hale come the morning, so long as their bones are gathered from the pot and left in an undisturbed pile. Other items so cooked become food but are consumed in the process.

**Effect:** Items placed in Eldhrimnir—swords, shoes, filthy cloaks, etc.—become meals on a one-for-one basis (e.g., one sword will become a meal for one character). Animals slaughtered and placed in the pot become a meal for everyone present, and the animal will be alive again the next day. Should a sapient being be placed in the cauldron, it will shatter, injuring anyone present. The being placed in the cauldron will become a draugr, intent on hunting and slaying those who were present.

**Inventory:** Hands/carried 4

**Type:** Magical equipment

# Gambanteinn

This long ash wand with arcane runes carved upon every surface is a sacred relic of the cult of Vafurdrnir the Whisperer. It is used to enslave the will.

**Effect:** Anyone using the wand causes a versus test between the target's Will (or Nature for monsters) and the wielder's Will +2. However, the wielder suffers -1s penalty for each rank by which the target's Might exceeds their own.

**Use of the wand has progressive results:**

- ☉ The first time the wielder uses Gambanteinn on the target, she may rewrite the target's Instinct.
- ☉ The second time the wielder uses Gambanteinn on the target, she may rewrite the target's Goal.
- ☉ The third time the wielder uses Gambanteinn on the target, she may rewrite the target's Belief.

For monsters without Goals or Beliefs, the second and third uses allow the wielder to add an additional Instinct to the monster (3 maximum).

At the end of each phase in which the target attempts to act upon his or her new Instinct, Goal or Belief, the

target may test Will (or Nature for monsters), +1D for each rank by which its Might exceeds that of the wielder. The test is versus the wielder's Will +2. Success breaks the enchantment(s), leaving the target fully cognizant of what the wielder has done.

Using the wand requires the wielder to engage the target in conversation for several minutes. The conversation need not be friendly, but it cannot be hostile or threatening. It does not work on undead or constructs (like guardian statues).

The wand may be used once per day.

**Inventory:** Hand/carried 1 or pack 2

**Type:** Magical equipment

# Gram

This gleaming runesword, inlaid with whorls of gold, is sunk nearly to the hilt in the trunk of a sortjern that one can sometimes see from the Blodveien. The legends say Sigtyr, Lord of Victory, plunged the sword into the tree, saying that whoever drew it forth shall win a kingdom with it. Some believe the sword once belonged to Bjorn Longfarer, and the King of the Asar reclaimed it from his tomb.

**Effect:** While in possession of Gram, gain the Wrathful trait at Level 2. If you already have four traits, Wrathful replaces one of them. Individuals with Wrathful shine with battle-fury in combat, but at other times struggle to restrain their anger. Increase wielder's Might by two against dragons.

**Inventory:** Hands/carried 1 or belt/weapon 1

**Type:** Magical weapon

# Helskor

The Sakki taught the Skyrnir how to weave these Helshoes, and they are frequently sold by wandering Skyrnir wisemen and wisewomen. People who do not die in battle must walk the Helveien, which crosses a heath grown thickly with thorns and a river full of irons with razor edges. The dead provided with colorful helskor by their loved ones may walk the Hel-road unharmed, but those without must suffer terribly to reach the Hidden Halls. It is considered bad luck for living folk to don helskor, but there are stories of living people using them to safely navigate the Otherworld.

### The Middarmark

**Effect:** +1D to Pathfinder tests in realms beyond earth. May be used to safely walk across heaths of thorns, rivers of swords, bridges of fire and other such obstacles in both the Otherworld and the mortal realm. When worn by the living, all failures cause twists rather than conditions.

**Inventory:** Feet/worn 1 or pack 2

**Type:** Magical clothing

## Skaldmjadar

This sweet, slightly effervescent mead, brewed by giants from the blood of poets mixed with honey, makes the drinker a skald without peer for a short time.

**Effect:** Each drink grants the drinker heroic Orator and Scholar (success on 3-6 rather than standard 4-6) for one turn.

**Draughts:** 1d3

**Inventory:** Pack 1 for one draught, pack 2 for two draughts, pack 3 for three draughts.

**Type:** Magical potion

## Skis of Ondurdis

These skis are made of birch, with leather bindings for boots. One ski is short and covered in reindeer hide burned with magic sigils; the other is long and inlaid with reindeer antler also carved into magic sigils. The short ski is used to push, while the long ski is slathered with animal fat and used to glide. Blessed by Ondurdis, Lady of the Winter Hunt, these skis seem to know their way home, and a hunter using them rarely returns empty-handed.

**Effect:** Confers +1D to Hunter and Pathfinder tests in snow in addition to the benefit of ordinary skis. In flee or pursue conflicts in snow, the user of these skis takes +1 disposition after the conflict captain distributes the hit points.

**Inventory:** Feet/worn 0 (when worn over boots in snow) or hands/carried 2

**Type:** Magical equipment

## Skofnung

A two-handed sword of meteoric iron scrawled with iron runes that spark with aetheric lightning, Skofnung was the legendary blade of Sigrun Shieldbreaker. It is possessed of the spirits of twelve berserkers, and wounds inflicted by the blade will not heal unless first rubbed with the Skofnung Stone. Skofnung is presumed lost in the bottomless depths of Sigrun's Mirror.

**Effect:** In kill conflicts, hit points lost due to Attacks from Skofnung may not be recovered by Defend actions. In addition, shields used in Defend actions against Skofnung are automatically sundered and disarmed. Injuries inflicted with Skofnung will only heal if they are first rubbed with the Skofnung Stone, a whetstone in Skofnung's scabbard. You cannot Suck Up wounds caused by Skofnung without the Skofnung Stone.

**Inventory:** Hand/carried 2

**Type:** Magical weapon

## Skofnung Stone

This large, fine-grained, almost-slick whetstone is inscribed with runes of power. It has the power to knit wounds when rubbed upon them—even the wounds inflicted by the runesword Skofnung. The Skofnung Stone is presumed lost in the bottomless depths of Sigrun's Mirror.

**Effect:** Once per camp phase, the holder of Skofnung's Stone may attempt to recover from the injured condition without spending a check. The Skofnung Stone also confers +1D advantage to Health for the recovery granted. Characters with wounds caused by Skofnung may recover normally when they rub the wound with the Skofnung Stone.

**Inventory:** Hand/carried 1 or pack 1

**Type:** Magical equipment

## Svalinn

This shining silver shield, bearing the face of the sun, was once the war-gear of Sol the Day-Star. Light emanates from it and a chilling wind streams from its mouth, protecting the bearer against flame and heat, magical or mundane. Some stories claim that Bjorngrim the Dragonslayer bore this shield against the Black Wyrms. Others say it fell in the utmost north, where its chill wind feeds Scathach Lifestealer and will eventually allow the glacier to claim all the living earth for her domain.

**Effect:** The wielder of this shield is unharmed by the effects of heat and fire. In addition, the shield provides light equivalent to a candle, though it never expires. The light can be covered but not extinguished.

**Inventory:** Hand/carried 1

**Type:** Magical weapon

## Teineigin

This spear boasts a foot-long runed blade honed to a razor's edge. It was forged by master dwarven armorers in the fires at the heart of the world for Bjornar the Grim and then bathed in the black blood of the wyrm Ofnir the Great, leaving haft and blade black as pitch. It is said to grant the power of the dragon.

**Effect:** Increase the wielder's Health and Might by one while wielding the spear. The wielder may spend a check in the adventure phase to make the Fighter skill heroic for a turn (success on 3-6 rather than standard 4-6). Teineigin is impregnated with the Black Wyrms' poison. Anyone not protected by magical gauntlets, spells or potions that defend against poison gain the sick condition upon touching Teineigin. Anyone who is already sick dies.

**Inventory:** Hand/carried 1

**Type:** Magical weapon

## Tyrfing

Delicate rose gold runes are inlaid along the length of this menacing blade, which gleams like fire when drawn. Tyrfing cuts through metal and stone as easily as it slices cloth. Made by captive dwarves for a Sakki chieftain long ago, Tyrfing carries a powerful curse: Each time it is drawn, it must kill. The blade was last wielded by Ukho the Head-taker, last of the Sakki chieftains, and is thought to be interred with him in the great barrow on the Sakki Downs.

**Effect:** Adds +1D and +1s to Attack actions. The blade ignores armor, shields and helmets. Tyrfing automatically damages armor used to protect against it (even leather armor) and destroys shields and helmets. Tyrfing's wielder gains the Death Dealer trait at level 2. Individuals with Death Dealer are nigh unstoppable on the battlefield, but are as prone to slaughtering friends and kin as enemies. If Tyrfing is ever sheathed without killing first, it will shatter.

**Type:** Magical weapon

## Ægishjalmr

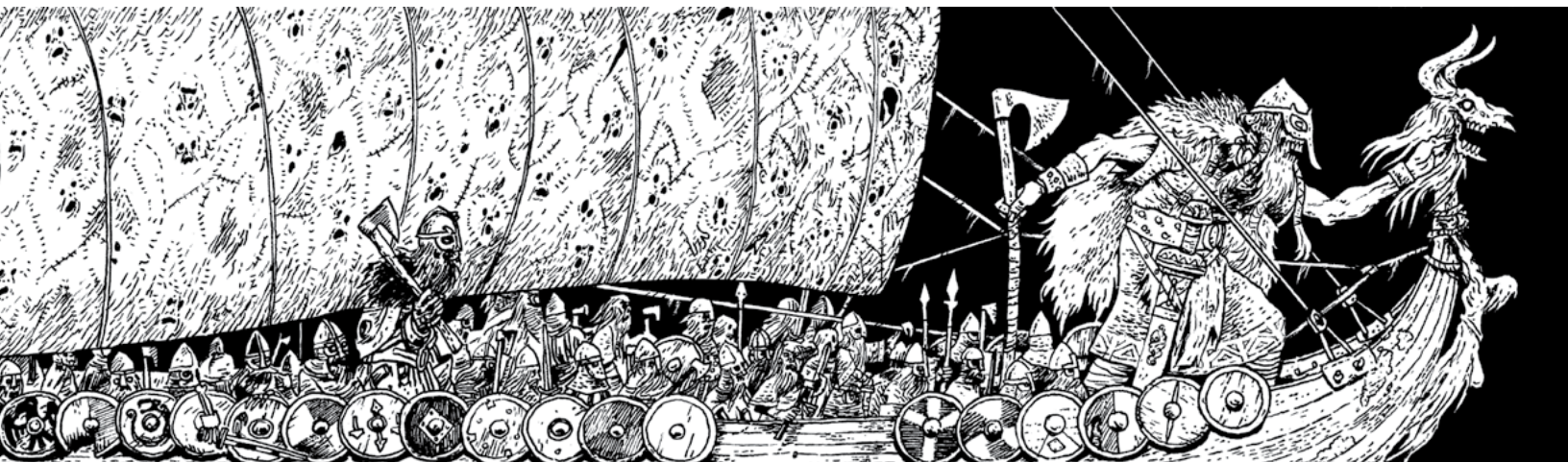
This pitted iron helm has a eyeguard to protect the face and bears the rune of terror upon it. Black waves of horror emanate from it, crushing the spirit of those who see it. The hobgoblin king of the Trollfjells is said to own Ægishjalmr and to have attached the massive black horns of a helgeit to it, such that many now call him the Horned King.

**Effect:** When used, the Ægishjalmr causes a versus test between the Will (or Nature for monsters) of any that see the helm and the wearer's Will +2. The wearer suffers a -1s to the roll for each rank by which the target's Might exceeds that of the wearer. Targets that fail the roll either flee (twist) the wearer or stand (and gain the afraid condition). Those who flee drop anything they're holding in their hands. Ægishjalmr may be used as a helmet three times before breaking. Once it breaks, its magic is lost, and it becomes a mundane helmet. It cannot be repaired.

**Inventory:** Head/worn 1

**Type:** Magical armor

# Of Trolls and Men



The Middarmark is overbrimming with monsters. Many of them take human form, but others are more beastly. The monsters below are not meant to replace the monsters in Torchbearer or those you have created. Instead, they're meant to add a bit of Middarmark spice. Many of the monsters below are quite potent. Introduce them judiciously.

## Jotnar

The jotnar (sing. jotunn) are primordial nature spirits of the winds, rivers, mountains, the earth, the sea and so on. Some are friendly or indifferent to humans. Others seek an end to creation so their progenitor, Aurgelmir, might receive proper funeral rites. Some are greater powers—Immortal Lords like Svikr or Vali—while others are lesser spirits, giants or trolls that hail from a particular hill or brook. Some are beautiful beyond compare, while others are so hideous that one could be rendered mad looking upon them. Some may even be partially tame, like the troll of a bridge or the spirit of a fountain. All the creatures below with Nature (Giant) are considered jotnar.

## Bergrisar

Bergrisar (sing. bergrisi) are mountain giants that dwell in the Trollfjells, Steinkjerne Mountains and Nifjoll Mountains. They are proud and inflexible, though honorable in their way. Bergrisar have been known to carve elaborate cities on and under the peaks of great mountains.

### Bergrisar

**Abilities** Might: 6 Nature (Giant): 7  
**Descriptors:** Carving, Throwing, Dreaming

### Conflict

**Dispositions**  
**Kill:** 12

**Flee:** 8  
**Convince:** 15

**Trick:** 5

**Instinct:**

### Weapons

**Attack:** +2D, *Hurled Boulder (turns Attack against Attack into versus test, even against bows)*

**Attack:** +1D, *Great Club*

**Maneuver:** +1s, *Gigantic Strides*

**Defend:** +1s, *Gigantic Strides*

**Maneuver:** +1D, *Rumble of the Mountain*

**Defend:** +1D, *Stubborn as the Stones*

**Defend:** +2D, *Set in Its Ways*

Let others care for themselves.

## Special

**Mountain Song.** The mountains are bergrisi themselves and so kin. They sing of what they know for those with ears to hear. A bergrisi may ask questions of its mountain, and the mountain will answer with its impressions.

# Brunnmigi

Ugly and malicious little trolls, these vile earth spirits dwell in springs and streams that gush out of mountains. Brunnmigi befoul such waters with their own water. They delight in making sweet water undrinkable and can destroy steadings and even whole towns if not driven out or slain. At first, there is usually only one, but they will slowly gather in numbers over many years if left to their own devices.

## Brunnmigi

**Abilities**    Might: 3    Nature: 5  
**Descriptors:**    Defiling, Swimming, Tricking

### Conflict

**Dispositions**    **Weapons**  
**Kill:** 4    **Attack:** +1s, *Stream of Poison*  
                  **Maneuver:** +1s, *Eel-like Slither*  
                  **Defend:** +2D, *Insubstantial Spirit*  
**Convince:** 7    **Maneuver:** +1D, *Loathsome*  
                  **Defend:** +2D, *Malevolent Cackle*  
**Trick:** 9    **Feint:** +1D, *Malicious Pranks*  
**Banish:** 11    **Feint:** +1s, *Low Cunning*  
                  **Defend:** +2D, *Low Cunning*

**Instinct:**    Defile all clean drinking water.

### Special

A brunnmigi can be destroyed, but it will reform over time. If a brunnmigi makes water in a spring, stream or well, the water makes anyone who drinks it sick. The water remains tainted until the brunnmigi is convinced or forced to leave, or banished.

# Draugr

A revenant with mottled blue and black skin. Mean, nasty, greedy or unpopular people often rise as draugr after death. Corpses found upright or sitting are a sure sign of a draugr, for the person died unloved and uncared for. Draugr rise from their graves to pursue and slay the living who they believe wronged them in life or death, but they also delight in tormenting the living out of pure spite. Draugr prefer to sleep and rest in their howes, but they are not confined to its bounds; they may roam far and wide in their mad lust for vengeance.

## Draugr

**Abilities**    Might: 5    Nature (Undead): 5  
**Descriptors:**    Hunting the Living, Cursing, Bypassing Barriers

### Conflict

**Dispositions**    **Weapons**  
**Flee:** 9    **Feint:** +1D, +1s, *Aura of Madness*  
                  **Maneuver:** +1D, *Stench of Death*  
**Kill:** 12    **Attack:** +1D, +1s, *Monstrous Strength*  
                  **Attack:** +2D, *Vicious Claws*  
                  **Maneuver:** +1D, *Stench of Death*  
**Convince:** 7    **Attack:** +1s, *Undying Hate*  
                  **Feint:** +2D, *Aura of Madness*  
                  **Defend:** +1D, *Stench of Death*  
**Capture:** 5    **Attack:** +1D, +1s, *Monstrous Strength*  
                  **Defend:** +2D, +1s, *Swelling to Gigantic Size*

**Armor:**    Dead Flesh (as plate; ignores first damage result).

**Instinct:**    Slay and torment the living.

### Special

Draugr possess a host of dread powers. Some possess all the powers below; others have only one or two

**Hexing:** The draugr lays a curse upon a victim. This forces a versus test between the Draugr's Nature and the victim's Nature. The victim suffers -1s to the roll for each point by which the draugr's Might exceeds his or her Might. If the victim fails the roll, he or she suffers -1s to all rolls until the curse is broken (e.g., by the Third Circle prayer Absolution of the Lord of Endings). May be used once per conflict.

**Plague Bringer:** The draugr inflicts disease upon a victim. This forces a versus test between the draugr's Nature and the victim's Health. The victim suffers -1s to the roll for each point by which the draugr's Might exceeds his or her Might. If the victim fails the roll, he or she becomes sick and incapacitated for the phase, after which anyone who shares food or drink with the character before the illness runs its course must make a Health test, Ob 2, or become sick themselves. May be used once per session.

**Shapeshifting:** The draugr can assume several different forms. It may assume each form no more than once per session. It may revert to its human form at any time.

- ☉ **Smoke:** While in this form, draugr are insubstantial and cannot be struck save with spells, prayers and magical weapons, but it cannot use the Attack action. They may move through solid stone in this form.
- ☉ **Flayed bull:** While in this form, the draugr is +1s to all actions in kill and capture conflicts, but reduces Nature to 4.

## The Míddarmark

- ☉ **Horse with a broken back but no ears or tail:** The draugr adds Running to its Nature descriptors and is +1D to all actions in flee conflicts.
- ☉ **Seal:** The draugr adds Swimming to its Nature descriptors (otherwise it would sink like a stone) and is +1D to all actions in kill, flee and capture conflicts that take place in water.

**Weather Binding:** A draugr can bind the weather to its will. Roll Nature, Ob 3. Success allows the draugr to shift the weather by one step up or down on the weather table. Margin of success may be spent to shift the weather additional steps. May be used once per session. Failure taxes the draugr's Nature by the margin of failure.

**Shroud of Night:** The draugr may summon darkness in its presence. Roll Nature, Ob 3. Success extinguishes all mundane light in its presence; all magical light provides only dim light. The effect lasts for an adventure phase. May be used once per session. Failure taxes the draugr's Nature by the margin of failure.

## Eldjotnar

The eldjotnar (sing. eldjotunn) are fire giants that dwell in Muspell, as well as volcanoes and other fiery places on earth. Of all the jotnar, they are the most fanatically dedicated to vengeance for Aurgelmir's murder. In their city of fire, they forge arms and armor and practice the martial arts to prepare for the coming Twilight.

### Eldjotnar

**Abilities** Might: 6 Nature (Giant): 8  
**Descriptors:** Raging, Forging, Destroying

#### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Kill:** 14 Attack: +1D, +1s *Great Sword*  
Feint: +1s, *Searing Heat*  
Maneuver: +1s, *Gigantic Strides*  
**Flee:** 8 Defend: +1s, *Gigantic Strides*  
**Battle:** 18 Attack: +2D, *Firey Berserker*  
Feint: +1s, *Searing Heat*

**Armor:** Iron plate and helmet.

**Instinct:** Tear down the works of the Asar.

#### Special

Eldjotnar are immune to heat and fire but vulnerable to cold. In combat, attacks made with frost and cold are +1s against eldjotnar. The greatest of the eldjotnar, including their king, are Might 7.



## Haugbui

Sometimes the dead simply do not wish to stay dead. A haugbui is a risen corpse of great hunger that lives in its tomb or grave. Unlike draugr, a haugbui cannot venture from its resting place. Instead, it moulders there, feeding on beetles and worms, gibbering to itself and descending into madness until someone passes by its grave or enters its tomb, at which point they pursue richer meat.

### Haugbui

**Abilities** Might: 4 Nature (Undead): 4  
**Descriptors:** Eating the Living, Murdering Tomb Robbers, Gibbering Mad Truths

#### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Kill:** 10 Attack: +2D, *Ragged Nails*  
Maneuver: +1D, *Insatiable Hunger*  
**Capture:** 8 Attack: +2D, *Ragged Nails*  
**Flee:** 3 Feint: +1s, *Shower of Maggots*  
Maneuver: +1D, *Insatiable Hunger*  
**Trick:** 5 Feint: +1D, +1s, *Terrifying Madness*  
Defend: +2D, *Disturbing Mutterings*

**Armor:** Dead Flesh (as leather).

**Instinct:** Trap trespassers within my tomb so I can feast on their flesh!

#### Special

Haugbui cannot be driven from their tombs. Any attempt at a drive off conflict defaults to a kill conflict instead.

# Helgeit

Massive, infernal black goats with eyes of fire and tortured horns, they are summoned from Hel to serve as mounts for the Goatrider's Horde. Walls of stone cannot stop them.

## Helgeit

**Abilities** Might: 4 Nature (Infernal): 5

**Descriptors:** Charging, Escaping, Leaping

### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Battle:** 10 Attack: +2D, *Thunderous Charge*

(in a horde) Maneuver: +1D, *Sulfurous Miasma*

**Banish:** 4 Defend: +1s, *Burning Hatred*

Maneuver: +1D, *Burning Hatred*

**Flee:** 7 Attack: +1D, *Firey Cloven Hooves*

Maneuver: +1D, *Firey Cloven Hooves*

**Feint:** +2D, *Banshee Cry*

**Kill:** 12 Attack: +2D, *Flaming Horns*

Maneuver: +1s, *Banshee Cry*

**Instinct:** End everything in fire and ruin.

### Special

Helgeit are impervious to fire. In addition, non-magical weapons and damaging spells are -1s against them. They cannot be convinced.

# Hrimthursar

Hrimthursar (sing. hrimthurs) are ice giants that live upon the Endless Ice and the frozen places of the Middarmark. Winter is their time, for when the ice and snow blanket the Middarmark, they come forth to raid and pillage, taking slaves and plunder.

## Hrimthursar

**Abilities** Might: 6 Nature (Giant): 7

**Descriptors:** Raiding, Pillaging, Enslaving

### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Kill:** 16 Attack: +2s, *Great Axe*

Attack: +1s, *Icy Bellow*

**Defend:** -1D, *Great Axe*

**Flee:** 8 Attack: +1D, *Massive Sack*

Defend: +1s, *Gigantic Strides*

**Trick:** 5 Maneuver: +1D, *Slave to Titanic Appetites*

Defend: -1D, *Slave to Titanic Appetites*

**Battle:** 12 Attack: +1D, *Heedless Charge*

Maneuver: +1D, *Icy Bellow*

**Armor:** Frozen mail (as chain).

**Instinct:** If I want it, take it.

### Special

Hrimthursar are immune to cold and ice. In combat, attacks made with fire and heat are +1s against hrimthursar.

# Kraken

This legendary sea monster hunts the seas of the Middarmark, particularly the Skera Strait. It is a monstrous, tentacled fish that devours ships and whales with equal ease. It is the hunger of the sea given form.

## Kraken

**Abilities** Might: 7 Nature: 10

**Descriptors:** Swimming, Devouring, Grasping

### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Kill:** 16 Attack: +2D, *Trunk-like Tentacles*

Attack: +1s, *Crushing Beak*  
(ignores armor)

Maneuver: +1s, *Cruel Grip*

**Flee:** 21 Attack: +1D, *Water Jet*

Maneuver: +1s, *Camouflage*

**Drive Off:** 12 Attack: +2D, *Trunk-like Tentacles*

Attack: +1s, *Crushing Beak*  
(ignores armor)

Maneuver: +1s, *Cruel Grip*

**Battle:** 10 Attack: +1D, *Immense Power*

+ Nature Roll Maneuver: +1s, *Cruel Grip*

**Instinct:** Break its back and drag it under.

### Special

Due to its many tentacles, when the kraken inflicts more damage in an action than the hit points of the character opposing it, the GM (rather than the conflict captain for that team) chooses which player (or players) must take the excess points.

**Devastator.** The Kraken's crushing beak ignores armor.

# Linnorm

Linnorm are serpentine, wingless dragons with a venomous bite. Some are limbless, but most have terrible clawed forearms with which to rend and tear. They are most often found at sea, where they grow to monstrous sizes, but some lair in hills or mountains and terrorize the countryside. Linnorm will sometimes take hostages and extort villages or even kingdoms for tribute in the form of oxen and treasure.

## Linnorm

**Abilities** Might: 6 Nature: 10  
**Descriptors:** Extorting, Devouring, Swimming

### Conflict

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**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Kill:** 21 Attack: +1D, *Tearing Claws*  
 Feint: +1s, *Venomous Bite*  
 Maneuver: +1s, *Constricting Coils*  
**Drive Off:** 11 Attack: +1D, *Tearing Claws*  
 Feint: +1s, *Venomous Bite*  
 Maneuver: +1s, *Constricting Coils*  
**Convince:** 7 Feint: +1D, *Venom-Dipped Words*  
 Maneuver: +1s, *Awesome Size*  
**Trick:** 16 Feint: +1D, *Venom-Dipped Words*  
 Maneuver: +1s, *Awesome Size*  
 Defend: +2D, *Uncanny Intelligence*  
**Battle:** 10 Feint: +1s, *Evil Cunning*  
 + Nature roll Maneuver: +1D, *Terror*  
 Attack: Attack always versus Attack  
 against melee weapons, *Acid Blood*

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**Armor:** Iron Scales (as chain).

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**Instinct:** Demand tribute in the form of oxen  
 and treasure

### Special

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**Venomous!** Characters that lose hit points to a linnorm's Poisonous Bite in a kill or drive off conflict must make an Ob 4 Health test at the end of the round. If failed, character is incapacitated for a phase (twist) or gains the sick condition. Characters who are already sick gain the dead condition. If killed in this manner, any hit points held by the character are lost and cannot be regained.

## Marmennill

These mermen (female: margygur) can be found in both the Regn and Skyet Seas, though sailors most commonly encounter them in the skerries of Toskarinn and the Skera Strait. Though eldritch and strange, most are not inimicable to humans. They are gifted with the power of prophecy, and many legends tell of fisherfolk that fish a marmennill up from the sea and compel him to speak the fisher's destiny. Other stories tell of margygur maids, sunning themselves upon the rocks, who glimpse a sailor and lose their hearts to the land—a tragedy, for though they can live for a time upon dry land, always they will pine for the sea. Marmennill and margygur tend to be surrounded by an air of melancholy, for they see the tragic ends to which most people journey.

## Marmennill

**Abilities** Might: 3 Nature: 4  
**Descriptors:** Swimming, Prophesying, Fishing

### Conflict

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**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Capture:** 7 Maneuver: +1s, *Slippery*  
 Defend: +2D, *Visions of the Future*  
**Convince:** 9 Maneuver: +1D, *Wisdom of the Deeps*  
**Drive Off:** 3 Maneuver: +2D, *Net*  
**Kill:** 5 Attack: +1D, *Trident* (may be thrown to  
 turn Attack against Attack into a versus test;  
 range as spear)  
 Maneuver: +1D, *Trident*  
 Defend: +2D, *Visions of the Future*

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**Instinct:** Watch surface-dwellers as they work

### Special

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Marmennill and margygur have the gift of prophecy. If convinced or forced, they will speak of a person's urd. If the subject of the prophecy rewrites their goal to reflect the prophecy, any actions taken toward fulfilling the prophecy are considered to be within that character's nature until the prophecy is fulfilled or the goal changes. Accomplishing the goal earns the character two Persona points rather than one. In addition, touching an object allows merfolk to read its past.

**Shape Change:** On land, marmennill and margygur may shapechange their fish tails into legs.

## Nykr

A nykr is a water spirit that delights in tricking the unwary to their deaths. It is a mercurial shapeshifter. It often appears as a handsome young man dressed in fine clothes and playing an enchanting tune upon a lyre or bone flute. The stories say that if one approaches a nykr properly and with appropriate sacrifices, it can be convinced to teach one to play the harp so finely that even trees and waterfalls will dance to the tune. Nearly as often, it appears as a powerful white stallion on foggy days; if someone attempts to mount it, it races to the nearest river and attempts to drown them.

## Nykr

**Abilities** Might: 4 Nature: 5  
**Descriptors:** Tricking, Playing Enchanting Music,  
 Drowning



**Conflict**

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Banish:** 11 **Attack:** +1D, *Haunting Music*  
**Maneuver:** +1s, *Slippery*  
**Defend:** +2D, *Haunting Music*  
**Convince:** 6 **Maneuver:** +1D, *Mercurial*  
**Drive Off:** 9 **Feint:** +1s, *Form of Water*  
**Maneuver:** +2D, *Water Horse*  
**Kill:** 4 **Attack:** +1D, *Drowning Grasp*  
**Feint:** +1D, *Malicious Pranks*  
**Maneuver:** +1D, *Slippery*

**Instinct:** Pull their heads underwater.

**Special**

A nykr can be “killed,” but will reform over time. In addition, nykr musicians are without peer. When one plays its lyre or flute, anyone who hears the song must make a Will test vs. the nykr’s Nature. Those that fail are lured into the water where it attempts to drown them. This forces a kill conflict in which the spirit has a disposition of 11 rather than 4.

If a nykr is convinced to teach a person music, that person gains a heroic music skill (3-6 indicates a success rather than standard 4-6).

## Sjorisar

Sjorisar (sing. sjorisi) are sea giants that maintain magnificent halls beneath the waves. They enjoy feasts and strong drink and delight in guests. But be not fooled: If roused to anger, they are capable of primal fury that could frighten even an eldjtunn berserker.

**Sjorisar**

**Abilities** Might: 6 Nature (Giant): 9  
**Descriptors:** Surging, Hosting, Brewing

**Conflict**

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Kill:** 19 **Attack:** +1D, +1s *Surging Waves*  
**Feint:** +1D, *Howling Fury*  
**Maneuver:** +2D, *Surging Waves*  
**Flee:** 10 **Attack:** +1s, *Sucking Vortex*  
**Maneuver:** +2D, *Surging Waves*  
**Convince:** 14 **Attack:** +1D, *Friendly Disposition*  
**Maneuver:** +1s, *Heady Brew*  
**Battle:** 9 **Attack:** +2D, *Wall of Water*  
 + Nature Roll **Maneuver:** +1D, *Howling Fury*

**Instinct:** Invite them to the feast.

**Special**

Sjorisar can breath underwater and safely transport others through it, though their underwater halls are filled with air. Sjorisar also exert a great deal of control over weather at sea. Sailors frequently make offerings to them for safe journeys. Weather Binding: A sjorisi can bind the weather at sea to its will. Roll Nature, Ob 3. Success allows the sjorisi to shift the weather by one step up or down on the weather table. Margin of success may be spent to shift the weather additional steps. May be used once per session.

## Thursar

A thursar (sing. thurs) is a hill giant, sometimes called an ogre. They are commonly found in the foothills of the many mountains of the Middarmark. They tend to be savage and dim-witted, though some have an odd sort of charm.

**Thursar**

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature (Giant): 6  
**Descriptors:** Man-eating, Lumbering, Bellowing

**Conflict**

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Kill:** 13 **Attack:** +1s, *Massive Club* (ignores chainmail, increases odds of damage to platemail)  
**Maneuver:** -1D, *Massive Club*  
**Convince:** 7 **Attack:** +1s, *Charming to Children* (in conflicts with children only)  
**Maneuver:** +1D, *Intimidating Bellow*  
**Defend:** +1s, *Stupid*  
**Flee:** 10 **Attack:** +1D, *Massive Sack*  
**Defend:** +1s, *Gigantic Strides*  
**Riddle:** 4 **Feint:** +1D, *Tricksy*

**Armor:** Thick Hide (as leather).

**Instinct:** Always stick to my daily routine.

**Special**

**Berserker.** If a thurs loses half or more of its hit points in a kill conflict, increase its Might to 6. While berserking, it may not use Feint or Maneuver actions.

## Troll-Aurochs

This giant takes the form of a gigantic aurochs the size of a longhouse or greater.

### Troll-Aurochs

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature (Giant): 8

**Descriptors:** Goring, Grazing, Trampling

#### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Kill:** 13 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor Sharp Horns*

**Feint:** +1D, *Trample*

**Maneuver:** +1s, *Surprisingly Fast*

**Flee:** 17 **Attack:** +1D, *Surprisingly Fast*

**Drive Off:** 15 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor Sharp Horns*

**Feint:** +1D, *Trample*

**Maneuver:** +1s, *Surprisingly Fast*

**Capture:** 9 **Maneuver:** +2D, *Massive Bulk*

**Defend:** +1D, *Savage Fury*

**Armor:** Thick Hide (as leather).

**Instinct:** Charge when threatened.

#### Special

**Thundering stomp.** When a troll-aurochs stamps its feet, the earth shudders. The troll-aurochs may invoke this power once between rounds after actions are chosen in a kill, flee, drive off or capture conflict. Everyone present must make a Health test vs. the troll-aurochs' Nature. Those who fail fall to the ground. Characters who fail and are assigned an action for the round suffer -1D to their roll during the round due to the shaking earth. Characters who fail and are not assigned an action cannot help during the round, as they are busy struggling to their feet.



## Troll-Bear

This terrifying giant is a lord of bears, the epitome of ursine power.

### Troll-Bear

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature (Giant): 9

**Descriptors:** Climbing, Smashing, Hunting (and Fishing)

#### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Kill:** 9 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor Sharp Horns*

**Feint:** +1D, *Low Cunning*

**Maneuver:** +1D, +1s, *Troll Bear-Hug*

**Flee:** 11 **Attack:** +1D, *Lumbering Run*

**Drive Off:** 4 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor Sharp Horns*

**Feint:** +1D, *Low Cunning*

**Maneuver:** +1D, +1s, *Troll Bear-Hug*

**Capture:** 6 **Maneuver:** +2D, *Massive Bulk*

**Defend:** +1D, *Savage Fury*

**Armor:** Thick Hide (as leather).

**Instinct:** Stop for honey

#### Special

**Thundering Roar.** The troll-bear's roar could frighten the dead. Once per conflict when choosing weapons, the troll-bear may unleash its devastating roar, forcing all who hear it to make a Will test vs. the troll-bear's Nature. Subtract margin of failure from disposition.

## Troll-Eagle

This regal giant nests at the edge of the world, causing the wind to blow when it beats its wings.

### Troll-Eagle

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature (Giant): 6

**Descriptors:** Inspiring, Flying, Raising the Wind

#### Conflict

**Dispositions** Weapons

**Kill:** 10 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor-Sharp Talons*

**Maneuver:** +1s, *Precipitous Dive*

**Defend:** +1s, *Powerful Wings*

**Trick:** 4 **Attack:** +1D, *Eye of the Eagle*

**Maneuver:** +1D, *Eye of the Eagle*

**Drive Off:** 13 **Attack:** +1D, *Razor-Sharp Talons*

**Feint:** +1s, *Precipitous Dive*

**Maneuver:** +1s, *Powerful Wings*

**Capture:** 7 **Attack:** +2D, *Soaring Wings*

**Defend:** +1D, *Savage Fury*

**Instinct:** Take to the sky

**Special**

The troll-eagle can summon or end blustery winds or gales at will as per the weather rules in the Seasons and Weather chapter. When reducing winds, gales settle to blustery winds, and blustery winds settle to clear and cool weather.

## Troll-Squirrel

This giant nests in Midmeither and is an inveterate spy with access to all the worlds. It hoards secrets like earthly squirrels hoard nuts. Sometimes, it can even be convinced to share.

### Troll-Squirrel

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature (Giant): 4  
**Descriptors:** Climbing, Burrowing, Stealing Secrets

**Conflict**

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Convince:** 8 **Attack:** +2D, *Rapid Chatter*  
**Trick:** 5 **Maneuver:** +1s, *Easily Distracted*  
**Drive Off:** 3 **Attack:** +1D, *Deep Cunning*  
**Capture:** 9 **Defend:** +1D, *Thrifty*  
**Attack:** +1D, *Sharp Bite*  
**Feint:** +1D, *Agile Leaper*  
**Maneuver:** +1s, *Rapid Scurry*  
**Defend:** +1D, *Agile Leaper*

**Instinct:** If there's a secret, I must learn it.

**Special**

Once per session in which it appears, the troll-squirrel may double its Nature for a test that would help it obtain a secret.

## Ættir

The world, both seen and unseen, is vast. It is well known among the Bjornings, Gotts and Scefings that each clan has a spirit that serves as its guardian in the Otherworld and guides the clan's recently deceased to the Hidden Halls. Sometimes called simply the ancestral mother, an ættir takes the form of a woman who founded the clan. She protects the clan, brings luck and may even provide prophetic counsel in dreams or waking visions. When the clan goes to war, the ættir assumes a terrible visage and bloody armor to those with Wizard's Sight. A shrine to the clan's ættir is kept at the clan's ancestral hearth and maintained by the ættmor. If the clan's ættir should be destroyed, the clan itself will soon wither and die.

## Ættir

**Abilities** Might: 5 Nature: (3-7 based on clan strength)

**Descriptors:** Protecting, Prophesying, Binding and Cursing

**Conflict**

**Dispositions** Weapons  
**Banish:** 4 **Maneuver:** +2D, *Fed with Regular Sacrifice*  
**Defend:** +2D, *Bound to Clan*  
**Convince:** 7 **Attack:** +1D, *Visions of the Future*  
**Defend:** +2D, *Matriarchal*  
**Capture:** 8 **Attack:** +1D, *Visions of the Future*  
**Maneuver:** +2D, *Fed with Regular Sacrifice*  
**Defend:** +2D, *Bound to Clan*  
**Battle:** 10 **Maneuver:** +1s, *Prophetic Warnings*  
**Maneuver:** +2D, *Rallying Cry*

**Armor:** Spiritual Armor (as chain).

**Instinct:** Protect my bloodline.

**Special**

The ættir is the embodiment of her bloodline and can speak to those who share her blood in dreams. She lives in the clan's regalia—a banner, piece of jewelry, weapon, article of clothing or relic of some sort—and can communicate with the bearer of the regalia directly.

**Clan Strength.** The ættir's nature is based on the strength of its leader as follows: impoverished steading (nature 3); well-off steading (nature: 4); hersir/godi (nature 5); jarl (nature 6); monarch (nature 7).

## Foemen

### Bear Cult Shapeshifter

These Skyrnir shamans all have bear as their fylgjur and know the secrets of attaining bear's shape. They can be clerics or magicians (the one below is a cleric). An elite society within the Skyrnir circle of shamans, members of the Bear Cult see it as their duty to defend their people.

**Abilities** Nature: 4 Will: 5 Health: 5  
Circles: 5 Might: 3 Resources: 4

**Descriptors:** Storytelling, Skygazing, Herding

**Skills:** Ritualist 5, Theologian 4, Fighter 4, Healer 3, Scout 3, Survivalist 3, Scholar 2

**Wises:** Bear-wise, Bee-wise

**Traits:** Crushing Strength (2), Touched by the Gods (1), Wise (1)

**Instinct:** Attack when threatened.

**Level Benefits:**

- ☉ **Level 2:** 1 1st Circle prayer slot
- ☉ **Level 3:** +1 1st Circle prayer slot
- ☉ **Level 4:** +1 2nd Circle prayer slot

Commonly Memorized Prayers: Fury of the Lords of Life and Death, Breath of the Burning Lord (1C), Vision of the Lords of Chaos and Law (1C), Boon of the Otherworld (2C)

## Bjorning Huskarl

**Abilities** Nature: 4 Will: 5 Health: 5  
Circles: 3 Might: 2 Resources: 3

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Demanding, Sailing

**Skills:** Fighter 5, Hunter 4, Scout 4, Laborer 2, Rider 2

**Wises:** Shield Wall-wise, Drinking-wise

**Traits:** Brave (1), Tough (1)

**Instinct:** Attack when threatened.

## Brotherhood of Plunder Pirate

**Abilities** Nature: 4 Will: 2 Health: 5  
Circles: 3 Might: 2 Resources: 1

**Descriptors:** Fishing, Suing, Feuding

**Skills:** Scout 5, Fighter 4, Manipulator 3, Sailor 3

**Wises:** River-wise, Loot-wise

**Traits:** Cunning (1), Scarred (1)

## Gott Ridder

**Abilities** Nature: 4 Will: 4 Health: 5  
Circles: 3 Might: 2 Resources: 3

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Demanding, Riding

**Skills:** Fighter 5, Hunter 3, Scout 3, Steward 2

**Wises:** Horse-wise, Lance Charge-wise

**Traits:** Brave (1), Proud (1)

## Orgoth Bloodeye, Warleader of the Brotherhood of Plunder

Orgoth is a massive, one-eyed orc that leads the Brotherhood of Plunder, a mixed band of orc and human river pirates that prey upon Jeilirdal. He always dresses in brightly colored stolen finery and is excessively proud of the cleverness of his wordplay—to the point that he accepts most offers of parley so that he might attack his opponents with his wit. He is savage and pitiless, more than happy to slit throats, but smart enough to understand that those who pay tribute rather than fighting to the death can be bled again another day. Orgoth hates the Horned King of the Goatrider's Horde with incandescent fury. He will direct his pirates to attack the Horde over any other opponents. No quarter is given in such clashes.



## Scefing Raider

**Abilities** Nature: 4 Will: 4 Health: 5  
Circles: 3 Might: 2 Resources: 3

**Descriptors:** Boasting, Enslaving, Sailing

**Skills:** Fighter 5, Hunter 4, Scout 4, Scavenger 3

**Wises:** Thrall-wise, Drinking-wise

**Traits:** Bloodlust (1), Tough (1)

# In the Shadow of the Horns



Tales of ancient ruins and long-lost treasure have drawn you to Ruindal. But before you can even begin to explore the valley, danger swirls about Valbjorn's Steading, which has provided you hospitality since you arrived. With Haustblot approaching, the hay is nearly ready to feed the animals through the long winter and the animals themselves have grown fat in the upland pastures. The goblin raiders of the Goatrider's Horde, and their voracious demon mounts, need beasts and fodder to keep them through the winter. They're eager to take what they need and burn the rest.

Valbjorn's family is in desperate need of defenders if they are to avoid a long season of slow starvation in the Hungry Time. And the horde has spent the year plundering throughout Jeilirdal. Surely there is treasure to be had...

## Set Up

*In the Shadow of the Horns* is an introductory adventure for 1st level Torchbearer characters. It should take one to two sessions of play. This scenario is set in Ruindal, a small valley

in the foothills of the Trollfjells, just north of the Gull Pass that connects Jeilirdal and Sudstrond. Ruindal is home to Valbjorn's Steading and a handful of similar isolated farms.

The adventurers have come to Ruindal to explore the ancient ruins that dot the valley. While they are guests of Valbjorn's Steading by default, they could also spot the signal fire or stumble upon the goblins raiding the steading while traveling.

The adventure opens with a band of goblins from the Goatrider's Horde, led by the hobgoblin Krakki Split-tongue, raiding Valbjorn's Steading. The goblins are after:

- The steading's livestock, which they will use to feed themselves and their helgeit mounts through the winter
- The steading's fodder, to feed their stolen animals through the winter
- Captives; Svana Goldnose, lendermann of Gull Pass, is paying Krakki to harass the locals in an effort to put pressure on the local hersir (see *Behind the Scenes* below)

## Valbjorn's Steading

Valbjorn's Steading is a longhouse and several outbuildings on a hill, surrounded by a wooden palisade. There's a swift-running stream below, which they use for water. There are many fields scattered all about beyond the fence, each surrounded by shoulder-height turf walls. The livestock, save the milk cows and ewes, are still in the sel, the upland pasture. Yet higher, on the crest of the ridge, sits a varda of piled stones.

## The Goatrider's Horde

It's common knowledge that the Goatrider's Horde is a scourge upon Jeilirdal. Their goat mounts are the size of horses and possess a malevolent intelligence; some tales say they are demons summoned from the Otherworld. They have pitch black coats, red eyes and flaming horns and hooves.

Note, helgeit are extremely dangerous monsters, especially for 1st level characters. Make sure to communicate the danger they represent in your descriptions. Novice players should consider driving them off or fleeing, rather than attempting to kill them. Additionally, remember that riders take on the might of their mounts. Goblins mounted on helgeit are considered to have Might 4.

### Krakki Split-tongue

Krakki Split-tongue, a hobgoblin, is the leader of this band of Goatrider's. Krakki planned this raid and knows it must succeed if his band is going to survive the winter in Gull Pass.

While Krakki is not sentimental about his goblins, he won't throw their lives away needlessly. He's ambitious, and doesn't want to show weakness by having to request reinforcements from the Horned King to continue raiding when the spring thaw comes.

See Hobgoblin, Torchbearer, page 155 for Krakki's stats. Remember that he has Might 4 when mounted on his helgeit. Krakki is armed with a crossbow, mace and spear.

## Behind the Scenes

The Horned King of the Goatrider's Horde has sent Krakki Split-tongue's band to harass trade moving into and out of the Gull Pass. To that end, they've occupied an ancient and ruined Græling watchtower situated at the northern mouth of Gull Pass. They do require stores to keep them through the winter, but they are targeting Ruindal, and not the wealthier valley of Tyrvidal to the northeast, because they have been paid to do so.

## Goatriders' Badge

All goblins elevated to the rank of Goatrider are gifted with a blood-red cloak and an iron brooch that bears a stylized horned goat skull upon it. The brooch is magical, and causes helgeit to look upon the riders as friends rather than prey. Goblins that do not have these brooches are understandably nervous around the demonic beasts.

**Effect:** Helgeit treat anyone wearing a Goatrider's Badge as a friend, as per the **Thread of Friendship** spell.

**Inventory:** Neck/worn 1

**Type:** Magical jewelry

A year ago, King Eyvind the Stout of Jeilirdal appointed his huskarl, Svana Goldnose, lendumann of Gull Pass. He charged her with taxing trade moving through the Gull Pass, and to collect taxes from Sunnås and other nearby villages and steadings.

Rather than risk the lives of her warriors forcing Ruindal to submit, Svana has established a relationship with Krakki Split-tongue through her agent, Karral Halfhand. Svana has been paying tribute to the Goatrider's to convince them to focus their raiding efforts on Ruindal, rather than her own holdings in Tyrvidal. She believes their depredations will force Linna the Mirthful, hersir of Ruindal, to request her aid.

Most recently, Svana has promised Krakki that she will reveal the location of an ancient underground armory in the Gull Pass, a remnant of the Græling-Sakki Wars from long ago. The ambitious Krakki, of course, sees the armory as an opportunity to secure a fortified position with which to control the Gull Pass.

Svana intends to keep her promise to reveal the location of the armory, but she plans to hold back knowledge of a backdoor entrance to the armory. Once Ruindal submits, she hopes to use the backdoor entrance to ambush the Goatrider's in their new dungeon and take control of the pass herself.

## Characters of Note

### Valbjorn and Halla.

Valbjorn and Halla have carved out this steading with years of hard work and sacrifice. They are simple but tough folk who do their best to take care of their children and tenants. They do their best to honor the Rites of Hospitality.

**Olrun.**

Valbjorn and Halla's eldest child. She has a warrior's spirit and dreams of adventure. She's very protective of her younger siblings.

**Bjorr.**

Valbjorn and Halla's second eldest child.

**Gisla and Myr.**

Valbjorn and Halla's youngest children. Twins.

**Krakki Split-tongue.**

The hobgoblin leader of a raiding band of the Goatrider's Horde.

**Svana Goldnose.**

The recently appointed lendermann of Gull Pass. King Eyvind of Jeilirdal has sent Svana to take control of the local hersir and to begin taxing trade through the Gull Pass.

**Karral Halfhand.**

Svana Goldnose's agent and spy. Karral is her contact with Krakki Split-tongue and acts as a go-between.

**Linna the Mirthful.**

Hersir of Ruindal. Valbjorn, Halla and other steaders in Ruindal look to Linna for protection.

## And So It Begins

After making a short but hard journey from the village of Sunnås to Ruindal, a valley near the Gull Pass, you have spent the past several days recovering at Valbjorn's Steading under the Rites of Hospitality. Valbjorn, his wife Halla, and their children have not stinted—they have shared their longhouse and meager fare with you without complaint.

With winter rapidly approaching, the steading's folk are hard at work turning the hay that will keep the animals alive through the Hungry Time. Valbjorn and his wife Halla are overseeing the work. The younger children are with Olrun, their eldest daughter, in the upland pasture, gathering the free roaming livestock in preparation for driving them down to the steading before the first snows come.

In return for the hospitality you've received, you have spent a day driving the steading's pigs into the saddle of woods to the north where they can grow fat on acorns for the next few weeks.

Dusk is rapidly approaching as you emerge from the woods following a day of hard labor. As you reach higher ground,

the smell of smoke draws your gaze to the north, beyond the woods you've just left, where a massive signal fire is burning on the ridge near where Olrun and the other

children are working. Trouble! You can see the silhouettes of mounted warriors on the ridge line!

Then shouts of alarm and screams of fury draw your gaze back to the steading itself. In the fading light, you can make out several folks with rakes and pitchforks on the turf roof of the steading, fending off attackers. Goblin goatrider!

## Sample Goals

- ☼ I will save Valbjorn's Steading.
- ☼ I will save Olrun and the children.
- ☼ I will make the Goatrider's Horde pay!
- ☼ I will learn the truth of the Helgeit.
- ☼ I will take the horde's plunder!
- ☼ I will find treasure among the ruins.

## Ongoing Events

About an hour after the signal fire was lit (generally after the adventurers have visited both the steading and the highland pasture), Linna the Mirthful, hersir of Ruindal, arrives with three mounted huskarls. Linna is clearly disturbed by the raid and determined to help. Her first priority is to help the steading salvage what it can. She offers the adventurers 1D of silver to track the raiders to their camp and another 2D of silver if they can rescue the prisoners and recapture any stolen fodder or animals.

If the adventurers ask for her aid in attacking the ruined watchtower, she will give it without question, but insist that she and her warriors get half of any plunder won. Use the Bjorning Huskarl stats (see entry in *Of Trolls and Men* in this book) for Linna and her warriors. When mounted, Linna and her huskarls are Might 3.

## Weather

When the scenario begins, it is early Autumn and the weather is Clear and Cool. Check for changes to the weather on the Autumn Weather Table after every three camp phases, after three days of traveling and after every town phase.

## Wandering Monsters

- ☼ *Goblins*. Three goblin slaves performing errands. They won't attack on their own. Instead they'll run for help and shout in alarm. (See *Goblin, Torchbearer*, page 154)

## The Middarmark

- ☉ *Helgeit*. Four helgeit are in area 1 (Scorched Hilltop). They're mostly content to devour their feast, but may come to investigate a disturbance at the Ruined Tower. (see entry in Of Trolls and Men in this book)
- ☉ *Dire Wolves*. 1d3+1 dire wolves hunt in the area. (See Dire Wolf, Torchbearer, page 153)
- ☉ *Damaged Gear*. Some important bit of gear—rope, a grappling hook, a lantern, a backpack, tools for a skill—is broken, ripped or otherwise damaged as a result of the failed test.

## Valbjorn's Steading Locations

### 1. The Woods

This dense thicket of oak, birch and maple sits in a narrow saddle between Valbjorn's Steading to the southeast and the upland pasture to the northwest. It's full of happy pigs foraging for acorns. A worn, rocky path skirts its western edge, connecting the steading and the upland pasture.

### 2. Valbjorn's Steading

If the adventurers visit Valbjorn's Steading first, they discover that something has battered a gaping hole in the stockade around the steading. Within, two goblins and a hobgoblin, all mounted upon pitch-black goats the size of horses, with burning red eyes and flaming hooves and horns, menace Valbjorn and Halla. They are perched on the turf roof of their longhouse, attempting to hold the raiders off with farm implements.

By one of the outbuildings, a goblin goatrider is screaming insults at a trio of goblin slaves who are loading a cart with the steading's hay.

If the adventurers visit the steading after investigating the Upland Pasture, they find the stockade battered down and the ground around the stead filled with with cloven hoofprints the size of platters, burned into the grass. There's blood spatter on one side of the longhouse. A bit of looking reveals a heavy cart has made tracks in the soft earth, heading south.

### 3. The Upland Pasture

If the adventurers visit the Upland Pasture first, they come to a large field at the center of which is a sorting pen made of piled stones stacked to shoulder height. Sheep, cattle and goats make terrified sounds as Olrún, armed with a staff, holds the entrance to the pen. Her brother, Bjorr, swings a sling threateningly, while their siblings Gisla and Myr huddle

### Svana Goldnose, Lendermann of the Gull Pass

Named for the golden prosthetic she uses to cover the nose she lost in battle years ago, Svana Goldnose is one of King Eyvind of Jeilirdal's most formidable huskarls. A year ago, he appointed her Lendermann of the Gull Pass between Jeilirdal and Sudstrond.

The appointment gives her the power to tax anyone in the pass moving goods along the Sölvveien and to collect taxes from Sunnås and several other nearby villages.

Svana saw the appointment as an opportunity to make herself and her friends wealthy, but many problems have reared their heads: The upstart Jarl Stigand of Sudstrond has been seizing the wealth of merchants traveling north from Stortmarke, drastically reducing her take; the Goatriders' Horde preys on merchants traveling south; and the villagers lack proper respect. She needs help to put them all in their place.



in fright behind them. Five goblins issue taunts as they close upon the siblings. Higher up the ridge, a large signal fire blazes.

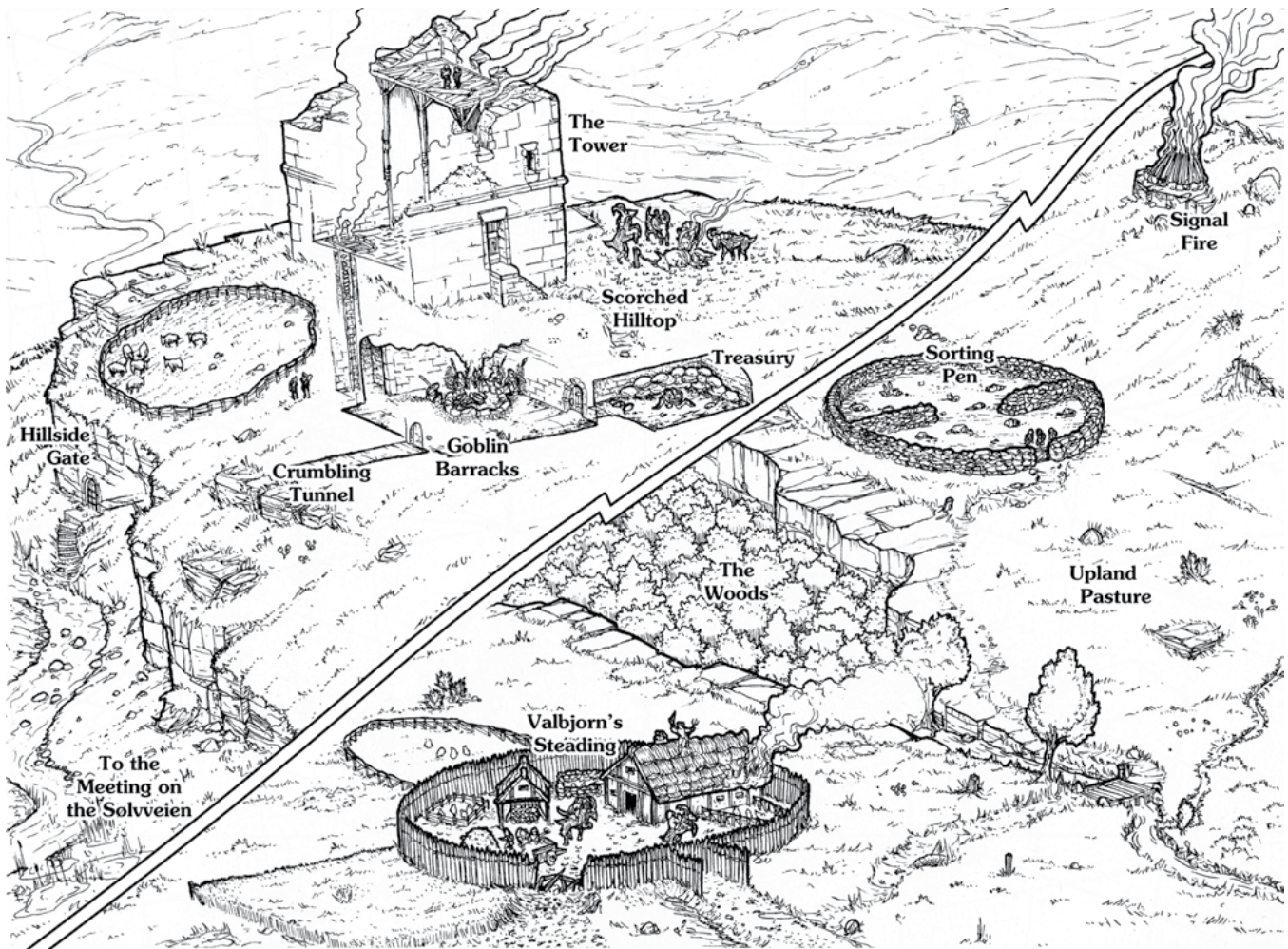
If the adventurers visit the Upland Pasture after going to Valbjorn's Steading, they see the light and smoke of the signal fire long before they reach it. On the slopes, they find a number of terrified animals wandering free in the pasture and Olrún, badly wounded and bleeding, lying near the entrance to the sorting pen. The carcasses of a number of animals, savagely hacked to pieces, lie within, but it's clear that many animals are missing.

If questioned, Olrún tells the adventurers that goblins have kidnapped her siblings and driven the surviving stock animals south toward Gull Pass.

## Following the Goatriders

The Ruined Tower is several hours' journey south of Valbjorn's Steading. Whether the goatriders seized the stock animals, the hay or both, the trail is easy to follow; no test is





required. It leads south for a time before intersecting with the Sølveien. The Ruined Tower sits atop a hill that overlooks the road.

## Ruined Tower Map Key

### 1. Scorched Hilltop

A crumbling, square stone tower, its upper level collapsed, squats atop a hill. Ivy, brilliant red in autumn, covers the exterior. The hill's crown is scorched black by the cloven hoofprints burned into the grass.

To one side, is a large wooden pen containing a number of cattle, sheep and goats, snorting and bleating in terror. Near the pen's entrance, two goblins armed with spears pass a skin of something between them. They warily eye a space near the entrance to the tower, where four helgeit tear at the bloody, steaming flesh of a bull staked there.

### Krakki Riding Out

As the adventurers approach, they see Krakki and three goblins, all mounted on helgeit, riding south. Krakki is on his way to meet with Karral Halfhand and tell him about the outcome of the raid.

### Sentries

Two bored goblins stand sentry on a platform erected on top of rickety scaffolding inside the ruined tower, allowing them to look out over the tower's broken walls (see area 3 Observation Post). While they've been tasked with keeping watch for anyone approaching the tower, they're engrossed in a contest to determine which one can launch the biggest gob of spittle over the wall to the ground below.

Because they're disinterested, the goblins will only notice the adventurers if they attempt to enter the tower itself, and then only if the adventurers aren't attempting to approach stealthily. If the adventurers do attempt to sneak up to the tower, consider it a Good Idea. Both goblins are armed with bows, and one has a horn made from a curving bull's horn that it can use to alert the other goblins in the band. Note: Neither goblin has a Goatrider's Badge.

### Feasting Helgeit

The helgeit are maliciously intelligent and very dangerous, but they're feasting and consider guard duty to be beneath them. They're content to continue gobbling chunks of



### The Middarmark

bloody meat, unless the adventurers make a lot of noise. If the adventurers do make their presence known, the helgeit will attack with demonic fury.

### Pen

The animals stolen from Valbjorn's Steading are gathered in this wooden pen, and they're painfully aware of the carnivorous helgeit beyond. They're ready to stampede at a moment's notice.

### Miserable Goblin Herders

Two miserable goblins are posted here, tasked with keeping the helgeit out of the pen and knowing full well that the demons could easily kill and eat them at any time before entering the pen, and there's little the goblins could do to stop it. They're half-drunk on a skin of strong goblin liquor they're passing back and forth while muttering vile imprecations against Krakki Split-tongue. Note: Neither goblin herder has a Goatrider's Badge.

## 2. The Ruined Tower

A heavy gate, banded with heavily rusted iron, marks the one part of the ruined tower not covered in blood-red ivy. The gate is barred from within.

Inside is a large, smoke-filled square chamber. After spending one turn in the smoke, adventurers must make a Health test, Ob 2. Suggested failure: The adventurer is blinded by watering eyes and coughs loudly until they escape the smoke-filled room.

There's a heavy trapdoor in the northeastern corner of the tower. The trapdoor is held cracked open with a bit of wood, and smoke billows out of the crack to fill the room.

Just inside the walls on each side is a rickety scaffold of timber and rope that supports a platform about 15 feet above the chipped and cracked flagstone floor. The platform and scaffolding creaks and groans with every step of the sentry goblins above. There's a hole cut in the platform in the middle of the northern side that can be used to climb onto the platform.

The eastern side of the tower is piled high with hay, nearly to the platform.

### Rickety Scaffolding

Climbing the scaffolding is a Dungeoneer test, Ob 2. Suggested failure: The scaffolding collapses with a huge clatter that everyone outside and below hears. The collapse pins the trapdoor in the floor shut and injures the sentry goblins. Adventurers caught in the collapse are trapped.

They can free themselves with a Health test, Ob 3. Alternately, adventurers not caught in the trap may free trapped companions with a Laborer test, Ob 2.

## 3. Observation Post

Two goblin sentries, armed with bows and a signal horn, are posted on this unsteady wooden platform. The platform can only handle the weight of three individuals. If more individuals climb to the platform, it will collapse, injuring anyone at the top. See *Rickety Scaffolding* under area 2.

## 4. Goblin Barracks

A wooden ladder descends through the smoke to a swelteringly hot, square rock chamber below. A haphazardly placed ring of stones forms a firepit in the center. Four goblin goatrider are gathered about the fire, roasting meat on skewers. They wear mud-spattered red cloaks, pinned at the left shoulder with Goatider's Badges.

### Secret Door

There's a cunningly hidden secret door concealed in the rock of the western wall, activated by pressing a jutting stone in that wall. Spotting the door requires a Scout test, Ob 3.

## 5. Crumbling Tunnel

This tunnel is half filled with dirt and mud. A Laborer test, Ob 2, is required to shift enough dirt out of the way to allow any adventurer larger than a dwarf to use it. The gate at the far end (see 7. *Secret Hillside Gate*) is secured with an ancient and heavily rusted lock. Picking the lock requires a Criminal test, Ob 5.

## 6. Makeshift Treasury

The goblins have secured the door to this chamber by spiking it on the outside with five iron spikes.

The small, square rock chamber is piled with sacks, some of them split and spilling grain on the floor, where rats are gorging on it. Any members of Valbjorn's family captured in the raid are trussed in the center of the room.

Most of the sacks here contain grain. However, there are two small sacks filled with copper and another filled with silver. A very fine rug (pack/carried 6, worth 5D) is rolled and carelessly tossed in a corner.

### Conspiracy

If any of the survivors are rescued, they tell the adventurers that they overheard Krakki and the goblins talking about some sort of deal with a man called Karral. The Goatrider targeted Valbjorn's Steading as part of the deal and expect to

be given an ancient armory in return. The goblins have been gloating about the plunder they'll take once they control the Gull Pass.

### 7. Secret Hillside Gate

This gate was built into the western slope of the hill upon which the watchtower stands, and cunningly disguised using knowledge imparted to the Grælings by the dwarves. Unless one knows precisely where it is, discovering it from the outside requires a Scout test, Ob 6. The gate is secured from the inside. It is impossible to open from the outside without breaking down the gate. Doing so requires a Health test, Ob 6.

### 8. Meeting on the Sølveien

Karral, accompanied by two of Svana Goldnose's other huskarls, meets Krakki Split-tongue on the Sølveien, about 30 minutes south of the ruined tower by goat. If the adventurers choose to follow Krakki, keeping track of them is no problem. Remaining unseen is another matter. Doing so requires a Scout test versus Krakki's nature (with help from the other goblins and helgeit): 10D.

Whether the raid was a complete success or not, Karral will give Krakki a map to the ancient armory, declaring that Svana Goldnose keeps her promises. However, he will show noticeable disappointment if the raid was not a complete success, and insist that Krakki finish the job.

#### Karral Halfhand

Karral Halfhand bears that name because he's missing two fingers on his left hand. He's Svana Goldnose's most trusted agent and is responsible for establishing the rather tense alliance between his lendermann and Krakki Split-tongue. Mounted and accompanied by two mounted huskarls, he would be a formidable opponent for the adventurers if they attempt to fight him. But he'd rather talk, especially if the adventurers encounter him when Krakki is elsewhere.

In that situation, he will attempt to offer the adventurers employment instead. He wants to ensure that Valbjorn's Steading doesn't survive the winter, and will offer a small sack full of gold (4D) if the adventurers agree to help.

## Where to Go From Here

Whether the adventurers have saved Valbjorn's Steading or not, there are still likely a number of loose ends.

Unless the adventurers managed to save the livestock and the fodder, Valbjorn's family and tenants are likely to starve over the winter. They will need help to survive. Failing that, they'll have to abandon the steading and hope that others are willing or able to take them in.

Svana Goldnose will continue her schemes to bring Ruindal and Linna the Mirthful under her thumb, and Krakki Split-tongue and his band probably know the location of the underground Græling armory in the Gull Pass.

The adventurers may choose to seek out Svana. Her seat of power is Tyrvidal, a valley north of Ruindal. Tyrvidal was once held by the Hersir Reidarr Tyrvisson, but she and her huskarls forced him to submit last year. Ruindal is next, after which she plans to take and hold the Gull Pass.

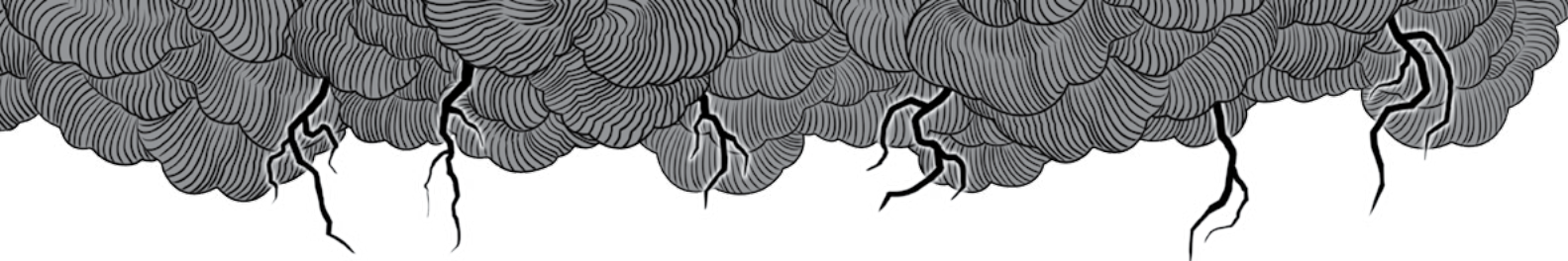
Even if it becomes clear the adventurers have spoiled some of her schemes, Svana will happily hire them as her agents.

Her plan is to use the underground armory to hold the Gull Pass—she just needs Krakki's band (or even the adventurers) to take care of any nasty surprises that may be lingering there.

Svana would be more than happy to provide aid for Valbjorn's Steading, if Linna is willing to submit to her.

Krakki will lead his surviving band to the underground armory and will attempt to secure it from the undead and other monsters that lurk there.

But ultimately you will decide where you will take your players, or perhaps they will decide to dig more into these leads.



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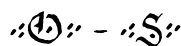
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