

« AGE OF » VIKINGS

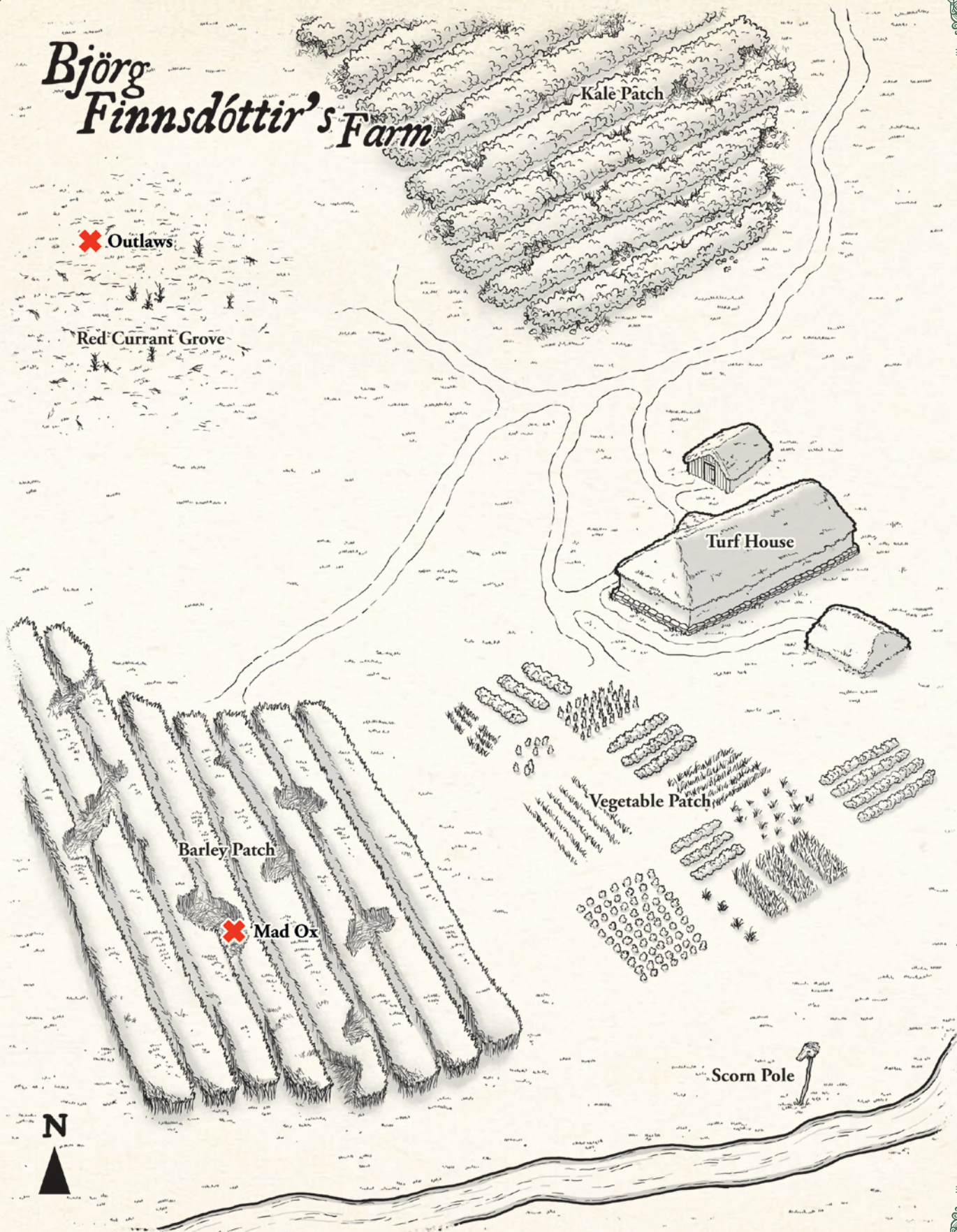
THE CURSED FARM



AN INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO
FOR THE AGE OF VIKINGS ROLEPLAYING GAME



Björg Finnsdóttir's Farm



AGE OF VIKINGS

THE CURSED FARM



ON THE WEST OF NORWAY COMES THE ISLAND CALLED ICELAND, WITH THE MIGHTY OCEAN WASHING ROUND IT: A LAND VERY SQUALID TO DWELL IN, BUT NOTEWORTHY FOR MARVELS, BOTH STRANGE OCCURRENCES, AND OBJECTS THAT PASS BELIEF.

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



The Cursed Farm is a short introductory adventure for *Age of Vikings*, and can be played with two to four players and playable within two to three hours. It requires a copy of the *Age of Vikings* core book, a standard assortment of RPG dice, and downloadable pregenerated characters.

You can download the pregenerated characters at this link:



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Vikings

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THE HEROES ARE CALLED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER OF SUSPICIOUS EVENTS OCCURRING AT A NEIGHBOR'S FARM. THERE, THEY DISCOVER A SUPERNATURAL CAUSE. WHILE TRYING TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT, THEY MUST CONFRONT A POWERFUL, MONSTROUS FOE FROM BEYOND THE WORLD OF THE LIVING!



ANATOMY OF A CURSE

BACKGROUND

- ▶ A *goði* (plural *goðar*) is a regional chieftain with a great deal of social and political power. However, *goðar* are seen as pillars of their communities rather than being any sort of ruling class.
- ▶ A **scorn pole** is a focal point of curse magic. They are created and placed by a wronged party and usually consist of a horse's severed head upon a rune-carved staff. Removing a scorn pole without satisfying the requirements brings the ire of the goddess Hel, queen of the underworld.
- ▶ A *draugur* is a warrior risen from the dead after the violation of a burial cairn. They are extremely deadly and brutal, fearsome and terrible to fight.



THE CURSED FARM

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

READ ALOUD

It is midsummer, but the day is unusually overcast.

Hrafn Reginsson, your local goði, chieftain of this area, has asked you to look in on your distant neighbor Björg Finnsdóttir, whose farm is suffering. Your goði is generous at returning favors, so you go to Björg's farm to see what you can do. As she's a distant member of the community, you know her.

Björg has a good heart and is respected. She wouldn't ask for aid if it wasn't needed, the type to lend help rather than ask for it. Whatever has befallen her farm must be bad.

As you arrive, you see things are going badly for Björg. This isn't the first time you've been to her farm, but you've never seen it in such a poor state. The typically prosperous fields are in an obvious state of disarray. The kale patch hasn't been tended to recently, and several cattle aggressively pace are in the barley field, churning up the soil and crushing the stalks of grain.

Devastatingly, the pride of the farmstead, a once-thriving grove of red currant berry shrubs, is nothing more than burned husks. Only a vegetable patch in front of the central turf house is in good shape.

A light rain is falling and clouds churn overhead. You would think the farm deserted if light wasn't visible from inside and a thin curl of smoke wasn't coming from the chimney.

Ask the heroes what they will do. Do they call out and identify themselves, or do they wait for someone to notice them?

The turf-house door opens and a farmhand looks out, bidding you to come inside. You enter the house, seeing the farm's entire household in the central hall. They look tired, dirty, and afraid. Björg greets you, wearily. "Thank you for coming," she says. "We've done everything we can to lift this darkness, but to no success. I hope that you can do better than we could."

She introduces her family, her husband, children, and a farmhand, and offers cups of ale as she explains what has befallen her farm as of late.

The trouble began about a month ago when her kale patch was overrun with mice, the farm cats having run away. Then her ox bull went mad and took over the barley field, herding other cattle into it despite her efforts at getting them back into their pens.

Finally, a sudden storm destroyed her currant grove. Lightning struck each of the shrubs, as if intentionally.

Björg answers any questions the heroes have, but she doesn't know much beyond what she has said.

Björg's last hope for any meaningful harvest this season is to keep her vegetable patch alive and productive. Mostly onions, radishes, and other root vegetables, the field has shown no ill signs so far. Björg is worried, however, that unless something is done to break whatever darkness looms over her home that she and her family will be left with nothing.

The bull ox aggressively patrols the barley field, the ruined currant grove is a tragic sight, and the kale patch is in an obvious state of chaos. She and her family are afraid to go out, lest they be attacked by the bull.

There is no doubt that this place has been cursed, but why? She has offered sacrifices to Freyr and to Sif—gods associated with prosperity and with farming, respectively—but her prayers have so far gone unanswered.

At this, Björg is practically in tears when she asks you to find out why she has been so cursed and to put a stop to it.

The heroes are now free to ask further questions or to investigate the farm itself.

Björg's Household

Björg's household includes six people: Björg, her husband, their two children, an adopted orphan, and a farmhand.

- ▶ **Björg Finnsdóttir:** A stately and respectable woman approaching the twilight of her life. Björg has a reputation for fairness that leans toward mercy and understanding. In short, she's a bit soft at heart, but is worn out.
- ▶ **Heimir, Björg's husband:** A middle-aged man with good intentions but lacking in ambition. He is devoted to his wife and content to tend the farm, her inheritance.
- ▶ **Katla:** A 14-year-old girl and Björg's eldest daughter. Katla is ambitious and eager to expand her horizons. She aspires to travel to distant shores and see things that none other in her family have ever beheld. She is a romantic at heart, but is saddened by the events.
- ▶ **Halli:** Björg and Heimir's 3-year-old boy. He is fair-haired and suspicious of strangers, and has little to offer any investigation.
- ▶ **Leifur:** A sullen and serious boy of 15 years. Leifur is an orphan adopted by Björg years ago after his father died on a raid. Leifur is cunning and clever, hungry for praise and adulation.
- ▶ **Ulfur:** A farmhand of around 30 years, Ulfur is fiercely loyal to Björg and her family but has an air of guilt and regret about him. He is a noticeably poor farmhand but quick to volunteer for any chores that need to be done about the stead. He is curiously close-mouthed.

If questioned, most members of the household are afraid, but as helpful as they can be. See the following page for details about each.

The Search

Simply searching the farmstead is possible, but there are no obvious sources of clues as to what has brought this bad luck upon the farm. Questioning the residents of the farmstead is a far better solution. **Charm**, **Insight**, or **Intimidate** are good choices for skills to uncover Leifur's guilt. The only other person on the farmstead who knows of Leifur's crime is Björg's daughter, Katla.

Leifur is in love with Katla and asked her to run away with him. Though he didn't tell her specifically about the stolen sword, he did admit that he had a plan to win riches and glory. Shortly after he told her this, the farmstead became cursed. While Katla doesn't know for certain that Leifur is responsible, she has every reason to suspect him.

If Leifur is questioned without being suspected, he seems eager to prove himself to any who are skilled with weapons and boasts that he has a heroic lineage, the descendant of a famed berserker. He says that occasionally Ulfur mentions things about his past that indicate he was not an honest man, and Ulfur has plenty of scars to prove he's been in some battles.

If Leifur is singled out as the culprit, he can be convinced to return the sword with a successful **Intimidate** or **Charm** roll. Appealing to his sense of guilt works best; Leifur isn't a monster, merely a misguided boy with grand aspirations. Leifur is also terrified that the *draugur* will want to exact revenge on him specifically, so assurances of protection will go a long way toward earning his trust.

There is another benefit to questioning the residents of the farmstead: a potential ally. Ulfur, the farmhand, is a former outlaw who was taken in and given a second chance by Björg. He gets flustered if he is approached and denies any wrongdoing, but he is obviously hiding something. If pressed, Ulfur admits he was once a warrior but has set aside the way of the sword. He is intensely loyal to Björg and her family due to the kindness and mercy they have shown him. Ulfur is a terrible farmer but a gifted warrior, and if asked to defend the farm, he is willing to break his oath to never carry a sword again, with Björg's permission. Only Björg knows of Ulfur's past, and despite this, she trusts him deeply and keeps his secret, certain that he would never do anything to endanger her family.



The Kale Field

A voracious swarm of mice has invaded the kale field, eating most of the kale and ruining the rest. The heroes have no way of knowing this, but the nearby scorn pole scared off the farm's few cats, who have a sense for the supernatural and little liking for it.

READ ALOUD

As you approach this field, you hear a quiet rustling sound in the distance. What remains of the kale crop looks as if it is swaying in a breeze even when the wind is calm. The plants closest to you grow still, but the stench of rodents and the aftermath of their feasting is evident even at casual investigation. There are far too many mice, and they are far too aggressive, for the farm's cats to deal with, if any cats remained. Strangely, the south side of the patch—the side closest to the farmhouse—is the most badly devastated by the mice.

All of Björg's attempts to drive the mice away have failed, and while they scatter when anyone approaches, they return quickly. It seems the only options are to hold out hope or to put the entire kale patch to the torch.

A successful **Farm** roll points the heroes to these two options, and if they decide to burn the field, they have enough know-how to keep the fire from spreading. Alternately, the heroes Prymur or Ísgerður can purge the vermin from the field with their magic, using the fire rune or earthquake, respectively. While this will expel the vermin in the short term, it won't prevent them from returning and will surely cause greater problems, as is the nature of magical fire or an earthquake.

Trying to kill the mice through violence is futile. There are far too many, and they'll scatter as soon as they're threatened, going underground until the heroes have left.

The Ox in the Barley

Two weeks ago, Björg's beloved bull ox, usually strong and obedient, became territorial and aggressive and took her barley field as his home. Any who draw too close are met with horns and hooves. Now it has penned in the other two cattle through intimidation, keeping them in the field whenever they try to leave.

A successful **Second Sight** roll reveals that the ox is under the effect of a curse and is not acting of its own accord. The ox can be killed (which is relatively straightforward, though Björg will have lost her bull), or the curse can be broken (by removing the scorn pole at the southeast corner of the farmstead).

READ ALOUD

By far the largest field in the whole of the farmstead, a large irregularly shaped plot has been ruined. Near the center of the field are three cattle, two of which seemed relatively calm and ordinary. The third, however, paces in a circle around the others and aggressively paws at the ground.

The animal's head turns to follow you. It snorts aggressively and pivots to fully face you, slowly moving to keep as many of you in sight as possible, though it glances repeatedly to the south even when none of you are in that direction.

Anyone can tell that this beast has blood on its mind.

Bull Ox

Characteristics

STR	32
CON	18
SIZ	26
INT	4
POW	8
DEX	12

Hit Points: 20

Move: 12

Armor: 2-point hide

Weapon	%	Damage
Horns	40%	2D4+2D6

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hind leg	01–02	2/5
Left Hind leg	03–04	2/5
Hindquarters	05–07	2/10
Forequarters	08–10	2/10
Right Arm	11–13	2/5
Left Arm	14–16	2/5
Head	17–20	2/7



Shattered Grove

Perhaps the most unique and valuable part of Björg's farmstead is—or more accurately was—her red currant grove, a rare treasure, the seeds brought over from Finland and carefully tended to for years.

READ ALOUD

The husks of four burned shrubs are all that remain as a sad memory of Björg's beloved currant grove. The ground here is covered in scorch marks, splinters, and burned and rotting fruit. The earth here is churned and muddy, and your clothes are constantly tugged by gusts of wind coming from the south.

According to Björg, four days ago, a freak and sudden storm gathered quickly. A bolt of lightning struck one of the shrubs, and then the rest caught fire. The storm vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Suspiciously, the storm caused no other damage.

This grove is where Leifur has hidden the stolen sword, buried beneath one of the shrubs. The shrub has since been struck by lightning, further covering his tracks. A special success on a **Spot Hidden** or **Track** roll to search the shattered grove (above) reveals Leifur's hidden stash: the cursed sword and a spare set of clothes. If discovered, the clothes point to Leifur as they're clearly those of a teen, not a full-grown adult male.

If they examine the sword, see **Eiríkur's Blade** (following).

Eiríkur's Blade

This is a well-made iron broadsword of Norse make, with a plain bar hilt and hoof-head pommel. It has seen much use, with many notches and scratches on the blade and hilt, and spots of rust indicate that it has not been cared for for many years. The Týr and Hagall runes are carved upon the blade near the hilt.

Eiríkur's blade ignores armor when dealing damage. The blade's curse plagues the bearer with discontent; they sleep poorly, often have an upset stomach, crops they plant won't grow, those they love gradually become distant and aloof, any roof that they take shelter under leaks, and other endlessly annoying misfortunes.

If the hero Prymur examines the blade, he won't know how to use those particular runes, but a successful **Rune Magic** roll identifies the blade's magical properties. A successful **Second Sight** roll identifies the blade as being magical with a malignant quality to it.

If the sword is shown to anyone on the farmstead, they have no idea where it came from. Only a successful **Insight** roll reveals that Leifur might be lying when he claims to have never seen it.

Optional Encounter: Outlaw Country

The farmhand Ulfur's past has caught up with him, likely as an aspect of the curse that has befallen Björg's farmstead.

READ ALOUD

As you pick through the burned remains of the currant shrubs, the sound of a cleared throat breaks the quiet. Several shapes step into the open. Dirty, rough, bloody-minded men and women with hands lingering near their weapons cast their threatening gazes upon you.

"You friends of Ulfur's?" one asks with a sneer. "He should know as good as anyone that you can't hide from yourself."

He glances briefly toward his comrades, then points toward the farmstead.

"Take everything. Burn the entire farm. Kill them all."

These are outlaws, former associates of Ulfur. They've come to kill him, along with anyone who offers him shelter. There is one outlaw per hero. Their leader is a scoundrel named Skorri. If the heroes attempt to negotiate with the bandits (**Fast Talk** or **Orate**) or scare them off (**Intimidate**), a successful roll reveals that Skorri has vowed revenge over some past falling out and tracked him to Björg's farmstead.

Depending on what heroes are there, the outlaws might be willing to parley or might simply attack outright. Shortly, Ulfur will hear the noise and come running, armed with an axe. His attributes are identical to those of the outlaws described here.

Outlaws

Characteristics

STR	13
CON	12
SIZ	13
INT	11
POW	10
DEX	12

Hit Points: 13

Move: 10

Armor: Leather and wool armor on all hit locations (1 or 2 points)

Skorri has a battle axe and shield, while the rest are armed with either saxes or long spears, and one has a bow.

Weapon	%	Damage	HP	Length	Type
Battle Axe	60%	1D8+2+1D4	8	0.7	S
Shield	35%	1D6+1D4	16	—	C
Sax	60%	1D6+1+1D4	12	0.4	CT
Long Spear	60%	1D10+1+1D4	10	2	I
Self Bow	40%	1D6+1+1D2	5	80 m	I

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/5
Left Leg	5–8	1/5
Abdomen	9–11	2/5
Chest	12	2/6
Right Arm	13–15	1/4
Left Arm	16–18	1/4
Head	19–20	2/5

If the fight goes badly for the outlaws, those who are able to flee, leaving their dead and injured behind. At the gamemaster's discretion, they'll come back later with a few reinforcements, perhaps attacking Ulfur and the household when the heroes are facing the *draugur* or complicating the battle with the *draugur*. If Skorri is killed, they won't return.

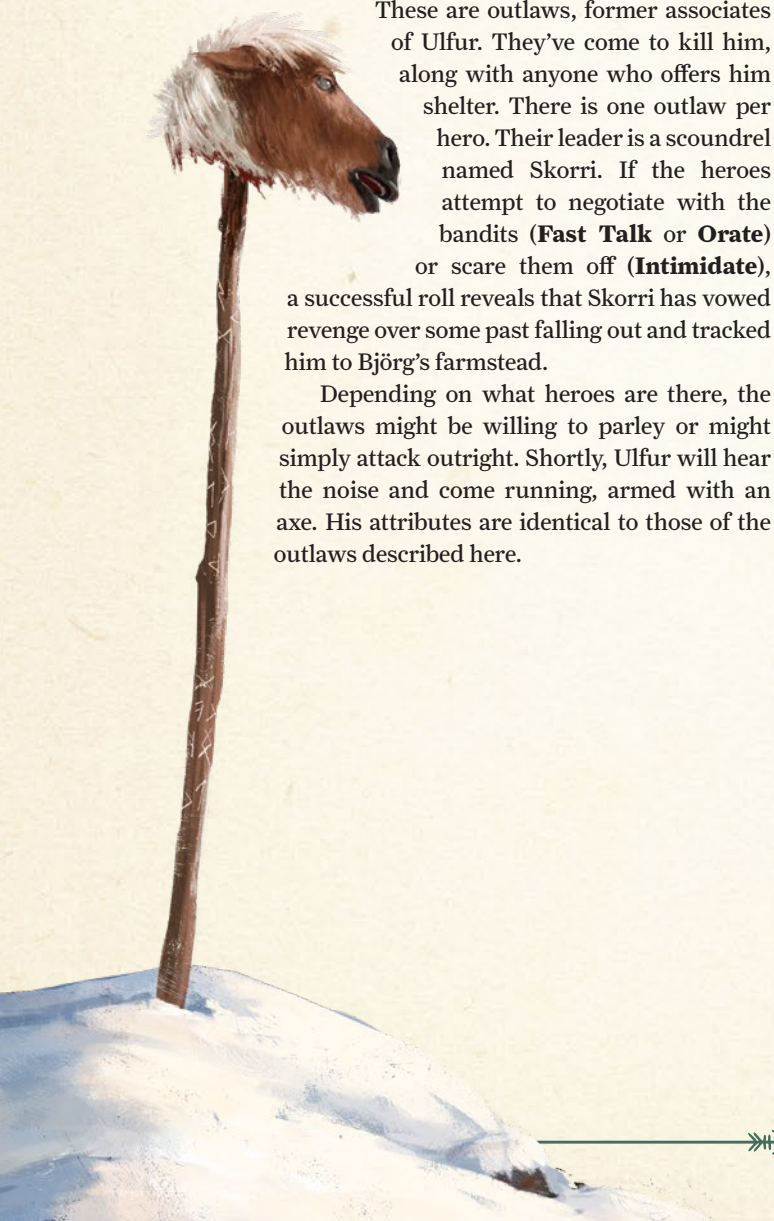
The gamemaster should feel free to improvise what happens if Skorri and Ulfur come face-to-face.

Meeting Death

Eiríkur, the *draugur*, lurks along the banks of the southern stream, staying near the scorn pole that he's placed.

If the heroes already have the sword and it is visible when they encounter the undead berserker, Eiríkur points at it and demands its return. If it isn't surrendered immediately, he attacks in an attempt to reclaim it.

A successful use of the **Skaldic Poetry** skill might convince Eiríkur to explain more before attacking, but he refuses to leave without regaining his stolen property.



READ ALOUD

The bubbling noise of running water fills the air as you approach the stream that runs along the farmstead's southern border. There is an undeniable sense of foreboding in the air, and it is easy to see why no one in Björg's farmstead has visited this place as of late. You feel as if you should leave.

As you draw closer to the water, the clear sky is darkened by clouds. There is a subtle scent of rot in the air, as of meat that has gone bad.

Just over a small rise that slopes down to the edge of the stream, two things draw your attention immediately.

The first is a 3-meter long wooden pole, likely a tree sapling, stripped of branches and leaves. Even from this distance you can tell that it has runes carved into the wood. Most disturbingly, it's capped with the severed head of a horse.

The second thing of note is a large figure crouched near the branch, watching you without moving. The figure seems calm at first glance, but you sense an underlying rage and fury as its gaze follows you.

As you draw closer, the figure rises to well over two meters tall. What remains of its flesh is darkened, swollen, and rotten, and you can see bones jutting out from beneath it. Where eyes should be, there are two pinpoints of brilliant, heatless orange light. You all know this hideous creature to be a draugur, a fearsome sort of undead who has returned to hateful life through some wrong done to it.

The figure spreads its arms wide, tilts its head back, and speaks loudly, boldly, and furiously.

"Undan Fjallholtshlíðum
Stritar Björg við akur, Harm sinn ber í hljóði.
Að Eiríkshaug læddist þjófur, Rændi brandi liðins.
Upp rís Eiríkur, með Glóð í augum
Til að bölv því býli
Er glæpinn hylur."

"Under the hills of Fjallholt's crest,
Björg tends her fields in quiet toil.
A thief crept to Eiríkur's cairn,
Stealing the blade sworn to the dead.
Eiríkur rises now, his gaze like embers,
To curse the hearth that shields the crime."
(translated from Icelandic)

The figure, presumably Eiríkur, regards you with nothing but scorn.

of old, and a true powerhouse in battle. Even if successful, the curse of the scorn pole remains unless it too is removed, which has its own consequences. The surest way to save Björg's farmstead is to do as Eiríkur asks: return the stolen sword.

If a hero agrees to meet Eiríkur in single combat, they can attempt to earn his respect. A hero who enters a duel with Eiríkur and either reduces him to half of his hit points or scores a critical success when attacking him proves their worth as a warrior. He will then agree to speak with them as equals. He tells them of the stolen blade and how he cannot rest until it is returned. He knows the sword is somewhere on the farmstead (he can sense it vaguely) but doesn't know specifically where it is hidden. He doesn't know the thief's identity. If Eiríkur's respect is earned in this way, he will allow one of the heroes to bear the blade, so long as they are aware of the curse that comes with it. If not, they should return it to him.

Eiríkur the Draugur

Characteristics

STR	22
CON	20
SIZ	22
INT	13
POW	17
DEX	11

Hit Points: 24

Move: 7

Armor: 2-point toughened skin.

Weapon	%	Damage
Claw	60%	1D6+2D6
Grapple	50%	(see Grapple, next page)

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	01-04	0/8
Left Leg	05-08	0/8
Abdomen	09-11	2/10
Chest	12	2/10
Right Arm	13-15	0/7
Left Arm	16-18	0/7
Head	19-20	5/10

- ▶ **Grapple:** If a Grapple succeeds, the *draugur* grips its opponent and does its full damage modifier (normally 2D6) each round.
- ▶ **Hard to Kill:** Suffers only half damage from mortal weapons. Fire and magic do full damage. If his own sword is used against him, it does normal damage and ignores his armor.
- ▶ **Night Vision:** Can see perfectly in the dark.
- ▶ **Unique Destruction Condition:** A *draugur* keeps fighting until its hit points are reduced to -10 on the

A **Customs (Norse)** roll reminds the heroes of the traditions of the Viking duel and how it would be a way to earn a warrior's respect by proving one's strength in battle. **Read/Write (Runes)** or **Worship (any)** can identify the scorn pole as an object that channels a curse associated with the goddess Hel.

The heroes can choose to battle Eiríkur in an attempt to drive him away if they wish. Eiríkur is a risen berserker, a hero

abdomen, chest, or head, at which point it collapses. In 1D12 hours after being hacked to a new death, the *draugur* returns with all hit points restored unless the head is severed and the body is burned.

If Eiríkur is introduced to Leifur and it is explained that the lad is his descendant, the *draugur* is initially derisive. No honor can be found in stealing from the dead, no matter if they were kin. How Leifur reacts to this is up to the gamemaster to determine and for the heroes to potentially influence. Maybe the *draugur* gives his descendant the sword with his blessing, or Leifur must face the fiend in single combat before he can prove his worth.



Aftermath

If the sword is returned to Eiríkur, the *draugur* thanks the heroes (and Leifur, if they convince him to return it himself) and warns against disturbing the resting dead in the future. He removes the scorn pole and leaves, lifting the curse on the farmstead. Over the following days, the mice abandon the kale field, and the bull ox returns to its formerly placid self. Unfortunately, the currant grove remains ruined, but Björg finds a few viable seeds that may, with luck, sprout into new shrubs.

If the heroes drive Eiríkur away through battle, the curse remains on the farmstead until someone removes the scorn pole. Doing so without fulfilling the conditions of the curse causes whoever removes it to immediately lose 2 points of POW. This loss is permanent until a sufficient offering and atonement to the goddess Hel is performed. The lingering effects of the curse cause Björg's influence and prosperity to dwindle for years to come.

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Age of Vikings

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Björg Finnsdóttir's Farm

✖ Outlaws

Red Currant Grove

Kale Patch

Turf House

Vegetable Patch

Barley Patch

✖ Mad Ox

Scorn Pole

N



Björg Finnsdóttir's Farm

Kale Patch

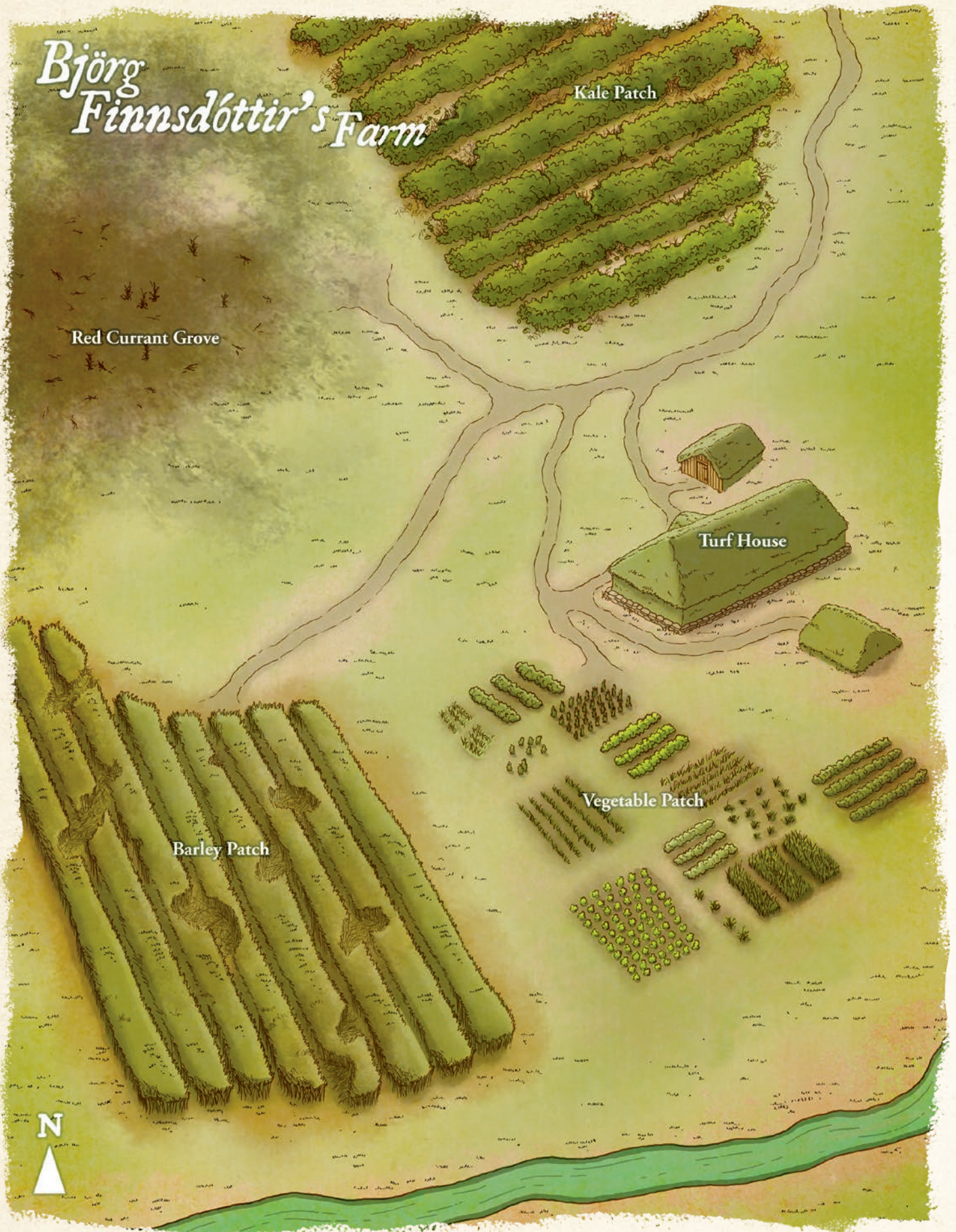
Red Currant Grove

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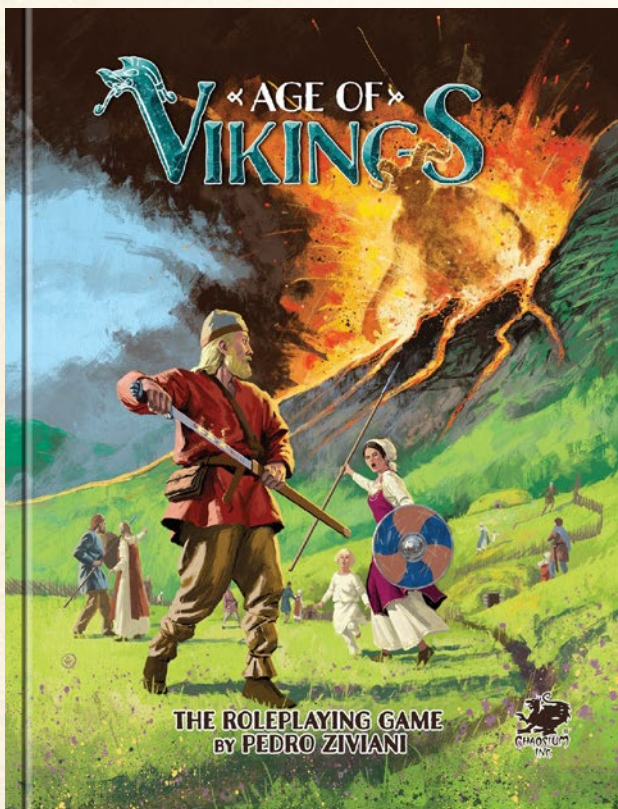


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— The Danish History, by Saxo Grammaticus, 12th Century

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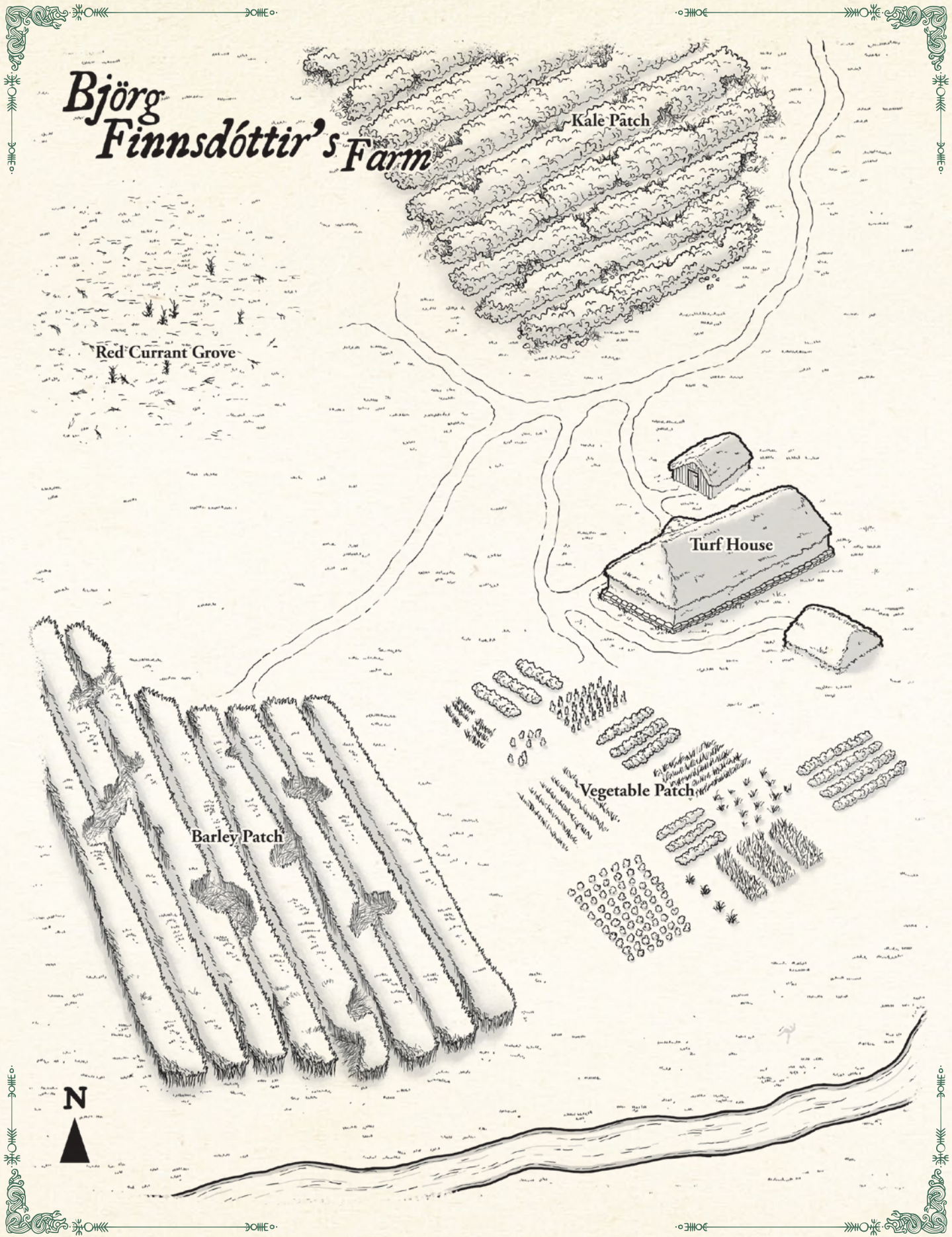


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AGE OF VIKINGS

THE CURSED FARM

AN INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE IN VIKING AGE ICELAND

The Cursed Farm is an adventure for *Age of Vikings*. The heroes are called upon to aid a neighbor in need, solve the mystery of a curse, and set things right, before a dreadful creature has its vengeance.

- ▶ A straightforward plot that can be resolved in multiple ways, including options for adding an additional challenge if desired.
- ▶ Full-color and black-and-white versions of maps for the players and gamemaster.
- ▶ A curse written in Icelandic (with English translation), to bring the Viking flavor to the table.
- ▶ Six downloadable pregenerated heroes for players jump right into play.
- ▶ Suggested guidelines for continuing this adventure or using it to spark new adventures.

The Cursed Farm is an introduction to the world of *Age of Vikings*. It is designed for new players and beginner gamemasters.

This adventure requires the *Age of Vikings: The Roleplaying Game* rulebook to run.



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