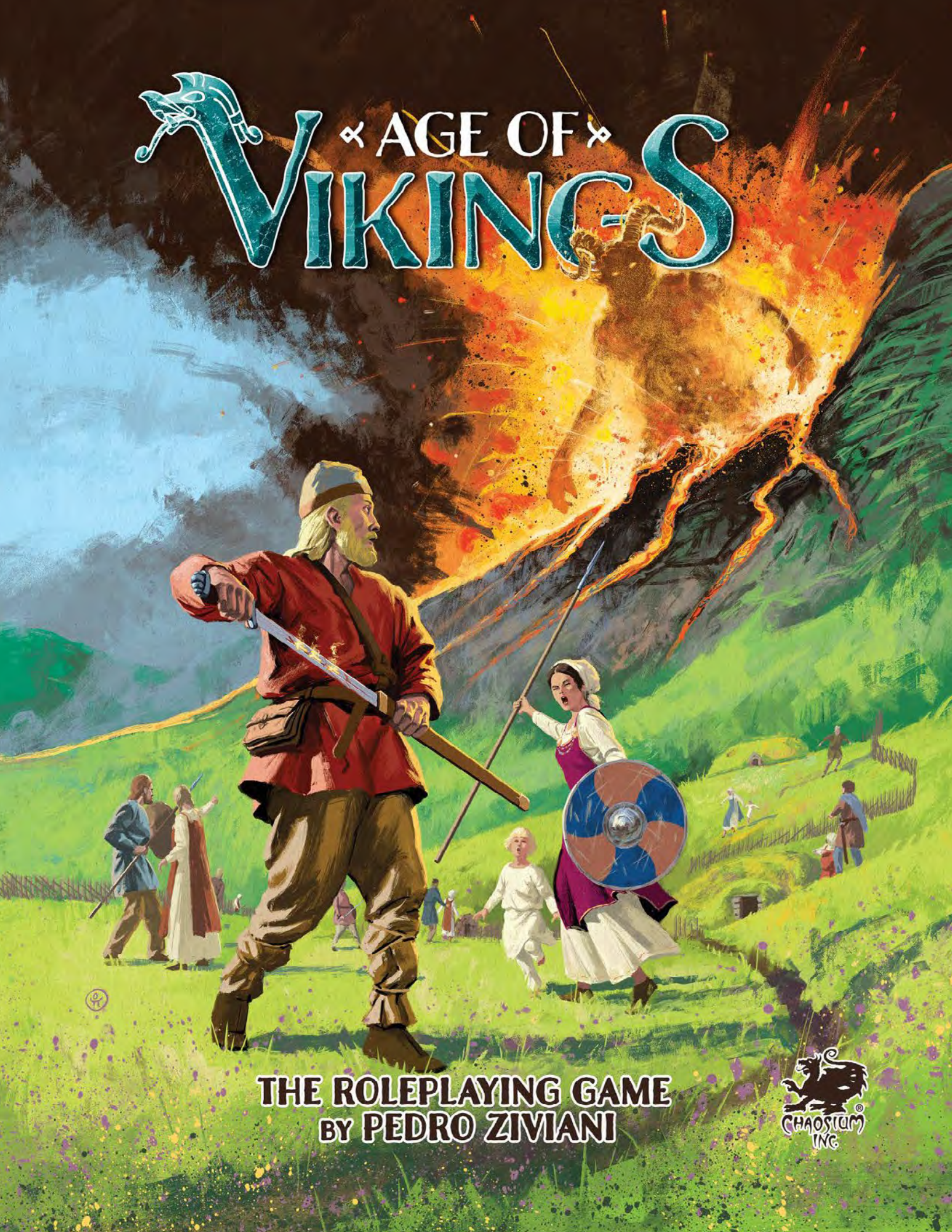

AGE OF
VIKINGS
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
BY PEDRO ZIVIANI
CHAOSIUM INC.

Age of Vikings

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
BY PEDRO ZIVIANI

CHAOSIUM INC.

CREDITS

WRITER: Pedro Ziviani

ADDITIONAL WRITING: Jason Durall, Sandy Petersen, Ken Rolston & Greg Stafford

COVER ART: Ossi Hiekkala

PRIMARY ART: Ossi Hiekkala & Martyna Starczewska

ART: Wilmar Ballespi, Marie Baumgarten, Jason Behnke, Katrin Dirim, John Donahue, Eugenio Frosali, Sally Grew, Llyn Hunter, Brendan J Lancaster, Lionel Marty, Fabian Parente, Riccardo Rullo, Jacopo Schiavo, Mark Smylie, Sergio Villa-Isaza, Kuo Yang & Aleksander Zawada

DESIGN & LAYOUT: Adam Szelążek

ART DIRECTION: Case Lopez & Daria Pilarczyk

CARTOGRAPHY: Colby Richards

GRAPHIC DESIGN ELEMENTS: Katrin Dirim

WORKSHEETS: Dan Zappone

LINE EDITOR: Jason Durall

EDITING & PROOFREADING: Leslee Beldotti & Christina Howell

EDITORIAL REVIEW: Þorsteinn Mar Gunnlaugsson

PRODUCERS: Daria Pilarczyk & Neil Robinson

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Jeff Richard

MARKETING: Brian Holland

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTOR: Leó Páll Hrafnsson

PLAYTESTING AND FEEDBACK: Heiðveig Helgadóttir, Ólafur Rögnvaldsson, Viktor Ragnarsson, Haukur Ársæll Gunnarsson, David Bensow, Sigurður Stefán Sigurðsson, Stuart Fraser, Kairam Hamdan, Mauro Lúcio Amado, Mauricio Pinheiro, Marco Aurélio Gazolla, Þorsteinn Mar Gunnlaugsson, Johann Ingi, Kjartan Yngvi Björnsson, Gunnar H. Jonsson, Reynir Örn MacGillivray & Ingibjörg Kristjánsdóttir

TYPOGRAPHY: This book is set in Charcuterie Contrast, Farnham Text, Noto Sans, Noto Serif, Roboto Condensed, Nelson, and IM Fell DW Pica.

First American Edition, 2024, Version 1.00
Published in the United States of America by Chaosium Inc.
3450 Wooddale Court, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
chaosium.com

Age of Vikings
Copyright © 2024 by Moon Design Publications LLC. All rights reserved.
RuneQuest and Basic Roleplaying © copyright 1978–2024 by Moon Design Publications LLC. All rights reserved.
Chaosium Inc. & the Chaosium logo are registered trademarks of Chaosium Inc.
Reproduction of this work by any means without written permission from the publisher, except for the use of short excerpts for the purpose of reviews and the copying of character sheets and handouts for in-game use, is expressly prohibited.

Chaosium Publication 2038

ISBN 978-1-56882-532-8

Version 1.4

Printed in Poland

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

WELCOME TO AGE OF VIKINGS 5

CHAPTER TWO

HERO CREATION 15

CHAPTER THREE

GAME SYSTEM 59

CHAPTER FOUR

SKILLS 79

CHAPTER FIVE

COMBAT 97

CHAPTER SIX

SHIPS AND SEAFARING 125

CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE IN THE AGE OF VIKINGS 141

CHAPTER EIGHT

LAW AND GOVERNMENT 157

CHAPTER NINE

RELIGION 167

CHAPTER TEN

PASSIONS, REPUTATIONS, AND STATUS 177

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RUNE MAGIC 185

CHAPTER TWELVE

SEIÐUR MAGIC 203

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHRONICLES OF THE AGE OF VIKINGS 211

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TRAVELER'S GUIDE 219

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE 245

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BESTIARY 251

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BETWEEN ADVENTURES 281

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ADVENTURE – THE *ALÞING* 291

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 298

BIBLIOGRAPHY 302

INDEX 304

CHAPTER ONE

WELCOME TO AGE OF VIKINGS

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

Welcome to the *Age of Vikings*, a world of myth and adventure in the deep and vibrant setting of Icelandic sagas. At the edge of the known world, free from tyranny, heroes take bold action to preserve honor and protect property and family, earning glory through heroic deeds!

This book uses three types of sidebars:

EXAMPLES OF PLAY

Examples of play are in brown boxes.

VARIATIONS ON RULES

Variations on rules, expanded detail, or commentary about Icelandic culture are in pale blue.

EXAMPLE: *Examples of rules in action.*

The Law and Family Feuds

There are no kings, queens, or nobility in Iceland. Fiercely independent, Icelanders heed only the law courts of the assemblies, where disputes are settled by the assembled *goðar* (chieftain-priests), following the law proclaimed atop the Law Rock by the elected Lawspeaker.

Between powerful households, however, the response to injury or insult is often not the law but blood vengeance, striking anywhere and at any time. A killing avenged with another revenge killing, which in turn is avenged with another, in true blood feud fashion.

Honor and Blood Oaths

Honor plays a significant role in Icelandic society, closely tied to the capacity to defend oneself and one's property and to exacting revenge. A violent attack to restore honor can happen at any place, against anyone. For that reason, weapons are always carried.

Blood oaths are extended to the network of kinship, and with it comes the responsibility to take revenge for any perceived injury or insult to close or extended family and allies.

Magic and Monsters

The settlers of Iceland found a land teeming with spirits of nature and mythic creatures. The hidden folk exist, concealing themselves from mortal eyes but sometimes meddling in mortal affairs. Those traveling through the highlands risk being attacked by trolls, and often curses and spells are laid on neighbors and enemies.

Magic and the supernatural, the threat of terrible monsters, as well as the whims of mysterious and all-too-human gods, are all part of daily life.

Raiding and Adventuring

The Norse, Icelanders among them, rule the North Seas with their agile warships. Raiding—not seen as theft but rather as an honorable challenge to a fight, with the winner keeping the spoils—is a sure way to raise one's status in society. Being a Viking raider is a seasonal occupation, with raiding taking place in the summer, and farming the rest of the year. Both at home and abroad, the opportunities for adventure are many, from hunting trolls or outlaws to fighting in the service of foreign kings.

MYTHIC OR HISTORICAL!?

In *Age of Vikings*, all the creatures of myth and all the magical aspects of life, which the early Icelanders believed in, really do exist, and they play a major role in peoples' lives. That doesn't mean, however, that these fantastic elements should always be the central points of your adventures. There is plenty of potential for conflict among the Icelanders themselves, without the need for the supernatural to come to the foreground. Adventures don't always have to involve elves, trolls, and magic.

If you would prefer to base your campaigns on a historical view of Viking Age Iceland, without any magic or mythic creatures, this book is written with that in mind. Many chapters provide guidance for using that chapter's content without mythical aspects.

AN OVERVIEW OF AGE OF VIKINGS

This rulebook contains everything you need to play *Age of Vikings*. Each chapter describes a different aspect of the game, from creating your **heroes**, to rules dealing with adventuring, combat and magic, and advice for the gamemaster. Keep in mind that all this information is intended as a guideline. Together, you can change any part of the game to make it more fun.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction** – The basics of the game.
- **Chapter 2: Hero Creation** – Create your Icelandic hero.
- **Chapter 3: Game System** – How to do things.
- **Chapter 4: Skills** – Detailed descriptions of skills.
- **Chapter 5: Combat** – How to do battle.
- **Chapter 6: Ships and Seafaring** – Overview of ships and anything sea-related.
- **Chapter 7: Life in the Age of Vikings** – Life in mythic Iceland.
- **Chapter 8: Law and Government** – Advice and rules on how to use the law system of the age.
- **Chapter 9: Religion** – A guide to Norse religion.
- **Chapter 10: Passions, Reputation, and Status** – Learn about social attributes.
- **Chapter 11: Rune Magic** – A guide to how to use the magic of the runes.
- **Chapter 12: *Seiður* Magic** – A guide to the shamanic magic of *seiður*
- **Chapter 13: Chronicles of Iceland** – Learn about the history of the Age of Vikings.
- **Chapter 14: Traveler's Guide** – A tour of Iceland, the Norse world, and beyond.
- **Chapter 15: The Hidden People** – Learn about the mysterious elven race.
- **Chapter 16: Bestiary** – A catalog of wondrous creatures.
- **Chapter 17: Between Adventures** – Explore your heroes' lives between their exploits.
- **Chapter 18: Adventure—The *Alþing*** – A sample adventure that can be used multiple times in a campaign.

HISTORICAL ACCURACY

This is not a coursebook on Icelandic history. In addition to the inclusion of magic and supernatural creatures, there are other elements in the game which do not fit a strictly historical view of the period.

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

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A roleplaying game (RPG) is a collective experience where a group gathers to talk through a spontaneously created story, like improvisational theater or some types of multiplayer computer games. The group consists of players who create and roleplay personas called **heroes** and a single **gamemaster** who manages and moderates the game.

The heroes need not be anything like the people who play them. In fact, it is often more rewarding and enjoyable to create characters entirely unlike their players since a lot of the fun of roleplaying is trying out different personalities and new existences.

The game world is operated by a gamemaster, who establishes the situations the heroes confront, moderates the rules, and generally manages what happens during play.

The rules make the game world understandable. They simulate the agreed-upon reality that links the players and gamemaster together, providing a framework for the action and events that take place in the imagined world. Most of the gameplay is verbal exchange. The players tell the gamemaster what they intend to do. The gamemaster then tells them if they can do it and, if not, what happens instead.

Dice rolls commonly determine the outcome of game actions that might be in question. Did the door open? Did the hero leap across the chasm? Did the sword strike inflict damage—and if so, how much damage did it do? All significant game variables depend on a variety of dice rolls for resolution.

Although some games last for only an evening, it is typical for a gaming group to play a series of stories (usually called "adventures") involving the same characters and setting over time. Such adventures are referred to collectively as a campaign.

Players

Unless acting as the gamemaster, each player takes on one or more personae called heroes—their avatars in the game world. During the game, the player attempts to speak and act in terms of those personalities.

Players should try to roleplay their heroes by making decisions and actions within the limits of the characters' personalities and abilities. That is the point of roleplaying. Try to know as little or as much as the hero would in life: the skill rolls the gamemaster requests will be of great help in doing that. Try to develop the hero's personality well enough that the other players can imagine what the hero would do in a specific situation.

The Gamemaster

The gamemaster moderates the game, creating elaborate worlds in which the heroes scheme, fight, talk, love, live, and die. Here, the world is all or some part of mythic Iceland, detailed as much as is needed for gameplay.

The gamemaster might use a published scenario or an adventure of their own creation. The gamemaster plays "the world" the heroes interact with, incidentally taking the parts of all the people, monsters, spirits, gods, and other entities that the players meet. The gamemaster provides options and choices for the players, deciding whether player actions are possible within the scope of the game. The gamemaster runs the game without bias or favoritism and should strive to give every player an opportunity to contribute and have fun.

Cooperation

Gaming is social. Roleplaying brings together several people to form a communal fantasy, often more vivid and imaginative than one person could ever create.

Working together enhances character survival. For instance, an exploration into troll-haunted caves would be doomed if the heroes were unwilling to heal or warn each other. Each player should clearly describe to the other players the essential elements of their hero so that their heroes have an honest chance to react. Whether or not the heroes cooperate, the players should. Heroes may be played as honorable warriors, nasty brutes, or however the players wish, but the entertainment and enjoyment come from the players' roleplaying ingenuity.

There also should be cooperation between players and the gamemaster. Though the gamemaster does mastermind the world by setting up and running its details, the game should be fun for everyone—including the gamemaster!

Living and Dying

Death and danger are common themes in the Viking sagas. But the possibility of loss makes success rewarding. While there is satisfaction in non-hazardous occupations, roleplaying's sharpest spice is the testing of your heroes by life-or-death situations. Roleplaying gives players the experience of danger, and even death, without physical risk. Even without real risk, you'll feel elated when your hero triumphs and agonize when they die.

An intimate relationship often develops between the player and their hero: discovering their hero's strengths and weaknesses and experiencing their growth and development often provides a sense of pride and accomplishment for the player.

Subsequently, the death of a beloved hero is also felt profoundly.

ON THE WORD VIKING

Early Icelanders themselves used the word "Viking", but not in an ethnic sense, as it is used in modern times. They would have understood the concept of a "Viking Age", but to them, the idea that Nordic society was a "Viking society" would have been a misnomer. Throughout the Nordic world, a *vikingur* (pl. *vikingar*) meant a pirate or freebooter, and *Vikingar* were people who grouped together in bands to raid from boats. The term applied both to those who honorably (in Norse eyes) sailed across the sea to raid and to those who robbed neighbors closer to home. It was common to say that one was "going Viking", meaning going abroad to raid towns and monasteries.

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

THE BASIC ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM

Age of Vikings uses a game system called Basic Roleplaying, a game system shared by many games, particularly *Call of Cthulhu* and *RuneQuest*, also published by Chaosium Inc. In Basic Roleplaying, players and the gamemaster must roll dice when a task is significant, risky, difficult, or when the outcome is in doubt. Not everything needs to be rolled for—just when it may have an outcome that matters. The way to resolve these tasks is with a dice roll, as demonstrated in the example of play (pages 9–10) and explained further in **Chapter 3: Game System**.

In short, most character abilities are represented with a percentage value, ranging from 0–100%, much like a weather forecast might indicate a chance of rain. The dice used to determine success or failure are percentage dice, a pair of D10s that are rolled together to generate a result from 0 to 100. An ability with a value of 0% means that an attempt with that ability has no chance of success, while a 100% indicates that it will definitely succeed. Most character ability ratings fall somewhere between these values, such as 50% meaning that the character will succeed or fail half of the time, unless modified by some other factors.

There's a lot more to know about the system, but this quick overview should provide some understanding about game concepts during character creation.

MATERIALS

Age of Vikings uses several different types of dice—20-sided dice, 8-sided dice, 6-sided dice, and 4-sided dice—but the most used are 10-sided dice, often used in pairs to represent percentiles, with results between 1 and 100. The results of a die roll are combined, divided, or lead to additional die rolls, as dictated by the game's rules. The various dice allow different ranges of probability.

Dice use standard abbreviations. The letter D always stands for the word "die" or "dice" and will be followed by a number denoting the number of sides on the die being used. Thus, D20 always indicates a 20-sided die, D6 always indicates a 6-sided die, and D100 always indicates percentile dice (as explained in the following section).

Dice designations may be preceded by a number. This number instructs the player to roll a specific quantity of that kind of dice. For instance, 2D6 requires that two 6-sided dice be rolled. If you lack the required quantity of a specific type of die, roll an available die the number of times indicated.

Whenever a result of more than one die is called for, add the results together to form a single total.

Sometimes, additions must be made to specified die rolls. You might see "1D6+1", for example. Always add the number following the plus sign to the result of the 1D6 roll. The "1D6+1" means that the final sum must be between 2 and 7, though the actual total depends on the result of the D6 roll.

Occasionally, specified die rolls require that different dice be rolled at one time. If a weapon does 1D6+2D4 damage, for instance, the actual damage will be determined by rolling the three specified dice and adding their results.

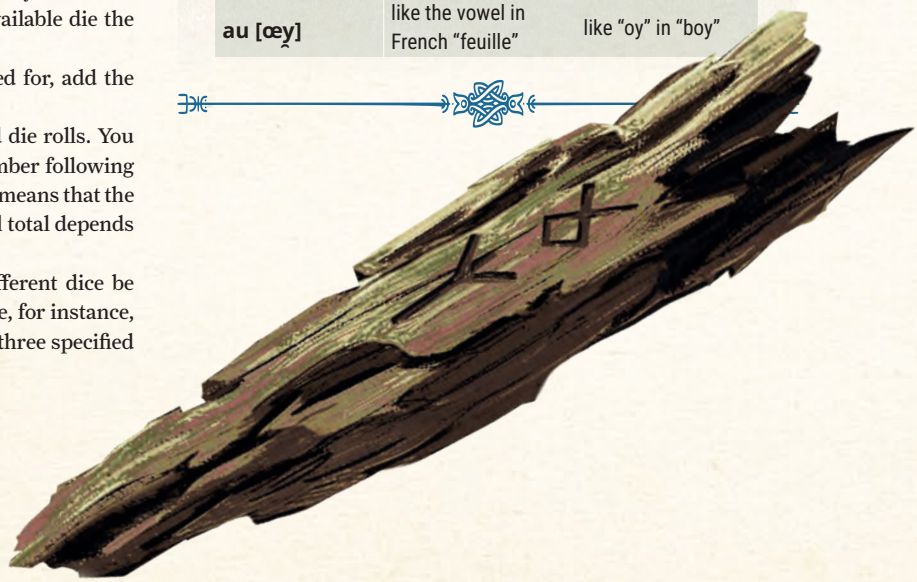
LANGUAGE

Names of people, places, and texts are presented here in the Icelandic nominative case form and using the letters of the modern Icelandic alphabet. They're presented as Snæbjörn, Njál, Guðrún, and Óðinn rather than Snaebjorn, Njál, Gudrun, and Odin.

In instances where the syntax of Old Norse and modern Icelandic words diverge, the modern Icelandic syntax has been chosen. One example is the name Leifur, which used to be written as Leifr in Old Norse and as Leifur in modern Icelandic—here, the latter, newer spelling is used. This choice is made because modern Icelandic syntax is easier and more approachable.

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

Letter	*Phonetic (IPA)*	*Sound*
á [au̯]	like "ou"	in "house"
í [i]	like "ee"	as in "peel"
ó [ou̯]	like "o"	in "sole"
ö [œ]	like "ur"	in "urgent"
ú [u]	like "oo"	in "moon"
ý [i]	like "ee"	in "feet"
æ [äi̯]	like "i"	in "fight"
þ [θɔrn̥]	like "th"	as in "thing"
ð [ɛð]	like "th"	in "the"
hv [xv]	like "kv"	
fn [mt]	like "bn"	
ll [tl]	like "tl"	
ng [ŋ]	like "nk"	at the end of a word, like "ng" in the middle
ey, ei [ɛi̯]	like "a"	in "pale"
au [œy̯]	like the vowel in French "feuille"	like "oy" in "boy"



AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY

In this example, Pedro (the gamemaster, or GM) is together with three players: David (playing Njáll), Anna (playing Sigmundur), and Viktor (playing Ísgerður), for a session of *Age of Vikings*. Games in play often involve a mix of technical "out-of-character" discussion of rules and actions, and "in-character" dialogue.

Pedro/GM: It is late in the summer, and you have just returned to Iceland from raiding abroad. As you journey on foot together from the shore to the valley where your farms are located, something seems wrong. The valley is covered in snow, but it shouldn't get this cold until much later in the year.

David/Njáll: I grew up in this region, and I know it very well. Has this strange weather ever happened before around here?

Pedro/GM: Make an Area Lore skill roll.

David/Njáll: (rolls 20 on D100) I have 45% on the skill and rolled a 20, so I succeed.

Pedro/GM: Snow only comes to this valley much later into the winter. You also think it's strange that the areas beyond the mountains surrounding the valley are not affected by the cold weather. This feels unnatural.

Pedro/GM: As you enter the valley, you face a fierce blizzard. Visibility through the falling snow is rather limited. As you were not expecting this kind of weather, you are not dressed for the cold, and you begin to freeze. Everyone, make a CON×3 roll (CON is short for Constitution, a characteristic measuring health.)

David/Njáll: (rolls 12 on D100) My CON is 10. Three times that is 30, and I rolled a 12. I succeeded. I'm tough and used to the harsh weather of Iceland!

Anna/Sigmundur: (rolls 22 on D100) Mine's 8, so three times that is 24. I got a 22. I make it! For now, I'm shaking off the cold.

Viktor/Ísgerður: (rolls 80 on D100) My CON is 10. That's a 30, times three. I rolled 80, so I failed by a lot. It seems I'm not as used to this weather as the rest of you!

Pedro/GM: You lose 3 hit points due to the extreme weather.

Pedro/GM: You all need to repeat this roll every hour, and because of the snowstorm, you are making slow progress and still need to travel for several more hours.

Viktor/Ísgerður: I don't think I can survive this blizzard if we keep going. If we can find shelter, I can use my *Seiður* Magic to keep us warm while we rest and wait for this blizzard to stop. Njáll, you said you grew up around here. Do you know of any place where we can take shelter?

David/Njáll: Do I know of any such place where we can take shelter?

Pedro/GM: Make another Area Lore roll, or you could try Survival, whichever is best for you.

David/Njáll: I'm rolling Area Lore again, as I have a higher score in that than Survival. (rolls 01 on D100) It's a critical result!

Pedro/GM: Oh wow, you know exactly what place would be perfect as a shelter for the night. It's a cave where you used to play when you were a kid. And because you rolled a critical, you have no problem finding it through the blizzard.

Pedro/GM: Njáll guides all of you to a cave nearby. It's only a short walk of about twenty minutes or so. Inside the cave, you feel tremendous relief to be out of the storm, but it's still cold, and you have no timber to make a fire.

Viktor/Ísgerður: As we sit there in the cave, I take out of the pouch hanging on my belt a set of weaving tablets and various colored strings. I start weaving, expertly moving the tablets.

Anna/Sigmundur: Ísgerður, what are you doing? Are you going to weave me a cloak for the night? You're going to need a lot more wool than what you can carry in that little pouch of yours!

Viktor/Ísgerður: (laughs) Don't be silly. Just let me concentrate. I am using *Seiður* Magic to reweave the strands of fate. It will take some time, so don't interrupt me. (rolls 11 on D100) My *Seiður* Magic skill is 65%, and I rolled 11, so I get a special success. After what seems a long while, I stop weaving and hold above my head a long, intricately patterned braid of colored wool threads. I silently thank Freya for the gift of *seiður*.

Pedro/GM: Right after Ísgerður does that, the temperature in the cave increases and becomes comfortably warm.

David/Njáll: Ha! You with your witchcraft. I was doing fine before!

Anna/Sigmundur: Don't listen to him, Ísgerður. He likes to play tough, but you can see the smile on the big man's face, betraying the fact that he is very much enjoying the warmth here. Thank you!

Viktor/Ísgerður: You're welcome. Now let's get some sleep. I feel even more tired now. The magic will last through the day tomorrow and keep us warm until we get to our homes.

Pedro/GM: You are all feeling tired, and the warmth makes you sleepy. You rest through the night peacefully. When you walk out of the cave in the morning, the snowstorm has stopped, but there is still a thick cover of snow on the ground.

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY (CONTINUED)

David/Njáll: Let's not waste any time. My farm is the closest to our position, so let's walk over there as quickly as we can.

Pedro/GM: After a few hours walking, you get to Njáll's farm. When you enter the house, no one is there. It appears that no one has been here for a few days. Other than being empty of people and animals, nothing else seems amiss or damaged.

David/Njáll: That is very strange. Do I see tracks outside?

Pedro/GM: You can't see any tracks because of the fresh snow.

Anna/Sigmundur: Okay, let's move on to my farm and then to Ísgerður's. Someone in this valley must be home and able to tell us what has happened here.

Pedro/GM: When you get to Sigmundur's and Ísgerður's farms, you find them in the same state as Össur's—no one is home, and the farms seem to have been deserted for many days.

Viktor/Ísgerður: This is starting to worry me. I could try to use magic to get some clues about what happened here or find the current location of my family, but that would take many hours.

David/Njáll: I'm not sitting here for hours again while you weave one of your fancy braids. I'm going to the goði's farm. Maybe the people of the valley are there right now, or at least we can visit the temple over there and pray for the gods to help us.

Anna/Sigmundur: Surprisingly, you are making a lot of sense right now. (Laughs)

Viktor/Ísgerður: Yes, okay, I'll come with you two to the goði's farm.

Pedro/GM: After a few hours of travel, you arrive at your chieftain's farm. The farmhouse is the largest in the valley and features an attached meeting hall with imposing front doors. As you get closer, the front door opens, and a few of your family members run to greet you, overjoyed at seeing your return in this time of need.

Players: We hug and greet them, then ask what is happening.

Pedro/GM: Just as your kinsfolk start to tell you of the hardships of the last few weeks, the expression of joy on their faces is replaced with one of dread. People point at the slope of a nearby hill. Atop the hill is a dark figure, bloated and ugly. Surrounding that figure stand several men made of ice, with snow swirling around them. "Run inside!" your family members shout as they hurry back into the farmhouse.

Players: We run into the house with them.

Pedro/GM: Once everyone is inside, the door is closed, and a heavy beam is placed across it. After a few moments of nervous silence, an enormous blow shakes the whole house, and the beam holding the door closed cracks in the middle. Something immensely strong is breaking down the door. What do you do?

And thus, the adventure continues…

Reading the Dice

- **D2.** Simulate a 2-sided die by rolling any other die. Any odd-number result equals 1; any even-numbered result equals 2.
- **D3.** Simulate a 3-sided die by rolling a D6, dividing the result by two, and then rounding up any fractions to the next whole number.
- **D4.** The pyramidal 4-sided die is read by throwing it so that it tumbles in the air before landing. The result of the roll is the number which is right side up on the sides of the die.
- **D6.** Most people are familiar with the D6. The result is the number face-up.
- **D8.** Read a D8 the same way as a D6. The top, face-up number is the result.
- **D10.** A D10 is rolled normally and read with the face-up number.
- **D20.** Read a D20 the same way as a D6. The top face-up number is the number rolled.
- **D100.** To generate a D100 result, roll a D10 twice. The first roll is the "tens" roll, and the second is the "ones". Thus, if you roll a 5 the first time and an 8 the second time, the result is 58. A "00" equals 100.

Some D10s are numbered as tens (10, 20, 30, etc.). Such dice should be used as the "tens" roll, and a normal D10 can then be used for the "ones". A roll of 10 for the tens die means 10X, so a roll of 10 and 0 is considered to be 100.

Rounding of Numbers and Results

On some occasions, you will be required to divide numbers—typically the rating in a skill (such as for determining a critical success, which is 1/20th of the skill's value). Whenever a division result creates a fraction, always round up to the whole number. So, for example, 1/20th of 64% is 3.2—this is rounded up to 4.

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following describes common game terms used throughout *Age of Vikings*, along with some commonly used Icelandic terms. A more complete Icelandic glossary is located on pages 298–301.

Adventure: One or more gaming sessions with a brief plot or story. Scenarios are often published as game supplements. Sometimes called a "scenario".

Ability: A skill or Devotion used by a hero or other character.

***Alþing*:** The annual National Assembly of all Icelandic chieftains where the formal processing of disputes takes place. Each chieftain is accompanied by some of their supporters.

Armor Points (AP): Armor nullifies points of damage equal to the armor points present.

Attribute: A secondary statistic derived from adding two characteristics to determine various modifiers, starting values for skills, etc.

Campaign: A series of adventures played over many sessions. A campaign is often epic in scope and episodic in manner. A campaign often has a common theme holding it together, such as a major villain, a great journey, or a terrible disaster.

Characteristic: A numerical rating for a character's innate physical, mental, and spiritual aptitudes.

Critical Success: An extraordinary success with an ability. The result of a skill roll that is 1/20 (or 5%) of the regular chance of success.

Damage: A value representing injury, subtracted from a character's hit points (health) in the affected hit location. Weapons, unfortunate events, and other hazards inflict damage on characters.

Damage Modifier (DM): A modifier to rolled damage due to above- or below-average Strength and Size characteristics.

Devotion: The devotion to a god and to the ideals embodied by that god.

Dedication Points: Points based on the value of Devotion to a god, spent to improve ability rolls.

Experience Check: Many abilities can be improved with successful practice. When an ability is used successfully in the course of play, make an experience check next to it (some cannot be checked). Between adventures, the player can determine if the ability improved.

Fumble: An extraordinary failure with an ability. The result of a skill roll that is 1/20 (or 5%) of the chance to miss.

Gamemaster: The person responsible for moderating the game.

Goði: A chieftain-priest (pl. *Goðar*).

Hero: The fictional persona created and played by the player.

Hit Points (HP): A measure of the relative health of your hero, represented in a value derived from their Constitution and Size characteristics and assigned to each hit location. Attackers inflict damage in hit points, subtracted from the target's hit points in the hit location affected.

Hit Location: Specifies where a successful attack lands on a character's body or where their attacks hit a foe.

Initiative: A number that determines in what order the heroes and nonplayer characters act in a melee round.

Melee Round: A 12-second period in which the participants battle each other in order of initiative.

Magic Points (MP): The amount of magical energy your hero has, represented as a total based on their Power (POW) characteristic. These are expended to cast magic and use special powers or abilities. When your hero reaches 0 magic points, they fall unconscious.

Modifiers: These are temporary additions or subtractions to your hero's rating in a skill, usually stemming from circumstances, environment, or equipment.

Movement Rate (MOV): The rate of movement your hero can make during a single melee round. This measurement is flexible but usually translates to one meter of unhurried movement per point of MOV.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Age of Vikings uses metric values. One gram is 1 cm^3 of water, so a jug of wine weighs about 1 kilogram. A one-handed axe weighs a little over 1 kilogram, but the balance may make that seem more.

The following are approximate conversions:

Weight and Distance Conversions

Metric	Imperial	Approximate
1 kg	2.2 lb	A jug of wine
½ kg	1.1 lb	A melon
¼ kg	½ lb	A large apple
100 g	3½ oz	A small pear
50 km	30 miles	10 hours of walking*
10 km	6 miles	2 hours of walking*
1 km	1,100 yards (⅔ miles)	10 minutes of walking*
½ km	550 yards (⅓ miles)	5 minutes of walking*
¼ km	275 yards	2½ minutes of walking*
100 m	110 yards	Shouting distance
10 m	11 yards	Loud talking distance
1 m	3'3"	A walking stick
½ m	1'7"	A short step
¼ m	10"	A knife's lenght
10 cm	4"	A small spoon

* At a normal human walking speed (MOV 10).

Most importantly, when relevant, weights and sizes are represented by a value called encumbrance (ENC), representing relative bulk and convenience. ENC is described on pages 68–69. ENC values are often fractional. An ENC value of "—" does not mean that an item is weightless, merely that its weight and bulk are negligible when worn or carried normally. Should enough of such items be accumulated or carried or worn in a manner that would cause some hindrance, the gamemaster should assign them an ENC value. Similarly, an unusually sized item may gain an ENC value or lose one as appropriate.

***For example**, wearing a single ring, or even a ring on each finger, is not a cause for an ENC value to be assigned, but a fist-sized bag of stolen rings and other pieces of jewelry would certainly have ENC. A ring taken from a giant might even represent 1 or 2 ENC, depending on the giant's SIZ.*

Nonplayer Character (NPC): Any character run by the gamemaster.

Opposed Roll: When your hero wants to attempt an action that another character (or nonplayer character) wants to oppose with an "opposite" skill that cancels or thwarts the initial action. In this case, both skill rolls are made, and the results are compared.

Runemaster: Individuals who can unlock the secrets of the runes and wield tremendous magical power.

***Seiðkona*:** A woman who practices *seiður*. (Male: *seiðmaður*)

***Seiður*:** A form of shamanism in which the practitioner communes with spirits, powers of the land, the gods, and even touches the very strands of fate that guide the lives of all.

Session: A single gaming session with the same group of players and gamemaster.

Spirit Animal: A semi-independent spirit, in the shape of an animal, that follows that person and appears in dreams to give warnings about the future.

Success: The result of a percentile dice roll where your hero performed the task adequately and achieved an average quality of success. If the roll is very low, it may be a critical success (described above).

For example, if your hero has a 70% in a skill and rolls 70 or lower, they have succeeded.

Special Success: A roll of 1/5 of the required rating for success indicates that your hero performed exceptionally well and achieved a greater result than a traditional success. This is especially important in combat.

For example, if your hero has a 70% in a skill and rolls 14 or lower, they have achieved a special success.

Skill: An activity with which a character has a percentage chance of success.

Skill Rating: The degree of competence your hero has with a skill.

Skill Roll: A percentile roll using D100 to determine whether an attempt at performing a skill was successful. The result of a skill roll is a critical success, success, failure, or a fumble.

***Skyr*:** Coagulated milk—high in protein and an important food in the winter.

Weapon Skill: A type of skill involving a particular weapon.

***Vaðmál*:** Woolen cloth used for clothing and as currency. The standard unit of trade is one *ell* (the length from the elbow to the point of the second finger—around 50 cm) of *vaðmál*.

SAGAS OF THE ICELANDERS: ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR

During the 13th and 14th centuries, anonymous Icelandic writers produced remarkable works of literature describing events mainly taking place in the tenth and 11th centuries. Written as a unique blend of historical information and fantastic storytelling, literary endeavor, and family pride, these prose narratives are collectively known as *Íslendingasögur*, "Sagas of Icelanders", and are also frequently referred to in English as "Family Sagas".

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

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

There are some 40 or so of these sagas. Reading a few of these sagas is recommended as a way for the gamemaster to get a better understanding of the flavor and pace of those stories. It's recommended to start with *Njáll's Saga* and *Egill's Saga*, available in multiple translations and editions.

CHAPTER TWO

HERO CREATION

The imaginary personae created and controlled by players are called **heroes**. Those used by the gamemaster are called **nonplayer characters** (NPCs). When these rules mention heroes, the same rules almost always apply equally to nonplayer characters. The gamemaster controls all other characters in the game.

Follow the steps in this chapter to create a hero. You will define their strengths, weaknesses, and skills, as well as their background, motivations, and personality.

Your hero can develop and change over time, becoming more capable, wealthier, and more powerful. *Age of Vikings* is a land of adventure and opportunity. Lacking a rigid social or political structure, the opportunity to gain influence and power within Icelandic society is available to all.

The Icelandic sagas are full of extraordinary individuals with a wide array of abilities. Use the rules to create heroes with unique personalities and motivations. Not every problem is solved with brawn.

STEPS IN HERO CREATION

Follow these eight steps to create your hero. Each step is explained in more detail on the following pages.

- **Step 1: Name and Nickname.** Give your hero an evocative name and colorful nickname.
- **Step 2: Passions.** Determine the passions that drive your hero.
- **Step 3: Family History.** Develop the family history for your hero and their own history prior to their life of adventure.
- **Step 4: Characteristics.** Determine your hero's characteristics.
- **Step 5: Attributes.** Determine your hero's secondary attributes.
- **Step 6: Skills.** Determine your hero's skills.
- **Step 7: Devotions.** Choose the gods that your hero worships.
- **Step 8: Family.** Determine the size of your hero's family.
- **Step 9: Wealth and Equipment.** Determine the type of farm and equipment used by your hero.
- **Step 10: Distinctive Features.** Determine the physical traits that make your hero unique.

Step 1: Name and Nickname

I SHALL LENGTHEN YOUR NAME AND CALL YOU FINNBOGI THE MIGHTY. IT IS MY OPINION THAT YOUR NAME WILL SURVIVE FOR AS LONG AS THE WORLD IS INHABITED.
—The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty

The first step in hero creation is choosing the character's name and nickname. Together, these can tell you and others something about that person and provide inspiration for the rest of the hero creation process.

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

Use the **Names** tables on pages 16–18 to help you choose a name that fits your hero. You may pick a name you like or roll the dice to let fate pick one for you.

First, roll a percentile die (D100) on the **Names** table to pick the character's first name.

If you don't feel ready to pick a name and nickname now, you can do it later or even at the very end.

Patronymic

The Icelandic naming tradition is patronymic. This means that people don't have family names passed from one generation to the next, but instead have a last name which is usually comprised of the name of the person's father plus "sson" for a son, or "sdóttir" for a daughter. Someone can inherit their mother's name, but this is very rare.

The name of the Icelandic explorer Leifur Eiríksson, for example, means "Leifur son of Eiríkur", while his sister's name Freydís Eiríksdóttir means "Freydís daughter of Eiríkur", and their father's name Eiríkur Þorvaldsson means "Eiríkur son of Þorvaldur". See the **Name Suffixes** table for guidance on how some name endings change when building the patronymic.

NAMES

Masculine			Feminine	
D100	Name	Meaning	Name	Meaning
1	Álfgeir	Elf-Knife	Æsa	Goddess
2	Arnþór	Eagle-Þór	Aldís	Noble Goddess
3	Atli	Tough	Álfdís	Elf Goddess
4	Björn	Bear	Álfheiður	Bright Elf
5	Bragi	Poet	Álfhildur	Elf Battle
6	Dufþakur	Dark Haired	Alfífa	Gift of the Elves
7	Dýri	Precious	Álöf	Descendant
8	Egill	Intimidating	Arnþrúður	Eagle Strength
9	Eilífur	Ever-Living	Ásgerður	Protected by the Gods
10	Einar	Lone Warrior	Áslaug	Gods' Spring
11	Eiríkur	Very Powerful	Ásta	Love
12	Erlendur	Foreigner	Ástríður	Divine Beauty
13	Erpur	Brown	Auður	Rich
14	Fjörnir	Life Protector	Bergdís	Goddess of Salvation
15	Flóki	Entangled	Berglind	Water Spring
16	Flosi	Ladies Man	Bergþóra	Saved by Þór
17	Friðgeir	Peaceful Spear	Birna	Female Bear
18	Friðleifur	Peace Heritage	Bót	Repair
19	Fróði	Wise	Brynhildur	Battle Armor
20	Gaukur	Cuckoo	Dagbjört	Bright Day
21	Geir	Spear	Droplaug	Pool of Drops
22	Gellir	Loud	Dúfa	Dove
23	Gísli	Hostage	Eir	Protector
24	Gissur	Guesser	Eyvör	Island Protector
25	Glúmur	Gloomy	Finna	The Finnish One
26	Gnúpur	Steep Mountain	Fönn	Snow
27	Grani	Mustached	Fríða	Beautiful
28	Grettir	Frowning Man	Geirfríður	Beautiful Spear
29	Grímur	Disguised	Geirþrúður	Powerful Spear
30	Guðmundur	God's Gift	Gerður	Protection
31	Gunnar	Battle	Gjaflaug	Pool of Gifts
32	Gunnlaugur	Source of Battle	Gróa	Grower
33	Guttormur	Protected by the Gods	Guðmunda	Gift of the Gods
34	Hafsteinn	Sea Stone	Guðrún	God's Magic
35	Haki	Hook	Gunnur	Battle
36	Hallvarður	Stone Guardian	Gyða	Godly Being
37	Hallbjörn	Stone Bear	Hallbera	Female Stone Bear
38	Halldór	Þór's Rock	Halldóra	Þór's Rock
39	Halli	Rock	Hallgerður	Stone Fortress
40	Haraldur	Army Leader	Heiður	Honor
41	Hari	Chieftain	Helga	Holy
42	Haukur	Hawk	Herdís	Warrior Goddess
43	Héðinn	Fur Wearer	Hildigunnur	Battle
44	Heimir	Home	Hjördís	Sword Goddess
45	Helgi	Holy	Hlaðgerður	Decorative Headband
46	Hjálmur	Helmet	Hlín	Defender
47	Hjörleifur	Sword Gift	Hödd	Hair
48	Hnikarr	Pusher	Hrafnhildur	War Raven
49	Högni	Protector	Hróðný	Newly famous
50	Hrafn	Raven	Hrund	Pusher
51	Hrappur	Clever	Iðunn	Ever Young
52	Hreiðar	Warrior's Shelter	Ingibjörg	Protected by Freyr
53	Hreinn	Pure	Ingunn	Loved by Freyr
54	Hróar	Famous warrior	Ingveldur	Freyr's Battle
55	Ísleifur	Gift of Ice	Ísgerður	Ice Fortress
56	Kári	Curly-Haired	Jófrídur	Beautiful Horse
57	Ketill	Kettle	Jórunn	Lover of horses
58	Kjartan	Sailor	Katla	Container
59	Leifur	Heritage	Kneif	Large Hook
60	Magnús	The Great	Kolbrún	Dark-Brow
61	Már	Sea Bird	Ljót	Bright
62	Mörður	Weasel	Ljótunn	Bright
63	Njáll	Hero	Lofn	Sweet
64	Ólafur	Descendant	Lofthæna	Air Chicken
65	Ormur	Worm	Mjöll	New Snow
66	Össur	The One Who Gives Answers	Nótt	Night
67	Óttar	Fearsome Warrior	Oddfríður	Beautiful Blade
68	Randver	Shielded Warrior	Oddkatla	Pointy Helmet

NAMES (CONTINUED)

	Masculine		Feminine	
69	Reginn	Decision	Ölrún	Magic Rune
70	Sæmundur	Sea Protection	Ormfríður	Beautiful Worm
71	Sigfús	Eager to Win	Ormhildur	Worm Battle
72	Sigmundur	Winner	Ósk	Wish
73	Sigurður	Protector	Rannveig	Powerful House
74	Skafti	Handle	Reginleif	Divine Heritage
75	Skarphéðinn	Hardened Fur Wearer	Sælaug	Sea Pool
76	Skeggi	Bearded	Sæunn	Sea Lover
77	Skorri	Argumentative	Sif	Relative
78	Sörli	Armored	Sigríður	Winning Peace
79	Sturla	Crazy	Snæfríður	Beautiful Snow
80	Sumarliði	Summer Viking	Sólbjört	Bright Sun
81	Sváfnir	Killer	Sölva	Pale
82	Svanur	Swan	Svanhildur	Swan Battle
83	Svartur	Dark	Sylgja	Swallower
84	Sveinn	Boy	Úlfhildur	Wolf Battle
85	Þorvarður	Protected by Þór	Una	Comfortable
86	Þráinn	Longing	Unnur	Lover
87	Þjóðólfur	Nation's Wolf	Valgerður	Protector of the Fallen
88	Úlfur	Wolf	Vébjörg	Holy Lady
89	Valgarður	Protector of the Fallen	Vildís	Holy Goddess
90	Veturliði	Winter Viking	Vigdís	Battle Goddess
91	Vöggur	Little Man	Ýr	Ox
92	Völundur	Skilled	Yrsa	Wild Sheep
93	Ýmir	Twin	Þóra	Þór
94	Þorbrandur	Þór's Sword	Þórdís	Þór's Goddess
95	Þórður	Protected by Þór	Þorfinna	Finnish Þór
96	Þorgrímur	Þór Disguise	Þorgerður	Þór's protection
97	Þorkell	Þór's Kettle	Þórhalla	Þór's Stone
98	Þóroddur	Þór's Blade	Þórunn	One who loves Þór
99	Þórólfur	Þór's Wolf	Þrúður	Strength
100	Þrymur	Force	Þuríður	Þór's Beauty

To build your character's patronymic, roll a second time on the **Name** table to establish the last name, adding "sson" or "sdóttir" as a suffix. See the **Name Suffixes** table regarding a few special cases when the patronymic ending may change.

Name Suffixes

If the name ends in	The ending changes to	Sample name	Son patronymic	Daughter patronymic
-i	-a	Skafti	Skaftason	Skaftadóttir
-a	-u	Sturla	Sturluson	Sturladóttir
-nn	-ns	Sveinn	Sveinsson	Sveinsdóttir
-ll	-ls	Ketill	Ketilsson	Ketilsdóttir
-ur	-s	Leifur	Leifsson	Leifsdóttir
-ir	-is	Grettir	Grettisson	Grettisdóttir

Nickname

Next, choose a nickname for your hero. If you already have a concept for the character's personality and physical attributes, pick a nickname from the **Nicknames** table that best matches that concept. If you don't yet have an idea of your character's traits, rolling a D100 and consulting the **Nicknames** table (page 18) may give you a good starting point.

Nicknames can be interpreted literally, but sometimes they have an ironic meaning instead. Someone nicknamed "the Strong" may not be strong at all.

Complete the process by creating an explanation for how your hero got their nickname.

All nicknames listed here are from the Icelandic sagas and other Icelandic medieval sources. They usually go onto the end of the name and patronymic surname, but you may choose to put a nickname beforehand or even use a nickname instead of a patronymic.

Step 2: Passions

Icelandic sagas are full of characters with conflicted loyalties, deadly feuds, and raging **passions**. This game encourages such themes through qualities called passions: game mechanics for quantifying your hero's emotional propensities.

Your hero starts with three passions rated at 60%:

- **Honor** is about maintaining life, property, status, and exacting revenge when appropriate. Honor is at stake in virtually every social activity: in gift exchanging, in feud and law, wealth, fighting skills, weaponry, clothing, and even (or maybe especially) in seating arrangements at feasts. (See **Honor** on page 178 for more information.)
- **Loyalty (*goði*)** is the measure of loyalty to the chieftain-priest whose role is to advocate or mediate disputes and to represent

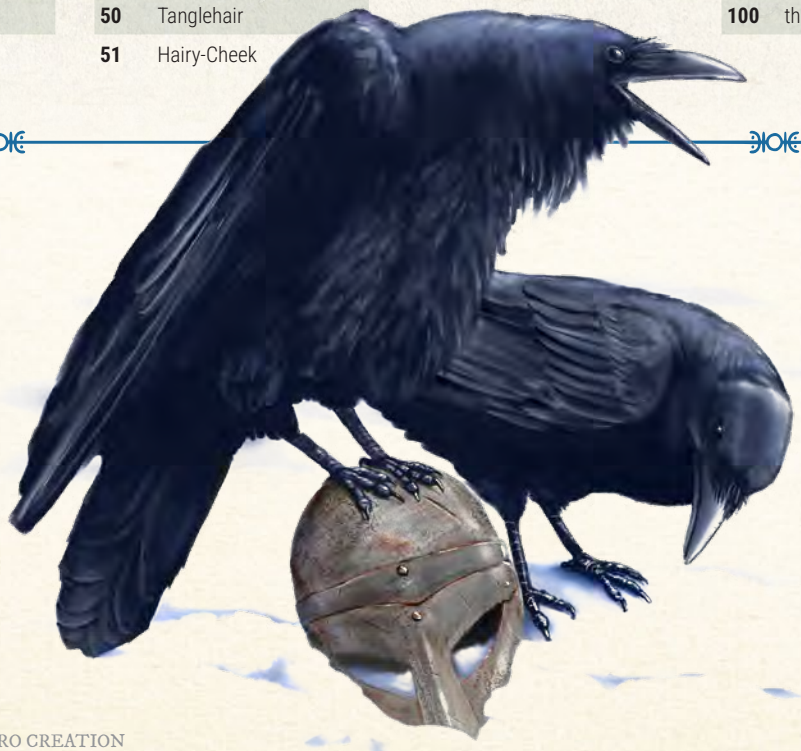
NICKNAMES

Nicknames	
D100	Nickname
1	the Proud
2	the Vile
3	the Learned
4	the Excellent
5	the White
6	the Unruly
7	the Red
8	the Black
9	the Powerful
10	the Mighty
11	the Grey
12	the Ugly
13	the Bald-Headed
14	the Beardless
15	the Bounteous
16	the Yeller
17	the Wise
18	the Tall
19	the Short
20	the Fat
21	the Slim
22	the Old
23	the Squinter
24	Flatnose
25	Forkbeard

Nicknames	
26	the Brave
27	Greycloak
28	the Fair
29	the Lucky
30	the Quiet
31	Longnose
32	the Good
33	Barelegs
34	Silkbeard
35	Snake-tongue
36	Long-Chin
37	Child-Sparer
38	the Broad
39	Ale-Lover
40	Deep-Minded
41	the Shifty
42	the Rash
43	Oxen-Might
44	the Peacock
45	the Coward
46	Cod-Biter
47	the Unwashed
48	the Smooth-Tongued
49	Hog-Head
50	Tanglehair
51	Hairy-Cheek

Nicknames	
52	Half-Troll
53	the Careless
54	the Elegant
55	the Walker
56	Shaggy-Breeches
57	the Uninspired
58	Bow-Bender
59	the Valiant
60	the Pock-Marked
61	Horsehead
62	Skull-Splitter
63	Half-Giant
64	the Generous
65	the Bellower
66	Foal-Brow
67	the Lean
68	Tree-Foot
69	Night-Wolf
70	the Filthy
71	Thunder
72	Black-Tooth
73	the Unlucky
74	the Vicious
75	Crooked-Nose

Nicknames	
76	Swift-Eyed
77	the Clumsy
78	Crow-Nose
79	the Troubled
80	the Timber-Quaker
81	Fairhair
82	Gold-Beard
83	the Foolish
84	Broad-Bearded
85	Black-Beard
86	the Far-Traveled
87	the Sharp
88	Red-Cloak
89	the Bow-Swayer
90	the Barker
91	Hawk-Nose
92	the Fast-Traveler
93	the Horn-Breaker
94	Coal-Brow
95	the Great-Slasher
96	the Thin-Bearded
97	Giant-Destroyer
98	the Bristle-Bearded
99	the Dueler
100	the Poet



EXAMPLE: *The player rolls to determine their hero's first name. A result of 63 indicates the name Njáll, meaning "hero". That sounds like a great match for the type of character they had in mind, so the player decides to keep that name. A second roll determines that Njáll's father's name is Þórólfur. That makes the hero's full name Njáll Þórólfsson. A roll on the* **Nicknames** *table points to "the Beardless" for Njáll. This intrigues the player as they consider how the character fits into society and how the nickname potentially affects their social interactions.*

the people settled on their chieftaincy assemblies. In exchange, heroes are expected to aid their goði in just cases whenever the *goði* requires support.

- **Love (family)** is the measure of the bond a hero has with their extended family and typically includes an obligation to avenge injuries, or even malicious rumors against family members.

Depending on your family history, these passions may be modified, or your hero may get new passions from your family or personal history.

Passions and their use in play are described in the **Passions, Reputation, and Status** chapter. (See pages 177–183.)

Step 3: Family History

MANY MEN SAY THAT WRITING ABOUT THE SETTLEMENT IS UNNECESSARY. BUT IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO ANSWER FOREIGNERS WHO CENSURE US FOR OUR DESCENT FROM SCOUNDRELS AND SLAVES IF WE KNEW OUR TRUE ORIGINS FOR CERTAIN. SIMILARLY, FOR THOSE MEN WHO WANT TO KNOW OLD LORE OR TO RECKON GENEALOGIES, IT IS BETTER TO BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING RATHER THAN TO JUMP RIGHT INTO THE MIDDLE. AND OF COURSE, ALL WISE PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE BEGINNINGS OF THEIR SETTLEMENT AND OF THEIR OWN FAMILIES.

—The Book of Settlements

Your hero's family history strongly influences their drives and passions. How a parent or grandparent lived or died helps establish your hero's identity.

This information can be written in the **Notes** section of the hero sheet (pages 42–43) or on a separate piece of paper.

You can skip the family history process entirely. This allows for a much faster hero creation process at the cost of a fuller, more complex background and deeper integration into the Age of Vikings, the wider Norse world, and recent history. See **Skipping the Family History** (following) for guidance.

SKIPPING THE FAMILY HISTORY

Family history is optional. It can take time to complete and may be inappropriate for one-shot games. If you do not want to use the family history section, do the following:

- Add up to three additional passions to start at 60% each.Add +20% to one passion of your choice.
- Add +10% to another passion of your choice.

SHORT VERSION OF THE FAMILY HISTORY

If you want a quicker version of the family history section that only determines your hero's prior background (but not that of your hero's parent or grandparent), skip ahead to the year 980.

How To Use This Section

This section is used to generate a deep family background for your hero, providing them with a rich personal history, connections to their family and community, and additional benefits to skills and passions. Gamemasters should keep in mind that this section is intended for creating heroes. This is not intended to create the background for typical Icelandic farmers!

1. **Pick which family member had the most critical impact on your hero's sense of identity.** First, pick the grandparent that you decide is most significant to your hero's story.

   Then, pick whichever parent you decide is most significant to your hero's sense of identity (that parent may die early in your hero's life but still cast a huge shadow over it). If in doubt, pick the parent born to the grandparent already tracked.
2. This section provides guidance on determining what events your grandparent and parent participated in and the impact that each event had upon your hero. You will start with your grandparent's birth, all the way up to the year 977 (the year your hero enters the game). You will progress through the following pages to determine events, going entry by entry until your hero is born (by default, this is the year 955). After your hero's birth, switch to determining events for your parent.

   You may choose the events or roll a D20 to get random results from the events that begin on page 20.

Additional information on event selection:

- When an event indicates that a grandparent or parent was killed (or its equivalent), make no additional rolls for that ancestor.
- If an event indicates that someone took part in a later event, go directly to that event.
- Some events give your hero passion, Reputation, or even wealth. Wealth is straightforward, but passions and Reputation are an additional type of inheritance, such as attitudes learned from the words and deeds of your parents and their parents. Write these down on your hero sheet.

- If the event indicates that your hero gains a passion (Love, Hate, Loyalty, Fear, etc.), that passion starts at 60% unless indicated otherwise.
- If your hero already has a specific passion from a previous event, increase it by +10% unless indicated otherwise. This also applies to Honor.
- If more than one grandparent or parent experienced the same event that gives a passion, that bonus is not cumulative. However, no passion can be raised above 100% at this step.
- If the event result indicates your hero gains Reputation, roll the appropriate die and write that down in the Reputation section of your hero sheet. Your hero can inherit Reputation through the deeds of their grandparents and parents.

If your hero's grandparent survived to 941, it is assumed that they retired from the **Event** table with dignity. Similarly, if your parent survived to 959, it is assumed that you retire them and do not continue subjecting them to the whims of the family history tables.

3. **Determine your hero's past.** Once your hero comes of age in 971, you should determine what events they participated in.

Heroes do not die during the family history process, regardless of what the result states! The gamemaster and player should improvise, modify, discard, or otherwise manipulate the results of the family history in the interest of creating a more exciting or relevant background for the hero.

While creating heroes, some rolls may be identical for different heroes. The gamemaster is encouraged to work with you and the other players to combine or alter these events in interesting ways. Perhaps the grandparents or parents were at the same event at the same time, or they may even be the selfsame person for heroes who are related. Similarly, if identical results are unlikely, the gamemaster is encouraged to alter the description to something more suitable.

Some passions have nonspecific subjects, such as Loyalty (*goði*) or Hate (other family). You and your gamemaster should work together to define these, giving them names and identities, as they may become important nonplayer characters in your *Age of Vikings* campaign. You can do this when the passions are assigned or at the end of this step of hero creation.

VARIATIONS

The family history presumes that your hero was born around 955, came of age around 971, and enters the game in the year 977, at approximately 22 years of age. It also assumes that your hero's parents were born by at least 925.

If you want to create an older hero, read **Additional Experience** on page 37 first. There are significant consequences if you make a hero who is over the age of 40.

Once you have decided your hero's age, adjust the family history accordingly. *For example, if the hero is to enter the game at 30 in the year 977, then the hero was born in 947, and their parents were born by at least 922.*

Do not roll any events for the hero's parents prior to the birth of the hero. Alternatively, you can roll for events but treat any result that kills the hero's parents prior to the birth of the hero as "nearly killing" the hero's parents.

Your Grandparent's History 900–941

Year 900

Your hero's grandparents were both born on or before this year.

Year 900 Events

D20	Event
1–7	Your grandparent was born in Iceland, having Norwegian parents who came to Iceland among the first settlers. Gain **Loyalty (Norway)** and **Reputation +1D3%**.
8–12	Your grandparent was born in Norway and moved to Iceland as a child. Gain **Loyalty (Norway).**
13–15	Your grandparent was born in Denmark and moved to Iceland as a child. Gain **Loyalty (Denmark)**.
16–18	Your grandparent was born in Sweden and moved to Iceland as a child. Gain **Loyalty (Sweden)**.
19–20	Your grandparent was a thrall captured during a raid by Norse migrants on their way to Iceland. Gain **Loyalty (grandparent's homeland)** and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Years 917–922

As a young adult, your grandparent may have embarked on a life of adventure and danger in search of wealth and glory, raiding the lands to the south. These years saw much plundering and warfare as the Norse made a renewed push to raid and colonize neighboring lands.

Years 917–922 Events

D20	Event
1–4	Your grandparent traveled around Iceland during these years, and you later heard many stories about their travels. Gain **Area Lore (Iceland) +10%**.
5–12	Your grandparent took part in the wars to the West (see **Battle of Fuat's Head** and **Battle of Corbridge** in the following section).
13–20	Your grandparent took part in the raids to the East (see **Raids to the East** in the following section).

Wars in the West: Dublin

Fifteen years after the Norse were expelled from Dublin, forces led by two grandsons of Ivarr the Boneless—the Danelaw Earl Sigtryggur One-Eyed and Rögnvaldur the King of Mann—returned to Ireland with their fleet and reconquered the city. Many Icelanders answered the call for warriors to join one of those armies. The battle took place at Fuat's Head ("Cenn Fuait"), a headland on the coast of the Irish kingdom of Leinster. With the defeat of the Irish army and the death of Augaire mac Ailella, the king of Leinster, the Norse faced no further opposition. This allowed them to rule Dublin once again. Sigtryggur became king of Dublin, while Rögnvaldur moved on to conquer the north of England.

Battle of Fuat's Head

D20	Event
1	Your grandparent stayed in Iceland.
2–10	Your grandparent survived. Fought as part of Sigtryggur's army, sailing from Mann. Stayed in Ireland for a few years.
11–18	Your grandparent survived. Fought as part of Rögnvaldur's army, sailing from Eastern Danelaw. Moved on with Rögnvaldur's forces to attack North England and take York.
19	Your grandparent died in battle. Gain **Hate (Irish)** passion.
20	Your grandparent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Wars in the West: York

After a series of battles against the Scots, a decisive confrontation took place at Corbridge in Northumberland between Rögnvaldur's invading army and the combined forces of Constantine II of Scotland and Ealdred of Bamburgh. Rögnvaldur divided his army into four troops, keeping one of those hidden behind a hill. Surprised by the fourth hidden group led by Rögnvaldur himself, the Scots were forced to retreat, allowing Rögnvaldur to take the whole of Northumberland and declare himself the king of York.

Battle of Corbridge

D20	Event
1–17	Your grandparent survived the battle and shared in the spoils of victory. Spent a few years in Northumberland.
18–19	Your grandparent died in battle. Gain **Hate (Scots)** passion.
20	Your grandparent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Raids to the East

Eiríkur Bloodaxe, son of Haraldur Fairhair, was given five longships by his father and spent four years plundering the British Isles, Lappland, and Bjarmaland (Russia).

Eastern Raids

D20	Event
1–5	Your grandparent survived.
6–12	Your grandparent survived and returned to Iceland with slaves and good plunder.
13–15	Your grandparent survived and returned to Iceland with great wealth. They fought alongside famous Icelandic warrior Þórólfur Skallagrímsson, the brother of the warrior poet Egill. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
16–17	Your grandparent survived. Learned magic from the Lapps while in Bjarmaland.
18	Your grandparent died in battle in France. Gain **Hate (French)**.
19	Your grandparent died in battle in Bjarmaland. Gain **Hate (Lapps)**.
20	Your grandparent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Hero Creation (Character Sheet Description)

STEP 1: Name and Nickname (Personal Section) 1

- Write your character's **Name** and **Nickname** on the top line.
- Write their **Name Meaning** below.
- **Personality Type** and **Spirit Animal** come later (**Step 6**).
- Choose your hero's **Gender**.
- Their **Age** is 22, and their **Birth Year** is 955.
- **Distinctive Features** come later (**Step 10**).
- Write your own name on the **Player** line.

STEP 2: Passions (Passions section) 2

- Your hero starts with three passions at 60%: Honor, Loyalty (*goði*), and Love (family).

STEP 3: Family History (Family section or note elsewhere) 3

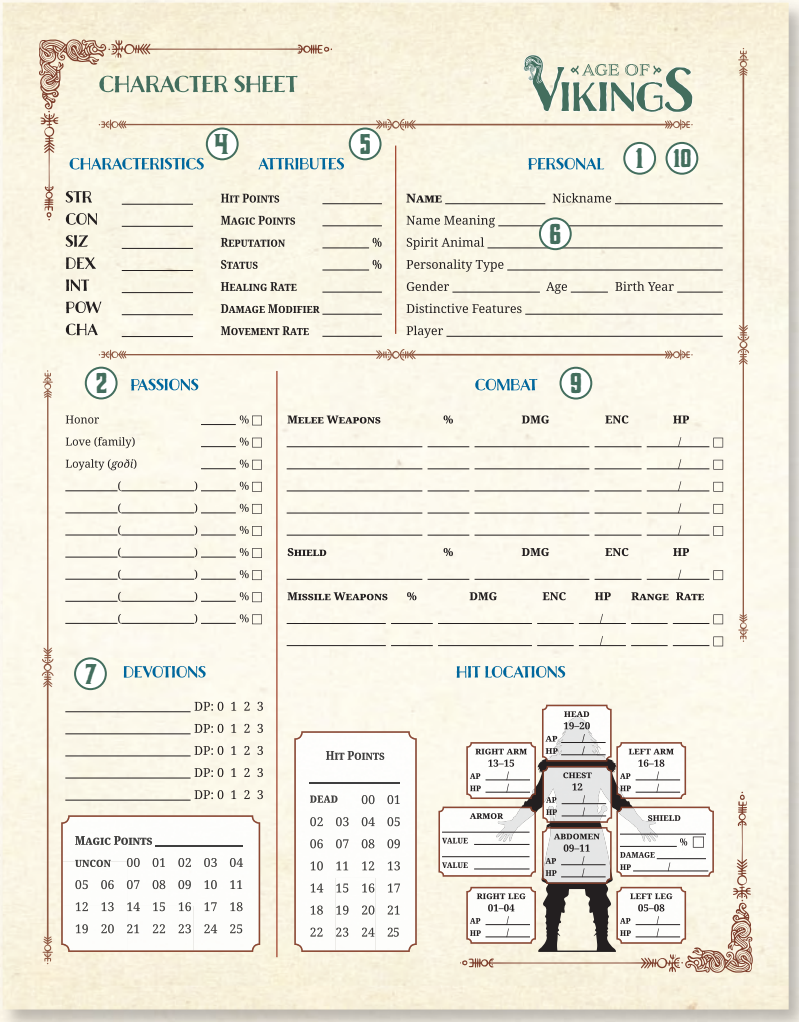
- Follow the family history procedure presented on pages 20–28 by picking your hero's most influential grandparent and parent. Take note of the events, modifiers, or possessions that affect your hero.
- Roll (or pick) to determine what happened to that grandparent between 900 and 954.
- Roll (or pick) to determine what happened to that parent between 954 and 969.
- Roll (or pick) events your hero experienced from 971 to 977.
- If you feel like it, determine your grandparent's and parent's names using the name tables (pages 16–18), and write them in the **Family** section of the hero sheet.

STEP 4: Characteristics (Characteristics section) 4

- Ask your gamemaster how you will be determining characteristics: random, random but assigned, or deliberate (see page 30).
- Calculate your hero's characteristics accordingly.

STEP 5: Attributes (Attributes section) 5

- Your hero's **Hit Points** are equal to their CON, modified by SIZ and POW (see **Hit Point Modifiers**, page 31).
- See the ***Hit Locations*** table (page 31) for hit points per hit location and write them in the **Hit Locations** body diagram (lower right) on the first half of each **HP** line.
- Your hero's **Magic Points** are equal to their POW. Circle that number in the Magic Points box in the lower left corner.
- Your hero's starting **Reputation** is 5%, plus any modifiers from family history.
- Your hero's starting **Status** is 25%.
- Your hero's **Healing Rate** is based on their CON (see ***Healing Rate*** table, page 32).
- Your hero's **Damage Modifier** is based on their STR+SIZ (see ***Damage Modifier*** table, page 32).
- Your hero's **Movement Rate** (MOV) is 10.
- Your hero's **Max ENC** is the average of STR and CON, rounded up. Write it on the lower right back of the sheet, in the **Equipment** section.



CHARACTER SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

CHARACTERISTICS 4 — ATTRIBUTES 5 — PERSONAL 1 10

STR _____ CON _____ SIZ _____ DEX _____ INT _____ POW _____ CHA _____

Hit Points _____ Magic Points _____ Reputation _____ % Status _____ % Healing Rate _____ Damage Modifier _____ Movement Rate _____

Name _____ Nickname _____ Name Meaning _____ Spirit Animal _____ 6 Personality Type _____ Gender _____ Age _____ Birth Year _____ Distinctive Features _____ Player _____

2 PASSIONS

Honor ____ % ☐ Love (family) ____ % ☐ Loyalty (*goði*) ____ % ☐

COMBAT 9

Melee Weapons	%	DMG	ENC	HP
				/ ☐

Shield	%	DMG	ENC	HP
				/ ☐

Missile Weapons	%	DMG	ENC	HP	Range	Rate
				/		☐

7 DEVOTIONS

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3 (×5)

Magic Points _____

UNCON	00	01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25

Hit Points

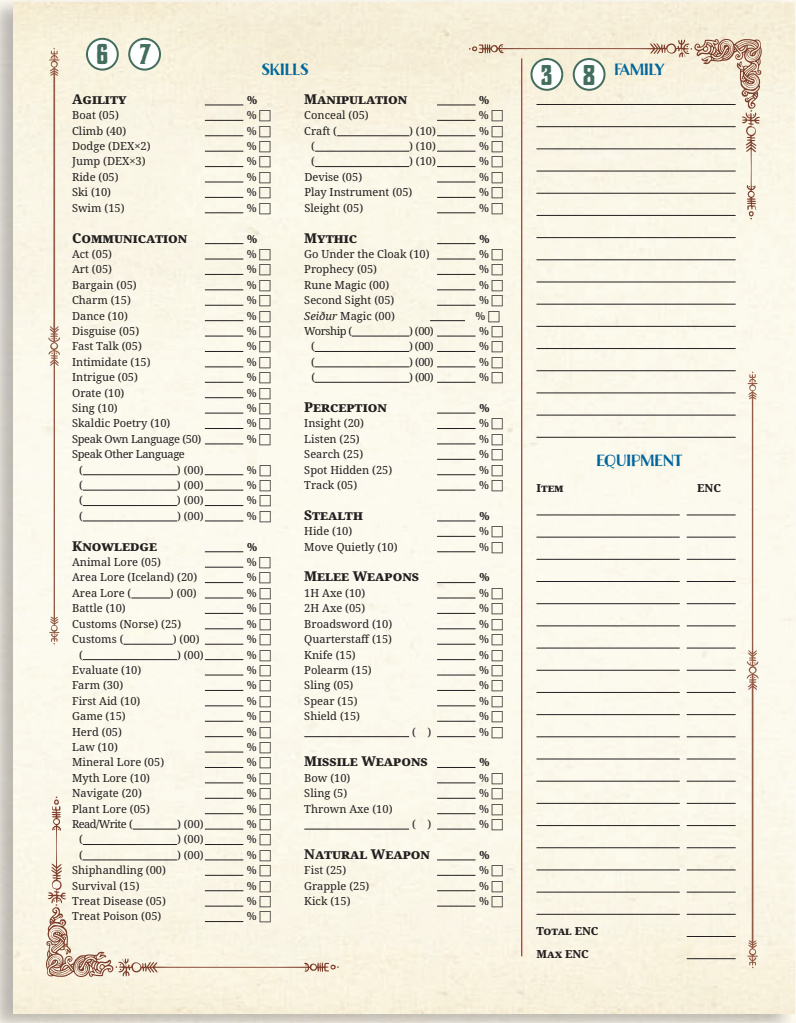
DEAD	00	01
02	03	04	05
06	07	08	09
10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25

HIT LOCATIONS

HEAD 19–20 (AP / HP) · RIGHT ARM 13–15 · LEFT ARM 16–18 · CHEST 12 · ABDOMEN 09–11 · RIGHT LEG 01–04 · LEFT LEG 05–08 · ARMOR (VALUE) · SHIELD (% ☐, DAMAGE, HP)

STEP 6:
Skills and Spirit Animal (Skills and Personal sections)

- Determine your hero's Skill Category Modifiers using the **Skill Category Modifiers** table (page 34) and write the results in each skill category. Skill category modifiers are eventually added to each skill in the category to determine its chance of success.
- Pick or roll a D6 to determine Spirit Animal from the **Spirit Animals** table (page 35). Each has an associated Personality Type. Write these in the Personal section.
- Add +20% to the associated skills category modifier.
- Every Icelandic hero gains +25% to the following skills: Area Lore (Iceland), Boat, Customs (Norse), Craft (any) , Farm, First Aid, Language (Norse) , Law, Ride, Survival, and any two Weapon skills.
- Determine whether your character is a runemaster or *seiðkona*. See **Runemaster and Seiðkona** (page 36) for more information and follow those directions.
- Add +25% to any five skills of your choice, and +10% to six other skills of your choice. No skill may be raised over 100% at this step, and any resultant combination of bonuses above 100% is capped at 100%. You may not add any bonuses to Mythic skills unless your character is a runemaster or *seiðkona*.
- If you want an older and more experienced hero, see **Additional Experience** (page 37).



6 7 SKILLS

AGILITY ____ %
Boat (05) ____ %
Climb (40) ____ %
Dodge (DEX×2) ____ %
Jump (DEX×3) ____ %
Ride (05) ____ %
Ski (10) ____ %
Swim (15) ____ %

COMMUNICATION ____ %
Act (05) ____ %
Art (05) ____ %
Bargain (05) ____ %
Charm (15) ____ %
Dance (10) ____ %
Disguise (05) ____ %
Fast Talk (05) ____ %
Intimidate (15) ____ %
Intrigue (05) ____ %
Orate (10) ____ %
Sing (10) ____ %
Skaldic Poetry (10) ____ %
Speak Own Language (50) ____ %
Speak Other Language
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %

KNOWLEDGE ____ %
Animal Lore (05) ____ %
Area Lore (Iceland) (20) ____ %
Area Lore (_____) (00) ____ %
Battle (10) ____ %
Customs (Norse) (25) ____ %
Customs (_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
Evaluate (10) ____ %
Farm (30) ____ %
First Aid (10) ____ %
Game (15) ____ %
Herd (05) ____ %
Law (10) ____ %
Mineral Lore (05) ____ %
Myth Lore (10) ____ %
Navigate (20) ____ %
Plant Lore (05) ____ %
Read/Write (_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
Shiphandling (00) ____ %
Survival (15) ____ %
Treat Disease (05) ____ %
Treat Poison (05) ____ %

MANIPULATION ____ %
Conceal (05) ____ %
Craft (_____) (10) ____ %
(_____) (10) ____ %
(_____) (10) ____ %
Devise (05) ____ %
Play Instrument (05) ____ %
Sleight (05) ____ %

MYTHIC ____ %
Go Under the Cloak (10) ____ %
Prophecy (05) ____ %
Rune Magic (00) ____ %
Second Sight (05) ____ %
Seiður Magic (00) ____ %
Worship (_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %
(_____) (00) ____ %

PERCEPTION ____ %
Insight (20) ____ %
Listen (25) ____ %
Search (25) ____ %
Spot Hidden (25) ____ %
Track (05) ____ %

STEALTH ____ %
Hide (10) ____ %
Move Quietly (10) ____ %

MELEE WEAPONS ____ %
1H Axe (10) ____ %
2H Axe (05) ____ %
Broadsword (10) ____ %
Quarterstaff (15) ____ %
Knife (15) ____ %
Polearm (15) ____ %
Sling (05) ____ %
Spear (15) ____ %
Shield (15) ____ %
_____ ( ) ____ %

MISSILE WEAPONS ____ %
Bow (10) ____ %
Sling (5) ____ %
Thrown Axe (10) ____ %
_____ ( ) ____ %

NATURAL WEAPON ____ %
Fist (25) ____ %
Grapple (25) ____ %
Kick (15) ____ %

3 8 FAMILY

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	ENC

TOTAL ENC ____
MAX ENC ____

STEP 7:
Devotions (Devotions and Skills sections)

- Your hero begins with three **Devotions**, chosen from the ***Gods & Goddesses for Devotions*** table (page 38), with their associated any ideals (if desired). Write these in the **Devotions** section and in the **Mythic** section of the **Skills** page of the hero sheet.
- Assign one of these Worship skills a rating of +70%, another +20%, and the third +10%.
- In the **Devotions** section, your hero has **dedication points (DP)** equal to their Worship score with each god.

STEP 8:
Family (Family section)

- Roll or pick a result from the ***Marital Status*** table (page 39) and write it in the **Family** section.
- Roll or pick to describe your hero's children, spouse, and any potential siblings, if any, and list them in the **Family** section.
- Determine how many additional living kin by 2D10 and adding half the hero's Honor passion (round up), with an additional +3D6 if married. List how many, if desired.

STEP 9:
Wealth and Equipment (Farm Record Sheet and Combat sections)

- Your hero begins with a small farm, comprising 20 hectares. Roll or pick a **Farm Activity** (page 40). Write the results on a copy of the **Farm Record Sheet** (not pictured, page 40). Detail it as much as desired.
- Pick or roll where the farm is located and mark it on the map. Ideally all heroes are in the same region.
- Your hero begins with the following gear, to be listed in Equipment (with ENCs) and on the Combat section of the hero sheet:
  - Any two weapons from the ***Weapons*** tables (pages 111 or 113). Write them in the **Equipment** section (along with their ENC) and write them in the **Combat** section of the hero sheet.
  - Woolen clothing (1 armor point [AP], all locations other than head, page 116).
  - Partial leather armor (+2 AP to abdomen and chest, page 116).
  - An iron helmet (5 AP to head, page 116).
  - A medium wooden shield (page 116).

STEP 10:
Distinctive Features (Personal section)

- Your hero has three Distinctive Features. Roll 1D10 or pick from the general categories across the top of the **Features** table (page 41), then roll or pick for the specific feature. Do this three times and write the results on the **Distinctive Features** line.

Year 930

With conflicts and family feuds spreading throughout the country, the *goðar* agreed that an assembly was needed where disputes could be mediated. The National Assembly, *Alþing*, was founded.

Year 930 Events

D20	Event
1–2	Being at odds with their *goði*, your grandparent refused to follow them to the founding of *Alþing*.
3–14	Your grandparent was present at the founding of the *Alþing*, as a follower of their *goði*.
15–16	Your grandparent was one of the 36 *goðar* that presided over the first session of the law court. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
17–19	Your grandparent traveled with Úlfljótur to Norway to study the laws of the assemblies. With your grandparent's support, Úlfljótur then became Iceland's first Lawspeaker. Gain **Loyalty (Norway) +5%** and **Reputation +1D3%**.
20	The *Alþing* was founded on land that belonged to your grandparent in a region known as Blue Forest. Your grandparent was found guilty of murder and sentenced to forfeit their land, which was seized and converted to public property. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 932

While traveling from Norway to Iceland, Gunnbjörn Ulfsson's ship was blown off course by a powerful gale, causing him to land at a group of islands west of Iceland that he named "Gunnbjörn's Skerries". From there, the crew said they could see a large landmass further to the west. Since their return, there has been much talk in Iceland about lands to the west.

Year 932 Events

D20	Event
1–13	Your grandparent was not aboard Gunnbjörn Ulfsson's ship.
14–19	Your grandparent was aboard Gunnbjörn Ulfsson's ship.
20	Your grandparent was aboard Gunnbjörn Ulfsson's ship. They divulged to their family that the crew did visit the large landmass to the west, where they saw something truly wonderous. As a result, the crew swore to never reveal what they had seen.

Year 934–936

A series of powerful earthquakes shook Iceland, causing an eerie glow in southern Iceland and lava fountains to appear on the horizon. This resulted in a view both magnificent and terrifying. For three years, lava spewed out of a long, deep rift, and dozens of explosions launched rocks and ash high into the sky. A vast area in the south was covered by thick tephra, acid clouds, and was overrun by floods of lava and water. People made sacrifices to appease the gods, and many suggested that the tremors and eruptions were caused by the shaking of the god Loki in his prison under the earth as he was being tormented by evil giants.

Fire Canyon Eruption

D20	Event
1–6	Your grandparent's farm was located far away and was not damaged. Family members whose farms were destroyed by the earthquakes came to stay with your grandparent temporarily before returning to their land to rebuild.
7–13	Your grandparent, or a close relative, had prophetic dreams about the eruption, allowing the family to escape unharmed. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
14–17	The family farm was destroyed by lava, but everyone managed to escape unharmed.
18–19	Your grandparent was part of a group of brave people who descended the deepest cave to slay whatever foul creature was causing the tremors. None of them ever returned, but the tremors and eruption stopped a few days later. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
20	Your grandparent died when their farm was overrun by lava. There was a rumor involving fiery creatures coming out of the lava to kill people; perhaps that is what happened to them.

Year 937

England: The Icelandic brothers Þórólfur and Egill Skallagrímsson led a band of 300 people in the army of Athelstan, king of the English. They fought the invading allied forces of Constantín mac Áeda, King of Scotland, and Óláfur Guðroðsson, the Norse king of Dublin. The battle took place in Wineheath on the west coast of England, also known as Brunanburh. It ended with the tremendous slaughter and defeat of the invading forces, marking the end of Norse power in Britain.

Battle of Wineheath

D20	Event
1–9	Your grandparent did not fight in this battle.
10–13	Your grandparent fought on the side of the Norse army led by kings Constantín and Óláfur. They escaped with the defeated forces. Gain **Hate (English)** passion.
14–18	Your grandparent fought on the side of the English army alongside the brothers Þórólfur and Egill. They witnessed Þórólfur's death and Egill's revenge murder of the Scots king's son. Gain **Hate (Scots)** passion.
19–20	Your grandparent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 941

Constantinople: Rus Vikings from Kiev, along with many of their Norse allies, attacked Constantinople, but their fleet was repelled by Byzantine ships fitted with Greek fire-throwers. With their ships in flames, many leaped into the sea, sinking under the weight of their armor and helmets. Those captured by the Byzantine army during the battle were beheaded. Even if denied the prize of sacking Constantinople, the Rus still enjoyed rich plunder in the lands around the city.

If your grandparent survived this long, congratulations! You can retire them with dignity. Now it is time to determine your parent's history.

Rus'-Byzantine War

D20	Event
1–9	Your grandparent did not fight in this battle.
10–12	Your grandparent survived the attack on Constantinople.
13–14	Your grandparent survived the attack on Constantinople but suffered severe burns that resulted in ugly scars.
15–18	Your grandparent survived the attack on Constantinople and found riches in the plunder of the Byzantine hinterlands. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
19–20	Your grandparent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Your Parent's History 954–969

Year 954

England: Eiríkur Bloodaxe, Northumbria's Norse king for the past two years, was expelled from his capital in York. While fleeing from his defeat at the Battle of Stainmore, Eiríkur was killed by traitorous allies—the earls Osulf of Bernicia and Maccus. This marked the end of Norse power in Jorvik and Northumbria.

Year 954 Events

D20	Events
1–12	Your parent was not involved in these events.
13–15	Your parent was involved in the conspiracy and betrayed Eiríkur Bloodaxe. Gain **Intrigue +10%**.
16–19	Your parent fought to protect Eiríkur Bloodaxe and barely escaped with their life. Gain **Hate (English)** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.
20	Your parent died alongside Eiríkur Bloodaxe with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 955

A stranger visited several of the farms in the region while the men were away raiding. Though few women would admit the connection, several children were born nine months later. Were you one of them?

Year 955 Events

D20	Events
1–14	You were not one of them.
15–16	You were one of them. Since you found out, the desire to find your real father has burned strong within your heart.
17–19	You were one of them. The stranger was an outlaw who still lives in hiding.
20	You were one of them. People say the stranger was in fact not human, but something else from beyond the world of humans. Add **+1D6% to one Mythic skill**.

Year 956–957

Óláfur the Peacock, son of the powerful *goði* Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson, went abroad with his closest allies to seek fortune. They set sail for Norway, where they gained great honor at the king's court. Óláfur then sailed to Ireland to search for his grandfather. He learned that his grandmother had been abducted during a Viking raid in Ireland and later revealed herself to be an Irish princess named Melkorka. After being lost at sea, they arrived in Ireland, far from the Norse-ruled areas. Their ship was attacked by local Irishmen, but luckily, Óláfur's grandfather, King Myrkjartan, was among them. Óláfur and his crew stayed with Myrkjartan for many months but departed when his grandfather's offer to make him his heir angered the king's sons. Finally returning to Iceland the next year, Óláfur and his allies brought great wealth with them.

Year 956–957 Events

D20	Events
1–10	Your parent did not take part in these travels.
11–15	Your parent found great honor in the Norwegian royal court. Gain **Honor** passion and **Loyalty (Norway)** passion.
16–19	Your parent made grave enemies of the Irish princes. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
20	Your parent returned from these journeys with extraordinary wealth. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 959

To force conversion to Christianity, followers of the Norwegian king, Haakon the Good, waged a campaign of destruction against temples in Iceland dedicated to Norse gods. This failed to gain support in Iceland and instead spurred the construction of more pagan temples in many parts of the country.

Year 959 Events

D20	Events
1–2	Your parent converted to Christianity, causing much tension within the extended family.
3–8	Your parent built a temple dedicated to Þór. Gain the skill **Worship (Þór) +1D6%**.
9–13	Your parent built a temple dedicated to Freyr. Gain the skill **Worship (Freyr) +1D6%**.
14–17	Your parent built a temple dedicated to Óðinn. Gain **+1D6% to Worship (Óðinn)**.
18–19	Your parent built a temple dedicated to a less commonly worshipped god. Gain **+1D6% to Worship (other god of your choice)**.
20	Your parent became a temple priest. Gain **Reputation +1D3%** and **+1D6% to Worship (god of your choice)**.

Year 964

A renowned seeress named Þórdís traveled through your parent's land and stayed at the family house for several days. One evening during her visit, while sitting on her high chair with her female followers chanting and dancing around her, the old woman made a prophecy about your family.

Year 964 Events

D20	Prophecy and Event
1–4	A mythic being would visit the farm soon (see **Mythic Visit** in the following section).
5–8	Your grandparent was not resting in peace in their grave and would soon bring ruin to this region (see **Grandparent's *Draugur*** in the following section).
9	It would be unlucky to go on raids that year, so your parent stayed home and survived.
10	Danger from the west would come to the farm. Later that year, a polar bear attacked your parent while they were collecting driftwood by the shore. Because of the prophecy, your parent was prepared. They survived the attack and slayed the fearsome beast.
11–12	Your parent would be betrayed by someone close to them. Later that year, they were betrayed by their half-brother Ólafur, who conspired with old enemies to have your parent ambushed and killed. Gain **Hate (Uncle Ólafur)**.
13–14	A great injustice would strike. Later that year, your older sibling was outlawed for a crime they insisted they did not commit. As a result, they went into hiding in the highlands.
15–16	Building a temple at the farm dedicated to a different god would bring prosperity. Your parent then destroyed the small temple altar built by your grandparent and constructed a new one. **After assigning Worship skills (page 38), deduct 15 from one god and add +10 to another.**
17–18	Love would take someone away. A few months later, your sibling disappeared. A few people reported seeing them entering a rocky hill with an attractive stranger who was thought to be one of the hidden folk.
19–20	The young child (you) would bring ruin to the family. After that, your parents arranged for you to be fostered by a distant cousin, and they have since avoided contact with you. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.

Mythic Visit

A mythical being offered a blessing to your parent's farm in exchange for regular offerings but threatened a curse if the offer was not accepted. Only later did they realize that the effects of their choice also followed their offspring. What mythical being was that?

Mythic Visit Results

D20	Events
1–10	Your parent accepted the offer. Gain **+15% to Farm**, but you must make an offering of a cow or horse every season.
11–20	Your parent rejected the offer, insisting upon maintaining their dedication to the family's current deity. Gain **Worship (god of your choice)**. You and your family have a **–15% penalty to Farm** until the mythical being is slain or banished.

Grandparent's Draugur

Your parent opened the grave mound of your grandparent and fought their restless undead form (see ***Draugur***, pages 269–270).

Fight of the Grandparent's Draugur

D20	Events
1–10	Your parent destroyed the *draugur*, putting your grandparent's soul to rest.
11–18	Just before being destroyed, the *draugur* cursed your parent. Later that year, your parent died.
19–20	Your parent was killed by the *draugur*. It still haunts the countryside, killing those unlucky enough to cross its path. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 965

Assemblies often required participants to travel long distances near enemy lands. When a battle prevented a Spring Assembly from conducting its sessions, it was decided at the *Alþing* to change these requirements. As a result, people could engage in lawsuits without the dangers of long travel.

The Battle at Assembly Bay

D20	Event
1–9	Your parent was not present at this battle.
10–13	Your parent fought in this battle and survived.
14–19	Your parent was wounded honorably in battle. Gain **Honor** passion.
20	Your parent died with great glory in battle. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Division of Iceland Into Quarters

D20	Event
1–8	Your parent was not part of these discussions.
9–12	Your parent was against the division and made enemies among the proponents.
13–19	Your parent was at the courts and took part in the agreement. Gain **Honor** passion.
20	Your parent played a critical role in mediating the agreement. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Your History 970–977

Year 971

Great winter of famine.

Year 971 Events

D20	You nearly starved to death, but were kept alive when…
1–3	You engaged in the murder and burning of enemies. Gain **Hate (another family)**.
4–6	You stole food. Gain **Hate (another family)**.
7–9	You were affected by the sacrifices of your family. Gain **Love (family) +20%**.
10–12	You foraged for food, eating ravens and foxes. Gain **+10% to Survival**.
13–15	You experienced the love of another. Gain **Love (individual)**.
16–17	You were fed by your *goði*. Gain **Loyalty *(goði)***.
18–19	You prepared well for the winter. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
20	You had the old and helpless killed and thrown off the cliffs. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 973

A traveling Christian missionary priest who was seeking new converts visited the farms in your region.

Year 973 Events

D20	Events
1–9	You joined the others in ignoring the priest's teachings.
10–15	You composed mocking poetry about the priest that was highly entertaining to your kinsfolk. Gain **+10% to Skaldic Poetry**.
16–20	You listened to the priest's words. Gain **+1D6% to Worship (Christ)** if you took them to heart, or **+1D6% to Worship (Norse god of your choice)** if your belief in the old gods is stronger.

Year 974

On a dark winter night, someone set fire to the *goði's* hall and the nearby temple to the god Freyr, burning it to the ground. The *goði* and their allies, including your family, went to war against a neighboring *goði* and their followers. A bloody feud followed until a settlement was reached, in spite of the accused still claiming to be innocent.

Year 974 Events

D20	Event
1–2	You were away at the time and did not fight in these battles.
3–12	That night, you saw a person riding away into the night just as the fire started. Your only chance to catch them was by riding the horse the ***goði*** had dedicated to Freyr. Gain **+15% to Ride** but lose **–1D4% to Worship (Freyr)** if you decided to ride the horse and set out in pursuit, or gain **+1D6% to Worship (Freyr)** if you chose not to ride the horse and killed another person who attempted to ride it.
13–20	You fought with bravery alongside your *goði*. Gain **Loyalty *(goði)*** and **Reputation +1D3%**.

Year 975

Þorsteinn, son of renowned warrior poet Egill Skallagrímsson, had a series of feuds over cattle grazing lands with Steinar, son of one of his father's friends, Önundur Ánason. Tensions between the two families lead to the revenge murders of slaves and kinfolk and threatened to escalate into an open blood feud.

Year 975 Events

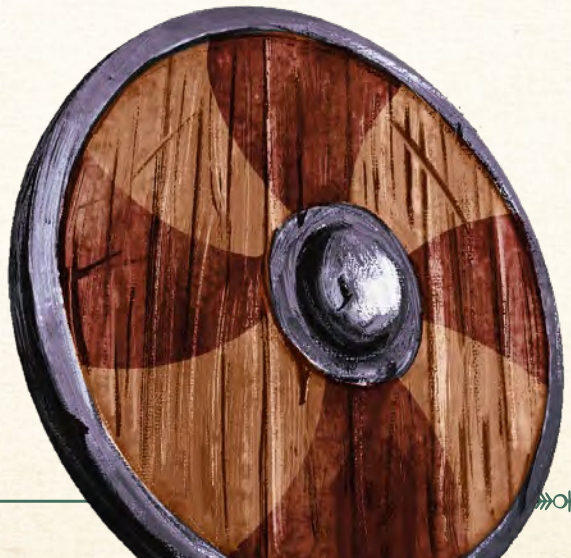
D20	Event
1–7	You were not involved in these events.
8–12	You took part in the killings on the side of Egill Skallagrímsson. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
13–17	You took part in the killings on the side of Steinar Önundursson. Gain **Reputation +1D3%**.
18–20	You rode to the assembly with Egill Skallagrímsson's force of 80 fighters, ensuring that Egill arbitrated the case, thus sparing his son Þorsteinn from outlawry. Gain **Honor** passion and **Reputation +1D6%**.

Year 976

Infamous outlaw to some, tragic hero to others, Gísli Súrsson was killed after living in hiding for 13 years. Gísli had been outlawed for the killing of his brother-in-law Þorgrímur, after dreams indicated Þorgrímur was the killer of Gísli's other brother-in-law, Vésteinn. Börkur the Stout, Þorgrímur's brother, had offered 300 silver pieces to anyone who would track down Gísli, but none could find him for many years. In the last day of summer of 976, a man named Eyjolfur the Grey, along with a band of 14 people, tracked Gísli down and killed him, thus claiming the bounty offered by Börkur.

Year 976 Events

D20	Event
1–9	You were not involved in the events surrounding Gísli's death.
10–14	Gísli Surlusson had once saved your life. Gain **Hate (Börkur the Stout)**.
15–16	Gísli was a friend, and you regarded him as an honorable and wise man. Gain **Hate (Börkur the Stout)**.
17–18	Despite Gísli being a friend of your family, one of your close family members took money to join the group that attacked and killed Gísli. Gain **Hate (Cousin Sturla)**.
19–20	Gísli Surlusson was a friend of the family. You fought bravely alongside Gísli and barely escaped with your life, taking Gísli's young son with you. Börkur and his group are now after you to finish the job. Gain **+10% to Battle** and **+1D3% to Reputation**.



Year 977

Somewhere near your farm, you encounter something grisly and mysterious...

Year 977 Events

D20	Item
1–4	Three men, lying dead next to one another in a lava field.
5–9	A small fishing boat drifted ashore. Onboard were three dead people: a man, a woman, and a child.
10–14	A camp that appeared to have been hastily abandoned. There was a large blood stain on the ground, but no bodies.
15–20	A spooked horse galloped by your farm. Its fur was stained with blood, but the horse was not wounded, and it was carrying a saddlebag.

Roll 1D20 to find out what the horse was carrying.

Things Found on a Horse

D20	Item
1	A finely crafted *hnefatafl* board game, with pieces sculpted from whale bone. The board's underside has an engraved rune-bind for good luck. The user gains **Game +20%** when using this set and **Battle +20%** when strategizing with this set before a battle.
3	A steering oar, ornately carved with a representation of the god Njörður. Gain **+15%** to **Boat** when using the oar.
2	Three obsidian arrowheads, each engraved with a bind-rune. Arrows fashioned with these arrowheads deal **+1 damage**. The arrowheads shatter if an attack roll is fumbled.
4	An exceptionally well-made figure of the god Þor, seated on a throne and holding his hammer. Gain a bonus of **+1D6%** to **Worship (Þór)** when holding this figure while saying your prayers.
5	A shield covered in white leather. A depiction of a unique, mysterious beast has been carved into the leather with a hot iron. What does this beast look like? When used in combat, this shield has 18 HP and deals +1 damage.
6	A leather pouch containing bone fragments and a small carving knife. Some of the bones have runes carved on them. By studying these runes, a runemaster gains +20% bonus when attempting to learn new runes (can be used for two different runes in this way).
7	A horn dice cup containing two exceptionally well-crafted bone dice. **Second Sight** reveals these dice to be cursed with bad luck, modifying the **Game** skill by **–40%** for anyone using them.
8	A strand of brightly colored glass beads worth 50 *vaðmál*.
9	A sunstone, used as a navigation tool for seafaring. Gain **+20%** to **Navigate**. A fumble result while wearing the sunstone means it has become cloudy and loses any utility as a navigation aid.
10	Small ingots of gold worth 50 *vaðmál*.
11	The horn of a narwhal worth 50 *vaðmál*.
12	A large bundle of driftwood worth 50 *vaðmál*.
13	A strange sharpening stone. **Myth Lore** reveals it is of hidden folk origin. Weapons sharpened with it gain **+1 damage**. There is a 20% chance that the stone will break after each use.
14	Finely made shoes. **Myth Lore** reveals them to be of hidden folk origin. When worn, gain **+20%** to **Move Quietly**.
15	A polar bear pelt with head intact, designed to be worn for warmth. Adds **+2 armor points** to protected hit locations.
16	A map drawn on a piece of leather, showing a large landmass to the west of Iceland. Gain **+20%** to **Navigate** when sailing the seas west of Iceland.
17	A large piece of crystal that changes color depending on how the sun strikes it. **Myth Lore** reveals this is a piece of Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge. Looking through the crystal gives **+20%** to **Second Sight**.
18	An exceptionally fine battle axe. The runes carved on the handle spell the name of Haakon Sigurdsson, King of Norway. It is worth three times the price of a common similar weapon but is likely worth much more if returned to the king.
19	A healing stone (see **Healing Stones**, page 199).
20	Roll twice on this table.

Step 4: Characteristics

YOU SHALL DECIDE YOUR COURSE YOURSELF, AS YOU ICELANDERS USUALLY INTEND TO HAVE YOUR WAY IN MOST THINGS.
—Norwegian King Olaf Tryggvason, in The Saga of the People of Laxárdal

Every hero is defined by seven characteristics that define how strong, fast, clever, or healthy they are. These characteristics form the basis for most aspects in defining your hero, such as attributes and skills.

Before calculating the characteristics, the following section explains what each represents.

Strength (STR)

Strength (STR) represents physical strength: how much one can lift, how hard one can hit, and so on. It helps determine your hero's damage modifier, the amount of encumbrance your hero can carry and still function normally, what weapons can be used, and influences the starting value for Agility-based skills (page 33–34). STR is used for tests of physical strength.

As explained in **Chapter 17: Between Adventures**, STR can be increased through training and research, but only up to the species maximum of 21. See pages 283–284 for more information.

Constitution (CON)

Constitution (CON) is the measure of the health and hardiness of your hero. It is a component in determining hit points and healing rate (see pages 31–32). The CON of your hero is used to maintain consciousness when gravely wounded, to determine resistance to disease and poison, and helps determine the amount of encumbrance your hero can carry and still function normally.

As explained in **Chapter 17: Between Adventures** (see pages 283–284), CON can be increased through training and research, but only up to the species maximum of 21.

Size (SIZ)

Size (SIZ) measures the mass of your hero. It affects their ability to inflict and absorb damage. SIZ is a component in determining hit points and damage modifier as greater mass helps increase the force of a blow.

The **Hero Sizes** table (following) provides approximate values for height and weight of a hero but are not intended to be restrictive. These are suggested ranges. You can define your hero's actual height and/or weight as higher or lower than these ranges, though generally, increasing one should result in a corresponding decrease of the other.

As explained in **Chapter 17: Between Adventures**, SIZ cannot be increased through training but may increase through other means. As mentioned earlier, increases to SIZ do not necessarily indicate a hero becomes taller—it might indicate greater muscle mass or weight.

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Example: Rolling to determine his family history creates an exciting background for Njáll, a lineage he can draw strength from and be proud to continue. Looking at the results of the rolls (and with some assistance from the gamemaster), Njáll's player devises the following background for their hero.

Grandparent

Njáll's paternal grandmother was Mugain. She had been captured during a raid in Ireland and taken to Iceland as a thrall. Njáll's grandfather, a powerful and wealthy man, fell in love with her, and a marriage was arranged. Married to a freeman, she became a free woman. The year after getting married, she joined her husband's raiding party to Ireland, serving as a guide and interpreter. They returned to Iceland with good plunder, and she also proved herself to be a skilled fighter.

Along with Njáll's grandfather, she was present at the *Alþing* when the National Assembly was founded. Years later, she saved many of their kinsfolk's lives thanks to her prophetic dreams that allowed people to get to safety just before the great earthquake struck.

Father

Njáll's father was Þórólfur Gold-Beard. As a young man, he went pillaging abroad and joined the forces of Earl Osulf of Bernicia as a hired warrior fighting against King Eiríkur Bloodaxe of Northumbria. He personally took part in the conspiracy to slay the king.

On a dark winter night, when the people of Salmon Valley gather around the fire, some gossip that Þórólfur's new wife was visited by a handsome stranger while her husband was abroad. The stranger was never seen again, and some say he was one of the hidden people. Njáll was born not a year after that. Þórólfur accepted the boy into the family and named him, but he and his son Njáll would never become close.

When Þórólfur finally settled back in Iceland for good, after many summers of plundering, he built a small temple to Freyr on his land and became a devout worshipper. His farm prospered, and he was blessed with more children, most of them surviving to become adults.

The years of prosperity came to an end when some foul creature began haunting the region, slaying most of Þórólfur's animals and even some of his slaves. Exasperated, Þórólfur called for a seeress. The old woman saw in her trance that the scourge was, in fact, Þórólfur's own father, who had risen from his grave. Þórólfur and a few allies entered his father's grave and destroyed the restless dead. After that day, Þórólfur never seemed the same, as he was forever terrified of the dark, seeing in it his father's undead eyes.

Þórólfur fought in the *Alþing* battles of 965 and survived despite being wounded. Later that summer, he was part of the court proceedings that resulted in the agreement to divide the country into quarters, helping ensure that his *goði*, who had always been a close ally of the family, had an advantageous position in the agreement.

Njáll

The winter of 971 was very harsh. Even after sacrifices were made, the gods didn't spare the people from the famine. Njáll and his family managed to survive mainly by eating ravens and foxes. During these challenging times, he learned much about foraging and living from the meager bounty of the land.

In 974, Njáll fought with bravery alongside his *goði* when the local temple to Freyr was burned to the ground. A bloody feud followed in which many were forced to take sides and more than a few were killed.

In 975, Njáll was involved in the feud between the families of the warrior poet Egill Skallagrímsson and that of Önundur Ánason. As Þorsteinn Egilsson was a friend with whom Njáll had fought alongside in the past, Njáll didn't hesitate when he was summoned to help in the battles between the families and their allies.

Recently, Njáll encountered a spooked, riderless horse with bloodstained fur galloping through his land. Inside the horse's saddlebag, he found a strange piece of colored glass. To his astonishment, looking through the glass revealed land features and spirits normally hidden from mortal eyes. Njáll showed the glass piece to an old hermit living in the mountains who was said to have magical talents. The old man told him that this was a piece of the Bifröst, the rainbow bridge. He also warned Njáll that much danger would follow, as many from this world and beyond would like to take this magical piece for themselves.

We now know Njáll's past and have a good idea of the direction his life is taking. His current skill and passion bonuses are:

- Loyalty (Ireland)
- Intrigue 15%
- Prophecy 10%
- Worship (Freyr) 6%
- Honor 90%
- Survival 25%
- Loyalty (*Goði*) 70%

Njáll also starts with a bonus to Reputation based on the following:

- Grandmother was a slave captured during a raid: +1%
- Grandmother's prophetic dreams saved the extended family from the volcanic eruptions +3%
- Fought alongside the *goði* when the temple to Freyr was burned and its worshippers attacked: +2%

Hero Sizes

SIZ	Kg.	Lbs.	Cm.	Ft./In.
1	0.1–5	0.2–11	1–30	0'3"–1'
2	6–11	12–24	31–60	1'1"–2'
3	12–17	25–37	61–90	2'1"–3'
4	18–24	38–53	91–105	3'1"–3'6"
5	25–35	54–77	106–120	3'7"–3'11"
6	36–41	78–90	121–135	4'–4'5"
7	42–49	91–108	136–150	4'6"–4'11"
8	50–54	109–119	151–155	5'–5'1
9	55–58	120–128	156–160	5'2"–5'3"
10	59–64	129–141	161–165	5'4"–5'5"
11	65–70	142–154	166–170	5'6"–5'7"
12	71–75	155–165	171–174	5'8"
13	76–80	166–176	175–178	5'9"–5'10"
14	81–85	177–187	179–182	5'11"–6'
15	86–90	188–198	183–186	6'1"
16	91–95	199–209	187–190	6'2"
17	96–100	210–220	191–194	6'3"–6'4"
18	101–115	221–253	195–198	6'5"–6'6"
19	116–130	254–286	199–202	6'7"–6'8"
20	131–145	287–319	203–206	6'9"
21	146–160	320–352	207–210	6'10"–6'11"

Dexterity (DEX)

Dexterity (DEX) is the measure of how fast and accurately your hero can perform different functions, such as fighting, dodging, or other athletic activities.

As explained in **Chapter 17: Between Adventures** (see pages 283–284), DEX can be increased through training and research, but only up to the limit of the hero's initial DEX×1.5 or the species maximum of 21, whichever is lower.

Intelligence (INT)

Intelligence (INT) is a measure of your hero's ability to deal with abstractions and memorization. It is an important characteristic modifier for Knowledge skills. Heroes with lower INT scores are not necessarily stupid, but they are likely to be constrained in how creatively they can employ their wits.

INT cannot be increased through training and research.

Power (POW) and Wyrd

Power (POW) is a measure of your hero's soul, spirit, inner drive, and ability to work magic. A high POW shows the favor of the gods and integration with the universe; a low POW shows proportionately less. When casting magic, your POW is often pitted against others' POW to determine if your spells have their desired effect. POW cannot be increased.

Closely related to POW is **Wyrd**, the ability to influence one's fate. An individual is born with a finite amount of **Wyrd**, which can be used to bring about moments of extraordinary luck. Rarely can **Wyrd** be increased. By spending 1 permanent point of POW, the player can turn a failed ability roll into a normal success (see page 105).

A hero who has depleted all their POW has run out of **Wyrd**. They have lived through their fate and are close to dying. Such luckless individuals are often shunned by others, as their lucklessness will undoubtedly attract disaster and death.

Charisma (CHA)

Charisma (CHA) is the measure of leadership and strength of personality. This is the ability to say, "Follow me!" and find oneself leading a charge. It is more than mere appearance and should not be mistaken for beauty. It helps determine the starting bonus for Communication skills (see pages 33–34).

CHA can be raised by a variety of means, but only up to the species maximum of 21.

Calculating Characteristics

Each characteristic has a numerical value to determine how potent it is. Heroes typically have STR, CON, DEX, POW, and CHA between 3 and 18 (3D6), and SIZ and INT between 8 and 18 (2D6+6). When creating characters, these values are usually determined by rolling dice.

Here are three different options for rolling characteristics. The gamemaster and players must decide which method to use in their game. However, it is recommended that all heroes are created using the same system.

- **Random Method:** Roll 3D6 for all characteristics except INT and SIZ; for those characteristics, roll 2D6+6.
- **Random But Assigned Method:** As per the random method, except the players may exchange any individual dice rolls between characteristics. INT and SIZ are assigned only two dice rolls each, as they start with +6. No characteristic can exceed 18 or be less than 3 (8 in the case of INT or SIZ).
- **Deliberate Method:** Allot a total of 90 points among your character's seven characteristics. INT and SIZ must have a minimum of 8 points each. All other characteristics must be at least 6 each. No characteristic can exceed 18.

EXAMPLE OF THE RANDOM BUT ASSIGNED METHOD

It is time to roll up Njáll's characteristics. The player rolls 3D6 five times and gets the results 10,13, 14, 7, and 11. They choose to assign 14 to STR, 13 to DEX, 10 to CON, 11 to POW, and 7 to CHA. They then roll 2D6+6 twice and roll 14 and 18. They assign 18 to SIZ and 14 to INT.

Njáll's characteristics are:

- **STR 14** – Very good. He is strong.
- **CON 10** – The weaker side of average.
- **SIZ 18** – Njáll is a large man. He is about 195 cm tall (6'5") and weighs about 105 kilos (240 lbs.).
- **DEX 13** – Faster than the average.
- **INT 14** – Very good. He is smart.
- **POW 11** – Perfectly average. He has a good amount of *Wyrd* to use.
- **CHA 7** – He is not a charismatic man and not so good at persuading others.

Step 5: Attributes

THE SLEEPING MAN SELDOM GAINS VICTORY.
—The Saga of the People of Vopnafjord

Attributes are qualities numerically derived from the values of certain characteristics. Attributes include movement rate, magic points, hit points, healing rate, damage modifier, maximum encumbrance, and skill category modifiers.

Movement Rate (MOV)

Movement (MOV) is the same for every human (roughly equalling 10 meters per combat round walking or 30 meters running) and does not need to be calculated. All heroes have a base movement rate (MOV) of 10 unless some injury or condition modifies this.

Magic Points

A hero's **magic points** equal their current POW. Situations may result in magic points higher or lower than the POW number. Magic points are expended to activate spells. A hero using magic points to cast spells does not deplete their POW.

A hero reaching 0 magic points falls unconscious and does not wake up until they regain at least 1 magic point. These return naturally. All heroes regain magic points at the rate of ¼ of their current POW every six hours (round up)—your hero can regain all lost magic points in 24 hours.

If a more specific recovery rate is desired, the gamemaster may use the rate of 1/24 of your hero's magic points recovered per hour (rounded up).

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has POW of 11, giving him 11 magic points. Dividing his total magic points by 4 means that Njáll regains 2.75 magic points per six hours. To keep it simple, round it up in favor of the hero, so it would be 3 points per six hours.*

Hit Points

Hit points represent how much damage your hero withstands before unconsciousness or death. The term refers to the total hit points of your hero as well as their hit points per body location.

- Total hit points are lost when your hero takes damage to an unspecified area of the body, for example, burns covering large areas, poison, or other injuries.
- Hit points per body location are reduced when injuries are inflicted upon your hero's body in a specific part of the body, such as a head, chest, abdomen, or a limb.

A hero's hit points are equal to their CON, modified by SIZ and POW. The reason for the first is obvious: the larger your hero is, the more damage they can withstand before taking a mortal wound. Thus, an increase in SIZ equals an increase in hit points. POW also represents willpower and the favor of the gods, useful in many ways, particularly in avoiding death.

See the **Hit Point Modifiers** table to determine these modifiers.

Hit Point Modifiers

Characteristic	SIZ	POW
01–04	−2	−1
05–08	−1	–
09–12	–	–
13–16	+1	–
17–20	+2	+1
21–24	+3	+2
25–28	+4	+3
Each +4	+1	+1

Hit points must be entered on the hero sheet (pages 42–43) for each hit location. The amount of damage each hit location can sustain is determined in the **Hit Locations** table. It distributes hit points per hit location for all humanoids.

Whenever your hero takes damage, deduct the amount from both the hit points of the specific body location and from the hero's total hit point pool. A hero dies when their total hit points are reduced to 0.

If your hero loses all their hit points in a location, that location is considered useless. The hit points of a hit location can become a negative number. If the negative number is large enough, that location may be maimed or even severed!

Hit Locations

Hit Location	1–6	7–9	10–12	13–15	16–18	19–21	Each +3
Each Leg	2	3	4	5	6	7	+1
Abdomen	2	3	4	5	6	7	+1
Chest	3	4	5	6	7	8	+1
Each Arm	1	2	3	4	5	6	+1
Head	2	3	4	5	6	7	+1

Hit points from the various hit locations can add up to more than the total hit points of your hero. However, when your hero has taken sufficient damage to surpass their total hit points, they will die at the end of the combat round unless healed to a positive hit point total when the round ends. It is possible that your hero can still die by bleeding to death, going into shock, etc., even though no area of their body is completely disabled.

As a hit location heals, your hero's total hit points recover at the same rate, up to their hit point total.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's CON is 10. His SIZ of 18 gives him a bonus of +2 hit points. His POW of 11 gives him no bonuses. That means he has 12 hit points. This is average but a bit low for a person who is regularly getting into fights. He will need to be careful in combat and make sure he is carrying his shield whenever he goes into battle.*

Healing Rate

Natural healing from wounds and injuries is based on the hero's **healing rate**. Depending on the severity of the injury (page 68), the healing rate determines how many hit points are recovered in each hit location at the end of each week through natural healing.

Healing Rate

CON	Healing Rate
1–6	1
7–12	2
13–18	3
Each +6 points	Additional +1

If your hero has multiple wounds in the same hit location, points restored from healing rate are spread evenly among those wounds, with any additional points going to the lightest injury

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's CON is 10, on the weaker side of average. Under normal circumstances, he has a healing rate of 2 points per week.*

Damage Modifier

The modifier for damage a hero inflicts when physically striking or applying force is known as their **damage modifier (dm)**. This is an extra die roll, added to or subtracted from the damage inflicted by a weapon or natural attack such as claw, bite, kick, etc. If a negative damage modifier takes a weapon's damage to 0 or below, no damage is inflicted. Generally, most hand-to-hand attacks use the full damage modifier (+dm), while thrown weapons use half (+½dm)

Add your hero's STR and SIZ together and consult the **Damage Modifier** table:

Damage Modifier

STR + SIZ	Damage Modifier
01–12	−1D4
13–24	0
25–32	+1D4
33–40	+1D6
41–56	+2D6
Each +16 points	Additional +1D6

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's STR plus SIZ is 32, giving him +1D4 additional damage to his weapon use. This is a good modifier, as only exceptionally large and/or strong heroes get a larger modifier.*

Maximum Encumbrance (ENC)

The total amount of gear (such as weapons, armor, etc.) your hero can carry or wear while functioning normally is measured in **encumbrance points (ENC)**. This value, ENC, is a nonspecific representation of the relative bulk and weight of an item or its ease of carrying.

Your hero can carry ENC up to the average of their STR and CON, rounded up, a value called **maximum encumbrance**. See pages 68–69 for more information.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's STR is 14 and his CON is 10, averaging to 12. That is the maximum encumbrance he can carry for a prolonged period without penalty.*

Starting Reputation

The starting **Reputation** for a hero depends on their family history. Each hero starts with a Reputation of 5% simply by being a member of a community under a *goði*.

A hero might get a Reputation bonus due to their family history. Reputation is described further on pages 180–182.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's Reputation equals 5% plus the 6% from his family history. These total 11%, meaning that Njáll is not yet well known, but he is beginning to make a name for himself across Iceland.*

Starting Status

Status is a measure of social importance and starts at 25% for all heroes, indicating that they are small householders at the beginning of their adventuring career. As the heroes earn renown for their deeds and accumulate wealth, their Status may increase, opening new possibilities for them in Icelandic society. As a hero's standing in Icelandic society improves, so does their Status score. Status is described further on pages 182–183.

Step 6: Skills

WHAT IS TESTED IS KNOWN.
—Grettir, in The Saga of Grettir the Strong

While heroes successfully perform routine actions in normal conditions, in stressful situations, the gamemaster may call for **skill rolls** to see if a hero can successfully use a specific skill to perform a desired activity or achieve a desired goal. Any activity can be said to call for some use of skill, but certain skills are fundamental and require special attention and description.

Skills are expressed as a percentage chance of success; however, skills can be higher than 100%.

Skill Category Modifiers

In addition to the base chances common to every human, your hero's skills may be increased or decreased by their **skill category modifiers**. These simulate the natural ability or raw aptitude with groups of related skills. It is possible for skill category modifiers to add or subtract percentiles from skills—or to leave them unchanged.

Skill category modifiers may change if the characteristics from which they are derived also change.

Skill category modifiers also affect **experience rolls**, simulating the benefits of natural abilities when trying to improve a skill. This is explained on pages 281–282.

To determine each skill category modifier, refer to each applicable characteristic on the **Skill Category Modifier** table (following), combining them for the final modifier, whether a bonus or penalty. The resulting value is the final skill category modifier and should be written on the hero sheet.

- **Agility skills** represent general bodily effort and benefit from DEX, STR, POW and are hindered by excess SIZ.
- **Communication skills** impart a message or feeling from one person to another and benefit from high CHA, INT, and POW.
- **Knowledge skills** require both formal knowledge and individual judgment and benefit from INT and POW.
- **Manipulation** and **Weapons skills** require good hand-eye coordination and represent both natural and trained abilities. They benefit from DEX, STR, INT, and POW.
- **Mythic skills** let the users manipulate magical energies to change the world and, as such, benefit from POW and CHA.
- **Perception skills** are used to receive and understand information from the world outside the self and benefit from INT and POW.
- **Stealth skills** shield the user from detection by others and benefit from DEX and STR but are hindered by high SIZ and POW.

Once determined, add the skill category modifiers to the base chances for the skills listed on the hero sheet (see pages 42–43) which have a base chance greater than zero. Some skills will also be increased later in hero creation.

The lowest value a skill can have is 00%, which represents no chance of success. A skill never has a minus value; if a modifier would make a skill start below 00%, write in 00%.

A hero's skill category modifiers do not apply to a skill with a 00% base chance until they have gained the ability, either through spirit animal or homeland bonuses, allocating skill points to it, or through training.

Skill Category Modifiers

Skill Category	Char.	1–4	5–8	9–12	13–16	17–20	Each +4
Agility	STR	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
	SIZ	+5%	—	—	—	−5%	−5%
	DEX	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	POW	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
Communication	INT	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
	POW	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
	CHA	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
Knowledge	INT	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	POW	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
Manipulation and Weapons	STR	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
	DEX	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	INT	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	POW	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
Mythic	POW	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	CHA	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
Perception	INT	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	POW	−5%	—	—	—	+5%	+5%
Stealth	SIZ	+10%	+5%	—	−5%	−10%	−5%
	DEX	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	INT	−10%	−5%	—	+5%	+10%	+5%
	POW	+5%	—	—	—	−5%	−5%

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's STR is 14, SIZ is 18, DEX is 13, INT is 14, POW is 11, and his CHA is 7. Checking the table above against Njáll's characteristics, we find the following:*

- *His Agility skill category modifier is +0%, average.*
- *His Communication skill category modifier is –5%, not too bad, but he will find that he sometimes has trouble communicating well with others and getting his point across.*
- *His Knowledge skill category modifier is +5%. He's a bit smarter than many, but it's already becoming clear that he's not going to be a scholarly type of hero.*
- *His Manipulation and Weapons skill category modifiers are +10%, giving a modest bonus to most physical and combat-oriented skills.*
- *His Mythic skill category modifier is 0%, meaning that he is unlikely to perform many magical abilities or pursue a career as a runemaster.*
- *His Perception skill category modifier is +5%. He is more perceptive than most, which is useful at home and when going Viking abroad.*
- *His Stealth skill category modifier is 0%, not good or bad. He's not going to be very good at sneaking around, but someone of his size and demeanor doesn't generally think of hiding and moving quietly as their first option.*

Skill Base Chance

The **base chance** for a given skill is expressed as a parenthetical value, such as (05) or (00). This is the likelihood an average person has when attempting to perform a skill for the first time without any training or additional aptitude (skill category modifier). Most skills have base chances. A few skills have a base chance derived from a characteristic, such as (DEX×3).

Add the base chance to the appropriate skill category modifiers. Then add any spirit animal and homeland skill bonuses, plus any personal interest skill bonuses. The result is the hero's current percentage in that skill.

Some skills, especially Knowledge and Mythic skills, have a base chance of 00%, or zero. The hero's skill category modifier does not apply to a skill with a base 00% chance until they have gained the ability at 01% or higher through a spirit animal, occupation, allocating skill points to it, or through training.

Skills listed on the hero sheet (pages 42–43) that have a box next to the skill rating can be improved during play, through experience, training, or research. Skills with no box can only be improved through training, research, or by extraordinary means.

Spirit Animal Skill Bonuses

"Many things now flit before my eyes", said he: "I see many animal fetches of Gunnar's bitter foes, and what is very strange is this, they seem to be mad with rage, and yet they fare without plan or purpose."
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

A hero's **spirit animal** (sometimes called a *fylgja*) is an expression of their self, an aspect of their soul. It can wander semi-autonomously but cannot act independently. It does not always follow but often precedes the person it is attached to as it looks into the future and foretells what is to be.

The spirit animal's type reflects the hero's personality. Study the characteristics of your hero and imagine the personality you would like them to have. Choose one of the options from the **Spirit Animal** table (page 35) or roll 1D6 for a random result. Pick one of the three spirit animal options corresponding to the result and add the corresponding bonus skill points to the listed skill category modifier.

Make sure you take note of the personality type and spirit animal on the spaces provided on the hero sheet.

Most people know, or at least have a strong suspicion of their spirit animal type. This knowledge comes from having seen that animal many times over, especially during childhood.

Spirit animals can be seen with a successful Second Sight roll. With a special success, it is possible to identify the individual animal if you have seen it before in or out of a dream.

Natural versions of these creatures are described on pages 265–266.

Homeland Skill Bonuses

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's player chooses to leave his personality type to luck. He rolls a 2, meaning Njáll's personality type is Steadfast, with a +20% bonus to Manipulation and Weapons skill category modifiers. Added to the previous modifier from his characteristics, the new total is +30% for each category. Looking at the associated list of spirit animals, the player chooses the gyrfalcon as Njáll's spirit animal.*

SKILL BASE CHANCES

Agility
Boat (05)
Climb (40)
Dodge (DEX×2)
Jump (DEX×3)
Ride (05)
Ski (10)
Swim (15)

Communication
Act (05)
Art (05)
Bargain (05)
Charm (15)
Dance (10)
Disguise (05)
Fast Talk (05)
Intimidate (15)
Intrigue (05)
Orate (10)
Sing (10)
Skaldic Poetry (10)
Speak Own Language (Norse) (50)
Speak Other Language (00)

Knowledge
Animal Lore (05)
Area Lore (Iceland) (20)
Area Lore (other) 00
Battle (10)
Customs (Norse 25/all others 00)
Evaluate (10)
Farm (30)
First Aid (10)
Game (15)
Herd (05)
Law (10)
Mineral Lore (05)
Myth Lore (10)
Navigate (20)
Plant Lore (05)
Read/Write (language) (00)
Shiphandling (00)
Survival (15)
Treat Disease (05)
Treat Poison (05)

Manipulation
Conceal (05)
Craft (specific craft) (10)
Devise (05)
Play Instrument (05)
Sleight (05)

Mythic
Go Under the Cloak (10)
Prophecy (05)
Rune Magic (00)
Second Sight (05)
Seiður Magic (00)
Worship (deity) (00)

Perception
Insight (20)
Listen (25)
Search (25)
Spot Hidden (25)
Track (05)

Stealth
Hide (10)
Move Quietly (10)

Melee Weapons
Atgeir (10)
Battle Axe (10)
Broadsword (10)
Quarterstaff (15)
Knife (15)
Long Axe (05)
Long Spear (15)
Sax (10)
Shield (15)

Missile Weapons
Bow (10)
Sling (5)
Thrown Axe (10)
Thrown Rock (15)

Natural Weapons
Fist (25)
Grapple (25)
Kick (15)

WHAT DO SKILL RATINGS MEAN?

These benchmarks may help to understand how skill percentage ratings define your hero:

- **Novice (25% or less):** A skill rating in this range suggests a largely untrained skill. The adage "knows enough to be dangerous" applies well here.
- **Amateur (26–50%):** Ratings in this range indicate some talent, rudimentary training, or dedicated dabbling in the skill.
- **Professional (51–75%):** At this rating, the hero can make a living using the skill.
- **Veteran (76–90%):** Skills in this range indicate advanced expertise.
- **Master (91%+):** Ratings of 91% or more indicate mastery of the skill.

If you want your hero to be useful in combat, it is recommended to take a weapon skill of 51% or higher. If your hero intends to be in the thick of combat regularly, it is suggested that your hero start with a weapon skill in the veteran range. Combat is deadly, and inexperienced fighters die quickly. If you want to play a largely non-combat hero, that's perfectly fine—just make sure you have some veteran warriors nearby to protect you when there is no alternative but violence.

Spirit Animals

D6	Spirit Animals	Personality Type	+20% Modifier to the…
1	Bear, bull, eagle	**Mighty:** Your hero attempts to solve problems first by means of physical force and brawn.	Agility skill category modifier
2	Beaver, gyrfalcon, seal	**Steadfast:** Your hero believes that technique, craft, and expertise are the secrets of success.	Manipulation skill category modifier
3	Cat, golden plover, raven	**Spiritual:** Your hero is attuned to the world of spirits, magic, and nature.	Mythic skill category modifier
4	Goose, horse, wolf	**Wanderer:** Your hero has a drive to know every corner of Iceland and of the world beyond.	Knowledge skill category modifier
5	Owl, snow fox, weasel	**Cunning:** Your hero first tries to outsmart an opponent to gain an advantage.	Perception and Stealth skill category modifiers
6	Arctic tern, dog, mouse	**Manipulative:** Your hero enjoys making decisions while persuading other people to carry out their work.	Communication skill category modifier

Iceland is a land of brave Viking warriors fighting to gain power and renown, mysterious runemasters wielding magical powers that can shape the land, great poets, and indispensable farmers. In fact, most people are a combination of all these roles and more.

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

Icelandic society is small and spread out, with no towns or villages. It lacks the conditions that allowed people in other parts of Europe to become specialized professionals in crafts and trade skills. In *Age of Vikings*, there are no professional blacksmiths or any specialized artisans able to make a living solely from their craft.

Choose a total of six skills among those listed below and add +25 points to each:

- Area Lore (Iceland)
- Boat
- Customs (Norse)
- Craft (any)
- Farm
- First Aid
- Language (Norse)
- Law
- Ride
- Survival
- Any two Weapon skills

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's player chooses six skills from the homeland skill bonuses (above), resulting in the list below. Each of those skills gains a bonus of +25%. The base chances for each skill have been included. Though his skill category modifiers are listed, they have not been added to the skills yet.*

Njáll has the following skills: *Area Lore (Iceland), Customs (Norse), Craft (Carpentry), First Aid, Shield, and Broadsword.*

Agility (+0%): *Ride 30%*
Knowledge (+5%): *Area Lore (Iceland) 40%, First Aid 35%*
Manipulation (+30%): *Bow 35%, Broadsword 75%., Craft (Carpentry) 65%, Shield 80%.*

From his family history, he also starts with Intrigue +15%, Prophecy +10%, Worship (Freyr) +6%, and Survival +25%.

RUNEMASTERS AND SEIÐKONA

These are individuals who have dedicated their lives to learning how to manipulate the magical energies of the world via the Rune Magic or *Seiður* Magic skills (both on page 92).

If you want to play *Age of Vikings* as a magic user, use the skill lists below when assigning homeland skill bonuses instead of the ones provided in in this chapter. Just as with the standard homeland skill bonuses, choose six of the skills listed below and give +25 points to each.

Rune Magic and *Seiður* Magic can only be performed by individuals with a skill of at least 25% in the respective skill.

Runemaster Homeland Skill Bonuses

- Area Lore (Iceland)
- Customs (Norse)
- Craft (carpentry or masonry)
- Language (Norse)
- Law
- Read/Write (runes)
- Go Under the Cloak
- Myth Lore
- *Skaldic* Poetry
- Rune Magic
- Second Sight
- Any one Weapon skill

Seiðkona Homeland Skill Bonuses

- Area Lore (Iceland)
- Customs (Norse)
- Dance
- First Aid
- Go Under the Cloak
- Language (Norse)
- Myth Lore
- Prophecy
- *Seiður* Magic
- Second Sight
- Sing
- Any one Weapon skill

MAGIC AND GENDER ROLES

Seiður magic, a type of shamanism in which the practitioner communes with spirits and powers of the land, is performed almost exclusively by women. Those women are known as "*seiðkona*" ("*seiður* woman"), and the best-known of them demand great respect as guests of honor when arriving at a farm or settlement. So closely associated is the figure of the *seiðkona* with *seiður* magic itself that any men who practice *seiður* are often seen as effeminate and cowardly.

Rune Magic, on the other hand, is closely associated with a man's role in society. It is, after all, the fierce god of war, Oðinn, who is believed to have given knowledge of the runes to mankind.

This does not preclude anyone from using either type of magic: Oðinn himself used *seiður* magic, and many women have knowledge of the runes.

Personal Skill Bonuses

Heroes also have skills they learn from personal choice, family tradition, or other opportunities. **Add +25% to any five skills on the hero sheet and +10% to six more skills of your choice, even if they have already been modified**. These bonuses cannot be stacked, however.

No skill may be raised to above 100% in this step. If your hero has a skill at 100% or greater through a combination of base chance, history, boons, skill category bonus, spirit animal skill bonuses, and homeland skill bonus, you cannot add additional personal skill bonuses to that skill.

If applying a personal skill bonus increases a skill beyond 100%, any benefit beyond 100% is discarded, and the skill is 100%. However, it is possible to increase skills beyond 100% with experience earned through gameplay; see page 282 for more information.

The same skill can be raised multiple times.

Mythic skills cannot be raised via personal skill bonuses unless the hero is a runemaster or *seiðkona*, or has the personality type Spiritual.

Unwanted points from Mythic skills can be transferred to other skills if the skills receiving points are not your hero's highest.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's player decides they want him to be a skilled warrior, so they pick Broadsword, Shield, and Ride. He has two remaining skills for a +25% bonus, and the player decides that Njáll is an experienced sailor, so they add +25% to Boat and +25% to Shiphandling.*

*For the six skills gaining a +10% bonus, the player picks Bow, Navigation, Farm, Law, **Skaldic** Poetry, and Track. After allocating Njáll's personal skill points and adding his skill category modifiers,*

Njáll's skills are:
Agility (+0%): *Ride 55%, Boat 30%*
Communication (–5%): *Intrigue 20%, Skaldic Poetry 30%*
Knowledge (+5%): *Area Lore (Iceland) 40%, Farm 20%, First Aid 35%, Law 20%, Navigate 20%, Survival 25%, Shiphandling 25%*
Manipulation (+30%): *Bow 35%, Broadsword 75%, Craft (Carpentry) 65%, Shield 80%*
Mythic (0%): *Prophecy 15%, Worship (Freyr) 6%*
Perception (+5%): *Track 15%*
Stealth (0%): —

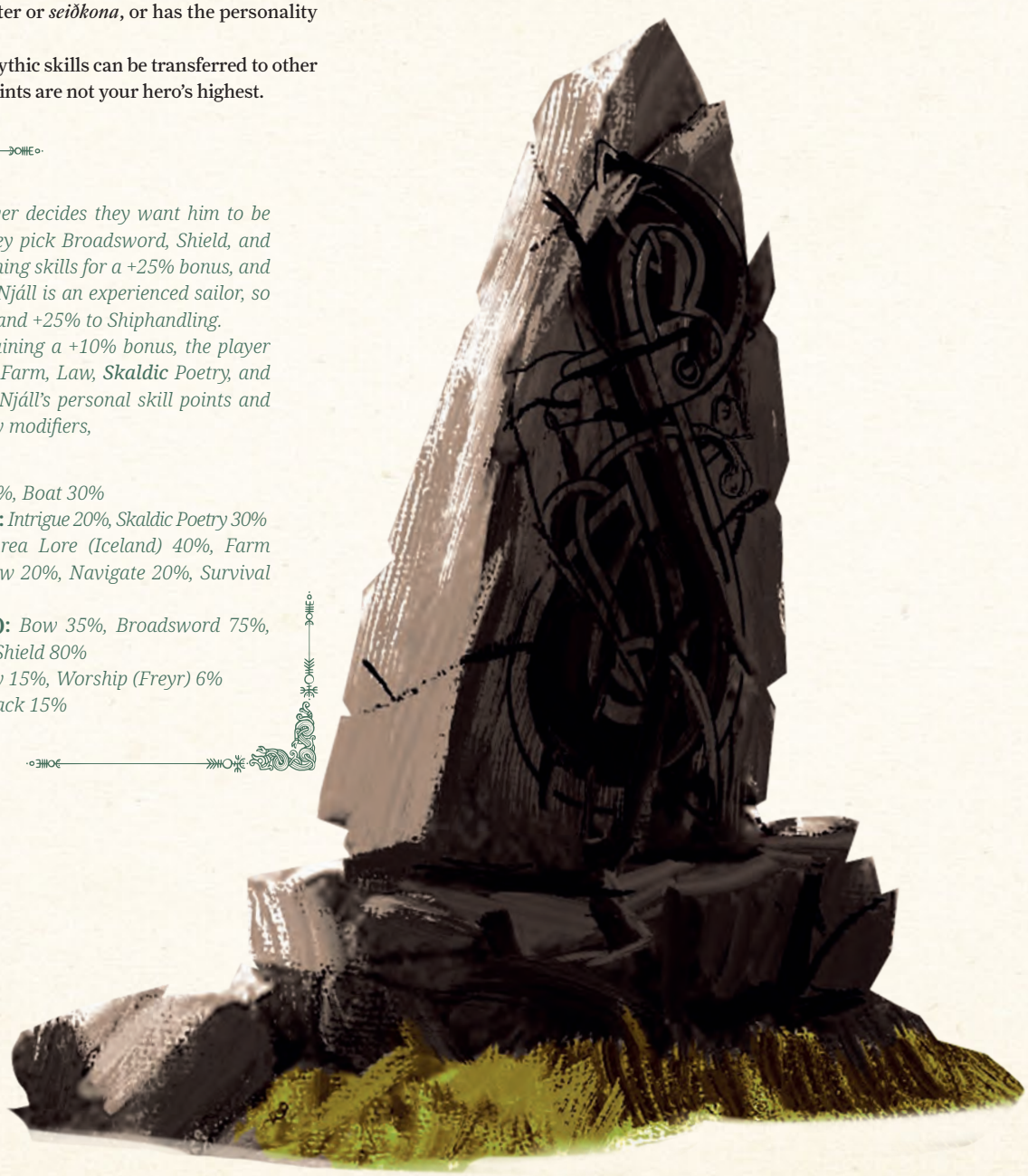
ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

You might have decided to create a hero older than 22 years old.

For every additional ten years of age, add +5% to four different skills from homeland skill bonuses list (page 36). These skill bonuses cannot increase a skill beyond 100%.

Maturity has a price, however. For each two-year interval or fraction above age 40, subtract 1 from STR, CON, or DEX (you pick).

Heroes gain no additional experience over the age of 60, although they do lose characteristic points.



Step 7: Devotions

Heroes in Icelandic sagas give great importance to religion and often base their code of honor and behavior on the god or goddess they worship. A hero's Devotion toward a god indicates not only that they worship that god but is also an indication of the hero's worldview and of the way they strive to live their life.

Although there are individuals who choose to dedicate themselves to one god, it is more common to worship multiple gods and call upon one or another depending on the type of favor one is seeking. The most worshipped gods are Þór, Freyr, and Óðinn, in that order.

A hero starts with three Devotions. Choose three gods from the **Gods and Goddesses for Devotions** table and write them down on each Devotion space on your hero sheet, along with the ideals connected to those gods.

Gods and Goddesses for Devotions

God	Ideals
Baldur	Light, Happiness, Peace
Forseti	Law, Justice, Mediation
Freyr	Family, Nature, Prosperity
Freyja	Beauty, Love, Magic
Frigg	Marriage, Motherhood, Family
Heimdallur	Duty, Protection, Vigilance
Hel*	Death, Decay, Poison
Höður	Darkness, Killing, Winter
Loki*	Deception, Dishonor, Trickery
Njörður	Fishing, Sailing, Wealth
Óðinn	Magic, War, Wisdom
Sif	Beauty, Farming, Nature
Týr	Courage, Glory, Justice
Ullur	Archery, Dueling, Hunting
Víðarr	Revenge, Silence, Strength
Þór	Battle, Strength, Sailing

* The open worship of Hel and Loki is very rare and seen by society at large as a serious character flaw.

Worship (Deity) Skills

Each Devotion has a corresponding Worship skill under the Mythic skill category. Assign 70 points to the god your hero feels most devoted to and to whose ideals they feel the strongest connection. Then assign 20 points to a second Worship skill to another god and 10 points to a third.

Dedication Points

Each Devotion has its own **dedication point (DP)** track ranging from 0 to a maximum of 3, depending on your Worship score with each god.

Dedication Points

Worship Score	Maximum Dedication points
10–29	1
30–59	2
60+	3

Heroes start with the maximum number of dedication points in each Devotion.

Dedication points can be used when praying to a god for assistance or blessing with a specific situation or task that comports with that god's ideals. This does not count as a full action and can be done as part of a combat action. A roll is not necessary—the player deducts a point off the total number of points available to the hero.

- Spending 1 dedication point adds a +20% bonus to the ability to be used. (Same as a success on an augment roll.)
- Spending 2 dedication points adds a +30% bonus to the ability to be used. (Same as a special success on an augment roll.)
- Spending 3 dedication points adds a +50% bonus to the ability to be used. (Same as a critical success on an augment roll.)

Replenishing Dedication Points

Dedication points are replenished by a successful Worship (deity) roll when performing sacrifices or rituals, or when taking part in religious festivals at temples. A success replenishes 1 dedication point, while a special success replenishes 2 points, and a critical success replenishes 3 points. Points gained beyond the maximum number for that deity are discarded.

Except for a victory sacrifice performed on the first day of summer (see page 151), only one Worship roll may be attempted per sacrifice or religious festival. The hero must pick one Devotion to be sacrificed for per occasion.

EXAMPLE: *As it was already defined in his family history that Njáll's father, Þórólfur, built a temple to Freyr on the family farm, Njáll's player decides to keep with the family faith. They assign 70 points to the Worship (Freyr) skill, adding that to the 6% points gained during family history, arriving at a total of 76% to Worship (Freyr). Keeping with the concept of Njáll being an experienced sailor, 20 points are assigned to Worship (Njörður). Finally, Njáll's last Devotion is Heimdallur, with 10 points.*

Njáll's Worship skill values and dedication points are:

- ***Worship (Freyr) 76%:** 3 dedication points*
- ***Worship (Njörður) 20%:** 1 dedication point*
- ***Worship (Heimdallur) 10%:** 1 dedication point.*

Step 8: Family

BARE IS THE BACK OF A BROTHERLESS MAN.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

Family is an important aspect of society in *Age of Vikings*.

An Icelander can count on their family and kin for support in times of need. There is also a requirement to seek compensation or take blood vengeance if kinfolk have been slayed.

You should decide if your hero is married and if they have any children. Use the **Marital Status** table if you would like a random answer to those questions.

Marital Status

1D10	Result
1–4	Unmarried
5–6	Married, no children
7–8	Married, one child of 1D4 years of age
9	Married, two children of 1D6 years of age
10	Married, three children of 1D8 years of age

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

The ages of the children should be appropriate for the hero's starting age (see **Step 3: Family History**, page 19). If you picked a different starting age for your hero, adjust the children's ages accordingly. Older characters, for example, may have more children.

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

- If your hero is married, there is a 30% chance that they are fostering the child of a friend or relative.
- Your hero has 1D6–1 siblings. You should decide if any of them live with you on your farm. Name them, if desired.
- The total number of living kin your hero has is equal to half their Honor passion +2D10.
- If the hero is married, add +3D6 kinfolk.

These minor kin do not need to be detailed at this time but can be utilized and defined as required, if at all, during play.

EXAMPLE: *Rolling using the* **Marital Status** *table, it is decided that Njáll is married but has no children. Njáll's player rolls again determines that Njáll is not fostering anyone else's children.*

Njáll's player rolls on the **Feminine Names** *tables, getting a 42 for personal name and 64 for family name. His player determines that Njáll's wife's name is Herdís Ólafsdóttir.*

Completing the family details, Njáll's player rolls a 3 on 1D6–1 and establishes that Njáll has three siblings. His starting Honor is 90%, so that divided in half plus +2D10 gives him an extended family of 58 (45+13) kinfolk plus 15 from his wife's family.

Step 9: Wealth and Equipment

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD THAT I'M NOT IN THE HABIT OF PAYING FOR THINGS, BUT I GENERALLY SEEM TO GET WHAT I WANT ALL THE SAME.
—The Saga of Grettir the Strong

Heroes start as small householders, owning farmland upon which stands one single building, a longhouse. Only large farms have a separate building to house animals in the winter.

A starting hero's farm is comprised of 20 hectares of land (nearly 50 acres, or 200,000 square meters). The farmland can produce 20 tons of hay in a good year, which is enough to support ten heads of cattle or 20 sheep.

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

The **Farm Activity** table determines the primary activity at the hero's farm. Roll 1D4 or choose a desired result.

Farm Activity

D4	Primary Activity	Value	Animals
1	Dairy production (cattle)	Farmland worth 4,200 *vaðmál*	Two horses, seven cows, eight sheep with lambs
2	Sheep wool and meat	Farmland worth 4,200 *vaðmál*	Three horses, two cows, sixteen sheep with lambs
3	Fishing (river)	Farmland worth 4,600 *vaðmál* and a fishing boat	Two horses, three cows, six sheep with lambs
4	Driftwood (coastal farm)*	Farmland worth 4,700 *vaðmál*	Two horses, two cows, six sheep with lambs

* Main source of food via trade of driftwood with neighbors.

The combined property value of all that a starting hero owns is around 5,000 *vaðmál*. Married and unmarried heroes have the same amount of starting wealth. Heroes start with no surplus money.

Your hero may own 1D3 thralls. They are used as farmhands or perhaps as concubines, but they have no fighting skills. See page 144 for a detailed description of a thrall's place in Viking Age Icelandic society. Once you have decided on the number of thralls, choose names for each of them. In most cases, they have non-Norse names from foreign lands. Try to think of brief descriptions of your thralls' appearance and personalities. If you choose to have your hero not own thralls, roll 1D3 and add that many sheep.

SLAVERY AND THRALLDOM IN AGE OF VIKINGS

The topic of slavery is a controversial one in the modern world but was unfortunately commonplace in the historical period in which *Age of Vikings* is set. In Iceland, male slaves were called *þræll* (thralls), and female slaves were known as *ambátt*. For convenience, all are called "thralls" here.

Most landowners possessed thralls, and as such, landowning heroes are likely to begin with them, but may choose otherwise.

The topic has been presented here in as sensitive a manner as possible. It does not represent the entirety of the Viking or Scandinavian world, just Iceland. If the players and/or gamemaster are uncomfortable with the topic, by all means, ignore it.

See page 144 for more on this topic.

Farm Location

The farm sheet (page 44) includes a map of Iceland showing the divisions between the quarters as established at the National Assembly in 965, corresponding roughly to cardinal directions. Roll on the **Farm Location** table to determine where your hero's farm is located.

Farm Location

D4	Quarter	Land Features
1	West	Fjords, geysers, and hot springs
2	East	Dense woods
3	North	Mountains and steep valleys
4	South	Broad sandy coasts and lava fields

Mark the location of your hero's farm on the map within the chosen quarter, keeping in mind what type of farm it is as defined above.

It is recommended that all heroes in the group are settled in the same quarter and are followers of the same *goði*.

Equipment

BROAD SPEARS ARE THE FASHION THESE DAYS.
—Last words of Atli Asmundson, The Saga of Grettir the Strong

Weapons: A starting hero may be skilled in many weapons, but they begin with only two weapons. Choose any two weapons from the **Weapons** table on pages 111 and 113.

NJÁLL'S SAGA

The Farm Activity dice roll indicated that the primary activity of Njáll´s farm is fishing. This is a great match to the character's skill and devotion to the god Njörður. Njáll's farm has three horses, three cows, six sheep with lambs, and he also owns a fishing boat. He owns no *vaðmál* or silver—gaining wealth is one of the driving forces as the game starts.

Njáll´s farm has 1D3 thralls, and the player rolls a 3. The player decides that one of these thralls is a French man named Tassart, and two Scottish women named Barita and Verica. Tassart is hard-working and reliable, and Njáll may one day allow him to buy his own freedom. Barita helps Njáll´s wife, Herdís, with household tasks and taking care of the animals, while Verica spends most of her time working the loom to make clothing for the family as well as *vaðmál* for trading.

Njáll's player chooses a broadsword and spear as starting weapons. Njáll also owns a shield. For armor, the player makes a note on their hero sheet of the following: Njáll has 3 armor points on the chest and abdomen as he is wearing leather armor on top of thick woolen clothing, 5 armor points on the head as he is wearing a metal helmet, and 1 point of armor on each leg and each arm as he is wearing thick woolen clothing over those areas of the body.

Armor: All heroes may start with thick woolen clothing made of many layers of wool stitched together, which affords a small degree of protection (1 armor point) to all body locations apart from the head. On top of the woolen clothing, heroes also start with leather armor which covers the abdomen and chest (+2 armor points for a total of 3 armor points when worn over thick woolen clothing). Chainmail is expensive, rare, and beyond the means of starting heroes. See pages 115–116 for armor details.

Helmet: Your hero owns one iron helmet (5 armor points).

Shield: Your hero owns one medium round shield.

Step 10: Distinctive Features

Egill was large-featured, broad of forehead, with large eyebrows, a nose not long but very thick, lips wide and long, chin exceeding broad, as was all about the jaws: thick-necked was he, and big-shouldered beyond other men, hard-featured, and grim when angry. He was well-made, more than commonly tall, had hair wolf-gray and thick, but became early bald. He was black-eyed and brown-skinned.

—Egill's Saga

Distinctive features define your hero's notable physical attributes. These are descriptive only and have no numerical game value. They serve to help make your hero seem more real.

Each hero has three distinctive features. Choose a category from the **Features** table or roll 1D10 to choose the category. You can choose the same category multiple times. Then roll 1D10 again or choose a feature, or features, from the entry. These are all cosmetic elements of your character's appearance and do not affect game values. You should keep your character's characteristics and skills in mind when picking distinctive features.

Your hero may gain other distinctive features during gameplay, at the gamemaster's discretion. This could be an impressive scar, a significant change in appearance, a shift in posture or bearing, or even a striking new garment. Particularly significant distinctive features may even modify Charisma by 1 or 2 points, at the gamemaster's discretion.

NJÁLL'S SAGA

Njáll, like all other heroes, begins with three distinctive features. His player rolls a 7 and a 2 for the first one, determining that Njáll has an aggressive manner of speech, which the player doesn't see as an indication of Njáll's personality but rather as a reflection of his poor social skills, as evidenced by his −5% penalty on the Communication skill category modifier.

The next rolls of 9. 6 establish that Njáll has a muscular torso, which makes sense considering his strength and time spent rowing his fishing boat. Lastly, a roll of 5,6 reveal that Njáll wears ill-fitting clothes, which the player decides is due to recent weight loss after a lean harvest.

Now, your Icelandic hero is ready for play.

Following is Njáll's hero sheet, as well as five of his fellow heroes, for use as examples of different hero types, as pregenerated heroes for player use, or for use by the gamemaster as nonplayer characters.

Features

D10	1. Head Hair	2. Facial Hair	3. Facial Feature	4. Expression	5. Clothes	6. Bearing	7. Speech	8. Arms and Hands	9. Torso	10. Legs and Feet
1	Bald	Arched eyebrows	Birthmark	Alluring	Expensive	Angry	Accented	Birthmark visible	Barrel-like	Bulging thighs and calves
2	Black	Braided beard	Broken teeth	Arrogant	Fashionable	Clumsy	Aggressive	Bracelets or arm jewelry	Birthmark visible	Hairy
3	Blond	Bushy beard	Hairy ears	Bright-eyed	Fine boots	Confident	Deep	Bulging biceps	Fat	Limping on one leg
4	Braided	Eyebrows grown together	Hooked nose	Curious	Full of holes	Fearful	Faint	Calloused hands	Hairless	Muscular
5	Curly	Goatee	Large nose	Dour	Garish	Graceful	Hard-of-hearing and hence loud	Left-handed	Many scars	One toe missing
6	Grey	Long beard	Large ears	Friendly	Ill-fitting	Jaunty	High-pitched	Long fingernails	Muscular	Scar
7	Matted	Neatly trimmed beard	Long eyelashes	Leering	Alluring	Nimble	Raspy	Muscular	Narrow	Smooth
8	Red	No eyebrows	Pointed chin	Mischievous	Lots of cheap jewelry	Stiff	Slow	One finger missing	One nipple gone	Very long legs
9	Shaven	Strange designs cut into close-trimmed beard	Thin lips	Naïve	New	Swaying	Soft-spoken	Scar	Slender	Very pale skin
10	Very long	Thick eyebrows	Tiny ears	Seductive	Tight-fitting	Wary	Throaty	Very hairy	Very hairy	Very short legs

CHARACTER SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	_____
CON	_____
SIZ	_____
DEX	_____
INT	_____
POW	_____
CHA	_____

ATTRIBUTES

Hit Points	_____
Magic Points	_____
Reputation	_____ %
Status	_____ %
Healing Rate	_____
Damage Modifier	_____
Movement Rate	_____

PERSONAL

Name _____ Nickname _____

Name Meaning _____

Spirit Animal _____

Personality Type _____

Gender _____ Age _____ Birth Year _____

Distinctive Features _____

Player _____

PASSIONS

Honor _____ % ☐

Love (family) _____ % ☐

Loyalty (*goði*) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

_____(_____) _____ % ☐

COMBAT

Melee Weapons	%	DMG	ENC	HP	
				___/___	☐
				___/___	☐
				___/___	☐
				___/___	☐
				___/___	☐
Shield	**%**	**DMG**	**ENC**	**HP**	
				___/___	☐

Missile Weapons	%	DMG	ENC	HP	Range	Rate	
				___/___			☐
				___/___			☐

DEVOTIONS

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3

_____ DP: 0 1 2 3

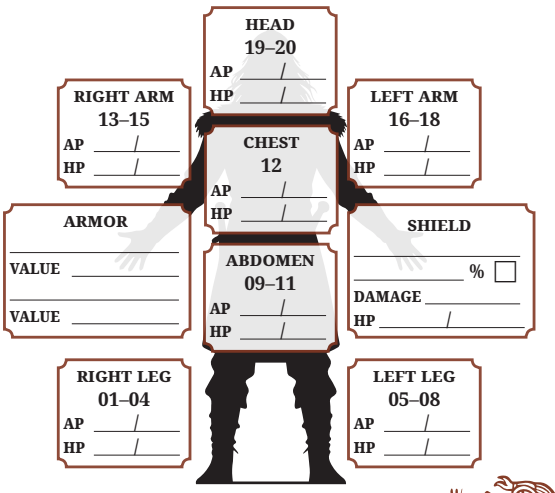
Magic Points _____

UNCON	00	01	02	03	04	
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25

Hit Points _____

DEAD	00	01				
02	03	04	05			
06	07	08	09			
10	11	12	13			
14	15	16	17			
18	19	20	21			
22	23	24	25			

HIT LOCATIONS



SKILLS

AGILITY _____ %
Boat (05) _____ % ☐
Climb (40) _____ % ☐
Dodge (DEX×2) _____ % ☐
Jump (DEX×3) _____ % ☐
Ride (05) _____ % ☐
Ski (10) _____ % ☐
Swim (15) _____ % ☐

COMMUNICATION _____ %
Act (05) _____ % ☐
Art (05) _____ % ☐
Bargain (05) _____ % ☐
Charm (15) _____ % ☐
Dance (10) _____ % ☐
Disguise (05) _____ % ☐
Fast Talk (05) _____ % ☐
Intimidate (15) _____ % ☐
Intrigue (05) _____ % ☐
Orate (10) _____ % ☐
Sing (10) _____ % ☐
Skaldic Poetry (10) _____ % ☐
Speak Own Language (50) _____ % ☐
Speak Other Language
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐

KNOWLEDGE _____ %
Animal Lore (05) _____ % ☐
Area Lore (Iceland) (20) _____ % ☐
Area Lore (_____) (00) _____ % ☐
Battle (10) _____ % ☐
Customs (Norse) (25) _____ % ☐
Customs (_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
Evaluate (10) _____ % ☐
Farm (30) _____ % ☐
First Aid (10) _____ % ☐
Game (15) _____ % ☐
Herd (05) _____ % ☐
Law (10) _____ % ☐
Mineral Lore (05) _____ % ☐
Myth Lore (10) _____ % ☐
Navigate (20) _____ % ☐
Plant Lore (05) _____ % ☐
Read/Write (_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
Shiphandling (00) _____ % ☐
Survival (15) _____ % ☐
Treat Disease (05) _____ % ☐
Treat Poison (05) _____ % ☐

MANIPULATION _____ %
Conceal (05) _____ % ☐
Craft (_____) (10) _____ % ☐
(_____) (10) _____ % ☐
(_____) (10) _____ % ☐
Devise (05) _____ % ☐
Play Instrument (05) _____ % ☐
Sleight (05) _____ % ☐

MYTHIC _____ %
Go Under the Cloak (10) _____ % ☐
Prophecy (05) _____ % ☐
Rune Magic (00) _____ % ☐
Second Sight (05) _____ % ☐
Seiður Magic (00) _____ % ☐
Worship (_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐
(_____) (00) _____ % ☐

PERCEPTION _____ %
Insight (20) _____ % ☐
Listen (25) _____ % ☐
Search (25) _____ % ☐
Spot Hidden (25) _____ % ☐
Track (05) _____ % ☐

STEALTH _____ %
Hide (10) _____ % ☐
Move Quietly (10) _____ % ☐

MELEE WEAPONS _____ %
1H Axe (10) _____ % ☐
2H Axe (05) _____ % ☐
Broadsword (10) _____ % ☐
Quarterstaff (15) _____ % ☐
Knife (15) _____ % ☐
Polearm (15) _____ % ☐
Sling (05) _____ % ☐
Spear (15) _____ % ☐
Shield (15) _____ % ☐
_____ ( ) _____ % ☐

MISSILE WEAPONS _____ %
Bow (10) _____ % ☐
Sling (5) _____ % ☐
Thrown Axe (10) _____ % ☐
_____ ( ) _____ % ☐

NATURAL WEAPON _____ %
Fist (25) _____ % ☐
Grapple (25) _____ % ☐
Kick (15) _____ % ☐

FAMILY

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	ENC

FARM RECORD SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

Farm _____

Primary Activity _____

_____

Value _____

Animals _____

_____

_____

Thralls _____

Location _____

Note _____

_____

_____

_____

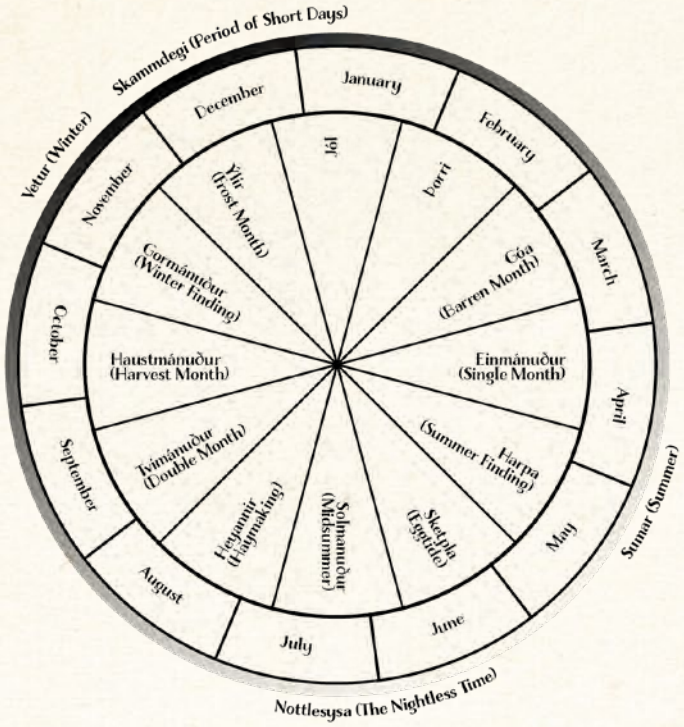
_____

_____

_____

_____

YEARLY CALENDAR



LOCATION OF FARM

Ready-to-Play Heroes

These heroes are presented ready-to-play or can be used by the gamemaster as nonplayer characters. Njáll is described in the **Hero Creation** chapter, while his companions are used throughout this book in various examples of play. Skills category modifiers have been calculated for each hero; listed skills have those modifiers included.

Njáll Þórólfsson

Ísgerður Haldorsdóttir

Þrymur Sörlason

Birna Flosadóttir

Sigmundur Gunnarsson

Hrund Erpsdóttir

Njáll Þórólfsson

- **Name:** Njáll Þórólfsson (ny-owl thoh-rohlf-son)
- **Name Meaning:** Hero
- **Nickname:** "The Beardless"
- **Personality type:** Steadfast (+20% to Manipulation and Weapon skill category modifiers)
- **Spirit Animal:** Gyrfalcon
- **Gender, Age:** Male, 22
- **Distinctive Features:** Aggressive speech, muscular torso, ill-fitting clothes

Njáll recently married the beautiful Herdís Ólafsdóttir, daughter of the local *goði* Ólafur Black-Tooth, to whom Njáll is fiercely loyal. He lives with his wife and three thralls on a farm near his family's lands by the margins of White River in the west quarter of Iceland. He is a competent fisherman and makes a good living from his farm, but his ambition is to become a famous and wealthy Viking raider. Njáll's grandmother was from Ireland and he has long wanted to visit her homeland.

Characteristics

STR	14	HIT POINTS	12
CON	10	MAGIC POINTS	11
SIZ	18	REPUTATION	11%
DEX	13	HEALING RATE	2
INT	14	DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1D4
POW	11	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	7	MAX ENC	12

Passions

Honor 90%
Love (family) 60%
Loyalty (*goði*) 70%
Loyalty (Ireland) 60%

Skills

Agility +0%: Boat 30%, Dodge 26%, Ride 55%.
Communication –5%: Intrigue 15%, Skaldic Poetry 25%, Speak Norse 45%.
Knowledge +5%: Area Lore (Iceland) 45%, Customs (Norse) 30%, Farm 35%, First Aid 40%, Law 25%, Navigate 25%, Shiphandling 30%, Survival 30%.
Manipulation +30%: Craft (Carpentry) 65%.
Mythic 0%: Prophecy 15%, Worship (Freyr) 71%, Worship (Heimdallur) 10%, Worship (Njörður) 20%.
Perception +5%: Listen 30%, Spot Hidden 30%, Track 15%.
Stealth 0%: Move Quietly 10%.
Weapons +30%: Bow 35%, Broadsword 75%, Shield 80%.

Devotions

Freyr (Family, Nature, Prosperity): 3 DP
Njörður (Fishing, Sailing, Wealth): 1 DP
Heimdallur (Duty, Protection, Vigilance): 1 DP

Attacks

Weapon	%	Damage
Shield	60	1D6+1D4
Broadsword	55	1D8+1+1D4
Spear	25	2D6+1+1D4 (1D2 thrown)
Bow	15	1D6+1D2
Fist	35	1D3+1D4
Grapple	35	Special
Kick	25	1D6+1D4

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	3/4
Chest	12	3/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	5/4

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Ísgerður Haldorsdóttir

- **Name:** Ísgerður Haldorsdóttir (ees-gerthur hal-dors-doh-tir)
- **Name Meaning:** Ice Fortress
- **Nickname:** "Skull-splitter"
- **Personality type:** Manipulative (+20% to Communication skill category modifier)
- **Spirit Animal:** Arctic tern
- **Gender, Age:** Female, 20
- **Distinctive Features:** Long and matted hair, tiny ears

Ísgerður lives at her family's farm in the Westfjords of Iceland. Her father is well regarded as a law expert and has greatly profited over the years from mediating disputes. Despite her parents' efforts to find her a husband, she has so far rejected all suitors. When she was a child, she befriended—and eventually fell in love with—a boy rom the hidden people. Though it's been many years since Ísgerður has seen him, she still hopes he will return for her someday. Just like her grandmother, who taught her how to perform seiður magic, Ísgerður is headstrong and opinionated. She has two older brothers. Her family's farm primarily produces milk and skyr and owns two horses, seven cows, and eight sheep.

Characteristics

STR	10	HIT POINTS	14
CON	13	MAGIC POINTS	16
SIZ	16	REPUTATION	12%
DEX	10	HEALING RATE	3
INT	16	DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1D4
POW	16	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	13	MAX ENC	12

Passions
Honor 80%
Love (family) 90%
Loyalty (*goði*) 60%

Skills
Agility 0%: Boat 20%, Dodge 35%.
Communication +25%: Charm 75%, Dance 60%, Fast Talk 55%, Speak Norse 75%.
Knowledge +5%: Area Lore 20%, Customs (Norse) 30%, First Aid 30%, Myth Lore 40%.
Manipulation +5%: Craft (Weaving) 45%.
Mythic +5%: Go Under the Cloak 30%, Prophecy 35%, Seiður Magic (Realm: Weave) 65%, Worship (Freyja) 75%, Worship (Freyr) 25%, Worship (Frigg) 15%.
Perception +5%: Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 55%.
Stealth 0%: Hide 20%, Move Quietly 10%.
Weapons +5%: Knife 30%, Quarterstaff 90%

Devotions
Freyja (Beauty, Love, Magic): 3 DP
Freyr (Family, Nature, Prosperity): 1 DP
Frigg (Marriage, Motherhood, Family): 1 DP

Attacks

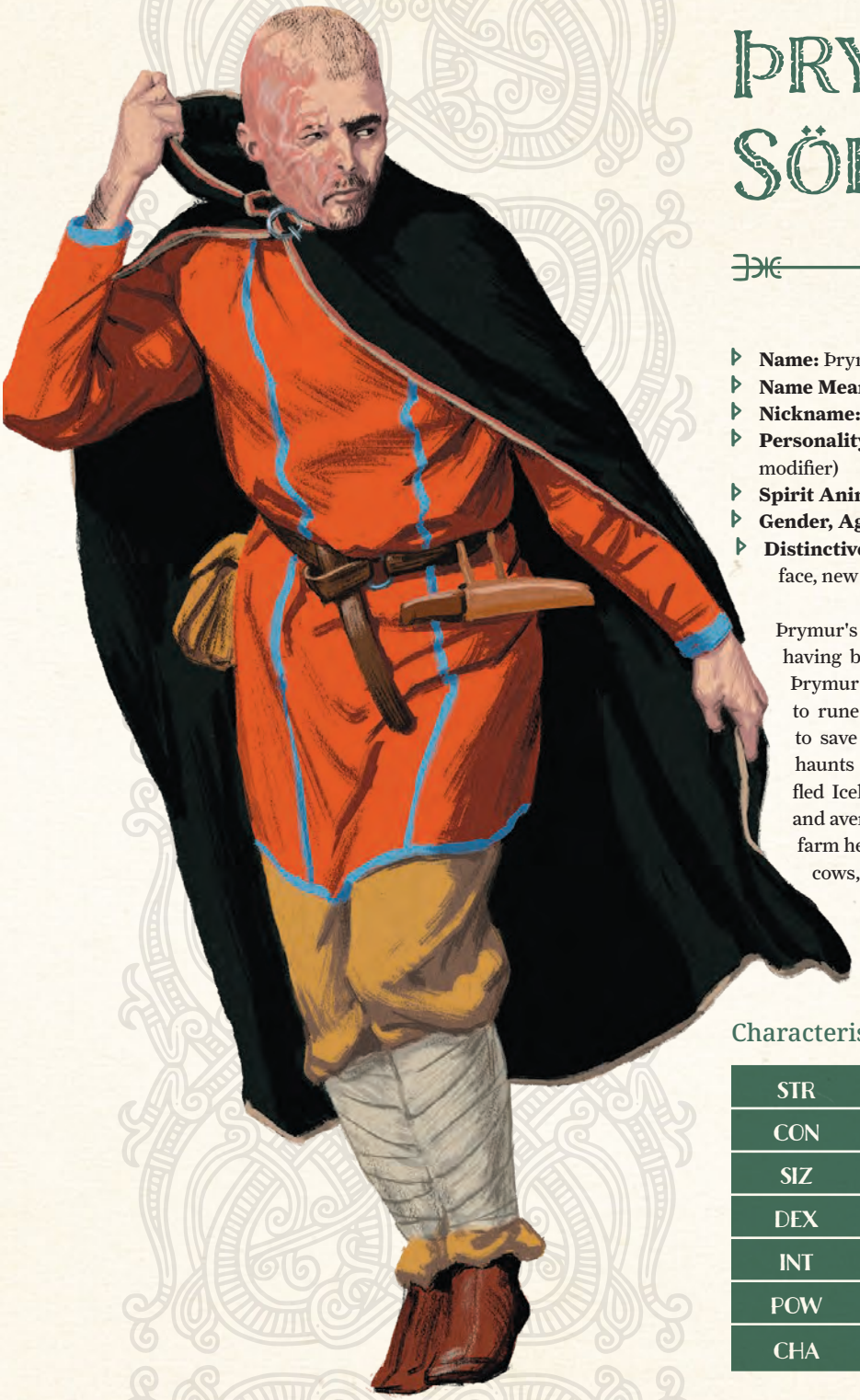
Weapon	%	Damage
Quarterstaff	90	1D6+1D4
Knife	85	1D8+1+1D4
Fist	40	2D6+1+1D4
Grapple	50	1D3+1D4
Kick	50	Special

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/5
Left Leg	5–8	1/5
Abdomen	9–11	3/5
Chest	12	3/6
Right Arm	13–15	1/4
Left Arm	16–18	1/4
Head	19–20	5/5

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-points leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Favored Seiður Spells
- ***Cause Strong Earthquake*** **(Duration 0, Distance 1, Dimension 5):** The earthquake hits within 1D6 hours. Any buildings in the affected area suffer extensive damage, and people inside must make a successful DEX×5 roll or suffer 5 damage to a random hit location due to falling debris. (**Magic Point Cost:** 13. **Ritual Time:** Two hours and ten minutes.)
- ***Evil Eye*** **(Duration 1, Distance 0, Dimension 5):** Increases the chance of a fumble roll result for a single individual by +15% for up to an hour. Skills from one single group (Ísgerður's choice) are affected. (**Magic Point Cost:** 13. **Ritual Time:** Two hours and ten minutes.)
- ***Weather Change*** **(Duration 3, Distance 0, Dimension 3):** Changes the weather, for up to a day, by three levels on the weather table appropriate to the season (see page 74), for better or worse (Ísgerður's choice). (**Magic Point Cost:** 12. **Ritual Time:** Two hours.)



Þrymur Sörlason

- **Name:** Þrymur Sorlason (three-mur sor-la-son)
- **Name Meaning:** Force
- **Nickname:** "The Ugly"
- **Personality type:** Spiritual (+20% to Mythic skill category modifier)
- **Spirit Animal:** Cat
- **Gender, Age:** Male, 28
- **Distinctive Features:** Shaven head, burn scars on neck and face, new clothes

Þrymur's parents and siblings were victims of a blood feud, having been burned alive in their house by a rival family. Þrymur was 16 years old at the time and only escaped thanks to rune magic he learned from an uncle. He was unable to save anyone else from his family and that failure still haunts him. His family's killers were outlawed and have fled Iceland, but Þrymur has sworn to one day find them and avenge their crimes. Þrymur is unmarried, living on the farm he inherited from his family. He owns two horses, two cows, and six sheep.

Characteristics

STR	9	HIT POINTS	12
CON	9	MAGIC POINTS	17
SIZ	17	REPUTATION	9%
DEX	11	HEALING RATE	2
INT	18	DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1D4
POW	17	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	5	MAX ENC	9

Passions
Honor 85%
Hate (outlaws) 90%
Love (family) 70%
Loyalty (*goði*) 60%

Skills
Agility 0%: Dodge 32%.
Communication +5%: Intrigue 40%, Speak Norse 55%.
Knowledge +15%: Area Lore 60%, Customs (Norse) 40%, Farm 55%, First Aid 25%, Read/Write (Runes) 40%
Manipulation +15%: Craft (Masonry) 50%.
Mythic +30%: Go Under the Cloak 65%, Rune Magic 80%, Second Sight 60%, Worship (Freyr) 40%, Worship (Óðinn) 100%, Worship (Ullur) 50%
Perception +15%: Listen 40%, Search 50%, Spot Hidden 40%, Track 30%.
Stealth –5%: Hide 30%, Move Quietly 30%.
Weapons +15%: Bow 75%, 1H Sword (Sax) 35%.

Devotions
Óðinn (Magic, War, Wisdom): 3 DP
Ullur (Archery, Dueling, Hunting): 1 DP
Freyr (Family, Nature, Prosperity): 1 DP

Attacks

Weapon	%	Damage
Bow	75	1D6+1D2
Sax (1H Sword)	35	1D8+1+1D4
Fist	40	1D3+1D4
Grapple	40	Special
Kick	30	1D6+1D4

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	3/4
Chest	12	3/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	5/4

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-points leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

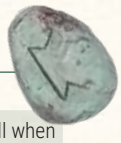
Runes Known

Rune	Name	Areas of Power
ᚠ	**Fé**	Wealth, fertility, animals
ᚢ	**Úr**	Strength, endurance, bravery, health, aging, willpower, nature-given wealth
ᚦ	**Þurs**	2D6 Active defense, plants, anger, lust
ᚨ	**Óss**	Knowledge, wisdom, communication, the mouth, travel, divination, magic, mythic creatures
ᚱ	**Reid**	Movement, riding, travel, journey
ᚲ	**Kaun**	Fire, sore, craft, destruction for the purpose of creation
ᚷ	**Gjöf**	Peace, love, aid, balance, trust
ᚹ	**Vend**	Happiness, relationship, hope, kinship

Prepared Rune Scripts

Rune Script	Meanings	Result
ᚢ ᚠ ᚲ (Úr + Óss + Kaun)	**Strong + Magical + Fire**	Starts a fire that spreads quickly and inflicts 3D6 points of damage to one hit location or 3D10 points damage to objects or buildings. (Magic Point Locked: 6)
ᚠ ᚱ ᚹ ᚦ ᚲ (Óss + Reid + Vend + Þurs + Kaun)	**Magic + Movement + Hope + Protection + Sore**	Þrymur uses this spell whenever combat is not going in his favor. Adds +4 to DEX and +30 to Dodge. (Magic Point Locked: 10)

Other Favored Rune Scripts



Rune Script	Meanings	Result
ᚷ ᚠ ᚷ (Gjöf + Óss + Gjöf)	**Trust + Relationship + Generosity**	Þrymur uses this spell when he needs to ask someone for aid. Adds +30% to Charm.
ᚠ ᚱ ᚠ (Óss + Reid + Fé)	**Magic + Travel + Animal**	Allows Þrymur to travel with magical speed on horseback.
ᚷ ᚢ ᚹ (Gjöf + Úr + Vend)	**Aid + Health + Hope**	Heal 1D6+3 hit points on one hit location.

Birna Flosadóttir

- **Name:** Birna Flosadóttir (bir-na flo-sa-doh-tir)
- **Name Meaning:** Female Bear
- **Nickname:** "The Bow-Swayer"
- **Personality type:** Wanderer (+20% to Knowledge skill category modifier)
- **Spirit Animal:** Wolf
- **Gender, Age:** Female, 26
- **Distinctive Features:** Curly hair, curious expression, nimble bearing

Birna's father was a wealthy chieftain in Norway but had to flee the country with his pregnant wife when the king decided to take control of his land by force. The journey to Iceland was a very difficult one, and many people perished in the rough seas, including Birna's father. Birna was born in Iceland and was raised by her father's cousin who had settled in the country a few years before. While growing up, she traveled the whole of the island with the family, trading goods brought into Iceland by foreign traders. Birna recently married her father's cousin's son Kjartan, and the two settled on a farm by the coast. She has a one-year-old daughter named Álfdís. Her farm has two horses, two cows, six sheep, and two thralls.

Characteristics

STR	10	HIT POINTS	14
CON	14	MAGIC POINTS	13
SIZ	9	REPUTATION	5%
DEX	16	HEALING RATE	3
INT	12	DAMAGE MODIFIER	0
POW	13	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	7	MAX ENC	12

Passions

Honor 60%
Love (family) 70%
Loyalty (*goði*) 80%

Skills

Agility +5%: Dodge 37%, Ride 20%.
Communication –5%: Bargain 35%, Speak Norse 45%.
Knowledge +20%: Area Lore (Iceland) 75%, Battle 55%, Customs (Norse) 70%, First Aid 65%, Law 65%, Survival 85%.
Manipulation +5%: —
Mythic +5%: Worship (Heimdallur) 25%, Worship (Höður) 15%, Worship (Ullur) 80%.
Perception +0%: Listen 25%, Search 35%, Spot Hidden 25%, Track 15%.
Stealth +5%: Hide 25%, Move Quietly 15%.
Weapons +5%: Bow 90%, 1H Sword (Sax) 15%.

Devotions

Ullur (Archery, Dueling, Hunting): 3 DP
Heimdallur (Duty, Protection, Vigilance): 1 DP
Höður (Darkness, Killing, Winter): 1 DP

Attacks

Weapon	%	Damage
Bow	90	1D6+1
Sax (1H Sword)	15	1D6+1
Fist	30	2D3
Grapple	30	Special
Kick	20	1D6

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/5
Left Leg	5–8	1/5
Abdomen	9–11	3/5
Chest	12	3/6
Right Arm	13–15	1/4
Left Arm	16–18	1/4
Head	19–20	5/5

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-points leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Sigmundur Gunnarsson

- **Name:** Sigmundur Gunnarsson (sig-mun-dur gun-ar-son)
- **Name Meaning:** Winner
- **Nickname:** "Silver-tongue"
- **Personality type:** Cunning (+20% to Perception and Stealth skill category modifiers)
- **Spirit Animal:** Snow fox
- **Gender, Age:** Male, 28
- **Distinctive Features:** Heavy, curious expression, lots of cheap jewelry

From an early age, Sigmundur displayed great love for poetry, drinking, and games. From the age of five, he used to get drunk and perform poetry at his father's feasts to the delight of the assembled guests. Sigmundur did not grow up to be as strong as his other two brothers, but he is good-looking and has attracted the interest of many admirers in the region. After his father died, the large family farm was split between the brothers. Sigmundur has no interest in farming, however, as he dreams of going overseas and becoming the resident poet of a king's court. His farm produces mainly milk and skyr and includes three horses, two cows, 16 sheep, and two thralls from England.

Characteristics

STR	7	HIT POINTS	7
CON	8	MAGIC POINTS	8
SIZ	8	REPUTATION	10%
DEX	13	HEALING RATE	2
INT	13	DAMAGE MODIFIER	0
POW	8	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	17	MAX ENC	8

Passions

Honor 60%
Love (family) 70%
Loyalty (*goði*) 80%

Skills

Agility +5%: Dodge 31%. Ride 40%.
Communication +10%: Charm 50%, Intrigue 30%, Sing 50%, Skaldic Poetry 65%, Speak Norse 60%.
Knowledge +5%: Area Lore (Iceland) 55%, Customs (Norse) 55%, First Aid 15%, Law 40%, Mineral Lore 20%, Plant Lore 20%, Survival 30%, Treat Poison 20%.
Manipulation +10%: Conceal 20%.
Mythic 0%: Worship (Baldur) 10%, Worship (Freyr) 20%, Worship (Óðinn) 70%.
Perception +25%: Listen 60%, Spot Hidden 50%.
Stealth +35%: Hide 55%, Move Quietly 70%.
Weapons +10%: 1H Sword (Broadsword, Sax) 50%, Quarterstaff 75%.

Devotions

Óðinn (Magic, War, Wisdom): 3 DP
Freyr (Family, Nature, Prosperity): 1 DP
Baldur (Light, Happiness, Peace): 1 DP

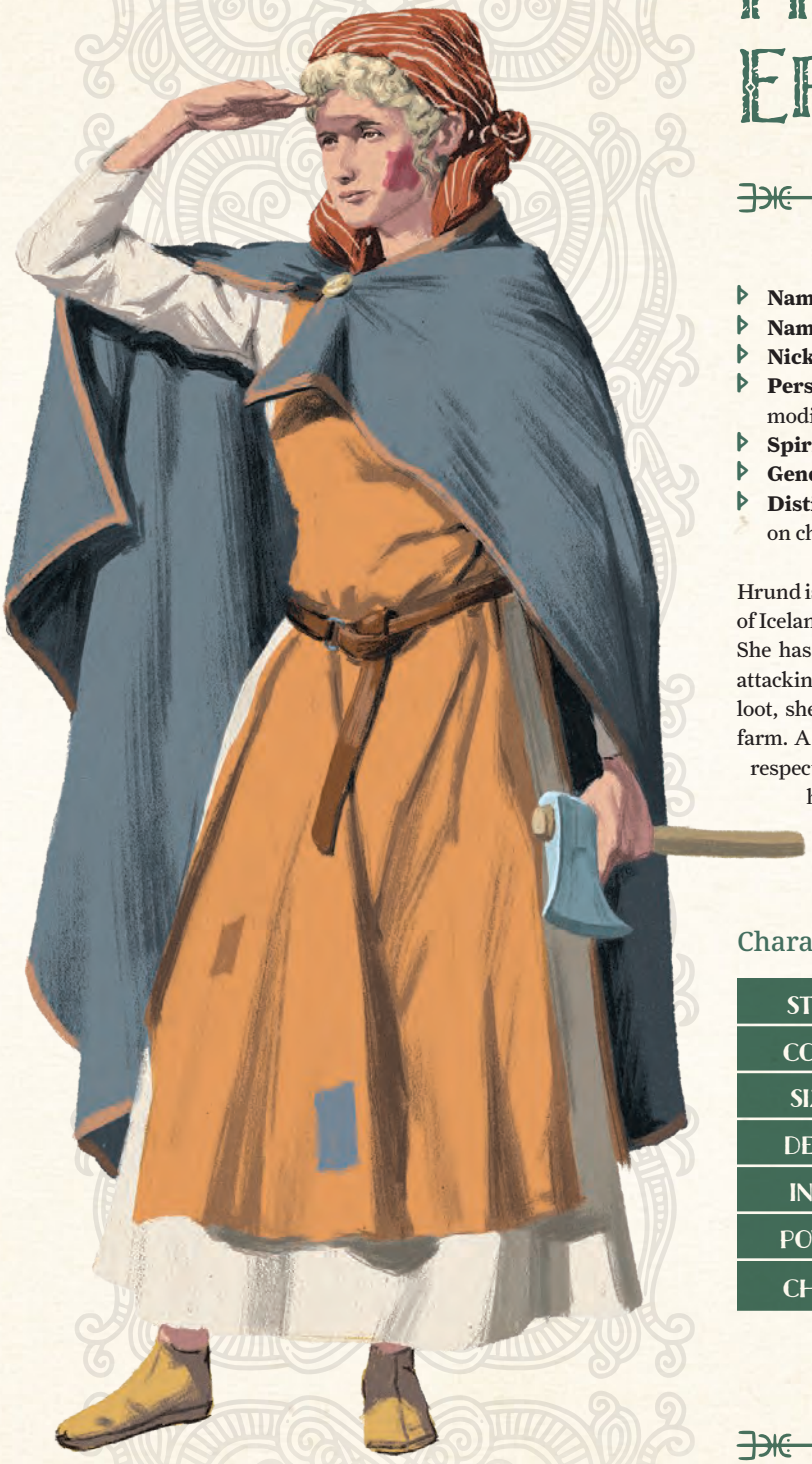
Attacks

Weapon	%	Damage
Quarterstaff	75	1D6
Broadsword	50	1D8+1
Sax (1H Sword)	50	1D6+1
Fist	35	1D3+1D4
Grapple	35	Special
Kick	25	1D6+1D4

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/3
Left Leg	5–8	1/3
Abdomen	9–11	3/3
Chest	12	3/4
Right Arm	13–15	1/2
Left Arm	16–18	1/2
Head	19–20	5/3

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-points leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.



Hrund Erpsdóttir

- **Name:** Hrund Erpsdóttir (hrund erps-doh-tir)
- **Name Meaning:** Pusher
- **Nickname:** "The Uninspired"
- **Personality type:** Mighty (+20% to Agility skill category modifier)
- **Spirit Animal:** Bear
- **Gender, Age:** Female, 27
- **Distinctive Features:** Friendly expression, slender, birthmark on cheek resembling a bear head

Hrund is the oldest child of the temple priest of Þór in the Westfjords of Iceland. Just like her father, Hrund is strong and has a hot temper. She has taken part in Viking raids with her brothers in the past, attacking and pillaging the Scottish coast. With her share of the loot, she bought a good farm by the sea not far from her family's farm. A few years ago, Hrund married Haukur Heimisson, a well-respected man with a broad knowledge of the law. Together, they have a son and two daughters. Her farm has two horses, two cows, six sheep, and three German thralls.

Characteristics

STR	16	HIT POINTS	15
CON	14	MAGIC POINTS	10
SIZ	13	REPUTATION	9%
DEX	13	HEALING RATE	3
INT	11	DAMAGE MODIFIER	+1D4
POW	10	MOVEMENT RATE	10
CHA	9	MAX ENC	15

Passions

Honor 60%
Love (family) 80%
Loyalty (goði) 70%

Skills

Agility +25%: Boat 55%, Climb 75%, Dodge 76%, Ride 80%, Swim 50%.
Communication +0%: Intimidate 25%, Speak Norse 50%.
Knowledge +0%: Customs (Norse) 25%, Farm 55%, First Aid 10%, Law 35%, Navigate 30%.
Manipulation +5%: —.
Mythic +0%: Worship (Þór) 70%, Worship (Týr) 20%, Worship (Víðarr) 10%.
Perception +0%: Listen 35%, Spot Hidden 25%.
Stealth 0%: Move Quietly 20%.
Weapons +5%: Battle Axe 75%, Bow 35%, 1H Sword (Sax) 15%, Shield 65%.

Devotions

Þór (Battle, Strength, Sailing): 3 DP
Týr (Courage, Glory, Justice): 1 DP
Víðarr (Revenge, Silence, Strength): 1 DP

Attacks

Weapon	%	Damage
Battle Axe	75	1D8+2+1D4
Shield	65	1D6+1D4
Bow	35	1D6+1D2
Sax (1H Sword)	15	1D6+1+1D4
Fist	30	1D3+1D4
Grapple	30	Special
Kick	20	1D6+1D4

Hit Locations

Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/5
Left Leg	5–8	1/5
Abdomen	9–11	3/5
Chest	12	3/6
Right Arm	13–15	1/4
Left Arm	16–18	1/4
Head	19–20	5/5

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-points leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

CHAPTER THREE

GAME SYSTEM

Prior chapters address hero creation, including abilities such as skills, passions, and Devotions. This chapter addresses the various systems by which heroes interact with the world, whether in the form of the environment, other characters controlled by the gamemaster, or other heroes.

TIME SCALE

"Game time" refers to the abstract fashion of how a game session represents the passage of time. It can move between combat rounds, which take much longer to resolve than the time being depicted, to passages in which days or even weeks are glossed over with a simple comment about the time passing. As such, game time has little to do with the passage of real time experienced by the players and the gamemaster while playing the game.

This section discusses how the rules handle the passage of the various modes of game time.

Campaign Time

Generally, one adventure occurs per season. The Icelandic calendar only has two seasons. The "one adventure per season" suggestion emphasizes the fact that adventures are extraordinary affairs and that the heroes have lives to lead. Much of a hero's time is not their own; they must work on their farms as well.

At the end of each season, heroes make experience rolls (pages 281–282), determine the results of training (pages 282–283), and complete other bookkeeping tasks. See **Chapter 17: Between Adventures** for more information on these aspects of improvement.

Real Time

Real time is when the same amount of time passes for the players and gamemaster as it does for your heroes. It usually only occurs when you're speaking in character or when you're otherwise describing the passage of time from your heroes' perspectives.

Narrative Time

Narrative time is the quick passage of time that moves the game along. It passes at whatever rate the gamemaster says it does. When nothing is happening, the gamemaster may simply remark, "Several days pass." The gamemaster can make a year pass in the same number of syllables.

Full Turn

A **full turn** represents five minutes or 25 combat rounds (see below). It is used to denote a passage of time longer than a combat round. Outside of actual battle, few combats last a full turn.

Combat Round

A **combat round** is about 12 seconds long and represents the basic unit of time used in combat. One complete cycle of attacks, parries, spells, and movements happens during a combat round. Combat rounds are described in more detail in **Chapter 5: Combat**.

Skill and Ability Time

The use of abilities can also mark the passage of time. Though combat skills can be repeated through multiple combat rounds, a skill which represents a process may consume hours or even days of game time, with a single roll representing the entirety of the time spent.

Typical times required to perform certain skills or abilities are provided below, though these may vary widely depending on how they are used and the surrounding circumstances.

- **Instantaneous:** Invoking a passion or Devotion.
- **A Few Seconds to a Combat Round:** Weapon attacks or parries, Dodge, First Aid (to stop bleeding), Hide, Jump, Listen, Lore, Second Sight, Spot Hidden.
- **One to Five Minutes (up to a full turn):** Act, Bargain, Climb, Customs, Conceal, Dance, Fast Talk, First Aid (to heal damage), Insight, Intimidate, Lore, Listen, Move Quietly, Play Instrument, Prophecy, Read/ Write, Skaldic Poetry, Sing, Sleight, Speak, Swim, Treat Disease, Treat Poison.
- **Five to 30 Minutes (up to six full turns):** Art, Boat, Charm, Customs, Dance, Devise, Disguise, Herd, Intrigue, Lore, Orate, Play Instrument, Read/Write, Search, Shiphandling, Sing, Speak.
- **30–60 Minutes (six to 12 full turns):** Battle, Boat, Charm, Customs, Disguise, Herd, Lore, Orate, Read/Write, Shiphandling, Track.
- **One Hour to Many Days:** Battle, Charm, Craft, Farm, Herd, Lore, Go Under the Cloak, Read/Write, Shiphandling, Survival, Worship.

As noted above, invoking a passion, even when augmenting another ability, is instantaneous and does not add to the time needed to perform the augmented ability. However, a hero cannot invoke more than one Devotion or passion at the same time.

ABILITY USE

Most important actions require the use of an ability, usually a skill or a passion. Each is specifically defined in later chapters. How to use these abilities mechanically is the subject of this section.

Many abilities are normal functions that anyone can perform. Walking across a room or opening a door can be said to be abilities, but every hero is considered competent enough to perform these actions without checking to see if they were successful. The hero is assumed to achieve an **automatic success** when doing these sorts of actions.

For any ability performed in a dramatic circumstance, an ability roll is required. It is usually obvious when an ability roll should be made, but if in doubt, the gamemaster should consider the consequences of failure. Does the chance of failure heighten tension and make for an exciting possibility?

Will a failure add fun to the game? If the answer to either is *"Yes"*, then the gamemaster should have the player make an ability roll.

Skill Base Chance

All skills have a **base chance**: the chance that any capable person would have to perform the skill for the first time. Base chances are found printed on the hero sheet. An individual hero's skills category modifiers may adjust such chances so that even at the beginning of their careers, different heroes have different skill ratings. Any percentiles of the skill learned through previous experience or training are added to the base chance.

EXAMPLE: *Despite his mother being a renowned healer, Njáll has never learned anything about treating diseases. His Treat Disease skill is a basic (05), or 05%. He has a Knowledge skills category modifier of +5%, giving him Treat Disease 10%.*

Characteristic Rolls

During gameplay, percentile dice are rolled against skills and passions to resolve actions. It sometimes happens that none of these seem appropriate for the action attempted. The gamemaster can then call for a **characteristic roll**.

In normal, uncomplicated circumstances, these rolls are made using **the value of the characteristic ×5**. The multiplier can be increased or decreased to represent differing circumstances, from simple to almost impossible.

Characteristic Rolls

Multiplier	Circumstance
×5	Simple action
×4	Easy
×3	Moderate
×2	Hard
×1	Very hard
×0.5	Nearly impossible

Examples of when such characteristic rolls may be appropriate:

- **Strength Check (STR×5):** Used for intense muscular efforts like bashing a door open, pulling oneself onto a boat or over a ledge, moving through thick mud, etc.
- **Constitution Check (CON×5):** Used to resist fatigue, etc., or during intense or prolonged effort (long run, etc.).
- **Intelligence Check (INT×5):** Used to test memory or logic. The Intelligence roll does not replace a player's intellectual contribution, but hints at the hero's mental capabilities, such as recalling someone's face or name.
- **Dexterity Check (DEX×5):** Used to resolve actions requiring good coordination, physical or manual skill, speed, or balance (catching a thrown object, walking on a roof, etc.).
- **Charisma Check (CHA×5):** Used to resolve verbal or nonverbal social contests where skills (such as Bargain, Charm, Fast Talk, Intimidate, Intrigue, or Orate) do not apply.

If there's an opposing force or ability at work directly resisting the hero's action, such as arm-wrestling, resisting poison, or carrying something heavy, those are handled by **resistance rolls** (see pages 64 –65) or by an **opposed roll** (see **Opposed Resolution**, page 61).

Results

Whenever a hero is called upon to resolve some form of contest using an ability, roll D100 and compare the result with the ability's rating.

Success

A result equal to or less than the ability's rating indicates a **success**. A roll of 1–5 on D100 is always a success, even if the ability rating is lower.

Failure

A result greater than the ability's rating (with any modifiers factored in) indicates a **failure**. A roll of 96–00 is always a failure, even if the ability rating is higher.

Critical Success

At times, a hero (or a nonplayer character) performs a task so well that they gain extra benefits from the accomplishment. The best result is a **critical success**. A critical success is an ability roll of 5% (1/20) or less of the modified chance of success. A roll of 1 is always a critical success.

The benefit of any critical success depends on the ability being used: weapons ignore armor, climbers gain extra distance, crafters make extra valuable goods, and so on. In an opposed roll, a critical success is always better than a normal or special success.

Some specific benefits from critical successes are described later.

Special Success

In some cases, an ability roll result that is better than usual but not a critical success can especially benefit the one who rolled. This result is called a special success.

- A special success is an ability roll of 20% (1/5) or less of the modified chance of success.
- As with a critical success, the special success is based on the modified chance of success, not on the user's raw ability rating.
- In an opposed roll, a special success is always better than a normal success.

Fumble

If a hero can succeed spectacularly, they can also fail spectacularly. Such a failure is called a **fumble**. The possibility of fumbling extends beyond combat and applies to every ability roll made in the game.

The chance of a fumble is equal to 5% of the hero's chance of failure and always occurs on a roll of 00. As with critical and special successes, the chance for a fumble depends on the modified ability rating for the situation, not on the hero's unmodified rating in the ability.

A fumble is the worst possible failure and usually has disastrous consequences. In an opposed roll, a fumble is always worse than a failure.

When a success falls under multiple categories, always use the best result. Similarly, a failure should use the worst result.

Reattempting Ability Rolls

A hero failing an ability roll may still be in a situation where they could potentially try again. The gamemaster may permit a follow-up attempt if it is justified, but at a –20% penalty.

If this second attempt fails and time allows, a third attempt can be made at a penalty of –40%. Beyond that, attempts cannot be made without the passage of time and/or a dramatic change of circumstances.

Ability Results Table

The following table provides a quick reference for determining the thresholds for critical successes, special successes, successes, failures, and fumbles.

Opposed Resolution

Opposed rolls are made when a hero pits their ability against an opponent's ability. Most commonly, this happens in situations such as when resolving a conflict of loyalties or when using Hide to escape a Search, etc. A simple success may not be enough to overcome the opponent. Opposed rolls are not used to resolve combat.

To make an opposed roll, both participants roll their respective abilities. If both participants succeed, the winner is whoever achieved the better result. If one participant got a special success and the other a normal success, the special success is the winner. If one participant rolled a critical success and the other a normal or special success, the critical success is the winner.

An opposed roll may thus result in a winner and a loser, a tie, or two losers.

- **Winner and a Loser:** The winner succeeds and the loser fails.
- **Tie:** A tie (where both participants achieve the same type of success but roll the same number) means the situation is temporarily unresolved. If both participants roll a critical success, the result is a tie.
- **Two Losers:** Both participants fail their roll. Neither party achieves their intended goal.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll finds a dead body near his farm, clearly a victim of a vicious attack with a sword or axe. He gets down from his horse and takes a good look at the dead man's face. The gamemaster asks the player to roll against Njáll's Area Lore (Iceland) skill of 34%.*

The player rolls a 23—a success! If the roll had been 35 or higher, above the ability's rating, the roll would be a failure, and if it had been 99 or 00, it would be a fumble.

The gamemaster tells the player that Njáll recognizes the man as Þorbrandur, the younger son of his neighbor and ally, Hallvarður Fjörnirsson. Njáll decides to ride to Hallvarður's farm at once to give the news. This killing must be avenged!

EXAMPLE: *Njáll wants to follow a rival who seems to be behaving suspiciously, and he wants to do so without being noticed. Njáll has a Move Quietly of 10%. The gamemaster says that the rival is occasionally glancing behind as she walks through the crowd— so Njáll's Move Quietly is opposed by the rival's Search of 65%.*

The player rolls a 08, a success. The gamemaster rolls a 06, also a success. However, the player rolled higher and so, wins the contest. Njáll follows his rival without being noticed.

ABILITY RESULTS

Skill	Critical	Special	Success	Failure	Fumble
1–5	1	1	1–5	6–95	96–00
6–7	1	1	Per ability	Per ability	96–00
8–10	1	2	Per ability	Per ability	96–00
11–12	1	2	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
13–17	1–2	3	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
18–22	1–2	3–4	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
23–27	1–2	3–5	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
28–29	1–2	3–6	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
30	1–2	3–6	Per ability	Per ability	97–00
31–32	1–2	3–6	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
33–37	1–2	3–7	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
38–42	1–2	3–8	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
43–47	1–2	3–9	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
48–49	1–2	3–10	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
50	1–3	4–10	Per ability	Per ability	98–00
51–52	1–3	4–10	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
53–57	1–3	4–11	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
58–62	1–3	4–12	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
63–67	1–3	4–13	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
68–69	1–3	4–14	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
70	1–4	5–14	Per ability	Per ability	99–00
71–72	1–4	5–14	Per ability	Per ability	00
73–77	1–4	5–15	Per ability	Per ability	00
78–82	1–4	5–16	Per ability	Per ability	00
83–87	1–4	5–17	Per ability	Per ability	00
88–89	1–4	5–18	Per ability	Per ability	00
90–92	1–5	6–18	Per ability	Per ability	00
93–95	1–5	6–19	Per ability	Per ability	00
96–97	1–5	6–19	1–95	96–99	00
98–102	1–5	6–20	1–95	96–99	00
103–107	1–5	6–21	1–95	96–99	00
108–109	1–5	6–22	1–95	96–99	00
110–112	1–6	7–22	1–95	96–99	00
113–117	1–6	7–23	1–95	96–99	00
118–122	1–6	7–24	1–95	96–99	00
(higher)	5% ability	20% ability	1–95	96–99	00

Abilities Above 100%

From experience, a hero may extend their abilities past 100%. Additionally, a hero may have an ability above 100% because of magic, augments, or other modifiers. The effects of such increases are mainly to improve critical and special success chances, but certain skills above 100% provide special benefits, as described below and on pages 106–108, relating to combat.

Note that while extending one's ability past 100% has many benefits, the hero still has no better than a 95% chance of succeeding with an ability roll, as **any roll of 96–00 is always a failure**.

- An ability above 100% provides a greater chance of preventing an opponent's attempt to parry, block, dodge, or otherwise oppose a hero's attack. If the highest-rated participant in an opposed roll has an ability rating above 100%, the difference between 100 and their ability rating is subtracted from the ability of everyone in the contest (including themselves).

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has Shield 65% and is fighting Gunnar, who has Broadsword 120%. Gunnar reduces Njáll's Shield skill by –20%, the amount Gunnar's skill is over 100%. Now, Njáll has only a 45% chance of parrying Gunnar's sword, while Gunnar now has a modified 100% skill rating with Broadsword.*

EXAMPLE: *Hrappur has an Oratory of 105%. He wishes to persuade the gathered* ***goðar*** *at the assembly to reject the outrageous demands of the Norwegian king. However, the treacherous* ***goði*** *Ólafur opposes Hrappur with his Oratory of 125%. Hrappur must modify his Oratory by –25%, bringing it to 80%. Óláfur also must modify his Oratory by –25%, bringing it to 100%.*

While the actual chance of success remains no better than 95%, the chance of a special or critical success is based on the final modified chance when making an opposed roll.

EXAMPLE: *Gunnar, with his Broadsword 120% skill, has a 24% chance of a special success and a 6% chance of a critical success. If his skill is reduced to 100% (while reducing his opponent's skill by –20%), his chance of a special success is based on 100%, and thus a 20% chance of a special and a 5% chance of a critical.*

AUGMENTING ABILITIES

Where appropriate, one ability—whether skill or passion—may be combined to **augment** another ability of the same or a different type.

EXAMPLE: *The Sing skill may be used to augment a hero's Dance skill. The Plant Lore skill may be employed to augment the hero's Treat Poison skill, helping them to understand how a selection of available herbs may be used to treat poisoning. A passion like Love or Loyalty might augment a skill used to defend the subject of that passion.*

The abilities being combined should be clearly relevant to the task at hand. It is always up to the gamemaster whether a combination of an augment and an ability is allowed. **Only one augment may be attempted per ability, and an ability can only be used once per session to augment a task being attempted.**

If a hero announces that they are attempting to augment one ability with another, the augmenting ability roll should be rolled first, and the resulting modifier applied to the augmented ability's chance of success. However, the augment and the primary ability are considered to happen simultaneously, on the same DEX rank (pages 98–99), and are both performed even if the augment is unsuccessful.

The effect of augmenting one ability with another depends on how successful the augmenting roll is:

- **Critical Success:** The augmenting ability adds a +50% bonus to the ability being used.
- **Special Success:** The augmenting ability adds a +30% bonus to the ability being used.
- **Success:** The augmenting ability adds a +20% bonus to the ability being used.
- **Failure:** The hero modifies the ability being used by –20%.
- **Fumble:** The hero modifies the ability being used –50%.

Abilities may also be used to augment a hero's chances when using the resistance table. See page 63 for more information. It is the gamemaster's discretion as to whether an ability is appropriate.

At the gamemaster's discretion, a hero can use one ability to augment another hero's ability. This may include using one skill to bolster another, enhancing cooperative work, or in support of another. This should only apply to situations where augmenting is clearly possible. It is impossible to cause another to feel a passion without being able to communicate that intense emotion to them or augment another hero using a passion they do not share.

Passions have additional effects when used to augment abilities, particularly the exceptional results (critical and special successes, fumbles), and are described in **Chapter 10: Passions, Reputation, and Status**.

Successful rolls for abilities used to augment another ability are eligible for experience checks if the augmented ability roll was successful. Inspiring a hero who fails does not merit an experience check.

The Resistance Table

At times, a successful action depends on a hero's raw characteristic overcoming an opposing force or obstacle, represented by its own characteristic. Use the resistance table (page 64) to resolve these situations.

The resistance table is not used for skill or passion rolls. It is mostly used when pitting one characteristic against another, such as a hero's STR against the SIZ of an object to be lifted or the POW of a spellcaster against the POW of their target to determine if their spell overcame the target's resistance.

General Use

Using the resistance table demands that one characteristic be **active** and the other **passive**. The active characteristic exerts influence on the passive characteristic.

> ***For example, when a hero with a certain STR is trying to move a stone of a certain SIZ, the active factor is the STR, and the passive factor is the SIZ.***

In some cases, it might not be apparent which characteristic is active and which is passive. These cases must be decided by the gamemaster. When a hero or other living being uses a characteristic (such as STR or CON) to oppose an object (such as a door to be moved or a toxin to be neutralized), it is recommended that the former be considered the active characteristic.

The formula for overcoming resistance used in the resistance table is:

% success = 50% + (active × 5%) minus (passive × 5%)

If the quantities are equal, there is a 50% chance of success. The active characteristic gains 5% for every point greater than the passive characteristic. It loses 5% for every point it is lower.

If a chance of success is theoretically possible, a roll of 1–5 always succeeds, and if failure is a possibility, then a roll of 96–00 always fails, no matter the difference between the active and passive characteristics. As with other rolls, resistance rolls may result in critical successes, special successes, and fumbles.

As the table shows, the chance of success drops to 5% when the passive characteristic is 9 or more points higher than the active one, and the chance of failure drops to 5% when the active characteristic is 9 or more points higher than the passive one.

Specific Uses

The following are common uses of the resistance table:

- **POW vs. POW:** A spellcaster using their POW to directly influence the mind or body of their target must use the resistance table to overcome the target's POW.
- **STR vs. SIZ:** A hero attempting to use their STR to lift an object must overcome the SIZ of the object using the resistance table.
- **STR vs. STR:** If attempting to open stuck doors or bend metal bars, the gamemaster may assign STR to the object. The hero must use their STR on the resistance table to overcome the STR of the object.
- **Potency (POT) vs. CON or Hit Points:** Diseases and poisons are measured in potency (POT). The CON or hit points of the target are matched against the POT on the resistance table to determine the effects.
- **Grappling:** To immobilize a limb while grappling, the grappler must first succeed with a Grapple skill and then succeed in a STR against STR roll on the resistance table. To throw a foe, the grappler must also succeed in a contest of STR+DEX against the SIZ+DEX of the foe. For more information, see **Grappling** in **Chapter 5: Combat** (page 120).
- **Knockback:** After succeeding with a knockback attack, the attacker must roll on the resistance table, contesting the attacker's STR+SIZ against the SIZ+DEX of the target. For more information, see **Knockback** in **Chapter 5: Combat** (page 120).

> **EXAMPLE:** *While robbing the grave of the late goði Óláfur, Njáll must fight Óláfur's undead form, which has risen from its resting place as a fierce draugur. During the fight, the draugur touches Njáll with the rotten flesh of his hand. The gamemaster asks the player to make a resistance roll, pitting his CON 11 against the strength of the draugur's POW of 16. As this is an attack by the draugur, the gamemaster decides that Njáll's CON is the passive characteristic.*
>
> *Per the resistance table, Njáll has a 25% chance of resisting the draugur's flesh-rotting disease. Njáll's player rolls 13—a success! As a result, Njáll does not contract the disease.*

MOVEMENT

All human characters have a **movement rate (MOV)** of 10 units per combat round. A unit can represent several to 10 meters, depending on the situation. If the gamemaster needs an exact measurement, they might use 1 meter for walking and 3 meters (10 feet) per unit for running, but the relative distance between combatants is usually more important than their literal distance.

Ten units represent the maximum sustainable rate of movement for a normal human being. Other creatures have different MOV rates. When distance and rate become important, the gamemaster can provide a specific measurement but should try to answer such questions in game terms, such as: *"It takes you two combat rounds to get there."*

The gamemaster can also lower a hero's MOV temporarily based on circumstances.

The following rates of movement are approximate and generalized. Each of them also involves a 10-hour travel day.

Skiing or riding for a sustained period, more than a few hours, is nearly impossible in Iceland due to the limitations of terrain and physical tolerance. Icelandic horses are not bred for long-distance rides at a gallop, and there are few roads that make such a pace tolerable. Similarly, the terrain of Iceland is so rough that skiing great distances is frequently interrupted by terrain. If heroes attempt all-day travel at a gallop or skiing at racing speed, the gamemaster should require Ride and Athletics rolls, along with CON×5 rolls to stave off fatigue.

Resistance Table

Passive Characteristic

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	RANGE OF AUTOMATIC SUCCESS			–	–
5	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–				–	–
6	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
8	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
9	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–	–
10	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	–	–	–	–	–
11	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95				
12	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95			
13	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95		
14	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	
15	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95
16	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90
17	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80	85
18	–	–	RANGE OF AUTOMATIC FAILURE			–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75	80
19	–	–				–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70	75
20	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65	70
21	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60	65
22	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55	60
23	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**	55
24	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	05	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	**50**

For success, roll D100 equal to or less than the indicated number.

Movement Rates

Speed	Combat Round	Hour	Day
Walking	10 meters (11 yards)	3 kilometers (1.8 miles)	30 kilometers
Running, normally	30 meters (33.5 yards)	9 kilometers (5.6 miles)	90 kilometers
Running, sprinting	50 meters (55 yards)	15 kilometers (9.3 miles)	150 kilometers
Skiing, normally	50 meters (55 yards)	15 kilometers (9.3 miles)	—
Skiing, racing	100 meters (110 yards)	30 kilometers (18.6 miles)	—
Swimming	5 meters (16 feet)	1.5 kilometers (.9 miles)	15 kilometers
Riding, walking speed	12 meters (13 yards)	3.6 kilometers (2.2 miles)	36 kilometers
Riding, gallop	60 meters (66 yards)	18 kilometers (11.2 miles)	—

DAMAGE

Heroes suffer many kinds of damage: cuts and concussions from weapons, burns from fires, and falls, etc. In fact, every time a hero suffers any sort of physical trauma, they are said to take damage.

Enter points of damage on the hero sheet by marking off an equal number of hit points. Except in special cases, subtract the hit points of damage from both the hero's total hit points and from the location where the damage was taken. It is important to record all damage taken by your hero and to keep track of each separate injury!

Hit Locations

The bodies of all living creatures are organized into a few major areas called **hit locations**. Humans, for example, have seven hit locations, all listed on the hero sheet. Physical damage usually occurs in a specific hit location; points of damage are subtracted from the hit points of the hit location as well as from the hero's total hit points.

To randomly determine a hit location (where a weapon strikes in combat), roll D20 and refer to the **Hit Locations** table.

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	Description
1–4	Right Leg	Right leg from hip to foot
5–8	Left Leg	Left leg from hip to foot
9–11	Abdomen	Hip to just under floating ribs
12	Chest	Floating ribs to neck and shoulders
13–15	Right Arm	Entire right arm
16–18	Left Arm	Entire left arm
19–20	Head	Neck and head

EXAMPLE: *While crossing a lava field at night, Njáll is attacked by a troll. The hideous creature hits Njáll with one massive fist. To determine where the troll struck, the gamemaster rolls a D20, getting a 9—meaning the blow hit Njáll in the abdomen!*

Results of Damage

A hero falls unconscious if only 1 or 2 total hit points remain. When a hero has taken enough damage to reduce their total hit points to 0 or less, then the hero dies at the end of the current combat round unless healed or otherwise brought to positive hit points.

The sum of the hit points in all the hit locations adds up to more than the total hit points; this allows for the hero to be disabled or killed by many small wounds, though each is perhaps not too consequential. Even though no specific area of the hero's body is disabled by damage, the hero can still die from blood loss, the effects of shock, etc.

An individual hit location can take damage beyond the actual hit points in that location. The severity of the damage has different effects, depending on the hit location.

Damage Equal to or More Than the Location's Hit Points

Leg: The limb becomes useless. The hero must fall to the ground prone and cannot do anything else during that round. The hero may fight while prone in subsequent rounds. A hero fighting while prone has all attack chances modified by –40%, though parry chances are unmodified. Anyone attacking a prone opponent adds +40% to their attack chance.

Abdomen: Both legs are useless, and the hero falls to the ground. The hero may fight from the ground in subsequent combat rounds with a –40% modifier. If the hero has the means to heal themselves through magic or First Aid (see page 68), they can do so. If not healed or treated with First Aid within ten minutes, the hero bleeds to death.

Chest: The hero falls and is too busy coughing blood to do anything. The hero bleeds to death in ten minutes unless the bleeding is stopped by First Aid (page 68), and the hero cannot take any action, including healing.

Arm: The limb is useless, and anything not attached to the arm is dropped. The hero continues to stand and can fight with whatever limbs are still functional.

Head: The hero is unconscious, falls prone, and must be healed or treated successfully with First Aid within five minutes, restoring them to at least 1 hit point, or they will die.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has been slashed in the abdomen by an outlaw he's trying to capture. He has 5 hit points in his abdomen hit location. Njáll is wearing thick wool breeches (1 armor point to abdomen) and leather armor (2 points to chest and abdomen). The outlaw's damage (D6+D4) gets a result of 8, to Njáll's dismay. The damage, after being reduced by armor, equals 5 points, which exceeds Njáll's hit points in the abdomen by 1. Njáll is now out of the fight. He falls to the ground, coughing blood, and will bleed to death in ten minutes if help doesn't arrive.*

Damage Equals or Exceeds Double the Location's Hit Points

Limb: A hero cannot take more than twice the possible points of damage in an arm or leg from a single blow. Thus, a 2-point arm hit for 5 points takes only 4 points of damage off the total hit points; the remaining 1 point of damage has no effect. Note that further blows to the injured arm affect the total hit points of the hero. However, a hero so damaged from a single blow is functionally incapacitated; they can no longer fight until healed and are in shock. They may try to heal themselves.

Head, Chest, or Abdomen: If the head, chest, or abdomen suffers more than twice as much damage as the hero has hit points in that location, the hero becomes unconscious, falls prone, and begins to lose 1 hit point per combat round unless healed or treated with First Aid (page 68).

EXAMPLE: *Gunnar has 4 hit points in the head and a total of 10 hit points. He takes 10 points of damage in a single blow. His armor protection (1 point) is subtracted, meaning he has suffered 9 points of damage in the head. He can only take 8 points total to the head (double the hit points for his head hit location), so 1 point of the damage does not affect him and is ignored. However, 8 points are enough to knock him out. Gunnar is now unconscious, with 2 total hit points remaining, and will lose 1 additional hit point each combat round until First Aid or healing magic is applied. With only 2 hit points remaining, he has two rounds until he reaches 0 hit points and is dead.*

Damage Equals or Exceeds Triple the Location's Hit Points

A limb hit for three times more points than it can take in a single blow is severed or irrevocably maimed. Thus, a hero with a 2-point arm struck for 8 points takes only 4 points of damage against their total hit points. However, the arm is maimed. In these cases, the hero is also functionally incapacitated.

A head, chest, or abdomen hit for three times as much damage as the hero has hit points in that location results in instant death.

EXAMPLE: *Fortunately for Njáll, he was not alone—his ally Birna is nearby and sees Njáll fall. Birna swings her axe and strikes the outlaw with a special success—a lucky blow! Birna's player rolls a 20 for the hit location, indicating that her axe strikes the outlaw in the head.*

The outlaw has 1 point of armor (a leather cap) and 6 hit points in his head hit location. For a special success with a cutting weapon like an axe, damage is doubled. Birna's normal damage with a battle axe is 1D8+2+1D4, so Birna rolls 2D8+4+1D4 (her damage modifier is not doubled). Birna rolls a total of 19 points of damage.

The outlaw's armor subtracts 1 point from this total, but the remaining 18 points are equal to three times his head's hit points. He dies, his skull cloven by Birna's axe. Now, Birna can heal her friend Njáll.

Severed and Maimed Limbs

No magic available to mortals can restore a severed limb. At the gamemaster's discretion, a god, or perhaps one of the hidden folk, may use powerful magic to regrow a hero's limb as a reward for completing a major quest.

The maiming or severing of a limb can cause permanent damage if it is not regrown through magic. If a hero no longer has part of a limb, they lose 1 or more hit points in that location (at the gamemaster's discretion). However, any healing magic that restores hit points can cure a maimed limb if all the hit points are restored within ten minutes. If that time limit passes, the limb is useless,

even though the hit points can be restored. To restore the use of the limb, the hero must receive godly or otherworldly magic capable of regrowing limbs, as with severed limbs.

HEALING

Damage can be erased by the First Aid skill, by magic, or by natural healing.

First Aid

The First Aid skill lets an injured hero stop bleeding to death, restores lost hit points, revives unconscious characters, etc. Use First Aid once on damage from one injury to a specific hit location. If a hero suffers two injuries to the abdomen, First Aid may be used once against the damage to each wound.

First Aid requires a full combat round to stop bleeding, and five full combat rounds to heal damage.

- A successful First Aid roll heals 1D3 damage to an injured location. A special or critical success heals 1D3+3 damage. Any amount of healing that exceeds the number of damage points taken is ignored.
- A failed First Aid roll means that no damage was healed, and First Aid cannot be attempted on that wound again. The wound is bandaged, stitched up, etc., but no other benefit comes from that treatment.
- A fumbled First Aid roll causes a further 1D3 damage

EXAMPLE: *At the battle against Sturla the Vicious and his followers, Njáll has taken two injuries: a 3-point cut to his right arm and a 2-point cut to his left leg. He tries to tend the wounds with First Aid. His skill in First Aid is 40%. Njáll gets a 4 on the first injury—a special success! Rather than the normal 1D3 for a success, Njáll heals 1D3+3 hit points. Rolling 1D3 for the healing attempt, he gets a 2 and adds 3 to that, restoring 5 hit points to his arm. The injury, however, was only a 3-point injury, so only 3 points are healed. It's bandaged but otherwise good as new.*

Now it's time for the injury to the left leg. A roll of 84 is a failure, meaning that no hit points are restored, and the injury cannot be treated again with First Aid. Now, Njáll must either use magic or let natural healing run its course.

Healing Magic

Healing magic takes many forms, as described in **Chapter 11: Rune Magic** and **Chapter 12: *Seiður* Magic**. A healing spell—whether a rune magic script containing a rune with healing properties or a *seiður* spell with Body focus and dedicated to healing—can be used any number of times to cure any injury.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has taken a 7-point wound, and Hallbera uses magic to cure 4 points of damage. She can then cure the other 3 points with a follow-up spell cast in a later combat round.*

Natural Healing

All living creatures heal naturally with time. Every hero's healing rate dictates how many hit points are recovered in each location at the end of each game week. For natural healing, it is the location that matters, not the number of wounds.

A hero cannot engage in strenuous activity—rest is necessary for healing! As a location recovers lost hit points, the level of injury improves, and any penalties from being incapacitated are adjusted based on its new state.

EXAMPLE: *With her CON 14, Birna has a healing rate of 3. She'll heal 3 hit points in each hit location per week of rest and recuperation.*

A hit location that has been maimed or severed does not heal naturally and remains non-functional. Though the hero will regain general hit points with natural healing, that hit location is lost and should be crossed off the hero sheet. Any further blows to that hit location are rerolled or pass on to an adjacent hit location, such as the abdomen or remaining leg for a lost leg, or the chest for a severed arm.

ENCUMBRANCE

The easiest means of handling **Encumbrance (ENC)** is for the gamemaster and players to agree that heroes may not carry more than what is reasonable under normal conditions.

Should additional clarity be required, such as when this is unclear or when "reasonable" or "normal conditions" are debatable, the following system is provided.

"Things" for ENC

Any item that can be held easily in one hand (e.g., a sword, a rock, an axe, a rope, etc.) is treated as a "thing". Most one-handed items have an ENC of 1 or 2. Even though they may have very different weights, they take up about the same space and are about the same difficulty to handle.

Every item has an ENC, measured more by how many "things" it is equivalent to rather than by its actual weight.

Maximum ENC

The total amount a hero can carry and still function normally is determined by averaging the hero's STR and CON. The maximum limit of this, however, is the hero's STR. A hero cannot carry more "things" than they have the STR for.

EXAMPLE: *Ísgerður has STR 10 and CON 13. She may carry ten "things" without penalty, even though the average of the two characteristics is 12. This is because her STR 10 limits how much can be picked up and carried.*

ENC Penalties

Every point of ENC a hero carries over their maximum ENC causes them to suffer the following penalties:

- –1 from Movement (MOV)
- –5% from all skills in the Agility, Manipulation, Stealth, and Weapon skill categories

EXAMPLE: *Ísgerður is forced to carry her unconscious friend Sigmundur off the battlefield. Sigmundur's SIZ is 8, and the weight of Ísgerður's and Sigmundur's personal gear weighs a total of another eight "things", for a combined total of 16. This is 4 points over Ísgerður's maximum ENC. While she's carrying Sigmundur, Ísgerður's MOV is reduced from 8 to 4, and any physical skills she attempts will be modified by –20%.*

Consequences of ENC for Dodging

The Dodge skill is modified by –5% per point of ENC above the hero's maximum ENC.

EXAMPLE: *Ísgerður, with a maximum ENC 12, carries 7 ENC (her clothing and helm, quarterstaff, and knife). If Ísgerður picks up a chainmail shirt and shield, her ENC is increased to 15, 3 points above her maximum ENC. Her Dodge skill is modified by –15% (3 ENC × –5%), to 25%.*

Size of Items

Use this table to equate an actual or estimated weight (in kilograms) to its game SIZ. A kilogram weighs 2.2 pounds if conversion is desired.

Sizes

SIZ	Kilos	SIZ	Kilos
1	0–5	25	218–237
2	6–11	26	238–258
3	12–17	27	259–282
4	18–24	28	283–307
5	25–35	29	308–335
6	36–41	30	336–366
7	42–49	31	367–399
8	50–54	32	400–435
9	55–58	33	436–475
10	59–64	34	476–518
11	65–70	35	519–565
12	71–75	36	566–616
13	76–80	37	617–672
14	81–85	38	673–733
15	86–90	39	734–799
16	91–95	40	800–871
17	96–100	41	872–950
18	101–115	42	951–1,039
19	116–130	43	1,040–1,129
20	131–145	44	1,130–1,229
21	146–160	45	1,230–1,349
22	161–184	46	1,350–1,469
23	185–201	47	1,470–1,599
24	202–219	48	1,600–1,739

SPOT RULES

The following section contains rules for a variety of situations or conditions that might emerge during gameplay, whether rare or common.

Alcohol

"I COUNSEL THEE...
I PRAY THEE BE WARY...
BE WARIEST OF ALL WITH ALE."
—Oðinn's council, from Hávamál ("Sayings of the High One"), Poetic Edda

The only grain grown in Iceland is barley. It is used for the purpose of brewing ale and for making bread. Brewing ale is difficult work, requiring much attention and prayers to the gods. Because of the harsh weather, however, the local production is not enough to cover the country's consumption, and grain is a valuable commodity brought to Iceland by traders.

Large quantities of ale are consumed at feasts and assemblies. At the *Alþing*, the National Assembly, ale is brewed on the spot.

Wine is rare and very expensive. Mead is also rare, as there are no honeybees in Iceland.

Alcohol Effects

Alcoholic beverages each have a potency score which reflects the alcoholic content per half-liter (pint). Continuous drinking accumulates **potency (POT)**. Potency is a rating of the relative strength of a substance, from poison to strong alcohol. See the **Beverage Potency** table (following) for more information.

Beverage Potency

Type of Drink	Potency (POT)
Watered beer/ale	1
Weak beer/ale	2
Strong beer/ale	3
Mead	5
Poor wine	3
Average wine	6
Best wine	9

* Potency may vary by as much as ±3 points depending on the brewer.

Drinking too much may result in the hero becoming sick or passing out. Each time the accumulated alcohol potency points exceed a multiple of the hero's average of CON and SIZ (round up), the drinker must make a CON×5 roll. Note that this roll may have modifiers if the hero has already failed a CON×5 roll before (see **Drunkenness Effects** table). Also, each subsequent CON×5 roll after the first has a cumulative –10% penalty.

Each failure shifts the hero one condition from Sober to Lightheaded to Inebriated to Drunken Stupor to Unconscious.

For example, if a hero has CON 14 and SIZ 16, the average is 15. Each time the accumulated alcohol potency points pass a multiple of 15, that hero must make a CON×5 roll; failure results in an increase in condition.

A fumble result on this roll shifts two levels: Sober to Inebriated, Lightheadedness to Drunken Stupor, or Inebriated to Unconscious.

Drunkenness Effects

Sober	**No effect**
Lightheaded	–20% to all skills
Inebriated	–40% to all skills
Drunken Stupor	Skill rolls only succeed on a critical success
Unconscious:	—

Once the drunken stupor condition is reached, the hero must make a CON×2 roll or become sick. If this roll is failed, the hero becomes sick and passes out.

- **Unconscious:** A hero that has passed out because of too much drink remains unconscious for 1D10+2 hours, during which time it is nearly impossible to wake them up. After that time, they pass on to a normal sleeping state for an additional 1D10+2 hours. After waking up, the hero must make a CON×3 roll or suffer from the effects of a hangover (see below).
- **Recovery:** When a hero who is Lightheaded, Inebriated, or in a Drunken Stupor condition has stopped drinking or gone to sleep, subtract the hero's CON from the number of ingested alcohol potency (POT). The remaining amount POT then decreases at the rate of 1 per hour of rest, during which time the hero suffers from a hangover.
- **Hangover:** A hero waking up the next day after having reached Drunken Stupor or Unconscious levels of alcohol effects the night before, or still having active potency points, suffers from headaches, nausea, and general body aches. The hero must make a CON×5 roll or suffer a penalty of –20% to all skills for the whole day. Any sudden movements or strenuous activity require an additional CON×5 roll or the hero becomes sick.

Drinking under moderate, noncompetitive conditions does not require any rolls. Assume that a hero can naturally absorb their healing rate in alcohol POT per hour without becoming drunk.

For example, a hero with a healing rate of 3 hit points per week can handle one strong beer or ale (POT 3) per hour without becoming drunk.

Drinking Contests

Drinking contests are common among Icelanders and the Norse and consist of drinking copious amounts of alcohol, usually ale or mead, until there is only one competitor left standing (or upright).

When running a drinking contest, the gamemaster must first take note of the average of CON and SIZ (rounded up) of every participant, as well as the potency (POT) of the beverages they are drinking.

- Each time the accumulated number of alcohol potency (POT) consumed by a hero exceeds their average of CON and SIZ, a CON×5 roll with the appropriate modifiers must be made.
- Each successive roll after the first also includes a cumulative –10% penalty.
- Failing four such rolls causes unconsciousness and the hero to lose the contest. Becoming sick does not disqualify a participant from the contest.

The last drinker standing is the winner, though victory does not spare them the physical consequences of the competition.

Chases

When one party—whether a hero on foot, mounted, or controlling a wagon, boat, or other vehicle—gives chase to another, there are three important things to determine:

- Range, or distance between parties.
- The effects of attacking or defending against one another while in pursuit.
- The conditions that constitute the end of the chase.

If in doubt, the gamemaster determines which party is the pursuer and which is the pursued.

Range Categories

Range during a chase is abstracted into the following range categories based on the relationship of the pursuer to the pursued, rather than specific distances along a defined course or path. If there is more than one pursuer or pursued, those closest to one another are used to determine which range category applies.

Note that these range categories solely relate to the distance between the two parties and have little to do with independent movement from round to round. As such, advancing from one range category to another might be greater than a participant's normal MOV rate and can reflect a variety of circumstances and activities in the chase.

- **Side-by-side:** The pursuer and the pursued are either side-by-side or are at the equivalent distance from the destination (if any). If within range, they may attack with hand weapons, or they may use ranged weapons if they are within ranged weapon distance. Those on horseback may be limited to what actions they can take based on the side of the mount their opponent is on, such as being unable to parry with a shield if it is being held on the opposite side of the attacker. Boats are hull-to-hull, and passengers may leap between them with successful Jump rolls. Weapon skills are otherwise unmodified.
- **Two Lengths:** The pursued is more than two "lengths" ahead of the pursuer. If this is a mount, it is twice the mount's body length from head to tail, and if it is a cart or wagon, it is twice the length of the vehicle from its end to the snout of the foremost beast pulling the vehicle. For a boat, it's twice the tip of the stern to the hindmost point aft. Ranged weapons are the only option here (applying any relevant modifiers for range, determined in **Range** on page 112).
- **Close:** The pursuer and pursued are between 50 and 100 meters (55 yards and 110 yards) apart from one another. Close combat is impossible, and range modifiers for ranged weapons are modified as above.
- **In Sight:** Both parties are more than 100 meters (110 yards) apart—up to 500 meters (547 yards). In some terrain or conditions, a successful Listen or Spot Hidden roll might be required even to locate the other party. Depending on terrain, a Track roll may be required to stay in pursuit. Only a few ranged weapons have this type of range (at the lower distance) and are modified as above. The gamemaster may choose to change the time scale from combat rounds to full turns.
- **Out of Sight:** The pursued is more than 500 meters (547 yards) ahead of the lead pursuer(s) and is considered out of sight and no longer visible. Ranged combat is impossible. Successful use of the Listen, Spot Hidden, Track skills, or some other magical means may be required to locate the pursued party. If the pursued party can move beyond this range increment, the chase is effectively over.

These rules can also be used to describe a race, with two or more parties attempting to reach a potential point first, with minimal adaptation by the gamemaster.

Movement in a Chase

Chases follow these basic rules, no matter how each party is moving:

- Once per combat round, each participant in the chase may perform their desired movement. This is either their full MOV if choosing to take no other action, or their MOV as modified by the rules for shooting while moving (see page 113). Mounted characters, or those in wagons, can attack as normal by performing the appropriate skill rolls (Ride, Drive).
- During each combat round, the gamemaster determines which party moves ahead by requiring all involved to make an opposed roll of an appropriate skill (Ride, Drive) or DEX vs. DEX.
- If the MOV characteristics of each participant are equal, the opposed rolls are unmodified. Otherwise, modify by –5% per point difference from the slower participant.
- If there is no clear winner, the parties are considered to remain Side-by-side.
- The winner of the opposed roll may advance their position by one full range category. A special success allows advancement by two range categories, and a critical success advances the participant by three range categories. A fumble on the side of the pursuer increases the range category by one step, and a fumble on the side of the pursued reduces it by one step.
- Moving from one range category to another may require covering more distance than can be handled with round-to-round MOV rates. In these cases, the gamemaster should adjust the time scale to accommodate the gap between the pursued and the pursuer.

For example, once the parties are at the In Sight range category, the gamemaster may choose to change from combat rounds to full turns.

- Either party can choose to reduce their advancement by a desired number of range categories, such as a pursued party wanting to remain within missile range to attack the pursuer. When attacking or defending one another while Side-by-side, the gamemaster should determine the effects of damage or failure on the ability of each party to participate. A wounded mount may not wish to continue, a damaged wagon may be unusable, and a fumbled DEX vs. DEX roll may indicate a fall or a leg injury.
- The chase ends when the pursuer is no longer able to continue the pursuit or when the pursued has moved beyond the Out of Sight range category.

At the gamemaster's discretion, the time scale can be adjusted to full turns, hours, or even days for extended pursuits. In these cases, the range categories can be increased as required by the gamemaster. However, this is not recommended when dealing with combat, whether ranged, hand-to-hand, or spell usage, which should be handled with combat rounds.

Mounted combat is addressed on pages 117–118.

Darkness

There are two forms of darkness: the dimness of ordinary night and the pitch-blackness of underground. The gamemaster may rule that the night is unusually light or dark and adjust the following rules appropriately.

- **The Darkness of Night:** When a hero is operating in the darkness of night or in night-like conditions (perhaps in a cave illuminated by a distant torch), the gamemaster must decide upon an appropriate penalty to subtract from skills that depend on eyesight. A modifier of –20% to –40% is recommended.
- **Pitch-black Darkness:** All skills depending on normal eyesight (Spot Hidden, Search, weapon skills, etc.) are at a –80% penalty.

Lighting the Darkness

Lamp: A dished stone filled with fish liver oil for fuel with cotton grass for a wick. A lamp illuminates a 1-meter radius sufficiently to read by and to use Search skills normally. The Search skill is reduced by –5% for every meter of distance away from the lamp.

A lamp can be extinguished by a breeze. If dropped, it spreads burning oil over the floor. Treat flames as a small fire.

Candle: Expensive and thus rarely used, a candle produces light similar to a lamp (see above). A candle can go out in very little breeze. If dropped, it goes out when the gamemaster rolls 6–00 on D100.

Torches: A torch held at shoulder height illuminates a 12-meter (40 foot) radius, sufficient to read by and to use Search skills normally. A torch lying on the ground reaches only 3 meters (10 feet). A held torch is visible for hundreds of meters and modifies a Search skill roll in the same manner as candles when the skill is performed outside the normal illumination radius. If dropped, a torch goes out when the gamemaster rolls 96–00 on D100.

Drowning and Asphyxiation

This rule can be used for both missed swimming rolls and involuntary immersion in water, such as being held under or trapped under an upended ship hull. It can also be adapted to poison gas attacks (though they are extremely rare).

A hero expecting immersion can hold their breath during the first combat round of that immersion. For each of the second through the fifth combat rounds, the player must roll the hero's CON×5 or less on D100 to maintain the held breath. Every combat round after this, the CON roll is reduced by one multiplier. Thus, on the sixth round, the roll must be CON×4, the seventh would be CON×3, etc. After the ninth round, the player must make a CON×1 roll until after the 15th round; then, the chance is reduced to 5% unless the hero's CON is lower than 5.

Whenever one of these rolls is missed, the hero takes 1D8 points of damage to the chest each round, except for any round in which a roll of CON×1 is successfully rolled.

If the hero is taken by surprise by the immersion, the player must determine by a roll of POW×5 or less on D100 whether the hero has instinctively taken a breath. If yes, then follow the above procedure entirely. If not, go directly to the drowning procedure with a damage roll of 1D8 in the first round.

Exposure, Hunger, and Thirst

Heroes may be caught in unforgiving and inhospitable environments or might suffer the effects of going without nutrition for prolonged periods. The following rules address these unfortunate circumstances.

Exposure to Cold

Heroes traveling outdoors during the winter without warm clothes may suffer severely. Even during the summer, when taking long journeys across land, it is best to be prepared for unpredictable weather.

The **Cold Exposure** table indicates the effects of cold upon a person without clothing or other protection. These values are far outside the range of normal weather conditions but might represent powerful magic at work.

Cold Exposure

Temperature C°	Temperature F°	Damage to Hit Points
0° to −10°	32° to 14°	1
−11° to −20°	12° to −4°	1D3
−21° to −30°	−6° to −22°	1D6
−31° to −40°	−24° to −40°	1D10
−41° to −50°	−42° to −58°	1D10+2
−51° to −60°	−60° to −76°	1D10+4
−61° to −70°	−78° to −94°	1D10+6
−71° to −80°	−96° to −112°	1D10+8
−81° to −90°	−114° to −130°	2D10+10
−91° to −100°	−132° to −148°	3D10+15

To calculate cold damage, subtract the point damage from the target's general hit points. For every 5 general hit points subtracted, also subtract 1 hit point from the location hit points of the head, each arm, and each leg.

During snowstorms, in addition to the effects of exposure to cold, all visibility is reduced to near zero, and movement rates are halved (round up). The **Cold Protection** table lists common protective measures.

Cold Protection

Clothing	Protection
Normal clothing	1 point
Wool or hide cloak	2 points
Warm headgear	1 point
Coat or long robe	1 point

Treat clothing as armor against cold; subtract the total amount of protection from any rolled damage. Thus, a hero wearing a wool cloak over normal clothing will not take any cold damage unless the temperature is below –20° C (–4° F) and then only if the die roll indicates over 3 points of damage.

Exposure to Heat

In the unlikely event of temperatures of 40° C (104° F) or higher, each hero's player must succeed with a CON×3 roll once per game hour or collapse from the heat, losing 1 point of total hit points per hour.

Hunger

Each day beyond a hero's weekly healing rate that a hero goes without food causes them to lose 1 point of total hit points.

For example, a hero with a healing rate of 2 can go two days without food without harm, but on the third day, they lose 1 hit point.

Thirst

For each hour beyond 12 hours in which a hero is completely denied fluids, they lose 1 point of total hit points. This loss is suspended if the hero can eat a substance that contains a reasonable amount of water, such as berries.

Falling

This rule covers damage taken from falling down a shaft or pit or being tossed by a horse. Damage from a fall is increased for every three meters (ten feet) the hero falls.

The **Falling Damage** table shows the result:

Falling Damage

Fall	Damage to Hit Location
0.1–1.0 meters (1 yard)	No effect
1.1–3.0 meters (3.3 yards)	1D6
3.1–6.0 meters (6.5 yards)	2D6
6.1–9.0 meters (9.8 yards)	3D6
9.1–12.0 meters (13 yards)	4D6
Each +3 meters (+3.3 yards)	+1D6

A hero can reduce the damage from falling by one "step" with a successful Jump roll. Failure has no effect, and a fumble increases it by another step.

When hitting the ground, roll 1D20 to determine the hit location striking the ground first. Because of the shock of landing, the normal limits for damage to a limb do not apply, as the shock continues throughout the body.

> ***For example, a hero with 9 hit points has 3 hit points in each leg. They fall 8 meters, for a possible 3D6 points of damage. When the hero hits the ground, the gamemaster rolls a 3 on 1D20, determining the right leg strikes the ground first. Normally, a 3-point limb can only take a maximum of 6 points of damage, but when falling, that limit is ignored.***

Forward velocity is also counted in determining damage, increasing it by one step. A fall from a horse is in the 1–3-meter (1–3.3 yard) range, but being thrown converts it to the 3.1–6-meter range (3.4–6.5 yard).

The gamemaster should make any adjustment necessary for the relative softness of the objects landed upon. Armor will protect against damage in some instances (at gamemaster discretion).

Even if damage is not reduced with a successful Jump roll, a player making a successful DEX×5 roll when landing can specify which hit location sustains the impact. Failure means that the hit location is rolled randomly.

Fire

A torch damages a target like a club (see page 111) if it is used to strike something. If the target is readily flammable, it might also catch fire (at the gamemaster's discretion).

If a torch is held next to a target for an entire combat round, the target takes fire damage. If the torch or similar flame source is being placed against an unresisting target, the target takes 1D6 damage directly to the specific hit location at the end of the first combat round.

If the placement of the flame is by chance, or the target is resisting by attempting to ward off the flame and fails a parry or Dodge attempt, the target has a chance equal to its current POW×5 or less on D100 of using any available armor to block the flame.

The flammability of the target must be decided by the gamemaster. If the target is flammable and takes initial damage as described above, the affected hit location may continue to burn on its own for 1D6 points of damage per combat round. The chance of it spreading to another hit location is determined by the gamemaster. If the target does not catch fire, it stops taking damage when the flame is removed.

A living being's skin and body are not flammable, body hair is.

Areas Affected by Fire

A torch affects a single hit location. A small fire less than 1 meter (1 yard) square affects each hit location entering it. This is usually the legs but can include other areas of a victim who falls into it. A large fire, more than 1 meter (1 yard) square, affects the hit locations entering it and may do damage to the lungs through flame inhalation.

This is handled in the same way as damage from **drowning** (see page 72). Only large burning fires have this effect. A large bed of burning coals would only have the effect of a small fire.

Putting Out a Fire

To put out a fire by dousing it with water or smothering it, first, roll the fire damage for each hit location, then roll 1D6 for each extinguishing attempt. If the extinguish roll is not as high as the damage roll, the difference between the two is the damage taken at the end of that round. If the extinguish roll is higher, the flame is put out, and the victim takes no damage in that hit location. A successful extinguish roll for each burning hit location must be made before the fire is totally out.

Poison

The principle of all poison use is the same. All poisons have a rating called **potency (POT)**, which is matched against the CON of a poisoned individual using the resistance table. If the victim fails to overcome the POT of the poison, they take as many hit points in damage as the poison has POT. The effects heal naturally at the hero's healing rate. Belladonna, if swallowed, does an additional 3D6 damage to the victim, in addition to damage from its POT.

If the hero resists the poison, they take half the poison's POT (round up) as damage to their hit points. If they survive the poisoning, the hero heals at the usual rate for poison.

Poison damage always damages the total hit points of the hero and not specific hit locations. If injured by other means, hit locations still suffer the same amount of damage as normal.

Poison damage is usually not determined in the same combat round in which a hero is poisoned. The delay before poison damage takes effect depends upon the poison. Unless otherwise specified, the delay is three combat rounds for fast-acting poisons, or three full turns for slower poisons.

If a hero takes two doses of poison, they must resist each one separately: two doses of POT 10 poison are not the same as one dose of POT 20 poison.

Foreign Poisons

There are no poisonous plants in Iceland, and no poisonous animals save a few rare monsters. Foreign traders and Icelanders returning from abroad, however, sometimes bring poisons with them.

Antidotes

Almost all poisons have antidotes, or antidotes can be made with a successful Plant Lore roll (see page 87). All antidotes have a POT rating, just as poisons. An antidote given within ten minutes to a poisoned but not-yet-dead hero cancels the damage done by the poison up to the level of the antidote. The antidote must normally be specific to the poisoning.

Thrown Objects

A palm-sized object balanced for throwing may be thrown 1 meter (1 yard) for every point of STR. If the thrown object is unbalanced or awkward, the distance it can be thrown is reduced to 1 meter (1 yard) for every 3 STR points.

A DEX×5 roll is used to hit a target with a casual object or improvised missile, doing no damage. Hitting a target with the right part of an object designed to be thrown—such as the blade of a throwing knife or the point of a javelin—uses the skill ratings for those weapons.

Accuracy is affected if the throwing distance is more than 10 meters (11 yards). For such throws, the attacker must modify by –3% for every meter (yard) more than 10 meters (11 yards). An object can be thrown vertically to a maximum of half the distance it may be thrown horizontally.

A thrown object does ½ the thrower's damage modifier.

Poisons

Type	Onset time	POT	Additional Damage	Symptoms
Adder (bite)	15–60 minutes	9	–	Convulsions, respiratory failure
Belladonna (swallowed)	2–48 hours	9	3D6	Rapid heartbeat, impaired vision, convulsions
Bees/Wasps (50 stings)	15–60 minutes	4	–	Pain, swelling, dizziness, nausea
Black Widow (bite)	2–8 hours	4	–	Chills, sweating, nausea
Death Cap (swallowed)	8–16 hours	9	–	Sickness, colic
Scorpion (sting)	24–48 hours	6	–	Intense pain, weakness, hemorrhaging
Wolfsbane (contact)	10–20 minutes	9	–	Cold sweat, pain, vomiting

Weather

The weather in Iceland can be volatile due to the influence of the mythic forces and land spirits over the island. The beating of the wings of the mighty eagle Vindsvall often generates strong winds, and fierce snowstorms are created by the ice giant Hrym walking the land.

Winds, even on bright summer days, but especially during the winter, can reach speeds of up to 200 km-per-hour (124 miles per hour). Extreme weather conditions usually do not last long, as the land spirits are typically quick to settle down from periods of intense activity. It is not uncommon to experience bright sunshine, rain, and snow in the same day.

Only two seasons are distinct in Iceland. Summers are short, mild, and calm. Winters are long, very windy, and wet.

Summer temperatures average 10° C (50° F) in the lowlands, but on rare hot days, it can reach up to 30° C (86° F). Blizzards during the summer are not unheard of.

At the height of the summer, for about six weeks, the sun never goes down.

In the dark winters, temperatures average 0° C (32° F) but can drop as low as -40° C (-40° F). Storms occur nearly every week during the winter. In midwinter, there are only about two or three hours of sunlight per day.

The weather in the highlands can be even more unstable and unpredictable. The gamemaster may choose to roll more frequently and even increase the severity of the weather conditions, as desired, especially in areas where magical beings such as giants (called *jötunn* in Norse) are active.

Summer Weather (roll twice daily)

D100	Weather	Temperature
01	Extremely hot weather, no wind	30° C (86° F)
02–15	Blue sky, no wind	20° C (68° F)
16–50	Blue sky, no wind	12° C (54° F)
51–65	Blue sky, windy	8° C (46° F)
66–75	Cloudy, strong winds	7° C (45° F)
76–85	Rain, strong winds	4° C (39° F)
86–98	Rain, very strong winds	2° C (36° F)
99–100	Snowstorm, very strong winds	-4° C (25° F)

Winter Weather (roll three times daily)

D100	Weather	Temperature
1	Blue sky, no wind	12° C (54° F)
2–10	Blue sky, no wind	7° C (45° F)
11–50	Cloudy, windy	3° C (37° F)
51–60	Snowing, no wind	0° C (32° F)
61–80	Snowing, strong winds	-5° C (23° F)
81–90	Heavy snowfall, strong winds	-15° C (5° F)
91–100	Snowstorm, very strong winds	-25° C (-13° F)

Wind

Strength and direction define moving air. Measure wind strength using the following table, which shows nominal air velocity in terms of STR.

Wind affects three aspects of play: forcing adjustments to movement, hindering missile fire, and limiting visibility.

- **Movement:** Total the hero's STR+SIZ. If the wind STR is greater than this total, the gamemaster should require the hero to make a resistance roll against the STR of the wind. A failed roll means that the hero has lost their footing and has fallen, possibly taking damage (1D6 for a fall to the ground). Flying creatures use only their STR to find the minimum wind that will affect them.
- **Missile Fire:** These adjustments begin at wind STR 10. Each point of wind STR greater than 10 reduces the accuracy of missiles by –5%.
- **Visibility:** Vision may be affected by wind-borne materials such as dust, snow, or rain. The wind's STR determines the size of the particle picked up, thereby reducing visibility. In situations where wind may blow debris about, the gamemaster may determine that sight-based skills (including Spot Hidden, Search, and weapon skills) incur a penalty up to the wind's STR as a percentage.

Wind Measurement

STR	Wind
0–2	Calm, no air movement.
3–6	Light air, little movement; gutters a candle, may not blow it out.
7–12	Breeze. Easily blows out a candle.
13–18	Light wind. Lower limit for good sailing in boats. Poison gas will dissipate.
19–24	Moderate wind. Dangerous to flying creatures and may knock them down. Birds typically roost in such wind.
25–30	Strong wind. Menacing to average humans and may knock them down. Upper limit sailing ships can endure.
31–36	Fresh gale. Impossible for average humans to remain afoot.
37–45	Fierce gale.
46–50	Hurricane.

CHAPTER FOUR

SKILLS

While heroes successfully perform routine actions in normal conditions, in stressful situations, the gamemaster may call for skill rolls to determine if a hero can successfully use a specific skill to perform a desired activity or achieve a desired goal.

Any activity can be said t call for some use of skill, but certain skills are fundamental and require special attention and description.

Base Chance

The **base chance** for a skill is the chance that any capable person would have to perform the skill for the first time; all skills have a base chance. An individual hero's skills category modifier may adjust such chances so that even at the beginning of their careers, different heroes may have different abilities.

Some skills are marked with (00) as their base chance. Skills category modifiers are not applied to these skills until the skill rating is increased to above 0%, meaning that the skills start at 0% unless increased through previous experience or training. Once the skill increases above 0%, the skills category modifier is applied. Add any percentiles of the skill learned through previous experience or training to the base chance. This combined value is the **skill rating**.

Who Rolls for Success with a Skill?

If the result of a skill attempt is immediately obvious to the hero, the player should roll. A failed Climb roll to climb a mountain, for example, means the hero does not climb the mountain. Likewise, the player should always make combat attack, parry, and Dodge rolls.

Sometimes, the gamemaster, not the player, should roll the dice on behalf of the hero. If the hero wants to see if something is lurking around the next corner, the gamemaster should make a Listen roll for the hero. The player should not know whether the hero did not hear anything because there was nothing there or because they failed their roll.

For similar reasons, the gamemaster may prefer to make Lore skill rolls for heroes in secret. A fumbled Lore skill can have interesting and misleading results, which would be spoiled if the player has knowledge of the fumble. Generally, though, the gamemaster should strive to let players roll the dice for their own heroes, as it gives the players a much greater sense of participation.

Modifying Skill Rolls

The gamemaster may declare that a skill roll for a hero must be modified due to a special circumstance, condition, or situation. Since the success percentage for a skill is for "normal" stressful situations, the changes are generally subtracted from the percentage ability.

Augmenting Skills

Where appropriate, one skill may be used to augment another. For example, the Sing skill may be used to try to augment a hero's Dance skill. Or the Area Lore skill may be used to try to augment one's Myth Lore to understand the myths related to a specific region.

The skill used to augment the other should be clearly relevant to the task at hand. It is the gamemaster's sole discretion whether an augment of one skill by another skill is allowed.

The effect of augmenting skills depends on how successful the augmenting skill roll is:

- **Critical Success:** The augmenting skill adds a +50% bonus to the skill to be used.
- **Special Success:** The augmenting skill adds a +30% bonus to the skill to be used.
- **Success:** The augmenting skill adds a +20% bonus to the skill to be used.
- **Failure:** The hero reduces –20% from the skill to be used.
- **Fumble:** The hero reduces –50% from the skill to be used.

The bonus from a skill's augment cannot be combined with an augment from a passion or Devotion.

Skills may also be used to augment a hero's chances when using the resistance table. See pages 64–65 for more information. It is the gamemaster's decision as to whether a skill is appropriate.

EXAMPLE: *Birna is negotiating a settlement with her neighbor Óttar for the killing of one of her cows that had wandered into Óttar's land. Hoping to avoid paying the local goði or another mediator for their legal help, she has decided to resolve the matter outside the assembly courts. Óttar agrees to an out-of-court settlement, and the two are in the process of negotiating the amount of compensation to be paid. Unfortunately, at only 30%, Birna's Bargain skill is not very good. To make matters worse for her, Óttar spent his younger years trading overseas and has built up his Bargain skill to 80%.*

The gamemaster decides that this is an opposed roll, as each of them wants the better end of the deal. Birna's player does not know Óttar's skill rating, but she suspects the old man is going to best her in this regard. Birna decides to try to augment her Bargain roll by spending 1 dedication point from her Devotion to the god Heimdallur. She argues that it is her duty to seek compensation and to secure the family's wealth. The gamemaster accepts the reasoning and rules that Birna receives divine inspiration. This raises her skill by +20% without the need for an augment roll, bringing her skill to 50%. Odds are still not in her favor, but it's looking better now than before.

The gamemaster decides that Óttar doesn't bother augmenting, as he trusts his bargaining skills and doesn't think much of the young woman seeking compensation from him. Birna and Óttar then roll their opposed Bargain skill. Birna gets a 44: a success thanks to the Devotion augment. Óttar does better, however, rolling a 17, which is a special success for the skilled haggler. A special success always beats a normal success, so in this case, the terms remain what they are. Birna is unable to get a larger compensation amount from Óttar than what the old man has already offered.

Fortunately, Birna has learned something from this experience, gaining her an experience check in her Bargain skill. She puts a check in the box next to the skill and later she may test to see if her skill improved from being successfully used in a challenging situation.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

A comprehensive list of skills follows. Each skill is arranged by skill category and contains the following information:

- **Skill Name:** The name of the skill. Some skills have a parenthetical comment as part of their name, such as "Craft (specific craft)". These skills require specialization, and each specialty must be learned separately.
- **Base Chance:** The skill rating all individuals have in the skill. This is in parentheses after ths skill, such as "Boat (05)".
- **Description:** A brief description of the kind of tasks that can be accomplished using the skill.

Agility Skills

This category includes all skills dependent on muscular coordination. Most of these skills are trained into the reflexes of the user; a hero does not require profound intelligence or continual cogitation to be agile. Agility skills call for STR, DEX, and small SIZ, allowing good coordination and rapid response to subtle clues. A high POW helps as well.

ENC is subtracted from both Dodge and Swim.

Boat (05)

Boat provides the hero with a skill in handling oared or poled small boats such as rafts, canoes, and rowboats. Boat is primarily a physical activity, unlike Shiphandling, which is Knowledge-based.

In an unhurried situation, the player must succeed at the hero's Boat skill when they start a journey. The boat does not move until the roll succeeds. If conditions are smooth and placid, the gamemaster may allow the skill rating to be doubled until the conditions become more challenging.

In bad weather or hostile environments (rapids, shoals, whirlpools, etc.), the gamemaster should require the use of the Boat skill. If the roll succeeds, the boat stays on course. If unsuccessful, it either goes off course or doesn't move at all, depending on the situation. If the roll is a fumble, the boat overturns, and the hero (and any other passengers) must make a Swim roll.

In chase situations (see **Chases**, page 70–71), the player's possible roll of a critical or special result adjusts the range categories and affects the outcome of the chase.

Climb (40)

This skill can be used to climb up or down walls, trees, cliffs, or any other surface. Ample hand- and footholds are assumed to be present. The gamemaster may impose penalties based on the surface being climbed. While climbing, a hero may not perform any other actions.

A successful roll allows the climbing of a 5-meter wall, a 15-meter slope up to 75 degrees or less, or a thickly branched tree. A special result doubles the distance climbed to 10 meters up a wall or 30 meters up a slope. A critical result increases the distance climbed to 25 meters up a wall or 100 meters up a slope. If the player misses the Climb roll, the hero stays in one place, unable to find appropriate hand- and footholds. On a fumble, the hero falls.

Dodge (DEX×2)

A skillful dodger is rarely where the blow falls. Dodging is described more fully in **Chapter 5: Combat** (pages 102–103), as are special conditions modifying this skill. A successful Dodge roll means that the hero is not hit by the attack being dodged. A hero's Dodge ability is decreased by –5% per point of ENC carried above maximum ENC.

Dodge takes no time when used against a hand-to-hand melee attack. It takes one entire combat round when used against missile attacks and cannot be used in the same DEX rank in which the hero is occupied with shooting a missile weapon. See **DEX Ranks** on pages 98–99 for more information.

Jump (DEX×3)

The ability to jump for height or distance over obstacles, such as bodies in melee. Jump is also the skill of falling (or landing) well and can be used to mitigate falling damage (see page 74).

With a success, the hero can safely leap down vertically to their own height, jump twice their height horizontally, or up to their height vertically with a running start. A standing start reduces this distance by half.

A falling hero whose player makes a successful Jump skill may reduce the damage taken by step of distance fallen (equivalent to 1D6) and pick the hit location landed on.

With a special success, the hero can jump three times their height horizontally or 1.5× their height vertically. A falling hero reduces falling damage by 1D6 and chooses what hit location they land on.

With a critical success, the hero can jump horizontally four times their height or twice their height vertically.

If falling, the player chooses which location the hero lands on, reduces falling damage by 1D6, and then halves any remaining damage.

Should the Jump roll while falling be unsuccessful, the hero can attempt a DEX×5 roll as a last-ditch attempt to designate the hit location the hero lands upon. Failure means that the hit location is rolled randomly.

Ride (05)

Riding a horse or other riding animal requires no skill if the animal goes no faster than a walk and is trained to accept a rider. To compel the animal to go faster than a congenial amble, a hero must learn the Ride skill.

By learning to ride, a hero (supported by a saddle) has a chance to stay on a mount at any gait. If the mount does something unexpected (bolt, shy, etc.), and the player fails the Ride skill roll, the hero has lost control. The player must attempt a Ride skill roll at the end of each combat round until the roll succeeds, at which time the hero regains control of the mount. A fumble roll when the animal is out of control results in the hero falling off and suffering 1D6 damage to a random hit location, as per the rules for falling damage (see page 74).

For a hero riding bareback without a saddle, an unsuccessful roll means that they fall off, suffering 1D6 damage to a random hit location. A fumble means that they were thrown off, and they suffer 2D6 falling damage to a random hit location.

The percentage ability to Ride is also the rider's chance to make a mount do something it hasn't done before, such as jumping a barrier.

In chase situations, the player's possible roll of a critical or special result adjusts the range categories and affects the outcome of the chase. A fumble result during a chase has the possibility of a piece of the mount's equipment falling off, the rider falling off, etc.

Experience in Riding

A hero may attempt an experience increase roll for Ride only when the gamemaster allows it. One or more of the following conditions should be met:

- The hero has lived through a melee in which they at least started riding (they may realize why they fell off).
- The hero has made a riding animal do something they never made it do before.
- The hero has completed a mostly mounted journey of at least a week through difficult terrain. The hero has successfully trained a riding animal to saddle and bridle.

Mounted Combat

A hero's Weapon skills are limited to their appropriate Ride skill when fighting from the back of a mount. No matter how skilled with a particular weapon, utilizing it from the back of a mount requires the Ride skill.

Fighting while on a mount is described extensively in **Mounted Combat** on pages 117–118.

Controlling a Mount During Battle

Icelandic horses are not usually trained for battle. It is common to travel to a battle on horseback, but warriors will almost always dismount before joining the fight.

When a hero joins a battle while riding an animal untrained for battle, the player must roll the hero's Ride skill or less for every combat round and any time the mount is injured. If the roll is unsuccessful, the hero must spend the next combat round calming the animal by making a Ride roll, to the exclusion of all else. If the hero does not attend to their mount or fails the roll, the animal bolts away from the excitement. If this happens, refer to the rules in the **Ride** skill description (see page 81) for unexpected actions by the animal.

In the rare cases when a horse has been trained for battle, perhaps one brought from abroad, then Ride rolls are not needed.

Training Riding Animals

Any hero with 50% or greater skill can train a riding animal to saddle and bridle, requiring one week of time. At the end of the week, the player attempts to roll the hero's Ride skill. When successful, the hero has trained the animal for riding.

Ski (10)

Skiing is a common skill in Viking Age Iceland. For cross-country skiing, unmatched skis are used. On the left foot, a long gliding ski is used, while a short, fur-covered kicking ski is used on the right foot. A single pole is used for balance. Skiing downhill for sport is rarely done. See page 65 for movement rates with skis, but generally in a combat round, movement is 12.

Swim (15)

Swim measures a hero's ability to stay afloat and move in a desired direction. The roll must be made every ten minutes, or the hero starts to drown (see **Drowning** and **Asphyxiation**, page 72). This is also a measure of the ability of the hero to get out of their armor when falling into water. Again, failure to make the roll means a drowning hero.

A swimming hero has only half their normal ENC capacity. Thus, a hero with STR 12 would have a maximum ENC of 6 in the water. For every "thing" carried over that 6, the hero is reduced by –5% in every DEX based skill, including swimming.

A failed Swim roll means that the hero fails to progress through the water. In the next combat round, the player must make a successful Swim roll, or the hero begins drowning.

Communication Skills

Communication skills are enhanced by high CHA, INT, and POW. A hero uses such skills to transmit their thoughts and desires by word or gesture to others. Good communication skills usually leave a good impression.

Act (05)

Act governs the art of being able to portray a different persona, whether in a staged performance or in a social situation. If successful, the persona portrayed seems real and natural to all who see the hero. It may be combined with the Disguise skill.

Art (05)

Art is the creation of images or objects, such as paintings and sculptures. It measures the hero's ability to communicate an idea, such as beauty, divinity, grace, etc., as well as the hero's technical skill. This skill is used in media such as pottery, bronze, gold, silver, stone, painting, wall tapestries, and more.

Bargain (05)

This is the skill of negotiation and compromise. Bargain is appropriate if both parties are willing to do something (sell and buy an item, provide aid for a price, support a coup if the rewards are worthwhile, etc.), but only if the terms (especially the price) are right.

Bargain is often (but not always) used to haggle over prices but can be used whenever opposing parties meet in negotiation. To use it, one must be in a position where negotiation is reasonable; using Bargain to buy a warship from a retainer of the king of Norway is not feasible.

Use simple skill rolls for trivial attempts (saving money on equipment or lodgings, for example). Bargaining is about compromise: use Fast Talk or Orate to resolve arguments that are absolutely won or lost. Finally, use opposed skill rolls (or skill against a passion or Devotion when appropriate) to decide important negotiations, such as the fates of captured enemies.

When using a simple skill roll for Bargain:

- On a success, the hero gets everything they wanted from the bargain, without having to give up anything they weren't prepared to part with. Items are bought or sold at the standard price.
- On a special success, the hero gets everything they wanted from the bargain, without having to give up anything. Items are bought or sold at an increased 25% margin (75% of the standard price if the buyer wins, 125% of the standard price if the seller wins).
- On a critical success, the hero gets more than they expected from the bargain, and gains some unexpected benefit, perhaps a close friendship with the other party or a recurring discount. Items are bought or sold at an increased 50% margin (50% of the standard price if the buyer wins, 150% of the standard price if the seller wins).
- On a failure, the hero gets very little out of the bargain and is forced to yield most of their desired points. Items are bought or sold at a 25% loss (125% of the standard price if the buyer fails, 75% of the standard price if the seller fails).
- On a fumble, the hero gets nothing out of the bargain and blunders so badly that they suffer an additional complication—being thrown out of the house or earning the enmity of the other party. Items are bought and sold at a 50% loss (150% of the standard price if the buyer fumbles, 50% of the standard price if the seller fumbles).

This skill may also be used to determine approximately what an item is worth in a certain market if the original value is known.

For example, a successful Bargain roll lets the hero know that the dark wool could be sold for a higher price in Denmark than it could in Norway due to being in fashion in that country for the past few years.

Charm (15)

Charm takes many forms, including physical attraction, seduction, flattery, or simply warmth of personality. Charm may be used to compel someone to act in a certain way but not in a manner completely contrary to that person's normal behavior. Charm is opposed by the Charm or Insight skills, or by an appropriate passion such as an appropriate Love or Loyalty.

Charm may be used for bargaining, to haggle the price of an item or service down. If successful, the seller is won over, and they will reduce the price a little.

Charm may also be used to augment other Communication skills.

Dance (10)

This skill measures the hero's ability to perform a dance—be it a social, ceremonial, erotic, martial, or sacred dance. Dancing often takes place in social events, such as feasts, weddings, and religious festivals. The skill includes the knowledge of the different forms of dance known in the Norse nations.

Dance may be used to evoke an emotional response from its audience.

For example, a dance may be used to inspire lust, wonder, or even to tell a story.

Dance may be used to augment *Seiður* Magic skill when performing Spirit realm *Seiður* Magic. Finally, Dance may be augmented with the Sing skill (or vice versa) to increase the chance of success of either skill.

A successful Dance roll evokes the desired emotional response from its audience. On a special success, the performance is extraordinary and accomplishes exactly what the hero intended. On a critical success, the dance evokes an intense emotional response from its audience: awe, lust, sadness, wonder, or whatever else the hero intends. The dancer gains a +25% bonus on all Communication rolls with the intended audience for a season.

Disguise (05)

Creating a convincing disguise using appropriate materials (costumes, cosmetics, wigs, or hairpieces) is covered by the Disguise skill. The successful use means that the hero has altered their appearance to all viewers. Disguise is often augmented by, or used to augment, the Act skill.

Fast Talk (05)

Successful use of Fast Talk causes the target to agree with whatever the fast talker is saying, deceiving the target into thinking that the user is logically correct. The skill can be opposed with Fast Talk, Insight, or an appropriate passion. If successful, the target agrees to assist as the hero needs. If allowed a moment's thought (perhaps if the victim is momentarily out of the Fast Talker's presence), the target's player may attempt an INT×5 roll to shake off the effects of the Fast Talk. Of course, if the talker was correct to begin with, the INT roll may simply confirm that the victim is doing the right thing.

This skill usually cannot be used to change the mind of a listener who firmly believes in an opposing view, or whose duty constrains their options (a family relation, a foster, or sworn sibling, for instance). However, a hero can talk their way out of a lesser accusation if the hero's player can invent a justification for why the other party can be dissuaded.

Fast Talk does not work on more than a handful of people at a time, or on targets whose minds are made up; use Orate instead. However, where Orate might take hours to unify the listeners into full agreement with the speaker, Fast Talk needs only one full turn (five minutes) or less.

Intimidate (15)

Intimidation can take many forms, including physical force, psychological manipulation, and threats. It is used to frighten or compel a person to act in a certain way. Intimidate is opposed by Intimidate, Insight, or an appropriate passion. Intimidate can be used to force down the price of an item or service. If successful, the seller may reduce the price or hand the item over free of charge, but depending on the situation, they will be convinced they were wronged and may later seek redress with backup from supporters.

Many conditions might influence the use of the skill, described in the **Intimidation Modifier** table, following. The gamemaster may add further modifiers, depending on the situation.

Intimidation Modifiers

Condition	Modifier
Brandishing a weapon.	+5%
Target is alone and/or outnumbered by competent or superior enemies.	+10%
Hero using Intimidate has a Reputation involving violence.	+10%
Causing actual harm to the target or someone the target cares about.	+25%

Intrigue (05)

Intrigue is the art of discovering what is going on among those in the upper layer of society, such as with the 36 *goðar* and the Lawspeaker, a council of important elected officials who make laws and judge legal matters for all of Iceland (see page 161). Everyone has access to gossip, but hard work and clever conversations help pry out real facts. Skill is needed to know who to ask, when, what to say, and how to sift truth from lies.

- On a success, the hero learns something true and useful about the alliances and politics of power.
- On a special success, the hero learns something special and important known only to them and the direct participants (perhaps a fact overheard at a critical juncture or seen by accident).
- On a critical success, the hero learns something special and important known only to them and the direct participants (perhaps a fact overheard at a critical juncture or seen by accident) and results in an unexpected benefit, such as a new ally within the court. The hero gets a +10% bonus on all Communication skills with the court for the next week.
- On a failure, the hero learns nothing new. On a fumble, a close contact lies to the hero or is thought by the hero to have lied to them. The hero has a –15% penalty on all Communication skills with that court for the next week.

Intrigue is not used to poison people in secret, foment rebellion, or assassinate rivals. Such deeds must be roleplayed, not left to random dice rolls.

Orate (10)

Fast Talk appeals to (or confuses) the intellect; Orate appeals to the emotions. It is used to make reluctant listeners act or grant a request. Imagine an orator as a great speaker standing before an assembly and persuading the people to take someone to trial over a perceived offense, or a chieftain who convinces their followers not to butcher their captives, or an ambitious individual recruiting others for a Viking expedition.

Orate is implicitly a skill most useful against a crowd of up to 50 people. Unlike Fast Talk, a successful Orate roll influences everyone, without an immediate chance for recovery. However, Orate works just as effectively on a few people, or even on only one person.

If successful, Orate can be far more effective than Fast Talk because it can grab and hold the emotions of the listener. Unlike Fast Talk, the targets do not get an INT roll to shake off the effects of an Orate. However, where Fast Talk can take only one full turn or less, Orate might require hours to unify the listeners into full agreement with the speaker.

Orate can be used to debate with others, with opposed rolls made by the other debaters.

- On a success, the target audience is convinced, granting the hero's request or adopting their position.
- On a special success, the target audience is moved by the hero's eloquence. They grant the hero's request and gain a favorable opinion of the hero.
- On a critical result, the target audience is utterly convinced. They are spurred to extreme action, such as stepping into harm's way to support the hero and their cause.
- On a fumble, the hero's argument is utterly unconvincing. The target audience doesn't believe a word of it and is offended by the very notion. The target embraces the opposite view and may become hostile.

Sing (10)

The Sing skill measures the hero's technical skill at singing or reciting poetry. Songs are used in religious rituals as well as a way of remembering oral history, genealogy, or law.

Dance may be used to augment *Seiður* Magic skill when performing Mind realm *Seiður* Magic. Furthermore, Sing may be augmented with the Dance or Play Instrument skill (or vice versa) to increase the chance of success of either skill.

- Success in this skill means that the hero pleased the audience. Failure indicates that the hero went off-key, forgot the right words, or something equivalent. The better a hero's chance of success, the better the song when performed, so that a hero with an 80% skill sounds significantly better than one with a 40% skill, even if both players succeeded with their skill rolls. The hero must make a Sing roll once per full turn of performance.
- A special result allows the hero to perform in such a way that the listeners remember the performance.
- A critical result allows the hero to increase their fame; the audience remembers not only the performance but the performer.
- Failing this role results in a mediocre performance.
- On a fumble, the hero is booed and mocked.

The Sing skill is often used to augment Dance, Orate, Skaldic Poetry, and even Custom.

Skaldic Poetry (10)

The skill to compose poetry is highly valued. Many renowned heroes are respected for their prowess as *skalds*. Skaldic poetry has a complex structure, makes liberal use of figurative language and metaphors, and can carry actual magical power.

Skaldic Poetry may be used to inspire a fellow hero. By reciting a poem that praises the fellow hero's competence in a specific action, Skaldic Poetry augments the skill being used in the attempt. Any skill belonging to another hero can be augmented in this way.

At the gamemaster's discretion, if the player makes an extra effort to recite an original poetic verse, they get a +20% bonus to the Skaldic Poetry skill roll.

Speak Own Language (50)

Icelanders of the Viking Age, and other Norse peoples of this time, call their language *dönsk tunga*—the "Danish tongue". In this book, it is referred to as simply "Norse".

The Norse language is spoken throughout Scandinavia and the Viking colonies, such as the Jorvik colony in Britain and Dublin in Ireland. It is related to, but different from, the language spoken in Anglo-Saxon England. With some practice, however, speakers of Norse and of Old English can understand each other. This is a factor that significantly broadens the cultural contacts of Viking Age Scandinavians, including Icelanders.

This skill is exclusively concerned with spoken communication. If you wish for your hero to read and write, they must have the Literacy skill in the appropriate language. Day-to-day conversation in your hero's native language is automatically successful and does not require a skill roll. Skill rolls are required when communicating complex concepts or in difficult and unusual situations, such as translating.

A hero speaks their native language at 50%, plus whatever increases are gained through previous experience. Even if the hero has a particularly low Communication skills category modifier, they still have a Speak Own Language 50%.

Special Functions of Languages

- **Conversation:** Conversation is an exchange of views and information between two speakers. If both speakers have a proficiency level above 50% with the language they are speaking, there is no communication problem. When one or both members of a conversation have less than 50% proficiency, there is a chance of misunderstanding.
- **Eavesdropping:** When a hero is trying to listen in on a conversation, the chance of understanding the conversation is determined by their skill with the language. This may be modified by distance, surrounding noise, thickness of the door being listened through, etc. The gamemaster may call for a successful Listen roll (see page 95) before the player makes a Language roll. If the hero succeeds with their Listen roll, the gamemaster should make a Language roll, and then relate to the eavesdropper the gist of the conversation. If the roll failed, the eavesdropper couldn't understand it. However, if the roll is a fumble, the gamemaster should give the listener a distorted rendition of the conversation, which might put the hero on entirely the wrong track.

Language Proficiency

D100	Result
1–10	May only communicate simple ideas, like "I food want!"
11–30	Can make simple requests and function adequately in day-to-day life. "How many monies for the leg of lamb?"
31–50	Can get most ideas across. "But that was only three silver yesterday..."
51–80	Assured communication as if a native speaker. Allows one to tell stories, sagas, songs, etc. Can argue and bargain as well as any native.
81–100	This level is the language of poets and diplomats and all who have a fluent grasp of the nation's speech.

Speak Other Language (00)

Speaking a foreign language begins at 00, unless that language has similarities to a language the hero already knows. If so, the hero can speak the other language at a fraction of the skill in the known language.

Foreign languages a hero may know include Arabic, Finnish, French, Greek, German, Pictish, Scots Gaelic, Slavic, Welsh, etc. Often, slaves from other countries still speak their own language, in addition to having learned Norse.

Knowledge Skills

These skills usually depend on the ability of the hero to memorize and comprehend a body of knowledge, whether learned by rote at a campfire or deduced from endless pedantic lectures from a sage or priest. Frequently, they cannot be increased through experience but must be trained or researched. They depend on the hero's INT and POW for modifiers.

Battle (10)

The Battle skill includes both the ability of an individual to survive massed combat and the ability to lead warriors in such a conflict. The skill is used when a hero is in a battle, either large or small.

The Battle skill measures how the heroes fare during a massed combat. During combat, roll D100 and consult each hero's Battle skill. The **Battle Results** table (following) shows the results of the engagement for that hero. The **Experience Checks to...** column lists all the skills or abilities that the hero may check for experience and possibly improve later (see **Chapter 18: Between Adventures,** pages 281–284).

It is entirely possible to die from injuries sustained during a battle, should the hit location and damage rolled prove fatal. Armor protects from such damage, and the armor value is subtracted from any damage roll.

Battle Results

Result	Result	Experience Checks to...
Critical	Fought well, with notable heroism.	Best three weapons (player choice if tied). Battle goes up 1D6%. Add +1D6 to Reputation.
Special	Fought well.	Battle, best three weapons (player choice if tied). Add +1D3 to Reputation.
Normal Success	Fought competently.	Battle and best two weapons (player choice if tied) experience check.
Failure	Wounded; take 2D6 damage to a random location.	Battle experience check.
Fumble	Badly wounded; take 4D6 damage to a random location.	None.

EXAMPLE: *While riding to the Alþing with a group of her allies, Birna encounters a larger group of fighters led by her enemy Óláfur. After exchanging a few measured but harsh words, it becomes clear that Óláfur has no intention of allowing Birna and her companions to reach the assembly, since he knows Birna plans to launch a case against him at the law court.*

The gamemaster looks at the situation (defenders outnumbered two to one, unfavorable terrain, etc.) and decides that the Battle roll will be at a –40% penalty. Birna's Battle skill is 55%, which is not high. She chooses to augment this with Love (family) 90% as Óláfur has just threatened her family if she stands against him. She succeeds, raising her Battle skill by +20% to +75%. This means that the newly-modified chance is 35% (55+20–40=35).

Birna rolls and gets a 05, a special success!

The course of events determines that the battle is a stalemate, with Birna and her supporters breaking off from the battle and fleeing into the mountains. Despite this outcome, Birna fought well, and for her performance in combat, she is awarded experience checks with her three best weapon skills, which are used later to determine whether she learned anything from successful use.

She also earns +1D3% to her Reputation.

Battles may result in spectacular and unpredictable outcomes. Occasionally, one or both sides turn tail, leaving their backs open to pursuit and wholesale slaughter. In larger battles, as opposed to common raids, this sort of outcome is common and can decisively end the battle. The gamemaster may decide that a battles may have a special modifier applied, positive or negative, based on the circumstances and the stakes. These are awarded to the winning or losing side, or both. Sometimes, if desired, different modifiers are given to specific individuals or groups within a larger battle, to distinguish between the actions and outcome apart from the overall resolution. This is handled for situations such as when a smaller group—such as the heroes—manage to achieve their goal within a battle, while the battle itself might have an entirely different outcome.

For raids rather than battles, see **Viking Raids** (pages 151–154) in **Chapter 8: Life in the Age of Vikings.**

Customs (Local 25/all others 00)

Customs represents the knowledge of the codes of behavior, traditions, and community standards of a given social group. It includes etiquette and the basic laws of a given people, governing both individual and communal conduct. Customs encompasses laws that apply to daily life, as opposed to the bureaucratic texts that are accessible to only a small proportion of the population.

Heroes start knowing their own Customs (Norse) skill at 25%. All others start at 00%.

- With a successful Customs skill roll, the hero comports themselves well, acts perfectly acceptably, or recalls some important local customs.

- With a special success, the hero makes a good impression and gets a +10% bonus to all Communication skills made among members of that culture for the rest of the social encounter.
- With a critical success, the hero gets a +25% bonus to all Communication skills made among members of that culture for the rest of the season.
- With a fumble, the hero commits major errors and manages to offend most people present. The hero is likely ejected from the current gathering and suffers a –10% penalty to all Communication skills made among members of that culture for the rest of the season.

Evaluate (10)

With this skill, a hero can evaluate the monetary value of artifacts, goods (cloth, jewelry, art objects, etc.), and valuable natural materials (gems, land, exotic animals, etc.).

If an object or substance is associated with a Lore or other Knowledge skill, and the hero makes a roll with the appropriate skill, the Evaluate chance is doubled.

Failure to Evaluate means that the hero doesn't know the worth of the item. A fumble with the roll means the hero has an entirely erroneous idea of an item's value. This idea will be either too high or too low—always in the direction most inconvenient for the hero. A critical success means that the hero knows the exact worth of the object.

Farm (30)

With this skill, the hero knows how to run a farm successfully, including the keeping of animals, cultivation of crops, and the best possible utilization of the resources of the land, such as rivers and sea fishing grounds.

Most farms do not attempt to cultivate crops, as crop cultivation in Iceland is difficult, and a farm cannot rely on crops alone. Farms that cultivate crops mainly have barley, oat, and rye, which are used for bread, porridge, and ale.

See **Farming** on page 141–142 for more details on Icelandic farms.

First Aid (10)

This skill imparts a basic knowledge of how to treat an injury or shock victim, and how to use materials at hand for that purpose.

First Aid takes one combat round if the intent is to stop a hero from bleeding or dying of their wounds. The success chance for this skill should be rolled immediately. If the roll succeeds, all bleeding stops and the victim is prevented from dying. If unsuccessful, the hero may try again to stop the bleeding in the next round. An injury that immediately kills a hero cannot be treated with First Aid.

It takes five full combat rounds of First Aid to heal damage. At the end of that time, if the First Aid was successful, the hero heals 1D3 hit points of damage to the patient. A special success allows the hero to heal 2D3 damage points. A critical success allows the hero to heal 1D3+3 damage points. The amount of hit points restored through a single use of First Aid cannot be greater than the damage suffered by the injury.

If the First Aid attempt is interrupted during the five combat rounds required to perform this skill, the recipient loses 2 hit points. This means even with a successful First Aid roll, it is possible for the recipient to take 1 point of damage at the end of the five combat rounds if the 1D3 roll result was 1.

First Aid can be used only once against an injury to a specific hit location. However, a fumble with the skill causes 1D3 damage to the recipient, and no further attempts may be made to treat that injury. First Aid can be used on any living creature.

Game (15)

Game measures a hero's competence in common Norse games of wits and chance. It includes knowing the rules of games and is used to assess the odds of success or failure, or to spot someone cheating.

Icelanders play a variation of chess called *hnefatafl*, which is a common pastime throughout the Nordic world. One player controls the king piece located at the center of the board, which is surrounded by other pieces representing its followers. The game's objective is for the king to escape the board via one of its corners. The opposing player controls twice as many pieces and tries to capture the king. It is not unheard of for great stakes to be bet on a match of *hnefatafl*. To resolve a *hnefatafl* match, both players make an opposed Game roll.

Herd (05)

Herd represents the ability to bring individual animals together into a herd, maintain the herd, and move the herd from place to place. It includes the ability to identify good pastures and assess the health of individual animals. It also includes the ability to train and use dogs to aid in herding.

Common herd animals are cattle and sheep.

Law (10)

Iceland is a land governed not by any ruler but by law alone. As such, good knowledge of Iceland's extensive law code is critical when defending an individual's property and land rights, as well as family honor. This skill measures a hero's knowledge of the laws of the land which touch all aspects of life, from criminal law and court procedure to religious law. Furthermore, heroes who have proven their mastery of Law can become very influential, earning both wealth and Reputation for each legal challenge they help resolve in or out of court.

See the **Law and Government** chapter (pages 157–165) for details regarding the laws of the land and the legal procedures of the assembly courts.

Lores

There are many kinds of Lore, each being a specialized body of knowledge. Each Lore skill must be learned separately and allows the hero to remember pertinent facts within its purview. Use a given Lore skill to analyze or identify clues, make logical suppositions, or recall information about the specialty.

Many Lores require further specialization, which must be learned separately. Area Lore, for example, must be learned separately for each country a hero visits. Heroes that gain similar Lore about different regions will have to separate their Lore into specialties, keeping track of their percentile chance for each.

Several common Lores are listed below. Others may be created with the gamemaster's approval.

Animal Lore (05)

Animal Lore represents knowledge of wild fauna. A hero making a successful Animal Lore roll can identify an animal, know what it eats, assess its health, and perhaps predict the animal's behavior.

Area Lore (Iceland) (20)

This skill measures a hero's knowledge of the people living in Iceland, as well as their knowledge of the country's geographical features. Even if the hero has not traveled much beyond their own home region, people acquire knowledge of events from all corners of the nation via the many assembly meetings.

When encountering a particularly famous person, or going to a well-known area, a hero may have a modifier applied to their Area Lore skill. At the gamemaster's discretion, the subject's Reputation may also earn a similar modifier.

Area Lore Modifiers

Subject	Bonus
Hero's local district	+30%
Famous person	+25%
Important person (e.g., *goði*)	+10%
Important location (e.g., Whale Fjord, Grímur's Island, etc.)	+10%
Little-known person or unfamiliar location	–10%
Extremely obscure person or secret location	–25%

With a successful Area Lore roll, the hero learns useful information. Special and critical results provide additional information. Fumbles yield erroneous information.

Area Lore (Other) (00)

This skill covers knowledge of a foreign country, its geographical features, and its people. For more information on the countries often visited by Icelanders and other Norse sailors, see **The Wider World** and **Other Nations** on pages 238–243.

Mineral Lore (05)

This skill is used to understand geology and metals. A successful Mineral Lore roll allows the hero to recognize types of rock formations, determine if what glitters really is gold, determine if a green rock is a jade, an emerald, or jasper, decide whether a mine is valuable or not, or discover the best place for a copper deposit in the region.

Myth Lore (10)

Tales of mythic creatures are often shared among family members during the long winters and between friends and neighbors during the assemblies. This skill measures the chance of a hero remembering those stories. A special success means that the hero remembers what the folk tales say about a mythic creature's behavior and attack methods. A critical means the hero recalls information about potential weaknesses the creature may have.

This skill can also be used to identify the nature of a magical rune script, whether it is meant to be harmful or beneficial, even if the hero cannot read the runic alphabet.

Plant Lore (05)

Plant Lore is the ability to recognize the virtues of various plants, to locate those plants in a favorable environment, or to recognize them if they are encountered.

If a hero's skill is high enough (see the **Plant Lore Ability** table), the hero may attempt to roll against Plant Lore to find specifically useful plants.

If attempting to brew an antidote or healing poultice, the gamemaster should determine the relative richness of the surrounding terrain and assign a modifier ranging from +40% for a verdant, well-known area to –40% for a barren, unfamiliar region.

Plant Lore Ability

Skill %	Ability
1–20	Can recognize and find edible plants in the wild.
21–30	Recognize any poisonous plants in sight.
31–40	Recognize and can find plants useful in ***seiður*** magic.
41–50	Recognize and can find plants that make good healing poultices (1D6 damage healed after 1D6 hours on wound) or antidotes against poisons of POT 5 or less.
51–70	Recognize and can find plants that make good healing salves (1D6 damage healed after 1D6×10 minutes) or antidotes against poisons of POT 10 or less.
71–100+	Recognize and can find plants that are hallucinogens or other emotion-affecting drugs, such as aphrodisiacs, hate-agents, etc.

Navigate (20)

Navigate governs the hero's success at safely finding the intended destination on both land and sea journeys. A roll of this skill should be made during unusual journeys or when in unfamiliar territory.

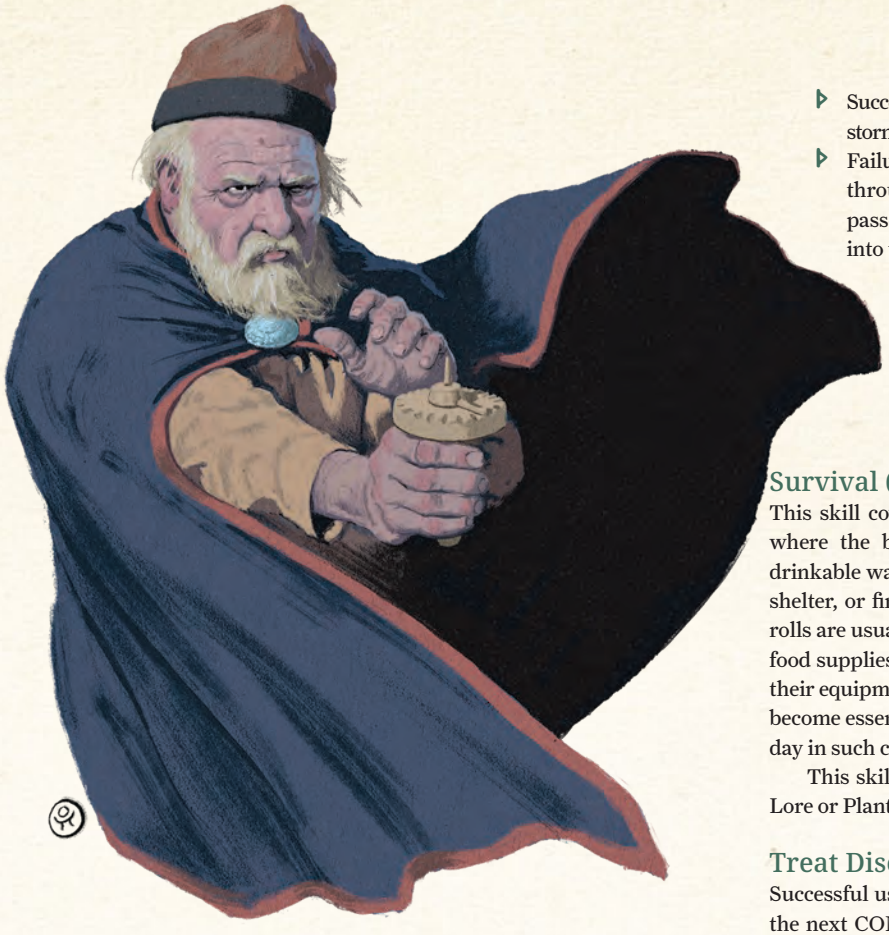
During high summer in and around Iceland, the stars cannot be seen at night, as the sun never sets. That makes the position of the sun in the sky the primary navigational aid used by sailors atnd by those traveling on land.

Icelandic seafarers are familiar with the correlation between weather conditions on the well-traveled sea routes and the direction of the wind. This allows them to estimate the wind direction with some accuracy, even when the sun is not visible or the sky is overcast, which can happen for days at a time. Other navigational aids used by Norse sailors include seabirds, the use of birds released from ships, the direction of the waves, the changing color and temperature of the sea, and cloud formations. When possible, it makes sense to island-hop, keeping within sight of islands and other landmarks as much as possible along the way, even if it means sailing a longer distance.

For sea journeys, once the ship sets out to sea, the hero must make a Navigate roll.

- A critical success means the gods have blessed this journey with perfect weather and optimal winds, cutting travel time by half—this will be talked about for years!
- A special success means the travel time is cut down by one day.
- With a success, the ship arrives at the destination within the estimated amount of time.
- A failure means the ship misses the intended destination and is lost at sea for 1D6 days. After that, a new Navigate roll can be attempted. In case of a second subsequent failure, the ship arrives at another land other than its intended destination after another 1D6 days lost at sea.
- With a fumble result, the ship crashes on a reef or a floating sheet of ice and is too damaged to proceed further. A Craft (shipbuilding) roll or a Craft (carpentry) roll with a –40% penalty is required to fix the ship well enough to reach the nearest landmass. If the crew cannot fix the ship, they are stranded and at the mercy of the gods.

Navigate can be augmented by Prophecy (see page 92), as the hero becomes aware of the most auspicious time for departure and of any storm areas that are best avoided.



Read/Write (Language) (00)

With this skill, a hero can read a script and write in it. The hero knows how to form written symbols so that another literate person can read them. Reading must be learned separately for each script known (e.g., Runes, Latin, Arabic, Greek, etc.).

If unsuccessful in reading a written passage from a language, the hero cannot try again until they have been trained further or have researched enough to increase the skill. Again, it is often a good idea for the gamemaster to make the dice roll when a hero reads a vital manuscript, as a fumbled roll provides misinformation.

Shiphandling (00)

Shiphandling allows a hero to successfully command a ship that needs a crew of more than two. For smaller vessels, use the Boat skill (page 80). Shiphandling includes aspects of navigation, sail-setting, arranging watches, and the other knowledge necessary to perform as the master of a ship. It also covers the maintenance and upkeep of a ship, assessing when repairs are needed, where it is safe to anchor, the dangers of violent weather, and so forth.

In chase situations (see **Chases**, pages 70–71), a critical or special result adjusts the range categories and affects the outcome of the chase. A fumble has the possibility of damaging the ship.

Whenever the heroes find themselves in a sea storm, the ship's captain must make a Shiphandling skill roll.

- With a critical result, the storm is avoided entirely, and a new course is set with good weather for the remainder of the voyage.
- A special success means the hero not only finds a quick way out of the storm but also uses the strong winds to propel the ship away from the bad weather. The hero gains a bonus of +20% to their next Sailing roll or attack roll made in naval combat.
- Success means the hero manages to control the ship during the storm and avoids damage to the vessel or loss of cargo or crew.
- Failure means the hero fails to handle the ship safely through the storm. The ship takes 2D6 damage. All passengers must make a DEX×5 roll to avoid being thrown into the sea.
- With a fumble, the hero loses control of the ship. An enormous wave hits the vessel at the worst possible angle, or it is driven aground into rocks, or some other disaster, causing 4D6 points of damage to the ship. Passengers must make DEX×3 roll to avoid being thrown into the sea.

Survival (15)

This skill covers surviving in a rural or wilderness environment where the benefits of civilization are absent: foraging, finding drinkable water, avoiding poisonous plants, building a fire, finding shelter, or finding a safe place to sleep. When properly equipped, rolls are usually unnecessary since the hero may be carrying a tent, food supplies, and so on. Only when characters are separated from their equipment or when environmental conditions turn bad does it become essential to utilize this skill. A roll is usually made once per day in such conditions.

This skill can be augmented with other abilities, such as Area Lore or Plant Lore.

Treat Disease (05)

Successful use of this skill doubles a victim's chance for success at the next CON recovery roll. Victims of acute, serious, or terminal diseases must be treated constantly to get this bonus. A critical roll indicates that the victim's chances to recover are tripled. Specials have no effect. A fumble indicates the victim's disease progresses to the next stage (i.e., acute becomes serious, serious becomes terminal, or a terminal victim dies).

Treat Poison (05)

Successful use of this skill purges the victim of 2D6 POT of poison. It must be performed before damage is taken (see **Poisons**, pages 74–75). A special result purges the victim of 4D6 POT, and a critical result purges all poison. A fumble indicates that the victim's chance of resisting the poison is halved. A skill attempt can be made only once per poisoning.

Manipulation Skills

Manipulation skills require fine hand control. Unlike Agility skills, they depend as much on INT as DEX, and SIZ is no penalty. A high POW and STR also aid in Manipulation.

Conceal (05)

This skill allows an object to be concealed so that it may be found only with a Search skill roll. The object may be of any size, and the act of concealing can be as simple as putting it into a drawer or as complex as rigging a false floor for a chest. The object may even be as large as a horse.

To successfully use Search to find a concealed item, an opposed roll is made against the Conceal skill of the one who hid the item. The gamemaster must be prepared to modify this roll for the SIZ of the concealed object or for specialized information the searcher might have.

Conceal can be used in any area, outside or inside, to find a hiding place (either natural or constructed) for an object. It is

assumed that anyone watching while the object is concealed can later go right to the object.

While the time to conceal an object depends on the object and facilities for concealment, as a guide, the gamemaster may use a time scale of one combat round per SIZ point to be concealed to determine time spent on concealment.

A special or critical result adjusts for the SIZ of the item. A fumble means that while the concealer thinks the item is hidden, it is revealed in some obvious way that is not apparent to the concealer.

Craft (Specific Craft) (10)

Craft is the ability to craft or make items from metal, wood, stone, hides, wool, clay, etc. There are many different crafts. Each craft must be learned separately, and knowledge of each craft is described on a different line of the hero sheet. The hero must have the appropriate tools to practice the craft, with the gamemaster having the final say when improvising.

The hero states what item they are trying to make and then rolls 1D6 to determine how many full days are to be spent on the job. The gamemaster may adjust this based on the size, nature, and complexity of the item being crafted. At the end of the period, the Craft roll is made.

If the roll is successful, a functional item of the desired type is created. On a special success, the item is particularly well-crafted and can command a higher price than normal. On a critical success, the item is remarkably durable, useful, and/or beautiful, as determined by the player and the gamemaster. A weapon might do an extra point of damage or have an extra hit point; a piece of armor might have an extra armor point; jewelry, clothing, or pottery might be worth twice what it normally is, etc.

If the Craft roll fails, the item looks functional but breaks, wears out, tarnishes, etc., after very little use. On a fumble, the item is spoiled in the manufacturing process.

Example Crafts include:

- **Bowmaking:** Making bows or crossbows from wood. This also includes arrow-and bolt-making, making the arrow-strings, etc. An ironsmith (following) may be required to make metal arrowheads, but with this skill, a bowyer can create stone or bone arrowheads. A successful Craft (bowmaking) roll can also restore 1D3 points to a damaged bow, with a special success restoring 2D3, and a critical success restoring 1D3+3.
- **Brewing:** Making beers out of cereals (primarily barley, rye, wheat, and maize) and flavoring them with herbs.
- **Carpentry:** Working wood to make buildings, bridges, and furniture, including the ability to decorate wood. A successful Craft (carpentry) roll can also restore 1D3 points to a damaged shield, with a special success restoring 2D3 and a critical success 1D3+3. Some wooden weapons can also be restored with this skill.
- **Ironsmithing:** Working iron, including making armor and weapons. Improperly made weapons often break. Improperly made armor does not fit the intended wearer. A successful Craft (ironsmithing) roll can restore 1D3 hit points to a damaged weapon, a special success restores 2D3, and a critical success restores 1D3+3, capped at the weapon's normal hit point total. It can also be used to repair a piece of armor that has been damaged.
- **Jewelry:** Making decorative items such as rings, necklaces, brooches, earrings, bracelets, arm rings, and neck rings, including the skill of cutting gemstones.
- **Leatherworking:** Making leather out of skinned animal hides. It includes skinning, tanning, crusting, and working the finished leather. A successful Craft (leatherworking) roll can repair a piece of broken leather armor, for example.
- **Masonry:** Shaping rough pieces of stone into accurate geometrical shapes and then arranging the resulting stones, often together with mortar, to make buildings or other structures.
- **Pottery:** Shaping clay by hand or with a wheel into objects and then firing them in a kiln. This craft also includes decorating pottery, although the Art skill is needed for making ornate or elaborate designs or imagery.
- **Shipbuilding:** Working wood to make and repair fishing boats or oceangoing ships.
- **Weaving:** Making cloth out of wool or plant fibers such as flax. The yarn is made with a spindle and then woven on a loom into cloth. This can also be used to repair cloth armor types.

Devise (05)

This is the skill of both assembling and disassembling mechanisms such as traps and locks. A successful Devise roll means that a set trap works as designed, that a trap is safely disarmed, or that a lock is opened without the proper key. A fumbled result sets off any trap for maximum effect or jams the lock so that it cannot be unlocked.

Melee Weapon (All)

"Leaving in the field his arms,
let no man go a foot's length forward:
for it is hard to know when on the way
a man may need his weapon."
—Hávamál 38

Each melee weapon has its own specific skill. A hero may use their melee weapon skill to attack and parry unless otherwise indicated.

Melee weapons are listed by category on the **Weapons** tables on pages 111 and 113. A hero can use any other weapons in the same weapon category (such as 1H Axe, Fist, 1H Sword, etc.) at ½ the skill rating of the best skill the hero has in that category. This represents additional training in related weapons or applying the techniques and tactics of using one weapon to related types.

Grapple is considered a natural hand-to-hand melee skill.

Missile Weapon (All)

Missile weapon is the use of a ranged weapon such as a bow, spear, or sling to shoot at a target or a person. Missile weapons are listed by category on the **Missile Weapon** tables on page 113. A hero can use any other missile weapons in the same weapon category at ½ the skill rating of the best skill the hero has in that category.

Play Instrument (05)

This skill covers the playing of musical instruments, from a simple bone flute to a complex stringed instrument such as a lyre. Each group of similar instruments requires a different Play Instrument skill:

- **Percussion:** This includes various drums, bells, and gongs.
- **String:** This category includes such instruments as lyres and lutes.
- **Woodwind:** Instruments such as flutes, horns, and lurs.

A musician who can play the flute with the Play Instrument (woodwind) skill can also play a lur or a horn because the fundamentals are the same. However, that skill does not help the musician play the lute or the lyre. These categories can be split into subcategories (such as lute or lyre, for example), if desired, but in reality few will need to have such specialization.

Play Instrument may use the Dance or Sing skills (or vice versa) to augment the chance of a successful performance and may be used by one performer to augment the chance of another performer's skill.

- A special result allows the performer to perform such that the listeners remember the performance.
- A critical result allows the performer to increase their fame; the audience remembers both performance and performer.
- On a failed roll, the performance is mediocre.
- On a fumble, the performer is booed out of the hall.

Shield (all) (15)

Each size of shield—small, medium, and large—has its own specific skill. A hero may use their shield skill to parry or attack with that weapon. A hero can use any other shield at ½ the skill rating of the best shield skill the hero has or at their base chance plus any additional training and experience, whichever is better. The medium shield is by far the most common in Iceland.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's broadsword skill rating is 75%. Since it's a 1H Sword, he has a skill rating of 38% (75÷2=37.5, rounded up to 38) when using other one-handed swords, such as the sax (a one-handed short sword).*

Sleight (05)

A hero can use this skill of quick hands and misdirection to hide or to take a small object while being watched by others. This skill manipulates small objects, as in juggling, and can be used to determine whether a small object is caught (instead of making a DEX roll).

Someone with a high skill in Sleight does well with shell games, card tricks, and picking pockets. A successful roll means that the hero accomplishes their purpose with no complications—if no one observing attempts a Spot Hidden roll at the same time. If both rolls are being attempted, it becomes an opposed roll against the observer's Spot Hidden skill.

A Sleight attempt takes 1 DEX rank if it is used in a combat round.

A fumbled result means the hero exposes the action in an obvious way to any onlooker.

Mythic Skills

Mythic Skills cover a range of abilities that allow heroes to perceive things that are hidden from others and to use magic to manipulate the world around them. The characteristic modifiers are POW and CHA.

Go Under the Cloak (10)

To Go Under the Cloak one must remain still for a period, with the body and head covered by a heavy woolen cloth. It is a spiritual practice allowing a focused state of serenity in which to seek enlightenment. Go Under the Cloak is often used to search for the answer to a specific question (allowing INT rerolls) and to augment magical activities.

A hero may also attempt to Go Under the Cloak to restore magic points, much in the same fashion that First Aid restores lost hit points.

- Each hour spent successfully Under the Cloak yields the hero 1 magic point in addition to any restored through normal rest and recuperation.
- A special success rewards the hero with 1D3 magic points, and a critical success yields 1D3+1.
- If the Go Under the Cloak roll fails, the hero had a difficult time focusing, was distracted, or did not achieve a calm state deep enough to hasten spiritual recovery. No additional benefit is accrued.
- If the roll results in a fumble, the hero loses 1D3 additional magic points, with the usual effects if magic points are reduced to 1 or 0.

To hasten the recovery of expended magic points, the hero must successfully Go Under the Cloak uninterrupted for one full hour. During this time, the hero cannot attempt other skill rolls, make any movement, cast a spell, or communicate in any way with others. If the gamemaster determines that a distraction has disturbed the attempt to Go Under the Cloak, the hero must perform a successful POW×3 roll to resist being distracted and gains no benefit from the attempt.

The hero can also attempt to use this skill to "reset" a failed INT roll by spending time Under the Cloak, reconsidering the answer. If successful, they may make another attempt at the INT roll. The issue the hero intends to ponder must be announced prior to the Go Under the Cloak attempt, and this attempt may only be made once per issue.

A new Go Under the Cloak attempt may be made every hour to receive the listed benefit. Periods shorter than one hour yield no reward other than peace of mind. A hero can only Go Under the Cloak the number of hours a day equal to their CON characteristic.

At the gamemaster's discretion, Go Under the Cloak may also be used to augment a variety of Mythic, Communication, and Knowledge skills, though it should only be allowed if the use of those skills would benefit from inner calm and reflection. Go Under the Cloak does not teach a hero a language they do not speak or provide any knowledge they have not been exposed to. It also does not serve in any activity requiring rapidly adapting patterns of thought, such as Fast Talk or most forms of combat.

Prophecy (05)

This skill measures the hero's ability to foresee the future. The revelations come in the form of dreams or visions, most often played out by Animal Spirits representing people. The future revealed by a prophecy is not set in stone, but rather represents the most likely outcome of forces that have already been set in motion. Changing a future that has been foretold is difficult, but not impossible.

A Prophecy skill roll may be attempted only once per scene.

- **Fumble:** The hero has a prophetic dream or vision of their impending doom—their own death or some other terrible fate.
- **Failure:** No glimpse of the future is revealed.
- **Success:** The hero has a prophetic dream or vision about an event in the future. See The Prophecy (below).
- **Critical:** The hero has a clear vision of the future that includes specific details.

The Prophecy

With a successful Prophecy roll, the hero may describe the prophetic dream or vision and their interpretation of its meaning. The player is free to use their imagination to come up with the details.

When the prophecy seems excessively positive, such as "I shall become king of the whole of Iceland", the gamemaster is encouraged to secretly plan a twist of fate.

> ***For example, the hero is declared "King of Iceland" by the Norwegian king in total disregard of Iceland's social order and without any recognition by the assembly courts. This makes the so-called "king" a mortal enemy of any goðar unwilling to submit to a foreign king.***

The hero is the agent of their own prophecy, and it is up to them to make it come true. Once the prophecy is made, the hero's thread of fate will most likely be woven in a predictable manner. However, any skill use that contributes to the prophecy's fulfillment is made as if it has a successful augment (+20% bonus to the skill used). Similarly, any skill use attempting to prevent the prophecy from occurring, or that set events in motion contrary to the prophecy, is modified by a failed augment roll (–30% penalty to the skill used). These modifiers apply only to the hero who made the prophecy and to no one else.

Only one prophecy may be active at a time. If the prophecy does not include a clear date, it will expire within 1D6 months.

EXAMPLE: *While riding to a battle, Ísgerður attempts to bring about a prophetic vision. Ísgerður's Prophecy skill is 35%, and the player rolls 21—a success. In the vision, an arctic tern squeaks at a wolf as it stands with its head bowed and its tail between its legs. Ísgerður declares her vision to mean that it may be possible to intimidate Sturla the Fierce into giving up his land claim without resorting to bloodshed. When Ísgerður faces Sturla, she tells him that if he insists on fighting, her allies will not rest until he is dead. Ísgerður's intimidation skill is only 15%, but the prophecy means it is boosted to 35%.*

A doomed individual often considers it a matter of honor to face their future with bravery, rather than try to alter their fate. If a hero becomes known for accepting a prophecy that will ultimately bring them harm or possibly even death, the gamemaster may award the hero +1D6% Reputation.

Each use of the Prophecy skill costs 3 magic points, regardless of the result of the skill roll. In case of a success or better result, the hero can add any of the effects in the **Prophecy Bonus Effects Cost** table (below) for the magic point cost listed.

Prophecy Bonus Effects Cost

MP Cost	Ability
0	The prophecy affects only the hero
+3	The prophecy affects one person other than the hero
+3	The prophecy involves misfortune befalling a few, or a shameful, disastrous event
+4	The prophecy affects a group of people
+4	People are seen in the prophetic dream or vision instead of their Animal Spirits
+5	The prophecy involves death

Rune Magic (00)

This skill covers the knowledge of how to use the magical power of the runes. Runemasters carve magic rune scripts on pieces of wood or bone and infuse them with power.

Rune magic effects usually take place immediately, have a short range, and are short-lived. It is less like some wondrous magic from the gods, and rather more like a fortunate stroke of serendipity or something out of a fanciful story as told by *skalds* (see page 84).

Runemasters must also know Read/Write (runes) and Craft (carpentry) or Craft (masonry) skills to be able to carve magic scripts in the runic alphabet.

Second Sight (05)

The ability to see that which is hidden from the eyes of the common folk, opening the mind's eye to the forces of nature and to the world of spirits and mythic creatures.

A successful Second Sight roll allows the hero to see any spirits, hidden ones (such as elves), or other mythic creatures in the area. A special success allows for the hero to identify the person who a spirit animal is attached to as if they have met that person before. Seeing someone's spirit animal means that its human counterpart must be somewhere nearby. On a failure, the hero's mind is overwhelmed by what they see and they cannot focus. A fumble means the hero is so overwhelmed that they cannot act for 1D3 rounds.

Seiður Magic (00)

This skill is used to perform *seiður* ritual magic, a type of shamanistic magic that involves elaborate rituals that produce long-lived and long-range effects. See ***Seiður* Magic**, pages 203–209.

Worship (Deity) (00)

This skill allows mortals to contact the *Æsir* and the *Vanir* deities, or other deities for characters who worship otherwise. It is always linked to a specific deity. The score of the Worship skill toward a deity defines the number of dedication points available to a hero.

A successful Worship roll allows the participant to complete religious rituals and replenish dedication points. A success replenishes 1 dedication point, while a special success replenishes 2 points, and a critical success replenishes 3 points. Points gained above the maximum number for that deity are discarded.

Sacrifice

Sacrificial rituals are practiced widely to ensure good standing with the gods. Sacrifices are typically of magic points, of living things, or of goods. A hero gets a bonus to their Worship skill depending on the nature and the amount of sacrifice made during the ritual:

- **Magic Points:** Runemasters and seiðkona must sacrifice at least 2 magic points during a Worship ritual to their deity. No dice roll is necessary for that sacrifice. For each additional magic point sacrificed, they get a +10% bonus to their Worship skill during that ritual. Magic points sacrificed regenerate normally.
- **Living Things:** Sacrificing animals, collecting the blood in bowls, using twigs to spatter the blood onto altars and ritual participants, then cooking and eating the meat in a sacred feast provides the following bonuses:

Living Offerings

Offering Size	Example	Bonus
Small	Bird, fox, etc.	+5%
Medium	Sheep, pig, goat, etc.	+10%
Large	Cow, horse, etc.	+20%

Human sacrifice is only performed at times of great crisis and only by those who firmly believe in the extreme and immediate need for the gods to intervene in some mortal affair. Sometimes, the courts of law will sentence a criminal to be sacrificed in the hope of a blessing for the entire community. Anyone sacrificing a person in a religious ritual outside of the ruling of the assembly courts faces the full penalties set out in law for murder (see **Outlawry**, pages 148–49).

Valuable Objects

Sacrificing valuable objects desired by the deity provides the following bonuses:

Valuable Object Offerings

Offering Size	Example	Bonus
Small	Bone combs, wool cloak, fox skins, or approximately 10 ells of ***vaðmál*** of goods.	+5%
Medium	Sax, axe, shield, or approximately 150 ells of ***vaðmál*** of goods.	+10%
Large	Broadsword, or approximately 1,000 ells of ***vaðmál*** of goods.	+30%

The item itself is ceremonially broken or rendered unusable, such as a comb being broken, a weapon blade being bent, armor being rent, or some other means of rendering the item useless. The item is then thrown into a pit or bog.

Sacred Times

A hero gets a bonus to their Worship skill by performing the ritual on a date sacred to the deity:

Sacred Time Modifiers

Sacred Day	Bonus
Day of the week dedicated to deity, or some other minor holy day	+10%
Seasonal holy day	+20%
High holy day	+30%

Sacred Places

A hero gets a bonus to their Worship skill by performing the ritual in a place sacred to the deity:

Sacred Place Modifiers

Sacred Day	Bonus
Minor shrine	+5%
Shrine at *goði*'s house	+10%
Temple building	+20%
Sacred land feature dedicated to the deity	+30%

Perception Skills

With a Perception-based skill, a hero can extract specific information from one or more senses, and intelligently organize it. The characteristic modifiers are INT, POW, and CON.

Insight (20)

This skill is used to evaluate another person's character, emotional state, trustworthiness, and motives based on body language, speech patterns, and other intangible factors. Insight is specific to humans and cannot be used with hidden people or mythic creatures.

- With a success, the target's general emotional state or motivations are revealed to the hero. In cases of deception, the hero gets a hint that the target is withholding something.
- With a special success, the hero sees into the psyche and motivation of the target, gaining a precise picture.
- With a critical success, the hero can read the target like an open book, discerning their emotional state, and even getting a very good idea of why the target feels the way they do. The hero gains a +10% bonus on all further Communication skill rolls against the target for the remainder of the day.
- If the roll is a failure, the emotions and motivations of the target remain inscrutable; no special insight is gained.
- A fumble leads the hero to bad assumptions and poor perceptions, giving them precisely the wrong conclusion: virtuous targets seem suspicious, or callous killers are deemed trustworthy. The hero falls for any deception and suffers a –15% penalty to all Communication skills with the target for the remainder of the day.

Listen (25)

This skill is both the ability of listening intently for sound where one would not normally hear it and the ability to pick up incidental sounds and interpret them correctly, even when not consciously searching for them. Trying to hear through a door or down a long corridor, or being awakened by the stealthy opening of a window are examples of Listen uses. The gamemaster may modify this skill roll negatively in special circumstances.

Move Quietly and Listen are often opposed skill rolls.

Successful use of this skill might take any length of time, from a full turn (five minutes) to no time at all, depending on the circumstances.

Search (25)

Using Search, a hero can closely scrutinize an area to find a concealed item, a person using Hide, or even a small object hidden with a Conceal or Sleight roll. This skill can reveal secret passageways, traps, or hidden drawers in chests. Search often involves handling items and risking life and limb while tracing the exact parameters of a trap. Search takes one combat round per 2×2 square meter (2×2 square yard) area searched.

Spot Hidden (25)

With Spot Hidden, a hero can observe an area for anomalous movement. Guards and scouts, for instance, study terrain for approaching enemies. The chance of a successful Spot Hidden roll can be curtailed by intervening terrain. Spot Hidden can also be used to determine if something has changed in terrain already familiar to the seeker.

If an intruder only moves when the seeker is not looking and freezes in place when the seeker is looking at them (a standard infiltration technique), the Spot Hidden and Hide or Move Quietly skills become opposed rolls to determine whether the hider is seen or not. See the Hide skill (this page) for more information on combined use of Hide and Move Quietly.

The Spot Hidden skill can be pitted against another's Sleight skill if the Sleight user is attempting some activity like cheating at dice.

Spot Hidden takes one combat round per 90-degree arc to be observed. The Spot Hidden skill is reduced by half for every extra 90-degree arc that the hero attempts to look in the same combat round.

Track (05)

With this skill, a living being can be trailed through wilderness and rural farming areas. A tracker follows traces that the quarry leaves behind, such as footprints, droppings, disturbed vegetation, etc. The skill includes such things as knowledge of how certain animals behave when trying to elude pursuers and the tricks used to cover trails.

When on the trail of something or someone, a Track roll must be made every two full turns (ten minutes) of game time. If the trail is lost, the tracker may cast about to see if they can pick it up again at half their normal Track ability. Each attempt to pick up the trail again takes one full turn, plus any time spent retracing one's step to the place where a trail may have diverged. Modify the tracker's ability by –10% for each day or fraction thereof that the trail is cold.

If the person being trailed has the Track skill, they can attempt to hide their trail using this skill, which results in an opposed roll when the tracker wishes to follow the trail.

Stealth Skills

Heroes use Stealth skills to conceal themselves from hostile eyes. The aura of a high POW (which draws attention) is not helpful in such situations; small SIZ and good DEX and INT enhance the skills.

Hide (10)

With Hide, any available cover, including shadows, misty areas, etc., can be used to hide oneself from others. The surrounding terrain influences the chance to Hide, with the gamemaster suggesting modifiers ranging anywhere from –50% (out in the open with nothing to hide behind) to +50% (dense forest). The Move Quietly skill may be used to augment the Hide skill and vice versa.

An opposed roll is required to detect someone hiding, using either Spot Hidden or Search, depending on the method being used to detect the hider.

For the simultaneous use of Hide and Move Quietly, the hero should use the primary skill being attempted (Hide or Move Quietly), and use the other as an augment. Failing the augmenting skill applies the modifier to the primary skill, as described in **Augmenting Skills** on pages 78–79.

If this skill is used near heroes who are not actively using Search, a simple success roll keeps the user from being discovered. If the hiding hero's player made a successful roll, but someone is actively searching in the area, it becomes an opposed roll using the enemy's Search skill.

The Hide skill can be rolled only once for each Hide attempt.

Move Quietly (10)

This skill covers moving in silence without alerting a foe. See the description of the Hide skill (prior) when using Hide and Move Quietly simultaneously.

Used near characters who are not actively using Listen, a simple success roll keeps the sneaker from discovery. If someone is stated to be using Listen in the area, it becomes an opposed roll.

Heroes attempting to Move Quietly may do so at their full skill if moving up to 1 meter (1.1 yards) per DEX rank, while moving at 2+ meters (2.2+ yards) per DEX rank reduces the Move Quietly skill by –40%.

Make a Move Quietly roll for each combat round in which the sneaker is being listened for, but only once if there is no active listening.

Wearing armor penalizes the Move Quietly skill (see the **Armor** table on page 116). If several different types of armor are worn, the penalty from the noisiest is applied.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMBAT

Combat normally begins in an uncertain and tentative manner. The gamemaster should remember that nonplayer characters typically value their lives as much as the heroes do and guide their behavior and actions accordingly.

The gamemaster should keep in mind many of the traditional customs of warfare in Iceland:

- **Threats:** Confrontation between groups often begins with threats of wider retribution or expensive legal challenges. This is often enough to persuade the group with fewer members or resources to retreat or even surrender.
- **Skirmishes:** Many battles begin with a tentative volley of missiles, especially rocks, thrown at the other group. On a volcanic island, lava rocks are plentiful, making it easy to find one just the right size to hit an enemy's head. Arrows may also be shot, but usually only a few, as they are generally in short supply. If enough opponents are still standing and engaged, the combat continues. If not, the aggressors retreat.
- **Retreat:** Few groups are willing to fight to the death—most try to withdraw and retreat when the situation looks dire. Injured combatants try to withdraw to safety or perhaps get dragged away by their comrades. Remaining steadfast in the face of a determined opponent may require a Battle roll by the leader to steady those under their command and passion rolls for the other combatants.

The reality of combat is that it can be a brutal and confusing affair, increasingly so the more parties involved. Combatants press together and withdraw, sidestep, and maneuver for positions from which to strike. Attacker and defender alike move back and forth on uncertain footing, made more perilous by the prone bodies of the fallen. Visibility might be limited by helmets, and armor can cause loss of mobility and speed.

Every second simultaneously stretches and feels fleeting, bringing desperate recalculations based on the moment-to-moment flow of combat, each loss and victory requiring an instant reassessment about whether—and how—to act.

Some hesitate, while others act and react with instincts born of hard-won experience.

Even seasoned companions can get in each other's way in the press of battle. Injuries are sometimes unfortunately caused by one's own allies.

Wood and iron thunder and clang against each other. Curses are hurled at foes. Battle orders barked out. Breathing is labored, and the howls and groans of the injured and dying are ever-present. Blood and sweat streaks onto hands and runs down into eyes, sometimes causing fatal distractions.

These rules specifically create a combat experience that is dangerous and strategic, easy to participate in, yet requiring skill to master. This chapter describes the mechanics of combat, beginning with the primary question of what happens first.

THE COMBAT ROUND

A **combat** is a mass of combatants attempting many actions at once while simultaneously avoiding death. As described above, it is an intensely chaotic affair. To make order out of this chaos and keep all players informed and involved, these conflicts are defined as **Combat Rounds** (defined on page 59), which in turn are divided into phases.

Combat is usually divided into two types of conflict:

- **Close Combat:** This is fought face-to-face with foes, generally within one's weapon's reach or within a quick movement to.
- **Missile Combat:** Ranged weapons such as bows, slings, thrown spears, etc., aimed at a foe who is more than within a quick movement away.

A combat round has no absolute fixed length, though for most purposes, it is assumed to be 12 seconds, so five combat rounds can occur in a minute. This flexible definition allows the gamemaster to determine what can feasibly happen in a combat round and what takes longer than a combat round, using common sense.

Who goes first and in what order during a combat round is determined by **DEX Ranks**, described on this page.

It is always necessary to realize that, although these phases are taken in turn, the activities they address occur more or less simultaneously.

There are four phases to a combat round:

1. Statement of Intent

The players and gamemaster declare the intentions of all participants in the combat round. These intentions do not need to be precise.

For example, "I'll wait here for them to act and have my shield and sword at the ready if someone gets close". is enough detail.

Enough information should be given so that every player understands your intentions as well as can be expected from their hero's involvement in the situation. The gamemaster should provide as much information to the players as seems reasonable. Players may not know what exact spell a foe is going to cast, but they should know that the foe is readying a spell.

2. Movement of Nonengaged Participants

Any hero, nonplayer character, or creature actively taking part in a fight, whether attacking or defending, is engaged in combat. All heroes and monsters not directly engaged in combat may move up to their total movement rate (MOV). Those moving no more than half of their usual movement allowance (round up) may also participate in combat or perform other feats, such as casting a spell.

See this and page 99 for a full explanation of **DEX Ranks**.

3. Resolution of Combat, Missiles, and Spells

Each attack of whatever type is resolved in DEX rank order. The highest DEX rank always strikes first. The defender may try to parry or dodge the attack, with multiple defensive actions incurring successive penalties to their skill rating.

The effects of damage from missiles, spells, or weapons take place during this phase unless otherwise indicated. If one opponent disables another before the other can attack, the victim gets no attack at all, whether with a spell, missile, or hand-to-hand weapon. If both have the same DEX rank, their INT characteristics are compared, and the smarter combatant strikes first. If INTs are the same, then the strikes are simultaneous, and damage is not taken until both attacks have been rolled and all damage assessed. See **Dexterity (DEX) Ranks** (following) for more detail.

As noted above, a combat round has no fixed length, and once all combatants have performed their possible actions, the combat round ends, no matter how many DEX ranks may remain.

4. Bookkeeping

After all attacks have been resolved, the players and gamemaster should ensure that all changes in the current condition of their heroes have been recorded. This includes magic points expended, dedication or *Wyrd* points spent, damage taken, healing done, etc. They should note all successful uses of skills, magic, and passions for future experience gains.

If the combat is not resolved, play proceeds to the next combat round, with all able participants repeating the same sequence again.

STREAMLINED COMBAT

If the gamemaster and players wish to speed up combat rounds considerably, Phases 1 (*Statement of Intent*), 2 (*Movement of Nonengaged Participants*), and 3 (*Resolution of Combat, Missiles, and Spells*) can occur simultaneously, with a statement of action—whether movement or a physical action like an attack—resolved immediately after being announced. Furthermore, Phase 4 (*Bookkeeping*) can be done as required immediately following the outcome of any actions.

This is usually handled with the gamemaster announcing when a new combat round begins and counting down from the highest DEX rank to the lowest, with all participants acting when their DEX rank is indicated.

This method of compressed resolution yields much quicker combats but has the side-effect of making combats less tactical, with most actions being determined on the spot rather than ahead of acting.

DEXTERITY (DEX) RANKS

In any combat, someone is going to have the edge—the opportunity to strike first and set the pattern for the combat. **Dexterity (DEX) rank** determines who has the first chance to act, whether by attacking or performing some other physical action.

Each action, of whatever type, is attempted in order of each combatant's Dexterity (DEX) value, from highest to lowest. This determines which attacks are resolved in which order during a combat round but does not represent each second of the combat round.

If DEX ranks are tied, use the individuals' INT values as the tiebreaker, with the higher INT taking precedence. If these are also tied, or one or more of the subjects lack INT, then the actions occur simultaneously.

See below for any conditions that might affect DEX rank:

- Readying or drawing a weapon or drawing an arrow or sling stone modifies DEX rank by –5.
- Putting a weapon away modifies DEX rank by –5. (Dropping something costs no DEX ranks.)
- Being surprised modifies DEX rank by –5.
- Moving beyond a few steps modifies DEX rank by –1 per 3 meters (10 feet), cumulative.

If a combination of modifiers reduces a DEX rank to 0 or lower, the combatant cannot act that round and instead goes on their DEX rank in the next round.

Any combatant can choose to delay their action and go on a later DEX rank, if desired, stating at that time when they would like to go, or going at the end of the round on DEX rank 1. If they would like to wait for another being to act and try to interrupt them, when that DEX rank occurs and the other being acts, use INT as the tiebreaker, as described above.

Magical Attacks and DEX Rank

Using Rune or S*eiður* Magic during combat is challenging and time-consuming.

- **Rune Magic:** Carving a quick rune script takes one full and uninterrupted combat round to accomplish, and singing a galdur (the vocal part of the spell) happens on the caster's DEX rank –1 DEX rank per rune in the script. See **Rune Magic During Combat** (page 188) for more information on using rune magic in combat situations. Using a bind-rune happens on the user's DEX rank as a normal action.
- **Seiður Magic:** As Seiður Magic requires a lengthy ritual of at least 10 minutes—one full turn—per magic point invested in the ritual, it is not suitable for use in hand-to-hand combat. It could be used to affect a larger battle, but its casting time means it would be useless for smaller engagements.

Free Actions

Parrying or dodging a physical attack (or other condition) is considered an instantaneous reaction and does not have a DEX rank cost.

Multiple Activities Within a Combat

When engaged in combat, a hero has fewer options, as they must focus on attacking and defending. While a hero might attempt a rune spell at an unaware foe and then engage that foe in combat within the next combat round, a hero cannot, while engaged in combat, attack both physically and magically in the same combat round.

This means that a hero who starts a round physically engaged in melee may choose one option:

- Attack and defend (parry or dodge) normally.
- Defend normally (parry or dodge) and attack magically.

Within a melee, a hero's DEX rank indicates when they may initiate an attack. Penalties to DEX rank are modifiers to that initial DEX rank, not a budget of time that may be allocated as desired.

Multiple Activities Outside of Combat

A hero not immediately involved in combat can conceivably do several smaller things in one round if it does not exceed the DEX ranks available to them. In some cases, actions such as readying a weapon and movement may be combined, so long as they do not seem improbable. When doing so, the larger of the DEX rank penalties should be used.

MOVEMENT

An unencumbered hero not engaged in combat may move up to their movement rate in a combat round. A human can move 10 movement units (MOV) in a combat round, or 30 meters (33.5 yards).

- For each unit (3 meters or 10 feet) of movement an unengaged hero makes during the combat round, modify their DEX rank by – 1 if they wish to take any action.
- A hero engaged in close combat cannot move until disengaged.

A mounted hero engaged in melee can move at the mount's normal movement rate unless the mount itself directly engages in combat. See **Mounted Combat** (page 117-118) for more information.

Disengaging from Close Combat

Sometimes, a hero may wish to disengage (exit) from combat while their opponent wishes to continue.

There are three ways to disengage from combat:

- **Retreating:** A hero wishing to disengage can choose to make a fighting retreat. To disengage in this manner, an adventure must spend one combat round making the attempt. During that round, they can do nothing but perform defensive actions (i.e., Parry and Dodge, described on pages 100 and 102–103). After that, the hero is unengaged. If the disengaging hero is on a horse and their foe is not, the mounted hero is disengaged at the end of the combat round and may ride away in the next combat round. A fighter cannot disengage from a mounted opponent unless they can hide, interpose some intervening obstacle between them, or are defended by another combatant, etc.
- **Knockback:** A hero may make a knockback attack (see page 120). If successful, the opponent is knocked back or down, allowing the attacker to disengage and run away.
- **Flee:** In desperation, a disengaging hero can simply turn and run. This leaves the disengaging hero open and defenseless—their opponent can make one immediate attack against the hero which cannot be parried or dodged, no matter what the opponent's DEX rank is or whether they have already acted that round.

RESOLUTION OF MELEE

The simplest description of combat is that an attacker rolls D100 to determine if they succeed in attacking and then rolls a D20 to determine the hit location. If the defender attempts to parry, they roll D100 to determine if they succeed.

One of the following conditions occurs:

- If the attacker succeeds and the defender does not, the defender takes damage in the hit location rolled on a D20.
- If the attacker and defender both succeed, the weapon or shield of the defender is affected.
- If the attacker fails, but the defender successfully parries with a weapon, the attacker's weapon takes damage.
- If neither succeeds, nothing is damaged.
- The **Attack & Parry Results** table (page 104) displays this information in greater detail.

Weapon Use

A **weapon** is any object used by a hero to do damage to a target, whether crafted, improvised, or natural. A hero may attack and parry with the same weapon in the same combat round.

Generally, each weapon skill is unique and must be learned separately from every other weapon skill. Most weapon skills permit the hero to both attack and parry with the weapon.

COMBAT TERMS

- **Armor Points:** Armor and some magic spells can reduce damage. Armor absorbs an amount of damage equal to its armor points. If it is equal to or higher than the damage inflicted, no damage is taken. Any additional hit points above the armor points (or any magical effect) are inflicted upon the target of the attack.
- **Combat Round:** A short sequence of events in which all participants in combat can act, usually resolved in order of DEX values, highest to lowest. This is abstracted as a 12-second period but is flexible and can be shorter or longer as needed.
- **Critical Success:** A blow so well-placed that extraordinary damage is done or is blocked by a parry. The chance of this happening is 5% of the hero's modified chance to succeed.
- **Damage Points:** When dice are rolled to determine damage, their total, plus any additions for weapon type or magic, are the damage points. Armor points, if any, are then subtracted from damage points, and the target removes the remaining damage from their hit points.
- **DEX Rank:** The DEX value of a combatant, indicating when they can act in a combat round, highest going first.
- **Fumble:** A blow so badly delivered that the result is disastrous to the attacker. The percentage chance of a fumble is 5% of the hero's modified chance of failure.
- **Special Success:** A well-delivered blow which might cause special damage, depending on the weapon type. The percentage chance of a special success is 20% of the hero's modified skill percentage.

The Attack

An **attack** is an attempt to use a weapon to harm a target. A hero's combat or missile weapon skill provides the individual probability of succeeding with an attack. If the player rolls the hero's needed percentage or less on a D100, the hero has succeeded and has hit their opponent. The defender may still manage to avoid damage by parrying or dodging the blow, trusting their armor, or through magic.

If the attack strikes the opponent or is parried, damage is still rolled and compared to the defender's armor (in case of a successful attack) or the defender's weapon (if the attack is parried). How much damage the attack does depends on the type of weapon used, the kind of armor the target may be wearing to absorb the damage, and whether the defender succeeds with a parry or a Dodge.

The **Attack & Parry Results** table (page 104) summarizes the results of different success levels of attacks versus different success levels of parries. The **Dodge Results** table (page 103) shows the results of different levels of successful attacks versus dodges.

Since combat is a stressful situation, a hero gets an experience check for that skill if the attack roll is successful.

The Parry

If the hero is armed with a weapon or shield, they may try to parry an attack. A parry is rolled on a D100 against the defender's relevant weapon skill. If the percentage amount (or less) needed to parry is rolled, the parry partially or completely blocks the attack. The parry should be rolled whether the attack succeeded or not, for some successful parries can affect a weapon used in an unsuccessful attack.

Using a prepared weapon or shield, a hero can attempt to parry an attack on any DEX rank during the round in which the parrying weapon is prepared (in hand and ready for use). A hero may attempt to parry additional attacks at a reduced chance (see **Subsequent Parries**, page 102).

The **Attack and Parry Results** table (page 104) summarizes the results of different success levels of parries versus different success levels of attacks.

A Successful Parry

A successful parry only blocks points of damage equal to the parrying weapon's current hit points. Any additional points of damage that affect a hit location of the defender are determined randomly in the case of a parrying weapon or go to one of two adjacent locations (see page 117). In most cases, a hit to a shield damages the arm wielding it.

Additionally, the parrying weapon or shield loses 1 hit point, simulating the damage it took blocking such an overwhelming blow.

Critical Parries

Parrying with a percentage roll equivalent to a critical hit (1/20 of the normal chance) results in a critical parry. In these cases, the shield or parrying weapon's damage is rolled and compared to the attacker's weapon.

- Against a special attack, the attacking weapon takes 1 point of damage if the parrying shield or weapon's damage is higher.
- Against a normal attack, the parrying item or shield's damage is compared to the current hit points of the attacking weapon. If the defender's damage is higher, the attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by the difference.
- Against a failed or fumbled attack, the defender's damage result is treated as a special result, reducing the attacking weapon's hit points.

The exception to this is if a critical parry is rolled against a critical hit; the parry is treated as a normal parry, and the critical hit is treated as a normal attack.

EXAMPLE: *An attacker stabs at Njáll with a spear. Njáll parries. The spear attack is successful, but Njáll's roll to parry with his shield is a critical success. Njáll rolls 1D6+1D4 for damage, getting a 6 and a 4. Because this is a critical parry, he does 10 points of damage to the attacking weapon, a solid defensive blow! The attacker's spear has 6 hit points currently, so any hit points above 6 are subtracted from its hit points. It is reduced to 2 hit points. The attacker looks at their weapon with dismay, seeing how damaged it is.*

Special Parries

A special success while parrying an attack (1/5 of the chance of a normal parry) results in a special parry.

- Against a critical attack, the parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage, and any excess damage goes to the defender's adjacent hit location (likely the arm) that does not have armor protection.
- Against a special attack, the parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage if the rolled damage is higher than its current hit points. Any excess damage goes to the defender's adjacent hit location (likely the arm).
- Against a normal attack, the damage of the parrying item or shield is compared to the current hit points of the attacker's weapon. If the defender's damage is higher, the attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by 1.
- Against a failed or fumbled attack, the defender's damage result is treated as a special result. The attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by the amount of damage done that exceeds its current hit points.

Successful Parry vs. Unsuccessful Attack

A successful parry against an unsuccessful attack always damages the attacking weapon, reducing it by 1 hit point if the shield or parrying weapon's damage roll is higher than its current hit points.

Parrying a Critical Hit

Though the target's armor does not subtract any damage from a critical hit, a successful parry from a weapon or shield blocks the amount of damage it normally would. However, a weapon that parries a critical hit takes twice the damage it would take normally. If the attacking weapon is a long-hafted weapon or an impaling weapon, the parrying weapon takes no damage.

A shield that parries a critical hit receives twice as much damage as normal, and any unabsorbed damage strikes the parrying hero.

Subsequent Parries

A hero may make a subsequent parry with a weapon they have already parried with. Any subsequent parry is at a cumulative –20% penalty for each additional parry; thus, a third parry attempt is at –40%, a fourth at –60%, etc. If the chance is reduced to 0% or below, the chance of success becomes the default 5% minimum chance of success.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has Broadsword 75%. His first parry is at 75%, his second is at 55%, his third is 35%, his fourth is reduced to 15%, and if he attempts a fifth parry in the same combat round, it will be modified to –5%. As this is below 0%, his chance of success is treated as the minimum of 5%, the minimum chance of success for an attempted ability roll..*

Damage to Weapons

Weapons can take damage in two ways:

- When parrying a successful attack from another weapon.
- When failing an attack against a successful weapon parry.

Whenever a weapon or shield takes damage exceeding its hit points, it loses 1 hit point. In a situation where a smaller weapon damages a larger weapon (such as a dagger versus a spear), it may be assumed that the lesser weapon diverted the larger weapon into a wall or floor, or that it reactively struck the larger weapon in a vulnerable location that was susceptible to damage.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll parries a draugur's special success with a claw attack. His Broadsword 75% succeeds with a roll of 64. Because the attack is a special success, though parried, the draugur rolls damage, getting a 13. Because 13 is more than the broadsword's 12 hit points, the sword takes 1 point of damage, reducing it from 12 hit points to 11. Additionally, Njáll takes 1 point of damage to an adjacent hit location, in this case, his right arm. Fortunately, his armor is enough to absorb it.*

When a weapon or shield reaches 0 hit points, it is unusable. The blade might be bent, the hilt loose, a haft may need to be replaced, a shield rim may need to be refastened, etc. A hero's skill rating with a weapon is reduced by –20% if the weapon is somewhat damaged (at ½ its normal hit points) and –40% if it is severely damaged (reduced to 1 hit point).

A weapon with 0 or more hit points can be repaired "in the field" with a suitable Craft roll (see page 89). Like a human limb, a weapon can take damage equal to its normal hit points below 0.

For example, a broadsword has 12 hit points and can be reduced to –12 hit points.

If these points are exceeded, the weapon is destroyed. It cannot be repaired and may not even be salvageable.

Results that indicate damage to the attacker's weapon are for melee attacks. Missiles such as spears, thrown knives, etc., may be damaged with a successful parry, but bows are not.

Dodge

Dodge may be used to avoid an attack instead of attempting to parry. Dodge may be used against all known attacks directed at the hero but must be rolled separately against each attack.

- A successful Dodge against a normal successful melee attack means that the attack missed.
- A special Dodge roll is necessary against a special hit, and a critical Dodge is necessary to avoid a critical hit.
- If the Dodge roll is fumbled the attacker scores an automatic normal hit unless their rolled attack gains a higher quality of success, at which point it is treated as the better result.

SUMMARY OF COMBAT RESULTS

Attack

- A normal success does normal rolled damage plus damage modifier.
- A special success does special damage (impale, slashing, crushing, etc.) plus damage modifier.
- A critical success ignores armor and does maximum special damage plus damage modifier.

Dodge

- A normal successful Dodge versus a normal attack roll avoids any damage.
- A special success with a Dodge roll is required to avoid a special success attack, and a critical success Dodge roll is required to avoid a critical success attack.
- A fumbled Dodge roll results in the defender being hit automatically unless the attacking roll is fumbled. Each subsequent Dodge and/or parry after the first is reduced by –20%, cumulative.

Parry

- A successful parry always blocks an attack to some degree, whether the attack is a normal, special, or critical success.
- Each subsequent parry and/or Dodge after the first is reduced by –20%, cumulative.

Subsequent Dodge attempts are at a cumulative –20% penalty but may take place in any subsequent DEX rank. For every point of ENC carried up to their maximum ENC, the hero's Dodge skill is reduced by –1%. For every point of ENC carried above their maximum ENC, the hero's Dodge skill is reduced an additional –5%.

The **Dodge Results** table (following) displays the results of different successful Dodge attempts versus different success levels of attacks.

Use of Dodge and Parry Against Missile Weapons

Dodge can be used against any weapon attack the defender is aware of (including projectile weapons). Parry can be used against melee weapons and thrown weapons but not against projectile weapons. See **Use of Shield Against Missile Weapons** (page 117) for additional information.

Combat With Skills Above 100%

With experience, a hero may extend their combat skills above 100%. Additionally, magic, augments, or other modifiers can modify a combat skill above 100%. In any case, these rules apply.

A hero with a combat skill above 100% gains several benefits, although they still have no better than a 95% chance of hitting. Even with a 100% chance of attacking or parrying, a roll of 96–99 is still a miss, and a roll of 00 is still a fumble.

- If the hero has a skill above 100% and that skill is opposed by another skill lower than the hero's skill, the opposing skill is reduced by the amount that the hero's skill is above 100%.

  For example, a troll with a 75% Shield skill who tries to parry an attack from a hero with a 120% Broadsword skill has only a 55% chance of parrying the sword. Alternatively, a troll with a 75% One-handed Mace skill who tries to hit a hero with a 120% Shield skill has only a 55% chance of hitting.

- If both combatants have combat skills greater than 100%, the combat skills of each are reduced by the amount the highest skill is above 100%.

  For example, if a hero with a 150% Broadsword skill fights a castle monarch with a 130% Shield skill, the hero attacks at 100%, and the castle monarch parries at 80%.

- While the actual chance of hitting remains no better than 95% (due to rolls of 96–00 failing), the chance of a special or critical success continues to increase or decrease based on the final modified chance of success. As with other skills or abilities, the final modified value is always the one used to determine the chance of special or critical successes, as well as fumbles.

  For example, a hero with a 150% Broadsword skill has a 30% chance of a special success and an 8% chance of a critical hit.

Splitting Attacks

A hero may split their skill and make multiple attacks if, and only if, each attack can be attempted at 50% or higher. Thus, a hero can only split attacks with a natural skill rating of 100% or higher with the weapon (magical benefits or augments that bring a skill over 100% do not count in this case).

The second attack takes place at half the hero's DEX rank (rounded up), or half the DEX rank the first attack was made at.

Dodge Results

	Critical Success	Special Success	Normal Success	Failure	Fumble
Critical Dodge vs.	Attack is dodged successfully.	Attack is dodged successfully.	Attack is dodged.	Attack misses.	Attacker rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Special Dodge vs.	Attack does special success damage.	Attack is dodged successfully.	Attack is dodged.	Attack misses.	Attacker rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Normal Dodge vs.	Attack does maximum special success damage, ignores armor.	Attack does special success damage.	Attack is dodged.	Attack misses.	Attacker rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Failed Dodge vs.	Attack does maximum special success damage, ignores armor.	Attack does special success damage.	Attack does normal damage.	Attack misses.	Attacker rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Fumbled Dodge vs.	Attack does maximum special success damage, ignores armor. Defender rolls on **Fumbles** table.	Attack does special success damage. Defender rolls on **Fumbles** table.	Attack does normal damage. Defender rolls on **Fumbles** table.	Attack does normal damage. Defender rolls on **Fumbles** table.	Attack fails and both attacker and defender roll on **Fumbles** table.

ATTACK & PARRY RESULTS

	Critical Parry	Special Parry	Normal Parry	Failed Parry	Fumbled Parry
Critical attack vs.	**Attacker rolls normal damage.** Defender's parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage if rolled damage is greater than its current hit points. Any excess damage goes to the affected hit location.	**Attacker rolls special damage.** Defender's parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage if rolled damage is greater than its current hit points. Any excess damage goes to an adjacent hit location, with no armor protection.	**Attacker rolls special damage.** Defender's parrying weapon hit points are reduced by the damage rolled. Any excess damage goes to an adjacent hit location, with no armor protection.	**Attack does maximum special damage.** Defender takes damage, with no armor protection.	**Attack automatically hits, does maximum special damage.** Defender takes damage, with no armor protection, and rolls on **Fumbles** table (see page 109).
Special attack vs.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's normal damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by 1 hit point if damage exceeds its current hit points.	**Attacker rolls normal damage.** Defender's parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage if damage exceeds its current hit points. Any excess damage goes to the affected hit location.	**Attacker rolls special damage.** Defender's parrying weapon takes damage over its hit points, with the same amount of damage going to an adjacent hit location.	**Attacker rolls special damage.** Defender takes damage.	**Attack causes special damage.** Defender takes damage and rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Normal attack vs.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's special damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by any damage exceeding its current hit points.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's normal damage. Attacking weapon's hit points reduced by 1 hit point if damage exceeds its current hit points.	**Attack rolls normal damage.** Defender's parrying weapon takes 1 hit point of damage if the damage exceeds its current hit points. Any excess damage goes to the affected hit location.	**Attacker rolls normal damage.** Defender takes damage.	**Attacker rolls normal damage.** Defender takes damage and rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Failed attack vs.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's special damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by the damage rolled.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's special damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by any damage over its current hit points.	**Attack parried or deflected.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's normal damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by 1 hit point if damage exceeds its current hit points.	**Attack misses.** Defender misses.	**Attacker rolls normal damage.** Defender takes damage and rolls on **Fumbles** table.
Fumbled attack vs.	**Attacker rolls on Fumbles table.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's special damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by the damage rolled.	**Attacker rolls on Fumbles table.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's special damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by the damage over its current hit points.	**Attacker rolls on Fumbles table.** Defender rolls parrying weapon's normal damage. Attacking weapon's hit points are reduced by 1 hit point if the damage exceeds its current hit points.	**Attacker rolls on Fumbles table.** Defender misses.	**Attacker rolls on Fumbles table.** Defender rolls on **Fumbles** table.

For example, if the first attack is at DEX rank 13, the second attack must be at DEX rank 7 (13÷2=6.5, rounded to 7).

Note that if the first attack results in an impalement, the second attack cannot be delivered with that weapon unless it is freed (see **Impaling**, page 106).

Higher skill provides the ability to make better split attacks.

For example, a hero with a 120% chance of hitting with a sword could make two 60% attacks; one 70% and one 50% attack; or any other combination, so long as each attack is 50% or higher.

The attacker can pick the order of the attacks based on their chances, if different.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll is on his way to the assembly when he is attacked by Flosi, a member of a rival family. Flosi is a very skilled swordfighter, with 120% skill and DEX 15. Flosi decides to split his attack, attacking twice in one combat round. He could divide the attacks evenly (60% and 60%) but instead chooses to attack once at 70% and once at 50%. Since Flosi's DEX 15, he attacks once on DEX rank 15 at 70% and again on DEX rank 8 (15÷2=7.5, rounded up to 8) at 50%.*

A hero with 150% ability with a weapon skill can split their attacks three times instead of two, and so on, with skills of 200% or higher providing four attacks. In this case, divide the hero's normal DEX rank by the number of attacks, rounding up, with each attack happening on that number of DEX ranks subtracted from the first.

For example, a hero with a skill of 150% can choose to attack three times per round. If their DEX rank is 17, then divide the DEX rank by 3, for a result of 5.6, rounded up to 6. The first attack is at the hero's normal DEX rank, with each subsequent attack at that DEX increment. In this case, the first attack is at DEX rank 17, the next is at 11, then the third at 5.

The prohibitions against further attacks after an impalement still apply.

Using Passion in Combat

Passions may be brought into play at any time to augment an action, such as an attack or parry. These augments take no additional time to perform.

If the augmenting roll succeeds and modifies a skill with Inspiration (see page 179), the modifier lasts for the rest of the fight or battle. If the hero fails and becomes despondent (modifying all further actions by –10%) that state continues for the rest of the fight.

See **Passions** (pages 177–179) for more information on augmenting skills with these traits.

EXAMPLE: *Arriving at the* ***goði****'s farm, Birna spots two people barricading the longhouse's doors, preparing to set fire to the building. Birna has Loyalty (****goði****) 80%, a strongly held passion, and she decides that she must stop the arsonists before they kill the* ***goði*** *and their family inside. She draws her bow and tries to augment the attack with her passion, knowing that if she fails, the* ***goði*** *she admires and respects so deeply will be killed.*

*Birna's player rolls a 73—a success! Birna can now add +20% to her bow skill for this combat, raising it to 110%. She can now check the Loyalty (****goði****) passion for experience to see if it improves, regardless of the result of her attack roll.*

Using Wyrd in Combat

A hero can use their *Wyrd* during combat. This innate ability to influence fate allows the player to turn failed roll into a success. It can only be used once per day and costs 1 permanent point of POW.

See **Power (POW) and *Wyrd*** (page 30) for more information on using Wyrd.

EXAMPLE: *Hrund is attacked by a jötunn, an Icelandic giant. Unfortunately for Hrund, the giant rolls a special success. Hrund attempts to move out of the way of the enormous club wielded by the giant. Her Dodge is 76%. However, the dice are not on Hrund's side today, and she rolls 00—a fumble! Knowing she could very well be crushed under the giant's club, she decides to use Wyrd to change her fate. She spends 1 permanent point of POW to turn the failed roll into a success, and moves safely out of the way as the massive club smashes the ground next to her. A necessary escape, but costly. She cannot use Wyrd again today, and the point of POW she spent will never be recovered. This brings her ever closer to becoming luckless.*

COMBAT RESULTS

A successful attack with a weapon means that the attacker can do damage to the defender. **Chapter 3: Game System** (page 66-68) discusses how damage is determined and what effects it can have on the recipient.

Each weapon has a **damage rating** described as a dice roll.

For example, a broadsword does 1D8+1 damage, which means the player rolls 1D8 and adds 1 to the result to determine the damage points done.

The hero may apply a damage modifier if applicable. Armor and special magic may subtract from damage. It is possible that a successful weapon hit does no damage at all because of the target's armor, a low roll for damage modified to 0, or some other form of protection, such as magic.

Summary of Special Damage Results

A special success does one of the following damage results, depending on the weapon being used. A critical success inflicts the maximum possible special damage type and ignores any armor.

Impaling

Impaling weapons do double normal damage.

For example, a broad sword normally doing 1D8+1 does 2D8+2 damage.

Any damage modifier or magical modifiers to damage are applied normally.

The impaling weapon is also stuck in the body of the target and may need to be freed to use further.

See page 107 for more information.

Slashing

Slashing weapons do double normal damage.

For example, a short sword normally doing 1D6+1 does 2D6+2 damage.

Any damage modifier or magical modifiers to damage are applied normally.

If the hit points in the location are exceeded, the target may be incapacitated and must roll (CON minus damage)×5 or less to remain conscious.

See page 107 for more information.

Crushing

Crushing weapons do the normal rolled damage and the attacker's normal damage modifier, but then the maximum rollable damage modifier is also applied.

For example, a hero with a +1D4 damage modifier using a maul (2D8 damage) does 2D8+1D4+4 damage.

Any magical modifiers to damage are applied normally.

Special Damage

Rolling a special success or critical hit when making an attack causes that attack to do additional damage and can have a special effect upon the target. A special success is any roll that is equal to or under ⅕ of the chance to succeed. The nature of this additional damage depends on the type of weapon the hero is using:

- **Thrusting Weapons:** These weapons are used with an extension or lunge, such as spears or arrows (which are bow-powered thrusting weapons). Thrusting weapons do impaling damage.
- **Cutting Weapons:** These are weapons used for hacking or slashing. Cutting weapons do slashing damage.
- **Cut-and-thrust Weapons:** These weapons can be used to cut or thrust and include most daggers and swords. They do either impaling or slashing damage; the hero must decide which mode of attack is being attempted before rolling.
- **Blunt Weapons:** These weapons are used for crushing with the weight at the end of the weapon. They do crushing damage.

Impaling Damage

Any thrusting weapon and most missile weapons (except for throwing axes and rocks) have the chance to do **impaling** damage. Impaling takes place if the attack roll is a special success.

> ***For example, a spear-wielding hero with a 40% chance of success who rolls 8 or less on D100 has impaled their opponent, unless the blow is parried.***

Impaling has the effects described below.

Double Damage

An impalement does twice the weapon's normal rolled damage.

> ***For example, an impaling blow with a short spear does 2D6+2 damage points, not the normal 1D6+1.***

If the impaling hero has a damage modifier, it is rolled normally and added to the damage—the damage modifier is not doubled. Any magical addition to the damage is only added once.

If the impalement is also a critical hit, the maximum possible impaling damage (14 points in the case of the short spear in the example above) is done to the victim, to which is added any damage modifier and any extra damage from spells.

Weapon Stuck in Target

The impaling weapon is stuck in the body of the target and can only be extracted by the attacker by making a D100 roll equal to half the attacker's weapon skill. If this roll fails, the weapon remains stuck in the target and is jerked out of the attacker's hands.

If uninterrupted for a combat round, a hero who has made a successful impalement may attempt to retrieve the stuck weapon at the end of the combat round by using their weapon skill. This action takes place in the next combat round after the impalement, not the same one. If the attacker cannot remove the weapon due to unsuccessful rolls, the gamemaster should assume its extraction after five combat rounds. If the hero fumbles the withdrawal, the weapon breaks, no matter what its hit points were at the time.

If the weapon impalement fails to penetrate armor, it is not stuck, and there is no need to extract it.

The impaled target may try to pull out the weapon. Even if under attack, they may ignore their attacker (using neither parry nor Dodge) and try to pull out the weapon. The chance to withdraw the weapon is equal to [STR+CON]×2 or less on D100 (CON is important as a measure of the ability to withstand the pain of drawing out the weapon).

An impaled target who moves while still impaled takes half the weapon's normal damage each round (rounded up). This damage is caused by the weapon getting caught in their armor or clothing, hitting a nearby wall, etc. The impaled target cannot turn to meet a foe approaching from the sides or behind without taking this additional damage. However, assuming the blow did not incapacitate the target, they can meet foes attacking head on.

The impaled target cannot be healed until the weapon is removed. A successful use of the First Aid skill or magical healing can stop further damage but does not heal any points until the weapon is removed.

> **EXAMPLE:** *Njáll throws his spear at an incoming troll. He rolls a 6, a special success. His spear normally does 1D10+1 damage plus Njáll's +1D2 damage modifier. The damage rolled is 12, and Njáll's hit location roll is 10, the troll's abdomen. The troll has 2 points of armor in that hit location, so only 10 points of damage are inflicted. This is enough to incapacitate the troll, as it only has 8 hit points in that hit location. The gamemaster tells Njáll that the troll falls to the ground and is unable to run until that hit location is healed to above 0 hit points (and because it has Njáll's spear sticking out of its abdomen). With a sigh of relief, Njáll draws his broadsword and prepares to move forward, ready to dispatch the troll before it rises.*

Parrying an Impaling Blow

If an impaling attack is parried by a shield, the weapon is stuck in the shield, unable to be removed until all combat is over and/or the person removing it has one full combat round free to extract it. Any damage done beyond the shield's ability to absorb will hit the target.

A weapon stuck in a shield has the following effects:

- If the weapon has an ENC of 2 or more, the shield is useless until the hero removes the spear or breaks it off by doing normal smashing or cutting weapon damage to it until its hit points are depleted.
- If the weapon is ENC 1, such as a sax or battle axe, the shield can only be used at ½ the normal skill rating until the weapon is removed, as described above.
- If the weapon has an effective ENC 0, such as a knife or an arrow, the shield is unaffected unless more than five such weapons are stuck into it. It is then treated as if it had ENC 1.

Slashing Damage

Any cutting weapon has the chance to do **slashing** damage. A slash takes place if the attack roll is a special success. The effects of slashing damage are listed below.

Roll Damage Twice

The slashing weapon's damage should be rolled normally twice, and both results added together.

> ***For example, a slash with a broadsword does 2D8+2 damage points, not the normal 1D8+1.***

If the hero has a damage modifier, it is rolled normally and added to the damage. Any magical addition to the damage is only added once. If the slash is also a critical hit, then the maximum possible damage (18 points if it's a broadsword, such as described above) is done to the victim in that hit location.

Incapacitating the Target

If the hit points in a location are matched or surpassed by slashing damage, the target may be incapacitated, and they must roll (CON minus any damage taken by the slashing attack)×5 or less to remain conscious. If the target fails, they fall unconscious for 1D6 hours or until woken.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll is slashed by a polar bear's claw. Unfortunately, the gamemaster has rolled a special success for its attack. The bear's claw damage is normally 1D8, plus 2D6 for its damage modifier. The damage roll is 5+7, plus the damage modifier roll of 6+4, for a total of 22 points of damage.*

Njáll rolls to parry with his shield and succeeds, though the shield will only block damage up to its hit point total—16 points. Subtracting the damage his shield can absorb still leaves him with 6 points of damage. Since he parried successfully, the attack goes through to his arm, which is clad in 1-point thick woolen clothing.

Despite the shield and thick clothing, the attack still results in Njáll taking 5 points to his 3-point arm. He still has hit points remaining, but he may be incapacitated by the slashing blow. He has a CON of 10. Subtracting the 5 points of damage from his CON of 10 gives him 5. He needs to roll 25 (5×5) or less to remain conscious. Njáll rolls a 44 and drops unconscious.

Crushing Damage

Any smashing weapon has the chance to do **crushing** damage. This occurs if the attack roll is a special success.

For example, if a quarterstaff wielder with a 60% chance of success rolls a 12 or less on a D100, they have succeeded in delivering crushing damage.

This type of damage has one effect, described below.

EXAMPLE: *During a fight with a troll, Njáll drops his sword and attacks with a shield bash, with a skill of 80%. He rolls a 12, a special success. Shields do crushing damage, so an additional +4 points is added to Njáll's normal damage of 1D6+1D4. This is the maximum possible roll for his damage modifier. He rolls a total of 11 points of damage for the shield bash.*

Double Bonus Damage

The weapon damage should be rolled normally, and the regular damage modifier for SIZ+STR (if any) should also be rolled normally. The maximum damage modifier from STR+SIZ should then be added to the result.

If the attacker has no damage modifier, it has no effect.

Critical Hit

If the player manages to roll 1/20 or less of what they need to successfully attack (a critical success), the hero has achieved a **critical hit**. A strike resulting in a roll of 1 on a D100 is always a critical hit. **A critical hit ignores the effects of armor or any other protection and usually does maximum impaling, slashing, or crushing damage (depending on weapon type), as described on page 108.**

As a hero's combat-related skills improve, their chance of striking a critical hit improves.

Fumble

A hero using a weapon for which they have only a 5–20% chance of success has a 5% chance (roll of 96–00 on a D100) of a fumble. For every additional 20% a hero has with a weapon, the chance of fumbling with it is reduced by 1%.

However, an attack roll of 00 is always a fumble. Even a hero with a 100% chance of hitting fumbles when a 00 is rolled (however, remember that a die roll of 96–00 is always a miss).

Effects of a Fumble on the Fumbler

If an attack or parry results in a fumble, the fumbling player must roll D100 on the **Fumbles** table (page 109) and apply the result. Many results apply to attacks and parries, while some describe effects that are specific to an attack or parry. If the result seems inappropriate to the situation, the gamemaster either should pick a similar result or have the player reroll.

EXAMPLE: *Gunnar, Birna's cousin, leaps to her defense during a battle against a troll. He announces that he is going to parry any attacks that come his way. The troll recognizes Gunnar as the greater threat and chooses to attack him first. Gunnar rolls a dismal 00 on his Shield parry roll—a fumble!*

Looking at the chart, the gamemaster asks Gunnar's player to roll a D100. Perhaps the dice are not with Gunnar, as the next roll is a 98, a terrible result. Gunnar leaves himself wide open, allowing the troll to automatically do a critical hit with its club—a crushing weapon. The damage is normally 1D8+2D6. The damage roll and damage modifier are rolled, and the maximum damage modifier is added. In this case, the results are exceptionally good for the troll, with rolls of 8 (1D8), 6 (1D8), and 10 (2D6), plus 12 (maximum damage modifier). The troll's attack does 36 points total damage.

The gamemaster rolls for the hit location and everyone at the table looks in horror as the result of 20 indicates that Gunnar is hit in the head for 36 points. As the attack was a critical success, Gunnar's 5-point metal helmet does not protect him. He takes 36 points of damage to his head, which has only 4 points. This is far more than three times the number of hit points allocated to Gunnar's head! The gamemaster rules that the unfortunate hero is killed instantly.

FUMBLES

D100	Effect
1–5	Lose next parry.
6–10	Lose next attack.
11–15	Lose next attack and parry.
16–20	Lose next attack, parry, and any Dodge.
21–25	Lose next 1D3 attacks.
26–30	Lose next 1D3 attacks and parries.
31–35	Shield strap breaks; lose shield immediately.
36–40	Shield strap breaks, as above, and skip next attack.
41–45	Armor strap breaks and armor comes loose (roll for hit location to determine which piece of armor is lost).
46–50	Armor strap breaks, as above, and skip next attack and parry.
51–55	Fall and lose parry this round (takes 1D3 rounds to get up).
56–60	Twist ankle,; lose half movement rate for 5D10 rounds.
61–63	Twist ankle and fall; apply the effects of 51–55 and 56–60.
64–67	Vision impaired; lose 25% effectiveness on attacks and parries (takes 1D3 rounds unengaged to clear vision).
68–70	Vision impaired; lose 50% effectiveness on attacks and parries (takes 1D6 rounds unengaged to clear vision).
71–72	Vision blocked; lose all attacks and parries (takes 1D6 rounds unengaged to clear vision).
73–74	Distracted; foes attack at +25% effectiveness in next round.
75–78	**Attack:** Weapon used in attack dropped (takes 1D3 rounds to recover). **Parry:** Parrying weapon or shield dropped (takes 1D3 rounds to recover).
79–82	**Attack:** Weapon knocked away (roll 1D6 for number of meters it travels. Roll 1D8 for compass direction it travels; with 1=north, 2=northeast, 3=east, 4=southeast, 5=south, 6=southwest, 7=west, 8=northwest). **Parry:** Parrying weapon or shield knocked away (roll 1D6 for number of meters it travels and 1D8 for compass direction it travels, as above).
83–86	**Attack:** Weapon automatically shatters if it is a normal weapon, or with a 50% chance of breaking if the weapon is named (see page 115). **Parry:** Parrying weapon or shield shatters if it is normal or with a 50% chance of breaking if the weapon is named (see page 115).
87–89	**Attack:** Hit nearest friend (hit self if no friend near); do rolled damage. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically hits with normal damage.
90–91	**Attack:** Hit nearest friend (hit self if no friend near) at full possible damage. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically hits with normal damage.
92	**Attack:** Hit nearest friend (hit self if no friend near); critical hit. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically hits with normal damage.
93–95	**Attack:** Hit self; do rolled damage. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically hits with full possible damage.
96–97	**Attack:** Hit self; do full possible damage. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically critical hits.
98	**Attack:** Hit self; do critical hit. **Parry:** Wide open; foe automatically critical hits.
99	**Spectacular Failure:** Roll twice on this table and apply both results. If this result is rolled again, continue rolling until two other results are achieved.
100	**Catastrophic Failure:** Foll three times on this table and apply all three results. If this result is rolled again, continue rolling until three other results are achieved.

WEAPONS

"Well, is Gunnar at home?", asked Gizur. "Find that out for yourselves", said Þorgrímur, "but this I am sure of, that his hewing spear is at home", and with that, he fell dead.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

The main kinds of weapons are melee and missile. These weapons differ in concept: melee weapons can be used to parry as well as attack, while missile weapons are normally used only beyond weapon-length range and have no designed capacity for parry.

Melee Weapons

A melee weapon is meant for close combat, with the combatants no more than a weapon length apart.

Weapon Categories

The melee weapon table (pages 111) lists melee weapons by categories (such as 1H Sword). A hero can use any other melee weapon in the same weapon category (such as 1H Axe, Fist, 1H Sword, etc.) at ½ the skill rating of the best skill the hero has in that category.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll has raised his broadsword skill to 90%. His ability to use any other weapon in the 1H Sword category is now 45%, so he can now use a sax at 45%.*

Explanation of Headings

- **Category:** These are classified as either one-handed (1H), fully controlled with one hand, or two-handed (2H), used with both hands, usually using one hand as a stabilizer and support and one hand for control. A shield may be used with a one-handed weapon but cannot normally be used with a two-handed weapon.
- **Base:** This is the base chance for using the weapon. Add to that the hero's Manipulation skills category modifier. If the hero's homeland or occupation gives the hero an additional percentage with that weapon, add that percentage to the total.
- **STR/DEX:** The minimum necessary STR and DEX required to handle the weapon. An excess of STR makes up for a lack of DEX on a 2 for 1 basis.

For example, a hero with a 13 STR and a 6 DEX can use a broadsword (which requires a 9 STR and a 7 DEX). If both STR and DEX are below the requirements, all attacks and parries with the weapon are performed at half-skill.

- **Damage:** Expressed as a die roll (such as 2D6, often plus a few additional damage points).

For example, sax damage is found by rolling 1D6 and adding 1 to the result, which ranges between 2 and 7 points.

- **HP:** How many hit points of damage the weapon takes while parrying before it breaks. All damage is cumulative. Better quality weapons may absorb more damage. Weapons can be repaired with a suitable Craft skill (page 89).
- **ENC:** The encumbrance (ENC) value of the weapon, measuring how many "things" it weighs. All ENC shown in parentheses indicate the number of items necessary to equal 1 ENC point. Thus, four knives equal 1 ENC. These fractional ENCs add to one another.
- **Length:** The approximate metric length of a weapon.
- **Type:** There are five types of weapons, rough categories that describe the type of damage each does. See **Weapon Types** (following) for more information.

Weapon Types

A broadsword inflicts a different type of injury than a quarterstaff, and an arrow damages someone differently than a kick or punch. Weapons are categorized into five weapon types, which determine the effects when a special or critical success is rolled.

The five weapon types are:

- **Crushing (C):** Weapons with blunt edges used for crushing with the weight at the end of the weapon. These weapons do crushing damage.
- **Cut-and-thrust (CT):** Weapons capable of use for slashing or thrusting. The player must state whether the weapon is being used to cut or thrust, as it may do slashing or impaling damage depending on the success.
- **Hand-to-hand (H):** Basic unarmed attacks, including fists, kicks, and grapples. These do crushing damage.
- **Impaling (I):** Long weapons used with a thrust or lunge. These weapons do impaling damage.
- **Slashing (S):** Weapons used for hacking or slashing. These weapons do slashing damage.

See pages 106–108 for the effects of special damage types.

Melee Weapons

Kolskegg turned sharp round, and strode toward Kolur, and smote him with his sax, and cut off his leg, and said, "Did that get you or not?" Kolur replied that it was what he deserved for not shielding himself. So, he stood a while on his other leg and looked at the stump. Kolskegg said, "You don't need to look, it's just as it appears: the leg is gone." Then Kolur fell dead.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

***Atgeir*:** A hewing spear (*atgeir*) is a type of polearm with a blade fitted at the end of a long wooden shaft. It can be used as a thrusting or cutting weapon.

Axe or Battle Axe: Light, fast, and well-balanced, a battle axe is often the weapon of choice for the poorest warriors. Axe heads are made of iron and are single-edged. The blade is crescent-shaped and measures from 22–45 cm (9–18 inches). The axe haft is made of wood and can be as long as 1.5 m (60 inches). One advantage of the shorter battle axes over the long axe is that they can be easily hidden behind a shield to surprise an opponent, a trick sometimes used by famous warriors.

Broadsword: These long swords are double-edged, designed to be used single-handed, and with blades carefully balanced for maximum slashing effect. The blade is typically 4–6 cm wide (2–3 inches) and 60–90 cm (24–36 inches) long. The grips are made with a variety of materials, ranging from wood wrapped with leather to elaborately decorated grips wound with wire made from precious metals. Swords are rare and expensive, costing as much as 1200 *vaðmál*, or 15 cows. A sword is likely to be the single most expensive item a person owns, after their farm. Swords are often heirlooms, given names and passed from parent to child for generations. The loss of one is regarded as a catastrophe.

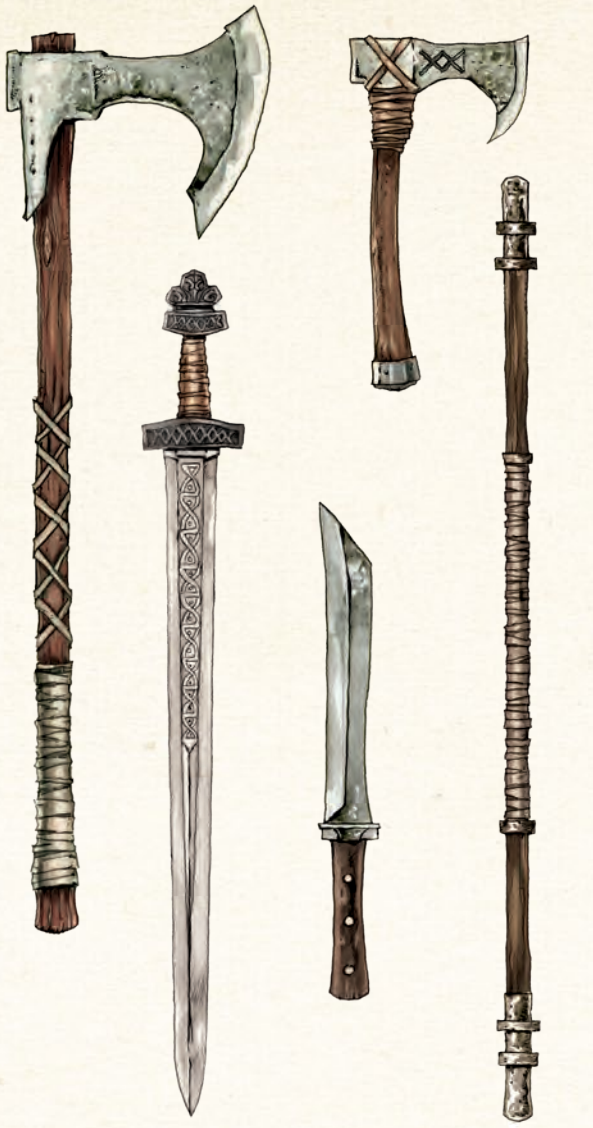
Knife: These resemble saxes in many regards, with the 20 cm (8 inches) or less length of the blade being the distinguishing feature.

Long Axe: A two-handed version of the battle axe with a haft around 140 cm (55 inches) long.

Long Spear: The long spear is often the weapon of choice for someone who cannot afford a sword. These are 2–3 meters (7–10 feet) long with a blade 20–50 cm (8–20 inches) long. A spear can be thrown at the enemy or used as a two-handed thrusting weapon. The fiercest warriors are known for their accuracy when throwing two spears at the same time, one with each hand, killing two enemies in one move. Such a maneuver can be attempted by splitting the Spear weapon skill and making two separate attack rolls.

Quarterstaff: A long wooden stick, often used as a walking staff.

Sax: A sax is a one-handed, single-edged knife-like weapon with a blade length ranging from 30–60 cm (12–24 inches). Compared to long swords, saxes typically are crudely made, with heavier and thicker blades. The hilt is usually made of wood, bone, or horn, and there is no cross-guard. A sax is carried in a sheath suspended horizontally from the belt and is a very common weapon. Some people favor the sax over a broadsword for fighting.



Melee Weapons

Category	Name	Base %	STR/DEX	Damage	HP	ENC	Length	Cost	Type
Axe, One-handed (1H)	Battle Axe	10	13/7	1D8+2	8	1	0.7	140 ells	S
Axe, Two-handed (2H)	Long Axe	5	11/7	2D6+2	10	2	1.4	240 ells	S
Knife	Knife	15	–/–	1D4+1	6	(4)	0.3	30 ells	CT
Pole Weapon, Two-handed (2H)	*Atgeir*	5	13/9	3D6	7	3	2.2	800 ells	CT
Quarterstaff	Quarterstaff	15	9/9	1D8	8	2	2	6 ells	C
Spear, Two-handed (2H)	Long Spear	15	9/7	1D10+1	10	3	2–3	40 ells	I
Sword, One-handed (1H)	Sax	10	–/–	1D6+1	12	1	0.3–0.6	120 ells	CT
Sword, One-handed (1H)	Broadsword	10	9/7	1D8+1	12	1	1	1,200 ells	CT
Shield	Shield, Medium Round	15	12/–	1D6	16	2	–	200 ells	C

Unarmed Attacks

Category	Name	Base %	STR/DEX	Damage	HP	ENC	Length	Type
Fist	Fist	25	–/–	1D3	Arm	0	0	H
Grapple	Grapple	25	–/–	Special	Arm	0	0	H
Kick	Kick	15	–/–	1D6	Leg	0	0	H

Shield, Medium Round: The main means of defense for a warrior is their shield, and most fighters carry one. By redistributing the shock over its larger area, the shield makes it possible for the warrior's body to absorb the force of the blow with a reduced risk of injury. The large round shield consists of a circular wooden board between 80 and 100 cm (31 and 39 inches) in diameter and is bound around the edges with iron with a central iron boss (a large raised disk or dome) to protect the hand. They are generally painted but may also be decorated with designs of mythic creatures, such as dragons. Elaborately decorated shields are given as gifts and are often proudly displayed in farmhouses. Another use for shields is as stretchers to carry away those wounded in combat.

Hrappur went in and bore his axe high. "Why is your axe bloody?" asks Gudbrand. "I made it so by taking care of Ásvarður's backache", said Hrappur.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

Missile Weapons

Missile weapons are weapons that leave the grasp or possession of the user to reach their target, usually traveling through the air. There are two types of missile weapons: thrown and projectile.

- **Thrown weapons** are typically melee weapons that are balanced for throwing. This category includes throwing axes, spears, and rocks.
- **Projectile weapons** are weapons that project a missile at a target. This category includes bows and slings.

A hero can use any other missile weapons in the same weapon category at ½ their skill rating of the best skill the hero has in that category.

Explanation of Weapon Headings

Base: This is the base chance for using the weapon. Add to it the hero's Manipulation skills category modifier. If one's homeland gives the hero an additional modifier with that weapon, add that to the total.

Range: At these ranges and less, the hero can be expected to hit at the percentage for which they have been trained.

HP: Represents the weapon's hit points, though most heroes are not trained to parry with missile weapons such as bows or slings. Thrown weapons, such as spears, include parrying in their training. If in doubt, the chance of parrying using a missile weapon should be based on the basic chance with a quarterstaff.

Range

The ranges shown on the following tables are effective ranges. At the ranges shown and less, the hero can be expected to hit at the percentage for which they have trained.

- **Thrown Weapons:** Thrown weapons have no effective value beyond 20 meters (66 feet).
- **Projectile Weapons:** Projectile weapons can reach further than their effective range but at the cost of accuracy. Medium range is about ½ again as many meters as the effective range. A hero shooting in this range has ½ the normal chance of hitting. Long range is between the limit of medium range and roughly twice the effective range. A hero shooting at long range has ¼ the normal chance of hitting.

Gunnar strings his bow, takes his arrows and throws them on the ground before him, and shoots as soon as ever they come within shot: by that Gunnar wounded many men, and some he slew.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

Missile Weapons

Bow, Self: Although the Icelanders and Norse warriors generally favor close combat, the use of bows is common on land and at sea. The most common is called the self bow, made from a single piece of the wood of a yew, although ash or elm is also used. Arrowheads are made from iron in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Sling: A simple leather thong with a cup to hold a rock. A sling stone can reach incredible velocity in the hands of an expert. The minimum range a sling can be used in is 5 meters.

Thrown Weapons

Axe, Throwing: A light axe balanced for throwing or melee.

Dagger, Throwing: A slender dagger balanced for throwing.

Rock: A fist-sized rock. Iceland is a volcanic island with an abundance of lava rocks in most areas.

Thrown Weapon Damage Modifier

If a hero using a thrown weapon has a damage modifier due to STR and SIZ, their thrown weapon gains only ½ the normal effect of the damage modifier.

For example, if a hero normally has a 1D4 damage modifier, their thrown axe does 1D6 plus 1D4 divided by two (round up).

Missile Weapons

Category	Name	Base %	STR/DEX	Damage	HP	ENC	Range	Cost	Type
Bow	Bow, Self	05	9/9	1D6+1	5	2	100	200 ells	I
Sling	Sling	10	–/9	1D8	8	2	80	20 ells	C

Thrown Weapons

Category	Name	Base %	STR/DEX	Damage	HP	ENC	Range	Cost	Type
Axe, One-handed (1H)	Battle Axe, Thrown	10	13/7	1D6	8	1	15	140 ells	I
Knife, Thrown (1H)	Knife, Thrown	15	–/–	1D4+1	6	(4)	20	30 ells	I
Rock	Rock, Thrown	15	–/–	1D4	–	(4)	20	–	C
Spear, Two-handed (2H)	Long Spear	15	9/7	1D8+1	10	2	15	40 ells	I

Shooting While Moving

A hero cannot shoot while moving or dodging. The only exception to this is mounted archery, which is performed at the same ability chance as regular archery, assuming the Ride skill of the archer is equal to the skill with the missile weapon. If the Ride skill is lower, the attacker's skill is reduced to the level of the Ride skill.

Shooting at Protected Targets

The chance of hitting a foe behind some form of protection, such as an arrow slit in a wall, is the same as normal. However, if the hit location rolled is not visible to the archer, the arrow or other missile hits the protection, not the target.

EXAMPLE: *Birna, aiming her bow at a troll behind a lava boulder, shoots, and hits. The hit location she rolls is 10, abdomen, which is covered by the bolder. The arrow bounces off the rock.*

A critical hit hits in any case. Reroll the hit location until it matches an exposed area. The above applies also to combat over barriers, fences, castle walls, etc.

Shooting at Moving Targets

Movement of a target directly toward or away from an attacker using a missile weapon has no effect on the probability of hitting it.

- If a target is moving at an angle from the archer, the archer's chance of hitting is reduced by –20%.
- If the target specified it was evading as it moves, the archer's chance of hitting is reduced by –40%.
- An evading target may only move ½ their normal movement and may do nothing else but move and evade.

These effects are cumulative.

EXAMPLE: *Birna, with 90% skill rating with her bow, is confronted by an evading foe crossing her path at a 45-degree angle. Her chance of hitting that foe is reduced by –60% (–20% for being at an angle and –40% for evading). Her modified chance is now 30%.*

Shooting into Melee

When shooting into a melee, the attacker cannot be sure that they will not hit an ally. The chance of hitting a specific target in a melee is reduced to a value equal to the attacker's skill rating divided by the number of combatants in the melee.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll announces his intention to hurl a spear into a skirmish in which his friends Sigmundur and Birna are battling five foes. His normal skill rating of 45% is divided by 7, the total number of combatants in the combat, giving him only a 6% chance of success. Though Sigmundur and Birna are not thrilled about having a spear thrown into their midst, Njáll goes ahead with the plan.*

If the player rolls a number between the normal chance to hit and the adjusted chance of hitting the intended target, the gamemaster should randomly determine which of the potential targets was struck (the random determination can still result in the intended target being hit).

The chance of a special or critical success is based on the modified chance to hit.

EXAMPLE: *With his chance reduced to 6% from a normal 40%, Njáll's roll of a 32 is a miss as expected. It is between his normal skill rating (40%) and his modified attack chance (06%), so the gamemaster must determine which combatant the spear strikes.*

The gamemaster decides to determine this by rolling a D20 for each participant in the melee, with the high roll indicating who gets hit. Rolling for each foe (1 through 5), Sigmundur and Birna, the gamemaster rolls: 10, 15, 1, 14, 12, 6, and 16. Unfortunately, Birna is unlucky number 16, and Njáll's spear will strike her, unless Birna can parry or dodge it.

If the hero is using a missile weapon on a mass of targets and doesn't care who gets hit, the chance of hitting someone is increased by +5% for every extra body shot at—if the bodies are packed closely together. The gamemaster rolls to determine which body actually gets hit. If enemies are grouped into a shield wall formation (see page 118), the missile user may fire at the shield wall; if the attackers are approaching in a loose skirmish line, they must be targeted individually, as normal.

Any special or critical chance is based on the original unmodified chance to hit.

EXAMPLE: *While making her way to the assembly, Birna is beset by a group of enemies bent on stopping her from reaching the assembly site, where she plans to present evidence against one of them in a court case. Knowing she's no match for them in combat, she decides she'll pick off as many as she can while they charge her. Her chance with her bow is 90%, and she's shooting into a crowd of five. This gives her a bonus of +20% for four additional potential targets—a total of 110% to hit something.*

Birna shoots and rolls a 10, a special success based on her unmodified skill rating! The gamemaster needs to determine who gets hit. Since they prefer the D20 method, they roll a D20 five times, with results of 8, 5, 17, 14, and 15. The third foe is struck and fails to parry or Dodge.

Birna's special damage roll is 12 (an impalement with a bow), striking the foe in the abdomen. Even the warrior's armor does not protect them. They take 11 points of damage, enough to immobilize them until they receive healing.

One down, four more to go!

Weapon Damage and Repair

Þórir rode home to the town of Uppsala, where he found Þorbjörn standing at the door holding weapons. Þórir went up to the door, but Þorbjörn attacked him with his spear. Then Þorbjörn drew his sword and attacked Þórir, but the sword broke when it hit Þórir's helmet.

—Gold-Þórir's Saga

Often, weapons can be damaged during combat. Even blades can be damaged or broken by striking metallic or other hard objects. That damage is reflected by a loss of hit points. See the **Combat** chapter for situations when weapons may get damaged.

If a weapon's hit points are reduced to 0, it is unusable until it is repaired.

Repairing a Weapon

"Grim fitted a spearhead to the shaft, Helgi riveted a hilt on a sword, and Hauskuld strengthened the handle of a shield. They must be bent on some great deed."

—The Saga of Burned Njáll

Bladed weapons can be repaired with Craft (ironsmithing), provided the necessary equipment and supplies are available. After a few hours of work by the hero, a success restores the weapon to full hit points. A fumble on this roll means the weapon loses one more hit point. A new attempt after a failure on the same day incurs a –20% cumulative penalty.

Shields can be repaired with Craft (carpentry), and bows can be repaired with Craft (bowmaking).

At the gamemaster's discretion, a broken weapon (with no hit points remaining) that has been named (see **Named War-gear**, page 115) may be repaired or reforged with a Craft skill at –40% penalty.

NAMED WAR-GEAR

Icelandic warriors often name their favorite weapon or even piece of armor. A named weapon can become famous on its own and be so strongly associated with the person who carries it that the reputation of the warrior is boosted for as long as they carry that weapon.

A hero gains +4 to Status as a direct result of owning a named weapon. That weapon must have earned its name in battle.

For example, a sword that scored a critical hit that severed an opponent's leg in a single blow could be named Leg Cutter.

It is very shameful for an Icelandic warrior to lose their weapon. In addition to losing the 4 points of Status that were granted by owning the weapon, the hero also loses an additional 6 points of Status due to the shame of losing it. If the named weapon is subsequently recovered, the hero recovers all lost Status points. There is no loss of status if the weapon is broken in honorable combat, however.

Below is a list of weapon names found in the Icelandic sagas that can be used for inspiration.

Weapon Names

Swords
Bastard (*Bastarður*)
Mail Biter (*Brynjubítur*)
Foot Broad (*Fetbreiður*)
Life Taker (*Fjörsváfnir*)
Foot Biter (*Fótbítur*)
Gamli's Gift (*Gamlanautur*)
Grey Side (*Grásíða*)
Grettir's Gift (*Grettisnautur*)
War Flame (*Gunnlogi*)
White One (*Hvítingur*)
Kárr's Gift (*Kársnautur*)
Long (*Lang*)
Leaf (*Laufi*)
Leg Biter (*Leggbítur*)
Adder (*Naður*)
Villain (*Níðingur*)
Pruning Knife (*Sniðill*)
Peace Breaker (*Sættarspillir*)

Axes
Drip Water (*Droplaugar*)
Hel (*Name of the goddess of death*)
Heaven Scraper (*Himintelgja*)
Pommel (*Hjalti*)
Steinn's Gift (*Steinsnautur*)
Star (*Stjarna*)
Black Leg (*Svartleggja*)
Cutting Blade (*Sveðja*)
Tent Spar (*Tjald-sperra*)

Mail Coats
Old Faithful (*Full-trúi*)
Sigfúss's Gift (*Sigfússnautur*)

Staves
Chastiser (*Hegnuður*)
Land Explorer (*Landkönnuður*)

ARMOR

Armor is the last barrier between a hero and an incoming weapon, fang, or claw. Armor absorbs damage and, hopefully, keeps the hero intact. The amount of damage a piece of armor can absorb is described as its armor points—the higher, the better. Different hit locations may wear different forms of armor.

Unlike weapons and shields, the armor points for armor rarely change, even if a blow exceeds the armor points covering the hit location struck. Armor is designed for defense, and it can withstand repeated blows, and its armor points are rarely, if ever, reduced through damage. If armor is damaged, the appropriate Craft skill (page 89) can be used to repair it.

Explanation of Headings and Terms

Some forms of armor protect more than one hit location. These types can, as a rule, be overlapped. Thus, one can wear both a heavy leather shirt and heavy leather trousers. Of course, encumbrance (ENC) adds up quickly in such cases.

- **Covers:** The part of the body the armor covers.
- **Hit Location:** The number range for the hit locations covered.
- **Type:** This is a term taken from general armor lore; the terms come from all times and climes. The hit locations each type covers are shown in the Hit Location column.
- **Material:** This briefly describes the type of material the armor is made of.
- **Absorbs:** The number of points of attack the armor absorbs. Any excess reaches the wearer.
- **ENC:** The encumbrance value for that piece of armor.
- **Cost:** For leg and arm armor, the cost is for the set, not just one, as are ENC costs.
- **Move Quietly:** This indication shows how much the armor subtracts from a hero's Move Quietly skill. When several different types of armor are worn, use the noisiest as the modifier. Do not add all the different types together.

Armor

Covers	Hit Location	Type	Material	Absorbs	ENC	Cost	Move Quietly
Head	19–20	Hood	Wool	1	(2)	6 ells	0
Head	19–20	Cap	Leather	2	(2)	8 ells	0
Head	19–20	Helmet	Iron	5	1	200 ells	0
Arms	13–18	Sleeves	Wool	1	(2)	—	0
Arms	13–15	Winter Coat	Fur	1	(2)	—	0
Abdomen & Chest	9–12	Shirt	Wool	1	1	8 ells	0
Abdomen & Chest	9–18	Winter Coat	Fur	1	2	16 ells	–5%
Abdomen & Chest	9–12	Shirt	Leather	2	2	20 ells	0
Abdomen & Chest	9–12	Shirt	Light Scale	4	4	300 ells	–15%
Abdomen & Chest	9–12	Shirt	Chain Mail	6	5	2,400 ells	–25%
Legs	1–8	Pants	Wool	1	(2)	6 ells	0

Armor Materials

Leather: This is tough leather (2-point), the thickness of shoe leather. It is easy to obtain from cattle raised in Iceland.

Wool: Layers of wool fabric stitched together.

Chain Mail: Iron fabric made of interlocking iron rings in a 4-in-1 pattern, with each ring connected to four other rings. Only very wealthy householders and the *goðar* have access to chain mail shirts, and those are almost always short sleeved. Chain mail is considered too valuable to be buried with a dead warrior and is passed down through generations.

Iron: Iron helmets are always worn in battle by those who can afford them. These consist typically of several pieces of iron riveted together to form an iron bowl, with an iron nose guard riveted to the brow. Inside the helmet, a cap made of sheepskin is used to absorb some of the impact force of a blow. It also absorbs sweat and prevents rust from forming on the inside.

Shields

Lambi Sigfusson rushed at Kári and hewed at him with his sword. Kári caught the blow sideways on his shield, and the sword would not bite: then Kári thrust at Lambi with his sword just below the breast, so that the point came out between his shoulders, and that was his deathblow.

—Egill's Saga

A shield is used to absorb damage before it reaches the bearer. A hero may use their relevant Shield skill to parry or attack. A shield may not be ready for use when the hero is using a two-handed weapon. Two-handed weapons include bows.

The **Shields** table describes how many points a shield can absorb before the bearer is damaged. As with a weapon, a shield user must make a successful parry roll to interpose the shield between their body and an incoming attack.

Almost all Norse shields used in Iceland are medium, consisting of a circular wooden board between 80 and 100 cm (31 and 40 inches) in diameter, bound around the edges with iron, and with a central iron boss to protect the hand. They are generally painted but may also be decorated with designs of mythic creatures, such as dragons. Large shields vary widely in shape and dimensions, and smaller shields are usually smaller in diameter than the user's forearm.

Almost all Norse shields used in Iceland are medium, but folks of other lands use small and large shields as appropriate. Only large and medium shields can be used in a shield wall formation (page 118).

Shields

Size	Type	Base %	STR	HP	Damage	ENC	Type
Large	Wood	15	12	20	1D6	3	C
Medium	Wood	15	12	16	1D6	2	C
Small	Wood	10	8	8	1D3	2	C

Explanation of Headings

Size: Most shields used in Iceland are medium, while overseas small and medium are sometimes encountered in the hands of foreign opponents such as town guards or nobles.

STR: The STR necessary for a hero to use the shield effectively. If the hero lacks the necessary STR, the parrying chance with the shield is halved.

Damage: The amount of damage the shield does when used offensively. Damage modifier is added to this.

HP: The shield absorbs this number of damage points per attack before the wielder takes damage.

ENC: How encumbering the shield is, measured in "things".

Notes on Shield Use

Any damage taken by the shield above what the shield can absorb in one blow is inflicted on the hit location originally rolled in the attack. The armor on the location, if any, absorbs the excess points, with the remainder going to the target in that hit location. The shield then loses 1 hit point. Greater successes might cause the shield to take more damage.

Shields break as often as weapons, or even more often. The hit points of a shield show the number of damage points that a shield can absorb before it is knocked aside or penetrated by the force of the blow, allowing the remainder of the damage to affect the intended target.

When a shield reaches 0 hit points, it is considered useless and must be repaired. If it takes double its normal hit points in damage, it is destroyed completely and cannot be salvaged.

Shield Attacks

It is possible to attack with a shield, giving up the chance of parrying that round. The chance to attack is identical to that for parrying—shield training covers offensive as well as defensive usage. Attacking can be done with the front of the shield, the boss (a large metal knob in the center), or with the edge. A frequent tactic for shield users is to attempt to knock opponents backward or off their feet (see **Knockback**, page 120).

All shields do crushing damage when special or critical successes are rolled.

Use of Shield Against Missile Weapons

Thrown weapons can be parried if the target is aware of the attack and is ready to parry. Missiles shot by projectile weapons cannot be parried. However, a shield can be used to provide coverage against projectile weapons if it is not used to parry that round.

A hero may specify in their *Statement of Intent* (page 98) that they are holding their shield in one place instead of parrying, covering the shield arm and two other hit locations contiguously (player's choice). If struck by a projectile, the shield protects those hit locations. If a shield is slung on the back of a missile target, the shield provides half its hit points (rounded up) as protection against chest hits when those hits are made from the rear.

MOUNTED COMBAT

The accepted way of fighting a battle in Iceland is on foot. Norse warriors may ride to battle, but always dismount from their horses before engaging the enemy. Nevertheless, an adventure can choose to fight while on horseback. Foreign combatants that heroes encounter may also choose to fight this way.

A hero's effectiveness in mounted combat is equal to the lesser of their Ride skill or their skill with the weapon being used. Horses bred in Iceland are not usually trained for combat and will not fight. See the description of the Ride skill (page 81) for more information.

A mount carrying a hero engaged in melee moves at its normal movement rate unless the mount itself directly engages in combat (such as a war horse making a Kick attack).

It is not possible to use a two-handed swinging weapon (such as a long axe) while mounted.

Mounted Archery

This technique is not common in Iceland but may be learned abroad. There is no extra penalty for shooting from a moving animal, although a hero's skill is still capped at their Ride skill. A moving target at the same speed and direction will also be treated as being a standard target. All other modifiers to archery still apply to the mounted archer.

EXAMPLE: *Hrund wants to shoot her bow while riding her horse. Her Bow skill is 35%, while her Ride is 80%. She can do mounted archery from horseback at 35% with no additional penalties. If she raised her Bow skill to 85%, but her Ride skill remained unchanged, her mounted archery would be capped at 80%.*

Controlling a Mount During Battle

When a hero is riding a mount untrained for battle, the player must succeed with the hero's Ride skill every combat round and at any time the mount is injured. If the roll is unsuccessful, the hero must spend the next combat round calming the mount, to the exclusion of all else, with a Ride roll. If they do not attend to their mount, or they fail the roll, the mount will flee from the excitement.

Special Hit Locations for Mounted Combat

In mounted combat, hit location rolls may change because of relative height:

- **Foot Soldier Targets:** A mounted combatant striking downward with a one-handed weapon effectively hits only the top half of the target. Use the **Hit Location** table on page 66, but roll D10+10 to determine the hit location in this situation.
- **Mounted Target:** For a combatant on foot striking upwards with a one-handed weapon at a mounted target, roll on the **Hit Location** table (page 66). If attacking from the side, a result indicating a hit location on the opposite side means the riding animal, not the rider, took the blow—either in the forequarters or hindquarters, whichever is closer to the attacker's weapon.

SHIELD WALLS

In larger battles between armies, Norse warriors favor the shield wall (*skjaldborg*), with a group of fighters standing side-by-side several ranks deep, with those better armed and armored forming the front rank. The shield wall is initially interlocked to receive the impact of the enemy's first charge and then loosens to provide more elbow space for weapon swings. For this reason, only medium and large shields can be used to form a shield wall.

It is not just large armies that can benefit from the shield wall formation. Small groups of four or more warriors may form a shield wall formation to better protect themselves against groups of armed foes. Forming a shield wall takes one full combat round if all participants are within 15 meters of each other. During this combat round, as they enter formation, the warriors may parry or Dodge at a –20% penalty but cannot attack.

Fighting in shield wall formation has several significant advantages.

Knockback Prevention

A warrior in a shield wall formation is not subject to knockback (see page 120) unless the attacker is of at least twice the SIZ of the defender.

Limit to Number of Attackers

No more than one opponent can make a frontal attack against a hero in a shield wall formation, except for heroes at the corners of the shield wall, who may be attacked by up to two opponents. Warriors in a shield wall lose the ability to Dodge but may parry as many attacks as they receive.

The hero on the far-left side (the shield side) of the shield wall formation suffers a –20% penalty to all attacks they attempt. The hero on the far-right side (the weapon side) corner suffers a –20% penalty to all shield parries they attempt. Heroes in shield wall formation cannot attack or parry opponents to the rear without breaking formation and turning around.

Defense in Formation

A hero that keeps to shield wall formation has several hit locations protected by the shield of the person on their immediate right: chest, abdomen, and right leg. The hero's left arm is protected by their own shield.

Heroes in a shield wall formation that is under attack have two options during each combat round:

- Stay in formation
- Break formation and parry

Each is described in the following sections.

Stay in Formation

The player does not roll for their hero's parry, relying instead on the formation defense. The shield of the person in formation to the right automatically successfully parries any attack that hits the hero's right leg, abdomen, or chest. An attack that hits the left arm is successfully parried by the hero's own shield. Damage above the current armor points of the shield is applied against the hit location (armor will reduce that damage). The current hit points of the shield are reduced by 1.

An attack that hits the hero's left leg, right arm, or head is not parried. Instead, the hero gets 1 extra armor point in that location.

Break Formation and Parry

Such an action is viewed as dishonorable and cowardly. The parry roll is attempted as normal but with the following caveat: unless the parry achieves a special or critical success, the hero to the left and right suffer a –20% penalty on their attacks and parries this combat round and the following combat round, when the shield wall reforms.

If someone breaks formation due to being wounded, knocked unconscious, or killed, the heroes to the left and right suffer a –20% penalty on their attacks and parries this combat round and the following combat round. This simulates the ranks closing and someone stepping in to fill the gap as the wounded hero is dragged to safety behind the shield wall.

Attacking in Formation

A hero armed with a weapon more than 1 meter (1.1 yard) long can fight from behind the shield wall against opponents engaged with the shield wall. Their attack is penalized based on weapon length:

Weapon Length Modifier

Length	Penalty
1.0–1.9 meters (3–6 feet)	–20%
2.0–2.9 meters (6–9 feet)	–10%
3.0+ meters (10+ feet)	–

The shield wall does not protect heroes fighting in this manner from long-reach weapon attacks by their opponents. However, it is common for a second wall (or rank) to be formed behind the first shield wall (rank), enabling heroes in the second wall to be defended by their own shield wall formation.

Moving the Shield Wall

A shield wall formation can move forward at a movement rate of 1 without penalty. It can move forward with a movement rate of 2 if the shield wall leader succeeds on a Battle skill roll. Failure means that the shield wall formation breaks, and all the benefits of the formation are lost. The leader must then succeed with an Orate roll to rally the fighters back into formation.

A shield wall formation can change its facing in one combat round if the shield wall leader succeeds on a Battle skill roll. Failure means that the shield wall formation breaks, and all the benefits of the formation are lost. The leader must succeed with an Orate roll to rally the fighters back into formation.

BATTLE TACTICS

When groups of Icelanders meet on land, the fight usually starts with both sides throwing stones at each other. Sometimes spears are thrown or arrows launched, if these weapons are available. Finally, one group will tire of the stone-throwing and charge the other.

The accepted way of fighting a battle is on foot. Icelanders may ride into battle, but always dismount from their horses before engaging the enemy.

Surprise attacks during times of the year when the enemy is not expecting forces to be active is another preferred tactic. Those times include the winter and religious festivals. Though ambushes are often thought of as dishonorable, they are a common tactic against openly acknowledged foes. So long as no attempt is made to conceal one's part in an ambush after the fact, it is generally considered acceptable behavior in the eyes of the law, though circumstances will be carefully weighed if the matter comes to court.

OTHER COMBAT RULES

Aimed Blows

Heroes (or foes) can inflict aimed blows on an enemy, using more care and deliberate action to deliver a well-placed blow upon a specific hit location versus determining it randomly. This can shorten a battle dramatically if the blow is to an incapacitating or poorly armored hit location.

- Anyone who wishes to strike a particular location in hand-to-hand or ranged combat must state the exact location before rolling.
- The attacker must wait until DEX rank 1, attacking at a -20% modifier to strike a limb or -40% to strike a head, torso, or abdomen, after all modifiers are applied.
- If the roll is successful, the blow strikes the desired hit location and does damage normally, with special success, critical, etc., determined based on the lowered chance.
- Deliberately striking a weapon or shield is much easier: the attacker acts on their normal DEX rank at a -20% modifier.

EXAMPLE: *Hrund has 75% skill with her battle axe. She can declare that she is going to try to hit her opponent in their head (a –40% modifier), waiting until DEX rank 1 to act. She has a modified 35% chance of success now. Her opponent, of course, may parry the blow. If Hrund rolls a 35 or less, and the blow is not parried, it strikes the foe in the head for the desired effect.*

If multiple combatants wait until DEX rank 1 to attempt aimed blows, the attacks are resolved in the order of the attackers' normal DEXs, with any further ties resolved in order of unmodified skill rating (highest first).

The modified chance of success affects all other potential results, including the chance of special and critical successes or fumbles.

These rules are strictly for use with hand-to-hand combat and ranged combat, not with spells.

Attacking From Advantage or Disadvantage

Shrewd combatants seek advantages over their foes, sometimes even skirting the edge of honorable behavior in favor of survival. Following are some common situations in which one combatant has an advantage or disadvantage over another.

- **Defenseless or Unaware Opponent:** An attacker gains a +40% chance of hitting an opponent when that opponent is on the ground, otherwise immobilized, or unaware of the attacker.
- **Attacking While Prone:** An attacker on the ground has their attack chance reduced by -40%, but the chance to parry is unmodified. An attacker on the ground can never do more than the weapon's basic damage (ignoring the damage modifier), unless attacking with natural weapons such as fists, kicks, claws, etc. While prone, an attacker rolls only 1D10 to determine hit locations against standing humanoid opponents. Other creatures determine hit locations normally.
- **Helpless Opponent:** A totally helpless opponent can be killed in a single combat round with any weapon unless the attacker rolls a 96–00. The attacker's chance of fumbling is the same as a normal attack with that weapon.

Darkness

If caught in darkness against foes who can maneuver in it, such as trolls, a hero without this ability has a basic chance of attacking and parrying equal to their normal skill rating -80%. If this results in a negative number, the hero has the usual 5% minimum chance of success (a roll of 01–05). All possibilities, such as impaling, critical hits, and fumbling, are included in this reduction.

For example, a hero with a 100% chance of hitting with their spear is reduced to a 20% chance, their impaling chance is reduced to 4%, and their critical is reduced to 1%.

A torch or lamp may be held in the shield hand while fighting, but this prevents the shield from being used for parrying.

Disarm

In combat, a hero may at any time declare that they are striking at their opponent's weapon instead of the opponent. If the opponent is parrying with the designated weapon, they automatically parry if the attacker succeeds in the attack.

The attacker has the normal chance of success if the target weapon is a long weapon, such as a spear or javelin held one-handed. The chance is reduced by -20% for an average one-handed weapon or -40% for a two-handed weapon or medium or large shield.

If the attacker hits the target weapon successfully, they may attempt one of the following actions:

- **Strike to Damage the Weapon:** The weapon loses hit points equal to the amount by which the damage exceeds the hit points of the weapon. Such damage cannot be done with a weapon meant only for thrusting, such as a spear or dagger.
- **Hit With the Flat of the Weapon:** Compare the rolled damage against the STR of the opponent (or STR×1.5 if the weapon is held with both hands) on the resistance table (page 65). If the attack succeeds, the target weapon is knocked from the user's hand and flies a distance in meters (yards) equal to the difference between the damage done and the STR of the user. If the STR is greater than the damage done, the weapon lands at the target's feet. If the

attack is unsuccessful, there is no effect on the struck weapon. This attack cannot be attempted with a short weapon meant only for thrusting (such as a dagger), but it can be used with spears, clubs, or quarterstaffs to slap away an opponent's weapon.

- **Entangle:** Attempt to entangle the target weapon with a flexible weapon. On a special success, some weapons (whips, lassos, etc.) can wind around a defending weapon to disarm an opponent. In such an event, the attacker pits their STR against the STR of the opponent on the resistance table (page 65); if successful, the attacker wrenches the target weapon out of the defender's hand. If the resistance roll is unsuccessful, the target may attempt a STR vs. STR roll against the attacker. On a success, the defender takes the entangling weapon out of the attacker's hand.

Grappling

Grappling is the ability to wrestle a foe using the Grapple skill.

A successful Grapple attack occurs when a hero catches an opponent's body in the specific hit location designated by the roll. If an opponent attempts to parry with a weapon, their weapon arm is caught instead. An opponent's attempt to parry with a shield causes their shield to be grasped. Dodge can be applied against the initial attack with this skill, and a parry with fist or Grapple means that the hold was blocked.

After a successful attack, the grappler may attempt to **immobilize** the grasped limb, or **throw** the foe in the next combat round. To do so, they must make another successful Grapple attack. Failure means the hold has been broken.

- To immobilize a limb, the hero must also succeed in a STR vs. STR roll. If this roll is not made, they still hold the limb, but it is not immobilized.
- To throw a foe, a hero must make an opposed roll of STR+DEX vs. the SIZ+DEX of the foe. Again, failure of this roll means the hero did not manage to throw their foe, although the hero still maintains a grip.

If a hero is thrown during a grapple, they must succeed in a DEX×5 roll on D100 or suffer 1D6 damage to a random hit location when they land. Armor can normally protect against this damage.

If two opponents are attempting to Grapple each other, two successful attacks mean they have grasped each other. Two successful immobilizations (one for each) may either mean nothing was accomplished (if they are contradictory) or that both succeeded. Two throws cancel, and no one is thrown. A hero's attempt to immobilize should always be rolled before their opponent's attempt to throw.

Knockback

In combat, a hero may wish to knock an opponent down or force them back. This is accomplished with a **knockback**.

A knockback attempt must be stated at the start of a combat round as an alternative action.

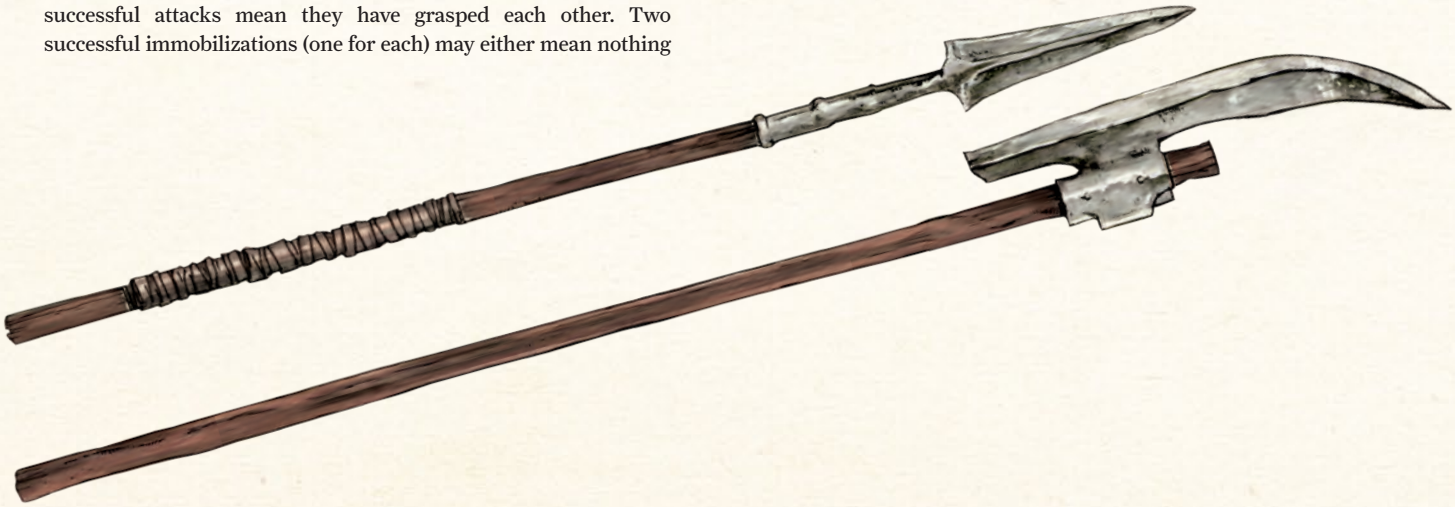
> ***For example, the player may say, "Njáll will fight the troll if the troll attacks him first, but if the troll attacks Birna, he attempts to knock the troll back instead."***

The hero must then make an attack with the weapon, shield, or the part of their body they intend to use for the knockback attempt. If the attack is successful, compare the STR and SIZ of the attacker as a resistance roll (page 64) against the SIZ and DEX of the target.

- If this knockback attempt succeeds, the target is knocked back 1D3 meters.
- If the roll is a special success, the target is knocked back 1D3 meters and falls prone (see page 119).
- If it is a critical success, the target drops any held weapon(s) or shield in addition to being knocked back and falling prone.

If the knockback attempt is unsuccessful, the hero must make a roll of DEX×5 or less on D100 or fall themselves. If the hero does not fall, they bounce off the target and are knocked back 1D3 meters. Resolve a fumbled knockback attempt with the **Fumbles** table (see page 109).

A knockback attempt always happens on DEX rank 1. The attacker may not attack in any other way but may parry or dodge normally during this round.



Subduing

At times, heroes will want to **subdue**, rather than slay, their opponents. There are two primary ways to do this:

- **Grappling:** A target can be immobilized using the Grapple rules (page 120).
- **Stunning:** A hero may use a weapon to stun an opponent using the flat, haft, or hilt of a weapon to make an **Aimed Blow** (page 119) to the head on DEX rank 1, instead of a normal attack. A strike at the head is at a –40% to the normal attack rating. Instead of rolling damage, the weapon does minimum damage plus the minimum possible damage modifier. Subtract any armor from this damage and use a resistance roll of the current number of hit points in the head hit location with the remaining damage. If the resistance roll succeeds, the target is stunned and unconscious. During the Bookkeeping Phase of each subsequent combat round, that stunned character can attempt a successful CON×1 roll to recover consciousness. Successful or not, the target takes 1 point of damage to the head location.

Two Weapon Use

The following conditions apply when a hero wishes to wield a separate weapon in each hand other than a weapon and shield.

- Any hero using a weapon in each hand may use them for two attacks, two parries, or one attack and one parry.
- Every hero is assumed to be right-handed unless otherwise determined by the player during hero creation. Use of a weapon in the "off " hand must be started at 05%, with the usual addition or subtraction for their Manipulation skills category modifier. Also, a hero's DEX must be at least 1.5 times the minimum DEX needed to use the weapon (always round up) before they may use it off-handed.
- To learn how to use a weapon in their off hand, a hero must find an instructor (gamemaster's discretion on how difficult this is at any time).
- The player must keep track of the individual weapon expertise of each weapon used in each hand. Training or experience in using a weapon with their left hand does not affect how the right hand wields the same weapon, except that the ½ effectiveness rule applies (round up).

For example, a hero knows how to use a knife left-handed at 40%. They can also choose to use it right-handed at ½ the left-handed ability, or 20%.

- When attacking with two weapons, the second attack is at ½ the hero's normal DEX rank (round up). For example, a hero with DEX rank 15 performs their first weapon attack at DEX rank 15 and the second at 8 (15÷2=7.5, rounded to 8).
- A hero using two weapons, with both weapons at weapon skill of 100% or more, may attack one foe twice at full skill rating (once with each weapon). The same hero may attack two foes twice at ½ their normal skill rating (each being attacked once with each weapon). Or they may attack one foe at ½ skill rating with the first weapon and the other foe at ½ skill rating with the same weapon, then finish by attacking one foe again with the full skill rating of the second weapon.

Weapon Length

In combat, there are effectively three distances to consider: close (within arm's reach), medium (roughly 1–2 meters apart), and long (2+ meters).

On the weapon tables, each hand-to-hand weapon includes its length. Generally, the longer the weapon, the more likely the wielder gets in the first blow, or holds off an opponent with a shorter weapon and prevents their attack.

The longer the weapon, though, the clumsier it is to wield effectively at all ranges.

- Use normal DEX ranks for short vs. short, short vs. medium, medium vs. medium, and long vs. long weapons.
- A character with a long weapon attacks first against an opponent using a medium or short weapon, despite DEX rank. The long-weapon-user attacks at their DEX rank if higher, or just before their opponent's DEX rank if equal or lower.
- A long-weapon-user can hold off a short-weapon-user, who must make a successful parry or Dodge to bypass their guard. Once the short-weapon-user slips inside, attacks against the long-weapon-user are Easy, attacks against the short-weapon-user are Difficult, and the long-weapon-user's parries are Difficult.
- To re-establish optimal combat distance, a long-weapon-user can Dodge to disengage and retreat, or drop their weapon and Brawl, Grapple, shield knockback, or draw and attack with a medium or short weapon.
- Medium versus short weapons remain unmodified and require no special conditions to maneuver into combat.

Some weapons, such as quarterstaffs, are especially adaptable and may be used to attack at any of the three distances.

NOTES ON COMBAT

Combat is deadly and poses serious risks to every participant. Heroes can easily be killed in combat, and combat should never be lightly entered.

- Always prepare before fighting, if possible. If there are rune masters or *seiðkonas* in the group, it is smart to have them cast defensive and weapon-enhancing spells before combat.
- Ambush when you can. The difference between attacking first versus being on the receiving end of an ambush can be the difference between life and death.
- Missile weapons are deadly. Projectile weapons are incredibly useful against foes as they cannot be parried, only blocked with a shield (and only if the target was prepared for the attack). However, the same is true when heroes are attacked with missile weapons!
- Armor saves lives. Even leather armor greatly increases a hero's chance of survival.
- Always be willing to flee. If the combat goes poorly for the heroes, they should always be willing to sound the retreat and run away! However, fleeing from a fight is a dishonorable act that results in a loss of -5% Honor passion.

Njáll's Saga

The following example uses a classic scene from *Njáll's Saga* and interprets it into *Age of Vikings* rules, presenting them side-by-side. Not all such combats are so epic, but they could be...

NJÁLL'S SAGA

"Do not thou come on", says Gunnar. "Thee, last of all, would I harm, but I will spare no one if I have to fight to my life."

"That I cannot do", says Hallbjörn; "thou wilt strive to kill my brother for all that, and it is a shame if I sit idly by." And as he says this, he thrusts at Gunnar with a great spear which he holds in both hands.

Gunnar throws his shield before the blow, but Hallbjörn pierces the shield through. Gunnar thrusts the shield down so hard that it stands fast in the earth, but he brandishes his sword so quickly that no eye can follow it, and he makes a blow with the sword, and it falls on Hallbjörn's arm above the wrist and cuts Hallbjörn's hand off.

Skammkell runs behind Gunnar's back and makes a blow at him with a great axe. Gunnar turns round upon him and parries the blow with his sword and catches the axe under one of its horns with such a wrench that it flies out of Skamkell's hand away into the river.

Then Gunnar sings a song.

"Once thou askedst, foolish fellow,
Of this man, this sea-horse racer,
When as fast as feet could foot it
Forth ye fled from farm of mine,
Whether that were rightly summoned?
Now with gore the spear we redden,
Battle-eager and avenge us
Thus on thee, vile source of strife."

Gunnar gives another thrust with his sword through Skamkell, lifts him up, and casts him down in the muddy path on his head.

Auðólfur the Easterling snatches up a spear and launches it at Gunnar. Gunnar catches the spear in the air with his hand, and hurls it back at once. It flies through the shield and the Easterling too, and down into the earth.

Otkell smites Gunnar with his sword, aiming at his leg just below the knee. However, Gunnar leaps into the air, and Otkell misses him. Gunnar thrusts at him with the sword, and the blow goes through him.

GAMEPLAY

Gunnar and Hallbjörn face off against one another, exchanging threats. In this case, Gunnar is a player hero, and everyone else is a nonplayer character handled by the gamemaster. Gunnar is holding his action, hoping he won't be forced to kill these people.

Hallbjörn attacks at DEX rank 15. He wields a long spear and has a skill rating of 85%. The gamemaster rolls a 12, a special success! Gunnar has Shield 70%, and his player rolls a 06 to parry, another special success.

Hallbjörn's long spear does impaling damage, and the gamemaster rolls 2D10+2+1D4 for damage for 21 points (impales double the damage dice, plus the normal damage modifier). Gunnar's shield absorbs 16 points of that damage but takes the remaining 5 points of damage. His armor soaks up 2 points of that, and he takes 3 points of damage to his arm.

The spear is impaled in the shield however, and Gunnar says he tries to Disarm Hallbjörn by planting it in the ground. The gamemaster judges that it's a simple STR vs. STR opposed roll, which Gunnar wins, and the spear is still stuck in the shield.

In the next combat round, Gunnar goes on his normal DEX rank 16 (faster than Hallbjörn) and hacks at Hallbjörn's arm with an aimed blow (a –20% modifier). Gunnar's broadsword skill is 95%, so even with a modified 75% skill rating, he succeeeds with a 43. Hallbjörn fails his Dodge roll and Gunnar's player rolls for damage, getting a solid roll of 13 (1D8+1+1D6). Hallbjörn's armor is only 1 point leather, and thus, he takes 12 points to his arm, severing it completely. Hallbjörn has 1 remaining hit point and is unconscious, falling to the ground.

Hallbjörn's ally Skamkell tries to attack Gunnar from behind at DEX rank 12, gaining a +40% bonus for this dishonorable tactic. The gamemaster asks Gunnar's player for a Listen roll, and Gunnar succeeds, alerting him to Skamkell's onrushing footsteps and allowing him an attempt to parry. (If he had failed, he could not make the attempt.)

Gunnar parries the attack at a –40% modifier for being attacked from behind (the gamemaster decides this is a reasonable penalty). When the new combat round begins, he attempts to disarm Skamkell, hitting with the flat of the

Njáll's Saga (continued)

weapon. He rolls 12 points of damage, that and Skamkell's STR 10 are pitted against one another in a resistance roll, a 60/40 chance. Luck is with Gunnar, and he rolls a 37, causing Skamkell's axe to go flying. As they are on the riverbank, the gamemaster decides that the axe goes into the water.

Gunnar tries to intimidate Skamkell with his Intimidate 60%. Circumstances give Gunnar modifiers of +40%, and he easily succeeds with a roll of 53. The gamemaster rules that Skamkell doesn't flee, temporarily wracked with indecision.

On the next combat round, Gunnar strikes at the unarmed Skamkell and rolls a 03, a critical. Skamkell tries to dodge and fails. Gunnar rolls for the hit location and gets a 12, chest. His damage roll is 21, more than enough to kill Skamkell in one blow.

On DEX rank 9, Hallbjörn's other ally, Audulf, enters the fray, throwing a long spear at Gunnar. Emboldened by his success so far, Gunnar's player asks if he can catch the spear in midair. The gamemaster says, "Sure, but it's a DEX×1 roll." This is only 16%, not great.

Gunnar's player rolls a 22… close but not successful! Rather than let himself be hit, Gunnar's player spends 1 point of *Wyrd*, reducing his POW by 1 permanently but turning the failed ability roll into a success. Gunnar himself has a skill of 84% with 2H Spear, so he's able to use it well enough.

The new combat round begins. Spear in hand now, Gunnar throws it back at Audulf on DEX rank 16, getting a lucky roll of 02, a critical! Audulf rolls a normal success for his parry. Gunnar's damage roll is a mighty 21 (2D8+2+½1D6)—maximum damage—and the spear goes through the 16-point shield, delivering 5 additional damage to Audulf. Gunnar's player rolls for hit location, and the dice favor him with a result of 12, the chest. Five points of damage is enough to put Audulf out of the fight for now.

Hallbjörn's last ally, Otkell, realizes he's going to die unless he can stop Gunnar, so he tries an aimed attack at Gunnar's leg, hoping that he can at least catch him off guard and hinder him. With a –20% modified chance to hit, he rolls a 33, a success. Gunnar's player decides to dodge this attack. Gunnar's Dodge is 75%. The player asks the gamemaster, "Is it okay if Gunnar dodges by jumping right up into the air?"

This is essentially an augment of Gunnar's Dodge 75% with his Jump 50%, so the gamemaster allows it. Gunnar's player rolls a 27 for his Jump skill, giving him a +20% bonus to his Dodge skill rating. With a roll of 61, Gunnar leaps into the air to avoid the strike at his leg.

The new combat round begins. Gunnar's player asks, "If Gunnar leaped up into the air, could he get an advantage on his attack as he comes down on Oktel?" The gamemaster decides that striking from above like that is worth a +20% bonus, so that's added to the skill rating, making it easy for Gunnar to clean up the last of Hallbjörn's followers.

CHAPTER SIX

SHIPS AND SEAFARING

"Here is a ship called High Stepper (Stigandi) which we consider the best ship of all upwind under sail and a better voyaging ship than any of the others, and this is the one which I chose for you. It is a fine vessel, though not a large one."
—The Saga of the People of Vatnsdalur

Norse people are accomplished shipbuilders and sailors. No other European people of this age have such an overwhelming military advantage from superiority in naval techniques.

Although very few ships are built in Iceland due to wood being increasingly scarce, ships are a common sight across the country. Most are bought in Scandinavia by Icelanders, mainly by the *goðar* (chieftain-priests), or received as gifts from Scandinavian kings or other nobles.

While on board a ship, the owner's word is absolute in all matters of conduct and action.

SHIP RULES

These rules supply the means for adventure while at sea and are explicitly not naval battle rules. They provide the means for heroes to adventure on a ship as an environment rather than to manipulate their vessel as if it were another hero.

- The gamemaster should use these rules and guidelines to gauge the status of a ship at sea and to introduce interesting new challenges and narrative elements, opening opportunities for roleplaying and challenges while traveling or while going Viking.

Ship Names

The prows of Norse ships are usually fitted with the carved heads of animals, particularly dragons. Such figureheads often provide the ships their names, such as Great Dragon, Bison, Crane, Elk, Man's Head, etc.

Approaching Iceland

Icelandic law dictates that figureheads on the prows of ships be removed whenever returning home. This is done prior to coming within sight of land to avoid scaring the island's spirits and mythic creatures.

THE SHIP SHEET

A **Ship Record Sheet** has been provided on page 139 for hero- and nonplayer character-owned ships, and should be filled out in as much detail as desired, as sea travel is fraught with potential danger, whether through raids, weather, or ill-fortune. This sheet is used for ships deserving extra detail, especially hero-owned ships.

Terminology

The following terms are used to define all ships. Specific values for each type of ship are found in the various ship tables later in this chapter and are also noted on the ship record sheet. The values listed on the ship tables represent average values for each ship type. The gamemaster may introduce ships with higher or lower values based on their origin and quality of craftsmanship.

Name: Most ships are named by their owners or captains.
Type: Common boats and ships are detailed on the following pages.

Nation: The nationality of the crew and captain.

Hull Type: Warship, merchant, or barge.

Hull Quality: Although there is some degree of standardization in ship design, no two ships ever have the same overall hull integrity. Factors include the expertise of the shipbuilder, the time and care taken to build the vessel, the timber used, and so on. Hull Quality is intrinsic to the ship as evidence of who made it and never changes, even if it's badly damaged. Hull Quality is determined by the gamemaster, or with a die roll. If the ship was made by a renowned shipbuilder, it should have the maximum Hull Quality of its class. If the ship is of low quality or was very cheap, it probably has the minimum. Hull Quality is to a ship's structure points as armor is to a person's hit points—so long as Hull Quality is higher than damage caused by storms or battles, etc., no structure points are lost. Hull Quality itself is never lost, nor can it ever be improved.

Seaworthiness: A vessel must withstand the rigors of sailing and stay watertight. Even the best-made wooden hull shrinks, expands, and warps. Sailors must consistently apply tar, wax, or other water-resistant substances to the hull to maintain Seaworthiness. Each hull type has its own Seaworthiness rating. All new ships begin at their maximum Seaworthiness and gradually lose Seaworthiness as they age. The rate of loss depends on the type of craft, as described later in this chapter.

Structure Points: Measures the amount of damage a ship can withstand before becoming useless. Essentially, these are hit points for ships. A loss of structure points represents the weakening of the main structural members of a ship; consequently, a ship's structure points are difficult to repair, as the damage affects a large number of timbers and structural joints. A ship lacking structure points is useless by definition: it cannot make way under sail or oar, nor can it carry cargo. It may still float in part or whole, but the cost of restoration is greater than that of building a new comparable craft.

Length: The distance from stem to stern (the most forward part of a ship to the back or aft-most part of a boat).

Beam: The widest part of the ship. If the ship is rowed, the reach of the oars furthers this distance.

SIZ: The ship's size as a characteristic.

Capacity: How much cargo or weight it can carry under normal circumstances when not overloaded, in tons. This number reflects excess capacity after accounting for the weight of the ship's gear, crew, provisions, and weapons.

Captain: The captain's name and their Boat or Shiphandling ability. They lead the crew, make the important decisions, and speak for all aboard the ship. Ultimately, the ship's success or failure rests with the captain.

Helmsman: The helmsman's name and their Navigate ability. They relay the captain's orders to the crew, handle the rudder for smaller vessels, and make decisions in the captain's absence.

Skill: The ability the relevant characters uses to perform their duties on the ship, such as Boat, Navigate, or Shiphandling.

Crew: The minimum number of sailors required to properly operate the vessel. When a ship is at rest, fewer crew members than indicated are usually on duty. When at sea, though, a ship's speed and maneuverability are reduced if the crewmembers are at or below the minimum. Minimum crew numbers are ⅙ the normal complement of rowers and ⅓ the normal complement of sailors. Modify the captain's Boat or Shiphandling skill by –20% for each 5% of the minimum crew not present. Thus, at 75% of the minimum crew, the captain's skill is modified by –100%.

Passengers: The number of people who can travel on the vessel without contributing to its performance. While more can feasibly be taken on a ship, this assumes the passengers have freedom of movement and are not mistreated.

Other Notes: Note anything else that seems important.

Sailing Speeds, Rowing Speeds: These are explained in **Movement Speeds** (page 131).

HULL TYPES

There are many different configurations of ships that travel the rivers, lakes, and open waters, too many to ever categorize. As this is prior to mass production, shipbuilding ranges from utilitarian and sometimes rudimentary fishing and transport vessels to near art forms, such as longships and the barges of the nobles and wealthy. These terms are solely game classifications and are not indicative of the wide array of historical classes and types.

The following hull types are the most relevant for adventuring but are not exhaustive.

Barge

Wide, flat-bottomed crafts of sturdy construction. Barges can be built square or in almost any length-to-width ratio. Barges move goods back and forth along rivers, canals, and harbors or provide stable platforms for fishing in calm water. They can also be used for simple transport of goods and personnel across rivers or bodies of water. At best, barges are slow and cumbersome to maneuver. At sea, even moderate waves or swells swamp them.

Merchant

This basic type of transport craft emphasizes hold capacity and seaworthiness. They carry few crewmen. A merchant ship is too bulky to be moved efficiently by oar at sea but has oars for navigating in narrow harbors when becalmed and for fending off enemies.

Warship

War craft are built sleekly (up to a 10:1 length-to-width ratio). They are fast, with or without a favorable wind, but have a limited cargo capacity. Although equipped with a removable mast for long-distance travel, warships are primarily designed to be rowed.

Compared to barges and merchants, warships are the last word in mobility, but in heavy seas, they suffer from low freeboard (the deck being close to water level) and, therefore, are of limited seaworthiness.

Warships are used as transportation vessels on occasion, but only at a drastic cost. As an example, a 200-oar galley is reduced to 30 oars when transporting 30 horses.

Some warships are built so that they can be disassembled into 30–40 different sections. While bulky, such pieces are easier to move overland than the fully assembled vessel.

Head-sized oar-holes honeycomb the sides of warships. The holes for the lowest banks of oars sit at most a foot above the waterline. A leather gasket holds each oar in place and keeps out the seawater.

Icelandic Ship Types

Three types of ships are common in the Icelandic waters: the *knörr*, the *dreki*, and simple fishing boats. Each is described below. The ship tables within this chapter allow comparison of different ship capabilities in game terms.

Sailors from other Norse countries generally make their ships in the same fashion, and for most purposes, the ships can be treated identically. As the Viking *dreki* is one of the most effective and adaptable ships on the water, most countries with warships follow that ship's design, though rarely with the craftsmanship of the Norse. As one goes further south into the Mediterranean Sea, more complex vessels may be encountered.

Knörr

Norse settlers coming to Iceland traveled the North Atlantic aboard cargo ships called *knörr* (pl. *knerrir*), bringing with them farming animals, horses, timber, and anything they could afford to carry.

These single-masted, square-sailed merchant ships are built for long oceangoing journeys and are used on the sailing routes between Iceland and Scandinavia.

A *knörr* is built by fixing overlapping horizontal planks on either side of a strong keel. This gives the ship its flexibility, allowing it to move with the batter of the waves rather than taking their full force. The deck is composed of loose planking laid on the ship's frame, allowing the planks to be easily lifted to bail out water or to retrieve anything stored below deck. Stem and stern rise high out of the water. As the ship sails in rough seas, it cuts through the waves rather than climbing over them.

The *knörr* is a shorter and broader vessel than a *dreki*, the Viking warship. There is a cargo hold mid-ship, with decking and oar ports in the fore and aft only. The ship also has a firmly seated mast designed to be unstepped (taken down) only rarely.

Although a typical *knörr* can transport up to 100 people, these ships can be minimally crewed: someone to steer (a *cockswain* in modern terminology), a lookout, someone to bail water, and several others to handle the sail. A crew of 12 is considered the minimum for an oceangoing *knörr*. The maximum cargo capacity on a *knörr* ship is 60 tons of cargo with a minimum crew.

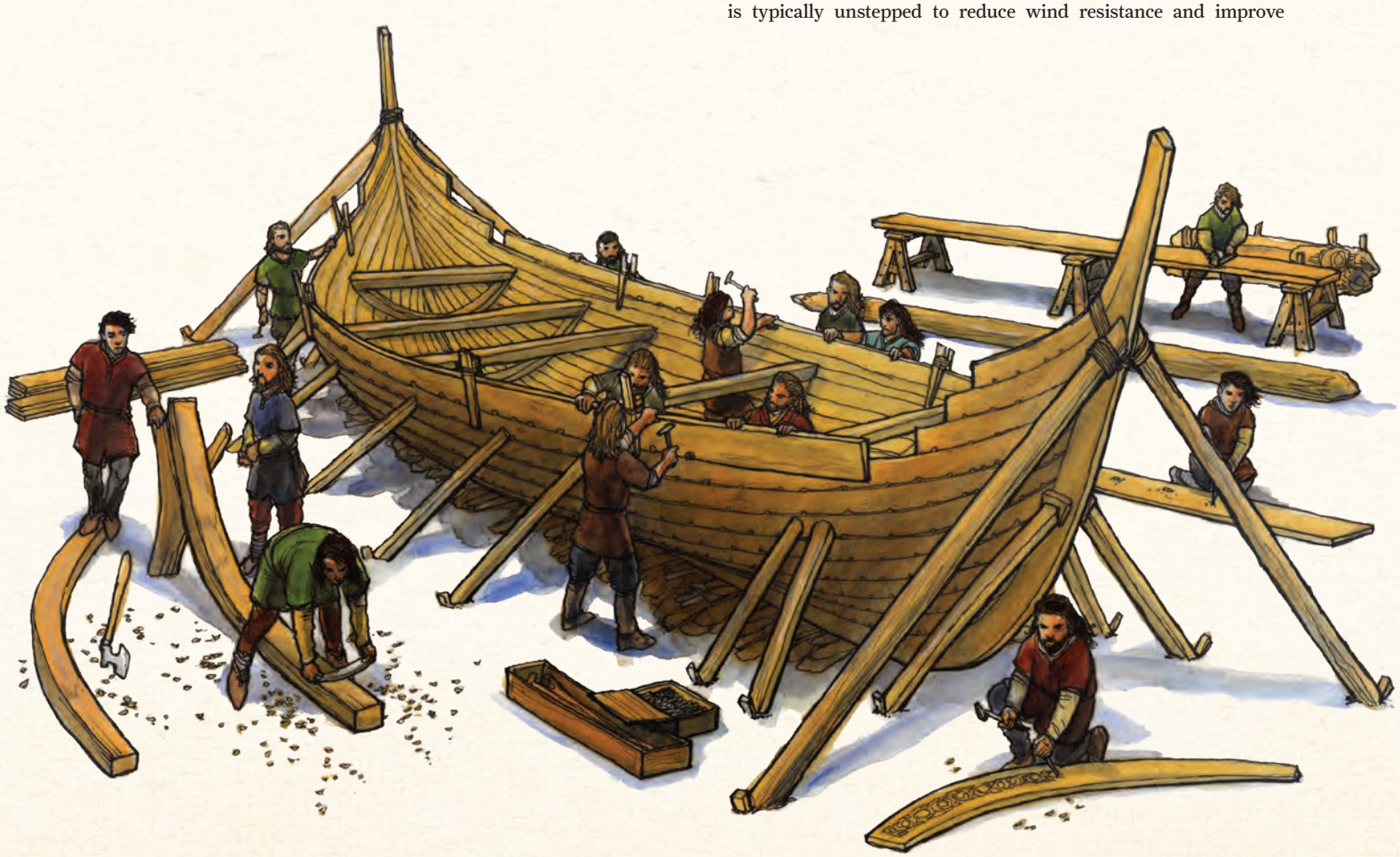
Despite its formidable design, the *knörr* is still an open boat, with cargo covered by skins and the crew exposed to the elements. Crew, merchants, and passengers sleep where best they can on deck between the thwarts (seats), covered with hides or in sleeping bags. During long sea journeys, food is mainly dried, pickled, salted, or smoked fish and meat with bread. For drinking, water is carried in skin bags, and ale and sour milk are stored in tubs. These supplies are held under the half-decks. Cats are commonly kept on board to protect the cargo from rats and mice.

A *knörr* can sail an average of 278 kilometers (150 nautical miles) per day, regardless of wind direction. This is equivalent to an average speed of 6.5 knots (nautical miles per hour). A nautical mile is 1,852 meters. The maximum speed may reach up to 12 knots with optimal wind conditions.

Dreki

The *dreki* (pl. *drekar*) is named after the Norse word for "dragon" due to the frequent use of a carved dragonhead at the prow. It is a warship built for speed and for its ability to sail semi-independently of the wind and the weather. Its shallow construction allows it to be beached, making it ideal for coastal Viking raids.

The *dreki's* primary source of power is the oar, and the mast is typically unstepped to reduce wind resistance and improve



Icelandic Ships

Type	Knörr	Dreki	Fishing Boat
Hull Type	***Merchant***	***Warship***	***Barge***
Hull Quality	10	10	4
Seaworthiness	18	20	15
Structure Points	60	50	35
Length	16 meters	20 meters	6 meters
Beam	5 meters	5 meters	2 meters
SIZ	80	100	18
Cargo	Up to 45 tons (with minimum crew)	Up to 20 tons (with minimum crew)	Up to 2 tons (includes crew)
Skill	Shiphandling	Shiphandling	Boat
Crew	12 sailors, 4 passengers	36 rowers, up to 150 warriors maximum	2–3 sailors, 1–2 passengers
Passengers	Up to 100	20+	Up to 4
Value	10,000 ***vaðmál***, or 125 cows	16,000 ***vaðmál***, or 200 cows	800 ***vaðmál***, or 10 cows

stability. It has no deck and has a greater number of oars than the *knörr*. It is also longer and thinner than a *knörr* and is not suited for long journeys at sea and can only venture into deeper water during relatively calm weather.

In severe weather, the mast can be removed and laid parallel to the keel on supports. Then, a sail can be stretched over the length of the mast like a tent, providing temporary cover against the elements.

These warships vary considerably in size and are measured by the number of rowing benches they accommodate. The smallest such ship considered suitable for war has 13 benches on each side, for a total of 26 oars. The most common size is 18 benches, measuring around 28 meters in length. Occasionally, ships of over 30 benches are built, but those are not common. This is not a transport ship for settlers or merchants. All crew are sailors at sea and soldiers on land. A typical *dreki* carries a crew of 30 to 60 rowers, with up to 150 warriors maximum.

A *dreki* is usually rowed one person to an oar, with a second crewmember joining in during battle to help with ship speed and maneuverability.

When rowing into battle, the crew's shields are positioned into slots in the timber rail attached to the outside of the gunwale to protect the rowers from arrows. When not in battle, shields are stored elsewhere to avoid the risk of being lost at sea or damaged by salt water.

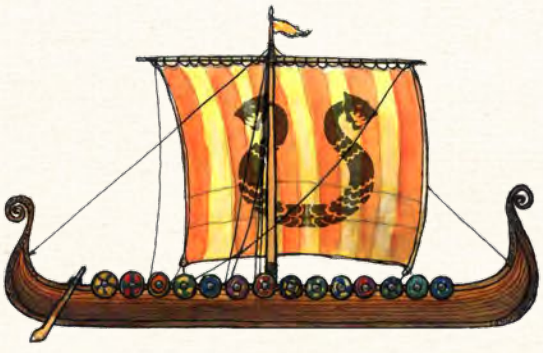
A *dreki* can sail an average of 333 kilometers (180 nautical miles) per day. This is equivalent to an average speed of 7.5 knots. The maximum speed may reach up to 14 knots in optimal wind conditions. Rowing speeds for short periods on calm water can reach up to 15 knots.

Fishing Boats

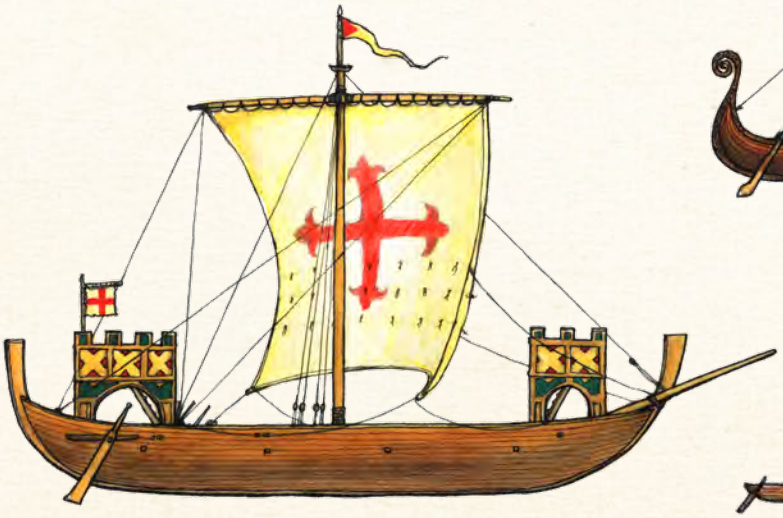
Fishing boats are much smaller than the *dreki* or the *knörr* and are the only type of vessel likely to be owned by a householder who is not a *goði*. They are rarely used for anything other than fishing or quick transportation and are unsuitable for ship-to-ship combat. They are equivalent to the cog, a common type of boat in the rest of the world.

Other Ship Types

The following sections outline the types of ships commonly found outside of Iceland. Heroes could potentially encounter any of these while traveling on Viking raids, trade voyages, or even exploration. As shipbuilding practices and techniques are largely similar throughout the period and across a wide area, many are not substantially different from those used by the Icelanders. Descriptions are shorter than those of the Icelandic ships as they are less likely to be crewed by heroes. Values are not provided as their worth should be determined by circumstances by which they are potentially acquired.



Longship



Large Cog

Rowboat

Raft

Small Boats

These small craft are found wherever people dwell near water. Larger or smaller versions abound, and these are merely samples.

Small Boats

Type	Simple Canoe	Common Raft	Common Rowboat	Small Trader
Hull Type	***Warship***	***Barge***	***Merchant***	***Merchant***
Hull Quality	1D3+1	3D6+6	1D3+3	2D6
Seaworthiness	7	10	15	18
Structure Points	5	50	15	30
Length	2.7 meters	5.5 meters	2.7 meters	9 meters
Beam	.6 meters	2 meters	1.2 meters	3.5 meters
SIZ	10	20	20	30
Cargo	100 kilos*	4 tons*	½ ton*	7 tons*
Skill	Boat	Boat	Boat	Shiphandling
Crew	1–2 rowers	2 polers	1 rower	2 sailors
Passengers	1	Up to 6	Up to 2	Up to 6

* Assuming no passengers. Reduce cargo capacity by a fraction for each passenger. ***For example, a vessel capable of carrying up to six passengers has its cargo reduced by 1/6 per passenger.***

Merchant Ships

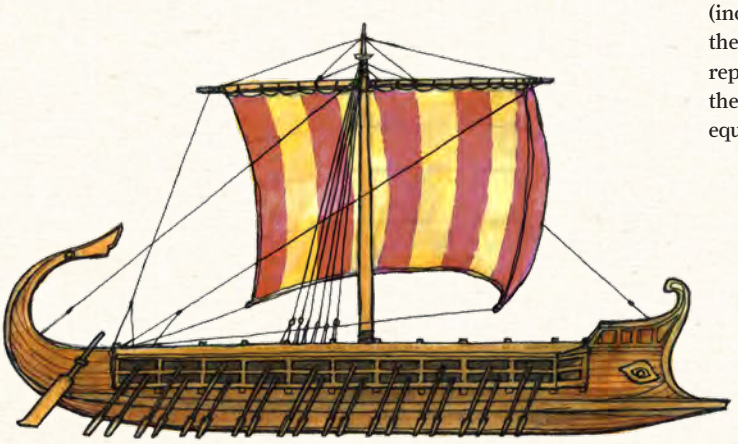
Trading vessels, sometimes known as roundships, set out from every port where folk dream of wealth and profit. Though shipbuilding techniques differ, and some are more sophisticated or better-made than others, they are similar to the Icelandic *knörr* (page 127).

Merchant Ships

Type	Small Cog	Large Cog
Hull Type	Merchant	Merchant
Hull Quality	1D6+4	2D6+4
Seaworthiness	22	28
Structure Points	45	80
Length	22 meters	29 meters
Beam	5.5 meters	7.5 meters
SIZ	121	218
Cargo	Up to 45 tons	Up to 95 tons
Skill	Shiphandling	Shiphandling
Crew	15 officers and sailors	25 officers and sailors
Passengers	Up to 8	Up to 12
Other Notes	Difficult to sail at a half wind angle (modify Boat or Shiphandling skill by –20%)	

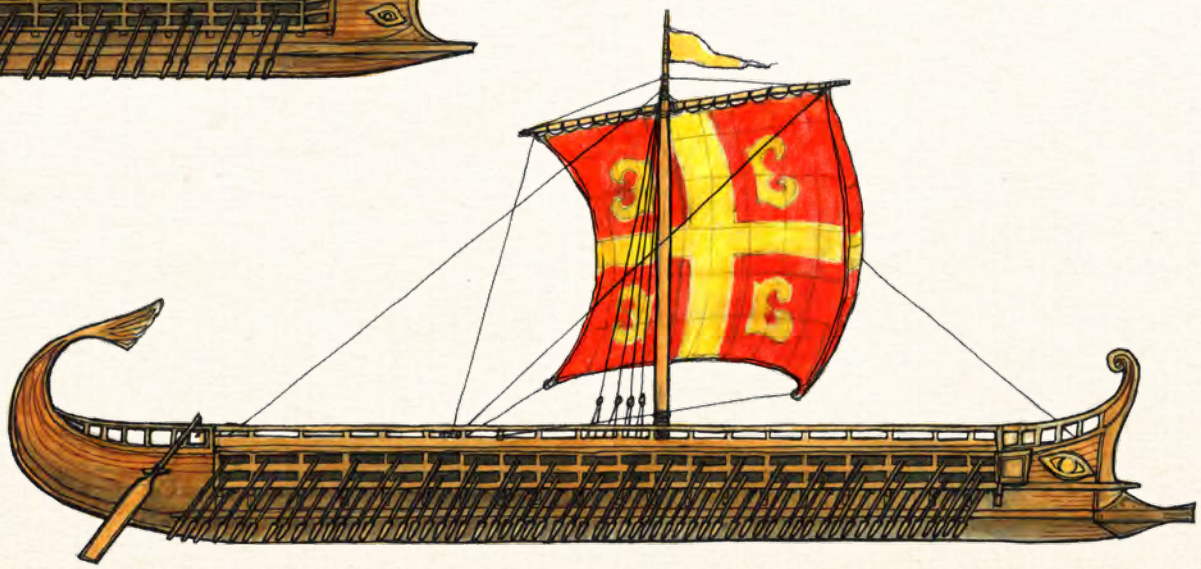
Warships

Many countries have a war fleet of some sort, with galleys (including biremes and triremes) dominating the calmer waters to the south, particularly the Mediterranean. The following vessels are representative of the ships a Viking crew might encounter should they sail so far. The longship described on the following page is an equivalent to the Norse *dreki*. The Byzantine world still sees the use



Bireme

Canoe



Trireme

of larger and more sophisticated vessels such as biremes, triremes, quadriremes, quinqueremes, and larger, but these vessels are rarely seen outside the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Similar to the *dreki*, these ships are relatively low to water level and are therefore impractical for traveling in rough waters or strong tides.

Warships

Type	Longship	Bireme	Trireme
Hull Type	Warship	Warship	Warship
Hull Quality	1D6+4	1D6+8	1D6+12
Seaworthiness	15	12	18
Structure Points	50	60	80
Length	30.5 meters	21.5 meters	37 meters
Beam	6 meters	3 meters	4 meters
SIZ	183	65	148
Cargo	20 tons		1 ton
Skill	Shiphandling	Shiphandling	Shiphandling
Crew	50 rowers, up to 200 warriors total	60 rowers, ten marines, ten officers and sailors	170 rowers, 14 marines, 30 officers and sailors
Passengers	Up to 20	Up to 30	Up to 30
Other Notes	–	–	Three banks of oars, up to two siege engines*

* Siege engines (ballistae, catapults, etc.) can be fired once every three combat rounds, have a range of anywhere between 100–300 meters, and do 4D6 damage to structure points on a successful hit. Catapults may also launch flaming ammunition capable of spreading across a ship and setting it aflame ("Greek fire"). If using these, the gamemaster should determine the relative skill of the crew and the exact type of weapon and ammunition.

SEA VOYAGES

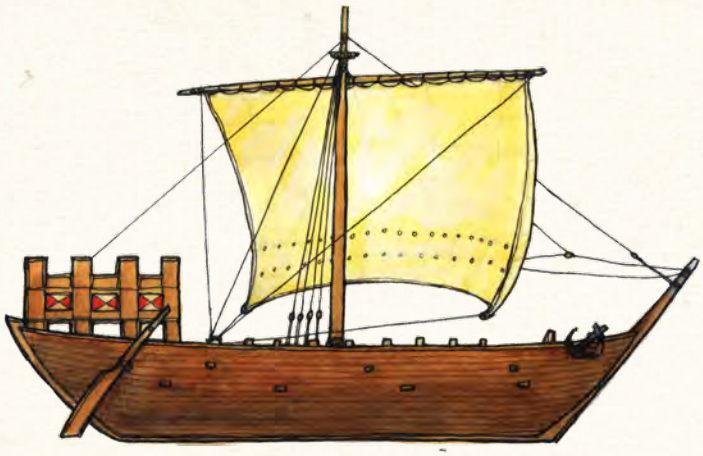
In good conditions, a sailing ship can cover around 308 kilometers (192 miles) over a 24-hour period. However, to account for bad weather and minor mishaps, calculate the total length of a journey using an average rate of 240 kilometers (150 miles) per day.

For each week of travel, the captain should make a Boat or Shiphandling roll.

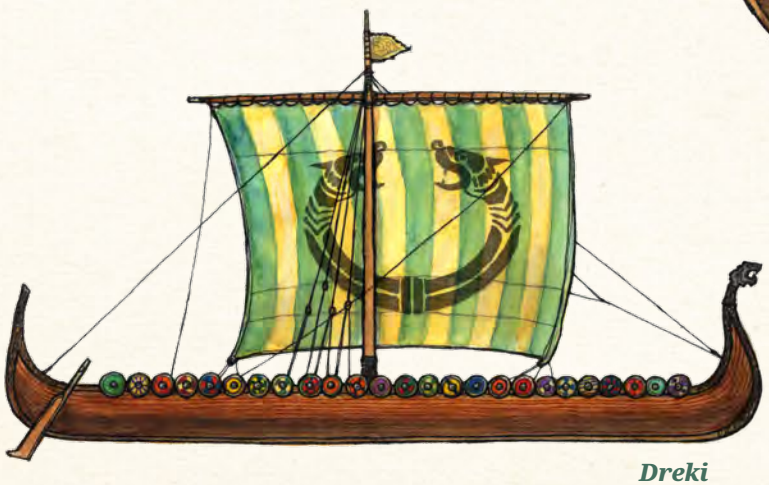
- If the roll is a success, the ship is on schedule.
- If a critical result is rolled, the ship is one day early.
- If the Boat or Shiphandling roll is missed, add 1D3 days to the travel time.
- If the roll is fumbled, the captain has blundered seriously and must roll on the **Sailing Fumbles** table (page 133) or add 1D6 days to the journey.

The helmsman, if any, should also make a Navigate roll each trip, and their results added to or subtracted from the results of the captain's roll.

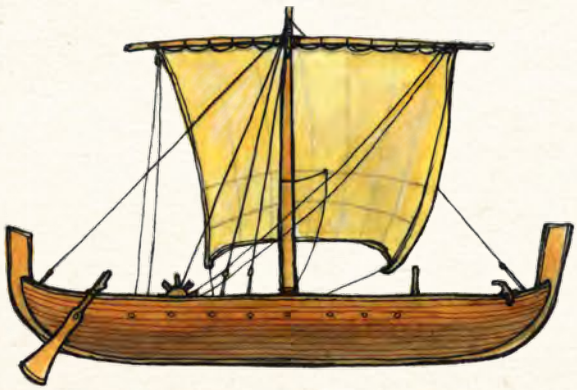
- Success indicates the vessel is on course as expected.
- A critical result reduces sailing time by one day.



Small Cog



Dreki



Knorr

Fishing Boat

- A failed roll adds one day.
- A fumble means that the ship is wildly off course: add 1D3 days to the journey, and the ship remains lost until a successful daily Navigate roll is made.

Travel Times

These travel times assume average weather and wind conditions throughout the journey, a rate of roughly 240 kilometers per day.

- From Stad in Norway to the Faroe Islands: Two to four days.
- From Stad in Norway to Horn in East Iceland: Seven to 14 days.
- From Reykjanes in South Iceland to Scotland: Three to six days.

Sea journeys may take longer, in some cases much longer, due to unfavorable winds and weather conditions.

Movement Speeds

This section explains how to calculate a ship's hourly speed. Relative speeds can be used tactically to determine if one vessel can outrun another. The gamemaster may prefer to use only the daily sailing speeds explained below to determine the length of sea-bound excursions. Ship speeds are expressed in knots (nautical miles per hour). One knot, or nautical mile, equals approximately 1.85 kilometers (1.15 miles).

Sailing

Sailing vessels use sails—large areas of linen or hide—to catch the wind and force it to propel the ship. The sails are usually edged with hide to strengthen them. Some sailors believe that seal and hyena hides ward off lightning.

The speed of a sailing ship depends upon the angle of the wind in relation to the sails of the ship. These rules acknowledge four such relationships: before the wind, quarter wind, half wind, and head wind.

- **Before the Wind:** When the wind blows directly from the stem of the craft to its bow. This attitude is best for ships with a single sail. On vessels boasting two or more sails, the sails block one another.
- **Quarter Wind:** When the wind comes from one of the two rear quarters. This is the most efficient aspect for ships with multiple sails.
- **Half Wind:** When the wind blows broadside to the ship. A strong half wind may cause top-heavy ships to keel over.
- **Head Wind:** When the wind blows from the bow across the vessel towards the stem. To make headway in such wind, a ship must be able to tack (follow a zigzag course so the wind always partially fills the sails).

Average Sailing Speeds

	Favorable Conditions		Unfavorable Conditions	
	Miles	**Kilometers**	**Miles**	**Kilometers**
Open Sea, hourly	8	13	1	1.6
Coast/river, hourly	4	6.4	2	3.2
Open Sea, daily	192	312	24	38
Coast/river, daylight hours	48	77	24	38

Favorable/Unfavorable Conditions: Winds, storms, the tide, rocks, sandbars, etc.

Most sailing ships cannot realign their sails as required, and so must use oars or sit becalmed until the wind shifts. While a ship can change direction to take advantage of the wind, it is hard to get further south by sailing north.

Use the **Average Sailing Speeds** table (above) to calculate a ship's tactical speed during play. If the conditions are not known, a single percentile roll determines the wind strength for all vessels. When filling in the speeds on the **Ship Record** sheet, assume a moderate wind.

A merchant ship sailing before a good wind averages about 5 knots. A warship averages about 7 knots. The average drops if the vessel is working through islands or coasting (traveling near a coast), as the strength of the wind is diminished by the proximity of land. Against the wind, a ship averages only 2–2.25 knots. Massed fleets average speeds of 2 knots maximum.

The **Wind and Sea Strength** table (following) lists these values. The gamemaster can roll D100 to determine it randomly or select a desired Strength for dramatic effect. Dice ranges for STR are provided if desired.

Sailing Speed (in Knots)

D100	Wind	Before*	Quarter*	Half	Head
01–04	Calm	1	1	0	0
05–12	Light Air	3	2	1	0
13–24	Breeze	4	2	2	1
25–36	Light Wind	5	3	3	1
37–48	Moderate Wind	5	4	3	1
49–60	Strong Wind	7	5	5	2
61–72	Fresh Gale	x	x	x	x
73–99	Whole Gale	x	x	X	X
00	Hurricane	x	x	x	x

Modifiers: Warship +2; Barge −1; successful Boat or Shiphandling roll + 1
* If a ship has two or more sails instead of a single sail, swap the contents of the Before and Quarter columns, i.e., a multi-sailed ship has a speed of 5 when quartering in a light wind and 3 when running before such a wind.
x Speed depends on the strength of the storm and the crew's ability to handle the challenge. This may vary greatly.

Rowing

Rowing speeds are determined by the number of oars per ton of a ship's capacity. Warships need two pairs of oars per ton of capacity to move at the listed speeds. Merchant ships need one pair per three tons. If crew are lost, the speeds must be reduced. The **Rowing Speeds (in Knots)** table (following) can be used to determine the rowing speed of a vessel. The basic speed of a vessel is dependent upon its hull type. A ship usually travels slower when it is going in reverse and faster when the crew is pushed to their utmost. Crew quality further modifies the speed a vessel can maintain.

Rowing Speeds (in knots)

	Warship	Merchant	Barge
Back Oars	3	1	1
Cruise	5	1	1
Race	7	2	1
Crew Modifiers			
Elite	+2	+1	+1
Green	–1	–	–

Sailing Fumbles

Bad things happen at sea. The **Sailing Fumbles** table can be used whenever the captain fumbles the weekly Boat or Shiphandling roll, or the gamemaster can invent their own results for a fumbled roll. If the result makes no sense or does not apply, then either nothing happens, or the gamemaster can roll again. The results in this table are appropriate for long voyages and should not be used for fumbles of routine actions (such as piloting a boat into a harbor). Results should be interpreted based on the conditions, hull type, crew, etc. The results of these fumbles can be roleplayed if desired or assumed to have happened recently, the outcome already determined.

If a hero is the captain, helmsman, etc., their player should make any appropriate roll (or have been assumed to have made them).

Vessel Damage and Repair

A ship is doomed when it becomes unseaworthy and starts to take on water or when its structure is severely damaged. The following rules describe the effects of such damage and how it is repaired.

Loss of Seaworthiness

Each month that a merchant ship rests or sails in water, its Seaworthiness is automatically reduced by 1 point. Properly maintained warships (those removed from the water each night) lose 1 point of Seaworthiness per month. Warships that are left to sit in water or are at sea full time lose 1 point of Seaworthiness per week. Barges lose 1 point of Seaworthiness per season they are in the water.

Whenever a vessel's Seaworthiness falls to 0, the ship begins to take on water. If it takes on enough water, the ship swamps or sinks.

Every five minutes after its Seaworthiness reaches 0, the ship takes on 1D6 points of water for each 5 structure points it possesses. When the number of points of water exceeds the ship's structure points, it is full of water and can no longer sail normally. If the ship is carrying no cargo or its cargo floats, it is swamped (still upright but full of water and unable to be used); otherwise, it sinks. Water can be bailed from an unseaworthy ship. Every five minutes that at least two people attempt to empty water from a ship, the number of points of water is reduced by 1D3.

Loss of Structure Points

Extreme stresses, such as the pounding of the winds and waves of a storm or the ram of an enemy warship, can damage a ship. Hull Quality acts like armor to protect a vessel's structure points from this damage. Whenever a ship takes damage, its Hull Quality is first subtracted from the damage. If this reduces the damage to 0 or below, the ship is unharmed. However, if the damage exceeds the ship's Hull Quality, its structure points are reduced appropriately. Hull Quality itself is never affected by damage.

A ship becomes useless when its structure points reach 0. While there may be sizable pieces of the vessel left, it can no longer carry cargo or crew and cannot sail. The resulting hulk can be rowed at a speed of 1 knot.

If a vessel loses half of its current structure points at one time, a disaster may occur; see the **Ship Disasters** table (page 135).

Repair of Ships and Boats

Repairs may be made through physical reconstruction or by magical means. Only damage to Seaworthiness can be repaired at sea, and even then, it cannot be fully repaired. Restoring lost structure points can only be repaired while the ship is beached.

Wind and Sea Strength

D100	Description	Strength (STR)	Damage	Average Damage
01–04	Calm	0–2 (1D3–1)	–	–
05–12	Light Air	3–6 (1D4+2)	1	1
13–24	Breeze	7–12 (1D6+6)	1D3	2
25–36	Light Wind	13–18 (1D6+12)	1D6+3	6–7
37–48	Moderate Wind	19–24 (1D6+18)	2D6+6	13
49–60	Strong Wind	25–30 (1D6+24)	4D6+12	26
61–72	Fresh Gale	31–36 (1D6+30)	6D6+24	45
73–99	Whole Gale	37–49 (1D10+1D4+35)	8D6+48	76
00	Hurricane	50	10D6+96	131

SAILING FUMBLES

D100	Result
01	**Lucky Mistake:** The captain makes a navigational error, but it turns out to be in the ship's favor. The journey is one day shorter.
02–30	**Poor Progress:** The going is rough, the captain makes some bad decisions, and the journey is 1D6 days longer. The crew grumbles and mocks the captain behind the captain's back.
31–45	**Terrible Progress:** Due to the captain's ineptitude, the ship goes off course, and the journey is 1D10 days longer. If there are any passengers, they may be angry at the delay.
46–50	**Supply Shortage:** The ship is out of pitch and timber and cannot make repairs of any kind until fresh materials are obtained from a port.
51–55	**Food Shortage:** Food levels are critically low. Rationing is introduced, and all aboard must roll CON×5 or lose 1 hit point due to hunger. This hit point cannot be regained until the food supply is replenished. Add 1D6 days to the journey to divert to land and restock the larder.
56–60	**Water Shortage:** Water levels are critically low. Rationing is introduced, and all aboard must roll CON×3 or lose 1 hit point to dehydration. This hit point loss cannot be regained until the water reserves are replenished. Add 1D6 days to the journey to divert to the nearest source of fresh water.
61–65	**Widespread Sickness:** A fever sweeps through the ship. All aboard must make a Constitution roll (CON×5) or catch the disease. Those ill lose 1 hit point, and all ability rolls are made at ½ normal rating (round up). Reroll CON×5 (unmodified) every week to get better. Successful First Aid or application of healing magic allows the patient to check daily for recovery. Add 1D6 days to the journey because of the temporary crew shortage.
66–80	**Possible Ship Disaster:** If the captain fails a Luck roll, make a roll on the **Ship Disasters** table (page 135) and apply the results. If the Luck roll is made, lose 1 point of Seaworthiness due to shipping water.
81–90	**Definite Ship Disaster:** Roll on the **Ship Disasters** table (page 135). The captain gets no Luck roll to avoid this.
91–92	**Cargo Breaks Free:** Heavy cargo in the hold is not securely stowed. It shifts during heavy seas and smashes the side of the boat. The ship loses 2D6 Structure points.
93–94	**Run Aground:** The ship strikes a reef or submerged rock shelf and runs aground, taking 6D10 damage. The total amount is subtracted from the ship's Seaworthiness. Damage over its Hull Quality is subtracted from structure points. A Boat or Shiphandling roll from the captain and the hard labor of all hands is needed to get the craft off the rock and back into the water.
95–96	**Collision:** The ship strikes a rock, another ship, an iceberg, or similar object. Damage is per the normal rules for collision (see **Collisions**, page 137).
97	**Fire in the Galley:** A fire starts in the galley (or where food is stored), causing a food shortage (see page 134). If the captain fails a Luck roll, the ship's cook is killed. If the roll is 00 the fire gets out of hand, and the ship burns to the waterline.
98	**Return to Port:** The ship must turn around. Vital cargo was left on the dock, an important passenger was forgotten, all the food is found to be spoiled, the map is wrong, or some such terrible event. This is a stupid error, and not one that the captain will soon live down. Add +1D6% to the captain's Reputation.
99	**Mutiny:** The captain treats the crew harshly, and they revolt. If their demands are not met, they set the captain and any loyalists adrift in a small boat with enough supplies to reach the mainland. Tracking down the mutineers might form the basis for a future adventure.
00	**Wrath of the Deep:** Roll twice and apply both results.

Repairing Seaworthiness

Each day, the lead carpenter may attempt a use of Craft (carpentry or shipbuilding). Success indicates that 1 point of Seaworthiness was repaired. Failure indicates that no significant repairs were completed that day. Additional carpenters may assist the lead carpenter, adding to the skill rating as with normal assistance.

Seaworthiness can be repaired more quickly when a ship is beached. A carpenter can repair 1D3+1 points of current Seaworthiness on a beached ship each day, up to the vessel's original Seaworthiness. Helpers need not have any Craft skill, as they are only doing heavy lifting.

Repairs attempted while at sea are only possible if a ship's carpenter and enough supplies are aboard, and even then, any Craft skill ratings are modified by –40%. If the roll fails, the supplies are still consumed, but no significant repairs are made. Up to half the maximum Seaworthiness for the ship's hull type (round up) can be repaired while at sea.

Repairing Structure Points

Structure points can only be repaired while a ship is beached or dry-docked. Beaching is the standard procedure, but dry-docking halves the time needed for repairs. The ship's carpenter must attempt a Craft (carpentry) roll once per day. If successful, 1D3+1 structure points are repaired that day. Structure points can be repaired up to the ship's original number while at sea.

The gamemaster should determine the effects of any magical efforts to repair the vessel.

Ship Disasters

Serious damage occurs when a ship loses more than half of its current structure points (rounded up). This is somewhat akin to the effects of a major wound on a person. In such situations, the captain should make a Luck roll. If the roll succeeds, the ship loses the structure points but suffers no other disaster. If the roll fails, the ship loses the structure points and sustains further damage, as determined by the results of the table below. The gamemaster should only use disasters appropriate to the situation, e.g., the mainmast cannot break on a canoe. If a result does not apply, assume that nothing happens or reroll as desired.

As with results on the **Sailing Fumbles** chart (page 133), the gamemaster should adapt results as needed and can play through them with the heroes during gameplay or can assume that the results occurred as described. Heroes should be allowed to perform the required actions whenever possible, and when nonplayer characters are being called to make rolls, players may should roll for them.

SURVIVAL AT SEA

When disaster strikes, survivors should try to get clear of the wreck as soon as it is obvious that the ship is in trouble. Most vessels do not have anything like a rowboat, but a raft can be constructed using an appropriate Craft or Devise roll to lash any available pieces of wood together. As a last resort, swimmers can cling to pieces of the wreckage and hope for rescue.

Survivors should get out of the water as soon as possible, or they risk hypothermia and drowning. To prevent chills, the best course of action is to remove and dry clothing as quickly as possible. Protection from the sun is equally important to prevent dehydration and exposure.

In a small boat, everyone must remain calm and cooperative. Discontent can prove fatal; therefore, food and water should be rationed fairly. Accusations and distrust usually mount as the supplies diminish. Orate rolls might help to keep the peace, but the gamemaster may impose increasing penalties to reflect the fraying tempers and psychological conditions of being stranded asea for prolonged periods.

Food and Water

The dangers of starvation and dehydration can be avoided by those who are world-wise. The Survival skill can be used for survival tips.

See the spot rules for **Thirst** (page 73) to address any cases where a ship is without water. Hit points lost in this way cannot be healed with First Aid or magic until a water supply is found. Sea water is not a replacement for fresh water, as the salt increases thirst and can eventually lead to madness. It is possible to capture rainwater in containers or on canvas.

Rules for prolonged hunger and starvation are covered in **Hunger** (page 73). As with dehydration, such damage cannot be healed in any way until a source of regular food is obtained.

Fish can be eaten raw as a source of both food and water. Even the flesh of fish taken from the salty ocean will satiate thirst. Fishing lines can be made by unraveling clothing or sail cloth, and hooks can be fashioned from nails or carved from wood. If no specific skill is available, Survival rolls can be used for fishing.

Seabirds are also a ready source of food and can be caught if a hero is quick. A DEX×2 roll is required to grab a bird with bare hands. While seabirds do not possess a large amount of flesh, and what they have is tough, that is enough to keep a person alive. In addition, the blood is nourishing and quenches thirst. The offal can be used as fish bait.

The truly desperate often must resort to cannibalism. The dead, weak, and wounded are usually the first to be devoured. Paranoia is bound to run rampant as the number of survivors diminishes. Even as the latest victim is consumed, the question on everyone's minds is: "Who will be next?" It is said that human flesh tastes like pork, but those who know what they are eating must make Constitution rolls (CON×5) to keep it down.

Finding the Way Home

Most of the craft used by shipwreck survivors are extremely difficult to steer, and for that reason, Navigation is of little use when trying to find land. Winds and currents govern such small boats' bearings, but as often as not, the effects of the two do not coincide. A craft must sit low in the water in order to float with the current.

Trawling an anchor over the stem increases drag and thus the effect of the current. If the wind offers a more favorable direction, the vessel should be lightened to raise its profile.

Even the crudest form of sail is valuable. Craft (carpentry or sewing) can be used to construct a sail from available materials.

Locating land is easiest when the sky is clear, as clouds form over land. It is wisest to steer toward the leeward side of clouds, as it is preferable to beach where they have passed and the weather is more favorable rather than where they are blowing. Driftwood and floating plants both indicate that land is near.

MENACES

Any number of terrors may threaten the safety of a ship and its passengers. The following are some of the most common threats to life, limb, and boats on the high seas. All are appropriate situations to challenge heroes.

Storms

Storms are the single greatest danger to ships and boats. Most craft never venture from the sight of land and try to land ashore every night. Deep-water travel prevents night beaching and increases exposure to storms. Fighting a storm can make for great roleplaying, with scope for drama and heroism. Storm winds tear at the sails and rigging, while waves rear and crash over the deck. A vessel might be blown off course, or even worse, into rocks or reefs. A ship's mast could snap in two, the hold might fill with water, or the vessel might be blown over onto its side. People and cargo might be swept off the deck, never to be seen again.

The captain's Boat or Shiphandling skill can be used to determine the vessel's overall welfare, but specific tasks can provide dramatic challenges for the other passengers aboard. As the wind howls and the waves rise, everyone must pitch in to keep the ship safe. Dexterity rolls (DEX×5) are needed to move on a ship during a storm, and Boat or Shiphandling rolls are required of all crew if they are to act decisively.

In a storm, the crew should work quickly to drop the sail. If the storm is blowing in too quickly for this, someone must climb the mast and cut the sail free. If the sail stays up in gale-force winds, the mast is sure to break.

Individual sailors should ensure that everything on deck is secure—lost cargo is dangerous and represents a loss of profit.

The helmsman should hold the rudder steady. Everyone else should huddle, clinging to one another and their benches, waiting out the storm and bailing water out of the ship when waves pour it in.

SHIP DISASTERS

Roll	Result
01–05	**Broken Oar:** This is hardly a disaster, except in a rowboat or a canoe.
06–10	**Ship's Cat Lost:** The proud ratcatcher falls into the sea and is lost. The ship's rats have cause for celebration.
11–25	**List to Starboard:** The ship leans severely and then rights itself. It loses 1 Seaworthiness point. All on deck must pass a Dexterity roll (DEX×5) roll or fall over. Those near the starboard rails (gamemaster discretion who) who fall over must successfully roll Luck (POW×5) or be pitched over the side.
26–40	**List to Port:** As above, but the ship leans to the other side.
41–45	**Some Cargo Lost:** 10% of the cargo on board is ruined in an accident due to water damage or is crushed by other cargo. This may reduce the ship's profits for this voyage.
46–50	**Overboard:** A random crewperson is knocked over the side. If desired, the gamemaster can ask all heroes to make a Luck roll (POW×5). The first one to fail is the one to go overboard (gamemaster discretion if it's not obvious), and if none fail the roll, a nonplayer character sailor is the one who falls into the sea.
51–55	**Rigging Falls:** A tangle of ropes is shaken loose and drops to the deck. Sailors in the rigging drop with it if they fail Agility rolls.
56–59	**Sail Tears:** The sail is ripped wide open. Until repaired, reduce speed by ½ a knot per hour.
60–63	**Boom Falls:** A length of wood splinters and falls from the rigging. It might hit an unlucky sailor for 1D6 points of damage. The unanchored sail flaps loose. Until the boom is repaired, reduce speed by 1 knot per hour.
64–67	**Half the Cargo Lost:** 50% of the cargo on board is broken, swamped, or ruined in some way. A merchant ship is almost certain to make a loss as a result.
68–71	**Mainyard Fails:** The ship's principal crossbeam is broken and the sail plummets with it, causing an additional 2D6 structural damage. Those below who fail Luck rolls (POW×5) are in its path, and unless they make Dodge rolls, they are struck for 2D6 damage. Until repaired, the ship cannot raise sail.
72–75	**Figurehead Smashed:** The symbol of the ship's luck, usually a dragon head, is smashed to splinters. The crew may become convinced the voyage is cursed.
76–78	**Lookout Killed:** The lookout is pitched out of the crow's nest and falls to their death.
79–81	**Crew Overboard!:** 1D10 sailors are knocked over the side. This may include any heroes who fail their Luck rolls, at the gamemaster's discretion.
82–84	**All Cargo Lost:** Falling timbers and serious leaks completely ruin all cargo carried on board.
85–86	**Starboard Oar Bank Sheared Off:** Half of the ship's oars are broken. If the oars from the port side are redistributed, the ship can continue at half speed.
87–88	**Port Oar Bank Sheared Off:** As above, but on the other side. If no oars remain, the ship must rely on sail power.
89–90	**Rudder Breaks:** The ship can no longer be steered reliably. Reduce Seaworthiness by 1 point. A temporary rudder can be rigged with a Craft (carpentry) roll, in which case subtract –20% from any Navigation, Boat, or Shiphandling rolls, and reduce speed by 1 knot per hour. If a temporary rudder is not installed, all Boat, Shiphandling, and Navigate rolls are halved (round up), and the vessel's speed is also halved (round up).
91	**Mainmast Breaks:** The mast breaks and crashes to the deck, causing 3D6 structural damage. Those on deck who fail Luck rolls (POW×5) are in its path, and unless they make Dodge rolls, they are struck for 3D6 damage. If the ship has no masts left, it must be rowed or let drift with the current.
92–93	**Mizzenmast Cracks:** If the ship has no mizzenmast (the second or third mast from the mainmast), this affects the main mast, causing an additional 2D6 structural damage. See **Mainmast Breaks** (91) for details.
94–95	**Foremast Snaps:** If the ship has no foremast (the most forward mast, closest to the bow), this affects the mizzenmast, doing 1D6+2 structural damage. Other effects are as described under **Mainmast Breaks** (91).
96–99	**Abandon Ship:** The ship has sustained irreparable damage. Structure points immediately fall to 0. It sinks in 1D20×10 minutes. There is ample time to put food and water into the rowboats and to launch them into the water.
00	**Lost With All Hands:** The keel breaks in two. Structure points immediately fall to 0. The ship sinks rapidly in 1D10 combat rounds. No boats can be launched. Those on board need to make Luck rolls (POW×5) to get well clear of the doomed vessel and then Swim rolls to reach a serviceably sized piece of floating wreckage. Failing either presents the risk of drowning (see page 73).

The gamemaster determines when a storm strikes and can either choose the wind strength or roll on the **Wind and Sea Strength** table (page 132). A ship is only threatened by wind with a Strength greater than the boat's Seaworthiness.

For every six hours of a storm, use the following procedure to determine its effects:

- Use the **Wind and Sea Strength** table (page 132) to find the initial STR of a storm. Every six hours, the gamemaster should decide whether the storm intensifies or eases. A captain's Luck roll (POW×5) may guide this decision, or the gamemaster may roll a D6. For a roll of 1–2, the wind STR eases by one level, 3–4 no change, and for 5–6, the wind STR rises by one level.
- Compare the wind's STR to the ship's Seaworthiness. If the wind's STR is lower than the Seaworthiness, it has no effect upon the craft.
- If the wind STR is greater than the ship's Seaworthiness, then the captain must attempt a Boat or Shiphandling roll. Subtract the wind's STR in percentiles (see the **Wind and Sea Strength** table, page 132) from the captain's Boat or Shiphandling skill; thus, to run before a hurricane, the captain's skill is modified by –50% (the STR of the hurricane). If the roll is successful, the storm has no effect upon the ship—the captain and crew have successfully maneuvered the ship and weather the danger for the quarter-day.
- If the Boat or Shiphandling roll fails, the ship is caught at a bad angle during a wind shift, takes a tremendous wave across the deck, or something similar. Subtract 1 from the vessel's Seaworthiness, then find the STR of the wind on the **Wind and Sea Strength** table (page 132), and roll for the damage to the ship's structure points. Hull Quality protects against this damage as armor protects a person.

Monsters

Large creatures may threaten a ship. Normally, sea creatures that attack ships are provoked, ensorcelled, diseased, or may merely be territorially aggressive. The **Bestiary** chapter provides a range of menaces to seafaring such as wicked whales and other monsters.

If a ship is hit by a large sea monster such as a wicked whale, roll the creature's normal combat damage, using the boat's structure points as if they are hit points. The total damage reduces the vessel's Seaworthiness with no exceptions or reductions. Damage that exceeds the Hull Quality affects the structure points. If the damage done by the creature is less than the ship's Hull Quality, then it takes no structural damage.

Fire

The wood and canvas of a ship are usually too damp to catch fire easily, but a major fire can cause structural damage. Hull Quality does not reduce structure point damage caused by fires.

Normal fire causes 1D6+2 points of damage. Damage is rolled once every five minutes of game time (25 combat rounds) and reduces structure points correspondingly. If a fire is not contained, double the damage for each successive roll.

NAVAL COMBAT

For ship-to-ship action, the captain of each vessel should attempt a Boat or Shiphandling roll each turn to perform any special maneuvers (closing, ramming, shearing oars, unusually tight turns, etc.). Success indicates that the desired maneuver was completed. Failure means that the ship did not maneuver correctly. A fumble results in the fouling of the sail or one bank of oars, requiring 2D6 rounds to correct before the vessel may again maneuver. Fouling may involve entanglement, obstruction, or other issues affecting the ship's movement. As with combat, continue turns until the engagement has been resolved or is no longer possible.

The captain of the faster ship receives a +20% modifier to their Boat or Shiphandling skill in such encounters. If one captain succeeds with their Boat or Shiphandling roll and the other does not, the successful ship has the advantage. When one ship pursues another, the second such advantage indicates that the ships reach war engine range, next to missile weapon range, then to ramming, shearing, or grappling range. The fleeing vessel pulls away one range each time it achieves the advantage. Thus, a pursuing captain must out-sail their prey at least four times to ensure the ships can be grappled and allow their crew to swarm across for melee combat.

Boarding is the only way to capture a vessel, although attacking from range may weaken the enemy. If neither captain decisively gains the advantage for long enough to reach grappling range or escape, the faster of the two ships eventually wins the contest and either comes alongside the other vessel or escapes.

Ramming is not a common tactic for Viking ships, as *dreki* are typically too light to ram effectively, and they are too valuable to risk damaging. Most captains would much rather capture an enemy vessel than destroy it. However, to ram an enemy craft or shear off its oars, the captain must make an additional Boat or Shiphandling roll, as if making an attack. If the roll succeeds, the ram strikes home. Ram damage is 2D6+6, plus an additional 1D6 for every 50 rowers. Critical and special results are possible, with all the effects of such blows in melee combat (treat as a crushing impact, page 106). Knockback can potentially force the passengers of the struck vessel to make DEX×5 rolls to remain standing, if so). Knockdown is not possible.

Ramming is a convenient way to create a temporary bridge for boarding. Sailors can simply jump from the prow of their vessel onto the deck of their quarry. The ram stays locked in the enemy ship until withdrawn. If the stricken vessel is sinking, there is a danger that the aggressor will be dragged down as well. A Boat or Shiphandling roll from the captain who initiated the ramming averts such a disaster.

Skirmishes at Sea

Most major battles against foreign forces take place at sea, either during Viking expeditions or when acting on behalf (or against) foreign kings. Often, the largest ships have iron spikes on and around the prow. These are designed to open a hole in any enemy ship which ventures close enough to board.

The main naval tactic for Viking ships is to row against an enemy ship, grapple it, board it, and engage in battle before moving to the next ship. A shower of arrows, spears, and stones usually precedes boarding. Frequently, though, when ships grow near, boards are thrown across the hull to the other ship, creating a platform to fight on. Often, rowers are protected by a second person whose sole job is to protect the rower from incoming missiles using their shield. When boarding is about to occur, all the crew hold shields overhead to a protective wall against the initial onslaught.

All participants attempt to make naval battles as much like land battles as possible. Ships are roped together to form large floating platforms, with the largest ships in the middle with their prows extending beyond the battle line.

Individual ships flank the floating platform to engage in skirmishes with the enemy. They may also attack the enemy's floating platform.

Masts are lowered for battle, and all movement is by oar. The loss of oars in a collision effectively cripples a ship's mobility.

Collisions

Sometimes, ships strike each other accidentally or run into lighthouses, harbor walls, rocks, or other solid objects. Bumping into the dock is unlikely to sink a vessel, but being storm-driven into a jagged cliff face will probably smash it to smithereens.

The gamemaster should determine the severity of a serious impact. A minor blunder might cause the vessel 2D6+6 points of structural damage. A ship-shaking crash might cause 8D6+48 points of structural damage. The **Wind and Sea Strength** table (page 132) is useful as a rough guide. In a ship-to-ship collision, both vessels take damage. It is more crippling to be struck in the central part of a ship than on the stem or prow—damage should be increased or decreased according to the circumstances.

Spot Rules for Shipboard Combats

The following spot rules are relevant to battles on the waves. The gamemaster may never require any of these special rules, but they could be useful when handling the many special circumstances that arise when fighting onboard ships.

Boarding Another Ship

To draw alongside an enemy vessel, the helmsman must make a Boat or Shiphandling roll. Alternatively, one may simply ram the enemy, thus providing a convenient bridge. As described previously, Vikings traditionally just pull up to one another and cooperate to make a bridge-like platform between the vessels, and then charge across when it's time to fight. If a hero wants to charge or leap across without the platform securely in place, they should attempt a Jump roll to leap between the ships and land amidst the enemy. Failure signifies the boarder hits the deck but takes 1D6 damage and falls. A 00 result drops them neatly between the ships into the water.

If the ships have unequal deck heights, the boarders from the lower ship must Climb up the side of the enemy vessel, modified by +20%, if grappling lines are used. Defenders watching the climbers have the advantage of a superior position (see page 119). Some reckless or confident warriors may choose to swing across on ropes.

To board a ship from the water, roll Swim to get close enough, and then roll for Climb on the next round. Modify Climb by +10% for any loose ropes, oars, nets, sprung boards, and other aids to climbing.

Falling Overboard

Many things can cause a sailor to fall overboard. With a successful Agility roll (DEX×5), no damage is taken when falling into the water; otherwise, the hapless sailor takes half the normal falling damage (round up, see page 74). Once in the ocean, the unfortunate sailor must discard non-buoyant armor or sink, as described in **Swimming in Armor** (page 138). A final Swim roll then propels them back in the direction of the ship.

Helpers onboard might toss a rope for the swimmer to seize with a Dexterity roll (DEX×5). Use a resistance roll using the STR of the puller(s) vs the SIZ of the swimmer to see if they can haul them safely aboard.

Sharks are a danger if there is any blood in the water. If sharks are present, only a successful Luck roll every round avoids an attack. If trying to haul someone onboard while sharks are attacking and biting, add the SIZ of any attached sharks to the resistance roll.

Ship-to-ship Missile Combat

Missile fire from one ship to another is wildly inaccurate. Neither vessel is a stable platform. Uniformly reduce missile weapon skills by half (round up) for any attacks made while on a boat in non-still water. If the seas are rough, reduce skills to a quarter (round up). In a storm or extreme weather, the gamemaster may rule that missile fire is next to impossible (only a roll of 01–05 is a success).

Nonetheless, in the event of missile fire, those wishing to avoid damage on a *dreki* have little recourse other than hiding under their shields and trying to stay low. Missiles aimed at a stooped-over target have a 50% chance of hitting the side of the ship instead. Hiding in the storage space, such as under benches or behind cargo can also offer some protection to those on board. An aimed shot (page 119) must be made to bypass any such obstacles.

Pitching and Rolling

Strong winds and high seas toss boats from side to side. In such conditions, a DEX×3 roll must be made by anyone attempting physical action on deck other than moving, which requires a Dexterity roll (DEX×5). Failing such a roll, crew and passengers must roll Luck (POW×5) or be swept over the side. At the gamemaster's discretion, the roll might be reduced to DEX×1 if conditions are truly awful. Wise mariners affix a stout rope to themselves during fierce winds.

Scuttling a Ship

Generally, scuttling a ship—sinking it and causing it to be lost forever—is rare. It can occur in cases where there is no profit in capturing a ship. To do so, the would be scuttler should go to the bilges, the lower-most point of the interior of the ship, below the waterline where the hull is the most vulnerable.

An axe or prybar is necessary. Do not make an attack roll; such blows strike automatically. Roll damage normally. The ship's Hull Quality acts as armor, although its effectiveness is halved against such attacks from within (round up). Thus, a *knörr* with a Hull Quality of 10 is only protected from 5 points of axe damage. If the damage exceeds the Hull Quality, subtract the difference from the ship's structure points. When the vessel's structure points reach 0, the ship begins to sink.

Seasickness

Heroes need to find their sea legs before they can be of much use on a boat. Roll CON×3 on the first voyage to get the hang of it. If they fail, the roll is CON×4 for the next journey, CON×5 on the one after, and so on. Failure indicates seasickness (see the following paragraph), and a fumble sends the hero vomiting over the side, utterly incapacitated until a CON×1 roll can be made. Each hour, this increases by one multiple as above. Once a roll succeeds, it never needs to be checked again. Heroes lacking their sea legs may not use any physically oriented skills at a rating higher than their DEX×3, even when the weather is fair and the decks are dry.

Seasickness strikes even the hardy. Make a Constitution roll (CON×5) at the beginning of every voyage, regardless of maritime experience. If the roll result is a fail, nausea sets in. Reduce the sailor's maximum hit points by 1 until back on land again.

Slippery Decks

Blood- or wave-drenched decks are hard to negotiate. Everyone on deck must succeed in a Dexterity roll (DEX×5) each combat round or slip and fall. A roll of 00 signifies that the unfortunate sailor has fallen overboard.

Swimming in Armor

Leather or hardened cloth armor is light enough to allow swimmers to stay afloat without Swim rolls until they become waterlogged. Hard leather does not absorb water, which is part of its usefulness. Leather, quilted armor, half plate, and mail require a successful Swim roll each round, or the wearer begins to drown. One cannot swim in anything heavier than half plate; instead, the wearer sinks like a stone.

Armor may be removed underwater by cutting the straps. A dagger or knife is needed for this. The armor falls away and is lost. Note that the wearer is sinking while cutting armor free. Thus, someone in chain armor is underwater for a few rounds before the last piece is cut loose. A Swim roll is required to rise back up, breaking the surface a round later. With a successful Dexterity roll (DEX×5), a hero can remove 2 points of armor each round. Failing the Dexterity roll, a hero needs to make a successful Swim roll, or they begin to drown.

See **Drowning** and **Asphyxiation** (page 72) for more information.

Swimming Under a Ship

A hero may surprise an enemy by swimming under an enemy boat, leaving the enemy standing at the rails, expecting them to surface nearby. It takes three rounds to pass beneath the keep, and the swimmer needs to make a Swim roll, as well as a CON×10 roll in the first round, CON×9 in the second, and CON×8 in the third. If either of these rolls is a failure, drowning begins. If the vessel is being rowed, the hero needs a Luck roll (POW×5) to avoid being brained with an oar for 1D6 damage when coming up on the other side. To complete the surprise, the hero must also climb the side of the vessel, as described in **Boarding Another Ship** (page 137).

SHIP RECORD SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

Name _____

Type _____ Nation _____

Figurehead / Flag / Symbol

_____

Sailing Speeds

Before _____
Quarter _____
Half _____
Head _____

Rowing Speeds

Before _____
Quarter _____
Half _____
Head _____

Siege Engines

_____
_____
_____
_____

Other Notes

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Captain _____ Boat/Shiphandling ____ % ☐

Helmsman _____ Navigate ____ % ☐

Hull Type	_____	Crew	_____
Hull Quality	_____	Rowers	_____
Seaworthiness	_____	Sailors	_____
Length	_____	Warriors	_____
Beam	_____	Additional Crew	_____
SIZ	_____	Passengers	_____
Capacity	_____		

Structure Points _____/_____

Destroyed 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27
28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43
44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59
60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75
76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91
92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Ship's Log

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE IN THE AGE OF VIKINGS

Here, at the edge of the habitable world, a thousand kilometers away from the Norse homelands, exists a social order unlike any other in medieval Europe. It esteems political flexibility instead of warfare, and every hero's actions have the potential to impact the entire nation.

GEOGRAPHY

VOLCANIC ERUPTION AT HOODED CLOAK MOUNTAIN WITH A GREAT FALL OF ASH AND PUMICE AND SUCH LARGE BREAKS IN THE EARTH THAT CLIFFS COLLIDED IN THE FIRES IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT WAS HEARD ALMOST THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE LAND. IT WAS SO DARK WHILE THE ASH FALL WAS AT ITS GREATEST THAT THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH LIGHT TO READ BOOKS IN THOSE CHURCHES THAT STOOD CLOSEST TO THE SOURCE OF THE FIRE. GREAT HUNGER. GREAT DEATH OF LIVESTOCK, BOTH OF SHEEP AND CATTLE, SO THAT IN THE TRAVELING DAYS, AND PETER'S DAY ALONE. EIGHTY HEAD OF CATTLE FROM SKÁLHOLT'S POSSESSIONS DIED.

—Entry in the annals of Skálholt

Iceland is a land of extremes. The mighty forces of ice and fire have carved a dramatic landscape. The island's interior is uninhabitable, with elevated plateaus partially covered by glaciers and extensive lava fields. Almost all settlements are on the coast, in sheltered valleys, or alongside the banks of fast-flowing rivers that cut deep gorges through the meadows.

The south coast consists mainly of broad sandy beaches. The north, east, and west coastlines are rugged and dominated by numerous long, deep, and narrow fjords. On either side of the coastal fjords, tall mountains or glaciers can be found, and there are likely to be many impressive waterfalls.

During the summer months, the sun never sets. This is called "night-less time" (*nóttleysa*). Conversely, during the cold winter months, there are only two or three hours of light during the day.

Hot springs, geysers, and pools of boiling mud are a common sight, providing a readily accessible supply of hot water. People utilize this resource in a variety of ways, including washing clothes, boiling and steaming foods, attending to personal hygiene and comfort, and socializing in the natural hot pools.

Volcanic eruptions and floods caused by molten rock explosions under the vast ice glaciers are frequent and can have devastating effects on the population. Among the many active volcanoes, the most notable are the unpredictable and dangerous Shifting Slopes (*Krafla*) at the Lake of Midges (*Mývatn*) in the north, the explosive volcano Kettle (*Katla*) under the Mire Valley glacier (*Mýrdalsjökull*) in the south, Hooded Cloak Mountain (*Hekla*) in the southwest (also known as the "Gateway to Hell"), and finally, the mysterious Holy Hill (*Helgafell*) in the Westman Islands.

Forests

AT THE TIME, ICELAND WAS OVERGROWN WITH WOODS BETWEEN FELL AND FORE-SHORE

—Book of the Icelanders

The old sagas tell that at the time of settlement, lush vegetation covered the lowlands. In the four centuries since settlement, however, most of this rich flora has been cut down to make way for livestock grazing fields or to be used as fuel and building material.

The few remaining wooded areas, mainly birch and willow forests, are considered very valuable property.

Good timber is primarily imported from Norway. This significantly increases the cost of maintaining ships.

Climate

Cool, dry wind blows from the north while warm, moist air collides from the south, making for unstable weather throughout the country.

Summers are wet and cold, with temperatures ranging between 5–13° C (41–55° F). Warm summer days can reach 20–25° C (68–77° F), but those are rare. Winters are relatively mild, with temperatures in the southern lowlands around 0° C (32° F) and -10° (14° F) in the highlands.

Violent and unstable western winds regularly blow over the seas around Iceland, making sailing in the open ocean a frightening proposition to all but seasoned Icelandic sailors.

Driftwood

With so few of the native forests remaining, driftwood has become the main source of timber other than expensive imports from Norway. This makes coastal farms, especially in the North where driftwood is more abundant, much more valuable property than farms further inland.

The legends say the merfolk cut down the trees from vast underwater forests. Those trees not used by the mysterious half-human, half-seal people float to the surface and wash up on the beaches.

The north of the country gets most of the driftwood. It is less frequent a find on the south coast and even scarcer along the western and eastern coastlines of the country.

Most driftwood is fir and larch, with some spruce and poplar.

Animals

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

—Grágás, the Icelandic Book of Laws

The arctic fox and the field mouse are the only native land mammals on the island.

Sometimes, solitary polar bears appear in the North, having traveled on ice floes from Greenland. By the time the bears reach Iceland, they are so desperately hungry that they attack anything and anyone, and represent a great danger to coastal settlers. Very few people know that a nation of intelligent polar bears exists in the highlands.

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

ICELANDIC SETTLEMENTS

There are no towns—not even small villages—and no roads. Society is entirely rural. The population is spread across the country in isolated farms.

When the settlers arrived, they found no native population apart from a few Irish monks. With the area free of hostile native inhabitants, they were able to choose the location of their settlements, which were scattered mainly along the coastal areas and in a few sheltered inland valleys.

There are no farms in the central highlands, where the weather is too harsh and attacks by trolls and giants too frequent. Only the mad and desperate attempt to settle there.

Population Size

Throughout the country, there are some 5,000 farmers who possess enough property to enjoy full rights in the courts and at assemblies. When counting all members of the families as well as slaves and tenant farmers, the population of Iceland is around 50,000 people.

Farming

In all regions of Iceland, individual farmsteads are mostly self-sufficient. Farmers and their families live from the meat of their livestock and dairy products produced on their farms.

Small-sized farms have around ten heads of cattle, depending on the amount of hay the farm can produce. Large farms have 20–40 heads of cattle. Milk cows are kept to provide dairy products, especially *skyr*, which is like yogurt and can be stored during winter when the cows stop producing fresh milk. Because they consume large amounts of hay in winter, bulls that are not used for breeding are slaughtered after they reach puberty.

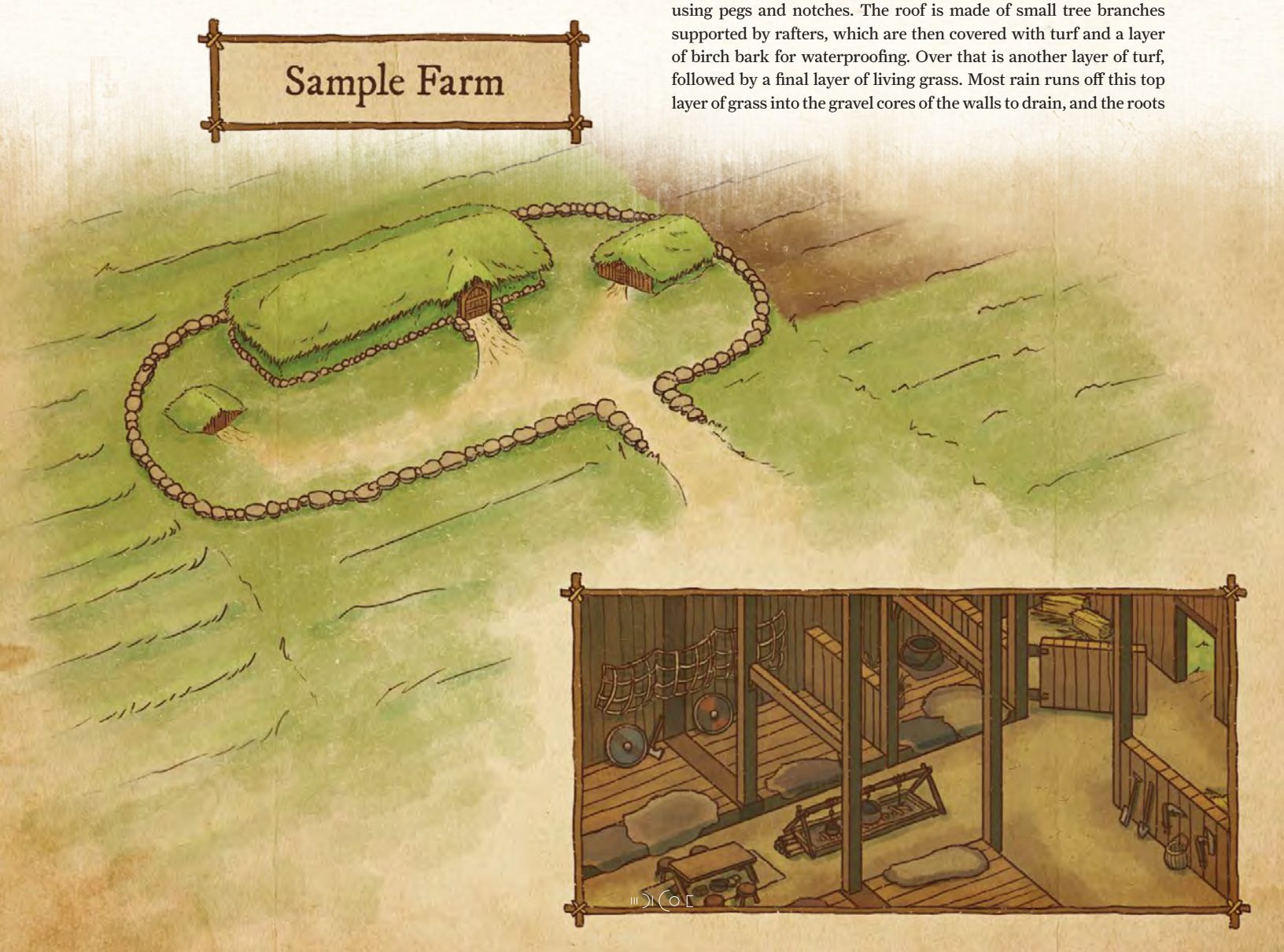
In the summer, the cattle graze on the farmland, but in winter, they are brought inside the farmhouse, where they are fed from the stored stocks of hay. Each cow requires two tons of hay to survive an Icelandic winter. Sometimes, it is necessary to slaughter the weakest animals before winter begins if the farmer was unable to store enough hay in advance.

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

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

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

Goats graze year around. Pigs are kept inside and slaughtered for home consumption.



Horses

Icelandic horses are small, strong, and sturdy. They are well adapted to the uneven terrain and the country's harsh weather conditions.

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

Horses that misbehave or become a nuisance during the winter while inside the longhouses soon become food for the family.

Statistics for the Icelandic breed of horse can be found on page 265.

Turf Houses

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

Icelanders have a limited amount of building wood available to them and must depend on turf. This grass with underlying sod attached is used to construct houses with heat-retaining walls. Two separate courses of turf bricks are used to build one wall, and a central cavity is filled with gravel to provide drainage. A finished wall is typically two meters (seven feet) thick.

Since the turf walls don't support any of the weight, the structural support for the house is provided by posts and beams of driftwood or imported wood. The wooden beams lock together using pegs and notches. The roof is made of small tree branches supported by rafters, which are then covered with turf and a layer of birch bark for waterproofing. Over that is another layer of turf, followed by a final layer of living grass. Most rain runs off this top layer of grass into the gravel cores of the walls to drain, and the roots

of the grass make the roof stronger. A smoke hole in the roof above each fireplace allows smoke to escape the interior. Sometimes sheep, and even cows, climb onto a roof.

The only sources of external light in a turf house are the smoke holes and a row of small holes at the base of the roof. When the house is under attack, these small holes are used as arrow slits. In extreme circumstances, it is possible for the roof of a turf house to be peeled off, either by strong winds, an attacker trying to invade the house, or by the strength of mythic creatures.

There are usually only one or two doors to a turf house, in front and at the back, opposite one anotherr, due to the thickness of the walls. These doors are always kept bolted to secure the house from invaders. Both doorways are short, both to reduce heat loss and to force invaders to bend down and expose their necks to those waiting inside.

The structure of the longhouse is a representation of the Norse universe. The wooden roof supports at the corners are known as dwarves (*dvegar*), just like the dwarves that hold the sky in place. The columns along the center of the longhouse represent the gods Óðinn, Þór, and Freyr, and prayers to these gods are fixed to the poles.

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

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

SOCIAL RANKS

The social structure in Iceland is unique in the Norse world and in Europe. Although Icelanders recognize the authority of foreign nobles and earls, none of them reside in the country. The one broad distinction is between those who are free and those who are not.

Householders

Householders are, in many ways, the dominant class, as only freeborn landowners can participate in assemblies, and only they can become *goðar*. They are also able to make other people work for them, whether as tenants or slaves. *Age of Vikings* heroes start as householders.

Tenants and Servants

These are freeborn farmers who do not own their land but rather rent it from the landowner or work another farmer's land in exchange for room and board. They have most of the same rights as householders, including the taking of vengeance and the collecting of blood money, but they cannot take part in assemblies.

Freedmen/-women

Freedmen or freedwomen are former slaves who have been freed by their former owners. They are often not entirely free, as Icelandic law specifies that if a free person cannot maintain themselves, then the former owner is required to support them in exchange for becoming the freedperson's legal heir if the freedperson dies childless.

Thralls

Most thralls (slaves) are gained from raids on the Celtic nations, but some are debt slaves, ordered into slavery when they were unable to pay for a debt they incurred and forced to remain until they work off their debt. They are generally at the bottom of the pecking order within any household, with few rights or freedoms.

Female slaves serve as nurses, foster mothers, and sometimes as concubines.

THRALLDOM IN ICELANDIC SOCIETY

The topic of slavery, thralldom, may be a controversial one for some gaming groups, and as such, their existence may be either ignored or considered as a mere subclass of servants. Further information is presented here to provide context for their existence in Icelandic society.

Thralls have some legal rights, including the right to own and acquire wealth, to marry, to kill to defend their spouse or offspring, and to carry knives for personal defense. If a thrall is slain by anyone other than their owner, the owner is compensated.

Though they cannot take part in any business transaction, thralls can legally purchase their freedom from their owners. They are then expected to swear to the local *goði* an oath of loyalty to obey the laws of the land. At this point, they become citizens, can own land, and vote, as any other free person can.

Children born to two thralls are considered thralls and inherit nothing unless allowed to by their parents' owner. They are often raised alongside the owners' children but remain with their parents, unless freed. Thralls may purchase the freedom of their children, but without a home, they will be without legal status until adulthood. Children of one thrall and one free parent usually inherit the status of the mother: freedom for a freewoman, and thralldom for a thrall mother.

Thrall owners are always careful not to give any advantage in numbers within the household, as revolts are not uncommon and often have fatal results. An owner can put any of their thralls to death without being prosecuted, and some do so when the thrall is no longer capable of working due to old age, disease, or injury. Others merely release them to the care of their children, or sell them to uncertain fates.

Vagrants

Those who have no residence are not attached to any farm and thus travel the country, surviving on the charity of others. According to law, vagrants are not allowed to marry, and anyone is free to kill a vagrant and take their belongings without penalty.

Goðar

> As you well know, I am considered your goði. I judge it to be in the spirit of our relationship that each aids the other in just cases. You should support me against my opponents while I am to be your ally when your needs require it.
>
> —Valla-Ljót's Saga

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

The primary functions of the *goði* are to advocate or mediate disputes and to represent the people settled on the *goði's* chieftaincy at the *Alþing*, or National Assembly. The members of this class also give spiritual guidance to the people living in their chieftaincy.

A chieftaincy, or *goðorð*, is treated as a private possession. It is sometimes inherited, can be purchased, shared, or received as a gift. The number of chieftaincies in the country is limited to 39. A chieftaincy cannot be compared to the petty kingdoms that flourished in Norway or Ireland. The chieftaincy is not defined by geographical area. Unlike Norwegian or Irish leaders, who lived surrounded by followers sharing a common loyalty, the *goðar* live interspersed among farmers who might be followers of other, sometimes rival, *goðar*.

Although *goðar* have no right to impose taxes on their followers, the position provides plenty of opportunities to amass wealth. Farmers in conflict who are unable to enforce claims will often turn to the *goðar*, who will expect to be paid. Prestige and privileged access to the process of law are also very attractive to ambitious individuals.

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

Dissatisfied farmers can take authority from one leader and give it to another. This is done by the farmers attending the *Alþing* and presenting their case by the Law Rock. The other assembled *goðar* judge if the contested chieftaincy should be given to someone else—usually, it is given to a successful and influential farmer living in that chieftaincy.

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

Feasts

The outward trappings of rank in Iceland are so few that it is difficult to determine whether a prominent individual is a chieftain or just a farmer. To assert their position, the *goðar* regularly holds feasts where they try to display their wealth and imported items.

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

Communal Units

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

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

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

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

The communal units and the spring assemblies (see **Law and Government** chapter pages 162–163) are independent institutions with overlapping membership. The spring assemblies are not territorial, while the communal units are. Once attached to a communal unit, a farmer's association cannot be changed, but one could attend a different Spring Assembly by switching their support to a different *goði*.

Honor

EVEN THOUGH THE ODDS ARE AGAINST US, IT IS BETTER TO LOSE OUR LIVES WITH HONOR, IF THAT IS OUR FATE, THAN TO SUFFER SUCH AN INSULT WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING.
—The Saga of Þórður the Menace

Icelanders have a highly personal view of honor. It is more tied to maintaining life, property, status, or exacting revenge than it is to the traditional ideal of individual sacrifice for obligations to a lord, religion, or the defense of others. It is often true that a person acquires honor at another's expense.

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

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

A violent attack to restore honor can happen at any place, against any person. For that reason, weapons are always carried.

Honor is measured by the Honor passion (see page 178).

Marriage

Marriage is a rather straightforward agreement linking two families into an extensive, though fragile, support network. In giving a child into marriage, parents and their family are investing in a new extended family alliance.

All marriages of the householder class are, to some extent, political. Some are overtly so, while others are not as much. A marriage is arranged by one's kin, and their consent is not required by law. It is regarded as prudent, however, to get the person's approval.

The betrothal involves one family paying a wedding payment before the marriage, and the other family promising to pay their share at the wedding. The two parties shake hands in front of witnesses and define a date for the wedding, usually within a year.

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

Divorce

If a marriage doesn't succeed, a divorce can be easily obtained for a variety of reasons; the couple simply recites a legal formula in front of witnesses.

A spouse can lawfully initiate divorce for many reasons, including incompatibility, violence, impotence, or even cowardice if a spouse refuses to take revenge for the killing of kin members.

Divorce can sometimes result in severe economic hardship for one or both partners. Generally, the estate is split in half, but if one spouse is found to be at fault, both wedding payments revert to the spouse who was wronged. Because it might be extremely difficult for some to make these payments, it is not uncommon for this fear of financial burden to be exploited, for example, by threatening divorce to spur a spouse to action in taking blood revenge.

Many Icelanders marry several times during their lifetimes.

Infidelity and Concubines

Infidelity is common in Icelandic marriages. In such a small and dispersed society, extramarital affairs are seldom a secret.

Many married Icelanders, whether farmers or *goðar*, keep concubines. These extramarital partners are called *frillur* (singular *frilla*) and come from families of equal, or more commonly, lower status than the person with whom they live. Becoming a concubine of a prominent person often increases the concubine's status and influence among their siblings and kin. Many often treat the kin of their concubines as trusted family members. "Better a good man's *frilla* than married badly" is an old Icelandic saying.

Home Life

The composition of a household can vary greatly.

Icelandic law provides that everyone who is not a householder must be formally attached to a household. Adult children over 16 years of age are allowed to make their own lodging arrangements. These arrangements are in the form of a contract, which is renegotiated annually in the spring. Even poor households have some servants, usually thralls. Wealthy households have many servants and thralls.

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

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

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

Children

When a child is born, the parents have the right to decide whether it should live. Unwanted children are taken outside and left to die of starvation and cold.

If allowed to live, the child is usually named after a dead relative, most often a grandparent or close friend. It is believed that naming a child after a dead relative will give that child some of the attributes of the deceased.

Trade Goods	Vaðmál	Silver (Currency-Grade)	Silver (Refined)	Gold (Refined)
Wool cloak	8 ells	2 *aurar* (0.06 kg / 2 ounces)	–	–
One ell of broad linen	4 ells	1 *eyrir* (0.03 kg / 1 ounce)	–	–
Hide of one fully grown cow	26 ells	6.5 *aurar* (0.18 kg / 6 ounces)	–	–
Fox skin	4 ells	1 *eyrir* (0.03 kg / 1 ounce)	–	–
Livestock				
Sheep with lambs	16 ells	4 *aurar* (0.11 kg / 4 ounces)	–	–
Goat with kids	16 ells	4 *aurar* (0.11 kg / 4 ounces)	–	–
Cow	80 ells	20 *aurar* (0.56 kg / 20 ounces)	2.7 *aurar* (0.07 kg / 2 ounces)	–
Horse	80 ells	20 *aurar* (0.56 kg / 20 ounces)	2.7 *aurar* (0.07 kg / 2 ounces)	–
Pig with piglets	80 ells	20 *aurar* (0.56 kg / 20 ounces)	2.7 *aurar* (0.07 kg / 2 ounces)	–
Property				
Farmland with standing farm	4,200 ells	1,050 *aurar* (29.4 kg / 65 lbs.)	140 *aurar* (3.92 kg / 9 lbs.)	17.5 *aurar* (0.49 kg / 1 pound)
Knörr ship, including sail and oars	10,000 ells	2,500 *aurar* (70 kg / 154 lbs.)	333.3 *aurar* (9.33 kg / 21 lbs.)	41.7 *aurar* (1.17 kg / 3 lbs.)
Dreki ship, 18 benches, including sail and oars	16,000 ells	4,000 *aurar* (112 kg / 247 lbs.)	533.3 *aurar* (14.93 kg / 33 lbs.)	66.7 *aurar* (1.87 kg / 4 lbs.)
Weapons and Armor				
Spear	40 ells	10 *aurar* (0.28 kg / 10 ounces)	1.3 *aurar* (0.04 kg / 1 ounce)	–
Sax	120 ells	30 *aurar* (0.84 kg / 30 ounces)	4 *aurar* (0.11 kg / 4 ounces)	–
Shield	200 ells	50 *aurar* (1.4 kg / 3 lbs.)	6.7 *aurar* (0.19 kg / 7 ounces)	–
Battle Axe (1H)	140 ells	35 *aurar* (0.98 kg / 35 ounces)	4.7 *aurar* (0.13 kg / 5 ounces)	–
Long Axe (2H)	240 ells	60 *aurar* (1.68 kg / 4 lbs.)	8 *aurar* (0.22 kg / 8 ounces)	1 *eyrir* (0.03 kg / 1 ounce)
Broadsword	1,200 ells	300 *aurar* (8.4 kg / 19 lbs.)	40 *aurar* (1.12 kg / 2 lbs.)	5 *aurar* (0.14 kg / 5 ounces)
Chain mail shirt	2,400 ells	600 *aurar* (16.8 kg / 37 lbs.)	80 *aurar* (2.24 kg / 5 lbs.)	10 *aurar* (0.28 kg / 10 ounces)

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

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

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

Not all children leave home after getting married. Sometimes, they move in with their in-laws. Also, unmarried adults often move in with their married siblings while they wait for a long-lived parent to die so that the family farm can become available.

Children are frequently sent out for fostering. Fostering forges links between households and is vital in cases where a family has more children than food available. Sometimes fostering is also arranged so that a child can be trained in a craft or in a specific farm-related activity.

Householders

All Icelandic householders have active roles in day-to-day life and in the politics of the country. Each has a high degree of control over their own lives, including the right to own property independently.

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

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

All householders are held accountable for their own actions and bear responsibility for all infractions of the law.

It is considered dishonorable in the extreme to harm a woman, and examples in the sagas of such violence are rare. Even when a household is attacked, it is common to let the women leave first before assaulting the building.

Language

Icelanders and other Norse peoples call their language *dönsk tunga*, the "Danish tongue". For ease, it is referred to in *Age of Vikings* as Norse.

The same language is spoken throughout Scandinavia and the Viking colonies, such as Jorvik in Britain and Dublin in Ireland. It is related to but different from the language spoken in Anglo-Saxon England. With some practice, however, speakers of the two languages can understand each other, a factor that significantly broadens the cultural contacts of Icelanders.

Clothing

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

Everyone tends to follow the clothing styles of mainland Scandinavia.

Some Icelanders wear long shirts and trousers, while others wear long skirts, sometimes pleated. These skirts are overlaid front and back by a long apron held in place by brooches attached to the front, just below the shoulders.

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

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

Economy

The ownership of livestock is the main measure of wealth.

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

There are no coins minted in Iceland. With iron only available in the form of low-grade bog ore. No individual or region has any significant production of iron, silver, or any other metals.

Wood and charcoal are required to create the steady heat necessary to work, and they are increasingly scarce everywhere. The land allows only limited agriculture and produces little on which the outside world places a premium.

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

Iceland is famous in the Scandinavian courts for one significant export—poetry. Most poets in the courts of the Norse countries come from Iceland. Songs of praise are often sold to earls and princes of Orkney, England, Dublin, and Scandinavia.

Trade and Gift-giving

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

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

The exceptions are long-distance traders, regardless of personal status, whether they are Icelandic or Norwegian. These traders periodically sail between Iceland and other parts of the world and are happy to take *vaðmál* as payment for the goods they bring from abroad.

Money

Lacking a sufficiently large or stable source of silver from which to make coinage, commodities such as livestock, dairy products, and especially woolen homespun cloth called *vaðmál*, are used as currency instead.

The standard unit of trade is one ell (the length from the elbow to the point of the second finger—around 50 cm, or 20 inches) of *vaðmál*.

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

The unit of measurement for silver and other metals is the *eyrir*, plural *aurar*, it is equal to one ounce or 28 grams.

The value of *vaðmál* can fluctuate over time according to many factors, such as the harshness of the last few winters. The tables which follow show the current value in the summer of 977, the current year.

Vaðmál Value

- 1 *eyrir* of currency-grade silver = 4 ells of *vaðmál*
- 1 *eyrir* of refined silver = 30 ells of *vaðmál*
- 1 *eyrir* of refined gold = 40 ells of *vaðmál*
- 38 *aurar* of forged iron = 1 ell of *vaðmál*
- 1 mark = 8 *eyrir*
- 1 *hundruðum* = 120 ells of *vaðmál*

Land Travel

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

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

The main route crossing the Central Highlands is called Keel (*Kjölur*), located between the Long Glacier (*Langjökull*) and Temple Glacier (*Hofsjökull*). This route is only usable during the summer and is used only with large numbers of well-armed guards due to fear of encountering trolls, giants, and bands of outlaws living in the highlands.

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

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

Outlawry

Icelandic sagas tell of many outlaws sentenced by an assembly court to be banished from society because of crimes they committed. Most often, outlaws flee to the uninhabited highlands in the central region of the country.

Life is extremely tough for an outlaw. There is a constant fear of being killed, not only by one's enemies but also by those hunting outlaws throughout the year. Killing an outlaw is seen as an honorable act and thus improves a person's reputation. It is also seen as a fair way of becoming wealthy by keeping any loot the outlaws may have accumulated. Even cooperation among outlaws is rare, as a criminal may be forgiven their crime if they kill three other outlaws. As if this wasn't enough hardship, there are also the challenges of surviving the unpredictable and harsh weather of the highlands.

Outlaws who manage to survive for many years despite the odds stacked against them can sometimes be celebrated by storytellers for their heroism and independence.

No food grows in the wastes of the Central Highlands. Apart from a few hidden valleys which are unknown by most people, there are only glaciers and snow year-round.

The key to an outlaw's survival is stealing from the law-abiding folk of the lowlands. Stealing sheep is the most common survival technique, as sheep are allowed to graze freely and often ascend the mountains looking for new patches of grass. Stealing directly from farmhouses is less common, as outlaws don't want to provide a reason for killing parties to be assembled. The kidnapping of young people by outlaws to serve as spouses is a sure way to enrage the local population, but it happens from time to time.

Outlaws also face many mythic creatures in the highlands, such as hidden people, trolls, giants, ghosts, and others. Without some degree of cooperation and friendship with these groups, an outlaw is destined to perish in such an unforgiving environment.

Another factor to consider is that the years of extreme isolation and paranoia can drive many outlaws insane.

Heroes as Outlaws

If heroes commit a crime, such as a murder they did not publicly announce, and are sentenced to outlawry, there is no reason to consider those characters finished and removed from the game. On the contrary, this could be the beginning of an exciting period of adventure.

If they were sentenced for a crime they didn't commit, some heroes may be tempted to remain in Iceland in an attempt to prove their innocence rather than fleeing the country. Even if they did commit the crime, there is always the chance of being pardoned if they manage to kill three other outlaws.

Adventures based around the premise of outlaws hunting other outlaws in the wastes of the mythic highlands can be truly exciting.

Foreign Relations

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

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

The kings of Norway are perhaps the country's primary potential enemies. However, for decades, they have been too weak or absorbed in their own wars and domestic problems to play more than a sporadic role in Icelandic affairs. Besides, no Scandinavian king is willing to risk their precious fleets by crossing the North Atlantic to reach Iceland.

Death and Burials

When buried, the dead are given personal possessions, some or all of their weapons, tools, and household equipment, and animals such as horses are sacrificed to accompany them. The dead body is placed in an underground grave, which is topped with a mound. Wealthy individuals may also be buried with one of their boats. The family decides what goods are buried with the dead, and it might be that a great figure is buried with new goods instead of particularly special ones, such as a named piece of war-gear (see page 115).

It is imperative that everyone receives a proper burial and is thus equipped for the afterlife. People are commonly allowed to return to a battlefield in their enemy's farmland to give their fallen a proper burial. This matter is beyond family or individual rivalries.

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

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

Timekeeping

Times of Day

Hour	Day-mark
6 a.m.	Hour of rising (***rismál***)
9 a.m.	Day meal (***dagmál***)
12 noon	High day (***hádegi***)
3 p.m.	Mid-afternoon meal (***undorn***)
6 p.m.	Mid-evening (***miður-aptan***)
9 p.m.	Night meal (***nátt-mál***)
12 midnight	Midnight (***mið-nætti***)
3 a.m.	Last part of the night (***ótta***)

Icelanders call the day "sun-ring" (***sólarbringur)*** and use that as the main unit of timekeeping. The sun-ring is divided into "day-marks" (***dagsmörk***).

These times are not precise. In the winter, the hour of rising, meaning the hour the sun rises, is much later than 6 a.m.

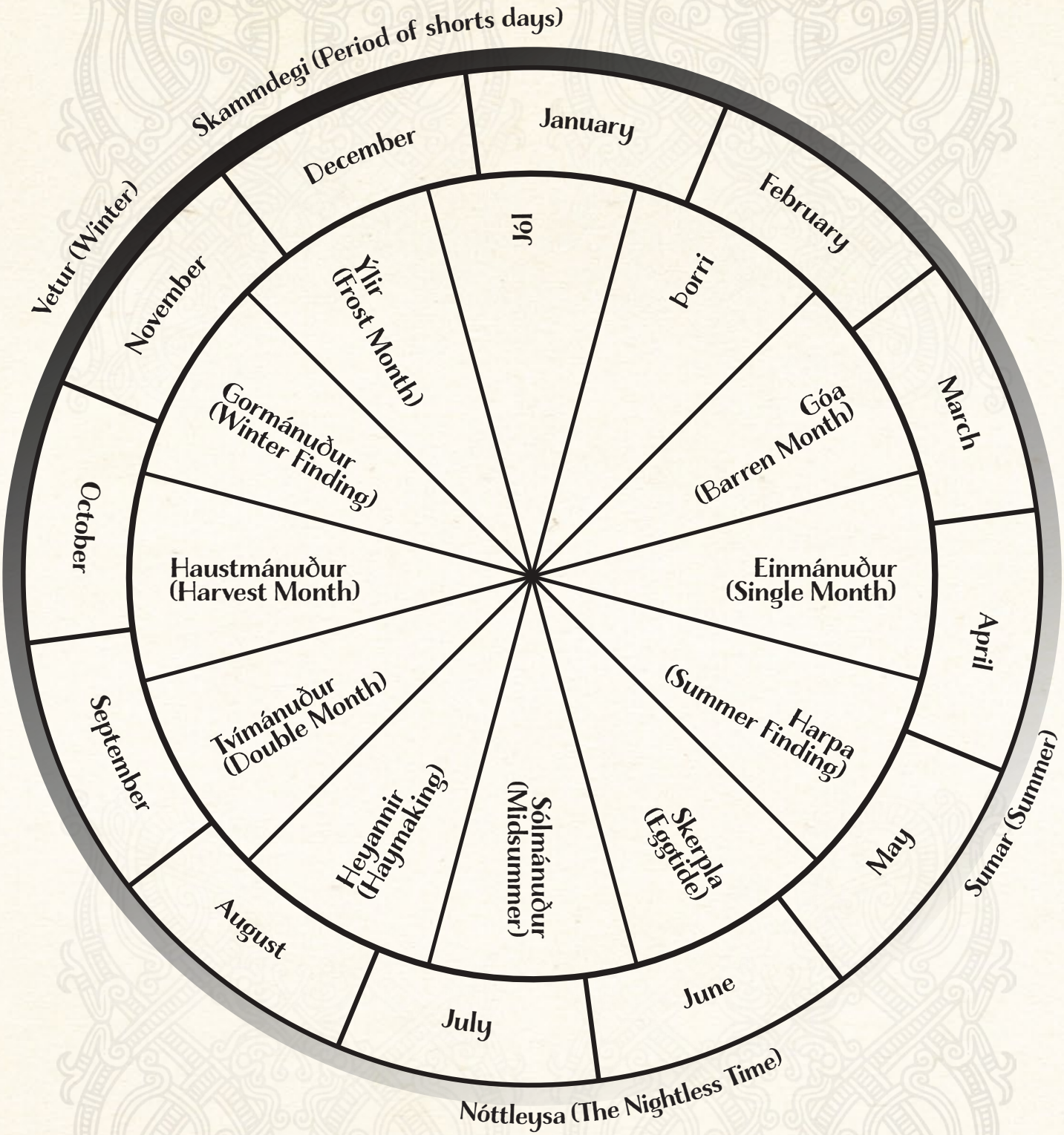
The time indicator used by Icelanders is mainly the position of the sun on the horizon as it relates to known landmarks, while the altitude of the sun is only used sporadically. During the night, the hours can be inferred by the position of the stars. At each locality, stars are chosen as leading stars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

Days of the Week

One year is understood to consist of 52 weeks of seven days each. The days are named in the following table.

Weekday Names

Day	Icelandic
Sunday	Sun Day (***Sunnudagur***)
Monday	Moon Day (***Mánadagur***)
Tuesday	Týr's Day (***Týsdagur***)
Wednesday	Oðinn's Day (***Óðinsdagur***)
Thursday	Þor's Day (***Þórsdagur***)
Friday	Freyja's Day (***Frjádagur***)
Saturday	Washing Day (***Laugardagur***)


Skammdegi (Period of shorts days)
December
January
February
Vetur (Winter)
November
March
October
April
September
May
August
June
July
Sumar (Summer)
Nóttleysa (The Nightless Time)
Ýlir (Frost Month)
Þorri
Góa (Barren Month)
Gormánuður (Winter Finding)
Jól
Haustmánuður (Harvest Month)
Einmánuður (Single Month)
Tvímánuður (Double Month)
Harpa (Summer Finding)
Heyannir (Haymaking)
Sólmánuður (Midsummer)
Skerpla (Eggtide)

Month Names

Names of the Months

Month	Dates
Winter Finding (first winter month)	October 14 to November 13
Frost Month	November 14 to December 13
Jól	December 14 to January 13
Þorri	January 14 to February 13
Barren Month	February 14 to March 13
Single Month	March 14 to April 13
Summer Finding (first summer month)	April 14 to May 13
Eggtide	May 14 to June 13
Midsummer	June 14 to July 13
Haymaking	July 14 to August 13
Double Month	August 14 to September 13
Harvest Month	September 14 to October 13

Seasons

The Icelandic calendar only has two seasons: summer and winter. Summer is a season of daylight, production, and travel across the country and beyond. Winter is a time of darkness, consumption, freezing temperatures, and fierce winds.

Chronology

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

When talking about past events, Icelanders most often count the years based on who was the Lawspeaker of the *Alþing*, the National Assembly, during a given period.

VIKING RAIDS

When Þorolfur was about twenty years old he made up his mind to go on a Viking expedition, so his father gave him a longship. Eyvind and Aulvir joined him with another longship and a good number of men, and they spent the summer plundering. There was plenty of loot, so each man got a good share. That's how things were for a number of years–every summer they'd go on Viking expeditions and every winter they would stay at home with their families and parents. Þorolfur brought his parents a lot of valuable things: thus, they were well-to-do both for possessions and honor.

—Egill's Saga

Icelanders and other Norse peoples see a raid as something entirely distinct from theft. Stealing someone's belongings is always regarded as shameful in Viking society. Raiding, on the other hand, is regarded as an honorable challenge to a fight, with the winner keeping all the spoils.

This is well-illustrated by a passage in *Egill's Saga*, where Egill and his men have been taken as prisoners. They manage to free themselves, grab some of their captors' treasure, and head back to the ship. Along the way, however, Egill realizes that he is acting like a thief. Ashamed, he decides to right his shameful behavior. He does what he thinks is the honorable thing: he goes back and kills every single one of his captors. Returning to the ship with the treasure, he is now regarded as a hero because he fought and won the battle and can rightly claim the booty.

Raiding, and consequently bringing rich treasures home, raises one's status in Norse society. It is, however, a part-time occupation. Icelanders may go raiding in the summer, but they come back home to tend to their farms for the rest of the year.

Viking raids may seem like chaotic, bloody affairs to those who hear the terrifying stories. Bloodthirsty, frenzied warriors arriving as if from nowhere, wreaking havoc, killing, and pillaging, each person acting independently with little organization between them. The truth, however, is that Viking raids are always carefully planned. Targets are chosen based on how isolated they are, what defenses they have, the distance from a navigable river or coastline, and the booty to be had.

With their broad bottoms, Viking ships can land on any sandy beach without the need for a harbor or pier. Indeed, many victims are surprised to see a Viking ship landing where it has been regarded as impossible for any ship to do so. That surprise factor plays a crucial role in a successful raid, as it allows the Vikings to arrive where defenses have not been prepared. They quickly pillage and leave before any resistance can be organized.

When raiding small coastal villages, Vikings most often run the ship through the surf, disembarking and forming up almost as soon as the ship has stopped moving, ready for the fight.

The preferred tactic against bigger and more ambitious targets, however, is to beach the ship on a small island, an isolated spot on the coast, or in the curve of a river. From there, they build up a fortified encampment, constructing a stockade on any side that is approachable by land. A garrison is left behind to guard the camp and the ship, ensuring a quick retreat if needed. Also, these fortified camps can be used as a refuge if they meet a superior enemy force.

Another common tactic is to capture horses in coastal areas and use them to raid locations further inland. This means it is possible to attack anywhere, even in places where a Viking attack was previously unthinkable.

The size of a raiding party can vary from a small crew of 20 on a single ship to more than 100 sailors in two or three ships. In a few cases, especially when Scandinavian royalty are involved in organizing the raids, the numbers can reach dozens of ships carrying a few thousand people.

Once at the target, if not expecting strong resistance, the Vikings spread out—every Viking for themself. The goal is to grab as much valuable booty as possible before an effective defense can be raised. Anything of value is fair game, especially if any silver or gold can be found. Unfortunately, attractive young women are often captured and taken away as slaves, concubines, or even as prospective brides. Men and children are also sometimes captured as slaves and taken to Iceland or to other parts of the Viking world.

Horns are used to signal instructions to the dispersed Vikings during raids, communicating when to assemble and when to retreat to the ship.

Even if the defenders can give chase to the Viking ships, there is little chance they will catch the raiders. With their combination of sail and oar, the Viking ships are faster than any other contemporary sea vessel under favorable conditions.

DANEGELD

Viking royalty and great leaders who can attract many followers can potentially become extraordinarily rich by extorting protection money from other European leaders. That protection money is often of greater value than whatever booty they could have plundered.

This so-called "Danish Tax" (*Danegeld*) is a tribute tax paid to Viking raiders to spare the land from attack.

Running a Raid

During a raid, heroes act together. Even if they are part of a larger group of raiders, they stay together and act as one unit. Two abstract values are used for this, the **risk/reward rating (RR)** and **preparation points (PP)**. Each is explained in further depth in the following section.

Selecting a Target: The Risk/Reward Rating

Raid targets have a **risk/reward rating (RR)** ranging from 1–10. The higher the risk, the better the loot. It is up to the heroes to choose how ambitious they feel about the next raid.

If heroes wish to try their luck with a little plunder at their next destination, roll 1D10 and consult the **Risk Reward Ratings** table (below). The players never know what the exact RR of any given settlement is, though they may estimate it based on averages or prior experience.

Risk/Reward Ratings

RR	Type of Settlement	Population
1	Isolated farm or tiny monastery	1–10
2	Small group of farms or small-to-medium monastery	11–30
3	Hamlet or a large monastery	30–100
4	Small village	100–200
5	Large village	200–500
6	Small town	500–2,000
7	Large town	2,000–4,000
8	Small city	4,000–6,000
9	Large city	6,000–10,000
10	Metropolis	10,000+

Not all villages or towns are the same, nor is each plunder attempt identical. A town may have better fortification, some experienced warriors, or be particularly vulnerable in some fashion. For some variability, modify RR by rolling a D10 on the **Risk/Reward Variation** table (following) and use that modifier value every time RR is mentioned on other tables. RR cannot be reduced below 1, so any results that modify it to below 1 become 1.

Keep the result secret from the players to keep the tension high.

Risk/Reward Variation

D10	RR Modifier
1	−2
2–3	−1
4–7	±0
8–9	+1
10	+2

For more information on settlements, see **Chapter 14: Traveler's Guide**. The gamemaster should use this material to describe these in additional detail, adding flavor from the land and the settlement descriptions.

Preparations

There is much that heroes can do to prepare for a raid ahead of time, improving their chances of success. A few examples are listed below.

- Scouting an area in advance with a Move Quietly roll.
- Traveling with a large crew of additional 20+ Vikings alongside the heroes.
- One of the heroes may know the area well, with successful use of an appropriate Lore roll.
- Talking to someone who knows the location well, using Charm or Bargain rolls to obtain information.
- Landing the ship in a favorable position for quick attack and withdraw with a successful Shiphandling roll.

For each quest or action that the heroes successfully undertake in preparation for the raid, the group earns 1 **preparation point (PP)**. For each raid, only one attempt at earning PP can be made per hero. These points may be spent during the raid to make things easier for the heroes. The gamemaster may modify the PP total by the quality of dice rolls (fumbles or critical dice rolls adding or subtracting PP), external conditions such as weather, creative planning, or by other factors, as desired.

Phase 1: Arrival

Upon arrival, the raiders meet with a resisting force scrambling to defend the settlement. A section of that defending force fights the heroes. Compare the settlement's originally determined RR on the **Arrival Opposition** table (following). Ideally, the RR should be as low as possible, indicating little resistance. If desired, heroes may spend PP to lower RR on this table on a 1:1 basis.

The gamemaster can use sample combatants from **Chapter 16: Bestiary** for these opponents.

Arrival Opposition

RR	Quality of Opponents	Number	Additional Opposition
0	Farmers/townsfolk	1D6+1	—
1–3	Half warriors, half farmers/townsfolk	1D6+3	—
4–5	Warriors	1D8+5	30% chance of wooden wall
6–8	Half guards, half warriors	1D8+8	60% chance of wooden wall, 30% chance of 1D3 archers
9+	Guards	RR+2D6	Wooden wall; 1D4 archers

* Wooden walls may be climbed with the use of rope and a successful Climb roll. A Spot Hidden roll may be attempted to locate the weakest part of the wall, which can be broken through by inflicting RR×2D6 hit points of damage to that section.

Phase 2. Looting

Once past the initial line of defense of the settlement, the heroes can pillage to their hearts' content. The group may stick together to improve their survival chances, scatter into smaller groups, or even plunder individually. Each time a group of heroes enters a building with intent to plunder, it is referred to as a **loot run**.

Compare the settlement's originally determined RR on the **Loot Run Opposition** table (below). Ideally, the RR should be as low as possible, indicating little resistance. If desired, heroes may spend PP to lower RR on this table on a 1:1 basis per run.

As above, use sample combatants from **Chapter 16: Bestiary** for these opponents.

Loot Run Opposition

RR	Opponent quality	Number of Opponents
9+	Guards	RR+3D6
5–8	Guards	RR+2D6
2–5	Warriors	RR+1D6
0–1	Farmers/townsfolk	RR+1D4

Heroes may decide to go on additional loot runs. For each subsequent loot run, add +1D4 to the opponent numbers, representing additional forces that the resistance can muster.

When the heroes complete loot runs equal to the settlement's originally determined RR, they must leave. If this is a small-scale raid, the loot run is considered finished, with everything of value taken. For a larger settlement, the resistance is considered to be organized and too dangerous to fight.

Either way, it's time to retreat to the ship and leave the area.

The Loot

Once heroes have dealt with the opponents on a loot run, they can quickly plunder the building they have secured. Each hero makes a Search roll. With a successful result, something from the **Valuable Loot** table is found. Compare the actual roll to the result on the table. Those who fail consult the **General Loot** table in the same fashion. Generally, heroes with higher Search rating have a better chance of finding more valuable items.

The tables that follow depict items that can commonly be found in the areas of Europe most often raided by Vikings. If the raid is happening in a more exotic location, such as in Rus or northern

Valuable Loot

Roll Result	Item (gamemaster chooses one)	Value
Critical	Chain mail armor (If RR is lower than 5, then mail is damaged and has half HP, otherwise it is in perfect condition)	2,400 ells of ***vaðmál*** in perfect condition, half that if damaged
Up to 29	Silver coins	RR+1D4 ***eyrir*** of currency-grade silver
30–39	Silver brooch, silver buckle, silver wire	RR+1D6 ***eyrir*** of refined silver
40–49	Silver rings, silver, spoon, ivory figurine	RR+1D8 ***eyrir*** of refined silver
50–59	Silver armband, exotic tapestry, scale mail armor	RR+1D10 ***eyrir*** of refined silver
60–69	Glass bead necklace, silver goblet, exotic cloth	RR×100 ells of ***vaðmál***
70–79	Amber amulet, silver pitcher, gold pin	RR×120 ells of ***vaðmál***
80–89	Gold brooch, gold wire, ivory pegleg	RR+1D10 ***eyrir*** of refined gold
Over 90	Sword, polearm (***Atgeir***)	1,200 ells of ***vaðmál***

General Loot

Roll Result	Item (gamemaster chooses one)	Value
Up to 20	Wool cloak, leather belt, leather gloves	RR×(1D4+1) in ells of ***vaðmál***
20–39	Bone comb, brass buckle, leather boots	RR×(1D6+1) in ells of ***vaðmál***
40–49	Furs, copper chalice, ornate drinking horn	RR×(1D6+3) in ells of ***vaðmál***
50–59	Thrall, fur-lined hooded cloak, pewter candelabra	80 in ells of ***vaðmál***
60–79	Thrall, bow and arrows, iron brazier	120 in ells of ***vaðmál***
80–84	Walrus tusk, ornate tapestry, bronze candelabra	130 in ells of ***vaðmál***
85+	Battle axe, lute, wax writing tablet, leather armor	140 in ells of ***vaðmál***
Fumble	Trap or accident	Roll Dodge or take 1D3 damage to a random hit location

Africa, the gamemaster is advised to change the results but keep the same equivalent values.

As discussed in **Thralldom in Icelandic Society** (page 144), the gamemaster is encouraged to ignore the results of slaves as loot, if desired.

MONETARY EXCHANGE RATES

The following conversions may be of use:

- 1 *eyrir* of currency-grade silver = 4 *ells* of *vaðmál*
- 1 *eyrir* of refined silver = 30 *ells* of *vaðmál*
- 1 *eyrir* of refined gold = 40 *ells* of *vaðmál*

Phase 3. The Return

Once the heroes decide it is time to leave, or when they are forced to by having done as many loot runs as RR, they must find their way back to their ship. Withdrawing is always fraught with danger, and they may be ambushed or chased.

Compare the settlement's originally determined RR on the **Return to the Ship** table (following) to determine the quality and number of opponents harrying the heroes as they retreat with their loot. Ideally, the heroes want as low a result as possible and, as mentioned earlier, may spend PP to lower the quality of the RR on this table on a 1:1 basis.

Once the heroes are on the open water, their path is clear, though the gamemaster may include additional encounters by other Vikings or even supernatural foes to hinder their return home.

Return to the Ship

RR	Opponents
9 or more	3D6+3 guards, 80% chance they are on horseback. The heroes' ship is chased by an enemy ship.
7 - 8	1D6+2 guards. 70% chance they are on horseback.
5 - 6	1D4+2 warriors. 60% chance they are on horseback.
2 - 4	1D4+1 warriors. 40% chance they are on horseback.
0 - 1	No pursuers.

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY: A RAID

The heroes are planning a raid for the next session to bolster their wealth, so the gamemaster prepares the conditions ahead of time. They have decided on a monastery to start with, and the gamemaster establishes from the **Risk/Reward Ratings** table (page 152) that this is a basic risk/reward (RR) value of 3.

A roll of 2 on the **Risk/Reward Variation** table (page 153) is a –1, reducing the RR to 2. The players don't know this, but the gamemaster decides that reason for the low rating is that the monastery was raided once before and has sent much of their remaining valuables away.

With a RR of 2, the **Arrival Opposition** table (page 153) shows 1D6+3 opponents, half warriors, half farmers or townsfolk. The gamemaster rolls 1D6+3 and gets a result of 6, for an even mix of 3 warriors and 3 farmers/townsfolk as the monastery's initial line of defense.

When it's time to raid, the heroes don't bother with much preparation, and only attempt to land in a strategic position, giving them 1 preparation point (PP) (see page 153).

Phase 1: Arrival occurs when the heroes arrive at the monastery. They are unimpressed by the quality of its defenders and quickly defeat them.

Phase 2: Looting begins as they attempt to plunder. Looking at the **Loot Run Opposition** table, the gamemaster determines the number of opponents for each loot run. This is initially equal to the RR+1D6: the gamemaster rolls a 1, for a total of 3 additional opponents. The gamemaster determines that the first group is 1 warrior, 1 farmer/townsfolk, and 1 priest (which they'll treat as a townsperson who won't fight). If the heroes continue to enter other buildings, in each one they'll encounter an additional +1D4 foes divided up as the gamemaster desires.

Each hero may make a Search roll once any combat is over and roll on the **General Loot** table (page 154) if they fail, and the **Valuable Loot** table (page 154) if they succeed.

In **Phase 3: The Return** the heroes decide to spend their 1 preparedness point to reduce any potential opposition as they flee. This takes the RR value of 2 down to 1 on the **Return to the Ship** table (page 154), meaning no pursuers.

Their first raid a moderate success, the heroes immediately make plans for another.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

OUR LAND MUST BE BUILT WITH LAW OR LAID WASTE WITH LAWLESSNESS.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

The issues of law, justice, and government are of tremendous importance to Icelanders.

The Norse settlers of Iceland came from lands with a strong tradition of householders' assemblies that mediated disputes at a local level, sharing the same code of laws. Those assemblies, however, had their power and influence limited by the ruler and regional warlords. In Iceland, using the freedom afforded by the absence of a ruler, or any royalty at all, a new body of laws and a system of government emerged that is entirely unique in the Norse world.

The natural aspects of Iceland, with its uninhabitable interior, isolated fjords, and remote valleys, make communication difficult, and with that comes an ever-present danger that regionalism might grow and bring instability to society. The *Alþing* system of government by means of a National Assembly has so far successfully countered this danger and brought stability and prosperity.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

There are many accepted forms of conflict resolution in Icelandic society.

- Out-of-court Arbitration
- Legal Courts
- Duels
- Blood Vengeance
- Compensation

Out-of-court Arbitration

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

Legal Courts

Disputes can be brought directly to the courts at either the Spring Assembly or the National Assembly. The choice of court is open to the parties involved. Usually, if both parties live in the same region, the dispute is brought to the regional Spring Assembly if it has not yet taken place that year. Serious disputes can be brought directly to the National Assembly; this may also occur if the parties live in different regions, or if the Spring Assembly date has passed.

Duels

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

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

The person being challenged may decline the challenge. When this occurs, the dispute is settled in court at an assembly. This is considered a dishonorable act, which results in a loss of –10% of Honor passion.

Taking part in a duel is commonly referred to as "going to the island" (*hólmganga*), as most duels are fought on small islands, both to prevent cowards from running away and to minimize any outside interference. One such island where duels often occur is at the site of the National Assembly. If not on an island, the dueling area is fenced off with ropes tied to poles.

In most cases, the weapon of choice for duels is the sword, but a fighter may choose another weapon if they prefer. Before the duel, a cloak is laid on the ground as a perimeter. If either combatant steps off the three-meters-square (32 square feet) cloak, they lose the duel.

A sacrificial bull is often brought to the dueling site to be slaughtered by the winner. Famously, Egill Skallagrímsson killed Atli the Short in a duel by biting through his throat. Afterward, Egill twisted the sacrificial bull's mouth and horn so hard that he broke the beast's neck.

Dueling Rules

Each fighter strikes a blow in turn, with the challenged party having the right to deliver the first blow. The give-and-take continues until one of the fighters is wounded and chooses to leave the duel, or until one is killed.

Each fighter may bring an unarmed shield-bearer carrying two extra shields to be used as needed. Once a fighter's three shields have been destroyed, they must defend themselves by parrying with their weapon. Dodging or running away are not allowable methods of defense.

If either duelist spills blood on the cloak, they are permitted to withdraw as the loser, if they agree to pay 100 *vaðmál*. When a duel ends in this manner, the loser incurs a loss of 1D6 points of Status, while the victor wins 1D6+2 points of Status.

Attacking someone after they have withdrawn from a duel is considered dishonorable. Such an attack gives the winner no rights to payment or property if their opponent dies. Anyone resorting to such a dishonorable act loses –10% points of Honor passion.

If both duelists choose to fight to the death, all property belonging to the loser goes to the winner. Relatives of a person slain in an honorable duel cannot seek any type of compensation.

Blood Vengeance

Blood vengeance is perceived to be a legitimate response to a wide range of injuries and insults. It can occur not only at the place and time of the injury, but nearly anywhere and at any time. This type of hot-blooded retaliation, however, is looked down upon as dishonorable. Vengeance is not seen as a punishment for the person on whom it is inflicted, but rather as reparation to the honor of the person being avenged.

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

There is a sense of limit on the methods of revenge. The use of poison, torture, or burning someone inside their house are never justifiable. Children are never acceptable targets for revenge, although a child of twelve might need to start worrying.

Even if the community feels a vengeance killing is legitimate, if it violates the laws governing such a kill, the opposing side will likely bring a court case against the avenger.

Between two powerful households, multiple reciprocal revenge killings can occur in true blood feud fashion. This cycle repeats until one family tires of the bloodshed and seeks a court settlement to the dispute. In the case of legal intercession, such an appeal involves an accounting of the number of deaths each household suffered to determine the amount of goods the family with fewer deaths must pay to compensate the other family's losses.

Compensation

When the perpetrator of a crime announces a willingness to pay compensation, the victim must refrain from blood-taking. The compensation offer may be for an amount specified by the court at an assembly, by out-of-court arbitration, or a simple offer by the perpetrator to pay a given amount. If the victim is not satisfied with the amount offered, they may insist on taking the case to court. Payment for a death is called **weregeld**.

A perpetrator is outlawed if the compensation amount decreed by a court exceeds their wealth and they are unable to pay.

THE ASSEMBLIES

Assemblies (*þing*) are meetings of householders where the formal processing of disputes takes place. They occur outdoors at a predetermined meeting location.

Courts of law are formed during the assemblies, with the judges sitting on rocks arranged in a circle.

Districts and Quarters

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

Each district assembly is presided over by three *goðar*, making for a total of 39 *goðar*.

Spring Assemblies

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

Each quarter holds several Spring Assemblies; each is the responsibility of the three local *goðar*. By law, all the householders living within the chieftaincy of the three presiding *goðar* are required to attend. They meet each year for one week in the middle of the month of Summer Finding.

The cases of local farmers and *goðar* are tried at these assemblies if they cannot be settled out of court.

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

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

Alþing

At the core of the Icelandic government is the *Alþing*, the annual National Assembly of all *goðar* in Iceland. Each *goðar* is accompanied by their supporters. People from all over the country come to this gathering, which takes place at Assembly Plain (*Þingvellir*) in the southwestern part of the island.

Not only those interested in matters of government gather here at the margins of the Axe River, but also peddlers, brewers of ale, and merchants. For the duration of the *Alþing*, the Assembly Plain becomes the national capital, where alliances are made or broken, friendships renewed, gossip and news exchanged, promises given, and stories told. This provides Iceland's sparse population an opportunity to meet and socialize to a greater degree than usual.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Law Council (*Lögrétta*)

> We shall also have a Law Council and hold it here at the National Assembly each summer, and it is always to sit in the place where it has been long since.
>
> —Grágás, the Icelandic Book of Laws

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

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

The Quarter Courts

The four Quarter Courts (*Fjórðungsdómar*) hold trials at the *Alþing* on cases against individuals from each of Iceland's four regions. Each court is comprised of 39 judges nominated by the *goðar* from each quarter region. To qualify as a judge, a person must have a settled home, be capable of taking responsibility for what they say, and be over the age of 12. Judges, witnesses, and litigants must all make a solemn oath on a large metal ring covered in a sacrificed animal's blood.

Any individual may bring an action directly to a quarter court at the *Alþing* instead of taking it to a local Spring Assembly, but the matter must be of more than minimal consequence. Cases that have been deadlocked at local spring assemblies can be brought into the Quarter Courts.

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

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

It is common that out-of-court maneuvers are used to influence the court's decision. Bribes, threats of violence, and actual violence in court sometimes occur.

Violence at the Alþing

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

A *goði* involved in a feud or contentious litigation often brings many supporters, sometimes as many as 300 armed fighters, to back their negotiations with lethal force if needed.

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

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

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

LAWSPEAKERS

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

The Lawspeaker is elected by the Law Council every three years and acts as its chairman. The Lawspeaker is the only official who receives a regular payment, akin to a salary. Lawspeakers are influential figures in Icelandic politics but do not rule the country. The power remains in the hands of the *goðar*, who are kept in check by their followers, who can switch alliances with minimum formalities.

Every year, the Lawspeaker is required to stand on the Law Rock (*Lögberg*) and recite a third of the laws of the country. This results in the Lawspeaker reciting the entire law code during their three-year mandate. All *goðar* are required to attend this event, which is open to anyone interested. All who attend are welcome to take part in discussions regarding any legal issues. The rock cliffs behind the speaker direct their voice, allowing them to be heard by all gathered at Law Rock.

The Lawspeaker is required to announce publicly any laws passed by the Law Council.

The current Lawspeaker is Þorkell Þorsteinsson, the grandson of Ingólfur Arnarson, who was the first person to settle in Iceland.

LAWS OF ICELAND

Among them there is no king, but only law.
—Adam of Bremen, about Iceland

The Icelandic code of laws touches virtually all aspects of life. It is extensive and covers not only criminal law but also court procedures and religious laws. The code is not a written document and is instead memorized and recited by the Lawspeaker at the *Alþing*.

The Laws

Avenging a Wounding or Killing

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

A blow that leaves a bruise or causes bleeding can be avenged up to the time of the next *Alþing*, when a case for the injuries must be brought forward, or else it is considered to be of no great importance, and forgotten. The same applies to anyone who has the right to avenge a killing.

The right to avenge belongs to the injured party and to those who accompany them.

Penalties

The penalty of lesser outlawry (see **Penalties and Punishments**, page 162) is prescribed for anyone who assaults a fellow traveler, cuts someone, or swings a weapon with intent to harm.

If someone inflicts major wounds on another, the penalty is outlawry. Major wounds include broken bones, cutting out a tongue, gouging eyes, knocking out teeth, cutting off an ear, or castration.

If during an assault either individual is wounded or killed, or if additional people are injured, the one who initiated the skirmish is penalized with outlawry.

Crimes

If someone commits murder, they are to cover the corpse so that neither birds nor beasts may eat it. They must also inform others of the corpse's location. Failure to properly cover a corpse results in the penalty of lesser outlawry (page 162).

The penalty for intentionally causing a rider to fall off their horse is lesser outlawry.

Aiding an outlaw can result in a fine or lesser outlawry, depending on the circumstances, such as the degree of aid and the outlaw's own identity.

If a person incites a horse or ox to trample, gore, or injure another, they will be penalized with lesser outlawry if their intended victim falls.

Attacking someone with a trained dog or bear results in a penalty of lesser outlawry if the victim is unharmed and full outlawry if there is a visible injury or the victim falls. If someone sustains major wounds, a lasting injury, or dies from an intentional animal attack (whether by horse, ox, dog, or bear), the penalty for causing the attack is the same as if the attacker had committed the assault themselves.

Other Offenses Punishable By Outlawry

- Capsizing someone's boat or wrecking their vessel in deep water.
- Any attempt to disgrace someone, such as by cutting their hair or soiling their clothes.
- Tearing, cutting, or removing a person's clothes against their will.
- Forcibly taking someone against their will a distance equal to the length of a bowshot or further.

Killings

The penalty for murder—dishonorable killing—is always outlawry, regardless of the person's age.

If someone steals another's property, it is lawful for the owner to kill the thief.

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

It is unlawful to kill a pregnant person, even if they instigated the attack or are an outlaw themselves. If a foreigner who shares a common language with Icelanders, such as the Danes, Swedes, or Norwegians, is killed in Iceland, justice for their death may be sought by any kin member residing in Iceland. For all other foreigners killed in Iceland, prosecution can only be sought by immediate family members.

To receive their reward, a person who kills an outlaw must publish a suit at the next assembly, as the reward is paid by the *goðar* presiding over the assembly.

Anyone may transfer a murder case to another for full prosecution of settlement. The person who assumes the case has full charge of it as if they were the rightful principal.

Inheritance

Any child is a lawful heir who may inherit their family's property on the death of their parents.

The child of a consort or concubine is not a lawful heir, unless explicitly claimed so by the parent.

A child has the right to take an inheritance and the yield of their property when they are sixteen winters old, but they are not to have care of either their own or anyone else's property, and they are not to be responsible for their own domicile until they are twenty.

A child has no right to inheritance in Iceland if they have a parent who was born outside the realm of Norway.

Marital Issues

If someone lies with the spouse of a person who is abroad, their closest kin in Iceland have the right to prosecute the case and the right to take compensation.

If a person neglects their spouse by not sleeping with them in the same bed for six seasons, the neglected spouse may assume the right to assert ownership of their own property and to defend it, but any claim they may have to other property or personal compensation lies with their kin.

There is no penalty for aiding an outlawed pregnant person. They do not forfeit their immunity until after the child is born.

Property

Every Icelander shall have what belongs to them unless they have willingly made it a gift or payment.

If someone steals another's property, the penalty is full outlawry.

Sexual Assault

An explicit right to kill is given in cases of sexual assault of a person's immediate family, but the killing must be carried out at the time and place of the assault.

COMPENSATION ACCORDING TO SOCIAL STATUS

In cases of killing, the prosecution may choose to call for compensation rather than outlawry. The compensation is paid by the family of the perpetrator to the family of the victim. The payment amount grows smaller as the degree of kinship becomes more distant. This extends as far as fourth cousins, that is, to people sharing a great-great-great-grandparent.

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

- **Householder:** Twenty times the victim's Status score in *vaðmál*, or equivalent in currency-grade silver
- **Tenant or Servant:** 240 *vaðmál*
- **Thrall:** 80 *vaðmál*.

Realities of the Law System

Manslaughter and Murder

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

Group Liabilities

Revenge can be taken not only on the perpetrator of the offending deed themselves but on a member of their family or household. This group liability gives a powerful incentive to groups to police the actions of their own members. If your uncle's jokes can get you killed, you will have more than a passing interest in his sense of humor.

In the give-and-take of family feuds, it is often a group's strongest person who is the target of a revenge killing for any wrongdoing of their kin, no matter whether or not they were involved or even if they were in the country when the wrongdoing occurred. This has the effect of a preemptive strike—better to kill them now on your own terms than wait for them to avenge the killing of someone else in the family.

Penalties and Punishments

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

Another common sentence is **full outlawry**. The guilty party who is sentenced to full outlawry (*skóggangur*) is banished from society forever, their property is confiscated, and no one may shelter or feed them. As the individual no longer enjoys the protection of the law and can be killed without penalty, full outlawry most often results in a death sentence. If they succeed in escaping Iceland, they can never return.

A lighter sentence, **lesser outlawry** (*fjörbaugsgarður*), lasts for only three years and does not involve the confiscation of the guilty party's property. This makes it possible for them to return to society after three years if they manage to survive that long.

When an outlawry sentence is delivered, the person is given four weeks to leave the country and cannot return for the duration of their outlawry. After the four- week grace period, it is legal for anyone to kill the outlaw. Anyone helping or sheltering an outlaw could be sentenced to outlawry themselves.

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

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

Law Enforcement

The *Alþing* does not have an executive body. Once the court has decided that a person is guilty of breaking the law, the *Alþing* has no power to execute a sentence. There are no state-sponsored armed forces or law enforcement agencies in Iceland. Enforcing the sentence is up to the injured party, their family, or supporters.

It is common for ambitious individuals to offer to buy a case (and enforce its sentence) from an injured party who lacks the ability to enforce it themselves.

Bringing the Legal Process to Life

Just like the heroes from the Icelandic sagas, *Age of Vikings* heroes will face not only bloody battles and mythical creatures but also complex legal disputes that open many opportunities for ambitious individuals to acquire power and influence.

When to Use the Legal System

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

The legal proceedings in the courts of the *Alþing* can be exciting and an excellent opportunity to acquire power and influence, but they also mean a great deal of risk. Someone who is not well prepared or who insists on taking to court a case in which they have no chance of winning may end up losing much of their wealth or worse, being outlawed or even killed.

Who Prosecutes and Who Defends

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

The heroes, being in the position of either prosecution or defense, will need to hire someone to represent them. This representative could be a *goði* from the region where the heroes live or even from another area of the country. The gamemaster should prepare a list of three choices for representatives, which the heroes will learn about from interaction with nonplayer characters, or with a successful Area Lore (Iceland) or Law roll.

Each option for a legal representative can offer a different price for their services and have a different Law skill rating. The choice of the legal representative may mean not only different results in the legal case but could also expand the heroes' circle of influence and even introduce new possibilities for adventures.

For example:

- ***Þorgeir Kjartansson (Law 60%) wants a substantial payment in silver.***
- ***Ólafur Hrafnsson (Law 50%) wants support from the heroes in a feud with a neighboring goði.***
- ***Snæbjörn Egilsson (Law 70%) wants to marry his son to the sister of one of the heroes, whose acceptance will require some convincing.***

A successful Area Lore (Iceland) may reveal how each of the options available to the heroes compares to the legal representative chosen by the opposing side in the legal case.

Influencing the Outcome of Legal Battles

Legal battles take place in one of the Quarter Courts, last many days, and involve all 39 *goði* acting as judges. However, once legal proceedings have started, it does not mean that the heroes can do nothing else but wait for the decision. Out-of-court maneuvers aimed at influencing the outcome of legal cases are commonplace, such as bribes, threats, actual violence, etc.

A legal battle is broken into four phases. Each phase usually consists of one day of court proceedings but can stretch to a few days for more complex legal cases. The heroes have three windows of opportunity for out-of-court maneuvers, one in between each of the phases. During each of these time windows, they can try to influence the outcome of the court case.

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

- **Phase Two** is when arguments are made by the legal representatives as to the facts pertaining to the case.
- **Phase Three** is when witnesses are brought into the court and give their testimony.
- **Phase Four** is the final phase, when the representatives present their last arguments to the judges, and the judges' decision is announced.

Legal Advantage Points

The outcome of the legal battle is decided through a resource called **legal advantage points**. Each side accumulates these during the legal proceedings.

The legal representative who performs best during each of the phases earns 1 legal advantage point for their side. The heroes may also score legal advantage points by means of out-of-court maneuvers during each window of opportunity between phases. At the end of Phase Four, the side with the highest number of legal advantage points wins the case.

Winning Legal Advantage Points—Representative

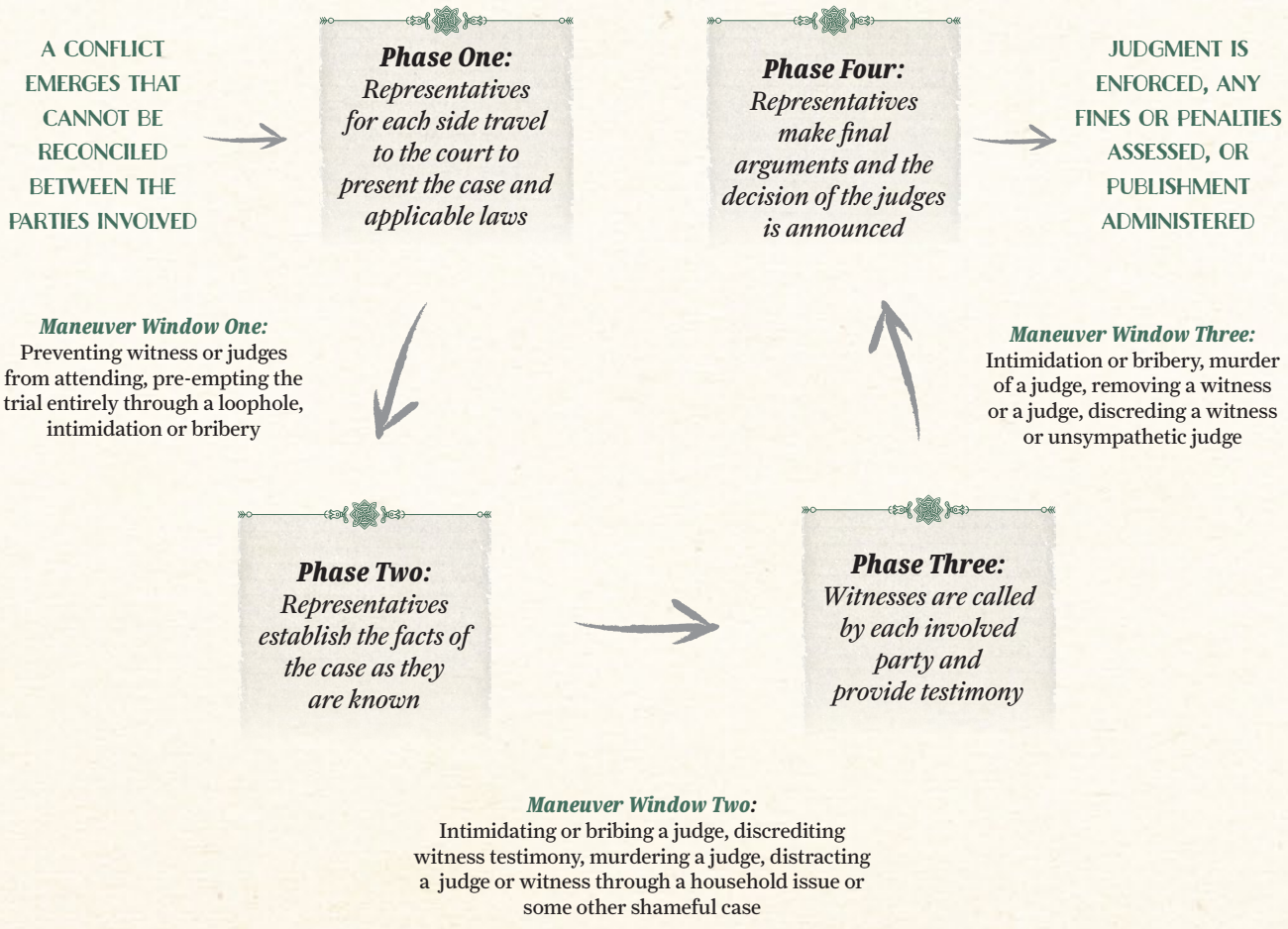
It is often true that cases are won based on which representative best knows the laws of the land, rather than the facts of the case. Each one of the four phases of the trial is, therefore, a showdown between representatives on their mastery of the legal code and is resolved with an opposed Law roll between the two representatives.

The players should perform the roll for their legal representative if that representative is not one of the heroes.

The winner of each opposed law roll wins 1 legal advantage point. Thus, it is possible for a representative to accumulate 4 legal advantage points during the whole of the legal process.

A fumble result rolled by either representative means that a gross legal mistake was made by that representative. In that event, the case ends immediately with the opposing side winning the case regardless of any other facts.

STAGES IN A LEGAL BATTLE



Winning Legal Advantage Points—Maneuver Windows

The time between each of the four phases of the legal process is called a **maneuver window**. It is during each maneuver window that the out-of-court events may influence the outcome of the legal case. Following are a variety of events that might transpire or be set into motion by either party during each maneuver window, though other events may likely also occur.

Maneuver Window One—Before Phase Two

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

Maneuver Window Two—Between Phases Two and Three

- Intimidating an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition.
- Bribing an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition.
- Fabricating a new witness who will lie in exchange for money or favors.
- Offering in marriage a member of a hero's household to a judge's immediate family.
- Intimidating an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition.
- Discrediting an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition by involving them in a shameful case.

Maneuver Window Three—Between Phases Three and Four

- Intimidating a judge who supports the opposition.
- Bribing a judge who supports the opposition.
- Killing a judge who supports the opposition.
- Removing a witness or judge from the Alþing by causing an emergency at their household.
- Discrediting an opposition witness or a judge who supports the opposition by involving them in a shameful case.

The gamemaster may suggest to the players any of the means listed above, via the heroes' legal representative, or via any other nonplayer character that the heroes trust.

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

The gamemaster chooses what ability roll is required from the heroes for each maneuver they attempt based on what exactly they are trying to do to influence the outcome of the court case.

Each successful maneuver wins 1 legal advantage point. Thus, the heroes may earn a total of 3 legal advantage points through out-of-court maneuvers during the legal case.

Out-of-court Maneuvers by the Opposition

It is not only the heroes who act above the law to influence the court outcome. The other side may also be doing all it can to win the court case.

To establish the outcome of the maneuvers from the opposition, the gamemaster rolls on behalf of the main individual opposing the heroes in the court case. For each maneuver window, a roll of INT×3 represents that nonplayer character's attempt to devise a strategy to influence the court case. For each successful roll, the opposition earns 1 legal advantage point.

It is best to make those rolls one at a time, as the game progresses through the maneuver windows. This gives the heroes a chance to learn about the maneuvers of the opposition with an Area Lore (Iceland) roll representing their connections within society.

Winning the Case

At the end of Phase Four, the gamemaster counts the total legal advantage points won by each side of the dispute. A maximum of 7 points may be earned by either side (four in court, and three from out-of-court maneuvers). The side with the highest total wins the case. The losing side receives the punishment as defined by the law.

It is important to remember that the *Alþing* has no executive or law enforcement bodies in Iceland, so it is up to the winning party and its supporters to enforce the sentence.

A court case that ends with both sides tied, with the same number of legal advantage points, results in the judges not agreeing on a final resolution, and the whole case is thrown out. Violence is not uncommon when a case is thrown out under such circumstances.

If the winning side reaches the end of the legal proceedings with an advantage of 3 or more legal advantage points greater than the losing side, a major victory has been achieved. This causes the sentence to be increased one level in severity (e.g., major compensation becomes minor outlawry, minor outlawry becomes major outlawry, etc.).

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

Sentence Severity (Lighter to Harsher)

- Minor compensation
- Major compensation
- Lesser outlawry
- Full outlawry

These rules take into consideration the importance of the legal prowess of the representatives, while still allowing the heroes a chance to win a case even when they have a weak representative—provided they work hard at out-of-court maneuvers on their own.

CHAPTER NINE

RELIGION

The belief in the Norse gods is strong among Icelanders. The gods are very real and trusted friends and are even considered distant kinsfolk, who people turn to in both good and bad times.

Icelanders seek the protection and blessing of the gods through sacrifice and feasting. Unlike the centralized religious institutions or organizations found in other areas of Europe, Icelandic religion is an unstructured part of ordinary life.

Rather than special temples and priests, most religious celebrations take place outside in the open air and are led by the same *goðar* who also leads their followers in secular matters. Most *goðar*, but not all, also maintain small temple buildings that are open to their followers, housing wooden figures of their favored gods. A few of the wealthier *goðar* build larger temples and enlist a "temple priest" to maintain them and help with ceremonies.

While most people have a favorite god, they will also pray to other gods when the need arises. This may occur when another god's ideals more directly relate to a blessing or protection being sought. Someone who regularly sacrifices to Freyr, for example, may sacrifice to Þór instead when seeking good weather during a sea journey, as Þór has power over storms while Freyr's influence in that area is less strong. A favorite god may also change over time if someone feels that their prayers and sacrifices no longer have the desired effect.

ÆSIR AND VANIR

The gods live in a realm called Ásgarður, beyond and above the human world of Miðgarður. Ásgarður was originally inhabited by a tribe of gods known as Æsir. As the sky and storm gods, most of them were sons of Óðinn, King of the Gods.

Another tribe of gods, called Vanir, were the gods of nature and fertility. They existed in the separate realm of Vanaheimur.

It was between these two tribes of gods that the world's very first battle was fought. The war was long and bloody, with each side laying waste to the other's territory. When the two sides finally tired of the destruction, they agreed to meet and negotiate a truce. They agreed to exchange hostages and to allow the Vanir to live peacefully in Ásgarður alongside the Æsir.

Influence in Miðgarður

The gods live in Ásgarður and very rarely visit Miðgarður, the realm of mortals and mythic creatures. Even though the gods sometimes walk among mortals in Miðgarður, their direct influence on human affairs is rare and almost always of an indirect nature.

Temples and Rituals

At the early stages of the Settlement Age, the gods sent dream visions to their most devout worshippers, demanding that their temples be moved across the sea. As a result, whole temples were moved from Norway to Iceland.

Householders are obliged to attend all major ceremonies held at the district temples where their farms are located.

The temples are places of worship for all Norse gods, but each temple has a primary god whose image stands in the center, directly in front of an altar. A tapestry of the primary god hangs on the wall behind the altar, while images of other deities flank each side.

The Temple Building

The main part of a temple building serves as a hall in which feasts are held after sacrifices. As in ordinary halls, there are fire pits in the middle of the floor and wooden benches lining each side. Over these fires hang large pots in which sacrificed animals are boiled and eaten by worshippers after being consecrated by the temple priest.

In smaller temples, the feast is held in the *goðar's* main farmhouse or outside in the open air when the weather allows, so there is enough space to accommodate all worshippers.

The inner area of a temple is its more sacred space, where the perpetually burning altar resides. On the altar lies a bowl for sacrificial blood and a silver armband. After sacrificing an animal on the altar, the temple priest must cover the armband with the animal's blood and wear it for the duration of any religious ceremony or assembly that they conduct. Anyone wishing to conduct legal business at a law court must first take an oath using this armband.

Rituals of Worships

Every ceremony involves a temple priest using twigs to sprinkle sacrificial blood upon the faithful.

Weapons are forbidden inside temples and holy places. Those who defy this custom are warned by the temple priest that they will come under the wrath of the gods unless they make amends for their mistakes. Such amends usually involve a donation to the temple.

Human sacrifices at temples in Iceland are very rare. Such an extreme measure is taken only when the need for divine protection or guidance is most dire.

THE THREE MOST POPULAR GODS

Þór

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

Þór is the son of the god Óðinn and the giantess Jörð. While his father Óðinn is crafty and complex, Þór is straightforward and physical. He is a mighty figure of enormous strength, with a huge red beard, and thick brows over red glowing eyes. The mightiest of the Æsir, he is the protector of Ásgarður and humans and the slayer of giants.

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

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

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

Þór is held in high regard among Icelanders and is often worshipped in Iceland. There are also many land features named after him throughout the country.

Ideals
Battle, Strength, Sailing

Óðinn

In Valland I was, and wars I raised,
Princes I angered, and peace brought never;
The noble who fall in the fight hath Óðinn,
And Þór hath the race of the thralls.
—Óðinn talks to Þór, Hárbarðsljóð Poem, Poetic Edda

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

Óðinn is a complex god, with many names that hint at his various roles and the numerous aspects of his character. Some of his other names are: All Father, Father of the Slain, The Red Bearded One, God of the Hanged, God of Prisoners, God of Cargoes, High One, Masked One, Capricious One, Inflamer, Swift Tricker, Father of Victory, Blind One, Shifty Eyed, One With the Magic Staff, Destroyer, Terror, and dozens more.

Ever in search of wisdom, Óðinn went to great lengths to further his magical powers. He pledged one of his eyes in payment for a drink from the well of Mīmir. Situated beneath a root of Yggdrasil, the World Tree, the water of the well gives inspiration and knowledge of the future to those who drink it. It was from this water that Óðinn learned the prophecy of doom for the gods at Ragnarök, the apocalpyptic battle that will end the world. He also gained wisdom from the decapitated head of the god Mimir, "The Wise One". After it had been cut off by the Vanir, Óðinn kept Mimir's head, which is said to have revealed to him extensive occult knowledge.

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

Óðinn has the magical spear Gungnir, which never misses its target, and the magical gold ring Draupnir, from which eight new rings appear every nine nights. He has two raven companions, named Thought (Huginn) and Memory (Muninn). These ravens fly throughout Miðgarður each day and return to Óðinn each night to report what they have seen. Óðinn rides an eight-legged horse named Sleipnir. He also commands a pair of wolves named Geri and Freki. These wolves receive the food intended for Óðinn, as he consumes nothing but mead and wine. From his throne, Gate-bench (*Hliðskjálf*), in the great hall known as Shelf of the Slain (*Valaskjálf*), Óðinn sees everything that occurs in any of the Nine Worlds, of which Miðgarður (the mortal world) is one.

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

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

Ideals
Magic, War, Wisdom

Freyr

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

—Prose Edda

The god of agriculture, the weather, and fertility, Freyr is the son of the sea god Njörðr and brother of the goddess Freyja. He decides when the sun shall shine or when the rain will fall. With this control of the weather, he rules over the produce of the earth. It is good to call on him for peace and plenty.

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

When the nine worlds were created by Óðinn and his brothers, Freyr was given the world of the elves, Álfheimur. Almost all elves in Álfheimur worship Freyr.

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

Ideals

Family, Nature, Prosperity

OTHER GODS OF NOTE

Baldur

The second son of Óðinn is Baldur, and good things are to be said of him. He is best, and all praise him: he is so fair of feature, and so bright, that light shines from him.

—Prose Edda

Baldur is the god of light, purity, peace, innocence, and forgiveness. Son of Óðinn and Frigg, he is loved by both gods and mortals and is the best of the gods. He has a good character and is friendly, wise, and eloquent.

His mother, the goddess Frigg, demanded that all living creatures—except one—swear an oath to never harm Baldur. Because of its young age, mistletoe was exempted from this promise. Baldur's death will be the first in a chain of events that ultimately leads to the destruction of the gods at Ragnarök.

Ideals

Light, Happiness, Peace

Forseti

The tenth is Glitnir: its pillars are gold,
And its roof with silver is set:
There most of his days does Forseti dwell,
And sets all strife at end.

—Grímnismál, Poetic Edda

The son of the god Baldur and Nanna, Forseti is the god of justice and mediation. He is the wisest and most eloquent of the gods. Forseti rules from the beautiful palace Glitnir. With its silver roof supported by pillars of red gold, it serves as a court of justice for the gods.

While the god Týr presides over the seeking of justice by means of bloody revenge, Forseti presides over disputes resolved by mediation. He is so respected that only the most solemn oaths are uttered in his name.

Ideals

Law, Justice, Mediation

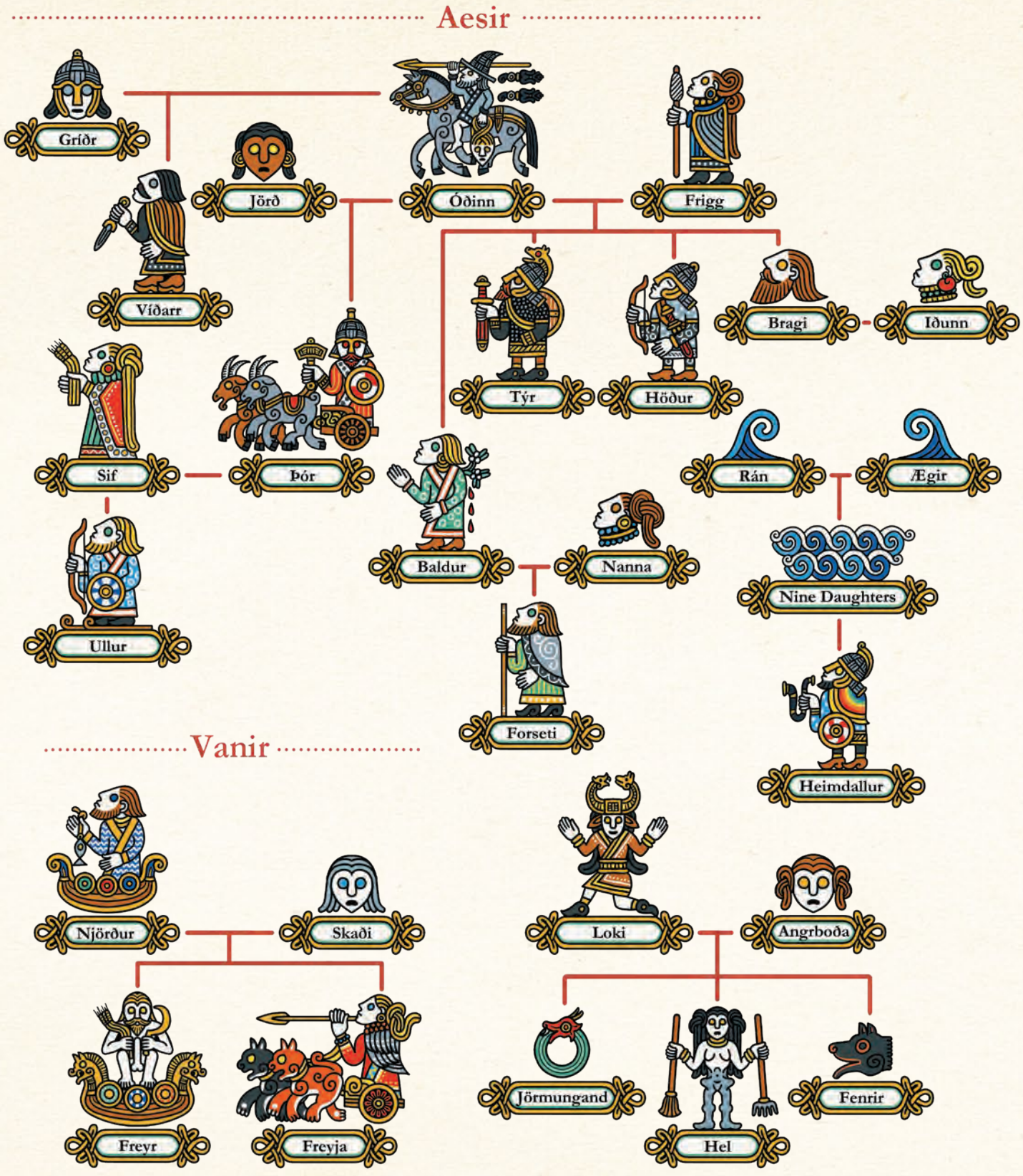
Freyja

Freyja is the most renowned of the goddesses: she has in heaven the dwelling called Fólkvangur, and wheresoever she rides to the strife, she has one-half of the kill, and Óðinn half.

—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

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

Freyja rules over the plants of the earth, the trees and animals of the forest, love, feminine sexuality, and magic. She is the goddess of all romantic love.


Aesir
Gríðr
Jörð
Óðinn
Frigg
Víðarr
Týr
Höður
Bragi
Iðunn
Sif
Þór
Rán
Ægir
Baldur
Nanna
Nine Daughters
Ullur
Forseti
Heimdallur
Vanir
Njörður
Skaði
Loki
Angrboða
Jörmungand
Hel
Fenrir
Freyr
Freyja

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

Ideals
Beauty, Love, Magic

Frigg

Óðinn and Frigg sat on the high seat and looked over all the worlds.
—Grímnismál, Poetic Edda

The wife of Óðinn, patron of marriage and motherhood, and representing female wisdom, Frigg is one of the most important goddesses. She has a reputation for knowing everyone's destiny but refuses to reveal it.

Ideals
Marriage, Motherhood, Family

Heimdallur

Renowned Heimdallur of the Shimmering Path (Bifröst), kind of counsel, competes with Farbauti's terribly sly son at Singastein. Son of eight mothers plus one, might of mood, is first to get hold of the beautiful Glowing Jewelry (Brísingamen). I announce it in strands of praise.
—Prose Edda

He is the guardian of the gods and of Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge (sometimes called the Shimmering Path)—the link between Miðgarður and Ásgarður. He is also the god of singing and music.

Heimdallur sits at the end of Ásgarður, guarding the bridge from giants. Requiring less sleep than a bird, he can see a hundred leagues in front of him, even at night. He can hear every sound from Miðgarður, even the growing of grass on earth and of wool on sheep. Upon the onset of Ragnarök, Heimdallur will sound his trumpet, the Yelling Horn (Gjallarhorn), to alert the gods that the end of the world is near.

Ideals
Duty, Protection, Vigilance

Höður

One of the Æsir is named Hödur: he is blind. He is of sufficient strength, but the gods would desire that no occasion should rise of naming this god, for the work of his hands shall long be held in memory among gods and men.
—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

Höður is the blind god of darkness and winter, son of the god Óðinn and Frigg. It is foretold that, before Ragnarök, Höður will be tricked by Loki and will unintentionally slay his brother, Baldur.

Ideals
Darkness, Killing, Winter

Njörður

The third among the Æsir is he that is called Njörður: he dwells in heaven, in the abode called Enclosure of Ships (Nóatún). He rules the course of the wind and stills sea and fire: on him shall men call for voyages and for hunting. He is so prosperous and abounding in wealth, that he may give them great plenty of lands or of gear: and him shall men invoke for such things.
—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

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

Njörður had a tumultuous marriage with the goddess of winter, Skaði. She personifies ice and cold, and prefers to live in the snowy mountains. Njörður personifies the summer warmth and the seas, and prefers to live by the sea. To resolve this conflict, the couple agreed to live nine nights in the mountains and nine nights on the coast. This alternation is the reason for the changing seasons.

Ideals
Fishing, Sailing, Wealth

Sif

How should Sif be paraphrased? By calling her wife of Þór, mother of Ullur, fair-haired goddess, co-wife of Járnsaxa, mother of Þrúdur.
—Skáldskaparmál, Prose Edda

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

When the mischievous Loki cut Sif's hair, Þór threatened to break every bone in his body. Loki escaped Þór's wrath by promising to have the black elves craft for Sif a head of hair made of gold, which would grow like real hair.

Ideals
Beauty, Farming, Nature

Týr

Yet remains that one of the Æsir who is called Týr: he is most daring, and best in stoutness of heart, and he has much authority over victory in battle: it is good for men of valor to invoke him.
—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

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

When the gods tried to persuade the monstrous wolf Fenrir to allow the fetter *Gleipnir* to be placed on him, the wolf did not believe that they would later set him free. Fenrir would only accept being bound if a god placed their right hand in Fenrir's mouth. The brave god Týr agreed and put his hand in Fenrir's mouth as a pledge. When the gods refused to release the wolf from the fetter, Fenrir bit off Týr's hand.

The unbreakable fetter, Fooler (*Gleipnir*), is a thin cord made by the black elves. It has six ingredients: the sound of a cat's footfall, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain, the sensibilities of a bear, the spittle of a bird, and the breath of fish. For this reason, a cat's footfalls cannot be heard, women have no beards, mountains have no roots, bears no sensibilities, fish no breath, and birds no spittle.

Ideals
Courage, Glory, Justice

Ullur

Ullur, Sif's son and Thór's stepson, is one [too]. He is such a good archer and ski-runner that no one can rival him. He is beautiful to look at as well and he has all the characteristics of a warrior. It is also good to call on him in duels.
—Prose Edda

Ullur is the god of skiing, archery, and hunting. His archery and skiing are unrivaled. He is the son of Sif, and Þór's stepson.

Ullur is a mighty warrior of unmatched prowess in dueling. Those who are about to fight duels often call on him for his blessing.

Ideals
Archery, Dueling, Hunting

Víðarr

Another god is Víðarr, surnamed the Silent, who wears very thick shoes. He is almost as strong as Þór himself, and the gods place great reliance on him in all critical conjunctures.
—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

The son of Óðinn and the giantess Gríður, Víðarr is the god of silence, stealth, and revenge. He is very strong, second only to the god Þór. Víðarr's shoes have very thick soles, crafted from the discarded toe and heel scraps he collected throughout the ages that people everywhere have cut from their shoes.

At Ragnarök, Víðarr is destined to save the world by using his thick-soled shoes to kill Fenrir. Holding the wolf's lower jaw

with his foot, he will tear the beast apart with his bare hands. By killing Fenrir, Viíðarr prevents the monstrous wolf from destroying the World Tree, Yggdrasil. With Yggdrasil intact, the world can be restored after the devastation of Ragnarök.

Ideals

Revenge, Silence, Strength

DISHONORABLE GODS

It is not recommended that heroes worship these two deities, as they are shunned throughout Iceland, and their ideals are contrary to those of Icelandic society. Worship of either of these gods is highly disruptive, and any worship of them is generally in secrecy or by villains or monsters.

Loki

Gefjon spoke: "Why, ye gods twain,
with bitter tongues
Raise hate among us here?
Loki is famed for his mockery foul,
And the dwellers in heaven he hates."
—Lokasenna, Poetic Edda

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

He is a shapeshifter, able to assume the shape of any person or animal.

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

Ideals

Deception, Dishonor, Trickery

Hel

Hel he cast into Niflheim, and gave to her power over nine worlds, to apportion all abodes among those that were sent to her: that is, men dead of sickness or of old age. She has great possessions there: her walls are exceedingly high and her gates great. Her hall is called Sleet-Cold: her dish, Hunger: Famine is her knife: Idler, her thrall: Sloven, her maidservant: Pit of Stumbling, her threshold, by which one enters: Disease, her bed: Gleaming Bale, her bed-hangings. She is half blue-black and half flesh-color (by which she is easily recognized), and very lowering and fierce.
—Gylfaginning, Prose Edda

One of the children of Loki, Hel is the ruler of Niflheimur, the realm of the dead. She is a horrible hag, half alive and half dead. Her face and body are those of a living woman, but her thighs and legs are those of a corpse, mottled and moldering.

Disease first entered the world when she was born. She sweeps through towns and cities, bringing plague. If she uses a rake, some survive; if a broom, none do.

Along with the wolf Fenrir and the serpent Jörmungandur, Hel is one of the three children of the god Loki and the giantess Angrboda. When Óðinn discovered that these three were being raised in Jötunheimur, the land of giants, he sent the gods to gather the children and bring them to him. Óðinn threw Hel into Niflheimur and bestowed upon her the duty to rule over those who die of sickness or old age.

Ideals

Death, Decay, Poison

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

THERE SHOULD BE A SACRIFICE AT THE BEGINNING OF WINTER FOR A GOOD YEAR, AND IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER FOR A GOOD CROP, THE THIRD IN SUMMER DAY, THAT WAS THE SACRIFICE FOR VICTORY.
—The Saga of the Ynglingar

There are four main religious festivals in Iceland. They are celebrated at each temple with blood sacrifice, the sprinkling of blood, the announcing of prophecies, and feasting and toasting to the gods.

- **Victory Sacrifice (*Sigurblót*):** The first day of the month of Summer Finding and thus the first day of summer, this day also marks the beginning of the year. It is a tradition to give gifts on this day to family members and to watch for omens that foretell future events in the coming year. Religious ceremonies involving sacrifices take place across the country, dedicated to victory in the upcoming summer raiding season and for a prosperous and bountiful year.
- **Assembly Sacrifice (*Þingblót*):** The opening of the Alþing in Midsummer, with sacrifices at the Assembly Plains. These sacrifices seek the blessing of the gods in legal proceedings that occur at the National Parliament during the summer.

- **Winter Nights Sacrifice (*Veturnáttablót*):** The three nights at the beginning of winter are a time of feasting and celebration, as livestock are slaughtered for the winter, and food and drink are plentiful. It is the favorite time for holding weddings.
- **Yule (*Jól*):** In the darkness of midwinter, three full moons after the full moon that began the winter season, feasts are held to celebrate the fertility of the land and to scare away evil spirits that may be hiding in the shadows of winter.

CHRISTIANITY

Christianity embraces forgiveness and condemns revenge in ways that are incompatible with the Icelandic legal system. Furthermore, Christianity is associated with the Norwegian king, who is viewed as a tyrant by Icelanders.

Christian Missionaries

"ÞÓR LIVES ONLY AT THE WILL OF THE CHRISTIAN GOD. WITHOUT MY GOD'S PERMISSION, ÞÓR WOULD BE NOTHING BUT DUST AND ASHES."
—Þangbrand the Missionary, The Saga of Burned Njáll

FRIGHTENED AT THE CHRISTIANS' SUCCESS, THE HEATHENS AT KERLINGARDALE HIRED A SORCERER NAMED HEÐIN TO KILL THEIR LEADER ÞANGBRAND. THE SORCERER ACCORDINGLY WENT TO THE ARNARSTAKK HEATH WHERE HE CONDUCTED A GREAT SACRIFICE. AT THE TIME ÞANGBRAND WAS RIDING WESTWARDS, AND THE GROUND SUDDENLY OPENED UP BENEATH HIS HORSE. THE HORSE DISAPPEARED INTO THE EARTH, BUT ÞANGBRAND MIRACULOUSLY PULLED HIMSELF TO SAFETY.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

Óláfur Tryggvason, the new king of Norway, sees it as his holy mission to spread the Christian faith to Iceland. Since ascending to the throne, the king has threatened to close Norwegian ports to Icelanders until all Icelanders abandon their old gods and embrace Christianity.

In the first year of his reign, the Norwegian king sent an Icelander named Stefnir Þórgilsson home with the mission of converting the country. Stefnir's methods were so confrontational and violent, involving the destruction of temples and images of the old gods, that he was outlawed and banished from Iceland. This caused a backlash against Christianity. As a result, the *Alþing* passed a decree instructing families to act against the Christians among them who blasphemed the old gods or attacked the old religion in any way.

King Óláfur was not deterred by this initial setback. He sent a second mission led by a German priest named Þangbrand. On his voyage to Iceland from Norway, Þangbrand's ship, the *Bison*, was wrecked before it reached the Icelandic coast. Many at the time claimed that this shipwreck was caused by the god Þór, who had struck the Christian ship with his giant-killing hammer, thus proving that Christ was powerless to respond to a challenge from the Norse god.

However, Þangbrand survived the shipwreck. He was not only a preacher but also a fierce warrior who used methods no less confrontational than those of his predecessor. Now, he travels the country accompanied by his converts, pausing to preach and sometimes even killing those who refuse to convert to the new faith.

Goði's Hall

CHAPTER TEN

PASSIONS, REPUTATION, AND STATUS

PASSIONS

Icelandic myths and sagas are full of intense passion and emotional turbulence, which can lead to heights of heroism and depths of tragedy. Love, Hate, Fear, Honor, and Loyalty are often placed in terrible conflict with one another and challenge personal codes of honor. Examples abound from Iceland mythology and the heroic sagas:

- Svipdagur makes a perilous journey to the underworld to learn from his dead mother how to win the love of Menglöð (from the Eddic poem *The Lay of Svipdagur*).
- Guðrún Gjukadóttir's hatred of her husband Atli drives her to kill him and then burn his entire estate with all of his followers inside (from the Eddic poem *The Lay of Atli*).
- Gísli Sursson kills Bárður to preserve his honor after Bárður makes insults against Gísli and his father (*The Saga of Gísli Súrsson*).
- Hörður's loyalty to his close friend Helgi compels him to kill Auður for endangering Helgi's life (*The Saga of Hörður and the People of Hólm*).

Inspired heroes may perform with superhuman effort and with a greater likelihood of success. They may be volatile, their feelings changing dramatically with each success or failure.

Basic Passions

Several common passions are described here, typifying those felt most intensely by heroes. Some are so common that they appear on the hero sheet.

Fear (Type or Individual)

Fear is perhaps one of the strongest passions, driving all manner of behavior, for better or worse. Fear can cause an individual to flee from the subject or act irrationally to escape its presence. It can even cause an adverse reaction.

Common Fears can be focused on a particular group, such as trolls or a rival family. It can also be focused on an individual, such as a former enemy or treacherous relative. Fear cannot be defined toward general concepts or forces, such as death or ruin, and is generally not useful when the subject is something any reasonable being would fear, such as a god or a force as vast as the army of the Norwegian king.

When used to inspire a hero, the subject of the Fear must either be present or their presence must be imminent. One cannot by motivated by Fear (trolls) if there are no trolls in the area or any indication of the impending arrival of one. The threat of confronting the subject must be real and immediate.

Being inspired by Fear may improve the hero's attempt to avoid the subject, help them flee from it, or improve their defense against it. It may also spur them to violent opposition when cornered. In certain situations, the gamemaster may ask the player to roll for their Fear passion if the hero is embarking on a course of action that would put them into contact with the source of their fear.

Hate (Group or Individual)

Hatred motivates many people in Iceland. Common hatreds in Iceland include: jötunn, trolls, polar bears, merfolk, elves, (individuals), (other countries), Christian missionaries, (rival family), and the undead. These are just examples; hatred can be toward anything the gamemaster accepts.

When used for inspiration, Hatred can only be used against a specific foe or narrow type of foes.

Example: ***a hero inspired by Hate (trolls) would get the passion bonus when combating trolls, but if other foes entered the battle it would not count. It does not apply as a generic modifier for any other foes in the fight.***

This must be contrasted with Loyalty or Love, which can inspire a hero to combat all the foes before them that threaten the subject of the passion, not just one type.

Hates can also be aimed at specific people, such as Hate (Sturla the Bald) or Hate (King Óláfur Tryggvason).

Honor

Honor is a personal code of dignity and integrity. It is about maintaining life, property, status, and exacting revenge when appropriate.

Honor is not a slippery issue, subject to interpretation. The difference between honorable action and dishonorable action is clear to everyone, no matter how they behave. The **Dishonor** table lists actions that all Icelanders agree are dishonorable. Performing these deeds diminishes Honor.

Dishonor

Dishonorable Act	Honor Lost
Attacking an unarmed foe	–5%
Cowardice	–5%
Discourtesy to a guest in your home	–10%
Raiding the grave of a person who still has living relatives	–10%
Not avenging or seeking compensation for an insult to oneself or to a family member	–10%
Declining the challenge to a duel	–10%
Treason against your family or *goði*	–15%
Breaking an oath	–25%
Attacking or stealing from a guest (or allowing it to happen)	–25%
Killing a guest	–35%
Violence by adults against children	–35%
Sexual assault	–35%
Killing kinsfolk	–35%

A hero who acts dishonorably will lose Honor, even if no one else knows about it. Honor is about an individual's view of their own integrity. How others view the hero's honor is measured by Status, not Honor.

Honor, like all other passions, can be increased through successful usage, with experience.

Loyalty

Loyalty is the cornerstone of all society beyond the family. It is the social bond that connects members of a community together. It is a prerequisite when calling upon that community for support.

A hero with conflicting loyalties may use their respective Loyalty ratings to determine an appropriate course of action. The player can simply choose based on the higher Loyalty rating or test them as an opposed roll. Thus, a player can use an opposed roll to determine if their hero will obey their *goði* or their family if those loyalties are in conflict.

- Loyalty (*goði*) is the measure of loyalty to the chieftain-priest whose role is to advocate or mediate disputes and to represent the people settled on the *goði*'s chieftaincy assemblies. In exchange, heroes are expected to aid their *goði* in just cases whenever their support is required. Loyalty (*goði*) is used to gain the personal support of one's *goði*.
- Loyalty (family) is the measure of the bond between a hero and their extended family. It typically includes an obligation to avenge injuries or even malicious rumors against family members. Loyalty (family) is used to gain the support of the family.
- Loyalty (individual) is the measure of a hero's bond with a specific individual, such as a mentor or close friend. Loyalty (individual) is also used to gain the personal support of that individual.

Example: ***Ísgerður has the Passion of Loyalty (goði) at 60%. She is tasked with uncovering a plot against the goði and needs to determine if one of the goði's followers is a traitor. For this, Ísgerður observes the official's actions around the goði and uses her Insight skill to check for treachery or deception. Since Ísgerður's Insight is only 20%, she decides to try for inspiration with her Passion of Loyalty (goði). With a roll of 58, she succeeds. Her Insight gets a +20% modifier, raising it to 40%. It's not great, but better than 20%. Her Loyalty (goði) Passion gets an experience check.***

Community Support

A hero's Loyalty passion can be used to gain the support of a community or individual. In times of trouble, the adventure may use their Loyalty to determine if the local communal unit (see page 145) will offer help. The gamemaster should determine the exact nature and extent of the support a given community can supply.

Love

Love is an emotional bond or attraction felt by one individual for another individual or group. A hero may have many loves.

- Love (family) is a natural emotion common to humankind in any age or culture. Close family is the most important community one can belong to in Iceland. Family members are expected to support, protect, and avenge each other. Kin-strife is widely considered a great tragedy.
- Love (individual) indicates a deep feeling and attraction for another person. It usually implies physical and carnal commitment, although it may also include unrequited love.

Using Passions

Passions define a hero's life intentions and serve to inspire them. The gamemaster may call for a passion roll. At other times, a player may suggest and request one, with the gamemaster's approval. Remember that the gamemaster has the final say on the appropriateness of attempting to use a passion for inspiration. Players are warned that passion rolls can be extremely risky as well as rewarding; a fumbled passion roll results in Despair!

Ultimately, the player is in command of their hero's actions and behavior in any but the most extraordinary circumstances. A failed passion roll cannot force a hero to do what they would not want to do; it merely suggests how the hero's own feelings suggest they behave. Only in the case of Despair or some supernatural influence does a player lose control of their hero's behavior.

Inspiration

A hero may attempt to be inspired by their passion and request a passion roll to augment a skill.

Only one attempt at inspiration can be made in a situation or "scene"—such as the duration of a skirmish, battle, assembly meeting, magic ritual, etc. An inspiration roll cannot be made multiple times for the same action. The inspiration lasts for the duration of the activity, with a maximum duration of one day. If in doubt, the gamemaster determines the duration of the inspiration. An inspiration attempt based on a passion does not require additional time; it can happen as part of another action and does not add to the DEX rank.

If a hero has already rolled to be inspired by a passion or has been inspired by a Devotion, additional attempts cannot be made using a different passion. Additionally, the bonus from inspiration cannot be combined with an augment from another skill (see pages 79–80).

Remember that the gamemaster has the final say on the appropriateness of an inspiration attempt and its duration. The player must roll against the passion's rating on a D100:

- **Critical Success:** The hero is inspired and acts very strongly in accordance with the passion. One ability of the player's choice temporarily receives a +50% bonus. This persists for the duration of the task or situation that evoked the passion roll. An experience check is gained in the passion.
- **Special Success:** The hero is inspired and acts strongly in accordance with the passion. One ability of the player's choice temporarily receives a +30% bonus. This persists for the duration of the task or situation that evoked the passion roll. An experience check is gained in the passion.
- **Success:** If successful, the hero is inspired and acts in accordance with the passion. Immediately add +20% to one ability for the duration of the task or situation that evoked the passion roll. An experience check is gained in the passion.
- **Failure:** The hero is despondent. The hero modifies all further rolls by –10% for the duration of the situation that brought on the state.
- **Fumble:** The hero is crushed by negative thoughts. The passion's rating is immediately reduced by –1D10%, and the hero is overcome by Despair. Despair might last for a few minutes or a few days, as determined by the gamemaster based on a roll on the **Despair** table (following). For the duration of the Despair, the hero's actions are limited to running away or hiding.

If a passion is reduced to 0%, it is removed from the hero sheet. A passion cannot be a negative value. Additionally, the hero can never regain a passion that has been lost in this manner; it has been exhausted and cannot be renewed unless the gamemaster determines that an extraordinary set of circumstances or behavior merits its return.

Gaining a Passion

Passions may be gained during play. Heroes should receive ample opportunities to gain enemies, loved ones, allies, and loyalties.

Both the player and gamemaster should agree upon passions. When a hero experiences a significant event, the gamemaster or player may suggest that a passion has been generated. After the passion has been discussed, the gamemaster and player determine a starting value together. The minimum starting value for a new passion is usually 60%.

Example: ***Upon returning home from a raiding expedition abroad, Njáll discovers that his farmhouse has been burned down by the Christian missionary, Þangbrand. This arsonist was sent by the Norwegian king after Njáll's family refused to convert to the new faith. The gamemaster agrees that this is enough to define a new passion of Hate (King Óláfur of Norway), with a starting rating of 60%, as Njáll swears he will take revenge on the agents of the Norwegian king.***

Despair

1D10	Duration of Despair
1–3	1D10 combat rounds
4–7	4D10+10 combat rounds
8–9	Until sunset, sunrise, or similar length of time
10	1D3 game days

Mandatory Rolls

Passions and Devotions with a rating of 80% or higher can place your hero at the mercy of the gamemaster. These should represent staunchly held beliefs and connections and are not to be taken lightly or used only when convenient. Such extreme passions and Devotions can require the player to make mandatory rolls due to these beliefs at the gamemaster's discretion. In general, the gamemaster has several options if a hero's actions contradict a relevant passion rating.

- **Reduce the Passion:** Immediately reduce the passion to a level below 80, which is the threshold for behavior mandates.
- **Opposed Rolls:** Ask if the hero would like to oppose the Devotion passion with another Devotion or passion. This is made as an opposed roll. If the opposed ability wins the contest with the passion or Devotion, the hero can act in a different manner, as dictated by the trait that won. This must be reasonable for the specific situation.

Example: ***Þrymur has a Hate (outlaws) passion at 90%. While traveling to*** *Alþing* ***via the Keel highland path, Þrymur meets Hnikarr, a cousin he hasn't seen since being outlawed after a killing many years ago. Hnikarr's initial panic turns to elation at seeing Þrymur after so many years. He approaches his cousin and asks for help, stating that a group keen on collecting the bounty on his head has been chasing him for days.***

Þrymur's Hate would normally make him distrust or even attack outlaws outright, but Hnikarr is family. Þrymur's player decides that his Love (Family) 70% is the relevant passion to oppose his Hate (outlaws). He rolls 11 for Love (Family), a special success, and a 73—a normal success for Hate.

As the special success is superior to the normal success, the gamemaster suggests that Þrymur Love overrides all—he should uphold his love for family. Furthermore, the gamemaster suggests that Þrymur should not only be willing to help his cousin escape his pursuers but, if necessary, may also be determined to fight by Hnikarr's side.

REPUTATION

Reputation measures a hero's fame, notoriety, and renown. It includes one's lineage and deeds—both glorious and infamous. It is expressed in sagas, songs, gossip, curses, and boasts. As a hero's Reputation increases, so does their notoriety.

Gaining Reputation

A hero gains Reputation by drawing the attention of others. Marriage, birth, making a vow, breaking a vow, owning a famous weapon, going on a Viking raid—these are all examples of things that can increase a hero's Reputation.

Reputation does not increase because of experience checks. Instead, it is handed out at the gamemaster's discretion, based on deeds and achievements. Reputation can also increase through negative deeds. It does not decrease as passions do; breaking an oath, behaving dishonorably, or committing foul deeds can make one just as famous (or even more so) than noble actions or heroic achievements.

Reputation Gains (following) lists a variety of examples of how Reputation may be acquired. Note that deeds must be known to others; heroes gain no Reputation for actions taken in secrecy or obscurity. The gamemaster may use these examples as listed, modify or augment as needed, or use them as guidelines for actions outside those described.

Reputation Gains

Notable Deed (+1D3 Reputation)

- Swearing an oath of some import.
- Defeating an equally powerful foe.
- Outstanding use of a skill; achieving success in a noteworthy endeavor.
- A noteworthy marriage.
- Taking part in a great journey.
- Becoming a parent in a fortuitous birth.
- Having an important guest.
- Making a shrewd alliance.
- Taking an important role in a worship ceremony.
- Having a poet or bard tell stories about one's deeds.
- A weird accident or stroke of luck.
- Lying and being discovered.
- Breaking an oath of import.
- Acting discourteously to guests in your home or hall.
- A particularly significant fumble or visible failure.
- Losing a family member or ally.
- Breaking an alliance.
- Minor sacrilege.
- Bringing minor shame upon one's family.

Extraordinary Deed (+1D6 Reputation)

- Swearing an epic oath.
- Defeating a superior foe (or number of foes).
- Critical use of a skill at an opportune moment.
- An outstanding success in an extraordinary endeavor.
- A prestigious marriage.
- A major alliance.
- Being the subject of a popular tale or well-known song.
- A freak stroke of luck.
- Gaining a major enemy.
- Significant act of sacrilege.
- Betraying or bringing harm to someone under your protection (such as a guest).
- A major criminal act.
- Breaking a major oath.
- Kin-slaying.
- A spectacular fumble or highly visible failure.
- Bringing major dishonor upon one's family.
- Becoming an outlaw.

Heroic Deed (+2D6 or more Reputation)

- Achieving a legendary success at a nearly impossible endeavor.
- Leading an army to victory or defeating one single-handedly.
- Defeating an enemy of divine or immortal nature.
- Marrying a noble or becoming one.
- Being the focus of a divine prophecy.
- Building an epic structure, such as a new major temple.
- A spectacular defeat.
- Slaying one's parents or children.
- An act of the darkest treachery or infamy.

Reputation from a single act provides only one award, though the gamemaster may modify the reward for multiple occurrences of the same deed, up to the total of the possible roll.

> **Example:** ***Sigmundur's battle against the trolls in Cold Valley earned him +1D3 Reputation. The gamemaster rolls and gets a result of 2, giving Sigmundur +2% to his Reputation. Later, he tells the story to Njáll, who is impressed enough to compose and publicly perform a poem about it. Having the story told about him would merit Sigmundur +1D3 Reputation, but he has already earned his +2% Reputation for this deed. The gamemaster rolls 1D3 and gets a 3, but the maximum Reputation Sigmundur can earn for the same deed is +3%, so he gains only +1% to his Reputation from Njáll's verse.***

It is possible to gain Reputation for an act and lose Honor for it, as well. Such is how infamy is born.

Tracking Reputation

The player should track the sources of the hero's Reputation and how much has been gained. Once Reputation has increased, it does not decrease. One merely becomes famous for different things.

> **Example:** ***Birna's Reputation is 5%. If she performs a spectacular trick shot with her bow, she might earn as much as +3% to her Reputation. Birna's player notes "Spectacular trick shot: +3%" on her hero sheet, increasing Birna's Reputation to 8%. Later, though, Birna ignores an insult to her Honor, as it conflicted with another Loyalty. She gains +1% to her Reputation, bringing it to 9%, and on her hero sheet she writes "Backed down from a fight with a drunken Norwegian merchant: +1%."***

Using Reputation

Reputation is used in two ways: to identify a hero and their deeds and to impress others.

Identifying a Hero

Reputation may be used by nonplayer characters to identify a hero and the nature of their fame, or for a hero to determine if they have heard of a particular nonplayer character. The gamemaster should apply any appropriate Reputation bonuses or penalties. A hero may try to augment their Reputation (or that of another person) with Orate or Sing, if they want to increase the chance of the nonplayer character recognizing them (which might be important if that hero wants to be recognized by a *goði* or even a foreign noble). If the gamemaster considers it appropriate, a hero trying to identify someone else can use (Homeland) Lore to augment the subject's Reputation.

If the roll succeeds, the one making the roll has heard of the other and of their deeds—for good or ill. This may affect how the nonplayer character reacts to the hero. Someone with a reputation for violence, outlawry, and amoral deeds might not get a good reception!

Someone with a reputation can always try to deny who they are, although such actions are considered dishonorable, and may be opposed by the Honor passion.

Impressing Others

Reputation may be used to augment Charm, Orate, or Sing. Similarly, the gamemaster may allow the hero to attempt to sway a nonplayer character's reaction to the hero.

To use Reputation to augment another skill, roll against the hero's Reputation:

- **Critical Success:** The hero's Reputation adds a +50% bonus to the skill.
- **Special Success:** The hero's Reputation adds a +30% bonus to the skill.
- **Success:** The hero's Reputation adds a +20% bonus to the skill.
- **Failure:** The hero modifies the skill by –20%.
- **Fumble:** The hero modifies the skill by –50%.

Reputation Bonuses and Penalties

Heroes get a Reputation bonus or penalty based on the social distance of the audience. Usually, a hero's Reputation among their kin is increased, as family members tend to spread the word about exceptional relatives. Conversely, a hero's Reputation diminishes with strangers and outsiders. Famous heroes might be completely unknown in distant regions of the country or abroad.

Reputation Modifiers

Circumstances	Modifier
From the same family	+25%
Well-traveled/gossiper/well-connected	+10—25%
From the hero's home quarter of Iceland	—
Outside of the hero's home quarter but from within the same homeland	–25%
Outside of the homeland where they earned most of their Reputation, but within the Norse homelands and occupied regions. (e.g., Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, etc.)	–50%
Outside of the geographical region where they earned most of their Reputation	–75%

STATUS

Status measures the respect a hero inspires in their fellow Icelanders, as well as their renown, wealth, and place within society. It is a broad measurement of how people perceive one's honor. It is earned by the person who possesses it, granted by the community around them who observe and judge the hero's behaviors.

Status and Social Rank

Status Rating	Social Rank
0	Outlaw or vagrant
01–10	Freedman
11–20	Tenant
21–80	Householder
80–99	*Goði* (chieftain-priest; pl. *goðar*)
100	Lawspeaker

Changes in a hero's social rank don't occur automatically when the hero reaches the Status score level associated with that rank.

> ***For example, a hero who has just reached 80% in Status is not automatically made a goði and given a chieftaincy. Instead, it means that the hero has the necessary social standing and potential to garner enough support to be accepted for that position if the opportunity arises.***

Remember that there is a fixed number of 39 chieftaincies in the country. For someone to become a *goði*, it is necessary that a chieftaincy become available. This may occur when a *goði* dies or decides to sell their position.

Also, the country has only one Lawspeaker position, which has a three-year mandate. Only heroes with 100% Status can garner the support needed to become a Lawspeaker.

Using Status

The gamemaster may ask a player to make a Status roll whenever a hero is trying to use their social standing to achieve a specific objective. This could be, for example, when persuading someone to provide help. Or it could be used to intimidate someone by reminding them of the respect owed the hero due to their social rank. Just like a standard skill roll, a result lower than the hero's current Status indicates a success.

Gaining Status

Status is increased by completing adventures and performing worthy deeds that bring the hero renown in the eyes of Icelandic society. At the end of each adventure, the gamemaster may award +1–3 Status to each hero in the group, provided that their exploits become well known.

Another way to increase Status is by gathering wealth.

Once the Status score reaches 100%, it cannot be increased any further. With this Status score the hero is now one of the most renowned and respected people in Iceland, and their name is known even by the kings of other Norse countries. Be mindful, however, that even heroes with 100% can lose Status if they act in dishonorable ways.

Wealth and Status

Status in Iceland is deeply connected to how prosperous and wealthy a person has become. In fact, in a country where no markets exist, and where everyone is a self-sufficient farmer, the primary reason for wealth accumulation is to gain a higher social standing. Icelanders use every opportunity to flaunt any treasure they possess, wearing silver or gold armbands and other valuable items at all social gatherings such as assemblies and feasts. When not being used, valuable objects are either stored safely at the farmhouse or buried (see **Oðinn's Law**, page 182).

For every 200 ells of *vaðmál* value of wealth acquired after hero creation, the hero can raise their Status score by 1 point. That wealth can be in the form of silver, actual ells of *vaðmál*, a ship, a farm, etc.

ÓÐINN'S LAW

Any valuable items that an individual would like to take to the afterlife do not necessarily need to be buried in their grave. Some prefer to bury their treasures while still alive. According to Óðinn's Law, the location of the buried objects is not important, if they are underground and undisturbed, and the person buries the objects themselves.

Burying your treasure while you are still alive is an excellent way to ensure there are no nasty surprises in the afterlife. You do not want to arrive in Valhalla without your favorite silver armband because your family had a change of heart and considered it too valuable to be buried with you. Furthermore, adhering to Óðinns Law in life may prevent grave robbing, as everyone will know that the grave has no treasures worth robbing.

It is a common habit to bury treasures in secret locations in Iceland before going on a Viking expedition abroad. If you are killed in battle while out of the country, your treasure will be with you when you arrive in Valhalla to feast and fight until Ragnarök.

Because buried treasure cannot be displayed at feasts and other occasions, it only affords the hero ½ as many Status points –1 point of Status for every 400 ells of *vaðmál* value.

Also, for every 400 ells of *vaðmál* of value that has been buried and dedicated to a god, the hero earns +1% to Worship (god of hero's choice). The gods favor those who plan and prepare for the afterlife.

Giving Wealth Away

THERE ARE MORE THINGS TO BE THOUGHT OF BY MEN THAN MONEY ALONE.
— The Saga of Grettir the Strong

One of the most effective ways of improving one's Status is by giving wealth away. Gift-giving is a powerful way to display power and wealth. It is always expected to be a two-way act. Giving someone a valuable gift challenges the receiver to reciprocate with a gift of equal, or even better, value. Giving someone an extremely valuable gift that is clearly beyond their ability to reciprocate can be seen as an insult.

Failure to reciprocate a gift within six months with one of equal or better value results in the loss of 1D3 points of Status.

For every 150 ells of *vaðmál* of value that a hero gives away, their Status score increases by 1 point. This is a higher rate of Status points per ell of *vaðmál* than merely acquiring and keeping wealth. It is more advantageous to give wealth away than to hoard it—at least in terms of Status.

Reputation from a single piece of wealth provides only one reward. The gamemaster may modify the reward if something else is done later with the same item that increases the hero's Status.

Example: Njáll's Status is 25%. He returns from raiding abroad having acquired a silver bracelet worth a total of 450 ells of vaðmál. As a result, he gains +2% to his Status, bringing it to 27%. Later, Njáll gives that bracelet away as a gift to a guest staying at his house. Gifting the bracelet would merit Njáll +3 Status, but he has already earned his +2 Status for owning that same bracelet, so he gains only +1% to his Status for gifting it.

Receiving a gift does not result in a Status score increase. Similarly, giving away a gift that you received from someone else does not result in a Status increase.

Losing Status

NEVER SLAY MORE THAN ONE MAN IN THE SAME STOCK, AND NEVER BREAK THE PEACE WHICH GOOD MEN AND TRUE MAKE BETWEEN THEE AND OTHERS.
—The Saga of Burned Njáll

No matter how high a hero may climb the social ladder, it is always possible to fall—sometimes all the way to the bottom.

Any dishonorable act that becomes well known, and for which the hero has not paid compensation, causes loss of Status. Whenever there is a loss of Honor that becomes well known in the community, the hero also loses 1/10 of the lost Honor in Status, rounded up.

Being found guilty of a crime by an assembly and paying the compensation amount stipulated by law does not incur a loss of Status, if the full amount of compensation is paid.

Anyone sentenced to full outlawry has their Status immediately reduced to 0. This is permanent unless the hero has the sentence reverted. In the case of lesser outlawry, the hero's Status is restored to the lowest score of their previous social rank (21% for a householder), after they complete the three years of exile prescribed by law.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RUNE MAGIC

The meaning of the Norse word *rún* is "whisper" or "secret, hidden lore, mystery". In Iceland, and throughout the Norse region, the runic alphabet is used to write simple everyday messages. In the hands of runemasters, those same runes can be combined to create rune scripts imbued with magical power.

THE ORIGINS OF THE RUNES

Beneath the roots of *Yggdrasil*, the World Tree, there are three wells. One of those is the Well of Fate.

The World Tree is the present, while the dew from the tree, which gathers in the well beneath, represents the past. The reflections of all that has ever happened shine in the waters of the Well of Fate.

Three Norns, named Urður (Past), Verðandi (Present), and Skuld (Future), spin the threads of fate at the foot of *Yggdrasil*. These powerful maiden giantesses draw from the Well of Fate every morning and water the roots of the World Tree, thus ensuring that past deeds determine future events.

The runes represent the Well of Fate's most ancient and deep mysteries. By using these mysteries of the ancient past, and thus manipulating the very laws of cause and effect in the universe, it is possible to affect the present.

Óðinn Grasps the Runes

I KNOW THAT I HUNG ON THAT WINDY TREE
SPEAR-WOUNDED, NINE FULL NIGHTS,
GIVEN TO ÓÐINN, MYSELF TO MYSELF,
ON THAT TREE THAT ROSE FROM ROOTS
THAT NO MAN KNOWS.
...
THEY GAVE ME NEITHER BREAD NOR DRINK FROM HORN,
I PEERED BELOW.
I CLUTCHED THE RUNES, SCREAMING
I GRABBED THEM, AND THEN SANK BACK.
—Óðinn, Hávamál

The god Óðinn discovered the runes while hanging upside down from a branch of the mighty World Tree *Yggdrasil* during an act of self-sacrifice. After spending nine days without water or food, Óðinn

looked down at the Well of Fate, which contains all the of past and its associated knowledge, and grasped the meaning of the runes, the secrets of the universe. Óðinn then revealed that knowledge to those he thought most worthy.

Although the runes existed prior to Óðinn's discovery, he was the first to win their knowledge.

Most often, but not always, runemasters are worshippers of Óðinn.

RUNES AS MAGIC AND LANGUAGE

The runic alphabet known to Icelanders is the same one used by other Norse countries. Occasionally used to write simple messages, rune scripts are more often used for magical purposes, or for marking important landmarks.

Few people in Norse society know how to read and write the runes. That knowledge is even less common in Iceland, where the short distances and lack of a centralized government or major wars, greatly diminish the need for written records.

The use of runes in Iceland is mainly associated with magic. The rare individuals who know rune magic are respected, but also feared for the power they command.

Laws of Rune Magic

The Law of Similarity states that like produces like. A runemaster wishing for rain must thus use the rune that has a meaning closely related to water or the weather.

The Law of Contagion states that once two things are in contact, they remain magically connected, even after separation. There is no distance limit to that magical connection. This means a runemaster wishing to affect someone with magic at a distance may use anything that has been in contact with that person, such as an item of clothing, a weapon, or a strand of hair.

The Law of Effect Singularity states that no two scripts may stack similar effects on the same target. This means that if a specific characteristic of an individual (e.g., a particular skill, armor points, hit points, STR, CON, etc.) has already been raised, or in any way affected by magic, it is not possible to further increase or alter that same characteristic again by means of a new magical rune script. Any single characteristic can only be raised or otherwise changed by magic once, and any further attempt will fail. The same applies to forces of nature—a storm brought about by magic cannot be made worse by a second magical rune script.

AFFECTING SOMEONE'S MIND

Any rune magic that targets a person's mind, such as an attempt to compel someone to perform a certain action, can be resisted with a roll of POW opposed by the runemaster's POW..

Multiple Meanings and Powers

A runemaster can extract different powers and meaning from each rune at different times. Within a magical script, however, each rune represents only a single meaning that is established when the *galdur* (the vocal part of the spell) is sung. To invoke two powers from a single rune, the runemaster must carve that rune twice in a rune script.

Magic Duration

Rune Magic has the duration of one scene or situation. This could be a battle that lasts a few minutes, a wedding party that lasts for hours, a journey that takes weeks to complete, or a harvest that lasts for months from planting to harvesting.

The affected scene is established by the runemaster when singing the *galdur* (see **Magical Rune Scripts** on pages 187–188) that activates the rune script. The rune cannot exceed one cycle of the moon's phases, or 30 days, per rune in the script. If the *galdur* does not establish the duration of the magical effect, the magic takes effect immediately and affects the current scene in which the runemaster is participating, such as a journey, battle, feast, etc.

Any hit points gained from Rune Magic beyond a hero's maximum hit points vanish when the magic expires at the end of the scene. Boosts to characteristics such as CON, STR, etc., only last for the duration of the scene.

Magic Range

The runemaster must touch whatever is to be affected by the magical power of the runes. The one exception to this rule is the Law of Contagion, as described above.

THE *ÆTTS*

The runes are arranged in three sets called *ætts*. Each *ætt* is associated with a group of the Norse gods.

Nature of Magical Effects

To an observer, the effects of rune magic are more akin to tall tales or appear to be incredible coincidences.

A magical rune script that sets fire to a house does not suddenly consume the building in a raging inferno. Rather, it works slowly by first causing dark smoke to rise from a corner of the roof, followed by a tiny fire bursting into life, and finally, the home being engulfed as the fire spreads and grows. Similarly, magic that inflicts damage on someone manifests in ways that align with the meaning of the runes in the script. They may appear to be freak natural events, such as a sudden painful cramp, a blow from a rock carried by sudden strong winds, or a lightning strike from dark clouds overhead, etc.

Becoming a Runemaster

There is no such thing as a "typical runemaster". Some are hardened warriors of many Viking raids, adept at using harmful magic against their opponents. Others are farmers who seek the magic of the runes to bring prosperity to their farms. There are also those who, perhaps secretly, have mastered the runes' power to curse anyone who poses a threat to them or their families.

All runemasters know the shapes of all 24 runes, the sounds they represent as a written alphabet, and how to use them for writing simple messages. Knowing how to unleash the magical power that each rune carries, however, is a different matter entirely. There are many secrets to be learned to become a master of the runes, and the runes must be learned one at a time.

Starting Number of Runes

Every runemaster hero begins by knowing one of the three groups of eight runes, called an *ætt*. This knowledge may have been acquired through a religious experience such as in a dream or during prayers and meditation under a cloak, or through the teachings of an already accomplished runemaster.

The first *ætt* a runemaster knows is the one associated with the god assigned the highest dedication points during the hero creation process.

The First Ætt: Freyr's Ætt

Gods: Freyr, Freyja, Óðinn, Njörður, Sif, Höður
(Creation, Destruction, and Renewal)

The Second Ætt: Hagal's Ætt

Gods: Loki, Heimdallur, Ullur, Heimdallur, Víðarr, Hel
(Human elements)

The Third Ætt: Týr's Ætt

Gods: Týr, Þór, Frigg, Baldur, Forseti
(Reaching a state of enlightenment)

LAW AND SOCIETY'S VIEW

Many people, for one reason or another, dislike anyone involved with magic and are openly hostile to any runemaster they meet. This is not a widespread attitude, but common enough that most runemasters prefer to not talk openly about their magic skills.

Using magic to harm other people, especially when unprovoked, is against the law code, and is considered a dishonorable act.

Learning More Runes

There are two ways in which a runemaster may advance their magical knowledge and learn the magical powers of more runes.

Mound Sitting

Sitting atop the burial mound of another runemaster for a full night in deep concentration, and succeeding on a roll of POW×5, summons the spirit of the deceased runemaster. The spirit is not obliged to share any knowledge with the person sitting atop their grave, however, and the hero must succeed on a Charm roll to persuade it to reveal the secret of a single rune. The Charm roll can be augmented with a relevant passion, such as family or loyalty, where appropriate.

It is possible that the spirit could ask the runemaster for a favor in exchange for the knowledge they seek.

Having persuaded the spirit to teach the power of a rune, the hero must succeed on a Rune Magic roll. The gamemaster decides which rune is learned. On a failed result, the hero cannot fully remember in the morning what was revealed to them the night and is thus unable to learn a new rune.

Any attempt to learn more than one rune from the same spirit, by returning to their grave, incurs a penalty of –20% on the Charm roll. A failure may result in a magical backlash that temporarily lowers POW by 1D3 points for nine days.

Going Under the Cloak

A runemaster may attempt to learn new runes by Going Under the Cloak at two special dates each year: the first day of the month of Summer Finding at the beginning of the summer season, and the first day of the month of Winter Finding at the start of winter. The runemaster must sit somewhere quiet, their head and body covered by a cloak, for at least 24 hours of complete solitude. At the end of that period, they may attempt a Rune Magic roll augmented by Go Under the Cloak. Success on the roll means the runemaster learns a single new rune of the gamemaster's choice.

Magical Rune Scripts

The process of creating a magical rune script can be summarized in four steps.

Step 1. Choosing the Right Runes

The very first step in creating a magical rune script is choosing the runes that will be part of it.

At least three runes must be part of the magical script. More powerful scripts combine more runes, always in an odd number—magical scripts have three, five, seven or nine runes.

The number of ways a hero may combine their known runes—produce different magical effects—is only limited by their imagination. Each rune is presented in this chapter alongside ideas on how they can be used in a magical script. These are just suggestions. Players are encouraged to creatively re-interpret and improvise rune combinations. The gamemaster has the final word on what is acceptable.

The greater the number of magical runes used, the greater is the number of effects that a rune script can have.

A rune's possible *Uses* are ways in which it may be employed to bring about change to the world around the hero. For example, a rune associated with water could be employed to bring forth rain. Each rune has many potential Uses, and the same rune can appear multiple times in the same script as long as its Use is different each time.

Each rune also has a range of potential *Effects*. Those are ways in which a rune could be used to change game system rules or a hero's abilities. Examples: bestowing STR or CON points, boosting skills, providing temporary hit points, causing direct damage, etc.

There is a limit to how many runes can be employed for their **Effect** within a magical script based on the script's size.

- Three Runes Script: Maximum of one Effect
- Five Runes Script: Maximum of two Effects
- Seven Runes Script: Maximum of three Effects
- Nine Runes Script: Maximum of four Effects

Step 2. Carving and Dying the Runes

The next step in creating a magical rune script is to carve the runes on an object with a carving knife. Most commonly, a piece of wood or a bone fragment is used for this purpose. Usually, no skill roll is required for this step, unless the carving is being done during combat (see **Creating Magical Rune Scripts During Combat**, page 188).

After the carving of the runes is completed, the next step is to dye them with the blood of the runemaster. This act infuses the runes with life essence and activates the power contained in them. At this moment, the hero's magic points are invested in the magical script (See **Magic Point Costs**, page 189).

It is also possible to dye the runes in other ways, such as using red ochre as a symbolic replacement for blood. Fire can also be used.

However, dyeing the runes with anything other than blood results in a –20% penalty to Rune Magic.

The time required for carving and dyeing a rune script is one melee round.

Step 3. Singing the Galdur

With the runes carved and dyed, it is necessary to intone a *galdur*. This is a short verse or chant declaring the desired magical effect. The *galdur* must be done while touching the target or something that has come into direct contact with the target in the past, as per the Law of Contagion (see **Laws of Rune Magic**, page 186).

The player need not perform a poetic verse but should compose and speak aloud a sentence that describes the desired effect of the rune script.

The *galdur* should be as specific as possible. It must mention the desired effect, the target, and a duration or scene (if not intended to be implemented immediately). Runemasters often call upon a favored god as part of the *galdur*.

As a general guideline, the *galdur* must contain proper nouns instead of pronouns, should be clear enough that a stranger could understand its meaning, and must directly mention the runes that have been carved.

> ***For example, a rune script containing the runes Auroch, Hail, and Jera should be accompanied by a galdur containing the words "protection", "harm", and "warrior" (or related rune meanings) somewhere in the verse or sentence.***

If the player makes an extra effort to produce a verse of poetic value, the gamemaster is encouraged to award them with a +10% bonus on the Rune Magic roll (see next step).

Step 4 - Rune Magic Roll

Creating a rune script is not an easy task, and there is always the chance that the runemaster could fail to unlock the power of the runes. In rare instances, a magic effect may still take place, but of a different nature than what the runemaster intended.

Once the runemaster has completed all the steps for creating a magical rune script and the *galdur* has been sung, it is time to judge whether the script worked or not in unleashing the full power of the runes. This is done through a Rune Magic skill roll.

Rune Magic During Combat

Preparing a magical rune script from scratch is a time-consuming task, requiring precise work with a carving knife. In normal circumstances, the hero can take their time, and no roll is necessary. In the heat of battle, however, one's carving skill is put to the test, and a Craft roll is needed.

Carving and dyeing the runes takes one full combat round to complete. The magic takes effect in the next round with the singing of the *galdur* on the DEX rank, + 1 DEX rank per rune in the script.

If the runemaster is wounded during the combat round while carving and dyeing the runes, their delicate work is disrupted, and a new attempt must be made in the next melee round.

If the Craft skill roll fails, it can be attempted again in the next round.

Rune Magic Results

Result	Effect
Critical	The magical rune script works with double effectiveness, producing an effect twice as potent. If it inflicts damage, that damage is doubled. If the script has an intended duration, the runemaster may choose to extend it. The required magic points are expended.
Special Success	The magical rune script works with 1.5 × effectiveness. The required magic points are expended.
Success	The magical rune script works just as the runemaster intended, with the predicted intensity. The required magic points are expended.
Failure	A mistake was made in the singing of the ***galdur***, and the magical effect fails to manifest. The required magic points are still locked in the carved runes of the script, and the runemaster may make another attempt to sing the ***galdur*** and unleash its power in the next melee round with a new Rune Magic roll.
Fumble	The magical effect manifests, but it is spectacularly twisted. One of the runes of the script, chosen by the gamemaster, has its meaning and Use/Effect reversed, with disastrous repercussions. The required magic points are expended.

RUNE MAGIC IN COMBAT SUMMARY

Melee Round One: Carve and dye runes (Craft roll)
Melee Round Two: Sing *galdur,* and magic takes effect (Rune Magic roll).

Preparing Rune Scripts in Advance

A cautious runemaster, especially one who is expecting danger, always has a few rune scripts prepared.

It is possible to carve a rune script and dye the runes in advance but save the singing of the *galdur* for later. When the *galdur* is finally sung later, the magic takes effect.

Preparing a single script can be accomplished in one melee round. The script can then be used anytime until the next sunrise when the magic points are washed away and return to the runemaster. When using a prepared script, the runemaster sings the *galdur* and attempts the Rune Magic skill roll to unleash the magic effect.

Players are encouraged to maintain a written list of prepared magical rune scripts.

Magic points invested in rune scripts are **locked** (see **Unlocking Magic Points**, following).

Unlocking Magic Points

Magic points invested in a rune script are **locked** and unavailable until unlocked in one of three ways: singing the galdur and unleashing the magic, having the magic expire at the next sunrise, or by physically destroying the script.

One can destroying a script by throwing the wooden piece into a fire, breaking the bone, scratching the script off the surface, or any other way that renders the script unreadable.

Once magic points are unlocked, they regenerate at the standard rate of ¼ of their current POW every six hours.

Magic Point Costs

The runemaster's must provide their own energy into a rune script to awaken the runes' power, represented by investing magic points.

Magical rune scripts containing only *Uses* and no *Effects* follow the same rules determining magic point cost.

A hero reaching 0 magic points falls unconscious.

Rune Script Magic Point Costs

Script Length	MP Cost	Max Effects	Sample Effects
3 runes	6	1	+30% to Sword skill
5 runes	10	2	+30% to Sword skill, 6 armor points
7 runes	14	3	+30% to Sword skill, 6 armor points, +4 to STR
9 runes	18	4	+30% to Sword skill, 6 armor points, +4 to STR, double critical chance

THE RUNES

The following section outlines the 24 Elder Fúþark, all of the known runes used by runemasters. Each rune of the Fúþark is described here, along with the powers they possess. The more recent Younger Fúþark are largely similar, but with some minor differences, and are used primarily for communication rather than magic.

The runes are divided into three groups of eight, called *ætts*. Each *ætt* reflects the ideals of the gods it is most closely associated with. Freyr's *ætt* pertains to the cycle of creation, destruction, and renewal. Hagal's *ætt* relates to human elements, while Týr's *ætt* concerns reaching a state of enlightenment.

Each rune's entry includes sample ways to employ them, divided into two groups: *Uses* and *Effects*.

- Uses act upon the forces of nature, the flow of destiny, or people's emotions—but not the game rules directly.
- Effects are direct changes to the rules system or changes to the abilities and other ratings of a character in the game. These can apply to the runemaster themselves or to another hero chosen by the runemaster and last for a full scene or situation.

When multiple possible *Uses* and *Effects* are described for the same rune, the runemaster must choose only one for each rune, and the content of the *galdur* must reflect that choice. Remember that the number of runes with *Effects* in a script are limited (one in a three runes script, and so forth).

Runemasters are encouraged to make creative interpretations of the meanings of the runes. The *Uses* and *Effects* listed in the following section are just examples. The final decision on what is possible to achieve with each rune rests with the gamemaster.

The First *Ætt* – Freyr's *Ætt*

(Fé)

Meaning: Wealth, cattle.
Areas of Power: Wealth, fertility, animals.

"Wealth is a source of discord
amongst kin
and fire of the sea
and path of the serpent."
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The central meaning of the rune Fé is wealth. More specifically, mobile wealth in the form of cattle. This is also the rune of Freyr, the god of fertility.

Uses

- Generating wealth, either through investment or chance finding. The exact nature of this wealth is decided by the gamemaster.
- Befriending or healing an animal.
- Bringing fertility. People trying to become pregnant often employ this rune.

Effects

- Add +30% to Farm.
- Add +30% to Animal Lore.
- Add +4 to CON.

(Úr)

Meaning: The great European wild ox, the auroch, iron slag and the drizzling rain.
Areas of Power: Strength, endurance, bravery, willpower, health, aging, nature-given wealth.

"Rain is lamentation of the clouds
and ruin of the hay-harvest
and abomination of the shepherd."
—Old Icelandic rune poem

"The auroch is proud and has
great horns:
it is a very savage beast and
fights with its horns:
a great ranger of the moors,
it is a creature of mettle"
—Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Úr carries a broad range of meanings. It represents the auroch, a large and powerful breed of cattle commonly found in Scandinavia. It is a symbol of the strength of both body and spirit, and of masculine energy.

This rune represents the sacred drizzle that flows over the branches of Yggdrasil toward the worlds that hang from the World Tree. It represents wealth, as does the rune Fé, but the Úr's wealth represents what nature provides to humanity rather than the material wealth accumulated by an individual.

Uses

- Affecting someone's strength or endurance.
- Protecting someone against magic.
- Bringing about wealth through the forces of nature, such as bringing forth just the right amount of rain to a crop field.

Effects

- Add +4 to STR. Hit points are not affected.
- Add +30% to any roll for defending from a magical attack.
- Heal 1D6+1 hit points on one hit location.

(Þurs)

Meaning: Protection, a thorny vine.
Areas of Power: Active defense, protection, plants, anger, lust.

THE THORN IS EXCEEDINGLY SHARP,
AN EVIL THING FOR ANY KNIGHT TO TOUCH,
UNCOMMONLY SEVERE ON ALL WHO SIT
AMONG THEM.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Named after a race of giants, the rune Þurs is the power of defense and destruction symbolized by thorny vines that provide protection against invaders. Depending on how it is used, Þurs can represent an active defense or an attack against adversaries. The god Þór is closely associated with this rune.

Uses

- Providing protection against enemies. How this rune provides protection depends upon what other runes are used with it.
- Affecting plants.
- Calming an angry individual or group.

Effects

- Add +30% to all weapon skills for parry only. Attacks are unmodified.
- Add +30% to Dodge.
- Add +30% to Plant Lore.

(Óss)

Meaning: The god Óðinn.
Areas of Power: Knowledge, wisdom, communication, the mouth, travel, divination, magic, mythic creatures.

ÓÐINN WAS BORN AGED
AND PRINCE OF ÁSGARÐUR
AND LORD OF VALHALLA.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

In the old rune poems, the meaning associated with the rune Óss revolves around the concept of communication, extended to include the god who gave the Norse the runes. This is Óðinn's rune, associated with the spoken word, song, poetry, and magical knowledge.

Uses

- Aiding in speech or communication.
- Affecting someone's mouth or tongue.
- Aiding in divination.

Effects

- Add +30% to Prophecy skill.
- Add +30% to any one Lore skill.
- Add +30% to *Skaldic* Poetry.

(Reið)

Meaning: Ride.
Areas of Power: Movement, riding, travel, journey.

RIDING IS JOY OF THE RIDER
AND A SWIFT JOURNEY,
AND THE LABOR OF THE HORSES
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Reid governs travel. It represents both the act of moving and the vehicle. Travel of all kinds, journeys, vehicles, roads, cargo, and travelers may all be represented by Reid in the right context. It can also indicate an unexpected or forced journey. Even the change of circumstances that break a deadlock are associated with Reid, as that, too, is a type of journey. Journeys require planning, and as such, this rune is associated with strategy, thought, and people working together.

Uses

- Influencing journeys or movements of any kind. The journey can be by any means of transportation: by boat, horse, or cart.
- Providing protection for travelers and vehicles.
- Speeding up the course of any proceedings, such as legal wrangles, long-running disputes, and negotiations that drag on without ever reaching a conclusion.

Effects

- Add +30% to Ride.
- Add +30% to Navigate.
- Add +4 to DEX.

(Kaun)

Meaning: Sore, Fire.
Areas of Power: Fire, sore, craft, destruction for the purpose of creation.

SORE IS THE BALE OF CHILDREN
AND A SCOURGE,
AND THE HOUSE OF ROTTEN FLESH.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Kaun symbolizes controlled fire and destruction for the purpose of creation. It also means creativity and craftsmanship, shaping things by control over fire, forcing the dissolution of the old in order to reshape it. It is the rune of unmaking for the sake of remaking.

Uses

- Producing light or heat as if from a fire. The intensity of the effect is determined by the runemaster. The light can be temporarily blinding, or the heat can burn the flesh of enemies. Alternatively, it is just enough light to illuminate the way ahead in darkness or keep someone warm during cold weather.
- Producing actual fire, ranging from a small bonfire to large flames.
- Destroying a small object or weakening a larger one.

Effects

- Painful burn wounds appear, causing 3D6 damage to one hit location of the runemaster's choice.
- Damage to an object or building, amounting to 3D10 hit points.
- Add +30% to Craft.

(Gjöf)

Meaning: Gift, generosity.
Areas of Power: Peace, love, aid, balance, trust.

Generosity brings credit and honor, which support one's dignity; it furnishes help and subsistence to all broken men who are devoid of aught else.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Gjöf symbolizes a gift that originates or results from the connection between people. Accepting a gift means taking on the obligation to give something in return. Often, a gift is met with a similar gift so that neither party is indebted to the other. Therefore, Gjöf is the rune of giving and receiving. Through this system of give-and-take, everything balances out. Gjöf also represents contracts, agreements and alliances, and any interactions where material wealth or honor is exchanged.

Uses

- Influencing agreements or negotiation, even at an assembly.
- Making someone more likely to come to the runemaster's aid.
- Aiding in forging new personal relationships.

Effects

- Add +30% to Charm.
- Add +30% to Oratory.
- Heal 1D6+1 hit points on one hit location.

(Vend)

Meaning: Bliss.
Areas of Power: Happiness, relationship, hope, kinship.

Bliss he enjoys who knows not pain, sorrow nor anxiety, and himself has prosperity and bliss and a good enough house.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Vend is the rune of happiness in a social setting. It is not about solitary ecstasy but a joy that comes from relationships, especially those relationships that involve connecting people through familial, sexual, or emotional bonds. Vend is connected to bliss such as one experiences in a great feast surrounded by family and friends. It can also be used to aid in offsetting negative emotions.

Uses

- Aiding in situations involving happiness and joy.
- Offsetting negative emotions.
- Calming an angry crowd enough that they will listen.

Effects

- Add +30% to Charm.
- Add +30% to Insight.
- Add +4 to CHA.

The Second *Ætt* – Hagal's *Ætt*

(Hagall)

Meaning: Hail.
Areas of Power: Destruction, transformation, weather.

Hail is cold grain and shower of sleet and sickness of serpents.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

Hagall is the rune of disruption in preparation for change, blight, or destruction. It also symbolizes the unpredictable and destructive sides of nature, such as sudden weather changes and hailstorms.

Uses

- Awakening the harmful and destructive side of another rune, reversing that rune's meaning.
- Bringing forth a literal destructive hailstorm capable of causing damage similar to being hit by a large hailstone.
- Transforming an object into something else of the same base material.

Effects

- Damage an object or building, causing 3D10 hit points damage.
- Cause 3D6 hit points damage to one hit location. Manifests as frostbite, getting hit by a hailstone, etc.
- Cause a character to slow down as if struggling against strong winds. The character's movement rate is lowered to ¼ of normal (round up).

(Nauð)

Meaning: Necessity.
Areas of Power: Endurance, trouble, deliverance.

Necessity is grief of the bondmaid
and state of oppression
and toilsome work.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

Nauð is the rune of necessity and constraint. Whereas Vend is a rune of change, Nauð is nearly the opposite. It is representative of stresses, struggles, and ordeals, but also gives the strength of will and ability to overcome those ordeals. Therefore, Nauð symbolizes both trouble and deliverance.

Uses

- Aiding in overcoming physical or mental hardships.
- Helping with extended physical challenges, such as running for hours.
- Dispelling tiredness.

Effects

- Add +30% to Treat Poison.
- Add +30% to Survival.
- Add +4 to CON.

(Íss)

Meaning: Ice.
Areas of Power: Cold, calming a situation.

Ice is bark of rivers
and roof of the wave
and destruction of the doomed.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Íss symbolizes ice, not only in its physical form, but also in its characteristics of solidity, contraction, stillness, calmness, and immutability.

Uses

- Produce ice in any shape the runemaster desires: a sheet of ice on the ground, people, objects, etc. The runemaster chooses the amount of ice created to a maximum volume of 1 cubic meter.
- Calming a tense situation, "cooling" the spirits of all affected and thus deescalating strife.
- Cooling a relationship, such as weakening the bond between a chieftain and their closest followers.

Effects

- Add +30% to Skiing.
- Add +30% to Listen.
- Add +4 to POW.

(Ár)

Meaning: Year, Harvest.
Areas of Power: Harvest, marriage, justice.

The yew is a tree with
rough bark,
hard and fast in the earth,
supported by its roots,
a guardian of flame and a
joy upon an estate.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Harvest is a blessing to men
and good summer
and fully ripe crops.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

Ár is the rune of harvest, the reaping of one's labors, and of divine aid. It represents the marriage of the sky and the earth, the rain and the soil. Along with human labor, it brings about a fruitful harvest. Its influence extends to nearly any undertaking in life, any long-term plan or relationship, or the birth of a child.

Uses

- Securing a good harvest.
- Anything to do with married couples, but never to harm their relationship.
- Extending the maximum duration of a rune script, doubling the standard 30 days to 60 days per rune in the script.

Effects

- Add +30% to Farm.
- Add +30% to Plant Lore.
- Add +30% to Customs (any).

(Ýr)

Meaning: Yew tree.
Areas of Power: Patience, death, the dead.

Yew is bent bow,
and brittle iron
And Farbauti (a giant) of the arrow.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Yr symbolizes the evergreen yew tree, the longest living tree in Europe. Trees are regarded as a link between the earth and the sky, and the long-lived yew tree extends this link to the world of the dead.

Uses

- Aiding in anything that requires patience.
- Increasing the likelihood that someone will die, not by direct damage, but rather by some dangerous pursuit.
- Communicating with the dead. The runemaster must say the full name of the deceased while holding a handful of soil from their grave. The spirit may answer one question for each rune in the script. The spirit is not required to speak the truth and has no knowledge of anything after their time of death. Those who received a full Christian burial cannot be contacted.

Effects

- Add +30% to a skill that demands patience, such as Craft.
- Double the chance of a fumble result in one skill of the runemaster's choice, to 10% of the chance of failure.
- Delay death until the end of the scene for anyone bleeding to death (on a result of "hero bleeds to death"). Does not work in cases of instant death.

(Peorð)

Meaning: Fate.
Areas of Power: Mysteries, gambling, luck, detecting poison, concealment.

GAMES OF CHANCE ARE A SOURCE OF
RECREATION AND AMUSEMENT TO THE GREAT,
WHERE WARRIORS SIT BLITHELY TOGETHER
IN THE BANQUETING-HALL.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Peorð is the rune of fate, symbolizing the power of the Norns to determine the future of every person.

Uses

- Manipulating luck, and the overall probability of a given event coming to pass.
- Detecting danger behind a seemingly harmless situation.
- Detecting poison.

Effects

- Add +30% to Game.
- Add +30% to Conceal.
- Add +30% to Insight.

(Elgur)

Meaning: Elk.
Areas of Power: Defense, protection.

THE ELK-SEDGE USUALLY LIVES IN THE FEN,
GROWING IN THE WATER. IT WOUNDS
SEVERELY,
STAINING WITH BLOOD ANY MAN
WHO MAKES A GRAB AT IT.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

Elgur is primarily a rune of passive defense. It symbolizes sacred ground and sanctuary. While Þurs provides active and offensive protection, Elgur is oriented towards passive protection, especially in connection with all that is sacred.

Uses

- Barring a door so that one specific individual is unable to open it.
- Alleviating the effects of a curse for a limited time.
- Making any large object, or collection of small objects, into a shield with the same effectiveness as a well-built medium round shield.

Effects

- Adds +30% to Hide.
- Adds +30% to Shield.
- Bestows 6 armor points to all hit locations. Not cumulative with armor worn (use the higher value).

(Sól)

Meaning: Sun.
Areas of Power: Light, heat, triumph.

SUN IS THE SHIELD OF THE CLOUDS
AND SHINING RAY
AND DESTROYER OF ICE.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Sól represents the sun and its light defeating darkness and the victory of good over evil. It also symbolizes the lightning bolt that links heaven and earth.

Uses

- Changing the weather to clear skies.
- Bringing forth warmth or light.
- Detecting evil intentions.

Effects

- Add +30% to any one weapon skill.
- Add +30% to Search.
- Increase the chance of a critical result on one skill of the runemaster's choice to double, up to 10% of the chance of success.

Third *Ætt* – Týr's *Ætt*

(Týr)

Meaning: The god Týr.
Areas of Power: Danger, warrior, battle, honesty, justice.

TYR IS A ONE-HANDED GOD,
AND LEAVINGS OF THE WOLF
AND PRINCE OF TEMPLES.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The first rune of the third *ætt* represents the god Týr, the god of courage, glory, and justice. Týr sacrificed his right hand to allow the binding of the Fenrir wolf that threatened the cosmic order.

Uses

- Influencing a battle, a warrior, and the dangers that warriors put themselves in.
- Affecting legal proceedings and generally bringing out the truth in all matters.
- Making someone speak the truth.

Effects

- Add +30% to Battle.
- Add +30% to Law.
- Add +30% to any one weapon skill.

(Bjarkan)

Meaning: Birch.
Areas of Power: Childbirth, rebirth, growth, health, healing, regeneration.

Birch is a leafy twig
and little tree
and fresh young shrub.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Bjarkan represents the many qualities associated with the birch tree, such as purification, healing, and the warmth of spring returning after the winter months.

Uses

- Influencing children or childbirth.
- Aiding in healing wounds.
- Preventing pregnancy, but not for ending an existing pregnancy.

Effects

- Heal 1D6+1 hit points on one hit location.
- Add +4 to SIZ. Hit points are not affected.
- Add +30% to Treat Disease.

(Eykur)

Meaning: Horse.
Areas of Power: Horses, travel, loyalty, pride.

A steed is the joy of aethlings or eorls,
a horse proud of hoof, where men
about it,
wealthy, on stallions, swap speech,
and to the unquiet is ever a solace.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Eykur is associated with movement, but unlike the rune Reid, it concerns the vehicle of movement, the horse, and all the symbolism surrounding it. It also relates to the partnership between horse and rider, the loyalty of the horse to the rider, and the pride in that partnership.

Uses

- Spreading a rumor.
- Influencing a horse.
- Reinforcing the notions of loyalty and faithfulness.

Effects

- Doubles a horse's movement rate.
- Doubles a horse's hit points.
- Add +30% to Ride.

(Maður)

Meaning: Mankind.
Areas of Power: Society, human qualities, human flaws, mortality.

Man is delight of man
and augmentation of the earth
and adorner of ships.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

The rune Maður represents essential human qualities. It signifies our shared experiences and represents the social order and the idea of mutual support.

Uses

- Affecting society in general or society's reaction towards the runemaster or any other person.
- Revealing knowledge by allowing the runemaster to tap into the pool of knowledge at the Well of Fate.
- Giving the affected character any human quality or flaw, such as making someone more honest, greedy, brave, or cowardly, etc. (As with any magic script affecting someone's mind, the target character can try to resist with a POW vs. POW roll.)

Effects

- Add +30% to Speak Other Language (any).
- Add +30% to any one Lore skill.
- Add +4 to INT.

(Lögur)

Meaning: Water.
Areas of Power: Ships, sea journey, mutability, water, treasure, rapid change.

Water is eddying stream
and broad geysir
and land of the fish.
—Old Icelandic rune poem

Lögur is another journey rune, this one of the sea. To Icelanders, the seas are a road to adventure and treasure.

Uses

- Affecting the sea or any other body of water.
- Aiding in sea journeys.
- Increase the speed of any type of change or transformation.

Effects

- Add +30% to Shiphandling.
- Add +30% to Navigate.
- Add +30% to Swim.

(Ing)

Meaning: The god Ing (Freyr).
Areas of Power: Fertility, pregnancy, health, peace, safety.

Ing was first amidst the East Danes
so seen, until he went eastward
over the sea. His wagon ran after.
Thus, the Heardings named that hero.
—Old English Runic Poem

The rune Ing refers to the god Freyr and, therefore, to fertility, health, peace, and safety. It also symbolizes the concentration of creative power just before its full realization.

Uses

- Inspiring new ideas. The runemaster may ask the gamemaster one question concerning a situation.
- Influencing someone's dreams.
- Communicating with elves.

Effects

- Add +30% to Second Sight.
- Add +30% to Survival.
- Add +30% to First Aid.

(Óðal)

Meaning: Possession.
Areas of Power: Inheritance, estate, possession.

An estate is very dear to every man,
if he can enjoy there in his house
whatever is right and proper in
constant prosperity.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Óðal represents possessions and property, especially in connection with the family. It is associated with both the family home and the virtue of loyalty toward one's family.

Uses

- Influencing family matters.
- Getting information on the location of a lost item (direction, distance, etc.)
- Finding a grave or corpse.

Effects

- Add +30% to Customs (any).
- Add +30% to Area Lore (any).
- Add +30% to Spot Hidden.

(Dagur)

Meaning: Day.
Areas of Power: Day, time, light, joy, unexpected luck.

Day, the glorious light of the
Creator, is sent by the Lord:
it is beloved of men, a source of hope
and happiness to rich and poor,
and of service to all.
—Old Anglo-Saxon rune poem

The rune Dagur is associated with the concept of time and the cycle of day and night, as well as the light and warmth that come with each new day. It is connected to luck in the sense of a joyous surprise.

Uses

- Manipulating the passing of time in relation to an event, making it last twice, or half, as long.
- Bringing about a lucky and unexpected event.
- Revealing a vision of the past or of a likely future.

Effects

- Double a character's healing rate.
- Eliminate penalties when fighting in darkness.
- Add +30% to Prophecy.

Rune Power Limits

Each rune carries multiple meanings, and each can be interpreted in different ways according to the situation at hand. This makes rune magic very flexible. There are, however, limits to the amount of power that can be unlocked from each rune.

Use the following guidelines when evaluating the maximum power level of a rune's Effect.

Rune Effect Limits

Effect	Limit
Skill points	+30%
Temporary hit points	+9 hit points
Healing	1D6+1 hit points to one hit location
Armor points	6 armor points to all hit locations (not cumulative with armor worn)
Damage to creature	3D6 hit points to one hit location
Damage to object or building	3D10 hit points
Damage bonus to weapon	+2D4
Characteristic increase	+4 points

All Effects that boost a skill or characteristic or that give extra hit points beyond the character's maximum hit points are temporary and vanish at the end of the scene.

Examples of Rune Scripts

(Fé + Óss + Gjöf)

Meanings: Animal + Communication + Trust
Galdur: "Allow Snæbjörn to *speak* (Óss) to his *sheep* (Fé) and have them *trust* (Gjöf) him so he can lead them back to his farm."

Fé can represent any animal, in this case, sheep. Óss is used with the meaning of speech, which fits its communication area of power. Vend is used to build a relationship of trust. All the runes in this script are being employed for their Use, and not Effect, as they are affecting the setting only and not the rules system directly.

The scene, and thus the duration of the magic effect, is clearly defined as the time it takes until Snæbjörn gets his sheep back to his farm. This can be as many days as necessary but cannot exceed 90 days.

Since the target character is the farmer Snæbjörn, the runemaster needs to touch him while singing the *galdur*. Alternatively, they must hold something that has been in contact with Snæbjörn, as per the magical Law of Contagion.

(Hagall + Lögur + Úr + Hagall + Lögur + Hagall + Óðal)

Meanings: Weather + Change + Strength + Hail + Sea + Destruction + Possession
Galdur: "Tonight, the *weather* will *change*. A strong *hailstorm* will come, and the *seas* will rise, *destroying* the longship *belonging* to Þorbjörn the Bald."

As this is a seven-rune script, it can enact many magical effects and be long-lasting.

In this script, only one rune is being used for its Effect: the destruction or damage caused by the rune Hagall. All other runes in this script are being employed for their Use.

The direct damage to objects caused by Hagall is limited to 3D10 hit points. The other runes in the script can affect the ship in a variety of ways, such as blowing it out to sea, throwing someone overboard, ripping sails, causing damage to the mast, etc.

The target is the longship belonging to Þórbjorn the Bald, and thus, the runemaster must touch the longship itself or something that has been aboard it while singing the *galdur*.

(Kaun + Kaun + Kaun)

Meanings: Fire + Sore + Destruction (for the purpose of creation)
Galdur: "Bjargmundur the Strong has wronged me, and for that, he must pay with the *destruction* (Kaun) of his farmhouse by *fire* (Kaun) which will *injure* (Kaun) him. This allows me to *build a new* farm for myself where his once stood."

This script uses the same rune, Kaun, three times, but each time with a different meaning. The third rune in this three-rune script has the "sore" Effect (remember, a three-rune script can only have one Effect), causing 3D6 hit points of damage to the target character.

The scene is the creation of the fire, everything else happens because of the fire. The duration of the magic effect is therefore contained within the moment in which the flames appear and take hold on the house.

The actual consequences of the fire, whether the house is destroyed entirely, or the runemaster gets their wish in assuming Bjargmundur's land, is a matter for the gamemaster to decide. It depends on many factors, such as the efforts of the occupants to contain the fire. Remember, the fire itself is not magical; it was only started with magic.

The target is Bjargmundur's farmhouse. Therefore, the runemaster must touch the farmhouse while singing the *galdur* or touch some object that has been in contact with the farmhouse.

(Gjöf + Ár + Vend)

Meanings: Gift + Harvest + Bliss
Galdur: "I ask Freyja to intervene so that Guðrún, the daughter of Helgi the Brave, will love me and accept my *marriage proposal*, making me a very *happy* person."

These three runes all have Effects that may help with courtship. Gjöf may give a boost to the hero's Charm, while Ár may increase Customs, and Vend may raise Charisma. All can potentially help the runemaster. As this is a three-rune script, however, only one rune may be employed for its Effect. The desired result of the script, the acceptance of the marriage proposal, is by no means guaranteed, as the magic only increases the love-struck person's chance of being considered as a prospective mate.

Because the scene is not specified in the *galdur*, it takes effect immediately. The runemaster has until the end of the current situation—be it a feast or assembly—to ask Guðrún for marriage with improved chances.

(Íss + Nauð + Sól)

Meanings: Ice + Trouble + Triumph
Galdur: "With the blessing of the gods, I command a sheet of *ice* to form on the ground to cause my assailants *trouble* and lead to my *triumph*."

This script has an immediate effect, as it doesn't specify a later time in the *galdur*. The opponent must make a DEX×5 roll to keep from slipping and falling. If the runemaster achieves a critical success on their Rune Magic roll, the area covered by ice can be larger and affect more characters.

(Elgur + Yr + Peorð)

Meanings: Protection + Death + Poison
Galdur: "May the power of the runes *protect* me from those who seek to cause my *death* with *poison*."

The three runes are combined in this script with the purpose of protecting someone from being poisoned. The magic may manifest by shattering the drinking horn containing the poisoned drink or in any other creative way imagined by the player or gamemaster.

(Dagur + Eykur + Bjarkan)

Meanings: Luck + Horse + Health
Galdur: "I ask the gods to allow me the *luck* to find a healthy *horse* so I can ride home and leave the glacier behind before its cold *kills* me."

As the rune Dagur is connected to unexpected luck, it may bring a surprise twist to the results. It could be that the horse is, in fact, an elven horse or one that is being chased by a hungry troll. Or perhaps the horse is carrying a dead man. If the gamemaster is feeling particularly mischievous, the horse could even be a nykur (page 272).

(Gjöf + Maður + Lögur)

Meanings: Trust + People + Sea Journey
Galdur: "Because I have been outlawed, I call upon the power of the runes to help me gain the *trust* of the *people* at Borgarfjörður, so that they may allow me to *travel* with them to Norway."

This script makes the runemaster seem more trustworthy. The runemaster chooses if the rune Gjöf is being used for its Effect of adding +30% to Charm or if they prefer to employ the rune for its Use. If the rune's Use is employed, the gamemaster determines the villagers' reaction during their initial encounter with the runemaster.

(Þurs + Fé + Elgur + Úr + Týr)

Meanings: Active Defense + Animal + Passive Defense + Battle + Mythic Creature
Galdur: "As I enter a troll's cave to rescue my brother, I trust the runes to *protect* me with the speed of a *cat* and the *toughness* of a bull in the *battle* against the *monster*."

This script employs two rune Effects: Þurs adds +30% to Dodge, and Elgur provides 6 armor points to all hit locations. The duration is specified as the scene of the raid on a troll's cave.

(Kaun + Kaun + Hagall)

Meanings: Sore + Fire + Hail

Galdur: "I call upon the gods to give Þórbjorn the Ugly the *sores* he deserves for wronging my brother. May he feel my wrath with *fire* and *hail*."

The vengeful runemaster is calling for one Effect of the rune Kaun to inflict 3D6 hit points of damage to Þórbjorn. The source of the damage is described in the *galdur* as hail and fire. The runemaster describes how a hailstorm will force Þórbjorn to gather with others inside a farmhouse that will catch fire. If Þórbjorn survives his burns, he will most likely be even more deserving of the nickname "the Ugly".

Bind-runes

Bind-runes are a combination of runes carved in such a way that they share some common lines and make up an entirely new design. Each bind-rune is unique. Even when two runemasters create a bind-rune using the same runes as its base, each runemaster will combine them differently, resulting in a different final shape.

A bind-rune is used to enchant objects, lending magical power to anyone who carries that object. Unlike rune scripts, however, the magic on bind-runes does not fade with time. It can be activated for as long as the object itself remains whole and the bind-rune shape is clear and undamaged.

The most common type of object that may carry a bind-rune is a talisman, such as necklaces, brooches, and rings. Weapons such as swords, axes, and spears can also be enchanted with bind-runes.

An object carved with a bind-rune can be used by anyone and is not tied to the runemaster or to any one specific individual.

Creating a Bind-rune

Creating a magical effect that can potentially last forever requires a sacrifice of the runemaster's own innate magic—permanent points of POW. Because this sacrifice is so great, items enchanted with bind-runes are rare and are only created in extreme situations, such as to protect someone from harm.

A bind-rune shape is not so much created by the runemaster as it is revealed to them. The first step in creating a bind-rune is to **Go Under the Cloak** (see page 91). This involves meditating and communing with the gods, without food or drink, for as many days as the number of runes in the bind-rune. At the end of this period, with a successful Go Under the Cloak roll, the runemaster emerges with a vision of the bind-rune shape.

The runemaster must then make a Rune Magic roll to fully comprehend the design. Failure means they are unable to remember it correctly. This roll can be attempted again after resting for nights equal to the number of runes in the bind-rune.

Finally, a Craft roll of the correct material type is necessary when carving the design. Failure means that the shape does not carry any magical power, and the permanent points of POW are not expended. The runemaster may try again but must wait the number of days equal to the number of runes in the bind-rune. Going Under the Cloak a second time is not necessary.

Each bind-rune design may only be carved once. Further attempts to carve the same bind-rune will result in no magical effect. Additionally, an object may only carry a single bind-rune. If a second bind-rune is carved on an object, all bind-runes on that object lose their power.

A bind-rune can be built with an odd number of runes, with a minimum of three. A runemaster may only create a bind-rune made from the runes they know. Just as with rune scripts, only one rune out of three, two out of five, three out of seven, and four out of nine, can have an active Effect. These are the "active runes". The other runes are present only to complete the magical shape.

The power of bind-runes is limited to Effects only. Uses are not counted. This means that bind-runes cannot affect the environment or cause an extreme change in a person.

- **Three runes:** 1 active rune / Effect, costs 1 permanent point of POW to create
- **Five runes:** 2 active runes / Effects, costs 2 permanent points of POW to create
- **Seven runes:** 3 active runes / Effects, costs 3 permanent points of POW to create
- **Nine runes:** 4 active runes / Effects, costs 4 permanent points of POW to create

Possible Effects of Each Active Rune in a Bind-Rune

- Increasing/decreasing a Characteristic (STR, DEX, INT, etc) by +2.
- Increasing/decreasing one skill by +20%.
- +4 armor points to the area of the body directly in contact with the object, plus +2 armor points to other areas. These are not cumulative with armor worn.

For example, a ring or bracelet can give +4 armor points to the arm wearing it, plus +2 armor points to all other body areas.

- Increase weapon damage by +1D4.
- Increase a healing action by +1D4 hit points (see **Healing Stones**, page 199).

Analyzing a Bind-rune

With a successful Rune Magic roll, a runemaster can recognize if a bind-rune was properly made and what power it carries.

Using a Bind-rune

Any hero can use a talisman or weapon that bears a bind-rune, not just runemasters.

To enjoy the effects of a bind-rune, the hero must first activate it by spending 3 magic points. This only takes only a thought and can be done as part of any combat action without affecting DEX rank.

The bind-rune's effect lasts until the start of the hero's next turn.

EXAMPLE

Njáll's broadsword bears a bind-rune that gives it +1D4 damage. When the bind-rune is activated, Nj'áll's total damage roll with the sword is 1D8+2+2D4, with his damage modifier also accounted for. His Broadsword skill is 90%.

During a journey through a highland path, Njáll is ambushed by desperate outlaws and must fight for his life. After parrying an attack, he attacks their leader with his sword and chooses to activate the rune-bind on the sword as part of that attack action, paying 3 magic points. The blow lands on the right leg, but Njáll's player rolls poorly. The resulting damage, even with the extra +1D4 provided by the rune-bind, is not enough to incapacitate or kill the outlaw leader. Njáll parries the next attacks against him.

When Njáll's next turn comes, the bind-rune on the sword is no longer active. He chooses once again to activate it and pays the 3 magic points cost. Njáll's second attack is a success. This time, the damage roll with the +1D4 is enough to kill the bandit leader.

Njáll has spent 6 of his 11 magic points so far. With only 5 magic points left, he can only afford to activate the bind-rune on the sword for one more attack. He can use it when he gets more magic points, but that takes time.

Examples of Bind-runes

Þurs + Úr + Fé

Active Rune: Þurs (Defense)
Effect: +20% to Dodge

The active rune is Þurs, employed with its meaning of active protection.

Þurs + Úr + Fé

Active Rune: Úr (Endurance)
Effect: +2 to CON

This bind-rune combines the same runes as the previous one, but in a different shape that makes Úr the central and active rune instead of Þurs. This shifts the effect from increasing Dodge to increasing CON.

Gjöf + Vend + Nauð + Peorð + Ár

Active Runes: Gjöf (Love) and Vend (Relationship)
Effects: +20% to Charm, and +2 to CHA

The owner of this item will be quite popular at feasts and other gatherings.

Peorð + Sól + Óðal

Active Rune: Peorð (Luck)
Effects: +20% to Prophecy

The hero carrying this talisman will surely gain a reputation for their accurate prophecies.

Sól + Kaun + Bjarkan + Týr + Dagur

Active Runes: Sól (Heat) and Kaun (fire)
Effects: +20% to Sword and +1D4 damage

A weapon engraved with this bind-rune feels perfectly balanced, allowing the hero to inflict extra damage.

Healing Stones

The most common type of rune-bind talisman is perhaps the healing stone (*Lyfsteinn*). These are basalt stones roughly the size of a closed fist, carved with a bind-rune that gives them healing properties. Touching a healing stone while performing a healing action, such as attempting First Aid or enacting healing magic, adds +1D4 to the number of hit points healed when that action is successful. Each time a healing stone is used, like any rune-bind, it must be activated at the cost of 3 magic points.

SCORN POLES

Here I place this Scorn Pole and turn it against King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhild–I turn this against all the spirits of the land, that they may all be lost, not finding their homes, until King Eiríkur and Queen Gunnhild are driven out of the country.

—Egill's Saga

There are times when someone's anger runs so deep, when they are so disgusted at an enemy's actions, that they turn to Hel, the goddess of Death and Pestilence, to enact revenge.

A scorn pole (*Níðstöng*) is a magical way of disrupting and angering the land spirits inhabiting the ground where a farm is located. The result is a type of curse where the accursed farm performs poorly for as long as the scorn pole stands. Animals become sick and die, and crops always fail. The hero who owns the farm has a penalty of –50% to Farm, and as a result, they stand to lose much of their Status during the coming years (see **Farm Circumstances**, pages 284–285). After many years of hardship and misery, the farmer could even be forced to sell or abandon their accursed farm.

The ritual to create a scorn pole may be performed by anyone; no Rune Magic skill is necessary. The magical power lies in knowing the proper ritual and performing it, with the correct sequence of runes being engraved and the correct words of power being intoned. This ritual is not widely known.

Creating a Scorn Pole

First, a pole three meters (10 feet) high must be covered in correctly carved runes. Secondly, the severed head of a horse must be put on the top of the pole, facing the direction of the farm to be cursed. Lastly, it is necessary to intone the correct words of power, invoking the destructive forces of Hel, to complete the ritual and activate the curse.

Creating a scorn pole is a dishonorable action and results in the loss of 2D6 points of Honor.

Destroying a Scorn Pole

It is well known that Hel does not take kindly to those who disrupt something that was consecrated to her. Taking a scorn pole down results in being cursed with bad luck by Hel, the Goddess of Death. This results in the immediate loss of 2 points of POW. The only exception is when the person who created the pole removes it themselves, in which case there is no ill effect in doing so. It is wise, therefore, for someone who has been targeted with a scorn pole to seek out the person who created it and force them to take it down.

RUNE MAGIC CHEAT SHEET

Rune Magic Fundamentals: Building a Simple Three Runes Script

- Determine what your hero wants to affect with magic and in what way (positive/negative, etc.).
- Look at the runes they know.
- Pick one rune that can be used to enact the desired effect.
- Choose two more runes to combine with the first to form a sentence. This is the *galdur*.

Full Magic Rules Reference

Creating a Magical Rune Script

1. Choose the runes.
2. Carve and dye the runes on an object (time required: one combat round). If during combat, must roll **Craft**.
3. In the following melee round, sing a *galdur* stating the purpose of the magical rune script.
4. Roll **Rune Magic**.

Steps 1 and 2 may be done in advance. Steps 3 and 4 can then be completed later, before the next sunrise.

The magic can take effect immediately or at a time specified by the *galdur*.

When singing the *galdur*, it is necessary to touch the target or something that has been in direct contact with the target (Law of Contagion).

Number of runes in a script: three, five, seven, or nine.

Magic Point Cost

- Two magic points per rune in the script.

Rune Powers

- **Uses** are the meanings associated with the runes and are used to manipulate the reality of the setting, such as using the water rune to bring forth rain. Runes can also appear in a script simply to complete its meaning.
- **Effects** modify the rules system itself, such as boosting characteristics, skill scores, etc. The runemaster chooses which rune or runes in the script are being employed for their Effect, if any.

Mechanical Effect Limits

- **Three-rune Script:** Maximum of 1 Effect
- **Five-runes Script:** Maximum of 2 Effects
- **Seven-rune Script:** Maximum of 3 Effects
- **Nine-rune Script:** Maximum of 4 Effects

CHAPTER TWELVE

SEIÐUR MAGIC

There are plenty of people so foolish that they believe nothing but what they have seen with their own eyes or heard with their own ears—never anything unfamiliar to them, such as the councils of the wise, or the strength and amazing skills of the great heroes, or the way in which seiður may bring death or a lifetime of misery for some, or bestow worldly honors, riches and rank on others. Those practitioners would sometimes stir up the elements, and sometimes calm them down, just like Óðinn and all those who learnt from him these skills, of magic and healing.

—The Saga of Walking Hrolfur

***Seiður* magic** is a form of shamanism in which the practitioner communes with spirits, powers of the land, and the gods. They may even touch the very strands of fate that guide the lives of all.

The rituals of *seiður* can take many hours to perform and have a vast array of effects. There are rituals for divination and clairvoyance; for seeking out that which is hidden, both in the secrets of the mind and in physical locations; for healing the sick and wounded; for bringing good luck; for controlling the weather; and many more. *Seiður* can also be used to cause harm: to curse an individual or an enterprise, to blight the land and make it barren, to induce or worsen illness, to tell false futures and thus set their recipients on the road to disaster, to cause injury and misfortune.

A practitioner of *seiður* is called a *seiðkona* or *a seiðmaður*. While the original meaning of these titles was gendered, they may be used interchangeably.

Seiður magic is cast with the *Seiður* Magic skill (page 92), while its practices and effects are described in this chapter.

Freyja and Seiður

Njorður's daughter was Freyja. She presided over the sacrifice. It was she who first acquainted the Æsir with seiður, which was customary among the Vanir.

—The Saga of the Ynglingar

Seiður was first known only to the *Vanir* tribe of gods. The highest master of the magical arts among them was the goddess Freyja. After the Æsir-Vanir war ended in a stalemate, Freyja became the priestess of sacrificial offerings among the gods, and she introduced the practice of *seiður* to the Æsir and later to the mortal inhabitants of Miðgarður. Most *seiður* practitioners are worshippers of Freyja.

Rune Magic vs. *Seiður* Magic

The magic of the runes and *seiður* magic are different in many ways. The two are set apart not only by their different origins and source of magical energies, but also by their practice methods.

	Rune Magic	*Seiður* Magic
Preparation Time	Immediate	Requires a long ritual
Duration of Effect	Usually short	Can be very long
Effect Target	Usually self	Mainly other people
Direct Damage	Yes	No
Practitioners Can Combine Forces	No	Yes

The Four Realms of *Seiður*

Seiður magic is divided into four **realms**:

- **Mind:** Affects the mind, perception, and the capacity to think clearly.
- **Body:** Affects the flesh, health, strength, and stamina.
- **Spirit:** Connects the practitioner with the spirits of the land and affects the spiritual well-being of others.
- **Weave:** Discerns fate and alters its course by re-weaving part of its web.

When a new practitioner is learning *seiður*, they will always find one of the four realms to be easier than the others. This is the practitioner's **focus realm**. Every adventurer with a skill rating in the *Seiður* Magic skill must choose one of the four realms as their focus realm. Casting spells outside one's focus realm is possible but more difficult.

The Ritual

Seiður magic depends on performing rituals that attune the practitioner to the magical binding energies of the world, to the World Tree, and to the will of the gods. Each realm requires a different type of ritual. They all involve chanting to some degree.

- **Mind:** Entering a trance through rhythmic chanting.
- **Body:** Drumming to the rhythm of the beating heart of the target.
- **Spirit:** Dancing and movements that call forth the attention of the spirits.
- **Weave:** Weaving a cloth or braid by hand or with weaving tablets.

The time required is 10 minutes for each magic point invested in the ritual.

A "spell-working scaffold" (*seiðhjallur*) is often used by the *seiður* practitioner as a symbolic representation of the World Tree and of the practitioner's own spiritual ascent. Such a scaffold can be built with a successful Craft (carpentry) roll, must be made by the practitioner, and can only be used by them. It provides a bonus of +20% to the *Seiður* Magic rating for the practitioner sitting or standing atop it.

Society's View

> Óðinn had the skill which gives great power and which he practiced himself. It is called seiður, and by means of it he could know the fate of men and predict events that had not yet come to pass; and by it he could also inflict bane on men, or loss of soul or waning health, or also take wit or power from some men, and give them to others.
>
> —The Saga of the Ynglingar

The presence of a *seiðkona* or ***seiðmaður*** in a community is seen as bringing good fortune. They are also feared to some degree, however, as they can also reverse the fortunes of those who displease them. Some of the older and more renowned practitioners of *seiður* have such a frightening reputation that people are afraid to make eye contact with them.

Performing *Seiður*

Seiður Magic is powered by the practitioner's magic points (see page 31). Every *seiður* spell drains magic points from the practitioner's total.

Performing a Seiður Ritual, Step by Step

Step 1. Declare the intended effect and realm. You can invent any effect you like or pick one from the example spells provided in this chapter.

Step 2. Choose the levels of the three spell elements: Duration, Distance, and Dimension (described below). Make sure to deduct the total magic points cost from the total on your character sheet.

Step 3. Make a *Seiður* Magic roll. If the ritual is outside your focus realm, there is a –20% penalty. The roll can be augmented by a relevant skill related to the ***Seiður*** realm ritual, e.g., Mind rituals can be augmented with the Sing skill, Body rituals with the Play Instrument skill, Spirit rituals with the Dance skill, and Weave rituals with the Craft (Weaving) skill.

Seiður Magic Roll Results

Result	Effect
Critical	The practitioner can touch the threads of fate with great precision and may choose to increase any one spell element of their choice (Duration, Distance, or Dimension) by up to three additional levels, to a maximum level of 6.
Special Success	The spell works even better than expected. The practitioner may choose to increase Dimension by one additional level, to a maximum level of 6.
Success	The spell works as intended.
Failure	The spell fails to produce any magical effect. The practitioner may attempt the same ritual again on the next day.
Fumble	The practitioner loses control of the magical forces, and they act in some way opposite to how it was intended.

The magic takes effect at the end of the ritual, which takes 10 minutes per magic point invested in the spell.

Spell Elements

The total cost of the spell in magic points is calculated by adding up the magic point costs of the chosen level of each of the three spell elements: Duration, Distance, and Dimension.

Duration of Magical Effects

Determines the Duration of the magical effect. The unit value is equal to 1/10 of the practitioner's *Seiður* Magic skill (rounded up).

For example, a practitioner with a Seiður Magic skill of 88%, who invested 6 magic points for Duration level 3, would produce an effect lasting 8 days.

Duration of Magical Effects

Level	Duration	MP Cost
0	Immediate /one combat round	0
1	Minute	1
2	Hours	3
3	Days	6
4	Weeks	9
5	Months	12
6	Years	15

Distance of Spell Effect

Determines the reach of the spell in relation to the location of the practitioner. Line of sight means the practitioner can see the target or at least the building or ship they are in.

Distance of Spell Effect

Level	Distance	MP Cost
0	Line of sight	0
1	Within a single day's ride	1
2	Within a few days' ride	3
3	Within a week's ride	6
4	In this country	9
5	In another country the hero has visited	12
6	Anywhere	15

Dimension

Determines the potency of the magical effect, with 0 being a mundane event barely worthy of note and 6 being a truly legendary event. Check the next section for examples of what each level can achieve.

Dimension of Magical Effect

Level	Dimension	MP Cost
0	Mundane	0
1	Very weak	1
2	Weak	3
3	Medium	6
4	Strong	9
5	Very strong	12
6	Fantastic	15

EXAMPLE

Guðbjörg's focus realm is Body, her *Seiður* Magic is 73%, and she has a total of 16 magic points. She wants to use *Seiður* Magic to cause an enemy to feel an itching and burning sensation that will affect their ability to fight. The enemy is within a single day´s ride (magic point cost of 1 for Distance level 1), she wants the spell to last for a few days (magic point cost of 6 for Duration level 3), and finally, she decides to invest her 9 remaining magic points on Dimension level 4 (Strong).

She gets a success in her *Seiður* Magic roll. The spell works as intended, and the person is afflicted with terrible itching and burning for 7 days, giving them a penalty of −40% on all Manipulation skills.

Guðbjorg, having exhausted all her magic points, goes unconscious at the end of the 160-minute-long ritual (10 minutes per magic point invested). She does not wake up until six hours later after recovering some of her magic points.

Locked Magic Points

For the Duration of an active *seiður* spell, a portion of the practitioner's magic points remain locked and unavailable. This number of locked magic points is equal to the spell's highest element level (after adjusting levels based on the *Seiður* Magic roll).

This means that a practitioner who has one or more powerful spells active has reduced magical power for new spells.

Locked magic points can be unlocked after the spell's Duration expires. Alternatively, the spell can be consciously dispelled by the practitioner who cast it by means of a three-hour "dispel ritual". This ritual does not cost additional magic points to perform.

EXAMPLE

Guðbjorg performs a *seiður* ritual with Distance level 1, Duration level 3, and Dimension level 4. As a result, her total pool of magic points is lowered by 4 magic points, from 16 down to 12. She will only be able to recover her 16 maximum total magic points after the Duration of her spell expires (in this case, after 7 days), or she could perform a dispel ritual to unlock those magic points.

MAGIC SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

NAME _____ Player _____

MAGIC POINTS _____ **UNCONSCIOUS** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07
08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

SEIÐUR SPELLS

RUNES KNOWN

RUNE	NAME	AREAS OF POWER

RUNE SCRIPTS

SCRIPT	MEANINGS	RESULTS

BIND RUNES

Runes _____
Effect _____

Runes _____
Effect _____

Multiple Targets

When affecting more than one target, divide the level of Dimension by the number of targets. So, while a spell may have a Fantastic (level 6) effect on one target, that effect is reduced to Weak (level 2) if the practitioner chooses to affect three individuals instead.

Working Together

Two or more *seiður* practitioners can work together on a ritual, making it easier to achieve stronger magical effects. All practitioners involved in the ritual declare the effect and the element levels together. They each make their *Seiður* Magic skill rolls as usual, but anyone working outside their focus realm has a –20% penalty to their skill rating. Those who succeeded in the roll may contribute any number of magic points to a common pool for the spell.

Performing ***seiður*** rituals in a group is also more stable. A fumble result is only possible if all practitioners involved in the ritual roll a fumble result.

The unit value for Duration is equal to 1/10 of the highest *Seiður* Magic skill among the group of practitioners (rounded up).

All practitioners involved in the ritual have magic points locked equal to the highest element level of the spell, as usual.

Seiður Magic Limits

Seiður Magic is exceptionally flexible. Use the following guidelines when determining the scope and limits of the effects of a *seiður* spell.

Aborting a Ritual: If, for any reason, a practitioner chooses, or is forced, to abort a ritual before it is completed, the effects are the same as rolling a fumble on *Seiður* Magic.

Effects of the Same Type Do Not Stack: If there is already an active spell boosting a characteristic or skill of an individual, that same boost cannot be applied a second time with a second spell.

No Direct Damage: No *seiður* spell may cause direct damage to a target who is otherwise healthy. Causing a wound to suddenly appear from nowhere is beyond the reach of a *seiður*. The worsening of an already existing wound, however, is possible.

No Increasing Magic Point Recovery Rate: A *seiður* spell cannot increase the rate with which a person recovers magic points.

No Rerolls: Only the use of **Wyrd** to change a failed roll to a success (page 30) allows for the web of fate to be changed in this way.

Mythical Creatures Cannot be Directly Affected: No *seiður* spell may directly affect a mythical creature. The practitioner may still affect the environment around that creature.

Skill Increase/Decrease: A *seiður* spell may increase or decrease a group of skills by ±10% per level of Dimension.

- **Mind:** Knowledge skills
- **Body:** Agility and Manipulation skill
- **Spirit:** Mythic and Stealth skills
- **Weave:** Communication and Perception skills

See the example spells (following) for additional guidance on what can be achieved with each element level of a *seiður* spell.

Seiður Magic Spell Examples

There are no formulaic spells in *Seiður* Magic. There is no exhaustive list of spells for players to browse and choose from for their adventurers to learn. Players are free to create whatever new effects they can imagine within the four realms of *seiður*. The gamemaster makes the final decision on what element levels are required to enact the desired effect.

To give an idea of what effects are possible within each realm, a list of a few *seiður* spells that appear in the Icelandic sagas and in other Norse medieval texts are provided, along with guidance on how to achieve the desired effect using these *seiður* rules.

Mind

Katla sat on the cross-bench spinning yarn. She told Oddur to sit beside her, "and be quiet and still." She told the women to sit in their places, "...and be quiet. I will speak for us all." When Arnkell and the others arrived, they went straight inside. As they came into the main room, Katla greeted Arnkel and asked him the news. Arnkel said he did not have any and asked where Oddur was.... They noticed that Katla was spinning wool on her distaff. They searched the buildings, but they could not find Oddur, and after that they left.

—The Saga of the People of Eyri

Conceal a Person: A person hidden by this spell can only be detected with a critical Scan roll. One person per level of Dimension can be hidden by this spell. If the spell is intended to conceal a moving person, then the Dimension cost is tripled. Any physical contact with another person breaks the spell.

Fear: The target is overcome with fear of something specific for a period equal to Duration. Performing any action that puts that individual in contact with the object of their fear suffers a penalty of –10% per level of Dimension.

Forgetfulness: Memories of events that occurred within as many days as the Dimension of the spell become hard to recall, requiring a POW×5 roll. After time equal to Duration has passed, the memories return.

Illusion: The target sees something that is not actually there. Dimension determines how complex the illusion can be. At level 0, it's only a small and static object. At level 3, the illusion can appear to be a person that can speak but not move. At level 6, the illusion is as strong and convincing as the practitioner desires. After time equal to Duration has passed, the illusion simply disappears when not being actively looked at, leaving the target unaware of it ever being an illusion.

Mental Fog: The target suffers a penalty on all Knowledge skills equal to –10% per Dimension level.

Plant Suggestion: The practitioner can implant a suggestion in the mind of the target, who perceives it as their own idea. The Dimension determines how strong the impulse is when it goes against the natural convictions of the target. At 0, the impulse is something mundane that the target does often, so there is no resistance to do it again now. Forcing someone to hurt a loved one, physically or emotionally, is only possible at Dimension level 6. The gamemaster makes the final decision on Dimension costs. After Duration has passed, the target starts doubting their own decisions and may suspect some kind of sorcery was involved if they know of an enemy with access to such powers.

Body

When the poem was done, the darkness lessened, and it grew brighter in the hall. The jarl awoke and knew that this slander poem had stung him badly. He also found that his beard had fallen out, as well as all his hair on one side of the head, and they never grew back later.

—The Tale of Þorleifur, the Jarl's Poet

Become Beardless or Bald: The target's beard and/or hair becomes patchy, possibly falling out altogether. A person who loses a beard may be seen in Norse society as socially diminished, causing a loss of Status. For the hair to fall completely out, Dimension level 3 is required. Duration determines how long it takes for the hair to begin growing again.

Cause Blemishes: The target's skin is afflicted with ugly blemishes, lowering their CHA by 1 point per level of Dimension. The blemishes gradually disappear after Duration has passed. The blemishes completely disappear in a matter of hours or days, depending upon the level of Duration.

Cause Disability: The target is affected by some type of disability that affects their mobility or bodily function. This may affect movement rate by –1 per level of Dimension, affecting the use of hands due to pain in the joints –10% per level of Dimension to any Manipulation skill, or something similar. It is also possible to cause impotence.

Clumsiness: For each level of Dimension, the target has a 10% chance of hitting an ally whenever one of their attack rolls fail to hit the intended target. Roll this chance separately after each failed attack.

Fester Wound: The condition of an already existing wound worsens, causing a loss of 1 hit point for each level of *Dimension* to the same hit location where the wound is located.

Healing: The target recovers 1 hit point per level of Dimension. The number of hit points gained can be spread among different hit locations. Duration doesn't need to be any higher than immediate, unless the practitioner wants the effect to occur gradually, over a period of time.

Shapeshifting: Allows the target to take on characteristics of an animal.

Shapeshifting Effects

Level	Effect
0	Dogs will bark at the target.
1	Target gains one sense of the chosen animal (sight, smell, hearing—use Scan or Track roll of that animal as appropriate).
2	Target's face changes to look like a hybrid between human and the chosen animal and allows for speaking with that animal type.
3	Gains the movement rate of that animal.
4	Gain some physical characteristic of that animal, such as talons or gills.
5	Fully take on the form of a natural animal of similar mass (SIZ) of the target.
6	Fully take on the form of a natural animal of any size.

Spirit

It is said that Gunnhildur prepared seiður, and the seiður was such that Egill Skallagrímsson would never be at peace in Iceland until she saw him.
—Egill's Saga

Become as One With Spirit Animal: Allows the target's animal spirit to become one with their animal fetch. In this form, they can move unseen by those who don't have Second Sight and can communicate directly with other spirits and spirit animals. The willingness of other spirits to talk or interact depends on their allegiances and motivations. Those with Second Sight feel something odd in the area, and with a successful skill roll, they can see the practitioner in the form of the spirit animal. Those without any points in Second Sight are completely oblivious to the presence of the spirit animal. Only limited interaction with material objects is possible, depending on the Dimension of the effect.

Project One's Spirit Into an Animal: With this ritual, the practitioner's spirit takes over the body of a natural animal.

Removal of Comfort or Protection: The target's spirit animal becomes lost, unable to find its partner soul, for the *Duration* of the spell. The target feels the detachment from their animal spirit as a sense of anxiety and spiritual discomfort, causing a penalty of –10% per level of Dimension to all Mythic and Perception skills.

Restlessness: The target becomes restless at home and feels that they must travel somewhere. Anywhere but home. Dimension determines how far they feel they must go, while Duration determines how long they feel they must stay away. The target must make a successful roll of POW×5 every day after the spell is performed. If they fail the roll, they can no longer resist the desire to travel and depart that day.

Spiritual Connection: Establishes a spiritual connection between another person and the practitioner, allowing the practitioner to feel any strong emotions felt by that person. Whenever the target of the spell feels fear, anger, sadness, joy, disgust, or surprise, that emotional state is felt by the practitioner as long as the two are within the Distance level of the spell. Additionally, for every level of Dimension, each time the practitioner feels the emotion affecting the target, there is a 20% chance of a sensorial experience accompanying that emotion, such as hearing, vision, tastes, or smells, lasting a few moments.

Vessel of the Gods: The practitioner's body is briefly taken over by a shard of the consciousness of the god with which they have the highest Devotion. The god speaks briefly on the course of action that it favors regarding whatever question is asked of it. The response will always be cryptic and colored by whatever ideals the god is connected to. For each level of Dimension, there is a 10% chance (practitioner rolls immediately after *Seiður* Magic roll) that the god may reveal something new, some clue, that the practitioner does not yet know pertaining to the situation.

Weave

Kotkell had a great spell-working scaffold made, and they all went up on to it, and they sang hard twisted songs that were enchantments. And presently a great tempest arose. Þórður, Ingunnarson, and his companions, continued out at sea as he was, soon knew that the storm was raised against him.
—The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur

Cause Natural Disaster: Makes an area prone to natural disasters: Floods, avalanches, mudslides, volcanic eruptions, etc. If the conditions are propitious (gamemaster discretion), disaster first happens within 1D6 hours of the ritual being completed, followed by random intervals over the Duration of the spell. The scale of the destruction to houses and other structures increases with the Dimension level. People inside affected buildings must make a successful DEX×5 roll or suffer damage equal to Dimension to a random hit location due to falling debris.

Create Dense Fog: A dense fog covers the area, reducing visibility. Scan rolls have a penalty of –10% per level of Dimension.

Evil Eye: Increases the chance of a fumble roll result for a single individual. Skills from one single group (practitioner's choice) are affected. The fumble chance is increased by +3% per level of Dimension for the Duration of the spell, as long as the target is within Distance from the practitioner.

Fortune Telling: This spell enhances the effects of the **Prophecy** skill (page 92). The practitioner must first succeed in performing the ritual with *Seiður* Magic before making a Prophecy roll. Success on both rolls means Prophecy works as expected, but effects are enhanced with an extra +5% per level of Dimension, to the usual +20% bonus for actions that contribute to the fulfillment of the prophecy (the same modifier also applies when going against the prophecy). Duration and Distance levels must cover the timeframe and location of the prophecy.

Weather Manipulation: Allows the practitioner to affect the weather within *Distance* and for the Duration of the spell. Each level of Dimension can shift the weather to better or worse, as desired by the practitioner, by one level on the appropriate weather table for the current season (page 76).

Weave Magic Into Cloth: A cloth may be imbued with magical properties that may then be used to make clothing that aids or hinders the person who wears it. The magical effect is only active when the clothing is within *Distance* from the practitioner. The effect must be connected to the area of the body covered by the cloth.

For example, a hood or cap may affect one Knowledge skill or give extra hit points to the head hit location.

When the practitioner creates the cloth, they must choose the effects per level of Dimension: to add or remove +1 hit point to the hit location covered by the cloth or to improve or hinder by 10% one skill that is somehow connected to the body area covered. Effects are cumulative and can be chosen more than once. After Duration has elapsed, the cloth loses its magical qualities.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CHRONICLES OF THE AGES OF VIKINGS

MYTHIC TIMES

Of old was the age when Ymir lived:
Sea nor cool waves nor sand there were:
Earth had not been, nor heaven above,
But a yawning gap, and grass nowhere.
—Poetic Edda

In the beginning, before the heaven, earth, and the seas were created, the great abyss Ginnungagap (Yawning Abyss) was without form and void. In the northern region of that huge emptiness was a realm called Niflheimur (Mist World), packed with ice. In the south, there was Múspellsheimur (Flame World), a region that flickered with dancing flames. In the middle of Ginnungagap, where the icy rivers that flowed from Niflheimur met the warm breath drifting north from Múspellsheimur, thawing drops appeared. From those drops was formed Ýmir, the first of the race of frost giants. Ýmir slept and began to sweat. Under his left arm, there grew two giants: a male and a female.

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

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

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

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

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

Iceland is Created

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

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

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

Sváfnir flew around the whole of Miðgarður but found no better place to live than on the island formed in the very spot where he had burst forth from the world's crust. The lava had now solidified, but a great volcano still raged on that island. Sváfnir entered the volcano and dove into the lava. The dragon swam through the molten rock under the island, forming faults and folds in the surface above, thus molding the land in its wake.

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

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

The great dragon learned of Óðinn's rage from the serpents that crawl upon the branches of the World Tree. He knew that, by himself, he was no match for Óðinn.

Sváfnir flew north and met with Hrym, the chief of the frost giants. He asked for Hrym's help in fighting Óðinn. The frost giant agreed on the condition that if they were victorious, he and his family could live on Sváfnir's magical island. Next, the dragon flew west, where he spoke to the mighty giant eagle Vindsvall, who also agreed to help the dragon fight Óðinn as long as it, too, could use the island as its home. Lastly, Sváfnir flew south and spoke with the Giant Grey Bull. It also agreed to help Sváfnir in the battle for his island.

As Óðinn rode his horse into Miðgarður, Sváfnir roared a battle cry, summoning all the island's mythical creatures to prepare for an epic battle. Óðinn was not afraid. The frost giant Hrym froze the North Seas, unleashed a massive ice storm, and prepared his feared clan of giants for battle. Still, Óðinn was not afraid and rode on across the skies. Approaching the magical island, he saw the gigantic eagle Vindsvall and its family of giant birds soaring into the sky above. Their wings were so large that they touched the mountains on each side of the fjord. Still, Óðinn was not afraid. Then, the ground shook with a great earthquake caused by the hooves of the giant grey bull, anxious for battle. Seeing the dragon, the giant eagle, the ice giant, and the giant great bull all united against him, Óðinn wisely decided to propose a truce. The lands' spirits agreed to become guardians of the island and protectors of its gates to the other worlds.

The dragon Sváfnir made its home in the underground rivers of molten rock under the island. The great volcano, Hooded Cloak Mountain (Hekla), is Sváfnir's passage to the surface. On the rare occasions when he visits the surface world, an eruption always follows the dragon's wake. The ice giant and his clans live in the highlands in the center of the island. Once per winter, the ice giant chief walks around the island, bringing blizzards and strong winds. The giant eagle protects the skies over the island. The bull walks the plateaus of the highlands.

This is the story of how Iceland was created, how it became such a magical place, and how it came to be guarded by the landvættir, the land spirits.

The Creation of Humans

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

—The Prose Edda

Long after the creation of Miðgarður, the first humans were formed by the gods Óðinn, Vili, and Vé from the trunks of fallen ash and elm trees. Óðinn breathed into them the spirit of life, while Vili gave them sharp wits and feeling hearts, and Vé gave them the gifts of hearing and sight. One was called Askur, while the other was named Embla, and they were given Miðgarður as their home.

ANCIENT TIMES

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

Ultima Thule

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

—Pliny the Elder, Natural History, AD 77

A Greek merchant ship was the first human-built vessel to reach Iceland in 320 BC. One of the people on board was the Greek historian Pytheas.

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

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

Romans

> Theodosius' adventurous oars broke the surface of the northern seas. What avail against him the eternal snows, the frozen air, the uncharted seas? Thule lies icebound beneath the pole-star.
>
> —Roman poet Claudius Claudianus (d. AD 404)

Five centuries passed until humans revisited Iceland. An ambitious Roman governor of the province of Britannia assembled a military expedition. It was entrusted with the mission of finding the northern island mentioned by the Greeks and spotted in the distance by Celtic sailors.

As soon as they arrived in the south of Iceland, the Romans began building a temporary fortress as a base for further exploration of the land. They gathered timber for construction from the forests that covered the lowlands and they hunted seals for food.

During that summer, as they explored more of the vast island, they were spotted by a small party of curious elves. These elves had heard stories about the children of Óðinn who lived in other parts of Miðgarður but had never previously met any. They first observed the Romans from afar, and soon learned that the Romans could not see them. Human eyes are attuned to seeing creatures from Miðgarður, but not from other worlds. Only through the use of elven magic could they make themselves visible to the humans.

This led to the elves playing tricks on the Romans. Soon, the men in the small fortress grew uneasy by the strange events occurring in this seemingly uninhabited land. At first, objects disappeared, simply vanishing when someone was not looking, only to reappear later in a different location. Occasionally, they would catch glimpses of movement on their periphery, only to find nothing upon closer inspection. Growing paranoid and fearful of what they believed were ghosts, the Romans turned on each other. None survived to take back to Rome the news of this frozen land in the distant north.

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

Irish Hermits

Irish monks in the Middle Ages searched for isolated places in which they could serve their Christian god in solitude. They sailed the North Atlantic in their tiny animal skin boats, eventually discovering the Faroe Islands, and finally reaching Iceland.

A learned Irish monk named Dicuilus describes in his book, *De Mensura Orbis Terrae*, a remote and uninhabited country the other monks called Thule. They spoke of sunlight so bright during the summer nights that they could pick lice from their shirts at midnight.

These monks eventually settled on the southern coast of Thule. Not long after their arrival, however, they encountered several strange creatures, including elves. Fearing them to be demons, the monks chose to retire to a small island off the southeastern coast of Iceland, now called Monks' Island (Papey), avoiding the mainland altogether.

The Irish monks finally abandoned Iceland sometime in 870 AD, when the first wave of Norse settlers arrived. They made a hasty departure, leaving much of their belongings behind. Some of their most valuable treasures remain buried in secret locations yet to be discovered.

Norse Discovery

Born in Norway, Naddoður was the first Norse to discover Iceland and was one of the first to settle on the Faroe Islands. In 860 AD, Naddoður became lost at sea and came upon an unfamiliar land. He climbed a mountain to look for chimney smoke but saw no sign of human habitation. As he returned to his ship to continue his journey to the Faroe Islands, it began to snow, so he called this new land Snæland (Snowland).

Five years after Naddoður's discovery of Snowland, in 865 AD, a Swedish man named Garðar Svavarsson became lost in a sea storm while sailing from Denmark to the Hebrides. The storm pushed his ship north, eventually reaching Iceland. Deciding to explore the area, he became the first person to circumnavigate Iceland and establish that it was an island. He built a house in the South and spent the winter there. He named the land Garðarshólmi (Garðar's Island, after himself). Upon returning to Scandinavia, he praised this new island discovery. As a result, the story of Garðar's Island became known throughout Scandinavia.

A Norwegian Viking, Flóki Vilgerðarson, nicknamed Raven-Flóki, was the first Scandinavian who deliberately sailed to Garðar's Island. Taking his family with him, he set out to find the island, intending to settle there.

Flóki took with him three ravens that he intended to use as his guides. When he believed his ship to be near Garðar's Island, he released the ravens one by one. The first one returned immediately, the second also returned to the ship, but the third raven flew forward, leading Flóki to land.

Flóki and his family settled Flóki and his family settled in the Westfjords for a year. They enjoyed a good summer but did not prepare any hay for the winter. Without any food in the cold winter months that followed, the animals died. When spring came, and their situation began to improve, Flóki climbed to the top of the tallest mountain. From there, all he could see was ice stretching down the fjords. At that moment, out of feelings of bitterness and frustration, he gave the land the name Ísland (Iceland).

After another year in Iceland, he decided to leave the country. Upon returning to Norway, he spoke poorly of the new land to the west, saying it was too cold and worthless. A few years later, though, he changed his mind and moved back to Iceland, where he spent the remainder of his life.

THE SETTLEMENT AGE

The first person to settle permanently in Iceland was a Norwegian chieftain named Ingólfur Arnarson. Since his only knowledge of the island was what he had heard from other seafarers, he decided to let the gods choose his destination for him. As he approached Iceland, he threw overboard two carved pillars, vowing to settle wherever the gods took them. He found the pillars in a southwest peninsula and settled there with his family in 874 CE. Many more Norse chieftains followed Ingólfur, bringing their families, thralls, and animals to settle in Iceland.

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

This was a time when the Norse people faced growing resistance in some parts of Europe where they had already settled. The native populations of England and Ireland were counterattacking and, on many occasions, defeating the invading Vikings. It was also a period of significant transformation in Scandinavia, especially in Norway, the homeland of most of the Icelandic settlers.

Upheaval in Norway

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

It began when Haraldur asked Gyða, the daughter of King Eiríkur of Hordaland, for her hand in marriage. She rejected him, refusing to marry Haraldur until he was the king of all of Norway. Haraldur vowed to unify the country and win over his bride. He also swore to not cut his hair until he succeeded. For the next ten years, he was known as Haraldur Tanglehair.

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

A great number of landowners who were unhappy with Haraldur's rule chose to leave Norway for Iceland or other Norse settlements in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

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

Land Taking and Unification

When the settlers arrived in Iceland, they found a large country with no native population and plenty of land for everyone. Certain rules for claiming land were agreed upon among the first settlers. A person was allowed to claim land inside a boundary defined by how many fires they could light within sight of each other in a single day. Women were allowed to claim land for themselves as well, though the rules for them were different. An alternative method for staking a claim was to lead a cow from sunrise to sunset around the desired piece of land.

During this time, lawlessness and warfare prevailed among the families of settlers.

Soon, the wisest leaders realized the benefits of having consistent laws and a unified society throughout the country. This movement spread and led to the unification of the scattered chieftainships into a single nation. Theis led to the establishment of the independent Icelandic Commonwealth in 930 AD.

By this time, all the usable land in Iceland had been taken, and the population of the country had grown to over 40,000.

Law and the National Assembly

Once the most powerful chieftains had agreed to unite the country, it became obvious that they needed a law code for everyone in the country to follow. The wisest among them were sent to Norway to gain knowledge and clarification on legal matters unfamiliar to the Icelanders.

At around the time the Icelandic code of laws was compiled, a farmer living in southwestern Iceland was found guilty of murder. His sentence was the forfeiture of his land, which became public property. It was agreed that this would become the site of the new National Assembly (*Alþing*), which gathered there for the first time in 930 AD.

WOMAN AND WEAPONS

In historic Iceland, women are forbidden by law from carrying weapons, as well as from wearing men's clothes, and from cutting their hair short. Because of those laws, young women are almost never taught how to use a sword, axe, bow, or any of the weapons of war. Examples of women using weapons in the Icelandic sagas are rare and mostly occur in instances when their husbands acted in a shameful manner.

There is considerable flexibility in how those laws work in practice, as the higher status and reputation a woman has, the more likely it is that no one will criticize her for carrying a weapon.

The most important thing to remember is that if your gamemaster and players want female warriors to be commonplace in your *Age of Vikings* campaign, you can make those changes without impact.

TIMELINE

This is a comprehensive list of the main events in Icelandic and Norse world history up to the year 977 AD, when your own adventures begin. For events mentioned in the Icelandic sagas and in other medieval documents, the name of that work is listed in brackets.

700 Irish monks begin to seek solace in Iceland.
860 Naddoður discovers Iceland.
860 Ragnar Loddbrok killed at York. Novgorod and Kiev are founded by the Rus.
860 Rus Vikings attack Constantinople.
862 Novgorod in Russia is founded by Ulrich, a Rus Viking.
865 Garðar Svavarsson is the first to circumnavigate Iceland, names it Garðar's Island.
866 Danish Vikings establish a kingdom in York, England.
870 Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson becomes the first Scandinavian to deliberately sail to Iceland (*Book of Settlements*).
845–50 Kveldúlfur Bjálfason's children are born (*Egill's Saga*).
871 Alfred the Great becomes king of Wessex; the Danish advance is halted in England.
872 Battle of Hafursfirth, victorious Haraldur Fairhair unifies Norway under his rule (*Egill's Saga*).
873–91 Kings Sigfred and Halfdan are co-rulers of Denmark.
874 Ingólfur Arnarson becomes the first permanent Nordic settler of Iceland (*Book of Settlements*).
877 Fall of Þórólfur Kveld-Úlfsson (*Egill's Saga*).
878 Haraldur Fairhair completes his conquest and unification of Norway and the Orkney Islands, many Norwegians flee to Iceland.
879 Skalla-Grímur Kveldúlfsson sets up house at Borg (*Egill's Saga*).
886 Alfred divides England with the Danes under the Danelaw pact.
890 Auður the Deep Minded settles in Iceland (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
900 Önundur Wooden-leg comes to Iceland (*The Saga of Grettir the Strong*).
900 Viking Raid: Various sites in Northwest England.
902 Viking Raid: Dublin, Ireland; Vikings expelled from area.
901 Egill Skallagrímsson is born (*Egill's Saga*).
910 Battle of Tettenhall, England; Vikings defeated.
911 Viking Raid: Seine Valley, France.

911 Viking chief Rollo is granted land by the Franks and founds Normandy in France.
912 Viking Raid: Brittany, France.
915 Hrútur Herjólfsson is born (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
917 Battle of Fuat's Head; Norse recapture Dublin.
918 Eiríkur Bloodaxe in Bjarmaland (*Egill's Saga*).
918 Battle of Corbridge, England; Rögnvaldur takes Northumberland.
918 Viking Raid: Dunblane, Scotland.
930 The Icelandic Commonwealth is founded with the opening of the National Assembly.
930 Hallmundarhraun lava field is formed in a giant eruption close to Long Glacier.
930 Njáll is born (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
932 Blown off course by strong winds, Gunnbjörn Úlfsson finds small islands to the west of Iceland that he names "Gunnbjörn's Skerries". From there, he saw a large landmass further west. (*Book of Settlement*).
933 Death of King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway.
934 Fire Canyon eruption starts and lasts for three years. It is the largest flood basalt eruption in historic times: 19 square kilometers of lava poured out of the earth.
935 Flight of King Eiríkur Bloodaxe out of Norway; his half-brother Hákon, fosterling of King Athelstan of England, becomes king (*Egill's Saga*).
935 Þórólfur and Egill raid Courland (Latvia) (*Egill's Saga*).
936 Egill in York (*Egill's Saga*).
937 Battle of Wineheath leads to the collapse of Norse power in northern Britain (*Egill's Saga*).
937 Viking Raid: Limerick, Ireland.
938 Egill comes home to Iceland (for 16 years) (*Egill's Saga*).
938 Ólafur the Peacock is born (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
940 Hallgerður is born (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
940 Birth of *skald* Kormákur Ögmundarson (*The Saga of Kormákur the Skald*).
941 Rus Vikings attack Constantinople.
936–958 Reign of King Gormur the Old of Denmark.
945 Gunnar of Hlíðarendi is born (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
950 Óttar and Ávaldi go to Iceland (*The Saga of Hallfreður the Troublesome Poet*).
952 Þorbjörn Súr arrives in Iceland (*The Saga of Gísli Súrsson*).
954 Battle of Stainmore, England; Vikings defeated). Fall of Eiríkur Bloodaxe, the last Norse king of York. (*Egill's Saga*).
955 Egill's parting with Arinbjörn (*Egill's Saga*).
956 Egill in Varmland (*Egill's Saga*).
956 Þorsteinn the Black drowns (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
956 Óláfur the Peacock goes abroad (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
956 Hallgerður marries Þorvaldur (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
959 Hallgerður marries Glúmur (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
960 Hrútur goes abroad (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
960 Böðvar, son of Egill Skallagrímsson, drowns (*Egill's Saga*).
960 Óláfur marries Þorgerður (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
960 Þorvaldur Ásvaldsson, the father of Eiríkur the Red, takes his family to Iceland after being banished from Norway for murder (*The Saga of Eiríkur the Red*).
960 Attempt at pledging sworn brotherhood between Þorgrímur, Gísli, Þorkell, and Vésteinn (*The Saga of Gísli Súrsson*).
962 Division of Iceland into quarters.
962 Hrútur marries Unn (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
964 Gísli Súrsson made outlaw (*The Saga of Gísli Súrsson*).
965 Hörður and Geir go abroad (*The Saga of Hörður and the Hólm-Dwellers*).
968 Battle of Sulcoit: The Irish defeat the Norse forces at Limerick, ending Norse expansion in Ireland.
969 Unn marries Valgarður the Grey (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
970 Fall of Arinbjörn (*Egill's Saga*).
970 Trouble with Valgerður, Óttar moves South (*The Saga of Hallfreður the Troublesome Poet*).
970 Grís marries Kolfinna, Hallfreður starts his travels (*The Saga of Hallfreður the Troublesome Poet*).
970 In Norway, Haraldur Greycloak dies. King Haraldur Bluetooth wins back power over Norway, with Haakon Sigurdsson as his vassal king.
973 Egill goes to dwell at Mosfell (*Egill's Saga*).
974 Gunnar marries Hallgerður (*The Saga of Burned Njáll*).
975 In Norway, Haakon refuses to convert to Christianity and severs ties with Haraldur Bluetooth, becoming the new king.
975 Over his wife's objections, Óláfur the Peacock goes on a second expedition to Norway (*The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur*).
975–7 Strife between Steinar and Þorsteinn Egilsson (*Egill's Saga*).
977 Gísli Súrsson, poet and outlaw, is killed in battle (*The Saga of Gísli Súrsson*).
977 Default beginning year of the *Age of Vikings* setting.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TRAVELER'S GUIDE

This tour of Iceland follows established horse paths as well as the less traveled routes and unexplored areas, traveling to all corners of the island and to places of importance in the West, the Westfjords region, the North, the East, the South, and finally, the Central Highlands. The landscape is described alongside the myths associated with each region, and rounding out all Icelandic locations are adventure seeds to prompt the gamemaster.

Place names are very important and often reflect a distinctive feature of the region, the name of the original settler, or some special event in the early history of the settlement. They are listed here in both English and Icelandic.

THE WEST

The west of Iceland and the Snow Mountain Peninsula (Snæfellsnes) are characterized by an abundance of fjords, valleys, waterfalls, lakes, volcanoes, and craters.

Children's Falls

The landscape here is one of lava fields and birch woods. The White River (Hvítá) cuts the lava fields and flows deep into a narrow canyon. In the winter, spray from the river forms ice bridges linking the narrowest parts of the canyon; crossing these is extremely risky. The point where the river falls from the highlands is known as Children's Falls (Barnafoss). There are various caves within the lava fields of this region, which are sometimes used as a refuge by outlaws.

History: This region was first settled by Skallagrímur Kveldúlfsson, father of Egill Skallagrímsson (from *Egill's Saga*), when he arrived in Iceland in 891. He established a farm here, which he called Stronghold (Borg). Thus, the region became known as Stronghold Fjord (Borgarfjörður). The main events from *Egill's Saga* happen in this region.

Myths: Two young boys were left alone at home while their mother visited the local *goði*. She had warned them not to leave the house, but they ignored her. They walked down to White River and tried to cross it via a stone arch. As they looked down at the narrow canyon and waterfall beneath them, they grew dizzy and fell, drowning in the river below. Their bodies were never found. The ghosts of the boys still haunt this place. After their deaths, the waterfall became known as Children's Falls.

Among the many caves in the lava fields of Stronghold Fjord is the cave known as Surtur's Cave (Surtshellir). People who set out to explore the depths of this cave never return. This cave leads into Múspellsheimur, a world of fire ruled by the jötunn named Surtur. Some believe that other deep caves in this region may lead to Niflheimur, where the goddess Hel rules over those who did not die heroically.

CHILDREN'S FALLS ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes are searching for an outlaw who was last seen in this region. They suspect the outlaw is hiding in the lava caves. While inspecting the caves, they are confronted by the ghosts of the dead boys, who threaten to curse the heroes if they do not recover their bodies and give them a proper funeral. Finding the bodies will be tricky and could require assistance from mythic creatures. Things could be further complicated by outlaws stalking the heroes. Wanting to remain in the area without fear of capture, the outlaws may ambush the heroes when the opportunity arises.

Holy Hill

Þórolfur settled land from Stafa river, inwards to Þór's river (Þórsar), and called all that part Þór's Headland (Þórsnes). He had so great a reverence for that fell which stands on the ness, and which he called Holy Hill (Helgafell), that he enjoined that thither should no man unwashen look, and there was so great place hallowedness that nothing should be destroyed on the mountain, neither cattle nor people, unless they should go away on their own accord. That was the belief of them, that they should die into the mountain.

—The Book of Settlements

Holy Hill (Helgafell) stands on the northern side of the Snæfellsnes (Snow Mountain Peninsula). The hill rises majestically from the flat lowland valley but is not very tall, measuring just under 100 meters (328 feet).

Myth: Holy Hill is the holiest of all pagan sites in Iceland. It is believed that the gods live on top of the mountain and that the souls of the dead enter the hill beneath. Both myths hold true. Holy Hill has portals linking Miðgarður to the other worlds that hang from the branches of the mighty World Tree, Yggdrasil. These include portals to Ásgarður, the world of the gods, and Álfheimur, the world of the elves. There is even a link through one of Yggdrasil's roots to Niflheimur, the land of the dead. The portals are hidden from human eyes by powerful magic placed there by the gods. Even mythic creatures have difficulty getting to the portals, which are guarded by one of the mightiest beings in all Miðgarður—the Giant Eagle, Vindsvall.

Because of the potent magic affecting the hill, no one can be harmed at this location. All creatures standing on the mountain are effectively immortal until they leave the hill area.

Those who climb to the top of Holy Hill on their first attempt are granted three wishes by the god Þór—as long as they ascend in silence and descend without looking back. The wishes must be made with goodwill, must not cause harm to another, and must not be repeated to anyone. The climb itself is not difficult, but climbers are taunted by the magic of the place and its connection to the realm of the dead. Voices from dead friends and relatives can be heard coming from behind, begging the climbers to turn around and speak with their dead loved ones. Those with enough determination and willpower to reach the top still have another obstacle to overcome: Vindsvall, the Great Eagle, who will dive from the skies to protect the portals from intruders.

Holy Hill Adventure Seed

Someone dear to the heroes is on their deathbed. There is nothing that can be done to save them from their illness. The only hope is for a miracle from the gods, and the only way to guarantee one is to climb to the top of Holy Hill. The heroes will face adversity in the form of deceased friends and kin demanding their attention, and they must fight immortal mythic creatures on the mountain. The fact that the heroes cannot be injured themselves should make for an entertaining yet challenging situation. Once they reach the top of the hill, there is the matter of dealing with the Great Eagle. The heroes may find success if they are able to avoid the powerful winds created by the Great Eagle's massive, flapping wings. Perhaps the hidden people know of magic that aids in keeping one's footing, but it will undoubtedly cost a heavy price.

Tongue Rock

In the Dalir region stands an impressive rocky outcrop called Tongue Rock (Tungustapi). There are also many heated pools in this area that are used for bathing.

Myth: One winter, a man named Sveinn disappeared. Knowing that Sveinn spent much of his time by the Tongue Rock, his brother Arnór went there to search for him. To Árnor's surprise, he found a mysterious doorway within the rock. Inside, he saw people celebrating a religious ritual, with Sveinn among them.

Tongue Rock Adventure Seed

As the heroes are traveling through the Dalir region, they see two frightened young men running down a hill. There appears to be nothing behind them, but the clattering of hooves can be heard. The two men, Árnor and Sveinn, spot the heroes and run toward them, pleading for help against the hidden people. Just as they reach the heroes, the hidden riders become visible. The heroes must do something quickly before they, too, are run over by the hidden people's strong horses. Runemasters among the heroes may use rune magic to keep the riders at bay, or they may simply use their shields to protect them from the charge. Regardless of how the heroes respond, the hidden people will view it as an unwanted interference and promptly place a curse on the heroes. This curse can only be broken by finding someone who is willing to replace Sveinn as a priest for the hidden people in their world. This matter will be a challenge to resolve. Resourceful heroes may seek out people who are known to have close relationships with hidden folk and attempt to persuade them to move to the hidden world. Other creative solutions may also be found.

Fearing that the hidden people may never allow his brother to return home, Árnor called out to Sveinn. Furious by the disruption, the hidden people cursed Sveinn with death if he ever set eyes on the rock again. The two brothers escaped the rock temple with the hidden people in hot pursuit. Árnor was trampled by the hidden people and died in a place that is now known as Death Slope (Banabrekkur). Sveinn survived and moved away from the area. One day, however, while visiting his father, a powerful wind blew the door open, and he accidentally saw Tongue Rock. He immediately fell dead on the spot.

Under the Glacier

The region called Under the Glacier (Undir Jökli) is dominated by the Snow Mountain Glacier (Snæfellsjökull), which is, in fact, an active volcano covered by a glacier. The slopes around the glacier are formed of lava and bare of any vegetation. Tall rock pillars rise out of the sea along the shore. Nearby is a vertical cliff known as Swallow Tussock (Svalþúfa).

Myth: It is said that a man named Kolbeinn once made a wager with an evil monster. Both sat on the cliff under the glacier exchanging poetry, each starting a verse for the other to finish in rhyme. The first one to fail would have to jump off the cliff and be at the mercy of the other's whims. Kolbeinn won the bet by tricking the monster with convoluted skaldic rhymes mixed with foreign words. The monster was so shocked by Kolbeinn's cleverness that it fell off the cliff into the ocean waves below. For this story, Kolbeinn was later called the Glacier-Poet.

UNDER THE GLACIER ADVENTURE SEED

The monster, a *draugur* (pages 269–270), has been bound here since it lost its wager with Kolbeinn and fell off the cliff. That was many years ago, and the Glacier-Poet is now an old and sick man. Kolbeinn fears the monster will return when he dies, to seek revenge upon his kinsfolk. He contacts the heroes and tells them his story, asking them to protect his family when the monster comes for them.

Whale Fjord

Whale Fjord (Hvalfjörður) is about 15 km (nine miles) north of Smoky Bay (Reykjavík), where Iceland's first settler, Ingólfur Arnarson, built his farm. The fjord is long and wide, stretching 30 km (19 miles) from beginning to end and 5 km (three miles) across. This area is covered by forests, with steep cliffs at the head of the fjord. To the east, there is the bottomless Whale Lake (Hvalvatn).

History: In one of the Icelandic outlaw sagas called *The Saga of Hörður and the People of Hólmur (Harðar Saga og Hólmverja)*, important events take place on a small island in Whale Fjord named Geir's Island (Geirshólmi). An outlaw named Hörður becomes the leader of a band of 180 outlaws. The group defies authority and establishes an alternative society with its own rules at Geir's Island. They live there for three years before they are all killed in a bloody battle.

Myth: The story goes that a fisherman got lost on a fishing trip in bad weather, and his friends believed him dead. A year later, however, he returned safe and sound. The man explained that during his absence, he had been living with the hidden people, who took great care of him. Later, the local temple priest found a cradle at the temple's door with a note asking that the child be blessed. It identified the father as the same man who had recently disappeared for a year. When confronted, the man denied having fathered the child. At that moment, a woman appeared as if from nowhere. She cursed him, saying, "I cast a spell upon you! You shall become the evillest whale in the sea and wreck many ships!" She then took the cradle and vanished. Instantly succumbing to madness, the fisherman ran toward the sea and jumped off a cliff. Upon hitting the water, he was transformed into a whale. Since that day, the whale has proven to be a great scourge, sinking many ships and injuring many people. This is how the area became known as Whale Fjord.

WHALE FJORD ADVENTURE SEED

- The heroes must find a way to kill the evil whale and avenge the death of a relative who drowned when the creature destroyed their ship. It will be necessary to find a way to revert the hidden people's magic that transformed the man into the whale. They could attempt to speak directly with the hidden people and ask for help, but their assistance will come at a price. The heroes will also be required to enact some form of justice against the man who refused to acknowledge that he fathered the child.
- The events from *The Saga of Hörður*, as described in the **History** section, make for an exciting *Age of Vikings* campaign. The heroes could be part of the outlaw group trying to survive in this region. Or they could be hunting down the outlaw group described in the saga to collect the reward being offered for their heads.

Þór's Headland

He settled land on the south side, near the middle of the firth. There he found Þór cast aland, upon a point of land which is now called Þór's Headland, on that account. They landed further up the ness in the bay, which is now called Temple Bay (Hofsvík). There he reared his home and there he built a large temple, and consecrated it to Þór, and now the place is called Temple Stead (Hofstaðir).

—The Book of Settlements

This ragged landscape, with strange but impressive rock formations, is home to a variety of bird species. The Snow Mountain Glacier to the south is visible from here.

Myth: One of the first settlers to come to Iceland, Þórólfur Örnólfsson, was the custodian of a temple dedicated to Þór on the southwestern coast of Norway. When Þórolfur lost favor with King

ICELAND
Main Bay
The Coasts
Ice Fjord Deep
Bay of Logs
Steingrimur's Fjord
Ram Fjord
Örn's Fjord
The Death Cliffs
Kola's Canyon
Lake Valley
Wide Valley
Metal Island
Rock Pillars Island
Peninsula Fjord
Long Glacier
Cold Valley
Tongue Rock
Children's Falls
White River
Ahlen Hill
Snow Mountain Glacier
Under the Glacier
Thór's Headland
White Fjord
5.
10
15.
20.
25.

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

Haraldur of Norway, he asked Þór if he should make peace with the king or leave the country. Þór gave him a sign to go to Iceland. Þórolfur tore down the temple and took with him the timber and dirt from under the pedestal on which the image of Þór had been seated. When his ship approached Iceland, he threw overboard the two chief pillars of the temple on which the image of Þór was carved. He then declared he would settle wherever Þór caused the pillars to wash ashore. He found the Þór pillar on a headland, which he named Þór's Headland (Þórsness). Þórolfur rebuilt the temple on Þór's Headland. It was the largest temple to Þór ever built in Iceland.

ÞÓR'S HEADLAND ADVENTURE SEED

Even though Þórolfur's temple has fallen into disrepair, it is still sacred ground. The hero experiences a vision of Þór, tasking them with rebuilding Þórolfur's temple. What the vision fails to mention is the reason why the building has been in ruin for so many years—trolls in the area will not allow a temple of the troll-slaying god to stand so close to their land.

Westfjords

The Westfjords is a large peninsula in northwestern Iceland. The mountainous landscape is utterly unlike the rest of the country. It has no active volcanoes or lava fields but does feature impressive flat-topped cliffs and many narrow fjords. The heavy snowfall in this region makes it accessible only during the summer months.

Bay of Logs

Coastal mountains stand guard over the Bay of Logs (Bolungarvík). There are rich fishing grounds at the mouth of the fjord known as Ice Fjord Deep (Ísafjarðardjúp). The landscape of the Bay of Logs is spectacular, with abundant forests and an impressive view across the fjords. This area can only be reached by sea.

Myth: *The Book of Settlements* tells of Þuríður the Strait-Filler, who came from northern Norway and settled in the Bay of Logs. Þuríður had remarkable magical powers. It is said that during a time of famine, while she was still in Norway, she used magic to fill all the straits with fish, thus acquiring the nickname Strait-Filler. Once in Iceland, a disagreement between Þuríður and her brother led to each of them casting a spell against the other in retaliation. Þuríður's spell forced her brother to spend an eternity as a monolith covered in bird droppings. His spell caused her to become a rock perpetually buffeted by the strongest winds.

BAY OF LOGS ADVENTURE SEED

One of the heroes falls victim to a curse from the hidden people that causes the hero to have extremely bad luck "...until the day Þuríður Strait-Filler walks the land again." The hero and their companions must first uncover the legend of Þuríður's fate, then locate her rock form, and finally, restore her to life. The situation becomes complicated when it is discovered that another family of hidden people has constructed a hidden house at the exact spot where Þuríður's rock stands. As a result, no magic can affect the rock until the house is moved. Heroes moving the rock will damage the house and infuriate the hidden folk. This may result in the heroes garnering another curse in the process. Also, the nature of the sibling's magic is such that releasing one from their spell will automatically release the other. The heroes may now find themselves in the middle of a magical battle and must be careful which side they take in this conflict.

Death Cliffs

The vertical walls of the Death Cliffs (Látrabjarg) rise high above the sea and extend for over 14 km (9 miles) of shoreline. These are the most impressive cliffs in Iceland, 500 meters (1640 feet) tall at the highest point. Several gullies, rich in vegetation, cut into the cliffs. From the sea, numerous caves can be seen on the cliffs.

Myth: A fearsome monster lives in the Death Cliffs. Those who are brave enough to attempt climbing down the cliff for birds' eggs rarely return. The monster is a particularly old and strong troll that is not happy with humans roaming his cliffs. The troll is an excellent climber and is very good at blending into the rocky environment. People of the region also talk about often seeing the hidden people in their fishing boats sailing near the coast.

DEATH CLIFFS ADVENTURE SEED

A relative of one of the heroes owns a farm near the Death Cliffs in Broad Fjord (Breiðafjörður) and has invited the heroes to the farm for a feast. Upon arrival, they discover one of the farmer's children dead near the cliffs, their body torn to pieces. The farmers in the surrounding area are talking about assembling a search party to find the monster they believe is responsible for the murder. None of the farmers are strong warriors, however, and this hunt will likely end in another tragedy. The heroes must dissuade the farmers from venturing out alone or convince them to join their group and protect them. By themselves, or along with the farmers, the hunt will be challenging. The heroes must first search the cliffs to find the caves, then successfully make the climb, and finally hunt down the troll inside the complex of interlinked caves. Use the troll statistics from page 264, but this particular troll has Climb 90%, and due to its chameleon-like ability to blend with its surroundings, it can only be spotted with a successful Search roll.

Örn's Fjord

Örn's Fjord (Arnarfjörður), named after its first settler, is a long and wide fjord enclosed by tall mountains. It forks into two narrower fjords at its head. At the northern tongue of the fjord is the impressive waterfall Thunderer (Dynjandi), which plummets over the edge of a tall cliff. Birch woods cover the lowlands and the mountainsides.

Myth: The Örn's Fjord region is notorious for the many practitioners of rune magic and *seiður*. In all of Iceland, this is the region where hidden people are the most common and have the most frequent contact with people—probably due to the high concentration of active magic users who can see into the hidden world.

ÖRN'S FJORD ADVENTURE SEED

Örn's Fjord can be used in a campaign whenever the heroes require magical help or need assistance in contacting the hidden people.

Main Bay

At the northernmost point of the Westfjords lies Main Bay (Aðalvík), a small bay only accessible by sea. The southern end of the bay is marked by Sea Gull Mountain (Ritur), while Stream Headland (Straumnes) rises to the north, steep and impressive. The extensive lowlands at the head of the bay are covered in woodland.

Myths: In Main Bay, there once was a skilled carpenter who was also a powerful runemaster. One day, this carpenter carved runes onto a wooden rod that caused anyone reading it to go blind. The carpenter threw the rod into the sea and let it drift to where another runemaster named Snorri was sitting. Snorri, unaware of the trick, read the runes and was immediately blinded. However, Snorri immediately created a rune script to restore their vision. They then scraped the runes off the rod and flung it back into the sea, saying, "Go back to your master and cause their death if they intend to use you again for evil purposes." The carpenter saw the rod and grabbed it, planning to carve it with runes powerful enough to kill Snorri. But the knife slipped off the rod and plunged deep into their chest, killing them instantly.

Another tale concerning this region tells of three children who saw a grey horse while playing near Place Lake (Staðarvatn). Two of them climbed onto the horse's back and asked the eldest to join them. When the older child refused, the others tauntingly yelled, "Ninny!" Suddenly, the horse reared up with a shriek and galloped into the lake with the two children on its back. The surviving child returned home and told the tale of what had happened. Everyone knew the other children would never return, for they had been taken by a nykur (see page 272).

MAIN BAY ADVENTURE SEED

- A skilled runemaster has gone mad in the Main Bay region and has been using their powers to cause all sorts of harm—and even death—to the people living in the area. They have also enslaved several trolls and forced them to carve giant runes into the mountainsides. These runes will curse anyone who looks at them. The heroes must find a way to reach the mad runemaster without looking at the giant runes and defeat the trolls and their master. Afterward, they must also find a way to remove the giant runes from the mountainside.
- The heroes are traveling near Place Lake when they see a magnificent grey horse. The creature approaches them in a friendly manner and waits to be mounted. As soon as anyone climbs onto its back, the horse gallops into the lake, leaving the other companions only a few moments to react. Having saved their friend or not, at the next farm, the heroes are told that the nykur has claimed many lives. Something must be done about this menace.

The Coasts

The region of the coasts (Strandir) is one of the most remote areas in Iceland and is known for the inhabitants' knowledge of magic. The landscape of this region is far from uniform. The low hills of Hrútafjörður (Ram Fjord) in the south gradually change to high mountains in the north, rising straight from the coast. Steingrímsfjörður (Steingrímur's Fjord) is the largest fjord in the region, at about 28 km (17 miles) long and 7 km (4 miles) across.

THE COASTS ADVENTURE SEED

One of the most powerful land spirits of Iceland, the Giant Bull, stopped the trolls from completing their ditch. The land spirits protect Iceland and do not allow its land to be divided. The Giant Bull killed two of the three trolls and cornered the third, waiting until morning when the sunlight turned the troll into stone. The bull then covered the ditch with massive rocks. Many centuries later, the Norse colonizers came to Iceland, unaware of this tale. Although the ditch has been covered, a tunnel underground still exists. Recently, trolls have been plotting again to split the land. They plan to collapse the tunnel's ceiling as soon as it's completed so that not even the land spirits will have time to intervene. Hidden people living in the Westfjords have found out about the plan. They ask the heroes to stop the trolls and find a way to seal the tunnel forever so that no one tries to divide Iceland again.

Myth: There is an old story from long ago about three trolls who tried to dig a ditch across the neck of land between Steingrímur's Fjord and Gílsfjörður (Wide Fjord). They never completed their attempt to separate the Westfjords region from the mainland, but the rocks they excavated from the tunnel and threw out to sea formed the many islands on the fjords. One of these three trolls was turned to stone by the sunlight and is now the rock known as Kerling (Old Hag).

THE NORTH

North Iceland is a region of dramatic landscapes, from giant volcanic craters to vast lava fields and powerful waterfalls. This area has some of the mildest temperatures in the country, perhaps due to the great frost giant Hrym preferring to dwell mainly in the southern edges of the Central Highlands.

Grímur's Island

Grímur's Island (Grímsey) is the northernmost island off the coast of Iceland, at 41 km (25 miles) from the mainland. It has an area of 5.3 square kilometers (2 square miles) and reaches a height of 105 meters (344 feet) above sea level at its highest point. All but the southern shoreline consists of steep cliffs. The climate is relatively mild, and there is abundant vegetation cover of forests and marshlands.

History: *The Sagas of the Norwegian Kings* (*Heimskringla*) relate how Icelanders rejected King Óláfur of Norway's request for the island as a gift because the army he would station there would be a threat to their independence.

Myth: Merfolk known as selkies (page 263) are frequently seen in the waters around Grímur's Island. Polar bears are also occasional visitors to the island when they come ashore on drift ice from Greenland. The best-known folktale that takes place on Grímur's Island concerns one such bear. The story goes that during one severe winter on Grímur's Island, all the fires at the various farms burned out and could not be relit. Three travelers were sent ashore, walking over the ice to the mainland. When they reached a gap in the ice, one of them who feared the treacherous jump, decided to walk along the gap instead, hoping to find a safer place to cross. As they walked along the gap, the ice began to break up, and they found themselves on an ice floe being carried out to sea. In the evening, they finally reached a tongue of ice close enough for them to jump to safety. There, they met a polar bear with two cubs. The mother bear motioned for the lost traveler to come near and allowed them to drink her milk. For the next few days, the traveler remained with the bear, recovering their strength. When they were strong enough, the bear allowed them to ride on her back as she swam to Grímur's Island. The traveler was so thankful that they invited the bear to their home. There, they had two of their finest sheep slaughtered, tied them together, and hung them across the bear's back. Carrying this generous meal, the bear swam back out to sea to her cubs.

GRIMUR'S ISLAND ADVENTURE SEED

Grímur's Island is the perfect place to put the heroes in contact with polar bears. This encounter could result in a fight against the massive beasts or be like the myth mentioned previously, with the heroes being helped by a bear. These bears could also be native intelligent polar bears (page 267).

Kola's Canyon

Under the twin waterfalls of Kola Falls (Kolufossar) is the Kola's Canyon (Kolugljúfur). The canyon is one kilometer (a little over half a mile) long and 50 meters (164 feet) deep, with vertical rock walls throughout.

Myth: Kola's Canyon is named for the gigantic troll woman who lives there. On the western side of the canyon is a grassy hollow known as Kola's Bed (Kolurúm), which is said to be where she sleeps. At the front of this hollow, there are two thin rock pillars called Bed Posts (Bríkur). Through a gap in these pillars, there is a cliff that leads down to the Wide River (Víðidalsá), flowing through the canyon below. When Kola wants breakfast, she reaches down through the gap and into the river teeming with salmon. It is said that she has treasure buried in a nearby hill.

KOLA'S CANYON ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes hear that a friend went to Kola's Canyon to steal the troll's gold. This was three days ago, and they have not returned. A child of the missing friend asks the heroes to go to Kola's Canyon to investigate. When they arrive, they must be stealthy to avoid being discovered by the troll. Kola has captured the greedy human who came looking for her gold and plans to cook them for a meal very soon. The heroes must succeed in freeing their friend, finding the gold, and escaping without becoming the gigantic troll's next victims.

Lake Valley

Lake Valley (Vatnsdalur) is dotted with a cluster of mounds and hillocks. Small rivers flow down into the valley from the highlands in a series of waterfalls. They continue through a large canyon to form Lake Valley River (Vatnsdalsá), which is teeming with salmon. Dense woods surround the river canyon. Landslides and avalanches are frequent in this area.

Myth: There is a story about a girl who worked at a farm in Lake Valley. The owner of the farm was wealthy but refused to share their bounty with others, cruelly turning away all who came in search of help. The harsh winters were very difficult for the nearby wildlife, and many of the creatures perished. Having a

kind heart and wanting to help the animals, the girl threw out as much leftover food as she could. One of the animals, a raven, grew so fond of her that it followed her whenever she went outside. For one Sunday morning feeding, however, the raven refused the food and instead flew a short distance away. The girl followed the raven, trying to feed it, but it continued to fly further and further away. She followed the bird until she was some distance south of the farmhouse. At that moment, she heard a roaring sound coming from the mountain. When she turned around, she saw a landslide destroy the farmhouse.

LAKE VALLEY ADVENTURE SEED

There are many Icelandic stories about intelligent animals that help those who are kind to them. In some of those tales, the animals can speak; in others, they cannot. You can bring that idea into your adventure. Introduce a raven, a fox, or any animal that seems appropriate to follow the heroes. If they are kind to the animal, it may come to their rescue in times of trouble, revealing its intelligence and magical power it possesses. Conversely, if the heroes are unkind or try to kill a hungry animal, it may reveal its mythical nature to them and flee. The next time it appears, it will mean trouble for the heroes, as it will be at the worst possible moment.

Metal Island

At the mouth of Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður), near the eastern shore but further out than Rock Pillars Island (Drangey), is a small island called Metal Island (Málmey). Green and fertile, it stands lower than sea level at its southern end and rises higher to the north.

Myth: No married couple can live on the island for more than twenty years, or one of them will disappear. One farmer, not being able to find their spouse, sought advice from a *goði*, who used magic to discover their location. Determined to save their beloved, the farmer and the goði rode to Angelica Valley Cliff (Hvanndalabjarg), a 600-meter-high (1,968 feet) precipice. There, the *goði* knocked on the sheer rock. It opened to reveal a grim giant and the farmer's spouse, who had become much larger and quite ugly. In shock, the farmer fled before the giant could attack.

METAL ISLAND ADVENTURE SEED

A friend of the heroes sends a plea for help. Upon arriving at Metal Island, the friend explains that their 20-year wedding anniversary is in one week. They do not intend to leave their farm and want the heroes to stand guard to prevent the same dreadful end that has plagued so many others on this island.

The truth behind the story is that a giant who lives inside Angelica Valley Cliff has learned how to brew a magic potion that can transform any married person into a giant, but the potion only works on someone who has been married for over 20 years. Inside the cliff, the giant lives with their many monstrous victims, and their magic seals the cave so that there is no entrance from the cliffside.

On the night of the heroes' friend's 20-year anniversary, the giant uses magic to invade the spouse's dreams and command them to walk to the cliffside. They obey as if they are sleepwalking. If the heroes prevent the sleepwalker from leaving the farmhouse, the giant will grow tired of waiting and come to fetch the victim themselves. Even after the giant is killed, the heroes still have plenty of problems, as the giant's other victims will go insane and rage across the island, destroying everything in their path and killing anyone they see.

Peninsula Fjord

Between two peninsulas, one called Peninsula of Trolls (Tröllaskagi), and the second one, known simply as Peninsula (Skagi), is Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður). The valley at the head of the fjord is West Valley (Vesturdalur), which is an area of vast grasslands that is ideal for farming.

Myth: In the southern region of West Valley, there is a narrow hilltop originally known as Lava Tussock (Hraunþúfa). It is said that a Christian missionary asked a child to go with them to a hilltop to help them bury a valuable hoard of silver stolen from pagans who refused to convert. After the treasure was buried, the missionary pushed the child over the edge to their death to prevent anyone from ever knowing its location. Since then, the cliff has been known as Holofernis' Headland (Hólófernishöfði).

PENINSULA FJORD ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes hear a tale about a ghost that speaks of buried treasure haunting Lava Tussock, a hill in West Valley. The climb up the hill is quite difficult. Upon getting there, they must deal with the ghost of the dead child, who has gone mad and mistakes everyone for the missionary who pushed them over the edge. The ghost is not happy to see people with the killer's face ("I see you are using some wicked magic!") coming after the treasure.

Rock Pillars Island

"There is an island", Guðmundur said, "in Peninsula Fjord, called Rock Pillars Island. It is excellent for defense: no one can get up to it without a ladder. If once you can reach it there is no chance of anyone attacking you there with arms or with craft, so long as you guard the ladder well."
—The Saga of Grettir the Strong

Rock Pillars Island (Drangey) is a massive natural rocky fortress standing 108 meters (354 feet) high on a small island located at Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður). The climb to the top is exceptionally challenging. The top of the island is flat and grassy. Because of the large bird population, plenty of eggs can be collected here.

History: Rock Pillars Island was never inhabited. However, *The Saga of Grettir the Strong* tells the story of Grettir Ásmundarson and his brother, who survived on the island as outlaws. When the brothers' fire had gone out on the island, Grettir is said to have swum ashore, a distance of nearly 7 kilometers (4 miles), to fetch embers.

Myths: There are many myths connected to Rock Pillars Island. One tells of the origins of the island in which two trolls were traveling across Peninsula Fjord, taking their troll-cow with them. They had only gone a short distance out into the fjord when dawn broke, and they were all turned into stone by the sunlight. The enormous troll-cow became Rock Pillars Island; one troll became the rock pillar named Old Hag (Kerling) at the southern end of the island, and the other troll became the rock pillar known as Old Man Karl (Karl) on the northern end.

ROCK PILLARS ISLAND ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes learn that someone is offering a reward for the killing of an outlaw. After searching for many weeks, they discover that the outlaw has been living on Rock Pillars Island. This presents a challenge, as the island is easy to defend and difficult to climb. Alternatively, the heroes could be the ones who have been outlawed and must defend Rock Pillars Island against people trying to hunt them down and kill them for a reward.

Altar River Valley

Sacrifice River Valley (Hörgárdalur) is a long valley to the west of Islands Fjord (Eyjafjörður). Farms, which are enclosed by high mountains with permanent snowdrifts, have existed near its mouth since the area was settled.

Myth: At Dark River (Myrká), in Altar River Valley, a temple priest invited a young woman named Guðrún from a remote farm to the Jól festivities. Unfortunately, he drowned in the river when he was on his way to meet Guðrún and was buried the week before Jól began. Despite this, someone riding the priest's horse came to Guðrún's farm. Having not heard of the priest's death, Guðrún climbed onto the horse behind the rider, and they set off for Dark River. As they rode, the moon shone on the back of the rider's head, revealing to Guðrún the white skull under the rider's hat. Guðrún realized she was riding with the undead but gave no sign until they reached Dark River.

Here, the undead priest tried to drag Guðrún into its grave, which had been left open when it started its journey. As they dismounted, Guðrún shoved the undead priest into the grave and ran away. Every night for the next two weeks, the undead priest haunted Guðrún, always repeating the name repeatedly as "Garún". It could not speak the word "god" (guð) in Guðrún's name because the undead priest's very existence goes against the laws of nature set by the gods. Finally, a sorcerer brought from Peninsula Fjord (Skagafjörður) in the West used a great spell to lay the deacon to rest.

ALTAR RIVER VALLEY ADVENTURE SEED

Traveling in the countryside during the winter, the heroes seek shelter at a farm, but the people inside are terrified and will not open the door. Around them, in the blizzard, they can hear an inhuman voice repeating, "Garún, Garún!" After a few moments, the faint outline of a person with half of their skull exposed can be seen not far from the heroes. This is a ***Draugur*** (pages 269–270) who returned from its grave and is obsessed with taking Gúðrun with them into the afterlife.

Waterfall of the Gods

This is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the country at 12 meters (39 feet) high and 30 meters (98 feet) wide. It is situated in the 175 km (108 miles) long Trembling River (Skjálfandafljót).

History: The Icelanders that choose to convert to Christianity—usually under threats of violence from the missionaries of the Norwegian king—are strongly encouraged to fling the images of the pagan gods into the waterfall as a public display of their devotion to Christ. For that reason, the waterfall is known as the Waterfall of the Gods (Goðafoss).

Myth: *The Saga of Grettir the Strong* tells the story of how the outlaw Grettir Ásmundarson was once hiding at a farm near the Waterfall of the Gods when he was attacked in the night by a troll. The creature did its best to haul Grettir down to the river canyon and throw him over the cliffs. It almost succeeded, but Grettir managed to chop off the troll's arm, causing it to fall into the gorge. Suspecting that there were more trolls in the area, Grettir decided to explore the river canyon a few days later. He jumped off the cliff and into the waterfall. Diving under the waterfall, he found a passage into a huge cave. Upon entering the cave, he saw a fearsome giant sitting next to a great fire. Grettir fought the giant, and when he finally managed to slay it, the river ran red with the giant's blood. It is said that Grettir found considerable treasure in the giant's cave.

WATERFALL OF THE GODS ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes hear that trolls are terrorizing the people of Bárður's Valley (Bárðardalur). When the heroes spend their first night at a farm near the Waterfall of the Gods, they are attacked by a massive troll. After slaying the creature, they hear stories of more trolls living in the river canyon and of hidden treasure. To rid the people of this region from the troll menace, the heroes must dive into the river and under the waterfall to look for caves where trolls may be hiding. The caves are only reachable via underwater passages. Once inside the cave complex, they must fight more trolls and, finally, a giant. Only then may they claim the giant's treasure.

The heroes are helped in the battle by someone hiding inside the giant's cave when they arrive. Later, they discover that this person is an outlaw. The heroes must decide whether to turn against this new ally or to remain friends. In the future, such an alliance could get the heroes into serious trouble with anyone hunting the outlaw.

Wide Valley and the Citadel

The Wide Valley (Víðidalur) is covered in birch forests. Through the valley flows Wide Valley River (Víðidalsá). The most prominent landmark here is a natural fortress named Citadel (Borgarvirki); standing upon a hill 180 meters (591 feet) above sea level, it dominates the surrounding region. There is a circular hollow on the top of the hill, which is surrounded by 15-meter-tall (49 feet) basalt columns and constructed walls with only one exit to the east.

Myth: The first Christian missionaries to visit Iceland, Bishop Fridrik and Þorvaldur the Far-Traveled, stayed at a farm in Wide Valley. They were met with fierce resistance from heathen Icelanders, some of whom gathered forces to attack the farm, intending to set it on fire and kill everyone inside. But just as their forces were approaching the farmhouse, a flock of birds took flight, startling the horses and causing the riders to be thrown and injured. The attack was abandoned.

Þórður's Headland

In Þórður's Headland (Þórðarhöfði), there is a 202-meter (663 feet) high volcano with a crater on its summit. The highest peak in the area is Warrior Women Rock (Herkonuklettur). The hollows on the headland are called Troll-Mate's Footprints (Skessuspor).

WIDE VALLEY AND THE CITADEL ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes are asked by their *goði* to do something about the Christian missionaries who came to the country hoping to convert the Icelanders—meaning, of course, that the missionaries need to die. The heroes learn that the missionaries have been taken to the Citadel. On their way there, the heroes are warned by a friendly mythical creature—perhaps a hidden person ally or the friendly raven from Lake Valley—that the missionaries are using magic to control the animals in the area and plan to use the birds, foxes, and even a polar bear against anyone who attacks them. In this conflict, the heroes must prove that the Norse gods are superior to the god of the Christians. Storming the Citadel should not be easy. If the heroes fail in their attack, will they convert to the new religion and face the fury of the *goði*?

Myths: The story behind the Troll-Mate's Footprints hollows is that a troll once took a shortcut across Peninsula Fjord to visit their sister, leaving their footprints behind. On the southern side of the headland is Camp Slope (Búðarbrekkur), where several large rocks stand. These are, in fact, farmhouses of hidden people.

There is another folk tale connected to this region about a farmer named Þórður who became lost during a blizzard. While stumbling through the snow, Þorður suddenly saw a cluster of large buildings. Through the windows came the sound of music, and people could be seen dancing inside. Þorður knocked on the door and was welcomed by a friendly family who gave the lost farmer food, shelter, and an opportunity to rest. In the morning, they also provided gifts for the farmer's family. When asked why they were being so kind, the family replied that this was Þorður's reward for saving their child. The farmer did not remember saving any children, but the family explained that it occurred when Þorður prevented a group of children from throwing stones at a large rock. If Þorður had not stopped them in time, the child resting below the rock would have died. It was then that the farmer realized that these were hidden people. During the long trek home, Þorður looked back and saw that where the buildings had stood, there were now only rocks.

ÞÓRÐUR'S HEADLAND ADVENTURE SEED

The gamemaster can use a variation of the folk tale above to introduce the heroes to the friendly nature of the hidden people, where they may find an ally. Alternatively, heroes traveling across the country become lost in a blizzard. Just when they lose all hope of survival, they encounter a group of unfamiliar buildings.

THE EAST

The windswept landscapes of East Iceland are full of striking contrasts. Immense volcanic plateaus and sheer-sided mountains loom over wide black beaches and vast green expanses. Most of Iceland's forests can be found in this region.

Decoration Island

The largest of the fjords on the east coast is Whale Fjord (Reyðarfjörður). At the mouth of the fjord is Decoration Island (Skrúður), a rocky island rich in bird life. This island is not inhabited, but people sometimes go there to collect bird's eggs. A few farmers also take their sheep to the island to graze during the summer months.

History: Whale Fjord is the place where the first Norse to come to Iceland made landfall. The seafarer Naddoður was traveling from Norway to the Faroe Islands but lost his way and made landfall at this spot in Iceland around the year 850. He sent some of his crew to Whale Mountain (Reyðarfjall) to look for signs of habitation. Finding no one in this new land, he called it Snow Land (Snæland) and sailed on to his original destination.

Myth: A troll lives on Decoration Island in the depths of a vast cave. This creature is responsible for the disappearance of some of the island's finest sheep and for many other unwanted incidents. One story goes that the child of a local *goði* in Whale Fjord disappeared. Despite a thorough search on land and sea, this missing child was never found. Sometime later, during a winter storm in the fjord, a ship took shelter below the cliffs of Decoration Island. Huddled together on a cliff's edge, cold and wet, the crew began to sing to pass the time. Suddenly, the rock wall behind them opened, and a huge hand holding a big dish of porridge emerged. A voice said, "Now, my mate is amused. Now, I am not amused." The crew was hungry and quickly devoured the food. When they were finished, the dish vanished back into the rock. When the crew told this story later, everyone believed that the monster's mate must be the *goði's* missing child.

DECORATION ISLAND ADVENTURE SEED

The local *goði* at the Whale Fjord region asks the heroes to go to Decoration Island and rescue their child from the hands of a troll. It's been many years since they disappeared, but the *goði* has not lost hope. After hearing the tale of the crew who spent a night on the island (see previous myth), the *goði* is convinced that the missing child is being held captive inside a cave on the island. The heroes must learn a song, then travel to the island and sing that song by the rock face. When the rock opens with food, they must seize the opportunity to gain access to the cave inside. Alternatively, they may choose a different approach altogether, such as disguising themselves as sheep and waiting for the troll to appear.

Eastern Stronghold Fjord

At the northernmost reaches of the East Fjords highlands is Eastern Stronghold Fjord (Borgarfjörður Eystri). At its head, is a valley covered by thick forests and surrounded by mountains of dark rock. The impressive Door Mountains (Dyrfjöll) rise at the end of the valley, owing their name to the large gap in the highest peak—which looks much like a gate or door.

Myth: People traveling through this region often speak of seeing hidden people. Many believe that a rocky hill in the middle of the valley, known as Elf Stronghold (Álfaborg), marks the settlement of the hidden folk. In the valley stands a huge rock shaped like a building, which the local settlers have named Church Rock (Kirkjusteinn).

The truth is that some of the first elves to settle in Eastern Stronghold Fjord did so after observing and later befriending one of the early Norse Christian settlers in the area. This Norwegian farmer took it as their mission to convert their elven friend to the new faith. During the next hundred years, more of the hidden folk joined the original settler in Eastern Stronghold Fjord, and this became one of the larger elven communities in Iceland. It is an exceptional community, being the only one to be entirely Christian. That first elf who was converted by their Norwegian friend over a hundred years ago is the leader of the community and a priest at the hidden Christian church at Church Rock.

EASTERN STRONGHOLD FJORD ADVENTURE SEED

The hidden people are peaceful folk who refuse to fight wars over religious matters. The Norse born in Iceland, however, are often willing to resolve religious disagreements with violence, even if that disagreement is with the hidden folk. In this adventure seed, a *goði* has been harassing and killing Christians in the area with the intent of ridding the East Fjords of the new religion. Growing more confident with each victory against Christian converts, the *goði* decides to take this religious war into the realms of the hidden folk. Knowing that the elves have powerful magic, the *goði* will need the help of brave warriors and runemasters—the heroes. They are tasked with destroying Elf Stronghold and expelling the Christian hidden folk from the region. This may present a real moral dilemma, however. When the hidden people allow themselves to be seen, the heroes recognize that they have much in common with each other. Their children look at them with terrified faces while unarmed elves do whatever they can to protect their families and farms. If the heroes press on, they soon discover that even unarmed elves are formidable adversaries able to lay devastating curses. The heroes must choose whether to destroy this community of peaceful people or join them in their fight for their right to live in peace.

Liquid River Lake

Between the coastal highlands of the East Fjords and the ice-covered peaks of the Central Highlands lies a long green valley covered by lush forests of birch and mountain ash. Cutting through the middle of this valley is Liquid River (Lagarfljót), which broadens at one point to form a lake 35 km (22 miles) long and about 2 km (1 mile) across. The waters of the lake are a murky brown, with bubbles often bursting on the surface. The lake rarely freezes during the winter.

Myth: A monster lives in the depths of Liquid River Lake. The serpent's origin story began when a young farmer near Liquid River received a gold ring from their mother. She claimed that the gold would multiply if the ring was placed beneath a heather serpent. Following this advice, both the ring and a heather serpent were put in a chest. After several days, the serpent grew so large that the chest burst apart. Terrified, the farmer threw the chest into the river. Sometime later, having reached a gigantic size, the serpent began killing any people or horses that approached the lake. The serpent is also known for spewing a terrible poisonous gas onto the banks of the lake.

LIQUID RIVER LAKE ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes are contacted by a friend living on a farm near Liquid River. Some livestock have been killed by the serpent. The friend will pay a hearty sum to anyone who can defeat the monster. If they can find it, they may also keep the serpent's gold ring, which is said to have magical powers. The serpent is, in fact, impossible to kill while it has its treasure. The only possible way to help the local people is to shackle the serpent to the bottom of the lake, but that should prove to be quite a challenge for even the most experienced group of heroes.

Njarðvík Cliffs

Njörður's Bay (Njarðvík) is the northernmost bay of the East Fjords. Mountains embrace the valley, and forests cover the lowlands. Along the coast, there are vertical cliffs dotted with numerous caves accessible only from the sea. These are known as Njörður's Bay Screes (Njarðvíkurskriður). The sea is often agitated, and the loud noise of the waves crashing against the cliff walls can be heard from far away.

Myth: A monstrous creature with the upper body of an animal and a human lower body attacks people who travel through this area—especially during the dark months of winter. The creature is known as Gnawer because of the gnawing sound it makes. It is said to live in a cave in Gnawer's Gully (Naddagil) north of the cliffs.

NJARÐVÍK CLIFFS ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes are traveling through this area and hear stories from the local farmers about a monster that has killed any who dare to travel along the coast of Njörður's Bay. The local *goði* offers a reward to anyone who defeats the monster. So far, Gnawer has killed all who attempt to slay it. The heroes must devise a plan to reach the cliff sides from the sea, make the dangerous climb at Gnawer's Gully, and find their way into Gnawer's Cave. Alternatively, they may prefer to send someone to go alone at night as bait to lure Gnawer out of its cave and attack the creature out in the open. Whatever the approach, the heroes are sure to face a tough challenge, as Gnawer is very strong, intelligent, and agile. As for the monster's actual appearance, the folk tales are vague as to which animal constitutes the top half of the beast. The gamemaster can choose anything that seems suitable, such as a bull (which would make Gnawer very similar to a minotaur), a bear, or any other animal.

Skafti's Mountains

The Skafti's Mountains (Skaftafell) are located just southwest of Field River Glacier (Skeiðarárjökull) and the shifting sands below the glacier. Two glacial tongues extend down into the lowlands from Isolated Glacier (Öræfajökull). Nearby is Iceland's highest point, Angelica Valley Peak (Hvannadalshnúkur), at 2,119 meters (one mile).

Myth: There was once a farmer named Bjarni who lived in the valley below Skafti's Mountains and was an excellent artisan. In a cave above the Skafti's Mountain woods lived a troll who was friendly toward Bjarni, guarding the farmer's sheep in the mountains and their driftwood on the shore. In return, Bjarni built a door for the troll's cave so it would be more comfortable there. One winter, the troll told Bjarni that a ship had run aground on the shore with all of the crew dead, save for one. The survivor was a fearsome warrior wielding powerful magic that made them nearly invincible. This warrior intended to destroy all of the farms on the eastern coast. The troll picked up its axe and followed Bjarni to the shore, where it slew the warrior with ease.

SKAFT'S MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes find themselves lost in terrible weather for several days. Hungry and tired, they spot a sheep and have no choice but to kill it for food. When they attack the sheep, they are surprised by a troll climbing up from a crack in the glacier ice. The troll tries to protect the sheep and scare the heroes away. If the heroes seriously injure the troll, it will flee by jumping into a deep crack in the ice where it cannot be followed. The next day, the weather continues to be terrible, but the heroes reach Bjarni's farm. The farmer is most distressed by the news that their troll friend was injured. The heroes must be diplomatic to avoid a fight with the farmer, one which could result in the heroes being outlawed. Bjarni finally reveals that the troll had spoken earlier of a dangerous warrior who had come ashore earlier that day. The only hope of defeating the warrior is to bring the troll back to full health so it can help in the fight. The heroes must climb the Skafti's Mountains, find the troll, and heal it. Then, they must fight the menace alongside the troll.

THE SOUTH

Volcanically active mountains, massive glaciers, and majestic waterfalls combine to make up extremely varied landscapes in the south of the country. The Southeast features vast expanses of black volcanic sand stretching from the highlands to the sea and only narrow strips of fertile lowlands. The Southwest, in contrast, has the best farmland in Iceland.

Blue Mountain

An old turf mountain formed during an eruption beneath a glacier, Blue Mountain (Bláfell), reaches a height of 1,200 meters (one mile). On the top of the mountain is a plateau, from where it is possible to see all the glaciers and rivers in Southwest Iceland.

BLUE MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes are traveling from South Iceland to the North and plan to use the Keel route across the highlands. When they reach a farm near Blue Mountain, a farmer warns them that the highland path has become impassable because of the threat of the giantess. It is evident to the heroes that many of the local farms have been severely affected by the loss of their sheep and by the deaths of those who dared to climb the mountain to face the giantess and never returned. If they accept the challenge to kill the monster, the heroes find themselves in a difficult situation when they recognize the evil giantess' true nature. That discovery can happen in many ways. A hero with magic skills may recognize the nature of her condition. Alternatively, the heroes could find the giantess' cave, which contains many hints of her true nature. Slaying the cursed elf could bring swift retribution from the hidden folk in the form of curses put upon the heroes or worse. The heroes could also see this as an opportunity to have the hidden people's gratitude, which they can use to their benefit. There is also the chance that the elf may give them a magical reward if they break the curse. The heroes must first understand the nature of the curse and then find out how to dispel it. To discover the name of the cursed elf woman, they must talk to the hidden folk or to someone with Second Sight who knew her in the past. The last bit of the challenge is to find the cursed elf and call her by her true name before she can attack them.

Myth: According to legend, at one time a dangerous giantess lived on Blue Mountain. The Keel (Kjölur) route that crosses the Central Highlands of Iceland had become impassable back then, as travelers either got killed by the giantess or went insane as they were hunted down. Large numbers of farmers' sheep also disappeared. The giantess, in fact, proved to be an elf woman under a magical spell. To be released, a male human would have to call her by name. The man who finally managed to do so was named Óláfur, and it is said that he deserted the world of man to go live among the hidden people.

Forest River Fall

Richly stacked is Þrasi's chest
under Forest's waters cold.
Whosoever goes there first
will find wealth untold.
—Old Icelandic verse

Twenty or so waterfalls cascade down the slopes of the mountains on the course of Forest River (Skógá). The biggest of these waterfalls is Forest River Fall (Skógafoss), which is 60 meters (197 feet) tall and 25 meters (82 feet) wide. The sheer volume of water falling and the resulting spray cloud make it an awe-inspiring view. On fine days, when the sun is shining, there is often a rainbow above the waterfall. This whole region, named Forests (Skógar), is covered in woods of birch and willow.

Myths: The first settler in this region was Þrasi Þórólfsson, a rich *goði* who was also a mighty warrior and skillful runemaster. Þrasi once got into a dispute with another runemaster, Loðmundur the Aged, who lived east of Glacier River (Jökulsá). Both used their magical skills, one after the other, to divert the river over to their lands, which ended up creating the wastelands of Sun-Home Sands (Sólheimasandur) and Forests Sands (Skógasandur). Finally, they agreed to let the river run the shortest route to the sea. The river was renamed Forest River, and Þrasi Þórólfsson settled near the newly created Forest River Fall.

Before their death, Þrasi is said to have sunk a chest full of gold and silver coins in the deep pool beneath Forest River Fall. Many have tried to retrieve the chest without success. Once, a young treasure hunter managed to get a rope through a ring on the end of the chest, but the ring suddenly came off its fastenings, and the chest vanished into the depths. Only the ring was recovered, which was later used for a temple door.

Forest River Fall Adventure Seed

The promise of a chest full of gold should prove enough to draw the interest of most groups of ambitious heroes. The catch here is that the pool under the waterfall is not only extremely deep and the chest very heavy, but there is a water serpent living in its depths, magically bound by Þrasi to forever guard the treasure chest. Anyone with the Swim skill may try to dive down to the bottom of the pool, with a −40% penalty. A Search skill roll is necessary to spot the chest once the swimmer gets to the bottom. The water serpent attacks anyone who reaches the bottom of the pool.

Hooded Cloak Mountain

The hot springs and the sulfur smell around the perpetually snow-covered volcano known as Hooded Cloak Mountain (Hekla) are reminders that devastating volcanic eruptions can occur at any time. When not erupting, the peak is always covered in snow and a small glacier.

Myth: Hooded Cloak Mountain is believed to be the gateway to Hel's realm of the dead, Niflheimur. Some Christians also believe the volcano to be the prison of Judas or a gateway to Christian hell.

HOODED CLOAK MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE SEED

An ally of the heroes is dead, taking to the grave an important secret. The heroes must find the entrance to the tunnel that leads to the realm of the dead, face many dangers on the way, and finally persuade Hel, the ruler of Niflheimur, to allow them to talk to their dead ally. Hel is a wicked being and will certainly ask them for something in return. The heroes may be asked to arrange the death of a powerful Icelander by any means except battle. This ensures that the individual goes to Niflheimur, and not Valhalla, after death. Enraging Hel in any way may result in a powerful volcanic eruption on Hooded Cloak Mountain.

Katla of Kötlugjá

The forest known as Noisy Woods (Dynskógar) spreads along the margins of Hjörleifur's Fjord (Hjörleifsfjörður). At the head of the fjord is Swamp Valley Glacier (Mýrdalsjökull), and beneath the glacier is the volcano Katla, which erupts every 80 years or so.

Myth: Once upon a time, a farmer named Katla lived in the area. Skilled with magic, the farmer owned a pair of magical breeches that allowed anyone who wore them to run exceedingly fast without tiring. Most people were fearful of Katla's magical powers, but one shepherd named Barði was not. Wanting to quickly round up the farm's sheep before sundown, Barði stole Katla's breeches. Katla became furious upon discovering that Barði had used the breeches. That same day, Katla secretly drowned the shepherd in a barrel of whey. After the winter passed and the level of the whey dropped in the barrel, Katla knew that the murder would soon be discovered. In desperation, Katla put on the breeches and ran northwards toward the glacier, plummeting into the gully below. Soon after, the farm was destroyed by a glacial flood. The people of this region believe that the volcanic eruption and the resulting flood were caused by Katla's magical powers. The gully in the glacier was named Katla's Gully (Kötlugjá), and the wasteland left over by the floods was called Katla's Sands (Kötlusandur).

KATLA OF KÖTLUGJÁ ADVENTURE SEED

While the heroes are visiting a friend's farm, a devastating glacial flood suddenly covers the land, destroying the farm and the area around it. The heroes' first challenge is to rescue as many people as possible from the flood. After the waters have subsided, they are told the story of Katla, who used to work at the farm but fled north a few months ago, shortly before another worker was found drowned in a barrel of whey. Katla's magical powers are known and feared by many. The friend begs the heroes to find Katla and avenge the deaths of those who perished in the flood. Hunting down and killing Katla on the glacier should be quite a challenge, as the magical breeches will provide Katla with tireless speed. Katla is also a very skilled runemaster and has allied with an evil giant that lives atop the glacier.

Swamp Valley

The Swamp Valley (Mýrdalur) region has a relatively mild climate but gets a lot of rain in the warmer months of the year. In this valley, there is a river called Foul Stream (Fúlilækur), named after the strong smell of sulfur from the geothermal sources upstream. Foul Stream is a fast–running river that has claimed many lives. Facing inland on the left of the river and sliding down into the lowlands is Sun-Home Glacier (Sólheimajökull). On the right side of Foul Stream is a desert of black volcanic sands that extends all the way to the sea. At the head of the valley is a tall mountain range known as the Swamp Valley Mountains and a flat solitary hill rising 300 meters (984 feet) called Pétur's Island (Pétursey). Nearby on the valley is Islands Hill (Eyjarhóll), which is 200 meters (656 feet) tall and strangely shaped like a pyramid.

Myth: A farmer at Swamp Valley wanted to build a temple on his land but lacked timber for the structure. One day, a stranger came to the farm and offered to build the temple. The visitor wanted no traditional payment for his work but instead asked the farmer to say his name aloud before the construction was completed. If the farmer was unable to discover (or guess) the worker's name, he would have to hand over his only child as payment. The farmer agreed, and the stranger began work on the temple foundation. The work progressed at an astonishing speed and, within a few days, was almost finished. The farmer now grew very worried and began enquiring at the neighboring farms about the stranger, but the name remained a mystery. Early in the morning, on the very day the temple construction was to be finished, the farmer decided to rest on a hillock overlooking the temple. Suddenly, he heard singing from inside the hillock: "Finnur soon will come, your forebearer from Swamp Valley, to fetch the child he won." The farmer now ran back to the temple, hoping to get there in time. The builder was about to nail the last board into place when the farmer arrived at the doorway and said, "So you are almost done, Finnur." The stranger was so surprised that he dropped his tools and vanished, never to be seen again.

The wide and flat Pétur's Island Hill and the pyramid-shaped Island's Hill are both believed to be homes of hidden people.

SWAMP VALLEY ADVENTURE SEED

The heroes meet a farmer in Swamp Valley who tells them about the stranger building a temple for the family and about the unusual deal they have agreed upon. (see the Swamp Valley myth entry). The farmer offers a few pieces of silver to the heroes if they can discover the stranger's name but warns them against doing harm, as the farmer doesn't want to be outlawed. The heroes must devise a plan on how to obtain the name. If their plan fails, they may hear the chanting from inside the hillock, just as in the folktale. Perhaps hidden folk allies may have the stranger reveal their hidden farm and explain that they would love to have a child but are unable to conceive. Will the heroes set out to bring the hidden folk an orphaned child? That choice could pose an interesting dilemma, especially when the heroes are unsure of what it would mean for a child to grow up among the hidden people.

Westman Islands

The Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar) are an archipelago of 14 islands situated just off the southern coast of Iceland. Steep sea cliffs dotted with caves surround many of the islands.

History: *The Book of Settlements* tells the story of Ingólfur Arnarson and his sworn brother, Hjörleifur, at the very start of the settlement of Iceland. The two brothers had just arrived in the country and were searching for a place to settle, when Irish slaves belonging to Hjörleifur rebelled and slew their master, then fled to the offshore islands. Ingólfur soon chased the slaves and killed all of them. The islands were then named after the Irish or "West Men" slaves killed there.

Myth: Gannet Reef (Súlnasker) is a small rocky island in the Westman Islands archipelago and is so-called for its large gannet bird colony. The island stands so high above the sea on four rock pillars that it is possible to row under it when the sea is calm. No one has ever successfully climbed up to the island, but the few who fell while attempting it were saved by a large, mysterious person. This same rescuer has been seen waving to sailors from the island to warn them of bad weather. No one knows the identity of this benevolent guardian or if anyone else lives on that island.

Highlands

The Highlands, covering the central region of the country, are the most remote and inhospitable part of Iceland. Most of the area is above 350 meters (1148 feet), with its weather-beaten peaks piercing into the clouds. Large sections consist of near-endless lava fields and vast black sands cut by great rivers flooding from under glaciers. In the winter, the ferocity of the wind and the extreme snowfall make traveling the Highland's few paths extremely reckless. Only during the summer are the routes safe for travelers, although there is still the danger presented by outlaws and the many mythic creatures that make their homes here.

WESTMAN ISLANDS ADVENTURE SEED

The mysterious rescuer on the island of Gannet Reef is one of the hidden folk who lives in solitude, worshipping the god Freyr. They have achieved a profound spiritual connection with Freyr that provides extraordinary abilities. The gamemaster might use this powerful yet reclusive figure in a campaign that directly involves religious themes.

Cold Valley

Cold Valley (Kaldidalur) is a mountain pass over the Western Highlands. The track starts near Assembly Plain (the site of the National Assembly), passes between Þórir's Glacier (Þórisjökull) and the volcano known as Ok, and leads up north. The scenery along the route varies between grand and desolate. The way over the pass is only accessible during the summer. It is full of debris and stones, making it difficult to traverse, with cairns being the only route markings along the way. The highest point of the route is 727 meters (0.5 miles).

Myths: Old folktales say that all of Iceland's trolls gather in this valley to play games while troll spectators watch from the surrounding mountains. Another folk tale tells the story of an outlaw named Skúli, who had been sentenced at the National Assembly for committing several serious offenses. Attempting to escape execution, Skúli quickly mounted his steed, Sörli, and fled. Many people pursued the fugitive outlaw from Assembly Plain all the way up to Cold Valley. Skúli escaped and finally reached home, but his steed, Sörli, fell dead from exhaustion. To honor the excellent horse, Skúli held a funeral wake. A large section of Cold Valley is now known as Skúli's Run (Skúlaskeið).

COLD VALLEY ADVENTURE SEED

The story of Skúli can be used as inspiration whenever the heroes bring someone to the courts at the National Assembly for any crime that carries the punishment of outlawry. Once the heroes think they've done their job and that justice has been served, they might be surprised to find out that the outlaw has fled to a desolate area of the country, riding on an excellent horse. The heroes will face not only the perils of traveling through the highlands and the threat of mythic creatures living there, but also fierce competition from others wanting to execute the outlaw and keep any treasures. When it comes to finding treasure and claiming rewards, competition can get brutal and bloody.

Goose Sands

This mountain route is the longest road across the Central Highlands, and it reaches higher altitudes than the Cold Valley and Keel routes. The name Goose Sands (Gásasandur) is a reference to the pink-footed geese that breed during summer in the highlands. Due to various dangers, bad weather, and the dryness of its lava desert, this route has had a bad reputation since Iceland's first settlers arrived.

Myth: There are many stories about the walking corpses (see *Draugur*, pages 269–270) of those who perished trying to make the treacherous journey across the highlands via the Goose Sands. Also, many outlaws take advantage of the remoteness and bad reputation of Goose Sands to hide in this region, attacking and robbing travelers along the mountain route.

GOOSE SANDS ADVENTURE SEED

During the summer, the heroes are asked to search along the Goose Sands route for the bodies of two workers from a farm in the South. The two tried to go north through the route in the early summer but never arrived at their destination. The bad weather and blizzards should be a surprise to the heroes. They find the bodies of the missing workers, too decomposed to be able to establish the cause of death. Soon after this discovery, the heroes are haunted by what appears to be the spirits of the deceased—they hear bone-chilling noises and are hit by stones thrown by an unseen assailant. Spooked by the strange noises, their horses gallop away, leaving the heroes to make the long journey back through Iceland's most dangerous mountain route on foot. These events are meant to be terrifying for the heroes. In fact, what has been haunting the heroes is not a ghost, but rather an outlaw who has been living in the highlands for a few years. They want to separate the group, so it is easier to kill each member one by one. This adventure can be made even more interesting by adding a mythic element to the story in the form of a giant who both the heroes and the outlaw encounter. Under the threat of a giant, and with the weather getting worse, the heroes' only hope is to work together with the outlaw, who knows the area well.

The Keel

The highland region between Long Glacier (Langjökull) and Temple Glacier (Hofsjökull) is called Keel (Kjölur). Ever since the first Norse settlers began exploring Iceland, the Keel mountain route has been an important link between the northern and southern regions of the island. Green meadows in the South change to barren sand deserts close to the mighty glaciers. Between the glaciers, 420 meters (1,378 feet) above sea level, is a broad and deep lake known as White River Lake. Further north along the Keel route, the rugged terrain gives way to sheltered green valleys. At the northern end of the route, near the headwaters of the Mixing River (Blanda), the hot springs of Hot Spring Fields (Hveravellir) provide a warm oasis. The Keel route is only open during the summer months.

Myth: Many people have died of exposure while trying to cross the Keel mountain route, and the trail is haunted by the undead (see *Draugur*, pages 269–270). Outlaws are believed to live in this area as well.

The Saga of Grettir the Strong tells the story of how the outlaw Grettir spent a winter in the valley between Long Glacier and Temple Glacier, under the protection of a giant named Þórir, and of his romance with the giant's daughters.

THE KEEL ADVENTURE SEED

The Keel path will likely be the first choice of route for heroes wanting to travel between North and South Iceland in the summer months. The journey takes many days, and they must deal with the undead, trolls, and giants living in the highlands along the mountain path. An interesting moral question is introduced when the heroes find themselves in need of food and water. To their surprise, they find a shack where a farmer couple scrapes a hard living from a few sheep. They welcome the heroes and give them all the help they can afford despite their meager supplies. It is only after they become acquainted that it becomes evident to the heroes that these are famous outlaws. If confronted, the couple pleads and begs the heroes for mercy. If the heroes take the outlaws back to the lowlands or kill them here and take proof of the executions with them, they will likely be paid a reward. Let the heroes decide the outlaw's fate, but be sure to include the consequences of their choice.

THE WIDER WORLD

To the north of Norway lies Finnmark; from there the land sweeps northeast and east to Bjarmaland, which renders tribute to the king of Russia. [...] England and Scotland are islands but separate kingdoms; Ireland is a large island. Iceland is also a large island, to the north of Ireland.

—Medieval Icelandic Geographical Treatise

Despite the geographical isolation of their island, people living in this remote corner of the North Atlantic have never cultivated isolation. No other people in the Middle Ages are as widely traveled as the Icelanders.

Most Europeans of this age confine themselves to sailing along the edge of coastal areas, fearing the open ocean. Icelanders, on the other hand, do not fear traveling across the Atlantic Ocean because they view it as a vast lake.

To Icelanders, the sea is a road rather than a barrier.

This section covers the main events and the general worldview of Icelanders in 977.

Scandinavia

Denmark

The Kingdom of Denmark comprises the peninsula of Jutland, a large area of the southern region of the Scandinavian peninsula, as well as the large islands of Fyn and Sjælland, and 500 smaller islands. The kingdom is protected by a series of earthworks known as Danevirke, in which a single gap exists for the passage of the Army Road. This road links the northern Jutland peninsula to Holstein, a frontier region to the south.

Denmark is a flat country. More than half of it stands less than 30 meters (98 feet) above sea level. The highest point in Denmark is 173 meters (568 feet), contrasting with the 2,560 meters (2 miles) of Norway's highest point. More than 75% of Denmark lies below 100 meters (330 feet) and is flat or gently undulating. The country is extensively wooded with oak and beech.

The Danes control all the trade between Western Europe and the Baltic region. This is because all sea-trading routes pass through the archipelago between Jutland and Skane—right through Danish lands.

The king of Denmark is Haraldur "Bluetooth" Gormsson, the first Danish king to convert to Christianity. He has built many fortified castles throughout his kingdom. Denmark's influence in Scandinavia has diminished in the last few years due to the Danish army's defeat in 974 and subsequent territory loss to the Holy Roman Empire.

Major Trading Center: Heiðabær

The town of Heiðabær was founded around 770. It is the largest town and most important trading market in all of Scandinavia.

Its position at the base of the Jutland peninsula gives the Heiðabær merchants control over the most important trading routes between Western Europe and the Baltics. More importantly, goods arriving from Western Europe can be disembarked at Hollingsted, on the opposite side of the peninsula. From there, they are transported the short distance of 18 kilometers (11 miles) by land, avoiding the dangerous coastal route and falling under the protection of the Danevirke fortifications. They finally arrive in Heiðabær, where they can be traded with merchants coming from the east.

King Gotrik of Denmark raided and burned down another important merchant town named Reric in 808, forcing the merchants there to move to Heiðabær. That move made Heiðabærthe unrivaled trading market of the North Sea.

Heiðabær is currently under the control of the Holy Roman Empire, after the army of Otto II defeated the Danish forces in 974 and pushed far into Denmark. Word has gotten to Iceland recently that King Haraldur Bluetooth wants to hire Icelanders willing to fight with the Danes in the coming battle to regain Heiðabær.

Timeline of Viking Age Denmark

710 Angantyr becomes the first of the "old kings" of the Danes. He is known for being "more savage than any beast and harder than stone." He builds the Danevirke, a series of earthen defenses at the base of the Jutland peninsula.

760 King Angantyr dies. His son Sigfred becomes king.

770 Founding of the town of Heiðabær.

804 King Sigfreður dies. His son Guðröður becomes king. He reinforces the Danevirke fortifications.

808 King Gotrik's forces attack the German town of Reric, burn it down, and order the town merchants to resettle in Heiðabær.

810 King Gotrik leads a force of 200 ships to plunder the Frisian coast and claims northern Frisia as Danish territory.

810 King Gotrik is assassinated. His nephew Hemming becomes king.

811 King Hemmingur dies, and Heiðrekur Gotriksson becomes king. Haraldur Klak Haraldsson also claims the title of king of Denmark.

814 Charlemagne dies. Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, begins a campaign against Denmark.

819 Haraldur Klak Haraldsson becomes co-ruler of Denmark alongside Horik Gotriksson.

826 King Haraldur Klak Haraldsson adopts Christianity.

827 King Haraldur Klak Haraldsson is driven out of Denmark for good and is given a fief in Frisia by the Franks.

845 Danish Viking Ragnar "Hairy-Breeches" leads a raid on Paris with a fleet of 120 ships. He only refrains from burning the city when the French King Charles the Fat agrees to pay a ransom of 3,000 kg (around 6,600 lbs.) of silver.

845 King Horik Gotriksson dispatches a fleet of 600 ships to the Elbe and seizes Hamburg. For two days, the Danes plunder the town until they are forced out by a Saxon army.

854 King Horik Gotriksson is murdered by a nephew he had previously driven into exile. After a brief civil war, Eiríkur "the Child" (thus nicknamed after being the only royal child left alive), becomes king and is known as Horik II.

864 Pope Nicholas writes to King Horik II, encouraging him to become a Christian. He refuses.

865 The Danish Viking Ragnar "Hairy-Breeches" is killed by the Northumbrian king, Aelle. Taking revenge for Ragnar's death, his sons Halfdan Ragnarsson, Ubba Ragnarsson, and Ivarr the Boneless take the Great Heathen Army to England.

866 The Great Heathen Army conquers the Kingdom of Northumbria.

The Wider World
Iceland
Finnmark
Norwegian Sea
Atlantic Ocean
Shetlands
Orkney
South Islands
Norway
Skiringssalur
Sigtuna
Birka
Sweden
Ireland
Scotland
Holmgarðr
North Sea
Denmark
Baltic Sea
Hlymrekur
Dyflinni
Vikingló
Mön
Veðrafjörður
Veigsfjörður
Cork
Northumbria
England
Mercia
East Anglia
Londinium
Wessex
Hedeby
Rus
English Channel
Kingdom of Germany
Rouen
River Seine
Paris
Holy Roman Empire
Normandy
Bay of Biscay
Duchy of Bavaria
France
Kingdom of Asturias
Pamplona
Kingdom of Italy
Iberian Peninsula
Lisbon
Adriatic Sea
Byzantine Empire
Constantinople
Cordoba
Seville
Mediterranean Sea
Cadiz
Medina Sidonia
Strait of Gibraltar
Aegean Sea
Ionian Sea
Scala milliarium Yslandirorum

867 King Horik II dies. Bagsecg becomes king.
870 The Great Heathen Army conquers the Kingdom of East Anglia.
871 King Bagsecg leads the Great Summer Army to England and adds his forces to the Great Heathen Army. King Bagsecg dies in battle.
874 The Great Heathen Army conquers Mercia.
871–877 Many kings rule parts of Denmark in quick succession: Halfdan Ragnarsson (871–877), Sigfred (873–891), Gotrik (880s), Helgi (890s), Óláfur (890), Gyrd and Gnupa (900), Sigtrygg Gnupasson (900s).
878 King Alfred of England defeats the Great Heathen Army at the Battle of Ethandun.
916 Hörða-Knútur Ragnarsson deposes the young king Sigtrygg and rules over most of Denmark.
936 Gormur Harthaknútsson becomes King of Denmark.
940 Haraldur "Bluetooth" Gormsson becomes king, ruling with his father Gormur Harthaknútsson.
950 Gormur Harthaknútsson conquers most of Denmark. Haraldur Bluetooth conquers Norway.
958 Gormur Harthaknútsson dies. Haraldur Bluetooth becomes sole king of Denmark.
970 Wedding of Haraldur Bluetooth and Tove of the Obotrites.
974 Heiðabær falls to the Holy Roman Empire.
975 The Norwegian vassal King Hákon Sigurðsson breaks his allegiance with Denmark, after Haraldur Bluetooth tries to force him to convert to Christianity.

Norway

Most of Norway's territory is occupied by mountains. These steep mountains rise abruptly from the sea, leaving only a few areas with gentle slopes, forcing its population inevitably toward the sea.

The land is indented with a great number of fjords, many of them long and narrow. There are also a total of 150,000 islets along the coast. Most of the population is concentrated in the southern part of the country.

The history of Norway during the Viking period begins with Haraldur, who succeeded his father, Halfdan the Black, in 860 AD as the ruler of several small kingdoms in southern Norway. After having his marriage proposal rejected by the daughter of the petty king of Hordaland, Haraldur swore that he would not comb or cut his hair until he became the sole king of Norway. Now known as Haraldur Tanglehair, he went on to make a series of conquests. He was later known as Haraldur Fairhair after becoming the first sole monarch of Norway. He retained this name for the remainder of his life.

Haraldur's campaign to unify Norway forced many of his opponents to flee to Iceland and the Scottish Islands. Subsequently, Haraldur made an expedition to Scotland to eliminate his opponents hiding there. Iceland, however, remains independent and out of Norwegian control.

As Haraldur grew old, he handed control of the country to his favorite son, Eiríkur Bloodaxe, but his descendants could not maintain the unity of the kingdom. Since then, the kingdom has been ruled—wholly or in part—by descendants of King Haraldur, or by earls under the rule of Denmark.

Major Trading Center: Skíringssalur

The largest trading town in Norway is Skíringssalur (Shining Hall), situated on the west side of the entrance to Víksfjörður in the southeast of the country. The main crafts are metalwork and soapstone vessels. The town is not fortified.

Timeline of Viking Age Norway

793 The plundering of England's Lindisfarne monastery marks the beginning of the Viking age.
850–870 Incited by Princess Gyða, King Haraldur unites Norway into one kingdom under his rule.
931 Eiríkur Bloodaxe becomes King of Norway and King of Northumbria.
934 Hákon the Good becomes King of Norway.
961 King Hákon the Good is mortally wounded at the Battle of Fitjar. His son, Haraldur Greycloak, becomes king of Norway.
970 Haraldur Greycloak is assassinated during a visit to Denmark, and Haakon Sigurðsson becomes the ruler of Norway as a vassal of Haraldur Bluetooth, King of Denmark.
974 King Haakon Sigurðsson goes to Denmark to help Harald Bluetooth of Denmark in his defense against the Holy Roman Empire. After the Danish forces are defeated, Norway stops paying taxes to Denmark.
975 King Haakon Sigurðsson breaks his alliance with Denmark after the Danish king tries to force him to convert to Christianity.
977 Norwegian warriors are sent to Novgorod to help King Haakon Sigurðsson's kinsman, Valdimar Gamli, in his attempt to regain the city.

Sweden

The Sweden of the Viking Age is limited to the central-eastern territory of the Scandinavian peninsula. The large lakes Väner, Vätter, Hjälmar, and Mälar dominate the middle of the country, which is also dotted with thousands of small lakes.

The many petty kingdoms have been recently united by the first undisputed king of Sweden, Eiríkur "the Victorious", who became king in 970.

Major Trading Centers: Birka and Sigtuna

The town of Birka on Birch Island (Björkö) was established around 800 AD. Ideally situated where the water routes from south and east converged at the entrance of Lake Mälar, it had, at its peak, over a thousand inhabitants. In 970, the entire population of Birka was ordered by royal decree to abandon the city and never return. Many moved to the new town of Sigtún on the mainland. There are many theories as to why this order was made, but the actual reasons are unknown. The abandoned ruins of Birka are rumored to be haunted, but this does not deter looters who venture past the soldiers guarding the island in search of valuables left behind.

Founded in 970, the town of Sigtuna is constructed in the form of long, narrow plots extending from the main street. Similar to Birka, the primary sources of Sigtuna's wealth are its fur trade with the Lapps and Russians, and its export of iron, reindeer antler, walrus teeth, amber, and honey.

Timeline of Viking Age Sweden

800 Birka is founded on the island of Björkö.

829 The first Christian missionary arrives in Sweden—the Benedictine brother Ansgar, accompanied by a helper, Witmar. They are attacked by Vikings and lose their holy books, but finally arrive in Birka on foot and penniless.

830 King Björn allows Ansgar to build a church in Birka, of which he becomes the minister. Ansgar converts Hergeir, the prefect of Birka. Hergeir donates land for the church and becomes a staunch Christian.

831 Ansgar is made the bishop of Hamburg, with ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Birka. Pope Gregory IV names him, jointly with Ebo of Rheims, papal legate to all the Northern Peoples, including the Swedes, Danes, and Slavs. Little or no impact is made on the pagan beliefs in Birka at this time.

860 King Eiríkur Eymundsson of Uppland conquers many of the local petty kingdoms, creating the largest of the Swedish kingdoms of the time. Swedish Vikings attack Constantinople.

866 King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway conquers parts of Sweden.

882 Björn Eiríksson becomes King of Sweden.

960 Lake Mälar's water level begins to drop, making the waterway that provides communication with Birka shallower.

970 Eiríkur Björnsson "the Victorious", becomes King of Sweden.

OTHER NATIONS

The Byzantine Empire

This vast empire to the east stretches over huge areas of the Balkans and Asia Minor. It is common for the Norse to go to Constantinople to work as mercenaries.

The capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, is the largest city known to the Vikings. For this reason, they call it The Great City (Miklagarður). Three parallel walls, 7 kilometers (4 miles) long, surround the city. The inside wall is 12 meters (39 feet) high. There are 100 towers along the wall, each 18 meters (59 feet) high. Moats surround the outside of the city, as well as an extensive length of protective walls along the seaside. A heavy iron chain known as the Golden Horn blocks the city's harbor.

The Vikings plundered The Great City for the first time in 860. To spare the city from further destruction, the emperor offered the Vikings a great treasure of gold. For many years after, more tribute had to be paid to avoid further plundering.

Emperor Basil II maintains an elite unit of soldiers comprised mainly of Norse, known as the "Varangians" (The Sworn). They are the best-paid troops in the empire, as they are allowed to keep any loot they plunder from the battlefields and towns they conquer. Many Icelanders serve in the Varangian Guard.

The native language of the Byzantine Empire is Greek.

- **Common Byzantine Masculine Names:** Anatolius, Christophorus, Gregoras, Ignatius, Phillippus, Theodoricus
- **Common Byzantine Feminine Names:** Aetheria, Athanasia, Byzantia, Eusebia, Ionna, Theodosia

England

England was the site of the first Viking raid. In 793, the monastery at Lindisfarne was sacked, marking the start of the Viking Age.

In the 9th century, a vast army of Vikings the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers called the "Great Heathen Army" pillaged and conquered much of England. The army had many thousands of warriors divided into smaller groups who rarely fought together and sometimes even targeted each other.

In late 866, Viking forces conquered the Kingdom of Northumbria, followed in 870 by the Kingdom of East Anglia, and in 874, they conquered the kingdom of Mercia.

In 878, Alfred the Great, king of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, defeated the Vikings and strengthened the defenses of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms. His sons later unified the country.

The native language of England is English.

- **Common English Masculine Names:** Geoffrey, Henry, Peter, Simon, Thomas, William
- **Common English Feminine Names:** Agnes, Emeline, Gunnilda, Ingrid, Margery, Wulfhild

Finnmark

The heavily forested land of Finnmark is home to a small population of diverse tribes without a central government. The Finns are famous for their powerful shamans and for the furs they export. Vikings occasionally raid the villages on the coast of Finnmark.

The native language of Finnmark is Finnish.

- **Common Finnish Masculine Names:** Aarnikka, Heikki, Johannes, Kauppi, Olavi, Rossi
- **Common Finnish Feminine Names:** Agata, Birgitta, Kirstin, Lucia, Margit, Seikka

France

France is a decentralized state. The authority of the king is more religious than administrative, with effective control of little more than the region around Paris.

The first large-scale Viking raid in France took place in 841 when a fleet sailed up the River Seine, conquered the city of Rouen, and burned it down. The loot from this raid was enormous. Vikings continued penetrating the Seine, plundering and burning the rich Jumièg monastery. The nearby monastery of Fontenelle was also assaulted and held for ransom. In this expedition, 68 captives were taken and then returned on the delivery of a ransom payment by the monks of Saint-Denis. In 845, a fleet of 120 Viking ships sailed up the Seine and besieged Paris. King Charles the Fat paid handsomely for Paris to be spared.

During the 9th and 10th centuries, Paris and other parts of France are raided several more times by Vikings.

The native language of France is French.

- **Common French Masculine Names:** Andri, Blaive, Delion, Hervi, Patriz, Tassart
- **Common French Feminine Names:** Aalis, Amée, Cateline, Jacqueline, Johanne, Melisende

Holy Roman Empire

The Holy Roman Empire is a conglomeration of different territories located in central Europe. It includes the Kingdom of Germany and the Kingdom of Italy. The empire's origins can be traced back to the Frankish empire of Charlemagne. The Holy Roman Empire was established in 962 when Otto I was crowned Emperor by Pope John XII.

Continuing his father's expansionist policies, Emperor Otto II now wages war with Denmark in the north and with the rebellious Duchy of Bavaria in the south.

The primary native language of the Holy Roman Empire is German, with many different dialects. In the south, various dialects of Italian are spoken

- **Common German Masculine Names:** Cuno, Didericus, Hermannus, Heinricus, Wilhelmus, Wernerus
- **Common German Feminine Names:** Adelheidis, Chunegundis, Elisabeth, Gertrudis, Hedewigis, Lugardis

Iberia Peninsula

The Kingdom of Asturias, in the north of the Iberia Peninsula, suffered from Viking attacks from the mid-10th century to the end of the Viking Age. Abductions of nobility and wealthy individuals for ransom were a common Viking practice in the Spanish kingdom.

In 861, a group of Vikings ransomed the king of Pamplona, whom they had captured the previous year, for 60,000 gold pieces. Small Viking settlements are established on the Portuguese coast.

The Islamic south of the Iberia Peninsula also suffered from Viking attacks. In the year 844, Vikings sacked Lisbon, Cadiz, and Medina Sidonia. They also captured Seville for a few weeks before being defeated by a Muslim counterattack. In 859, Vikings sailed through Gibraltar and raided the Moroccan kingdom of Nekor. The king's harem had to be ransomed back by the Emir of Cordoba.

The native languages in the north are Spanish and Galician-Portuguese. The language in the Muslim-occupied territories is Arabic.

- **Common Spanish Masculine Names:** Alfonso, Antonio, Jorge, Pedro, Sebastian, Velasco
- **Common Spanish Feminine Names:** Beatriz, Estefania, Ines, Maria, Mencia, Teresa

Ireland

Ireland is divided into many petty kingdoms and clans locked in wars against each other. Vikings established the first cities of Dyflin (Dublin), Hlymrekur (Limerick), Veigsfjörður (Wexford), Veðrafjörður (Waterford), Vikinglo (Wicklow) and in the marshes at Cork. Used as trading centers, these cities are ideally situated for trade between many Norse settlements in the North Sea and the markets to the south. They also serve as bases for plundering.

The native language outside the Viking settlements is Irish.

- **Common Irish Masculine Names:** Áed, Óengus, Ailill, Fergus, Eochaid, Lugaid
- **Common Irish Feminine Names:** Almaith, Eachraidh, Failend, Orlaith, Mugain, Uallach

Kievan Rus

Swedish Vikings, known as the Rus, founded Kievan Rus (Kiev) in 880. It became the capital of an empire consisting of a vast portion of Eastern Europe, which also included Holmgarður (Novgorod).

The native languages of Kievan Rus are Norse and Slavic.

- **Common Slavic Masculine Names:** Ivan, Semen, Georgii, Grigorii, Stepan, Mixail
- **Common Slavic Feminine Names:** Anastasiia, Dominika, Ekaterina, Iulianiia, Negoshka, Tatiana

Mön

In the first half of the 9th century, Vikings came to Mön (Island of Man) mainly to plunder. In 850, they settled on the island, and it became part of the Viking kingdom of Dublin.

The native language is Welsh, with Norse-speaking overlords.

Normandy

The Vikings began raiding the coast of Normandy at the end of the 8th century, pillaging in the summer and going back to Scandinavia during the winter. From 851, they began to stay in the lower Seine Valley during the winter.

In 911, the Danish Viking leader Hrólfur the Walker forced Charles III, the king of France, to sign the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte. Under this treaty, the French king gave a large area of northwest France to the Vikings, establishing the Duchy of Normandy. Danish settlers mainly colonized Normandy, but there were also Norwegians and Swedes. With a series of conquests, the territory of Normandy gradually expanded.

The language of Normandy is Norse.

Orkney and Shetlands

At the end of the 8th century, a great number of Norwegian Vikings settled in the islands of Orkneyjar (Orkney) and Hjaltland (Shetlands). They took over farms and settlements, killing nearly every member of the native Pictish population in the process.

In 875, King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway set sail with a great fleet to conquer his enemies in Orkneyjar and Hjaltland, annexing them to Norway. King Haraldur later gave the islands to Rögnvaldur Eysteinsson, the Earl of Møre, as reparation for the death of his son in battle in Scotland.

The islands are currently used as bases for Viking raids in Scotland and Norway and are a refuge for many of the enemies of the Norwegian king.

The language of Orkney and Shetlands is Norse.

Scotland

The first Viking raid in Scotland took place in 795 when the monastery on the island of Iona was plundered. During the 9th century, the Vikings settled the Shetlands, the Orkneys, and the Hebrides. Vikings also settled in Caithness and Sutherland.

In 893, the Danes waged a major offensive in Scotland in which many members of the Pict nobility were killed. The resulting succession crisis allowed Cináed mac Ailpín, ruler of the Dál Riata kingdom on the west coast of Scotland, to unify the remaining Scots and Pictish peoples. Soon after, parts of the Great Heathen Army attacked eastern Scotland, and Viking raiders based in the Orkneys raided Moray Firth. By 900, the Vikings captured the fortress of Dunottar, south of Aberdeen. King Indulf of Scotland was killed by Vikings in 962.

The languages of Scotland are Gaelic and Pictish.

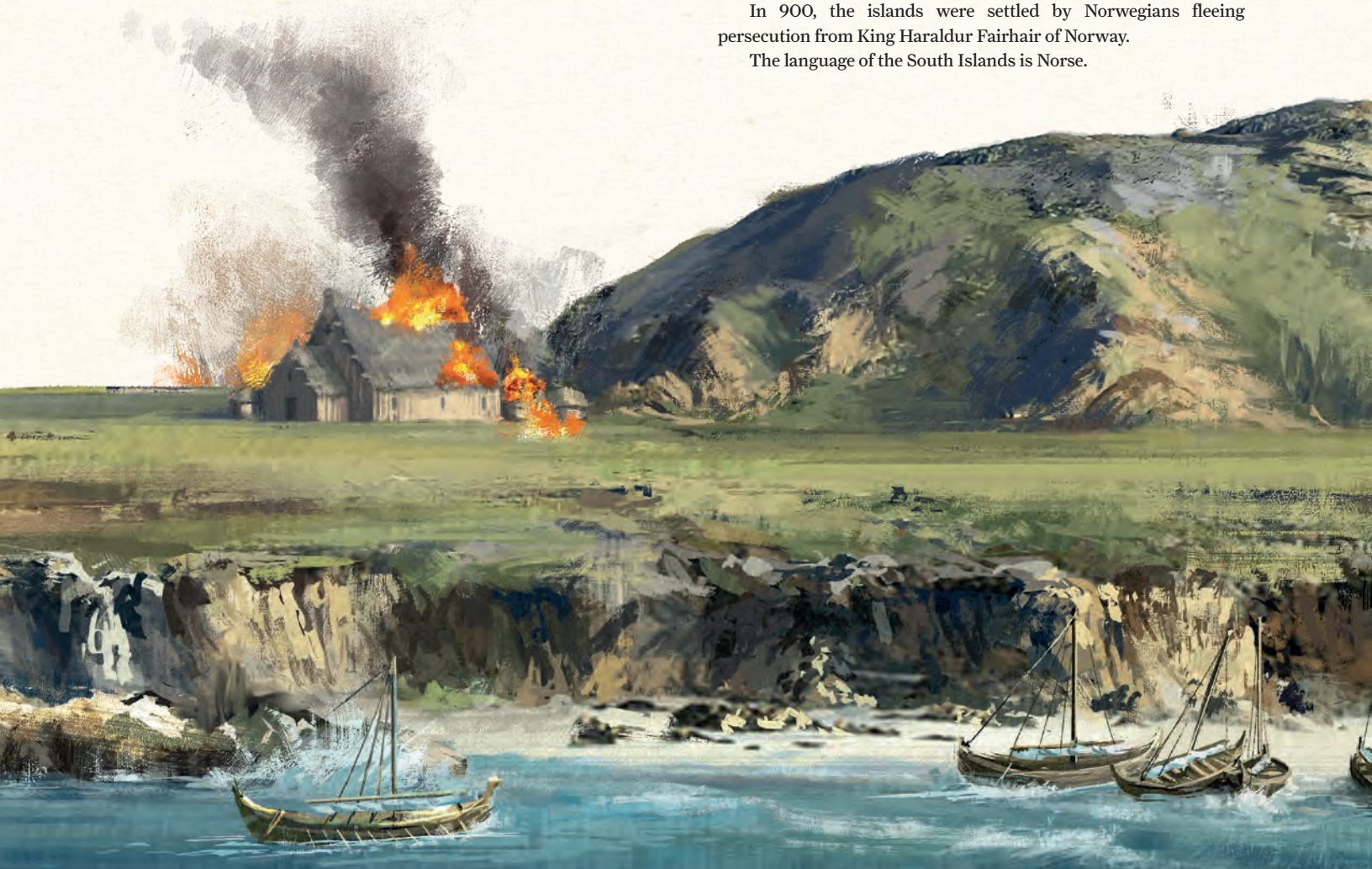
- **Common Scottish Gaelic and Pictish Masculine Names:** Alpin, Brude, Cinead, Drustan, Gartnait, Talorc
- **Common Scottish Gaelic and Pictish Feminine Names:** Barita, Cunoarda, Cunovinda, Huctia, Tancorix, Verica

South Islands

The South Islands (Suðureyjar, Hebrides), to the northwest of Scotland, are often plundered by Vikings from Orkneyjar (Orkney) and Mön (Man).

In 900, the islands were settled by Norwegians fleeing persecution from King Haraldur Fairhair of Norway.

The language of the South Islands is Norse.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

"This winter was called the winter of wonders, because of the many remarkable things that were seen. Two suns were seen in the sky at once: elves and other strange people were seen riding together in a group in Skagafjörður and they were seen by Ánn Bjarnason."

—The Saga of Guðmundur Arason (Guðmundar saga Arasonar)

Icelanders hold a firm belief that there are two nations in Iceland: the nation of the Norse settlers, and the nation of the hidden people.

WHAT PEOPLE KNOW

Contact

Since the arrival of the first Norse settlers in Iceland, many have met the hidden people, and everyone has at least heard the stories about this kindred race to humans.

It is said that they are kind beings who never seek to harm others and often help those in need. Many people in dangerous situations have been saved by the hidden folk, sometimes by direct help, and other times through warnings of impending volcanic eruptions or extreme weather. The legends say they should be respected, as they can bestow curses and use magical powers to ruin even the most powerful enemies.

Seeing the Hidden People

There are those who are born with the gift of Second Sight (page 92). These people can sometimes (but not always) see the hidden folk, as well as their hidden houses, farms, and animals. Often, those blessed with this gift become friends with the hidden people. Many seek the advice of those who have hidden friends because they have access to magical knowledge about nature and even about future events.

Magic can also provide temporary Second Sight, although it tends to be unreliable.

Ordinary people without the gift of Second Sight can sometimes see the hidden folk during moments of extreme desperation, such as when one's life is in grave danger. Seeing the hidden folk, in whatever circumstances, is considered a blessing by most.

Children are an exception, as anyone below the age of ten can usually see into the hidden world. They often befriend hidden children and play with them in their hidden homes. It is common for children to have friends that their parents cannot see, and the parents never question the existence of these hidden friends. Such a friendship is welcomed, as the hidden friend may come to the child's aid many decades later.

Appearance

The hidden people appear very similar to humans. They are similar in height and dress to the Norse farmers. They are almost always beautiful, with delicate features and fine hair.

Peaceful by nature, the hidden folk never carry weapons unless they are on a rare hunting expedition.

Two subtle physical features distinguish hidden people from humans: a ridge instead of a groove in the upper lip, and no clear division between nostrils. An adventurer may attempt a Spot Hidden roll to notice those traits, and a Myth Lore roll to understand what they mean.

Houses and Farms

To humans, the homes of hidden people appear as large rocks. In the hidden world, however, they closely resemble a typical Icelandic farmhouse made of mud and stone walls and a turf roof.

The hidden folk intentionally build their homes near large rock formations because these areas have a strong connection with the forces of nature. This also prevents someone from walking through the space occupied by a hidden home, which disturbs the flow of energies within the world.

A hidden home would appear to be rather bare, and even poor, to a Norse settler. Hidden people do not value expensive goods or luxuries and prefer not to clutter their homes with anything nonessential. A typical house interior is usually comprised of nothing more than a central fireplace, raised wooden platforms with beds, and chests for personal belongings.

Just like their human counterparts, the hidden people subsist by farming and fishing. Their farm animals, such as cows and sheep, are invisible to humans. It is said that the hidden animals produce milk that can cure any disease, and the wool from hidden sheep can protect against the harshest winters and last for many generations.

Most stories about hidden homes come from the children who have played inside them.

Magic of the Hidden People

The hidden people are said to possess wondrous magical powers and to be exceptionally skilled at magical curses. Some can glimpse into the future and speak to people in their dreams.

They have a strong connection with nature and can accurately predict weather conditions several days in advance. In a place such as Iceland, where extreme weather is common and changes with little warning, this is valuable knowledge. Fishers with the gift of Second Sight learn that seeing a hidden fishing boat going out to sea is a sign of good weather and a plentiful catch.

Gifts from the Hidden People

Those who have helped or befriended the hidden people often receive gifts of gratitude. These gifts are not powerful swords or other weapons but instead are typical household, farming, or clothing items. These items are always of very high quality and often have magical properties. Examples: light clothes that can protect from extreme weather, saddles from which the rider can never fall, horseshoes that increase the animal's speed, etc.

Moving Over to the Hidden World

The hidden people are attractive, kind-hearted, and frequently charming. So, it is no surprise that more than a few people have fallen in love with a hidden person.

This kind of romantic relationship may endure for many years, even between worlds. At first, a young paramour spends as much time as they can with their hidden lover. Over the years, however, the relationship becomes harder to maintain, as hidden people must limit their time in the human world.

Hidden people cannot remain permanently in the human world, but they have magic that allows a human to reside permanently in their world. When this occurs, the person is forever invisible to their fellow human beings. Not even the hidden folk's magic can return a human to the visible world. The only possible communication with those left behind is through dreams. It is possible to see humans who have crossed over with a successful Second Sight roll at a –20% penalty.

When a family learns that one of their children has fallen in love with a hidden person, they must accept the possibility that their child may one day leave the visible world. Nevertheless, it is considered lucky to have a family member living among the hidden people, as it is believed that they live a perfect life while watching over their family from their hidden homes.

THE HIDDEN TRUTH

The following information is beyond the knowledge of most people living in Iceland.

The remainder of this chapter is for the gamemaster's eyes only.

The True Nature of the Hidden People

The hidden people have not always lived in the human world of Miðgarður, nor have they always been a peaceful people. In truth, they migrated from the elven world of Álfheimur, to live as refugees in Miðgarður.

For more information about Álfheimur and the elves living there, see pages 247–248.

The Great Rift

Created as worlds mirroring each other, Álfheimur and Miðgarður have the same landmasses and seas.

When the rising of the dragon Sváfnir (see **Mythic Times**, page 211–212) created Iceland, a similarly shaped island appeared in the northern ocean of Álfheimur. It was also infused with magical energies, just as the island in Miðgarður. The elves initially avoided

the island as its magic was considered wild and unstable. After some time, the island was colonized, and a new elven kingdom was founded there.

For millennia, elves from Álfheimur traveled to Miðgarður via portals linking together the two islands of both worlds. Those journeys were done only sporadically by small groups of elves. They explored Iceland and interacted with its native mythical creatures.

Thousands of years passed.

Then humans came to Iceland. First the Romans, who only stayed briefly. When Norse settlers arrived in large numbers, the elves took notice. They had never seen or had any previous contact with humans. The elves discovered that they were invisible to the Norse settlers and took advantage of this to watch them closely in secret.

After a decade or so, some of the elves became fond of the humans they observed from afar. They admired the society the humans built in Iceland, a society free of the politics and backstabbing of the elven royal courts. They also became interested in how humans lived—not from magic like the elves in Álfheimur had always done—but instead from farming and fishing. It seemed to be a life connected closer to nature than their own in Álfheimur. The lives of the children of Óðinn appeared to be happier than their own.

A small group of elves decided to abandon Álfheimur to live in Iceland's Miðgarður. They built farms that closely resembled human homesteads and used their magic to make their Álfheimur animals mirror local livestock. They prospered and soon decided to remain in Miðgarður permanently. Over the following years, more elves joined them in a migratory movement that became known amongst the elves as the Great Rift.

Soon, a sizable portion of the population of this elf kingdom from Álfheimur had relocated to Miðgarður. Settling in Iceland, they built farms to work the land, eventually becoming the first "hidden people".

Just as the humans had rejected a monarchy in Iceland, so did the elves. They were tired of the royal courts of Álfheimur. Communal units were created to resemble the Hreppur (page 145) of the Norse. Intending to live without strife, they did not create assemblies or legal courts. So far, they have avoided the blood feuds that are popular among their Norse neighbors.

Beliefs of the Hidden People

The hidden people mostly pray to their god Freyr, who rules over their home world of Álfheimur. However, Freyr has far less influence among the hidden people in Iceland than he does with the elves in Álfheimur.

Many hidden people also worship Þór, Óðinn, and other Norse gods, as the connection of those gods with Miðgarður is strong. A small group even worships the Christian god, having learned of the religion from Christian settlers.

Family and Children

Like their human neighbors in Iceland, most hidden people live on farms in family units. Bearing children, however, is more difficult for them.

Because it is not natural for an elf to be born outside of Álfheimur, those living in Miðgarður who are pregnant almost always have complications during the final weeks before birth. They often need the help of human doulas during labor and birth to ensure that the child is "anchored" to Miðgarður.

Human midwives who have assisted in such childbirths recount that merely touching the pregnant person's belly during labor was needed. They recount feeling a tingly sensation running down their arm as if energy was flowing from the doula to the parent and child. The hidden people are always very grateful for the help of their human midwives and show their appreciation with gifts.

Life and Death

Elves are immortal in Álfheimur, but not in Miðgarður. While their life span is much longer than that of humans, they still age and eventually die.

Society

There are many similarities between hidden people and Icelandic societies. This is not surprising, as they spent many years observing humans before deciding to settle in Miðgarður, and in doing so, they tried to model their dwellings and lifestyle on those of the Norse settlers.

The farms of the hidden people are scattered across Iceland, including in the highlands, where harsh weather conditions prevented human settlements. The hidden people use their magical abilities to shield themselves from the worst of the weather. Each farm is an isolated household. There are no hidden people villages.

The total population of hidden people in Iceland is only a few thousand.

Love Between Humans and Hidden Folk

Hidden people admire many things about the humans of Miðgarður. They consider it a joyous event when a human marries one of their own and moves into the hidden world permanently.

Sadly, the children of such unions are often born with illnesses, and most die before reaching their first birthday. Only a few half-elves survive to adulthood. By the third generation, half-elf children are born completely healthy and strong.

Half-elves can walk freely between the hidden and human worlds, easily spending time on either side. While among humans, they can still see their hidden families and do not need to resort to magic to make themselves visible.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Hidden people can serve as benevolent but mysterious nonplayer characters, wielding magic powers capable of just about anything. Some of them may have their own agenda and only provide help to the adventurers in return for favors.

Conflicts between Norse settlers and hidden people, or among factions of hidden people, are good starting points for campaigns.

Álfheimur

After slaying the giant Ýmir, the gods created many worlds. Among those worlds were Miðgarður and Álfheimur, built as mirror images of each other with similar continents and seas.

Having sprung from the very flesh of the primordial giant, the elves were given Álfheimur as their home under the watchful eye of the god Freyr. Unlike Miðgarður, Álfheimur was filled with wild magic that constantly altered both landforms and living creatures.

Elves spread far and wide in Álfheimur, despite many lives lost due to the instability of magic during that time. Great nations were founded, and wars raged among them for control of the sites with the most potent magical energies. When the wild magic was finally tamed,

it heralded a new era for the elven nations of Álfheimur—a period of prosperity and security. Over millennia, the spells that tamed the old wild magical energies were all but forgotten.

For the next few thousand years, the elves developed an intricate system of nobility, one in which nearly every elf is part of a royal house, and every elf's primary concern is with their own social position in the courts. Political ladder-climbing and backstabbing became the norm. Social rank within the royal courts become entangled with each elf's own existence. When an elf lost their social standing, they were literally reborn—magically transformed into a child. All memories of their previous life were erased, forcing them to relive their lives at a lower social rank.

When Iceland appeared in Miðgarður (see **Mythic Times**, pages 211–212), powerful magical forces unleashed by the great dragon Sváfnir caused an island similar in size to appear in Álfheimur. This new island was filled with wild magic, making the elven nations fear that it would once again spread through Álfheimur and threaten their very existence. A powerful elven house was enlisted to tame the new island, using tattered tomes and fragmented texts containing the only spells still in existence that could bring wild magic under control. Although many lives were lost, the elven house was successful in its mission. They contained the wild magic and, accordingly, acquired knowledge that made them very powerful. Fearing that their new power could destabilize the delicate balance between nations, the other elven nations exiled them permanently to the island. Thus, a new elven kingdom with its own noble court was born.

Queen Bóthildur rules over this unique Álfheimur island. She has held the position since the new nation was established and is the only one who remembers the time when wild magic was tamed. The traditional political backstabbing of the elven courts occurs here, too, and is even more vicious than elsewhere in Álfheimur.

Álfheimur Elves in Iceland

A magical pathway, or portal, created by the force of the dragon's violent arrival to the surface in Miðgarður, connects the sister islands in the two worlds. On the Miðgarður side, the portal is protected by the land spirits (landvættir), which do not allow any humans to enter Álfheimur.

Throughout the centuries, many expeditions were sent via the portal to explore the island in Miðgarður. Dealing with the guardians on the way back to Álfheimur, however, was always a perilous undertaking and prohibited large-scale exploration of Miðgarður.

With the coming of the children of Óðinn to Iceland, significant changes took place in the isolated elven nation. With the so-called Time of the Great Rift (see **The Hidden Truth**, pages 246–247), a few thousand elves decided to abandon traditional elven court politics in favor of a simpler life in Miðgarður. They settled in Iceland and became known as the hidden people.

Exploratory missions from Álfheimur didn't stop after the Great Rift. Expeditions are undertaken by the most militaristic royal houses. Their primary interest now is spying on the elves who have settled in Iceland, whom they see as betrayers of the elven kingdom. The two groups often clash, and similarly, encounters with humans usually lead to violence. Some of the elven settlers fear that if the land spirits stop guarding the portal, a massive military invasion will be launched, and they will undoubtedly suffer.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BESTIARY

King Haraldur told a warlock to journey to Iceland in some altered shape, and to try what he could learn there to tell him: and he set out in the shape of a whale. And when he came near to the land he went to the west side of Iceland, north around the land, where he saw all the mountains and hills full of guardian--spirits, some great, some small. When he came to Vopnafjörður he went in toward the land, intending to go on shore: but a huge dragon rushed down the dale against him with a train of serpents, paddocks, and toads, that blew poison toward him. Then he turned to go westward around the land as far as Eyjafjörður, and he went into the fjord. Then a bird flew against him, which was so great that its wings stretched over the mountains on either side of the fjord, and many birds, great and small, with it. Then he swam farther west, and then south into Breidafjörður. When he came into the fjord a large grey bull ran against him, wading into the sea, and bellowing fearfully, and he was followed by a crowd of land spirits. From thence he went round by Reykjanes, and wanted to land at Vikarsskeið, but there came down a hill-giant against him with an iron staff in his hands. He was a head higher than the mountains, and many other giants followed him. He then swam eastward along the land, and there was nothing to see, he said, but sand and vast deserts, and, without the skerries, high-breaking surf: and the ocean between the countries was so wide that a longship could not cross it. Then the Danish king turned about with his fleet and sailed back to Denmark.

--The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway

All creatures (including humans) in this chapter appear in Icelandic sagas or in Icelandic folk tales, fairy tales, and legends of old.

Unless otherwise indicated, each entry in this chapter can attack once per combat round. Those able to attack more than once per round usually do so on ½ their DEX rank (round up), though some natural animals have multiple attacks on their DEX rank.

Creatures with a movement rate of X/X (method) walk at the first value and use the parenthetical method as their second movement rate. This is usually their primary method of movement.

Most creatures' damage modifiers are described as "+dm" in their attack entries. For muscle-powered ranged attacks and bites, use ½ of their damage modifier.

Creatures will attack or flee based on their nature. The gamemaster should use common sense when handling encounters with intelligent or wild foes. Many natural animals will flee if wounded seriously, and most humans try to avoid fighting to the death if they can avoid it.

If a value is needed for a skill that is not provided, the gamemaster should assign it based on the values provided in **What Do Skill Ratings Mean?** (page 35), choosing a competency that makes sense for the occasion and the individual creature.

Creatures generally do not need to make rolls for movement, such as swimming, the way heroes do. If a creature's Move attribute lists an alternate movement type (swimming, flying, etc.), then it simply moves at that rate without needing to make a roll.

The **NPC Record** and **Followers** sheets are presented at the end of this chapter (pages 278–279) and can be used to write up human and nonhuman creatures alike.

VARIABLE CHARACTERISTICS

Generally, the average characteristic presented here is enough for a normal encounter. If the gamemaster wishes some variety with nonplayer character characteristics and/or skills, roll 1D10 on the following **Nonplayer Characteristic & Skill Variation** table for any characteristic or skill when it becomes relevant, keeping in mind that these might require adjustment to associated attributes like hit points and hit points per location and damage modifiers, as seen in those tables. .

Nonplayer Characteristic & Skill Variation

Roll	Characteristic	Skill
1	−3	−30%
2	−2	−20%
3	−1	−10%
4–7	No variation	No variation
8	+1	+10%
9	+2	+20%
10	+3	+30%

For creatures with a greater variety of characteristic dice multiply the characteristic variant by ×1 per 3D6 rolled (round up) or modify by an approximate amount as desired.

DAMAGE MODIFIER, HIT POINTS, AND HIT LOCATIONS

Sample values for hit points and damage modifiers are presented with each creature presented in this chapter for the gamemaster's convenience. The following guidelines are presented if creating custom creatures or using the **Variant of Characteristics** rules (above).

- **Hit Points:** For convenience, the **Hit Point Modifiers** table is repeated here.
- **Damage Modifier:** For convenience, the **Damage Modifier** table is repeated here. If an attack does not include the damage modifier, do not apply it.
- **Hit Points per Hit Location:** Most creatures have their own hit location tables, but the wild and domesticated animals do not. Use the sample tables presented on page 265 and adjust hit points as needed. If an example creature has ±3 hit points, it is advised to adjust their hit points per location by ±1 hit point for every ±3 hit points, as appropriate.

Hit Point Modifiers

Characteristic	SIZ	POW
01–04	−2	−1
05–08	−1	–
09–12	–	–
13–16	+1	–
17–20	+2	+1
21–24	+3	+2
25–28	+4	+3
Each +4	+1	+1

Damage Modifier

STR + SIZ	Damage Modifier
01–12	−1D4
13–24	0
25–32	+1D4
33–40	+1D6
41–56	+2D6
Each +16 points	Additional +1D6

MORTALS

Berserker

Berserkers are warriors devoid of any honor who behave mindlessly and represent a great threat to society. They are invariably foreign, mostly Swedes, who come to Iceland to cause trouble and try to usurp honorable folk of their land and their spouses.

The ability to go berserk is inherited. If the individual lives a life of honor and virtue, those tendencies are kept in check. The berserker's true tendency toward out-of-control fury does not surface unless all their honor has been lost.

The news of the arrival of a berserker in Iceland causes panic and interest in equal measure. Many Icelandic warriors covet the honor and status that come with slaying a berserker, as dangerous as that prospect may be.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
18	15	18	17
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
9	12	8	

Hit Points: 17
Magic Points: 12
Spirit Animal: Bull
Damage Modifier: +1D6
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Skills: Area Lore (homeland) 50%, Evaluate 50%, First Aid 30%, Intimidate 90%, Jump 65%, Law 30%, Listen 40%, Ride 55%, Search 40%, Shiphandling 30%, Spot Hidden 50%, Survival 50%, Swim 60%, Track 30%, Worship (Óðinn) 70%.

Powers

Berserker Fury: A berserker may choose to enter a frenzied state in which they have the following advantages and disadvantages:

- Their hit points are doubled.
- All their attacks inflict maximum damage.
- They gain one extra attack per round at ½ DEX rank (round up).
- They do not fall unconscious from special damage results until dead.
- The berserker can no longer choose to strike a foe in a specific hit location, and they attack anyone near them, including friends.
- The berserker loses 1 magic point per round and will eventually collapse once all magic points are depleted.
- If the berserker wants to end a berserker state early, they must attempt a POW×3 roll. If this fails, they continue berserking until unconscious or defeated.

Weapon	%	Damage
Broadsword	90	1D8+1+dm
Shield	80	1D6+dm
Long Spear	70	1D10+1+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/6
Left Leg	5–8	1/6
Abdomen	9–11	3/6
Chest	12	3/7
Right Arm	13–15	1/5
Left Arm	16–18	1/5
Head	19–20	5/6

Foreign Raid Opponents

Guard

These are town guards with some training or garrisoned troops.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+5	15
CON	3D6+4	14
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	3D6+3	12
POW	3D6+1	11
DEX	3D6+4	14
CHA	3D6	9

Hit Points: 15
Magic Points: 11
Damage Modifier: +1D4
Move: 10
Armor: 4-point scale armor on torso, 5-point iron helmet.
Skills: Dodge 60%, Hide 40%, Listen 55%, Spot Hidden 65%.

Weapon	Attack	Damage
Polearm (halberd/*atgeir*)	50%	3D6+dm
Short Sword (sax)	67%	1D6+1+dm

Hit Location	D20	AP/HP
Right Leg	01–04	0/5
Left Leg	05–08	0/5
Abdomen	09–11	4/5
Chest	12	4/6
Right Arm	13–15	0/4
Left Arm	16–18	0/4
Head	19–20	5/5

Warrior

These are volunteers that patrol towns or settlements, ready to jump into action if needed to protect a settlement.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+4	13
CON	3D6+3	12
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	3D6+2	11
POW	3D6+1	10
DEX	3D6+3	12
CHA	3D6+1	10

Hit Points: 13
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: +1D4
Move: 10
Armor: 2-point leather armor on torso.
Skills: Dodge 40%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Weapon	Attack	Damage
Broadsword	60%	1D8+1+1D4

Hit Location	D20	AP/HP
Right Leg	01–04	0/5
Left Leg	05–08	0/5
Abdomen	09–11	2/5
Chest	12	2/6
Right Arm	13–15	0/4
Left Arm	16–18	0/4
Head	19–20	0/5

Farmer/Townsfolk

These are farmers or simple folk living in a village or town. In desperation, they will grab any weapon they can find to protect themselves, their families, and their homes during a raid.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+2	11
CON	3D6+3	12
SIZ	2D6+3	11
INT	3D6+1	10
POW	3D6+1	10
DEX	3D6+2	11
CHA	3D6+3	12

Hit Points: 12
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10
Armor: —
Skills: Dodge 30%, Spot Hidden 40%.

Weapon	Attack	Damage
Axe	45%	1D8+1+dm
Knife	55%	1D4+2+dm

Hit Location	D20	AP/HP
Right Leg	01–04	0/4
Left Leg	05–08	0/4
Abdomen	09–11	0/4
Chest	12	0/5
Right Arm	13–15	0/3
Left Arm	16–18	0/3
Head	19–20	0/4

EARLS AND HOUSECARLS

In Scandinavia, earls and *housecarls* are nobles and their warrior retainers. Those roles do not exist in Icelandic society. Unlike an earl, a *goði* has no territory to rule over. Any free householder can declare allegiance to a *goði* regardless of where they live. The title of a *goði* can be transferred or sold. A few wealthier farmers in Iceland may keep landless servants who are skilled fighters, but they are not professional warriors like the Scandinavian housecarls.

Goði

A *goði* is a chieftain-priest, a political leader who possesses only a slight formal authority and no means to forcefully repress the surrounding population. The primary functions of the *goði* are to advocate or mediate disputes and to represent the people settled on their chieftaincy at the *Alþing*, the National Assembly. The members of this class also give spiritual guidance to the people living in their chieftaincy. There are 39 chieftaincies in Iceland.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
16	12	17	14
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
13	11	13	

Hit Points: 14
Magic Points: 11
Spirit Animal: Bear
Damage Modifier: +1D6
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 70%, Bargain 50%, Battle 50%, Charm 30%, Customs (Norse) 70%, Dodge 40%, Evaluate 60%, Farm 60%, Insight 40%, Intimidate 50%, Intrigue 70%, Jump 55%, Law 60%, Listen 45%, Myth Lore 35%, Orate 55%, Ride 65%, Search 40%, Spot Hidden 50%, Swim 60%, Track 30%, Worship (Þór) 90%, Worship (Freyr) 60%, Worship (Óðinn) 40%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Broadsword	90	1D8+1+dm
Shield	70	1D6+dm
Long Spear	60	1D10+1+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/5
Left Leg	5–8	1/5
Abdomen	9–11	3/5
Chest	12	3/6
Right Arm	13–15	1/4
Left Arm	16–18	1/4
Head	19–20	5/5

Lawspeaker

The Lawspeaker is elected by the Law Council of the *Alþing* (National Assembly) every three years and acts as its chairman. They are an influential figure in Icelandic politics but do not rule the country. Every year, the Lawspeaker is required to stand on the Law Rock and recite a third of the country's laws.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
12	11	11	10
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
18	17	15	

Hit Points: 12
Magic Points: 17
Spirit Animal: Wolf
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing and cap, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 90%, Bargain 60%, Charm 60%, Customs (Norse) 90%, Farm 60%, Insight 60%, Intimidate 50%, Intrigue 80%, Law 100%, Listen 55%, Orate 80%, Ride 50%, Search 40%, Spot Hidden 50%, Swim 50%, Track 30%, Worship (Óðinn) 80%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Broadsword	50	1D8+1
Shield	60	1D6
Long Spear	40	1D10+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	3/4
Chest	12	3/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	1/4

Runemaster

A runemaster is a farmer who can create rune scripts that have magical powers. The magic of the runes manifests in ways akin to lucky coincidences or freak natural events.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
10	10	11	10
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
14	16	11	

Hit Points: 10
Magic Points: 16
Spirit Animal: Raven
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing and cap, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 25%, Bargain 45%, Craft (carpentry) 50%, Customs (Norse) 30%, Dodge 35%, Farm 55%, First Aid 50%, Go Under the Cloak 60%, Hide 50%, Law 35%, Listen 30%, Move Quietly 40%, Myth Lore 65%, Read/Write (runes) 70%, Ride 40%, Rune Magic 70%, Second Sight 65%, Search 50%, Spot Hidden 40%,Survival 30%, Swim 35%, Worship (Óðinn) 70%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bow	70	1D6+1
Sax	20	1D6+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	3/4
Chest	12	3/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	1/4

Runes	
Rune	**Areas of Power**
Fé	Wealth, fertility, animals
Úr	Strength, endurance, bravery, health, aging, willpower, nature-given wealth
Þurs	Active defense, plants, anger, lust
Óss	Knowledge, wisdom, communication, the mouth, travel, divination, magic, mythic creatures
Reid	Movement, riding, travel, journey
Kaun	Fire, sore, craft, destruction for the purpose of creation
Gjöf	Peace, love, aid, balance, trust
Vend	Happiness, relationship, hope, kinship
Hagall	Destruction, transformation, weather
Yr	Patience, death, and the dead
Týr	Danger, warrior, battle, honesty, justice
Eykur	Horses, travel, loyalty, pride

Nonplayer Characters and Rune Magic

To quickly build a simple rune script for a nonplayer character, choose one rune with an area of power matching the effect the nonplayer character intends to bring forth. Two other runes work in the script but are only narratively important for a nonplayer character if the heroes can hear the *galdur* (the vocal part of the spell). The magic point cost for a simple script with three runes is 6.

EXAMPLE

The heroes are running to the beach to stop a ship from departing because a prisoner onboard is an important ally. The gamemaster knows that there is a runemaster aboard this ship and quickly scans the list of runes, looking for something to use in this situation.

The gamemaster spots Hagall, a rune that influences the weather, and Reið, which influences movement and travel. Hagall could be used to make the wind grow fiercer, but the sails of the ship are not yet unfurled. Reid is the better choice in this situation.

The gamemaster describes a cloaked figure standing on the deck of the ship, carving something into a piece of wood. The figure then shouts into the wind, but the heroes can't hear it because of the distance. Suddenly, a wave washes the entire beach! When it withdraws, the sand has become muddy, slowing their advance.

The heroes were certain that they would reach the ship in time, but now they need to roll DEX×5 to make it.

Seiðkona

A *seiðkona* is a practitioner of *seiður*, a form of shamanistic magic passed down to mortals by the goddess Freyja. Most are settled farmers, but some live traveling from farm to farm, lending their magical services and proclaiming prophecies wherever they may be needed. A *seiður* ritual typically takes many hours to perform.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
9	11	9	10
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
13	17	12	

Hit Points: 12
Magic Points: 17
Spirit Animal: Cat
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing and cap.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 25%, Charm 60%, Craft (weaving) 50%, Customs (Norse) 40%, Dance 60%, Dodge 45%, Farm 55%, First Aid 40%, Go Under the Cloak 30%, Hide 50%, Listen 30%, Move Quietly 40%, Myth Lore 30%, Prophecy 75%, Second Sight 30%, Search 50%, *Seiður* Magic (*Realm:* Weave) 70%, Spot Hidden 40%, Treat Disease 30%, Worship (Freyja) 70%.

***Seiður* Weave Realm Effect Examples:** Cause Natural Disaster, Create Dense Fog, Fortune Telling, Weather Manipulation, Weave Magic Into Cloth (see page 209).

Weapon	%	Damage
Quarterstaff	45	1D8
Knife	30	1D4+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	1/4
Chest	12	1/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	1/4

Servant

Servants are freeborn farmers who do not own land and instead work as hired help for others. They have the same rights as farmers, including the taking of vengeance and the collecting of blood money, but they cannot take part in assemblies.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
13	15	10	12
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
11	10	12	

Magic Points: 10
Spirit Animal: Seal
Damage Modifier: —
Hit Points: 15
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing and cap.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 20%, Farm 40%, Herd 30%, Listen 40%, Myth Lore 25%, Ride 35%, Search 40%, Spot Hidden 40%, Swim 40%, Worship (Freyir) 70%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Battle Axe	50	1D8+2
Quarterstaff	40	1D8
Knife	35	1D4+1

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

Thrall

Most thralls were captured in raids on the Celtic nations, but some are debt slaves. Female thralls serve as nurses and foster mothers as well as concubines.

The following represents a simple laborer. At the gamemaster's discretion, a thrall may have skills from their life prior to their capture.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
13	12	14	15
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
9	9	11	

Hit Points: 13
Magic Points: 9
Spirit Animal: Horse
Damage Modifier: +1D4
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing.

Skills: Area Lore (homeland) 45%, Conceal 50%, Dodge 40%, Farm 35%, Listen 40%, Ride 35%, Search 40%, Speak Own Language (Celtic or other) 80%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Survival 45%, Worship (foreign deity) 70%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Quarterstaff	50	1D8+dm
Knife	35	1D4+1+dm

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

Trader

Aside from during assemblies, Iceland has no marketplaces, and no one makes a living solely through trading. Any professional trader that heroes encounter is most likely a foreigner bringing wares to Iceland from other nations—usually from Scandinavia. They travel from farm to farm, hoping to make a good trade for Icelandic *vaðmál*, which they take abroad to sell.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
10	14	10	13
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
16	13	17	

Hit Points: 14
Magic Points: 13
Spirit Animal: Weasel
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing and cap.

Skills: Area Lore (homeland) 60%, Area Lore (Iceland) 40%, Bargain 80%, Craft (various) 50%, Evaluate 90%, Fast Talk 60%, Herd 30%, Insight 40%, Listen 40%, Myth Lore 25%, Navigate 50%, Orate 35%, Ride 40%, Search 50%, Spot Hidden 55%, Survival 50%, Worship (Freyr or other foreign deity) 70%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Quarterstaff	60	1D8
Knife	40	1D4+1
Sax	55	1D6+1

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

Warrior

While every Icelander knows their way around weapons and armor, there are some that make being a warrior their primary concern when not taking care of the family farm.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
17	11	16	15
INT	**POW**	**CHA**	
10	10	8	

Hit Points: 12
Magic Points: 10
Spirit Animal: Bull
Damage Modifier: +1D6
Move: 10

Armor: 1-point thick woolen clothing, 2-point leather armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point iron helmet.

Skills: Area Lore (Iceland) 35%, Bargain 25%, Customs (Norse) 35%, Dodge 45%, Evaluate 30%, Farm 55%, First Aid 30%, Intimidate 60%, Jump 55%, Navigate 25%, Law 30%, Listen 35%, Ride 55%, Search 40%, Shiphandling 30%, Spot Hidden 50%, Survival 30%, Swim 60%, Track 20%, Worship (Þór) 70%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bow	50	1D6+1
Broadsword	80	1D8+1+dm
Shield	70	1D6+dm
Long Spear	60	1D10+1+dm
Axe, One-handed	50	1D8+2+dm
Axe, One-handed (thrown)	50	1D6+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	3/4
Chest	12	3/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	5/4

MYTHIC FOLK

Elf (Hidden People)

The mysterious hidden people are elves who live alongside the Norse settlers of Iceland. See **Chapter 15: The Hidden People** for more information on elves.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+3	12
CON	3D6+2	11
SIZ	2D6+6	12
INT	3D6+3	12
POW	3D6+6	15
DEX	3D6+6	15
CHA	3D6+3	14

Hit Points: 11
Magic Points: 15
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10
Armor: None

Skills: Charm 55%, Craft (Carpentry) 45%, Dodge 40%, Farming 50%, First Aid 70%, Hide 70%, Prophecy 70%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 40%, Spot Hidden 65%, Survival 60%, Swim 50%, Track 60%.

Powers

Dispel (60%): Eliminates effects of magic. *Magic Point Cost:* 9.

Light (100%): Illuminates a circle 3 meters (10 feet) in diameter for each magic point spent.

Resistance (50%): Each magic point spent provides 1 point of resistance against damage from extreme temperatures.

Curse (80%): A magical curse can be placed on any living creature. Common effects include turning someone into an animal or stone, causing blindness, etc. An escape clause that completely dispels the magical effects must always be part of a curse; it must be something difficult to accomplish but within the realm of possibility and must be announced to the victim when the spell is cast. The victim cannot resist the curse, but it can be dispelled by anyone with the Dispel

power or by a runemaster capable of creating a five-rune magical script that dispels magical effects. Each use of this power costs 1 permanent point of POW.

Become Visible to Humans (80%): This power allows elves to become visible to humans. *Magic Point Cost:* 3 per hour.

Speak in Dreams (70%): This spell allows the caster to enter someone's dreams and communicate with them inside the dream. The caster must be within 30 km (19 miles) of the target.

Notes: Hidden people do not commonly use weapons in combat. When needing to defend themselves, they always resort to magic, especially curses. They do use weapons, however, for hunting birds and seals, just as humans do.

Weapon	%	Damage
Long Spear	65%	1D10+1
Bow	60%	1D6+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	1/4
Left Leg	5–8	1/4
Abdomen	9–11	1/4
Chest	12	1/5
Right Arm	13–15	1/3
Left Arm	16–18	1/3
Head	19–20	0/4

Elf (Patrols from Álfheimur)

The well-armed elven patrols from Álfheimur hail from an island in their home world that is identical to Iceland. The more militaristic and aggressive royal houses send these elite soldiers to accomplish specific missions before returning home through the magical portal that connects the two worlds.

Hit Points: 11

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+3	12
CON	3D6+2	11
SIZ	2D6+6	12
INT	3D6+3	12
POW	3D6+6	15
DEX	3D6+6	15
CHA	3D6+3	14

Magic Points: 15
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10

Armor: 6-point, includes helmet, made of material not of this world that looks like hard darkened leather.

Skills: Dodge 65%, First Aid 60%, Hide 70%, Move Quietly 40%, Myth Lore 50%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 20%, Speak Own Language (Elvish) 80%, Spot Hidden 55%, Swim 50%, Track 65%.

Magical Powers

As **Elf** (page 259) plus the following abilities and weapons:

Illusion (65%): Allows the elf to create an illusion of an object up to SIZ 20. The illusion is visual only, with no sound, scent, touch, or taste aspects. It is insubstantial but remains in place if touched. Can be used to mislead or terrify opponents or entrap them by disguising walls, concealing traps, etc. Maintaining a static illusion requires no concentration, but making it move requires full concentration. *Magic Point Cost:* 1 point per hour while active.

Weapon	%	Damage
Elven Long Bow	70%	1D6+2
Short Sword	80%	1D6+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	1–4	6/4
Left Leg	5–8	6/4
Abdomen	9–11	6/4
Chest	12	6/5
Right Arm	13–15	6/3
Left Arm	16–18	6/3
Head	19–20	6/4

Jötunn

The *jötunn*, also called giants or frost giants, are mythic creatures with superhuman strength. They often stand in opposition to the gods but also mingle and intermarry with them. The *jöttun's* homeland is Jötunheimur, one of the nine worlds that hang from the branches of *Yggdrasil*, the World Tree.

These jötunn immigrated to Miðgarður long ago, when the world of giants was thrown into anarchy by the death of its ruler, King Þrymur. King Þrymur attempted to extort the gods into allowing him to marry the goddess Freyja by stealing Þór's hammer. He met his demise when his plan was foiled by the knowledge of Heimdallur, the cunning of Loki, and the strength of Þór.

The few *jötunn* remaining in Iceland live in solitude, either in halls inside cliffs or in caves. They prefer to keep to themselves in their highland mountain homes. Larger and more intelligent than trolls, some are known to show kindness and wisdom to those who befriend them.

A few *jötunn* are powerful magic users and are usually rulers among their folk.

Characteristics	Roll	Average
STR	3D6+25	36
CON	4D6+16	28
SIZ	3D6+50	60
INT	3D6+15	24
POW	2D6+18	23
DEX	3D6+5	14
CHA	3D6	10

Hit Points: 42
Magic Points: 23
Move: 16
Armor: 2-point thick skin, plus 2-point leather armor.
Skills: Dodge 30%, Spot Hidden 60%.

Powers

Beauty: Some *jötunn* are unusually attractive. Many great heroes, and even gods, have fallen in love with giants.

Create Blizzard: A *jötunn* can create a fierce snowstorm that lasts for 10 minutes for every magic point invested in this power. For more details about the effects of weather conditions, see pages 76–77.

Size Change: A *jötunn* can reduce its size and appearance to that of an average person and be completely indistinguishable from a human.

Note: A jöttun can make two attacks per melee round, the second on ½ their DEX rank (round up).

Weapon	%	Damage
Club	60%	3D6+5D6
Kick/Stomp	45%	1D6+5D6
Thrown Rock	45%	2D6+2D6

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	01–04	4/15
Left Leg	05–08	4/15
Abdomen	09–11	4/15
Chest	12	4/18
Right Arm	13–15	4/11
Left Arm	16–18	4/11
Head	19–20	4/15

Merfolk

These creatures have the upper body of a human and the lower body of a seal, with large heads and broad hands.

Merfolk live along the southern coast of Iceland in undersea homes built out of coral. They subsist by hunting fish and other sea creatures, farming seaweed, and milking sea cattle (page 268–269).

One well-known story tells of a fisherman who caught a mermaid in a net. The fisher tried to force the mermaid to reveal her magical lore, but she refused, bursting into mocking laughter instead. Shocked, the fisherman offered to free the mermaid if she would explain the reason for her unprovoked laughter. After being freed, the mermaid replied, "Yesterday, you kissed your wife, kicked your dog, heartily cursed a tussock for being in your path, and felt clever for buying thick-soled boots. But I laugh at your own stupidity, fisherman. Your dog loves you dearly, but your wife is cheating on you and wishes you dead. The tussock you cursed covers a treasure destined for you. You are unwise and dull-witted, fisherman, and this is why I laugh. Also, your new boots will last you all your life, for you haven't long to live. In fact, they'll last you three days!"

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	4D6+1	15
CON	1D6+10	13
SIZ	1D6+6	9
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	3D6	10
DEX	3D6	10
CHA	3D6	10

Hit Points: 13
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 15 (swimming)
Armor: 3-point thick skin from the waist down.
Skills: Dodge 20%, Hide 70%, Spot Hidden 45%.

Powers

Reveal Truth: Facts that are hidden to most people are clear to the eyes of the merfolk, who can instinctively see the true intention of individuals, hidden treasures, etc.

Absolute Prophecy: Merfolk can predict the future with absolute accuracy, but this power comes with a heavy price, costing 1 permanent point of POW per use.

Weapon	%	Damage
Fist	50%	1D3
Long Spear	55%	1D10+1

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Tail	01–06	3/5
Abdomen	07–11	3/4
Chest	12	0/4
Right Arm	13–15	0/3
Left Arm	16–18	0/3
Head	19–20	0/4

Sealskin

Sealskins, sometimes called selkies, are intelligent seals that live along the Icelandic coast and can turn into humans by removing their seal skin. When in human form, they are stunningly beautiful. Their seal skins are family treasures, handed down from parents to children.

It is said that stealing the skin of a sealskin while they are in human form will cause the selkie to become the thief's devoted spouse. However, if a sealskin recovers their stolen skin, they will eagerly transform back into their original form and disappear into the sea, regardless of how long they have lived on land.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average (human form)*
STR	2D6+2	9
CON	3D6	10
SIZ	2D6+4	9
INT	3D6+6	17
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	3D6+3	14
CHA	3D6+9	18

Hit Points: 10
Magic Points: 13
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 10/12 (swimming)
Armor: —, or per armor worn.

Skills: Dodge 50%, Spot Hidden 80%, Swim 100%.

Powers

Shapeshift: A sealskin's natural shape is that of a seal (see pages 265–266), but they can change into human form by removing their seal skin. If the skin is lost, a sealskin can never revert to its seal form; it must spend the remainder of its life as a human.

Weapon	%	Damage
Fist	50%	1D3

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	01–04	0/4
Left Leg	05–08	0/4
Abdomen	09–11	0/4
Chest	12	0/5
Right Arm	13–15	0/3
Left Arm	16–18	0/3
Head	19–20	0/4

Troll

Icelandic trolls live in mountains, caves, and cliffs—especially the seabird cliffs. Like humans, they live together socially in small groups or as family units. They fish, cultivate land, and keep giant versions of farm animals.

Although considered by humans to be fearsome and cruel creatures, they often live in harmony with their neighbors inside mountains near human farms. They treat people as they are treated, returning favors for favors, but will exact vengeance if harmed.

Trolls are nocturnal creatures. They will turn to stone if exposed to sunlight. Many of the strange rock formations rising above mythic Iceland's lava plains are trolls that were accidentally turned to stone by the morning sun. The animals they keep are also nocturnal and susceptible to the same fate. A dead troll always turns to stone.

An average Icelandic troll stands 3 meters (10 feet) tall, but a few can be much bigger. For very large trolls reaching SIZ 40, change the following characteristics by adding 10 extra hit points and change the damage modifier to +3D6.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+15	25
CON	4D6+12	18
SIZ	4D6+18	30
INT	2D6	7
POW	3D6	9
DEX	2D6+3	10
CHA	1D6+1	4

Hit Points: 23
Magic Points: 9
Damage Modifier: +2D6
Move: 8
Armor: 2-point thick skin.

Skills: Dodge 30%, Hide 40%, Move Quietly 30%, Spot Hidden 60%, Track 50%.

Powers

High Stamina: Trolls do not lose consciousness or become incapacitated by damage. They fight until slain.

Night Vision: Can see perfectly in the dark.

Regeneration: Trolls regenerate 2 hit points per combat round unless that damage was done by fire.

Weapon	%	Damage
Fist Smash	40%	1D6+dm
Club	50%	1D8+dm
Thrown Rock	30%	1D10+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Leg	01–04	2/8
Left Leg	05–08	2/8
Abdomen	09–11	2/8
Chest	12	2/9
Right Arm	13–15	2/7
Left Arm	16–18	2/7
Head	19–20	2/8

BEASTS

Wild and Domesticated Animals

As mentioned on page 251, most wild or domesticated animals will rarely fight to the death and usually flee if wounded severely or frightened away. Those with asterisks (*) next to their name are not native to Iceland but still figure in memories, stories, myths, and are readily encountered overseas.

Arctic Tern

A medium-sized bird, the arctic tern migrates in great flocks from the north to the south and settles in Iceland twice per year, where they fill the skies when they land. They are mostly grey and white, with elements of black, and have reddish-orange beaks and feet. They are fiercely protective of their nests.

*Beaver**

Doughty little brown furred rodents, beavers dwell in rivers and build complex and sprawling dam-like lodges out of twigs and branches. They are adept swimmers and fishers and can chew through wood with astonishing speed. Areas they inhabit are marked with muddy mounds scented with their urine. They are hunted for their furs and meat.

Bull

Bulls are large and powerful male cattle and are symbols of strength and verity to the Icelandic people. They are used to pull wagons and till fields, as well as driving other farm labor. Bulls are valuable offerings in trade and worship and are sacred to Þór.

Cat

Icelanders keep cats for their valuable skills as mousers, as well as pets. These are of a large breed, known for their strong bones and muscular bodies. Kittens are sometimes given as a wedding gift as a part of setting up a new household. Such a gift is especially appropriate for newlyweds, as cats are associated with Freyja, the goddess of love.

Cattle

Icelandic farmers raise cattle for multiple purposes. Milk cows are important for providing farms with fresh dairy products and for foods such as cheese, butter, and *skyr* that are stored and consumed during the winter months. Oxen are sometimes used to pull a plow or a sledge, or they may be used as sacrificial offerings to the gods. Icelandic cattle stand at less than 120 cm (47 inches) high at the shoulder. Ownership of more than a few cattle is a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

In the summer, cattle are driven to highland pastures. Milk cows are usually brought inside during the winter.

Norse religion says that before there was anything, the great cow Auðhumla fed Ýmir, the first jötunn, with her milk, and she licked away the primal ice surrounding Búri, the grandfather of the gods, from whom the Æsir sprang.

*Deer**

Though common throughout much of Scandinavia, deer are not common to Iceland and are primarily known through traveler's tales and their role in Norse religion.

It is said that four red stags are said to nibble at the branches of Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

Animal	STR	CON	SIZ	INT	POW	DEX	Move	HP	Attack %	Armor	Damage	Attacks
Arctic Tern	2	6	3	6	7	16	1/16 (fly)	5	25%	–	1D3–1	1
Beaver*	4	10	3	5	7	10	8/8 (swim)	8	25%	1	1D3	1
Bull	32	18	26	4	8	12	12	20	40%	2	2D4+dm	1
Cat	2	6	2	7	13	17	12	4	45%	1	1D3–1	2
Cattle	24	17	20	4	7	7	10	19	40%	2	1D8+dm	1
Deer*	12	12	12	5	7	15	14	12				
Dog	3	8	3	5	9	13	11	6	40%	1	1D6–1	1
Eagle	4	7	4	5	9	16	1/16 (fly)	6	50%	1	1D4-1	1
Golden Plover	1	4	2	4	5	16	1/16 (fly)	1	–	–	–	–
Goose	2	6	3	3	5	12	1/12 (fly)	4	25%	–	1D3–1	1
Gyrfalcon	2	4	3	4	7	29	1/18 (fly)	2	50%	0	1D4–1	1
Horse	23	17	20	4	11	12	12	19	40%	2	1D6+dm	1
Mouse	–	1	1	5	3	15	6	1	–	–	–	–
Owl	2	6	2	7	9	12	1/12 (fly)	4	25%	–	1D3-1	1
Seal	4	9	6	5	7	7	1/10 (swim)	8	–	1	–	–
Sheep	3	10	4	4	6	11	10	8	35%	–	–	–
Snow Fox	2	4	2	7	9	16	11	2	35%	1	1D4–1	1
Weasel*	2	5	1	6	7	15	8	3	20%	–	1D2–1	1
Wolf*	7	11	4	6	7	14	12	10	50%	1	1D4+dm	1

Dog

When the first Norse settlers arrived in Iceland, they bought with them a Scandinavian breed of small-to-medium sheepdogs. These dogs gradually became a separate breed, with a thicker coat than their Norwegian ancestors. Besides rounding up sheep, dogs also warn of intruders and can track those who are fleeing their pursuers.

Eagle

The breed of eagle most common in Iceland is the white-tailed sea eagle. They are usually coastal dwellers, concentrated around Breiðafjörður. They hunt fish for sustenance primarily, though they eat smaller rodents when convenient. They are mostly brown and grey, with stark white tailfeathers.

In poetry, eagles are associated with warfare and skill in battle. Óðinn holds them sacred, and an unnamed eagle is said to rest in the uppermost branches of Yggdrasil. A jötunn in the shape of a hawk sits upon its beak, the flapping of its wings the source of all wind.

Golden Plover

A small-to-medium-sized bird, the golden plover is beloved by Icelanders, perhaps due to their characteristic black feathered coats covered with gold speckles. Migratory, they summer in Iceland and spend the winters elsewhere, either to the south or to the east. Their arrival heralds the beginning of spring- and summer-time.

Their eggs are a reversal of their feathered coats, being largely golden with black speckles.

Goose

A type of waterfowl common throughout Iceland, geese are found in the wild and are kept by some farmers, their wings clipped. They are kept for eggs, feathers, and finally for their fat and meat.

Frigg's sacred animal is the goose.

Gyrfalcon

Among the largest of all birds of prey, the great white gyrfalcon is common in the northern part of Iceland, where they prefer to nest on sea cliffs. Because of their connection to the goddess Freyja, these birds are sacred to many. They believe that Freyja possesses a magical falcon-skin cloak that allows her to transform into a bird and fly in their midst. There are many stories of gyrfalcons coming to the aid of those who helped them before.

Gyrfalcons are highly sought after by European monarchies and members of the aristocracy, as they are the most prized bird used in falconry. They are difficult to trap and transport safely from Iceland to Europe, but that doesn't stop many from trying to profit from this trade.

Horse

Icelandic horses are small, standing on average between 13 and 14 hands (132–142 cm/52–56 inches) high. The mane and tail are full, with coarse hair and a low-set tail. They have a double coat that provides extra insulation in cold temperatures. They are not usually ridden until they are four years old. Their most productive years are between eight and eighteen, although they retain their strength and stamina into their twenties.

Horses are raised not only for their utility in travel and transport but also because their meat is prized. Horses are often sacrificed to the pagan gods, and the meat is consumed as part of the feasting ceremonies.

Mouse

The smallest of creatures, mice are commonly grey or brown and range in size from a thick finger to filling the palm of a hand. They inhabit the wild as well as infesting human settlements and homes. Mice can eat almost anything and are preyed upon by cats and birds of prey. They are sometimes feared, as spirits called fylgja are said to take their forms to commit great wickedness.

Owl

Two breeds of owl are common in Iceland: the short-eared owl and the snowy owl. The short-eared owl is primarily brown and grey and inhabits the south and middle of Iceland. The snowy owl is most common in the West, is known for its distinctive white and black-spotted coat and is the larger of the two types.

Owls are traditionally thought of as symbols of wisdom. As nocturnal animals, they represent the unseen and unknown.

Seal

A variety of seal breeds inhabit the coasts and shoals of Iceland, and are hunted for meat and fur. They range in size up to 300 kg (660 lbs) in weight and 2.5 meters (8+ feet) from snout to flippers.

Seals often dwell alongside selkies, who lead their herds.

Sheep

The Icelandic breed of sheep is the most common domestic animal in the country. It is mid-sized, generally short-legged and stocky, with face and legs free of wool. They are valued for their wool, which is gathered ei ther by plucking or after it sheds naturally; for their meat (both lamb and mutton); and for their milk.

There is a common saying in Iceland: "A sheepless household starves."

Snow Fox

Commonly called "dogs of the tundra" (*melrakki*), the arctic fox is the only terrestrial mammal not brought to Iceland by humans. Its fur coat changes color to blend with its environment, from a dark brown hue that matches the lava rocks during the summer, to a pure white to match the winter snow.

The fox is sacred to Sigyn, a goddess said to be married to Loki.

*Weasel**

Small and carnivorous, weasels—also called stoats—are uncommon animals in Iceland but are known throughout the rest of the Norse world. Some Vikings and traders have brought these little creatures back as living pets or dead as pieces of fur.

Sneaky and prone to running away with small objects, they are often associated with the trickster god Loki.

*Wolf**

Renowned in fables and folktales, the wolf is a common threat to farmers throughout the Norse world outside of Iceland, preying upon sheep and other domesticated animals. The most common type is the ice wolf, all white in coloration. They dwell in packs of 12–15 and often haunt the peripheries of farms. Ice wolves are stockier and smaller than many other species of wolf.

The most famous wolf in Norse myth is Fenrir, the gigantic wolf that cost Týr his hand and looms large in the prophesied end of the world, but others include the sun-chasing wolf Sköll, the "Mother of Monsters" Angurboða (Fenrir's mother), Garmur who guards the gate to Hel, and Óðinn's two wolves, Geri and Freki.

FISH AND INSECT LIFE IN ICELAND

Though most of the coastal Icelanders sustain themselves in part through fishing, the likelihood of an encounter with one or more fish resulting in combat is highly unlikely, and thus, no statistics are provided for them. Should the gamemaster wish for more information, the fish types most common to Iceland's shores are cod, herring, salmon, haddock, perch, trout, char, and eels, fished with nets, traps, individually with hooks and lines.

The most common types of insects in Iceland are the midges, gnats, flies, moths, and butterflies. None are venomous, and only gnats or flies bite—harmlessly but annoying nonetheless.

Polar Bears

Polar bears are a distinct threat to the people living in the north of the country. Many avoid traveling alone over the mountains because of the danger they present. These huge beasts arrive in Iceland on big blocks of ice, usually so starved that they attack any animal or person they see.

The Book of Settlements tells the story of the first person to meet a polar bear in Iceland in 890. Ingimundur the Old met a polar bear and her cubs while traveling through the north of the country. Ingimundur barely escaped the encounter but managed to capture one of the bear cubs, which was later given to the king of Denmark as a gift. No one in Scandinavia had seen a polar bear prior to this. Afterwards, the lake in the valley where the bears were first discovered has been called Cub Lake (Húnavatn).

What most people don't know, however, is that not all polar bears arrive in Iceland on blocks of floating ice. In truth, a colony of extraordinarily intelligent polar bears exists in the Central Highlands. They attack anyone coming near their colony and will do anything to protect the secret of its location. Many people who are thought to have fallen to seemingly random attacks from polar bears were killed because they ventured too close to the bears' colony.

These are enormous animals, with the largest weighing approximately 350–650 kg (772–1,433 lbs.) and growing to a length of three meters (10 feet). Some grow to even larger sizes.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+21	28–32
CON	2D6+12	19
SIZ	3D6+21	31–32
INT	9	9
POW	3D6	10–11
DEX	3D6	10–11

Hit Points: 24
Magic Points: 11
Damage Modifier: +2D6
Move: 14/8 (swimming)
Armor: 4-point fur
Skills: Dodge 35%, Hide 60%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 50%, Spot Hidden 70%, Swim 80%, Track 60%.

Powers

Human Speech: Icelandic bears can understand and speak the Norse language, though they rarely speak to humans.

Hide in Snow: Polar bears can blend in with the snowy surroundings and can only be noticed with a successful Spot Hidden roll.

Note: Bears can attack twice per melee round, using either two separate claw attacks or one claw and one bite attack.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	45%	1D10+½dm
Claw	60%	1D8+dm
Slap	45%	1D4+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	4/9
Left Hindleg	03–04	4/9
Hindquarter	05–07	4/12
Forequarter	08–10	4/12
Right Foreleg	11–13	4/9
Left Foreleg	14–16	4/9
Head	17–20	4/11

King of the Bears

Few people know about the polar bear colony in the Highlands of Iceland, and fewer still know about the King of the Bears (Bjarndýrakóngur), who rules over the country's entire polar bear population. He is the largest of all polar bears, being the offspring of a bear and a walrus. He has red cheeks and a single horn extending from his forehead. This horn can magically shine with an intense light that illuminates a large area. The king often uses this power to guide his followers through the darkness of the long winter nights.

The King of the Bears has great wisdom and can fully communicate in the Norse language. If angered, or when the bear colony is in danger, he fights using his sharp horn and powerful claws.

CHARACTERISTICS

STR	CON	SIZ	DEX
40	23	34	16
INT	**POW**		
17	18		

Hit Points: 38
Magic Points: 17
Damage Modifier: +3D6
Move: 15/10 (swimming)
Armor: 4-point fur.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Hide 70%, Second Sight 90%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 30%, Speak Other Language (Elvish) 40%, Spot Hidden 80%, Swim 100%.

Powers

Light: The horn of the king can illuminate an area in a three-meter (ten-foot) radius for each magic point spent.

Speech: Fluent in Norse and elvish languages.

Note: Just as with all polar bears, the King of Bears can attack twice per melee round, using either two separate claw attacks or one claw and one bite attack.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	65%	1D12+½dm
Claw	80%	1D8+dm
Horn	70%	1D10+dm
Slap	55%	1D4+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	4/12
Left Hindleg	03–04	4/12
Hindquarter	05–07	4/20
Forequarter	08–10	4/20
Right Foreleg	11–13	4/14
Left Foreleg	14–16	4/14
Head	17–20	4/16

Ravens

Icelandic ravens are exceptionally intelligent and wise, often more so than people realize. They have a well-structured society with their own laws and assemble at specific locations twice a year—midsummer and midwinter. At these gatherings, they lay the ground rules for their society and settle disputes. Farmers have at times observed these gatherings, calling them "raven assemblies" (*hrafnaþing*).

These large black birds are widespread in Iceland. They do not migrate south for the winter but stay in the country, often complementing their diet with leftovers from farms.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	1D3	2
CON	1D4	3
SIZ	1D2	1–2
INT	3D6	9
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	3D6+9	17

Hit Points: 2
Magic Points: 13
Damage Modifier: -1D4
Move: 1/13 (flying)
Armor: —

Skills: Charm 40%, Dodge 55%, Prophecy 70%, Second Sight 100%, Spot Hidden 80%.

Powers

Speech: Icelandic ravens can speak the Norse language of the humans, as well as the language of the elves and their own raven language.

Note: A raven can attack twice per melee round.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	40%	1D4–1–dm
Claw	30%	1D3–1–dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–03	1/2
Left Hindleg	04–06	1/2
Abdomen	07–08	1/3
Chest	09–11	1/3
Tail	12	1/1
Right Wing	13–14	1/1
Left Wing	15–16	1/1
Head	17–20	1/2

Sea Cattle

Sea cattle live underwater in the seas around Iceland. They possess a type of bladder in front of their nostrils that allows them to remain underwater for long periods before needing to resurface. If this air bladder bursts, they are unable to swim to the depths of the sea and must spend the rest of their lives on land.

When sea cattle venture overland, it is often in herds, mainly to entice the bulls and cows belonging to the human population to follow them into the sea. They are trained by merfolk to do this so that the land animals can be drowned and eaten by the merfolk.

They have larger bodies, are slicker, and are able to yield more milk than land-based cattle. They usually have long tails and large ears.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	4D6+16	30
CON	2D6+10	17
SIZ	3D6+18	30
INT	4	4
POW	2D6	7
DEX	2D6	7

Hit Points: 22
Magic Points: 7
Damage Modifier: +3D6
Move: 9
Armor: 4-point hide.

Skills: Dodge 25%, Spot Hidden 40%, Track 30%.

Powers
Breathe Underwater: Sea cattle can remain underwater for up to four hours at a time.

Weapon	%	Damage
Horn charge	40%	1D3+dm
Trample	60%	1D6+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	4/8
Left Hindleg	03–04	4/8
Hindquarter	05–07	4/9
Forequarter	08–10	4/9
Right Foreleg	11–13	4/8
Left Foreleg	14–16	4/8
Head	17–20	4/8

MONSTERS

Draugur

A *draugur* is an animated corpse that emerges from its grave mound, or one that shows restlessness on the road to burial. They spend their undead existence inside the mound, watching jealously over their possessions. Sometimes a *draugur* will leave its earthen home and haunt the surrounding countryside, attacking both humans and animals.

These hideous slain corpses have tremendous strength that greatly exceeds that of the living, and their skin is as black as death. As a rule, they are swollen almost to the size of an ox.

They prefer to wrestle in combat but may also use the weapons that were buried with them.

To permanently destroy a *draugur*, it is necessary to first decapitate it and then burn the body.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	5D6+3	20–22
CON	4D6+3	20
SIZ	4D6+4	22
INT	2D6+6	13
POW	3D6+7	16–17
DEX	3D6	10–11

Hit Points: 23
Magic Points: 17
Damage Modifier: +2D6
Move: 7
Armor: 2-point armor on abdomen and chest, 5-point metal helmet.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Listen 50%, Spot Hidden 50%, Track 40%.

Powers

Diseased Touch: Every time a hero is struck by a *draugur*'s claw, they must make a roll of CON×5 versus the *draugur*'s POW×5 or contract a disease that spreads through the body and rots the flesh. The first symptoms appear after 1D12 hours. The disease causes disfigurement and the loss of 1 point of CON per day. When a victim's CON reaches 0, the hero dies. If a hero is successfully treated with magical healing before losing all CON points, the disease is cured, and they recover 1D3 CON points per day of rest.

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 weapons. Fire and magic do full damage.

Night Vision: Can see perfectly in the dark.

Unique Destruction Condition: A *draugur* keeps fighting until its hit points are reduced to –10 on either the 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.

Weapon	%	Damage
Claw	60%	1D6+dm
Sword	70%	1D8+1+dm
Grapple	50%	See **Grappling** (page 121)

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

Fallen Raven

Ravens that eat the hearts of humans or elves can learn any skill the person possessed. However, gaining knowledge in this manner repeatedly has dire consequences, in the form of a curse from the gods. For that reason, eating a person's heart is forbidden by raven law, as proclaimed by the raven assemblies.

A raven's own heart will become progressively more corrupt with each elf or human heart it consumes. After the third heart is consumed, the bird becomes a fallen raven.

As a result of their transformation, fallen ravens are larger than common ravens. Their beaks and claws become sharp-edged metal as sturdy as iron; they can only fly at night, and their motivations turn evil.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	1D4+1	4
CON	1D4+1	4
SIZ	1D3+1	3
INT	3D6	10
POW	2D6+6	13
DEX	3D6+9	17

Hit Points: 4
Magic Points: 13
Damage Modifier: –1D4
Move: 1/13 (flying)
Armor: —

Skills: Charm 60%, Dodge 55%, Listen 55%, Prophecy 70%, Second Sight 100%, Speak Other Language (Elven) 30%, Speak Other Language (Norse) 50%, Spot Hidden 80%, plus 1D6+2 skills at 60% gained from eating hearts.

Powers

Speech: Icelandic ravens can speak the Norse and elven languages, as well as their own raven tongue.

Learn by Heart: When a raven eats the fresh heart of a person, it can choose to gain any one skill that person possessed.

Note: A raven can attack twice per melee round.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	60%	1D4–dm
Claw	50%	1D6–dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–03	1/2
Left Hindleg	04–06	1/2
Abdomen	07–08	2/3
Chest	09–11	2/3
Tail	12	1/1
Right Wing	13–14	1/1
Left Wing	15–16	1/1
Head	17–20	2/2

Fingal

The offspring of a tomcat and a vixen, this creature is extremely fierce and aggressive. There is no more significant threat to a farmer's sheep. They are also called ghoul cats because they are known to dig up human bodies and eat the rotten flesh.

Powerful in appearance and dark of hue, a fingal has a thick coat of fur and a long tail. The creature resembles an enormous cat, almost the size of a sheep, with a head that blends the features of both cat and fox. It is shy, alert, and very fleet of foot.

They are intelligent and can speak human languages, as well as communicate with cats and foxes.

A fingal's skin is valuable because it can only be cut or pierced by silver. This makes it perfect for crafting armor that will protect the wearer from most ordinary weapons. It is very dangerous to hunt a fingal, as their gaze can kill a person. Popular wisdom claims that the only way to kill a fingal is by using magic or silver-headed arrows.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	2D6+5	12
CON	3D6	10–11
SIZ	1D6+2	4–5
INT	2D6	7
POW	3D6	10
DEX	3D6+6	17

Hit Points: 9
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: —
Move: 12
Armor: 2-point fur against silver weapons. Steel weapons cannot harm a fingal.

Skills: Dodge 70%, Listen 75%, Move Quietly 80%, Spot Hidden 65%, Track 50%.

Powers

Magical Fur: A fingal can only be hurt by silver weapons.

Death Gaze: Anyone looking into the eyes of a fingal must succeed on a CON×5 roll or immediately lose 3D6 hit points to the chest hit location due to a sudden massive heart attack. Each victim is only susceptible to this attack once. Those trying to avoid looking at the fingal, while at the same time fighting it, must succeed on POW×3 or succumb to the temptation to look at the beast.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	50%	1D8
Claw	60%	1D6

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	2/2
Left Hindleg	03–04	2/2
Hindquarter	05–07	2/3
Forequarter	08–10	2/3
Right Foreleg	11–13	2/2
Left Foreleg	14–16	2/2
Head	17–20	2/3

Nykur

Nykur are horse-like creatures found in practically every bottomless pond or large, deep lake, as well as in rivers throughout Iceland.

On the surface of frozen lakes, sometimes a booming noise can be heard, caused by the horsehide dragging along the underside of the ice cover. They live in herds under the surface of lakes and rivers but will sometimes emerge out of the water. If the lake is frozen, they will break the ice with tremendous force when coming to the surface.

They strongly resemble a healthy horse, usually grey in color, with a luxuriant mane and tail. The hoof of a *nykur* also resembles that of a regular horse, but it is hollow underneath to aid in swimming. The front of the legs are covered in long hair, while the back of the legs has shorter hair; this makes the hooves appear to be turned in the wrong direction.

Nykur are known for tempting people onto their backs, then plunging into the nearest water, drowning, and then eating their victims. It is considered dangerous to do ice fishing after nightfall, as a *nykur* may break the ice and drown anyone standing on it.

Some stories say that *nykur* can also shapeshift into the forms of any land or sea creature.

The only sure way to make a *nykur* flee back to its watery home is to shout its name: "*nykur*" or "*nennie*".

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	3D6+20	30–31
CON	3D6+5	13
SIZ	3D6+12	22
INT	7	7
POW	3D6	11
DEX	3D6	14

Hit Points: 15
Magic Points: 13
Damage Modifier: +2D6
Move: 12/14 (swimming)
Armor: 2-point fur and hide.

Skills: Dodge 45%, Listen 70%, Spot Hidden 60%, Track 50%.

Powers

Shapechange: Can change shape into any animal of similar size for 3 magic points per use.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	40%	1D3+½dm
Kick	35%	1D6+dm
Rear and Plunge	50%	2D6+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	2/5
Left Hindleg	03–04	2/5
Hindquarter	05–07	2/7
Forequarter	08–10	2/7
Right Foreleg	11–13	2/5
Left Foreleg	14–16	2/5
Head	17–20	2/6

Seal Mother

Seals are a common sight along the Icelandic coast, and they have been hunted since the first settlers arrived. The hunting of seals is not without danger, as some can weigh as much as 300 kilos (661 lbs.) and have a powerful bite.

When the seals' large bulk is not enough to ward off attacks, they can resort to calling the seal mother. Whenever seals are being viciously attacked, the seal mother may sense it and come to their defense. They can use their large fins as legs to walk on land.

The seal mother is shaped like a regular seal but is of enormous dimensions. It ferociously attacks anyone who is hunting seals. It is imbued with a measure of intelligence, and it is known to destroy traps set up by farmers to capture seals.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	4D6+20	24
CON	3D6+9	18
SIZ	3D6+30	40
INT	7	7
POW	3D6	10–11
DEX	4D6+5	15–16

Hit Points: 25
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: +2d6
Move: 12/10 (swimming)
Armor: 4-point skin and blubber.

Skills: Dodge 30%, Hide 30%, Spot Hidden 40%, Swim 100%, Track 40%.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	40%	2D8+dm
Claw	50%	1D10+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hind Fin	01–02	4/9
Left Hind Fin	03–04	4/9
Hindquarter	05–07	4/10
Forequarter	08–10	4/10
Right Fore Fin	11–13	4/9
Left Fore Fin	14–16	4/9
Head	17–20	4/10

Shell Monster

The shell monster is a four-legged beast inhabiting the seas around Iceland. They occasionally come ashore, attracted by light, or to visit freshwater sources.

This creature is similar in size to a large horse but is very broad and muscular. It has a tail with a lump on the end. The legs are stout and short, with nearly circular footprints. Its eyes are red. Its trunk is covered by a layer of dark blue scales that shine under the moonlight.

A shell monster only comes out of the sea under cover of darkness, accompanied by a clattering noise produced by the rattling of its shell armor and the friction of its enormous claws rubbing together.

Few have survived an encounter with a shell monster, and none have spoken of actually killing one. They are swift in combat, using their tail to attack, as well as biting with their powerful jaws and long, glowing, illuminated teeth. The creature's extremely long claws, which are kept turned inwards when walking on land, can also be used to attack an enemy with devastating effect.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	6D6+20	28–32
CON	4D6+8	20
SIZ	5D6+20	31–32
INT	3	3
POW	3D6	10–11
DEX	4D6+6	16–17

Hit Points: 25
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: +2D6
Move: 12/10 (swimming)
Armor: 6-point shell armor on trunk, 5-point hide on legs and head.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Spot Hidden 50%, Track 60%.

Powers

Poisonous Blood: The blood of a shell monster contains contact poison (POT 6), causing extreme pain, impaired vision, and convulsions within five combat rounds. A hero fighting one of these creatures must make a successful DEX×5 roll after each time damage is dealt to the monster to avoid being splattered by the poisonous blood.

Note: Shell monsters can attack twice per melee round, using either two separate claw attacks, or one claw and one bite attack, or two tail swings.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	50%	1D10+½dm
Claw	60%	1D8+dm
Tail	65%	1D8+1+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Right Hindleg	01–02	5/9
Left Hindleg	03–04	5/9
Hindquarter	05–07	6/10
Forequarter	08–10	6/10
Right Foreleg	11–13	5/9
Left Foreleg	14–16	5/9
Head	17–20	5/9

HORRORS

Ocean Mist (Kraken)

An ocean mist is a gigantic eight-legged octopus, considered the most dangerous monster in the sea. The name ocean mist (*hafgufa*) comes from the hot vomit and noxious vapor that the creature belches out to attract prey. Those who have seen this monster describe it as appearing more like a piece of land than a living animal. It is known in other cultures by the name kraken.

An encounter with this creature usually begins with a ship encountering a foul-smelling mist in a patch of ocean covered by steaming bits of chum. The ship eventually encounters a featureless, desolate piece of land. Walking on this section of ground may prove lethal, as it can disappear at any moment, taking the crew with it.

Another tactic this creature employs is to float at the surface of the sea in a way that mimics an island with a fjord. When a ship sails into the fjord, it enters the monster's maw, which snaps shut in one sudden move, devouring the ship and its crew.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	15D6	50
CON	2D6+10	17
SIZ	30D6	100
INT	6	6
POW	3D6	10–11
DEX	2D6+12	19

Hit Points: 40
Magic Points: 11
Damage Modifier: +8D6
Move: 18 (swimming)
Armor: 3-point hide.

Skills: Hide (underwater) 80%, Swim 100%.

Powers

Foul-smelling Mist: The ocean mist can belch a mist that obscures vision to a 3-meter (10-foot) visibility reach. Anyone caught in the area can escape this mist with a successful Dodge roll. Anyone breathing the mist must make a roll of CON×5 or become sick. Costs 5 magic points.

Roar: The ocean mist can emit a terrible roar that weakens the structural integrity of ships by making the wooden planks vibrate, causing 2D6 hit points of damage to the ship per round. Costs 3 magic points.

Note: The ocean mist rarely attacks with its tentacles, preferring to set up a trap to lure prey right above its mouth. When attacking with tentacles, it can attack up to eight times per round. Any individual struck by a tentacle must succeed on an opposed DEX roll to avoid being grabbed and dragged under the water.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	70%	1D10+dm
Tentacle	50%	4D6+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Tentacle 1	01–02	3/15
Tentacle 2	03–04	3/15
Tentacle 3	05–06	3/15
Tentacle 4	07–08	3/15
Tentacle 5	09–10	3/15
Tentacle 6	11–12	3/15
Tentacle 7	13–14	3/15
Tentacle 8	15–16	3/15
Head	17–18	3/23
Body	19–20	3/23

Water Serpent

These creatures inhabit many of Iceland's rivers and lakes. They all have elongated necks and massive jaws and are enormous.

Water serpents can live for long periods of time at the bottom of lakes, feeding on vegetation and sunken animal carcasses. To swallow larger chunks of food, these animals must uncoil their long necks and extend their heads above the water.

Water serpents pose a significant threat to those living near lakes and rivers inhabited by the creatures. They attack and eat anyone swimming in the water, or even those who merely approach the water's edge when the monsters are actively hunting for food.

They can stretch themselves onto the riverbanks and can spew vast amounts of deadly poisonous gas.

Water serpents travel between lakes through networks of underground tunnels and have even been reported to attack ships at sea.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	10D6	32
CON	6D6	20
SIZ	6D6+30	60
INT	3	3
POW	3D6	10–11
DEX	3D6+6	16

Hit Points: 27
Magic Points: 10
Damage Modifier: +5D6
Move: 8 (swimming)
Armor: 6-point scales.

Skills: Hide 60%, Move Quietly 70%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Powers

Poisonous Gas: A water serpent can spew a noxious cloud of poisonous gas (POT equal to the serpent's CON) from its mouth. This poisonous cloud spreads fast. In the first round, it affects anyone within 10 meters (33 feet) from the head of the serpent, and a further 10 meters (33 feet) is added to the range every round up to 2D6×10 meters. The cloud dissipates after 3D6 combat rounds or faster if in windy weather.

Weapon	%	Damage
Bite	60%	1D8+dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor/HP
Tail	01–02	6/10
Body	03–04	6/11
Head	15–20	6/10

Wicked Whales

There are many stories of strange whales living in Icelandic waters who hold a great hatred for ships—hunting and attacking them at every opportunity. Wicked whales are similar in size—around 25 meters (82 feet) long.

Eating the meat of any of these wicked animals is unwise.

Weapon	%	Damage
Ram	50%	2D6+dm to ship
Bite	70%	1D6+½dm

Hit Location	D20	Armor*/HP
Right Hind Fin	01–02	5(12)/12
Left Hind Fin	03–04	5(12)/12
Hindquarter	05–07	5(12)/13
Forequarter	08–10	5(12)/13
Right Fore Fin	11–13	5(12)/12
Left Fore Fin	14–16	5(12)/12
Head	17–20	5(12)/14

* Parenthetical value is for the shell-whale.

Powers

Each type of wicked whale has a specific power, though the gamemaster may assign them additional powers:

- **Red Mane Disease (Horse-whale):** This wicked whale plays with its prey before eating it. If anyone is lucky enough to escape after being tossed around by the creature, there is a 35% chance that open wounds on the victim may have come into contact with the whale's red mane, which is full of dangerous bacteria. Infected wounds inflict 1D4+1 hit points of damage per day until healed with a successful First Aid roll.
- **Leg Press (Mouse-whale):** The mouse-whale tries to capsize boats by pressing on the gunwale with its legs. The only way to prevent this is for the crew to attack the whale's legs and cause at least 6 hit points of damage to both legs within one combat round before the whale can capsize the ship.
- **Ship Swallow (Mouse-whale):** This wicked whale has such an enormous mouth that it can attempt to lure a ship into it and then crush it with its jaw. This attack has 30% chance of succeeding but can be avoided with a successful Shiphandling roll. If the attack is successful, it causes 12D6 damage to the ship.
- **Cow Calling (Ox-whale):** Any cows hearing the bellowing of the ox-whale become agitated. After 1D4 minutes, they run to the sea, where the ox-whale is waiting, ready to eat any cows that answer its call.
- **Solid Wall (Shell-whale):** This wicked whale's favorite form of attack is to put itself in front of a ship, forcing it to sail directly into it. At the moment of impact, the whale attempts to forcefully toss the ship into the air. The combined damage from this attack is 10D6. To avoid the crash, the ship's captain must make a successful Shiphandling roll with a –20% modifier.
- **Jumping (Jumper-whale):** This whale's preferred method of attack is to jump out of the water and crash down on top of a ship or other whale, causing a devastating 18D6 damage. The chance of success is 50%, and it can only be avoided with a successful Shiphandling roll with a –40% modifier.

Note: The ramming action may be different for each type. See descriptions of each whale for details.

Horse-whale

This one-eyed sea creature with a flowing red mane is often encountered on the southern coast of Iceland, plowing through the surface of the sea, hell-bent on destruction. Whenever it finds a ship, it tries to overtake and wreck it by leaning its weight against it. This evil whale is said to have a thirst for human blood that can never be satisfied. Its red mane contains bacteria that causes any open wound it touches to putrefy, leading to the eventual death of its prey.

Jumper-whale

This wicked whale kills other whales and destroys ships by leaping out of the water and crashing down on top of them. Its body is grey, with a white belly and a small fin in the middle of its back. On the front of its head is a bony ridge covered in skin. When the jumper-whale attacks, the skin on this ridge flakes off and flaps in front of its eyes. For this reason, it cannot see well out of the water, but its vision is unimpaired underwater, as the sea washes the ripped skin away from its eyes.

Ox-whale

Mouse-whale

This toothed whale has large dorsal fins resembling the huge ears of a mouse. Instead of ordinary fins, it has front legs. It will attempt to destroy any marine vessel it encounters; its favorite method is to press down on the gunwale with its short legs, causing the vessel to capsize. It traverses skerries and shallows with ease, allowing it to chase prey up to the very shoreline. Its great gaping jaws are so wide apart that there is more than enough space for a boat between them. A mouse-whale can swim very fast, causing the sea to foam at its chest.

Ox-whale

This wicked whale receives its name from the terrible bull-like bellow it makes when hungry. It produces the sound with such violence that the resulting echo shakes the entire area. Any cows hearing this bellow become so agitated that they dash into the sea in a fit of madness, thus being devoured by the ox-whale.

Shell-whale

This toothed whale is covered by a strong armor of multicolored shell plates, with enormous flippers and a powerful jaw. It strikes by positioning its massive body in front of a ship, forcing it to sail straight into the monster. It then tosses the hapless ship into the air, breaking it to smithereens. They are sufficiently different than other wicked whales to merit their own description.

Characteristics	*Roll*	*Average*
STR	12D6	40
CON	4D6+10	24
SIZ	16D6	60
INT	7	7
POW	3D6+2	12–13
DEX	2D6+6	13

Hit Points: 30
Magic Points: 12
Damage Modifier: +6D6
Move: 11 (swimming)
Armor: 5-point skin and blubber; 12-point shell armor for shell-whale.

Skills: Spot Hidden 50%.

Jumper-whale

Shell-whale

Mouse-whale

NPC RECORD SHEET

AGE OF VIKINGS

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

_____

_____

_____

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	%	DAMAGE
Brawl/Claw		

ARMOR	ARMOR VALUE

SHIELD	%	DAMAGE	HP

STR ____ **INT** ____ **CHA** ____

CON ____ **POW** ____

SIZ ____ **DEX** ____ **MOV** ____

SKILLS _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MAGIC _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** _____

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

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

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

36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47

48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59

60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71

MAGIC POINTS _____ **UNCON** ____

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

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

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

POSSESSIONS _____

_____

_____

_____

FOLLOWER ONE

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ **SIZ** _____ **POW** _____ **CHA** _____

CON _____ **INT** _____ **DEX** _____ **MOV** _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	%	DAMAGE

ARMOR	ARMOR VALUE

SHIELD	%	DAMAGE	HP

SKILLS _____

_____

_____

POSSESSIONS _____

_____

MAGIC POINTS

_____ / _____

MAGIC _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FOLLOWER TWO

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ **SIZ** _____ **POW** _____ **CHA** _____

CON _____ **INT** _____ **DEX** _____ **MOV** _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	%	DAMAGE

ARMOR	ARMOR VALUE

SHIELD	%	DAMAGE	HP

SKILLS _____

_____

_____

POSSESSIONS _____

_____

MAGIC POINTS

_____ / _____

MAGIC _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FOLLOWER THREE

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ SIZ _____ POW _____ CHA _____

CON _____ INT _____ DEX _____ MOV _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	**%**	**DAMAGE**

ARMOR	**ARMOR VALUE**

SHIELD	**%**	**DAMAGE**	**HP**

SKILLS _____

POSSESSIONS _____

MAGIC POINTS _____ / _____

MAGIC _____

FOLLOWER FOUR

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ SIZ _____ POW _____ CHA _____

CON _____ INT _____ DEX _____ MOV _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	**%**	**DAMAGE**

ARMOR	**ARMOR VALUE**

SHIELD	**%**	**DAMAGE**	**HP**

SKILLS _____

POSSESSIONS _____

MAGIC POINTS _____ / _____

MAGIC _____

FOLLOWER FIVE

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ SIZ _____ POW _____ CHA _____

CON _____ INT _____ DEX _____ MOV _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	**%**	**DAMAGE**

ARMOR	**ARMOR VALUE**

SHIELD	**%**	**DAMAGE**	**HP**

SKILLS _____

POSSESSIONS _____

MAGIC POINTS _____ / _____

MAGIC _____

FOLLOWER SIX

NAME _____

DESCRIPTION _____

STR _____ SIZ _____ POW _____ CHA _____

CON _____ INT _____ DEX _____ MOV _____

HIT POINTS _____ **DEAD** 00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64

DAMAGE MODIFIER _____

WEAPON	**%**	**DAMAGE**

ARMOR	**ARMOR VALUE**

SHIELD	**%**	**DAMAGE**	**HP**

SKILLS _____

POSSESSIONS _____

MAGIC POINTS _____ / _____

MAGIC _____

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BETWEEN ADVENTURES

One of the pleasures of roleplaying is participating in the growth and development of heroes as the game progresses.

Passions can only improve through experience. Skills increase not only through experience, but also through training and research. Even characteristics can be improved by training and research.

Experience rolls are usually made during the quarterly religious festivals. These events are a time of self-contemplation, communion, and spiritual growth. See **Religious Festivals** on page 174 for details.

Skills and passions can increase above 100% through improvement.

EXPERIENCE

Any ability (such as a skill or passion) that can be improved by experience or training is marked on the hero sheet in the small checkbox next to the ability. The gamemaster may instruct a player to make a check when their hero succeeds in using the ability under stressful conditions. This means that the hero has successfully used that ability during a crisis and may, at a future time, learn from the experience.

An ability cannot be increased by experience if there is no checkbox next to it.

Experience checks are not automatic whenever a success is achieved; the use of the ability must involve a real risk or challenge or result in roleplaying opportunities. Determining when an experience check is warranted is an important responsibility for the gamemaster.

Regardless of how many times it is used successfully in an adventure, an ability's experience box is only checked once during that adventure. Heroes determine if they have learned from their experience when the gamemaster calls for experience rolls during each religious festival.

Making an Experience Roll

Players make experience rolls for each check on their hero sheets during one of the quarterly religious festivals. Only one check per skill is allowed, no matter how many times it is used successfully. The gamemaster may allow experience rolls after an adventure if more than one adventure occurs between festivals.

To make an experience roll, a player rolls D100 for each ability check and then adds the appropriate skills category modifier for that ability to the roll. Passions do not receive a bonus to the roll.

If the roll, as modified by the appropriate skills category modifier, is higher than the hero's current skill ability, the hero improves their rating in that skill. A modified roll of 100 or more is always a success. As a result, heroes can improve most abilities beyond 100%.

After making a successful experience roll, the player can add +1D6 percentiles to an ability. The result of experience varies; a hero may learn much from one incident and little from another, no matter how successful they were at that time.

If the player does not feel lucky, they can choose to add +3% to the ability without making the 1D6 increase roll. The player must choose to do this before attempting the ability increase roll.

Repeat this procedure for all the remaining experience checks, and then erase all checks on the hero sheet, leaving them blank for future adventures and a chance of improvement during the subsequent adventures.

EXAMPLE: *The gamemaster announces that the heroes will have time to check for experience before the next session begins. Þrymur looks at the abilities he still has checked and begins to make experience rolls. He successfully used Dodge in the adventure, so he rolls against that. The current value is 32%, and his Agility skills category modifier is 0%. He must roll above a 32, with no modifier to his roll. With a result of 87, Þrymur has learned from his successful practice with the skill. His player rolls 1D6 and gets a result of 2. Þrymur's new Dodge skill rating is 34%. He updates his hero sheet and erases the experience check. Now he can move on to his other experience checks.*

Exceeding 100% in an Ability

If a hero is 100% or better in a skill or passion, the player must roll 100 or more on a D100 to succeed at an experience roll. (Remember that the hero's skills category modifier can boost the D100 result to over 100.) This rule applies at any time, no matter how much over 100% the skill has risen. A result of 100 or higher is always successful.

If a hero has a negative skills category modifier, they cannot improve much beyond 100% in any of the skills within that category without extraordinary effort, though a result of 100 always merits improvement.

EXAMPLE: *Gunnar has increased his Track skill to 102% and has used it successfully in a recent exploit. It is impossible to make an unmodified roll of 102 or higher, but any roll of 100 or higher counts as a success. Gunnar's Perception skills category modifier is +10%, meaning he must roll a 90 or higher (before the skills category modifier) to improve through experience. Fortune is with him today: he rolls a 98, adds his Perception skills category modifier, and gets a total of 108. Rather than rolling 1D6 and risking a result of one or two, Gunnar's player decides to forego rolling and take the +3% bonus, bringing his Track skill to 105%.*

Experience Between Adventures

Heroes can also gain experience while they are at home performing routine tasks, as these activities are often similar to what they would be doing during an adventure.

At the time of each religious festival, a hero may perform an experience check on up to three homeland skills (see page 36). These experience checks are resolved at the same time as regular experience checks. If a skill has already had an experience check since the last religious festival, it cannot receive an additional check through this method. If less than three homeland skills are available for experience checks, these additional homeland skill checks are lost.

If a hero has been away adventuring for more than half of the time between two festivals (gamemaster discretion), they receive no homeland experience at the next religious festival.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll is ready to improve more than the skills he's successfully used while adventuring. During the between-adventures religious festival, the gamemaster tells the players that they can pick three skills for experience checks. Because Njáll has been near home for more than enough days, his player looks at his homeland skills and picks the following: Area Lore (Iceland), Craft (carpentry), and Ride. Njáll's player can make experience rolls for each of these skills as if Njáll had used them successfully during the course of an adventure.*

Training

Although experience is often the best teacher, it is not the only one. Instruction from a skill expert can increase a hero's ability with it. A hero can train a skill by getting instruction from someone with a higher percentage in it than the hero. The instructor is usually a nonplayer character.

To improve a skill through training, a hero must practice with an instructor for an entire, uninterrupted period between religious festivals.

At the time of each religious festival, the player rolls 1D6–1 and adds the result to the ability. Alternatively, the player can choose to add +2% to the ability, but the decision must be made before the ability increase roll is made. No experience roll is needed; completion of training always allows an ability increase roll.

However, any ability at or above 75% listed on the hero sheet with an experience check box cannot be trained—it must be improved through experience.

EXAMPLE: *Ísgerður decides that she would like to improve her **Seiður** Magic through study and training. She finds an instructor and spends a season engrossed in training. At the next religious festival, she rolls a 6 (lucky!) and subtracts 1 from it, for a total of +5% to her **Seiður** Magic. She updates her hero sheet accordingly.*

Paying for Training

An instructor must normally be paid in some fashion, or they will not teach. Payment can be in ells of *vaðmál*, silver, goods, or favors from the hero or their patrons. The cost of training depends on the current value of the skill to be trained and the type of skill.

As a student's skill improves, they require more attention from their teacher, so the cost of training increases.

Training Cost in Ells of *Vaðmál*

Current Skill	Common	Rare
1–25%	60	120
26–50%	80	160
51–75%	100	200
76–100%	–	–

The Teacher-Student Relationship

Training is transactional in Iceland, and the relationship between the teacher and student is not formal. Training takes place as time allows when the teacher is not busy with their responsibilities on the family farm.

Sometimes, a teacher may accept service for payment, such as the student joining the teacher's household as a temporary family guest who is expected to do as much work on the farm as the other members of the family. If desired, the student may take a Loyalty (teacher) passion, starting at 60%.

Research

Any skill that can be increased through training can also be increased through research. Research is self-instruction and includes such activities as reading imported tomes, Going Under the Cloak, wandering the countryside observing, practicing combat skills, etc.

A hero can research only one skill at a time. At the time of the next religious festival, the player must make an experience roll just as if the hero were learning from experience. If the roll succeeds, the player rolls 1D6–2 and adds the result to the skill rating.

Alternatively, the player can instead choose to add +1% to the skill, but the decision must be made before the increase roll is made.

EXAMPLE: *Birna spends the time between religious festivals engrossed in the study of the bow by observing others practicing and through her own intense practice. At the time of the next religious festival, Birna can see if she has learned from her research. She succeeds in her experience roll by adding her Manipulation skills category modifier to the roll.*

For the actual improvement, she rolls 1D6–2, but unfortunately, she rolls a 1, modified to a –1. The gamemaster tells her that her self-guided studies were counterproductive, and she lost some of the aptitude she already had with the skill. Birna's player updates her hero sheet with the lowered skill rating.

As with training, an ability at or above 75% listed on the hero sheet with an experience check box cannot be researched—it must be improved through experience.

Increasing Characteristics

Heroes may increase their characteristics, which enhances their skills category modifiers or other characteristic bonuses and attributes, thus making survival more likely.

POW cannot be increased because it is deeply linked to a hero's *Wyrd. Wyrd is the ability to influence one's own fate.* Fate can be used, but never increased.

INT and SIZ cannot be increased through non-magical means.

Other characteristics such as CHA can be improved through training or other means.

No characteristic may be increased for any reason (except through magic) beyond the maximum amount rollable on the

characteristic die (a D6) plus the number of dice rolled. This is an 18 for humans, as most characteristics are rolled with 3D6. A 2D6+6 counts as three dice for SIZ and INT, and three dice for the rest. Thus, normal people may not normally have any characteristics higher than 21.

These rules discuss human characters only, while future releases in the *Age of Vikings* line will include rules for non-human heroes.

STR, CON, DEX, and CHA Increase

STR, CON, DEX, and CHA can be increased through training or research with gamemaster approval. The methods of increasing each characteristic vary, from physical training or conditioning (STR, CON, DEX) to focus on becoming more appealing to others (CHA). DEX is limited to the hero's starting DEX×1.5, or the human maximum, whichever is lower.

Regardless of whether by training or research, each attempt takes the entirety of the time between religious festivals, during which no other training, research, or adventuring can take place.

If done by training, the player rolls 1D3–1 and adds the result to the characteristic.

If done by research, the player must first roll to determine if the research is successful by adding together the maximum characteristic that can be rolled (usually 18) plus the minimum rollable characteristic value (either 3 for 3D6 or 2D6+6 characteristics). For normal humans, this value is always 21.

Next, subtract the hero's current value for the characteristic being trained from that sum. Multiply the remainder by five. Attempt to roll that number, or less, on a D100.

If successful, the player may then add 1D3–1 to the characteristic.

EXAMPLE: *Sigmundur wishes to increase his DEX through training and research. Sigmundur's DEX is 13, which is subtracted from the total of 21, giving him a result of 8. This is multiplied by five, for a chance of 40% to increase his DEX after a season of training.*

For humans, a characteristic cannot be increased beyond 21, however, and any points in excess are lost.

When a characteristic is increased, all abilities and skills category modifiers derived from that characteristic are also increased.

CHA Increase and Decrease

CHA can be increased through training and research. However, at the gamemaster's discretion, the following events can also increase (or decrease) CHA:

- Possession of *dreki* or *knörr* ships raises CHA by +1. Just one point is gained here. It does not matter if the hero has one or three ships.
- Becoming a *goði* or a temple priest during play or between adventures increases a hero's CHA by +1.
- Successful leadership of a military expedition (such as a raid) or of a community in a crisis can increase a hero's CHA by +1. Unsuccessful leadership can cause the hero to lose CHA. Disastrous leadership can force the leader to make a CHA×1 roll or lose –1D3 points of CHA.

VICTORY SACRIFICE

Victory Sacrifice is Iceland's most important religious festival. It is celebrated on the first day of summer and thus on the first day of the year in the Icelandic calendar. Each goði in the country holds a ceremony on this day for their followers. All in attendance eat the meat of sacrificed animals, and omens are read for the new year. The sacrifices are dedicated to the fertility gods Freyr and Freyja, wishing for victory in the coming raiding season and a prosperous new year.

Victory Sacrifice is formalized into these steps, which should be handled in the order below, described on the following pages:

1. **Worship**
2. **Resolve Farm Circumstances**
3. ***Vaðmál* Production**
4. **Check for Aging**
5. **Make Family Rolls**
6. **Read the Omens**

1. Worship

Heroes may attempt to earn dedication points by attending religious ceremonies during Victory Sacrifice. One Worship (deity) roll may be attempted per Devotion. A success replenishes 1 dedication point, while a special success replenishes 2 points, and a critical success replenishes 3 points. Points over the maximum number for that deity are discarded.

EXAMPLE: *Njáll's Worship skills for each of his Devotions are Worship (Freyr) 76%, Worship (Njörður) 20%, and Worship (Heimdallur) 10%. Njáll's player rolls, respectively: 15, 11 and 60. As a result, Njáll earns 2 dedication points with Freyr and one with Njörður, but none with Heimdallur.*

2. Farm Circumstances

All Icelanders are farmers and all depend on their farms' circumstances for their survival.

Many diverse factors influence a farm's circumstances, including the previous year's omens and the effects of seasonal events that occurred the previous year. These modifiers are cumulative.

Apply Previous Year's Omens

Apply the omens from the previous Victory Sacrifice. If this is the first Victory Sacrifice in the campaign, the gamemaster should choose or randomly determine the omens by using the **Omens** table.

Omens

D100	Omen	Farm Circumstance Modifier
1–10	Cursed	–30% to Farm Circumstance roll
11–30	Ill-favored	–15% to Farm Circumstance roll
31–70	Normal	No Modifier
71–90	Good	+15% to Farm Circumstance roll
91–00	Blessed	+30% to Farm Circumstance roll

Previous Circumstances

The circumstances of the farm a year ago affect the current circumstances. The following modifiers are applied to the Farm Circumstances results:

Previous Circumstances Modifier

Previous Circumstances	Farm Circumstance Modifier
Famine	–10% to Farm Circumstance roll
Bad or Good	No Modifier
Excellent	+10% to Farm Circumstance roll
Superlative	+15% to Farm Circumstance roll

Skyr Production

Milk cows are kept to provide dairy products, especially *skyr*. This thick type of yogurt is produced in the summer and stored in barrels for consumption during the winter.

One cow can produce enough milk for three people, which is consumed in the summer and turned into *skyr* for the winter. If there are children on the farm below the age of 10, count every two children as equal to one person for the purpose of calculating milk and *skyr* consumption.

For each person living on the farm above the number that can be supported by the farm's cows, apply a cumulative –5% penalty to the Farm Circumstances roll:

Skyr Production Modifier

Excess People	Farm Circumstances Modifier
1	–5% to Farm Circumstance roll
2	–10% to Farm Circumstance roll
3	–15% to Farm Circumstance roll
4	–20% to Farm Circumstance roll
Each +1	–5% to Farm Circumstance roll

Driftwood

Coastal farms get a significant economic benefit from trading driftwood that washes up on its shores. To best utilize this resource, it is important to check for driftwood at least once a day. Collect any that can be found to avoid them being reclaimed by the high tide or stolen.

If a hero's farm is located on the coast, roll 2D6 and apply the driftwoood modifier (below) to the Farm Circumstances roll:

Driftwood Modifier

2D6	Farm Circumstances Modifier
2	–
3	+5%
4-10	+10%
11	+15%
12	+20%

Fishing

Similar to coastal farms benefiting from driftwood, farms located near rivers get a significant benefit from fishing.

If a hero's farm is located near a fishing river, roll 2D6 and apply the modifier from the **Fishing Modifier** table (below) to the Farm Circumstances roll:

Fishing Modifier

2D6	Farm Circumstances Modifier
2	–
3	+5%
4–10	+10%
11	+15%
12	+20%

Farm Roll

A hero's knowledge of how to successfully run a farm has an impact on its circumstances. This includes the keeping of animals, cultivation of any crops, and the best possible utilization of the land's resources, such as rivers and sea fishing grounds. The following modifiers are applied to the Farm Circumstances results:

Farm Roll Modifier

Farm Roll	Farm Circumstances Modifier
Critical	+25% to Farm Circumstance roll
Special Success	+10% to Farm Circumstance roll
Success	No modifier
Failure	–10% to Farm Circumstance roll
Fumble	–25% to Farm Circumstance roll

Determine Farm Circumstance Results

Results of the year's Farm Circumstances should be rolled for each farm. Roll a D100 and then apply all the modifiers to the Circumstance result.

Those who can keep a successful farm are highly respected, and this is reflected in the hero's Status score. Whenever the farmer does well, their Status increases; conversely, if the farmer does poorly, their Status decreases.

The change in the number of animals on the farm reflects the natural growth of the cattle and sheep herds during the year. This also accounts for the slaughter of the animals throughout the same period.

Farm Circumstance Results

D100	Circumstances	Status Change	Animals
1–10	Famine	–3 Status	–1 cow, –3 sheep
11–40	Bad	–2 Status	–2 sheep
41–60	Good	+1 Status	+3 sheep
61–95	Excellent	+2 Status	+1 cow, +4 sheep
96–00	Superlative	+3 Status	+2 cows, +5 sheep

EXAMPLE: *This is the third Victory Sacrifice in the campaign, so the gamemaster uses the Omen determined during the last Victory Sacrifice. In this case, it was Ill-favored, with a –15% modifier to the Farm Circumstances roll.*

The previous year, the Farm Circumstances were excellent, so the Farm Circumstances roll is modified by +10%.

Njáll's farm is home to five people: himself, his spouse, and three servants. He has no children yet. The farm has three cows and produces enough milk to support nine people. As there is no shortage of milk, there is no negative modifier to the Farm Circumstances roll due to inadequate skyr production.

His farm is not on the coast, so Njáll gets no driftwood bonus to the Farm Circumstances roll. The farm is located close to a fishing river, however, so Njáll's player rolls on the **Fishing Modifier** *table and gets a modifier of +10% to the Farm Circumstances roll.*

Njáll is not particularly knowledgeable about how to run a farm efficiently. His Farm is only 35%. Luckily, Njáll's player rolls 05, a special success! This means a +10% modifier to the Farm Circumstances roll.

The overall modifiers total +15%. Njálls's player rolls on the **Farm Circumstance Result** *table. The result is a 59, modified to 74. This yields a result of "excellent" circumstances, meaning that Njáll's farm added one cow and four sheep to the herd this past year.*

The prosperous circumstances of Njáll's farm raise his profile in the local community, giving him +2 Status.

3. *Vaðmál* Production

Every farm aims to be self-sufficient, not only in food production, but also in the production of wool.

New clothes for everyone living on the farm may only be needed every few years, but new wool is still needed to patch and repair their existing woolen clothes, cloaks, etc. This means a household requirement of wool is equivalent to two ells of *vaðmál* per year per person. This includes the hero, their spouse, children, servants, etc.

Ambitious individuals invest in the production of surplus wool that can be turned into ells of *vaðmál*, the standard unit of trade in the country.

Each sheep produces enough wool per year to make one ell of *vaðmál*. From the total production number, subtract two ells of *vaðmál* per person living on the farm. Whatever is left afterward is surplus *vaðmál* that the hero can use as currency for trade.

EXAMPLE: *There are a total of five people living at Njáll's farm. A production of wool equivalent to ten units of vaðmál is necessary to keep everyone properly clothed. Njáll's flock of sheep grew last year to ten, so the farm can produce just enough wool to keep everyone clothed. There is no loss of Status, but no gain in surplus vaðmál either.*

Failure to produce enough *vaðmál* to keep those living on the farm properly clothed is shameful, resulting in –1 Status loss. If a hero happens to have enough surplus *vaðmál* saved to cover the shortfall, they can use that to avoid the Status loss.

4. Aging

Icelanders count their age by how many winters they have survived. Increase all heroes' ages by one winter (one year), regardless of their actual birth date.

With age comes wisdom and experience, but also a decline in physical abilities. After a hero has reached 40 winters, roll 2D6 on the following table each summer:

Aging

2D6	Characteristics Affected
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	1
6–8	0
9	1
10	2
11	3
12	4

After determining the number of characteristics affected, roll 1D10 on the **Characteristic Point Loss** table for each potential loss.

Characteristic Point Loss

1D10	Characteristics Reduced
1–2	–1 SIZ
3–4	–1 DEX
5–6	–1 STR
7–8	–1 CON
9–10	No Loss

If a characteristic is lowered to 0, the hero dies. SIZ, however, is limited to 8 for humans. This represents general withering, weight loss, and loss of muscle mass. Further rolls indicating SIZ loss are rerolled.

Aging eventually takes every mortal hero out of play.

5. Family Rolls

A hero's family is a potent resource. They may provide the hero with skills that supplement their own. They might serve as bodyguards, agents, administrators, supplemental laborers, healers, or anything else the player and the gamemaster agree to.

Having a spouse and children is a goal for most (but certainly not all) Icelanders. A spouse brings a potential alliance with another family group, as well as love, companionship, and children.

If your hero is unmarried and wishes to remain so this year, skip the marriage and childbirth portions of this step.

Marriage

When a player wishes their hero to marry, the gamemaster rules whether this honor is possible for the hero at this point in the campaign.

A marriage should require some roleplaying to find a spouse. Finding one requires a success in either a CHA×5 roll or a Customs (Norse) skill roll. Alternatively, a hero may try to court an eligible nonplayer character already introduced in the campaign, handled as a discussion with the gamemaster between adventures or during play.

Spouses do not require extra payment to maintain.

Children

Heroes may choose to make a D100 roll on the **Childbirth** table once per year, regardless of their marital status. This should be done for themselves, a spouse, a lover, or simply someone they have encountered during play within the previous year.

If the gamemaster allows it, a hero may be granted up to one annual childbirth roll for themselves or a partner if there was sufficient opportunity during play to allow for conception.

Childbirth

D100	Childbirth
1–45	No children
46–49	Child dies at birth
50–95	Child born*
96–00	Twins born*

* Roll 1D6 for each child born; odd = female, even = male.

After checking for new children, roll a D100 for each child a hero has (if any) under 12 years of age and consult the **Child Survival** table. This table should be ignored if the subject is too controversial for the group. Children who live to age 12 are assumed to survive to adulthood.

Child Survival

D100	Consequence
1–45	Child dies
46–49	Child ill, but lives
50–95	Child lives
96–00	Child lives, but may be a hidden folk changeling

Family Events

Determine whether any important or interesting events happened in a hero's immediate family. Reroll results that are ridiculous or make no sense (such as someone marrying again after being declared dead).

Family Events

D100	Consequence
1–10	Death*
11–40	Marriage*
41–60	Birth*
61–75	Blessing**
76–90	No Event
91–00	Scandal***

* Roll on the **Family Member** table to determine who.
** Roll on the **Blessing** table to determine the type.
*** Roll on the **Scandal** table to determine the event.

Blessing

D100	Blessing
1–15	Befriended one of the hidden people.
16–20	Acquired a famous named weapon.
21–40	Found treasure.
41–45	Received a gift from the hidden people.
46–50	Returned from raiding season with valuable booty.
51–65	Captured an outlaw and claimed bounty.
66–80	Mediated a dispute and received wealth and acclaim.
81–90	Learned how to use rune magic.
91–00	Received prophetic dreams.

Family Member

D100	Blessing
1–15	Father
16–30	Mother
31–45	Brother
46–60	Sister
61–65	Paternal Uncle
66–70	Maternal Uncle
71–75	Paternal Aunt
76–80	Maternal Aunt
81–95	Cousin
96–00	Grandparent

Scandal

D100	Scandal
1–5	Insulted a *goði*.
6–10	Accused of erecting a scorn pole (see pages 199–200).
11–15	Insulted important person in nearby family group; compensation demanded.
16–25	Adultery accusations.
26–35	Livestock (or other property) theft accusation.
36–50	Killed someone, compensation demanded by victim's kin.
51–62	Graverobbing accusations.
63–65	Rumors of conversion to Christianity.
66–75	Badly in debt.
76–80	Murder rumored.
81–94	Messy love affair.
95	Accusations of Loki worship.
96	Accusations of Hel worship.
97–00	Roll again, but this time there is evidence that the event is true (though that evidence itself may not be real).

6. Omens for Next Year

Finally, the gamemaster should announce the omens for the next year. The gamemaster can pick the omens (especially if there are some events the gamemaster wants to foreshadow for future game sessions) or roll on the **Omens** table on page 284.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ADVENTURE– THE *ALÞING*

As described in **The Assemblies** (pages 158–160) and ***Alþing*** (page 159), there are occasions during the year when the entire community, either in part or as a whole, meets to discuss their problems, settle conflicts, trade, and generally come together as fellow citizens.

The gamemaster can potentially use this scenario several times during the campaign, changing the details as needed to get heroes involved in the legal proceedings of their families and communities. This adventure includes a supernatural event to stir things up and allow the heroes to prove their mettle, abilities, or wits to solve problems.

The National Assembly (*Alþing*) is a useful event as an opening for a campaign or as the stage to resolve open plot threads. It also provides new players opportunities to learn about many aspects of Icelandic society and serves as a springboard to introduce game systems and procedures.

INTRODUCTION

The National Assembly, the *Alþing*, is a regular community assembly attended by *goðar*, their families and followers, and anyone else interested. The primary function of the *Alþing* is to provide a time and place to resolve legal disputes, but it is much more than that. Though attendance at the *Alþing* is not required, most citizens do, and it is an odd person who refuses to attend when the opportunity arises. Heroes should attend several *Alþing* during the campaign, using this scenario any number of times.

There are many reasons to go to the *Alþing*, but its most important purpose is to settle legal conflicts with the backing of the law and the pressure from one's peers to adhere to the verdict. Three sample cases are provided in this scenario. The heroes should become involved in one or more of these cases during play. Establish the relationships, if any, between the litigants and the heroes. Several outcomes for these cases are provided, dependent on how the heroes help resolve them. If the heroes break any laws during the campaign or created enemies among other families, the National Assembly is where the legal consequences of their actions might come back to haunt them. If the gamemaster deems it necessary, the names of the case participants or any details can be changed to better suit the campaign.

Other occurrences abound, as described in the **First Days** section (following). The gamemaster should feel free to intersperse these events before, during, and perhaps even after the Assembly ends. Additionally, a few supernatural events are described in **Magic and Faith**, page 294. These incursions of the fantastic and mythic world can enliven what might be an otherwise ordinary social gathering. The gamemaster is encouraged to use one of these, but not all, in a single session to emphasize the magical elements present in Iceland.

Violence is discouraged during an *Alþing*, and everyone (including the heroes) either leaves their weapons in their homes, ships, or temporary quarters, or straps them into their scabbards, sheaths, etc., to indicate that they will not be used in violence. This prohibition, however, has rarely stopped those with quick tempers, bellies full of strong drink, or those who feel they have been wronged. If the *Alþing* and its attendees are in danger, the heroes are expected to act decisively, which might mean bringing swords and spears to bear.

The *Alþing* is discussed in greater detail on pages 159, and the specifics of Icelandic law are addressed on pages 157–165. The gamemaster should review that material before presenting this adventure. Icelandic law bears distinct differences from modern law.

Each significant nonplayer character is given a suggested writeup if their statistics are required. The gamemaster is encouraged to customize these as desired.

FIRST DAYS

It is the first two weeks of Midsummer, when the days are the longest, lightest, and mildest of the year. People come from across Iceland by foot, horseback, or even by ship. The attendees usually begin to gather at the traditional location, the Assembly Plain (*Þingvellir*), at the margins of the Axe River, a few days before the *Alþing* formally begins. The heroes can and should roam about, encounter remote relatives, meet other important personalities, and exchange rumors and gossip. This is a good time to meet with merchants and to trade or buy new goods. It is also a good time to seek a likely prospect for a spouse.

A hero's relatives will approach them to renew their acquaintance and kinship. This contact with close kin is usually warm and generous, but personalities often clash nonetheless. Relatives may offer to help in legal actions involving the hero and ask for their help with their own problems.

People who are not relatives but wish to make the acquaintance of a famous hero may also visit, possibly just to hear about the hero's exploits and meet this famous person. If this is the heroes' first adventure, they may be the ones seeking to meet other notable figures in their communities.

Events Before the Assembly Begins

In the days before the event, excitement steadily builds as famous people, the wealthy, Iceland's *goðar*, and their respective households and retainers arrive. The gamemaster can include some or all of the following events as preludes to the official start of the *Alþing* or may intersperse them between the three cases presented in this scenario.

Each event is described in general, with some specific ready-to-use examples.

Socializing

The *Alþing* is the social event of the year, mixing commerce, government, and trade all at once. The heroes might be eager to meet their peers, distant relatives, renowned figures, or even rivals. The gamemaster should consider the heroes' backgrounds and select potential figures that might be encountered at the *Alþing*.

- The gamemaster might use this opportunity to introduce figures who will play a role in future adventures, using the writeups of sample nonplayer characters from the **Bestiary** (pages 252–259) when necessary.
- If they are not already in use, the pre-generated heroes on pages 45–57 might also make good "off the shelf" local heroes or figures of renown. Perhaps as rivals or potential allies?
- Sometimes, social encounters can go bad. Heroes may inadvertently cause offense—even if they haven't actually done anything—with a drunken warrior (page 259) spoiling for a fight. It could be the instigator is just an unruly drunk, or they might be driven by some unfathomable reason to spill blood. Whatever the case, the hero may become the subject of their ire. What will they do?

Trading

Merchants and peddlers arrive to conduct trade and barter with one another, sometimes offering goods from outside Iceland, spoils from Viking raids, or even more exotic items. Generally, most goods, weapons, and armor described in the **Trade Goods** table (page 147) can be purchased here. As nearly everyone attends the *Alþing*, it is a convenient time to deliver items purchased and crafted earlier in the year to their new owners.

- Gautráður, a skilled blacksmith, is on hand to sell his wares and deliver items that have been promised. He bears with him a particular sword, finer than anything the heroes (or anyone else at the *Alþing*) has ever seen, made from meteoric iron. He has named it Járntönn (Irontooth), the hilt is bound with gold wire, and he has inscribed a bind rune onto it (nature to be determined by the gamemaster). News has just reached the *Alþing* that Sturla the Black, the powerful Viking who commissioned it, was unfortunately killed on a raid. None of Sturla's family has the wealth to claim it, so Gautráður offers it to the one he feels is most worthy or who will pay the most. Though such a mighty sword is clearly suited for a hero, and no wealth has been exchanged, Sturla's kin feels the blade is theirs by right. What will an interested party do to earn this blade?
- Fylkir, a trader from Stronghold Fjord (page 219), has arrived before the bulk of his merchandise, a herd of cattle, has been delivered by his brothers. (Use the trader writeup on page 258.) He says he is willing to sell at a bargain price to those who pay him early. Fylkir has a few cows on hand and offers them as a guarantee for the rest, due any day now. Naturally, this is a scam, and Fylkir plans to take any money and run the moment his victims' backs are turned. The heroes may or may not fall for this obvious ploy but might be asked to help someone who was taken in by Fylkir's ruse. What will the heroes do?

Recruiting

Recruiting for Viking raids or protection often occurs at the National Assembly. Heroes who want to take part in such events might try to make a good impression. Those with poor farms or those without family affiliation might seek to make a good impression on a wealthy landowner or *goði* to hopefully become a part of their retinue and earn a steady source of meals and shelter.

- Hjörtur Helgason is planning a Viking trading and/or raiding expedition to the Irish coast. This is a popular destination for Vikings eager to raid Christian monasteries. By Viking standards, the men wear dresses and don't fight back to protect their golden treasures, so they deserve to be raided. This is Hjörtur's first expedition, though. He could use the advice and backing of reputable figures... like the heroes.
- Ingiríður Tanglehair, daughter of the famous hero Katla Reginsdóttir, has inherited her mother's lands and property upon Katla's untimely death on a Viking raid. Ingrid seeks valiant heroes to serve in her household, as her younger brother Svanur is untrustworthy and conspires against her, thinking he should be the rightful inheritor of their mother's estate. Both are present at the *Alþing* and might make a bid to recruit the heroes.

Courting

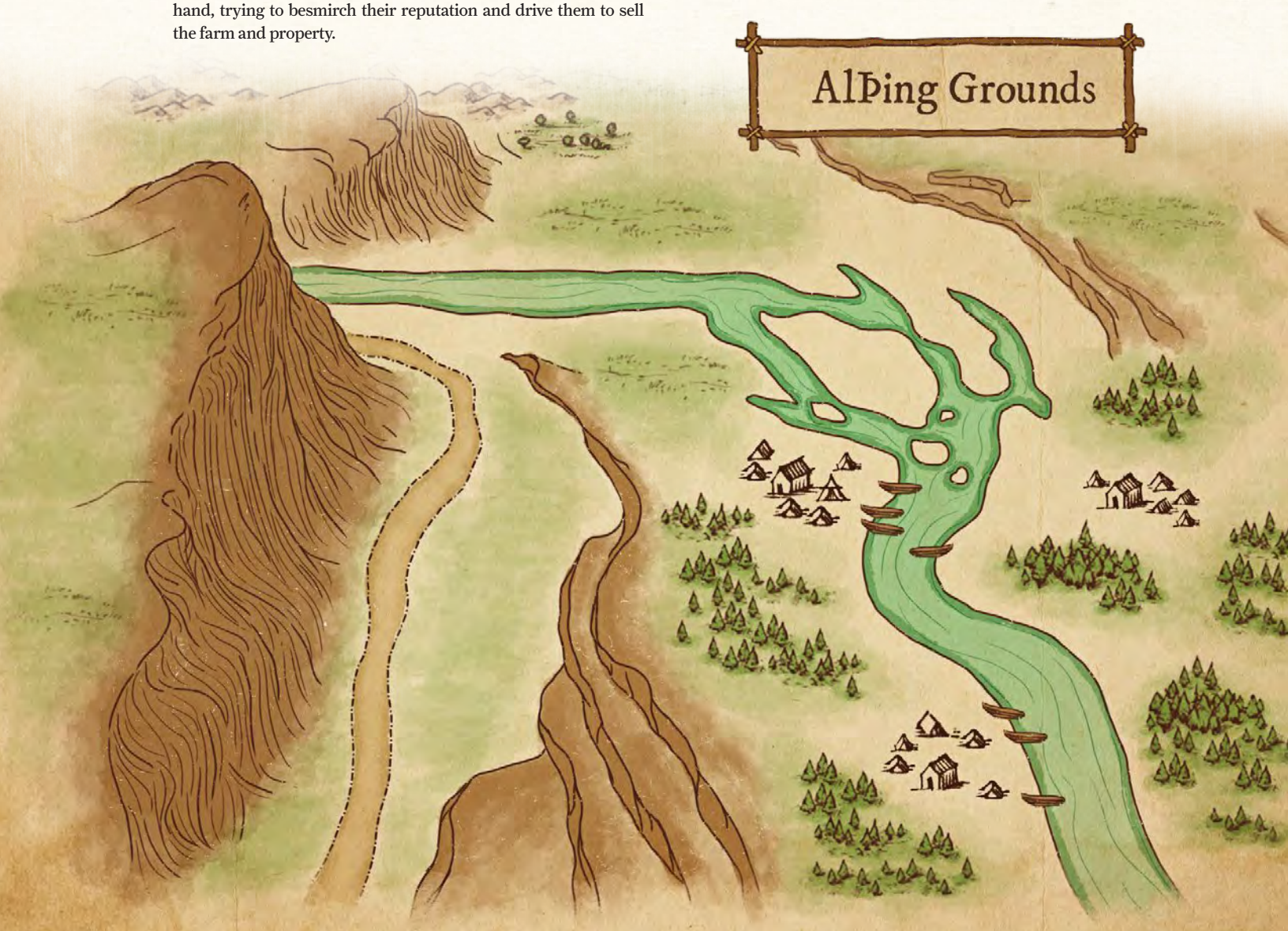
As mentioned previously, it is common at the *Alþing* to use the occasion to seek a spouse, whether for political or financial advancement, simple practicality, or love. For pragmatic marriages, the families of both parties might be involved, actively seeking a suitable partner. Families might aim to cement business relationships with a marriage, or "extra" offspring without inheritances might be encouraged to marry someone with property. See **Marriage** (page 287) for more information.

- Magnús Hrafnsson, a wealthy local landowner, has an offspring (either Leifur or Lofn, as appropriate) he is trying to marry off to a good match. He's of the mind that his child should be able to pick the one they love, but his wife Reginleif insists that they make a good match for their child, one that is politically advantageous and brings additional prestige to the family. Both parents insist on interviewing a suitable hero, both with and without their child present, offering a very generous dowry to the one they pick. Their daughter/son does not wish to make such an arrangement unless there's a spark of real attraction. Will a hero seek to capture the Hrafnson's heart?
- A newly widowed landowner, Máni or Ragna Ormsson/-dóttir, has three children to feed and seeks a new spouse. Their land, though fallen into disrepair, is worth quite a bit and can be easily turned into a lucrative piece of property. They may turn to one of the heroes as a potential new spouse or seek the heroes' assistance in finding a suitor. However, a jealous and spurned suitor is on hand, trying to besmirch their reputation and drive them to sell the farm and property.

Drinking

There are many brewers and sellers of ale onsite and many, many customers. For those without official business at the *Alþing*, drinking is a popular way to pass the time away. The smell of roasted barley fermenting drifts across the Assembly Plain all day and night, and it is common for casual drinking to turn serious. See **Alcohol Effects** and **Drinking Contests** (page 70) for these inevitabilities.

- Yrsa Sveinsdóttir is a legendary drinker and claims to be able to outdrink any man, so much so that when Yrsa drinks, wagers are made. She has SIZ 15 and CON 18, her healing rate is 3, and due to a lifetime of practice, she can reduce the effects of drunkenness by one level (lightheaded is treated as sober, inebriated as lightheaded, etc.). One of the heroes (pick which) is shoved up to the table before her, and a drinking horn is thrust into their hand. How do they fare?
- A brother and sister, Arnór and Hafdís, from Lake Valley, in the North, use the drinking competitions as a chance to steal. They are both escaped thralls (page 258). Their normal course of action is to target anyone who looks like they have a bit of wealth and looks likely to be plied with drink. One of them will befriend their target and get them sufficiently drunk (or more drunk) to make theft easy, either directly from their person or from their temporary quarters. If caught, they sprint away. To pursue, use the **Chase** rules (pages 70–71).



Contests

Whenever people gather for festivals, there are inevitably opportunities to test one's mettle in feats of arms. Use the writeup of the warrior (page 259) for a sample opponent, adjusting the relevant skill by +40% for a truly amazing foe, +20% for a superior foe, and unmodified for an average challenger.

- Makeshift targets for throwing axes, bows, and spears have been set up, giving heroes the chance to test their skills with these weapons. Use the sample writeups for foes, as modified above, and determine any wagers—typically small stakes.
- There's always a chance to grapple and wrestle with a worthy opponent when drink flows freely. Use the sample warrior and add a 50% grapple skill (modified as above, as desired). Treat this like a *hólmganga* duel (page 158), though with a less formal arrangement and requiring three falls, not blood, as the condition for a win.
- Feats of strength are also effective ways to impress people, and there is no shortage of brave warriors and stout local heroes wanting to prove their mettle with wrestling matches or even a few variants of arm-wrestling. Determine the relevant STR with 2D6+6 for a STR vs. STR resistant roll and a Grapple skill of 50+2D10%.

Magic and Faith

Iceland is a deeply magical place, with ancient and powerful forces at play.

- A woman named Sædís is selling charms and small sticks with simple rune scripts (see pages 187–189). Though there has been no trickery, something about Sædis seems a bit off. She is, in fact, one of the hidden people (see pages 245–248) and has taken some care to disguise herself. She is equivalent to the hidden person described on pages 259–260 but with some basic rune spells.
- Brother Colum, an Irish priest, is on hand. Though he has no social standing in Ireland, he has befriended the Lawspeaker and thus is relatively safe from harm. Colum is happy to fill the ear of any who will listen to him extol the virtues of his faith and seeks converts.

Opening Ritual

The *Alþing* begins with a solemn invocation to Týr and the sacrifice of a red ox. A blessing and an augury are made, as described on page 174.

The current Lawspeaker, Þorkell Þorsteinsson, then recites one-third of the community's laws. He does this from memory because most Icelanders are illiterate. These laws are derived from tradition and can only be changed by the council of *goði,* and only rarely will they do so. All cases heard at the *Alþing* are measured against these laws, described on pages 161–162.

Once the oral recitation of the laws is completed, the Lawspeaker declares that the Law Rock is open to the presentation of cases.

Presentation of Cases

Any cases that were not settled during the Spring Assemblies are presented by the plaintiffs at the National Assembly. Most of these cases concern mundane matters: cows being in the wrong pasture, non-delivery of goods, divorces, allegations of witchcraft, and the like. A few cases involve serious matters that test the laws of tradition.

Support for Legal Cases

When seeking legal assistance, a citizen first seeks the support of their closest kin. Most of the time, people support their kin, right or wrong. However, cousins and in-laws frequently ask nosy questions, trying to determine their chances of being on the winning or losing side. If a family member comes asking for help, the hero must do his best to aid them. However, if the family member has done something that is unmistakably illegal, like manslaughter, the family might not be willing to pay weregeld (page 158) and let the murderer be outlawed. If the wrongdoer is not close kin or is a known troublemaker, the hero may decline to give aid, knowing that if the case is lost, the hero will be responsible for paying part of the weregeld. Always determine the exact degree of kinship between the heroes and those asking for their aid.

As described in **Who Prosecutes and Who Defends** (page 163), it is not necessary to be someone's kin to support their case. Frequently, a family seeks the assistance of a powerful chieftain, *goði*, someone skilled with law, or up-and-coming heroes like the player characters. Usually, this comes with an offer of payment of goods, services, or an unspecified favor to be redeemed later. If desired, the three sample representatives from page 163 may be used for legal support, renamed if necessary.

Jury

For this National Assembly, due to the number of cases they must review, the council of *goðar* decides that they need to enlist help to delegate some cases. They choose a jury of three to nine jurors who are to listen to cases to ensure they are argued according to the law. This jury does not judge innocence or guilt. If the heroes aren't involved directly with either side of the case, one or more of them may be pulled into the jury. There is no payment for such a duty—it's considered one's social responsibility to take part in legal matters affecting the community.

Case Resolution

Each case should be reviewed, and the Law Council determines whether it should be resolved in full using the system on pages 162–165 or a quicker resolution. There are three other ways to resolve a case: through a Law or Oratory debate (and a negotiated compensation) or a formal duel such as described on page 158, or even a desperate provoked melee (following).

Lawspeaking

During the *Alþing*, the Law Council—made up of all *goðar* in attendance—meets to debate whether current laws need to be changed or if new ones need to be made. The National Assembly is also used to determine actions regarding foreign matters. New heroes, such as the player characters, are unlikely to be a part of such deliberations. However, if a hero gets involved in a case and is known for their Law skill, then they may act as an advisor and use their skill.

Settlements

A peaceful settlement will result in a payment of goods, silver, and animals equal to the total *vaðmál* decided by custom and the arbitrators for the case.

Peaceful settlements can be refused by the aggrieved party, which usually begins a blood feud. Peaceful payments can also be ignored by the payer, in which case the payee's family has the responsibility of collecting, which can again result in a blood feud.

Hólmganga

If a case may not be settled peacefully, a formal duel may be used to resolve differences of opinion or slighted honor. The plaintiff and defendant or their champion(s) fight as described on pages 158. Most of the spectators at the *Alþing* favor this form of settlement, as there is nothing like a good fight to enliven a dull *Alþing*.

Provoked Melee

A provoked melee at the *Alþing* is highly improper and initiated only in desperation. This is essentially a team fight, one side calling the other out and challenging them with little preparation, giving them no time to flee or seek reinforceements. In such a fight, the antagonists attempt to butcher each other's key personnel, such as chieftains and influential people. There is much bloodshed, and these melees often result in longstanding hatred and blood feuds. They are frowned upon at any gathering, and will earn the challengers points of Reputation based on the conditions (gamemaster's decision about how much).

Sample Cases

Information for each of the following sample cases is divided into four sections: **Charge**, **Evidence**, **Resolution**, and **Settlement**, with an occasional **Relationships** section.

Case One: Murder

Murder is one of the most serious crimes in Icelandic society. Secret murder is the most serious crime. The usual punishment inflicted upon a murderer is payment of weregeld or outlawry.

Charge

The well-known and popular Skafti Þorgeirsson charges Vésteinn of the Highlands with the secret murders of Hrafn Hrollason and a thrall. Vésteinn, a reputed berserker, is not present at the *Alþing*. His brother, Vigfús, contests the charge.

Relationships to the Heroes

In the recent past, Vésteinn sailed with an uncle of one of the heroes and is an acquaintance of another close relative. That relative requests that all their family members support Vésteinn. As the two men see it, Hrafn obviously provoked Vésteinn, and anyone who provokes a berserker deserves the results. Woe to those who refuse a close relative's request.

Skafti is a well-known and popular man to whom one of the heroes is distantly related. They might think seriously about being on the wrong side of Vésteinn, though, no matter how the case is settled.

Evidence

- Skafti Þorgeirsson was a close friend of Hrafn Hrollaugsson, who otherwise had no family or heirs.
- Skafti is supported by his earl and many bondspeople of his district.

- Vésteinn of Uplands is a young and violent man who many think is a berserker. He has no friends and has threatened to kill everyone who speaks against his case. His brother, Vigfús, is young, inexperienced, and impoverished.
- All testimony indicates that Hrafn was last seen in Vésteinn's company, and they were arguing violently over the division of goods from a Viking expedition.

Resolution and Settlement

This case should certainly go against the murderer, who committed one of the worst crimes imaginable to Icelanders. The slim chance that he will not be found guilty may be based on surprise evidence from the brother or a witness. The gamemaster will have to improvise this new evidence.

If convicted, Vésteinn will owe an earl's weregeld of 40 cows plus one thrall-price of five cows, or a total of 45 cows. Young Vigfús would be responsible for paying for this, though it would cost him and Vésteinn their farm. He will refuse to pay, threatening to ignore all court settlements, making a counteroffer to settle the affair by a fair *hólmganga* duel (page 158). He looks inexperienced and ill-armed—something of a pushover (use the writeup of the foreign raid opponent warrior, page 254).

Vigfús will go through with the challenge and preparation, but at the last minute, his older, berserk brother will step up as champion for the fight. Vésteinn is a proper berserker and a dangerous foe (use the writeup of the berserker, page 252). This ruse will not endear Vigfús to anyone, but if Vésteinn wins, he is legally cleared.

Hrafn Hrollasson's champion, if it is not one of the heroes, will be Hrafn's sister, Guðrún Hrollaugsdóttir (use the standard warrior stats from page 259).

Case Two: Divorce Settlement

Charge

Álfdís Ívarsdóttir is a striking, middle-aged woman who claims her husband, Steingestur the Handsome, beat her and turned her out into the winter night in favor of a concubine. She left him and now wants to divorce him.

Evidence

Steingestur the Handsome owns a small farm and has few close family members. Álfdís comes from a good family who is intent upon regaining her dowry, which Steingestur reputedly squandered through bad trading deals. Ívar of the Vale, Álfdís' father, claims Steingestur's whole farm in compensation.

Steingestur claims that Álfdís spent her own dowry, and he should not have to pay for her losses. Furthermore, he claims Álfdís mismanaged his farm so badly that half his cattle are hungry, and she deserves no compensation for her brideprice.

Resolution and Settlement

This case is sticky and full of possibilities for both parties and is a good situation for the players to portray the case judges. Neither Ivar nor Steingestur wants to take this to a *hólmganga* or general melee, but the matter has passed beyond the other means of resolving disputes such as arbitration or direct compensation (see page 158).

If Álfdís wins, her brideprice is about 100 *vaðmál*. She will claim Steingestur's entire farm, though she should only be granted a portion of it under customary situations. The rough total value of the farm is 4,500 ells of *vaðmál*.

If Steingestur wins, no payment is due.

Case Three: Murder in a Pasture

Charge

Otkell Wheelfoot claims that he was attacked and that his brother Ölvir the Fat and two earls were murdered by Ari the Black in a fight over grazing rights to a highland pasture. Otkell demands weregeld for his brother, the return of seventeen milk goats, and clear grazing rights to the pasture.

Evidence

Otkell states that Ari and seven men ambushed him, his brother Ölvir, and two earls in their own pasture. Ari and his men were better armed and surprised his party. Two of Ari's brothers and two of their men were wounded (possibly including one or two of the heroes) by Otkell's arrow shooting in the fight. Ari the Black is a proud and arrogant man, and he is angry that Otkell was not also killed. Ari affirms that the pasture was his own and that he followed all proper procedures after the killing (i.e., traveled about finding witnesses to support him).

Ari the Black comes from a large family, including Killer-Gest, a famous Viking. He always keeps many armed men about him. It would be hard to collect weregeld from Ari.

Otkell is from a small family, but all the menfolk of the area have agreed that Ari has grown too impudent and must not be allowed to continue his greedy land grabbing. They have reportedly enlisted the aid of Garði the Easterner, a wealthy trader searching for a wife. Otkell's sister is just of marrying age and quite comely.

Relationships

Ari's family is large, and the players could be part of his clan. This will give them some serious roleplaying challenges if they are closely related to a greedy land grabber like Ari.

Otkell's family is small, yet Ölvir was a popular man, and gaining the goodwill of Otkel's incipient brother-in-law, Garði, is something to think about. Garði might take those who help him in this matter with him on his next trading mission (potentially the heroes themselves).

Resolution and Settlement

If Ari wins, the wounded men will collect a quarter of the standard legal penalty for murder for their wounds, usually based on the position in society someone holds. Ari's kinsmen are deemed as earls because they are very rich, while the other injured men are considered to be either wealthy freemen or poor earls. Thus, the total that they will collect is 1,000 *vaðmál*.

Since Ari comes from a large family, the winnings will be widely divided. A large family has its weregelds divided into about 20 portions. Thus, a relative of Ari's would receive about 50 *vaðmál*. Non-kin persons who were asked into the case by Ari will receive about half of that amount. Otkell's family has six members (not including Otkell); thus, each would have to pay one-seventh of this value, or 143 *vaðmál* apiece.

If Otkell wins, he should receive full compensation for Ölvir and the two lesser nobles. This comes to 2,400 *vaðmál*. The 17 goats add a further 170 *vaðmál*. Otkell has promised Garði, the eastern trader, a cut as a family member as he will be a brother-in-law soon. Otkell has also enlisted the aid of a famous former Lawspeaker, who earns 500 *vaðmál*, whether he wins or loses. Thus, the Otkell members will each receive roughly 296 *vaðmál* each if there are 6+1 family members (2,400+170-500=2,070, divided by 7 is roughly 296 *vaðmál*

apiece). They will likely enlist the aid of some friends to collect this vast sum from Ari. Non-family heroes are likely candidates and can expect to be rewarded generously for success. A total of 500 *vaðmál* divided amongst them is appropriate.

Ari's twenty-person family must divide the loss among themselves, making an average of 50 *vaðmál* apiece.

Other Events

The following events commonly occur at the *Alþing*. As with the minor events (pages 292–294) the gamemaster should intersperse these with the hearing of cases.

A Religious Ceremony

Some communities used things as opportunities for fertility rituals in which they attempted to help barren women conceive through the intercession of Freyr, Freyja, or other spirits.

Generally, these rituals would happen at night and be closed to the menfolk of the community and to any member of other communities. Sometimes youths in the community try to sneak past the guardians—usually older members of the community—and catch glimpses of the ritual.

Getting Swindled

Swindlers and con artists may attend the *Alþing* as merchants, attempting to divest common folk of their property through confidence games, muggings, and the selling of shoddy merchandise. There's always someone willing to believe in a deal too good to be true, and these unfortunate souls usually fall prey to scams. Using these nefarious methods, unwitting heroes might be divested of excess loot they may have acquired on their prior adventures. This provides excellent roleplaying opportunities as heroes may encounter the same unsavory characters at different assemblies across Iceland.

A Strange Guest

To the Icelanders, the gods are very real, and from time to time, they even walk among humans, disguised as mortals. At a particularly significant *Alþing*, the heroes might meet a wandering old man with one eye speaking cryptic words of prophecy, or a burly red-bearded man looking for his lost hammer (but not wanting to admit it is missing), or a certain mischief-making, shapeshifting god up to no good.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Æsir: The tribe of gods who originally inhabited Ásgarður. As the sky and storm gods, most of them were sons of Óðinn, King of the Gods.

Ætts: Runes are arranged in three sets called *ætts*. Each ætt is associated with a group of the Norse gods.

Álfheimur: The world of the elves.

***Alþing*:** The annual National Assembly of all Icelandic chieftains where the formal processing of disputes takes place. It takes place during the first two weeks of the month of Midsummer, when there is uninterrupted daylight and the mildest weather.

***Ambátt*:** Female thralls or slaves.

Angrboda: The giantess and one of three wives of Loki. She mothered Fenrir, Hel, and Jötunheimur.

Ásgarður: The gods live in a realm called Ásgarður, beyond and above the human world of Miðgarður. Ásgarður was originally inhabited by a tribe of gods known as Æsir. As the sky and storm gods, most of them were sons of Óðinn, King of the Gods.

***Atgeir*:** A hewing spear that is a type of polearm with a blade fitted at the end of a long wooden shaft. It can be used as a thrusting or cutting weapon.

Athelstan: King of the English in 937.

Augaire Mac Ailella: The Irish king of Leinster.

Baldur: Baldur is the god of light, purity, peace, innocence, and forgiveness. Son of Óðinn and Frigg, he is loved by both gods and mortals and is the best of the gods.

Bestla: The daughter of the first ice giant, wife of Búri and mother of Óðinn.

Bifröst: The Rainbow Bridge also known as the Shimmering Path bridge—the link between Miðgarður and Ásgarður.

Bjarmaland: Russia.

Börkur the Stout: Offered bounty for Gísli Sursson's death after Gísli killed his brother, Þorgrímur.

Búri: The first man to emerge from the melting of Ginnungagap and the father of Óðinn.

Constantín Mac Áeda: King of Scotland in 937.

***Dagmál*:** The day meal time (breakfast), 9 a.m.

***Dagsmörk*:** The sun-ring (*sólarbringur*) is divided into "day-marks."

Danegeld: This so-called "Danish Tax" is a tribute tax paid to Viking raiders to spare the land from attack.

Earl Sigtryggur One-Eyed: King of Dublin and grandson of Ivarr the Boneless

***Dönsk Tunga*:** *Dönsk tunga* is the "Danish tongue." In this book, it is referred to as simply "Norse."

***Draugur*:** An animated corpse that emerges from its grave mound, or one that shows restlessness on the road to burial.

Draupnir: Óðinn's magical gold ring from which eight new rings appear every nine nights.

***Dreki*:** A warship built for speed and for its ability to sail semi-independently of the wind and weather. Its shallow draft allows it to be beached, making it ideal for coastal Viking raids.

Dublin: A Viking settlement in Ireland.

Dvegar: Dwarves. Also, the wooden roof supports at the corners (just like the dwarves that hold the sky in place).

Egill: Famous warrior poet and brother of the famous warrior Þórólfur Skallagrímsson.

Eiríkur Bloodaxe: Northumbria's Norse king 953–954. Son of Haraldur Fairhair. Was given five longships by his father and spent four years plundering the British Isles, Lappland, and Bjarmaland (Russia).

***Ell*:** The length from the elbow to the point of the second finger—around 50 cm.

Eyjolfur the Grey: Killed Gísli Sursson to claim Börkur the Stout's bounty.

***Eyrir* (plural - *Aurar*):** The unit of measurement for silver and other metals. It is equivalent to one ounce or 28 grams.

Fenrir: Son of Loki, the wolf destined to slay Oðinn at the time of Ragnarök.

***Feræringur*:** A small boat used for fishing or transport.

***Fjörbaugsgarður*:** A lighter sentence than full outlawry, lesser outlawry (*fjörbaugsgarður*), lasts for only three years and does not involve the confiscation of the guilty party's property. This makes it possible for them to return to society after three years if they manage to survive that long.

***Fjórðungsdómar*:** The four quarter courts which hold trials at the Alþing.

Flóki Vilgerdarson: A Norwegian Viking, Flóki Vilgerdarson, nicknamed Raven-Flóki, was the first Scandinavian who deliberately sailed to Garðar's Island and after living there for a year, he named it Iceland.

Forseti: The god and son of the god Baldur and Nanna, Forseti is the god of justice and mediation. He is the wisest and most eloquent of the gods.

Freyja: Freyja is the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. With long blonde hair and blue eyes, she is the most beautiful goddess in the pantheon. Those seeking happiness in love pray to her. She is also associated with wealth, magic, war, and prophecy.

Freyr: The god of agriculture, the weather, and fertility, Freyr is the son of the sea god Njörður and brother of the goddess Freyja. He decides when the sun shall shine or when the rain will fall.

Frigg: The goddess and wife of Óðinn, patron of marriage and motherhood, and representing female wisdom, Frigg is one of the most important goddesses. She has a reputation for knowing everyone's destiny but refuses to reveal it.

***Frilla* (plural - *Frillur*):** Extramarital partners.

Frjádagur: Friday (Freyja's day).

Fuat's Head ("Cenn Fuait"): a headland on the coast of the Irish kingdom of Leinster.

***Fylgja*:** Spirits known to take the form of animals.

***Galdur*:** A spell or incantation, usually performed in combination with certain rites.

Garðar Svavarsson: The first person to circumnavigate Iceland and determine that it was an island, in 865 AD. He named the land Garðar's Island (Garðarshólmi, after himself).

Ginnungagap: Before the heaven, earth, and the seas were created, the great abyss Ginnungagap (Yawning Abyss) was without form and void.

Gísli Sursson: Outlawed for the killing of his brother-in-law Þorgrímur

***Goði* (plural - *Goðar*):** A Chieftain-priest.

Gungnir: Óðinn›s magical spear which never misses its target.

Gunnbjörn Ulfsson: A famous Viking explorer.

Gunnbjörn's Skerries: A group of islands west of Iceland.

Haakon the Good: Haakon Sigurdsson, Norwegian king 959.

***Hádegi*:** "High day" or noon.

Heimdallur: God of Duty, Protection, Vigilance. He is the guardian of the gods and of the Shimmering Path (Bifröst) bridge—the link between Miðgarður and Ásgarður. He is also the god of singing and music.

Hel: Goddess of Death, Decay, Poison. She is the ruler of Niflheimur, the realm of the dead and daughter of Loki.

Hidden People: Elves who decided to live in Miðgarður after the Great Rift and live much like their human counterparts, but are invisible to humans.

Hlidskjalf: Óðinn's throne, "Gate Bench."

***Hnefatafl*:** A popular Norse board game, now sometimes referred to as Viking chess.

Höður: Höður is the blind god of darkness, killing, and winter, son of the god Óðinn and Frigg.

***Hólmganga*:** Taking part in a duel is commonly referred to as "going to the island" (*hólmganga*), as most duels are fought on small islands, both to prevent cowards from running away and to minimize any outside interference.

Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson: A powerful *goði*.

***Hreppur* (plural - *Hreppar*)** Communal units that are geographically defined associations of landowners and are independent of the goðar.

***Hundruðum*:** 120 ells of vaðmál

Ingólfur Arnarson: The first person to settle in Iceland and grandfather of the current Lawspeaker, Þorkell Þorsteinsson.

***Íslendingasögur*:** "Sagas of Icelanders"—also frequently referred to in English as "Family Sagas."

***Jól*:** Yule: In the darkness of midwinter, three full moons after the full moon that began the winter season, feasts are held to celebrate the fertility of the land and to scare away evil spirits that may be hiding in the shadows of winter.

Jörmungandur: Son of Loki. The great sea serpent that encircles Miðgarður, biting on its own tail. Also known as Miðgarðsormur.

Jorvik: A Viking colony in Britain.

Jötunheimur: The realm of the giants.

***Jötunn*:** Also called giants or frost giants, are mythic creatures with superhuman strength.

Kjölur: The main route crossing the Central Highlands. Also called Keel.

Kjölur: The main route crossing the Central Highlands is called Keel (Kjölur), located between the Long Glacier (Langjökull) and Temple Glacier (Hofsjökull)

***Knörr* (plural - *Knerrir*):** A single-masted, square-sailed merchant ship built for long oceangoing journeys and used on the sailing routes between Iceland and Scandinavia. A knörr is built by fixing overlapping horizontal planks on either side of a strong keel.

***Landvættir*:** Land spirits who protect the portal between Álfheimur and Miðgarður. They stay on the Miðgarður side and do not allow anyone to enter Álfheimur.

Lappland: The northernmost region of Finnmark.

***Laugardagur*:** Saturday (Washing day).

Lögberg: The Law Rock where Lawspeakers must recite a third of the laws of the land each year.

Lögretta: The Law Council which is the legislative body of the Alþing.

Loki: God of Deception, Dishonor, Trickery. One of the most wicked of the gods, he represents the negative forces of chaos, destruction, and the erosion of all that is honorable.

Magni: Þór's son.

***Mánadagur*:** Monday (moon day).

Mark: One mark is equal to eight *eyrir*.

Melkorka: An Irish princess and mother of Óláfur the Peacock, son of the powerful goði Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson.

Miðgarðsormur: Son of Loki. The great sea serpent that encircles Miðgarður, biting on its own tail. Also known as Jörmungandur.

Miðgarður: The realm of mortals and mythic creatures

***Mið-Nætti*:** Midnight.

***Miður-Aptan*:** Mid-evening, 6 p.m.

Mimir: The god known as "The Wise One" who was decapitated by the Vanir. Óðinn kept his head in order to gain wisdom and occult knowledge.

Mjölnir: Þór's hammer, the chief weapon with which he dispatches the giants and enemies of the gods. Mjölnir was created by the dwarves Brokk and Eitri.

Modi: Þór's son.

Morð: Murder—a concealed and unacknowledged killing. If discovered, it is viewed as a very shameful act and is likely to result in full outlawry of the perpetrator.

Múspellsheimur: Múspellsheimur (Flame World) existed in the southern region of the huge emptiness of Ginnungagap before the heaven, earth, and seas were created.

Myrkjartan, King: Grandfather of Óláfur the Peacock, son of the powerful goði Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson.

Naddoður: The first Norse to discover Iceland and one of the first to settle on the Faroe Islands.

***Nátt-Mál*:** Night meal, 9 p.m.

***Niðstöng*:** A scorn pole is a magical way of disrupting and angering the land spirits inhabiting the ground where a farm is located, resulting in a curse.

Niflheimur: The realm of the dead.

Niflheimur: In the northern region of the huge emptiness of Ginnungagap was an ice-packed realm called Niflheimur (Mist World) before the heaven, earth, and seas were created.

Njörður: God of Fishing, Sailing, Wealth. He controls the path of the wind, the calm seas, and the summer. He also grants wealth in land and valuables to those who request his aid. He is the father of the gods Freyr and Freyja.

Norns: Norns are deities in Norse mythology responsible for shaping the course of human destinies. Urður (Past), Verðandi (Present) and Skuld (Future), spin the threads of fate at the foot of Yggdrasil.

***Nóttleysa*:** The "night-less time" during the summer months when the sun never sets.

Nykur: Horse-like creatures found in practically every bottomless pond or large, deep lake, as well as in rivers throughout Iceland.

Óðinn: The one-eyed god of war, magic, and poetry. He is the king of the Æsir, and the father of many of them. Some of his other names are: All Father, Father of the Slain, The Red Bearded One, God of the Hanged, God of Prisoners, God of Cargoes, High One, Masked One, Capricious One, Inflamer, Swift Tricker, Father of Victory, Blind One, Shifty Eyed, One With the Magic Staff, Destroyer, Terror, and dozens more.

***Oðinsdagur*:** Wednesday (Oðinn's day).

Óláfur Guðroðsson: The Norse king of Dublin in 937.

Óláfur The Peacock: Son of the powerful *goði* Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson.

Önundur the Anason: Friend of renowned warrior poet Egill Skallagrímsson and father of Steinar.

***Ótta*:** The last part of the night, 3 a.m.

Osulf and Maccus of Bernica, Earls: Traitorous allies and murderers of Eiríkur Bloodaxe.

Ragnarök: Ragnarök is a foretold series of impending events, including a great battle in which numerous great Norse mythological figures will perish; it will entail a catastrophic series of natural disasters, including the burning of the world, and culminate in the submersion of the world underwater.

***Rismál*:** The hour of rising, 6 a.m.

Rögnvaldur The King Of Mann: King of York. Grandson of Ivarr the Boneless and conqueror of Northern England.

Rún: Rune translates to "whisper" or "secret, hidden lore, mystery" in Norse. The runic alphabet is used to write simple everyday messages. In the hands of runemasters, those same runes can be combined to create rune scripts imbued with magical power.

Sax: A sax is a short sword that was used primarily during the early part of the Viking era. It's a one-handed single-edged weapon with a blade length ranging from 30—60 cm (12—24 in).

Seiðkona: Individuals (almost exclusively women) who have dedicated their lives to learning how to manipulate the magical energies of the world via rune magic.

Seiðmaður: A man who practices *seiður*.

Seiður: A type of shamanic magic in which the practitioner communes with spirits, powers of the land, the gods, and even touches the very strands of fate that guide the lives of all.

Seiðurhjallur: A "spell-working scaffold" (*seiðurhjallur*) is often used by the *seiður* practitioner as a symbolic representation of the World Tree and of the practitioner's own spiritual ascent.

Sif: Sif is the goddess of grain, harvests, fertility, and farming, and is the wife of the god Þór.

Sigurblót: "Victory Sacrifice", the first day of the month of Summer Finding and thus the first day of summer, this day also marks the beginning of the year.

Skaði: The goddess of winter. She personifies ice and cold. Wife of the god Njörður. Mother of Freyr and Freyja.

Skald: Skalds are poets and Skaldic poetry has a complex structure, makes liberal use of figurative language and metaphors, and can carry actual magical power.

Skjaldborg: A shield wall battle formation, with a group of fighters standing side-by-side several ranks deep, with those better armed and armored forming the front rank.

Skóggangur: Full outlawry—a person who is sentenced with full outlawry is banished from society forever, their property is confiscated, and no one may shelter or feed them. They may no longer enjoy the protection of the law and can be killed without penalty. If they succeed in escaping Iceland, they can never return.

Skyr: Coagulated milk—high in protein, and an important food in the winter.

Sleipnir: Óðinn's eight-legged horse.

Snæland: In 860 AD, Naddoður was the first Norse to discover Iceland, he named it Snæland, meaning "snow land."

Sólarhringur: Literally, "sun-ring." This represents a day and is the main unit of timekeeping.

Steinar Önundursson: Son of Önundur Anason.

Sunnudagur: Sunday (sun day).

Þing: Assemblies (*þing*) are meetings of householders where the formal processing of disputes take place. They occur outdoors, at a pre-determined meeting location.

Þingblót: "Assembly Sacrifice", the opening of the *Alþing* in Midsummer, with sacrifices at the Assembly Plains.

Þingvellir: Assembly Plain is in the southwestern part of the island and is where the National Assembly (*Alþing*) takes place.

Þór: God of Battle, Strength, Sailing

Þórdís: A renowned seeress.

Þorkell Þorsteinsson: The current Lawspeaker and grandson of Ingólfur Arnarson (the first person to settle in Iceland).

Þórólfur Skallagrímsson: Famous Icelandic warrior and the brother of the warrior poet Egill.

Þórsdagur: Thursday (Þor's day).

Þorsteinn: Son of the renowned warrior poet, Egill Skallagrímsson.

Þræll: Male thralls or slaves.

Þrúður: Þór's daughter.

Týr: God of Courage, Glory, Justice. Týr is the boldest and most courageous of the gods and has power over victory in combat.

Týsdagur: Tuesday (Týr's day).

Úlfljótur: Iceland's first Lawspeaker

Ullur: God of Archery, Dueling, Hunting. Ullur is the god of skiing, archery, and hunting. His archery and skiing are unrivaled. He is the son of Sif, and Þór's stepson.

Undorn: The midafternoon meal, 3 p.m.

Vaðmál: Woolen cloth used for clothing and as currency. The standard unit of trade is one ell (the length from the elbow to the point of the second finger—around 50 cm) of *vaðmál*.

Vanaheimur: The realm where the Vanir gods of nature and fertility existed before living in Ásgarður.

Vanir: The gods of nature and fertility who existed in the separate realm of Vanaheimur before living in Ásgarður.

Vé: Third son of Búri and Bestla, brother to Óðinn.

Veturnáttablót: Winter Nights Sacrifice: The three nights at the beginning of winter are a time of feasting and celebration, as livestock are slaughtered for the winter, and food and drink are plentiful. It is the favorite time for holding weddings.

Víðarr: God of Revenge, Silence, Strength. The son of Óðinn and the giantess Gríður. He is very strong, second only to the god Þór.

Víg: Manslaughter—a killing publicly acknowledged by the perpetrator shortly after the act and can usually be atoned via compensation.

***Vikingur* (plural – *Vikingar*)**: A pirate or freebooter, often grouped together in bands to raid from boats.

Vili: Second son of Búri and Bestla, brother to Óðinn.

Vorþing: Spring assemblies where the cases of local farmers and goðar are tried if they cannot be settled out of court

Wineheath: On the west coast of England, also known as Brunanburh. The battle here marked the end of Norse power in Britain.

Wyrd: The ability to influence one's fate.

Yggdrasil: The World Tree.

Ýmir: The first of the ice giants. Óðinn and his brothers killed him and created the world and magical creatures sprung from his flesh.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Icelandic Studies

Byock, Jesse L. *Viking Age Iceland*. Penguin (Non-Classics), 2001.

Byock, Jesse L. *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power*. University of California Press, 1990.

Short, William R. *Icelanders in the Viking Age: The People of the Sagas*. McFarland, 2010.

Ólason, Vésteinn. *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders*. Heimskringla, Mál og Menning Academic Division, 1998.

High Days and Holidays in Iceland. Reykjavik, Iceland: Mal og menning, 1995.

Phillpotts, Bertha Surtees. *Kindred & Clan in the Middle Ages & After*. Cambridge, 1913.

Adalsteinsson, Jon Hnefill. *Under the Cloak*. 2nd ed. University of Iceland Press, 1999.

Heritage and Identity: Shaping the Nations of the North, ed. J. M. Fladmark, Donhead St. Mary, Shaftesbury: Donhead, 2002

Sterling, Nichole Laine. *The Other Inside: Icelandic Identity and Foreigners in the Islendingasogur*. University of California, Berkeley. 2008

Icelandic Sagas

The Sagas of Icelanders: Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition. Penguin (Non-Classics), 2001.

Laxdaela Saga. Trans. Hermann Palsson. Penguin Classics, 1969.

Njal's Saga. Ed. Robert Cook. Trans. Robert Cook. Penguin Classics, 2002.

Three Icelandic Outlaw Sagas: "The Saga of Gisli", "The Saga of Grettir", "The Saga of Hord". Ed. Anthony Faulkes. Trans. George Johnston. Viking Society for Northern Research, 2004.

Viking History

Brooke, Christopher. *Europe in the Central Middle Ages, 962-1154*. Longman Higher Education, 1975.

Barraclough, Eleanor Rosamund. *Beyond the Northlands: Viking voyages and the Old Norse sagas*. 2016.

Cronholm, Neander Nicolas. *A history of Sweden from the earliest times to the present day*. The author, 1902.

Koenigsberger, H. *Mediaeval Europe, 400-1500*. Longman, 1987.

Clarke, Helen, and Bjorn Ambrosiani. *Towns in the Viking Age*. 2nd ed. Leicester University Press, 1995.

Harrison, Mark. *Viking Hersir*. 11th ed. Osprey Publishing, 1993.

Graham-Campbell, James. *The Viking World*. Frances Lincoln, 2001.

Heath, Ian. *The Vikings*. Osprey Publishing, 1985.

Logan, F.Donald. *The Vikings in History*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 1991.

Graham-Campbell, James, and Colleen E. Batey. *Vikings in Scotland: An Archaeological Survey*. Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Short, William R. *Viking Weapons and Combat Techniques*. Westholme Publishing, 2009.

Price, Neil S. *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*. 2002.

Norse Mythology and Religion

Larrington, Carolyne. *Poetic Edda*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Macculloch, J. A. *The Celtic and Scandinavian Religions*. Hutchinson Radius, 1998.

Orchard, Andrew. *Cassell's Dictionary of Norse Myth & Legend*. Cassell, 2003.

Byock, Jesse L. *The Prose Edda: Norse Mythology*. Ed. Jesse L. Byock. Trans. Jesse L. Byock. Penguin Classics, 2006.

Ellis, Hilda Roderick. *The Road to Hel. A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature*. 1943.

Norse Magic

Thorsson, Edred. *Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic.* Weiser Books, 1983.

Macleod, Mindy, and Bernard Mees. *Runic Amulets and Magic Objects.* Boydell Press, 2006.

Paxson, Diana L. *Taking Up the Runes: A Complete Guide to Using Runes in Spells, Rituals, Divination, and Magic.* Weiser Books, 2005.

Rafnsson, Magnús. *Tvær galdraskræður - Two Icelandic Books of Magic.* Strandagaldur ses, 2008.

Heide, Eldar. *Spinning Seiðr. In Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions. Edited by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere.* 2006

Svenson, Rig. *The Chicanery of Seiðr.* 2015

Eggertsson, Jochum Magnús. *Sorcerer's Screed: The Icelandic Book of Magic Spells.* The Icelandic Magic Company, 2015.

Flowers, Stephen. *Icelandic Magic: Practical Secrets of the Northern Grimoires.* Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Myths and Fairy Tales

Simpson, Jacqueline. *Icelandic Folktales and Legends. 2nd ed.* Tempus Publishing, Limited, 2004.

Legends and Landscape: *Plenary Papers from the 5th Celtic-Nordic-Baltic Folklore Symposium*. Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2008.

Adalsteinsson, Jon Hnefill. *A Piece of Horse Liver: Myth, Ritual and Folklore in Old Icelandic Sources*. Univ of Iceland Pr, 1998.

Njarovik, Njorour. *The Demon Whistle.* Trans. John Porter. Iceland Review,Iceland, 1998.

Halldórsson, Haukur. *Elves, Aesir and Humans.* Iceland: The Viking Circle, 2008.

Sveinsson, Einar Olafur. *The Folk-stories of Iceland.* Trans. Benedikt Benedikz. Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003.

Gunnell, Terry. *The Hidden People of Iceland.* Iceland: Mál og Menning, 2008.

Arnason, Jon. *Icelandic Folk Tales and Fariytales.* Iceland Review,Iceland, 2000.

Icelandic Folktales - A Classic Collection of Authentic Icelandic Tales of the Supernatural. Trans. Alan Boucher. 2006.

Ægisson, Sigurður. *Meeting with Monsters: An Illustrated Guide to the Beasts of Iceland.* Iceland: Forlagid, 2008.

Strauss, Claude Lévi. *Mythologiques.* 1964.

Hjálmarsson, Jón R. *A Traveler's Guide to Icelandic Folk Tales.* 2nd ed. Reykjavík: Forlagið, 2009.

In Icelandic

Tulinius, Torfi H. *Galdramenn: galdrar og samfélag á miðöldum.* Reykjavík: Hugvísindastofnun Háskóla Íslands. 2008. (Compilation of essays about magic in Medieval Iceland)

Kvaran, Guðrun. *Nöfn Íslendinga*. Haskolaforlag Mals og menningar. 1991. (Catalog of Icelandic names from old and modern times, and their meanings)

Web Resources

www.northvegr.org
www.sagadb.org
www.hurstwic.org
www.vikinganswerlady.com
www.sunnyway.com/runes

INDEX

Æ

Æsir 92, 167, 168, 169, 171–172, 203, 265, 298, 300
Æsir-Vanir war 203
Ætts 186, 189, 298

Þ

Þangbrand 174, 179
þing 158, 301
Þingblót 174, 301
Þingvellir 159, 292, 301
Þorbjörn Súr 216
Þorgerður 17, 216
Þorgrímur 17, 27, 110, 216, 298, 299
Þorkell 17, 161, 216, 294, 299, 301
Þorkell Þorsteinsson 161, 294, 299, 301
Þorsteinn Egilsson 29
Þorsteinn the Black 216
Þorvaldur 15, 216, 229
Þorvaldur Ásvaldsson 216
Þorvaldur the Far-Traveled 229
Þór 16–17, 26, 28, 38, 56–57, 144, 167–168, 172, 174, 187, 190, 220–221, 224, 247, 255, 259–260, 265, 300–301
Þórðarhöfði 229
Þórdís 17, 26
Þórður's Headland 229
Þórir 114, 236–237
Þórir's Glacier 236
Þórisjökull 236
Þórólfur 17, 19, 21, 24, 29, 38, 215–216, 221, 299, 301
Þórólfur Kveld-Úlfsson 215
Þórólfur Skallagrímsson 21, 299, 301
Þórsar 220
Þór's Headland 220–221, 224
Þórsnes 220
Þórsness 224
Þór's river 220
Þræll 40, 301
Þrasi Þórólfsson 234
Þrúður 17, 168, 301
Þrymur 17, 45, 50–51, 180, 260, 282
Þrymur Sörlason 45, 50
Þuríður the Strait-Filler 224
Þurs 51, 190, 193, 197, 199, 256

A

Aberdeen 243
Ability 11
Ac 35, 60, 82, 83, 178
Aðalvík 225
Adam of Bremen 161
Aelle 238
Aging 284, 287
Aimed Blows 119
Álfaborg 230
Álfdís Ívarsdóttir 296
Álfheimur 169, 211, 212, 220, 246, 247, 248, 260, 298, 300
Alfred the Great 215, 241
Altar River Valley 228
Alþing 6, 11, 24, 26, 29, 69, 85, 145, 151, 157, 159–163, 165, 174, 180, 215, 255, 291–295, 297, 298–301
Ambátt 40
Angantyr 238
Angelica Valley Cliff 227
Angelica Valley Peak 232
Anglo-Saxon England 84, 147
Animal Lore 35, 86, 189
Ansgar 241
Antidotes 74
Ár 192, 197, 199
Arbitration 157
Arctic Tern 265
Arinbjörn 216
Ari the Black 296
Armor Points 11, 100
Army Road 238
Arnarfjörður 225
Art 35, 60, 82, 89
Ásgarður 167–169, 171, 190, 212, 220, 298–299, 301
Asia Minor 241
Askur 212

Asphyxiation 72, 81, 138
Assembly Plain 159, 236, 292–293, 301
Asturias 242
Atgeir 110–111, 154, 298
Athelstan 24, 216, 298
Atli Asmundson 40
Attacking From Advantage or Disadvantage 119
Attribute 11, 34
Attributes 15, 22, 31
Auðhumla 211, 265
Auður the Deep Minded 215
Augaire mac Ailella 21
Augment 38, 63, 79–80, 82– 85, 90–92, 95, 105, 123, 179, 181–182
Aurar 147–148
Automatic success 60
Ávaldi 216

B

Bagsecg 240
Baldur 38, 55, 169, 171, 187, 298–299
Balkans 241
Banabrekkur 221
Bárðardalur 229
Barði 235
Bárður's Valley 229
Bargain 35, 53, 60, 80, 82, 153, 255–256, 258–259
Barge 126, 128–129, 131–132
Barnafoss 219
Base chance 33–34, 37, 60, 79, 90, 110, 112
Battle 16–17,21, 24–28, 35, 38, 53, 57, 60, 81, 85, 97, 110–111, 113, 117–119, 122, 147, 154, 164, 168, 193, 197, 215–216, 240, 255, 257, 301
Battle of Corbridge 21, 216
Battle of Ethandun 240
Battle of Fuat's Head 21, 216
Battle of Stainmore 25, 216
Battle of Sulcoit 216
Battle of Tettenhall 215
Battle of Wineheath 24, 216
Battle Results 85
Bavaria 242
Bay of Logs 224
Beam 126, 128–130
Bears 267–268
Beaver 35, 265
Bed Posts 226
Bernicia 25, 29
Berserker 252–253, 296
Bestla 211, 298, 301
Bifröst 28, 29, 171, 298–299
Bind-rune 198–199
Birch Island 240
Bireme 129, 130
Birka 240, 241
Birna Flosadóttir 45, 52
Bishop Fridrik 229
Bjarkan 194, 197, 199
Bjarmaland 21, 216, 238, 298–299
Bjarndýrakóngur 267
Björkö 240–241
Björn 16, 241
Björn Eiríksson 241
Bláfell 233
Blanda 237
Blessing 288
Blue Forest 24
Blue Mountain 233
Boarding Another Ship 137, 138
Boat 23, 28, 35, 36, 37, 47, 49, 57, 60, 80, 88, 126, 128–137, 282
Böðvar 216
Bolungarvík 224
Bookkeeping 98, 121
Book of Settlements 19, 215, 220–221, 224, 236, 267
Book of the Icelanders 141
Borg 215, 219
Borgarfjörður 197, 219, 230
Borgarfjörður Eystri 230
Borgarvirki 229
Börkur the Stout 27, 298–299
Borr 211
Breiðafjörður 224, 266
Bríkur 226
Brísingamen 171
Britannia 213
British Isles 21, 213–214, 299
Brittany 216
Broad Fjord 224
Brokk 168, 300
Brunanburh 24, 301
Búðarbrekkur 229
Bull 212, 225, 252, 259, 265
Burned Njáll 34, 39
Byzantine 25, 129, 241
Byzantine Empire 241

C

Cadiz 242
Caithness 243
Campaign 11, 59
Camp Slope 229
Canoe 129
Capacity 126
Cat 35, 50, 135, 257, 265
Cattle 265, 268
Central Highlands 148–149, 219, 226, 232–233, 237, 267, 300
Characteristic 11, 31, 60, 65, 195, 198, 252, 287
Characteristic Point Loss 287
Characteristic Roll 60
Charisma 30, 41, 60, 197
Charisma Check 60
Charlemagne 238, 242
Charles III 243
Charles the Fat 238, 241
Charm 35, 49, 51, 55, 60, 82, 153, 181, 187, 191, 197, 199, 255, 257, 259, 268, 270
Chases 70–71, 80, 88
Children 39, 144, 146–147, 158, 219, 245, 247, 287
Children's Falls 219
Child Survival 287
Christianity . 26, 174, 216, 228, 238, 240, 288
Church Rock 230
Cináed mac Ailpín 243
Citadel 229
Climate 142
Climb 35, 57, 60, 79, 80, 137, 153, 224
Cog 128, 129, 130
Cold Valley 181, 236–237
Collisions 133, 137
Combat round 31–32, 59–60, 64–68, 71–72, 74, 81, 86, 89–90, 95, 97–100, 105, 107, 117–123, 138, 188, 200, 204, 251, 264, 276
Combat With Skills Above 100% 103
Communal units 145
Conceal 35, 55, 60, 88, 95, 193, 207, 258
Concubines 146
Constantine II 21
Constantín mac Áeda 24
Constantinople 25, 215–216, 241
Constitution 9, 11, 28, 60, 133–134, 137
Constitution Check 60
Corbridge 21
Cordoba 242
Cork 242
Courland 216
Craft 23, 35–37, 47, 49, 51, 60, 80, 87, 89, 92, 102, 110, 114–115, 132–135, 188, 191, 193, 198, 200, 204, 256–257, 259, 282
Critical Success 11, 61, 63, 79, 100, 103, 179, 182
Crushing 106, 108, 110
Cub Lake 267
Customs 23, 35–36, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 85, 192, 195, 197, 255–257, 259, 287

D

Dagsmörk 149
Dagur 195, 197, 199
Dál Riata 243
Damage 11, 22, 32, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 66–68, 73–75, 100, 102, 105–108, 110–119, 132–133, 136–137, 191, 195, 203, 207, 252–265, 267–277
Damage modifier 11, 22, 28, 31–32, 67, 75, 103, 106–108, 112, 119, 121–122, 199, 251–260, 262–264, 267–273

Damage to Weapons 102
Dance 35–36, 49, 60, 63, 79, 82–84, 90, 204, 257
Danegeld 152
Danelaw 21, 215
Danevirke 238
Danish tongue 84, 147, 298
Darkness 38, 53, 71, 119, 171
Dark River 228
Day-mark 149
Death Cliffs 224
Death Slope 221
Decoration Island 230
Dedication point 11, 38, 80, 93, 284
Deer 265
Denmark 20, 82, 182, 213, 215–216, 238, 240, 242, 251, 267
Devise 35, 60, 89, 134
Devotion 11, 38, 60, 80, 82, 179–180, 209, 284
DEX rank ... 63, 81, 90, 95, 98–100, 103, 105, 119–123, 188, 199, 251, 253, 261
Dexterity 30, 60, 98, 134–135, 137, 138
Dexterity Check 60
Dicuilus 213
Disarm 119
Disguise 17, 35, 60, 82, 83
Distinct Features 15
Distinctive Features 22–23, 41, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56
Divorce 145–146, 296
Dodge 35, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 69, 74, 79, 80–81, 100, 102–103, 105, 107, 109, 114, 118, 120, 122–123, 135, 154, 190, 197, 199, 253–264, 267–273, 275, 282
Dog 265, 266
Dönsk tunga 84, 147
Door Mountains 230
Drangey 227–228
Draugur 26, 64, 102, 221, 228, 269–270, 298,
Draupnir 168, 298
Drekar 127
Dreki 126–130, 136–137, 147, 284,298
Driftwood 40, 134, 142, 285
Drowning 72, 81, 138
Drowning and Asphyxiation 138
Dublin 21, 24, 84, 147–148, 215–216, 242–243, 298, 300
Duel 158
Dunblane 216
Dunottar 243
Dynjandi 225
Dynskógar 235
Dyrfjöll 230

E

Eagle 16, 220, 265–266
Ealdred 21
Ealdred of Bamburgh 21
Earl 254, 295–296
East Anglia 240–241
Eastern Quarter 159
Eastern Stronghold Fjord 230
Ebo of Rheims 241
Egill Skallagrímsson 24, 27, 29, 158, 209, 215–216, 219, 300–301
Egill's Saga 12, 41, 116, 151, 199, 209, 215–216, 219
Eiríkur 15–16, 21, 25, 29, 199, 214, 216, 238, 240–241, 299–300
Eiríkur Björnsson 241
Eiríkur Bloodaxe 21, 25, 29, 216, 240, 299–300
Eiríkur Eymundsson 241
Eiríkur "the Child" 238
Eiríkur the Red 216
Eitri 168, 300
Elbe 238
Elder Fúþark 189
Elf 16, 230, 259–260
Elf Stronghold 230
Elgur 193, 197
Ell 12, 147, 148, 183, 286, 301
Elves 6, 92, 169, 172, 177, 195, 211–213, 220, 230, 245–248, 259–260, 268, 270, 298
Embla 212
Emperor Basil II 241
Encumbrance 32
Encumbrance Points 32
England 21, 24–25, 54, 84, 147–148, 214–216, 238, 240–241, 300–301
Evaluate 35, 86, 253, 255, 258, 259
Exceeding 100% in an Ability 282
Experience 6–7, 11, 33–34, 37, 59–60, 63, 76, 79–81, 84–85, 90, 97–98, 100, 103, 105, 121, 137, 152, 178–180, 187, 209, 281–283, 287
Experience Between Adventures 282
Experience Check 11
Experience Roll 281
Exposure 72–73
Eyjafjörður 228, 251
Eyjarhóll 235
Eyjolfur the Grey 27, 299
Eykur 194, 197, 256
Eyrir 147–148, 154, 300

F

Fallen Raven 270
Falling 74, 135, 137
Falling Overboard 137
Family Events 288
Family Rolls 284, 287
Farm 23, 26, 35–37, 40, 47, 51, 57, 60, 86, 189, 192, 199, 255–259, 284–286
Farm Circumstance 199, 284–286
Farmer 254
Farm Roll 285
Faroe Islands 131, 213, 230, 300
Fast Talk 35, 49, 60, 82–83, 91, 258
Fé 51, 189, 196, 197, 199, 256
Fear 20, 177, 207
Feasts 145
Fetches 34
Field River Glacier 232
Fingal 271
Finnbogi 15
Finnmark 238, 241, 300
Fire 24, 51, 74, 77, 133, 136, 187, 190, 196, 198, 216, 256, 270
Fire Canyon 24, 216
First Aid 23, 35–37, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 66–68, 86, 91, 107, 133–134, 195, 199, 253, 256–257, 259–260, 276
Fishing Boat 128, 130
Fjörbaugsgarður 162, 299
Fjórðungsdómar 160, 299
Flóki Vilgerðarson 214–215
Fontenelle 241
Forest River 234
Forest River Fall 234
Forests 141, 234
Forests Sands 234
Forseti 38, 169, 187, 299
Foul Stream 235
France 21, 215–216, 241, 243
Free Actions 99
Freedmen 144
Freedwomen 144
Freki 168, 266
Freya 9
Freyja 38, 49, 149, 169, 171, 187, 197, 203, 257, 260, 265–266, 284, 297, 299, 300–301
Freyr 16, 26–27, 29, 36–38, 47, 49, 51, 55, 144, 167, 169, 171, 187, 189, 195, 236, 247, 255, 258, 284, 297, 299, 300–301
Frigg 38, 49, 169, 171, 187, 266, 298, 299
Frilla 146
Frisia 238
Fuat's Head 21, 216, 299
Fúlilækur 235
Full turn 59–60, 83–84, 95, 99
Fumble 11, 61–63, 79, 85, 92, 100, 103, 108, 130, 154, 179, 182, 188, 204, 285

Fylgja 34, 266
Fylkir 292
Fyn 238

G

Gaining a Passion 179
Gaining Reputation 180
Galdur 99, 186, 188–189, 196–198, 200, 256
Game 3, 6, 8, 28, 35, 59, 86, 106, 193
Gannet Reef 236
Garðarshólmi 213, 299
Garðar's Island 213–215, 299
Garðar Svavarsson 213–215, 299
Garði the Easterner 296
Gásasandur 237
Gateway to Hell 141
Gautráður 292
Geirshólmi 221
Geir's Island 221
Geri 168, 266
ghoul cats 271
Ghoul cats 271
Giant Grey Bull 212
Gibraltar 242
Gílsfjörður 226
Ginnungagap 211, 298–300
Gísli 16, 27, 177, 216, 298–299
Gísli Súrsson 27, 177, 216
Gjallarhorn 171
Gjöf 51, 191, 196–197, 199, 256
Glacier River 234
Gleipnir 172
Glitnir 169
Glowing 171
Glowing Jewelry 171
Glúmur 16, 216
Gnawer 232
Gnawer's Gully 232
Gnupa 240
Goat 143, 147
Goðafoss 228
Goðar 5, 24, 63, 83, 92, 116, 125, 144–146, 157–161, 167–168, 182, 291–292, 295, 299, 301
Goði 10–11, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24–25, 27, 29, 33, 40, 46–47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 63–64, 80, 87, 94, 105, 128, 144–145, 157, 159–160, 163, 178, 181–182, 219, 227, 229–230, 232, 234, 254–255, 284, 288, 292, 294–295, 299–300
Goðorð 145
Golden Bristles 169
Golden Horn 241
Golden Plover 265–266
Gold-Þórir's Saga 114
Goose 35, 237, 265–266
Goose Sands 237
Gormur Harthaknútsson 240
Gormur the Old 216
Gotrik 238, 240
Gotrik of Denmark 238
Go Under the Cloak 35–36, 49, 51, 60, 91, 187, 198, 256–257
Grágás 142, 159, 161
Grapple 35, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 64, 111, 120–121, 270, 294
Grappling 64, 120–121, 270
Great Heathen Army 238, 240–241, 243
Great Rift 246–248, 299
Great Summer Army 240
Greek 25, 84, 88, 130, 213, 241
Grettir 16–17, 33, 39–40, 115, 183, 215, 228, 237, 302
Grettir Ásmundarson 228
Grettir the Strong 33, 40
Gríður 172, 301
Grímsey 226
Grímur's Island 87, 226
Guard 241, 253
Guðröður 238
Guðrún 8, 16, 177, 197, 228, 296
Guðrún Hrollaugsdóttir 296
Gullinbursti 169
Gungnir 168, 299
Gunnar of Hlíðarendi 216
Gunnbjörn's Skerries 24, 216
Gunnbjörn Ulfsson 24, 299
Gunnbjörn Úlfsson 216
Gyða 16, 214, 240
Gyrd 240
Gyrfalcon 46, 265–266

H

Haakon Sigurdsson 28, 216, 299
Haakon Sigurðsson 240
Haakon the Good 26, 299
Hafursfirth 215
Hagall 191, 196, 198, 256
Hákon 216, 240
Hákon the Good 240
Halfdan 215, 238, 240
Halfdan Ragnarsson 238, 240
Halfdan the Black 240
Hallgerður 16, 216
Hallmundarhraun 216
Hamburg 238, 241
Haraldur 16, 21, 214–216, 224, 238, 240–241, 243, 251, 299
Haraldur Bluetooth 216, 238, 240
Haraldur "Bluetooth" Gormsson 238, 240
Haraldur Fairhair 21, 214–216, 240–241, 243, 299
Haraldur Greycloak 216, 240
Haraldur Klak Haraldsson 238
Haraldur Tanglehair 214, 240
Hate 20–21, 24–27, 51, 177–180
Hávamál 69, 90, 185
Healing 22, 28, 32, 68, 195, 199, 208
Healing rate 22, 28, 31–32, 68, 70, 73– 74, 195, 293
Healing stone 28, 199
Hebrides 213, 243
Heiðabær 238, 240
Heiðrekur Gotriksson 238
Heimdallur 38, 47, 53, 80, 171, 187, 260, 284, 299
Heimskringla 226, 302
Hekla 141, 212, 235
Hel 38, 115, 173, 187, 199–200, 219, 235, 266, 288, 298–299, 302
Helgafell 141, 220
Helgi 16, 114, 177, 197, 240
Helmsman 126
Hemming 238
Herd 35, 60, 86, 257–258
Hergeir 241
Herkonuklettur 229
Hero sheet 19, 20, 22–23, 32–34, 37–41, 60, 66, 68, 89, 177, 179, 181, 281–283
Hidden folk 5, 26, 28, 67, 220, 224, 230, 233, 236, 245–246, 287
Hidden People 3, 6, 245–247, 259, 294, 299, 303
Hide 35, 49, 51, 53, 55, 60–61, 95, 147, 193, 253, 256–257, 259–260, 262, 264, 267–268, 273, 275
Highlands 148–149, 219, 226, 232–233, 236–237, 267, 295, 300
Hit Location 11, 22, 32, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 66, 73–74, 115–116, 118, 252–264, 267–276
Hit points 9, 11, 22, 28, 31–32, 51, 64, 66–68, 70, 73–74, 86, 89, 91, 100–102, 104, 106–108, 110, 112, 114, 117–119, 121, 126, 136–137, 153, 186–187, 190–191, 194–196, 198–199, 208–209, 252–264, 267–273, 275–277
Hjälmar 240
Hjaltland 243
Hjörleifsfjörður 235
Hjörleifur 16, 235–236
Hjörleifur's Fjord 235
Hjörtur Helgason 292
Hliðskjálf 168
Hnefatafl 28, 86
Höður 38, 53, 171, 187, 299
Hofsjökull 148, 237, 300
Hofstaðir 221
Hofsvík 221
Holmgarður 242
Holofernis' Headland 227
Holstein 238
Holy Hill 141, 220
Holy Roman Empire 238, 240, 242
Honor 5, 16–17, 20–27, 29, 39, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 121, 145, 158, 177–178, 181, 183, 200

Hooded Cloak 141, 212, 235
Hooded Cloak Mountain 141, 212, 235
Hörða-Knútur Ragnarsson 240
Hordaland 214, 240
Hörður 177, 216, 221
Hörgárdalur 228
Horik Gotriksson 238
Horik II 238, 240
Horse 16, 28, 143, 147, 194, 197, 258, 265–276, 300, 303
Horse-whale 276
Höskuldur Dala-Kollsson 25
Hot Spring Fields 237
Housecarl 254
Householder 144, 162, 182
Hólmganga 158, 294–295, 299
Hólófernishöfði 227
Hrafna-Flóki Vilgerðarson 215
Hraunþúfa 227
Hreppar 145
Hreppur 145, 247, 299
Hrólfur the Walker 243
Hrund Erpsdóttir 45, 56
Hrútafjörður 225
Hrútur 216
Hrútur Herjólfsson 216
Hrym 76, 212, 226
Huginn 168
Hull Quality 126, 128–130, 132–133, 136–137
Hull Type 126, 128–130
Húnavatn 267
Hundruðum 148
Hunger 72–73, 134, 173
Hvalfjörður 221
Hvalvatn 221
Hvannadalshnúkur 232
Hvanndalabjarg 227
Hveravellir 237
Hvítá 219

I

Iberia Peninsula 242
Ice Fjord Deep 224
Icelandic Book of Laws 142, 159, 161
Icelandic Commonwealth 214, 216
Impaling 105–107, 110
Increasing Characteristics 283
Infidelity 146
Ing 195
Ingiríður Tanglehair 292
Ingólfur Arnarson 161, 214–215, 221, 236, 299, 301
Inheritance 161, 195
Initiative 11
Insight 35, 60, 82–83, 94, 178, 191, 193, 255, 258
Inspiration 105, 179
Intelligence 30, 60
Intelligence Check 60
Intimidate 35, 57, 60, 83, 123, 253, 255, 259
Intrigue 25, 29, 35–37, 47, 51, 55, 60, 83, 255
Ireland 21, 25, 29, 46–47, 84, 145, 147, 182, 214–216, 238, 242, 294, 298
Irontooth 292
Ísafjarðardjúp 224
Ísgerður 9–10, 16, 45, 48–49, 69, 92, 178, 282
Ísgerður Haldorsdóttir 45, 48
Island of Man 243
Islands Fjord 228
Islands Hill 235
Íslendingasögur 12, 299
Isolated Glacier 232
Íss 192, 197
Ívar of the Vale 296
Ivarr the Boneless 21, 298, 300
Ivar the Boneless 238

J

Járntönn 292
Jewelry 171
Jökulsá 234
Jörð 168
Jorvik 25, 84, 147, 299
Jötunheimur 173, 260, 298, 299
Jötunn 76, 105, 177, 219, 260–261, 265–266, 299
Jól 151, 174, 228, 299
Jump 35, 60, 71, 74, 81, 123, 137, 253, 255, 259
Jumper-whale 276–277
Jutland 238

K

Kaldidalur 236
Karl 228
Katla 16, 141, 207, 235, 292
Katla Reginsdóttir 292
Katla's Gully 235
Katla's Sands 235
Kaun 51, 190, 196, 198–199, 256
Keel 148, 180, 233, 237, 300
Kerling 226, 228
Kettle 16–17, 141
Kiev 25, 215, 242
Kievan Rus 242
Killer-Gest 296
Kingdom of Germany 242
King of the Bears 267
Kirkjusteinn 230
Kjölur 148, 233, 237, 300
Knerrir 127
Knockback 64, 100, 117–118, 120, 136
Knörr 126, 127, 128, 129, 137, 147, 284, 300
Kola Falls 226
Kola's Bed 226
Kola's Canyon 226
Kolbeinn 221
Kolufossar 226
Kolugljúfur 226
Kolurúm 226
Kormákur Ögmundarson 216
Kötlugjá 235
Kötlusandur 235
Krafla 141
Kraken 274
Kveldúlfur Bjálfason's 215

L

Lagarfljót 232
Lake Mälar 240–241
Lake of Midges 141
Lake Valley 226, 229, 293
Lake Valley River 226
Landvættir 212, 248
Langjökull 148, 237, 300
Lappland 21, 299–300
Látrabjarg 224
Latvia 216
Lava Tussock 227
Law 3, 5–6, 23, 35–38, 47, 53, 55, 57, 86, 145, 159, 161–164, 169, 182–183, 186, 188, 193, 196, 200, 215, 253, 255–256, 259, 294–295, 300
Law Council 159, 161, 255, 295, 300
Law of Contagion 186, 188, 196, 200
Law of Effect Singularity 186
Law of Similarity 186
Law Rock 5, 145, 161, 255, 294, 300
Lawspeaker 5, 24, 83, 151, 159, 161, 165, 182, 255, 294, 296, 299, 301
Legal advantage points 164–165
Legal Courts 157
Leifur 8, 15–17, 293
Leifur Eiríksson 15
Leinster 21, 298–299
Limerick 216, 242
Lindisfarne 240–241
Liquid River 232
Liquid River Lake 232
Lisbon 242
Listen 35, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 71, 79, 84, 95, 122, 192, 253, 255–259, 272
Loðmundur the Aged 234
Lögberg 161, 300
Lögrétta 159
Lögur 194, 196–197
Loki 24, 38, 171–173, 187, 260, 266, 288, 298–299, 300

Long Glacier 148, 216, 237, 300
longhouse 39, 105, 143, 144
Longship 128, 130
Loot 153, 154, 155
Lores 86
Louis the Pious 238
Love 16, 19–20, 22, 26–27, 38, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 63, 82, 85, 171, 177–178, 180, 199, 247
Love (family) ... 19, 22, 27, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57
Loyalty 17, 20, 22, 24–25, 27, 29, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 63, 82, 105, 177–178, 181, 283
Loyalty (goði) 17, 20, 22, 27, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57
Lyfsteinn 199

M

Maccus 25, 300
Maður 194, 197
Magical Attacks 99
Magical Rune Scripts 186–187
Magic Points 11, 22, 31, 91–93, 98, 187–189, 199–200, 204–205, 207, 252–264, 272–273, 275, 277
Magic Skill 203
Magni 168, 300
Magnús Hrafnsson 293
Main Bay 225
Mälar 240–241
Málmey 227
Maneuver window 165
Marriage..... 38, 49, 145, 171, 180, 287–288, 293
Maximum Encumbrance..... 32
Medina Sidonia..... 242
Melee Round 11, 188
Melee Weapon 90
Melkorka..... 25
Melrakki 266
Merchant 126, 128–129, 131–132
Merfolk 226, 262
Metal Island 227
Miðgarður 167–168, 171, 173, 203, 211–213, 220, 246–248, 260, 298–300
Miklagarður 241
Mímir 168
Mineral Lore 35, 55, 87
Mire Valley 141
Missile Weapon 90
Missionaries 174
Mixing River 237
Mjölnir 168, 300
Mön 243
Monks' Island 213
Month Names 151
Moray Firth 243
Møre 243
Mosfell 216
Mound Sitting 187
Mountain 16, 141, 212, 219–221, 225, 230, 232–233, 235
Mounted Combat 81, 100, 117–118
Mouse 265–266, 276–277
Mouse-whale 276–277
Movement of Nonengaged Participants 98
Movement Rate 11, 31
Movement Speeds 126
Move Quietly 28, 35, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60–61, 95, 115–116, 153, 256–257, 271
Móði 168
Muninn 168
Múspellsheimur 211, 219, 300
Mýrdalsjökull 141, 235
Mýrdalur 235
Myrká 228
Myrkjartan..... 25, 300
Mythic Times 246, 248
Myth Lore 28, 35–36, 49, 79, 87, 245, 255–258
Mývatn 141

N

Naddagil..... 232
Naddoður 213, 215, 230, 300–301
Nanna 169, 299
Narrative time.....59
National Assembly 11, 24, 29, 40, 69, 145, 148, 151, 157–159, 215–216, 236, 255, 291–292, 295, 298, 301
Natural Healing 68
Nauð 192, 197, 199
Naval Combat 136
Navigate 28, 35, 37, 47, 57, 87, 126, 130, 135, 190, 194, 258–259
Negative skills category modifier 282
Nekor 242
Níðstöng 199
Niflheimur 173, 211, 219–220, 235, 299–300
Night-less time.....141, 300
Njál 8
Njáll 9–10, 12, 16, 19, 29–34, 36–41, 45–46, 60–61, 63–64, 66–68, 90, 101–102, 105, 107–108, 110, 112, 114, 120, 122–123, 157, 174, 179, 181, 183, 199, 216, 282, 284, 286–287
Njáll's Saga 12, 40–41, 122–123
Njáll Þórólfsson 19, 45–46
Njarðvík 232
Njarðvíkurskriður 232
Njörður.....28, 38, 40, 47, 169, 171, 187, 232, 284, 299–301
Njörður's Bay 232
Njörður's Bay Screes 232
Noisy Woods 235
Nonplayer Character 12, 252
Normandy 216, 243
Norns 185, 193, 300
Norse 6–8, 19–21, 23–27, 35–36, 40, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 70, 76, 82, 84–87, 112, 116–118, 125, 127, 129, 141, 144, 147–149, 151, 157–158, 167–168, 174, 182, 185–186, 190, 207–208, 213–216, 225, 229, 230, 237, 241–243, 245–247, 255–260, 265–268, 270, 287, 298–303
North Seas 6, 212
Northumberland 21, 216
Northumbria 25, 29, 238, 240–241, 299
Norway.....5, 20, 24–25, 28, 52, 82, 131, 141–142, 145, 149, 161, 167, 174, 179, 182, 197, 213–216, 221, 224, 226, 230, 238, 240–241, 243, 251
Novgorod..... 215, 240, 242
Nóatún 169, 171
Nóttleysa 141, 150, 300
Nykur 197, 225, 272

O

Obotrites..... 240
Ocean Mist 274
Oðinn's Law 182
Olaf Tryggvason 28
Old Hag 226, 228
Old Man Karl 228
Ölvir the Fat 296
Omens 284, 288
Önundur Ánason 27, 29
Önundur Wooden-leg 215
opposed roll 12, 60–61, 63, 71, 80, 88, 90, 95, 120, 122, 178, 180
Öræfajökull..... 232
Orate.....35, 60, 82–84, 118, 134, 181, 255, 258
Orkney 148, 215, 243
Orkney Islands 215
Örn's Fjord 225
Össur 10, 16
Osulf 25, 29, 300
Osulf of Bernicia..... 25, 29
Otkell Wheelfoot 296
Otto I 242
Otto II 238, 242
Outlaw 148, 182, 302
Owl 35, 265–266
Ox-whale 276–277

Ó

Óðal 195–196, 199
Óðinn 8, 26, 38, 51, 55, 144, 167–169, 171–173, 183, 185–187, 190, 203–204, 211–213, 247–248, 253, 255–256, 266, 298–301
Óðinn Law 183
Ólafur 2, 16, 26, 63, 163, 216

Óláfur 24–25, 46, 63–64, 85, 174, 178–179, 216, 226, 233, 240, 300
Óláfur Guðroðsson 24, 300
Ólafur the Peacock 216
Óláfur the Peacock 25, 216, 300
Óláfur Tryggvason 174, 178
Óss 51, 190, 196, 256
Óttar 16, 80, 216

P

Pamplona 242
Papey 213
Paris 238, 241
Parry 100–104, 109, 118
Passions 3, 6, 15, 17, 19, 22, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 63, 105, 177, 179–180, 281
Peninsula 219–220, 227–229, 242
Peninsula Fjord 227–229
Peninsula of Trolls 227
Peorð 193, 197, 199
Pétursey 235
Pétur's Island 235
Pig 143, 147
Pitching and Rolling 137
Place Lake 225
Plant Lore 35, 55, 63, 74, 87–88, 190, 192
Play Instrument 35, 60, 84, 90, 204
Pliny the Elder 212
Poetic Edda 69, 168–169, 171, 173, 211, 302
Poison 35, 38, 55, 60, 63, 74, 77, 88, 173, 192, 197, 299
Pope John XII 242
Potency 64, 70
Power 11, 30, 51, 105, 189–195, 256, 302
Prophecy 26, 29, 35–37, 47, 49, 60, 87, 92, 190, 195, 199, 209, 257, 259, 262, 268, 270
Prose Edda 168–169, 171–173, 212, 302
Provoked Melee 295
Pytheas 213

Q

Quarter Courts 159–160, 162–163
Queen Bóthildur 248

R

Raft 128–129
Ragna Ormsson 293
Ragnar "Hairy-Breeches" 238
Ragnar Loddbrok 215
Ragnarök 168–169, 171–173, 183, 299–300
Raid 152, 215–216, 253, 296
Rainbow Bridge 28, 171, 298
Ram Fjord 225
Range 70–71, 112–113, 186
Ravens 268, 270
Read/Write 35–36, 51, 60, 88, 92, 256
Real Time 59
Reið 190, 256
Religious Festival 281
Repair of Ships and Boats 132
Reputation 6, 19–22, 24–27, 29, 33, 63, 83, 85–87, 92, 133, 180–183, 295
Reputation Modifiers 182
Reric 238
Research 283, 302–303
Resistance roll 60, 64, 77, 120–121, 123, 137
Resistance table 63–64, 74, 80, 119–120
Resolution of Combat, Missiles, and Spells 98
Reyðarfjall 230
Reyðarfjorður 230
Reykjavík 221, 303
Ride 23, 27, 35–37, 47, 53, 55, 57, 64, 71, 81, 113, 117, 190, 194, 253, 255–259, 282
Risk/Reward rating 152
Ritur 225
River Seine 241
Rock Pillars Island 227–228
Rögnvaldur 21, 216, 243, 300
Rögnvaldur Eysteinsson 243
Rollo 216
Rouen 241
Rowboat 128, 129
Rowing 126, 128, 131, 132
Rowing Speed 126
Rune Magic 3, 6, 35–36, 51, 68, 92, 99, 186–188, 197–200, 203, 256, 303
Runemaster 12, 23, 36, 186, 256
Rus 25, 153, 215–216, 242
Russia 21, 215, 238, 298–299

S

Sacrifice River Valley 228
Sailing Fumbles 132, 134
Sailing Speed 126
Sailing Speeds 126, 131
Saint-Denis 241
Salmon Valley 29
Sax 51, 53, 55, 57, 93, 111, 147, 256, 258, 300
Scandal 288
Scorn pole 199, 200, 288, 300
Scotland 21, 24, 131, 214, 216, 238, 240, 243, 298, 302
Scuttling 137
Sea Cattle 262, 268
Sea Gull Mountain 225
Seal Mother 273
Sealskin 263
Search 35, 51, 53, 60–61, 71–72, 77, 88, 95, 153, 155, 193, 224, 234, 245, 253, 255–259
Seasickness 137
Sea Voyages 130
Seaworthiness 126, 128–130, 132–136
Second Sight 28, 34–36, 51, 60, 92, 195, 209, 233, 245–246, 256–257, 268, 270
Seiðhjallur 204
Seiðkona 12, 23, 36, 257, 301
Seiðmaður 12
Seiður 3, 6, 9, 12, 36, 48–49, 68, 82, 84, 87, 92, 99, 203–205, 207, 209, 225, 257, 282, 301
Seiður Magic 3, 6, 9, 35–36, 49, 68, 82, 84, 92, 99, 203–205, 207, 209, 257, 282
Seiður Ritual 204
Seine Valley 215, 243
Selkies 226, 263
Servant 162, 257
Servants 144, 257
Seville 242
Sheep 17, 40, 93, 143, 147, 265–266
Shelf of the Slain 168
Shell Monster 273
Shell-whale 276–277
Shetlands 243
Shield 35–37, 41, 47, 57, 63, 90, 103, 108–109, 111–112, 116–118, 122, 147, 193, 253, 255, 259
Shield Walls 118
Shining Hall 240
Shipboard Combats 137
Ship Disasters 133
Shiphandling 35, 37, 47, 60, 80, 88, 126, 128–137, 153, 194, 253, 259, 276
Ship Record Sheet 125
Ship Sheet 125
Ship-to-ship Missile Combat 137
Sif 17, 38, 168, 172, 187, 301
Sigfred 215, 238, 240
Sigmundur 9, 10, 17, 45, 54, 69, 114, 181, 284
Sigmundur Gunnarsson 45, 54
Sigtrygg 240
Sigtrygg Gnupasson 240
Sigtryggur 21, 298
Sigtryggur One-Eyed 21, 298
Sigtún 240
Sigtuna 240
Sigurblót 174, 301
Sing 35–36, 55, 60, 63, 79, 82, 84, 90, 181, 188, 204
Size 11, 28, 69, 93, 116–117, 142, 261
Sjælland 238
Skaði 171, 301
Skaftafell 232
Skafti's Mountains 232, 233
Skafti Þorgeirsson 295
Skagafjörður 227–228, 245
Skagi 227
Skaldic Poetry 27, 35–37, 47, 55, 60, 84, 190

Skalds 84, 92
Skalla-Grímur Kveldúlfsson 215
Skammdegi 150
Skane 238
Skeiðarárjökull 232
Skessuspor 229
Ski 35, 81
Skíðblaðnir 169
Skill Category Modifier 33
Skill Category Modifiers 23, 33–34
Skill Rating 12
Skills category modifier 23, 33–34, 60, 79, 84, 110, 112, 121, 281–283
Skíringssalur 240
Skirmishes at Sea 136
Skjaldborg 118
Skjálfandafljót 228
Skógá 234
Skógafoss 234
Skógar 234
Skógasandur 234
Skóggangur 162
Skrúður 230
Skúlaskeið 236
Skuld 185, 300
Skúli's Run 236
Skyr 12, 285, 301
Skyr Production 285
Slashing 106–107, 110
Sleight 35, 60, 90, 95
Sleipnir 168, 173, 212, 301
Slippery Decks 138
Smoky Bay 221
Snæbjörn 8, 163, 196
Snæfellsjökull 221
Snæfellsnes 219–220
Snæland 213, 230, 301
Snow Fox 265–266
Snowland 213
Snow Land 230
Snow Mountain Glacier 221
Snow Mountain Peninsula 219–220
Social Rank 182
South Islands 243
Sól 193, 197, 199
Sólarhringur 149, 298
Sólheimajökull 235
Sólheimasandur 234
Speak Other Language 35, 84, 194, 258–260, 267–268, 270
Speak Own Language 35, 84, 258, 260
Special Success 12, 61, 63, 79, 100, 103, 179, 182, 188, 204, 285
Spirit Animal 12, 22–23, 33–35, 37, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 92, 209, 252, 255–259
Splitting Attacks 103
Spot Hidden 35, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 71, 77, 90, 95, 153, 277
Spring Assembly 26, 61, 145, 157, 159–160
Staðarvatn 225
Statement of Intent 98, 117
Status 3, 6, 19, 22–23, 33, 39, 63, 115, 145, 158, 162, 178, 182–183, 199, 208, 285–287
Steinar 27, 216, 300–301
Steinar Önundursson 27
Steingestur the Handsome 296
Steingrímsfjörður 225
Steingrímur's Fjord 225–226
Storms 76, 134
Strandir 225
Straumnes 225
Stream Headland 225
Strength 11, 16–17, 28, 38, 51, 57, 60, 77, 131–132, 134, 136, 168, 173, 189, 196, 256, 301
Strength Check 60
Stronghold 219, 230, 292
Stronghold Fjord 219, 230, 292
Structure Points 126, 128–130, 132–133
Sturla 17, 27, 68, 92, 178, 292
Sturla the Black 292
Subduing 121
Suðureyjar 243
Súlnasker 236
Sumar 150
Sun-Home Glacier 235
Sun-Home Sands 234
sunstone 28
Surtshellir 219
Surtur's Cave 219
Survival 9, 23, 27, 29, 35–37, 47, 53, 55, 60, 88, 134, 192, 195, 253, 256, 258–259, 287
Sutherland 243
Sváfnir 17, 211–212, 246, 248
Svalþúfa 221
Swallow Tussock 221
Swamp Valley 235–236
Swamp Valley Glacier 235
Swamp Valley Mountains 235
Sweden 20, 182, 240–241, 302
Swim 35, 57, 60, 80–81, 135, 137–138, 194, 234, 253, 255–257, 259–260, 263, 267–268, 273, 275
Swimming in Armor 137–138

T

Temple Bay 221
Temple Glacier 148, 237, 300
Temple Stead 221
Tenants 144
The Book of Settlements 19, 220–221, 224, 236, 267
The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway 251
The Hidden Truth 246, 248
The Lay of Atli 177
The Lay of Svipdagur 177
The Prose Edda 212, 302
The Saga of Eiríkur the Red 216
The Saga of Finnbogi the Mighty 15
The Saga of Gísli Súrsson 177, 216
The Saga of Grettir the Strong 33, 39–40, 183, 215, 228, 237
The Saga of Guðmundur Arason 245
The Saga of Hallfreður the Troublesome Poet 216
The Saga of Hörður and the Hólm-Dwellers 216
The Saga of Hörður and the People of Hólm 177
The Saga of Hörður and the People of Hólmur 221
The Saga of Kormákur the Skald 216
The Saga of the People of Laxárdal 28
The Saga of the People of Laxárdalur 209, 215, 216
The Saga of the People of Unruly Valley 158
The Saga of the People of Vatnsdalur 125
The Saga of the People of Vopnafjord 31
The Saga of the Ynglingar 174, 203, 204
The Saga of Walking Hrolfur 203
The Saga of Þórður the Menace 145
The Sagas of the Norwegian Kings 226
Thirst 72–73, 134
Thrall 20, 29, 40, 144, 154, 162, 173, 258, 295– 296
Thrown Objects 75
Thunderer 225
Time of the Great Rift 248
Tongue Rock 220–221
Tove 240
Townsfolk 254
Track 35, 37, 47, 51, 53, 60, 71, 95, 208, 253, 255, 259–260, 264, 267, 269, 271–273, 282
Trader 129, 258
Training 28, 30, 33–35, 59–60, 79, 90, 112, 117, 253, 281–284
Travel Times 131
Treat Disease 35, 60, 88, 194, 257
Treat Poison 35, 55, 60, 63, 88, 192
Trembling River 228
Trireme 129–130
Troll 18, 224, 229, 264
Tröllaskagi 227
Troll-Mate's Footprints 229
Trolls 5–6, 119, 142, 148–149, 177–178, 181, 211, 224–226, 228–229, 236–237, 260, 264
Tungustapi 220
Turf House 143
Two Weapon Use 121
Týr 38, 57, 149, 169, 172, 187, 189, 193, 197, 199, 256, 266, 294, 301

U

Ubba Ragnarsson 238
Úlfljótur 24, 301
Ullur 38, 51, 53, 172, 187, 301
Ulrich 215
Ultima Thule 212–213
Under the Glacier 221
Undir Jökli 221
Uppland 241
Úr 51, 189, 196–197, 199, 256
Urður 185, 300
Using Passions 179
Using Reputation 181

V

Vaðmál 12, 28, 40
Vaðmal Production 284, 286
Vagrants 144
Valaskjálf 168
Valdimar Gamli 240
Valgerður 17, 216
Valla-Ljót's Saga 144
Vanaheimur 167, 301
Väner 240
Vanir 92, 167–168, 203, 300–301
Varangian Guard 241
Varangians 241
Vatnsdalsá 226
Vatnsdalur 125, 226
Vätter 240
Vé 211–212, 301
Vend 51, 191–192, 196–197, 199, 256
Verðandi 185, 300
Vessel Damage and Repair 132
Vésteinn 27, 216, 295–296, 302
Vésteinn of the Highlands 295
Vestmannaeyjar 236
Vesturdalur 227
Vetur 150
Veturnáttablót 174, 301
Victory Sacrifice 174, 284, 286, 301
Víðarr 38, 57, 172, 187, 301
Víðidalsá 226, 229
Víðidalur 229
Vigfús 295–296
Víksfjörður 240
Vili 211–212, 301
Vindsvall 76, 212, 220
vorþing 158
Vorþing 158

W

Warrior 16, 229, 254, 259, 294, 296
Warrior Women Rock 229
Warship 126, 128–132
Waterfall of the Gods 228–229
Waterford 242
Water Serpent 275
Weasel 16, 258, 265–266
Weather 49, 76, 196, 209, 257
Weekday Names 149
Well of Fate 185–186, 194
Wessex 215, 241
Westfjords 48, 214, 224–225
West Fjords 56, 219, 225–226
Westman Islands 141, 236
West Valley 227
Wexford 242
Whale Fjord 87, 221, 230
Whale Lake 221
Whale Mountain 230
White River 46, 219, 237
White River Lake 237
Wicked Whales 276
Wicklow 242
Wide Fjord 226
Wide River 226
Wide Valley 229
Wide Valley River 229
Wineheath 24, 216, 301
Witmar 241
Wolf 17–18, 52, 255, 265–266
Wood Leaf 169
World Tree 168, 173, 185, 189, 204, 212, 220, 260, 265, 301
Worship 23, 26–29, 35–38, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 60, 92–94, 173, 183, 253, 255–259, 284
Wyrd 30, 301

Y

Yelling Horn 171
Yggdrasil 168, 173, 185, 189, 212, 220, 260, 265–266, 300–301
Ýmir 17, 211, 247, 265, 301
York 21, 25, 215–216, 300
Younger Fúþark 189
Ýr 17, 192
Yrsa Sveinsdóttir 293

Age of Vikings

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME
BY PEDRO ZIVIANI

Adventure in an Iceland of myth and legend!

"...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

Age of Vikings transports you to medieval Iceland—a vibrant land on the edge of the known world, where Vikings seek honor and fame through adventure. This book contains everything you need to both play and run *Age of Vikings*!

- Hero creation rules, including Passions, family history, and ever-important Icelandic nicknames.
- Rules for the *Basic Roleplaying* system as used in *Age of Vikings*, including skills, conflict resolution, and hero development.
- The history of mythic Iceland, covering the life of a Viking, laws and government, religion, and the wild and wondrous creatures of legend.
- A guide to magic: rules for combining different Norse runes to cast powerful spells, and the shamanic practice of *seiður*.
- Extensive rules for ships and seafaring, including naval combat.
- A full bestiary of enemies both mundane and magical, and an extensive section on the mysterious "Hidden People."
- The *Alþing*—an introductory adventure that can be used multiple times in a campaign, and a suite of ready-to-play heroes.
- Includes a 17"×22" pull-out map of Iceland.

Hear the call of glory and honor, journey proud across your land free from the tyranny of kings and queens—enter the *Age of Vikings*!

CHA2038-H $59.99
ISBN: 978-1-56882-532-8

What is BRP?

Introduced over 40 years ago, Basic Roleplaying is the engine that powers games like *Call of Cthulhu*, *RuneQuest*, *Pendragon*, and countless others. BRP-powered games all use a roll-low skill-based system, so you don't have to learn a brand new system with each game.