

THE NORTH EXPOSED

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FOREWORD

I really cannot tell you how much we enjoyed the first of what I plan to be a series of Origins stories. By this point, a continuity was being established spanning our Classic World of Darkness chronicles. The point of the Origins stories was to give the players a chance (I say chance, but what they hear is 'rat race') to become an elder vampire established in this continuity. The story would not only tell the epic of a Methuselah's Embrace, but it would also lay all the groundwork and motivations for an active role in the Jihad. The first of these then is set during the viking era in Norway.

It occurs to me that I should preface what follows with a number of caveats. This work contains all the scenes as I had written them out before each session, accompanied by illustrations (and for the first time, even photographs) provided by various players. Only a few very critical player decisions that resulted from these scenes are provided in the form of sidebars. In this sense, the story is presented in broad strokes and will likely leave the reader wondering about what is left unsaid. On top of this, note that as usual, this work has not undergone the luxury of proofreading.

Should the reader really want to know about the manner of psychopath that Povar was, or what exact brotherly tension persisted between Arka and Falke, or any other such aspect that the players and I deem crucial, feel free to query us. We would all enjoy recounting it in greater detail than I can offer here.

Let us prepare. Allow your world to narrow. Forget what the shape of continents are. Forget your knowledge of history. Forget the calendar you know. Forget it all.

Now remember the unchanging things. Remember starlight. Remember the seasons. Remember life and death. Remember survival. Remember community. Remember family.

*Ut av moders djupe kjød,
inn i verdas grøne lød.
Døy og bli født på ny.*

Wardruna – Bjarkan

PROLOGUE

EXPOSURE

(783-785)

The story begins, for each player seated at the table, when their characters come into existence. From the womb, they enter a time and place long past. It is there that they lie exposed.

CHARACTER CREATION

“A woman wails through the night. Outside, it is cold and dark, a landscape of ice and howling winds. A child is pulled from her womb and she slumps in exhaustion. The child is immediately dragged from her side and brought before the father, a stern, stoic face caught in the consternation of his decision: will this creature bear his name, or will it be thrown to the midden to feed the dogs?” [...] “What does he see before him, held up in his hands?” [...] Alternatively, the season is different for each character. They are born within a stretch of two years of each other.

CHILDHOOD

(789)

By the age of the characters’ first chores and duties, allow the players to fill in their characters’ names, and Attributes. A character concept should start to grow here. Also make the characters draw their homes in a map of their village. Note that this ‘village’ is spread wide apart, where the individual farms (which may be shared by different characters as well as different families) are the height of wealth and civilization.

FILLING IN EIKUNDASUND

The structure of Eikundasund depends largely on the characters’ choices in their family ties and roles. The rest of village will need to be invented on the spot using names like: Beigarth, Hrut, Naddod, Osvald, and

BIRTH

Þormoðr’s conception was preceded by long years of his parents thinking they were barren. The moment of Þéa’s birth coincided with a loud strike of thunder. Arka emerged from the womb with what seemed to be clenched fists, making a noise that might have been called a growl. Falke’s grandfather’s last breath was followed by the new child’s first cry. Valfreyja’s mother died in labor. All who looked into the child’s eyes for the first time, saw something they had never seen before.

Rognvald for the men and Asgerd, Gudrid, Kadlin, Oddbjorg, and Unn for the women. The grandparents invented here will later form an important council of crones.

A DISTANT MEMORY

This event will later seem to the characters as mythical, for they are too young to truly comprehend what they are seeing. One day, toward evening, the characters are off away from the village, fishing for example, when they hear shouts. If they investigate, they will find three men in heated discussion. Close by lies the corpse of a hunted reindeer. They are three brothers from Stafangr. The characters can just overhear them calling each other blood kin, and rivals over their father’s fortune.

Soon, insults come to battle, each for his own, with axe and knife. One is slain first. Then, another is struck down, but not before the last is mortally wounded. The characters watch, the sun by now set, as the man gurgles a prayer. He says “Oðr!”, which means either ‘furious’ or ‘soul’ or ‘wit’. Before long, a dark woman then appears above the characters, perched high in a tree, as if flown from the skies. She is a Wælkyrige, a creature in the service of the All-High. She says nothing, only kisses the man, and he rises to join her. He has been made a ghoul, not Embraced. If the characters approach the corpses, she scares them off.

STORIES FROM THE ALDERMAN

The alderman often tells stories to the children. Every time he tells them a story this way, he begins to carve in a piece of wood. When the story is done, he gives the children the figure he has made. So far, he has told them about trolls and völur, about dwarves and elves, about bears and wolves, and about dragons and giants. All of these stories have a wooden figure to remember them by.

Tonight then, the alderman promises to tell them a story about the gods. He asks the children which one they want to hear about: the poet, the warrior, or the magician. Regardless of their choice, he begins his tale.

There was once a man who was poor. He was so poor, he had no choice but to beg from his own younger brother. The brother promised to feed him lamb if he promised to do something, but he would not be told what it was he must do before he promised to do it.

The older brother promised he would do it and in turn, the younger brother fed him delicious lamb. The lamb was sweet and flavorful. He had nothing to eat for so long that he tried to eat the whole lamb, hoping that if he did, he would never have to eat again.

When finally, nothing was left but the bones, the younger brother smiled and laughed. He said the promise was due and that right then, full and heavy, the begging brother had to go out and venture to the Hall of the Dead. Because he had promised it, he had no choice and the older brother set out.



A sign from
the gods

On the long road away from his village, someone crossed the older brother's path. The man was old and looked poorer than the older brother had ever been. The old man had a long beard and a wide hat and two large birds were pecking at his eyes, thinking him already dead.

At this point, the characters realize they have heard of this wandering man before, in fact many times. If queried, the alderman only says that he is called Blindi.

The old man begged the brother for something to feed the birds so they would not peck at his eyes. He saw that the brother's belly was full and said he must have much to spare. The brother, in truth, had nothing to give and wished he had not eaten so much. Then, he might have had some lamb to share.

But then, the brother picked between his teeth and found some strings of meat he had not yet swallowed in all his hurry. He gave these to the old wanderer, who gave him some advice in return. The old man said he knew where the road ahead led and he said that it must mean the brother was going toward Hel.

The old man said that the men in Hel's Hall are very bored and very hungry. He said that it always rains and yet the cups are always empty. They would be jealous of seeing the brother's full gut and may cut it from him. The old man then thought for a while before he stretched out his arm and gave the brother back the string of meat. He said he would have more need of it than him. Then, the old man walked away and one of the hungry birds pecked out his eye and started eating it.

The brother carried on his journey to the Hall of the Dead until finally he arrived. He entered the hall and the dead looked back. The dead spoke to him, saying: you have a full belly and we have nothing. The dead said it was not fair.

Although they said that they had nothing, the brother saw in the corner of the hall a standing mill that had long not been used. The brother said the dead were rich, for they had a mill. He said that if he had that mill, he would not have been so hungry earlier that day.

The dead answered that they did not have anything to grind in the mill and so that it was useless to them. The brother then offered them the string of meat he had pulled from between his teeth and he offered to trade. The dead accepted and fell into a fight over who could eat the strand of lamb while the brother left the hall with the mill.

From that day on, the brother tried to mill everything he could find. He milled grains to make bread and he milled beehives to make honey and candles. He worked hard at the mill every day, so hard that his sweat poured over the mill in little rivers.

After a time, however, the man's younger brother found out about the mill and he grew jealous of it. One night, he took the mill and put it on a boat to steal it. He sailed the boat out to sea, but found he was too curious about the mill and decided to try it.

Accidentally, the man milled a part of the boat itself and it began to sink. The brother drowned and was never seen again. Parts of the boat eventually washed up ashore, but the mill was lost forever. It remained on the bottom of the sea, where the

motion of the waves slowly turned the mill. The mill unleashed the older brother's sweat and ground the younger brother's dying tears.

And that is why the sea is salt.

At the end of the story, the man finishes his carving and gives it to the children. It is a figure of the old man, with his wide hat and the two birds. He repeats the characters' choice between poet, warrior, and magician, but reveals this figure is actually all three. When they are older, they will be told more of him, he says.



(793)

Years later, a ping is called and the characters are to witness it. They join half the village in their trek north, to the hall at Stafangr. There, word will have reached them of the attack at Lindisfarne ("Norðhymbra"). After the Ping, the men of Eikundasund daringly attempt such a voyage themselves.

They are gone for a long time. Only the Alderman Bjorgolf, old and now crippled from battle, returns. He stops at the island at Eikundasund in sight for a day and a night, then he returns to the village and confers with the women. Within a few days, he does not return from hunting. The characters may find him dead in the woods, slain by wolves. There are no more men in the village.

HUNGER

The years have not been kind to the village and its children. By now, the characters are the only children left. Many of their friends have died of the poor conditions they live in. Unless they pass a raw Stamina roll (difficulty 8), the characters must all remove a dot from either Strength or Stamina to reflect their own malnutrition.

FAMILIES

The journey to Stafangr is a 15-hour walk which crosses inland, through the fjords. In Stafangr, all the represented families from the surrounding villages will have marked themselves so they can be recognized. The people of Eikundasund all have an oak leaf either braided into their hair, or tied to their forehead.

Svarthola: To the north of Stafangr lies an ancient cave, from which these families originated. They guard the entrance well and it is said dwarves live within its depths. Whatever the truth of the matter, the people of Svarthola are the wealthiest and display this in their silver jewelry. Such riches are unthinkable to the people of Eikundasund. Also, the people from around Svarthola have painted their faces dark with ashes, as if they just returned from the depths.

Finnø: To the north-east of Stafangr lie several islands.

The families here are dominant fishermen and seafarers. They are the master boat builders of Rygjafylke. Their attire is adorned with the feather of a gull. Their patriarch even wears a cloak, all of white feathers.

Gjæsdal: The people of Gjæsdal come from further inland, to the east. Their lands are better for farming than any other. Their sheep also make them the area's best clothiers. Aside from their thickest of sheepskin cloaks, they also bear their own drinking horns, which have been inscribed with the deeds of its owner.

VÖLVA

The characters may see, in a moment when they are unsupervised, a woman walking through the crowd holding a staff. She sees the children staring and beckons them away from the hall, away from the others. At a flat stone out of earshot, she then reveals that she is a practitioner of seiðr, spá, and galdar. She offers to reveal the runes to the children.

They will be made to sit in a circle and eleven runes will be cast between them. The rune closest to every child reflects their present and is placed in front of them. Then, a rune is placed at every child's left and right, the one indicating their future, the other indicating their past (in the way they are placed, the one child's future rune is the neighbor's past). One rune remains and this one is said to bind the children together for a common danger (4).

Allow the players to incorporate these runes in the concepts of their characters. After the runes are spoken, the völva tells the characters that once their future has come true, they may seek out a seeress again to discover what else the future holds for them.

BRAG AND PROVING

Most of the time, the children are kept at a distance from the business in the hall of the jarl. In fact, the children never even see the jarl. Word reaches them soon, however, as their fathers return bloody and broken. They were all of them defeated in an escalated argument, the outcome of which was to be determined by combat. Worse, they were all shamed.

Before long, children from the other families taunt the characters about their fathers' shame. The insult is a serious thing and violence may follow from it if the characters stand up for themselves.

Eventually, on the eve of their departure from the Þing, the characters' fathers end a long argument with their wives when they sell all the horses and cattle brought from Eikundasund to buy a ship with a sail from the Finnø. They promise their children they will return from the raid richer than the jarl himself and all the Svarthola people put together. They will end the hunger of their families.



FIRST LINES

ƿ: Fé, wealth in cattle

Fé er frænda róg
ok flæðar viti
ok grafseiðs gata.
Fé is discord amongst kin
and fire of the sea
and path of the serpent.

Ð: Úr, rain and mud

Úr er skýja grátr
ok skára þverrir
ok hirðis hatr.
Úr is lamentation of the clouds
and ruin of the hay-harvest
and hate of the shepherd.

Þ: Þurs, giant

Þurs er kvenna kvöl
ok kletta búi
ok varðrúnar verr.
Þurs is torture of women
and cliff-dweller
and husband of a giantess.

Ṛ: Reið, riding

Reið er sitjandi sæla
ok snúðig ferð
ok jórs erfiði.
Reið is of sitting a blessing
and swift journey
and horses toiling.

ƿ: Kaun, disease or ulcer

Kaun er barna böll
ok bardaga för
ok holdfúa hús.
Kaun is fatal to children
and painful spot
and house of mortification.

*: Hagall, hail

Hagall er kaldakorn
ok krapadrífa
ok snáka sótt.
Hagall is cold grain
and shower of sleet
and sickness of serpents.

ḥ: Sól, sun

Sól er skýja skjöldr
ok skínandi röðull
ok ísa aldrregi.
Sól is the shield of the clouds
and shining ray
and destroyer of ice.

†: Týr, warrior

Týr er einhendr áss
ok ulfs leifar
ok hofa hilmir.
Týr is a god with one hand
and is left with the wolf
and prince of temples.

Ḃ: Bjarkan, birch

Bjarkan er laufgat lim
ok lítit tré
ok ungsamligr viðr.
Bjarkan is a leafy twig
and little tree
and fresh young shrub.

ƿ: Maðr, man

Maðr er manns gaman
ok moldar auki
ok skipa skreytir.
Maðr is delight of man
and augmentation of the earth
and adorer of ships.

l̥: Lögr, water

Lögr er vellanda vatn
ok viðr ketill
ok glömmungr grund.
Lögr is eddying stream
and broad geyser
and land of the fish.



FALKE'S FAILURE

The child Falke, eager to wish his father a safe journey, decided to carve a rune just like those he saw the völvu use. The player unfortunately botched the Crafts roll, leading to a fatal mistake. His father promised Falke that carrying that rune, he would need no shield.

TO BE EINHERJAR

Alderman Bjorgolf explains to the children that, although he has told them many stories, he has not yet told them about 'einherjar'. He has no time to explain, but he tells them that it is an important thing for every grown man.

The characters' fathers shout for Þór as they enter the boat, taking all the village's axes with them. The alderman invokes something different, softly, which the characters might make out as having sounded like either 'furious' or 'soul' or 'wit'.

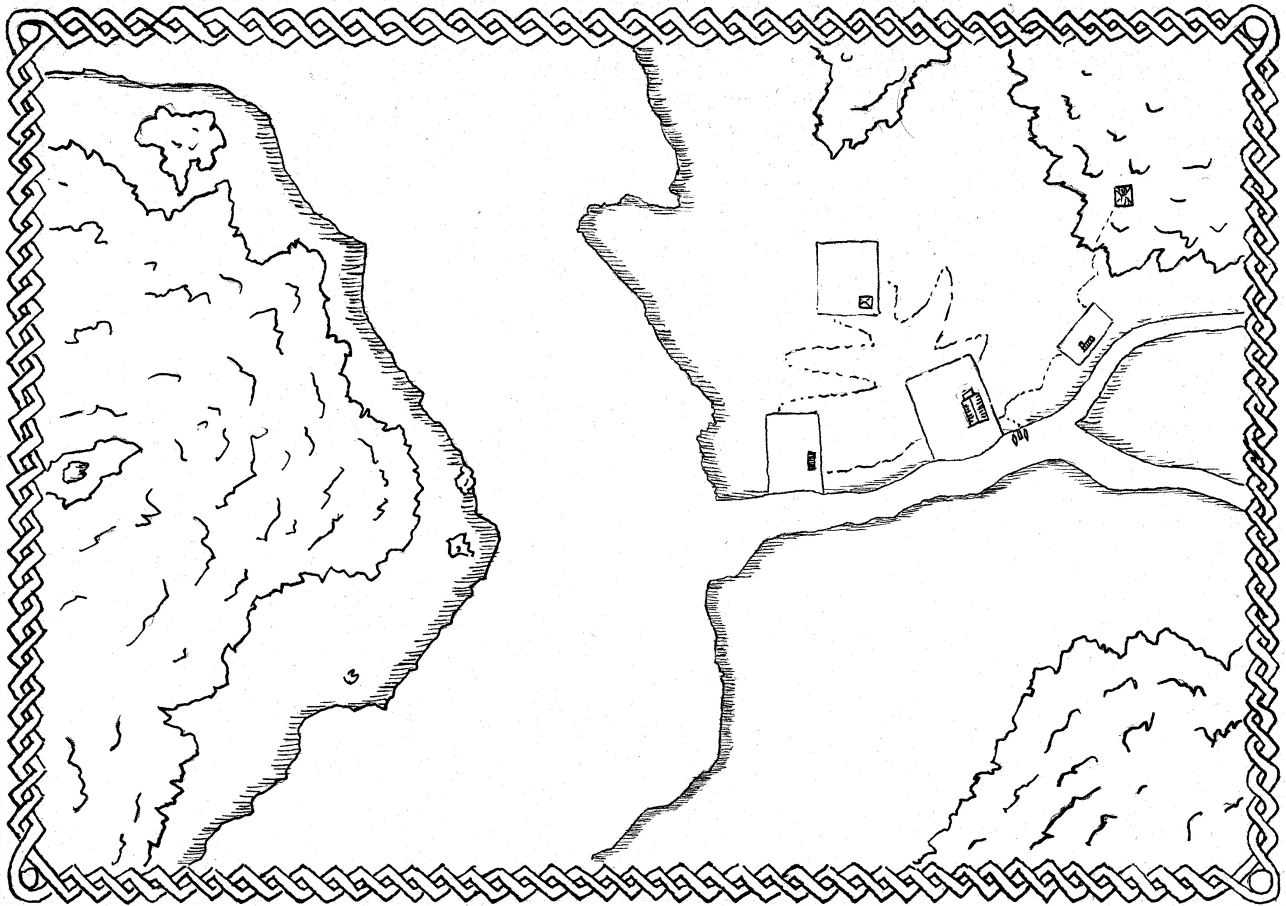
rites of passage

(799)

By the time the characters grow into adolescence, the village consists solely of them and a council of crones. They have been kept sheltered at home ever since the þing and the disappearance of their men. Allow the players to choose their characters' Abilities, now.

The crones have had a great weight on their shoulders in sheltering the village without the strength of men. This council has turned to Lhiannan benefactors, a mysterious threesome inhabiting the island nearby. The women keep this a great secret, however, and the children are forbidden to even enter the waters, let alone approach the island.'

After a long time, the Lhiannan demand of the village a sacrifice. This will be one of the characters. The others witness this, and are explained its implications in terms that may fall short. After witnessing their friend's departure, the characters all fill in their Virtues. Most importantly, they can decide for themselves whether they have Conscience or Conviction and Instinct or Self-Control.



ONE MORE STORY FROM THE ALDERMAN

This is a story about a glutton and his thirst. A giant is a glutton because he is always thinking about eating. And, when he is thinking about eating, he is thinking about eating the flesh of goats down in the grass, of birds high in the clouds, of fish deep in the sea, but also about you, child. When a giant looks down at you, he is thinking: "What would that little one taste like?" And the giant is curious enough to try.

But with so much eating, the giant is also thirsty and he must have a river to drink. Sometimes, he will drink the cold water straight from the glacier. Sometimes, he will steal ale or mead from wherever he can find it. But what he really likes to do, is drink the blood of whatever he is eating. And all the giants know there is no blood sweeter than that of little children.

I don't need to tell you that giants are tall and have the strength of countless men. Only one story have I heard, where men succeeded in killing a giant. It is a story of fortitude, cunning, and sacrifice. A long time ago, I met a man who came from the north, the far north where the giants are still everywhere.

They live high in the mountains, where no man can reach. They like to come down during the night and plunder, and kill, and eat, and drink. These men in the north knew all too well how the giant is a glutton and has a great thirst.

First, they ate the goats. A month later, they ate the bulls. They kept coming back for more. After a year, they were eating the women. It was like they knew how to make man extinct. Not much later, they were eating the children. It was then that a lone farmer approached the jarl.

This man was old and angry. His wife and his sister he had lost a long time ago. Only recently, did he lose all his daughters, and now he had only one son. What the man proposed as he stood before the jarl made all the men's guts turn weak. The man had with him a cart full of nightshade, which he had collected far and wide, and he said he wanted to make his son eat it all. One branch is enough to kill a grown man, so the jarl screamed at the madman. Why on earth would this farmer want to feed so much to his own son?

Then, said the man, it is was they should have done long ago. One more sacrifice, and then it would all be over. The farmer said he would gladly sacrifice himself, but the giants would not eat the men until all the children were gone. That would be too late.

"Let my son be the sacrifice," he said. "We will poison him so deeply, that when the glutton drinks to quench his thirst, he will be dead as well as my son. And that will be the end of it."

The men were all disgusted, but the jarl saw the truth of what the farmer said. They could not conquer the gluttons in battle. Perhaps, this was truly the only way. With a heavy heart, the jarl agreed.

The young child was fed the berries, the men promising him it was good and healthy. His father did not shed a tear as the boy ate his fill again and again. When finally the boy fell to the ground, it was night, and they knew the giants would soon come.

The hungry beasts came down the mountain, growling and snarling, and heaving and drooling. One among them caught the scent of a young boy and he followed it, stealing away from his giant friends to be alone with his prize.

When the glutton stepped over a house, he found the boy, lying on his back with his feet in a pool, as if he fell asleep enjoying himself. The giant licked his foul lips with his foul tongue and stepped closer. It was then, however, that he found he was not alone.

A man was stooped over the boy, whispering in his ear. As the giant came closer, he had to bend down to see what manner of man it was. He had a long beard and a great cloak. The rest of face was invisible to the giant, hidden by a wide hat.

The glutton did not like the taste of old men, so instead he roared to make the man go away. Spittle flew from its teeth and the sound woke everyone in the village, but still the cloaked man did not move.

"Here," said the old man as he pointed to a barrel. "That is for you. The boy has been dead for a long time. You would not like the taste of his cold flesh, but I have bled him into that vessel for you and kept it warm with my magic."

The giant was suspicious of the old man, whose eyes he could not see. The old man saw that the giant wanted to leave and find other children to eat. Just as the glutton turned to leave, he spoke of drought. This made the giant's tongue turn to sand. The cloaked man spoke of a primal thirst so strong that even drinking the salt water in the sea would be better than enduring one more moment with such a thirst.

Immediately, the spoken spell took hold on the giant. Such a thirst he had to cleanse, but he did not trust the old man and so he started drinking from the pool nearby instead. The glutton drank and drank. Meanwhile, the old man began to utter a second spell. He spoke of how cold it could get in winter and how frost may settle even in a giant's stomach.

Suddenly, the giant, his thirst never sated, could not drink from the cold pool anymore. The old man had won. The giant had no choice but to drink from the barrel. And so, the giant drank from the barrel, and with it, he drank the purest brew of nightshade.

The giant died in that village, where his bones can be seen until this day. In fury, all the giant's friends took revenge on the villagers for their trick. They ate and crushed and drank and killed until there was no one left.

Only one old man escaped from the village. It was from him that I heard this tale. All you must remember, children, is to stay away from giants.

SURVIVAL

After the characters have decided on their abilities, their roles in the village become apparent. Whether their talents lie in a craft they can trade in, or in hunting and fishing alone, each of the characters must roll for his or her duty (difficulty 8). Any character who fails this roll must make do with a Stamina + Survival roll at the same difficulty. If both fail, that character is once more malnourished and gains the Short flaw (**Vampire: the Dark Ages** page 277).

MEN

As one of the male characters is about his duties on one of the farms, he may roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6) to notice someone approaching. This is unnerving, since men have often posed a problem to what remains of the families of Eikundasund. The three characters with the highest Appearance score (undoubtedly inherited from their fair parents) will already have lost their mothers to raiders kidnapping from the defenseless village. They appear to have come from the land to the south, Agðir.

The man approaching now is wealthy and calm, however. He has a silver ring around one wrist and a gold one around the other. He claims to be a Dane on his way to see the north. He intends to return home with stories to tell and with a wife. When he heard there was a village with no men, he had to see it for himself, only to be disappointed that a young man is the first thing he sees. He makes note of the fact that these women cannot be teaching him how to fight.

He will want to speak with the character's elders. If the woman is fair, he says he will pay with his silver band. If she is truly beautiful, he will pay with the gold one. In the end, he is even more disappointed with the two women that remain. He will take them both for half a silver armband, which he splits in half before them with his axe. The council of crones cruelly sends the women away before they squabble over who should keep the silver safe. Now, the characters truly are alone in a village of crones.

WOMEN

After the last two mothers have been taken away from the village, the council of crones' attention is turned to the female characters. They will often comment on how they have grown so much this last year and how they are truly becoming women. Eventually, they are both fetched late at night and brought before them all. They ask which of them has bled yet, a matter they may have discussed with their mothers but not with the crones. Then, they ask if they have kept themselves virgins.

Thus, the crones will choose one of the characters to be sacrificed to the gods. They will feed the victim an infusion to make her delirious and then overcome her. The other characters will be gathered then, as well, as the victim is placed in the same boat that washed up with the alderman six years ago. Fires are lit on it and the girl, by now too drugged to stand, is laid on branches of oak. She is cast off to the other island.

Characters may roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7) to see three figures standing on the shore of the island,



ready to receive the boat. The crones tell the characters that they are now old enough to understand this: They are in the presence of the gods and the gods must be appeased.

DESTINY

(801)

The characters, now young adults, carry all responsibilities of the village. The players may choose their characters' archetypes and complete their character sheet. They effectively receive no Backgrounds.

Their council of crones is bitter, but not one of them has died. They speak of the day when they may reap their rewards. Somehow, infighting has intensified among them. Then, one day, that day arrives when the character previously sacrificed returns to the village, a Lhiannan (13th generation). Each and every crone of the council desired the gift bestowed on this character and bitterly schemed against her rivals until this day. Meanwhile, the other Lhiannan have sunk to torpor here, as was their intention, to escape the rise of Christianity that is claiming their homeland.

AMONG THE LHIANNAN

Note that the Lhiannan sires never revealed their names, only desperately placed their fate in the hands of the newly Embraced character. They expect her to provide them with a new pagan land full of riches and worship, and most importantly: blood. The character may very well hold resent for them, however, especially after she discovers the powers they teach her could have been used to protect the village.

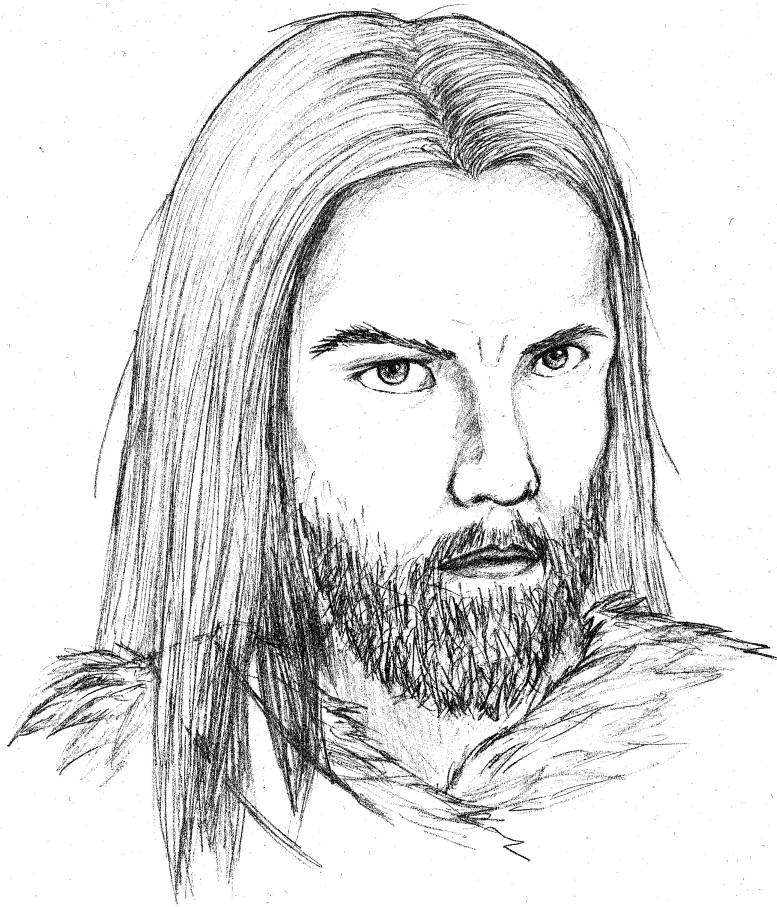
Note also, that although the Lhiannan taught their childe much about the ways of vampires, she does not know how to Embrace another. She was drugged during her own Embrace and was never told its secrets. She does know about making ghouls, however.

FATE

Here, the characters, heavily influenced by their new vampire patron, will start to decide their own fate. The Lhiannan has been taught for years by her sires and their fears for a coming danger, for Christianity to take over their realms too. Allow the characters to decide what happens to the council of crones, what happens to the torporous Lhiannan on the island, and how they will continue in their village.



THE NORTH EXPOSED



DORNODAR

Mortal

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Rogue

Strength[†] ●●●●○
 Dexterity ●●○○○
 Stamina‡ ●●●●○

Charisma ●●○○○
 Manipulation ●●○○○
 Appearance ●●○○○

Perception ●●●○○
 Intelligence ●●○○○
 Wits ●●●○○

Acting ○○○○○
 Alertness ●○○○○
 Athletics ●○○○○
 Brawl ●○○○○
 Dodge ○○○○○
 Empathy ●○○○○
 Intimidation ●●●○○
 Larceny ○○○○○
 Leadership ●○○○○
 Subterfuge ●○○○○

Animal Ken ●○○○○
 Archery ●○○○○
 Crafts^{††} ●●●●○
 Etiquette ●○○○○
 Herbalism ○○○○○
 Melee^{‡‡} ●●●●○
 Music ○○○○○
 Ride ○○○○○
 Stealth ●○○○○
 Survival ●○○○○

Academics ○○○○○
 Hearth Wisdom ●○○○○
 Investigation ○○○○○
 Law ●○○○○
 Linguistics ○○○○○
 Medicine ●○○○○
 Occult ○○○○○
 Politics ○○○○○
 Science ●○○○○
 Seneschal ●○○○○

Conscience ●●●○○
 Self-Control ●●○○○
 Courage ●●●●○

Willpower ●●●●○○○○○

† Bludgeoning
 ‡ Endurance
 †† Coopering
 ‡‡ Hammer

PROLOGUE



NEA

Mortal

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Rebel

Strength† ●●●●○
 Dexterity ●●●●○
 Stamina ●●●●○

Charisma ●●○○○
 Manipulation ●●○○○
 Appearance ●●○○○

Perception ●●●○○
 Intelligence ●●●○○
 Wits ●●○○○

Acting ○○○○○
 Alertness‡ ●●●●○
 Athletics ●●○○○
 Brawl ●●○○○
 Dodge ○○○○○
 Empathy ●○○○○
 Intimidation ●●●○○
 Larceny ○○○○○
 Leadership ●○○○○
 Subterfuge ○○○○○

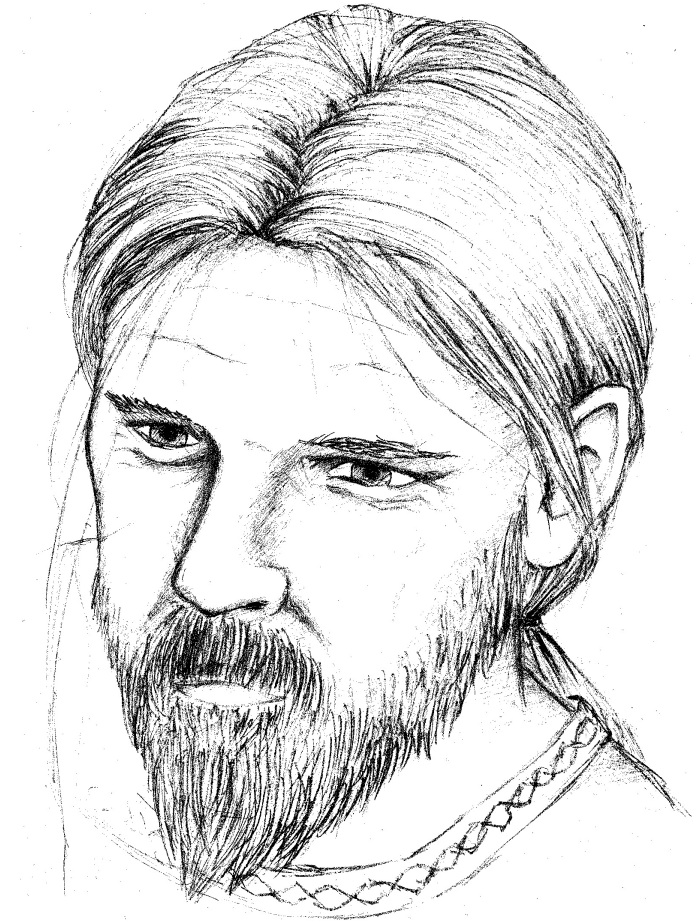
Animal Ken ○○○○○
 Archery ○○○○○
 Crafts ●○○○○
 Etiquette ○○○○○
 Herbalism ○○○○○
 Melee†† ●●●●○
 Music ○○○○○
 Ride ○○○○○
 Stealth ●○○○○
 Survival ●●●○○

Academics ○○○○○
 Hearth Wisdom ●●○○○
 Investigation ●●○○○
 Law ○○○○○
 Linguistics ○○○○○
 Medicine ○○○○○
 Occult ○○○○○
 Politics ●○○○○
 Science ○○○○○
 Seneschal ○○○○○

Conviction ●●●●○
 Instinct ●●○○○
 Courage ●●●●○

Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○

† Grip
 ‡ Being watched
 †† Disarm



Mortal

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Traditionalist

Strength	●●●●○
Dexterity [†]	●●●●○
Stamina	●●●●○
Acting	○●●●○
Alertness	●●●●○
Athletics	●●●●○
Brawl	●●●●○
Dodge [‡]	●●●●○
Empathy	●●●●○
Intimidation	○●●●○
Larceny	○●●●○
Leadership	●●●●○
Subterfuge	○●●●○
Conscience	●●●●○
Instinct	●●●●○
Courage	●●●●○

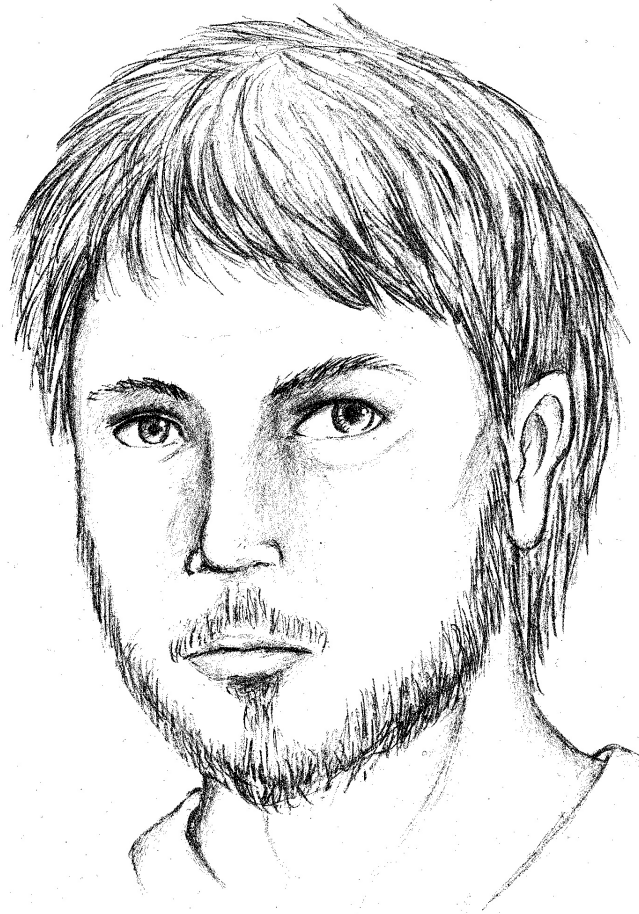
Charisma	●●●●○
Manipulation	●●●●○
Appearance	●●●●○
Animal Ken	○●●●○
Archery	○●●●○
Crafts	●●●●○
Etiquette	○●●●○
Herbalism	○●●●○
Melee	●●●●○
Music	○●●●○
Ride	○●●●○
Stealth	●●●●○
Survival	●●●●○

Perception	●●●●○
Intelligence	●●●●○
Wits	●●●●○
Academics	○●●●○
Hearth Wisdom	●●●●○
Investigation	●●●●○
Law	○●●●○
Linguistics	○●●●○
Medicine	○●●●○
Occult	●●●●○
Politics	○●●●○
Science	○●●●○
Seneschal	●●●●○

Willpower	●●●●○○○○○
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† Axes
‡ Full dodge

PROLOGUE



FALKE

Mortal

Nature: Celebrant

Demeanor: Survivor

Strength ●●○○○
 Dexterity ●●○○○
 Stamina ●●○○○

Charisma ●●○○○
 Manipulation ●●○○○
 Appearance ●●○○○

Perception† ●●●○○
 Intelligence ●●●○○
 Wits ●●●○○

Acting ○○○○○
 Alertness ●●○○○
 Athletics ●○○○○
 Brawl ●○○○○
 Dodge ●●○○○
 Empathy ○○○○○
 Intimidation ●○○○○
 Larceny ○○○○○
 Leadership ○○○○○
 Subterfuge ●●○○○

Animal Ken ●○○○○
 Archery ●●○○○
 Crafts ●●○○○
 Etiquette ○○○○○
 Herbalism ●●○○○
 Melee ●○○○○
 Music ○○○○○
 Ride ○○○○○
 Stealth ●●○○○
 Survival ●●○○○

Academics ○○○○○
 Hearth Wisdom ●●○○○
 Investigation ●●○○○
 Law ○○○○○
 Linguistics ○○○○○
 Medicine ●○○○○
 Occult ○○○○○
 Politics ○○○○○
 Science ○○○○○
 Seneschal ○○○○○

Conscience ●●○○○
 Instinct ●●○○○
 Courage ●●○○○

Willpower ●●●●○○○○○

† Keen ear

THE NORTH EXPOSED



VALFREYA

13th generation Lhiannan

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Conformist

Strength ●●○○○
 Dexterity ●●●○○
 Stamina ●●○○○

Charisma ●●●○○
 Manipulation ●●●○○
 Appearance† ●●●○○

Perception ●○○○○
 Intelligence ●●○○○
 Wits ●●●○○

Acting ●○○○○
 Alertness‡ ●●●○○
 Athletics ○○○○○
 Brawl ○○○○○
 Dodge ○○○○○
 Empathy ●●○○○
 Intimidation ○○○○○
 Larceny ○○○○○
 Leadership ○○○○○
 Subterfuge ●●○○○

Animal Ken ○○○○○
 Archery†† ●●●○○
 Crafts ●●○○○
 Etiquette ●●○○○
 Herbalism ○○○○○
 Melee ●●○○○
 Music ○○○○○
 Ride ○○○○○
 Stealth ○○○○○
 Survival ●●●○○

Academics ○○○○○
 Hearth Wisdom ○○○○○
 Investigation ●○○○○
 Law ○○○○○
 Linguistics ○○○○○
 Medicine ●○○○○
 Occult ○○○○○
 Politics ○○○○○
 Science ○○○○○
 Seneschal ●●●○○

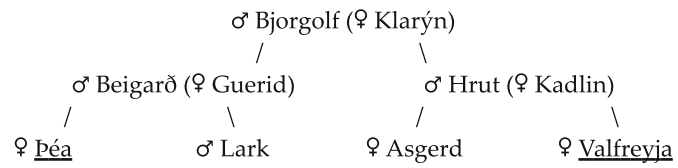
Conscience ●●●○○
 Instinct ●●●○○
 Courage ●●●○○

Presence ●●●○○
 Willpower ●●●○○○○○○
 Humanity ●●●●○○○○○

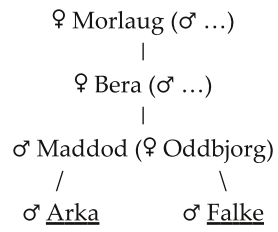
† Exotic
 ‡ Hearing
 †† Quick draw

PROLOGUE

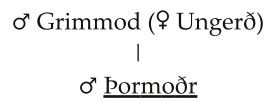
THE LINE OF BJORGOLF



THE LINE OF MORLAUG



THE LINE OF GRIMMOD



*Haglhríð slær,
høgg i aks!
Deyr einn,
spirar einn.*

Wardruna – Hagall

PART I:
IN SEARCH OF HOME

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART I

(799)

This scene constitutes the first flashback to the time just after one of the characters was Embraced. What happened among the Lhiannan will be referred back to in parts, starting here.

INTRODUCTION

The Embraced Lhiannan character, Valfreyja, will awaken in the arms of one of the Sabat of crones. They each sleep on different corners of the island in deep burrows under the roots of trees. The Sabat have no consistent names, instead allowing the people who worship them incorporate whatever deities they see in them. Here, they are named for the trees under which they sleep. Where the character wakes up, she lies beneath a Juniper tree (Eina). The other two crones rest far away under a willow (Selja) and an ash (Aska), respectively.

The character cannot escape the Lhiannan's cold grasp until the senior vampire awakens as well, whereupon they make their way outside to meet the others in a circle in the middle of the island, there they wash themselves in a pond, naked, to cleanse themselves of the dirt and last night's blood-wood.

When they are done, they turn to the character and demand she make a sleeping place of her own with her hands and nails. She may well find a grove of birch trees, corresponding to the rune attributed formerly to her future.

When she is done, the crones will have her wash herself in the same pool. Now, she will be known to them as Bjarka. Then, they will ask: "Do you wish to know what you inherit from us, foolish pretty girl? Then listen to what we tell you, carefully."

THE SHINING ONE, PART I

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

First, we will tell you of his birth.

This land was divided. In the south there lived the [Dei], in the north the Fomhorain. Both were a mighty race, but the Fomhorain were of a wicked and wild nature. They were

nightmares in the waking world, led by Balor of the Evil Eye, the largest among his kin of giants. In the middle of his forehead, there was an enormous eye. If the eye was open, it could smite wherever he looked until there was nothing left but blight. If the eye was closed, it brought about a wilting of the land until there was nothing left but drought.

In a tower in his kingdom, Balor kept a prisoner. Her name was Eaghnie and she was the wisest of all women, wiser far beyond any man. Eaghnie was a wanderer before she was imprisoned, and although he did not know why, Balor desired her greatly.

One day, there came an old man called Cian to the lands of the Fomhorain. He himself descended from the [Dei] and did not belong there. He had come because Balor had stolen some of his cattle, and this man was very stubborn, but very brave.

In looking for his cattle, Cian found Eaghnie's tower instead. There he entered, and beheld her great beauty. She was intrigued that anyone not of the Fomhorain could find her. They spent a long night in each other's company, exchanging secrets of every kind.

Nine cycles of the moon later, Eaghnie gave birth to a son. She cast the [childe] out, telling her son to go south and make his own life there. Before he left her, she lastly spoke great words of wonder: "I lay this destiny on you, that you shall never have a name until you receive one from me."

DEPARTURE

(801-802)

The characters decided to leave Eikundasund after being reunited with their lost friend, but not immediately. Intending to stay in town for one more year, they will see the crones protest before they wither and die.

RESISTANCE

As the characters stay in Eikundasund a little while longer, the crones will all vie for Valfreyja's attentions, mostly asking her for her blood. If denied, they will even find a way to harm themselves, insisting they need the blood to be healed.

Eventually, Morlaug will find a way to steal the boat away from the rest, to make it to the island where the senior Lhiannan lie. She will even break it so In her desperate search for them and for their blood, she will find only her own death.

COOPERING

At the moment of departure, then, the craftsman among the characters may roll his Wits + Crafts (difficulty 6) to determine how many tools the characters have, in all, that function well enough to be worth taking with them. From this number (equal to the amount of successes rolled) the characters may choose a knife, an axe, a bow, a

fishing net (or a three-pronged spear, or a basket), a cart, or something in which to hide the Lhiannan among them from sunlight.

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART II

(799)

In this second flashback, Valfreyja has been among the Lhiannan for more a few cycles of the moon. As it begins, she is staring out across the water to dimming lights on the other shore. When she has only just risen, her childhood friends have already heaved themselves into bed after a hard day, with a harder one to follow in the morning, when Valfreyja will again have succumbed to slumber under the birch trees.

TO HUNT

The Sabat approach Valfreyja to interrupt her self-pity. The sacrifices from town have become infrequent. Undoubtedly strife has affected the town for what happened to Valfreyja. Not for the first time, the Lhiannan stress that their progeny has an important role to play and that her creation should prove worthwhile.

They will also stress that her creation has weakened the three of them and that they haven't the strength to exert control over the town all over again. Instead, they will vie for the legacy that Valfreyja will inherit and fulfill. For this, they need to prepare her. Even when the population of people resists her, she must be able to hunt for sustenance.

Valfreyja is to catch birds that sleep in the island with her bare hands and drink their blood. If she fails, her hunger will persist with possibly dire consequences.

THE SHINING ONE, PART II

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his power.

When the young son of Eaghnie came to the [Dei], the men there asked him his name. He answered: "I shall have no name, but the name my mother has yet to give me."

The race of the [Dei] found this stranger very strange indeed. They took him in and agreed that he would not have a name. Still, because they did not trust him, they forbade him to

bear weapons or armor and they forbade him to have a wife.

As he grew older, the son of Eaghnie proved to be cunning, however. In the desires of any man, he yearned to hold a spear, and to hold a wife. A truly powerful man cannot be kept from his desires.

One night, he crawled away from the [Dei] and taunted some of the Fomhorain across the border to attack. As he ran back, an army of the giants came after him. With haste, he climbed back into the castle and woke all the [Dei], shouting that the Fomhorain had come to attack again.

"How will we defend ourselves?" wailed the queen in horror.

"I will defend us all," answered the son of Eaghnie, "if only you give me a stout shield and a strong spear."

It was in this fashion that he had tricked the [Dei] into arming him, but his accomplishments did not end there. The Fomhorain were at the gates and had to be repelled. Imagine the horror of the giants to see their own kin slaughtered at the hands of one man, a man small compared to their own stature. The reach of his spear was far. His grip on it was strong. The northern race was defeated by him and him alone.

Although he was praised, the exploits of Eaghnie's son still did not end there. After his victory, he made friends among the [Dei]. One was Math, a great warrior who could not be slain in battle. Outside of battle, however, he would die instantly unless his feet were cradled in the lap of a virgin. The other was Figden, a man who was born from trees. He was both a magician and a trickster.

Math and Figden told their new friend that although he was now allowed to bear his mighty spear, the [Dei] people still would not let him have a wife from among them. So, they offered to create a maiden for their friend from the blossoms of oak and meadowsweet.

By their magic, they wove her together, and she was married to Eaghnie's son. After the wedding, Math and Figden named her [Blood-Wed].

LEAVING RÖGNFYLKE

(802)

The characters decided to head south, where the coast leads them to the land of Agðir. They have likely measured it so that they leave in the spring, with good weather ahead.

CHALLENGES ON THE ROAD

The characters have a significant challenge sustaining themselves on the road. They may have brought cattle to avert this temporarily, though it will slow them down greatly. They may need to hunt, which poses its own delays and tribulations. Even more difficult is their no-longer-human friend, making it so they can probably only travel by night, not to mention the facts of her feeding habits. Also, the use of her disciple is at a higher difficulty

because she is away from home.

DREAM OF THE WATER

Falke has a terrible, vivid dream once he leaves Eikundasund. He remembers the words he spoke to his father before he left to sail out to sea. He remembers the rune he carved, and he remembers how it was flawed.

The völvu had said Lögr was to be Falke's future, Týr his past. Falke tried to carve Týr for his father but made it a mistake. His father, placing faith in both his son and the völvu, promised to carry it into battle in his hand instead of his shield, taking it as a good sign, infusing him with the power of the warrior god.

Instead, Maddod never came home. Falke dreams of his father drowning in the deep, releasing his grip on a carved rune, but it is Lögr (𐌺), not Týr (᚛). It is Falke's fault, that his father is dead.

RESPIRE FROM THE ROAD

After traveling on the road for days (or nights), the characters will have experienced a great desire to stay on one of the few farms they happened on. Without impressive Survival rolls, they will have started draining their supplies. The locals they have encountered have not been hospitable, however. They will have been outright despised if they travel solely by night.

KAUN

Þormoðr will start finding his health challenged, to make matters worse. With Stamina rolls (difficulty 6 and

increasing each day), he may stave off the descent into what is equivalently a state of being Mauled. His dire condition cannot be cured without shelter and long rest.

HASTING'S HOME

One night, then, they happen on a farmer who is still up late, warming up a bright fire outside. The man, for a change, is hospitable. He introduces himself as Hasting and mentions he hasn't been able to sleep well since the death of his wife. Clearly rich, he feeds the characters well and offers them a place to sleep in exchange for some levity in his dark days.

On Their Mothers: One of the reasons the characters left for the south was to discover what happened to their mothers, who were captured in raids years ago. The farmer knows of these same raiders, as he fought them off. He can offer them a vital piece of information in their quest, namely that they were from a place called Marnardalr.

Haunting: In the night, the characters may notice the source of Hasting's sleepless nights. Lenn, his dead wife, lingers just beyond the Shroud. Her haunting is an exhibition of the Embodiment Arcanos, where after a horror, it becomes clear Hasting did not bury her as he should have. It was Freyja herself who was ready to meet Lenn on the other side of the Shroud, to take her to the fields, to the Fólkvangr. Lenn was shamed, however, because she did not have her bone needles, nor her bronze thimble, not even her brushes or her comb.

At first, it was a mere mistake on Hasting's part. He



sacrificed half their livestock for her departure and buried his wife deep with his own hands. By the time he realized his wife had lingered, he had already given away her precious tools in an attempt to court a traveling maiden. The girl had stayed with him through the winter, until one night she walked out to Lenn's grave and slit her own throat—or so it seemed it the time.

Draugr: On the ninth month since her death, Lenn claws her way out of her grave as one of the Risen. She can be seen in the distance, marching toward the farm, a rotted dress billowing across her dead flesh and a pendulous amulet hanging from her neck. Her Shadow has nearly overcome her when he makes herself heard, demanding the return of her tools. She is violent and merciless. Before long, it turns out Hasting's late lover broke the tools by rolling over them on the bed. When the nature of the haunting became clear, he hid them, then lost them.

The characters could destroy Lenn's corpse and burn it to stop her rising again, but the haunting would continue in a matter of days. The only way to bring peace to the revenant is to find the tools and return her to her grave. Her Shadow may prove uncooperative, however.

Longer Stay: With Þormoðr's illness and an assured level of hospitality, the characters will find themselves staying on the farm for a while longer. When, by autumn, those who have caught Þormoðr's illness are starting to improve, it is unwise to travel. The next spring, the characters will set out once again.

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART III

(800)

In the third flashback, Valfreyja starts to realize her mentors are eager to teach her their secret powers. They are preparing her for something, but she has no idea what.

WOAD

The Lhiannan will find a cruel form of amusement in teaching Valfreyja about the Crimson Woad power. They will instruct her to inscribe herself with blood as they have done while a fire is prepared in the clearing. Valfreyja fears the fire immensely, though she cannot understand why. After applying the patterns on herself, she is instructed to approach the fire and reach ever closer with her hand. Only if the character had opted to purchase the second tier of Ogham, she may benefit from the reduced difficulty to Röttschreck.

THE SHINING ONE, PART III

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his betrayal.

Eaghníe's son was now a great, grown man. He was known among the [Dei] for his fair hair and his skillful hand. Among some, however, he was more known for his mysterious, beautiful bride.

As the fair-haired one of the skillful hand became more important among the people of the south, he was often away from his home and from his wife, [Blood-Wed]. One day, a prince came to their domain, hunting, just as [Blood-Wed] was walking outside, alone.

The prince was called Gronw the Radiant. Immediately, [Blood-Wed] fell in love with the hunter from afar. Gronw, meanwhile, decided to approach. He asked of her whose daughter she was that she lived in this far-away castle.

That she was fatherless, [Blood-Wed] replied. She told Gronw that she knew no man but her husband. Gronw seduced her that day, while her husband was gone. Under the prince's spell, [Blood-Wed] insisted he did not leave her after they had lain together.

Then Gronw replied in a voice as dark as sunless night: "Only when the fair-haired one of the skillful hand, your strange, nameless husband is dead can we be together. He is a vile creature, and should be slain for his dark ways."

[Blood-Wed] replied: "My husband cannot be killed like any other man, neither by cutting the throat, nor by piercing the heart with a blade."

"Then," said Gronw the Radiant lastly as he mounted his horse and started to ride away, "you must find out how he can be killed, and I will kill him so."

ENTERING A FAIR

(803)

After their prolonged stay half-way across their journey, the characters are likely to leave again when the weather favors travel, in the spring. Hasting still sings their praises and wishes them well. He can give them accurate instructions on how to travel, such that the characters may find a pass through the fjords that is used by travelers of every sort. Lastly, before they leave, Hasting takes a small golden circlet (which actually isn't a crown) from his hoard and hacks it into pieces, giving each of the characters one golden piece to spend wisely.

MYRAS RINES

Ʒ: Fé

“Strife and blood is the price of: Fé.”

Ɔ: Úr

“Rain turns even the sturdiest roads to: Úr.”

Ɔ: Þurs

“The northerners become restless whenever their name is spoken: Þurs.”

⚔: Ás

“From the east came the great race under their chief the: Ás.”

℞: Reið

“One cannot finish a journey before one has had a: Reið.”

Ʒ: Kaun

“Death comes for those who are marked by: Kaun.”

*: Hagall

“In cold violence comes falling from the heavens a wrathful: Hagall.”

†: Nauðr

“Toilsome work and oppression bring the greatest strain of: Nauðr.”

l: Isa

“In the long nights even rivers grow their bark: Isa.”

†: Ár

“When the earth returns her sacrifice, we speak of: Ár.”

⚔: Sol

“Destroyer of dwarves, melter of snow, early comes the: Sol.”

†: Týr

“The blow of the hammer, the bite of the sword—warrior and smith both is one-handed: Týr.”

℞: Bjarkan

“The greenest leaves hide the ghosts of trees: Bjarkan.”

Ʒ: Maðr

“To carve and the curse, to heal and to harm is the will of: Maðr.”

l: Lögr

“Attractive and cool to the touch, all men find death in the depths of: Lögr.”

♠: Yr

“Heavy lies the blanket of snow and tough-strung is the bow when we speak of: Yr.”

TRAVELERS MET

On the road further inland, the characters may one night happen upon a troupe of travelers who have set up camp. Their sentries will be quick to awaken the rest, though they are apprehensive about the characters intending no harm.

Among them are Vigdis, a prostitute of some reputation, Refr, a riddler and a poet, Ofeigr, a great warrior-skald, and Hallgeir, a historian and diplomat to King Harald Granraude (Harald Redbeard) himself. The travelers all agree that the characters are fools for leaving behind a whole village of farms. They can further inform them about the perils of travel and tell them how they need to provide a service to jarls and kings if they truly want to live well. Such services are not limited to acting as bards, craftsmen, warriors, concubines, or merchants.

If prompted, each of the other travelers can be further engaged. Vigdis will refuse the men any attention, as she is currently in the service of Hallgeir. Then again, she might change her mind if they force their golden coin on her. Instead, she is willing to share a few trade secrets with the women among the characters' group.

Refr, if pushed, will riddle the character thus: Wide is the road on which two bands of travelers might meet; Late is the hour when they all rest their feet. Wise are those who ask after the road ahead; Many are those who do not and end up dead. Near lives a woman with words of wisdom so great; High reaches the pass where one may learn the future fate. He refers to the völvá a few hours further down the road, from where his band came.

Ofeigr can tell the characters about the glory of the shield wall in words greatly understating the chaos of such battle. He can also demonstrate the use of a shield, allowing the characters use of them once they are acquired.

Hallgeir can tell the characters about the political landscape briefly, as he does not care so much for their inquiries. All they need to know, he says, is that King Harald Granraude owns the lands they are about to enter from his island farm. There may be those in the north who call themselves king, but Harald is truly such.

HIGH REACHES THE PASS

Following Refr's riddle, the characters may come across a path splitting off from the main road that reaches high into the rocky fjord. In a ragged hut made of branches and animal skins, a völvá called Mara makes her home. She is skinny and looks as if she has seen ten winters more than she has. Despite this, her eyes remain a bright silver color.

She will meet the characters outside, where she is clearly enticed by the arrival of several young men. Her terms are simple. She will tell the characters their fates if one of them satisfied her sexually while the others do her laundry in a nearby stream. The traveling band the

characters met on the road earlier have already supplied her with all else she needs.

If the characters do as she demands, she will welcome them inside her hut afterward. Almost immediately, she takes to studying Valfreyja. She seems worried at first, but later laughs loudly. "You are a strange one. Is it not so? Weakness, fragility, and vulnerability I sense. Is it not so?" she will say.

She will proceed to dip her hand in a bowl of water, further than should be possible. Beyond the veil none of the characters can see, she will grasp at Valfreyja's dead heart, paralyzing her completely. Mara will only laugh and continue reading the characters' runes.

Note that Arka will still receive the same future of Maðr. After reading their runes, Mara will have a violent vision, through which she falls from her seat. After recovering, she tells the characters the fate of something—as fragile now as it will be great later—rests in their hands.

BABE IN THE WOODS

Walking, the characters may in time smell a fire. At first they may have thought it a hearth, but soon the flames lick the tops of trees in the distance. A farm is burning to the ground. The charred remains of one victim can be distinguished, trapped under a beam, long dead. It is hard to say where the fire originated as the surrounding forest is ablaze as well.

Then, the characters will hear the howling of wolves, fearful of the flames approaching their den. Roll Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7) to realize that among their clamor, the crying of a babe can be heard as well, from within the burning forest.

Braving the inferno, the characters may find the baby alone, disoriented. At great risk of harm, the characters may save the naked boy. He looks only a few months old. Through the blur and smoke, the characters may later process that there were bones of animals around the area of the forest set on fire, and the scattered remains of human corpses as well.

**AMONG THE MOTHERS
PART IV**

(800)

Valfreyja is slowly accepting her new identity as Bjarka. The cruelty of the Lhiannan mothers knows no bounds, and her existence remains a confusing one.

LINES IN THE LAND

One night, the Lhiannan, having taught their pupil much already, ask her why she thinks it is that they do all they do to help the land and the spirits of fertility resting

within every inch of it. If her answer is even cautiously optimistic, they will scorn her and laugh. They tell her about the dragon lines in the land and tell her they are close to the surface here, near their sacred pool.

The Lhiannan begin to chant and reach deep inside the pool, further than should be possible. Their faces become flushed, their grip strong as all around the pool, the land starts to die. After the flowers have all wilted, they have the strength to break a tree in half, which they do.

THE SHINING ONE, PART IV

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his murder.

In love with the radiant prince, [Blood-Wed] tricked her husband into telling her how he could be killed. She told him she was full of fear of his death and that he must tell her how it may come about, so that it might be prevented.

“Not easily can I be slain,” said Eaghnie’s son, “except by a deep wound, to the heart, struck by spear a year in the forming. Worry not, for even then, I cannot be slain within a house, nor without, neither on horseback, nor on foot.”

After [Blood-Wed] had told this to Gronw the Radiant, they conceived a foul plot. Eaghnie’s son was led from his castle a year later by his wife to go riding on their horses. There fell a mighty rain, and thunder approached. At the banks of a river, under the branches of a great oak tree, they halted. There, [Blood-Wed] told her husband to look at the far bank of the river, where some wild bucks were grazing.

From behind, Gronw appeared and placed a rope around his neck. He hoisted and pulled, lifting the fair-haired one, so that he was neither on his horse, nor on his feet. The rope was coiled around a branch of the tree, so that as Gronw pulled harder, [Blood-Wed]’s husband was lifted ever higher, until the branches of the tree protected him from the falling rain, so that he was not indoors, but still had a roof over his head.

Then, [Blood-Wed] screamed for her husband’s death and Gronw lifted a mighty spear a year in the making. They both cursed him as the prince let the spear fly, aimed perfectly at their hanged victim’s chest.

The blade of the spear pierced the heart of Eaghnie’s son, but it was driven no further. Before the shaft could penetrate any deeper, the shape of the fair-haired one with the skillful hand changed. He flew up in the form of an eagle and gave a fearful scream and thenceforth he was no more seen, for nine long days and nights, except by one man.

SEARCHING

(803)

The characters spend a few days more on the road. For once, there actually isn’t much time skipped between here and before the previous flashback. They continue on toward Marnardalr and must make up their mind on what they intend to do once they arrive.

WARRIORS

In the inland stretches of Agðir, on their way to finding either Marnardalr, or the king’s law in Tromøy, the characters encounter a mercenary band as they head north to find work in what has—already—become known as the lawless land. In one morning, as the characters are quite tired and are about to go to sleep, they find the band recruiting at a nearby farm. The warriors offer farmers silver in exchange for healthy young male slaves. They spar and test each other and might consider the characters as candidates if they approach, even if the proposition does not suit their agenda at all.

If the characters are attentive, they may take note of recruits from Marnardalr, who can tell them that their mothers are in fact alive and even have many new sons. The recruits are a testament to the cruelty of the people of Marnardalr, however. It is why they joined the company.

MARNARDALR

King Harald Granraude has stopped the people of Marnardalr raiding. The past years have left them poor in their region, as they had none of the skills their neighbors did, relying on their plunder instead. The characters’ mothers have fully integrated with their captors. They still remember their children fondly, though their time with the Eikundasund crones was a true horror.

Welcome: The characters enter Marnardalr to witness its poverty. All around, the poorly maintained halls

HRYGG

While conversing with the mercenary band, Arka engaged in a proving with one of the warriors. In the process, Arka’s axe cleaved the man’s spine, leaving him paralyzed. The warrior’s colleagues gave him his severance pay, but had to leave him behind there on the side of the road.

Valfreyja took pity on the cripple. She fed him her blood and allowed him to rise again. The man’s devotion to Valfreyja was both immediate and eternal. His new name would be Hrygg and he would follow Valfreyja wherever she went.

shelter a rugged people. Soon enough, word will spread of visitors. An assembly of men and women will greet them at the center of the dale, even at night. Their mothers will soon emerge from a crowd to welcome their long-lost children. In all, it is decided they should be welcomed.

Feast: The characters are led to one of the larger farms, the home of one of their mothers, where they fed well. They meet their half-siblings and their mothers' abductors, now husbands. At the end of a warm evening, a small, unused building near the farm is prepared for the characters to sleep in. It was once a building for servants to sleep, who have since been allowed to return to their homes.

EMBERS AT DAWN

Early at dawn, before the characters normally awaken, bright lights and sparks surround their sleeping quarters. As they come to their senses, thatch from the roof is falling down on all sides, ablaze. All the walls are in fire before they can rise.

At first, the characters might suspect the locals of treachery, but as soon as they breach the flaming door at personal peril, the mayhem around Marnardalr rises above the noise of the flames. The whole village is set ablaze and the cries of its people are horrifying. The first casualty the characters encounter will be in her death throes, wide-eyed, whispering "Dreki! Ormr! Brenn!" before dying.

There will be survivors, but the characters' mothers are unlikely to be among them. When they are at a safe distance, the child rescued from the fire earlier will wail in the night. Some of the Marnardalr folk will agree that only the gods can protect from such a thing as this.

SOJOURN

The characters are in a foreign land with no home. Among their growing group are already the babe (as of yet unnamed) rescued from the burnings woods and Hrygg, formerly of the mercenary band encountered on the road. They may gather some of their surviving half-siblings and other townsfolk around them in their departure from Marnardalr. The question soon arises where they will go next. The characters need only decide on a direction where they will try their luck and who they will take with them, for now. The story will now go forward in leaps and bounds.

MONTHS PASS

If the characters settle somewhere with survivors from Marnardalr, ask the characters if possibly, they would have taken a widow to wife, or taken personal responsibility over some of the children, or anything similar. Let them explain with similar freedom as they had in the prologue, who this child or spouse is. News

ÁSVALDUR'S PAIN

It was unlikely to ever come to light, but Ásvaldur, by 'sacrificing his wife to Fenris', is actually the step-grandfather of Eldur. The child he raised was not his own. When he found out, he left wife and child to the mercy of the Fenrir, where the child belonged but the mother did not. This was only one of many painful chapters of Ásvaldur's life.

may also reach them, wherever they are, that the völvu of the mountain pass is heavy with child.

MADR

Arka's ears may be burning at the news that he could become a father soon. If the völvu is sought out, it will turn out to be true. She is pregnant with Arka's child. She also inexplicably appears decades younger than when they last saw her, and healthier too.

Mara will make it clear she has great plans for her child, whether it is a boy or a girl. Narrowing her eyes, she tells him: "But we already know what gender it will be. Is it not so?" Arka may be involved peripherally if he wishes, but she will remain in Agðir with the child.

Lastly, she will tell Arka the child will be strong in seiðr. She will place emphasis on the implications for the child if it is indeed a boy. Such a boy would be shunned, the antithesis of a warrior.

FIRE ANEW

Throughout the coming months, then years, the characters will find themselves cursed. Inexplicable fires follow them wherever they go. Half their settlement is burned to the ground every time, whether they have stayed to rebuild Marnardalr, have returned to Rygjafylke, or gone anywhere else. The handful of times the fire blazes from nowhere, one character may be designated as being awake, to attempt a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) to spot the source of their terror. A slithering, red creature may be glimpsed between the licking flames, always disappearing behind a curtain of billowing, dark smoke. It has scales and a barbed spine.

If they remain in contact with Mara, she will say of it: "The winds of your fate are stronger than your mere mortal will." The survivors of Marnardalr as well as Mara all agree that they must seek the protection of the gods. There is one place in Agðir that offers this, namely the area one dale further east from Marnardalr, where the temple at Otruness stands.



OTRUNESS

The temple is large and the lands around it beautiful and fertile. At the peak of a peninsula over the river, the wooden structure stands with sparse farms and buildings around it. Ásvaldur lives in the temple and leads its worship of the gods. He is an old man, but stands taller and broader than most. Rumors about him include that he has slain giants in the north, that he has sacrificed all his daughters to Loki and his wife to Fenrisúlfur, but mostly, beyond any doubt, that he has met Oðin, the All-Father, and learned from him the runes, not how to read them, but how to write them, how to control them.

THE GODS

Before they even reach the temple, the characters may finally ask the question of who these gods are. They have heard mention of Þór and Týr, but few more. The closest god they know, they believe to walk among them as Valfreyja. In short, they will be assured that if they may stay and live by the temple, they will soon learn all that there is to be learned. But, for now, Loki can be described as a weird, dangerous thing, and Fenrisúlfur as a great wolf, Loki's son—that's how strange Loki is. (Because, honestly, how strange would it be to have a son who is actually a wolf? On a tangent, have the characters named the babe rescued from the woods?)

Above all, though, stands Oðin, All-Father, he who is both a poet and a warrior and a magician. His name is Furious One, as well as Soulful One, as well as Witty One. He has two ravens, he prefers to walk in the guise of a

poor wanderer, he is the king among all gods, and it takes a great man to worship him correctly.

BLÓT

When the characters arrive before the temple, witnessing its tall splendor, they are told to wait outside along with their entire entourage. One by one, they are dragged away and admitted into the temple by servants dressed in robes of once-white linen. A roll of Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6) may reveal that they are unwashed and stained through with blood both aged and fresh.

Individually, each character is brought inside for an audience with Ásvaldur. He stands tall among wooden statues of the gods which are taller still. A single pit burns low at his feet as he seats himself on a stool and the character is bidden to do the same. Grasped tightly in his hand is a staff carved from top to bottom with figures.

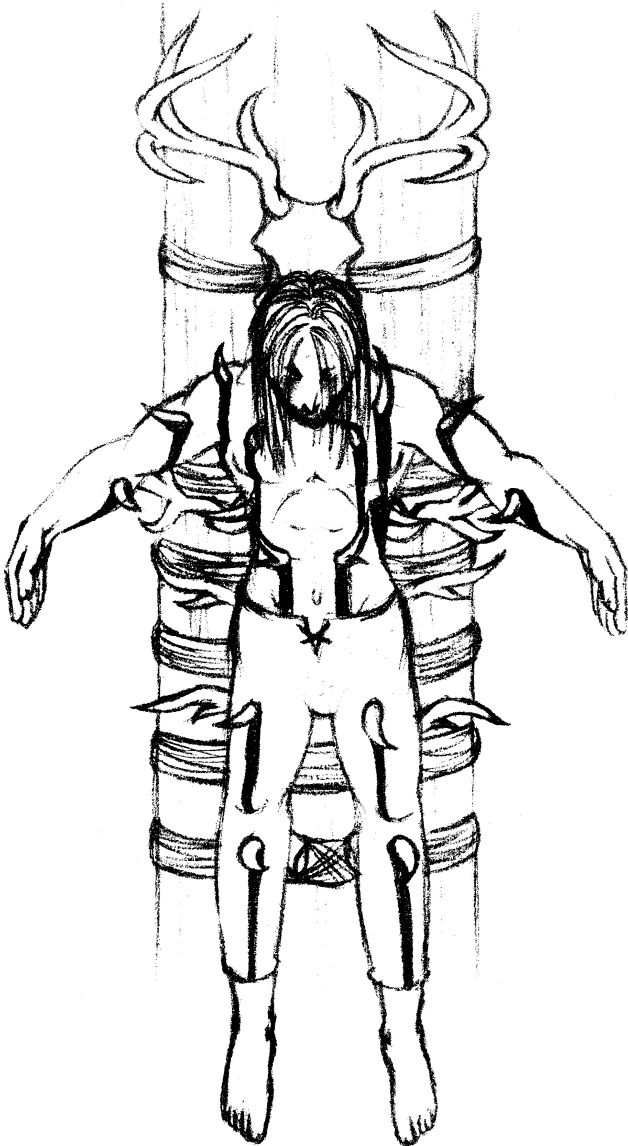
He will say to each of them in a dark voice: "I see the fiery terror from which you run. The power of the wyrm is great enough to defeat a kingdom of men. You ask the gods to protect you from this?" [...] "I am chosen by the gods. I have power over runes none now remember. I have tread in the footsteps of the All-Father and I have spoken with him for many nights. You ask me to beseech the gods for you?" [...] "To withstand the fire of the wyrm, we need to release something of great power. What is the most powerful thing you know?" [...] "What of life itself? What of that which draws breath, that which makes grow, that which is aware?" [...] "I must release a life against this force. A last time: Do you wish me to give you the protection you ask for? This is your last chance to flee this place. Stay, and you accept your fate, or your companions'." [...] "How strong is your life?" [...] "You may go."

Indeed, after each character has answered these questions, and they have chosen to remain, one among their entourage must be sacrificed. All are gathered inside the temple and all are fed. The servants begin to wash everyone who is seated on their brow, through their hair, and in their neck. When all have eaten, Ásvaldur merely addresses everyone. "It is time for one to come forth. If there is no volunteer, the runes will decide."

A draw of the (younger futhark) runes will truly determine who is to be sacrificed, where neither a widow nor indeed one of the characters will be spared. Only children are exempt. The servants meanwhile erect a structure outside, composed of two long sets of antlers crossed on an oak tree. Whoever draws Ás, must die.

The sacrifice will be performed on the brink of dawn, before the wyrm can strike again. A large pile of stones has been consecrated around the sacrificial tree, called a hörgr by Ásvaldur. The victim of the Blót is then mounted on the antlers, their spikes tearing through flesh. There, he or she bleeds to death.

At the end of the Blót, Ásvaldur takes a moment alone inside the temple. When he returns, the sun has risen and in the streaming sunlight he announces: "I have conferred with the runes. Jera was answered to me seven times. Óðin promises safety from the beast in Otruness for seven years. If the wyrm has not departed by then, we will offer again." If indeed one of the characters was sacrificed in this manner, the player will have an heir to take over from their extended family.



AMONG THE MOTHERS PART V

(800)

Despite all the mothers' efforts, Bjarka's education is not progressing as quickly as they had hoped. Their disappointment in her is an open accusation and encroaches on Valfreyja's every night.

THE SPIRITS

Now summer, Valfreyja is haunted by sights and smells that would have meant delight among her people. She meets with Eina, Selja, and Aska at the pool, which still hasn't recovered from the Lhiannan reaching into the spirit world. They address her as Bjarka again and tell they are disappointed with her progress.

They hint that they are preparing her for something and that their efforts, rising each night, cannot be sustained indefinitely. Bjarka must realize that this world is mirrored by spirits, that dragon lines separate everything she can see and smell from a world beyond, where great and terrible creatures lurk.

They make her stand to her waist in the pool and wait for the water to be still. She is to look at her own reflection, look at the trees reflected overhead, and watch minor ripples distort it all. The Lhiannan assure her that she is looking at the thin veil and that as she stares at her reflection, the other side is looking at her. The trees she sees reflected have a representation, all spirits.

Then, they make her reach through the surface of the water. The character may attempt at Perception + Occult (difficulty 8) roll to get a sense of the sentience on the other side. The Lhiannan assure her that there lies malevolence in the parallel world. At that very instant, Valfreyja feels something grasp her by the feet. It will turn out to have been an eel, giving the mothers a good cackle.

THE SHINING ONE, PART V

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

SACRIFICE

After a long and tense wait, Þormoðr stepped forward and volunteered to be sacrificed. A long jealousy had developed between Hrygg and he over Valfreyja. Hrygg had burned half of his face trying to save her from the Ormr's fire and it was Hrygg Valfreyja had decided to marry.

Nonetheless, even Hrygg stood in awe. The characters watched as Þormoðr was killed, all except Valfreyja, who could not attend the morning ritual.



In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his return.

Word spread quickly of [Blood-Wed] and Gronw's treachery. When Math and Figden learned of it, the lovers had already taken their friend's land as their own. They both set out with haste and fury.

Math found the radiant prince first and thrust a spear deep in his gut. He lifted Gronw high for all to see until his bowels spilled out of him. Math released the weapon and the prince fell into a pile of his own filth. The warrior left Gronw there to die slowly while he returned home quickly to place his feet in the lap of a maiden.

Figden, meanwhile, wandered around his friend's lands a while longer until he found the river along which his friend was betrayed. There, he stood contemplating under a great oak tree

when he saw an eagle perched in its branches.

On that first day since his friend was betrayed, Figden spoke a spell of the voice at the eagle.

"Oak that grows by the river's side;

Darkened is the sky and hill!

Shall I not tell by his wound so wide,

That this is my friend who no man can kill?"

The eagle did not move, but it let its blood drip down from the tree to land at Figden's feet. On the third day since the rope was strung, the magician spoke a spell at the eagle again.

"Oak that grows in upland soil,

Is it not wetted by the falling rain?

Has it not been drenched by nine tempests' toil?

It bears in its branches my friend in pain!"

The eagle spread its wings wide, but did not leap. Instead, it showed only that between the feathers, the wound had healed. On the sixth day since the spear was thrown, the eagle's friend worked his magic one more time.

"Oak that grows above the mire;

Stately and majestic it hides a foul trap!

Shall I not speak my only desire?

That my friend will come down into my lap?"

The eagle only looked down, straight into Figden's eyes and held that gaze for the rest of the night. On the ninth day since the eagle's form was made, Figden approached the tree and was only silent.

The eagle came down on Figden's knee. There, it returned to its true form. Now stood again Eaghnie's son, nothing but skin and bone, hungry, yet full of hate.

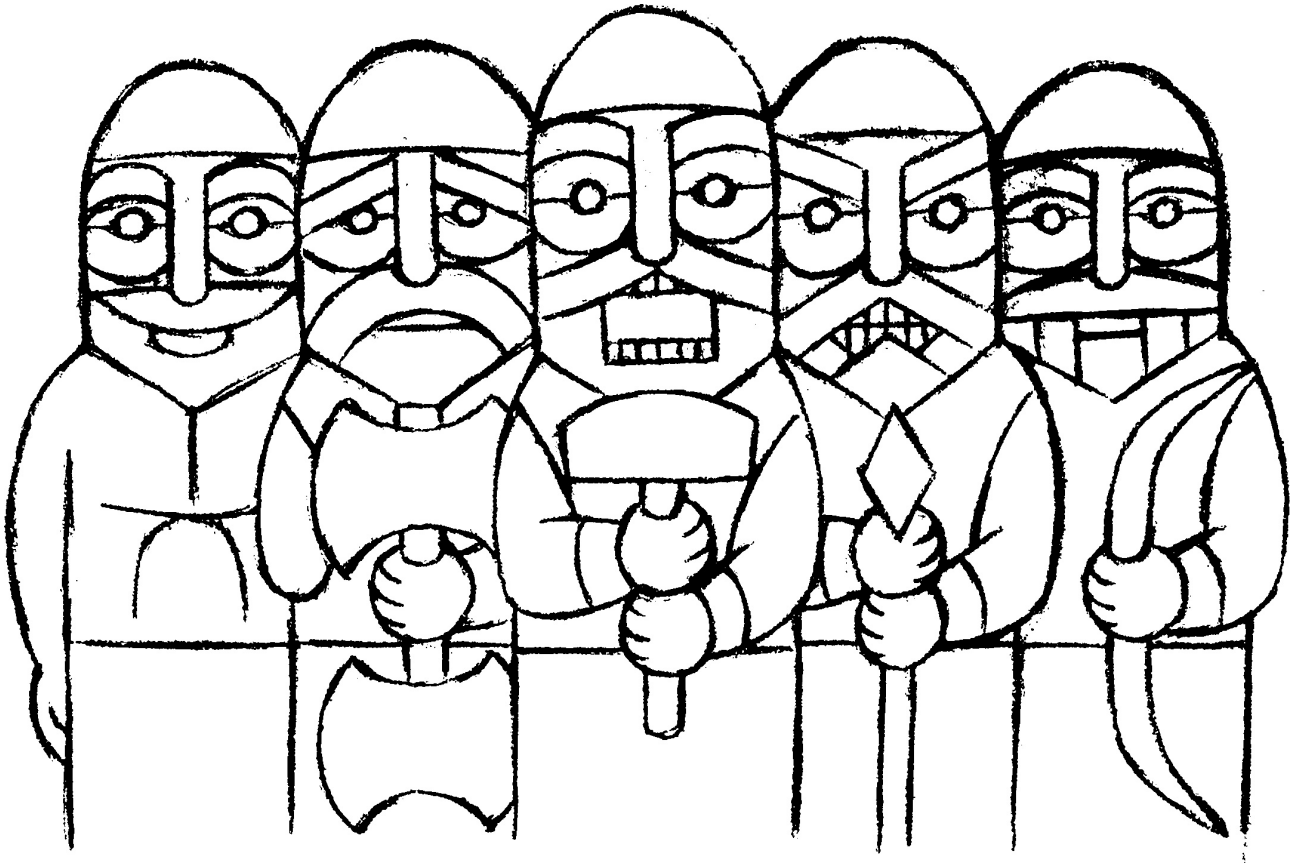
UNDER THE WATCH OF THE GODS

(810)

We skip over several years, now. Not only are the characters significantly older, but the children around them have started to grow up as well. It is up to Arka, still, if he visits his son at Mara's regularly, who she has named Galdramaðr.

Additionally, the characters will all have taken to a profession in Otruness. A short walk from the temple is a harbor where both merchants and fishermen work their trade. Their needs call for guards, shipbuilders, coopers, and sailors. The characters share a farm, where they might live with their extended families. This farm will have cost them one of the pieces of hack-gold from Hasting's circlet. Additional, private plots of land may be bought as well. Working the land at the farm, then, naturally is also an option. A character may also find a profession, of sorts, in serving at the temple in reverence of the gods as well as Ásvaldur himself.

How Valfreyja will have presented herself in this new settlement will also be crucial. Whether Valfreyja can find



a profession is tricky. It is a certainty that Ásvaldur will not suffer her to be worshiped. He may suspect her nature, but won't expose her until she oversteps.

Depending on the choices in their roles, each of the characters may roll for their status, a factor of how prolific they are in their duties. Note that sailing requires the new Knowledge Seamanship and shipbuilding requires the new Skill Shipwright. The characters have the opportunity to invest experience points before making these rolls.

LÖGR

Note that if Þéa decides to try her profession at sea, the runes play out in her favor greatly. She may purchase both the Seamanship Knowledge and the Shipwright skill at half the experience point cost in this window of time.

THE WAYS OF THE WORLD

In the time the characters have spent in Otruness, they may have learned several things about the gods and about Agðir.

On the Gods: First, the gods venerated in the temple by their statues of carved wood are the sons of Oðin: Þór (a tall, central figure bearing a great hammer in both hands, his expression glorious), Týr (a warrior with a double-headed axe in one hand, the other hand missing, his expression mournful), Víðarr (carrying a spear in both hands, his expression enraged), Baldr (a shining, half-

dressed, unarmed man, his expression happy), and Váli (a narrow man with a bow in hand, his expression cold).

Ásvaldur leaves the matters of daily worship by both travelers and locals to his servants. Those seeking blessings are told to sacrifice (cattle, mead, or anything else that is perishable and will be missed) before one of Oðin's sons. Váli has the knowledge of familial duty, Baldr that of purity and light, Víðarr that of revenge, Týr that of justice and tactics, and Þór that of raw strength.

If a character takes particular interest in the temple, he may learn more of the nature of the gods themselves. So far, a god is something powerful, either seen or unseen, but nonetheless tangible. The Lhiannan were present on the island off Eikundasund and Valfreyja walks among the characters to this day. They will be affirmed then, in the fact that the gods worshiped at the temple walk this greater world as well, as they have done since beyond the generations before.

Oðin's line came from the east of here. Ásvaldur claims to have met with the wandering All-Father one night. Their conversations touched on the sons now worshiped there singularly aside their father, as well as a great many sayings to guide mankind. Examples include: When you enter a hall, you should look a good long while, you should seek in every corner, for you do not know where your enemies might be sitting; and Livestock die, friends die, families die, and you yourself will die, but one thing that never dies is the judgment of a dead man's life.

On Agðir: The characters may learn of the king again, but also that his home island of Tromøy lies a two days' walk along the coast (perhaps to the characters surprise, to the north-east). They may also hear of his unmarried daughter Åsa, who is a great beauty.

On Other Kingdoms: Those characters who make their trade by one way or another on the sea will know a little more of areas around Otruness. The harbor by the temple thrives by trade with Kaupang (marketplace) at Skíringssalur in Vestfold. Along the route, Tromøy can be spotted, with its opulent and rich farm surrounded by a palisade and a ringed harbor.

Kaupang is a busy place with traders from far and wide. Characters will have seen slaves being sold and heard tales of Widukind and Karl in the land of the Saksen, where a great war has just ended after thirty years. Meanwhile, the Danes are building walls from their eastern coast to their western coast to hold back the great power of the Christian ruler. They will have heard of Guðroðr Veiðikonungr, the hunting king of Vestfold, who has never let something go after he set his eyes on it. The characters will also hear of Álveimr, the land to the south of Vestfold. There, the king does not descend from the oldest gods like the Ynglings (as Guðroðr does), but instead from an ancient line of Álvar (strange gods born from sunlight).

A WINTRY VISIT

It is late in winter, but still horribly cold outside, when news spreads through Otruness of a visit from the king. A rider has gone ahead to tell of Harald Granraude coming to the temple with his daughter Åsa. There is much speculation about the nature of their visit, in winter of all times. Some suggest perhaps Åsa is to be married at last.

When, days later, they do arrive, they command great respect. Almost all of Otruness has come out to watch despite the cold. The king and his daughter are both clad in thick furs with silver chains to bind them. Despite the harsh cold, none can deny that Åsa Haraldsdottir is the most beautiful woman they have ever seen.

By the king ride three warriors of his hirð. Alongside Åsa ride three shieldmaidens. Behind them both trail a household of servants, all more richly dressed and better fed than the characters or their neighbors.

As the procession rides up, all agree that a life under the king's roof is the best life that can be attained. Speculation about whether there is a king left who might need a warrior better than any in his hirð or a skald better versed than any in his court will catch the characters' ears.

When the procession has made it to the temple, where Ásvaldur greets the king, Harald Granraude unfastens a fur from his neck to show his rich imported robes and his bright red beard untouched by the snow. He addresses his people: "It has been a hard winter! And every year, the reports of wildfires throughout my lands reach my ear!

All around me, my peers say to me: 'King, you must let your daughter be wed,' every year. I remain reluctant to release her from the safety of my home. Long ago, a seer prophesied that my line would give birth to the greatest king these lands have ever seen, far greater than even the line of the Ynglings, all without my ever having sons. We have come to seek the advice of the gods, to ask if she should wed this year or not."

Wild speculation may continue around the characters. A day later, the king and his daughter leave for Tromøy again.

BLOOD IN SPRING

Early in the spring, when the ground around Otruness begins to thaw and sea voyages are planned anew, Ásvaldur will address the people once more about the need for sacrifice. He allows a few days for a volunteer to emerge. Otherwise, a sacrifice will be selected.

Eldur, the boy saved from the flames at the first wildfire, will have many questions about the nature of the sacrifice, as will many of the other children. Here, it becomes important what the characters have told Eldur about his origins.

Týr: Before the choice of the sacrifice is dealt, Eldur will take a significant moment to take a hold of Falke's right hand. Eldur has decided to ask him specifically: What will you do when the man at the temple wants to kill Þéa (who he might refer to as 'mother')? He squeezes the hand tightly.

Sacrifice: This time, the choice of the sacrifice will fall to one of the characters inevitably. Before the sacrifice can be completed, however, Eldur wails. He mightily pushes people aside thrice his size and begins to growl. Before their eyes, Eldur turns into a great wolf standing on two legs, as tall as Ásvaldur, and proceeds to attack the priest.

The characters might intervene and Ásvaldur might be killed before he manages to reach a bowl of water. The priest tries to step outside the physical world with the werewolf to slay him where he is strongest. If he succeeds, he will douse the both of them with water and they will disappear as if a curtain fell over them. At this point, only Valfreyja might see what is happening if she manages to look into the spirit world.

In due time, Eldur will reemerge, his shape that of blood-drenched seven-year-old, still fuming with rage. At his feet lies the crippled and bloodied corpse of the priest. The child confesses he hates the gods and curses Oðin's name, before he begins to weep, longing for his foster mother's touch.

EXILE

Following the events around the second Blót, which is referred to forever after as the Fordæmingu av Æsir, the Cursing of the Gods, the characters are inevitably driven away from Otruness. Their neighbors dare not provoke

them directly, but they make it clear the king will hear of what happened. A rider has already been dispatched. The only place the characters will be safe is inland, to the north.

The question arises as to how much of the characters' extended families follow them. In truth, they will all try to distance themselves from them as much as possible. A future of exile does not appeal.

The characters might stop by Mara for advice. She will speak highly of Eldur's destiny, although the news of the child murdering Ásvaldur is a shock and the Cursing of the Gods bodes ill. She will tell the characters they indeed have only north, inland to run to. She will cast runes once in a closed palm and grin, saying that in the wild, Eldur will be nearer to his greatness and Valfreyja will be nearer to her doom. The characters might further inquire about what the runes spell for their future. Mara will also offer to take care of the smaller children remaining in the characters' troupe at her hut.

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART VI

(800)

After many moons with the malice of the mothers, Bjarka glimpses more of their intentions. They reveal why they are preparing her and why her progress is not only a disappointment, it is dangerous.

A CAERN

One night, by now later in her education among the Lhiannan, Valfreyja will be pulled aside by her mentors again. They have told her about the dragon lines and about the wealth of power that can be extracted from the spirit world. Now, they ask her what she would do with it, had she paid enough attention to have learned how to do the same.

The answer the Lhiannan are looking for is: protection. They will impress upon Valfreyja how they are hunted, that their legacy is one that demands isolation from even more entities than the sun itself.

As Valfreyja witnessed at the great act of wilting by the sacred pool, if their kind can find a place where the dragon lines meet, they can overcome anything. The mothers will gravely state that if ultimately, if she intends to exist beyond the span of what her mortal life would have been, Valfreyja's survival will depend on her finding these Caerns and extracting their strength.

THE SHINING ONE, PART VI

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over

many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his magnification.

After the debt of blood was paid between Eaghnie's son and the radiant prince, his lands reclaimed and his place among the [Dei] resumed, [Blood-Wed] was summoned to be cursed by her former husband. The fair-haired one with the skillful hand said to her:

"You will not dare to show your face in the light of day ever again, and that will be because of enmity between you and all others. It will be in their nature to harass you and despise you wherever they find you. And you will not lose your name, that will always be [Blood-Wed]."

[Blood-Wed] would wander the lands forever after that, seeking shelter where there was none to find. Her story does not end here, however, and you will hear more of her later. First, you must hear of her former husband and how he became king.

For Eaghnie's son was now known as a warrior and a magician both. Before long, he showed the people of the [Dei] how he was also the best among them as a smith, as a harpist, as a poet, and as a historian. They acknowledged him after all this time as their champion, as their king.

Only one thing did his people insist of him. They said that the [Dei] could not have a king without a name. "Very well," answered he, and he gave his first command to his people: "Then we will march north to wage war on the Fomhorain. We will end their tyranny and banish them from our lands. The [Dei] will rule both the north and the south after I destroy Balor of the Evil Eye. It is on this battlefield that I will finally be named."

The next day, a great army left the castles of the [Dei] and marched to battle. Riding at the very front was their king. At his side rode his two friends Math and Figden. In the king's hand was a great spear, newly made. Only he could wield it and it was long enough to skewer the Fomhorain giants.

IN THE WILD

(810)

The characters are forced into hiding. If they are spotted on the roads, a certain fate of death awaits them. In truth, shortly after the characters' exile, the king is murdered and his daughter is kidnapped by King Guðroðr of Vestfold.

HALF-BROTHER

After Þormoðr's sacrifice, there remains a player without a character. He will take on Magni, one of Oddbjorg's sons born in Marnardalr. The child will have



<i>Mortal</i>		Nature: Survivor		Demeanor: Judge	
Strength [†]	●●●●○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity [‡]	●●●●○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○
Acting	●○○○○	Animal Ken ^{‡‡}	●●●●○	Academics	○○○○○
Alertness	●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom	●●●○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl ^{††}	●●●●○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Melee	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Music	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Leadership	●●●○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Seneschal	●○○○○
Conscience	●●●○○	Willpower	●●●○○○○○	† Pummeling	
Self-Control	●●●○○			‡ Parrying	
Courage	●●●○○			†† Blocking	
				‡‡ Training	

been born some time between 795 and 799. As it was in the prologue, the character's traits and background are left to the player. Given his adolescent age, his character sheet may be filled in completely, except only 5 Freebie Points are granted.

SURVIVAL

The characters spend the rest of the spring and the whole of summer in the wilderness, surviving as best they can. They may receive help from Mara occasionally, but ultimately the characters depend on their own resourcefulness. They may also turn to banditry, though it comes with risks of being spotted on the road.

Allow the characters corresponding Survival (or Larceny) rolls to see how well they do. Note that with the numbers they brought with them, surviving off the land will become increasingly difficult, even if everyone does their part.

RAISING A BEAST

Þéa will find it increasingly difficult to put up with Eldur. At first, the child whimsically walking alongside the group in the shape an overlarge puppy may have been adorable. Before long, however, the wolf inside him will keep him running great distances ahead of the group, often straying for days at a time. If the child is ever angered, he will not hesitate to vent his rage in the same urges that led to the Fordæmingu av Æsir.

HAGALL

After a few days' travel, the characters will find themselves in a land that might be a part of Rygjafylke, or Agðir, or it might be a new land entirely. Farms are still visible between fjords and along the river. The characters have taken great care to avoid them while venturing ever further north.

One night, at the setting of the sun, Valfreyja will rise to the sound of loud howling all around them. Eldur has taken to howling at the moon, almost full tonight, from the highest peak he can find in the area. Just when his howling reaches its loudest, a crash of thunder will tear through the sky, unleashing a storm of rain and wind.

The weather prohibits travel and the characters must hurry to improve their shelters. As the rain falls harder and thicker, the characters may notice more wolves' howls mixed in with Eldur's. Before long, the rain turns to hail and the air around the characters becomes too harsh for spring.

It is the first night the characters have spent in the same place, immobile. Hours pass before finally, in the midst of the storm, some over the horizon begins to glow. Where a farm stood on the other side of the river, just over a hill, a wildfire now spreads. The howling has stopped and the deafening hail is all the characters hear.

Although the howling has stopped, Eldur has not returned. Long after causing great concern among the characters, will he suddenly reappear as a small, naked

boy unmarked by the sharp, crushing hail still falling everywhere around them.

He will have reappeared near Valfreyja, looking at her through squinted eyes. Unafraid and steadfast in his declaration at the Fordæmingu av Æsir, he asks her: "Are you another god?"

RUINS

If the characters investigate the site of the wildfire after the rain has drenched the flames, they will discover the farm burned to the ground. All around, a mingling of wolf carcasses and human corpses mark the scene, not unlike the place where Eldur was found. Numerous successes on a Perception + Investigation roll (difficulty 6) will reveal a large wolf statue among the burnt timber of the hall.

THE FENRIR

On a later day, the characters will be approached. Valfreyja will have committed herself to the ground and Eldur will have been missing since some time in the night. Characters succeeding a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) may notice the shapes of wolves have them surrounded before they emerge from the thicket.

They are greater than any wolves the characters have seen before, each one the size of the extinct dire wolves. Among them, Eldur paces submissively. The wolves have ragged, wild fur and reek of beast. Their teeth are bared and their eyes hold malice.

Before long, Eldur is pushed forward with biting and growling. He changes back into the shape of a boy and tells the characters that he has seen the great wolf who dwells in the marshes with no small sense of wonder in his voice. Eldur further tries to explain that the characters should obey the wolves and follow them.

Staying behind will be seen as a sign of cowardice by the Fenrir, as Eldur might explain. Hrygg, for one, will stubbornly refuse to leave Valfreyja's resting place and others might join him in this conviction. Before long, the wolves lead the rest of them upstream.

THE DEN

Following the wolves, the characters will come to a low-built hall with the makings of a farm around it. Inside, they will be offered a seat on long benches. In the middle of the room stands a great carved statue of Fenrisúlfur, like the one found in the ruins earlier. As soon as they enter the doors of the hall, all of the wolves change back into rough, unkempt men and women. Large cloaks are scattered around the hall for them to wear.

One of the men takes a seat on an enormous chair. His face is marked by a great scar that has left his cheek torn open from lip to jaw. He does not speak as several of the she-wolves gather around him, huddling close. Meanwhile, the tallest of them all, a woman with golden

hair, addresses the characters about Eldur, who she keeps close as she wraps him in a cloak as well.

She will not give her name, stating that the characters are not among jarls or other such windbags. She lists only what the characters need to know: that they are on the borders of a sacred domain where they may not enter, that Eldur's survival is a miracle for which the tribe is indebted to the characters (Péa especially), that they are at war with something they too call the Wyrms, or Ormr, and that Eldur could be the key to defeating the great fire beast that haunts them all.

Great Fenrisúlfur, she will explain, can be beseeched to face the dragon himself, but this would require an act worthy of the great wolf's attention. Eldur is the one who can make such a display. The cub who survived the serpent's fire, who cursed the false god Óðin and slew his servant, and who is the youngest human to go through the First Change in the tribe's history.

The act itself has been decided. They will hunt for a specific prey. The wolves have sensed her moving through their lands in the night. Eldur will hunt and kill a Wælkyrige, tonight.

MEANWHILE

Those who stayed behind will have to have waited for Valfreyja to awaken. She, in turn, be visited by a disturbance in the earth in which she is entombed. She may roll Perception + Occult (difficulty 7) to realize the roots around her wriggle to reach out to her while she leaves her resting place. As soon as one makes contact with her, skin, she will receive a vision of Mara standing above a bowl of water, her arm reaching deep within it. All around her, the children are watching. Arka Galdramaðr is chanting something. Mara will then speak out loud: "You must return here immediately."

TO HUNT A WÆLKYRIGE

The Fenrir believe they cannot take part in what will be Eldur's Rite of Passage. If they wish to assist, however, they will offer that the characters may aid by acting as the bait. The wolves know the area where the Wælkyrige went to ground for the day. It will have risen already, but the characters and Eldur can try to follow its trail and try to get ahead of it. Their prey will be scared off by a wolf, even one so small as Eldur, so it is up to the characters to lure her. She seeks humans to taint and will likely be headed for one of the sparse farms further south.

What she seeks in her prey is good fight. If her prey is in the midst of a heated duel, she will be captivated, unable to walk away. Whoever fought the best, she will intend to choose for her dark desires. If the fight is good, she may be drawn out to come close, to reveal herself to the warriors. It is then that Eldur may strike.

The characters may spend several days tracking the light footsteps left by the Wælkyrige. The Fenrir will

NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

After traveling for numerous days herself, Valfreyja and those who remained with her arrive at Mara's hut in the depth of the night. They will have to wake Mara from a deep sleep and possibly frighten the children in doing so. When all are gathered around another cup of her soup, she will explain she was able to communicate with Valfreyja due to her nature, though she truly intended Arka and the others to return, rather than her.

The reason she called them back is because their exile may come to an end. Agðir is in turmoil. The kingdom has no king. Harald Granraude has been murdered. There is no law. There are none to persecute those involved with the wolf-child stories. Agðir has become as dangerous for the characters as for anyone left in it.

What happened is that the king of Vestfold, Guðroðr Veiðikonungr, whose wife had died some time before, sent a messenger to the king's farm at Tromøy to ask for Harald's daughter's hand in marriage. The king of Agðir refused. King Guðroðr, however, has never let something go after he sets his eye on it. When the messenger came back with Harald's answer, Guðroðr sailed there himself, only now he brought with him an army. There was a great battle and the king and all his family were slaughtered. Ása was captured and taken back to Vestfold.

BLOOD CIRCLE

When the other characters part ways with the Fenrir, they may find the place where Hrygg stayed behind to find tracks leading back south. In the night, either crossing their path or disturbing their sleep, the characters may hear a deep, resonant singing. The voice is rich, loud, and dark. By the time the characters near it, the singing has stopped. The last distinguishable words referred to a 'dottir' (daughter). All they see is a clearing ahead where the ground and the tallest leaves are all covered in blood. A shrouded figure with a great cloak draped over his shoulders walks out of its center, towards the characters. It is none other than the All-High, whose bloodbath was conceived in mourning of the Wælkyrige. He wants nothing of the characters, but is intrigued by them. The characters might learn nothing at all about him at this point, or their interaction with him may give some critical insight. After answering three questions, the All-High will move on.

REUNION

The characters will eventually meet again, whether they converge on Mara's hut or elsewhere. From here, their news will be pooled and a decision must be made with regard to what they will do now, where they will go, and who with. A full year of strife and anarchy in Agðir will follow.



follow from a great distance, afraid to interfere. When they finally get a head of her and recognize the upcoming farms, they may stage a battle between them. To make it convincing, the characters must greatly succeed at Acting rolls, or decide to start fighting for real, with possibly fatal consequences.

When the Wælkyrige descend from a tree she watching from, she will appear, a gorgeous woman dressed all in black, with the feathers of a raven woven into her hair. Immediately, Eldur will pounce on her and tear her apart like he did Ásvaldur.

As the Wælkyrige's remains are rubbed into the dirt, Eldur begins to howl loudly. Within several hours, the Fenrir find them. They recognize Eldur for his great deed. Next, they must beseech the great Fenrisúlfur. To do this, however, they must travel deep within the sacred domain, where the characters cannot be permitted to enter.

They ask Déa's permission to part her and her adopted son. The great debt the tribe has to her remains strong, however, and they will honor it until death. She need only ask when she has the need.

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART VII

(801)

Three final flashbacks remain. In this, the first of them, Valfreyja starts to realize her existence is about to change, forever, again.

THE DEEP CONCERN, PART I

Valfreyja, or Bjarka, as the Lhiannan still call her, will be asked to recite the importance of protection and how she will achieve it. This was discussed in the previous flashback, corresponding to a few months before this scene. The character may pick up on a growing sense of gravity to her mentors' demeanor. They hint at their great need to escape to this land all those years ago. Then, they announce it: in three months' time, they will cast their childe out from the island.

THE SHINING ONE, PART VII

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his victory.

The battles against the Fomhorain were vicious and left cold wastes littered with corpses of both races. The king of the [Dei], however, always rode where the killing was fresh. Giants fell before him and the armies of his adopted people followed behind him.

It would not take much longer before the kings of both races would meet in battle. Balor of the Evil Eye loomed in the distance, the three-eyed giant. Eaghnie's son, the fair-haired one of the skillful hand, was preparing himself to face this foul foe, who brought drought where he tread and whose sight could smite until nothing was left but blight.

One night, there was a battle where the [Dei] lost sight of their leader. They charged forward and clashed with the enemy, searching for their king. Towering above his forces, Balor of the Evil Eye came closer. The greatest among the giants of the north was almost within reach of the invading forces.

Then, the armies stood apart in confusion. They circled a clearing where stood three figures, each one's face similar to the next. Each bore a great spear and each had the same fair hair.

"By the sun and the moon, who are you?!" demand one of the other two.

Two replied with one voice: "We have no name until our

mother names us."

The first to speak looked from his one likeness to the next. He dropped his spear and stepped forward. His likenesses did the same. Two armies stood and watched as the three came to stand as close as lovers.

One acted and tore at the others, overcoming them, consuming them, becoming one. There rose the fair-haired one of the skillful hand, with three mouths and four eyes.

Balor of the Evil Eye had now reached the clearing and stood ready to bear down and open his third eye to destroy the opposing force. The three-faced one did not hesitate. Three great spears went flying, each one cast deep in the eyes of the Fomhorain king.

The spears were cast so deep that they came out the back of Balor's head and laid waste on his armies. Clutching his bleeding skull, the fallen king of giants fled those fields for distant lands, never to be seen again.

The armies of the [Dei] vanquished the Fomhorain and claimed all for their own. Both north and south now belonged to these people. But, to their dismay, they were without a king. Math and Figden searched and searched, long after all battles had ended.

RETURN OF THE QUEEN

(811)

A year passes in Agðir where the land dissolves into reclusive villages. There is word of at least five different self-proclaimed jarls and as months pass, they manage to slaughter one another as often as a new one rises from the ranks of farmers. The characters' involvement at the Fordæmingu av Æsir have been forgotten by all except the inhabitants of Otruness.

ENDURANCE

Wherever the characters have decided to attempt to live, they will spend a cycle of seasons surviving there. Each will require a trade and may roll appropriately as before. Note that although they will have been welcomed by Mara at first, every staying near her will slowly corrode into a horrid existence.

After the anarchy of Agðir, called 'The Ringulreið', shows no signs of resolution, rumors abound and the characters may think of how they have managed to stay in touch with the rest of the world all this time. Whispered fears include invasion from Rygjafylke or Vestfold, or a return to the looting days of Marnardalr. It takes over a year for royal blood to cross the borders into Agðir, however.

NEWS FROM VESTFOLD

Eventually, the characters hear shattering news, spread out over a couple of days. It is entirely up to them, when they will act on what they know. First, the distressed

word of a traveler is: “The Ringulreið has spread! Not only Agðir, but now Vestfold has fallen! Guðroðr Veiðikonungr has been killed, stabbed to death while he was drunk on his ship.”

Later: “Guðroðr’s son Olaf is too young to take his father’s place. Chaos has not broken loose yet, but it undoubtedly will.” Also, though these are far more obscure rumors: “A small ship was seen landing on Tromøy through thick mists early in the morning a few days ago, even though the ruins of the farm there have been abandoned for a year. No one dares go there.”

Even later, with a burst of joy, it is reported that: “It is Åsa! Åsa has escaped Vestfold to return to her home at Tromøy. Not only that, it was she who had her husband killed. She has proclaimed herself queen over Agðir. She does this not for herself, but for her son, Olaf Gudrødsson’s half-brother: Halfdan. Even though he is less than a year old, Åsa is purely convinced that he will become the greatest king the north has ever seen.”

At this point, Åsa is vulnerable at her father’s island farm. None oppose her directly, but she does not have enough allies to claim Agðir. Lastly, word arrives that: “In response to the petty rulers that arose across Agðir, Åsa invites the brave and the bold to a great summit at Tromøy. Those who want to contest her rule, those who want to support her rule, all men and women who believe they have a strong stake in this land are invited to the great Þing on the next new moon.”

Depending on how quickly the characters acted in receiving the news so far, they might only have a few days before the Þing. There isn’t room for all at Tromøy. Some final rumors circulate, especially on the road, that the whole event is staged so that Åsa can find a husband. She always loathed Guðroðr and his Vestfold, supposedly, and wants the very finest man from Agðir’s soil for herself.

PASSAGE TO TROMØY

Åsa quickly proves herself to be of greater intellect than her peers expect. There is only one boat to ferry people to Tromøy and it will only sail twice, once at daybreak, and once in the deep of night. The characters may have already missed the first chance. She has no army, not even a team to act as a personal guard. She sends one handmaiden to the shore on her vessel, alone.

Before the boat reaches the shore, the handmaiden, a true beauty, asks: “Who there can steer this vessel back to the island?” Of those who reply, she asks: “Who there can prevent others from entering my vessel?” Then, when the boat reaches the shore, she says: “Prove it.” She speaks with a true Norse tongue, but as she gets closer, she is revealed to have darker skin and eyes. Her name is Ashavan.

This results in a steep contest for the characters and those around them. Irrespective of their intentions at the

Þing, Åsa wants those she receives to be able to fend off all the others. Anyone entering the boat will be torn off again, outnumbered. Eventually, the strongest defenders will have made a line around the boat. When they can hold the rest off, these men and women are invited to enter the boat and steer it back to Tromøy. After two boats have been ferried to the island in this manner, it will remain there.

ÞING AT TROMØY

The island itself is a blackened ruin. While the bodies have been taken away, the signs of bloodshed are still evident. Visitors are invited to see to sleeping arrangements of their own along the shore, where they may further deter those who were not selected for admittance to the Þing. Stores of food have been provided (mostly barley and cabbage stolen from Vestfold).

Rumors persist around the encampment about the nature of the summit and Åsa’s intentions. A consensus arises that all will speak in public in the morning. As small campfires are lit around different groups, those who are alert may notice Åsa’s handmaiden stepping lightly through the camp and taking a man by the arm, leading him away to the ruined hall in the center.

In truth, Åsa has already begun her summit and will speak to everyone who came here all throughout the night in private. Eventually, each of the characters will be brought to her as well. At the same time, the others have some choices to make with regards to the other visitors. Some mean Åsa and the child harm, others are here to support her.

ALLIANCES BY FIRELIGHT

A person of note the characters may come across sits by himself near his own campfire. His name is Kárr and he has a foreign look about him, with curled hair. He is not secretive about his intentions. He came here from Vestfold in pursuit of Åsa. He remains pledged in the service of Olaf Gudrødsson. This fact alone makes him unpopular and leaves many other visitors suspicious of him. In truth, he is here to offer Olaf’s eternal friendship to his half-brother, to his kin, despite all that has happened.

Several things will furthermore happen during the night. A fight will break out between two groups of men, rival jarls who intend to seduce Åsa and raise her prince as their own son. A boat of half a dozen warriors will land on the shore after circling the island in an attempt to gain access to the Þing. They will be killed on sight, but not without casualties among those invited.

ÅSA’S INTERROGATION

When a character is led away by the handmaiden, they arrive at the central hall to the faint sound of a child sobbing. The hall’s roof is completely gone and parts of

the wall have crumbled. The door, however, has been raised back into its hinges. Inside, at the end of a long table, Ása sits in her father's throne with Halfdan on her lap. As the character draws nearer, she quiets the child with a mere gesture of her hand.

Behind any visitor's back, Ása's handmaiden stands by with a concealed bow in case they intend to harm the queen. Rolling Perception + Alertness (difficulty 8) and achieving multiple successes may reveal this fact, as well as traces of hastily cleaned pools of blood near where the character stands across from the throne. A Perception + Empathy roll may reveal that Ása is easily underestimated in her demeanor, but that she is truly more intelligent than anyone could have realized.

Without looking up at first, she begins her interrogation: "I prefer the night for conversations of gravity, though I could not say why. [...] I have always felt the gods are closer to us after dark has fallen. [...] Were you born in Agðir? [...] Which of the Æsir do you hold dearest? [...] I have one last question, and then I will know all that I need to, for now. In what way are you unconquerable?"

ÁSA'S DECISIONS

The next morning, Ása will be late in waking. While she sleeps, her handmaiden can be seen dragging the corpses of last night's traitors down to the shore and back into the boat. Kárr is already waiting near the boat as well, his business here being done.

By the time Ása awakens, Ashavan will be at her side to care for Halfdan. Then, Ása will meet her visitors outside, by the shores, herself. There, she looks at them all from afar, her gown and hair blowing in the stark weather. The wind carries her voice strongly from the distance as she calls out several names, none of them the characters'. Then, she retreats with these men and women into the ruined hall.

Some time later, with possibly strange noises having come from the hall, they leave there again. Ása proclaims five among them to be jarls of Agðir henceforth. Their company makes for the boat, then, to return to the mainland. Ása then calls for each of the characters to come forward, into the hall.

Inside, she takes her place on the throne and takes her son from her handmaiden. She will repeat what she has learned about the characters and makes it clear she wants to offer them riches, comfort, a home and a purpose worth dying for. Halfdan, she says, will need húskarlar, as will she herself. Those who serve in the royal hirð will be subject to special laws. Anyone who lays a hand on a húskarl will be slain. In turn, every member of the hirð is prepared to lay down his or her life for the chieftain, to protect both Ása and Halfdan so long as they may live, and avenge their deaths after.

This, the life best cared-for in all the land, can be theirs

if they prove themselves. Ása will ask the characters again what they believed made them unconquerable and asks them to prove it. Those who succeed to an impressive degree, will be made húskarl.

After their proving, Ása will give them their first command: to take the ship back to the mainland and arrange new ships, new timber, and new livestock for Tromøy. Meanwhile, Ása will confer with the remaining group of visitors, from which she intends to select advisors and emissaries. The ferrying ship has already returned to the shores by this time and oddly enough, Kárr had decided to wait for the characters to emerge, staying behind. He gives the characters a knowing look and studies them closely after confirming that they are now to Halfdan what he is to Olaf.

HALL-BOUND

The characters' lives will now gradually improve toward what are the dreams of most in the land. Those who were not admitted into the hirð will need to take up professions as they did in Otruness, but can do so near the island itself. Under Ása's invisible ploys, Agðir will become stable again. Slowly, news arrives of Olaf taking control of Vestfold with the help of advisors as well.

Tromøy will be rebuilt with a palisade wall, strong docks, and a hall that houses the hirð as well as the queen and her son. Riches will flow into the island and a significant portion of it goes to arming and feeding the characters. Ása often travels all throughout the land along with her son to see the her people's needs, but more importantly for her people to see the king and slowly let them believe in his future greatness. The characters naturally accompany them on these journeys and slowly become familiar with every corner of the land. Despite their travels, they will never witness a wildfire again. They have the chance to visit with their distant loved-ones, though not as often as they would like.

Some months later, the characters will sit in the richly decorated hall, wearing gleaming armor of ringed mail, when a visitor comes through the door. The man is a Swede, travel-worn, but well-received. Ása had clearly been expecting him as she seats him at a place of honor. He is introduced to the entire hall as Bragi Boddason, a great court poet, a skald who has chronicled the lives of all great kings of these ages. She invited him especially to hear the tale of her sons origins, so that they may stand recorded against where he will be when he claims his right to rule.

She recites the how and why of her husband's murder and the year that preceded it. At the end of it, the skald is able to recite it perfectly, just as she had told it. He continues, however, to trace the lineage back. According to Bragi, Halfdan, although he now rules far away in Agðir, is heir to the House of Ynglings alongside his brother Olaf, whose great ancestors are buried at Östra

AUN THE OLD

*In Upsal's town the cruel king
Slaughtered his sons at Odin's shrine—
Slaughtered his sons with cruel knife,
To get from Odin length of life.
He lived until he had to turn
His toothless mouth to the deer's horn;
And he who shed his children's blood
Sucked through the ox's horn his food.
At length fell Death had tracked him down,
Slowly, but sure, in Upsal's town.*

Aros. As he recites, the child is Halfdan, son of Guðroðr the Hunter, son of Halfdan the Mild, son of Östen of Raumaríki, son of Halfdan Whiteshanks, son of Olof Woodwhittler, son of Ingjald III-Ruler, son of Anund the Land-Clearer, son of Ingvar the Hoary, son of Östen the Burned, son of Aðils the Deadly Foe, son of Óttarr Vendelcrow, son of Egil the Boar-Skewered, son of Aun the Old, son of Jörundr the Hanged, son of Haki the Sea-King, son of Hugleik the Amused, son of Yngvi the Betrayed, son of Alrik the Betrayed, son of Hogne the Powerful, son of Dag the Wise, son of Dyggvi the Useful by Loki's daughter Hel, son of Dómarr the Judge, son of Dómaldr the Ill-Lucky, son of Visbur the Undoubted Son, son of Vanlandi the Hag-ridden, son of Sveigðir the Waving One by the Vanir called Vana of Vanaheimr, son of Fjölfnir the Sweetswimmer, son of the greatest of the Vanir Freyr by the giantess Gerðr.

He thanks her for a warm meal and ends up inquiring after her household. Deep in the night, the man joins the characters at their table and asks after their story, for he has heard strange rumors on the road about the húskarlar of Ása Haraldsdóttir, who are not even from Agðir. What the characters relate may be considered a saga in its own right. Bragi particularly asks after their full names (as in Somebody the That), assuming this is not the first time their tale is being relayed. He has heard faint rumors about them already on the road. Which one of them, for instance, is the one called 'Wolf-Mother'?

AMONG THE MOTHERS
PART VIII

(801)

In this, the second-to-last flashback for Valfreyja, the mothers' fear and hatred is given a name.

DOMALDE THE UNLUCKY

Domalde's rule was marked by bad crops and starvation. The first autumn, the Swedes sacrificed oxen at the temple at Östra Aros, but the next harvest was not better. The second autumn, they sacrificed men, but the following crops were even worse.

The third year many Swedes arrived at Östra Aros at the Thing of all Swedes and the chiefs decided they had to sacrifice the king. They sprinkled the statues of the gods with his blood and the good harvests returned.

The scene was painted as a willing sacrifice by Carl Larsson in 1915, and became the most controversial work in Sweden's history.

A DEEP CONCERN, PART II

The Lhiannan will tell Valfreyja more of what drove them to flee their homeland. They have seen long ages pass in the depths of the forest, from where they watched as castles rose and fell and how eventually, invaders came to build an empire. There are two words the Lhiannan practically spit as they say it, 'empire' being the first. These invaders drove them from their groves, from the Caerns, and forced them into the deepest parts of forests. Eventually, this empire fell and the invaders slipped away.

Something much darker, however, was left behind. Seeds had been sown in that empire's time, and their roots lingered: Christians, the second word spat. Blind, foolish, and oppressive are a few of the words used to describe Christians. This weed spreads fast and has cruel roots. It can destroy fields and choke trees. This is why the Lhiannan were forced to flee their homeland, hide away to another invader's homeland and sow new seeds of their own there. There is no doubt in their minds, however: Christians are the weed that will choke the world. It will spread and find them even here, in this cold infertile north.

THE SHINING ONE, PART VIII

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you. This is the story of the mightiest being, from a land far away from here.

Now, we will tell you of his naming.

Long did Math and Figden search after the battles. When finally they found their friend the king, they saw only his fair hair from behind as he was speaking to a beautiful, wild woman near a tower.

“Now, my [childe],” said the beautiful woman, “you will have your name. I call you Lugh the Shining One, Lugh the Black One, and Lugh the Broken One.”

Math and Figden listened carefully to the woman’s words and gasped as she started to remove her robe. Naked, the wild woman held Lugh close and said: “I lay this destiny on you, that you shall wander the land as I have and as I shall yet, until one day you may find a place where you can become one with the earth. You will take with you Thought and Nemory and you will surround yourself with the greedy and the ravenous without succumbing to either yourself. Where you wander, those in your company will desire to worship you and will conceive new names for you and you will let them do both.”

She held her [childe] to her breast for a moment longer. Then, the beautiful woman changed her shape, like Lugh did all those nights ago, only she changed into the shape of two great she-wolves. “And we shall never meet again,” she spoke lastly. Then, they parted ways.

Math and Figden brought back word of what they had witnessed, and belief spread quickly through the new borders. They were the first to worship the three-faced god who they called Lugh, but they would far from be the last.

WEALTH

(814)

Over the years, the king’s hirð will have had many opportunities for battle. All the while, their offspring

are growing to adulthood and signs start to surround them of their own aging. Kari, the woman who was also selected to be a part of the hirð, has gotten to know the characters amiably.

Ås

The first moment we explore after skipping three years, is Magni waking from a fierce nightmare of the events of Blood Circle. He was sweating and muttering something about ‘dottir’. Kari is the one who shakes him to wake him up, asking if he is alright.

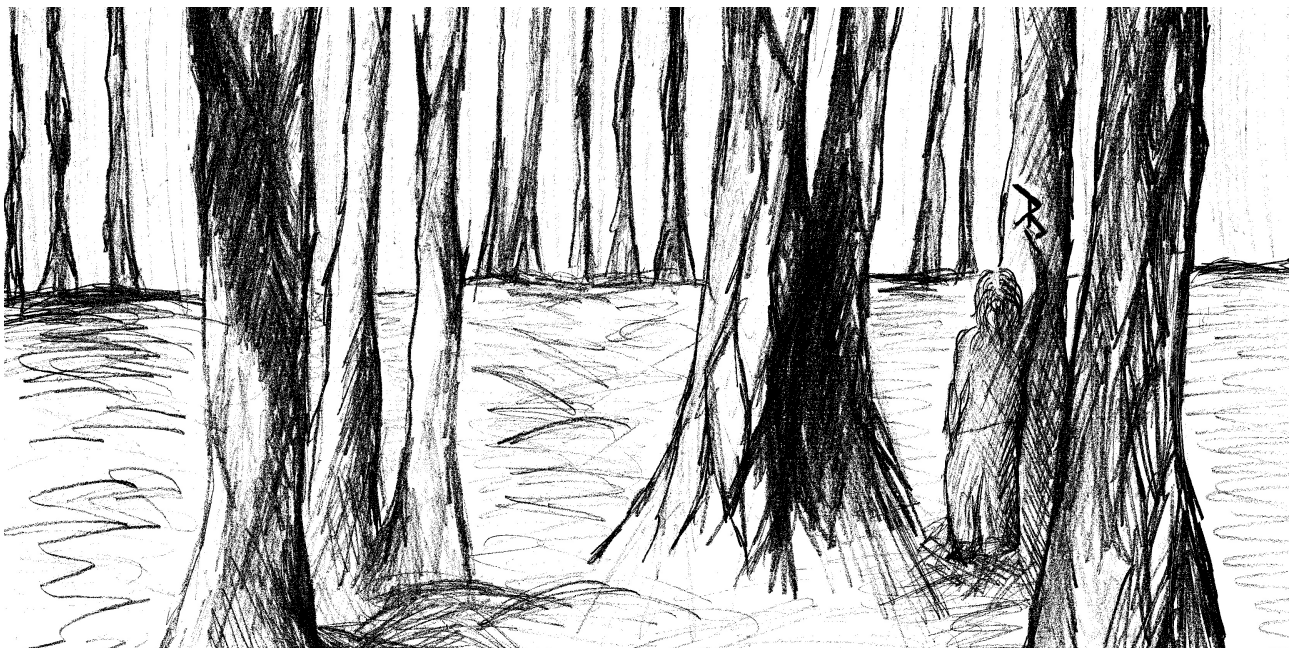
HOVEGÅRD

The farm where Falke’s family has settled lies on the south-western part of the island, where a peculiar property in the soil presents itself. No farm on the mainland or any on the rest of Tromøy is so easily cultivated. The soil is fertile and the sunlight is unobstructed. Mostly, though, it is unparalleled because the ground is self-draining.

THREE WITNESSES

The following observations were made by several of the characters in private two years ago, in the winter. The events seemed unrelated at the time and have gone by undiscussed.

Bjarkan: While Falke was out hunting, he passed by Valfreyja’s birch tree, as he often does. Ordinarily, he would have waved to Hrygg across the distance, who often dwells around his lover’s resting place even in the depths of winter. This time, however, the silhouette by the tree did not look up. It knelt by the tree, consumed by something. Before long, Falke realized it was his brother, Arka. As he was watching, he was startled from behind



him by none other than Hrygg greeting him, who was gathering firewood. By the time they looked back, Arka had gone again.

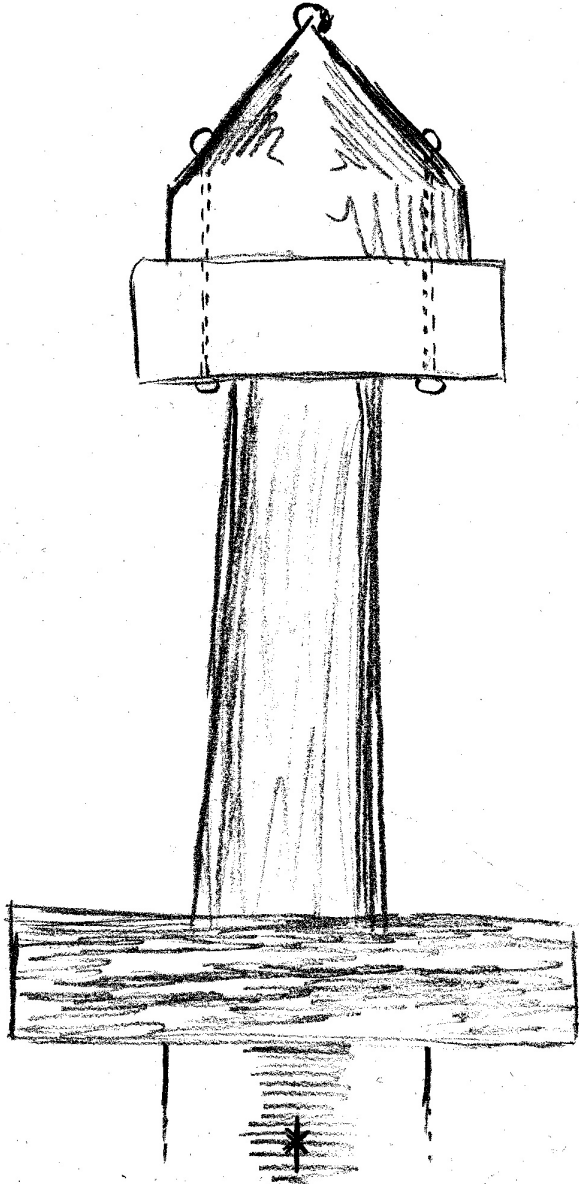
Nauðr: One day, while she was clearing her head of a profound hangover, Póa saw a child playing near the ledge of a steep cliff she knew to be treacherous. Coming closer, she soon realized it was Galdramaðr. The boy had been carving into a nearby tree with a knife. First, a straight, vertical line. In his boyish voice, Galdramaðr said to Póa that he admires her strength greatly and confided in her that the other children of Tromøy teased him awfully about his seiðr. He was easily reassured by Póa. Then, he vowed to use his seiðr for glory, forsaking Mara's intentions for him explicitly.

Galdramaðr then turned back to the tree and began to carve a short line across the one that was already there.

His deeper voice then came on, saying that he would tell Póa a secret. He said that the gods walk among us, that while men need to eat and sleep until they die, the gods need not and do not. They have the power to bestow a similar immortality on others. Even the false gods have this power. At that, Galdramaðr finished his carving into the shape of Bjarkan. Lastly, he said, with the greatest depth and gravity in his voice, that some, however, do not deserve this power.

Isa: Mara's beauty had been fading for longer than usual. Old almost beyond recognition, she had begun to worry Arka with her frailty. Meanwhile, Galdramaðr had been spending more time with his father. One evening, after they had enjoyed a feast in Ása's hall, Mara was found by the boy within a few strides of her home, dead and frozen.





finely-oiled leather with thin metal plates stitched unto it, making a crude version of lamellar armor.

Also, the characters may be appointed a maneuver (Vampire the Dark Ages p. 193, Dark Ages Companion p. 34) to have mastered if they decide they have risked their lives in combat sufficiently. This boon comes with the price that the character may have been injured. Determined by a dice roll, there is the chance the character has had to recover from being Crippled, and thus loses a dot in a Physical Attribute. This tradeoff may be refused, or repeated.

GAMES AND DANCING

One of many feasts in Åsa's hall is featured early in our telling of the year 814. Notably, it is attended by those who make up the hall's staff. Hallgeir, for one, has returned from hiding to serve as Åsa's lawman. He was at the Þing at Tromøy, although he and the characters did not meet. Kari and the characters still make up the band of húskarlar, some of whom serve as hirð. Ashavan remains most intimately connect to the queen and her son.

At the feast, then, these members sit at a large table below the queen's throne. Other inhabitants of the island and visitors from the mainland occupy long tables throughout the rest of the gloriously-restored hall. This feast in particular is dedicated to the Vanir Freyr. Åsa commences the festivities with a great speech about an ancient war between the old Vanir and the fierce Æsir, which ended in peaceful coexistence when Freyr was sent to live with the Æsir. He has always been a god of kingship and it is only fitting that he is honored with noble sport as her son, Halfdan, descends directly from him.

Games follow in the feast, where the characters may participate in wrestling or swimming. Eventually, with great ritual, horse fighting commences as the peak of the evening's dedications. Here, the four years old Halfdan is asked to pick a stallion to represent him in the ring. The crowd whispers among themselves as the boy chooses a black horse with hair as dark as his own.

After this horse slaughters four others, it is taken as sign of Freyr's presence and blessing. Halfdan's horse is sacrificed and buried in its own mound. From this day forth, people begin to call the boy Halfdan Svarti: Halfdan the Black.

DEATH OF AN EMPEROR

One evening, a few months after the feast of Halfdan the Black's naming, there is a feast in honor of new trade connections to the south. Everyone in the hall knows there is big news of some kind, only Åsa seems to delay in sharing it. When all the food is already cleared and mead is all that is being served, the queen begins: "I met a man today, a Dane. We got to talking about events current and

EXPOSURE

If this wasn't cruel enough, every character with a child must determine who has survived the three years skipped over. While they are well-fed on the island, many risks remain. First, all their children are assigned Attributes by the usual division. Then, the players roll Stamina for each of them (difficulty 5). Those who fail have not survived the last three years.

ARMED

The characters are now armed by their queen. The characters are each given a shield, a sword, and armor. Their shields are painted with the rune Hagall for 'Halfdan' just as their swords are engraved with it as well as a rune for their own names. The armor consists of

past. The highlight of these is always the same."

Åsa looks to the hall to see if they could guess. Otherwise, she fills in: "War".

"It is always war, with us. I wonder, is there anyone here who was alive during the Battle of Brávellir?" Hallgeir protests, saying it is beyond any living man's lifespan. To that, Åsa replies: "Not true."

"There are many accounts of that battle. Today, I heard from this Dane a new one. He claimed to have heard it from a warrior who fought on Sigurd's side. He claimed it was none other than Starkad."

At that, all in the hall are amazed. The characters, in their time here, have heard of him as well. He is a hero, perhaps the greatest known hero of their time, but a conflicted one. Although his reputation was gained in lands to the east and to the south of where the characters have been so far, it seems he was born further in the north than even Rygjafylke. Descended from giants, Starkad's deeds are as great as they are intriguing, questionable, and half the time, downright devious.

"At first, I doubted him, but then he answered some of my questions about Starkad with uncommon knowledge. War, it is always so with us, past and future. Before I tell you of our news, our present, let me dwell on what this Dane had to tell. This is the account of the battle from Starkad himself."

Sigurd Ring and Harald Wartooth were kin. That is the first thing every man must understand about the Battle of Brávellir. The story is often told with a count of the Wartooth's sins, but this has nothing to do with the war. The reason why Harald, king of Zealand, named Wartooth, declared his intent to kill Sigurd, king of Götland, named Ring, is the same reason he allowed for seven years of preparation. Harald Wartooth wanted to die and he wanted to die well.

During the preparations of the battle, many heroes from lands far and wide flocked to either banner. The lists were long and the armies vast. None of them, not even Egil the One-Eyed, Styr the Stout, Hogni the Clever, Thengel the Tall, or Grettir the Wicked, Grettir the Lover of Invasions, would command the gods' attention as much as Starkad.

When the day of battle had then arrived, Sigurd's fleet had fair weather to reach the agreed field of battle at Brávellir. Harald's suffered bad weather, however. This meant that Sigurd Ring landed first and was ready. He was able to spread his forces all along the coastline, placing his cleverest heroes in the vanguard to hold the rest in check. The rest of his army, he massed on two wings to the side in a great curve. Behind them, lastly, stood a line of slingers.

After ceaselessly sailing, Harald Wartooth then arrived with his forces nearby, on an opposing shore. Sigurd told his men to stand quietly until the enemy was able to assemble their line. They were not to advance until Wartooth, old and blind, had been lifted unto his seat to be ridden into battle. He did not fear their assembly, Ring told to his men, because he thought Harald as witless as he was sightless. Wealth could not satisfy this man

who, if he looked to his years, ought to be well-nigh content with a grave. And what army would really march to its death in serving such a man as him?

These are the words Starkad heard from Sigurd Ring firsthand. He fought in the fray and watched then, as Harald's men formed not a line, but something else. It was a formation like a spear, a tactical insight bestowed by Oðin himself. Sigurd by then, was out of earshot. Bloodshed followed. Starkad made sure to know the names of those who fell before him. There were Hun and Elli, Hort and Burgha. He cut off the right hand of Wisna and further wounded in the field Roa, Gnepie, and Gardar. Eventually, he came before the great warrior Hakon, who he managed to cast to the earth. In return, he received such a wound that he was forced to leave the battle and watch from afar. His neck was cleft, his hand was deprived of a finger, and his lung was exposed through his chest.

From here, Starkad saw the maiden Webjorg fight and slay the champion Soth. She challenged more of Harald's champions, but was then felled by an arrow, shot from the bow of Thorkill. The deaths, all the deaths of that day, cannot be recounted again in a lifetime.

It seemed at this point in the battle, that Harald was winning. Then, Starkad saw a figure moving through the battle, untouched. This figure, disguised, was moving from one king's side, to the other. By the time Harald Wartooth let himself be brought forward, to see the killing from closer, Sigurd Ring had taken new counsel. He concentrated his warriors and, from nowhere, they made the spear formation. Those who had been presumed slain rose again to fight at Sigurd's side. Webjorg tore the arrow from her chest and roared that she would rip the head off Thorkill's shoulder.

No sooner had the fortunes of battle had been shifted in Sigurd Ring's favor, than treachery fell. Brun, the personal guard standing by King Harald, tore his lord from his horse. In Starkad's far sight, he saw Brun cut his king's head off, thus robbing the two kings of their proving ground. The Battle of Brávellir was over.

It is silent in the hall for some time. "War. It is always so with us. Let me tell you then, as surely as the gods walked among the warriors at Brávellir, a great thing has happened. I heard it from this Dane, who knows the area of Jutland, where the great Danevirke stretches from the inner coast to the outer coast to ward out a cruel invader in the south. Long has the Danevirke protected us from this threat, this empire in the south, forged by the one named Karl. This great man of the south, Karl, is dead. The news is fresh, there is turmoil now, there are coasts unguarded. South of the Danevirke, somewhere, lies the treasure on which Agðir can become great. When my Halfdan becomes of age, there will be the means for him to call on an army to rival Sigurd Ring's, and when ages from now, the gods think on the heroes of our time, they will think of Halfdan the Black before they think of Starkad! They will think of my son before they think of Sigurd's."

A KING'S RAID

Weeks of preparation follow. It was indeed foremost the honor of the hirð to offer themselves for this raid. Much discussion was required before a destination was decided. Most accessible are the lands south and west of the Danevirke, which leads the characters to raid Frisia, known to them as Friesland. Before the characters leave on this grave journey, they must make a few arrangements. First, they should consider the fate of their families in the case of their deaths. Each of them must communicate to Hallgeir an effective will. Also, they must decide on what ship to take. Available to them are a trading vessel known as a knorr, or a warship known as a drakkar. Where a drakkar is suitable for making a direct landing on shallow beaches and even for traveling up rivers, a knorr has a stowage area and can carry more loot (as well as hide Valfreyja comfortably during daylight hours). Next, the characters must decide on who to bring. Although she is not a part of the hirð, Valfreyja may want to join the endeavor. Þovar will be eager to join, as will Grein in an attempt to finally eclipse his brother Magni's accomplishments. More warriors will be summoned from the mainland to fill the ship. When the characters are ready to sail from the shore then, into the treacherous open North Sea, the first Act will be concluded.

AMONG THE MOTHERS PART IX

(801)

At last, Valfreyja's time among the mothers ends. She is cast out, but not without some apprehension of what it was they were planning and what she has now become exposed to.

A DEEP CONCERN, PART III

Eina, Selja, and Aska impress all their lessons on their pupil once more. On the night after this one, they will cast her back to the mainland, back to her people, and she must know what to do. They have told her about the Dragon Lines, about Caerns, Christians, about the empires, and most importantly, about the Shining One. It is for Valfreyja to recite her conclusion about her purpose. If she has any remaining doubts, the elders will angrily recite it for her:

Valfreyja is a last hope for the survival of the Lhiannan. It is for her to find a place of power in the northern lands and to establish herself there. There, she must await the arrival of her mothers.

The Lhiannan mothers do not leave instructions for their resurrection. They will sleep and awaken when the time is right. They say that when they do, they will know where to find their Bjarka. If Valfreyja has done her duty,

they will have a new place of power, where the four of them should be able to ward off all adversaries until the falling of the great tree of life itself. The consequences of them finding Valfreyja having not accomplished this position are left undiscussed.

THE SHINING ONE, PART IX

The Lhiannan mothers are both cruel and nurturing, and at times both guarded and free about what they know. They tell the Embraced character something over many nights, something which reveals ancient creatures, and incidentally, the origins of the All-High.

In our ancient memories rests an important thing. You must hear this tale and you must remember this tale. You may tell it to others, but you may not tell it any different than we tell it to you.

Now, childe, you must hear of what happened to [Blood-Wed]. She was shaped for Lugh, married to Lugh, and cursed by Lugh. After the start of the war with the Fomhorain, she followed after the armies like one among the crows, feeding from the slain. After there were no more battles, she left the newly formed land for the west until in her travels, [Blood-Wed] encountered two she-wolves who would have a word with her.

The wolves said that what [Blood-Wed] saw was not their true form, but that they were in fact one ancient woman called Eahnie. [Blood-Wed] could only weep for no one had talked to her since she was cursed.

Eahnie told her that although Lugh had cursed her, she would speak for [Blood-Wed] a blessing. She could not give her any name but what Lugh commanded her to be called for all eternity. Instead, she offered [Blood-Wed] the knowledge that she might yet have daughters of her own. These daughters would be despised as [Blood-Wed] is, but she at least could call them dearest, beloved, [Lhiannan], like the meadowsweet from which their mother was once created.

It is from [Blood-Wed] that our love flows and our power grows. It is from [Blood-Wed] that we descend, but it is the curse of Lugh that will yet be our end.

*Deyr fé,
deyja frændr,
deyr sjalfr it sama,
en orðstírr
deyr aldregi,
hveim er sér góðan getr.*

Wardruna – Helvegen

PART II:
IN SEARCH OF THE GODS

AMONG THE FALLEN PART I

(803)

Pormoðr was sacrificed to the Æsir when the characters first came to Otruness. Flashbacks similar in format to the Among the Mothers scenes in Part I will be acted out here in Act II, focusing on his afterlife experiences. We begin with the moment of death itself.

FALLING

It is the year 803 again, and we revisit an event witnessed by many through the eyes of one.

“Pormoðr, you are very brave. You’re a good man.”
[Falke]

“It is my duty.” [Pormoðr]

“We will remember you.” [Falke]

“Are you sure about this?” [Valfreyja]

“I’ve talked about protecting you all before. This is the way to show it.” [Pormoðr]

“Thank you.” [Valfreyja]

“You are a better man than us all.” [Falke]

“You are all my brothers and sisters.” [Pormoðr]

“Do you have any wish?” [Falke]

“Don’t let my sacrifice be in vain.” [Pormoðr]

“Never.” [Arka]

“This will not mean I will stop looking after you.”
[Pormoðr]

“You will keep your eye out from the Hall of the Dead. You will not be forgotten.” [Arka]

“I will be with you, always. Protecting you, still.”
[Pormoðr]

You remember. You remember and perhaps that is strange. After stepping forward, the men in stained robes grabbed hold of your arms and spread you, lifted you in the air for all to see. In front of you, was your family, the people you loved. Behind you stood a great tree made ready for sacrifice.

You bled from a dozen wounds. It was just after dawn. And she was not there. You watch as everyone walks away after there is no blood left in your veins. And she is not there. You want to scream. You want to tell them that your eyes are still open! And she is not there.

Pormoðr has awoken in the Shadowlands, but does not remember the moment of death. With a feat of strength, he can tear himself from the hörgr, and from his caul. The hörgr and the sacrificial tree have a strong representation in the Shadowlands. All the rest is vague and distant. His family won’t be able to answer him if he calls. The world has become bleak and the realness of his wounds poses a troubling question. The scene is over only when Pormoðr starts to despair, whether he has made it off the tree or not.

FOREIGN SHORES

(814)

The characters are about to depart from Tromøy. In the name of their future king, they will raid Frisia. The men of Eikundasund once embarked on a similar voyage. The characters are determined to make theirs have a different outcome.

RUMORS OF A DESTINATION

Falke recalled rumors overheard on his travels back when the characters lived in Otruness. They were about a place called Lugdunum Batavorum down somewhere in the southern lands. While organization continues for the raid down south, Falke will run into a familiar face when he is checking up on the ship being prepared for the journey at Tromøy. It is none other than his colleague from Vestfold, who it seems is still running the same routes as previously. His name is Herthart. He is the one who mentioned Lugdunum Batavorum to Falke and may be able to tell him more.

If Falke approaches him, the man will gladly tell him more of that story. He recites how his fathers have sailed the seas as merchants for as far back as he can remember, and that they had a particular fascination with tales of the old empires of the south. He addresses specifically that this is not the empire of the recently-fallen Karl, but the one that preceded it. This empire encompassed nearly all the lands where the northerners now raid and trade. His fathers were amazed to find that if they sailed in two different directions for days or even weeks, they kept finding that in lands which spoke vastly different languages, the same authority had once held a presence there. His father brought him up on such stories, stories of coincidences and similarities across the known world. One of the many things these lands had in common, was that there were places called ‘Lugdunum’. You could hear stories of ruins called ‘Lugdunum’, local legends, all over.

Now, the reason why Herthart mentioned Lugdunum Batavorum all those years ago, is because he had talked with a highly learned Frisian who knew a story, a legend from that ancient empire’s time. It was a story about a man who led this empire, its great king at one time, an emperor called Kalla. This man once developed a hatred for the gods and saw their wrath in the seas. He commanded his army to line up on a beach and forced them to attack the gods in their home. When his forces emerged from the water, triumphant, he ordered a tall structure to be built to commemorate it. Kalla’s Tower it was called, and it stood tall on the sea’s shore. At the top of the tower burned a bright flame and as long as that flame was fed, Kalla had power over his gods. According to the Frisian, these seas were close to his homeland. He believed that he knew where Kalla’s Tower stood, in a

place also called Lugdunum, Lugdunum Batavorum. If the merchant remembers the Frisian's words correctly, it was about a day's travel to the west of where he lived, where the sea became less shallow and the shore turned south.

After the exchange, Falke's former colleague has more than an inkling about Falke's new position and his mission. He tells Falke that he believes he is far superior on the seas compared to Falke. He tells him that the means to navigate between Agðir and Vestfold (which, indeed, are all based on estimations on bare sight of the sun and stars) are insufficient for his endeavors south. He offers to save Falke's life, and he will even keep it a secret that he had to teach him this, in exchange for two things. The man thinks the harbormaster at Tromøy demands too much. If Falke, in his position as huskarl, can persuade the harbormaster to never inspect his ship's goods again, and if Falke swears to visit him in Vestfold after he returns (after all, with the knowledge he is about to provide him, he is guaranteed to come home alive) for a friendly visit, then Herthart will tell about a technique which will help him navigate.

DEPARTURE

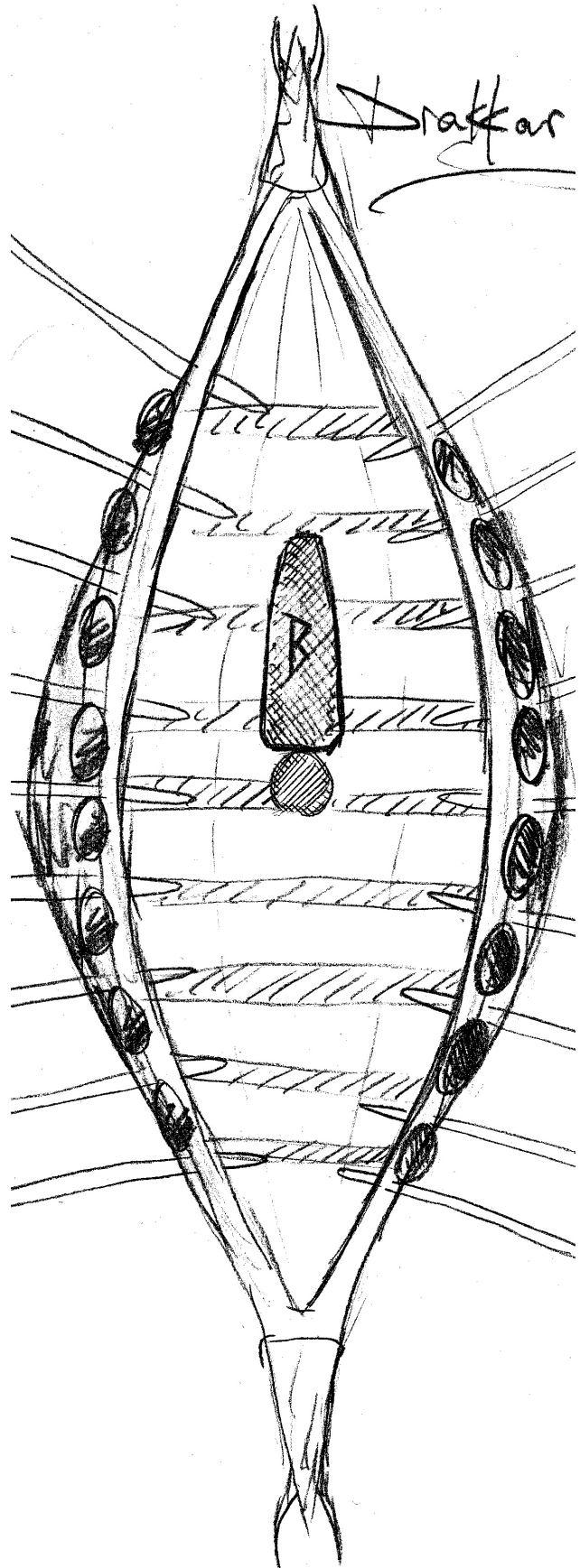
The characters have one last opportunity to describe every aspect of their vessel's configuration. Previously, they mentioned they wanted a drakkar ship. Note everyone who was coming along and where they will sit in the boat. When finally they do set off, nearly all of the island's inhabitants are at the shore to bid them farewell and a safe journey. Åsa in particular anoints each of the raiders in a sacrificed goat's blood with a symbol that could be interpreted either as the Týr rune, or Þór's hammer.

AT SEA

The characters have departed early in spring to be ahead of other raids following from the news of Karl's death. This means it is still frigid out at sea, however. The primary duty of navigation is the first concern. Likely, this task will be taken up by Falke.

Navigation: If Falke agreed to Herthart's terms before, he will have had tied strange device to the main mast. It is a notched pendulum, which to due to a weight at its bottom remains approximately vertical. This measure is set up in such an angle with the main mast, that if it and the mast line up, Falke's heading should take him to the Friesland. More than this, because of the critical solar times in spring, he can keep track of sunrise, sunset, and noon on its notches to determine latitude.

In all, Falke will have to make his Perception + Seamanship roll. He may declare is Willpower now and roll the dice. This roll represent the entire voyage. The dice, as rolled, should be placed on the table and remain there. The difficulty will be announced later.



Talk: The places on the boat not designated by the characters earlier will have been filled by others from Agðir. Some of them are experienced in raiding and their words, spoken through the strokes of oars and the billowing of sails carry weight.

“The last line of land has sunk behind the horizon. We are now above the deep. North of us lies Agðir, a land that is strong and beautiful, a land that is ours. South of us lie the Danelands, lands of turmoil, lands with too many borders. East of us lie the God-Lands, lands which are sacred, lands which we all respect. Below us, lies the deep. What creatures dwell in those depths, what gods breathe under that murk, will see a thousand ships scuttled, a thousand of our kings buried... West lies the way to lands foreign and far, strange and secluded. Above us are the watching gods and we pray they allow us glory and the chance to see our lands again.”

Rowing: As the characters enter the wilder seas, their toil on board becomes crucial. In three rounds, the characters’ efforts are evaluated. The navigator is the only one exempt from rowing (except perhaps Valfreyja, as well). Based on their seating determined earlier, everyone rolls Strength + Athletics at a difficulty of 7. A total of ten successes are required for either side. If one side of the boat falls behind, they are slowed and must correct their course. Simultaneously, rainfall and crashing waves constantly bring water into the boat. Orders must be passed quickly as to who stops rowing in order to empty the boat of its water, lest they sink. Again a total of ten successes are required on Dexterity + Athletics rolls to empty the boat.

Destination: Falke’s earlier roll for navigation is now evaluated. The difficulty is 7 if he has the aid of Herthart’s technique, or 9 without it. Consequences of failure are absolutely dire. Success leads the drakkar to southern shores which resemble expectations. First, there are shallows of murk that stretch for miles inland. Eventually, the coast turns to the south, and the flat lands of their destination reveal themselves.

BEACH

At long last, the characters may find they have found the shores described by Falke’s former colleague. After scouring its length, however, they see no tower. It simply doesn’t exist. Much more attractive, however, is the opening of a river. This is where the river Rhine ends, a site as strategically important now as it was during the Roman Empire.

Behind the dunes, the characters can see a vast, flat land. A large forest that once stretched inland from here was felled years ago, though the trunks can still be seen. Thus, the characters can easily see far and wide what awaits them. A small village lies nearby, on the banks of the river. It lies close enough that the characters need to be careful not to be seen. The mouth of the river is wide

and can easily accommodate their drakkar. Further upstream, they can see a much larger settlement. Both consist of farms with thatched roofs, and one notably taller building in their centers.

While standing on the dune, a character who rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 7) may notice something protruding from the sand and grass. If they dig it up, they will find a peculiar artifact. It is a small statue of three faces merged into one. In truth, the ruins of Lugdunum Batavorum have been lost for centuries and will remain buried until the 16th century, when violent weather uproots the ground on which the characters stand at that very moment.

GALDRAR

Perhaps an inconvenience to the rest, as soon as plans are made for the raid, Galdramaðr announces that he will require preparation before the battle. Worse, his preparations require him to make a fire.

Before the moment of battle, Galdramaðr secludes himself and starts a fire. Those watching can see him jumping through the flames dangerously. Eventually, when the high flames die down, he reaches into the glowing coals with his bare hand and screams in pain. Then, he pulls one of the glowing coals out and swallows it whole.

He joins the others, clearly wounded, unable to speak. The smell is sickening and he exhales smoke. He is determined to start fighting immediately. In fact, his fighting ability may shock the characters. His galdra grants him a Strength + Melee of 8.

RAID

How the characters go about the plunder is entirely up to them. They are judged on speed and subtlety. There are risks to taking the boat upriver for all to see and there are risks in leaving it behind at the shore. The town they attack first may be unprepared. The second one will have mustered a force. Wherever they attack, the locals, all farmers, will shout ‘Wytsing! Wytsing!’ at their approach. Both towns contain a church, though the one deeper inland is larger by far. The churches are made from a foreign kind of stone as its base and extend into wooden towers. Inside, a priest will try to shelter his people in the sanctuary.

The first such priest the characters encounter will stand ready for them at the threshold, just beyond the doors. In his hands, he holds a cup of holy water. He will pray: “*Exorcizo te, creatura aquæ, in nomine Dei Patris omnipotentis, et in nomine Jesu Christi, Filii ejus Domini nostri, et in virtute Spiritus Sancti: ut fias aqua exorcizata ad effugandam omnem potestatem inimici, et ipsum inimicum eradicare et explantare valeas cum angelis suis apostaticis, per virtutem ejusdem Domini nostri Jesu Christi: qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos et sæculum per ignem,*” while

marking the threshold with the water. Valfreyja is instantly discomfited. Should she go nearer, she must roll Courage (difficulty 6). The priest will continue to sprinkle the threshold and those who cross over it. The water will cause Valfreyja 3 aggravated damage instantly if it touches her. More than this, anyone who has ever tasted her blood will receive 1 aggravated damage from it. Galdramaðr is also hurt by the water. The others are entirely unaffected.

The treasures found in a church include gleaming chalices, books (an unfamiliar object for the characters), and many other pieces of art whose materials can be appraised by those among the characters who are familiar with trade (ivory statues, painted wood, vestments, quilts, jewelry, ...).

If they try to interrogate the locals, they may discover only vague phrasings. The smaller settlement closer to the shore is called Katti. The one deeper inland is called Leighon. Near Leighon stands a hill where a fort can be

seen once the characters draw closer. This fort houses the overseer of this land, who keeps a considerable military force.

Two further particular finds for characters include the works of Seutonium: *De vita Cæsarum*, of which a copy is kept here. The characters may not realize what it is however, apart from it being protected by someone other than a priest. Lastly, they may overhear or even find a map which indicates the even further upriver lies a place called Dorestad, a great trading center which is connected to the rest of the known world.

After the initial shock of their attack has passed, locals will have a chance to defend themselves. Many will climb to the roofs of their houses, shooting at them with bow and arrow or just throwing rocks. It also will not take long for the nearby fort's soldiers to arrive, which outnumber the characters heavily. These soldiers are well-armed and battle-proven.

AMONG THE FALLEN PART II

(803)

In the previous flashback, Þormoðr remained stuck on the sacrificial tree. He was unable to pull free. His caul lies dissolved in the hörgr below him and his skin is exposed to the cold winds of the lands of the dead.

ÆVIKVIÐA

After Þormoðr has been stuck where he is hung for what seems to be an eternity, he slowly, but certainly, hears footsteps behind him. He cannot turn around to see, but slowly he can hear them coming closer. Then, close enough to hear a low sigh, they stop behind him. Without revealing himself, the figure may hear Þormoðr out. Eventually, his curt responses will end when he says: "So, you are dead." [...] "And Freyja and was not here to meet you and to hold you to her breast and to take your hand softly in hers and to guide you to the Fólkvangr, the fields of your people?" [...] "And Oðin was not here to deliver you and to test you and to call you worthy of his hall and a feast unending and a fight worth fighting?" [...] "So you bared your soul and spoke of the deeds of your life and, like me, it went unheard." [...] "Don't you know the stories? Don't you even know where to start?" [...] "Ævikviða. You cannot expect the Gods to hear you if you have not spoken."

The wanderer then shows himself. He is tall and thin. He looks much younger than his voice suggested, but he has clearly been in these lands for a long time. Everything about him is grim and decayed. After Þormoðr has recited the deeds of his life, and nothing happens, the wanderer answers: "No one is listening, my—" where he is about to

GREIN'S PRIZE

The characters had petitioned for more men to join them on their raid as well as allowing Grein to join. While their arms were welcome for rowing, too late did the characters notice that these men have plans only for their own glory. When they meet up at the boat again, with the whole town of Leighon roused and its soldiers marching, Grein returns with a prize he claims all for his own: a fat man in expensive clothes, his hostage.

A SON FORSAKEN

As the soldiers of Leighon's fort entered the town on the characters' heels, chaos brewed. All the characters made for the boat as quickly as they could, but Galdramaðr was uncooperative. He had become a berserker and only Arka remained to try to hold him in check as the line of soldiers approached.

Galdramaðr's attempt at speech was unintelligible. Arka despaired and let his son go after pushing a shield into his hands. Galdramaðr stormed into the line of soldiers, decapitating several of them before a sword pierced his chest. Arka had turned around by then and was running.



say 'my friend' but instead finishes with: "I once had many friends... but no more." and begins to walk away.

The wanderer can be convinced to aid Þormoðr, in fact he is trying to manipulate the recently deceased man into trusting him. Still, if Þormoðr does not call after him, he will keep walking rather than have his bluff called. Otherwise, he may show him how his ghostly body can pass through the antlers protruding from him, though it will hurt.

RISE OF A KING

(814-829)

After the king's hirð returned home, the years passed by in relative peace. With wealth and comfort, the land awaited eagerly for their future king to grow into a man. Fifteen years fly by deceptively fast before one day, Halfdan is ready to take the crown. By then, however, his hirð will have been confronted more than once with the constraints of mortality and their growing age.

GREIN HAUKR

After returning from the raid, Grein kept his prize close. He convinced Ása that he should keep his hostage close and before long, the Burggravius of Leighon and Grein managed to talk. Grein gathered up several young warriors from Tromøy and made a proposition to his queen. In front of everyone, he spoke of Dorestad, a place further upriver from Leighon, a place which has trade routes to lands unheard of, where gold flows like rivers. He convinces Ása to let him risk his life for her enterprise, instead of her hirð. He will attack Dorestad with his own band and bring her back its riches. With Þéa's consent, Povar will join this warband.

Soon, Grein and his men command more awe than the characters do, who spend all their time in the warm hall. Grein also begins to shave his head and grows his beard into a point. Together with a broken nose that grew back hooked, the result of an early raid, people begin to call him Grein Haukr, Grein the Hawk. In secret, Grein earns more riches on his travels by selling information. After his first visit to Dorestad, he has started systematically

exposing all the other trading outposts of this vast continental network. His findings, he offers to the Danes. Nonetheless, Tromøy prospers. A year passes.

Buddha-Bøtte

One day, Grein returns from a raid with a gift for Ása. It is a bucket made from yew, framed with brass all around and decorated with inlaid colored glass. Two ornate figures decorate the handles. They sit with their legs crossed in a peculiar fashion. Ása takes a great interest in the gift thereafter. She cannot explain why, but she often claims it is irrefutably a symbol of immortality.

SOIL

It is nearly one year since Galdramaðr read Valfreyja's rune: Ár. He promised insidiously that something would happen in one year's time. Shortly after drawing this rune, he died. It is here we take a moment to explore how Arka is dealing with his son's death. Valfreyja's history with Mara makes this strenuous enough. While Valfreyja worries, Hrygg approaches her with something unusual. He says he wants to leave her side, for a little while. He will not want to explain why, in case he fails. He urges her to let him, though. While he claims to go with Grein on his raid, they will actually never have permitted him to come because he wanted them to make a stop out of their way. They left Hrygg on the mainland, from where he continued on foot. Grein will return from his raid before Hrygg is seen again. All the while, Valfreyja is exposed. If Hrygg posed an obstacle to any of the characters' plans, he doesn't now. Eventually, he will return, however, and he will be carrying a satchel with enough earth to fill a cauldron. He retrieved it from the island by Eikundasund, from the birch tree she spoke of often. He also returns with the news that while the island remained deserted, others have settled in the farms the characters left behind. Two years pass.

MAGNI AND KARI WED

After their long courtship, there will come the day when Kari is receptive to the idea of marrying Magni. A long procedure of formalizing their bond is completed with a wedding feast on the island lasting several days. Because both Kari and Magni stand so close to Ása, the queen dotes on their union. In fact, they are offered so much cattle that they could rival any farm on the island. This is precisely what Ása offers them on the final night of the wedding feast. If they wish, she will allow both of them to retire from the hirð, to live out their years on a newly built farm near the hall and to have a family of their own. It is what Ása has always have wanted for Kari. Three years pass.

FAIR BJARKA

As the characters' children grow through adolescence, questions arise with regard to their age. Firstly, some of

the characters' issue want to join Grein in his raids. Later, the characters' own age seems to catch up on them. They cannot avoid that slowly, they are growing less strong and that their faces betray the start of their loss of youth. Ása suffers the same, although she does not seem troubled by it. Remarkably, it is Valfreyja and Hrygg, then, who do not. Amidst all the complications that this brings, the characters all wonder, at one point or another, if they are satisfied with what they have achieved. Four years pass.

ISA

It is deep in the growing melancholy of the characters concerning their age, that something uncommon overcomes Péa. She watches as her eldest son walks into the hall with Halfdan at his side. They are both marked with bruises and a trail of blood rolls down Sjó's face, but they are both smiling. They had been training well. The pride she feels for her son wells up to such a degree that she begins to breathe heavily. Her heart starts racing. Something happens to her which has only ever happened to other women, the völvur. Péa has a vision.

She sees a thawing winter landscape. A great lake surrounded by trees. In the distance, she sees a man with a band of warriors take a sled unto the ice to cross it. The man is tall and strong, broad and commanding. His men follow his every command with haste. They fear him and they love him. The sled draws nearer and she sees the man's face clearly. He has a great beard which is starting to turn grey. She thinks the man may be about as old as she is. Then, suddenly, spring betrays this man. The ice, too thin, cracks and swallows the sled whole. The man drowns, to the despair of his men, and is dead by the time they pull the sled out again.

When Péa recovers from her vision, she is lying on the floor of the hall with concerned voices all around her. It is Halfdan who stands over her, offering her water and asking if she is alright. She looks at his face and recognizes the man from her vision immediately. What haunts her most, later, although it makes perfect sense that it was so, is that none of the characters were there with Halfdan on the ice. Five years pass.

THE VINGUL

As Halfdan grows older than Valfreyja looks, the conversations in the characters' presence at the queen's hall all revolve around one thing: the future king is being instructed in the lands around him. Hallgeir, who is by now truly old, and Ása tell him of the lands away from the sea, further inland. Of particular interest is Vingulmork, which has a border in the west to Vestfold, the lands of Halfdan's brother Olaf, and a border in the north to Raumaríki which once belonged to King Eystein of Heiðmork further to north but has been shared by his sons since his passing, and lastly a border in the south to



Álvheimr, ruled by King Gandálv. It is King Gandálv who has currently laid claim to Vingulmork, reaching far from home. But Vingulmork, Hallgeir is quick to point out, is a priceless land strategically. The island of Tromøy is strong, but in truth it could be assaulted from any side. That is how Halfdan's grandfather was conquered years ago. Vingulmork, however, is a mountainous land which cradles the sea like a bird with stretched wings. Any attack by sea would require navigation carefully for a long, narrow distance, before reaching its center. A king who rules from the source of that inlet, Hallgeir says, could rule all the northern lands.

Not long after, the characters overhear Halfdan formulate his intentions. It shocks them and everyone in the hall, everyone but Ása. Halfdan speaks often of those bordering lands. He speaks of the right of birth and the right of might at every feast. Agðir, he says, belongs to him, not Ása. Vestfold, he says, belongs to him, not Olaf. Vingulmork, he says, belongs to him, not Gandálv, and not Eystein's sons. And, he says, if Gandálv contests him over Vingulmork, then Álvheimr will belong to him too. And, he says, if Eystein's sons contest him, then Raumaríki and Heiðmork will belong to him too. When the hall has been silent for a good long while, Ása rises

and says only: “Halfdan is right. Agðir is not mine. From this night forward, it belongs to King Halfdan Svarti.”

AMONG THE FALLEN PART III

(803)

Previously, Þormoðr beseeched Luðr to remove him from the sacrificial tree. He did not understand what the stranger meant when he spoke of Ævikviða. Þormoðr then decided to see his family in Otruness, where Luðr refused to go.

NÍÐR OK NORÐR

Þormoðr walks over the hill and looks below to see the small farms circling the great temple of Otruness. Getting close, he soon discovers he drifts invisible through the realms of the living and the family he is desperate to see are beyond closed doors he can’t open. He must force his wraithly body through the thick walls to go beyond, and it will hurt him. Another little piece of him will be torn.

Then, when he is inside, he must wonder what he is so desperate for. There is no doubt that what he feels is desperation, but is he desperate to protect them? Or is he desperate to be consoled by them? Desperate to be acknowledged by them? His selfish desperation then soon turns to self-loathing when he witnesses only the most private and intimate moments of starting families. He feels the desperate need to be near them, but all he can do is invade on moments not meant for him. When finally he gathers up the courage to see Valfreyja, he will see her giving her most sacred blood to Hrygg.

Before long, Ásvaldur will have felt his presence. He will come storming out of the temple, straight for Þormoðr, staff in hand. Beyond the deep, gray Shroud, that staff shines bright and it hurts Þormoðr, the way Ásvaldur waves it in his direction. He whispers something under his breath about the sacrifice being in vain. He is furious with Þormoðr and shouts at him: “Niðr ok norðr liggir helvegr!” Down beneath and to the north lie the roads to Hel. Ásvaldur will vigilantly drive Þormoðr away from Otruness, no matter what he tries.

EASTERN TIDES

(829)

The characters, some of whom are not even Huskarlar anymore, have a decision and a proving ahead of them. For more than a decade, this has been in coming. Halfdan is king and he means to conquer. Between Þéa’s vision and each character’s remaining ambitions, where do they seek their fate?

AGING

By now, the characters are in their mid forties, an old age for their culture. Those who have aged this far naturally must roll Stamina (difficulty 7) or acquire a Flaw appropriate to their aging.

PROVING

Halfdan means to venture to Vestfold almost immediately. He has grown to be a bear of a man at only 19 years of age, with the stubbornness to match. He wants to take his finest warriors and leave Tromøy behind. His household may follow later. In his mind, he will simply walk up to Olaf and tell him that they now rule Vestfold together before turning his eye to Vingulmork. To decide who his new hirð will be, he asks any who are willing to offer their service. The rest of the warriors may remain to look after his mother.

Any who offer to join before Halfdan must swear an oath in blood, but even before this, Halfdan tells them that those who will protect him and wear the black sheepskin cloak beside him must be truly great warriors. He has no need of a hirð composed of warriors weaker than himself. They must be able to defeat their king in a brawl to be worthy. The characters know, Halfdan grew to be stronger than anyone suspected.

Most of the Grein’s young warriors will try their luck, including some of the characters’ children. By now, these deserve fully-worked out sheets.

TØNSBERG

Those who join Halfdan set sail from Tromøy soon after that, leaving all the rest behind. First, they land at Geirstad, where King Olaf has his seat of power. The docks are empty when they do, although a runner can be seen heading up the hill, toward a short and flat hall. There, they are met by wary guards for whom Halfdan shows no fear. He announces who he is and pushes through them without drawing a sword. Inside the hall, Halfdan’s older brother sits pained and old. He was older than Halfdan is now when their father was killed. Now, Olaf is feeble and stricken with gout. Although the hall is tense with anticipation has the new king of Agðir steps close to Olaf, towering above him, that tension is broken when both kings break out a smile. Before the characters know it, they are feasting in Geirstad. Vestfold has become poor in Agðir’s shadow these last few years and the feast is far from as lavish as what they are used to in Tromøy. By the end of it, Olaf has explained to Halfdan how their father once owned half of the Vingul, but that Álvgeir, Gandálv’s father, had taken it from them long ago. He goes on to offer his brother half of Vestfold, everything to the east of here, saying it is theirs to share equally, both equal sons of Guðroðr Veiðikonungr.

The next day, Halfdan sets sail again, promising to return to speak more with Olaf after he has inspected his

new shores. From the vessel then, one of the characters may roll Perception + Alertness to notice a particular inlet, beyond which a small settlement lies well-hidden. Behind the settlement, a large hill stands bare and would make the perfect place for a hall or even a fortress. Halfdan will begin constructing his new seat of power here, in what is called Tønsberg. He means for the construction to be completed soon as he and Olaf swear to take back Vingulmork before the coming winter.

ON IMMORTALITY

Meanwhile, those who remain behind on Tromøy fare a peaceful, yet still somehow melancholy existence. Since her son's departure, Åsa has become reclusive and sluggish. Her once-famed beauty is long-lost on her aged face. She still fosters an obsession with the Buddha-Bøtte that Grein brought back for her. One night, it is late after a feast when all the guests have departed and Åsa has not touched her food. The characters dutifully remain awake until the once-queen withdraws to her chambers. Then, her raspy, old voice echoes through the hall when she asks the characters to recount how it was again that they thought they had met the All-Father. After they have recounted it, she says out of nowhere, almost as if by a twitch of dementia: "You know, I have always felt the gods are closer to us after dark has fallen." Then, after a moment of silence, she remembers what she asked of the characters and says: "You cannot have met the All-Father. If there is one good thing that came from my being in Vestfold, besides Halfdan coming into my life, it was that Vestfold is closer to the Gods' lands. In the east, they know more of these things, of what happens there. You cannot have met the All-Father, because he is no longer among us, not really. This, I know. Of those who might claim to be Him, well, there are three." [...] "They speak of three who wander, three who touch our lives and destine our deaths." [...] "Draugadróttinn. Hangadróttinn. Foldardróttinn." [...] "Perhaps you spoke the truth to me all those years ago, when you came to my Ping. I was so strong then, so beautiful then. I remember. You may have met one of the three wanderers. My huskarlar..." Before she can finish her sentence, her eyes close and she slumps in her chair. Ashavan is not slow in running to her and feeling her breath. She has only fallen asleep. Ashavan then carries her to her sleeping chambers. By the morning, Åsa has forgotten what she said the night before.

UPROOTED

Months later, then, in the summer, a ship comes with news from Tønsberg. Halfdan's throne has been built and it is time for his household to come to his side. This has severe implications for those who have remained behind, and may permanently separate the characters. Magni and Kari have been released from serving as huskarlar since

they were wed. Valfreyja has made the soil of Tromøy her own after all these years and Þéa's recent devotion to Valfreyja cannot suffer parting whatsoever. Still, Åsa must go and she looks forward in her aged mind to be closer to what she still calls the Gods' lands. Without her, Tromøy is just a vulnerable island with fertile farms.

Among those who depart to remain in Halfdan's household, Hallgeir does not survive the journey. Always having served Agðir, the ships stop on its last shores to give him a burial under a great mound of stones. Åsa, however, consistently fails to remember his death. It is Ashavan who comments that Halfdan will have great need of counsel in the violent times to come. She looks to the two children of the characters', who were apprenticed under Hallgeir.

GENERATIONS

At this precise moment in the story, the players have a critical decision to make. They may decide to take up playing one of their character's children instead of the older generation. They all know where this origins story is meant to end and the matter of candidacy for that ultimate goal should weigh heaviest in this decision. This opportunity exists only this once to make it possible for the younger generation not to be a mere second choice after a character's death.

If one of Hallgeir's pupils now becomes a player character, they will know of a great burden falling on their shoulders. Their time with Hallgeir opened their eyes to the fact that if a warrior fails in his duty, he has Valhöll to look forward to, but if the King's councilors fail in their duty, more than those bound for Valhöll will die, much more.

HARVEST OF BLOOD

When the characters arrive at Halfdan's new hall at Tønsberg, they will marvel at the quick construction, the fresh wood, but ultimately they will realize this area is nothing like what they left behind at Tromøy. The few farms here suffer under the appetites of the king's warriors. Outside, the men are fighting in pairs. Some might call it training, but it looks like simple brutality.

Inside then, Halfdan seems drunk as he directs two of his warriors to climb into the rafters to mount a shield on the ceiling. The characters don't recognize the two warriors from their time in Agðir, though they do recognize the shield. It is unquestionably Arka's. Halfdan spills mead over his armor, shouting as the shield joins a dozen others.

The king will first show his household to their quarters, where most of them retire immediately, exhausted. Only after Åsa is asleep, does he explain to the characters what happened. They were recruiting from the locals of Vingulmork, he says, remarking on how clever he thinks it was to do so. It's what they have been doing

since the spring. He shows them a fresh cut on his shoulder, where he was grazed by an arrow before he could get his shield up earlier today. They had pressed further into the Vingul, where a local jarl with more bowmen than sense tried to drive them away. Arka was relieving himself in a ditch. He had handed his shield to the man next to him. That's when they came over the hillside. They had the high ground. They were lucky, Haldan says, that they only lost one.

The further truth that the characters are likely to get out of him is that he didn't actually see Arka fall, but he is sure no man can dodge so many arrows, especially an old one. He also has no time to spare to look for his body. Halfdan believes his taunting has worked and that Gandálv will meet him in battle. The king knows where he wants to confront his enemy and he must ride out with his warriors the next morning if he wants to have the advantageous ground first. If the characters want to look for Arka's corpse, presumably to give him a burial, he will not object since they are not a part of his new hirð. Some of the new warriors, young men taken from the farms of the Vingulmork, can tell them where they were ambushed.

The Sowing: When the characters navigate their way to the site of the ambush, they will find themselves a long way from Tønsberg, following the coast east. There, in a valley, they see two dead horses, riddled with shafts.

Some supplies were left behind as well as the arrows that couldn't be salvaged. Nowhere do they see Arka's corpse. To see if there was any blood left behind, though, we must first go back and see what happened.

Arka is indeed without his shield when the archers rise over the hill. He has his breeches down and his back turned to them, but he can hear the sound of their bows being strung. His sword lies within reach and the archers have not seen him yet. They are aiming their volleys at his comrades. His use of Stealth and Dodge then determine the outcome of the endeavor. The jarl's men have kept Arka alive for questioning, but whether Arka surrendered before strung bows or if he had to be dragged, pierced by many shafts, is yet to be determined.

Back with the characters, they may draw whatever conclusions can be drawn from what they see before them. The jarl's men's tracks at least can be followed. These go further inland.

The Reaping: First, we focus back on Arka, who has been held for more than day at a farm nearby. First, the jarl's men questioned him for hours, leaving him bruised and eventually incoherent after one too many kicks to the head. In his leering state, Arka only remembers the sight of the sun setting far on the horizon, in the direction of his warband and his king. He recalls the sound of men talking about a sighting of some sort. 'Starkad', they said, 'High One' they muttered. Most of all, he remembers the



smell of the men pissing at his feet.

When the other characters follow the tracks to the farm, they will see the men posted there. Whoever made a life here is gone. They are outnumbered beyond any doubt. If they linger long enough to assess the situation they may discover the men discussing the fact that King Gandálv is expected to arrive here the next morning. If they observe even more carefully, they may note the

ANOTHER FALLEN

The characters had all ventured east to find Arka. While encircling the farm, they were spotted. In the end, Valfreyja was trapped, alone, with the soldiers closing in on her outside. Falke saw this and came out of hiding. He threw himself at the soldiers, giving Valfreyja the opportunity to run. The soldiers all turned on Falke, however, and the noble act cost him his life.

At the start of this session, Falke's player had already decided to take over one of his sons as a new protagonist. Gangráðr had studied under Hallgeir to be a diplomat, administrator, and perhaps even a tactician in Halfdan's kingdom. The first session of playing Gangráðr was overcast with the death of his father.

THE SCORE

From here on out, a new type of reward system was used. All the players knew what the story was building up to in the sense of it being the first of the Origins series. In the end, one of them would be established as a (potential) elder in the continuity of our chronicles.

To begin tracking this, a player would be rewarded a feather for each deed worthy of the All-High's attention. Both the nature of the deed and the opportunity for word of it spreading were taken into account.

This feather had to be kept safe and brought along to every session, or it was forfeit. Although it was never explicitly said, all the players knew from the moment the first feather was handed out that at the end of the story, the player with most feathers would be chosen. That first feather was awarded here.

BLACK FEATHER

A token was awarded to Arka for choosing a warrior's life without looking back.



shadow of a raven perched on the farm's roof, lingering patiently.


In all, there are twelve of the jarl's warriors, nine of whom are sleeping inside. At the first sign of confrontation, the raven will leave the roof and glide into barn where Arka is chained up. By the time the characters press though, however many of the jarl's men are left, they will see the shape of a woman hunched by Arka's broken body. A circle of feathers have fallen on the straw at her feet. Her body is naked save for countless markings in thick, dark paint. She has broken his bonds with her bare hands and does not turn around to face the intruders. "Hann er minn," she says, before she turns into a raven before the characters' eyes and flies high and out of the barn, away toward the east.

Arka lies there, unconscious, bruised and bloodied. The stains of blood near his lips are hard to notice amongst the rest of it. When he wakes, Arka remembers clearly the woman's face and he knows now that he is in love with death.

THE CONCESSIONS OF WINTER

The characters may return to Tønsberg with the news of Gandálv's intentions. Halfdan will quickly recover from his first position and call upon his brother Olaf for reinforcements. The next months feature opportunistic raids and skirmishes singularly. Halfdan and Gandálv clash often enough that it is now said that Vingulmork has doubled in value, now that the soil is so fertile with shed blood.

The truth of it all is that the land has by now been robbed of all its young people. The farm where Arka was

		
<i>Mortal</i>	Nature: Innovator	Demeanor: Judge
Strength ●●○○○	Charisma† ●●●○	Perception ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○	Manipulation ●●●○	Intelligence ●●●○
Stamina ●●○○○	Appearance ●●●○	Wits ●●○○○
Acting ●●○○○	Animal Ken ○○○○	Academics ○○○○
Alertness ●○○○○	Archery ○○○○	Hearth Wisdom ○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○	Crafts ○○○○	Investigation ●●○○○
Brawl ○○○○○	Etiquette ●●●○	Law ●○○○○
Dodge ●○○○○	Herbalism ○○○○	Linguistics ●○○○○
Empathy ●●○○○	Melee ●○○○○	Medicine ○○○○○
Intimidation ●●○○○	Music ○○○○○	Occult ○○○○○
Larceny ○○○○○	Ride ○○○○○	Politics ●●●○
Leadership ●●●○	Stealth ○○○○○	Science ○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○	Survival ●○○○○	Seneschal ●●○○○
Conscience ●●●○	Willpower ●●●○○○○○	† Diplomacy
Self-Control ●●●○		
Courage ●●●○		

held before had been run by a widow and her only son. When Halfdan came recruiting, she wept. Empty farms now litter the landscape.

After months of fighting the southern king then, the days are also getting shorter. Word reaches Halfdan’s two young counselors that King Gandálv has returned home to Álvheimr for the winter. They know that annexing the empty land will not satisfy Halfdan’s sense of glory. They realize there is the chance for diplomatic resolution if the idea can be suggested to Halfdan. For such a mission, the old huskarlar are much better suited than the new hirð.

ÁLVAR OK EINHERJAR

The late autumn seas are treacherous, but it is faster than going by land. However the characters find their way to the land of Álvheimr, when they arrive they will soon be spotted by the locals. After climbing some of the cliffs, further inland they will see the landscape change drastically. The inland of Rygjafylke, Agðir, Vestfold, and Vingulmork are all characterized by steeper fjords and higher mountain ranges. Here, however, the land is flat and deeply forested. By the time they find a track through the woods, they also notice the many lakes they pass, some so large they might as well be a new, tideless sea. In one then, they see two figures swimming playfully, a young couple. They seem to be swimming towards a small island in the middle of the lake. What captivates the characters more than anything is how stunningly

beautiful they both are.

Wanderers: Not long after, a traveling merchant greets them, traveling the same road in the other direction. Again, the characters cannot believe how fair the man’s features are. The merchant halts a moment to greet the characters and comments immediately that they must be foreigners by their appearance alone. The merchant is kind to the strangers, but urges them to behave themselves in Álvheimr. He also offers them a warning, for he just met another foreigner further up the road, alone. The stranger has a bag of gold tied around his neck and he wants others to try to take it from him. The merchant presses the characters not to indulge the man however, and to just let him be. It is a trick, he says, and the stranger is a foul one.

When the characters catch up to this reputed scoundrel, then, the first thing they will notice is his ragged clothing and old age. Then, they will notice three swords strapped to his hip and back, one of which is twice the size of any sword they have seen. Deep scars mark him, not the least of which runs up his neck and around his chin as if it had once come off entirely. Then, around his neck indeed dangles a half-opened pouch, filled with sparkling gold.

The man walks slowly and seems infirm. The characters can walk past him and he won’t say a word. If they advance on him, though, he asks them one thing: “Do you know why you do the things you do?” [...] “Be

certain, and then if you want to try to take something from me, try.”

The stranger is Starkad himself. He, for one, knows why he does what he does. Whatever is purpose here in Álvheimr is, he has for a long time now sought a warrior's death. In truth, he is almost two centuries old, a ghoul bound to the All-High. If there exists a character with more greed than sense, they will be put down. Starkad is well fed, now, with a dot in Potence as well as Celerity and Fortitude.

If the characters continue on their way up the road, they will find it meets with others before too long. The roads all head for a great hall not far away, King Gandálv's hall, a day's walk away from the coast. The hall is nestled on the shore of a great lake, one of which the characters cannot see the other shore. It is the greatest they have ever seen.

Blót: Gandálv's court consists of great beauties once more, all contenders with the grace of Ása herself in her youth. The king himself is old, though, enough to make him completely bald and beardless. Still, he is strong and a light burns in his narrow eyes. How their diplomacy turns out depends entirely on the characters' approach and they are free in the many ways to try. Critical here from Gandálv's perspective is the following. First, the characters may not have been told that in fact it was Gandálv's younger sister who was Guðroðr's first wife and Olaf's mother. The king always regretted agreeing to the marriage for the same reasons that eventually made Harald Granraude reject Guðroðr's proposal to Ása. Secondly, this heritage of their foul father's these two Yngling sons seem so eager to stake a claim to did not extend to the border of Álvheimr. Only a portion of what is now called Vingulmork ever belonged to Guðroðr, and it did not include the narrow inlet along the coast.

Despite these truths, undoubtedly setbacks in the characters' negotiations, King Gandálv is hospitable enough to allow them to stay for the night. In fact, they are preparing to hold a Dísablót, for these are the three days that mark the beginning of winter, the vetrnætr. The characters are welcome to observe.

The Dísablót is held in reverence for the dísir, and it is a custom the characters are familiar with from their time in Tromøy. There, Ása led the praise of the goddesses herself. The festival here is accompanied by endless speculation on everyone's fate. The characters will find the people of Álvheimr easy to talk to, and may learn many things about the ways of their people. A conversation about this land and its folk is likely to converge on the tradition of the Álvar and their worship. The characters may be surprised to learn that it is introduced first as a being alike unto one of the gods, but different. It is only after they explain a human can actually become one of the Álvar after death that the characters may realize it is a form of ancestor worship.

Just before the characters curiosity is entirely sated in this matter, they are told to speak of it no more. After all, today is about the worship of the dísir.

Before long, the characters will realize the festival centers around the king and his daughter, Álfhilðr. They are to lead the festival's ritual and can be seen in the distance, preparing something that is sure to give the characters pause. Even if it happened years ago, the sight of a hörgr still puts them on edge. Soon enough, they will realize the intended sacrifices consist only of cattle. When the fires blaze high in the night, however, a cloaked figure can be seen approaching the king. Rumors soon spread after the hörgr has been reddened with first blood, an old man has asked to be sacrificed to the ladies of fate.

When the figure is brought before Álfhilðr at the hörgr, he removes his cloak and the characters realize it is the man they met on the road. He does not carry his swords, nor the pouch of gold. Starkad then smiles brightly as the knife is drawn before him and keeps smiling as it is drawn across his neck, spilling blood. But Starkad never falls. The gathered crowd shudders then, as after long moments, he blinks. Things move quickly then as Starkad says: “The ladies of fate will not have me! They send me back to the world of blood and breath. Álvar, þursar, völur, dísir, and vanir, all must heed the one true power over lives and deaths: All-Seeing All-Father Oðin. He has commanded the dísir. He wishes not for my death. He wishes for another's!” Then, he looks intently at Álfhilðr. Before the characters can reach the hörgr, Starkad has broken free of his bonds and taken Álfhilðr by the neck, slung her across his shoulder, and makes for the forests with her blade in his had.

The king commands all warriors to chase after the rogue, calling him a liar and scoundrel. Promises of wealth and riches are announced as a torrent of words from his mouth, and several of the king's warriors head into the forests immediately.

Embrace: The characters will need to track very carefully, better than any of the other warriors. Everyone splits off into smaller groups to claim the promised prize for their own. After a time, all they notice of others pursuing Starkad is shouts echoing across the valleys and hills. The characters may be the only ones to see that Starkad has led a false trail and then doubled back to the shore of the enormous lake.

The characters may take for themselves one of the many boats along the lake's shores from a nearby farm or they may even swim after Starkad. By the time they reach the island he swam for with Álfhilðr unconscious across his back, they may spy a third conspirator in the princesses' kidnapping. The island is small, with much undergrowth. As the characters arrive, they may see the ritual performed before their eyes. A tall, thin woman wearing nothing but an open cloak made of wolfskins tied together with vines stands tall amidst a ring of black

feathers on the wet soil. Above, a thunderclap resounds loudly. She addresses the old man before him as Starkad, telling him he has served her well. She then goes on to deny him what she calls the All-High's gift. Starkad groans at that, but does not say a word. The groan is one of true remorse and agony. On the ground between them, Álphilðr begins to rouse. Starkad weeps as the Wælkyrige snatches her up and lifts her high, baring her throat. This time there is no confusion in what they see happen before their eyes. The Wælkyrige bites the princess with sharp

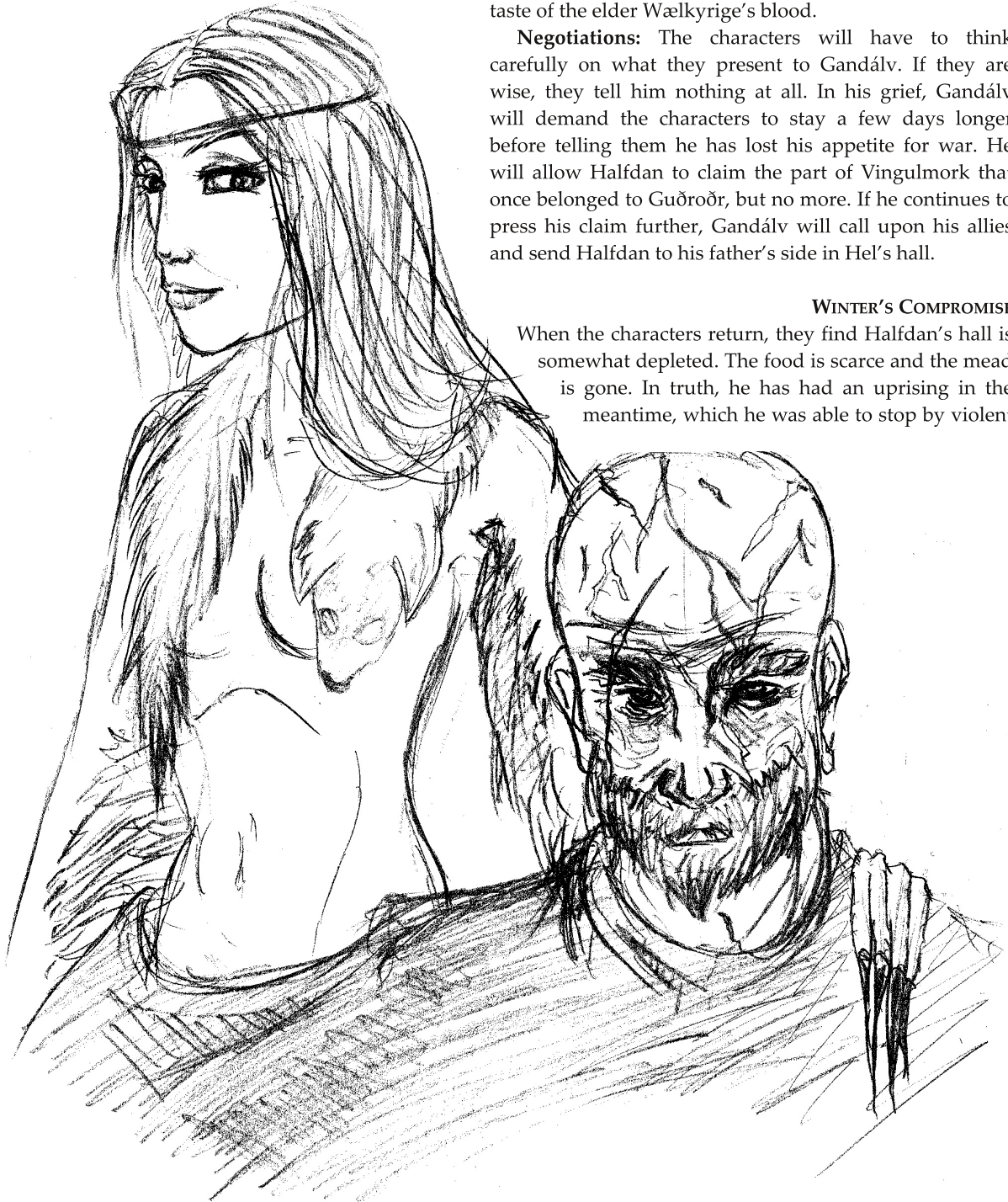
teeth, drains her, and replaces the blood taken with her own.

The characters may not want to come out of hiding, or they may even want to interfere with what happens. The Wælkyrige will be unashamed of her act, and may even find a use for the characters. As she puts it, Starkad's time is up. She opens Álphilðr eyes, although she remains unconscious, and says the first thing her new sister should see is a worthy death (whether it is Starkad's or one of the characters'). Whoever wins is rewarded with a taste of the elder Wælkyrige's blood.

Negotiations: The characters will have to think carefully on what they present to Gandálv. If they are wise, they tell him nothing at all. In his grief, Gandálv will demand the characters to stay a few days longer before telling them he has lost his appetite for war. He will allow Halfdan to claim the part of Vingulmork that once belonged to Guðroðr, but no more. If he continues to press his claim further, Gandálv will call upon his allies and send Halfdan to his father's side in Hel's hall.

WINTER'S COMPROMISE

When the characters return, they find Halfdan's hall is somewhat depleted. The food is scarce and the mead is gone. In truth, he has had an uprising in the meantime, which he was able to stop by violent



BLACK FEATHER

A token was awarded to **Magni** for being the one to slay Starkad.



means. The news the characters have to bring then, is welcome. Halfdan takes credit for the diplomatic mission and gladly stakes claim to the farms in the limited part of Vingulmork. Meanwhile, he turns his eye north, to Raumaríki.

AMONG THE FALLEN PART IV

(814)

The draugr Þormoðr wanders away from Otruness, convinced he is destined for Hel's hall. He wanders aimlessly to the north until it takes him along the same roads that lead home.

HELHEST

The road north is bleak for Þormoðr. When Otruness is no longer in view, he drifts along a familiar road. It is, or should be, the road home. He sees the fleeting living pass through him on their daily ventures. After a long time spent traveling, the distance between him and his family has taken its toll. He feels hollow, impassionate. Eventually, the road passes by a stream. In the stream, he sees something more vivid than anything living seemed so far. A horse lies slumped and drowned in its shallow waters. One of its legs is severed and floats down the stream, toward the sea. At his touch, the creature will rouse and rise. It is three-legged Helhest. Its mouth drips blood and its skin sloughs in places, revealing bone. It

limps ahead on the road north, and waits for Magni to follow. Then, he realizes, he is going home.

DEATH OF A QUEEN

(829-831)

The characters have wintered in Tønsberg. Early in spring, Halfdan is ready for war once more.

WORD SPREADS

It is up to Halfdan's adviser to decide how he frames the result of Halfdan's claim to half of the Vingulmork. Travelers from here to Olaf's hall at Geirstad and beyond often come to him for news. Some of them even serve Olaf in the capacity of huskarl. Word will spread further from there into the wider lands the north. How Gangráðr phrases this will have great repercussions. Halfdan's forces may soon be strengthened by ambitious warriors from lands further away.

BORDERLAND

A year passes, throughout which the characters must declare their intentions and activities. War with Raumaríki is slow and cruel, where Halfdan now has borders to defend from Sigtrygg, one of the sons of the late King Eysteinn of Heiðmork. After the year's passing, Halfdan owns Raumaríki, but rules from Tønsberg. If Gangráðr succeeded in his phrasing, his army will have been too large to support over the winter, draining all their supplies. Halfdan decrees then early that spring, his forces are to divide however they see fit and occupy the conquered halls of Vingulmork and Raumaríki. It is up to the characters what their group looks like, for instance whether their children go with them or another faction. Where the characters are sent, they hold a hall on the eastern border in Vingulmork. Less than a day's travel away, a group of warriors who came here all the way from Sygnafylke hold the shore. If the characters decide nothing for their children, they will be sent to Raumaríki to hold the northern border. Before they leave, Halfdan announces that all groups must send forward a representative. As soon as these stand assembled, their king pronounces them jarls under his rule for as long as they can hold their border.

A HALL OF THEIR OWN

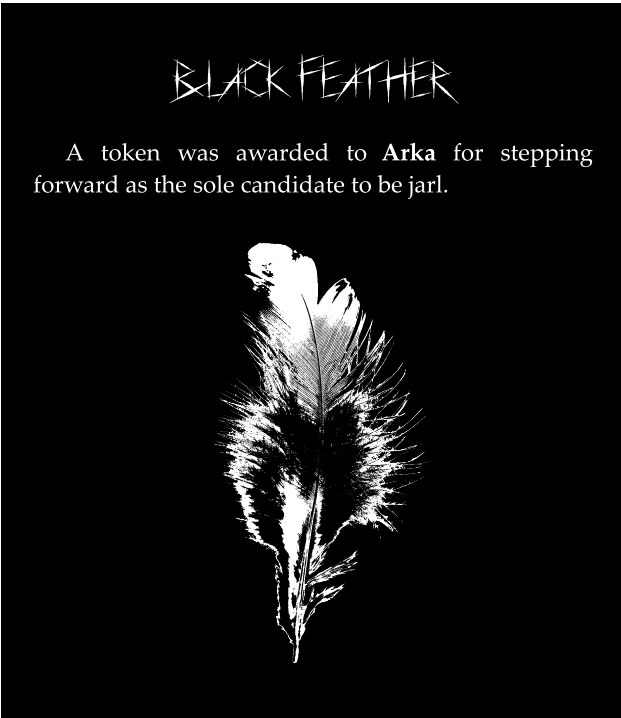
When the characters arrive at their destination, still early in the spring, they find their hall difficult to spot at first. The density of farms slowly guides them to a small forest which populates a rocky hill. In the midst of those woods stand the abandoned hall. It is in a slight disarray and no one in the area is left alive to tell them who once lived here. All the characters have to go on with regard to its previous owner is an abundance of boar tusks. They



are used as torches, they hold drink, and they frame every doorway. Indeed the isolated forest is home to several families of boar, who do not leave its canopy.

Not even Arka remembers the assault on this part of

Vingulmork. One might have thought it was simply abandoned. That is until the characters see a severed hand left on the seat at the head of the hall. What they do with the place is entirely up to the characters. For the next few weeks, then months, the area around their hall is quiet as the grave. None have come to populate the surrounding farms. Other than their allies to the south, they seem isolated from the world by days of travel.



A token was awarded to **Arka** for stepping forward as the sole candidate to be jarl.

BOAR HUNTING

The characters will inevitably find their first meals in the boar population in the woods surrounding their hall. The boars have been left to breed for a while now and have reclaimed most of the forest. More than this, in their explorations the characters may find strange signs left by the previous hunting race. Narrow tracks lead through the woods, leading to the ever denser parts. The trees bordering have symbols of two tusks carved in them, as well as hanging ornaments made from twigs and fur. After a few finds, the characters will need to search deeper and deeper down that path to find pens made in dark hollows from bent branches, long overturned. By this time they will hear the grunts of a beast far larger than any boar in the distance. Later, tracks reveal the beast to indeed be a boar, but at least twice the size it could naturally be. At the end of the path, where by that time the canopy shields all sunlight, this beast has its own

harem of sows in several pits all spread around a bent structure of whole trees with woven branches connecting them into a sinister tower. The beast is fiercely protective of its territory and the characters might decide to leave it here as it is solely responsible for the heavy reproduction of the boars. The eerie tower was once a place of ritual slaughter, with the implements of sacrifice still kept within, and a great slab of stone emerging from the soil, covered in blood.

TRADE AND TRAFFIC

Their southern neighbors send a runner once each month at least to share news. They have seen ships headed west, though they could not say whose or for what purpose. At the news of their rich supplies of boar, they will eagerly start a system of trade for it in exchange for the fish they catch. Also, they have a skilled armorer and smith among their warriors in case the characters have a need for something of that nature.

A full day's walk still separates them, but a relation between the settlements may ensue. The runner had always been a head taller than any of the characters, but once they visit the place the characters will note all of the Sygnafylke warriors are tall men. By the end of the summer season, neither of them have seen any other living souls on land approach from either west or east. As soon as the characters start getting worried, the Sygnafylke warriors, led by a man named Othere, tell them to wait a while longer. They have sent word to their king Harald Gullskjegg (Harald Goldbeard) of what goes on here and reinforcements are expected to arrive by ship soon. When they do, a band of them march north, and the characters witness from a distance that what comes at them looks like an army. While second-guessing the mercenaries' intent, they may spot a figure towering above the rest behind the vanguard. He is a giant of a man at least nine feet tall.

They continue their march until they stand before one of the characters, fully armed. Othere then speaks, formally, that they request to enter their hall for they have news to share. As he does so, the shield wall parts, and a woman steps forward, young and beautiful, with braids and flowers in her hair and a gown green as the grass. The towering man walks with her always, protecting her. As soon as they are seated in the hall, Othere will explain everything to Gangráðr. Him being an adviser to the king, they would like his aid in a matter of importance to Halfdan's new realm. The king of Sygnafylke has no sons, but only his daughter Ragnhild. It is his wish to marry Ragnhild into this dynasty of heroes, so that any sons the queen may have will rule over Sygnafylke joined with Halfdan's new borders. They all look to Gangráðr about how to accomplish this. Should the characters ask about the giant of a man, whose weight can barely be contained as he sits one of their benches, they will be told he is

Ragnhild's cousin, who has protected her since she was a little girl. His name, if queried, is Beli, and he rarely speaks. When he does, his voice is low and rumbling.

RETURN

However the characters divide up the emissary group to see the king back at Tønsberg, they will find his hall still stands. News quickly shared between other visiting jarls is that Raumaríki is being harassed. King Sigtrygg is on a mission to reclaim it for shame of having lost it. Sigtrygg is desperate. He started to perform hall-burnings. Several jarls and their men have already been lost, burned to death in their sleep.

Then, concerning the marriage to the king of Sygnafylke's daughter, tact will be necessary from those presenting the idea to Halfdan. When the idea of merging their borders is made plain, he is quick to accept, however. The giant Beli intrigues him, although Beli is intrigued by nothing he has seen of Halfdan's kingdom.

Åsa seems to be doing better. Ashavan has had her personal belonging from Tromøy collected and spread out in her private chamber. Even her old throne has been shipped here, where she sits every day, telling the children of the hall stories of the old country and tales of the gods. If the characters have a word with Ashavan, they will learn that Åsa's condition has worsened much, but that keeping her close to things like her Buddha-Bøtte keeps her lucid. She does not leave her chambers anymore.

As for the marriage itself, several arrangements are yet to be made. After Ragnhild has spent a full day in private with Åsa, she obtains her blessing. It is the intent for Ragnhild to return to the borderlands, for now, however. Despite it being more dangerous there, she should remain with her own people until the marriage itself. After the winter, Halfdan intends to have the wedding at Tønsberg.

WINTER'S HALT

If the characters have been modest in their slaughter of boars, enough will remain to feed them throughout the winter. Otherwise, they will suffer a lean and long one in the cold, with the appropriate consequences for their health. With no company but themselves and little work to be done, a sinking feeling inevitably comes over them. It has been a long time since they have had to endure a winter in this manner. Word may reach them of more hall-burnings leading up to midwinter, though eventually these too stopped for the winter is too harsh for war.

SPRING'S WAR

As soon as the ground thaws, riders are sent to every hall. Halfdan has challenged King Sigtrygg in open war and he has accepted. All Halfdan's men are to don arms and armor and report at Rakni's Mound, a landmark deep in Raumaríki none can miss. It is said to be the greatest

burial mound in the known world, from an ancient king whose deeds are forgotten but his importance and name are not. Some say he was a sea-king who could not be buried too close the water lest it revive him. Others say he was more god than king, from a time when the gods who are worshiped now were new and young.

The characters have the longest march to the north to find the place of battle. Likely, they will travel together with the Sygnafylke warriors. Ragnhild was sent back to Tønsberg for her safety and at Halfdan's explicit request, Beri joins in the battle. A few days after their departure, the characters may notice there are being followed overhead. A raven flies high and circles them. Sometimes it flies off, but it always returns, hovering within view, even during the daytime. Note that while the journey is impractical for Valfreyja and the battle does not interest her, the others are all expected to go, as witnessed by the other warriors. Among them are at least two who would be pained greatly if they left for the north without Valfreyja there. The characters may influence their travels themselves, and by deciding their own time of arrival, they decide whether the war is fought during the day or during the night. By the time they arrive, the king is eager to leave their camp behind and march straight for war, as King Sigtrygg's scouts have already been seen in the distance, counting their men for days. In the distance, the great burial mound looms. Overhead, the raven that followed them joins a conspiracy of others. Halfdan asks for volunteers to scout ahead while the army starts its march, to count Sigtrygg's forces in turn. Should the characters volunteer, they might find a vantage point around the mound. If he is perceptive, Gangráðr may notice carvings in the stones that mark a the mound, all in the shape of the rune \Uparrow : Týr.

The character doing the counting, then may roll Perception + Seneschal to get a gauge of King Sigtrygg's forces. In truth, Halfdan outnumbers him significantly. The king himself is on horseback and gives commands. The characters can see his own scouts returning with the news that Halfdan is marching, at which he rallies everyone and the low morale in his forces becomes evident. This morale sinks further when they can hear the scout report of a giant in the invader's army.

Shield Wall: Soon after they have been able to report this, the characters must take their place in the line. None of them have ever stood alongside this many warriors. Halfdan orders his forces to make an enormous shield wall, which instantly intimidates the opposing, smaller force. As they advance, the flanks of the wall naturally form a bowl, to surround the smaller line of the enemy's. Within a hundred paces, both lines halt, and Halfdan's forces list and repeat three kennings. Ramming spears and swords against one's own shield, the warriors shout: "Grennir gunn-más," meaning 'feeder of ravens'. Doing the same again, once more proclaiming themselves:

"Eyðendr arnar hungurs," meaning 'destroyers of the eagle's hunger'. Then, they point their weapons at the enemy, shouting: "Svarraði sárgymir," meaning 'a sea of wounds'. The two kennings for warrior and the last for blood are repeated until the enemy loses its calm and advances toward Halfdan's army.

The characters' part in this struggle can be modeled in a combat with a wall of warriors opposing them, outnumbered by two. The clash and the ensuing slaughter is hectic. By the time Sigtrygg's forces are decimated, their king mounts a horse and attempts to flee the battle. Halfdan orders any in his army with a bow to cut the man down. It might be one of the characters who plants an arrow in him, dropping him from his horse. By the time Halfdan and his men catch up to the slumped body, Sigtrygg will have taken his own life with a small blade. "Coward," Halfdan proclaims him, before announcing that Raumaríki is his. Any character who did not stop fighting until the very end is praised highly by the king in sight of the black birds.

TREACHERY

By the time the characters return south, riders come to meet them halfway. They have grave news for Halfdan. While Sigtrygg drew Halfdan's forces far north, an assassin had slipped into the household at Tønsberg. The man, who had been seen in counsel with Ása several times before, drew a concealed axe in her private chamber. Ashavan was there and positioned herself between her mistress and the falling blade. She fell, but

BLACK FEATHER

Two tokens were awarded to **Magni** and **Þéa** for the sheer quantities of blood they spilled during the shield wall.



not before she put a blade through the assassin's heart. She lay on her deathbed when the messengers rode north.

When the entourage returns to Tønsberg, it seems Ashavan is still alive and that her broken collarbone is healing. She herself claims that she is dying, however. Åsa persists in a perpetual state of panic. By the end of the month, both die in their beds.

Naturally, the characters are summoned to attend the funeral. There in the solemn night, Åsa and Ashavan are placed in a great karv ship which Þéa remembers building. A white veil is placed over Åsa's face. The ritual lasts hours as an ox, three dogs, and fourteen horses are brought into the ship and slaughtered. Åsa's possessions are also placed in the vessel, not least of which is the Buddha-Bøtte. Many of the characters' relations who remained in Agðir also attend the funeral. The vessel is slowly buried near the shore, until a mound remains. Halfdan can be seen weeping uncontrollably despite the small comforts Ragnhild offers him.

Old Words: When the last of the soil is heaved onto the mound, the crowd begins to retreat inside. Several clusters remain, vigil over a great woman's departure of this world. Those characters who linger a moment longer will look at to the sea, their view of the mound partially obscured by the silhouette of a broad man they had not seen there before. Without turning around his old voice asks them: "Did you know her well?" [...] "Will you tell me about her—Åsa Haraldsdottir?" As many characters as possible are encouraged to respond. [...] The figure then turns around. If the characters hadn't moved forward to see before, they will now witness the old man's great white beard and his many scars. The most threatening scar runs across the right half of his face, leaving the eye dead pale and blind. The All-High simply walks away with great strides. Before he is out of earshot, he says: "Now she is no more." The All-High will remember the words of the most honoring eulogy.

AMONG THE FALLEN PART V

(814)

Þormoðr is on his way north, mounted on the Helhest he encountered. The beast is a Ferryman of sorts, intent on guiding souls to their fate. This particular soul is falsely hoping to see the last thing in mind that attracts and binds him: his home of Eikundasund.

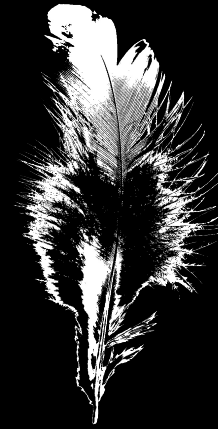
WHISPERS

Out of nowhere, after countless hours of walking through the gray mists, a voice speaks to him. It seems to come from the Helhest itself. The low voice intones: "You know where you're headed, don't you?" [...] "How could

BLACK FEATHER

A token was awarded to **Valfreyja** for her words at the funeral:

"She has given me and my family many things, but that is not why I respect her. She should be to any woman a role model. She is intelligent and she cares about her people. I truly can't name anything that was wrong about her—nothing."



the stories of the living relate, how could the living even understand, the true torment that awaits you?" [...] "That horse you are sitting on is guiding you to suffering. If you could, would you resist the fate dictated by those who are now called gods in the lands of flesh and warmth?"

By now, Þormoðr will realize the voice isn't coming from the Helhest at all. Behind him, a thin and tall man stalks him, pace for pace, looking down. He looks familiar and a moment's thought will reveal him to be none other than Luðr. "I can free you, you know," he says. Despite any attempts at denial or explanation, Luðr will stop the Helhest and tear its throat out. The whole thing seems like a blur to Þormoðr and at some points it felt like it was him tearing the beast to pieces. By the end of it, Luðr and he sit amidst the gore, quietly. "I told you," he says, "that I only help friends." [...] "Tell me what troubles you." Luðr listens eagerly. The moment he discovers about Þormoðr's sacrifice and the threats made against him by Ásvaldur, he will reaffirm confidence in their friendship. Luðr claims to know much, even the location of Valhöll. Far more than that, he speaks of those who the gods have angered.

FATE

(831)

The year carries on, as does Halfdan's empire, without Åsa among the living. Slowly, settlers come to the region over which the characters preside. Slowly, the farms are being populated.

A SENSE OF FOREBODING

Sleeping once more in their hall, three visitations come upon three of the characters. Magni has suffered nightmares ever since the characters met a strange man mourning for his daughter in the woods years ago. Now, after having met the one-eyed mourner at Åsa's funeral, Þéa and Róðbjartr find nightmares waiting for them too. Magni dreams of hatred felt deep below the soil, and cannot escape the sound of fires burning in his nightmare. Róðbjartr dreams of cold revenge, and cannot escape the sight of men hung from tall trees. Þéa dreams of a bitter mourning yet to come, and cannot escape the smell of betrayal—and the smell is sweet.

DEVELOPMENTS

As the characters contemplate the implications of all they have been through, weeks pass to bring news from far and wide. Halfdan and Ragnhild are married. Shortly after, she follows Beli back home to Sygnafylke. Rumors say she is pregnant with Halfdan's son. To all neighboring lands, their union is a matter of much dread. Halfdan has already shown himself to be a dangerous conqueror. Slowly, his enemies stop speaking of him as if he were a mere man. They shudder in fear of other stories

where such a being marries a jötunn.

The new domain of Raumaríki is both a violent and a prosperous place. The most worrisome rumors abound of wolves harassing the site of the battlefield itself. Many of the dead have been left behind for the threat these beasts pose. At the same time, word spreads of Sigtrygg's younger brother. He has made himself king of Heiðmork, and every night swears new vows to the gods about what he will do to Halfdan.

CLOSE TO HOME

While the realms of King Halfdan the Black prosper, only very few settlers have come east to the characters' realms. Before the summer, their southern neighbors further approach them with the news that they have been called back to their homeland by King Harald Gullskjegg. The homes they have built and the harbor they have maintained are up for the taking if the characters are interested.

IMMIGRANTS

When finally, farmers who have uprooted their families arrive in the characters' domains, they can be seen approaching from the east instead of the west. After taking great pains to cross the river, they come before their rulers harmlessly. They make up a large, extended family led by their patriarch Grandfather Adawúlf. He speaks on everyone's behalf when he explains that they are indeed of the Svear, a people who live in the far east. In all his words about Svealand, he seems proud to call himself from there until he explains that they have been driven out by an ancient family feud. He has come to settle in the conquered lands he has heard so much about,



leaving behind the home of his ancestors, all so that no more young blood needs to be shed. He asks if the jarl here will have them work the land and make a new home.

WORSHIP

After the family has spread over several of the unoccupied farms, the characters may notice they have kept one of the larger ones for a different purpose. None sleep within its walls, but much food is brought inside. When they go to investigate, Adawúlf will happily show them a peace of home they could not live without. More an homage than a replica, the inside resembles a part of the temple they call Östra Aros. Adawúlf can and will talk for hours about the splendors of the high hall by the eastern shore, the greatest temple to the Æsir. The family sacrifices to the idol they have made of Oðin just as they would have at their former home. Come the harvest and the lengthening of the nights, Östra Aros will fill with people from far and wide, eager for the reward of their sacrifice, when every year the gods appear before them. They don't expect the same to have happened here, but they take great comfort in the ritual they have grown accustomed to. The characters can't help but notice how the wooden idol is coated and drenched in blood.

FRIAR WITMAR

A travel-worn man comes before the characters, soaked from head to toe after having crossed the river. He says his name is Witmar and he smiles more than he should. He has a strong accent and clearly comes from the south. As he relates, he comes from further south than the Danelands, where he is a friar. Indeed, he is a Christian from a city which Karl the Great built, Hamburg. Witmar has come all the way to these lands with The Apostle to the North, Ansgar, who has had much success already performing his miracles in Birka, to the east. Witmar offers the characters tales he will tell in exchange for supper and a bed.

"You all know of the line of generations. You know you had a father, and a mother, and they in turn had a father and mother. If we could see what has passed, we would go back to the beginning of it and see two, the very first, a woman and a man. They cannot have been born, or they would not be the first. They must have been created. This man was called Adam and this woman was called Eve. The first man to be born then, was a son of theirs. The first man to be killed, was a son of theirs as well..."

Depending on their tolerance, the characters may soon find out that Adawúlf cannot stand Witmar. Birka is well known to him as it is a part of Svealand. If what Witmar says is true about conversion, he considers it a grave treachery. If the characters allow a conversation about their gods, Witmar will reply: "How can this be so? I have listened to the northern people. I have heard about your gods. I have paid close attention. How can a true god

walk in your midst like a man? Even then, how can it be that Oðin is sighted in two places at once, on the same day? This is not divinity. It is folly."

It is up to the characters what happens to the friar, but Adawúlf wants to hang him upside down from the rafters of the temple-farm, to be bled out over Oðin's statue. Witmar's dying words will be a desperate question: "What manner of savages are you?! Who would defy the creator God and loving Jesus Christ in the name of the devil Oðin?! Who would choose to imagine a father figure so dark, so merciless?" The moment before he dies, he looks the characters in the eyes to speak the painless last words: "Take the war out of your veins and what would you have left?"

EYES AND EARS

If the Christian is sacrificed, a blanket of implication is left over the characters' land. The cruelty of the act does not leave the characters alone. In war, there exists the luxury of a kill-or-be-killed mentality. Even in raids, there is the rationalization behind following orders. All the characters' actions fall on them now as a great weight and their conscience must be consolidated.

In these dark times, two ravens will be drawn to the characters' domain. They make a home in the straw roof

BLACK FEATHER

A token was awarded to Péa at this point, for accepting an unexpected offer. Arka, still serving as jarl, was crippled in the battle at Rakni's Mound. Péa had challenged him for his rulership, intending to duel him once he had recovered. To save as much of his honor as he could, Arka instead asked the recent widow to marry him. In this marriage, Péa would sit the throne while Arka lay broken in bed.





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of the temple-farm after picking out Friar Witmar's eyes. In solemn worship, the ravens sometimes appear standing on a rafter above. The left bird may talk about the characters: "I remember them," and the right bird may reply: "I think they are strong."

"I recall the last time we interfered." "It seems to me that he was a mistake." [...] "He is dead now." "His successor may do better." [...] "It has been a long time since the All-High agreed to do what we are suggesting." "There is a great change on the horizon." [...]

The ravens will flutter down from the rafters, to land on either shoulder of the Oðin statue. "Ask us what you have been waiting all your lives to know." [...] "The Lord of the Undead has gone to the west, following a scent. He seeks an island and that smells of meadowsweet. There, he intends to right three wrongs." [...] "The Lord of the Earth has gone north. He matches the hatred he will find there with his own limitless fury." [...] "The Lord of the Hanged has gone to the south. He is alone and only his fate is beyond our sight." [...] "If you choose to intertwine your fate with that of the gods, you should know that this fate demands the return of the Three to the Hall of the Einherjar in the east." [...] If they dare to seek this fate, it is up to the characters to decide in which direction they go first.

AMONG THE FALLEN PART VI

(814)

Pormoðr has tentatively accepted Luðr's friendship. Leaving the Helhest's entrails behind them, they have begun to walk east.

FETTERS

As the two beings walk ever further east now, the road slowly becomes more steep. At first, they seemed to make a descent into a valley. But now, mists have come down around them, obscuring the road that winds ever further down. Before long, they come to a wide river that has frozen over. Slowly, they are crossing into what lies below, called Niflheimr by some. Luðr continues to goad Pormoðr forward. "Hel's hall is close," Luðr says, "But that is not what we have come to this place for."

Mists ahead eventually clear, after innumerable time spent wandering, at the foot of a great mound, the greatest Pormoðr has ever seen. Mists part to reveal an opened maw, ragged fur, and eyes of deep suffering and endless hatred. Sprawled over the enormous mound is a colossal wolf, fettered by one paw to rock with an intricate braid. Its maw is open because its jaw is pinned into the mound by a great sword. Steaming blood pours down from the wound, mingling with the ice all around and

flowing into the shroud.

"This is where hatred was born into the world," Luðr says, "This is where the greatest of the old gods was displaced in the North." [...] "I will tell you more my friend. First, you must claim what is yours by right as one of the Betrayed. That sword belonged to Týr once. You will succeed him." [...] As Pormoðr ascends toward the great beast, the mound below his feet will seem to shrink. By the time he stands before the wolf, they are of the same height. Below, he looks down as is from the greatest cliff. Luðr has vanished in the fog below. The great wolf weeps, but cannot move. In the deep cold of this place, the sword's hilt seethes with heat. With a feat of strength, the blade is released from the soil and the wolf rears its head high and howls, showering Pormoðr in a rain of blood flowing from its teeth. When he looks down again, Luðr stands a few feet away, stroking the wolf's neck. "This is where Týr was wounded before he was forgotten." [...] "One day soon, my friend, monsters like you and I will walk the earth again." [...] Just before they descend again, the great wolf seems to have nuzzled Luðr briefly.

DRUGADRÓTTINN

(831)

In three final efforts, three sacrifices must be made. In this, the first, we concern ourselves with the Lhiannan mothers.

LANDS LEFT BEHIND

The characters need to decide how they get to the west. It has been hinted that Draugadróttinn, the Lord of the Undead, either is in Eikundasund or is headed there, to settle a score with the Lhiannan. They may travel by sea or by land. In either case, they may hear a last word of news before their departure. Olaf, Halfdan's half-brother, has died. He will be buried at Geirstad under a great hill where he always played as a child. They called him Olaf the Geirstad-Álv then, for his lineage and his playing around the hill, as if worshiping like his ancestors did. Now, that mound is the subject of some worship as well. Because he was not buried at Östra Aros like his ancestors, Halfdan is now the only true Yngling of the two.

EIKUNDASUND

When the characters arrive at the place where the whole of this story began, the situation will be as follows. The hamlet has changed. Several additional farms have been built and only one of the old halls remains. Despite this, the farms are underpopulated. Those who remain in Eikundasund, five in total, are hard at work building a raft and engage in deep singing at sunset each night. In

fact, they are all dead. Each man, woman, and child displays wounds of battle. They sing for their god Oðin to appear, who has touched them with his spear so that they may rise again. Each night, he eludes them, and so they work to finished his bidding: the construction of a raft that can carry all of them and 'those who are lost'.

'Those who are lost' refers to the survivors of the infighting of several nights ago. The inhabitants had fallen into strife over those who believed the man who claimed to have seen Oðin walking his fields, and those who had long worshiped what they called the guardian spirits of this land. The latter group held the upper hand, in the end, and fled to the nearby island in a fishing boat and are the target of both the original Oðin-worshippers and the others who converted after being resurrected. Now, these draugr on the mainland prepare to cross the water and make their community whole again.

THE ISLAND

The three Lhiannan are awake, desperate, and dangerous. They feed nightly on their new cult of men and women, four in total, who do their bidding unquestioningly. Their faces are lathered and inscribed with green and black paste, hiding them as they keep an eye out on the mainland activities.

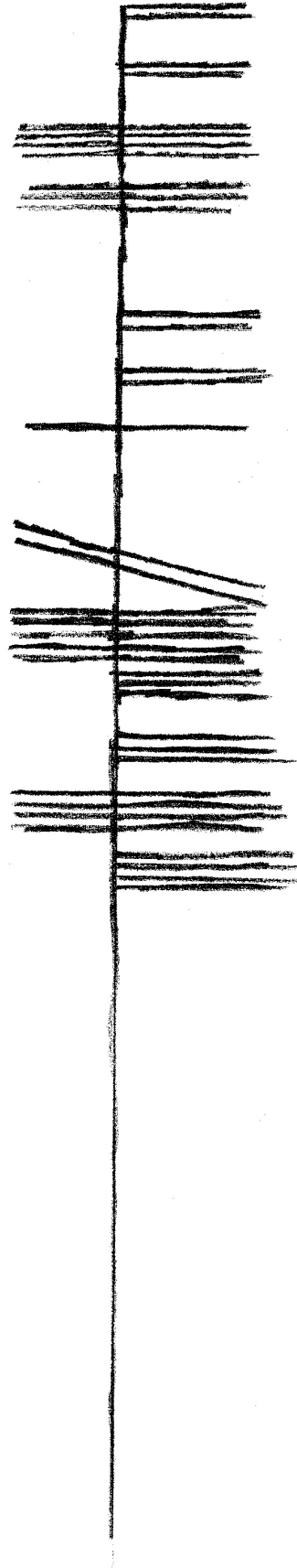
Eina, Aska, and Selja, meanwhile, remain close together at all times at the heart of their flourishing Caern. Their ancient Ogham runic script has been applied across their bare shoulders and chest in blood. Valfreyja may know it to read 'Lleu Llaw Gyffes', 'The Shining One', and may also know it is a method of the Lhiannan to inscribe a curse, in this case three-fold. The name Lleu Llaw Gyffes is more powerful than Oðin, All-High, or even Lugh, for they incorporate The Black One and The Broken One as well.

Hostile though they will be to any intruders on the island, Valfreyja's presence (or Bjarka, as the mothers still call her) will delight them in a foul scheme. They may elaborate that with her there as well, an opportunity has presented itself. The Caern, nurtured for all these years, is strong, and while it is Lugh they have always feared, what awaits them here is not he, not completely. What if this is their chance to destroy that which hunts them and reclaim their lost glories?

Valfreyja will be instructed to find a way to bring Draugadróttinn to the island without his draugr, disarmed, and vulnerable. In her veins after all, flows the essence of [Blood-Wed], a thing he once loved.

THE LORD OF THE UNDEAD

Before long, the aspect of the All-High will reveal itself to the draugr he has helped cross back into the world of the flesh. The characters may be there to witness mists coming down the mountains. The fog is so thick that it is impossible to believe that they are not transitioning or



glimpsing across the Niflheimr. Yet it is from that mist that the fair-haired one of the skillful hand appears, walking with spear in hand, an old man with stark white hair and a blind left eye. As mists part, rise, and fill the sky, thunder claps and hail crashes down around the fields. His eye fixed only on Valfreyja, the All-High asks, aghast and befuddled: “That face of flowers... Owl’s eyes... Blóðæweð?” [...] Furious, he then demands: “You who looks so much like her, you were born of my lands, of my people... mine.” [...] “My vargr have slain countless daughters of that corrupted line. Tell me who made you.”

CULMINATIONS

With everything at stake, ultimate roads to take are paved before the characters. The following key notions hold, whichever they attempt to pursue.

The All-High has come here following the scent of meadowsweet, detected with his grasp of Auspex. He does not know that there are four Lhiannan present, nor that three of them control a Caern, though he suspects the land here holds power.

The tales told of The Shining One by the Lhiannan mothers contains information the All-High himself has been bereft of for all these centuries. He does not know how [Blood-Wed] endured to spawn daughters of her own. The knowledge that it may have been his sire, the Antediluvian mother, will make him unstoppable in a mission to interrogate the mothers. They even know more about [Blood-Wed] than their stories contained. They know that those tales passed down through the generations originated in a land far away. Ultimately, they know she ruled as a goddess in the east until she was destroyed by the three-eyed one’s race. Learning this, the All-High will exude grief such as none present have ever witnessed as he mourns the loss of his revenge.

If caught unawares on the island, the Lhiannan can overcome the All-High with their three-fold curse, saturated power extracted from the dragon lines, and full control of their grove’s vegetation. They can hold the great being ensnared with thick roots of oak and their curse can render him impotent (unable to spend Blood Points to use Protean to escape). It then becomes possible for Valfreyja to attempt diablerie on this aspect of the All-High.

Draugadróttinn’s respect for the characters may be earned when they assist in him getting his hands on the Lhiannan. Ultimately he will destroy them in gruesome ways. He is prepared to forgive Valfreyja, however, learning she was born among his own people and taken away. If Valfreyja has displayed exceptional deference to him, the mothers’ demise may take a particularly cruel shape. The All-High will look at Valfreyja in a way that torments Hrygg and he will invite her to devour the mothers one by one. In deciding which of the three to

BLACK FEATHER

Three tokens were awarded to **Arka**, **Magni**, and **Valfreyja** for acting first and foremost against the Lhiannan mothers.



SUSPENDED GRIEF

The Lhiannan mothers were never given a chance to elaborate on the reign and demise of [Blood-Wed]. The All-High did not learn of her destruction. His grief was delayed another generation.

perish first, Eina will break, begging Bjarka to have mercy on her, after all it was her who made her, her who nurtured her into this life. The All-High will demand she is destroyed first, but first he will reject the name Bjarka and draw the elder futhark rune Hagalaz on her forehead. On Hrygg’s forehead he draws the elder rune Ansur.

Besides all of this, the All-High’s two winged servants are never far away. Although, they may be watching from another world.

PARTING WORDS

“Heed a warning. The other High Ones differ from me. They do not remember the day. I will await you at Östra Aros.” “Heed a warning. Walk with the All-High, and each one of you will fall.” “Heed a warning. Sacrifice is a true and absolute act. It is endless and it is powerful. It will always be necessary.”

AMONG THE FALLEN PART VII

(831)

Pormoðr has taken up the sword and now walks south with Luðr. They trail through the Niflheimr, the mists becoming thinner and thinner, and they talk.

RECOLLECTION OF FIRE

“This once was a land where people were fond of the sun. They grew tall under it and strong through it. Like all good things back then, there was a god to maintain it. Týr was radiant, glorious.” [...] “The Three-Faced one came from no-one knows where. The people, led by a false king, were lied to. This king’s delusion was the downfall of all that once was. Instead of light, darkness became the mark of power. He changed his name for the newcomer and with him changed all the land. The gods were next.” [...] “When Týr fell, it was his own nobility that shaped his demise. I would not go down that way.” [...] “I am the fire that will drown them.” [...] “And you, you are my light.” [...] “I can show you how to crawl back into the world of the living, you know, sword in hand—”

Pormoðr and Luðr’s conversation is interrupted by a figure emerging from the mists ahead. The silhouette drags itself forward, stumbling through the mists, waving them from his sight. Luðr pauses in his stride. As the figure comes closer, Pormoðr can see that it is a familiar face. It’s Hrygg, walking past them, blindly, unaware. His neck has been torn open, the blood drained from his face. Luðr turns around from where Hrygg walks north with a smile on his face before shouting: “Niðr ok norðr, bleak one! Fool!” He bursts out laughing, before finishing with: “It’s good to have friends. South we go.”

FOLDARDROTINN

(831)

In three final efforts, three sacrifices must be made. In this, the second, we concern ourselves with Hrygg.

RAVEN’S SONG

The characters are traveling east, by land. First, allow them to elaborate on the trajectory of their journey, what they did with the boat, and most importantly, confirm that the characters are heading for Rakni’s mound. Note that if the characters choose to navigate a route through the valleys behind what was once Mara’s home, they will find the Fenrir territories empty. The werewolves left their den behind a few weeks ago to wage war. That route will take them weeks, however.

Next, a sequence of rolls involving the Survival skill

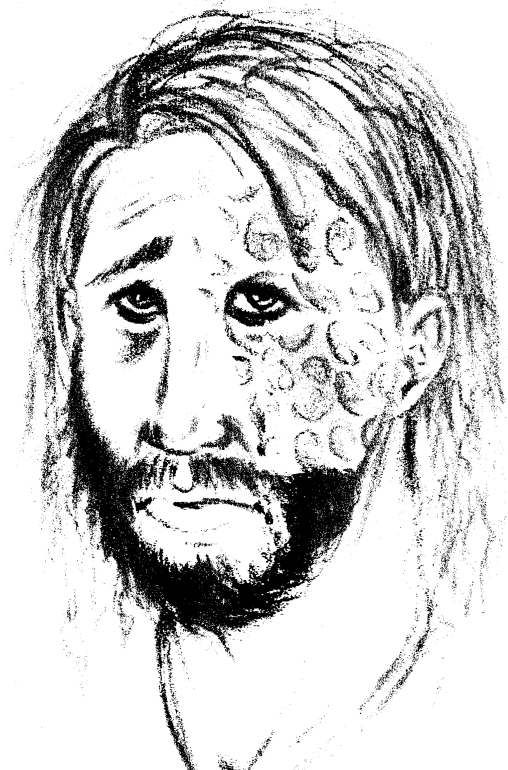
are in order to determine the characters’ condition on the road. Lastly then, as the character inevitably find themselves trudging through a forest at night under heavy rainfall, two ravens peer down at them from tall branches. Their cawing sounds louder than the crashing rain. They flutter down from the trees, circling around trees, to land hunched in human form just out of sight. The two figures that walk back from opposing directions are scrawny and black-haired. Most of all, their eyes are a deep black all-round, glistening from far away.

When they begin to speak, the characters recognize their tone more than than voice. In their human form, they sound hoarse and harsh. “Her rune is Hagalaz. I think it means protection.” “It was once the sickness of serpents.” [...] “His rune is Ansur. I think it bodes ill.” “It once meant only one thing.” “Now it’s meaning is clear.” The figures then step forward to draw in the wet soil with their long, black nails. At Hrygg’s feet they draw: † (Ås) and † (Ár). Then, they only cock their heads and stare at him.

Before they fly away, they will intone as one: “Sacrifice: true, absolute, endless, powerful—necessary.”

DREAMS

After a long, long trek, the characters know they should be getting close. They had expected to arrive at Rakni’s mound hours earlier. Despite everything, they think they are headed in the right direction. They are desperately tired and know that they cannot go any further. They must try again tomorrow and set up a camp



here. It is just as everyone has settled in, their own fire's embers dying, that they start to slip into sleep, hearing the sound of wolves in the distance.

Þéa's Dream: In the deepest moments of sleep, a visitation comes over Þéa. It is in this very depth of sleep that something overcomes her that she later cannot attribute to a mere dream. Once again, she has a vision. She sees a child, young and foolishly brave. His mother is close by, though she looks weak. Þéa immediately recognizes her to be Ragnhild, years older. The mother calls to her son "Harald," just as the dream starts to fade away from her. Through a sheer act of will, Þéa can reclaim her grasp on her own vision and return to the man's life years later. He has grown tall, with short, bright-golden hair. A beautiful woman rejects his offer of marriage, saying that she will only marry him if he becomes king of all of the north.

The Others' Dreams: The howling of wolves slowly turns into a growl in their dreams. Before long, they think back to the woman who lived at the border of the wolves' lands, Mara. Of all the things she had ever said, each of the other characters remembers something distinct the next morning: "The delight of man... Augmentation of the earth... Adorner of ships."

ELDUR

When the first of the characters wakes up, they will be startled by a towering beast in the midst of their camp. The character to awaken first is the one with the highest Perception + Alertness roll. The werewolf has grey and brown fur meshed with scars. It doesn't make a noise, instead it just stares at the character. With another roll, the character may become aware of a handful others in wolf form surrounding the camp.

Even if the awake character is one Eldur does not recognize, he will recognize others sleeping. With a growl, he will instruct the one who is awake to gently stir the others. As calm as Eldur acts, the other wolves are extremely hostile. To counter, Eldur changes not into his human shape, but into a wolf. As the other characters blearily open their eyes, they will recognize the aged fur patterns of what was once a beloved disobedient pup.

An Animal Ken roll may reveal that Eldur is in a dangerous position. He is at the prime of his life, but starting to decline. The warriors with him are edgy, on the verge of a challenge.

By the time mutual recognition has been established, Eldur changes again. In his human form he will address those before him. "You were forbidden to enter our holy ground. Though you are not the first trespassers, you trespass. Why are you here?" [...]

THE LORD THE EARTH

The Fenrir are at war because they have been cut off from the great wolf, Fenrisúlfur. Foldardröttinn has

intervened because one of the wolf's fetters was removed, Týr's sword. The Fenrir were anxious to further free their spirit paragon of their tribe, but this is something the All-High cannot allow. The Fenrir know this and Eldur has no reason not to share this.

Hrygg plays a crucial role here. He wants desperately for everyone to side with the Fenrir. Eldur remembers him and Hrygg speaks fondly of Eldur in turn, even if he never did before. While one of the characters' first ideas may be to use the favor they are still owed by the Fenrir tribe to make them leave this place, Hrygg will intervene with all he can muster.

The lands around Rakni's mound are different than the characters remember. There once was grass and tall trees. Now, the lands around the mound are blackened with soot, mixed with rain. Great fires have leveled all nearby trees. There is nothing left to burn, now.

By night, the All-High hunts the Fenrir to feed. The werewolf blood has further enraged him, making him the incarnation of fury. Foldardröttinn makes pools in the earth with their dark blood and bathes in them. His skin is smeared black from it. The Fenrir speak with dread of the nights, where this great danger can spring up from anywhere under the earth, evaporate into mist, or walk in the skin of any living creature—even sometimes appearing as one of their own.

By day, Foldardröttinn hides deep underground. In anguish, the Fenrir seek him out by his tracks, finding evidence of all the cruelties the All-High has bestowed on his victims so far. Wolf skulls float in the many blood-pools and intricate piles are made with their limbs. So far, he has now been found. The only chance the Fenrir have of attacking Foldardröttinn is at night. So far, the war has been solely fought on their nemesis' terms.

CULMINATIONS

The options are again diverse. Depending on their pattern of day and night, the All-High may be masquerading as one in Eldur's pack at the first moment they meet after having singled one of the Fenrir out and tasting its blood. Using the favor owed by the Fenrir is the only way to avoid further bloodshed between the All-High and the werewolves, at least initially. Such a decision will doom Eldur's leadership in the long run.

The reason why Eldur's leadership is already challenged is that the cause of the great fires around the mound has called his past glorious deeds into question. The Fenrir warriors speak of a great fire serpent, a dragon exactly like the one that plagued the lands almost thirty years ago. The Fenrir claim to have driven it away with their might, though in truth it disappeared because there was nothing left to burn. It coils around the edge between this world and the next, preventing the Fenrir from crossing through. Eldur is close to admitting the truth to them and may also confide in the characters. While he did

surmount all expectations, gaining the honor and rank worthy of an audience with the great Fenrisúlfur, the conquest of the great fire serpent was not accomplished with glory. Back then, not everyone of the Fenrir was aware of their namesake's bondage. This was a secret kept by the eldest Fenrir, and Eldur was the youngest to learn the truth. He has since made it common knowledge among the wolves. In truth, there was no way for Fenrisúlfur to seek out and combat the serpent. Instead, they enlisted the aid of a being Eldur calls the Dark Father, an untrustworthy entity of great power. At first, this Dark Father seemed to have kept his word, for the serpent vanished instantly from the lands. How it had suddenly returned now, Eldur cannot say. Foldardröttinn knows the Dark Father by a different name and is aware of precisely how devious the being can be.

A strange turn of events may even lead to the Fenrir trying to use the characters as hostages to force the All-High to reveal himself. In any case, those of them that

walk away from the encounter will vow vengeance, promising to destroy what they call the Hall of the Damned. As to the possible situation where Foldardröttinn is challenged and defeated with the characters' help, his ease of escape must be countered somehow, or he will always be able to vanish with Protean. One way to counter this might involve an increased mastery of Ogham on Valfreyja's side, and a significant amount of the island's soil carried with them.

SACRIFICE

Foldardröttinn's frightening appearance will do much to unnerve the characters as they finally stand face to face. Some of them can recognize the figure as the very first aspect of the All-High they saw, years ago, if they manage to see past the blood and soot. Foldardröttinn will pay careful attention to the runes on the foreheads of Valfreyja and Hrygg. Foldardröttinn will approve of Hrygg's sacrifice and the one wielding the instrument of his death. Lastly, he will approve of Þéa strongly if he learns her title as Wolf-Mother is well-earned.

Foldardröttinn's parting words may echo: "So long as there is bloodshed in the North, I will be what I am."

BLACK FEATHER

A token was awarded to Arka for being the one to kill Hrygg. This reward did not come cheap. It was clear to half the characters that the All-High had called for his death. Valfreyja resisted, however, not wanting to give up her husband. Þéa, meanwhile, had started drinking Valfreyja's blood and was by now completely bound to her will. Arka walked away from the confrontation crippled and the characters' bonds soured. Valfreyja was becoming unsure of the others' devotion to the mythical All-High.

Despite the part she played in trying to protect Hrygg, Þéa was also rewarded a token. The All-High learned that she was the one called Wolf-Mother.



AMONG THE FALLEN PART VIII

(831)

Þormoðr is nearing the southern shore of Agðir's bleak Shadowlands. Luðr's plan is set in motion, but he will not join for its fruition.

TO CROSS THE SEA

After wandering for all this time, the land in front of Luðr and Þormoðr simply ends. No part of what he sees around him seems familiar to Þormoðr, though he can distinguish a hall perched on a height a distance away and a burial mound closer by. Luðr meanwhile, has stopped in his tracks only stare at Þormoðr, smiling. At the inevitable query, he will answer: "This is where we part ways, my friend. You are going to Gylfi's lands and I will return to the Niflheimr." [...] "I will wait for you there, amongst the mists, and you will cross the still waters to engage the target of your strife with your wrath." [...] As a part of Luðr's plan, a powerful relic stands prepared to take Þormoðr across the dead waters. It's a ship with grave dirt still clinging to its hull.

Luðr stands silently smiling until Þormoðr has gotten into the boat and started rowing it single-handedly. His strange mentor disappears in the distance and open waters soon surround the lone wraith. A last thing he may have misheard his mentor say over the distance is: "Make some eagles."

Then, much later, he can see storms building ahead. The dead waters writhe suddenly, and deafening noise clatters, carried on stark winds. The ship, rising on a steep wave, stands vertically when Þormoðr can see his own rotting corpse caught just under the surface of its water. Then, everything is dark, and he sinks down to the depths that have claimed so many before.

HANGADRÓTTINN

(831)

In three final efforts, three sacrifices must be made. In this, the third, we concern ourselves with Þormoðr.

BACK AT THE HALL

The characters have returned home from the second encounter with one of the High Ones. Some of them are bruised, others broken. The clues they have for finding the last aspect of the All-High are scarce and they don't have the luxury of much time before their information becomes obsolete.

While the characters debate the history of their actions and whether all want to continue this path, an incident among Adawúlf's people breaks out in the night. He can tell the characters of a conflict that had been building up for some time between two of his grandsons. They had once settled an argument by the exchange of livestock for the right of one of them to marry a woman they both desired. It was one they both wound up regretting, leaving everyone around them unhappy. Now, the cousins lie dead in the field, each with bloodied fists and broken bones. By the time the characters and other witnesses arrive, a raven is bathing in their blood, its beak red with it and its spread wings dripping.

Before long, the Wælykyrige reveals itself. Álfhilðr stands before the characters, naked in a ring of black feathers. She hardly recognizes them, but the story of their more recent acts have reached her ears. Looking at the two corpses at her slender feet, she may say: "Eager Ones... I had expected more of your people. These two limp wretches were pathetic." [...] Álfhilðr is interested in the characters, though clearly disapproves of them as well. She cannot stop what they have put in motion and so she has decided to help them in exchange for a service. "Travel all along the coast as it turns south along the lands in which I was born, then further until the coast continues westward. He wanders those shores, those of the Danes, searching for a reason not to remain. He must know..." It is at this point that Álfhilðr trembles visibly before continuing, "He must know I love him most." Abruptly then, she reverts and flies away, high and toward the east.

SAILING FOR THE BROKEN ONE

On another sea voyage, the characters have relatively easy time of following the coast. Vastly intriguing lands pass by within reach, but they have no time to spare. Mostly, they must contemplate what they will find in the last of the High Ones. First the Shining One, then the Black One, now there is the Broken One.

HANGED MEN

As the characters sail ever further along the winding coast, they pass an area with cliffs during the day. None are as tall as the fjords of their homeland, but the cliffs stand out nonetheless. On these cliffs rest the focus of their attention: two tall pines supporting a beam fashioned from a third, and the five men hung from it by the neck, swinging gracelessly in the strong winds.

Should the characters investigate, they will find there are more corpses scattered on the cliff under those hung high. More than this, a child no more than eight years of age lives among them, mourning for his father, one of the hanged men. There was clearly a battle here. Some knowledge of the Danes may lead a character to conclude some of the more well-armed warriors served King Horik. The rest, including the men dangling in the winds, look more like raiders.

The child is terrified of the characters at first. Upon seeing Magni, however, the child brightens. Almost immediately he runs toward him, only to stop halfway. For a moment, he thought Magni was his father come back to life. They look similar, the child says, before gazing up at the swinging corpses. If appropriately calmed, the child can tell of what transpired after his father finally returned from Dorestad and how he came to death here to be a symbol to all other unsanctioned raids. His name is Erik and his family lives far from here, in the south of the Danelands. His father was the king's half-brother, but that did not warrant a shred of mercy.

The child is furthermore very sick. Insisting to stay with his father, he has slept beside corpses for days now, eating what moldy rations he can find in their pockets. He refuses to leave if the characters suggests it. At night, the mists come and the child knows that so long as they do, the border between the living and the dead is thin. Not only does he believe his father is still close, he believes if he begs the gods long enough, if he has to resolve to remain here, they will bring his father back. For as long as the mists come, the gods must not have made up their mind.

NIGHT FALLS

The characters will likely process this, waiting for night to come, for Valfreyja to awaken. By the time night does fall, Hangadróttinn will have reappeared, first in mist. The child begs for his father's return and even tries to force the gods' hand with an ultimatum. The child

raises his father's heavy sword to his own throat, insisting he will be more decisive than the gods when he reaches the other side. This will draw Hangadróttinn out, emerging from the mists. The characters will recognize the face of deep mourning from Ása's funeral. The All-High approaches the child, and takes his hand. "I am not here for your father, young one. He has long departed this realm. I am here to take your life." The child begins to cry.

ÞORMOÐR'S REVENGE

All this time, a draugr marches south on the sea's bottom. Þormoðr, carrying Týr's shining sword, has become one of the Risen. He is looking for the All-High here, vengeance the sole thing on his mind. In the night, the blade shines brighter than the moon, cutting through the distance. His corpse is rotten, displaying the wounds that killed him. Salt water pours out of his veins. Somehow, a crumbling, petrified leaf of oak still adorns his collar.

The blade he carries burns like white-hot iron such that Valfreyja is not only likely to frenzy, but also proximity to it will burn her like sunlight does. Hangadróttinn may counter with immense Fortitude and Courage, but in truth, he is weary of his duty and has been debating leaving his counterparts behind. The characters may have learned some of this before Þormoðr arrives by speaking to the ancient as he refuses to let the child go. Now, the characters are all that stand between the draugr and the destruction of the All-High.

THE GOD OF DEATH

If Þormoðr is destroyed, Hangadróttinn will sink to his knees, cradling the child with a hand wrapped tightly around his skull, ready to twist it. Staring at the draugr corpse, he will find some resolve again, saying: "I am the god of death." Then, he lets the child go after whispering for him to run south.

By the time the characters have explained what they want from the All-High, he will question their intent in the Hall of the Einherjar. He asks each of them why they think they have the resolve to endure immortality.

AMONG THE FALLEN PART IX

(831)

All things end for Þormoðr, yet he is not alone.

THE HALL OF HEL

Mists. Þormoðr has washed up on familiar shores and his friend is nowhere in sight. All he can see are mists.

BLACK FEATHER

A double-weighted token was awarded to Þéa for her conviction, the reason why she is suited for immortality: "I believe there are rules in this world for a very good reason. It just happens that I do not agree with most common and accepted moralities. I am a survivor at heart and a long time ago I adopted other values. I'm not callous or cold-hearted. All I want is a better future, for myself, and, a select loved ones.

"I am not ashamed of my actions. I cannot feel sorry for the ones I deprived of life or those who experience suffering on my account. In the end they all would have done the same as me if only they were stronger and more determined.

"You get the most out of yourself if you act without restraint. I can only have respect for those who have established something in life, regardless what they did to get there. There is no good or evil, there is only prevailing or failing."



The only way forward is north. Countless roads follow, all descending, all leading deeper and deeper into the Niflheimr. He passes the place where hatred was born into the world and the sight voids him of all of his. The place is empty and there is only one place for Þormoðr, now. He needs only go further north and beneath the trodden soil waits the only house that will take him. [...] Þormoðr's steps sound hollow to his own ears. He imagines shadows creeping just below the surface of the ever-encroaching mist. He cannot stray from his path, now. [...] An arch, a roof, and a set of doors loom ahead. His approach is met only with silence from within. The doors' creak deafens when jarred. [...] Hel's Hall is a temple to longing, a prison to satisfaction. She looms high

over tables filled only with souls. A seat has been made for Þormoðr. [...] Four men sit in Hel's Hall. Three try to recall the face so fair, and she is not there.

Here Þormoðr's story ends. Across from him sits Hrygg. To his left sits Þovar. What will grieve all witnesses most is that to his right sits Falke.

EINHERJAR

(831)

Þéa has been awarded the last black feather token, now owning more than any other player character. The last of the High Ones has been found and he has agreed to venture to the east. As the characters prepare themselves to make the last journey of their lives, it is Þéa who has picked up the sword of Týr to wrap it in a cloth.

What follows is an extensive session, written under the assumption that Þéa's claim to the ultimate reward of this chronicle goes uninterrupted. Should she falter in anything the All-High demands of her, the other characters will provide substitution of her role in the order of the number of black feather tokens awarded.

EAST

The characters venture toward those lands they passed when they made their way along the coasts. There, roads take them inland, around fair Álvheimr, and all the while they wonder about Þormoðr. Their friend had long ago willingly sacrificed himself to the gods. Somehow, almost three decades later, he wanted to destroy the All-High. Any character who changes his or her mind about the east and the Hall of the Einherjar has this last opportunity to turn back and live out a mortal life at the home of their choosing. When the characters first set out to find the All-Highs, it was late in the summer. Now, the first snowfall marks the land around them.

Inevitably, they will come across locals, to whom the characters' language seems crude and stunted. Anyone here in Götland can show them the way to Svealand and anyone in Svealand can tell them the way to Östra Aros. When they near the place, crossing through dense woods all their journey long, they will come across a wanderer striding through the thicket. He bears a staff almost identical to the one Ásvaldur had. His robes are white, dirtied slightly by his travels and he has a mark which runs from his forehead down over his nose, a single line of soot (Isaz). His name is Ásannað and he is friendly to the characters. He is drawn to them mostly because he senses the power of Týr's shining sword. He knows how dangerous it is, though he will not intervene here. The characters might spot him eyeing the blade while it rests in its wrappings.

The Softening Touch: Ásannað takes a particular

interest in Arka. He comments that this is no condition in which to meet the gods. He asks for Arka's permission to soften what is harsh. If he agrees, the wanderer will produce a pouch of dark paste and add a line to his forehead, turning the shape into Laukaz. With a touch of his staff, Arka's wounds are healed enough that he may stand unaided.

NINE TIERS, WHO AM I

As they near their destination, Ásannað suggests a game of wit and riddles. "Three famous men I will be, three holy men. All those who wander the middling realms have heard of them. You must tell me which." [...]

"I was chosen and I was taught. Many women there were in my life, a wife and daughters. All, I parted with, giving them up to greater powers. Then, I was parted by my own legacy. Who was I?" [...] "I was Ásvaldur of Otruness."

"I was blessed by Oðin to endure three lifetimes and I was cursed by Þór to commit crimes in each one. With one last strike of Þór's hammer, I was no more. Who was I?" [...] "I was Starkad son of Jötnar."

"I was a wanderer and a liar. Walking north, I was brave. Fleeing south, I was a coward. Soon, I will be attacked and my temple plundered. Who was I?" [...] "I was Ansgar, Apostle to the North."

NINE TIERS, ÆVIKVIÐA

When the characters arrive at the outstretched land, whose timber has long since been cut to construct the great wonder before them, they witness the full height of the high temple, the great hall. All around it, a mist lies thick on the soil and shouting can be heard from deep within, just as small fires glow dimly. Ásannað tells the characters that now with the celebration of the coming of winter, Östra Aros is not what it usually is. Now, it is the Hall of the Einherjar. Mists swallow him up before their eyes just as he tells them they should leave this place now that they have seen it.

Should the characters decide to brave the mists, they will soon be enveloped by them, seeing only dim fires ahead. They can hear snarling all around them and wings flapping overhead. As they near one fire, a figure only visible in silhouette blocks their way. They see the outline of thick arms, lethal claws, and a wolf's snout. The shape demands the characters turn back, for the temple is not for the living now that it is inhabited by the Einherjar. Meanwhile, other shapes, vague and looming, shift around the fire.

If the characters persist, the figure before them will make it plain once more that this place is not for the living: "You are about to undergo a most painful death." If they really want to die, they should announce their life's deeds, their Ævikviða, as they take their next steps. At the mention of any character who earned three black

feather tokens or more, the vargr around the fire will show apprehension.

Those who announce their *Ævikviða* may step forward and see the mists cleared around the fire, where men including the speaker wears the skins of wolves over their face and shoulders. All are vicious and hungry. They are clearly creatures of death. They leap over the flames as a test of courage, a sight that will make *Valfreyja* want to cower.

NINE TIERS, ACCEPTANCE

The characters may freely wander the grounds around the great temple after they have been admitted by the vargr, the childer and grandchilder of the All-High who are destined to roam the wilds. Camps of vargr surround the great hall and more than once, fights break out among them. The door to the great hall remains shut, guarded by none other than *Ásannað*. *Wælyrjur* stalk silently through the crowds, regarding everything closely as if appraising. If the characters join one of the vargr fires, they will hear them exchange stories of their deeds. Doing so, the characters may learn they are not the only mortals who have forsaken everything to witness what happens here. Only one has so far survived three nights. The others have all paid the price of admittance. At this point, the characters may become aware of corpses hung from the hall's roof. They number seven, with two places remaining at their side.

Should the characters seek out the other surviving mortal, they will find him at another vargr fire. He has proven himself worthy by many acts, not the least of which has left an arm burned from his shoulder to his fingertips. Again, the mere sight of it will unnerve *Valfreyja* greatly. The vargr will speak on his behalf before he introduces himself. They venerate him as the father of bears. He says his name is *Regin Sigurdson* and he is here to succeed *Starkad*.

A clear threat looms in the air between *Regin* and *Þéa* when suddenly, the *Wælyrjur* screech. The mists around the camps are thickening, converging in three different directions. All the vargr start to howl. *Ásannað* shouts: "The All-High has come!" All eyes look on as the three figures move toward each other with great strides. Emerging past the fires, they stand before *Ásannað*, who bows. Soon, all lower themselves before the three High Ones, who now face their counterparts.

Only two in the gathering are rude enough not to bow and they now stand out. The characters recognize them as the human shapes of *Huginn* and *Muninn*. Instead, these walk toward *Þéa* and *Regin* and hoist them up by the shoulder. They guide them and drag them until they kneel before the All-High. *Huginn* and *Muninn* take on the shape of ravens then, and speak in a tongue the characters cannot understand. The All-High replies in kind before a long silence falls. It is a *Wælyrige* who

finally tells them: "He said there will be only one." *Regin* draws his axe and for the first time in her life, *Þéa* has met her match in combat.

NINE TIERS, THE BLOOD HORN

After *Regin* is slain, the All-High opens the doors to the great hall and all follow in suit, silent. The slain man's corpse is mounted on the roof by *Wælyrjur*, leaving one more space open. Inside, all attendants solemnly take their seat at long tables. The hall is dark, all its sconces and fireplaces left cold. With great ceremony, the three High Ones approach a single throne. The droning prayer of vargr and *Wælyrjur* alike resound: "Harr... Harr... Harr..."

Before their eyes then, the All-High becomes one. The three come to stand intimately close and then tear at each other fast as lightning. What remains is the face of the three-faced god placed on the body stouter than any of the three that stood in the same place a moment ago. *Draugadróttinn's* left eye merges with *Hangadróttinn's* right, their scars matching perfectly into one. "Bring forth the Blood Horn," three mouths say in unison, before the *Methuselah* takes his seat. *Ásannað* obeys and produces an artifact the likes of which the characters have never before seen. Wrought with gold and carved with the ancient scripts of countless forgotten tribes, the horn is held high for all to see. "Mead," the father of all *Einherjar* commands. After the horn is filled, the All-High grows a feral talon in one finger to cut across his ruined eye, perfectly matching the scar already there. He weeps blood and offers a single drop into the horn. "This is my sacrifice to the world," he intones. "Partake of it," he commands. The horn is then passed all along the tables in silence, an act which takes many moments. When finally the horn reaches the first of the characters, they will notice it is as full as it was when *Ásannað* first poured into it, though the substance within is nothing like mead. It is the liquid death *Arka* fell in love with, a thousand times as potent. All who drink feel the strength of the All-High. There is a vision in the blood clearer than any thought their lives have ever before produced. This is the blood that has bathed in the death of tribes since the beginning of time. Where it started is unclear, but its propagation has never changed. Life is purest where it is hardest. Life is worthiest where it is most precious. Only thus is death absolute. Only thus is sacrifice true. With the blood on the characters' tongue it is made endless.

Valfreyja, especially, if she drinks of the blood, begins to swoon. The potency of this entity reveals to her the truth behind all the stories told by the *Lhiannan* mothers, whose souls still scream for release in her veins. This truth is that the All-High has never ceased longing for *Blóðæweð*. To him, *Valfreyja's* existence is somehow the definition of her prostration, of her seeking forgiveness. He will never know that she was destroyed long ago.

NINE TIERS, TRIBUTE

While the horn is passed further, the All-High simply clutches the armrests of his thrones ever tighter. Unknown to the hall, he is unable to consolidate his three identities. It is Ásannað who approaches where the characters are seated and whispers to only one of them: “The vargr are counting your last breaths. Be sure that you take the time to appreciate this life you have had. Prolong what comes. Offer tribute humbly to the All-High, the costliest gift you carry.”

Ásannað means for the characters to deliver Týr’s sword to the All-High. In truth, this is a moment of grave danger. Should there be a character ill-inclined, that sword still harbors the power to destroy even a Methuselah. With its delivery, however, the hall becomes ever more favorable to the characters. The All-High will gauge it cautiously before noting that indeed, by the characters’ insistence, the spawn of Fenrisúlfur have released their patron from its bonds. A great war is coming and this blade would prove most cruel if it were to fall in the wrong hands.

NINE TIERS, CONFESSION

When everyone in the hall has drunk of the horn, the time has come for the All-High to acknowledge that he is willing to make one of the characters Einherjar. Þéa is called to the front. At her heels, two ravens flap from table to table, to land on the All-High’s shoulders. Again, they rasp in his ears something incomprehensible to the characters.

When Þéa stands before the All-High, he questions her: “Why does the Wolf-Mother grace this hall with her presence?” [...] “You are Hrfanvaldur, Krummisannað, and yet you have many weaknesses.” [...] “If I am to be your father in the truest sense, you must be rid of them. Confess your weaknesses before the gathering now and let those that go unmentioned follow you forever after, beyond my gift.”

NINE TIERS, INDEPENDENCE

Þéa’s confessions are met by silence until she has ceased to list them. The All-High then utters, bleakly: “And if I am to be your father in the truest sense, then you cannot have a mother.” The Methuselah gestures in the distance before Huginn and Munnin respond, flying with outstretched talons toward Valfreyja. They latch onto her shoulders and usher her towards the All-High. “I will father you,” the All-High intones with nothing less than perversion on his tongue, “and I will claim her for my own. Submit to this. Renounce her to me, your sister, your mother.”

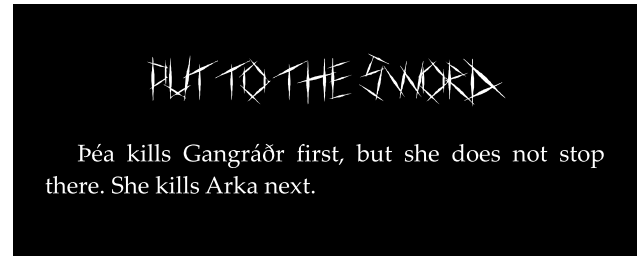
Should Valfreyja resist, all lies in ruin. It will require every last shred of Þéa’s Willpower to relinquish the being she worshiped even as her husband, her daughter, and her son perished all around her.

NINE TIERS, NINE CORPSES

If Valfreyja has joined the All-High, standing at his side while his outstretched hand fondles her thigh, the Methuselah will continue with his demands. He demands that Þéa demonstrate her devotion. “There is old power in the chance to kiss the sword that kills you,” three voices drone. “There are those in this hall who yet breathe. Which of them will kiss your blade?” The All-High expects Þéa to add the last corpse to the roof over their heads, demonstrating her understanding of the importance of sacrifice. The blood must be spilled into a bowl for Þéa to keep.

When the deed is done, the All-High addresses his attendees to say: “We rule on a tide of blood and have power over life and death. It is the duty of my offspring to protect those of the great race from which we were all once born. We are their gods. We nurture their ways and their way has always been war.” [...] “Ragnarök is a year nearer to our door. Be ready, my vargr, be patient my Wækyrjur.”

Lastly, he calls for Brynhildr, his most trusted Wækyrige, and Kveld-Úlfr, the most vicious of his vargr, and they leave together with Þéa, taking the Blood Horn. None of the other characters will ever see her again. The All-High turns to Valfreyja and all the Einherjar turn to the mortals among them in the hall.

**NINE TIERS, THE WOLF OR THE RAVEN**

Outside, Þéa is led by Brynhildr and Kveld-Úlfr toward the mouth of a stream through these flat, green lands blanketed in a thin layer of snow. The river slowly widens until the three of them reach a great lake. Kveld-Úlfr stops Þéa and bids her to raise the bowl of cooling blood in front of her. He breaks a long, sharp tooth from the wolf’s skull that adorns his head and drops it into the liquid. Brynhildr similarly produces a feather and adds it in as well. “May the blood decide whether you are worthy of becoming a wanderer of the land,” Kveld-Úlfr growls. “Or may it decide whether you are at heart a maiden of the skies,” Brynhildr counters.

After a dread silence then, they take the bowl from Þéa and throw it into the lake. It floats, yet drifts ever further away. Then, both immortals tear at Þéa’s throat, rending both jugular veins. The soil around them reddens and Þéa can feel her oncoming death. When she lies slumped at the edge of the water, Brynhildr pours the All-High’s

blood from the horn into Déa's mouth. The two immortals watch as it enters her throat, then they throw her into the water. By the time Déa can open her eyes, she is surrounded by cold darkness. It will take a moment to realize she lies at the bottom of the lake. A frenzy will overcome her with only the memory of the floating bowl somewhere above her head.

Déa has been Embraced by All-High's vitae, making her a 5th generation Gangrel. One question remains. By the time she surfaces and gorges herself on what remains of the blood she herself has shed, will she have grown to display a feature of a raven or a wolf on her forever-immortal body?



*Den tredje er deg,
ok tri ek nemnar.*

Wardruna – Løyndomsriss

EPILOGUE

WORDS OF THE ALL-HIGH

“All are born with no name. When one dies, one may have many.”

“I am the All-High. I am many other things besides.”

“Óðin is a name the northern people have given me. But there are more natures besides and there are more names besides.”

“I am the wanderer in the night. I am the keeper of the Einherjar. I am their father, all. I have given more to my people than they will ever know. I have supped with the best of beings. I have fought with the strongest of beings.”

“I have more sons than any king, yet none of them shall ever inherit what is mine. I have more daughters than any queen, yet none of them shall ever marry.”

“No, I do not travel by horse. Their hooves slip on the slimmest soil.”

“We rule on a tide of blood and have power over life and death. It is the duty of my offspring to protect those of the great race from which we were all once born. We are their gods. We nurture their ways and their way has always been war.”

“Now do you know why they call me the god of Death?”

MAGNI'S END

Magni has a hard time trying to remain calm and collected as he watches his family get betrayed or slain by Péa’s hand. He is outraged at her and wants to fight her as well, but does not want to be disrespectful towards the gods. Even though he disagrees with the All-High’s choice, he honors his will nonetheless.

Magni realizes that it is likely his last chance when Péa is escorted out of the hall by the most trustworthy Wælkyrige and the fiercest vargr. He continues to remain silent and does not want to do anything out of place. As a last resort, he desperately tries to gain eye contact with Péa with the intent of giving her a challenging expression. However, she either misses his stare or ignores him entirely and she makes her leave to the cold night outside.

Everything falls silent soon afterward and the gazes eventually start to turn to Magni. He is greatly disappointed but remains determined to serve the gods. Before they can do anything else, he declares that he would like to offer his life to their wishes. Either to walk with them like Starkad did, serve as a willing sacrifice, or anything else they can think of. One of the vargr seems interested, but he only teases Magni in order to coerce

him into a battle. There is a beautiful Wælkyrige who steps in before this transpires. She asks Magni to lay down his weapons, armor, other belongings and he gives her all that she desires as he gets on his knees. Then she moves in to give him a last ecstatic kiss that slowly makes him drift into oblivion for eternity.

VALFREYJA'S END

Valfreyja is forced to accompany Draugadróttinn after everyone she once knew is gone. She doesn’t resist it. She’s alone now. They drift through the lands, never settling, never lingering. Valfreyja never has the chance to make the soil her own again. Word reaches her of Halfdan’s troubles and eventually the deaths of all grandsons and granddaughters left in his kingdom.

One night, she tries to call out to Péa, summoning her, but Péa never shows. The All-High scorns her. Years later, Valfreyja adapts to her new existence. She has changed and now goes by the name Hagall. As Hagall, she grows closer to her captor. One day, Draugadróttinn rejoins his counterparts to undergo a long sleep. Before Valfreyja can join them, the hall over their head is burned. Valfreyja is destroyed in the fire of Christians’ torches.

QUESTIONS

As has become customary for these chronicles, the players were allowed to accumulate a list of questions at the end of the story. The long-awaited answers to these questions are presented here.

HOW DID MORLAUG DIE ON THE ISLAND?

Painfully. She was entangled, torn limb from limb, then strangled. Her blood would feed her killers, both the land itself and the Mothers.

WOULD HASTING HAVE KILLED HIMSELF IF THE CHARACTERS HAD NEVER INTERVENED?

Certainly, eventually.

WOULD GALDRAMADR HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SPEAK AGAIN, HAD HE LIVED?

The essence of galdrar encompasses a spellcraft of the voice. Whatever it exactly was that Galdramaðr attempted, he meant for it to last. One must not confuse his act with mere barbarism, however. His transformation was intended to achieve a new kind of greatness through the greatest sacrifice the boy had to give.

Epilogue

HOW DID HALFDAN COMMUNICATE THE PLANS FOR THE BATTLE AT RAKNI'S MOUND?

Halfdan was never the architect of the battle. Instead, Sigtrygg had a servant placed in Halfdan's household. This man was as clever as he was cruel, a master manipulator. Halfdan does not remember the suggestion being made before one day asking this man to personally travel north to treat with Sigtrygg. No one knew his true name and his allegiance was only revealed after he tried to murder Ása.

WHY DID RAGNHILD LEAVE HALFDAN?

She was with child and no one expected Halfdan to become a good father.

WHAT WAS THE SHIP'S NAME?

Today, it is called the Oseberg Ship.

HOW DID THE KING OF RYGJAFYLKE REACT TO THE BETRAYAL?

He declared war on Agðir, uniting his neighboring peers against the threats from the south. That declaration still stands after the last of the protagonist characters have drawn a final breath.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ORMR?

It kept slithering back and forth across the worlds.

WHY WAS THE ORMR AFTER ELDUR?

It wanted to recreate the delight of killing his parents.

HOW DID ÁSVALDUR REPEL THE ORMR?

Never doubt the power of one such as Ásvaldur.

WHAT ARE THOUGHT AND MEMORY?

They are creatures belonging to the physical world and the spirit world in equal parts. They were both born as ravens once, before they found they could assume other, terrible forms, not least among which was the human guise they adopted.

WHO WAS TÝR?

Týr was the chieftain God before the All-High ever set foot in the lands of the north.

HOW DOES TÝR DIFFER FROM THE ÆSIR AND THE VANIR?

He predates them.

DID TÝR REALLY SACRIFICE HIS HAND TO FENRISÚLFUR?

In truth, Týr lost more than his hand that night. Indeed, though, he saw it as a sacrifice.

DID ÞORMOÐR RELEASE FENRISÚLFUR?

Not single-handedly, but his actions were the catalyst.

HOW DID FENRISÚLFUR BREAK FREE FROM THE INTRICATE BRAID THAT BOUND HIM?

Luðr is ultimately responsible, in his scheme with the Fenrir.

WHY DID LUÐR NEED ÞORMOÐR TO RELEASE FENRISÚLFUR FROM THE SWORD?

He didn't. As far candidates went, however, given what happened, it seems Þormoðr was the perfect candidate for Luðr's intentions.

HOW COULD ÞORMOÐR HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE HÖRGR WITHOUT LUÐR'S HELP?

By rolling more successes.

WHO MADE THE SHIP THAT BROUGHT ÞORMOÐR TO THE SHORES OF THE DANELANDS?

Þéa did.

IS LUÐR... LOKI?

Luðr is everlasting spite. Luðr is the old fire that will not die. Luðr is father to Fenrisúlfur and many other horrors.

HOW WAS ELDUR ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH FENRISÚLFUR?

They spoke, face-to-face, in the spirit world many years before the battle at Rakni's Mound. There, Eldur learned a dire truth kept secret by his elders.

WHAT WOULD ELDUR HAVE WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH VALFREYJA NEAR RAKNI'S MOUND, HAD THEY BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO SPEAK?

Valfreyja's powers over the spirit world are one of the prime causes of Eldur's hatred for her. However, at that moment, he was desperate. He would have discussed the presence of the Ormr with her and he would have considered a collaboration if she was willing. If he had been able to enter the spirit world, everything could have been different.

HOW DID THE SHINING ONE BECOME ONE FROM THREE? HOW DID THE SHINING ONE BECOME THREE FROM ONE? ALSO, WHY?

Once, and only once, three became one by diablerie. All other joinings and separations of the All-High were achieved by the powers of Protean. The longer they spend apart, however, the further they diverge. Over the centuries, it is becoming harder to consolidate them as one being.

WHICH ASPECT OF THE ALL-HIGH, THE SHINING ONE, THE BROKEN ONE, OR THE BLACK ONE, IS STRONGEST?

Only He could say. Only one of them is truly the God of Death. Only one of them remembers the Dei. Only one

of them is more furious than any Beast.

**DID THE SHINING ONE THINK VALFREYJA WAS
BLODEUWEDD/BLÓÐÆWED?**

Yes—well—not really. He never learned that his once-wife was destroyed, but the smell was unmistakable. He realized Valfreyja was born here in the north. He loved her instantly, nonetheless.

WERE THE SONS OF THE ALL-HIGH ALL VARGR?

All His childer in the north are either vargr or Wælkýrjur, and there are no male Wælkýrjur. The identities of sons such as Víðarr and Baldr are more complicated, however. They were not all immortal.

**WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF VALFREYJA HAD BEEN
CHOSEN AS THE MOST FAVORED?**

She would have survived beyond the coming of Christianity. In one of many endings, she might have chosen a path of further diablerie. This could have led her to stand by the All-High's side as a 5th generation Cainite. Her Lhiannan blood will have become diluted and weak, indistinguishable, after all those Gangrel souls stained hers.

WHY DO THE VÖLVUR HATE THE WÆLKÝRJUR?

They don't, not as a rule at least. However, if you live in isolation on the border of Lupine territory like Mara, you might benefit from agreeing with their point of view.

**WAS IT ADAWÚLF'S PLAN TO TAKE OVER THE CHARACTERS'
HALL?**

It wasn't explicitly on his mind when he first arrived. He wanted what was best for his family while remaining its patriarch. His ambitions can't be denied and, looking back, could well be considered healthy ones.

**WOULD ÞÉA'S VISIONS ABOUT HALFDAN HAVE COME TRUE?
Read Heimskringla.**

Now that the players have had their curiosity sated, allow the storyteller to pose some questions of his own:

How many of you remember the way Eldur cried after killing the Wælkýrige?

Was there ever a second tear shed for Ása? For Mara? For Þovar? For all those children weaker than their parents? For all the countless others?

Do you realize that the first time you met the All-High, you failed to follow his decree to be silent for the remainder of the evening?

Might the world have been better off with Ásvaldur alive?

Of all the men Þéa has slain, who was the greatest? Do you think one of them is mentioned in the sagas?

Why didn't any of you ask a single question about Gylfi, Rakni, or Gangleri?

Do you think Arka joined his silent friends in Hel's Hall? What about Magni?

What do you think became of the rest of them? How many years did Vigdis have left? Did Gandálv ever see his daughter again?

How long do you think Galdramaðr lasted with his father's shield in his hands?

Epilogue



Pormoðr the Brave

“As I have always said, it is my duty to protect all of you and now is the time to show it.”

STEREOTYPES

Arka: “A highly dependable man and good friend.”

Falke: “Requires guidance, but remains a friend nonetheless.”

Péa: “A respectable woman who does not need aid even though she has earned it.”

Valfreyja: “My beloved.”

Hrygg: “I hate that this spineless bastard still exists.”

Eldur: “He has become part of our family like the survivors from Marnardalr and deserves our protection just like the rest.”



Draugr

Nature: Defender

Demeanor: Rogue

Strength [†]	●●●●○
Dexterity	●●●●○
Stamina [‡]	●●●●○
Acting	○●●●○
Alertness	●●●●○
Athletics	●●●●○
Brawl	●●●●○
Dodge	○●●●○
Empathy	●●●●○
Intimidation	●●●●○
Larceny	○●●●○
Leadership	●●●●○
Subterfuge	●●●●○
Conscience	●●●●○
Self-Control	●●●●○
Courage	●●●●●

Charisma	●●●○
Manipulation	●●○○○
Appearance	●●○○○
Animal Ken	●○○○○
Archery	●○○○○
Crafts ^{††}	●●●●○
Etiquette	●○○○○
Herbalism	○○○○○
Melee ^{‡‡}	●●●●○
Music	○○○○○
Ride	○○○○○
Stealth	●○○○○
Survival	●●○○○

Perception	●●●○○
Intelligence	●●○○○
Wits	●●●○○
Academics	○○○○○
Hearth Wisdom	●○○○○
Investigation	●○○○○
Law	●○○○○
Linguistics	○○○○○
Medicine	●○○○○
Occult	○○○○○
Politics	○○○○○
Science	●○○○○
Seneschal	●○○○○

Willpower	●●●●○○○○○
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- † Bludgeoning
- ‡ Endurance
- †† Coopering
- ‡‡ Hammer



Falke Nine-Fingers

To this day, we wait for the player to submit stereotypes, a quote, anything at all.

<i>FALKE</i>		
<i>Mortal</i>	Nature: Celebrant	Demeanor: Survivor
Strength ●●●○	Charisma ●●○○	Perception† ●●●○
Dexterity ●●●○	Manipulation ●●○○	Intelligence ●●●○
Stamina ●●●○	Appearance ●●○○	Wits ●●●○
Acting ○○○○	Animal Ken ●○○○	Academics ○○○○
Alertness ●●○○	Archery ●●○○	Hearth Wisdom ●●○○
Athletics ●○○○	Crafts ●●○○	Investigation ●●○○
Brawl ●○○○	Etiquette ○○○○	Law ○○○○
Dodge ●●○○	Herbalism ●●○○	Linguistics ○○○○
Empathy ○○○○	Melee ●●○○	Medicine ●○○○
Intimidation ●○○○	Music ○○○○	Occult ○○○○
Larceny ○○○○	Ride ○○○○	Politics ○○○○
Leadership ○○○○	Stealth ●●○○	Science ○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○	Survival ●●○○	Seneschal ○○○○
Conscience ●●●○		Seamanship ●●●○
Instinct ●●●○	Willpower ●●●○○○○○	† Keen ear
Courage ●●●○		



Gangráðr the Heavy-Hearted

Even a few crude archetypes scrawled on a napkin are welcome at this point.

<i>GANGRÁÐR</i>		
<i>Mortal</i>	Nature: Innovator	Demeanor: Judge
Strength ●●○○○	Charisma† ●●●○	Perception ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○	Manipulation ●●●○	Intelligence ●●●○
Stamina ●●○○○	Appearance ●●●○	Wits ●●○○○
Acting ●●○○○	Animal Ken ○○○○	Academics ○○○○
Alertness ●○○○○	Archery ○○○○	Hearth Wisdom ○○○○
Athletics ○○○○○	Crafts ○○○○	Investigation ●●○○○
Brawl ●○○○○	Etiquette ●●●○	Law ●○○○○
Dodge ●○○○○	Herbalism ○○○○	Linguistics ●○○○○
Empathy ●●○○○	Melee ●○○○○	Medicine ○○○○○
Intimidation ●●○○○	Music ○○○○	Occult ○○○○○
Larceny ○○○○○	Ride ○○○○	Politics ●●●○
Leadership ●●●○	Stealth ○○○○	Science ○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○	Survival ●○○○○	Seneschal‡ ●●●○
Conscience ●●●○	Willpower ●●●○○○○○	† Diplomacy
Self-Control ●●●○		‡ War
Courage ●●●○		



Arka the Lucky

"I don't have children to carry on my legacy. I can't build ships fit for a jarl. I can't navigate to new worlds and I'm not a god. All I have is my axe."

STEREOTYPES

Falke: "We don't always see eye-to-eye but I am proud to be of the same blood. I couldn't wish for a better brother."

Þormoðr: "Dependable. Always dependable."

Þéa: "Poisoned by ambition and blood."

Valfreyja: "Something precious to be protected. This was true before her... ascent as well. Her disregard of my life in favor of the others cuts deeply."

Gangráðr: "The product of a cloistered upbringing. Let the new generation make the rules for the new generation and let the old hold on to the old ways."

Magni: "A brother of whom I wish I could say he was my son."

Galdramaðr: "My own distaste and distrust of my boy sickens me."

Halfdan: "His success is proof of his favor with the gods. He has my favor as well."

		
<i>Mortal</i>	Nature: Survivor	Demeanor: Survivor
Strength ●●●○	Charisma ●●●○	Perception ●●●○
Dexterity† ●●●●	Manipulation ●○○○	Intelligence ●●○○
Stamina ●●●○	Appearance ●●○○	Wits ●●●○
Acting ○○○○	Animal Ken ○○○○	Academics ○○○○
Alertness ●●●○	Archery ○○○○	Hearth Wisdom ●●○○
Athletics ●●○○	Crafts ●●○○	Investigation ●○○○
Brawl ●●●○	Etiquette ○○○○	Law ○○○○
Dodge‡ ●●●○	Herbalism ○○○○	Linguistics ○○○○
Empathy ●○○○	Melee ●●●○	Medicine ○○○○
Intimidation ○○○○	Music ○○○○	Occult ●○○○
Larceny ○○○○	Ride ○○○○	Politics ○○○○
Leadership ●●●○	Stealth ●○○○	Science ○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○	Survival ●●●○	Seneschal ●○○○
Conscience ●●●○	Willpower ●●●○○○○○	† Axes, Blindfighting
Instinct ●●●○		‡ Full dodge
Courage ●●●○		



Magni Stonehands

"I value many great virtues and strive to stay true to them."

STEREOTYPES

- Arka:** "There are few things he cannot dodge and even less which he cannot endure."
Falke: "One of the wisest men I have ever known. I highly respect that."
Gangráðr: "Almost as insightful as his father. I value his words just as much."
Þéa: "Her might is uncontested, but she thinks with her axe."
Valfreyja: "There lies power within her, even though she does not seem strong. It makes me wonder whether she is one of the dvergar, truly a god, or something else."
Hrygg: "An empty shell of his former self, but I have nothing against him personally."
Pormoðr: "The heroic courage that he continually displayed will be remembered."
Grein: "All that I have done to my brother was to help him and I will continue to do so, whatever he might think of me."
Eldur: "I still count him as my brother and friend, wherever he might be."
Kari: "The most virtuous person I know of. Not only an inspiration to our children but to all of us."
Halfdan: "Descendant of the gods and thus the true king. He presents a great cause."
Gods: "The greatest cause and virtue would be to serve them."



Mortal

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Judge

Strength [†]	●●●●●	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity [‡]	●●●●○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○
Acting	●○○○○	Animal Ken ^{‡‡}	●●●●○	Academics	○○○○○
Alertness	●○○○○	Archery	○○○○○	Hearth Wisdom ^{†‡}	●●●●○
Athletics	●○○○○	Crafts	●○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Brawl ^{††}	●●●●○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Herbalism	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Melee	●●●○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Music	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Larceny	○○○○○	Ride	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Leadership	●●●○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Science	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●○○○○	Survival	●○○○○	Seneschal ^{†‡}	●●●○○
Conscience	●●●○○	Willpower	●●●○○○○○	† Pummeling, Grappling	
Self-Control	●●●○○			‡ Parrying	
Courage	●●●○○			†† Blocking	

‡‡ Training

†‡ Battles

†‡ Tactics



Valfreyja the Ageless

" I just want to be home."

STEREOTYPES

Arka: "I can't even count the times I thought him to be dead. He truly is blessed with luck. He has always been loyal to us, his family, and for that I love him."

Péa: "I loved her most of the time. Except for those years with Eldur, the kid only brought trouble."

Pormoðr: "I would have preferred it if Eldur sacrificed himself instead. At least Pormoðr would have stayed with us forever. He was true and beloved family."

Falke: "He must have been the happiest of all of us. He had everything he wanted, even his choice of death. He is missed and loved."

Magni: "Tough and loyal. Sadly his loyalty doesn't lie with family."

Ása: "A respectable woman who did so much for us. She possessed both wisdom and beauty."

Halfdan: "With his dreams he crushed mine."

Mara: "I wanted to get along. She embarrassed me and since then everything was awkward."

Galdramaðr: "Another weird child who hates me for being a god."

Hrygg: "I will never understand why his death would be necessary. We should have fled."

VALFREYJA

11th generation Lhiannan

Nature: Loner

Demeanor: Conformist

Strength ●●○○○
Dexterity ●●○○○
Stamina ●●○○○

Charisma ●●○○○
Manipulation ●●○○○
Appearance[†] ●●○○○

Perception ●○○○○
Intelligence ●●○○○
Wits ●●○○○

Acting ●○○○○
Alertness[‡] ●●○○○
Athletics ○○○○○
Brawl ○○○○○
Dodge ○○○○○
Empathy ●●○○○
Intimidation ○○○○○
Larceny ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Subterfuge ●●○○○

Animal Ken ●○○○○
Archery^{††} ●●○○○
Crafts ●●○○○
Etiquette ●●○○○
Herbalism ○○○○○
Melee ●●○○○
Music ○○○○○
Ride ●○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
Survival ●●○○○

Academics ○○○○○
Hearth Wisdom ○○○○○
Investigation ●○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ●○○○○
Occult ●●○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○
Seneschal^{‡‡} ●●○○○

Conscience ●●○○○
Instinct ●●○○○
Courage ●●○○○

Presence ●●○○○
Ogham ●●○○○
Animalism ●○○○○

Willpower ●●●○○○○○
Humanity ●○○○○○○○

† Exotic
‡ Hearing
†† Quick draw
‡‡ Farming



Péa Wolf-Mother

“To find a better future you have to let go of your burdensome moralities.”

STEREOTYPES

Arka: “A truly persistent man. I tried to kill him so many times.”

Valfeyja: “She is delicate and fair and so beautifully deadly.”

Pormoðr: “A respectable and trustworthy man.”

Magni: “I met my match with him.”

Falke: “A man that will not be soon forgotten. His many offspring are there to prove it.”

Gangráðr: “A big mouth and no muscles.”

Galdramaðr: “A misunderstood boy.”

Povar: “I’m sorry I took him for granted.”

Hrygg: “He did a good job protecting Valfreya.”

Ása: “The best mother she could be.”

Halfdan: “I like that his clear goals made him successful.”

Eldur: “I’m proud to be his—and only his—Wolf-Mother.”



5th generation Gangrel

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Rebel

Strength[†] ●●●●●

Dexterity[‡] ●●●●●

Stamina ●●○○○

Acting ○○○○○

Alertness^{††} ●●●●○

Athletics ●●○○○

Brawl ●●●●○

Dodge ●●○○○

Empathy ●○○○○

Intimidation ●●●●○

Larceny ○○○○○

Leadership ●○○○○

Subterfuge ○○○○○

Conviction ●●●●○

Instinct ●●○○○

Courage ●●●●○

Charisma ●●○○○

Manipulation ●●○○○

Appearance ●●○○○

Animal Ken ○○○○○

Archery ○○○○○

Crafts ●○○○○

Etiquette ○○○○○

Herbalism ○○○○○

Melee^{‡‡} ●●●●●

Music ○○○○○

Ride ○○○○○

Stealth ●○○○○

Survival ●●●○○

Shipwright ●●●○○

Potence ●○○○○

Animalism ●○○○○

Fortitude ●○○○○

Protean ●●○○○

Perception ●●●○○

Intelligence ●●●○○

Wits ●●○○○

Academics ○○○○○

Hearth Wisdom ●●○○○

Investigation ●●○○○

Law ○○○○○

Linguistics ○○○○○

Medicine ○○○○○

Occult ○○○○○

Politics ●○○○○

Science ○○○○○

Seneschal ○○○○○

Seamanship ●○○○○

[†] Grip, Lifting

[‡] Balance, Parry

^{††} Being watched

^{‡‡} Disarm, Axe

Willpower ●●●●●○○○

Road of the Beast ●●●●●○○○

*Ravn flyg i himmelhjul,
i skogen gjestar gamal Tul.*

Wardruna – Stien Klarnar

APPENDIX



ARANSAN

A SKETCHY COMIC

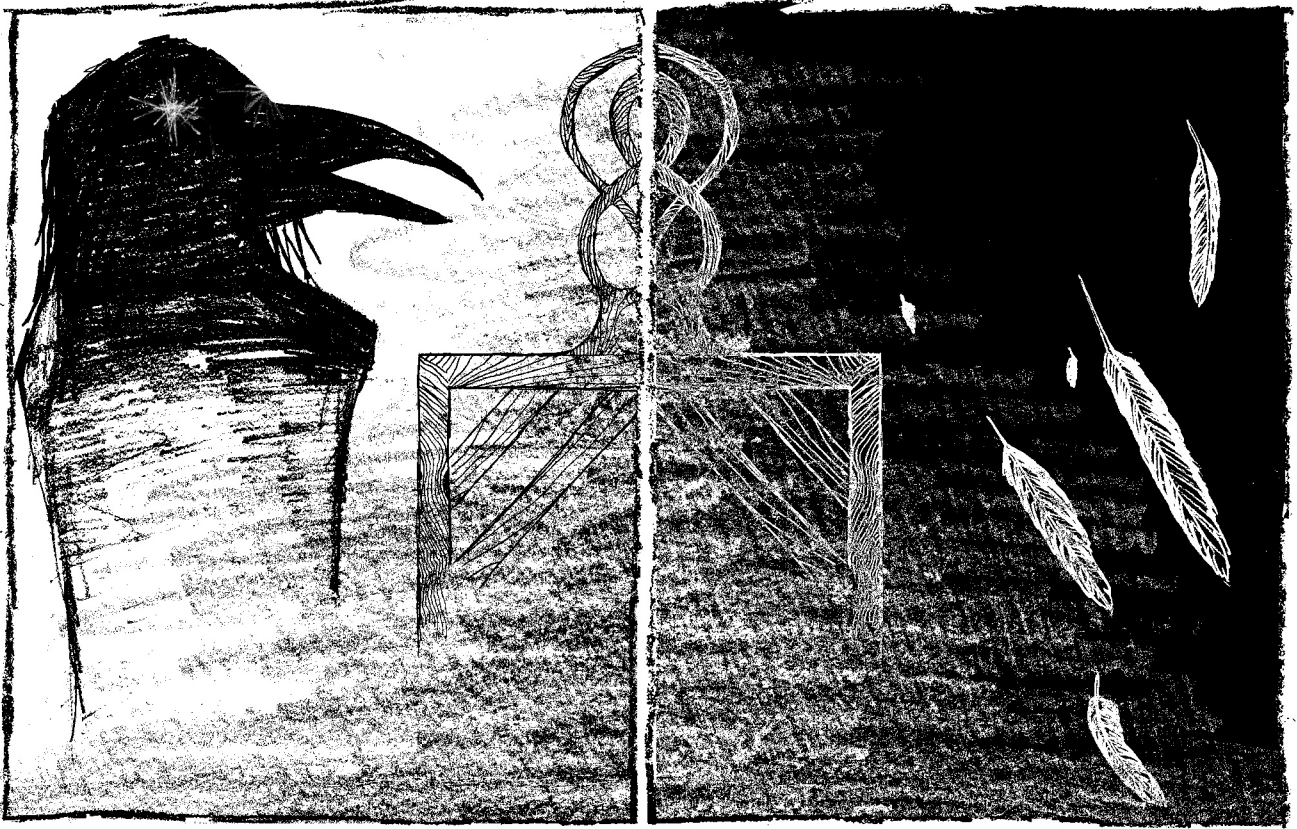




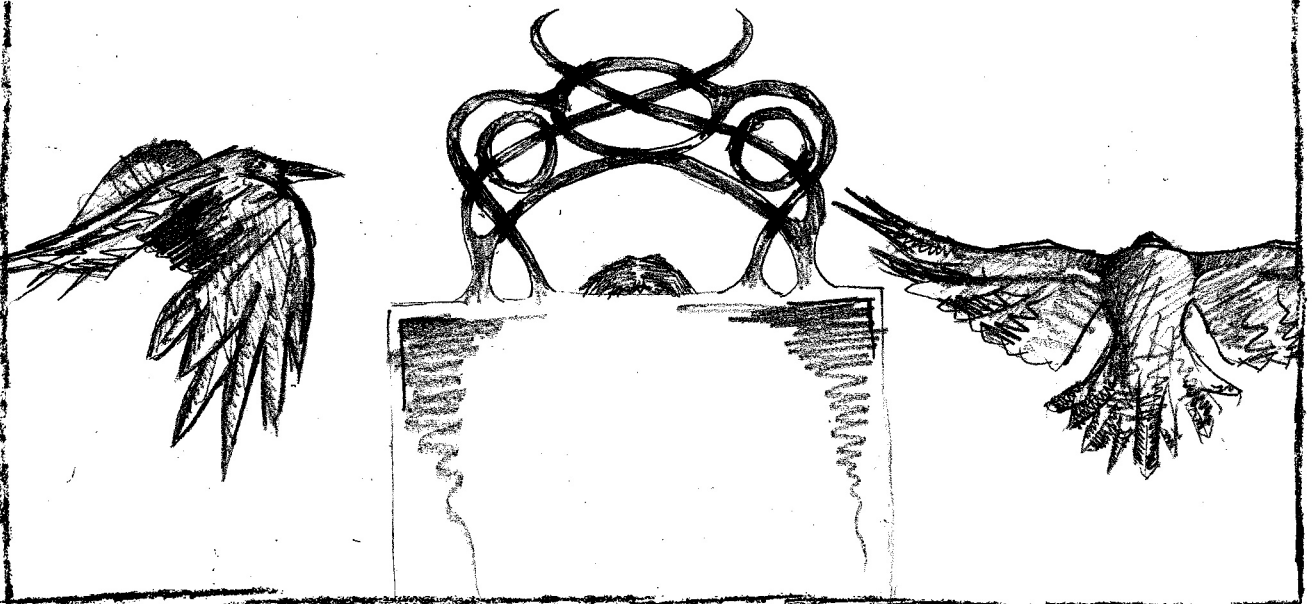
OVER THE
MIDDLING
REALMS

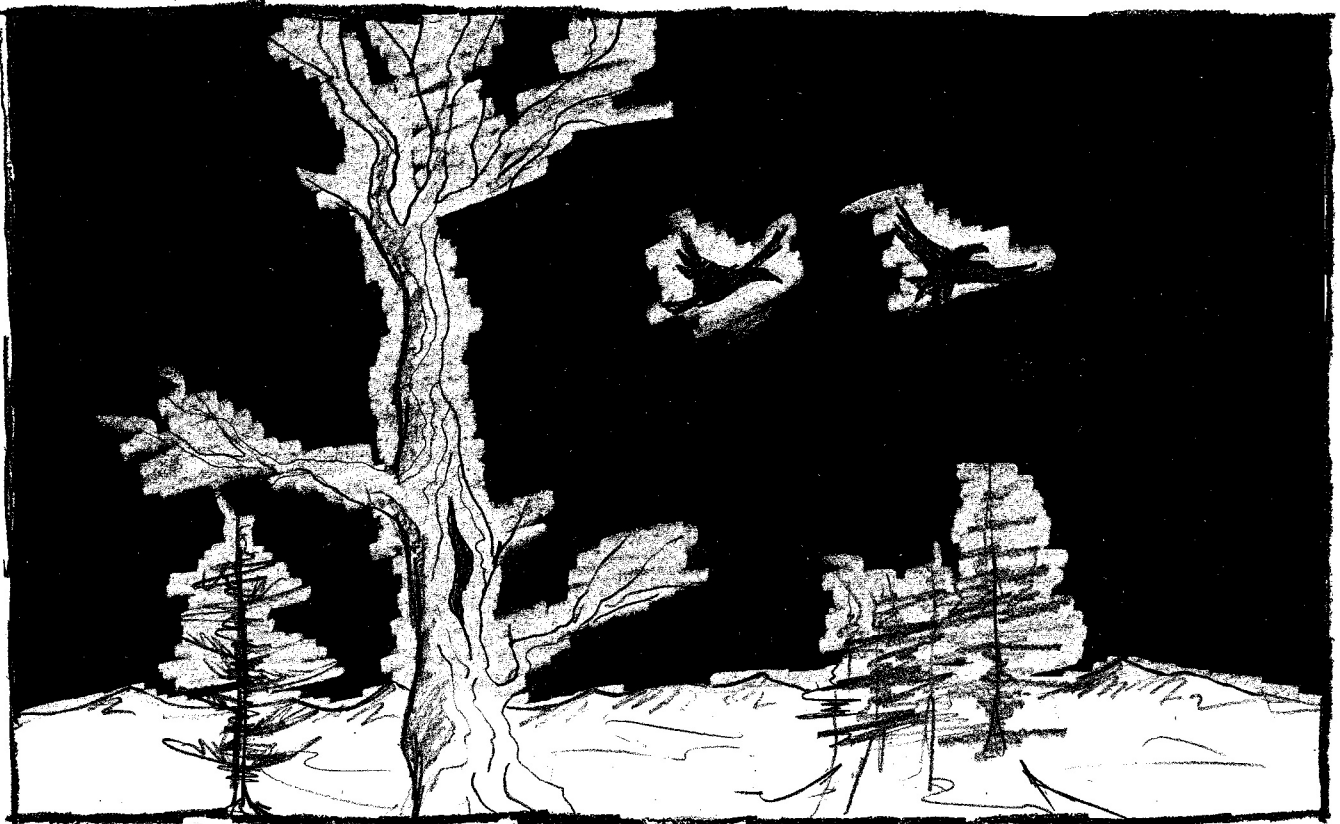
THEY EACH
DAY SET
FORTH

WHILE WE
RELEASE OUR
AWARENESS



FOR THOUGHT I FEAR LEST HE DISAPPEARS
BUT FOR MEMORY MY CARE IS GREATER STILL







The Waelkyrige was well-versed
in the tongue of the birds.
Being wise of the Shining One's will,
she would heed what they had to say.

*From where do you come, ravens,
that your beaks are a mess of gore?
The morning is almost upon us.
Your claws are bloody and you both reek of carrion.
Were you perhaps bereaving corpses?*

*There must have been a battle nearby.
Will you tell me then whose it was,
faithfully defending his homeland from foemen?*

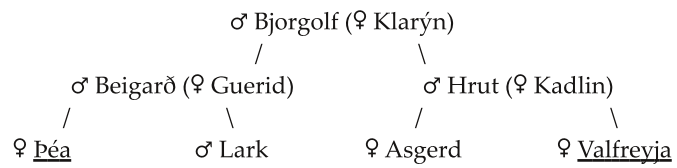


Shaking their feathers and drying their beaks,
the dun-hued birds shared a look.
One recalled the events of that evening quite clearly.
The other thought of an answer.

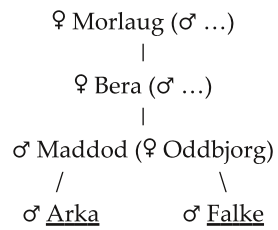
*Our path followed Harald, Halfdan's first-born,
just as skalds and berserkers did.
The young Yngling, the high-born liege lord
is now done with his foes.
Happiest were they who had hope for battle,
rowing strong and swiftly roused.*

*The fair-haired king has broken Rygjafylke,
and its Hordaland siblings.
From Halogaland to Heidmork, all were tried,
and all had bent to wisest warlord.*

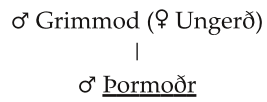
DESCENDANTS



THE LINE OF BJORGOLF



THE LINE OF MORLAUG



THE LINE OF GRIMMOD

Appendix

THE EXTENDED LINES

♀ Oddbjorg (♂ ...)
/ \
♂ Grein ♂ Magni

♂ Falke (♀ Gunhilder)
/ | \
♂ Þormoðr ♂ Róðbjartr ♀ Oddbjorg ♂ Gangráðr ♂ Maddod ♀ Bera ♂ Arka

♀ Þéa (♂ Þovar)
/ | \
♂ Sjór ♂ Stein ♀ Ellen ♂ Þraz ♂ Eldur

♂ Arka (♀ Mara)
|
♂ Galdramaðr

♂ Magni (♀ Kari)
/ \
♂ Váli ♀ Erli