



FROG GOD GAMES' NORTHLANDS ADVENTURES

Spring RITES



BY KEN SPENKER

Spring RITES

By Ken Spencer

PROJECT MANAGER:

Jeff Harkness

EDITOR:

Jeff Harkness

ART DIRECTOR:

Casey Christofferson

FIFTH EDITION COORDINATOR:

Edwin Nagy

FRONT COVER ART:

Quentin Soubrouillard

INTERIOR ART:

Tuan Pham, Hector Rodriquez,
Quentin Soubrouillard

DEVELOPMENT MANAGER:

Michael Gross

COVER DESIGN:

Casey Christofferson

LAYOUT:

Giordano Manes, Jeff Harkness

CARTOGRAPHY:

Robert Altbauer

QA:

Emanuele Granatello
Italo Iozzi

FROG GOD GAMES IS

Bill Webb, Zach Glazar, Edwin Nagy, Jeff Harkness,
Casey W. Christofferson, Ken Spencer, and Michael Badolato.

In collaboration with



<http://kaizokupress.it/english>
info@kaizokupress.it



© 2022 Frog God Games. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden. Frog God Games, and the Frog God Games logo, Spring Rites is a trademark of Frog God Games. All rights reserved. All characters, names, places, items, art, and text herein are copyrighted by Frog God Games. The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

FROG GOD GAMES

ISBN: 978-1-6656-0356-0

Printed in the US



Table of Contents

SPRING RITES.....	3	CHAPTER THREE: FIGHT AT THE STONES	24
CHAPTER ONE: A FINE SPRING DAY.....	7	APPENDIX ONE: NEW CREATURES	31
CHAPTER TWO: THE TRAIL OF THE AGLÆCWIF....	13	APPENDIX TWO: NEW MAGIC ITEM.....	38

NOTES ON THE NORTHLANDS

If you are unfamiliar with the Northlands, here is a short list of terms you will want to remember:

Aglæcwif. A magic-user of doubtful intentions and suspect honesty. Aglæwifs are considered mad and often dabble in dark forces.

Althunak. The Demon-God of Ice and Cold, Althunak was driven from the Northlands a generation ago. Yet his cults pop up from time to time, and it is said the Demon-God broods on his icy throne somewhere in the Far North.

Andovan. A long-dead civilization that once occupied the area now known as the Northlands. They built massive stone monuments and burial mounds and are said to possess powerful magics.

Estenfird. A wild frontier across the North Sea.

Gatland. Home of the powerful Gat clan.

Gats. Traditionalists, the Gat clan rules a third of the Northlands. They are rivals of the Hrolfs.

Godi. A holy person who can talk to the gods. Clerics and druids are the usual classes that become godi, but anyone with the favor of the gods are called godi. Godi are part-time priests who spend the majority of their time farming, fishing, or working a trade.

Hacksilver (hs). None of the rulers of the Northlands mint their own coins. Instead of coins, hacksilver is the unit of measure that is used, with 1 hs equal to 1 gp. Hacksilver takes many forms such as foreign coins, broken pieces of jewelry, and even metal shavings.

Hordaland. A peninsula that juts out of the southern coast of the North Sea, home to Silvermeade Hall and the setting of this adventure.

Hrolfs. One of the two most powerful clans in the Northlands, the Hrolfs have been adopting Southlander ways such as mounted warriors, heavy armor, lances, crossbows, and serfdom.

Hrolfland. Easternmost of the lands of the North, Hrolfland is the home of the Hrolf clan. They dissolved the Things and Althing of Hrolfland and rule as petty lords.

Huscarl. An oathbound warrior or another important retainer of a jarl.

Jarl. A local ruler. Becoming a jarl is not just inheritance, for they must prove themselves worthy of being sworn to. As the Nørsk are free people, if they find a jarl unacceptable, they are free to leave or remove them.

Kennings. A poetic compound expression with a metaphorical meaning.

Nørsk. The human people of the Northlands, they speak Nørsk as their common tongue and their written language is Runic. There is great diversity among the Nørsk as their far sailing ways have brought all manner of strangers to their lands. Mostly, the Nørsk are farmers, fishers, merchants, and tradesfolk.

Mind's-worth. A kenning meaning honor.

North Sea. The great sea at the center of the Northlands.

Núkländer. The reindeer herding and riding elf-like people of the tundra and taiga north of Eštenfird.

Ring Giver. A kenning meaning generous.

Shieldwall. The common battle formation of the Nørsk is a densely packed line of warriors three ranks deep with interlocked shields. Up to five creatures carrying shields can form a shieldwall as an action, with the entire formation chancing its initiative order to that of the last person to join. While in this formation, all receive a +1 bonus to their AC for attacks from the front, but the formation can move only at half speed.

Sif's Hair. A kenning meaning gold.

Skald. A storyteller, lore keeper, and musician.

Spear-din. A kenning meaning battle.

Storstrøm Vale. The heart of the Northlands, this peaceful region lies south of the North Sea and east of Hordaland. The Great Godi House is here as well as many of the oldest settlements. Trondheim, the oldest city in the North is the capital of the Vale.

Thing. A democratic legislative and judicial gathering of all adult landholders in an area. All may speak, all may vote, but the Thing has no power to enforce its decisions.

Vastavikland. This rugged, mountainous land in the west of the Northlands is known for three things: its many volcanoes, its poor soil, and its aggressive people. Vastaviklander is synonymous with raider in many parts of the world.

Whale Road. A kenning meaning sea.

Wound-Sea. A kenning meaning blood or battle.

Wyrd. A person's fate or destiny as decided by the Norns at their birth.

Spring Rites

Our heroes, or would-be heroes as the case may be, are retainers, hangers-on, and lesser relations of the Jarl Olaf Henrikson. They have spent the past winter at his home, Silvermeade Hall, and spring is well on its way. Not yet having won a place in his retinue, they should be eager to please and impress the jarl. He is known as a ring-giver, one who rewards those in his service, and to join his retinue is a mark of honor and distinction. Unfortunately, all he needs of our heroes today is to guard his three daughters as they pick flowers for the upcoming feast of Freya.

From such humble beginnings great sagas may begin.

The adventure is designed for Tier 1 play, making it a fine introduction to the Northlands and the *Lord of Ice and Cold* series. *Spring Rites* calls for characters who are of good or neutral alignments, though good tendencies should prevail in the group. Someone should have some wilderness skills, especially the ability to track, a cleric would be very useful in the Barrow Lands, and a druid or ranger will aid the party should they choose to take the forest path. Naturally, this being the Northlands, fighting men and women will be needed. There is a fair mix of exploration and combat, with social matters making up the first third of the adventures.

SPRING RITES AND THE LORD OF ICE AND COLD SERIES

Spring Rites is the start of the **Lord of Ice and Cold** series, the epic tale of the battle against Althunak, the Lord of Ice and Cold, that continues with *Spears in the Ice* and *Banners over Monrovia*. You can play this as a standalone adventure or as part of the series. Keep in mind that the series hits the high points of the saga of our heroes' battle against Althunak; there is plenty of room to have other adventures in the spaces between.

While set in the Northlands of **Frog God Games'** Lost Lands setting, it can easily be dropped into any campaign world that has a strong Old Norse-themed region. Your world does have a region with a strong Viking theme?

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Northlanders have many words for a those who practice the dark arts: *galdricge*, *seiðkona*, or often simply *aglæcwif*. Unlike the mysterious, but respected, cunning folk who are accepted into Northlander society for the wisdom they bring and their connection to the world's unseen, an *aglæcwif* exists on the very fringes of society. They lurk in the shadows, universally reviled, subsisting on what little they can find, ever wary of an angry mob or vengeful jarl who holds them responsible for a bad accident, a blighted crop, or simply poor luck on a voyage. Despite all of these disadvantages, there are always those willing to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to embrace the unnatural power had by trafficking in such things. And sometimes, if a Northlander is desperate enough, they might be willing to have dealings with such matters themselves. But there is always a price, for no one can dabble in the dark arts and hope to escape without at least some small taint of the shadow clinging to them.

Jarl Olaf Henrikson is a man of power and honor, respected among his peers, carrying a reputation as a fierce warrior and wise leader, and ruler of the largest and wealthiest settlement in all the Northlands. Even a man of such stature, however, can find himself at the mercy of his *wyrd* and be truly desperate enough to try to cheat even fate if it be in his power. The father of two beautiful

daughters, Jarl Olaf thought his life truly blessed by the gods for his bravery and honor, but when it came time for the birthing of his third daughter, his *wyrd* took a dark turn indeed. The jarl's beloved wife labored for more than a day, struggling, losing blood, unable to deliver the child. The *godi* and cunning women of his hall were unable to help and, when after a night and a day, his wife took fever, the jarl truly despaired. It was then in his fear and desperation that he turned to powers he never would have been willing to entertain. He recalled an ancient crone who lived upon the Moors not far from his hall at Silvermeade. Sending his *huscarls* upon his fastest horses, Jarl Olaf summoned the *aglæcwif* Sibbe the Unkempt to attend his wife's birthing chamber.

Sibbe the *aglæcwif* was dragged unceremoniously to the jarl's hall and told in no uncertain turns that if the jarl's wife and child died, her own life would be forfeit shortly thereafter. With that threat over her head, she attended to the delivery and by the next evening the child was born alive, and the mother's fever had broken. Mother and child were fine, and if the newborn babe bore a dark birthmark across her face, her grateful parents saw only a healthy baby where before they saw only tragedy (though more than one householder whispered of the mark as a sign of ill omen for trying to challenge one's *wyrd*).

Sibbe said not a word as the jarl expressed his gratitude for the miracle she had performed and gave her a fat pouch of silver for her troubles as well. This she took and headed out alone back to the Moors, soon forgotten by the jarl. But her stone-faced visage hid much from the jarl's household as she left. They thought her forced intervention a benevolent act, but she knew better. She knew her magic had left its taint on the child and that the two were now connected. She did not know what she would do with this connection, but she knew something would come of it for her own purposes someday.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The initial section begins with our heroes sent to escort and guard their jarl's three daughters as they gather flowers for the Feast of Freyja. The daughters themselves present a bit of a challenge, being headstrong, having their own agendas, and in general causing trouble. During the morning ride through calm, settled areas of Hordaland near the jarl's hall, the girls act up a bit, allowing for ample roleplaying opportunities. Once at the meadows, there are a few small events, and one major event presaging events in *Vengeance of the Long Serpent*.

Foul magic and a kidnapping interrupt the tranquil scene in the meadows. The aglæcwif Sibbe the Unkempt plans to capture the girls and sacrifice them to reap their life essence and use it to bring back her lost youth and increase her arcane power. She uses powerful ancient magic to put everyone in the meadow into a magical sleep while her minions grab the girls. Once they are captured, she takes the three girls to an ancient site of power in the nearby Barrow Lands to be sacrificed.

Upon regaining consciousness, the party finds that the girls are gone, their horses are scattered, and their day has taken a dark turn. Clues point to Sibbe the Unkempt taking the girls, as well as her nefarious plot and her likely destination. Our heroes must choose how they plan to reach the stone circle in order to rescue the girls along one of three possible routes: through the Barrow Lands, across the Trollfist Hills, or along the forest trails. The route through the Barrow Lands is the fastest route, but the undead residents of that haunted region do not take kindly to trespassers. The Trollfist Hills present a slow-but-safer route, as the jarl and his huscarls have cleared out the resident trolls. Finally, there is the middle-length route along the paths that lead through the forest, which is not as swift as the hills, but not as dangerous as the Barrow Lands.

Following one of these three routes, our heroes make their way to the stone ring deep in the Barrow Lands where Sibbe intends to conduct her sacrifice. They must arrive before dawn of the vernal equinox to stop the ceremony and rescue the daughters of their jarl and bring them home safely.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins as our heroes gather in the jarl's hall at Silvermeade. He is about to give them their first assignment to work together and plant the seeds for a life of adventure. This is a heady moment and should set the nature for the rest of the campaign.

You have been ordered to appear before your jarl, Olaf Henrikson, jarl of Halfstead, greatest city of the Northlands. For young members in service to his household or visitors who have wintered there but have no plans for pursuing their wyrd, this is a moment of hope and fear. Hope that he assigns you a glorious task to prove your mettle but tinged with fear of his wrath should you fail. Your jarl is a good man, strong and battle-tested, with many famed heroic deeds to his name.

After making yourself presentable, you and a few of his other retainers and guests walk through the gates of the great hall's stockade and present yourselves to the guards at the carved wooden doors that mark the main entrance. After exchanging a few jests with these household warriors that you have known for as long as you've been a part of the jarl's household, Ari Hrokson, your jarl's herald, comes for you.

"I needn't remind you to keep polite and let the jarl speak first. And do not keep too much of his time, this is a busy day," the old skald states. He then announces you to the jarl.

Our heroes are announced in order of precedence by their status. The order is as follows: anyone of noble birth, warriors, godi, skaldi, arcane casters, and finally foreigners. Once the introductions are complete, continue with the following.

The hall is dimly lit, for this is a normal day and not a cause for feasting. Only a few huscarls stand about the room, but several thralls busy themselves putting up garlands of flowers and green boughs, preparations for the upcoming Feast of Freyja. The jarl is seated at the end of the feasting table in his chair, an ornate piece of work carved from the trunk of an oak. He is leaning in and talking with a stranger, a well-dressed man with the bearing of an envoy. As you approach, you hear the jarl say, "... and thirty-five cattle, that's all her dowry will be."

The jarl turns to you. "Good, you have come quickly and well comported. This speaks kindly of you and your kin. Sit and partake of an early meal; you will need it, for I have a task for you. My three daughters, Inga, Fastvi, and Runa, wish to go out this afternoon and gather flowers for the feast. As this is a rightful thing for young folk to do, I am allowing it. They need to be guarded, and this is the task I set before you.

"I know you have longed for a chance to prove yourselves and rise in my favor as well as allow your mind's-worth to shine, but there is no spear-din today and no chance to shed battle-dew. All I have is this task: Spend a spring afternoon watching young folk as they pick flowers in the meadows. When you have your own halls and have seen the swans of blood sip on many a foeman's wound-sea, such a day as this will be a boon beyond naming. So remember it well and pray you have many more like it. Now, let us eat.

But before that, allow me to introduce our bread-brother this morning, Ottar Gundrikson, skald and herald to the Jarl Ref Solumundson of the Vale.



Our heroes may ask any questions they wish, but they need to make DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) checks to get a polite word in between the two older men's telling of tales of battles and adventures past without making fools of themselves by interrupting. They may also make a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check to find out something about Jarl Ref Solumundson of the Vale. This jarl is a landholder of middling importance in the Storstrøm Vale but more importantly is joined by blood through his wife to the powerful Gat family, one of the two most-powerful clans in the Northlands. Jarl Ref Solumundson has three sons of marrying age, all well accomplished in deeds. Considering that Jarl Henrikson's eldest daughter is 19, and thus of marrying age, our heroes should realize they have likely intruded upon a discussion over her dowry. An alliance between Halfstead and the Gats would be beneficial but would also put the rival Hrolf clan at a disadvantage. Adding to this, all our heroes know that Hordaland's kōenig recently passed away, leaving a child on the throne. As Jarl Olaf supports the child, he needs allies in the event of a civil war.

After an early lunch of black bread, butter, the last of the winter's pickled flounder, fresh spring greens (cooked with white beans and a ham hock), and several pints of beer, our heroes are sent away to meet the daughters. Before joining them at the gates of the stockade, they should stop by the stables and pick up any mounts they have (any of our heroes without a mount is loaned a Trondheim pony for the day). The three girls are waiting impatiently at the front gate.

You arrive at the stockade wall to find the gate open and three young women waiting impatiently astride fine horses. The oldest wears a dress of blue linen with a squared border of small yellow flowers embroidered around the neck, cuffs, and hem. She is tall and fair of face, her golden hair coiled about her head in braids and covered in a silver net. Her face favors her father, and she is introduced by your escort as Inga **[commoner]**, the Jarl's oldest daughter. Next to her upon a skittish mare sits a girl of perhaps 13. Her dress is a plain green smock, and her hair and eyes are dark like her mother's. She is named to you as Fastvi **[commoner]**.

The third girl is the smallest, perhaps nine or 10 years old, with a distant and dreaming look on her face. Her hair is fair like her older sister's, but the resemblance ends there. You have heard the rumors of Little Runa's **[commoner]** troubled birth near 10 winters ago whispered around the hearth fires out of the jarl's hearing. The truth of these tales seems to be told in the angry red birthmark that covers her face from left ear to chin, the girl seemingly unaware of the rough, wrinkled texture or the ill portent it marks. Worse from the standpoint of omens are her eyes, one blue and one pale green, the eyes of the aglæcwif. Nevertheless, though dreamy and precocious, the jarl and his wife have loved Little Runa dearly, and she has enjoyed the privileges and upbringing of a devoted family despite the ill omens of her birth. If anything can overcome the spinning of wyrd at her birth, it would have to be the good Jarl Henrikson, a man favored by fate as much as any man can claim.



After the introductions are made, our heroes have time to get to know the girls in their charge as they turn their mounts and head west down the road toward the Meadows, a location well known to the inhabitants of Silvermeade.

Inga is a young woman of 16 winters. She is of marriageable age and has been known to practice using her wiles on the men of the household. As a result, she petulantly expects to be able to charm anyone. Inga is prone to behavior that could best be termed haughty but plays out more like insolence. The hero with the highest status is treated with coy respect, while the others are ordered about. The young woman is unmindful of the fact that her father's householders are not hers and that she has no status save that of birth (and birth is regarded, but not overly regarded, in the Northlands).

Fastvi, the middle daughter, is just starting to bloom into womanhood, but has not yet laid aside her wild, childish ways. The young girl, barely 13, is friendly where her older sister is imperious, reckless where the elder is cautious (at least with regard to physical risk), and open where her sister is coy. For today's outing, she has donned a tunic and trousers unseen beneath her plain dress and smock. As soon as she is out of sight of the holdfast, she pulls the dress off and glares a challenge at anyone who so much as raises an eyebrow in disapproval. This leads her

and her older sister to bicker for several minutes before Fastvi enters a long sulk.

Little Runa is a different story altogether. She is nine years old, spoiled, and precocious, and (unknown to our heroes) also tainted. Our heroes have heard rumors that her birthing was a difficult one. Rumors say that at Runa's birth, the midwives of the holdfast were afraid that both child and mother would be lost. Fearing the worst, the jarl sent his best huscarls across the Moors and into the Barrow Lands to seek out a seiðkona – an evil worker of magic – named Sibbe the Unkempt. They found the filthy, rag-covered woman and brought her back to aid in the birthing. The aglæcwif's magic saved Runa and her mother, but the child was never quite right, marked by fate for the sorcerous interference at her birth. Furthermore, she seems to see and hear things that are not there and has on more than one occasion spoken of things she could not know of or of things that occurred well before they happened. Still, the jarl and his wife love the girl and dote on her a great deal of time – at least until recently. With the birth of the jarl's first son last year, that mewling babe has garnered the most attention, and Runa has been acting up and causing trouble. The girl is clad in a simple dress whose subtle embroidery denotes her status, but the dress becomes dirty and disheveled within minutes of reaching the meadows.

Chapter One: A Fine Spring Day

It is only an hour's ride through farmland and well-coppiced woods to the Meadows where the girls want to pick flowers. The Meadows are beyond the settlements, just inside the boundaries of the forest and wilder, but still near enough to largely be safe. The jarl would never send his children into a lawless area, and a group of huscarls and retainers should be more than adequate to safeguard his daughters. It is a pleasant spring day, and the girls are atwitter with delight at their first outing after the long winter. Freemen traveling along the muddy road or out in fields still spotted with snow wave to the party as they ride past, and some of the higher-status hirdmen stop and chat for a short while.

During the journey, Inga is at her worst. She deigns only to give freemen and their families a slight wave or nod of the head and is too curt and short with the hirdmen she encounters. However, the young woman acts flirtatiously toward any high-status heroes. It would simply not do for her to climb onto her horse, and Inga will need someone to hold its reins and another to lift her into the saddle (and thus give the lucky fellow a chance to hold her around her slim waist). The favored hero's every comment is shown appropriate appreciation, his prowess in arms is commented on with approval, as well as any distinctive physical features. The others – especially if female, foreign, or of low status – are completely ignored.

Fastvi is enamored with all things martial and heroic and pesters any warriors in the party with endless questions, requests to hold their sword, pleas for them to teach her how to fight, and such annoyances. She responds well to anyone who tells her tales of battle – the more gruesome the better – and becomes fast friends with any of our heroes who show her some kindness. However, she is headstrong and rides off if not stopped – which is a sure way to earn her displeasure unless someone gains her respect with their warlike prowess; she stubbornly obeys that individual for a time. Unless prevented from doing so, she rides well ahead of the party, jumps her horse over fences, and gallops through pastures and fields. In general, she causes minor havoc.

Runa, on the other hand, is rather quiet during the entire ride. She mutters to herself and occasionally laughs at some private joke. If listened to closely with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, she is obviously holding half of a conversation with some unseen person named Jalvik. If pressed, Runa just stares daggers at the interruption. Afterward, her half of the conversation gets louder and begins mocking those too inquisitive for their own good. As much fun as she is having with this, it's all just a game. The girl knows her reputation and is wicked enough to play on it at the expense of others for her own amusement.

EVENTS DURING THE FINE SPRING DAY

The following events occur as our heroes accompany the girls to the Meadows. Some of the events are keyed to locations, and some are based on timing. Review the events thoroughly before running the adventure so you can insert them into play at the appropriate times.

EVENT 1. FINE WORK FOR WARRIORS

This event occurs no more than 20 minutes after our heroes leave the holdfast. The party meets a tired and ragged group of householders and huscarls on their way back to the hall.

Your horses travel at a trot as you make your way toward the Meadows. On the muddy track ahead of you, you see an armed group of warriors riding your way. Their horses move more slowly, as if exhausted from long riding, and they and their mounts are spattered with the mud of hard travel.

Once within hailing distance, our heroes recognize this group as huscarls and householders of the jarl. They are Hallbjorn Bolverkson (one of Jarl Olaf's most-trusted huscarls), Kraki Hallason (an up-and-coming householder), Young Ljot (no relation to Old Ljot), Hauk Arinbjornson (a hotheaded Vastaviklander), and Berg Geirson (a sour-spirited warrior). They have been out on the Moors for a week, hunting down an outlaw called Styr the Ugly who was spotted trying to sneak into the barn of an outlying farmstead. They were unsuccessful but managed to spend several chilly nights sleeping in the mud, getting rained on, and in general not having an adventure.

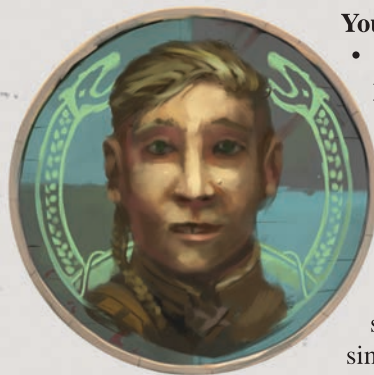
They pause to speak to our heroes to find out what they are up to escorting the jarl's daughters. As respected members of the jarl's household, they are more prone to asking questions than answering. The party of huscarls are already grumpy and tired, and likely look poorly upon what they might see as disrespect coming from a group of untested younglings. Their attitudes and mannerisms are described below to allow you to adjudicate conversation with them. They tend to overtalk each other and address different members of the party, so rather than conduct the conversations one at a time, have the players address different members of this group simultaneously to simulate group conversation. Regardless of our heroes' actions, they do not respect our heroes enough to fight them. If tensions get high, Hallbjorn exerts his authority to prevent any violence, but bad feelings might linger.

Hallbjorn Bolverkson (huscarl, see **Appendix One: New Monsters**)

- Initial greeting: “Ho there, where are you bound?”
- If our heroes answer civilly and state their purpose, he becomes friendly and says: “The Meadows then, keep an eye out for an outlaw by the name of Styr the Ugly. He’s tall, dark haired, and has a scar across his chin like a serpent’s tail. Rumor is he may have fallen in with the aglæcwif Sibbe the Unkempt, but for what reasons none know.”
- If provoked or if any sort of heated moment arises between our heroes and the other householders, he snaps at all involved: “That is enough! Olaf will hear about this, and not take it kindly, I promise you that.”

Kraki Hallason (huscarl, see **Appendix One: New Monsters**)

- Initial greeting: “Some people get all the luck.”
- Kraki has little to say and will not be provoked. If any arguments begin between our heroes and the householders, he says: “No need to quarrel. We all have a duty to do.”
- Kraki will not be baited, and his attitude will not change even if attacked. He responds to such actions: “Hold now, this is unseemly for our jarl’s followers!”



YOUNG LJOT

Young Ljot (guard)

- Initial greeting: “Hello Inga, you look pretty today.”
- Ljot is friendly but has eyes only for Inga whom he not-so-secretly has a crush on. She plays coy with him for the time being which, along with any sort of verbal sparring from our heroes, simply prompts: “Can we just move on, my feet are wet and cold.”
- If any sort of hostilities arises, his attitude becomes unfriendly, but he still attempts to stay out of a fight: “Uh, this isn’t the time and place, right?”

Hauk Arinbjornson (berserker)



HAUK ARINBJORNSON

- Initial greeting: “What have we here? Ladies off for a morning ride?”
- If responded to in anything other than a solicitous way, his next response is: “Must be proud warriors who escort little girls to pick flowers; fine warrior’s work that is.”
- If provoked, he says: “Step off that horse and learn what the weather of weapons is all about.” (Hallbjorn intervenes before any actual fighting occurs.)



BERG GEIRSON

Berg Geirson (guard)

- Initial greeting (said morosely): “I think I may be catching a chill.”
- He does not respond to threats or endearments alike and responds to word of our heroes’ mission with: “Ah, flowers just make me sneeze.”
- If our heroes speak with him, he confides in them: “I probably have guard duty tomorrow; I’ll miss the feast.” Otherwise, he remains silent for the rest of the encounter.

EVENT 2. FASTVI’S GREAT RIDE

A mere 15 minutes into the ride after leaving the hunters, Fastvi spots something interesting across a recently plowed field, or perhaps she just wants to take a fast and daring ride. Regardless of which, she suddenly turns her horse and jumps a ditch along the side of the road, taking off across Old Ljot’s fields.

Unless they have been paying close attention to her, Fastvi gains surprise. Roll initiative for this event as you would for combat. On her first round (likely while our heroes are surprised), Fastvi uses her action a second time to charge across the fields as fast as her horse can go. About 150 feet across the field is a ditch that can be jumped with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. Any who fail the check find that their horses balk at the ditch and need to spend their next turn wheeling the mount around. Once across the ditch, Fastvi makes for the next field (300 feet wide), heads through a stand of trees (90 feet deep), and rides on until caught or out of sight of our heroes. If lost, she meets our heroes at the Meadows. Not that she tells them that.

To complicate matters, Old Ljot spots this abuse of his recent handiwork and is a little disgruntled. He appears in the first round after the surprise round from behind a barn and rails at the party for losing control of their young charge, as both the jump and riding off places her in danger, as well as tearing up his field.

As the young girl’s steed tears across the field toward the nearby ditch, a stooped old farmer rounds the corner from behind his low-thatched barn waving an old hoe over his head. “You lazy, pig-brained wastes of breath! Look what that damned-fool girl did to my field! Don’t just stand there with your teeth in your mouth! Do your duty to your jarl and go get her. Letting a slip of a girl get the drop on you and run off, and this is what the jarl plans to bring into his hall?”

EVENT 3. THE DOG

This event occurs shortly after the party arrives at **Area 3**. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check detects a rustling in the bushes toward the western edge of the meadow. Moments later, a stray dog wanders into the meadow, a mangy flea-bitten but

friendly cur. Runa immediately runs to it with a squeal of delight and, if not stopped, throws her arms around the mutt as it begins to lick her face happily. She promptly names the dog Bogi and asks that it return to the hall with her. Any of our heroes examining it with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine or Nature) check can determine that it seems to have a fairly gentle nature and is disease free. It was probably some farmer's dog that ran away during the winter months and is likely desperately seeking a new master – and Runa fits the bill nicely.

The little girl politely asks our heroes to let her keep the dog, and based on what they have seen of her, the companionship of a pet would likely do her good. Also, refusing her such a base request is unlikely to go over well with the jarl. Besides, if they refuse, the dog still hangs around anyway, just out of reach unless killed or badly injured, in which case the jarl undoubtedly is angered by their cruelty. He chose them for this task because he thought them honorable and worthy enough to escort his children, not because he thought them a pack of violent louts.

If our heroes allow Runa to keep the dog (the jarl can always tell her no later), she looks at our heroes very solemnly and asks them to swear to protect her friend Bogi just as they would protect her. It is true that she is just a child and only the youngest daughter of the jarl, but this is our heroes' first opportunity to make oath to a lord or lady (in this case, a future lady), and the oath seems light enough and quite complementary to what they have already been tasked to do. Should a combat occur later, the dog generally avoids a fight unless Runa is directly endangered; it barks menacingly from the edge of combat.

EVENT 4. A STOLEN KISS

Inga tires quickly of picking flowers and, once her basket is filled, she spends her time flirting with her chosen character. Part of this is walking with them through the meadow, chatting, and gently touching their arm. If in a position where the others are either not watching or can't see her, she attempts to steal a kiss. This is as far as she goes and is something she considers a great game. If the character chooses to reciprocate the kiss, they must make either a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to ensure that no one else is watching or a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check to ensure that they are doing so where no one else can see. If they fail the check, then Fastvi spies the kiss and runs by laughing that she is going to tell, which puts Inga into a frenzy trying to catch and beat the girl with a switch. In this case, a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check is needed to stop the beating and convince Fastvi to keep what she saw to herself. On a failed check, Fastvi remains noncommittal, though circumstances soon render the point moot.

EVENT 5. A BRANCH TOO FAR

Unless thoroughly dissuaded from climbing trees as described under **Area 3**, Fastvi spends most of her time up in a tree trying to reach the highest branches. At one point, she goes too far, slips, and crashes down into the flowers. Her right arm is broken, and she begins howling in pain. A simple application of a cure spell that heals at least 4 hp fixes it, but her enthusiasm is killed for some time (by the time of **Event 8** below, she is back up in a tree).

If healing magic is not available, she needs to be treated with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check to stabilize the arm and then taken home. This brings an abrupt end to the day in the Meadows. In this instance, **Events 6** and **8** occur as our heroes pack up and before they leave the Meadows.

EVENT 6. A SHADOW IS CAST

This occurs while Fastvi is being tended to in **Event 5** if no healing magic is used or later if the party remains in the Meadows.

While picking flowers nearby, Runa stops and stands up abruptly. She utters a pronouncement in a powerful voice unlike that of a little girl, "A storm is coming to sweep all away. Father will die from bloodied ice. The raven calls for us all." Then her demeanor shifts back to that of a little girl in a bright spring meadow as she skips off after a butterfly.

Runa says no more than that, and if asked about it has no recollection of saying anything. She vaguely remembers a "shadow that passed over the sun" but then says it went away. She does not know that she received any kind of foretelling. It is nonetheless chilling to hear the small girl speak of the death of the jarl.

EVENT 7. SHAPES IN THE WOODS

This event occurs moments before **Event 8** below. Anyone making a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the following. The DC is only 18 for any of our heroes who specifically state they are watching the wood line (and who have not been involved in the other goings-on in the Meadows). The DC is 13 if any of our heroes spent the time scouting the wood line away from the others.

The faint snap of a breaking branch in the tree line catches your attention. Looking in that direction, you can just make out the dark forms of two burly men, well-armed and armored, crouching in the shadows of the brush. They hold between them a shield-sized stone plate with carvings on it. A rather tattered and dirty woman is standing behind them, muttering to herself and waving her arms above the stone tablet.

Anyone who spots the figures and makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can tell that the woman is casting an arcane spell, apparently from an inscription on the stone. The group is 80 feet away and has cover and concealment from our heroes. Only those heroes who make the requisite Wisdom (Perception) check can act in this surprise round. The party can attack and try to disrupt the spell normally, but only those who spotted the group can attempt to do so. Unfortunately for them, the spellcaster just completed the spell and even if she is injured, the spell still activates on her turn the next round. See **Event 8** for additional details of this group. Even though our heroes are unable to stop the spell from being cast, the results of their attacks in the surprise round can still affect these opponents when encountered later (see **Chapter 2**).

EVENT 8. THE ATTACK

As mentioned at the beginning of the adventure, Sibbe the Unkempt assisted in the birthing of Runa Olafsdottir, and in the process, she managed to corrupt the girl. Sibbe was called in when it looked as if the child would die and, although mother and child were saved, Sibbe planted the seeds of her own discord in the girl. In the decade since, Sibbe has been continuing her research among the ancient stones and lost Andøvan magic in the Barrow Lands to find some way to increase her own power, and she intends to use the subtle hexes she implanted in young Runa. Now her research has borne fruit. Using a powerful ritual of the Ancient Ones at the spring equinox will allow her to replenish her youth and grow greatly in her magical abilities. All it requires is the sacrifice of a virgin of noble blood, and she knew just where to find one.

Using the strange empathic influence that Sibbe has over Runa, she implanted in the girl's mind the idea to come to the Meadows to pick flowers for the equinox festival. Runa, long affected by strange moods and an unsettling wyrd, does not consciously know of the aglæcwif's influence upon her. She subtly put the idea of the girls going to the Meadows into her parents' heads, which resulted in the girls and a few unsuspecting retainers coming straight into the trap prepared by Sibbe.

After about an hour of picking flowers and our heroes dealing with the girls, Inga stumbles over to the character with whom she has been flirting and collapses into his arms. Have everyone roll for initiative. On 17, Fastvi falls out of a tree, unconscious; on 8, Runa starts walking toward the edge of the meadow, her eyes wide and vacant, beckoned by her link to Sibbe and, as a result, unaffected by the aglæcwif's spell.

At the start of their turn, each of our heroes and any mounts they might have with them must succeed at a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be rendered unconscious as if struck in the head by a mighty blow. If successful, they are merely knocked prone and rendered incapacitated by the magic of Sibbe's runestone. Those incapacitated can observe the goings-on in the meadow from their perspective but may not act.

Each round the DC increases by 1 until all our heroes are knocked out. Let them run around in a panic, trying to figure out what is happening until they are all unconscious. Any who stay conscious for more than one round likely look for the source of the attack (see **Event 7** above). *Detect magic* reveals a powerful enchantment over the meadow. If our heroes have a reroll boon from **Area 2**, don't let them waste it here as it ultimately is futile. Either give them another one later or advise them that their attempt to use the boon is unsuccessful on this occasion due to some cosmic twist of fate.

The source of this magical effect is Sibbe the Unkempt (an aglæcwif, see **Appendix One: New Monsters**) and her two henchmen, Njarni the Traitor (**berserker**) and Gufti the Clever (**bandit**). Sibbe used the magic from the stone tablet she discovered in the Barrow Lands. Once read, the Andøvan runes on the tablet render living creatures in a broad area unconscious as if they had received a powerful blow to the head. The area of effect covers the entire meadow and even knocks out insects and birds.

Once all opponents are dealt with, the henchmen gather up the

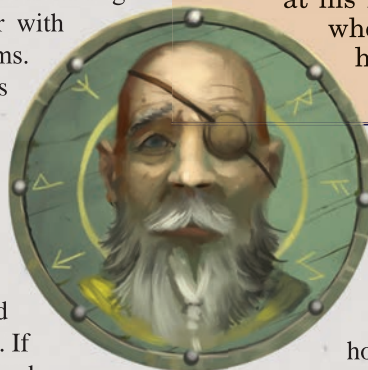
sleeping girls and carry them to horses they left deeper in the woods, leaving our heroes unconscious, or fled. With the two unconscious girls draped over mounts and Little Runa obediently following in a daze, the group rides for the Moors, where they skirt the Trollfist Hills and head south for the Tor (area 15).

ENCOUNTER AREAS

The following areas are encountered on the way to and upon reaching the Meadows. The events described previously occur in and among these areas, so be sure to coordinate the events that occur with the appropriate areas.

I. ONE-EYED SVEN'S SPRING

The main Coast Road crosses your trail here at One-Eyed Sven's Spring. Named for the old huscarl who enlarged this natural spring and ringed it with stones as a service to travelers and others taking the main road, the spring is the best watering hole in the area. An older fellow sits and whittles under a lean-to by this spring pool, a small pile of wood shavings at his feet. It is the huscarl One-Eyed Sven who tends this spring when not called by his duties in Jarl Olaf's hall. He hails you as you ride up.



ONE-EYED SVEN

One-Eyed Sven (**huscarl**) is semi-retired in his service to Jarl Olaf. When not on duty at the hall, he can often be found resting here under a lean-to, whittling, and chatting with passers-by. He is a friendly sort, fatherly toward the girls and younger householders in a rather sympathetic way. If our heroes act in friendly manner, he engages them in conversation.

"Morning young folk, care for some dried apples? Well, it's a nice day to travel, and I envy you a peaceful task for it. I have to head back to the hall this afternoon and see what ol' Olaf is planning for the season. Probably going whaling. The godi and cunning women are talking about a dry summer, and that means a poor harvest."

If our heroes respond kindly and ask for advice or traveling conditions (a commonplace thing on the muddy roads) or even seem like they'll bend half an ear, he relates the following as well.

"You young folks should keep an eye out. I heard that a couple of outlaws have been spotted out on the Moors, not to mention the trouble that Jasil the Nûklander ran into in the forest – damned fairies. And keep a look out for troll sign. We may not have got them all when we burned 'em out of the hills last winter. Oh, and keep an eye on the weather. I've got an awful crick in my back, sure sign of a storm coming."

HORD PENINSULA

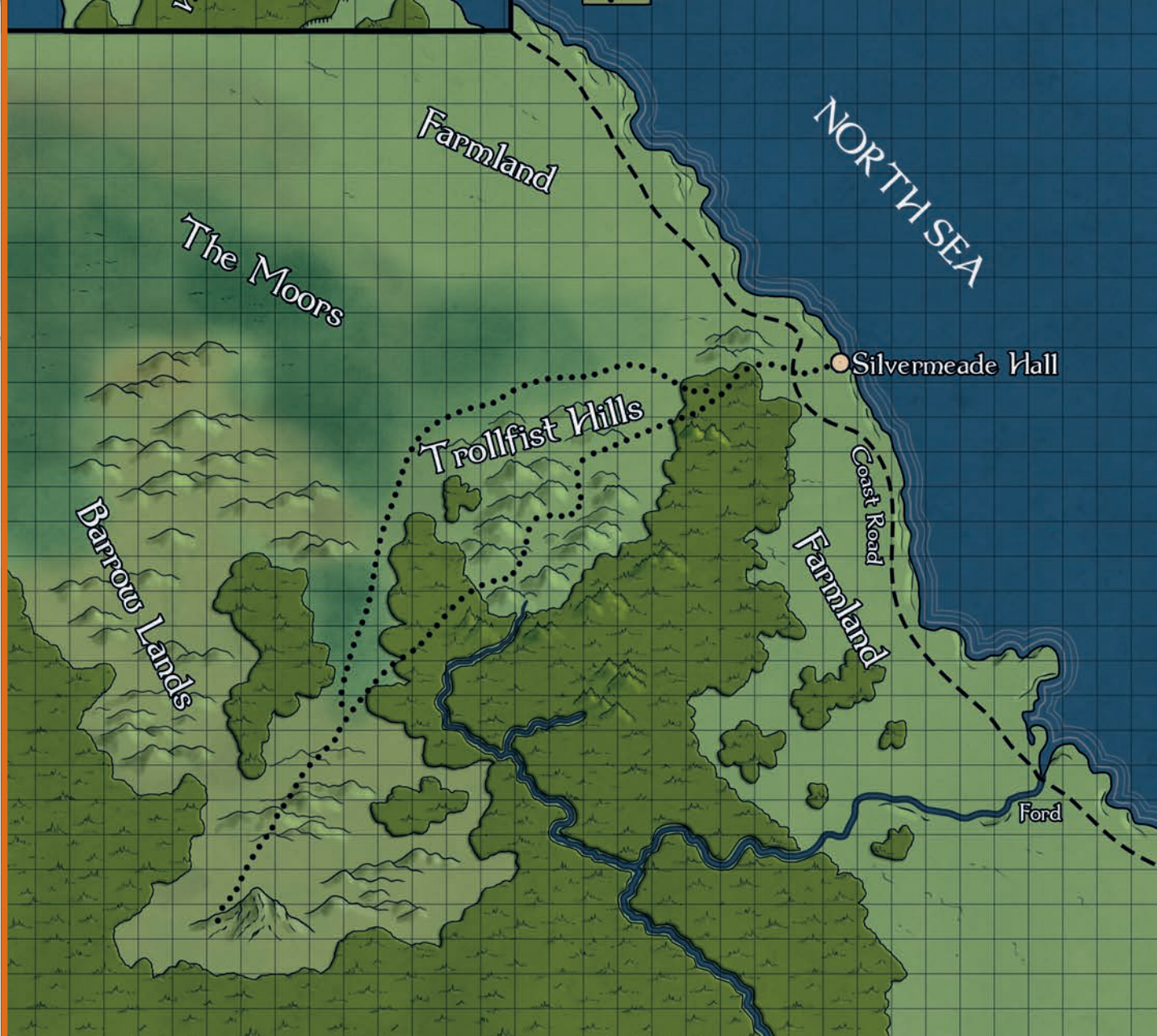
1 square - 25 miles



TROLLFIST HILLS REGION

1 square - 1 mile

- moors
- forest
- hills
- barrow lands
- road
- trail



He has no other specific information to give besides giving the news as he heard it from other travelers, but there are nevertheless several good hints that may be of use to our heroes later.

2. THE MUDDY TRACK

Near the end of the ride, the road turns southwest and heads into the woods. This part of the forest is fairly tame, and you soon find yourselves on a side path that is little more than a dirt double track through the trees, muddy in the low places due to recent rains. After a few minutes, you hear the lowing of oxen and the raised voice of a man cursing his beasts. Coming around the corner, you see a small, heavily laden cart stuck in the mud. A one-eyed, elderly man is trying to goad a pair of oxen into pulling the cart from the mud, with little success. Standing off to the side, out of the mud, is a strikingly handsome blonde woman of middle years and a young red-haired boy.

The man's cart is completely blocking the narrow woodland track. The party would need to take a game trail through the woods to go around. The honorable thing to do would be to help the stranger get his cart out of the mud. However, any delay simply brings bitter looks from Inga and gives Fastvi a chance to run off again. If our heroes intend to help the old man and his family, they need to make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to keep Inga from loudly declaiming the "peasant" and his "stout" farm wife for blocking the trail, an act that greatly dishonors our heroes in the eyes of the common folk. Further, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check needs to be made or Fastvi (if she is present) attempts to bolt again. If the check is successful, one of our heroes quickly grabs her bridle to prevent her from doing so. If the check is unsuccessful, she makes a run for a nearby game trail, and a character needs to make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to prevent her from making off through the forest, which requires another pursuit through the woods. If she escapes, she is encountered again as soon as the heroes reach the Meadows (**Area 3**).

If our heroes attempt to help the family, this requires a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check and a DC 17 Strength check (up to five people can use aid another to help) to move the cart. Unloading the cart takes time but reduces the Strength check to a DC 13. Once the cart is out of the mud and on dry ground, the stranger thanks our heroes profusely. If our heroes refuse to help and simply circle around in the woods, they are roundly cursed as described in the second box below.

A THANKS

The old man looks at you gratefully with his one good eye. "Thank you for your aid. You are the sort of folk who make the Northlands proud. Have a pleasant journey, wherever you are going. Keep tight to your mind's worth, and may your fates soar through the ages."

A CURSE

The old man's one good eye gleams at you with malice. "Curse you for selfish fools who would not stop to help an old man and his family in their time of need. May the gods look poorly on such as you, heartless and honorless curs."

The ways of the gods are mysterious, and this little vignette may not be what it seems. It is entirely possible that the old man and his family are actually Wotan, his wife Frigga, and his son Donar taken on mortal forms. Or perhaps they are mortals that Wotan has chosen to use in his tests of our heroes' mettle. Regardless of the case, there are consequences to our heroes' actions in how they deal with this family. They are granted a boon if they help the family, but they are cursed if they ignore the family. The boon and curse affect each character individually based on their attitude toward helping the family.

The boon: The character gains advantage on their next three ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws.

The curse: The character suffers disadvantage on their next three ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws.

3. THE MEADOWS

It is a warm spring day, and the chosen meadow is nestled in a narrow arm of the forest not far from the settled lands to the east. Insects buzz about, and the idyllic expanse of flowers is fragrant with fresh growth and new blossoms. The girls quickly dismount and spread across the meadow.

The Meadows are on the edge of the settled lands surrounding Jarl Olaf's hall, partly in the forest and partly adjacent to fields and woodlots. The area is largely deserted this morning, and the party is alone, save for small animals and insects. To the south, the woodlands extend into the greater forest, and to the west, beyond the forest's edge, are the Trollfist Hills and the Barrow Lands. The sun is warm, the air is fragrant, and trouble is brewing.

The three daughters of the jarl each pursue a different set of tasks while in the meadow. Inga busies herself with picking the best flowers, gathering them in a basket. She does so in the most ladylike of manners, avoiding anything that could possibly dirty her dress. Fastvi picks flowers only if reminded, and then only after being told several times to get to her work. Instead, she cavorts about the meadow, throwing a small knife into logs, climbing trees, investigating hollows, and trying to read tracks. To keep her on task requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check. If care is not taken with Fastvi, the heroes will be returning a scratched-up and muddy daughter to the jarl. Runa gets to the flower picking but is easily distracted by squirrels, mice, insects, odd-shaped petals, and her own hidden conversations. See **Events 3–8** for encounters that occur while in the Meadows.

Chapter Two: The Trail of the Aglæcwif

Our heroes recover hours later, the sun sloping down from midday toward evening. Read the following:

You come to, your head splitting in pain that no amount of mead or ale could have produced, and blood trickles from your ears, noses, and even eyes. Your mouth is a dry roadbed paved with moldy sailcloth. The sun is slanting down in a mid-afternoon glare; you have been unconscious or incapacitated for several hours. Bees buzz among the flowers in the meadow. Of the girls – and your horses for that matter – there is no sign. The only other living creature you see is the mangy stray dog claimed by Little Runa. It licks at your faces as if happy for you to awaken.

Our heroes can quickly confirm that the girls are not in the meadow. Adding to their woes, the horses have been scattered. Thirty minutes and either a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check to follow the tracks or a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to coax them back brings all the horses together. The mounts may be needed to speed up travel, but also horses are very valuable in the Northlands. Jarl Olaf raises horses, and this is one of the sources of his wealth. Losing a small herd of horses on top of his daughters only makes things worse for our heroes.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals spots in the tall meadow grass where bodies the size of Inga and Fastvi had lain, as well as signs of larger tracks around them where they were retrieved. There are no signs of blood or violence, however. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check finds tracks in the forest's verge leading off away from the meadow and heading west. These tracks are of two large barefoot men, one smaller barefoot humanoid – likely a woman – and smaller shoeprints like those of a little girl, as well as a pair horses. These prints lead off to the northwest, deeper into the forest and toward the Moors beyond. Following the tracks leads to a small clearing a quarter mile away where three horses had been hobbled for some time and are now gone. Clearly the kidnappers mounted here to ride with their prisoners in tow. The horses' tracks likewise head northwest into the Moors. If our heroes lack the Survival skill or were unsuccessful in their check, Bogi the dog can use its scent ability to find the trail of our heroes' mounts and the girls for them. It loyally remains with our heroes for the duration of the adventure.

In the forest, just a few yards from the edge of the meadow where the tracks head off to the northwest, are the remains of a large stone slab the size of a shield. It has cracked in several places, and the writing on it is faded and almost entirely illegible, as if recently scoured away. It still bears a lingering aura of enchantment magic, and anyone who can read Andøvan can barely make out that it once contained the words of power needed to cast some sort of ancient Andøvan word magic.

At this point, our heroes must decide what to do. They have been charged by their jarl with protecting his daughters on this outing, and the girls were kidnapped on their watch. In addition to the jeopardy the girls are in, our heroes' own honor is at stake. Multiple options are available to the party. First, they can send someone back to get help and mount a full-scale rescue expedition. This takes the better part of an hour over the muddy road and probably two hours before a force can be assembled and return, a lengthy waste of valuable time. A better option would be to solve the problem. Nothing shows that the girls were harmed, and the footprints look like Runa was even cooperating (our heroes likely remember her walking to the meadow's edge just when the spell struck), so there is every reason to believe that they are still alive and only a few hours ahead. To return to their jarl with tales of a sudden magical attack, strange footprints, and missing daughters will see them cast out and likely challenged to duels of the holmgang between the hazel posts by the older huscarls. Our heroes would be branded liars, brought before the next Thing (should they live that long), tried for murder and kidnapping, and then declared outlaws. After that, it will be a race to see who kills them first, the jarl or someone wishing to curry favor with him.

Our heroes should therefore quickly reach the conclusion that they have only one clear option: They must recover the girls. The jarl's household knew where they were going with the girls, and when they are missed, help will be sent. Our heroes could leave a message here for the jarl's men while they go in pursuit of the girls themselves. However, this presents a new set of problems, namely where to go from here.

The tracks left by Sibbe, her guardians, and Runa lead directly through the narrow band of woods and into a section of the Moors that skirt the Trollfist Hills. The kidnappers are unlikely to head north toward the civilized lands under Jarl Olaf's sway with his kidnapped daughters in tow, so that leaves only the Moors

or possibly the Barrow Lands. In the Barrow Lands beyond the Moors about 20 miles away is a legendary hill known as the Tor. They also recall that the seiðkona called Sibbe the Unkempt, a wretched old crone known for her witchcraft and delving into the ancient magic of the Andøvan, is known to live in the vicinity of the Tor. Furthermore, Skirting the Trollfist Hills would provide a fast route for someone mounted to ride to the Tor.

Three possible ways exist to reach the Tor from the Meadows. Our heroes can follow the same trail taken by the kidnappers. This is the fastest route through the relatively flat lands of the Moors and the Barrow Lands but also likely the most dangerous for the many undead denizens said to haunt those lands. For Sibbe to have taken it, she must have gained some power over these undead from her time spent at the Tor and should make our heroes consider that such a trail could well be a trap left for any pursuers. Taking the paths through the Trollfist Hills is slower but likely safer, though there is no guarantee that new dangers don't lurk there now. And the middle-length route would follow the game trails through the forest to skirt the Barrow Lands and the Trollfist Hills. They are not as slow as the hills but not as dangerous as the Barrow Lands.

TIMING

From the moment our heroes recover, the clock is ticking. Sibbe intends to sacrifice the girls atop the Tor in a vernal equinox ritual. The ritual leads to Sibbe's rebirth in a younger and more powerful form but needs to be completed at dawn the next day (8 a.m.). This gives the party 14 hours to reach the Tor and rescue the girls. It is approximately 6 p.m., and the sun will set in two hours, but a full moon offers plenty of light to travel and fight by (dim light from sunset to sunrise). However, the forest is dark throughout due to the canopy.

Looking at the three routes, the party must balance speed, risk, and exhaustion. If they take the route through the Trollfist Hills, they will spend the night riding and be forced to attack the stones only slightly before dawn. This means the entire party and their mounts will be fatigued, and possibly exhausted if they hustled. Without rest, they will be at a disadvantage in the battle, especially spellcasters. The forest route allows for some rest, but again, the party might just charge in during the middle of the night, meaning they will be fatigued going into the fight. If they choose to pursue straight across the Barrow Lands, the danger is not lack of rest but the inhabitants; however, the route is the fastest and puts the party at the Tor (if they even make it) shortly after sunset. You should advise players, especially if they are inexperienced, as to the dangers of forced marches.

4. SIBBE'S TRAIL

The trail left by the aglæcwif and her cohorts heads northwest out of the woods and skirts just north of the Trollfist Hills before plunging south rapidly for a fast run to the Tor. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check each hour allows the heroes to follow this trail, even by moonlight. If the trail is lost, our heroes can continue on their way toward the Tor simply by following the edge of the hills and then the woods. They do not, therefore, need to worry about becoming lost as long as they stick to this route and attempt a new Wisdom (Survival) check each mile to pick up the trail again since it follows that course as well. Following the trail reveals that the horses are all being ridden hard; the riders clearly do not care if the horses survive the trip so long as they reach their destination quickly. This gives the aglæcwif's party a sizable lead on our heroes, who must also attempt to spare their horses somewhat if they wish to be able to quickly leave with the girls and get back to the jarl's hall. Refer to **The Moors** below for information about a journey along this route whether our heroes are successfully following the trail or not.

THE TROLLFIST HILLS

Four rugged, round hills looking like the bent knuckles of a troll's fist push up out of the moors, larger than the lower hills around them. The hills are sparsely vegetated and rather steep, though a path goes through them. That trail is one of hard-packed earth over flinty rock and is as gray and lifeless as the rest of the territory.

These low hills lie to the west of the settled portions around Jarl Olaf's hall and represent the western border of the land he and his followers claim. Named for the resemblance of the four central peaks to a great stony fist thrust up out of the ground, the hills are rocky and largely devoid of vegetation save for scraggly grasses and scrubby trees. A single path winds through the hills and passes through the verge of the forest before ending at the edge of the Barrow Lands. This path is not straight and only five to six feet wide, which requires the party to move at a walk to safely traverse the ground. The path is also rather stony, and anyone trying to force march a mount needs to succeed at a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check or the horse stumbles and comes up lame, forcing the party to abandon it. The trail from the hills passes through a short stretch of the Moors, leaving only the faintest outline of a path through the bogs and heath.

5. TROLL SIGN

Shortly after entering the hills and entering a muddy, overgrown area, an observant character with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices tufts of coarse, damp hair stuck to rocks, large footprints, and fresh claw marks on the stones – certain troll sign. A successful DC 13 Arcana check reveals that the hair and other sign is from a swamp troll, a rare species of troll known to dwell in the wetlands of the Moors that has apparently recently wandered into the area.

The swamp troll (see **Appendix One: New Monsters**) in question is drawn to the cattle in **Area 6**. It is not looking for a fight and would prefer to grab an easy meal. However, horse is almost as tasty as cattle (at least to a troll) and humans are even more so. If the party is not making any attempt to conceal themselves, the troll lurks out of sight, doing its best to hide among the rocks and brambles. It attacks the weakest-looking member of the party if an opportunity presents itself or if the prey appears to be leaving the hills, at which point a desperate action on the part of the troll is called for. The swamp troll does not fight to the death and flees if reduced to 10 hp, unless a member of the party calls on Donar's name during the battle (either as a war cry or in casting a divine spell). If that occurs, the enraged troll sacrifices its life to slay the offender.

6. CATTLE THIEVES

The flickering light of a fading campfire can be spotted ahead among the hills right in your path. Cattle low in the darkness just beyond, and five figures snore away on the ground, empty wineskins scattered about in disarray.

Of all the nights to choose to make an illicit camp, a group of five cattle raiders chose this one. They are Dirty Olaf (**bandit captain** but armed with shield and sword) and his four accomplices: Arni Buison, Cnut Erpson, Najal the Skinny, and Sigrid Saxisdottir (all **bandits** but armed with spears and shields). Five nights ago, they crept into the barns of Javik Gilson, a freesteader who lives on the other coast of the Hord Peninsula. While stealing eight cattle, the thieves complicated their escape by making too much noise and had to fight Javik and his sons. During the fight, Javik was killed and two of his sons were injured.

Dirty Olaf still considers it a successful raid. He has feuded with Javik going back nearly 30 years and seeing his rival killed and a fortune in cattle taken has made him more than a little celebratory. As a result, he camped in the Trollfist Hills closer to Jarl Olaf's lands than he realizes to uncork some mead and live it up with his companions. By nightfall, all five are drunk and oblivious to the goings-on around them; after all, they escaped unscathed, the cattle are corralled, and the night is a pleasant one. Too bad for them that the Norns decreed that their fate is to be stalked by a troll and to eventually have a band of the local jarl's householders ride into their camp.

The camp is set right across the trail where the draws between three hills intersect. No watch has been set. All five raiders are asleep but wake to any loud noise. They are not in their armor, and their weapons are stacked close at hand. Due to their drunkenness, these thieves all have the sickened condition (already factored into their stat block).

THE MOORS

Muddy, heath-covered, and dotted with small bogs, the Moors run from the coast to the Forest of Woe far to the south, interrupted only by the Stonefist Hills, forested areas, and occasional barrow fields of the ancient Andøvan peoples. Only the barest hints of green have begun to spring up among the broken rocks and muddy hollows. The winds of a recent winter still blow across this flatland and chill through all but the heaviest cloaks. The occasional bog pool still has a rime of fragile ice around its edges. There is no cover on the Moors, leaving you feeling exposed and vulnerable to any watching eyes.

A poorly drained, soggy moor dominates the middle of the Hord Peninsula. This area, known simply as the Moors, is considered wasteland by most of the Northlanders and is inhabited by strange beasts, crazed hermits, and outcasts from holdings all over the region. Adding to the dread that most feel when traveling through the area, the higher and drier parts of the Moors often contain rings of broken stones or ancient barrows whose occupants are assumed to be restless and hungry for the blood of the living. No one knows for sure what is out there, as few people are foolish enough to risk their lives and sanity by traveling the Moors to any great extent.

Unfortunately, this is where the tracks lead as described in **Area 4**. The horizon is a fair distance and it's a clear day, so our heroes can easily see for several miles. Storm clouds are rolling in and beginning to gather in a spiraling tempest to the southwest (recognizable as unnatural and above the Tor to anyone making a successful DC 15 Intelligence [Nature] check). The clouds hover low and send down bolts of lightning to strike the stones below due to the ritual Sibbe is preparing.

7. THE RESTLESS DEAD

The land is drier here, the ground higher than that of the surrounding bog lands. Occasional mounds of earth elongated and low dot the terrain. You suspect this the edge of the Barrow Lands and dread what foul specters must lurk beneath the thin veneer of earth that covers them. You can only hope that your passing does not disturb any of them. Your hope is short-lived, however, as in the dim moonlight ahead, directly upon the path you follow, stand the remains of what must have once been one of the mounds. Someone recently dug down into the very center of it, leaving a large crater surrounded by piles of freshly turned earth. More than one glint of bone can be seen in this churned furrow.

A small spur of the Barrow Lands follows a ridge of dry ground from the west here. The barrow mounds are old and less frequent than encountered in the Barrow Lands proper but are present, nonetheless. In anticipation that someone might attempt to follow

her trail, Sibbe previously unearthed one of the barrow mounds here to leave a trap for those who might come along behind. As our heroes reach this area, 6 **skeletons** claw their way up through the loose soil. Clad in tattered rags and carrying bronze-bladed spears and swords, the dead of ancient Andøvan rise to deal with trespassers.

8. Bog

At some point, the trail you have been following was part of an actual path or road cutting through the swampy moors. Ahead, a large bog blocks your path, but someone long ago built a wooden walkway over it to the far shore that remains lost in the night mist. You can only hope that it reaches all the way to the other side. The wooden walkway is rickety and missing a few planks, but it is wide enough to ride a horse across and otherwise appears sturdy.

Built long ago by marsh folk who fished for eels and hunted fowl upon the Moors, the five-foot-wide walkway is indeed sturdy enough for the entire party to traverse single file. Wooden pilings are sunk into the bog at intervals so that the entire walkway is suspended less than a foot above the surrounding waters. The waters themselves range in depth from seven to 12 feet (1d6 + 6), but they are so murky that it is impossible to tell at any given place without probing their depths. The bog extends roughly two miles east and west, and a mile to the south. The walkway extends all the way across it, though visibility is reduced to 50 feet by the mists so that our heroes can never be sure until they approach the far shore. Attempting to skirt around the bog adds almost two hours to the journey (one hour and another accumulation of nonlethal damage if they hustle), so despite its sinister appearance, the wooden walkway is the most advantageous route for our heroes.

Even with the shortcut across the wooden walkway, the bog is a dangerous and creepy place. Midway across the bog is a small, muddy island, 20 feet on a side. The walkway ends at this island, and another walkway extends out from the other side and continues to the far side of the bog. Complicating matters is the fact that the bog is home to a **bog hound** (see **Appendix One: New Monsters**), an undead creature left behind by ancient cults of the Andøvan. The bog hound pulls itself out of its watery grave and attacks any who trespass upon its island. Sibbe and her minions encountered the bog hound when they passed through hours earlier and battled it for a short time before escaping to the south. The bog hound now blocks the south bridge to prevent anyone from fleeing in that direction. Upon facing the bog hound, it is obvious to our heroes that it was recently involved in a battle, as several slashing wounds from axe blades mar its corrupt hide. It fights until destroyed.

THE FOREST

The forest is relatively open. Few people venture here because of its horrid reputation, and thus few trees are felled these days. It is an old forest, with soaring towers of tree trunks spreading out above to form a tightly closed canopy, leaving the forest floor in deep shade. A low mist hangs about in dells and crannies and seems to flow away as you approach.

The forest here is a remnant of the mighty forest that once covered most of the Hord Peninsula. In decades past, it was logged and thinned in all but its southernmost reaches where it is still thick and primordial and is known as the Forest of Woe. However, since the fey who have long inhabited the depths of the Forest of Woe have become more aggressive in past years, the logging has ceased everywhere but on the outermost edges of the tree line. Even here on the peninsula's northern reaches, the forest is often looked at askance, as if it were the Forest of Woe itself.

The part of the forest that runs to the south of the Meadows is a relatively peaceful stretch of woodland, one regularly used by people from the area for hunting, wood gathering, and other such activities. However, to pass through this arm of the forest and loop around the southern edge of the Stonefist Hills to find safe passage to the Tor, the party needs to skirt the deeper and darker heart of the forest.

No straight route runs through the forest. Our heroes must either go cross-country or try to navigate a maze of game trails and small paths. Striking out cross-country is difficult, and the forest floor is dense enough in places that horses have a hard time getting through. Also, it will be nightfall before the party manages to get far through the forest, making navigation difficult. Going cross-country requires a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check from the party to find the right route to the Tor, as well as an additional check after any encounter. Successful DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks must be made by each character for every hour of travel. A failure of the Survival check means the party becomes lost (see the **Lost!** sidebar). A failure on the Animal Handling check yields a lamed horse that delays the party by an hour when they no longer have any spare mounts to go around and must travel at the speed our heroes walk.

Following the trails is easier, though they twist and turn, crossing each other with great frequency. Due to some of the lingering faerie enchantment of the forest, the trails sometimes change direction and location, especially at night. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Survival) check must be made by the party to navigate along the trails. An additional check needs to be made after any encounter. Failing the Survival check means the party becomes lost (see the **Lost!** sidebar).

Lost!

Becoming lost at night is not a pleasant experience, as the forest itself seems to take a perverse joy in harassing anyone foolish enough to wander its depths. Lost characters lose 1d4 – 1 hours of travel time (minimum one hour) and may try again after this to get back on track. Also, each time the party becomes lost, you should roll 1d6 on the **Random Encounters** table:

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

1d6	Encounter
1–2	No encounter
3	Bandits
4	Shifting trails
5	Boar
6	Bear

Bandits: A small band of outlaws has taken to the forest and set up a hideout among the trees despite the presence of dangerous faeries and other creatures. The party encounters a group of 2 **bandits** (armed with spears and shields) and their **bandit captain** leader (armed with an axe and shield) heading back to their homes in the middle of the night. For the bandits, it has been an unprofitable couple of days, as they have spent their time fruitlessly staking out the coast road from Halfstead south to the Vale. Little traffic is on the road this time of year, and the last few nights have been rainy. Thus, the bandits are in a foul mood, and intruders in their domain are the last irritants they are willing to put up with. These bandits are part of the gang from **Area 11** but have been out on patrol and will not return before our heroes reach there, so do not remove their numbers from that location.

Have our heroes and the bandits make opposed Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Perception checks), unless our heroes are not trying to move quietly through the forest, in which case have the party make Wisdom (Perception) checks to see if they spot the bandits in time. If the bandits have time to set up an ambush, they do so, seeking to waylay our heroes and rob them, or at the very least drive them off minus a horse or two. If any are captured and intimidated, they admit to the location and details of their hideout at **Area 11**. The bandits have between them a total of 34 hs.

Shifting Trails: The trail shifts before our heroes' very eyes, changing direction in front and behind them. They must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to find their way back onto the right route through the forest. If the check succeeds, the party loses only half an hour while lost; if failed, they continue to be lost for another 1d4 – 1 hours (minimum 1 hour).

Boar: An angry **boar** charges out of concealment from the underbrush, likely upsetting our heroes' mounts. The boar is very territorial and charges on the first round of combat, aiming for a character on foot or the nearest horse if no one is afoot. All the horses are spooked, requiring a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to control the mounts or that character is unable to do anything else that round but regain control of the mount. Those who maintain control of their mount can enter the initiative order but must still use a move action to control their mounts.

Bear: A **black bear** lumbers out of the woods at the party, attacking in a blind rage. The bear makes no attempt to hide and simply closes with the nearest character. It attacks until killed.

9. TREE OF WOE

Beneath the boughs of the forest, in the waning moments of twilight, you come upon a shocking scene. A rugged and heavily muscled Northman is tied to the trunk of a gnarled oak tree, his arms suspended above, a foot off the ground. From the way the ropes are tied, it is evident that he tied them himself. He is entirely unclothed, and his body is crisscrossed with scars both old and new. His face is a mask of dried blood on one side where it has flowed down his cheek and onto his chest, and it is evident that his eye has been plucked out. His other eye is closed, and his face is a contorted mask of pain.

This man is a bearsarker, a sacred warrior dedicated to Wotan, who hung himself from this tree in imitation of Wotan's sacrifice to gain wisdom. He is deep in reverie and should not be disturbed as he seeks divinely inspired revelations. He has nothing to steal and is completely helpless if the party is callous enough to harm or kill him. Whatever they do, he does not acknowledge their presence in any way, even if dying. However, if our heroes elect not to disturb the bearsarker and if one or more of them helped the old man at **Area 2**, the berserker's good eye springs open and he suddenly speaks, "The storm will come, and Donar's usurper must be laid low. Ice and cold threaten the world. The glowing

stone must be returned for mind's worth." After that utterance, he returns to his reverie and says no more.

10. FAERIE GATHERING

Shortly after the white moon Narrah reaches her zenith in the night sky, the party sees lights ahead in the forest, low to the ground and glowing with an eerie green color. Should they turn off their route to avoid these lights, they find the lights ahead of them again moments later. This keeps up until the party advances on the lights or until they try to avoid the lights three times, whichever happens first (avoiding them adds an hour to their travel time). If the party approaches the lights, read the following:

The lights are coming from a ring of large mushrooms, each a little lantern illuminating a circular clearing in the middle of the forest. Satyrs, dryads, pixies, and other faeries are busy putting up garlands of flowers, bringing in and setting up a long table and benches, and in general getting ready for a feast.

Our heroes have stumbled upon a rare sight, a picnic feast by part of the faerie court from the Forest of Woe. They patiently ignore our heroes, moving around and past while going on about their business, casting rude glances at any who annoy them. If our heroes attack, the lanterns immediately extinguish plunging the



clearing into absolute darkness as the faeries scatter. By the time our heroes get their bearings, they find that their sword strokes have hit only the boles of gnarled trees, and no sign of the fey folk remain. If this occurs, they will not see the faeries again. However, if our heroes maintain their good manners and stick around to watch for a few moments, their patience is soon rewarded.

In moments, the scene changes, and the faeries assemble along the benches in obvious anticipation. A horn sounds in the woods, and a tall, regal stag with antlers like birch branches walks to the head of the table. The stag, its rack shimmering as if crowned by glowing gems or living fire, addresses you in a voice like the flow of a fresh, pebbled brook.

“Strangers, be welcome as guests or cursed as interlopers, the choice is yours. Come and sit. Partake of our feast, but repay our generosity in kind, or be gone and on your way as craven and honorless men, mere trespassers in our domain.”

At this point, the party must make its choice and do so with bravery and élan. As Northlanders, they are well aware that any hesitation on their part will be taken as a refusal of hospitality – a grave crime in the Northlands. It takes just one character to speak up and accept, and likewise just one to refuse. Acceptance leads to **Payment in Kind** below. Refusal leaves the party lost (see the **Lost!** sidebar) as the faeries and all their feast preparations disappear in the blink of an eye.

PAYMENT IN KIND

The feast is one of otherworldly fare and beauty. Dainty cups made of flowers are filled with mead brewed from faerie bees and water from secret magical streams. Steaming hunks of roast pork as well as other savory dishes are brought out on platters of bark. The bread is light and airy, yet filling, and both sweet and hearty as needed. The conversation, to say nothing of the company, is beyond words, and the party soon finds themselves swept away on a tide of wonder. All it takes is one character to be rude, to refuse to eat and drink, or otherwise to be poor guests for the whole party to find themselves lost (again, see the **Lost!** sidebar). The feast continues for hours, and after it is done, the stag speaks again, this time in a voice like sultry summer winds blowing through fully leafed trees. It says, “As you have enjoyed our fare, let us enjoy yours. What do you offer us in return for our hospitality? Songs, stories, dances? What entertainment can you show your hosts that befits the food and drink you have consumed?”

Each of our heroes needs to provide some form of gift in exchange. Perform checks for storytelling, singing, dancing, or playing of instruments are called for, and as long as an honest attempt is made, it is sufficient payment. Special care needs to be made with regard to the content of the performance; any character making or conducting a performance needs to be specific about what the theme and plot of his song, story, and playing is about lest they offend their host. Glorifying the forest, tales of heroes who fell into tragic love affairs (especially with faeries), and such are appropriate, as would be poems or orations praising the Forest King and his court. Anything that paints the natural world or fey in general in a poor

light results in the party waking up in the forest lost as above. One option is for one or more of our heroes to offer to dance with the dryads or satyrs, something that brings rude catcalls from the court but little more. Another is to offer to wrestle a satyr or provide some other form of violent but nonlethal combat as sport. It should be noted that inflicting lethal damage goes poorly for the whole party.

When the entertainment is done, the party begins to get drowsy, lulled into sleepiness by the mead, the company, and the late hour. Soon, they find themselves drifting off, whether immune to magical sleep or not. They wake up four hours before dawn (even if this means they go backward in their own timeline), completely refreshed, as if they spent a night sleeping, and healed of all wounds. The faerie court is gone, but the path out of the forest toward the Tor is clear. Our heroes no longer have to make Survival checks while they are in the forest to avoid getting lost.

CLUES TO THE BANDITS

Our heroes know from Hallbjorn and others that some outlaws were spotted near the settled lands around Silvermeade. In addition, human footprints, dropped items, and other signs may be found on the trails in the forest. When within two miles of **Area 11**, a Passive Wisdom 14 or higher spots signs that bandit are in the area. These include footprints, recent campfires, and discarded equipment.

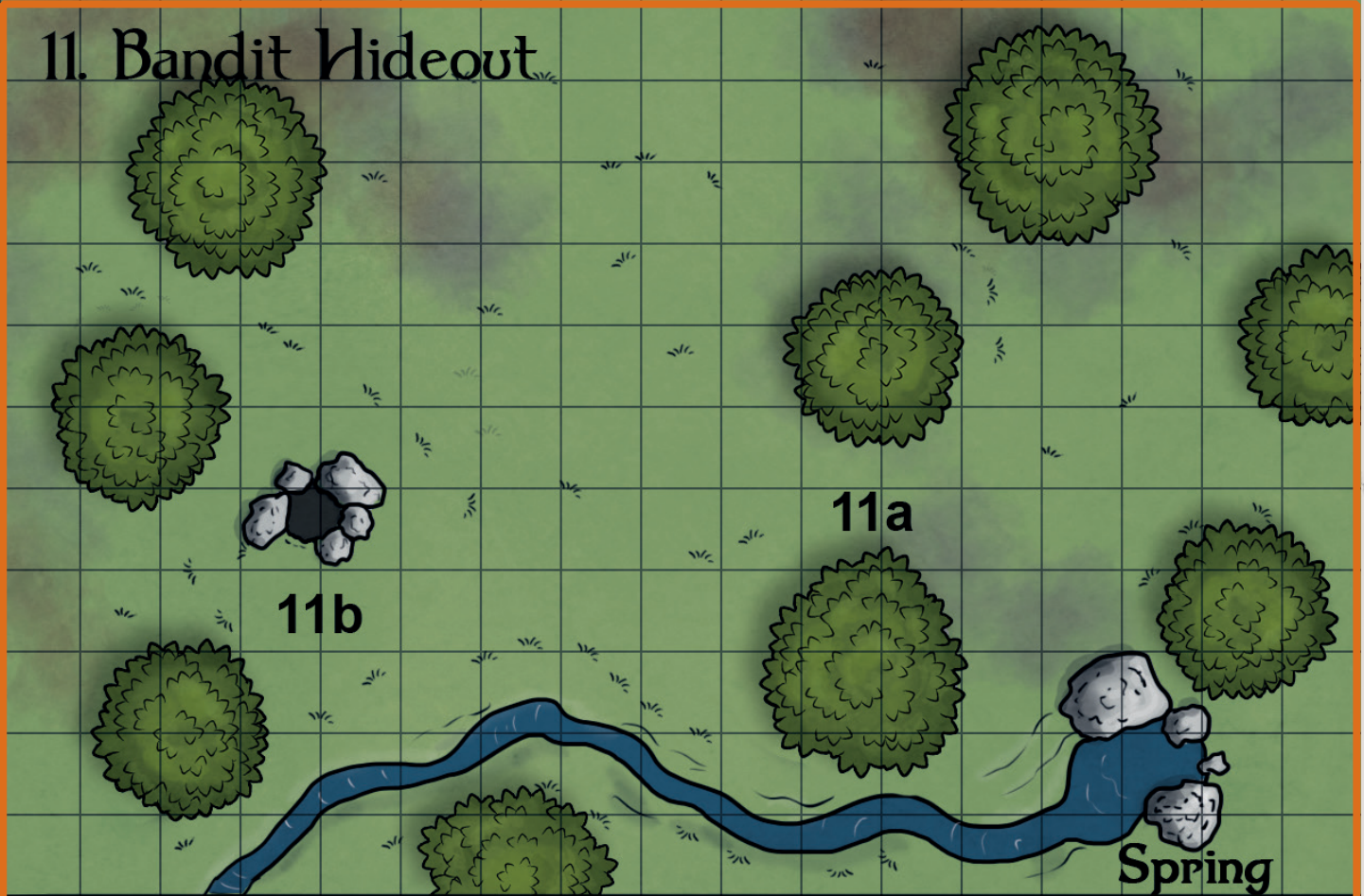
II. BANDIT HIDEOUT

A band of outlaws resides in the forest, and their hideout lies upon the game trail that our heroes follow. The presence of the bandits may be learned from a random encounter above, or the party may pick up signs that they are not the only mortals in the forest. If they learn of the bandits, or even suspect them to be present, the party has to decide if they are going to move slowly and with stealth as they pass through the forest or risk discovery during their midnight ride. Even if our heroes do not directly encounter the bandits in the forest, they may wish to return after rescuing the jarl’s daughters to deal with the outlaws.

Astrid the Mad is an outlaw from the Vale who was sentenced on what she considers trumped-up charges for murdering her cousin. According to Astrid, her cousin just happened to die near her, stumbled into her, and thus got his blood on her clothes and hands (plus, she drew the dagger out of his chest to try and save him). In her mind, the true reason behind her prosecution and conviction was that she had begun showing signs of having arcane powers. Fleeing justice, she headed off into the wilds and eventually met up with other outlaws and began rampaging along the edges of the Vale.

Last fall, Astrid led her bandits north into Hordaland, hoping that their relative obscurity would allow them a chance to either restart their lives or, better, evade the families of their victims. Instead, they found the Forest of Woe and struck a deal with the King of the Forest and the faeries who reside there. In exchange for safe passage and freedom to build a hideout in the forest, the bandits give the faeries a young adult female at each of the four corners

11. Bandit Hideout



1 square - 10 feet



 Stalagmite

 Chimney Entrance

of the year (solstices and equinoxes). What happens to these prisoners is none of Astrid's concern, and the longer she stays in the forest, the greater her powers grow – as does her inhumanity.

The hideout is impressive, a large cavern formed by the constant action of water on the limestone foundations of the Hord Peninsula. Its natural defenses have been enhanced by the construction of barricades and a lookout post in a nearby oak tree. A natural spring bubbles up near the cave mouth and forms a small run of water that eventually joins the unnamed stream below. Our heroes know that a large stream borders the forest and the Moors and following the water from the spring likely brings them there, thus negating any further Survival checks to find their way through the forest.

The bandits are on edge about the faeries and other dangers of the forest, despite their agreement with the King of the Forest. They are on alert for intruders and keep lookouts in the watch post in the tree (**Area 11a**) and the cave mouth (**Area 11b**). In addition, they practice fairly decent light and noise discipline, keeping fires to a minimum during the night, and stick to the cave as much as possible. If the party is not trying to be stealthy, their approach is noticed and prepared for.

IIA. LOOKOUT

A small platform high up in a tall beech tree is 40 feet from the entrance to the cave. Here the bandits stationed **2 bandits** to keep an eye out for approaching beasts or faeries. The platform is small, only five feet by 10 feet, and is 50 feet up the tree. A rope ladder provides access and is usually rolled up to avoid any surprises. If intruders are detected, the lookouts blow a horn to alert the bandits sleeping in **Area 11c**. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check is necessary to spot the lookouts while they are hidden in their post at night, but if the dog from the Meadows accompanies our heroes, it detects them with its scent ability and barks at them, alerting the whole camp. If the bandits are not noticed by our heroes, then they attack with surprise from the darkness when our heroes are 50 feet away. They blow their horn to alert the others. If our heroes do not make the Perception check, they are not able to see where the arrows are coming from.

IIB. CAVE MOUTH

A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check is needed to find this entrance.

A natural ring of stones surrounds a cleft in the ground barely large enough to admit an armored man. The smell of smoke and unwashed bodies clings to the wet leaves around the hole. From here, a steep descent drops into darkness.

The cave is inside a small hill in the forest. The entrance is nothing more than a narrow opening near the base of the hill, with the small brook running down the hill nearby. The bandits cleared the area around it to make it more accessible and marked the perimeter with stones so that they do not fall in at night. The opening is only three feet by four feet wide and leads to a short chimney that drops 10 feet before opening into a larger room (**Area 11c**). The climb down the chimney is easy (requiring a successful DC 10 Strength [Athletics] check). A screen made of woven brush

secured at the bottom of the chimney blocks access to the cavern unless removed by someone below or broken through.

IIc. INNER CAVE

A wide cave filled with stalactites and stalagmites opens at the bottom of the chimney. The smell and piled refuse show that a number of people have been living here in tight quarters for some time. The floor is slightly raised with years of detritus fallen in from above. The low ceiling shows soot stains from the fire pit dug in its center.

This large, natural cavern is dotted with stalactites and stalagmites. The ceiling is only seven feet high. The floor is covered in packed dirt and refuse washed down from above and is slightly convex. The floor of the cavern slopes toward the walls, most noticeably on the east and north sides. A small tunnel to the north leads off to **Area 11d**. To the east, the cavern floor ends at a rock wall, though a three-foot-long-by-18-inch-high opening permits water to drain from the cavern.

Residing here are **4 bandits** led by Styr the Ugly (**berserker**). They normally sleep, eat, and hang out around the central fire that is put out after dark to keep their location hidden. If alerted by the lookouts above, they wait in the darkness around the edges of the cavern for the first character to come down with a light source before attacking from ambush with their slings. Even if aware of intruders, Astrid will not stir from her cave to join the fight unless at least five bandits are killed. Like their fellows, the group is poorly armed, consisting of little more than escaped thralls, failed petty farmers, and wandering beggars, though Styr is a more formidable foe.

Styr is a man burdened by neither good looks nor morality. His face is coarse and marred by a scar on his chin that looks like a snake's tail. His hair and clothing are generally disheveled, and often splattered with dried blood. Styr is a murderer, thief, and worse, and he has secretly been working his own deals with the faeries in the depths of the forest. These evil fey have been willing to trade blood sacrifices for magical elixirs, including one that they promise will cause Astrid to fall madly in love with him and allow him to take control of the bandits and gain the young woman's affections once he brings them enough victims. Each bandit has 2d6 hp.

11d. ASTRID'S CAVE

The opening to this side cave is a three-foot-high crawl tunnel that is eight feet long.

This narrow cave is not much more than a wide tunnel in the rock and appears to be home to the bandit leader based on the bedroll cushioned with evergreen boughs against one wall. The walls are covered with scratched and painted sigils, a meaningless scrawl of mad designs, geometric shapes, and oddly placed runes. One wall holds a natural shelf stacked with assorted odds and ends.

Astrid the Mad (treat as a **cult fanatic**) lives here, keeping herself separate from her bandits whom she sees as beneath her. Various occult and arcane items – many of them completely useless but nonetheless intriguing in shape – line natural shelves on the east wall. Astrid is slowly being driven mad by the power in her blood, and the walls of her cave are covered with scrawled shapes, geometric designs, and meaningless arcane writing. Astrid is a beautiful but wild woman of fewer than 25 winters with fair hair, blue eyes, and a generous smile. One of her ancestors mixed his blood with the fey, and this taint passed down to Astrid, giving her arcane powers but also ruining her sanity. She keeps on her person 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, a spear, a dagger, and a pouch with 82 hs and a gold torc (100 hs).

12. STREAM

A stream engorged with spring rains blocks your path. Just beyond is the tree line and the Barrow Lands beyond, the path that leads to the jarl's daughters.

To pass out of the forest, the party must cross a stream that is normally fordable but currently swollen due to recent spring rains. The stream is cold and has overrun its banks, creating a raging torrent of brown water 60 feet wide and eight feet deep at its center, with shallower water extending 10 feet in from the edges. The raging stream requires a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to cross; failure indicates that the character is swept downstream (1d4 x 100 feet), taking 1d4 points of damage and having to make one or more Strength (Athletics) check to reach the bank. If mounted, our heroes must make a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check or the horses balk at the fast-flowing water and will not cross until calmed down (which takes at least 15 minutes).

THE BARROW LANDS

Your horses balk and will not enter this field of earthen mounds. Built by the long-dead Andøvan tribes, the ancient barrows cover the highest points in the Moors. Some of the mounds are only waist high, others are as tall as a man, but all have a sinister air about them. Corroded weapons protrude awkwardly from the sides and tops of some of them, and a few have stone doorways marking their ancient entrances. Of these, a handful have no stone slabs blocking them, leaving them gaping open to reveal only darkness beyond.

In the far distance, thunderclouds gather and roil as a huge storm builds in intensity before unleashing its raging power upon the lands below. Unfortunately, this storm stays in one spot rather than moving with the southern winds, concentrating all its fury in one location. In the continual flashes of lightning that lance down to the ground below, you can see beneath this gathering gloom a single tall hill some miles distant. Multiple lightning strikes impale its peak, and from the crown of this hill can be seen a pale, muted glow. Dark magic is at work upon the Tor.

This portion of the Barrow Lands stretches north and east of the Tor, forming a miles-long expanse of low earthen mounds. The reputation of the Barrow Lands is that of a haunted place of certain doom; it is a reputation richly deserved. Hundreds of barrows are in this field, most averaging seven feet long by four feet across and standing three to six feet high. A few are much larger, running as much as 15 feet in length and seven feet in width. These tend to be six feet high or more. A few of the larger mounds have stone posts and lintels framing an entrance, and most entrances are closed off with a large stone slab. Some stand open, however, granting access inside to the foolish or allowing things to come out into the world of the living. Many of the mounds have corroded bronze weapons of ancient design – short swords and spears for the most part – sticking out of their upper surfaces like a macabre garden. No plants grow here nor do insects even buzz about.

The inhabitants of these burial mounds do not like others trespassing on their land and often take violent revenge on interlopers. Sibbe possesses an *Andøvan barrow charm* (see **Appendix Two: New Magic Items**) that she found in a barrow. The device allows her and her henchmen to pass through the Barrow Lands unmolested. Of course, our heroes have no such amulet, which leaves them at the mercy of those whose rest has not only been disturbed but whose bloodlust has already been left unslaked.

13. A CHALLENGE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

This encounter occurs regardless of the direction from which our heroes enter the Barrow Lands. This encounter can be run in various ways depending on the strength of the party. Keep in mind that there is still a final showdown against Sibbe and her henchmen, and our heroes will not have time to retreat to heal, rest, and regain spells. Choose the strength of this encounter depending on how well our heroes have been doing up to this point and how battered they are.

The hollow notes of a horn sound from one of the open barrows, and a long-dead Andøvan warrior emerges from the darkness. The faint moonlight reflects from his bronze armor and the finely crafted, though somewhat corroded sword he bears. Behind him comes an entourage of four dead warriors armed with swords of green-tinged bronze.

The barrow skeletal chieftain (see **Appendix One: New Monsters**) advances on the party and gestures with its sword toward them. Behind it stand 2–4 barrow skeletal warriors (see **Appendix One: New Monsters**), its retainers in life. Depending on the health of the party, the skeletal champion may accept challenges only in single combat to the death, until unconsciousness, or until first blood. If a character accepts its challenge and adheres to the strictures of honor, fighting only one-on-one, regardless of the outcome if it is not destroyed, it and its retainers return to their barrow and let our heroes pass unmolested. If more than one character takes part in the fight, its retainers quickly join in against the honorless curs.



14. THE BARROW KING SCORNE

This encounter occurs when our heroes come within one mile of the Tor.

With a loud crash, a stone rolls away from one of the barrow openings to reveal a gaping hole into darkness. Out of the shadows strides a long-dead hero from before the Northlanders first came to this land. His raiment is grand; he is clad in rotting silks and fine cloths, armored with a cuirass of bronze, and carrying a two-handed sword of gold-and-silver-gilt bronze. The undead king mounts a nearby barrow and raises his hands in a silent command, a command answered by the hordes of undead crawling forth from the surrounding Barrow Lands. The way ahead is open but does not remain so for long as hundreds of decayed skeletons lurch forth from the cold embrace of the earth.

Though Sibbe's amulet allows her to pass through the Barrow Lands unmolested, the ritual atop the Tor perverted the natural order and sent a shockwave of unrest through the surrounding burial mounds. This ancient Andøvan king has now awakened and is calling forth his equally ancient subjects to put a stop to this desecration. Because of Sibbe's *Andøvan barrow charm*, this undead king cannot affect her directly, but it knows that our heroes can. As a result, even though there is an overwhelming tide of undead approaching our heroes, the path to the Tor remains open. The undead do not wish to fight our heroes but merely hope to drive them onward to their confrontation with Sibbe. If our heroes are foolish enough to fight, a couple of rounds against an endless supply of skeletons should convince them of the folly of their ways. If they run, they find all ways of egress blocked save the path toward the Tor. The undead follow but do not close with our heroes and do not follow them up the Tor.



Chapter Three: Fight at the Stones

15. THE TOR

At the far corner of the field of barrows is the tall mound of packed earth known as the Tor. Crowning this hilltop is a ring of standing stones, tumbled down and long forgotten, built ages ago by the long-dead Andøvan that once inhabited what is now the Northlands. The Tor is steeply sloped, and the slopes are covered with grasses, herbs, and bracken. Two causeways march up from the surrounding plains, one to the southwest and one to the northwest. The stones themselves are cracked and worn with age; green lichen and moss cling to the lower surfaces and run up these fissures, contrasting sharply with the dark gray rock. Thunderclouds roil overhead, and lightning flashes down to strike the few stones still standing.

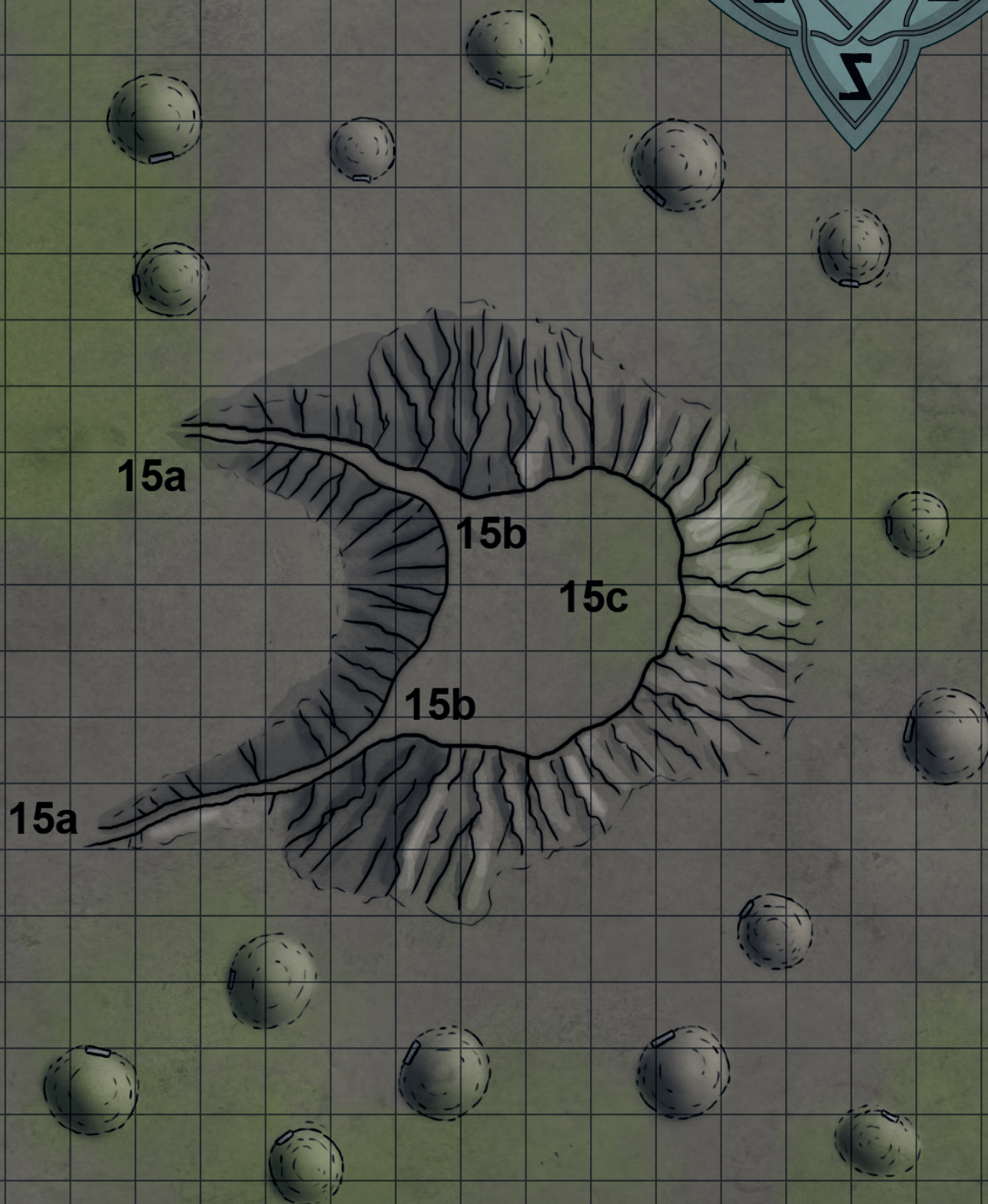
The Tor is 105 feet high and covers 15 acres of ground. The slopes are steep and count as difficult terrain. Anyone pushed off the edge of the Tor can must succeed at a DC 12 Dexterity check or suffer 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage. Those who fall land prone at its base.

15A. CAUSEWAYS

Approaching the Tor from the southwest and northwest are two causeways that allow for easy access to its summit. Both causeways are firm, wide, and slightly graded but long, each running for 400 feet. Anyone walking up a causeway can easily be seen from the top of the Tor, which alerts anyone there to the approach. Anyone climbing the slope in the dark can make opposed Stealth checks to avoid being noticed by the watchers there.

15. THE TOR

1 SQUARE - 100 FEET





15B. HEELSTONE GATE

At the top end of each causeway is a shallow ditch that is only two feet deep and 20 feet long. The ditch symbolically demarcates the entrance to the top of the Tor. Each end of the ditch is anchored by an eight-foot-tall standing heelstone. They lean slightly inward toward each other and have tapered tops. Ancient Andøvan runes once marked their surfaces, but these have been worn to illegibility.

Sibbe placed a trap at each of these ditches to slow anyone trying to interrupt her ceremony. A thin trip cord has been strung on the far side of each ditch to snag anyone attempting to step over the shallow depression. Anyone tripping this cord is targeted by a spear strung to a bent tree branch of green wood behind one of the heelstones, out of sight of anyone on the causeway. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the trap; it can be removed using a sharp knife and a successful DC 13 Dexterity check. If triggered, the spear attacks the person tripping the wire with a +5 to hit and inflicts 1d6 piercing damage.

15C. STONE CIRCLE

A ring of ancient standing stones is at the center of the Tor's summit. A few of the stones still stand as trilithons with posts and lintels 10 feet high, but most of the stones are on the ground or lean at precarious angles. The dark clouds above swirl in a great spiral seemingly only a hundred feet

above the hilltop and are constantly illuminated from within by flashes of lightning. Other streaks of lightning flash downward in jagged arcs to strike the still-standing trilithons. After each flash, the stones radiate a pale glow for a few moments as if absorbing the power of the storm.

All the stones of the circle are carved of the same blueish dolerite, a type of stone not native to the area. They bear no legible carvings, but some faded, weathered creases in the rock hint that at one time they were richly adorned. At the center of the ring is a three-foot-high-by-12-foot-long altar stone stained in ancient blood. The area between the altar and the ring is open and covered with low grass. Roughly half of the stones are still standing, especially the main entrance stones at the south of the ring. The flashing lightning of the storm and the glowing stones provide the entire hilltop with normal lightning. The stones themselves, though seething with magical power from the ritual, are not harmful to the touch, though anyone standing atop one has a 25% chance of being struck by lightning each round for 6d6 points of electricity.

damage (DC 20 Dexterity save for half).

If our heroes arrive at night, they find Sibbe and Runa at the altar, conversing in harsh whispers. The remaining two daughters of the jarl are tied up nearby. Njarni and Gufti are on watch. Shortly before dawn, Sibbe and Runa are at the altar, each raising a knife to the heavens and screaming out an incantation to the swelling storm clouds. Inga and Fastvi are tied up next to the altar stone, guarded by Gufti. Njarni is on watch. The group's three horses are hobbled outside the circle to the east and are skittish and fatigued from their long ride. Sibbe distributed *potions of lesser restoration* among her henchmen to remove their fatigue from hustling all the way to the Tor.

Njarni and Gufti are two large Northlanders who have been long ensorcelled by the aglæcwif and serve her in a numb but fanatical manner. Both are outlaws she came across on the Moors and can easily be identified as such by anyone who conversed with Hallbjorn. Njarni the Traitor murdered his jarl in western Storstrøm Vale, and Gufti the Clever is a known arsonist and thief from Trotheim. Killing either man will not result in a blood feud and likely earns the slayer a reward from the families of their victims should someone be willing to travel to the Thing of the Vale to claim responsibility (1d2 + 2 x 100 hs for Njarni, and 1d6 + 4 x 10 hs for Gufti).

Tactics: Even once our heroes finally make it to the stones, Sibbe still needs to be physically stopped. Her two henchmen defend her to the death, as their minds are entirely under her control. As soon as the party is spotted, Njarni is awakened and Sibbe casts *mage armor* on herself. Runa will not join in any combat but cowers at the edge of the fight. If things look bad for Sibbe and she decides to cut her losses and run, she commands Runa to attack and hopes the confusion covers her retreat. If the battle is going against the henchmen, Sibbe uses ranged attacks to try to turn the tables but will not engage in melee combat unless forced to do so. Once hard pressed (her henchmen are dead and her foes are closing in), she uses Runa as a diversion and flees, using her *Andøvan barrow charm* to disappear among the undead gathered below. If Sibbe is slain, both henchmen break and flee in a panic, only to be shortly dragged down by the undead in the surrounding Barrow Lands.

Development: At sunrise (8 a.m.), Sibbe begins the sacrifice portion of her ritual, and unless either she is slain or the girls

rescued, the girls are sacrificed in 10-minute intervals in this order: Inga, Fastvi, and finally Little Runa. If Sibbe is slain, her influence over Runa ends, and the little girl falls to the ground sobbing, no longer able to take any aggressive actions.

This is a difficult battle, and it is possible that our heroes may find themselves quickly overwhelmed. While our heroes have been pursuing Sibbe and the girls, the jarl's own householders have likewise been on the trail ever since they noticed the girls and our heroes were missing. If the party is in real danger of being destroyed here at the climax of the adventure, read the following description to our heroes. In this event, some or all of Sibbe's henchmen must go and deal with this new threat, leaving our heroes to deal with Sibbe and whoever remains behind. Assume that anyone moving to deal with the reinforcements described below is slain in the process without any loss of life to the householders.

The sounds of pounding hooves and the jingle of harness and armor rise from the Barrow Lands below. Below where stood the ranks of the dead who allowed you to pass to the Tor now can be seen a large party of armed warriors riding hard toward the hillock. In the flashes of lightning, you can make out the forms of the dead moving aside to allow them to pass without a fight. As the riders make hard for the causeway, you see that though their harness and armor are mud-spattered and travel stained, the weapons they bear in their hands are bright and their faces grim. These are men going to war. Riding at their head you see the boar-headed helm of Jarl Olaf Henrikson himself leading three full hands of huscarls and warriors.

Unless otherwise indicated, these warriors arrive when the battle is over and the girls are (hopefully) freed from Sibbe's possession. If she succeeded in completing the sacrifice, then she uses her newfound powers to fly into the stormy sky above and disappear, cackling madly, leaving her minions to be slaughtered alone. However, if some or all the girls are rescued, then the ritual is interrupted and the storm soon dissipates, leaving a clear night sky over the Tor with just a hint of spring-like wind from the south.



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If our heroes succeeded, then Jarl Olaf is overjoyed to find his girls safe with our heroes and the aglæcwif defeated. If some or all of the girls were killed, he grows grimmer with each one, but as long as Sibbe is defeated and our heroes did what they could to save the girls, he does not hold it against them. However, if our heroes failed and somehow survived, Jarl Olaf names them cowards and outlaws and allows them only to immediately flee the Tor before he sets his warriors upon them. Our heroes have a hard career ahead of them indeed, and the players may even need to start new characters to continue their campaign.

If Sibbe is victorious, she experiences a sudden increase in power and her youth is renewed. She physically becomes 22 years old again and becomes an 8th-level sorcerer. She uses her magic to fly away. This makes her a serious threat in the Northlands for some time and, should any of our heroes survive, she can become a continuing nemesis to plague them throughout their careers as she continues to rise in power and wickedness. In this case, the undead disperse on their own, and our heroes have no problem leaving the Barrow Lands, though the dead begin haunting their lands anew as soon as night falls again.

The following description assumes that our heroes successfully rescued all three girls. If not, modify the text accordingly.

From the mud that grimes his armor and the blood that dries on his face, you can tell that Jarl Olaf has had a long night. He and his huscarls gather around you and the girls. Kraki Hallason is there, and Young Ljot, sour-spirited Berg Geirson, surly Hauk of Vastavikland, One-Eyed Sven, and even Old Ljot. Hallbjorn also looks on approvingly, his helm clutched under one arm, his eyes tired but bright.

"It seems you young-spears have had a night of it, too," your jarl begins. "At first I had thought that you were young and foolish, unable to oversee my girls, then I thought you defeated, or your mind's worth broken by what strange signs we found at the Meadows when you did not return. But when we began to follow the trail to find the girls, we realized it was your trail that we followed, and we saw the

signs of your own battle-dew shed upon the path as you fought to fulfill your sword-oath to me. You have fought and bled for my household, and in my mind that makes you a part of it."

"Glad I am that you have saved my daughters from that evil aglæcwif, and happy I am to reward such warriors as you. When we return to Silvermeade, you eat, drink, and fill yourselves with good mead, for you have done well this day. And here in the sight of my own householders take from my hand these armbands that have graced my own arms since I slew the giant Hastral in furious spear-din. Truly you are warriors of Olaf Henrikson."

If our heroes acquitted themselves well and saved all three girls, each is given an arm-ring of gold taken from his own arm (a great honor) worth 300 hs. If only two girls were saved, it is an arm-ring

of gold and silver worth 200 hs. If only one girl was saved, a ring of silver is worth 100 hs.

The girls must still be gotten home, though with the jarl and more than a dozen of his huscarls and finest warriors in tow, even the horde of undead seems not insurmountable, though the warriors eye the surrounding Barrow Lands nervously as they wait for dawn before attempting to head out. The girls are mounted on fresh horses, and the jarl orders our heroes to stay with them and finish their oath to see them safely home. However, despite the grim cast of the warriors' eyes and the barely contained fear of the supernatural on more than one face, a battle against the spawn of Hel is not to be. Continue with the following text:

The coming dawn glows pink over the endless field of barrows that surround the Tor. Jarl Henrikson decides to make a break for the forest to the south to try to get out of the accursed Barrow Lands as quickly as possible and risk the forest rather than the unquiet dead. The troop gathers at the foot of the causeway preparing to make a fighting retreat as the forms of scores of skeletal remnants of the ancient Andøvan still shuffle about dimly visible in the half-light.

The hordes of shuffling undead part at the base of the causeway, however, and one dead warrior steps forth in front of the others. The rotting silks and fine cloth still cover his cuirass of bronze below his hollow-eyed skull, though now in the early light you can see that traces of ancient dye still show where his raiment was once of the finest fabric. And he still carries that massive bronze sword of magnificent make, now point down in the earth. It is the barrow king who first allowed you to pass to reach the Tor, and he seems to want to parley.

Assuming our heroes do not attack – a very foolish and suicidal option since literally hundreds of undead warriors are ready to back the barrow king up in battle – the undead creature makes no harmful moves. Instead, it lifts its hand to mimic the shape of a necklace and then holds its arm out waiting. Our heroes have no trouble realizing that it is wanting the *Andøvan barrow charm*, the strange necklace found with Sibbe. It will not relent in this, and our heroes cannot hope to win the battle over it. However, as soon as a character hands the charm over, the barrow king raises its sword to our heroes, point downward, and allows them to take it in fair trade. Then it and the rest of its horde disappear back among the barrow mounds and are lost from sight in the morning mist. The group has no trouble leaving the Barrow Lands, though future visits to the haunted uplands promise no such respite. The sword that the barrow king gifts upon our heroes is a *+1 greatsword* named "Fury" in Andøvan (*Helfath*), a relic of the ancient Andøvan. Though it is made of bronze, its magic gives it the hardness of steel, and it is a weapon of some power despite its great age – truly a weapon of heroes. All the householders look on in awe at the exchange, newfound respect in their eyes for the one who carries such a weapon of legend.

EPILOGUE

If all goes well, our heroes and their jarl return to Silvermeade, three tired-but-safe young girls in tow. All three girls are taken by their female kinfolk and tended to, healers are brought in to see to any injured characters, and a small impromptu feast is thrown in their honor. After an appropriate amount of time eating and drinking, the jarl calls on our heroes to tell their tale, a cry that is quickly picked up and reverberates through the hall for the story of this latest deed of valor. Following the recounting of their feats, rewards are handed out. Our heroes are on their way up in the world with a budding reputation as heroes and should feel a certain amount of pride.

If our heroes return with less than a full complement of daughters, then the feast is much more subdued with little to no tale telling. The rewards are less, but the jarl is thankful for our heroes' success while he mourns his losses. Our heroes' place has risen slightly but being the followers who let one or more of his daughters perish is not going to bode well for them in the jarl's eyes or for their future hopes and dreams.

Finally, there is the matter of Runa to settle if she survives. It is obvious that she was under some foul influence of Sibbe, an enchantment no doubt laid upon her at her birth. With Sibbe's death, the connection is no more. She is comatose by the time our heroes get her back to the hall and wakes two days later refreshed and back to her usual – if somewhat abnormal – self. The fact that our heroes saw her demonstrate sorcerous powers is a matter of some import, though. If the matter is spoken of to the jarl (or anyone else for that matter, as it undoubtedly makes its way back to him eventually), he denies it vehemently and threatens to settle such slander between the hazel posts if our heroes persist. A wiser course of action would be to keep the matter to themselves

and just keep an eye on young Runa to see what develops. Regardless, the trauma of the experience at the Tor causes Runa to subconsciously place a mental block on her arcane abilities, and it will be many years before they begin to bud within her again. It is possible that they could emerge again and force her into an existence as an outcast from her own people, embittered and accursed, or perhaps she could manage to turn to the path of a cunning woman and become a powerful woman in Hordaland. Either way, that is a matter for a different story.



REWARDS

Character Types	Complete Success	Partial Success
Warriors (barbarians, fighters, monks, paladins, rangers)	A fine weapon gilt in gold with amber decoration (valued at 450 hs)	An armband (valued at 200 hs)
Godi (clerics and druids)	a runescroll (a <i>spell scroll</i> with a 1st-level spell)	A ring (valued at 100 hs)
Runecasters (wizards)	a runestick (a randomly rolled wand)	A ring (valued at 100 hs)
Skaldi (bards)	A fine musical instrument (grants advantage on Charisma [Performance] checks used with it; valued at 300 hs)	A fine cloak with gold thread embroidery (valued at 100 hs)
Cunning folk (sorcerers, warlocks)	a runescroll (a <i>spell scroll</i> with a 1st-level spell) A ring (valued at 100 hs)	A fine cloak with silver thread embroidery (valued at 75 hs)
Outlanders (any non-Northlander)	a ring (valued at 200 hs)	a fine tunic (valued at 50 hs)

Appendix One: New Creatures

AGLÆCWIF

She squatted there in the cave seemingly oblivious to our approach. The locals had said she was an aglæcwif, some sort of local magic worker. Before we could ask our question, she spoke in a voice like nails along a stone or the chill of death. “You seek answers, but you must pay the price in blood.” Then she turned and was upon us.

We paid the price; I’ll miss that torchbearer.

Aglæcwif are evil magic-users who turn to the darkest of arts to gain power. They forsake all mind’s worth and society, living alone in haunted moors and in the depths of the forest. Often, they consort with outlaws, enthralling them and using them to further their own ends. At the heart of an Aglæcwif is selfish greed, greed for power, greed for the life’s blood of others. Even so, their power is unquestionable, their knowledge of life and death deep, and thus the foolish or desperate will turn to them for help.



AGLÆCWIF

MEDIUM HUMANOID (HUMAN), CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	6 (–2)

Skills Arcana +6, Stealth +3, Survival +4

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Andøvan, Nørsk

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The aglæcwif’s innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

At will: *charm person*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*
3/day: *hold person*, *invisibility*
1/day: *bestow curse*, *enthrall*

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Curse Glare (recharge 5–6). The aglæcwif targets one creature she can see and curses them. The target must succeed at a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or suffer one of the following curses. The Aglæcwif cannot curse the same person twice in one day.

Curse of Blood. The target’s wounds bleed profusely and cause them to suffer 1d4 necrotic damage every time they lose hit points. When they do so, the Aglæcwif regains 1d4 hp.

Curse of Death. The target dies after failing two death saves. This effect lasts until the moon sets or rises.

Curse of Ill-Luck. The target suffers disadvantage on their attack rolls and saving throws until the moon sets or rises.

BARROW SKELETON, CHIEFTAIN

The stones rolled away from the barrow and a skeletal figure sauntered out as if he owned the place. Well, he did. In life, he was a noble of some kind, clad in green-tinted bronze armor, bearing a two-handed sword with an antler-shaped crosspiece. The regal plumage that once adorned his helmet was faded and tattered, but that did not detract from his regal bearing. Silently he pointed one hand toward us then whipped his great blade up in a challenge.

The Andøvan peoples who once inhabited the Northlands left behind great stone circles and sealed burial mounds. These barrows are said to be haunted, and with good cause. While not all barrow mounds are enchanted to animate their occupants, those that contain the remains and burial goods of the Andøvan chieftains certainly are. When disturbed, and this may be as easy to do as walking past one, the chieftains awaken and lead their entourage out to drive off the living or to bring justice to tomb robbers. While fearsome foes clad in ancient armor and bearing often magical weapons, the chieftains are honorable and often let mere trespassers go with a warning and a single pass of arms.

BARROW SKELETON, CHIEFTAIN

MEDIUM UNDEAD, LAWFUL NEUTRAL

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 48 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	2 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Andøvan, but cannot speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Eternal Undeath. Barrow skeletons are hard to destroyed. If reduced to 0 hp, they crumble into a pile of bones. If those bones are within a mile of their burial mound on the next full moon, they rise again at full hit points.

Scent of Justice. Barrow chieftains can smell crimes on others. To do so, they must be within 30 feet of a target and the target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or the barrow chieftain learns every crime they have committed. Furthermore, the barrow chieftain knows the distance and direction of every item of grave goods buried with him.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The chieftain makes two Broadsword attacks.

Broadsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.





BARROW SKELETON, WARRIOR

It crawled out of the ooze between the barrows, a risen Andøvan warrior in tarnished bronze armor hanging from its skeletal frame. Without a word, it stood erect and grabbed one of the ancient spears decorating the tomb. Armed and ready, it waited for us to violate the burial, standing an eternal watch over the resting place of its chieftain.

The Andøvan chieftains were buried alongside their closest retainers. These warriors who guarded their lord in life carry on an endless vigil in death. To be chosen to become an undead warrior was a high honor and one that many retainers fought for fiercely, and sometimes to the death, to be granted. Clad in their faded raiment and tarnished armor, these steadfast followers drive away the living and awaken their sleeping lord if danger threatens.

BARROW SKELETON, WARRIOR

MEDIUM UNDEAD, LAWFUL NEUTRAL

Armor Class 17 (ring mail and shield)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Andøvan, but cannot speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Eternal Undeath. Barrow skeletons are hard to destroyed. If reduced to 0 hp, they crumble into a pile of bones. If those bones are within a mile of their burial mound on the next full moon, they rise again at full hit points.

Loyal Followers. Warriors are animated by the magic that animates their chieftains. If more than a mile from their chieftain or if their chieftain is reduced to 0 hp, they fall to the ground in a heap of bones until the next full moon.

ACTIONS

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.



HOUND, BOG

It rose out of the mire, muck and slime dripping from its head. The beast looked like a large dog but shrunk and preserved by the magic that laid it low and the acidic bog it long rested in. Its hide was like old leather and creaked as it moved. Those eyes though, they were alive with red anger, and centuries in the swamp had not dulled its sharp teeth.

For reasons unknown to the current inhabitants of the Northlands, the Andøvan threw living creatures into bogs, enchanting them to rise again to terrorize the night. Many of these haunted bogs are near burial mounds, and some say these beasts are kept for when their Andøvan masters return. Bog hounds are one such, and the most common, bog beast. Their bodies preserved by the bog and the magic that animates them, they appear as leathery, emaciated versions of their living forms, often covered in the muck and mire of their resting place. Bog hounds rarely stir unless disturbed, but when the residents of the nearby barrows are agitated, the bog hounds pull themselves to the surface to hunt the living.

HOUND, BOG

MEDIUM UNDEAD, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 13 (natural)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 40 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception + 4

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft, scent, passive Perception 14

Languages Cannot speak but understands Andøvan

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Eternal Undeath. Bog hounds are hard to destroy. If reduced to 0 hp, they dissolve into a puddle of muck. If this puddle is within a mile of their burial bog on the next full moon, they rise again at full hit points.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

HUSCARL

Jarl's keep a set of household retainers known as huscarls. Most of these are warriors who strengthen the shieldwall and form a bodyguard for the jarl. During times of peace, they are the jarl's officers empowered to represent their jarl in all affairs pertaining to the administration of the jarldom such as keeping the peace and pursuing justice. Most huscarls have long served their jarl and risen to high rank through skill in battle and demonstration of their wisdom in peace.

HUSCARL

MEDIUM HUMANOID (HUMAN), LAWFUL NEUTRAL

Armor Class 18 (chainmail and shield)

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Nørsk

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

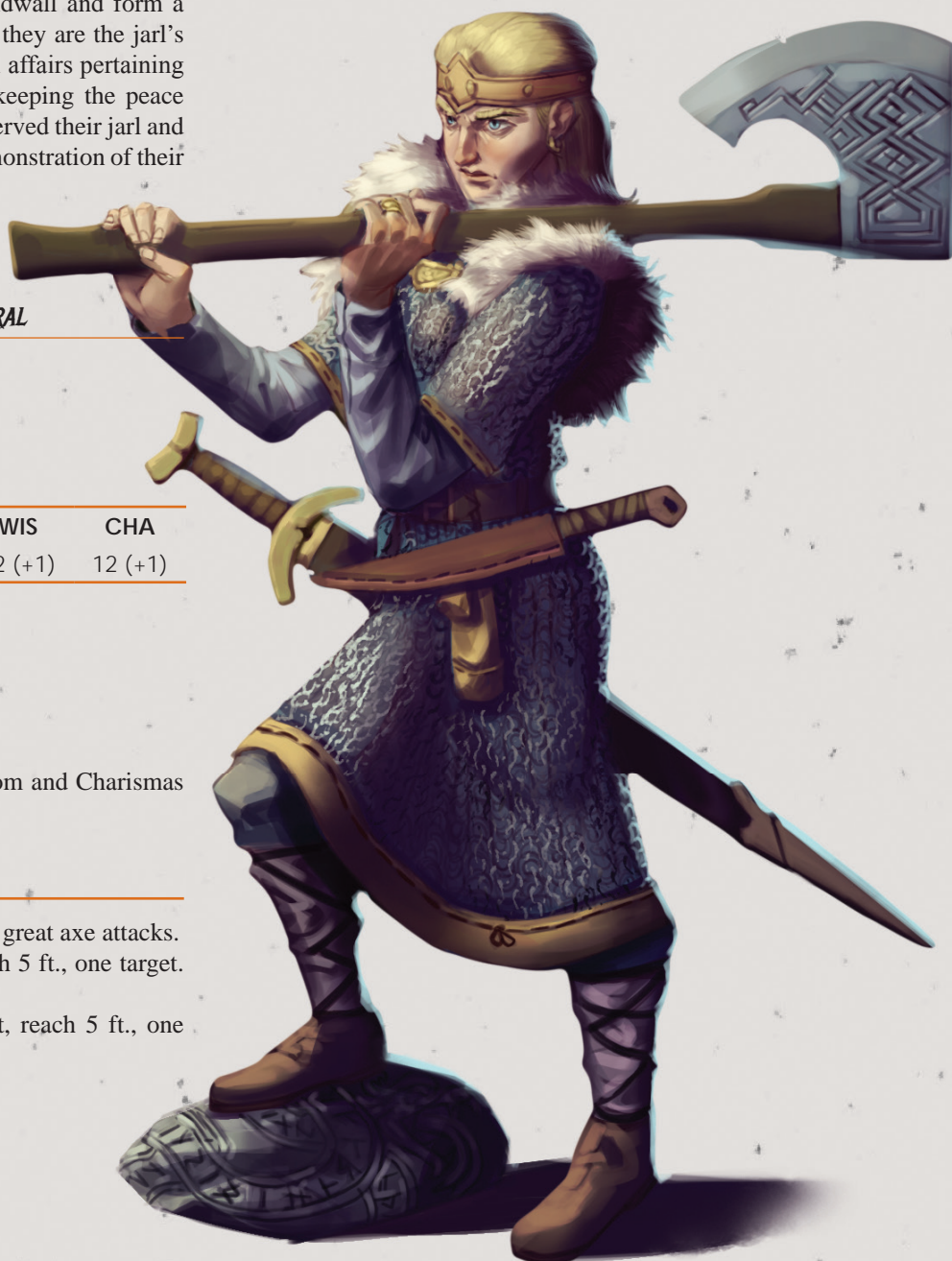
Loyal. Huscarls gain advantage on all Wisdom and Charisma saves when within sight of their jarls.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The huscarl makes two spear or great axe attacks.

Spear. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Great Axe. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.





PONY, TRONDHEIM

I had to laugh at this shaggy beast, barely 12 hands tall. It was a stout little fellow, like a full-sized horse but shorter. Sure enough, a grown adult could ride one. He never moved faster than a hard trot and certainly was no jumper, but he was a fine steed to get around the rocky terrain of Hordaland. His name was Hesten.

Trondheim ponies are the common riding horses of the Northlands and are often used as draft animals for small carts or plows. They are short ponies, ranging from 10 to 13 hands tall, but sturdily built. Despite their small size, they can carry a fully armed warrior to the battle. Not into battle, mind you, but they will get you there. Some wealthy jarls display their power by buying larger horses from the Southlands, but most prefer their native breed out of pride.

PONY, TRONDHEIM

MEDIUM BEAST, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 11 (natural)

Hit Points 15 (2d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Constitution +5

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Cannot speak, understands Nørsk

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Sturdy. Despite being Medium-sized creatures, Trondheim ponies can carry a Medium-sized rider. They count as a Large-sized creature for calculating encumbrance.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

TROLL, SWAMP

This large hulking brute has long, thick arms and legs, both of which end in sharpened and filthy claws. Its body is covered with moss and fungus, and its hair is dark brownish-green. Large, upward-curving fangs jut from its lower jaw.

Swamp trolls are large, stocky, dark gray or brown, hunched humanoids. Their flesh is slick and slimy like moss. Swamp trolls make their lairs deep in swampland and marshes away from more settled areas, but not far enough away where they cannot hunt humans if game and other food run scarce in the swamps.

Swamp trolls are seven-foot-tall, hunched humanoids and weigh about 400 pounds.

Swamp trolls are aggressive predators that attack living creatures on sight (especially when a swamp troll is hungry). When hunting, a swamp troll moves quietly along, easing closer to its prey and then finally striking with its claws and bite when within range. Swamp trolls rarely fight to the death unless threatened or hungry.

SWAMP TROLL

LARGE GIANT, CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 63 (6d10 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	9 (-1)	4 (-3)

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +1, Stealth +4 (+6 in swampy terrain)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Giant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Keen Smell. The swamp troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Regeneration. The troll regains 3 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Slimy. The swamp troll is covered swampy muck. Creatures attempting to grapple a swamp troll have disadvantage.

Swamp Stride. The swamp troll ignores nonmagical difficult terrain caused by swamp water or vegetation.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swamp troll makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6+4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6+4) piercing damage.



Appendix Two: New Magic Item

ANDØVAN BARRROW CHARM

WONDROUS ITEM, UNCOMMON

This necklace is made of small animal bones and laced with dead roses surrounding a faintly glowing blue crystal. Despite its obvious age, the delicate bones and flowers that comprise the necklace are still in good repair – every dried rose petal remains in place as if locked in time. The wearer of this charm and anyone designated within 30 feet can pass through ancient Andøvan burial

grounds without being disturbed by any of the undead that may inhabit those lands. The undead are aware of the individuals but do not consider them interlopers. This does not mean, however, that the undead follow the wearer's commands. In addition, any traps left by the ancient Andøvan will not be triggered by the wearer or those designated for protection. Most known Andøvan burial grounds are located in the Barrow Lands of the Hord Peninsula in the Northlands. It is possible that this charm could function at other Andøvan burial sites as well, but this has not been tested. The charm protects its wearer from sleep and charm-type magic.



Legal Appendix

Product Identity: The following items are hereby identified as Frog God Games LLC's Product Identity, as defined in the Open Game License version 1.0a, Section 1(e), and are not Open Game Content: product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures; characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product Identity. Previously released Open Game Content is excluded from the above list.

Notice of Open Game Content: This product contains Open Game Content, as defined in the Open Game License, below. Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of the Open Game License.

Designation of Open Game Content: Subject to the Product Identity Designation herein, the following material is designated as Open Game Content. (1) all monster statistics, descriptions of special abilities, and sentences including game mechanics such as die rolls, probabilities, and/or other material required to be open game content as part of the game rules, or previously released as Open Game Content, (2) all portions of spell descriptions that include rules-specific definitions of the effect of the spells, and all material previously released as Open Game Content, (3) all other descriptions of game-rule effects specifying die rolls or other mechanic features of the game, whether in traps, magic items, hazards, or anywhere else in the text, (4) all previously released Open Game Content, material required to be Open Game Content under the terms of the Open Game License, and public domain material anywhere in the text.

Use of Content from Tome of Horrors Complete: This product contains or references content from the Tome of Horrors Complete and/or other monster Tomes by Frog God Games. Such content is used by permission and an abbreviated Section 15 entry has been approved. Citation to monsters from the Tome of Horrors Complete or other monster Tomes must be done by citation to that original work.

OPEN GAME LICENSE Version 1.0a

The following text is the property of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. and is Copyright 2000 Wizards of the Coast, Inc. ("Wizards"). All Rights Reserved.

1. Definitions: (a) "Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b) "Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgement, or other form in which an existing work may be recast,

transformed, or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit, or otherwise distribute; (d) "Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes, and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity; (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos, and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures and characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes, and graphic, photographic, and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses, and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magic or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product Identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor; (g) "Use", "Used", or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate, and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content; (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open Game Content You are

copying, modifying, or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title, and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content, You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify, and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10. Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contribute Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12. Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13. Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14. Reformation: If any provisions of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15. COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Open Game License v 1.0a Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. System Reference Document 5.0 Copyright 2016, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.; Authors Mike Mearls, Jeremy Crawford, Chris Perkins, Rodney Thompson, Peter Lee, James Wyatt, Robert J. Schwalb, Bruce R. Cordell, Chris Sims, and Steve Townshend, based on original material by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Spring Rites, Copyright 2023, Frog God Games, Author Ken Spencer.



ENJOY A DEADLY SPRINGTIME IN THE NORTH

It is a time for festivals in honor of the gods and the end of a long winter. The jarl needs heroes to guard his daughters as they gather flowers for the feast of Freyja. What could be easier than that?

Come meet haughty Inga, troublesome Fastvi, and Little Runa, whose very birth was accompanied by dark omens and unfulfilled prophecy. Will the heroes protect the jarl's daughters when the spring day turns dark and deadly, or will this first trusted task be their last?

Spring Rites is designed for new characters and can be played on its own as an introduction to the dangerous Northlands setting.

