

VIKINGS OF LEGEND



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VIKINGS OF LEGEND

Credits

Author
Pete Nash

Legend Conversion
Bryan Steele

Editor
Charlotte Law

Layout and Graphic Design
Will Chapman

Interior Illustrations
Nick Egberts, Pete Johnston, Sara Forlenza
and Danilo Guida

Proofreading
Nick Robinson

Special Thanks
This book is dedicated to Lynn Willis,
without whom I would never have started
writing Historical RPG settings. You are my
mentor and inspiration.

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INTRODUCTION

'Sigurd goes forth before the banners, and has the good sword Gram in his hand, and smites down both men and horses, and goes through the thickest of the throng with both arms red with blood to the shoulder; and folk shrank aback before him wheresoever he went, nor would either helm or byrny hold before him, and no man deemed he had ever seen his like.

So a long while the battle lasted, and many a man was slain, and furious was the onset; till at last it befell, even as seldom comes to hand, when a land army falls on, that, do what they might, naught was brought about; but so many men fell of the sons of Hunding that the tale of them may not be told; and now when as Sigurd was among the foremost, came the sons of Hunding against him, and Sigurd smote therewith at Lyngi the king, and clave him down, both helm and head, and mail-clad body, and thereafter he smote Hjorward his brother atwain, and then slew all the other sons of Hunding who were yet alive, and the more part of their folk withal.'

— Volsunga Saga

Gods and giants, blood and battle, honour and treachery, swords and silver, vengeance and wergeld; these are the driving motivations for sagas and tales of mighty deeds. Will you be an exile fighting his way to freedom in the new lands across the sea? A member of the infamous Varangian Guard in Byzantium? Engage in a war against the evil wizards of the Lapps? Or perhaps cross the Bifrost Bridge to stand beside Thor and protect Asgard against the giants?

Worship the old gods. Sail the stormy seas. Wrestle bears. Drink sweet mead. Slay your enemies. Let no insult pass by. Honour your oaths. Pillage the priests of the weakling faith. Marry a shieldmaiden. Sire many children. Die with your sword in hand and be burned in your longship.

These are the paths to Valhalla. Be a Viking. Be a true man!

What this Book Contains

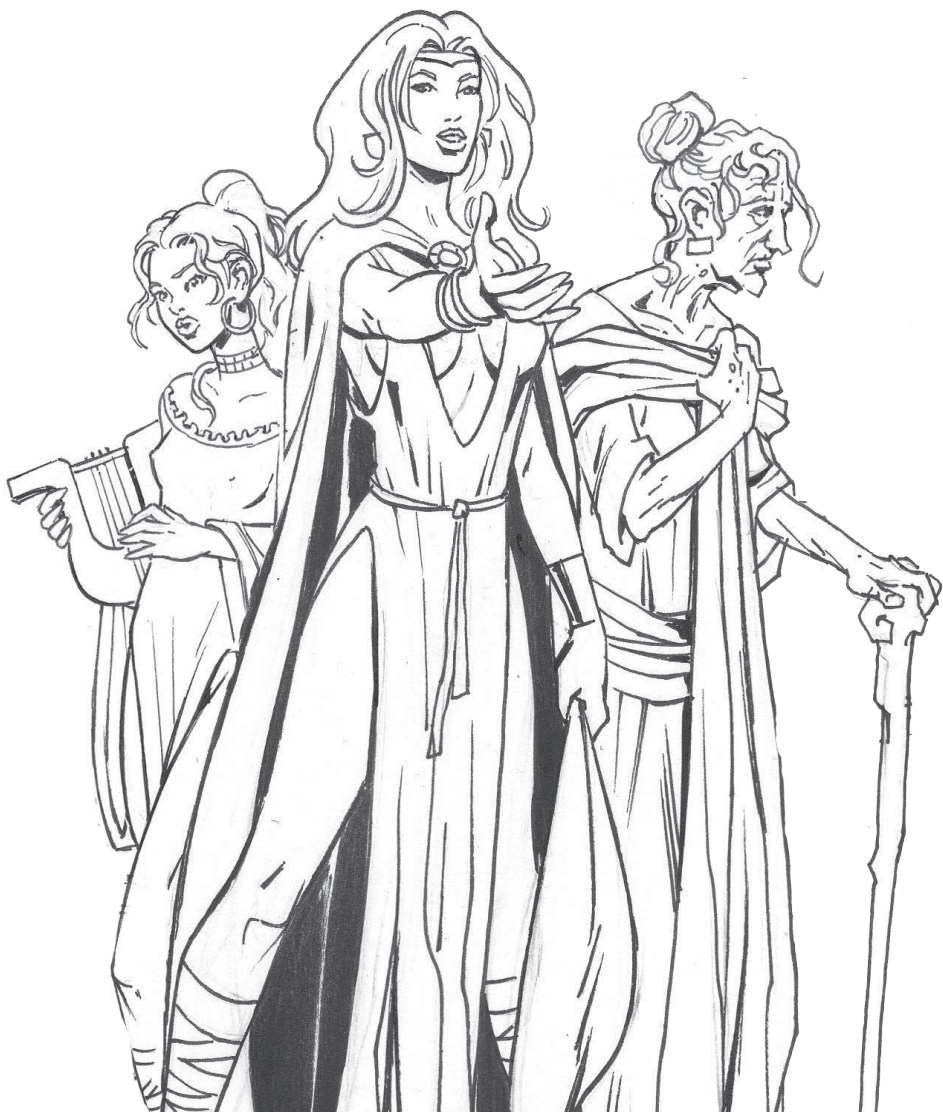
Welcome to *Vikings of Legend*, a historical source book concerning the Northmen, their myths, magic and monsters. Contained within these covers are all the basic rules and information needed to set a *Legend* campaign in the Viking period.

Whilst a considerable amount of space is dedicated to the history and society of the Viking age, this book is merely a broad overview of these powerful and fascinating peoples. To make this unique culture more accessible, the information included within is fairly generic and perhaps anachronistic considering the length of time the Viking age spans.

Included are in-depth descriptions of Viking society, religious belief, magic, supernatural creatures and so on. *Vikings of Legend* is designed to be the basis for not just historical games but ones of fantasy or myth too, where heroic Adventurers can fight by the side of their gods, travel to the other worlds and have divine gifts passed down to them by their fathers.

Games Masters are encouraged to use this book as a springboard to dive deeper into the history and culture of the Northmen, so that they can be captivated by the sagas or explore the deeper complexities of Viking religion and government.

The ideas presented here are simply guidelines. Feel free to change what you will, ignore rules, modify history. As always Your *Legend* May Vary. Now grab your Dane axe, turn the page and enjoy!



THE VIKING AGE

The same year also a great army of the pagans came with three hundred and fifty ships to the mouth of the river Thames, and sacked Dorobernia (Canterbury), which is the city of the Cantuarians, and also the city of London, which lies on the north bank of the river Thames, on the confines of Essex and Middlesex; but yet that city belongs in truth to Essex; and they put to flight Berthwulf, king of Mercia, with all the army, which he had led out to oppose them.

— The Life of King Alfred

The Vikings were a vibrant, often violent culture, which exploded from Scandinavia after the Migration Period of the Dark Ages. A dynamic, sea based people, they spread across the Baltic into modern day Russia, down to Byzantium and the Middle East, conquered the northern coast of France, settled the eastern regions of England and Scotland, took over the Scottish and north Atlantic Isles and colonised Iceland and Greenland.

Whilst primarily farmers and traders, the Vikings are best remembered as warlike raiders, which gave rise to their name. The word *Viking* probably originated from ‘*vik*’ the Scandinavian for bay, a suitable word for a sea faring culture; but by the end of the period the word was synonymous with ‘pirate’.

Traditionally, the Viking Age spans from the year 793 when raiders sacked Lindisfane, to the year 1066 at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. Somewhat of a simplification, the Vikings had been exploring long before their savage attack on a monastery brought them infamy in the pages of their contemporary historians. Raiding probably only followed once trade links had been established; accumulated wealth making such dangerous ventures worthwhile.

The Vikings themselves were a surprisingly homogenous culture bound by common language and extensive trade links. They lived along the coasts and rivers of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, wherever a ship could venture. However, despite a common kinship, they were still a loose collection of feuding tribes ruled by elected chieftains, often warring with one another or suffering internal anarchy.

Viking lands were not highly populated; most of Norway and Sweden especially were regions of inhospitable mountains or impenetrable forest. Clearing such land to plant crops took generations of back breaking work to excavate roots and stone from the soil and slowly nurture it to be able to support crops. Further north the deeper forests were frightening places jealously guarded by the Lapp tribes.

With the slow onset of stability, the population began to grow as petty kingdoms formed and merged. What cleared land existed was already settled, so young men not destined to inherit were faced with the choice of clearing their own land, earning enough wealth to purchase already productive steads, or sailing overseas to settle easier terrain. Since personal reputation was based on land ownership and warrior prowess, many took to the sea to build their status. Others simply fled their homelands as criminal outcasts or to escape political persecution.

Thus began a period of fear and terror for the coastal regions of Europe.

A Historical Overview

The greatest strength of the Vikings was their ships. Arguably the most advanced sailing vessels built during that period, their design allowed the Vikings to sail very long distances, with a greater degree of safety if facing rough weather.

Reliable sea transport allowed the Vikings to engage in widespread trade. Initially this was along the coast of Scandinavia and across the Baltic Sea where the central islands of Gotland and Öland became well populated trade centres.

The Danish and Norwegian Vikings turned their attention westwards. The ships that had initially helped to spread Viking culture along the coasts, allowed them to safely cross the North Sea, where the kingdoms of Britain lay unsuspecting of the looming danger.

The Norwegians expanded into Scotland and Ireland, ultimately colonising Iceland and Greenland. The Danes concentrated their efforts further south, eventually settling in the Danelaw (northern and eastern England) and Normandy in France after a series of raids that grew ever larger and more destructive, forcing the local rulers to pay off the invaders.

Slightly less aggressive than their brethren, the Swedish Vikings became more focussed on trade and exploration of the East, travelling deep into Russia and south along the Dneiper and Volga towards Byzantium.

The Vikings' First Contact with Britain and Ireland

During the eighth century the seven British Kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Wessex, Essex, Sussex and Kent were well settled and converted to Christianity. Mercia in ascendance over the other kingdoms under the powerful warrior King Offa, enabled some degree of stability that allowed a rise in wealth and goods.

In 789 three Norwegian Viking ships arrived in Wessex, landing at the small settlement of Portland. The reeve of King Beorhtric rode to meet the strangers, assuming they were traders and requested they accompany him to the villa of the Wessex King; whereupon the reeve and his men were slain. This was the first recorded instance of conflict with the Vikings and what provoked the attack is unknown.

Historical Accuracy

A major difficulty of any historical roleplaying supplement is the naming of historical figures and dating of their accomplishments. Although effort is made to present accurate information, many historians have conflicting opinions as to how names are spelled, when events actually occurred or even whether they did!

For ease of comprehension, the Scandinavian names, places and activities in this book use the anglicised version of their spelling. In addition, effort has been made to try to keep the names and dates mentioned in this book consistent. However, in the face of conflicting or contentious source material, specific choices were selected for which the author apologises if later proven inaccurate.

Remember that this supplement is designed to help set roleplaying adventures in the Viking Era, it is not a work of scholarship. Although Viking history is a fascinating subject, a good game probably just skims the surface of this knowledge. Sip not too deep of Mimir's Well!

The exploratory voyages were obviously scouting missions for land or plunder, for the next incidence of their presence was the inconceivable assault on the monastery of Lindesfarne. In 793 after many omens of high winds, lightning and fiery dragons in the sky, Viking raiders destroyed the holy place, looting its accumulated treasures and killing all the priests. No one had dared profane the sanctity of the island for almost 350 years and the shock was profound.

This was merely the beginning however. The following year in 794 another Northumbrian monastery, Jarrow, was attacked but the raiders were thwarted. More assaults occurred along the coast and up navigable rivers, becoming an almost yearly occurrence. The holy island of Iona was even raided three times in one decade. A total of 25 monastic raids were recorded in a period of 34 years.

Nowhere was particularly safe. Raiding spread around the capes of Scotland, the Western Isles falling into Viking hands and reached as far as Ireland. Between 830 and 845 raids on religious centres became severe, the annals recording over 50 attacks, nine of which spread to pillage large areas. Monasteries and large churches seemed to have been the main targets of these raids, presumably because of the prevalence of valuable objects and hostages located within them.

In 841 as part of a systematic plundering of Ireland, the Vikings built a series of fortifications, including one in Dublin. Overwintering in their *longphoirts*, they began building permanent settlements, which could act as a secure base for further invasions inland. The local Irish kings were too involved with their own bickering to put up a united defence, leaving the Vikings to plunder at will and briefly forced the Irish to become tributaries. Once they realised the danger they faced, the Irish kings began to

fight back, winning some significant victories, but it was too little too late. The Vikings held onto their coastal settlements, managing to form their own petty kingdoms and marrying into the local population. Their presence grudgingly accepted, the Vikings acted as mercenaries for the Irish kings.

Infighting between the Vikings occurred in 849 when a fleet of 120 ships arrived in Ireland to subjugate the Vikings already settled there. Two years later another Danish invasion was beaten off by the Irish Vikings.

Then in 853 the Norwegian Viking Olaf the White came to extract tribute from the entirety of Ireland and along with his brothers Imar and Auisle became prominent leaders of Dublin. Things seemed to quiet down for a period until 866 before he left to overrun Pictland and continued onward to Strathclyde, returning to Dublin in 870 with 200 ships, a vast treasure and large numbers of captives.

After this came a gradual decline in the power of the Irish Vikings, their *longphoirs* were destroyed one-by-one; although plenty of independent Viking raids continued to plunder the hinterlands. Eventually however, the leadership of Dublin became divided and Viking forces split into two factions under Sitric, a son of Imar and Earl Sigfrith. Sitric was killed in 896 during the dynastic feud.

In this weakened state, the Vikings could not resist the combined forces of the Irish kingdoms of Brega and Leinster who drove the pagans out of Ireland in 902, sorely wounded and forced to abandon many ships.

The Danish Conquest of Britain

By 865 the Danes began to settle in Britain. An invasion led by the brothers Halfdan and Ivar the Boneless arrived in East Anglia and demanded tribute from King Edmund in exchange for peace. A deal was wrought that allowed the Danes to overwinter in the kingdom before venturing north to attack the Kingdom of Northumbria, which was suffering a civil war between its deposed King Osberht and his usurper Ælla.

York fell to the invaders in 866 and was sacked and burned. Afterwards the town was renamed as Jorvik and became the Danish capital in Britain. The following year Osberht and Æella formed an alliance against the Danes but were killed in battle and the Vikings marched south. Alarmed by this outcome Æthelred, King of Wessex summoned his army against the Vikings, who remained safe behind fortifications in Nottingham and refused to fight. Fearing yet more devastation, King Burgred of Mercia ceded part of his kingdom to the Danes in exchange for a permanent peace between them.

Flushed with their success, in 869 Ivar the Boneless demanded further tribute from King Edmund of Anglia. The king refused, so the next year Ivar returned with an army and defeated Edmund at Hoxne. He sacrificed the king to Odin in the 'blood eagle' ritual, adding East Anglia to the Danish conquests of Northumbria and parts of Mercia.

Dreading the subjugation of the whole of Britain, King Æthelred and his brother Alfred rushed to stop the Danes at Reading but were defeated with heavy losses. Retreating back to Ashdown, the Danes pursued the Wessex army and engaged them a final time in early January 871. Whilst Æthelred prayed in his tent, Alfred led the army and defeated the Danes, killing five of their leading Jarls. Further skirmishing between the forces led to Æthelred's death and Alfred inherited the throne.

Facing overwhelming odds with the landing of a second Danish army in Britain, Alfred undertook a style of guerrilla warfare but had to pay off the Danes to gain respite for his troops. The Danes took this opportunity to turn north and finish off Mercia. King Burgred fought for three years in vain, eventually forced to flee to Rome in 874 when his kingdom finally fell. Ivar the Boneless died during the campaign and was succeeded by Guthrum the Old.

In 875 the Danes settled in Dorsetshire, within the borders of Wessex. Unable to react, Alfred sued for peace, which the Danes treacherously broke the following year capturing Wareham and then Exeter in 877. Forced to react, Alfred laid siege to the Danes who patiently awaited relief from reinforcements sailing from Scandinavia. Unfortunately most of the fleet, over 100 ships, was sunk during a storm and the Danes retreated northwards back to Mercia.

The year of 878 finally saw the turn of fate against the Danes. Guthrum the Old manoeuvred his forces to pin Alfred in his winter quarters, whilst a second Danish army landed in Wales to cut off his escape. This second force was defeated by an inferior number of Saxons, led by a Wessex ealdorman named Odda, who launched an attack whilst the Danes slept. Freed from this threat, Alfred was able to defeat the main army of Guthrum's Danes, pursuing them back to Chippenham where they surrendered.

Forced to renounce paganism and be baptised as a Christian, Guthrum retired to East Anglia. Six years later in 884 he attacked the Kingdom of Kent but was defeated soundly and lost many of the lands that had been won previously. In order to promote peace, King Alfred established the borders of Danish territory, forming the Danelaw – the region extending over the north and east of Britain, roughly along a line between London and Chester, within which the Danes had self-rule.

The peace brought by the Danelaw lasted until 903. Æthelwald, the eldest son of Æthelred, angered by his failure to seize the throne of Wessex, sought refuge with the Danes of Northumbria. Seeking some way to regain power he travelled south to East Anglia, where he incited the local Danes to break the peace treaty and attack his cousin King Edward the Elder of Wessex.

After ravaging Mercia, Æthelwald and the Danes retired to East Anglia but were chased by Edward and his combined army. Although the Danes managed to ambush the Kentish contingent, a great mutual slaughter ensued, which led to the deaths of both Æthelwald and the Danish King Eohric.

This setback persuaded the Danes to desist their aggression until 911 when the Northumbrian Danes wrought havoc on Mercia for a second time, only to be defeated by King Edward of Wessex and Ealdorman Æthelred of Mercia at the Battle of Tettenhall.

Attracted by its wealth, in 919 an expedition of Norwegian Vikings led by King Rægnold of Dublin attacked and took Jorvik, displacing Danish authority. The following year King Edward of Wessex and Mercia, already suzerain lord of Essex and East Anglia, was accepted as overlord by the Norse, Scots and Welsh – indicating that the Danelaw was already faltering as an independent nation. He died in 924 and passed on the combined kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex to his son Æthelstan, who in turn, after bringing Northumbria back under Saxon control, was declared *totius rex Britanniae*, or Lord of all Britain, and was succeeded by his son Edmund in 939.

The young British King soon lost control of Northumbria, the Five Boroughs and parts of Mercia, so that in 941, the inhabitants of Jorvik chose King Olaf Sigtryggsson of Dublin as their co-ruler. Angered by their breaking of faith, Edmund immediately re-captured the Five Boroughs and Mercia during 942 and resisted a series of raids by Olaf until 944 whereupon the two foes formed an alliance and Olaf was baptised, then later deposed as king.

Edmund died several years later, acceded by his son Eadred whose authoritarian domination of Northumberland caused the Danes to violate their oaths, electing Eirik Blood-Axe as their new king. To punish their disloyalty, Eadred raided the Danelaw inflicting much destruction. Although beaten back at the Battle of Castleford, Eadred's threats convinced the fickle Northumbrians to renounce Eirik and pay compensation.

Never a Viking to stay down, Eirik returned to rule Northumbria in 952, this time reigning for two years. He was eventually expelled by his own people in 954. The Danelaw finally fell under permanent Saxon rule, temporarily ending any prospect of an independent Viking kingdom in Britain.

The Norwegian Re-conquest of Ireland

Driven from Dublin in 902, the Viking exiles settled much of the Western Isles of Scotland and took up fighting against the Picts; forgetting their previous hold on Ireland.

The brief respite of the Irish ended in 914 when a great sea fleet of pagans landed at Waterford and erected a winter camp. The following year, more Vikings arrived and the combined force proceeded to ravage the kingdom and churches of Munster.

In 917 two exiles, Ragnall and his Kinsman Sitric arrived back in Ireland and took over control. Sitric fought a battle against an army of Leinstermen, killing the King and Bishop of Leinster, which allowed him to retake Dublin. Ragnall, failing to win anything in Ireland, took his Waterford fleet to northern Britain and fought a series of campaigns, which resulted in his Kingship of both Jorvik and Northumberland, binding the two under a single dynasty.

Niall, King of Tara marched on Dublin in 919 but fell at the Battle of Islandbridge along with a great many other Irish leaders. Several years later Sitric left Dublin to claim the throne of Jorvik when Ragnall died, ruling it for six years from 921 to 927.

Dublin was left in the hands of Godfrid a notorious raider and slaver, who initiated half a decade of severe raids in an attempt to conquer the lands of Armagh. He was thwarted by the valiant defence of King Muirchertach of Ui Neill.

When Sitric died leaving Northumbria in the hands of Æthelstan, Godfrid foolishly hurried to claim Jorvik, leaving Dublin unsupervised. In his absence Tomar mac Ailche, the powerful Viking lord of Limerick, which he had conquered in 922, negotiated with Godfrid's enemies and briefly took Dublin – precipitating a long term Dublin-Limerick struggle when Godfrid returned, finally driven off by the people of Jorvik. When he died in 934 Godfrid was remembered as a 'most cruel king of the Norsemen'.

His son, Olaf Guthfrithsson, ultimately dealt with Limerick in 937, destroying its fleet and bringing back its leader as a captive to Dublin. He left for Jorvik in 939 and died two years later, the King of Jorvik, Northumbria, Danish Mercia, Dublin and wielded power over Scotland and the Isles.

His successor Olaf Sigtryggsson briefly ruled as King of Jorvik but was expelled in a coup led by Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. Returning to Ireland he found the war between the Irish and Vikings had worsened. Dublin was sacked by King Congalach of Brega and King Broen of Leinster. The destruction was total, every ship and building burned, the warriors were killed, women and children enslaved. Only a quarter of the population survived the massacre by fleeing in boats.

For his success Congalach was made King of Tara. Olaf was offered an alliance and granted rule over Dublin. Together they fought a series of battles against Ruaidri ua Canannain, a rival for High Kingship of Ireland. When their combined forces were defeated at the Battle of Slane in 947, Olaf lost his kingship of Dublin and returned to Jorvik in 949 where he ruled briefly until 952 when Eirik Blood-Axe replaced him.

From 950-980 Dublin acted as a typical petty kingdom involving itself in Irish politics. During this period Olaf Sigtryggsson fought many battles in and against an endless succession of raids. However, in 980 he lost a disastrous battle at Tara, which ended in a 'red slaughter' for the unified Dublin and Hebridean army. Although several Irish kings died, Olaf's son Ragnall also fell and Dublin was forced to pay a heavy tribute to King Mael Sechnaill of Ui Neill. Olaf abdicated his authority and retired to the Island of Mona.

The Irish Struggle against the Vikings

In 999 the up and coming King of Munster, Brian Boruma mac Cennetig, laid siege to the city of Dublin, which was then ruled by Sigtrygg Silkbeard. Aided by his Irish cousin, Mael Morda King of Leinster, the Viking decided to meet Brian's forces in the field. The battle was fierce, lasting the entire day and resulted in the loss of 4,000 Leinstermen and Vikings.

With no defenders remaining, Dublin was sacked again but Brian decided to reinstate Sigtrygg as King, granting the Viking one of his daughters in marriage. Calling upon his new vassal, the next year Brian led a combined Munster, Leinster and Dublin army against the High King Mael Sechnaill. Although the offensive was defeated by the cunning construction of two bridges, which prevented Brian's Viking ships from using the River Shannon, the High King eventually surrendered his title in 1002.

Over the following decade Brian assumed the High Kingship in practice as well as name. The Viking troops under his authority fought against the province of Ulster, which refused to acknowledge his authority, using their naval skills to launch sea based attacks, which the Ulstermen could not block.

In 1013 the disgruntled Mael Morda, King of Leinster, insulted by a member of the High King's family, rose in revolt. In retaliation the southern half of Leinster was ravaged by an army from Munster under the command of Murchad, one of Brian's sons. Joining his father their combined forces laid siege to Dublin. However, the High King's army ran out of supplies first and was forced to abandon the blockade in late December.

Mael Morda realising that Brian would return in the spring, sent his cousin Sigtrygg King of Dublin to fetch troops from outside of Ireland. He sailed to Orkney and the Isle of Man, gathering the support of Viking mercenaries willing to fight for loot.

Brian gathered a large army comprised of the men of Munster, Southern Connacht and Meath. Overconfident with his superiority of numbers, he sent a large mounted detachment to raid southern Leinster in order to cause the Leinster troops to desert to defend their homes. All would have been well, save for an argument with Mael Sechnaill mac Domnaill, causing the King of Meath to withdraw with all of his men.

Fatefully, Sigurd Hlodvirsson Earl of Orkney and Brodir of the Isle of Man arrived not long after with the promised reinforcements for Sigtrygg. In the resulting Battle of Clontarf, Brian was killed but almost all of the Viking mercenaries and their leaders also fell.

With their warriors slain, the Dublin Vikings ceased to be a political force. Sigtrygg who had garrisoned the city during the battle, remained King of Dublin until his death in 1042. Lacking any form of power in Ireland, the Vikings instead turned to conquests in England and Scotland once Cnut became king in 1016.

The Norsemen of the Atlantic

The ships of the Vikings allowed the Norse to cross the rough and turbulent seas of the North Atlantic. Rowing and sailing, they could reach remote islands, some of which, like the Shetlands and Orkneys, had been inhabited since Neolithic times. Other islands such as the Faeroes and Iceland itself were simply remote and uninhabited save for Christian hermits seeking isolation.

Many Vikings settled the occupied islands, marrying into the local population and helping to weave the isles into their trade routes, bringing a degree of prosperity where once only grim survival existed. The unoccupied islands were simply colonised by whoever wanted to live that far away, adopting a lifestyle of fishermen and whalers to support themselves on the bleak atolls.

Ingolfur Arnarson, a Norwegian chieftain, was the first settler of Iceland, arriving with his household and family in 874. Finding that the land stretched for many miles, he constructed a small settlement on a headland on the southwest coast of the island. With little else but open grass and soft porous volcanic rock, his farmstead was built of turf. The settlement supported itself with grazing sheep and fishing. Sailing back home to collect timber and other vital supplies, knowledge of the colonisation soon spread, causing a wave of Norwegians, displaced by the confiscations of Harald Finehair, to flock to Iceland in search of lands away from the persecution of kings.

Further discoveries were made in the seas to the west of Iceland. In 978 Snæbjorn Galti was the first Viking to navigate to Greenland, following up on tales of its first sighting by Gunnbjorn Ulfsson years before when he had been driven off course by bad weather. Four years later Erik the Red, declared an outlaw for murder, decided to sail west to see if Snæbjorn had been telling the truth and became the first man to temporarily settle Greenland as he named it.

Returning to Iceland he organised a massive expedition of 25 ships packed with 500 people and everything needed to establish a new colony. Eleven ships failed to reach their destination but the remainder established two settlements, the eastern one at Brattahlid and a western one, further north near Nuuk.

Erik's son Leif did not rest at his father's seat of power but continued exploring westwards, spurred on by news of far off lands reported by Bjarni Herjolfsson. Sailing out with a small crew, Leif set foot on a number of places he named Helluland, Markland and Vinland, which roughly translate to flat stone-land, wood-land and wine-land. A temporary settlement was established and Vinland probably continued to be infrequently visited as a source of timber for the wood-poor colonies on Greenland and Iceland.

Greenland's remote settlements flourished, at their height providing homes for nearly 3,000 people. It survived as a nation for five centuries before the gradual cooling of climate change slowly froze their fields and pastures, bringing starvation and ultimately conflict with the native Inuit tribes.

The Persecution of the Franks

Whilst the petty British and Irish kingdoms constantly weakened themselves with internecine feuding, the Frankish kingdom was a strong empire that had unified much of western and central Europe under the rule of Charlemagne. The strength and power of the Franks was legendary; thus many Vikings avoided the Frankish coastline, preferring to raid easier targets. Once Charlemagne died however, his empire began to slowly fracture over the succeeding decades.

Finally between 834 and 839 the Vikings began attacking Frisia and Aquitaine, slowly growing in confidence. Eventually realising that no organised resistance existed, from 843 onwards the raiders began founding permanent settlements along the coast. The destabilising threat of raids encouraged local rulers to pay off the invaders in exchange for moving on. This tactic worked but proved to be cripplingly expensive in the long term, the chance of earning tribute only encouraging larger raiding fleets to return in subsequent years. In 845 Paris was raided for the first time and forced to pay a large tribute of 7,000 pounds of silver, only to be raided again in 857 and 861.

Between 882 and 911 the Vikings grew bolder yet, blazing a path of utter destruction on shrinking Frankish soil. Ultimately, finding no other way to prevent the sea wolves from ravaging his kingdom, King Charles the Simple offered the lands around Rouen to the Norwegian Viking leader Hrolfr the Ganger in exchange for protecting the Franks against all future raiding. The clever move worked, using one set of Vikings to guard against the others. To seal the bargain, Hrolfr was baptised and became known as Rollo, whilst the dukedom was renamed Normandy – or land of the North men.

Over the next couple of centuries Rollo's descendents continued to rule the province, slowly adding to its boundaries and even raiding far off lands in Italy. The future William the Conqueror is of direct lineage from his Viking ancestor.

The Origin of the Rus

Whilst the Norwegians and Danes spread westwards, the Swedish Vikings of Gotland and Svealand began exploring eastwards. The motivation of these expeditions was trade, initially exchanging goods across the Baltic. Once traders became aware of the market opportunities further south, they began using the major rivers of eastern Europe to transport goods between the Baltic and the Black Sea, where lay mighty Byzantium, or Miklagard as the Vikings named it.

The Vikings who travelled these regions were called Varangians, which simply meant sea-farers. From the mid eighth century many Varangians settled in the important inland trading post of Ladoga, which lay on the Volkov River that connected it to Novgorod. Eventually trade was supplemented with raids and during 859 the Varangians extracted servile tribute from the coastal Finnic and Slavic tribes. All too soon these extortions drove the tribes to rebel against the raiders. In 862 the Varangian Rus were forced back to Scandinavia but the tribes bickered amongst themselves, resulting in the Varangians being invited back to enforce peace.

The chief amongst the Varangian Rus was Rurik and he took up the reins of authority, ruling over the region. In addition to controlling Ladoga and the Byzantine trade routes, he founded a new settlement named Holmgard near Novgorod, which he decreed as the capital of the Rus lands, eventually to become known as Russia. Over the next few centuries the Varangians intermarried with the local Slavic tribes, gradually losing their Scandinavian roots.

Many Varangians sailed up the Volkov, Lovat and Dnieper rivers creating new settlements or conquering existing towns along the trade route. The greatest threat faced by traders was the nomadic Pecheneg who often attacked boats as they were portaged around seven sets of rapids on the Dnieper River.

In 882 Prince Oleg, Rurik's successor, launched an attack on Kiev, an important town half way along the trade route, which was under the control of two Varangian leaders Askold and Dir. After capturing the town, Oleg moved the Rus capital there, where it remained until 968 when the nomadic Pechenegs tried to destroy it but were forced to retire after a fruitless siege.

Prince Oleg strengthened the Rus hold over trade when in 907 he launched a huge invasion force south against Byzantium. The great city sued for peace and paid a tribute of linen, silk, gold, wine and fruit. To ensure a continuing peace treaty, Oleg negotiated trading rights between Byzantium and the Rus, which was reprinted in 911, allowing, amongst other things, for Varangians to join the Emperor's personal guard. Many Viking chieftains and kings serve in the Varangian Guard before returning home and ascending to a throne.

Varangian Trade Goods

The Trade Route between the Baltic and Byzantium was used to carry a wide range of diverse merchandise.

The Baltic regions provided high quality timber suitable for ship building, exotic furs, uniquely flavoured honey, slaves and amber. Scandinavia produced high quality iron ingots, armour, weapons, wool and carved wooden or ivory handicrafts. Byzantium in return offered spices, glass tableware, dyed silks and linens, wine, gold and silver.

The Rurik dynasty continued to thrive throughout the Viking Age, intermittently suffering a number of struggles for succession, which resulted in the kin slaying of numerous brothers seeking the position of Grand Prince of Rusland.

Viking Timeline

Although the previous section has given a rough overview of Viking history, albeit somewhat biased towards Scandinavian expansion, unfortunately not everything can be covered in detail. To help Games Masters identify when famous events occurred or which king was in power when, a timeline has been provided of history across the Viking world.

Those readers who are unfamiliar with Viking history are encouraged to take these names and events and look them up on the internet for more detail. The following table should provide an invaluable resource for planning historically based campaigns.

Viking Timeline

Year	Event
c. 436	Legendary time of Sigurd, son of Sigmund, slayer of the dragon Fafnir and central figure of the Volsung Saga.
c. 480	Legendary time of King Hadding of Denmark. Raised by giants his epic is filled with fantastic creatures, battles and magic.
c. 520	Legendary time of Beowulf, killer of Grendel and dragon slayer.
c. 550	Legendary time of Hrolf Kraki, King of Denmark. His tale is filled with berserkers, witches and all manner of shape-shifting creatures.
789	Vikings begin their attacks on England.
789	The first Viking attack on England.
793	Vikings' first raid in England. The monastery of St. Cuthbert at Lindisfarne is sacked.
793– 795	Norwegian Vikings attack the monasteries of Jarrow, Monkwearmouth, Rechru, St. Patrick and St. Columbia, sacking them with speed and efficiency.
795	Vikings approach the Irish sea and attacks on Ireland begin.
795	Vikings sack the Irish monastic foundation on Iona. They attacked again in 801 and once more in 806. The survivors flee to the Irish mainland.
797	Vikings attack Lambay, Ireland.
798	Vikings attack Isle of Man.
798	Vikings launch several attacks on the Franks.
799	Aquitaine is raided by Vikings.
800	The Oseberg Viking longship is buried about this time.
800	Skiringsal and Birka trade centres are founded (approximately).
800	Frankish coastal defences are organised by Charlemagne.
800	The Elder Futhark is replaced by the Younger or Sixteen-Rune Futhark in Scandinavia.
800– 810	Reign of King Godfrid of Denmark.
802	Vikings attack the holy monastery of Columbas on the isle Iona of the Hebrides.
805	Vikings attack the holy monastery of Columbas for the second time.
810	Frisia is ravaged by the Danish king Godfred.
810	Death of Charlemagne.
810– 827	Reign of King Harald Klak of Denmark.
813	The magnificent Oseberg ship is built.
820	Vikings conquer the Isle of Man and establish permanent settlements.
820	Vikings attack Flanders and approach the mouth of river Seine.
822– 823	Archbishop Ebo of Rheims undertakes a mission to Denmark.
827– 853	Reign of King Horik Godfredsson of Denmark.

Year	Event
832	Vikings raid Armagh in Ireland three times in one month.
834	The Oseberg ship is interred in its burial mound.
834	Vikings approach the River Thames, England.
835	Danish raiders ally with the Cornish against the rule of King Ecgbheht of Wessex.
837	60 Viking longships enter the mouth of the Boyne and another 60 sail up to Liffey.
837	The Vikings devastate Ireland, ravaging her churches, sanctuaries and shrines.
839	Thorgisl with a big Norse Viking fleet conquers Ireland and settles permanently.
839	Thorgisl leads an impressive army into the north of Ireland, conquering Ulster and founds the harbour-stronghold of Dublin.
840–870	Reign of King Halfdan the Black of Norway.
841	Vikings burn Lillebonne, Caudebec and Rouen and destroy the abbeys of Jumieges and St Wandrille.
843	Vikings of Vestfold establish a power base on the isle Noirmountier (Loire) and raid Nantes.
844	A group of Danes sail up the Guadalquivir and attack Seville but are repulsed.
845	Vikings, led by Ragnor Lodbrok, travel up the River Seine in France. The French King pays a tribute of bullion worth 7,000 pounds of silver to prevent the sacking of Paris
845	Al-Ghazal's embassy to Turgeis, King of the Vikings in Ireland.
845	Thorgisl is killed by the Irish, drowned in Lough Owel.
851	Danish Vikings land in Ireland and join forces with the Irish to become the rulers of Ireland.
851	First Norse raid on Wales.
852	The Swedish Rus become dominant among the Slavs of the Volga.
853	Olaf the White conquers Ireland with a big Viking fleet.
853–873	Reign of King Rorik of Denmark.
857	Vikings raid Paris again.
858	Vikings capture the abbot of St Denis and claim ransom.
859	The Danish chieftain Hastein (the cruel, harsh, destructive, troublesome, wild, ferocious, lustful, lawless, death-dealing, arrogant, ungodly and much else besides!) joins forces with another Viking leader and leads a fleet of 60 ships through the straits of Gibraltar and raids Algeciras and the coasts of Morocco.
860	Varangians attack Byzantium.
860	Hastein and his fleet sack Luna in Italy.
860	Hrafna-Floki sets out from the Faeroe Isles to locate Iceland, previously discovered by Naddoddr and originally named Snaeland (Snowland).

Year	Event
860's	Ragnar Loddbrok killed at York.
861	The third big attack on Paris by Vikings.
862	Rurik a Varangian chieftain assumes command of Ladoga, a prosperous trading post that sits on the Baltic-Byzantium trade route and builds the settlement of Holmgard near Novgorod.
862–879	Reign of Prince Rurik over the Rus.
863	Xanten in the Rhinelands is destroyed by Vikings.
866	Danish Vikings establish a kingdom in York, England.
870	Harald Fairhair begins his efforts to gain full control of Norway.
871	Alfred the Great becomes king of Wessex; the Danish advance is halted in England.
871	Olaf the White returns to Norway, his brother Ivarr becomes ruler of Ireland.
872–945	Harald Finehair defeats his opponents and rules Norway, forcing many Norwegians to flee west towards Iceland.
873–891	Kings Sigfred and Halfdan are co-rulers of Denmark.
874	Ivarr the Boneless dies, his sons continue attacks on north-eastern England.
874	Settlement of Iceland begins.
876	Rolf the Ganger's (Rollo) first raids in the Seine.
878	Alfred the Great defeats Guthrum and forces the Viking leader to accept Christianity.
878	Harald Finehair conquers the Orkney Islands causing more displacement.
879	Death of Rurik.
882–912	Reign of Prince Oleg the Wise (Oleg of Novgorod) over the Rus.
882	Oleg the Wise conquers Kiev, moving the Rus capital from Novgorod there.
885	A huge fleet of Viking ships attack Paris but fail to conquer the city.
885	Harald Fairhair finally unites Norway as one kingdom, the first in Scandinavia.
885	Birth of Eirik Blood-Axe.
886	Alfred divides England with the Danes under the Danelaw pact.
890	The Gokstad ship is built.
890's	Reign of King Helgi of Denmark, followed by Swedish rule of Denmark under King Olaf the Swede.
891	The Vikings at Noirmountier are finally beaten.
894	Turf-Einar, son of Rognwald and half brother of Rollo, becomes Earl of Orkney.
900	The Vikings raid along the Mediterranean coast.
902	The Irish seize Dublin from the Vikings, ruling it for the next 15 years.

Year	Event
907	Oleg the Wise leads an army and 200 ships to Byzantium. Panic-stricken, the city pays a large tribute and agrees to a commercial treaty.
910–990	Life of poet/warrior Egill Skallagrimsson.
911	Viking chieftain Rollo is granted land by the Franks, founding Normandy in France.
912	Oleg the Wise dies from a snake bite, fulfilling a prophesy.
912–945	Reign of Prince Igor of Kiev over the Rus.
917	Vikings recapture Dublin.
919	Birth of Haakon the Good.
920	Ulfjotr the Norwegian brings the Gulathing Law to Iceland, where it is used as a model upon which Icelandic Law is based.
922	Ibn-Fadlan, an Arab ambassador to the Scandinavian Rus along the Volga, writes his account of their customs, including a full description of a ship/cremation funeral.
928	Kings Æthelstan and Harald Fairhair join in a treaty to gain control of the Norse Vikings.
930	The first <i>national</i> democracy (Althing) is founded at Thingvellir, Iceland.
930	Eirik Blood-Axe proclaimed co-ruler of Norway with his father Harold Fairhair.
930–1011	Life of Njal of Berthorsknoll.
931	Death of Rollo, founder of Normandy.
933	Death of Harald Fairhair.
934	Haakon The Good deposes Eirik and becomes king of Norway.
936–958	Reign of King Gorm the Old of Denmark.
939	Olaf Guthfrithsson becomes King of Northumberland.
941	Rus Vikings attack Byzantium.
945–962	Reign of Olga of Kiev as regent over the Rus, who attempts to introduce Christianity but fails.
947	Eirik Blood-axe gains control of York.
949	Olaf Sigtryggsson defeats Eirik Blood-axe, who flees.
952	Olaf Sigtryggsson driven out and Eirik Blood-axe regains control of York.
954	Death of Eirik Blood-Axe at Steinmore in England at the hands of King Edmund.
958–986	Reign of King Harald Bluetooth of Denmark, Denmark adopts Christianity.
961	Death of Haakon the Good after the battle on the island of Stord. Norway divides into four kingdoms.
961–970	Reign of Harald Greycloak of Norway. A son of Eirik Blood-Axe, he kills off his rivals to reunite Norway.

Year	Event
962–972	Reign of Prince Sviatoslav over the Rus, who during his term subdued the Khazars, Bulgars, Alans and other Slavic tribes.
968	Birth of Olaf Tryggvason.
970	Death of Harald Greycloak, killed in a plot organised by Haakon Sigurdsson, the vengeful son of one of the men Harald slew to seize power.
970–995	Reign of King Erik the Victorious of Sweden, who won the Battle of Fyrisvellir after sacrificing to Odin and promising that if victorious, he would give himself to Odin in 10 years.
972	Death of Sviatoslav, killed by the Pechenegs in an ambush (instigated by the Emperor of Byzantium) and his skull turned into a chalice for their khan Kurya.
972–980	Reign of Prince Yaropolk over the Rus, during which time he fought several wars with his brothers for the succession.
974	Emperor Otto II of Germany attacks Denmark but fails because of Norwegian aid.
975–995	Reign of Jarl Haakon Sigurdsson over Norway, as a vassal of Harald Bluetooth.
976	Angelsey is absorbed by the Norse Kingdom of the Isles.
978	Snæbjorn Galti is the first Viking to navigate to Greenland, following up on tales of its first sighting by Gunnbjorn Ulfsson.
980–1015	Reign of Prince Vladimir the Great over the Rus, after defeating his brother Yaropolk with an army of Varangian mercenaries.
980	Norse and Danish Vikings start a new wave of attacks to gain control of England.
982	Erik the Red, accused of murder, is exiled from Iceland for three years. So sails west and establishes the first settlement in Greenland.
985–1014	Reign of King Svein Forkbeard of Denmark after deposing his father Harald Bluetooth, who dies fighting the rebellion.
985	The Jomsvikings, a staunchly pagan mercenary warband, lead a Danish fleet to attack Jarl Haakon Sigurdsson but are firmly defeated at Hjorungavagr.
986	Viking ships sail in Newfoundland waters.
991	Viking chieftain Olaf Tryggvason, along with 93 ships, defeats Earl Byrhtnoth at Maldon. This forces King Æthelred to pay tribute, the first Danegeld of 10,000 pounds of silver.
994	Æthelred pays a second Danegeld of 16,000 pounds in silver to King Svein Forkbeard and Olaf Tryggvason in order to save London from being sacked.
995	Jarl Haakon Sigurdsson, unpopular due to sleeping with the daughters of wealthy men, is overthrown in a revolt and killed by his own slave who hoped for a reward. The slave instead is beheaded.
995–1000	Reign of King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway, who introduces Christianity.

Year	Event
995–1022	Reign of King Olof the Treasurer of Sweden, son of Erik the Victorious, who finally united the Svear and the Geats.
999	Christianity reaches Greenland and Iceland by powers of Olaf Tryggvason.
1000	Death of Olaf Tryggvason in the Battle of Svolder, slain by the combined fleets of King Svein Forkbeard, King Olaf Eiriksson of Sweden and Eirik Hakonarson, Jarl of Lade. Norway temporarily ruled by the Jarls of Lade as a Danish fiefdom.
1002	Leif Erikson, the son of Erik the Red, leaves Greenland with 35 men in search of another land glimpsed to the west by Bjarni Herjolfsson. He lands on 'Markland' and 'Vinland' becoming the first European to discover North America. His attempts to settle are opposed by skraelings.
1002	Brian Boru defeats the Norse settlers and becomes the king of Ireland.
1009	Viking chieftain Olaf Haraldsson attacks London by river and destroys London Bridge.
1010	Viking explorer Thorfinn Karlsefni attempts to found a settlement in North America.
1013	Danish King Svein Forkbeard conquers England, driving Aethelred the Unready into temporary exile in Normandy.
1014	Death of Svein Forkbeard, who at his death ruled over Denmark, Norway and England.
1014–1018	Reign of King Harald II of Denmark, son of Svein Forkbeard.
1014	Cnut the Great, second son of Svein Forkbeard, inherits England but is forced to flee to Denmark after Aethelred the Unready returns from Normandy.
1014	The Vikings of Ireland are finally and utterly defeated in the Battle of Clontarf but high king Brian Boru, Jarl Sigurd of Orkney and most of the Viking mercenaries are slain.
1015	Vikings abandon the Vinland settlement on the coast of North America.
1015–1028	Reign of King Olaf Haraldsson who regains Norway from the Danes. He continues the spread of Christianity, torturing and killing those who refuse to submit to the new faith.
1015	Cnut the Great gathers forces of 10,000 men and 200 longships and leads a new invasion of England.
1015–1019	Reign of Prince Sviatopolk the Accursed over the Rus.
1016	Cnut and Edmund negotiate a settlement, splitting England between the two kings. In less than a month Edmund died leaving Cnut sole ruler of England, which he reinforces by marrying Aethelred's widow, Queen Emma.
1016–1035	Reign of King Cnut the Great over England.
1018–1035	Reign of King Cnut over Denmark, inheriting the title after the death of his half-brother Harald.

Year	Event
1019–1054	Reign of Prince Yaroslav the Wise over the Rus, under whose rule the Rus reached their pinnacle of power.
1022–1050	Reign of King Anund Jakob of Sweden, son of Olof the Treasurer.
1026	Kings Anund Jakob and Olaf Haraldsson combine forces to attack Denmark but are defeated by Cnut and Jarl Ulf at the Battle of the Helgea. Cnut is left the preeminent authority in Scandinavia, subjugating core provinces of Sweden for four years in recompense.
1028	Cnut sails to Norway and deposes Olaf Haraldsson, whose support is undermined by his tendency to flay the wives of the nobility for practicing Seidr. Jarl Hakon Eiriksson is appointed warden of Norway.
1028–1035	Reign of King Cnut over Norway.
1029	Jarl Hakon Eiriksson dies in a shipwreck off the southern coast of the Orkneys.
1030	Olaf Haraldsson returns from Novgorod to retake Norway but is killed at the Battle of Stiklestad.
1031	Olaf Haraldsson becomes officially proclaimed a Saint, by Bishop Grimkel.
1035	Cnut the Great dies. At his death he rules over England, Denmark and Norway, with the kingdoms of Scotland, Wales, Dublin and the Isles as loyal vassals and allied with Normandy and Poland.
1035	With Cnut's death, Magnus the illegitimate son of St Olaf, expels the Danes from Norway and regains the kingdom.
1035–1047	Reign of King Magnus the Good of Norway.
1035–1042	Reign of King Harthacnut of Denmark.
1042–1065	Edward the Confessor rules England with the support of the Danes.
1042–1047	Reign of King Magnus the Good over Denmark.
1042	Magnus the Good destroys Jomsborg, the headquarters of the mercenary Jomsvikings
1043	Magnus the Good, wielding St. Olaf's battle-axe, wins a crushing victory over the Wends at the Battle of Lyrskov Heath, killing more than 15,000 warriors.
1046	To avoid civil war, Magnus the Good grants Harald Hardrada joint rule of Norway, as a co-king.
1047	Magnus the Good dies, leaving Harald Hardrada sole ruler of Norway.
1047–1066	Reign of King Harald Hardrada of Norway, noted for his harsh policies and formation of a standing army (<i>hird</i>).
1047–1074	Reign of King Sweyn Estridsson of Denmark.

Year	Event
1049	Harald Hardrada founds Oslo, Norway.
1050	Harald Hardrada sacks and burns Hedeby in Jutland.
1050–1060	Reign of King Emund the Old of Sweden, illegitimate son of Olof the Treasurer.
1054–1073	First reign of Prince Iziaslav of Kiev over the Rus.
1060–1066	Reign of King Stenkil Ragnvaldsson of Sweden
1062	Harald Hardrada defeats Sweyn Estridsson at the naval Battle of Nissen but fails to gain control of Denmark.
1064	Harald Hardrada gives up trying to conquer Denmark and both he and Sweyn Estridsson recognise each other as legal heir to their respective thrones.
1065	Death of Edward the Confessor, who is succeeded by Harold Godwinson as King of England.
1066	Harald Hardrada leads an army to invade England but is killed at the battle of Stamford Bridge near York.
1066	William, Duke of Normandy, defeats Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings and is crowned King of England.
1066	The practice of 'going Viking' ends.



VIKING LIFE

*The man who stands at a strange threshold,
Should be cautious before he cross it,
Glance this way and that:
Who knows beforehand what foes may sit
Awaiting him in the hall?*

— Havamal

This chapter grants an overview of Viking society and culture, explaining the class system, social codes and a few of the conventions used by the Vikings in their everyday life. These are important aspects for any roleplaying setting, since scenarios are often built upon the restrictions of society and the drives, ambitions and inequalities of its people.

Whether you wish to survive in a gritty historical campaign or heroically slay giants in a mythic one, the social characteristics of status, honour and death remain the same.

Games Masters should take care to read through this section a couple of times to grasp the flavour of Scandinavian life. However, whilst this chapter provides many details, it must be remembered that this is merely an overview. Much of the information presented are rough generalisations and may even portray interesting facts that are anachronistic to local customs elsewhere across the Viking world.

Social Structure

During the Viking Age most people live in extended ‘families’ of relatives and kinfolk grouped together on the same farmstead. The steading is the minimum social cooperative required to survive in the harsh northern climate and because of this it is the core basis of Scandinavian society.

This collective family can consist of several married couples, one spouse of each is usually, but not necessarily, blood related to the owner of the steading. In addition to children, each household may also have bondsmen and thralls increasing their numbers, some of whom could be married and possess children too. Taking this into consideration, an average small steading might comprise of anywhere from 10 to 20 people. Larger farmsteads would typically number more folk.

The reasons for such communal life are fundamentally due to the vast amount of land and work required to provide a subsistence level of living. In the poorer lands of the north, good arable land is rare, the soil stony or overgrown with forest and the ground

frozen or snow covered for five or six months of the year. Substituting herding for crop raising requires yet more land for grazing and winter fodder.

Due to the difficulty of food production, very few settlements ever develop into towns. Those which do are wholly dependent on trade to exist, little more than a commercial centre whose populations can shrink dramatically in the winter months when some traders return to their own steadings.

In spite of the distances between farmsteads, most remain clustered in the same relative area for mutual support and defence, communal decisions led by local chieftains. Over time regions begin to be unified under the authority of jarls and eventually kings, as the Scandinavians slowly transform from tribes to national kingdoms. In fact, such amalgamations are a prime source of Norwegian and Danish migrations, in an attempt to locate new places where a man can rule over his own stead without interference.

Unification aside, for most of the Viking Age, families and steads are the basis of society. Blood feuds, avenging wrongs done to a relative – even distantly related kinfolk – are commonplace, since your family are the only people guaranteed to stand beside you in times of trouble. Similarly the crews of ships that *go Viking*, that is to trade or raid, are often the men folk of several neighbouring steadings who pool their resources to finance and man the voyage.

Class and Rank

Viking society has a number of social divisions that rank people according to their liberty, land ownership and authority. Unlike other societies in Europe of the time, Scandinavian social classes are fairly loose, allowing someone to rise from thralldom to become a king if they are ambitious or blessed with good fortune.

The Viking class system is inherited from ancient times, described and taught in the mythological poem *Rígsthula*. Roughly speaking society is broken into those who are thralls, those that are karls and those regarded as jarls.

Thralls

Thralls are the lowest class, further subdivided into slaves and bondsmen. Slaves are usually captives taken in a raid and given out as part of the plunder. They are frequently traded; selected to serve as concubines or fill labourer positions back at the family farmstead.

A slave need not have been a foreigner from a distant land. Norwegian Vikings can own Swedish and Danish slaves and vice versa for example. Some Viking laws allow a convicted thief to be sentenced to act as a slave to he who the thief stole from.

Bondsmen differ from slaves as they are of a higher class reduced in status due to debt. To repay what they owe, a bondsman is forced by law to work off their deficit by serving the man they owe. A bondsman is therefore a temporary rank, which can be recovered from.

Thralls work alongside their owners but are generally given the hardest or most repugnant work to do. Male thralls often dig peat, reap hay, build walls or stay out shepherding the livestock. Female thralls churn butter, grind grain and wash laundry, all of which involve backbreaking labour.

To ensure recalcitrant thralls do not flee the steading, their hair is often close cropped and in addition some wear slave collars around their neck. Despite these indignities, most slaves are reasonably well treated or even welcomed into the close knit community of the family. Since everyone, not just the thralls, has to work hard to survive and they are allowed to earn their own money in hope of purchasing their freedom, Viking slavery is relatively liberal compared with the hardship faced by slaves on the continent. They can even marry and are legally permitted to take vengeance on those who abuse their wife!



A thrall can be freed by their master for good service or loyalty, or their freedom purchased by a third party. A freedman ceases being chattel and is adopted into the family proper, gaining the rights of inheritance, testifying in legal cases and future children being free from slave status. To celebrate such manumissions the family holds a feast, which includes the ritual slaughter of a sheep.

Most steadings possess several thralls with which they run the farm. Usually the number of thralls is less than the karls to deter any thought of revolt, which occasionally does occur. Although rare, accounts tell of maltreated slaves killing everyone on the farm to ensure their escape.

'During the first winter, Hjorleifr decided to settle permanently where he had landed, by the headland where he built two houses. In the spring, he hitched two slaves to the plough in order to till the field. The slaves took their revenge for this abuse by enticing Hjorleifr and his men, one at a time, out of sight of the buildings and killing them. Once the entire household had been dispatched, the slaves took a boat and rowed to a nearby island.'

A male slave costs an average of 12 ounces of silver, whereas a female costs about 8 ounces – the equivalent price of a milk cow. Exceptionally strong, skilled or pretty slaves are valued much higher.

Karls

Most Vikings belong to the social class of karl. These are the common folk who are free from bondage. All members of the class can bear weapons, seek protection under the law, have freedom of speech and participate at the *thing* (assembly) – an unheard of liberty and franchise compared to the peasants of Europe.

Like thralls there are many subdivisions of rank within the generic class of karl. These in ascending order of precedence are leysingi, karls, bondi, hauldr and godi.

Leysingi (freedmen) are freed slaves who are still obligated to their former owners; being expected to consult their ex-master's approval before undertaking marriage, business deals and law cases. In return the former owner is obliged to offer legal protection, support and maintenance.

Karl is often used as the more specific title for a free man who does not own a boat or land of his own. By far and away more numerous than the other ranks, they usually find employment as farmhands, servants, herders, hunters, traders, craftsmen or fishermen, working in exchange for room and board.

Bondi are tenant farmers, working a croft or stead for an absentee owner. Those that work hard can turn a respectable profit from these steadings, above and beyond the annual rent payments.

Hauldr are farmers who own their lands outright, possessing the freehold and hereditary rights to it. Such rights belong to the family and cannot be taken or overthrown by anyone, not even the jarls or kings. The wealthier the lands or powerful the family connections, the more status a hauldr has.

Above all of these are the godi. Technically a godi is a respected hauldr who has been granted legal and administrative responsibilities by his peers. Godi lead the religious observances but their main task is to oversee disputes and make just decisions, acting like a local chieftain. The office of a godi relies on the continued support of the freemen under his authority and can be lost due to neglect or bias.

Jarls

Viking nobility is the highest social class. These are the leaders of Scandinavia, respected chieftains who possess the titles of landsmenn, styraesmen (ship owners), jarls and kings. A landsmann might rule over a small fjord, whereas a jarl could be responsible for a petty kingdom. They use their authority to raise troops for war, fund fleets of merchant ships, provide safe markets and protect the honour of the people they rule over.

Unlike European feudal nobility, Scandinavian aristocracy is not normally inherited; although matters begin to change towards the end of the Viking Age. To become a ruler one must instead accumulate enough wealth, fame and popular support to be seen as a leader. Without the loyalty of their own freemen, a jarl or king can be, and frequently are, deposed either by being voted out of office or by violent coup d'états led by ambitious warriors.

Nobility is a temporary rank, not a sacred right, and confers no special consideration from the egalitarian minded Scandinavians of this time. A jarl is given respect only if he *acts* like a jarl. Failure to do so results in his commands being ignored by the men under his authority. Technically there is no legal obligation to follow a noble's orders but doing so can bring problems if the ruler's support is strong.

Likewise, the authority wielded by a noble is his alone. The relations of a ruling noble have no additional authority beyond what they themselves possess. Thus the son of a king has no special rights above that of the karl standing beside him.

Although the rank is not inherited, by the end of the Viking period the gradually increasing wealth and loyalty accumulated by a family can ease the transfer of power from father to son.

Rulers are usually dynamic men capable of inspiring warriors in battle or convincing them in public debate. A noble is expected to be generous with his wealth and possessions, giving out gifts and granting hospitality to all who pay visit. They must maintain a personal guard of warriors, hearth men or thanes who support them in the *thing* or battle. Such *hirdmadr* possess high status, sharing that of their lord. Skalds are also given patronage in order to spread the jarl's fame and indeed are held in barely less stature than the ruler himself.

Those Outside of Society

Despite holding the rank of freemen, beggars and vagrants are regarded as having less status than that of freed slaves. Lacking land or a permanent residence often means a man is technically outside of the law and cannot be charged. However this is not so much an immunity from legal prosecution but rather a dangerous vulnerability due to lack of protection; indeed a vagabond can be robbed or even castrated with impunity!

Transients include, but are not necessarily limited to, tramps, sorcerers, seers, witches, beggars and of course outlaws. Although outside the law, some famous or infamous practitioners of magic may still command a great deal of respect. Thus it is often wise to treat a vagrant with respect, since you never know what they are capable of or whom they might be related to!

Women

Viking society has very distinct gender roles for men and women. It is not normally possible for a woman to participate in a raiding trip or join an overseas mercantile expedition. Women are expected to stay at home and maintain the farmstead. Those that cross gender boundaries are often ostracised and sometimes even punished. It is, for example, forbidden in some lands for a woman to wear male clothes, cut their hair short or to bear a weapon.

Women are under the authority of their father or husband, with little or no legal rights. Under Scandinavian law, women cannot become a ruler or godi, judge or witness and are barred from *direct* political activity by being prohibited from speaking at the *thing*.

However, Viking women are permitted a great deal of domestic authority. They control the finances of the family and steading, running the farm whilst their husbands are away raiding or trading. They are also stringently protected by the law against unwelcome advances, such as kissing or forced intercourse, which in turn allows them to lead more social lives, a freedom forbidden to women of other cultures at this time. A woman can inherit her husband's property and indeed most possess their own lands as part of their dowry. One of the most powerful levers a woman has is the ease and right of divorce, the chance of losing a wife's dowry being a significant threat against her husband.

Wives who own or run successful farmsteads are granted a high degree of respect. Widows especially can exert a strong authority over their destiny and possessions, frequently superseding men in honour of their courage, will and wisdom. It is often the women's role to berate their men folk to protect the family honour, often inciting the start of blood feuds or acts of revenge.

Women are rarely harmed in Viking society. To abuse a woman is a shameful act but to injure one is a grave dishonour. Even playful violence such as throwing snowballs is frowned upon. This behaviour is so reinforced that women are excluded during attacks on a rival family or household. If a house is to be burnt down to kill the men folk or drive them outside, women and children are always allowed to leave unharmed first. Of course the women are free to refuse the offer if they wish to die alongside their husbands or sons.

There are only two acceptable situations where violence can be used against women. The first is during a Viking raid, when women are frequently captured as plunder to be sold into slavery. The second is when the woman is using evil sorcery to cause mischief or harm.

The Brooding of Viking Women

The power of women in Viking society is often expressed in the sagas by the incessant taunting of their menfolk. Mothers hound sons and wives harass husbands, expressing their disfavour not only by words but also in the withholding of household chores (no cooked food for example), conjugal rights, treatment of wounds and so on. Eventually the man usually breaks.

Roleplaying these situations can be great fun, although some people may find it embarrassing or humiliating to be ridden so by a female in a campaign. For games where such feminine threats and insults will be ignored or misunderstood by players, Games Masters are encouraged to abstract the moral pressure with an Opposed Test of the woman's Influence skill versus the Adventurer's Persistence skill.

Then Hildigunna went back into the hall and unlocked her chest and then she took out the cloak, Flosi's gift, and in it Hauskuld had been slain and there she had kept it, blood and all. Then she went back into the sitting-room with the Cloak; she went up silently to Flosi. Flosi had just then eaten his full and the board was cleared. Hildigunna threw the cloak over Flosi and the gore rattled down all over him.

Then she spoke and said, 'This cloak, Flosi, thou gavest to Hauskuld, and now I will give it back to thee; he was slain in it, and I call God and all good men to witness, that I abjure thee, by all the might of thy Christ, and by thy manhood and bravery, to take vengeance for all those wounds which he had on his dead body, or else to be called every man's dastard.'

Flosi threw the cloak off him and hurled it into her lap, and said, 'Thou art the greatest hell-bag, and thou wishest that we should take that course which will be the worst for all of us. But `women's counsel is ever cruel.'

— Njal's Saga

'Subsequently, Thorarinn learned that Oddur was responsible for severing Audur's hand. Oddur's mother, Katla, was a sorceress. It was she who used magic to make Oddur's tunic invulnerable to weapons. Thorarinn led a party to the farm where Oddur was staying. Again, Katla used magic, this time to prevent Thorarinn from seeing Oddur. Thorarinn's mother told him what precautions to take against the magic. Thorarinn returned to Oddur's farm and put a bag over Katla's head to prevent her from using magic. He seized Oddur and hanged him for being a party to magic and for his cowardice. Katla cursed them all, and they stoned her to death for being a sorceress.'

— Eyrbyggja Saga

Viking Warrior Women

Despite the popular image of Shield Maidens in Viking society as portrayed by Saxo Grammaticus in his *History of the Danes*, such things were mythical and did not normally happen. A woman who tried to act like a man would be heavily censured, possibly punished under the laws of the *thing* for transgressing gender roles. To a man, the idea of being attacked by a weapon wielding woman whilst he himself was forbidden by good manners to strike back was an anathema.

Of course in a roleplaying game such boundaries are meant to be overcome. Games Masters are free to allow warrior women in their campaigns if so desired. Unless playing a fantasy or mythical campaign however, women who become shield maidens should suffer social restrictions or be unable to hold any personal status. Such reproaches may even affect their family, causing relations to suffer a loss of status in the community.

Personality and Beliefs

Viking culture is based around a number of core virtues and beliefs, which hold society together. The difficult climate, dispersed population and extended families make these moral codes of paramount importance. Without them survival is questionable.

The reputation of a man is based upon his adherence to these ethical qualities and nothing is dearer to a Viking than his name and standing. In Scandinavian eyes it is better to die with honour (*drengskapr*) and be admired, than to have his repute stained with shame (*nidr*) and be reviled.

Respected men are called *drengr*. They should be brave, generous, noble, magnanimous, fair minded, respectful, pragmatic, morally strong, honourable in his word and able to maintain his self control. These are the values upon which a man bases his self-respect and what the community expects from him. Those who maintain them in adversity are remembered, viewed as people to be emulated and are often sought out to take up the mantle of the ruling class.

Nidringr, shameful men, have no respect or support from the community. A jarl or king who acts without adhering to Viking values will soon find themselves overthrown, their own men deserting them. Others of lower rank are merely exiled or isolated, cut off from social contact and unable to trade for necessary goods; their name forgotten or spat upon after death.

Courage

Bravery is an expected quality in all men but is particularly praised in women. Courage does not equate to stupidity. It is perfectly acceptable to retreat from overwhelming odds or flee in terror when confronted by the supernatural.

'Beware of going where overwhelming force opposes you. There is more honour in accumulating little by little than in overreaching and falling down flat.'

— Vatnsdæla Saga

Men are expected to stand up to their enemies. A Viking will engage in single combat, even if they are certain they cannot win, because it is important to display their courage. Kolfinnur in the Kjalnesinga Saga announces his plan to duel with Bui but when observers advise that the match is unevenly stacked against him, Kolfinnur replies, 'there are two outcomes to every danger: either I will live or I will die'.

The sagas record the names of those who demonstrated unusual levels of courage. Men remembered for facing multiple foes, beating terrifying creatures or deliberately sacrificing themselves for another. Such as Grettir who defeats a number of horrific monsters, or Bjarni Grimolfsson in Erik's Saga, who gave up his place on a lifeboat and purposely drowned to allow an Icelandic coward to survive the sinking of their worm-eaten ship.

Fatalism

At the birth of every baby the three Norns (*Nornar*) decree when it must die. Nothing can postpone this fate, or *wyrd*, so most Vikings are philosophical about facing death. However, although death is predetermined, little else is. A person can live their life as they will, determining the nature and manner of their death. It is generally considered better to be adventurous and daring, rather than stay at home and pass peacefully away in bed.

Fatalism also involves the belief in omens, whether they are dreams or the prophecies of a soothsayer. The simplest of forebodings can cause a Viking to abandon a course of action. Even the stumbling of a horse whilst riding to join a ship can be interpreted as a warning, perhaps from the *Disir* or the rider's own *Fylgjar*.

Fortune

A lucky man is a person to follow or ally oneself to and lucky talismans are treasured. Vikings are very superstitious about the power of luck (*gæfa*), which is akin to, but not the same as, fate. Lucky men always succeed, no matter what is brought to bear against them, thus they are often sought after to join ship crews or raiding parties.

Likewise nothing can help unlucky men, who are spurned even if liked or sympathised with. A man seen as plagued with bad luck would be abandoned mid way through a voyage, rather than risk him staying aboard. Some acts are considered unlucky too, such as pillaging a dead man for his weapons and armour. If the arms had failed their previous owner, then they were obviously unlucky charms that might infect their plunderer with ill fortune too. Many of the famous swords reputed to be forged by dwarfs were accursed items whose power tempted men to risk the bad luck associated with them.

Generosity

It is a commonly held belief that if skill or fortune has blessed a man with wealth, it is proper for that man to pass part of that prosperity to the people around him. A generous man will help others in times of strife or give them a hand to achieve their own affluence, rather than horde away their treasures where they do no good.

Generosity can be expressed in a number of ways, the quality of food and drink offered at the table for example. A lord who feasts on fine vittles whilst offering fare of lesser quality to his guests would be considered miserly, whereas if the food is poor but the best that household can offer, then it is most generous.

Other forms of generosity may be the loaning of a ship to a trusted friend or family member, the giving of clothing as a gift, or arming and armouring of men who join a household. The most generous of men give up their personal possessions to aid those who have suffered disaster, such as a prize cow when a neighbour's herd have been slaughtered by wolves.

The story of Ref in Gautreks Saga is a humorous tale of a young man who always gives away his most prized possession, only to receive a greater gift in return. Eventually Ref becomes a Jarl of high repute!

Honour

Honour is the steadfastness of a Viking in keeping his word. Oathbreaking is considered one of the most contemptible deeds a man can be accused of, since the word of a man is paramount to his ability to make deals and bargains. If suspected of lying or cheating he will be unable to function within society, doomed to be outcaste as everyone will distrust him. Lacking literacy, a Viking contract is normally made before witnesses and sealed by a handshake. Such an agreement is binding.

'Gunnlaug said, 'Betray me not if I bring thee water in my helm'. 'I will not betray thee,' said Raven. Then went Gunnlaug to a brook and fetched water in his helm, and brought it to Raven; but Raven stretched forth his left hand to take it, but with his right hand drove his sword into Gunnlaug's head, and that was a mighty great wound. Then Gunnlaug said, 'Evilly hast thou beguiled me, and done traitorously wherein I trusted thee.'^x

— Gunnlaugs Saga

This virtue seems difficult to resolve with the Viking penchant for trickery. The gods repeatedly engaged in trickery to emerge victorious in their quests; not only Loki but Odin and even Thor resort to tricks to overcome seemingly irresolvable challenges. A trick is acceptable if it is humorous or clever but frowned on in most other situations. In the Heimskringla 30 Vikings are taken prisoner by Earl Eirik and are being beheaded, when Sigurd Bue's son plays the following trick, which results in the release of the remaining survivors:

'There sat also a very handsome man with long hair, who twisted his hair over his head, put out his neck, and said, 'Don't make my hair bloody.' A man took the hair in his hands and held it fast. Thorkel hewed with his axe; but the Viking twitched his head so strongly that he who was holding his hair fell forwards, and the axe cut off both his hands, and stuck fast in the earth. Then Earl Eirik came up, and asked, 'Who is that handsome man?'

Hospitality

Hospitality, or the granting of refuge, sustenance and protection, is one of the most important virtues of Scandinavian life. Travellers lost in unfamiliar lands or caught in the snow or cold will most likely die without shelter and food. Thus hospitality is not only a charitable act but also one of self preservation, since men facing death are capable of desperate actions and most steadings are remote from their neighbours.

The Art of Hospitality

*Greetings to the host,
The guest has arrived,
In which seat shall he sit?
Rash is he who at unknown doors
Relies on his good luck*

*Fire is needed by the newcomer
Whose knees are frozen numb;
Meat and clean linen a man needs
Who has fared across the fells*

*Water, too, that he may wash before eating,
Handcloth's and a hearty welcome,
Courteous words, then courteous silence
That he may tell his tale*

— Havamal

The pact between host and guest is sacrosanct. Bed and board is offered with the understanding that no ill words or violence be given by either, even if the two are the worst of rivals. Odin is the guardian of hospitality and is reputed to send misfortune to those who withhold or abuse it.

To grant hospitality is a double edged sword. Although it improves the host's reputation and may forge bonds of friendship between strangers, there is a risk that the guest may outstay his welcome, since a host cannot force a guest to leave once hospitality

is granted. Many stanzas in the Havamal (the Viking poem that taught ethics and wisdom) advise against over eating, excessive drinking, boasting or making oneself a bore.

A guest who remains under his host's roof for too long, may find himself hosting his original benefactor in the following year, along with half his family! Of course during the winter months a guest may very well find himself cut off from further travel due to the weather or accumulated snow. In such a case it was considered good manners to help out with the work on the steading, rather than sit about eating his way through the host's carefully stored provisions.

Refusing to give hospitality is a shameful act but is permitted in certain circumstances. Outlaws may be denied hospitality, for example.

Humour

A good sense of humour is vital for most Vikings, acting as a legitimate outlet for feelings of frustration or anger but still preserving their reputation. Indeed clever witticisms can add greatly to a man's repute and many Vikings cracked a last sardonic quip before dying. Viking flippancy emphasises wry understatement, the forerunner of black humour.

Viking Humour

Thorgrim the Easterling went and began to climb up on the hall; Gunnar sees that a red kirtle passed before the window slit, and thrusts out the bill, and smote him on the middle. Thorgrim's feet slipped from under him, and he dropped his shield, and down he toppled from the roof. Then he goes to Gizur and his band as they sat on the ground.

Gizur looked at him and said, 'Well, is Gunnar at home?'

'Find that out for yourselves,' said Thorgrim; 'but this I am sure of, that his bill is at home, and with that he fell down dead.'

— Njals Saga

Loyalty

Loyalty is a close relation to honour but refers more to keeping faith with comrades, relatives and rulers than the legal bond of one's word. A Viking can show loyalty to his friends, extended family, jarl or even his animals, standing up for them in times of adversity. Ties of loyalty are often tested, especially when a blood feud erupts between families. It is a noble thing to stand by a father or brother, even if they are in the wrong; many of the greatest stories tell of the unwilling protagonist supporting a family member or king against a close friend.

Huskarls swear allegiance to their jarl or king, in return for being armed and supported. Such oaths can include promises to fight in the forefront of battle, never flee and avenge the life of their lord if he falls.

Viking loyalty is not blind obedience however. A supporter is free to question the motivations of those they follow and even disregard a command if it is viewed as dishonourable. In the Gísla Saga, Eyjolf orders his man Havardr to kill a woman who dashes a purse of silver into his face. Havardr refuses, stating ‘Our journey is about as bad as it can be already without our doing this dastard’s deed’ – in response to which Eyjolf accuses his man of treachery. The rest of the warriors support their comrade in arms and refuse to follow their lord’s disgraceful command.

Manliness

Vikings are very sensitive to their manliness being questioned or insulted. To compare a man with an animal, especially a dog, or accuse him of acting in a womanly manner is a mortal insult. In fact some laws forbid the use of such insults, permitting the accused to seek compensation or even the right to kill his insulter.

‘Then there are three terms which occasion bringing such a serious suit against a man that they are worthy to outlaw him. If a man call a man unmanly, or homosexual, or demonstrably homosexually used by another man, he shall proceed to prosecute as with other terms of abuse, and indeed a man has the right to avenge with combat for these terms of abuse.’

— Gragas

A Viking always has to defend his manliness, since charges of effeminacy imply that he always takes the submissive or cowardly role, not only sexually but in leadership, warfare and the like. Of course most insults of this nature are simply a method of provoking a fight without fouling oneself with a more provocative deed and lack any real conviction. However, any offence that might blot a man’s honour has to be put down firmly in order to maintain the respect of the community. Thus Vikings are always alert for wrongs against their reputation and ready to avenge them.

‘Because,’ said Skarphedinn, ‘thou art the sweetheart of the Swinefell’s troll, if, as men say, he does indeed turn thee into a woman every ninth night.’ Then Flosi spurned the money, and said he would not touch a penny of it, and then he said he would only have one of two things: either that Hauskuld should fall unatoned, or they would have vengeance for him.

— Njáls Saga

Tenacity

In many of the sagas, Viking men show their tenacity by overcoming the elements, or battling to the last despite sporting horrific wounds. A man should be imperturbable no matter the circumstances.

'They were very great swordsmen, and their onslaught was both hard and hot; and now they gave him some wounds with spear-thrusts, but he still fought on with great stoutness and bravery; and they got such knocks from him, both with stones and strokes, that there was not one of them without a wound who came nigh him, for Gisli was not a man to miss his mark. Now Eyjolf and his kinsmen press on hard, for they felt that their fame and honour lay on it. Then they thrust at him with spears, so that his entrails fall out; but he swept up the entrails with his shirt and bound the rope round the wound.'

— Gisli's Saga

Law and Punishment

Scandinavian society has a sophisticated legal system to protect free men and their possessions. These laws are decided by communal consensus and preserved in tradition, passed down orally from each generation to the next. Unlike the lands outside of Viking control, laws are firmly in the hands of free men, independent of overruling by kings and jarls, who themselves are equally subject to them.

Most folk adhere to the law, since it protects them against disorder and lawlessness. Since Scandinavia is illiterate during this period, only trained Law Speakers (*logsogumadur*) know all the legal codes in detail. They are responsible for the memorisation, preservation and clarification of the laws, whereas the law council (*logretta*), consisting of the godar and their advisors, debate new legal procedures.

Government is based upon the *thing*, an assembly of the free men in a local area. The gathering is used primarily to debate and settle issues that have affected the community. People discuss their complaints and try to settle their differences with negotiation and compromise. If this fails, a lawsuit can be placed, which is judged by the attendees. Other matters handled at the *thing* are marriage arrangements, the offering of lands and animals for rent, the payment of said rent and general trading of goods and services not available in a small collective of steadings (*bygthir*).

The site of the *thing* is blessed by a godi who performs religious sacrifices to bless the assembly. The hallowed ground is deemed to be an area of truce. Weapons are not openly borne or tied fast to their scabbards with *fridbond* (peace knots).

At the larger regional *things*, laws are recited by the law speaker and new legislation proposed by the attending law council, which would then be placed to the vote by the people – each man present gaining a single equal vote. These important gatherings also hold elections of godi and jarls, earls or kings and the settlement of disputes that involve offenses beyond the borders of a local *thing*. These events are so large that they often last a week or more, because of the amount of legal business to be dealt with; thus families often build booths (*budir*), small stone or turf structures over which a fabric roof can be erected, in which to live during the assembly.

As time passed and the Scandinavian clans and tribes became ever more unified, these *things* grew to encompass common law for entire nations, gaining names such as the *Althing* in Iceland, *Disathing* in Svealand, *Alla Gotars Thing* in the Gotaland and the *Haugathing* in Norway.

Lawsuits

A lawsuit is brought before the presiding godi or godar by plaintiffs making a formal charge at the Law Rock. Each case is heard in the order they had been presented, over the course of the *thing*.

The Presentation of a Lawsuit

I give notice of a suit for assault laid down by law against Gunnar Hamond's son; for that he rushed with an onslaught laid down by law on Thorgeir Otkell's son and wounded him with a body wound, which proved a death wound, so that Thorgeir got his death.'

I say on this charge he ought to become a convicted outlaw, not to be fed, not to be forwarded, not to be helped or harboured in any need. I say that his goods are forfeited, half to me and half to the men of the Quarter, whose right it is by law to seize the goods of outlaws. I give notice of this charge in the Quarter Court, into which this suit ought by law to come. I give this lawful notice in the hearing of all men at the Hill of Laws.'

— Njal's Saga

The law court is comprised solely of the godar present, with a law speaker who can be called upon to settle any disputed points of law. The godar exert their authority during the presentation of the suit, determining whether the case is legitimate and ensuring the correct procedures are followed. They also decide the subsequent punishment or compensation due. However the outcome of the case itself is resolved by a public vote of the attending bondi and hauldr.

Those who plan to present a lawsuit or know there is a case against them, often travel to the *thing* bringing as many relatives and friends as they can muster, in order to sway the vote in their favour. During the wait for their hearing, the plaintiff and defendant often remain at their booths presenting their side of the case to interested parties.

Once a case has been scheduled for hearing, those involved are summoned to the Law Stone. The case is opened with the plaintiff swearing an oath of honesty and stating his accusation. He presents his witnesses, who either vouch for the plaintiff's honour and reputation, or recount their personal observation of the crime committed.

The defendant is then allowed his rebuttal after swearing a similar oath of honesty. He may use the law to undermine his accuser's position and attempt to invalidate the case using his own witnesses or legal knowledge. For instance when Gunner Hamundarson was accused of murder, it was pointed out by his witness that Gunnar and his companions had been outnumbered 25 to two, so it was their ambushers who had obviously meant to kill him and not vice versa!

Either participant who feels mortally insulted or guesses that the case will not go in their favour can insist on the right to settle the trial by arms, calling for a holmgang. This ends the case with respect to the godi and normal legal procedure but is a dangerous or desperate option, since fights often end with one man dead and the other permanently maimed.

Cases are sometimes won before being put to a vote, testimony ignored because correct legal procedure has not been used, regardless of the facts presented. In fact justice is often not served due to bribery, intimidation of witnesses and even open violence in the court itself. It is often necessary for the godi or local jarl to arrive with a large personal retinue to ensure order is kept.

Punishments

At the conclusion of the lawsuit, it is necessary for the godar to decide on the nature of any punishment required. This can take the form of outlawry, compensation or a combination of both.

Compensation is the normal form of settlement for crimes such as manslaughter, maiming, slander, theft and so on. The amount to be paid depends on the wound given, the status of the person killed or the worth of what was stolen.

General values of *manbote* (wergild) are one mark of silver for a thrall, 10 marks for a freedman, 15 marks for a karl, 20 marks for a bondi and anywhere between 40 and 120 marks for a hauldr, depending on his holdings and whether he held a position of authority.

These prices are subject to caveats, however. The slaying of a man in self defence when ambushed or tricked, evokes no compensation. Whereas a man convicted of attempted murder has to pay the full amount, even though he may have failed to even injure his victim. Compensation for maiming a man by blinding him in one eye or crippling a limb is half their wergild. Blinding in both eyes is worth the full amount.

Less serious, but deliberate, injuries require the payment of one mark of silver per serious wound or six minor wounds, plus the cost of the medical care, housing and food costs until healed, which is at least an additional mark per month.

Killing of livestock or damage to buildings usually incurs compensation of at least twice the worth of the loss. Even inappropriately touching a woman costs half a mark,

twice that if the groping strayed nearer more sensitive locations; assuming of course the molester survives to reach court.

Outlawry is generally used to punish deliberate killings. Open murders, where the family are warned in advance of the planned assassination, result in being declared an outlaw for the period of three years (*fjorbaugsgardur*). Hidden murders or deliberate arson are punished by permanent outlawry (*skoggangur*) and in addition all their lands and possessions are forfeited, half assigned to the outlaw's victims and half to his former neighbours.

An outlaw can be killed with no fear of any legal consequences. They are literally outside of society. Aiding an outlaw brings the risk of being fined or declared an outlaw yourself, so the life of an outlaw is a lonely exile full of fear that the next person they meet will be seeking their head.

Scandinavian law provides no method of actually forcing the loser of the case to adhere to the settlement decided. It is up to the winner to extract any compensation owed, or drive the guilty man away with threats. Often the friends and relatives of a victim actively pursue the outlaw, hunting him until he is found and slain. Unfortunately this often propagates enduring blood feuds, despite the legality and justice of the situation.

Einvigi and Holmganga

Duelling is a method of settling disputes between two men. A duel can be over a legal matter, extraction of debt, to defend one's honour or avenge the death of a friend or relative. *Einvigi* (single combat) are less formal than *holmganga* (going to the island). Such duels are legal and permitted as long as they adhere to strict rules.

To ensure hot blooded fights do not break out at the merest provocation, duels cannot be fought until at least three days after the challenge. Failing to turn up to a duel results in the supposed coward being declared an outlaw, stripped of all honour and reputation.

'Jokull responded, 'You must now turn up to the duel if you have a man's heart, rather than a mare's. And if anyone fails to turn up, then a scorn-pole will be raised against him with this curse - that he will be a coward in the eyes of all men, and will never again share the fellowship of good folk, and will endure the wrath of the gods, and bear the name of truce-breaker.'

— Vatnsdæla Saga

If one participant is considered outclassed by his opponent, a substitute warrior can volunteer to take his place. This prevents intimidating men from simply bullying their way out of law cases or using the tradition to legally extort property from legitimate owners.

The participants of the duel settle the terms of the fight in advance, deciding what weapons can be used, who strikes first (usually the challenged man), the conditions determining a victory (first blood, incapacitation or death) and what the winner will receive. If an opponent dies his killer is immune from prosecution.

Duels are fought upon an ox hide or cloak, which designates the boundary of the fighting area. This is roughly a square area of two and a half metres per side. Stepping completely off the hide results in the loss of fight. Fleeing not only forfeits the combat but brands the quitter as a craven coward, a fate worse than death.

Some holmgang are very formalised, the participants being limited to a predetermined number of shields and alternating blows upon one another until all the shields break. At which point the defenceless man has the option to honourably retire (and lose) or continue with just his weapon.

A Viking Duel

'And when they were ready for the combat, then ran they each at the other, and first they threw their halberds, neither of which stood fast in the foeman's shield, but both struck in the ground. Then took they both to their swords, and went at it with a will, blow upon blow. Atli gave no ground. They smote fast and hard, and full soon their shields were becoming useless. And when Atli's shield was of no use, then he cast it from him, and, grasping his sword with both hands, dealt blows as quickly as possible. Egil fetched him a blow on the shoulder, but the sword bit not. He dealt another, and a third. It was now easy to find parts in Atli that he could strike, since he had no cover; and Egil brandished and brought down his sword with all his might, yet it bit not, strike he where he might. Then Egil saw that nothing would be done this way, for his shield was now rendered useless. So Egil let drop both sword and shield, and bounding on Atli, gripped him with his hands. Then the difference of strength was seen, and Atli fell right back, but Egil went down prone upon him and bit through his throat. There Atli died.'

— Egil's Saga

Marriage and Death

Far from being the consummation of romance, marriage in the Viking world is more of a business arrangement between families. Often marriages are arranged to form alliances or consolidate lands but generally both the bride and groom have some feelings for one another.

Suitors court women but often at their own risk. A woman's family tries to supervise the contact between the two, restricting it to arranged visits of the suitor to their steading. Blatant fawning is frowned upon as are romantic poems, which are considered morally dangerous. A man who flirts too openly can be driven off or even killed by the woman's family, fearing her dishonour.



After courting a woman, a suitor is expected to place a marriage proposal. Failing to do so is considered an insult to the family, with the predictable feuds and violence to follow. If on the other hand the marriage suit is refused, then it is the suitor's family who are insulted.

If the suit is accepted, a betrothal must be made. This is a detailed commercial contract to determine the *mundr* (bride price) and *heimangerd* (dowry), usually negotiated between the woman's guardian and the suitor or his representative. In most cases these will be the two fathers. Once an agreement is reached, hands are shaken before witnesses and the wedding planned for within the year.

Weddings are large feasts held at the home of the bride's parents. It lasts for several days with no formal ritual to actually join the bride and groom together. The wedding is considered binding when witnesses view the couple departing for their marriage bed.

Marriage is not a permanent bond if there are difficulties. The failure to produce children, abuse from either spouse, infidelity or even lack of respect are all valid reasons for dissolving the union. Divorce in itself is very easy, just proclaiming it in front of witnesses is enough. However a divorce requires that the woman be granted the return of her dowry and in addition she may be entitled to one half of the steading, which she too has worked hard to maintain. The bitter legal outfall and financial ruin of divorce can cause terrible feuds between families and in a male dominated world wives often use this threat to manipulate their husbands' actions.

The Potential Strife of a Viking Marriage

Very few roleplaying games ever investigate the plot opportunities of marriage. Viking marriages however are bursting with tragic or bitter scenario potential. What if, for example, an Adventurer is enticed into marrying to increase his personal wealth and then discovers his wife is an unbearable shrew? A vindictive wife could be the perfect impetus to drive an individual into performing questionable deeds in order to gain some peace and quiet. Or perhaps constant needling is the reason he *goes viking* so frequently.

Conversely, what if the Adventurer's wife is having an affair with an important member of the local community? Should he divorce her and be exposed to the ridicule of his friends and family? Or base a series of scenarios upon his wife leaving him for another man, taking most of his wealth and lands with her and bringing down the disgust of his own family for not keeping her under control. Such merciless twists can drive an Adventurer to the end of his tether, potentially causing him to start a blood feud out of indignity and frustration.

Death Rituals

Death rituals across Scandinavia vary greatly according to wealth and status. Most folk are buried in graves along with a few daily tools and treasured belongings. Wealthier personages have more grave goods, so to prevent the corpses being despoiled by grave robbing, howes or mounds of earth are piled over the grave to make access a little more difficult.

Prosperous men and heroic leaders are often buried in ships. Dressed in fine garb, their vessels stocked with a wide panoply of goods and animals, such as weapons, armour, crockery, horses, hounds and even slaves. Although in the early days before the Viking Age, weapons and shields were bent and broken to prevent their worth attracting grave robbers, most Viking warriors are buried with their armaments intact, thieves held at bay by superstition and the widespread tales of *draugr*, the walking dead.

Sometimes wives or female slaves join their husband in death, deliberately allowing themselves to be killed as part of the funeral ritual. The famous account of a Rus chieftain's death rites by an Arabic chronicler named Ibn Fadlan describes the gruesome fate of a slave girl who wished to enter Valhalla with her lord. Unusually it seems the Rus Vikings preferred cremation to burial, although the body was temporarily buried whilst the funeral rites were arranged.

'One of the Rus was at my side and I heard him speak to the interpreter, who was present. I asked the interpreter what he said. He answered, 'He said, 'You Arabs are fools. 'Why?' I asked him. He said, 'You take the people who are most dear to you and whom you honour most and put them into the ground where insects and worms devour them. We burn him in a moment, so that he enters Paradise at once.' Then he began to laugh uproariously. When I asked why he laughed, he said, 'His Lord, for love of him, has sent the wind to bring him away in an hour.' And actually an hour had not passed before the ship, the wood, the girl, and her master were nothing but cinders and ashes. Then they constructed in the place where had been the ship which they had drawn up out of the river something like a small round hill, in the middle of which they erected a great post of birch wood, on which they wrote the name of the man and the name of the Rus king and they departed.'

— Ibn Fadlan's Account of the Rus

Homes and Settlements

Most Vikings live on farmsteads. These can range from a single longhouse that shelters both people and animals, to a large collection of outhouses and byres clustered around a more impressively sized longhouse. Steads are usually built on well sloping, well drained land, in close proximity to a source of drinking water and possess good views over their approaches. With lawlessness and raiding a constant threat, it bodes well to keep an eye out for the approach of strangers.

Depending on the fertility and suitability of the land, the number of nearby steads can be limited, with large distances separating them. Few definable settlements existed; rather the largest farmsteads encompass a population rivalling a hamlet, all working together under the guidance of the owner. Fishing settlements are slightly different, many homes clustered together in small villages on the sheltered beach of an inlet or fjord.

Longhouses

Communal living within a longhouse is normal for families. Private or segregated accommodation is a luxury few can afford; wasteful of building materials and fuel for heating. In winter, less hardy animals are herded into stalls inside the longhouse, sheltering them from the often intense cold. This serves two purposes. The first that it cuts down on the amount of fodder the animals need to survive the months before grazing is available once again. Secondly the animal's body heat is the prime source of warmth inside the hall, limited wood stocks being reserved for cooking and light.

Due to the number of folk and animals that need to fit inside the longhouse, they can be impressively large. A 'small' longhouse averages five metres across and up to 15 metres long. The largest longhouses are no more than eight metres across but can be between 60 and 80 metres long, often shaped to swell a little wider in the mid sections. They are constructed from two rows of central posts, which support the roof. Outer walls are made from wood, either planks or logs; although in wood poor regions walls are made of turf instead. In colder climes turf is sometimes added anyway as an extra insulating layer against the walls and used as a roofing material to help hold the heat in winter. Turfed roofs however have the age old problem of livestock climbing up to graze the grass.

Internally the longhouse is left open along the central aisle, providing passage along the whole building. Placed along the middle of this section are stone lined troughs used as fire pits. The outer isles on either side can be divided with wattle and daub partitions, allowing small areas to act as storage rooms or stalls for livestock. The floor is normally packed earth mixed with ashes to prevent the surface churning into mud.

In the main living section, the areas to either side of the central corridor are built up above the earthen floor and planked over to provide an area to eat, sit, sleep or work. These may be covered with furs and hides to provide a little softness and warmth.

Few windows are built into longhouses. The few which exist in better homes are shuttered openings built into the end walls up near the roof. Most light comes from closable smoke holes in the roof, which are supplemented by the central fires and simple stone lamps that burn fish, seal or whale oil. Candles, although available, are very expensive so only used by the wealthiest families. Thus the ambience inside a longhouse is rather dim unless the smoke holes are fully uncovered.

Little furniture is used inside Viking homes. The master and mistress of the house might have a straw stuffed box-bed built inside a closet for a small amount of privacy

and perhaps extra warmth. Trestle tables can be set up for meals or feasts but are taken down afterwards to keep the central areas clear. The few other objects of note may be wooden storage chests, often serving as seats, and a weaving loom. The longhouse of a noble probably contains a 'high seat', a platform built between the roof pillars atop which was set an ornately carved throne. This chair is often very broad, more akin to a small settee, on which the master sits along with honoured guests.

Longhouses are often decorated. Posts and beam ends carved with fantastic knotwork designs, wainscoting painted with scenes from the myths and walls hung with decorated shields and wall hangings, although the latter were very expensive items.

Steadings

Most farmsteads need additional buildings to supplement the central longhouse. Outhouses such as byres are used to house livestock in the warmer months before being freed to graze on summer pastures. Byres may be used to house thralls too but it would take a callous master to segregate his workers in such a fashion, since it may be a miserable experience to live in them during winter unless sleeping with the livestock to keep warm.

Other buildings include partially subterranean, stone-lined storehouses used to keep foodstuffs cold and secure from animals. In northern forest regions, food storehouses are sometimes built atop a strong single pillar, normally a tree hewn off about four metres above the ground. Access into the storehouse is only possible by a removable ladder, which prevents animals, such as bears or wolverines, from climbing up and breaking in during the spring.

Bath houses (saunas) are popular additions. People clean themselves by throwing water over fire heated rocks to produce invigorating steam. They are popular places to give birth. Some Icelandic steads use volcanically heated water to create heated bathing pools.

A barn of sorts is usually needed to store the vast quantities of winter fodder for the livestock, since keeping large amounts of hay inside the longhouse is a dangerous fire risk. Winter fuel, be it split logs or cut peat, also needs to be stored out of the elements, requiring yet another building.

Steads may also have their own smithy to repair and create tools, as well as, possibly, a small smoke house in which meat is preserved. Both of these outbuildings are kept well separated, downwind from the rest of the stead in case of accidental fires.

Those steads that border the sea or a river might possess a ship-house to protect the vessel in winter and provide an indoor area to perform the myriad of repairs and maintenance required to keep it seaworthy.

Farming

Most Viking steads primarily focus on raising livestock. Cattle and sheep are the most important animals. Milk cows are valuable because from them can be produced cheese, butter and *skyr*, a type of soft cheese, which has the consistency and taste of yoghurt. All these foodstuffs are valuable since they can be preserved over the winter when the cows stop giving milk. Other cattle are used as a source of leather, sinews and meat, often being butchered at the onset of winter due to the amount of fodder it will take to feed them before spring arrives.

Although cattle in the Viking age are relatively small, rarely exceeding 1.2 metres at the shoulder, it takes a lot of land to keep many of them. Depending on location, cattle need about two tons of hay to survive over the winter, so each cow requires between five and nine acres of land to grow its winter fodder, not including the land needed to graze the beast in the meantime. A wealthy farmstead might only be able to support one to two dozen cows at most.

Sheep are also small and reared for their wool, which is the primary source of fabric for Viking clothes, tents and even ships sails. Castrated rams are communally grazed in pastures, or left to roam wild in regions lacking wolves, whereas ewes are kept penned for their milk and to ensure that lambs are not stolen or tagged with a neighbour's mark. The fleece of sheep is not sheered but rather plucked or combed for its wool. Older or weak animals are killed and eaten.

Horses are used as both transportation (riding or pulling sleds) and a source of meat. Horse flesh is a staple part of a Viking diet, probably as a result of the animals being a popular sacrifice to the gods. Horses are bred to fight too but as a sporting entertainment like dog-baiting, rather than for warfare.

Goats and pigs are also kept as a source of food. Dogs often guard the steading by barking when strangers approach and keep inquisitive wolves and bears at bay. Cats are useful for pest control but skinned after death for their soft fur, which is used in clothing.

Crops raised include a selection of grains such as barley, rye and oats, which are used for bread or porridge. Vegetables range from the ubiquitous bean and cabbage to the turnip. Fruits such as apples and plums can be cultivated over most of Scandinavia and, lacking citrus fruits, vitamin C is obtained from birch bark.

To supplement their crops most Vikings gather up natural fruits and nuts – wild strawberries, lingonberries and blueberries, which grow prolifically in the north. Wild leeks are popular and coastal steadings sometimes gather seaweed to eat.

Hunting and fishing are an important part of survival, wild boars, game fowl, deer and elk the usual sources of meat, especially during the spring when food stocks run low. Game fish like salmon, perch, trout and pike live in most of the rivers and lakes, the

latter species often caught in the winter by drilling a hole in the ice and dangling a line into the freezing water.

Fishing steads rely primarily on their fish catch during the year. Most of the land around a northern fishing community is covered with open air racks from which gutted cod and mackerel are hung to desiccate in the cold, dry winds, whilst family members drive off hungry gulls. Herring is generally too small to dry so they are pickled or salted instead. Occasionally in the Atlantic settlements seals, walrus and even whales are hunted for food, skins, bone and ivory. Their flesh is difficult to preserve, so it is either boiled then pickled in sour whey, smoked and hung in the rafters of the longhouse, sewn into sealskin bags and dropped into deep water where it remains chilled but not frozen, or most unsettling of all, dropped into deep pits and buried where it partially rots, the outer fermented layer preserving the inner meat!

Beyond the necessary cultivation of foodstuffs to keep the family fed, periods when no other farming work is possible are spent crafting. A stead has to be capable of supporting itself, especially in remote regions where traders or even neighbours rarely visit. Thus the farm hands have to sew their own boots, forge and sharpen tools, perform carpentry, weave cloth, tailor clothes and so on.

What little spare time remains at the end of each day is spent with smaller handicrafts, producing nick-knacks or useful items that can be traded for luxuries.

Running a Stead in Legend

Whilst steadings are of vital importance as a source of wealth and status, the day-to-day running of a farmstead is perhaps less than interesting for most players. A Games Master can use the ownership of a stead as an abstract focus point for scenarios, threatening its confiscation by lawsuit or destruction in a blood feud, rather than sending the Adventurers off on another interminable Viking raid.

Yet owning a stead should incur a degree of responsibility, perhaps gaining a reward for good stewardship. Once each year during the annual *thing*, the owner may roll against their Lore (Farming) skill, adjusting for any applicable events on the Farmstead Productivity table and consult the following:

- **Critical Success:** Indicates that the farmstead has experienced an unusually productive year, earning twice what a successful roll would bring in.
- **Success:** The farmstead turns a profit earning a number of *aurar* (ounces) of silver equal to the value of the *adjusted* Lore (Farming) skill.
- **Failure:** The farm struggles to remain at a subsistence level of productivity, earning no money.
- **Fumble:** Misfortune strikes, the crops rot, some outbuildings burn down or the weather was abysmal through the year, causing the stead to lose a number of *aurar* (ounces) of silver equal to 150 minus the value of the unadjusted Lore (Farming) skill.

Farmstead Productivity Modifiers

Reason	Modifier to Lore (Farming) skill
Unusually severe winter	-10%
Owner absent for over a month ¹	-10%
Owner absent for over half the year ¹	-20%
Family engaged in an active blood feud	-20%
Region raided by Viking warband or foreign army	-40%
Owner declared outlaw ¹	-40%
The <i>landvættir</i> (nature spirits) of the farmstead are angry	Shift success of skill check down by one step

¹ These particular modifiers do not stack, only use the worst value.

The amount of silver earned or lost assumes a moderate sized farmstead. Smallholdings, usually run by bondi, halve the amount of silver involved. Large steadings owned by the wealthiest hauldr double earnings or losses.

Settlements

Surprisingly the Vikings develop very few permanent settlements, which reach the size of towns. The reliance on herding makes high population density settlements difficult to maintain, save at locations which are the centre of trade or worship.

The small handful of towns are the settling place for professional merchants and craftsmen, being able to dedicate themselves to their vocation, rather than dabbling on the side as a tenant farmer. With the wealth they earn from trade the town inhabitants purchase food and equipment instead of producing it themselves.

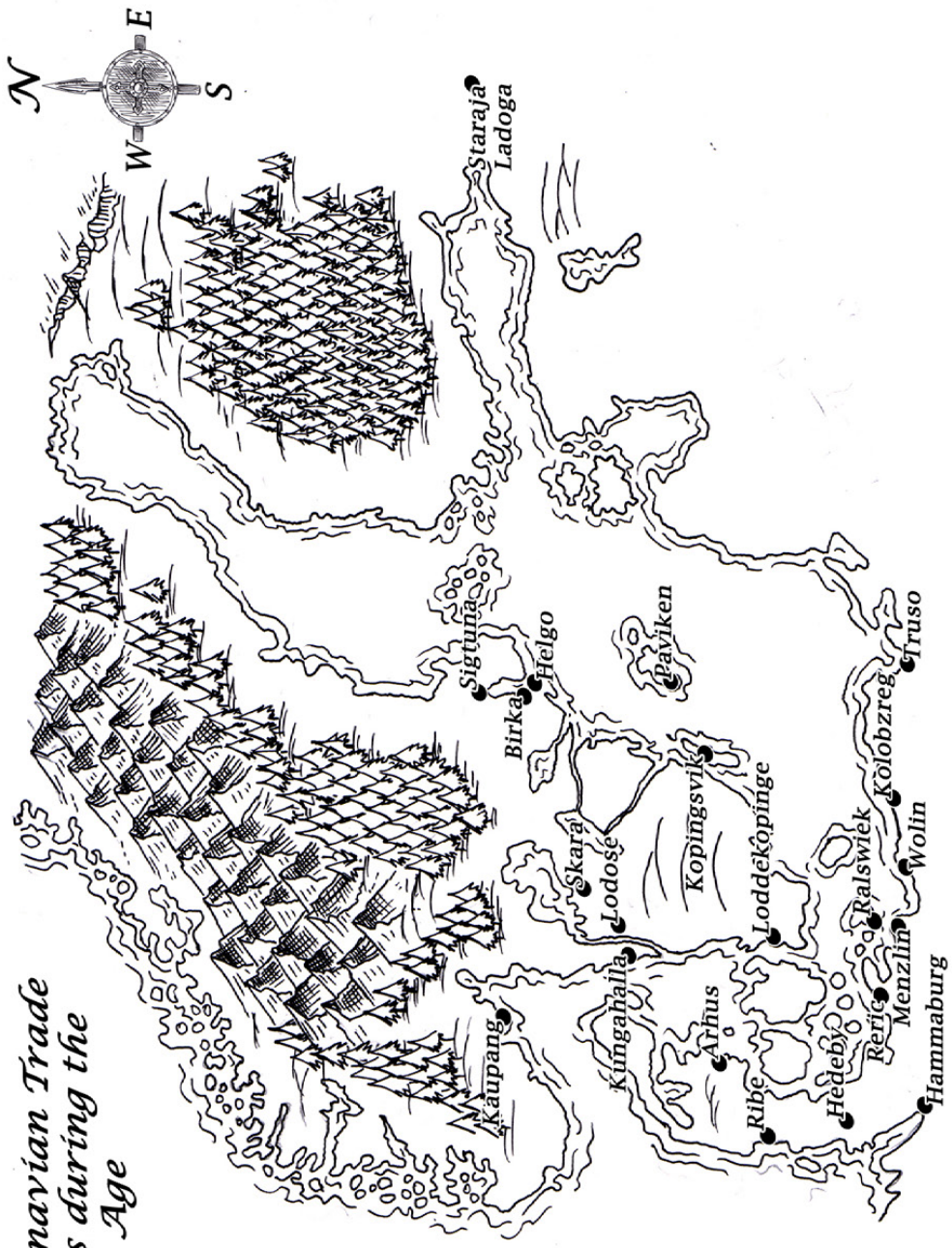
Town housing is modest in comparison to the traditional longhouse. Smaller buildings are sufficient if not needing to house livestock in the winter and since space is at a premium, they are packed closely together within town walls.

Whether a town is seasonably occupied or not probably depends on the amount and type of trade that flows through it. Location also has an effect since, for example, the rivers and lakes around Birka and Uppsala usually freeze during winter, making large scale transportation to and from there impossible. Some occupants, especially the sailors, are probably seasonably transient to cater for increased demand of goods during the warmer months.

The earliest towns are all coastal or river based. Overland trade is almost non-existent, both the difficulty of crossing forested or mountainous terrain and the number of animals needed to carry significant loads making such journeys uneconomic. Ships travel faster, carry far greater cargoes and do not require large amounts of feed.

Although built in strategic positions and granted protection by the local jarl or king, the trading towns remain prime targets for raiding. Most are fortified and maintain a garrison but often that does not save them.

*Scandinavian Trade
Centres during the
Viking Age*



'Because the inhabitants of Birka are often attacked by pirates, and because they cannot defend themselves through force of arms, they try to defend themselves by cunning. They have blockaded the sea for a distance of more than 100 stadia with concealed heaps of stones and have made access difficult both for their own people and for the pirates. As the anchorage is the safest in the whole coastal area of the Svear, all the ships of the Danes, the Norwegians, the Slavs, the Sembs, and other Baltic Sea tribes are accustomed to assemble there regularly to pursue their necessary affairs.'

— Adam of Bremen

The four major towns of Scandinavia during the Viking period are Hedeby and Ribe in Denmark, Kaupang in Norway and Birka in Sweden. Despite being primary trading centres the populations of both Birka and Hedeby remain less than 1,000 people!

Trade

Of far greater importance than raiding, Viking traders venture widely across the known world, exchanging their goods for exotic cargos, which are brought back to Scandinavia. Using the generous capacity of their ships they can turn a profit even if shipping bulk cargoes of little worth.

Most Scandinavians trade locally, not risking their ships away from the coast or venturing deep into foreign lands. This is probably due more to practicality rather than a lack of courage, since most traders are simply a group of local farmers who gather together their surplus handcrafts or crops and undertake a collective voyage to exchange their cargo for goods and materials needed on their steads. Few land owners can remain away from home for an extended period, being needed back home to help run the farm and prepare for the next winter.

The more adventurous trading expeditions are undertaken by men with no property or prospects, so set out to seek their fortune elsewhere, managing to reach places like Byzantium (*Miklagard*) and beyond.

Each participant in the collective voyage pays for their place and is granted an equal allotment of cargo space. The captain/owner of the ship is permitted an additional cargo allowance, filled with trade goods needed to pay for repairs or supplies if the need arises during the voyage. Thus it acts like a primitive insurance policy.

Every man aboard a trading expedition is expected to help sail the ship, row when necessary and defend the vessel if attacked by pirates. If someone embarks on a ship as purely a passenger, then they must pay an extra fee in order to avoid performing shipboard chores.

Some voyages require an extended amount of time to complete. Expeditions to Iceland or Greenland depend on the correct currents and winds, necessitating the ship to overwinter at the destination whilst waiting for the prevailing conditions to

Regional Exports in the Viking Period

Region	Exports
Byzantium	Silks, fruits, spices, wines, glassware, gems, gold, silver, jewellery, dyed linen
East Baltic regions	Amber, slaves, furs
England	Tin, wheat, honey, woollens, silver, barley, linen
Frankish kingdoms	Weapons, jewellery, wine, glassware, salt, woollen cloth
Greenland	Walrus ivory, furs, seal skins, wool
Iceland	Fish, whale oil, animal fat, wool cloth and clothing, sulphur, falcons
Lapland	Furs, horn, reindeer skins
Norway	Timber, iron, soapstone, whetstones, barley, tar
Russia	Slaves, furs, wax, honey
Shetland Islands	Soapstone
Sweden	Iron, furs
Vinland	Timber

change the following spring. During this time, enterprising crew members seek other profitable tasks rather than fritter away the trade profit paying for lodgings and food. Some hire themselves out for labour or bodyguard duty, whereas others attempt whale or seal hunts.

Likewise, expeditions to Byzantium and the Arabic Caliphates beyond can earn a staggering amount of wealth but several years can pass on the trip with no guarantee of success or survival. It takes months to row and portage ships to the Volga or Dnieper rivers, exposing the crew to the chance of being ambushed or charged exorbitant tolls en-route. The journey is often so wearisome that many Vikings use the opportunity to join the Varangian Guard to recuperate or gather together new compatriots to face the journey home.

The Scandinavians normally barter in trade, preferring to avoid coinage save as its weight as silver or gold. When trading overseas many Vikings use scales to determine the worth of coins, no matter what their face value in that land. Coins or items of jewellery are often cut into pieces to get a precise balance, leading to the term 'hack silver'.

Health and Medicine

As a people the Vikings lead a remarkably healthy life. They take pride in their personal appearance, value hygiene, have a reasonably balanced diet and take pains to avoid the spread of sickness. Perhaps the most telling signs of their general health is the fact that they are taller than the average European peasant and are famed for their handsomeness, which suggests a childhood free of the worst diseases.

Appearance

Vikings are generally tall, keeping themselves clean and neat of appearance. Men trim their moustaches and beards but do not normally shave since being beardless is a sign of immaturity, or worse, effeminacy. Men's hair length can vary between being cut to the nape of the neck or allowed to grow down to their shoulders. Women however are forbidden to cut their hair short, that being a male prerogative only.

It is a man's wife who washes and cuts his hair. They use combs to tease out knots and have a range of other toiletry tools; tweezers, razors, toothpicks and earwax scrapers for example. Said items are normally made of bone or horn for their ease of shaping, although wealthy families may possess articles carved from ivory.

Vikings wear clean clothes when possible, carrying spare changes of clean garments when travelling, although more out of personal pride in their appearance rather than any deeper knowledge of hygiene. Deliberately dirtying a man by pushing him into (or casting at him) mud, food, water or urine is a litigious event and severely punished.

Some Rus Vikings are reputed to be tattooed although this habit may be Slavic since it is not recorded elsewhere in Viking sagas or literature. Tooth decoration however is practiced amongst the Danes and Swedes. Horizontal grooves are filed into the front of the teeth as a sign of rank or achievement. These could be filled with coloured wax to emphasise the effect.

Personal Hygiene

'Combed and washed every thoughtful man should be and fed in the morning; for one cannot foresee where one will be by evening; it is bad to rush headlong before one's fate.'

— Havamal

Regular washing is an important part of Viking hygiene. Viking dental health is good, very few developing tooth decay due to the coarse food and regular cleaning practices, as evidenced by toothpicks. Face and hands are expected to be washed before meals, a good host providing water and towels to guests. Lacking readily available hot water, most use rivers and pools to wash themselves but this is not practical in the colder months.

To get really clean Scandinavians use small outbuildings inside which a fire heats stones. When hot enough, water is poured onto the stones, which bursts into steam. The vapour not only warms the bathhouse occupants but also condenses onto their bodies, wetting them without immersion. This combined with natural sweating and beating oneself with leafy branches, enables the body's pores to extrude all the dirt, allowing the bather to simply rinse themselves clean with a bucket of cooler water before drying themselves.

Some Icelandic bathhouses tap into the natural hot springs available in the country, enabling settlers to bathe and swim even in mid winter, since the water never freezes.

Not everyone shares the Viking enthusiasm for cleanliness. The right to bathe whenever desired in Byzantium had to be specified in the treaty between the Rus traders and the city. In fact the overall cleanliness and pride of personal appearance made the Norse invaders of Britain more attractive to Anglo-Saxon women than their own men folk!

Only those in mourning are exempt from bathing, washing and combing their hair as a sign of respect to the dead.

Health and Injury

Most Viking men and women are robust and healthy, guarded from widespread contagion by the isolation of their steadings. Sanitation is carefully controlled, placing sewage trenches well away from water sources.

In the few existent Viking towns however, proper sanitation fails to be maintained in the more densely settled environment. Many inhabitants suffer from intestinal parasites that spread in the water adjoining the settlements. These cause frequent nausea and diarrhoea, making urban life less than desirable to most farmers and sailors.

With no actual knowledge of disease and how it functions, the majority of Scandinavian healers use magic and superstition to treat their patients. Like most of Viking religion, propitiation is used to avert or ward off disease. If someone does sicken it is a sign that the spirits are angry or that the person's good luck has deserted them. A jarl or ship master who does not possess the absolute loyalty of his men can lose his position by suffering an extended bout of sickness.

Although the Vikings may not know much about epidemics, their ability to treat wounds is exceptional. In bone-setting especially they are masters, preventing broken limbs from healing crookedly – often by re-breaking the wound to set the bones straighter. They also use cauterisation, lancing and the washing out of open wounds to prevent infection and are very knowledgeable of surgery – removing impaled weapons such as arrow or spear heads and sewing flesh back together.

'Then Snorri the Priest healed all the sons of Thorbrand. But when Thorod's neck grew together his head sat somewhat drawn backwards on his trunk, and he said that Snorri would heal him into a maimed man. Snorri said that he deemed the head would come straight when the sinews were knit together; but Thorod would have nought but that the wound should be torn open again, and the head set straighter. But all went as Snorri had guessed, and as soon as the sinews were knit together the head came right'

— Eyrbyggja Saga

Professional healers (*læknir*) however are a rarity at the start of the Viking Age. Most healing is done by the women of the stead, so a wife skilled in leech-craft is very highly valued. Men slowly take over the skills later in the period.

The worst injuries occur in the frequent battles and feuds between Vikings. Mentions are made of amputations of hands, feet and legs. Disembowelments and splitting open of bodies are also recounted. However, not all of these dreadful wounds are fatal. Many a man has the epithet of 'Tree Foot' or similar, indicating a peg leg. In local feuds womenfolk are present to help treat those suffering what seem to be fatal injuries but due to careful ministrations the patient often pulls through. In the Laxdaela Saga, 'An Brushwood-Belly' survives being disembowelled. Thorarin in the following excerpt took an entire summer to heal but did eventually recover from his grievous injury.

'It is told too that Halldor, Glum's wife, called on the women to go with her, saying, 'We will bind up the wounds of those men who have any hope of life, whichever party they belong to.' When she came up Thorarin was just struck down by Marr, his shoulder was cut away in such fashion that the lungs were exposed. But Halldor bound up his wound, and kept watch over him till the fight was over.'

— Viga-Glums Saga

Survival into old age is possible for a Viking, although may not be welcomed if they are a firm believer in Odin and Valhalla. If one can avoid the more deadly diseases when travelling overseas, win every battle and survive accidents and misfortune, then reaching your dotage is quite possible, although said person might be half blind, deaf as a post and be suffering bad arthritis by the end.

Professions and Crafts

One of the unusual aspects of Viking life is that every farmstead has to be self-supporting. Trading or purchasing goods normally only occurs during the local *thing*, so there is little commercialism to help encourage dedicated professions. The family running the farm needs to herd animals, plant crops, harvest and preserve food, prepare firewood, reap hay, erect new buildings, repair tools, provide its own medical care, craft furniture and crockery, weave its own cloth, supplement its diet with fish or game, protect itself from raids and so on.

Looking at the list of diverse but necessary skills, it seems that everyone is required to be a generalist and very few 'professional' craftsmen, healers and the like exist. Whilst this is fairly accurate for the beginning of the Viking Age, as wealth and productivity began to increase, the opportunity for professionals grew in step.

A huskarl of an early period jarl might be sworn to service as a warrior but spend most of his time working in the fields alongside his lord and master. By the end of the Viking Age however, a wealthy and powerful Norwegian Jarl ruling over a large area could retain his warriors in his hall, never requiring them to labour physically.

Of course some Vikings own the personal resources or hire themselves out to specialise in a specific profession. Craftsmen for example can be wandering tinkers providing their skills to those who will hire them for a season. Otherwise they might own a small shop in a trading town, manufacturing goods wholesale. Hunters willing to live a rough seasonal life trapping animals in the forest may return to their family stead before winter with a small fortune in furs. Warriors can sell their skills as mercenaries, to the Jomsvikings for example, granted roof and board in exchange for their sword in battle.

A list of professions is provided in the Viking Adventurers chapter beginning on page 63. These mainly reflect the options available in later periods but can easily be used for less historically accurate games. For campaigns based around the family stead, it would be wise for a group of players to diversify their skills to take into account the range of capabilities needed to successfully survive and prosper.

Leisure and Sport

In their periods of leisure time, Vikings seek entertainment. Whether it is listening to a poetry recital, engaging in drinking bouts, playing music or singing, testing themselves playing sports or challenging one another with board games, these diversions help to pass time, knitting family and society together.

A significant aspect of these entertainments is that most are competitive. Team sports are based on two groups of family or friends proving who was tougher or better. Even solo performances are chances for each participant to gain status over his peers. This unspoken struggle to gain reputation often causes erstwhile friendly competitions to break down into feuds, even murder.

Singing, Dancing and Poetry

Singing and dancing are the fundamental forms of entertainment across the Viking Age world. They require no tools, cross all cultural boundaries and, unless crippled or mute, everyone is capable of performing either.

In Viking society, in particular, communal singing and dancing can gather together the folks of outlying steadings, to renew relationships between families or establish courtships. They are also used to celebrate informal festivities and pay respect at official ceremonies. There are work songs, bawdy songs and religious songs.

'When Odin's toast had been drunk, there was only one more left, the toast dedicated to Freyja. Then 'Sigurd' started plucking the one string that lies across the other strings, and told the king to get ready for the tune called 'Powerful'. The king was so startled at this tune that he jumped to his feet and the bride and the bridegroom too, and nobody danced more vigorously than they did.'

— Bosa Saga

However, solo singing and dancing performances can also be used to demonstrate a Viking's talent, in order to advance his own reputation or attractiveness to members of the opposite sex.

The Importance of Social Skills

In these days of modern recreation it is sometimes difficult for players to understand just how vital social skills like singing and dancing are. In the Viking Age there are no visual or audio entertainments save for what you yourself can provide. Professional entertainers are extremely rare. Actors and plays do not exist. Travelling musicians are rare, stringed instruments rarer and ensemble performances rarer still. Books and literacy are all but unknown.

Left with nothing save for their hands, feet and voices, folks sing, dance and recite poetry to amuse and enjoy themselves.

Although often overlooked by many Adventurers, singing and dancing are very useful abilities in Viking society. Those that fail to develop a degree of proficiency in these important social skills should find themselves lampooned for their lack of ability, renowned as a notoriously poor dancer or tone deaf singer; an undesirable situation for a Viking who wishes to raise himself in the eyes of his peers.

Games Masters are encouraged to reward Adventurers who advance their entertainment skills to high degrees of competence. Use Dance or Sing as a test to impress the local Jarl, help win the heart of a potential future wife or forge bonds with yet unknown allies. It is often an amusing situation to have an Adventurer celebrated for his mastery of singing and granted higher fame and status in the hall of a noble, over his companions who are just ubiquitous slayers of men.

Poetry is the highest art of entertainment. Skalds are renowned as singers but it is their poetry that is their greatest gift. Poems known as *Eddas* preserve the mythological tales of the gods, whereas *Sagas* record the achievements of heroes and great men. Both types of poetry beguile the mind with their alliterations and kennings. The skill of a poet lies not only in the memorisation of thousands of stanzas but also in the ability to compose witty and evocative verse. Few are able to become true skalds but those who master the skills are honoured above all men and thought blessed by Odin himself.

With the voice being held in paramount position, instrumental music is less common in Viking society, possibly due to the limited range of musical instruments available to them. Whistles, flutes and recorders are carved from elder tree branches or animal leg bones. Panpipes are made from pieces of boxwood with different length holes drilled into it. The only stringed instrument known to the Vikings is the lyre, an expensive item that is limited to the wealthy. Otherwise the only other instruments are the small

hand drum, similar to a bodhran, which probably came from the Lapp peoples to the north, and the metal ringed rattle.

Sports

Viking men love playing sports of all kinds, the rougher the better. Whenever a social gathering occurs, they compete at nearly anything that can be staged as a physical challenge; *Knattleikr* (a bat and ball game), *glima* (wrestling), skating, skiing, swimming, *toga honk* (tug-of-war) and weight lifting are just a few of the many they created. Although most sports occur at the *thing* or major religious celebrations, sometimes a games festival is held purely for the pursuit of sporting events.

Like other aspects of their society, the desire to present a manly appearance combined with a fierce competitiveness leads to many serious injuries and even deaths when participants take offence at what they consider cheating. The prevalence of unintentional violence being high, laws place all responsibility on the contestant himself and not the man who accidentally harms him. Deliberate injuries however, are censured.

Knattleikr is a ball game where two teams face each other, one side strikes the ball and the other side attempts to either catch and run, or knock back to score. The game involves full-on tackling but possibly only by a matched opponent on the opposite team to prevent imbalance due to strength or skill. Bats and players are frequently broken during the game. *Skofuleik* is a similar type of game possibly akin to hockey or hurling.

Glima is Viking wrestling. To win a bout you must first lift your opponent off the ground and then throw him down so that he fails to land on his feet. Wrestling is popular at the assemblies since it requires no special equipment (although a padded jacket could be worn to help protect against broken bones) and is a good demonstration of manliness and strength. Wrestling indoors should be avoided since landing on a piece of furniture could be extremely dangerous. In Gunnar's Saga the hero of the story cast down his opponent onto the raised side bench of the longhouse, breaking his spine!

Most swimming competitions are not races per se but effectively wrestling in water. The winner is the person who held his opponent under water the longest. Proper swimming races could either be tests of speed or of endurance – a mythical test of swimming strength being described near the beginning of Beowulf where he and his friend swam for many days, still dressed in armour. There were few rules against diabolical tricks, such as pulling down the treads of a competitor to foul their legs.

Weight lifting challenges are simple tests of brute strength. He who lifts and raises the heaviest rock is declared the winner. Tug of war is unlike the modern variation where two teams haul on a long length of rope. Viking *toga honk* sets two men opposite each other with bent knees, the soles of their feet pressed together. Both hold onto a small loop of strong rope and try to pull their opponent over by straightening their legs.

Viking Sportsmanship

These youths used to play at ball together at Midfjord Water. Those from Midfjord and from Vididal used to meet there, and there came many from Vestrhop and Vatnsnes with some from Hrutasfjord. Those who came from afar used to lodge there. Those who were about equal in the ball-game were matched together, and generally they had much fun in the autumn. Grettir went to the sports when he was fourteen years old at the request of his brother Atli.

The parties were made up. Grettir was matched against Audun, the youth already mentioned, who was a few years the elder. Audun struck the ball over Grettir's head so that he could not reach it, and it bounded far away over the ice. Grettir lost his temper, thinking he had done it out of mischief, but he fetched the ball, brought it back and going up to Audun drove it straight into his forehead, so that the skin was broken. Audun then struck at Grettir with the bat that he was holding, but Grettir ducked and the blow missed him. Then they seized each other with their arms and wrestled.

It was evident to the people around that Grettir was stronger than they had supposed, for Audun was very strong indeed of body. They struggled long together until at last Grettir was thrown. Audun then set his knees on his stomach and dealt unmercifully with him. Atli and Bersi and a number of the others ran up and separated them. Gretti said they need not hold him like a mad dog, and added: 'The thrall alone takes instant vengeance, the coward never.'

— Grettir's Saga

The Vikings have other popular games such as *skinnleikr* a sort of four versus one 'piggy in the middle' using a rolled up bear ski, although little detail remains about them.

Games

Scandinavians also enjoy board or dice games, which can be played indoors especially during the depths of winter. Vikings skilled at these games are either considered very lucky or cunning minded, both of which are valuable traits for a man who wishes to become a leader. Indeed board games were so popular that they are often buried with their owners, presumably to ward off the tedium of death in the underworld. The boards and game pieces can be very valuable in their own right, finely crafted and made from materials such as amber, antler, bone, bronze, glass or wood. Dice can be made from carved wood, bone or animal knucklebones.

Competitiveness and betting on board games can often lead to outbreaks of violence. These sometimes fatal outbursts are so bad, that in some areas gambling on games is forbidden.

How to Run Competitions

Viking sports and games are an excellent form of non-combat challenges, which can add a sense of achievement during an adventure. How to model these competitions using the *Legend* rules is up to the Games Master.

Short challenges should be resolved in a single dice roll. These are used in scenarios where there are dozens of simultaneous competitors, such as in a swimming race for example, or the players intend to enter every event during the session. The competition is resolved with a simple Opposed Test of the relevant skill. If there is more than one opponent, then each one (including the Adventurer) gets a single roll and the winner is determined as normal.

Long challenges are resolved in a series of Skill Tests, three or five steps for instance. These promote a greater degree of excitement as the competition continues. Long challenges should be reserved for two participants; otherwise the number of dice rolls becomes excessive. Each stage of the challenge the Adventurer should test his relevant skill and gain a number of points based on the Level of Success rolled: Fumble 0 points, Failure 1 point, Success 2 points and Critical Success 3 points.

The winner of the long challenge is the person with the highest total at the end. If both competitors have an equal value, then whoever gained the better level of success on the final round wins. If this too is tied, then it goes to whichever of the two rolled the highest number on the dice.

Suggested skills to be used for each type of game follows:

Sport or Game	Skill
Bat and Ball (Knattleikr)	Athletics
Drinking	Combined rolls of Resilience and Poetry, each Resilience failure incurring a cumulative 10% penalty against the Poetry skill
Hnefatafl	Gaming
Skaktafl	Gaming
Skating	Skiing
Cross Country Skiing	Skiing
Swimming	Swim
Tug of War (toga honk)	Brawn
Weight Lifting	Brawn
Wrestling (Glima)	Unarmed

The most famous Viking game is *hnefatafl*. The objective is to protect or capture a king piece (*hnefi*) defended by a small number of retainers, from the opponent's more numerous army of pieces. *Skaktafl* (chess) is also known and played, introduced by the first traders to reach Byzantium and the Middle East.

Drinking games are another popular pastime. Just as with other tests of manliness, Viking drinking competitions are primarily challenges of personal capacity but differ however, in that between each draft the participants must compose a verse of poetry either praising their own personal achievements, or humorously ridiculing those of their opponent. The winner of the competition is the one who maintains the quality of his compositions, whilst still able to recite them clearly.

Of course such drinking bouts are avid forms of entertainment for surrounding observers as the boasts, insults and witticisms grow more outlandish and less restrained as the drinkers lose their inhibitions under the influence of the alcohol. These types of drinking games are frowned upon in the Havamal, the edda of wisdom, which gives many warnings about the dangers of drunkenness – *'A man should drink in moderation be sensible or silent, none will find fault with your manners though you retire in good time'*—suggests that unless the drinkers were close friends or appreciated good humour, the disparaging taunts may have started fights or long lasting enmities.

An unusual game is where a man and women are randomly assigned together by lots as a drinking couple. For the rest of the evening they are supposed to entertain each other, presumably as an effort to encourage visitors or guests to mix with folks they would never normally approach, a sort of Viking blind date. Whether it is done for fun or as a serious attempt to form new married couples is, of course, up to the host of the celebration.

'At once beer was brought in and given them to drink. They sat there till evening. But before the tables were removed the earl said that they should cast lots to drink together in pairs, man and woman, so far as numbers would allow, but the odd ones by themselves. They cast then their lots into the skirt of a cloak, and the earl drew them out. The earl had a very beautiful daughter then in the flower of youth; the lot decreed that Egil should sit by her for the evening.'

— Egil's Saga

Horse Fights

Animal fights between wild beasts are something of a rarity in Viking society. Wild animals, especially carnivores, are hard to trap, transport and keep fed with fresh meat. Although bear cubs are sometimes traded as potential pets, doing the same with a full grown bear is not easy. To throw such a creature into a pit against dogs or wolves would be a tremendous waste of time and effort, for which there would be little remuneration, since the concept of paying for such spectacles does not exist in Scandinavian society.



The Vikings have a different type of animal baiting, fighting stallions against one another instead. Horses are easier to control, can be raised on grass and rarely fight to the death. Since it is often difficult to start two stallions battling each other, they are provoked with special goad sticks and mares in heat placed upwind in clear sight. In the sagas it is obvious that the men remain close behind their horse continuing to goad it until the end. Fights continue until one stallion runs away, is injured too badly to continue or, occasionally, is killed.

Horse fights are very popular at assemblies but private bouts can also be hosted. Men often bet heavily on the outcome of a fight. Women are forbidden to attend due to the frequent arguments and potential violence, which can break out between the spectators.

Hunting

Another unusual aspect of Viking culture is their approach to hunting. Although respected as a valued skill, hunting is not entertainment per se, rather a necessity to gather valuable pelts or fresh meat. Of course, a group of men may treat a hunt as incidental fun but the objective is not indolent pleasure.

A Viking hunt is rarely performed on horseback. The forests and fells covering much of Scandinavia make cross country riding hazardous and most of the creatures being hunted required cover to approach close enough to ambush.

Hunting fearsome animals such as boars or bears on foot is a very dangerous prospect, as is hunting whales or walrus at sea. Successfully killing a great beast gains the slayer much reputation for the noteworthy accomplishment, especially if achieved singlehandedly.



VIKING ADVENTURERS

Now the hair of this Sigurd was golden-red of hue, fair of fashion, and falling down in great locks; thick and short was his beard, and of no other colour, high-nosed he was, broad and high-boned of face; so keen were his eyes, that few durst gaze up under the brows of him; his shoulders were as broad to look on as the shoulders of two; most duly was his body fashioned betwixt height and breadth, and in such wise as was seemliest; and this is the sign told of his height, that when he was girt with his sword Gram, which same was seven spans long, as he went through the full-grown rye-fields, the dew-shoe of the said sword smote the ears of the standing corn; and, for all that; greater was his strength than his growth: well could he wield sword, and cast forth spear, shoot shaft, and hold shield, bend bow, back horse, and do all the goodly deeds that he learned in his youth's days.

— Volsunga Saga

Cruel giants from the frozen northlands, the Vikings are the archetypal pagan barbarians. Fierce in battle, fearless in war, they voyage the seas looting and raiding, seeking lands to settle or silver for their wives.

The Vikings are a colourful, exciting culture, with many dynamic possibilities for conflict and adventure. Their society has classes and ranks, with the ability to rise from the lowliest thrall to become a jarl or king. They also have many professions and crafts that can be learned, all of them useful to surviving in harsh climates or emerging victorious from the field of battle.

A fascinating aspect of Viking life are their polytheistic beliefs, even Christianised Vikings still make offerings to the spirits of their steeds and pray to Thor, even if attending church regularly. Magic and superstition resounds in Viking culture, with its curses, wyrds, chants and runes.

As described in the previous chapter, Viking personality is not limited to what we consider socially acceptable today. A Viking can be domineering, cruel, treacherous or even stupid and get away with it, as long as they hold the loyalty of their personal community or have the warrior skills to back it up. Of course, alienating everyone can result in being declared an outcaste but many sagas show the dramatic lives of those whose belligerence or aggression would never be tolerated in more civilised lands.

In conclusion, Vikings present the perfect culture for warrior-adventurers. Whether motivated by greed, vengeance, ambition or simply a desire to seek out the unknown – a Viking makes the perfect *Legend Adventurer*!

Creating a Viking Adventurer

The checklist for creating a Viking Adventurer is as follows:

- Select the culture from which the Adventurer comes. If the Games Master allows, Adventurers can be from cultures other than those traditional for a Viking, maybe being a savage Bulgar, mysterious Lapp or fractious Hibernian. For those wishing to play a more mythic style of campaign, an Adventurer can be a semi divine Æsir, Vanir or even Jotunn.
- Roll the appropriate Characteristics.
- Determine the background skills based on the Adventurer's culture.
- Roll for the Adventurer's social rank. The Games Master may allow the Adventurers to choose their rank or impose one to suit their campaign.
- Determine the Adventurer's profession. Again, if desired, the Games Master may allow players to choose a profession that suits their concept.
- If a magic using profession, determine the type of magic known, referring to the Viking Magic chapter if necessary.
- Roll on the Family Ties and Family Reputation tables in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.
- Roll on the Viking Background Events table.
- Allocate the Free Skill Points to remaining skills and to buy new Advanced Skills.
- If playing in a mythic campaign, grant the Adventurer a roll on the 'Divine Gift' table.

Viking Characteristics

I have seen the Rus as they came on their merchant journeys and encamped by the Volga. I have never seen more perfect physical specimens, tall as date palms, blonde and ruddy'

— The *Risala* of Ahmad ibn Fadl n

Adventurers, depending on race or culture, use different dice rolls to generate their Characteristics from the normal method in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. Although this may appear somewhat unfair or unbalanced, Games Masters can prevent player dissatisfaction by ensuring that Adventurers in their campaigns all come from the same origin.

Scandinavians

Many of the sagas and historical documents recounting the Vikings suggest that they were often men of unusual strength, size and beauty in comparison with their contemporaries from other parts of Europe. This was probably due to their healthier diet and lifestyle. Rural living in isolated steadings helped too, since diseases, which often stunted growth, tended to be rife in towns and cities.

To reflect their general health and vigour, the Norwegians, Danes, Swedes and Rus use the following Characteristics.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+3	14	1–3	Right Leg	–/6
CON	3D6	11	4–6	Left Leg	–/6
SIZ	2D6+9	16	7–9	Abdomen	–/7
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	–/8
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/5
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	–/5
CHA	3D6	11	19–20	Head	–/6

Combat Actions	2
Damage Modifier	+1D2
Magic Points	11
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	+12

Typical Armour:

Traits:

Western Europeans

These include the English, Scots, Hibernians, Franks and so on. Whilst feudalism has yet to take a stranglehold during this period, most of the population still maintain a reasonable standard of living. In these cultures members of the noble class may, with the Games Master's permission, use Viking Characteristics instead, reflecting their better nutrition and upbringing.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	11	1–3	Right Leg	–/5
CON	3D6	11	4–6	Left Leg	–/5
SIZ	2D6+6	13	7–9	Abdomen	–/6
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	–/7
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/4
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	–/4
CHA	3D6	11	19–20	Head	–/5

Combat Actions	2
Damage Modifier	—
Magic Points	11
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	+12

Typical Armour:

Traits:

Eastern Europeans

This category mainly covers the peoples of the far north and east of Europe and the Balkans, such as the Lapps, Finns, Kurs, Wends, Bulgars and Khazars. Most of these people tend to be smaller than average due to a nomadic lifestyle, poverty or living in disease ridden urban environments. As mentioned previously, members of the noble class may, with the Games Master's permission, use European Characteristics instead, reflecting the advantages of a better lifestyle.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+3	10	1-3	Right Leg	-/5
CON	3D6	11	4-6	Left Leg	-/5
SIZ	2D6+3	10	7-9	Abdomen	-/6
DEX	3D6	11	10-12	Chest	-/7
INT	2D6+6	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/4
POW	3D6	11	16-18	Left Arm	-/4
CHA	3D6	11	19-20	Head	-/5

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour:
Damage Modifier	—	
Magic Points	11	Traits:
Movement	8m	
Strike Rank	+12	

Asians

These are the peoples of Byzantium and those from the Arab Caliphates. Use the same Characteristics as for Eastern Europeans.

Mythic Races

Some campaigns can be heroic games set during the times of the gods and giants. In such mythic campaigns players would be able to play members of the Aesir, Vanir, Jotnar or their offspring. Many mythological heroes were thought to be descendants of the gods; the most famous among them were Volsung, Sigurd the Dragon-slayer; Helgi Thrice-Born, Harald Wartooth, Hadding and Starkad.

The following Characteristics reflect heroes and deities; as such they should not be used for straight historical campaigns, unless the Games Master wishes to give the players a distinct advantage or has fated the Adventurers to be legendary heroes.

Divine Adventurers are assumed to be of noble rank and Viking culture and should be allowed to choose their profession.

Æsir or Vanir

The Æsir and Vanir are the divine races of the gods of war and fertility.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1D6+15	19	1–3	Right Leg	-7
CON	1D6+12	16	4–6	Left Leg	-7
SIZ	1D6+15	19	7–9	Abdomen	-8
DEX	2D6+6	13	10–12	Chest	-9
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	-6
POW	1D6+15	19	16–18	Left Arm	-6
CHA	2D6+6	13	19–20	Head	-7

Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour:
Damage Modifier	+1D6	
Magic Points	19	Traits:
Movement	8m	
Strike Rank	+13	

Jotnar

The Jotnar are the race of giants and monsters that live in Jotunheim. Adventurers in mythic campaigns who wish to be a Jotun can either choose a giant form, as described here, or a monstrous animal form as described on page 200 of the Viking Creatures chapter.

Although some giants are portrayed as huge, such as the frost giants (hrimthursar), fire giants (eldjotnar) and mountain giants (bergrisar), most are only modestly bigger than human size; being able to share furniture and sire children with the Æsir and Vanir.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+12	23	1–3	Right Leg	1/8
CON	1D6+12	16	4–6	Left Leg	1/8
SIZ	3D6+12	23	7–9	Abdomen	1/9
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	1/10
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	1/7
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	1/7
CHA	3D6	11	19–20	Head	1/8

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Thick Skin
Damage Modifier	+1D10	
Magic Points	11	Traits:
Movement	12m	
Strike Rank	+12	

Cultural Backgrounds

As well as providing different Characteristics, culture also determines the types of skills learned whilst growing up. Players are free to choose (within the established parameters of their campaign) between the following Cultural Backgrounds to represent their Adventurers' origin.

Cultural Backgrounds

Background	Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skill Bonuses	Starting Money
Viking (Dane, Geat, Norse, Rus, Svear)	Athletics +10%, Brawn +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Resilience +10% Select One Dance +10%, Drive (Sled) +10%, Ride +10%, Sing +10%	Select two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Boating, Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Skiing Select One Craft (Other), Healing, Language (Any), Play Instrument, Poetry, Shiphandling	4D6x50 silver
Lapp	Athletics +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Perception +10%, Stealth +10% Select One Dance +10%, Drive (Sled) +10%, Sing +10%	Select Two Combat Styles from Bow, Knife or Spear and gain a +10% bonus to each	Language (Native) +50%, Skiing, Survival Select One Craft (Any), Healing, Play Instrument, Track	2D6x5 silver
Baltic (Finn, Slav)	Brawn +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Persistence +10%, Resilience +10% Select One Dance +10%, Drive (Sled) +10%, Sing +10%	Select Two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Skiing Select One Boating, Craft (Other), Healing, Language (Any), Play Instrument	2D6x10 silver

Background	Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skill Bonuses	Starting Money
Western European (English, Frank, Hibernian, Pict, Scot)	Brawn +10%, Culture (Own) +30%, Influence +10%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Persistence +10% Select One Dance +10%, Drive (Cart) +10%, Ride +10%, Sing +10%	Select Two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Craft (Any), Language (Native) +50%, Select Two Art (Any), Healing, Language (Any), Lore (Any), Oratory, Play Instrument	3D6x30 silver
Arabic, Byzantine	Culture (Own) +30%, Evaluate +10%, First Aid +10%, Influence +10%, Lore (Regional) +30% Select One Dance +10%, Ride +10%, Sing +10%	Select One Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	Courtesy, Language (Native) +50%, Language (Any) Select Two Art (Any), Craft (Any), Healing, Language (Other), Lore (Any), Play Instrument	3D6x20 silver
Eastern Nomad (Bulgar, Khazar)	Culture (Own) +30%, Lore (Regional) +30%, Perception +10%, Resilience +10%, Ride +10% Select Two Dance +10%, Influence +10%, Sing +10%	Select Two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Language (Native) +50%, Survival, Tracking Select One Craft (Any), Healing, Language (Any), Play Instrument	3D6x10 silver

Combat Styles

The common weapons of the Viking ages were generally simple swords, spears, axes and shields. Few exotic weapons existed, although some might be available to Adventurers who journey to Byzantium.

Use the following weapons, either singularly or in combination, as Viking Combat Styles. This book assumes a default of one two-handed or two single-handed weapons per style but Games Masters may freely include as many as is fitting for his campaign – a Danish warrior could have Danish Raider style, which incorporates Axe, Daneaxe, Shield and thrown Spear under a single skill for example.

Close Combat: Axe, Club, Daneaxe, Glaive (*Atgeirr*), Knife, Shield, Shortsword (*Seax*), Spear, Sword, Unarmed

Ranged Combat: Axe, Bow, Sling, Spear, Thrown Stone

Note that these weapons are only culturally relevant for Scandinavians. Other cultures may have less access to expensive items like swords or specialise in different weapons such as lances.

Social Ranks

The cultures of the Viking Age are universally class based societies. Although some class mobility is possible, starting Adventurers should either roll to see what social class they were born into or be assigned one by the Games Master.

An Adventurer's access to certain professions is based upon their birth. Due to space limitations, specific ranks are only given for Vikings. With a little work a Games Master could fill in the equivalent ranks for the multitude of other cultures present at this time.

Social Class and Rank

Roll 1D100	Class	Viking Ranks	Professions	Wealth Multiplier ¹
01–05	Criminal or Exile	Outlaw	Beggar, Magician, Outlaw, Seer, Shaman, Sorcerer, Thief	x 0.25
06–25	Slave	Leysing Thrall	Craftsman, Farmer, Fisherman, Herdsman	x 0.5
26–80	Peasant	Bondi Hauldr Karr	Craftsman, Farmer, Fisherman, Herdsman, Hunter, Huskarl, Skald, Trader, Warrior	None
81–00	Noble	Jarl Landsmann	Explorer, Godi, Noble	x 5

¹ When determining starting money, adjust the value of silver by the wealth multiplier.

Professions

Use the following professions depending on the Adventurer's Social Rank or Cultural Background. Most folk in this period tend to be generalists, since there are few opportunities to devote oneself to scholarly pursuits. For more civilised cultures such as Byzantium or the Arab Caliphates, the Games Master may allow other more specialised professions from the *Legend Core Rulebook* to be used.

Professions

Profession	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Beggar	Influence +10%, Insight +10%, Perception +10%, Sleight +10%	Disguise
Craftsman	Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%, Persistence +10%	Art (Any), Craft (Any)
Explorer	Influence +10%, Perception +10%	Select Three Courtesy, Culture (Other), Language (Other), Lore (Other Region), Oratory
Farmer	Brawn +10%, Drive (Any) +10%, Lore (Regional) +10%	Craft (Any), Lore (Farming)
Fisherman	Athletics +5%, Lore (Regional) +5%, Resilience +10%, Swim +10%	Select Two Boating, Craft (Any), Shiphandling
Godi	Insight +10%, Influence +10, Persistence +10%	Lore (Law), Lore (Religion)
Herdsmen	Lore (Regional) +10%, Perception +10%, Resilience +10%	Lore (Herding), Track
Hunter	Lore (Regional) +5%, Resilience +5%, Stealth +10%	Survival, Track
	Select One ranged Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	
Huskarl	Athletics +5%, Evade +5%, Resilience +10%	Select One Boating, Gambling, Shiphandling
	Select Two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	
Noble	Influence +10%, Insight +10%, Ride +10%	Select One Courtesy, Oratory, Shiphandling
	Select One Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	
Outlaw	Athletics +10%, Evade +10%, Stealth +10%	Select One Culture (Other), Language (Other), Lore (Other Region), Survival
	Select One Combat Style and gain a +10% bonus to it	

Profession	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Seer	Influence +10, Insight +20%, Persistence +10%	Spa
Shaman	Influence +10, Lore (Regional) +10%, Persistence +10%, Sing +10	Shamanism
Skald	Influence +10, Sing +10	Lore (Eddas and Sagas), Oratory, Poetry
Sorcerer	Influence +10, Persistence +10%	Healing, Rune Carving, Seidr
Thief	Athletics +10%, Evaluate +10%, Perception +10%, Sleight +10%, Stealth +10%	
Trader	Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%	Select Three Boating, Commerce, Culture (Any), Language (Any), Shiphandling
Warrior	Athletics or Ride +10%, Resilience +10% Select Two Combat Styles and gain a +10% bonus to each	Lore (Battle)

Beggar: Beggars in Scandinavian lands are not the archetypal street layabouts of more civilised lands. Instead they are more akin to dispossessed itinerant workers, who exchange hard labour for hospitality. Although they have little status, they are often the source of entertainment or adventure, Odin in particular favours the role of begging wanderer when travelling Midgard.

Craftsman: Whilst most folk know a craft, some work as dedicated manufacturers of goods. These can be smiths, ship builders, leather workers, glass blowers, wood carvers and so on. Since most people in a small Viking community tend to make their own gear, most professional craftsmen are located in the few major trading settlements, where travelling traders are more likely to purchase their wares.

Explorer: Realistically there are few 'professional' explorers during the Viking Age. However, a few travellers such as Leif Eriksson seem driven by wanderlust to seek out new places and founding colonies. Viking explorers need not necessarily search out uninhabited lands. They could form new trade links to the Middle East or even Africa!

Farmer: By far the most common Viking occupation, farming is the foundation that pays for raiding or trading trips overseas. Most steads are small communities in their own right, with dozens of workers to herd, till, reap and preserve in order to survive the generally harsh winters. The highest objective for most farmers is to own their own land and raise a family, which can support them in their dotage, if they are unfortunate enough to survive into old age.

New Skills

A number of new skills have been introduced for this setting and are described here. For the magic skills of Rune Carving, Seidr, Shamanism and Spa please refer to the Viking Magic Chapter.

Gaming (Int x 2)

This skill allows the playing of board games such as the Viking game of Hnefatafl or chess (Skakatafl). Most people know the rules to these games but additional proficiency indicates a better grasp of the tactics and strategy involved to play them. To resolve the winner of a game simply use an Opposed Test of each Adventurer's Gaming skill.

Poetry (Int+Cha)

Poetry is the primary form of artistic entertainment in Viking culture. The skill covers several aspects of poetry. Firstly the memorisation of Eddas and Sagas – the mythological tales and historic deeds of heroes. Secondly it allows the user to compose *skaldic* poetry on the spot, creating beautiful sounding and thoughtful stanzas about something the poet has just witnessed or wishes to comment on. Thirdly it demonstrates the quality of a rendition, ensuring the alliteration and meter is correct. The skill can be used to remember a historical or mythological fact, create a pleasing poem, or stage a pleasing public performance.

Skiing (Con+Dex)

The Skiing skill covers all forms of foot travel over snow and ice. Hence it is also used for skating, which is generally used less often in northern Scandinavia due to the amount of snow that normally covers the ice. Anyone with this skill can automatically ski or skate with no need to make a Skill Test unless they are faced with a challenging situation, such as passing a dangerous obstacle or engaging in a pursuit. The skill also covers the efficient use of snow shoes, allowing wearers to ignore fatigue loss tests if they can make a successful Skiing roll.

Fisherman: The Baltic seas are famed for their herring, which Swedes and Danes catch to supplement their diet. The Norse however, locked in fjords with little arable land, are more dependent on fish, which they smoke or dry on racks to preserve it. Fishermen go whaling too during the migrating season. Most Viking fishermen use small skiffs that look like tiny two or three man longships and sail far offshore. Inland fishermen go ice fishing in the winter, cutting holes in the ice to lower baited lines.

Godi: Local leaders of the community, Godi are actually more akin to judges rather than priests. Although they supervise religious ceremonies and make sacrifices, their chief purpose is to host community assemblies (*things*), present heralds and settle legal disputes.



Herdsmen: Shepherds, goatherds, cowherds and swineherds, who free their flocks into the wilderness or up hillsides in the spring and summer, then gather them in late autumn and return to winter quarters before the snows arrive. Herdsmen are more prevalent in the Norse regions where there is more grazing land, rather than arable land. In northern Scandinavia the Lapps herd reindeer, which are the only livestock able to survive outdoors in the winter cold.

Hunter: A primary way of life for many Finns and Lapps, many Vikings also hunt in the deep forests of their homelands. Hunters gather fresh meat for consumption and furs for trading. They also keep down the number of dangerous animals in an area, such as wolves or bears. Hunters are not limited to land animals. In the north they often hunt seals or even whales once the ice is thick enough to support weight.

Huskarl: A professional Viking warrior who joins a noble's household. Huskarls are expected to be able to fight, wrestle, swim and travel by ship. In return for swearing loyalty they are fed and sheltered by their lord.

Noble: The secular leaders of society, a Viking noble is generally a Landmann, Jarl or King. Whilst some are renowned warriors in their own right, the primary concern of a noble is to maintain the stability and protection of his people. Since in early Viking culture such authority is based on popular acclaim, rather than hereditary inheritance, detested nobles are usually driven off and wealthy ones killed for their possessions.

Outlaw: Outlaws are members of society who have had the protection of the law stripped from them. Generally the result of a serious crime, an outlaw can be killed, tortured or mutilated without censure. Thus it is in an outlaw's best interest to flee the region and seek out new lands where his name and deeds are unknown.

Seer: Many Viking folk have the incidental power of foresight but a seer has the ability to call upon divination (*spa*) at will. Both feared and respected due to their strange ability to view the *wyrd* of those who request a foretelling; seers are often held outside of society, law and authority have no hold upon them.

Shaman: Shamanism is common amongst the Lapps where it is rightly feared for its power over nature and the ability to curse those who threaten them. They can project their spirit into animals or the forms of animals to do their will.

Skald: The most respected profession within Viking society, a skald is a poet, historian, storyteller and singer. Skalds entertain by recounting epic tales or presenting wry commentary. Fine singers and public speakers, skalds often take up permanent positions in the courts of powerful men, immortalising their battles and deeds as skaldic poems.

Sorcerer: A Viking sorcerer is a worker of magic, either sung charms (*seidr*) or rune carving. Although Odin himself was said to use *seidr*, it is normally considered a female art and rather unmanly. Conversely, rune carving is largely the province of men.

Thief: Full time thieves do not really exist within rural Viking society, the population density being too low to support a criminal class. A thief could be a travelling brigand or live in one of the large trade towns but most ‘thieves’ are probably opportunistic wanderers that help themselves to food, clothing or tools. Viking locks exist in this period, so theft is a fear even if only by a stead’s own thralls.

Trader: Viking traders use boats or ships to travel the rivers and seas that are the roads of the Viking Age. Cautious traders stick to safer, well known routes – but large profits are available to traders willing to risk long journeys into unknown territory.

Warrior: This professional warrior class is presented for non-Viking cultures. It can be used for Frankish Knights or Saxon Fyrdsmen.

Magical Skills

If the Adventurer is a sorcerer or shaman, then they should start the game with three powers, chants or spirits, suitable to the magical skill they have chosen.

Family Ties, Reputation and Connections

Family is very important in Viking society. Generally your family are those who will protect you, perhaps even after becoming an outcaste. They are also the people who will seek vengeance for your death, so a large number of healthy brothers are often valuable as a deterrent – or a source of new Adventurers if your current one dies. Sisters given in marriage can be a powerful bond between families, creating alliances that can be called upon in times of strife.

Conversely some family members can be a damning liability. An Adventurer may come from a family of ill reputation, forcing him to constantly struggle when people discover his name. Relations of a known murderer or thief can have legal cases drawn against them, or be butchered by the dead man’s own relatives seeking justice in a blood feud. Many of the Viking sagas centre on the thirst for vengeance or justice for deeds committed against their family, thus the ties that an Adventurer has with his relations are a powerful motivating force in an ongoing campaign.

To determine an Adventurer’s family ties, reputation and connections, follow the guidelines in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

Background Events

Life is harsh in the Viking Age. Many terrible deeds or omens can occur in an Adventurer’s life before they set forth in the world. Sometimes, however, the fate woven by the Norms can instead grant a bountiful and sheltered upbringing. The following table lists a multitude of Viking specific incidents, which may have moulded an Adventurer during his upbringing.

Games Masters are encouraged to allow players several rolls on the table. The events can be used as personality guidelines or motivations for starting Adventurers, until they

have found their feet in the storyline of the campaign. Some entries may not be suitable for foreign Adventurers of non-Viking origin. If something incongruous comes up, either re-roll the event or use the Background Events table in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

Viking Background Events Table

1D100	Event
01	A family member mysteriously disappeared 1D10 years ago but the Adventurer is plagued by dreams that they are still alive.
02	Abandoned as a small child by parents in the fjords or forests and wandered lost and hungry for countless days – gain the Survival skill.
03	Accidentally injured or killed a childhood friend – gain an Enemy.
04	Actually a member of the opposite sex, the Adventurer has adopted this role to hide from enemies or function outside of gender restrictions – gain the Disguise skill.
05	Adopted into the household of a powerful mercantile family or jarl – increase social class to that of Noble.
06	Afflicted by wanderlust, never remained in one place for more than a year.
07	As a young child, you remember your mother donning a cloak of swan feathers before she vanished forever.
08	As a youth, gave/made an illegitimate child to/with the daughter/son of the local Jarl.
09	Asked to perform a deed to fulfil the dying wish of a relative or loved one.
10	Attacked by a herd of farm animals as a small child – gain a fear of that type of creature and suffer a penalty to skills when in its presence or hearing its bleat.
11	Bitten by a venomous serpent but survived, Adventurer believes themselves to be immune to poison.
12	Blinded in one eye in battle or by a cruel stranger.
13	Born with a prominent and unusual birth mark.
14	Brought up by supernatural beings (perceived or otherwise) – gain one unusual crafting or magical skill.
15	Bullied viciously as a youth by one or more peers.
16	Captured and ransomed during a battle, reducing the family to poverty.
17	Case of mistaken identity resulted in a period of embarrassing imprisonment or some other unforgivable punishment.
18	Adventurer has a twin sibling, brother or sister.
19	Close family save for one sibling or parent killed in a mysterious fire.
20	Close relatives disposed of their land by the legal manipulation and sabotage orchestrated by the local Jarl.
21	Considered as the local hero, well known in local community for a particularly heroic deed.
22	Crushed under the snow fall from a roof and nearly died of suffocation – harbour a dislike of snow.

1D100 Event

23	Cursed for thieving, cannot retain money but always lose it somehow.
24	Discerned to be a very close likeness of someone famous (or infamous).
25	Discovered an animal cub or bird egg and raised it by hand – gain a fully grown wild animal or bird of prey as a loyal pet but must feed and control the creature.
26	Disguised real identity to avoid being hunted down in a blood feud.
27	During a drinking bout, discovered that you never suffer from hangovers, no matter what you drink.
28	Encountered a villain at a time when he or she was relatively unknown.
29	Engaged in long-standing feud with religious or political rivals.
30	Entire family wiped out by a blood feud.
31	Every member of the family thus far has died by drowning.
32	Family are the custodians of a great treasure.
33	Fanatically religious sibling has embraced the cult of Christianity.
34	Father reveals family is descended from the Æsir.
35	Feared as a sorcerer, even if you lack magical skills.
36	Fell into the sea or river rapids as a child but was rescued by an animal (whale, giant sturgeon, otter and so on) – develop a mutual empathy with that species.
37	Found washed up on a beach or battered at the bottom of a cliff with no memory of life up to that point.
38	Foundling of unknown parents, brought up by adoptive guardians.
39	Gifted an ancient artefact or heirloom by a travelling stranger who was killed soon after by folk seeking the missing item.
40	Grew up or was born as a mute but able to still communicate with sign language or grunts – use the Dance skill to put across complex ideas.
41	Grotesque physical deformity of a random location – no ill effects, as Adventurer has learned to adapt but must keep it hidden to prevent causing horror or disgust.
42	Grow up to be tall and ugly – feared as a trollblood, raise your SIZ to 21 but reduce your CHA by the same amount (to a minimum of 1).
43	Happened upon a hidden hoard of silver, quadrupling your starting wealth.
44	Hard work and prosperity gains the Adventurer's family much respect – increase social class by one level.
45	Hated Enemy revealed to be Adventurer's true father.
46	Haunted by evil dreams of a personal doom ridden wyrd.
47	Home destroyed by flooding or violent storms.
48	Hopelessly in love with a childhood sweetheart and has dreams of marrying object of desire once proven in battle or gained in wealth.
49	In a fit of anger, publically cursed someone who promptly died in a tragic and unusual accident – gain the Seidr skill.

1D100	Event
50	Inadvertent comments resulted in a fight, battle or war – the remark or action was innocent but the repercussions tragic.
51	Inheritance denied by greedy lord or family members who wish to cheat the Adventurer out of a huge legacy left by a relative.
52	Kidnapped by foreigners and maltreated before escaping to freedom – now have a hatred of that nationality.
53	Lost childhood sweetheart, who married a friend or rival.
54	Maimed in a raid on your stead – permanently lose 1D4 Hit Points from one body location but as compensation gain the same amount of points as a bonus to one Characteristic (which cannot exceed 21).
55	Mauled or hunted by a dangerous animal or monster – harbour a deep fear of the creatures as a result.
56	Met a great hero at a time when he or she was relatively unknown.
57	Mistakenly burned down best friend's farm in which they lost their entire family but told nobody your guilty secret.
58	Mother reveals family is descended from the Vanir.
59	Nearly drowned when swimming in a river – become fearful of water.
60	Offered clandestine help to a known fugitive, which if discovered would bring the Adventurer great trouble.
61	On first trading voyage, witnessed the eruption of a volcano.
62	Orphaned when both parents were lost through either illness, an accident or some other mysterious or suspicious tragedy.
63	Ostracised from family for behaviour or beliefs.
64	Outcast after killing own brother or sister in a violent argument and forced to flee homeland.
65	Outcast by a jealous rival, the Adventurer's family were forced to move and lost much status – reduce social class by one level.
66	Picked-up a loyal companion or retainer, not necessarily a welcome one, but the relationship has somehow endured over the years.
67	Plagued by dreams of strange animals and old wizened men – gain the Shamanism skill at base value but cannot utilise it until you locate a shaman to train you.
68	Plunged through the ice as a child but survived – now fears travelling on ice.
69	Profaned a sacrifice to the gods, now bad luck seems to have cursed the Adventurer.
70	Raised by a Christian monastic order, opinion of the faith can be good or bad depending on how the Adventurer was treated by the monks.
71	Ran away from family to become a famous hero but never made it beyond the coast before being found and returned home.
72	Regarded as the local coward, well-known in local community for a particularly <i>unheroic</i> deed.
73	Robbed of all wealth, family now faced with destitution.

1D100 Event

74	Romantically entwined with a member of an Enemy or Rival family.
75	Runetouched – gain the Rune Carving skill.
76	Savaged by a wolf as a child, you gain a fearsome facial scar but now wear its skin as a cloak.
77	Saw a star stone fall from the heavens during a display of the Northern Lights and know where it landed.
78	Saw one or both of your parents burned at the stake for paganism by castigating Christian missionaries – acquire a hatred of Christianity.
79	Secretly plundered a burial cairn but is now haunted by ghosts or spirits.
80	Set to inherit a huge legacy from a parent or relative.
81	Shipwrecked or stranded as a youth and lived alone for several years before rescued or found.
82	Sole survivor of a tragedy that wiped out the Adventurer's entire settlement/community.
83	Spent childhood and young adulthood as a slave before escaping or being freed.
84	Struck deaf but other senses have compensated.
85	Suffer but survive a terrible disease or plague and are now immune to such things.
86	Suffering years of being beaten and abused by your father or mother you finally murdered them in secret.
87	Taken in a Viking raid and sold into slavery – reduce social class to that of thrall.
88	Tended by wild animals as a child, now regarded and feared as a shape shifter.
89	Touched by visions of the immanent doom of others – gain the Divination skill.
90	Undertook a gruelling and shameful penance for some insult or slight committed against someone in power or authority.
91	Unwittingly caught up in a fraud, for which the Adventurer must bear responsibility, despite being a victim of the same scam.
92	Was the sole survivor of a raid performed by an unknown foreign tribe.
93	Watched family member slain by evil sorcery or spirits – develop hatred of that type of magic.
94	Well-travelled as a youth – gain the Lore (Other Region) skill.
95	Whilst cutting timber was crushed by a falling tree – dislike forests.
96	Whole family moved to a new country as settlers, refugees or pioneers.
97	Witnessed a future clan hero/leader cowardly flee from battle.
98	Won an important local competition as a youth – Gain a 10% bonus to a non-combat skill.
99	Roll again and take both events.
00	Roll twice more and take all events.

Allocate Free Skill Points

*I can play at tafl,
Nine skills I know,
Rarely forget I the runes,
I know of books and smithing,
I know how to slide on skis,
Shoot and row, well enough;
Each of two arts I know,
Harp-playing and speaking poetry.*

— Earl Rognvaldr Kali

Every Adventurer now gains an additional 250 Skill Points to spend on their skills, as described in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

Divine Gifts

Games Masters who are running epic level or mythic campaigns may wish to allow Adventurers to start with a Divine Gift to give them an edge. If permitted, starting Adventurers can select a Divine Gift from page 133 of the Viking Religion chapter.

Viking Names

The last step before buying equipment is to name the Adventurer. Vikings usually have two names. The first is their personal name, by which close friends and acquaintances call them. The second is their patronymic, which is based upon adding the suffix of –son or –dotter to the father’s name. Ulf Eriksson would mean Ulf son of Erik for instance.

Since some names are quite popular, to distinguish specific individuals Vikings often used bynames (nicknames) or the place where they came from to grant a more unique identifier. Quite often the nickname can be quite sarcastic or derogatory. It is used after the personal name, sometimes separated by the word ‘the’ depending on the adjective.

Adventurers should select, or perhaps even roll, for their name and their father’s name from the following table. It is recommended that starting Viking Adventurers withhold selecting a nickname, since it is more atmospheric and rewarding to be granted one during a campaign by a notable personage, in recognition of some mighty deed.

Male Viking Names

1D100	1	2	3	4	5	6
01	Adalsteinn	Eldgrímr	Hallgrímr	Ketilbjörn	Sigvaldi	Thoroddr
02	Adils	Eldiarn	Halli	Ketill	Skæringr	Thorolfr
03	Ævarr	Elfradr	Hallkell	Kiall akr	Skagi	Thorormr
04	Afavldr	Ellidagrímr	Hallormr	Kiaran	Skalpr	Thorsteinn
05	Alfarinn	Endridi	Hallr	Kiartan	Skamkell	Thorvaldr
06	Alfgeirr	Erlendr	Hallsteinn	Kiotvi	Skapti	Thorvardr
07	Alfr	Erlingr	Hallvardr	Klængr	Skarphedinn	Thorvidr
08	Ali	Erpr	Hals	Klaufi	Skati	Thrainn
09	Alrekr	Eyfrodr	Hamall	Kleppiarn	Skefill	Thrandr
10	An	Eyiarr	Hamundr	Klyppr	Skeggi	Thrasi
11	Ani	Eyiolfr	Haraldr	Kniukr	Skialdbjörn	Throndr
12	Ari	Eylausgr	Hardnefr	Knorr	Skialgr	Throstr
13	Arinbjörn	Eymundr	Harekr	Knottr	Skidi	Tindr
14	Armodr	Eysteinn	Hasteinn	Kodran	Skioldulfr	Tiorvi
15	Arnaldr	Eythiofr	Haukr	Kolbeinn	Skolmr	Torfi
16	Arnbjörn	Eyvindr	Havadr	Kolbjörn	Skopti	Torradr
17	Arngeirr	Falki	Havarr	Kolgrímr	Skorangeirr	Tryggvi
18	Arngrímr	Finnbogi	Hedinn	Kolli	Skorri	Tyrfingr
19	Arni	Finngeirr	Heggr	Kollr	Skuli	Ulfar
20	Arnis	Finni	Helgi	Kollsveinn	Skumr	Ulfhedinn
21	Arnkell	Finnr	Herfinnr	Kolr	Smidkell	Ulfkell
22	Arnlausgr	Finnvardr	Hergils	Kolskeggr	Smidr	Ulfliotr
23	Arnliotr	Fleinn	Hergrímr	Konall	Snæbjörn	Ulfr
24	Arnmodr	Floki	Heriolfr	Kori	Snorri	Vadi
25	Arnoddr	Flosi	Herlausgr	Kormakr	Snortr	Valbrandr
26	Arnorr	Forni	Hermundr	Krumr	Sokki	Vali
27	Arnrídr	Fostolfr	Herródr	Kugaldi	Sokkolfr	Valthiofr
28	Arnsteinn	Freysteinn	Hersteinn	Kvistr	Solgi	Vebjörn
29	Arnthorr	Freyvidr	Hiallkarr	Kylan	Solmundr	Vebrandr
30	Asbjörn	Fridleifr	Hialmolfr	Lambi	Solvarr	Vefódr
31	Asbrandr	Fridmundr	Hialti	Leidolfr	Solvi	Vegestr
32	Asgautr	Frodi	Hildir	Loftr	Soti	Vekell
33	Asgeirr	Galmr	Hiorleifr	Mani	Soxolfr	Veleifr
34	Asi	Galti	Hiorr	Mar	Stafngrímr	Vemundr
35	Askell	Gamli	Hiortr	Melpatrikr	Starkadr	Verlidi
36	Askr	Gardarr	Hlenni	Modolfr	Starri	Vermundr
37	Aslakr	Gaukr	Hlodver	Moror	Steinarr	Vestarr
38	Asmolfr	Gautr	Hnaki	Mottull	Steinbjörn	Vesteinn
39	Asmundr	Gautrekr	Hoggvandill	Naddoddr	Steinfrídr	Vestlidi
40	Asródr	Geiri	Hogni	Nagli	Steingrímr	Vestmadr
41	Asvaldr	Geirleifr	Holmkell	Narfi	Steini	Vethormr
42	Atli	Geirmundr	Holmsteinn	Nefsteinn	Steinmodr	Vethorn
43	Audolfr	Geirolfr	Holti	Nereidr	Steinn	Vidarr
44	Audr	Geirr	Hordr	Niall	Steinolfr	Vifill
45	Audun	Geirrodr	Hoskuldr	Oblaudr	Steinrodr	Vigbjodr
46	Avaldi	Geirsteinn	Hradi	Oddbjörn	Steinthorr	Vigfuss
47	Avaldr	Geirthiofr	Hrærekr	Oddgeirr	Storolfr	Viglundur
48	Avanger	Geitir	Hrafn	Oddi	Sturla	Vigsterkr
49	Balki	Gellir	Hrafnkell	Oddleifr	Styrbjörn	Vilbradr

1D100	1	2	3	4	5	6
50	Bardi	Gestr	Hrafsi	Oddmar	Styrkarr	Vilgeirr
51	Bardr	Giafvaldr	Hrani	Oddr	Styrmir	
52	Barekr	Gils	Hrappr	Ofeigr	Styrr	
53	Bauger	Gisl	Hreidarr	Ogmundr	Sulki	
54	Beinir	Gisli	Hreinn	Ogurr	Sumarlidi	
55	Bekan	Gizurr	Hrifla	Olafr	Surtr	
56	Bergr	Glædir	Hroaldr	Oleifr	Svanr	
57	Bergthorr	Glumr	Hroarr	Oli	Svardkell	
58	Bersi	Gnupr	Hrodgeirr	Olmodr	Svarthofdi	
59	Bialfi	Gormr	Hrodmar	Olvir	Svartkell	
60	Biarnhedinn	Grani	Hrodolfr	Ondotr	Svartr	
61	Biarni	Greniadr	Hroi	Ongull	Svavarr	
62	Biartmarr	Grettir	Hrolfr	Onundr	Sveinbjorn	
63	Biolan	Grimkell	Hrollaugr	Orækia	Sveinn	
64	Biolfr	Grimolfr	Hrolleifr	Orlygr	Sveinungr	
65	Bjorn	Grimr	Hromundr	Ormarr	Svertingr	
66	Bjornolfr	Griotgardr	Hrossbjorn	Ormr	Tanni	
67	Blæinger	Gripr	Hrosskell	Orn	Teitr	
68	Bodmodr	Griss	Hrutr	Ornolfr	Thangbrandr	
69	Bodvarr	Gudlaugr	Hunbogi	Ospakr	Thengill	
70	Bogi	Gudleifr	Hundi	Osvaldr	Thidrandi	
71	Bolli	Gudmundr	Hundolfr	Osvifr	Thiodarr	
72	Bolverkr	Gudrødr	Hunrødr	Otkell	Thiodolfr	
73	Borkr	Gudthormr	Hvati	Otryggr	Thiostarr	
74	Botolfr	Gufi	Hyrningr	Ottarr	Thiostolfr	
75	Bragi	Gunnarr	Illugi	Ozurr	Thodrekr	
76	Brandi	Gunniorn	Ingialdr	Radormr	Thoralf	
77	Brandr	Gunnlaugr	Ingimundr	Ragi	Thorarinn	
78	Brattr	Gunnolfr	Ingolfr	Ragnarr	Thorberger	
79	Breidr	Gunnsteinn	Ingvarr	Raudr	Thorberger	
80	Briningr	Gunnvaldr	Ísleifr	Raudulfr	Thorbjorn	
81	Broddr	Guttormr	Ísolfr	Raumr	Thorbrandr	
82	Brondolfr	Gyrdr	Ísraudr	Refr	Thordr	
83	Bruni	Halfr	Ívarr	Reistr	Thorfidr	
84	Brusi	Hængr	Jatmundr	Reyrketill	Thorfinnr	
85	Bryniolfr	Hæringr	Jatvardr	Rodrekr	Thorgautr	
86	Dagr	Hafgrimr	Jofreidr	Rognvaldr	Thorgeirr	
87	Dalkr	Hafliði	Jokull	Rongudr	Thorgestr	
88	Darri	Hafliotr	Jolgeirr	Runolfr	Thorgils	
89	Draffi	Hafr	Jon	Sæbjorn	Thorgnyr	
90	Dufnall	Hafthorr	Jorundr	Sæmingr	Thorgrimr	
91	Dufniall	Haki	Josteinn	Sæmundr	Thorhaddr	
92	Dufthakr	Hakon	Josurr	Samr	Thorhalli	
93	Dugfuss	Haleygr	Kadall	Saxi	Thorhallr	
94	Dyri	Halfdan	Kalfr	Sigarr	Thorir	
95	Egill	Halladr	Kali	Sigfastr	Thorkell	
96	Eidr	Hallbjorn	Kalman	Sigfuss	Thorlacr	
97	Eilifr	Halldorr	Kari	Sighvatr	Thorleifr	
98	Einarr	Hallfredr	Karl	Sigmundr	Thorleikr	
99	Eindrídi	Hallgeirr	Karli	Sigtryggr	Thorliotr	
00	Eirikr	Hallgils	Karr	Sigurdr	Thormodr	

Female Viking Names

1D100	1	2	3	4
01-02	Ægileif	Fregerdr	Ingridr	Svanlaug
03-04	Æsa	Fridgerdr	Ingunn	Thiodgerdr
05-06	Aldis	Geirbiorg	Ingvoldr	Thiodhildr
07-08	Alfdis	Geirhildr	Ísgerdr	Thora
09-10	Alfeidr	Geirlaug	Jarngerdr	Thorarna
11-12	Alfgerdr	Geirny	Jodis	Thorbiorg
13-14	Alof	Geirridr	Jofridr	Thordis
15-16	Arnbiorg	Gerdr	Jora	Thorelfr
17-18	Arndis	Giaflaug	Joreidr	Thorey
19-20	Arneidr	Grelod	Jorunn	Thorfinna
21-22	Arnfridr	Grima	Kadlin	Thorgerdr
23-24	Arngerdr	Groa	Katla	Thorgrima
25-26	Arngunnr	Gudbiorg	Ketilridr	Thorhildr
27-28	Arnkatla	Gudlaug	Kiolvor	Thorkatla
29-30	Arnleif	Gudleif	Kolfinna	Thorlaug
31-32	Arnora	Gudny	Kolgrima	Thorleif
33-34	Arnthrudr	Gudridr	Mæva	Thorlot
35-36	Asa	Gudrun	Melkorka	Thorny
37-38	Asbiorg	Gunnhildr	Mioll	Thorodda
39-40	Asdis	Gunnvor	Moeidr	Thorunn
41-42	Asgerdr	Hafthora	Myrgiol	Thorve
43-44	Ashildr	Halla	Myrun	Thorvor
45-46	Asleif	Hallbera	Nidbiorg	Thraslaug
47-48	Asny	Hallbiorg	Oddbior	Thuridr
49-50	Asta	Halldis	Oddfridr	Tofa
51-52	Astridr	Halldora	Oddlaug	Ulfeidr
53-54	Asvor	Hallfridr	Oddleif	Ulfhildr
55-56	Audr	Hallgerdr	Oddny	Ulfrun
57-58	Bera	Hallkatla	Ondot	Valdis
59-60	Bergdis	Hallveig	Ormhildr	Valgerdr
61-62	Bergliot	Hallvor	Osk	Vedis
6364	Bergthora	Heidr	Otkatla	Velaug
65-66	Biargey	Heimlaug	Raforta	Veny
67-68	Biollok	Helga	Ragnheidr	Vigdis
69-70	Biorg	Herdis	Ragnhildr	Vilborg
71-72	Birna	Herridr	Rannveig	Vilgerdr
73-74	Bot	Herthrudr	Reginleif	Yngvildr
75-76	Botey	Hervor	Riupa	Ýrr
77-78	Bryngerdr	Hialmgerdr	Sæhildr	
79-80	Dagrun	Hialp	Sæudr	
81-82	Dalla	Hildigunnr	Salbiorg	
83-84	Dis	Hlif	Salgerdr	
85-86	Dyrfinna	Hrafnhildr	Signy	
8788	Edna	Hrefna	Sigridr	
89-90	Eirny	Hrodny	Snælaug	
91-92	Eydis	Hungerdr	Solveig	
93-94	Eyia	Idunn	Solvor	
95-96	Fastny	Ingibiorg	Steinunn	
97-98	Finna	Ingigerdr	Steinvor	
99-00	Fiorleif	Ingileif	Svana	

Viking Nicknames

ID100	1	2	3	4	5	6
01-02	Abandoned	Coward	Fur-trader	Laggard	Scowler	Tax-collector
03-04	Ale-Lover	Crippled	Gash-skull	Lamb	Scrawny-runt	Thin-beard
05-06	All-Wise	Crooked	Gaudy	Lame	Screamer	Thistle
07-08	Arsonist	Crooked-arse	Gelder	Large	Sea-farer	Thorn-Foot
09-10	Axe	Crow	Generous	Lean	Seer	Thud-beam
11-12	Bad	Crow-nose	Gentle	Leech	Serpent-tongue	Thunder
13-14	Bad-mouth	Curly-head	Giant	Level-head	Shaggy-breeches	Timber-quaker
15-16	Bad-poet	Cut-cheek	Giant-bane	Limp-leg	Shaggy-head	Tinkle-scales
17-18	Bald-pate	Dandy	Girlish	Long-chin	Sharp	Tongue
19-20	Bare-leg	Dauntless	Glad	Lucky	Sheen-mane	Torpid
21-22	Barker	Deep-minded	Gold-beard	Lust-hostage	Shield	Travel-hard
23-24	Battle-tooth	Desirous-of-beer	Gold-bearer	Mad	Shifty	Travel-shirt
25-26	Bear-cub	Downy-nose	Good-cheer	Marksman	Shipwright	Tree-leg
27-28	Beardless	Dreamer	Gossip	Mercenary	Short	Trickster
29-30	Bellower	Dream-reader	Grave-robber	Mighty	Short-penis	Troll
31-32	Berserk	Drowsy	Gray	Mixing-horn	Shrieking	Troublesome Poet
33-34	Berserks-bane	Duel	Great	Much-sailing	Sickly	Trout
35-36	Billygoat	Eagle	Great-slasher	Oaken-crook	Silk-Beard	Trustworthy
37-38	Bitch	Earl's-skald	Gripe	Old	Skerry-blaze	Twig-belly
39-40	Bitter	Earth-long	Grovelling	Oppressed	Skinny	Twist-foot
41-42	Black	Elder	Hag's-nose	Orphan-poet	Skull-cleaver	
43-44	Black-brows	Elegant	Hairy	Ox-might	Sledge-hammer	Uninspired
45-46	Black-troll	Eloquent	Hairy-Cheek	Paunch	Sleeper	Unjust
47-48	Bladder-bald	Evil	Half-troll	Peacock	Sleet-Nose	Unlucky
49-50	Blind	Excrement	Handsome	Peevish	Slim	Unwashed
51-52	Blind-Snout	Fair-hair	Hang-stocking	Pelt	Smith	Upright
53-54	Blue-tooth	Farmer	Hard-rule	Piglet	Smooth-tongued	Valiant
55-56	Blusterer	Far-travelling	Haven-key	Pock-marked	Snake-in-the-Eye	Very-wise
57-58	Boar	Cleft-palate	Hell-Hide	Poet	Snow-shoe	Vicious
59-60	Boneless	Clumsy-boor	Helmet	Pouch-back	Sorcerer	Victorious
61-62	Bow-swayer	Clumsy-foot	Heron	Prick	Sour	Viking
63-64	Braggart	Codfish-biter	Hoary-head	Pride-of-the-benches	Speedy	Virtuous
65-66	Brave	Cold-mouth	Hog-Head	Proud	Spike	Wag-beard
67-68	Bristle-beard	Coward	Honest	Raging	Split-stick	Walker
69-70	Broad	Crippled	Horn-breaker	Ram	Squinter	Weak
71-72	Broad-bearded	Crooked	Horse-fly	Rash	Stink-fart	Whale
73-74	Broken	Fast-traveller	Horse-gelder	Raven	Stooped	Whale-might
75-76	Builder	Fat	Horse-head	Red	Stout	Whiskers
77-78	Burned	Figurehead	Horse-penis	Red-cheek	Stout-hearted	Whistler
79-80	Button-arse	Filthy	Hound	Red-cloak	Straw	White
81-82	Cairn-breaker	Fish-hook	Howler	Rich	Strong	White-cloud
83-84	Careless	Flat-foot	Hump	Ring-slinger	Stump	White-leg
85-86	Champion	Flat-nose	Hunchback	Rooster	Subtle	Wild-man
87-88	Chest-butter	Foal-forehead	Illegitimate	Rutter	Surprise-attack	Winker
89-90	Chieftain	Foolish	Impressive	Sad	Swarthy-old-man	Wise
91-92	Child-Sparer	Forest-nose	Insignificant	Salmon	Swarthy-skin	Witch-breaker
93-94	Cleft-palate	Fork-beard	Iron-side	Sarcastic	Swift-eyed	Woe-snout
95-96	Clumsy-boor	Fortunate	Jawbone	Scar-leg	Swine	Wolf
97-98	Codfish-biter	Fox	Keen	Scatter-Brain	Tall	Wood-skull
99-00	Cold-mouth	Fringed-cloak	Knob	Scoffing	Tangle-hair	Worm-tongue

VIKING EQUIPMENT

*'The ring-linked coat of strongest mail could not withstand the iron hail,
Though sewed with care and elbow bent, by Norn on its strength intent.
The fire of battle raged around, Odin's steel shirt flew all unbound!
The earl his ring-mail from him flung, its steel rings on the wet deck rung;
Part of it fell into the sea, a part was kept, a proof to be
How sharp and thick the arrow-flight among the sea-steeds in this fight.'*

— King Olaf Tryggvason's Saga

The possessions of a Viking are varied and many. Every Viking raider worth his salt needs his axe and spear, helm and shield. A stead-bound bondi on the other hand might only own his herd of milk cows. Viking women long for jewellery to accentuate their desirability and the men can be dandies if brightly dyed cloth falls into their hands.

The number and quality of a Viking's goods are important, not only as personal wealth but to improve their status in the eyes of others. However the goods available to the Vikings are somewhat limited compared to those listed in the *Legend Core Rulebook*, some items are beyond the technology of the time to produce or are simply unnecessary for day-to-day living.

Listed in the following sections are common Viking goods and some optional rules concerning their use. Games Masters need not restrain themselves to just these; after all, items manufactured outside of Scandinavia could turn up as plunder from a raiding trip or be discovered in the hoard of some ancient monster. Due to the limited availability of goods, some items are treasured heirlooms passed from father to son.

The Availability of Goods

Save for the few trading towns in Scandinavia, there are no such thing as shops. This is a very important concept – if you lack something you must either make it yourself, steal it, or wait until the *thing* and hope some itinerate trader has one on offer.

If an item is not available at the *thing* market, a Viking can place an order with a trader requesting that he brings one the next time he travels to the region. A desperate man can even undertake a journey to one of the trade towns in the hope of finding what he wants there.

Another concept important to the setting is that there is no mass production. Each item is individually hand crafted and uniquely decorated. Since folk own so few possessions, stealing an item risks the chance of its recognition by the victim of the crime, or his

close friends and family. Looting a dead body is tantamount to broadcasting your guilt if the thief attempts to use or barter the articles in that area.

Both of these considerations can be used as the basis for adventure. Where has Snorri been for the last two weeks and why does Arngrim have his ivory hilted knife? No chainmail hauberks here but if you sail to Birka, only a voyage of a week, my brother sells armour from the stall with the red and white striped awning...

In reality most items needed for day-to-day survival and comfort are made by people themselves. Folk living on a stead will often carve their own furniture, sew their own shoes, forge their own metal tools and even build their own ships. It is the specialist items such as fine woven cloth, swords, armour, glassware or jewellery that require a dedicated craftsman to manufacture. These goods are expensive and often hard to locate without the right contacts.

If using the 'Running a Stead in *Legend*' rules, it might appear that a landowner has plenty of money to purchase anything wanted from these lists. There are some things to consider, however. Many years a farmer will fail to earn any income from their steading and whatever profit is earned, needs to be distributed amongst the entire family; wives and brothers not granted a share for their labours will grow increasingly discontent. Also fines levied by the *thing* can quickly eat up funds, especially if paying compensation for insults, wounds or wergild.

Displaying One's Wealth

If a Viking acquires items of great value, such as fine silk clothing or a gold arm ring for example, wearing such articles can add to his influence. A wealthy man either has great luck or the skill to defend himself from others who would strip it from him.

Games Masters are encouraged to grant Adventurers who spend large amounts of wealth, on such things, a situational bonus to their Commerce, Influence, Oratory and Seduction skills. The size of the bonus depends on who is being influenced and the ambient level of wealth.

Thus a warrior dripping with silver, dressed in brightly dyed clothing and bearing a gold inlaid sword might gain a +40% bonus in the home of a poor karl, perhaps only +20% at the steading of a well-off hauldr and nothing in the great hall of a jarl where such levels of ostentation are expected.

Conversely if the warrior is a freedman with nothing to his name but the undyed homespun clothes on his back and a rickety old spear, he would gain no bonus in the home of the karl; a -20% penalty at the hauldr's stead and -40% in the jarl's great hall where the word of the poor man would carry little influence.

Games Masters who find their Adventurers awash with wealth can encourage them to purchase better quality items than the bog standard versions listed. A basic sword may cost 1 Mark of silver but one with gold inlay and gems inset into the hilt could easily quadruple the price, gaining the bearer additional fame and reputation.

Bartering for Goods

Vikings do not use money for transactions. Coinage is viewed only as small ingots of precious metal of variable quality. Goods or services are bartered, precious metals only being used for high value purchases or when a person needs to travel without weighing themselves down with trade items.

Fortunately Scandinavians understand the concept of exchange rates, providing a rough conversion value for most items in order to prevent runaway inflation. The value of goods is usually rated in ounces of silver or its equivalent of woven cloth or standard cloth.

An *eyrir*, plural *aurar*, was a unit of weight, approximately 27 grams, used for measuring precious metals. A *logeyrir* is a length of homespun cloth (*vadmál*) six ells long and two ells broad. Since an ell is about 50 centimetres, this translates to an area of woollen fabric three metres long and one metre wide. The reason for this comparison is that it gives a good idea of how much silver is worth, since one *eyrir* is equivalent to the combing, carding, spinning and weaving of a *logeyrir* of cloth – perhaps a week of hard work.

For most of the Viking Age one *logeyrir* remains about the equivalent of an *eyrir* of silver; which in turn is equal to one milk cow. Almost everything in Scandinavia is valued in terms of lengths of fabric, weight in silver or number of cows.

For the sake of simplicity, the equipment listed in this chapter is given a base price in silver. The weights used are *pennies*, *aurar* or *marks* of silver. A penny is equivalent to the amount of silver in an Arabic dirham, about 10 pennies equalling an *eyrir*. A *mark* is eight *aurar* of silver or 80 pennies. Gold, if ever encountered in quantity, is worth eight times its equivalent weight in silver. A man carrying too much debased silver coinage or hacked up jewellery will often have a smith melt it down to form pure silver ingots equal to a mark in weight.

When engaging in trade a Viking might face difficulties if he cannot offer goods or services useful to the seller. Although this is taken into account when trading at the local *thing*, since folks tend to produce items or surpluses that they know will be in demand by the inhabitants of the region, it is another matter altogether if sailing overseas to negotiate trade with foreigners. Offering nomadic Lapps delicate, high quality glassware for their furs is probably going to fail.

Bartering deals might involve multiple goods in the same transaction. For example, a cargo of bear, wolf and reindeer skins might require half a dozen iron knives, three blue dyed tunics, a carved wooden bed, 10 metres of rope, 20 leather belts and a skin of fine wine in exchange.

Armour

Vikings do not possess a large range of protective armour. What exists is generally limited in availability and if made from iron, prohibitively expensive. Poorer Vikings normally rely on just a large shield and perhaps a leather helmet for protection, few but the wealthiest land owners can afford to outfit themselves and their men with chainmail byrnies.

Beyond leather clothing, armour is not normally worn on a daily basis, even by the huskarls of a jarl, due to its weight and encumbrance. Instead it is stored in chests and only brought out when the owner expects trouble, such as when a threat is made against his life or outlaws have been reported in the area. Vikings who depart overseas, whether for trading or raiding, generally take their armour with them carefully wrapped and stored against moisture, only to be removed just before it will be needed.

Although most armour is a valuable commodity, it is almost never looted from the dead. The Vikings are very superstitious about taking armour and weapons from corpses, believing such items are cursed (jewellery and other items are fine however). Of course sly Adventurers can take these items and try to resell them to merchants who specialise in armaments. Armour, however, usually shows signs of its use. Bloodstained leather or freshly broken rings are a giveaway of looted armour, causing most Scandinavian merchants to avoid contact with it at all costs unless the seller can come up with a convincing lie as to its origin and current condition. Failing to do so can cause the seller to gain a reputation as a grave robber, causing the gradual loss of friends and associates.

Looted Armour

Due to the inescapable superstition concerning grave goods, an Adventurer who *knowingly* dons a suit of looted armour will find it cursed. In purely historical campaigns the Adventurer merely suffers from a psychosomatic effect driven by his guilt. In fantasy Viking campaigns the curse is real. No matter the source the effects are identical and only cease if the accursed item is discarded.

1D6 Roll Type of Curse

1	Armour betrays the wearer – Armour Points are halved.
2	Armour brings nightmares – wearer suffers a constant Fatigue Level of Winded due to lack of sleep.
3	Armour burdens conscience – the Armour Penalty of the looted item is doubled.
4	Armour constricts wearer – wearer loses one of his Combat Actions each round due to snagging or tightness.
5	Armour dooms its wearer – whilst worn all Resilience tests automatically fail.
6	Armour hinders flight – the base Movement Rate of the wearer when running is halved.

Armour Descriptions

The following types of armour are specific to the Viking period and vary slightly to armour in the *Legend Core Rulebook* due to different materials or manufacturing techniques. They are considered to already include any necessary padding or undergarments and cannot be layered.

Bearskin: Literally the cured skin of a bear draped over the torso and arms of the wearer and tied in place. The bear's head can be worn over the wearer's skull to act as a helmet.

Byrnie: Also known as a brynja, a byrnie is a tunic or coat of armour that covers from the shoulders to the groin and extends down to the elbows.

Cap: A cap is a form fitting hat, which protects the top, back and sides of the head, down to the ears.

Coif: A hood made of mail.

Hauberk: A hauberk is the same as a byrnie but longer, hanging down to the knees and covering more of the arms, extending to mid-forearm or wrist. Due to the additional coverage it is usually slightly more encumbering.

Hood: An article that completely covers the head and shoulders, leaving only the face exposed.

Lamellar: Lamellar is formed from hundreds of overlapping plates called lames, which are laced together to make a thick protective layer that has some degree of flexibility. Individual lames are made from a variety of materials from iron, horn or thick rawhide but provide the same protection.

Mail: Mail is a fabric-like mesh made from thousands of small interlaced metal rings. Each ring joins to four others and is riveted closed, making it very flexible but difficult to break. Making mail requires a lot of iron and time, making it very expensive.

Quilted: Fabric armour made from many layers of wool stitched together. Sometimes a stuffing of hair is used to reduce the amount of fabric layers. The resulting thick sandwich provides reasonable protection but is prone to being cut, requiring a lot of maintenance to remain useful.

Reindeer/Seal Skin: Reindeer hides are used by the Lapps to make their armour and are sometimes traded south. The protection is usually minimal but Reindeer Skin has the advantage that it can be easily decorated. Lapp Wizards are famed for enchanting reindeer skin with sigils and chants to make it impervious to harm. Sealskin clothes are worn by Norwegian and Icelandic Vikings for warmth, rather than protection.

Shirt: A shirt indicates an item of light protective value that fully covers the chest, abdomen and arms of the wearer.

Spangenhelm: A rigid helmet that covers the same parts of the head as a cap but includes a nasal bar and sometimes cheek flaps to protect the face. They are formed from sections of metal riveted together.

Trews: Another word for trousers.

Vendel Helm: As per a Spangenhelm, except the nasal bar is extended with an ocular to better protect the eyes or completely replaced by a full face mask. The neck and face are further guarded with a mail aventail.

Body Armour

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations	Base Cost
Bearskin	3	3	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Head	1 Mark
Lamellar Byrnie	5	3	Abdomen, Arms, Chest	2 Marks
Lamellar Hauberk	5	4	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs	3 Marks
Mail Byrnie	6	4	Abdomen, Arms, Chest	4 Marks
Mail Hauberk	6	5	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs	5 Marks
Quilted Byrnie	2	1	Abdomen, Arms, Chest	6 Aurar
Quilted Hauberk	2	1	Abdomen, Arms, Chest, Legs	1 Mark
Reindeer/Seal Skin Shirt	1	0	Abdomen, Arms, Chest	4 Aurar
Reindeer/Seal Skin Trews	1	0	Legs	2 Aurar

Helmets

Armour	AP	ENC	Locations	Base Cost
Horn Reinforced Cap	3	1	Head	2 Aurar
Leather Cap	2	0	Head	1 Eyrir
Mail Coif	5	1	Head	2 Marks
Spangenhelm	6	1	Head	3 Marks
Vendel Helm	7	1	Head	4 Marks
Woollen Hood	1	0	Head	½ Eyrir

Weaponry

Although the range and variation of Viking weapons is very limited, the handful adopted seem to fulfil their needs more than adequately. Due to the costs of bog or forged iron, most Vikings use cheaper weapons that require little metal to manufacture, such as spears and axes.



Metal weapons are very expensive, not only in terms of iron required but the skill needed to forge them. The quality and size of Iron ingots available to Vikings is often poor, requiring pattern welding to build up a large enough billet and ensure a reasonably good blade free from flaws. However, the manufacture of pattern welded billets requires hours of folding and forge-welding the metal, losing much of the iron in the process. Swords, spears and knives are made from pattern welded steel.

Weapons that emerge from the forge unusually hard or resistant to damage are often named and passed down within families for several generations. Weapons are buried with their last owner if he fell in battle. Some blades however are so famous and deadly that foolish men seek to recover them from the grave. Akin to armour, looting the weapon of a dead man invariably brings a curse and whilst the weapon may still be effective in combat, it will always betray its thief in the end.

Looted Weapons

Use the following curses for a weapon looted from a dead man. Similar to looted armour, it is the weapon itself that is accursed, not its wielder. The psychosomatic or magical effects cease if the weapon is abandoned.

1D6 Roll	Type of Curse
1	Weapon becomes kin-slayer – every fumble that occurs whilst using the weapon, results in it striking the nearest friend in a random location for full damage, ignoring armour. Lacking a suitable target it injures the wielder instead.
2	Weapon blunted in combat – the damage rolled for the weapon in a successful attack is halved, although any Damage Bonus is not affected.
3	Weapon brings nightmares – wearer suffers a constant Fatigue Level of Winded due to lack of sleep.
4	Weapon dooms its wielder – the bearer's wounds fail to heal naturally.
5	Weapon turns in grip – any disarm attempt against the wielder automatically succeeds and fumbles in combat default to Drop Weapon.
6	Weapon weighs heavily – wielder loses one of his Combat Actions each round due to the weapon feeling heavy and unwieldy.

Close Combat Weapon Descriptions

Axe: A single-bladed weapon with a sturdy haft and a small iron head, the axe is normally used as a singlehanded weapon. If using both hands the damage dice is increased one step to 1D8+1. An axe can be used to bash through doors and obstacles rather quickly. It suffers no damage when attacking inanimate wooden objects.

Club: Although seemingly incongruous in the Viking Age clubs are very popular weapons in some of the sagas where foes are immune to the bite of iron. A champion often has to flee battle in order to cut himself a hefty club, which he then uses to pound the magically protected enemy to death. Lapps and Inuit peoples often have clubs fashioned with alternate materials such as stone or whalebone, and even an icicle, if large enough, can be used as a one-shot club. If two hands are used to wield a club, then the damage of the weapon is increased by one dice step to 1D8.

Dane Axe: A single headed axe blade mounted on a shaft up to two metres in length, the Dane axe is a two handed weapon of terrible destructive power. Wielded by a strong man, it is capable of sheering off the leg of a horse in a single blow. Like a normal axe it also suffers no damage when used to break inanimate wooden objects.

Glaive: Known as an *atgeirr* the Viking glaive is effectively a sword mounted on a long haft. These are quite popular weapons in the sagas, since an enemy is often incapacitated with a single blow and it is capable of puncturing chain byrnie. Glaives require two hands to wield.

Halberd: Called a *kesja*, Viking halberds are similar to the weapons used later in the Middle Ages. The axe head is combined with a thrusting tip and a hook, mounted on a long shaft. Halberds require both hands to wield. Halberdiers are versatile opponents that can bring any version of the weapon's attack to bear in an instant.

Knife: Knives can be made from a sharp piece of metal, stone or bone. Viking knives have decorated hilts of wood or ivory carved with patterns. Seen as a tool rather than a weapon, a knife is a multi-purpose item that everyone in society carries, even the thralls.

Seax: The Scandinavian seax is a straight, single-edged shortsword with a distinctive point that can be used to hack or thrust. The seax is the ubiquitous sidearm of karls who cannot afford a sword.

Spear: Viking *spjot* are singlehanded weapons designed to be used in combination with shields. If two hands are used then the damage of the weapon is increased by one dice step to 1D10+1. Spears are designed to be thrown but have a very short range. Spear heads are relatively cheap in comparison to swords and are often traded. Most free men own a spear, which they use when hunting or to defend their stead.

Sword: The prince of weapons, Viking swords are a status symbol of wealth and authority. The majority of early Viking swords are double edged blades less than a metre long and have rounded tips making it impossible to thrust with them. Owners often name their blades and have them decorated with precious metals. Due to their tight hilts Viking swords cannot be used two handed.

Viking Shield: A large circular shield designed for foot combat. Its generous surface area provides excellent coverage but its construction from thin wood makes it fragile, enabling powerful blows to quickly shatter it. Most are reinforced with metal edging and commonly have some form of pattern or insignia painted on the outside face.

Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage		STR/		Combat		ENCAP/HP	Base Cost
		Dice	DEX	Size	Reach	Manoeuvres			
Axe	Single	1D6+1	11/9	M	M	Bleed	1	4/8	2 Aurar
Club	Single	1D6	7/5	M	S	Stun Location	1	4/4	—
Dane Axe	Double	1D12+2	13/9	H	L	Bleed, Sunder	2	4/10	4 Aurar
Glaive ¹	Double	1D10+2	7/7	L	L	Bleed, Impale, Sunder	4	4/10	1 Mark
Halberd ¹	Double	2D6	7/7	L	VL	Entangle, Impale, Sunder	4	4/10	6 Aurar
Knife	Single	1D3	—/—	S	S	Bleed, Impale	—	5/4	1 Eyrir
Seax	Single	1D6	5/7	M	S	Bleed, Impale	1	6/8	4 Aurar
Spear ^{1,2}	Single	1D8+1	5/5	M	L	Impale	2	4/5	4 Aurar
Sword	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed	2	6/10	2 Marks
Viking shield ³	Single	1D4	9/5	L	S	Shield Bash, Shield Twist	2	4/8	2 Aurar

¹This weapon may be set against a charge.

²This weapon suffers no penalty when thrown.

³This weapon may Parry ranged weapons.

Ranged Weapon Descriptions

Short Bow: Designed to be fired from horseback, the short bow is equally useful as a foot soldier's weapon. It is a good hunting tool as well as a weapon of war and when used to hunt deer and smaller game animals it can make all the difference.

Sling: A sling is a long strip of cloth or leather used to fling a stone or bullet at a target. It is as lethal as a bow, able to injure or kill those wearing heavy armour. Many slings also have a sewn-in leather cup or pad in which to hold the projectile while gathering velocity. A sling's range makes it useful against archers.

Throwing Axe: Originally a Frankish invention, the Vikings inherited throwing axes from the continent. Shaped to increase the chance of the blade striking rather than the haft, a throwing axe is of little use against well armoured foes.

Thrown Anvil: Just for fun...

New Combat Manoeuvres

Some of the combat descriptions in the sagas offer up some interesting new tactics to those trained in their use. The following manoeuvres are designed to emulate these techniques.

Cast Back (Defensive, Critical Success Only) – The recipient of a thrown weapon attack can snatch the weapon out of the air, spin in place and throw it back at the original thrower. This costs the user of the manoeuvre no additional Combat Actions beyond the one spent to parry in the first place. In addition it also voids whatever damage the missile attack would have normally inflicted. If the user is currently wielding two weapons and does not have a free hand, they can decide to drop one of the weapons as part of this manoeuvre, to allow the initial catch. This manoeuvre does not work against projectile weapons such as arrow or sling stones and common sense should be applied if the thrown object is particularly large or awkward.

Shield Bash (Offensive) – Works like the Bash Opponent manoeuvre, except that the opponent is knocked backwards by one metre *per point of damage* inflicted by the shield (including any damage bonus). In addition the force of the blow is sufficient to require the opponent to make the *Difficult* Athletics Skill Test without needing an obstacle to trip over.

Shield Twist (Defensive) – Whilst parrying, the wielder of a Viking Shield may allow an attacking weapon to lodge deeply into the wood. From that moment on, the lodged weapon is automatically considered to be suffering the *Pin Weapon* Combat Manoeuvre. However, this is just the set-up. The user of the shield can spend the Combat Action of their next turn to make an automatic Disarm Opponent attempt, treating the shield as an entangling weapon. Whilst a weapon remains lodged in it, attempts to parry with the shield suffer a –20% penalty.

‘Vigfus, a son of Vigaglum, took up an anvil with a sharp end, which lay upon the deck, and on which a man had welded the hilt to his sword just before, and being a very strong man cast the anvil with both hands at the head of Aslak Holmskalle, and the end of it went into his brains. Before this no weapon could wound this Aslak, who was Bue’s foster-brother, and forecastle commander, although he could wound right and left.’

— King Olaf Tryggvason’s Saga

Thrown Spear: Throwing a spear does the same damage as wielding it one handed. It does not travel as far as a javelin when thrown. However, a cast spear can still neutralise a shield used to parry it, using the *Pin Weapon* Combat Manoeuvre. In this circumstance,

the pinned shield cannot be used until the spear has been removed (which takes one round).

Thrown Stone: Picking up and hurling a palm sized stone inflicts only incidental damage. Volleyed stones cast in this way can actually be a threat against unprotected opponents.

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Handedness	Damage		Range	Load	STR/		Combat		AP/		Cost
		Damage	Modifier			DEX	SIZ	Manoeuvres	ENC	HP		
Short bow	Double	1D6	Y	80m	1	9/11	L	Impale	1	4/4	1 Eyrir	
Sling	Single	1D8	Y	200m	1	-/11	L	Stun Location	—	1/2	5 Pennies	
Throwing Axe	Single	1D4	Y	5m	—	7/11	S	Bleed	1	4/6	1 Eyrir	
Thrown Anvil	Double	2D8	Y	3m	—	17/5	S	Impale, Stun Location	10	12/50	—	
Thrown Spear	Single	1D8	Y	10m	—	7/9	H	Impale, Pin Weapon (Shield)	1	4/5	4 Aurar	
Thrown Stone	Single	1	Y	20m	—	5/5	S	Stun Location	—	10/3	—	

Clothing

Viking clothing is a simple, yet practical, combination of tunics and trews for men and apron dresses for women, with socks and shoes of various types. In colder months or during bad weather, several layers of tunics are often worn to keep warm. Additional protection is provided by woollen gloves and leather over-mittens for the hands, extra thick woollen socks, grass stuffed felt boots, hoods, coats and waterproofed cloaks.

The fabrics used for clothing are primarily woollen textiles, with a soft feel due to the type of wool used and weaving techniques. Linens are often imported from regions like England but due to expense are generally reserved for under-tunics or under-dresses. Silk is extraordinarily expensive, imported from Byzantium where it costs more than its own weight in gold. Fortunately silk is light and a little goes a long way.

Woollen or silk fabrics take dye easily and a broad range of muted colours are available. Red from madder; blue from woad; yellow from weld or onion skins; purple from lichens; and greens from over-dyeing yellow with blue. A very dark brownish-black can be produced from walnut shells and iron.

The following garments assume a basic item of clothing with no decoration. Fancier garb suitable to project wealth and importance multiplies the cost. Add all multipliers together before calculating the final cost of the item.

The Naming of Weapons

Vikings like to name their weapons and armour, whether from superstition that each has its own spirit or merely to make them sound tougher is unknown. However, giving a sword a name brings a degree of reputation to that blade, which in turn adds to the bearer's.

The names in the following list are actual weapons from the sagas. Games Masters are encouraged to use them to make gifts or family heirlooms much more special. Some are intended to be fearsome, a few indicate the lineage of who the weapon was received from and a couple are obviously tongue-in-cheek humorous names.

Swords

Bastadr – bastard
Brynjubitr – byrnie-biter
Fetbreidr – foot-broad
Fjorsvafi – life-taker
Fotbitr – foot-biter
Gamlanautr – Gamli's gift
Grettisnautr – Grettir's gift
Gunnlogi – battle-blaze
Hneitir – thruster
Hvitingr – white-one
Jardhussnautr – grave-gift
Jokulsnautr – Jokull's gift
Karsnautr – Karr's gift
Kettlingr – kitten
Kvernbitr – quern-biter
Lang – long
Laufi – leaf
Leggbitr – leg-biter
Nadr – viper
Naegling – Beowulf's sword
Nidingr – shame-bringer
Olvisnautr – Olvir's gift
Sætarspillir – peace-breaker
Skofnungr – shin-bone
Skrymir – large-one
Snidill – pruning-knife
Tumanautr – Tumi's gift
Tyrfingr – burning-fir

Axes

Droplaugar – drip-water
Hel – death
Himintelgja – heaven-scraper
Hjalti – sword-guard
Hlokk – battle-din
Randgrid – shield-hungry
Rimmugygr – battle-hag
Saxa – iron-blade
Skadi – scather
Steinsnautr – Steinn's gift
Stjarna – fallen-star
Svartleggja – black-haft
Svedja – glancer
Tjald-sperra – tent-spar

Spears

Grasida – grey-side
Vigr – spear

Staves

Hegnudr – chastiser
Landkonnudr – land-prober

Mail Hauberks

Fulltrui – full-trust
Sigfussnautr – Sigfuss's gift

Enhancement	Description	Cost Multiplier
Dyed	Changes the colour of the raw material.	+2
Embroidered	Embroidery uses coloured threads to sew patterns into the fabric.	+1
Fur Lined	Uses soft fur as a lining (mittens or hats) or as decorative trim.	+4
Gold Trim	Trim woven with gold wire incorporated.	+8
Linen	Imported fabric from Britain and the Continent.	+2
Silk	The most expensive material imported from the east.	+10
Silver Trim	Trim woven with silver wire incorporated	+3
Tooled	Leather items can be tooled with decorative patterns.	+1
Woven Trim	Tablet woven strips of decorative, coloured fabric applied to the cuffs, neck and hemline of the garment.	+1

For example, a linen tunic dyed red and decorated with tablet-woven trim would be a very fine article of clothing. The total cost of such a garment is worked out by adding the multipliers, 2 (linen) + 2 (dyed) + 1 (woven trim) is a combined factor of 5, which multiplied by the base cost gives a price of 50 pennies or 5 aurar – a significant purchase. The same tunic but made of wool would have only cost 3 aurar.

Note that clothing is not generally available ‘off the peg’ but must be made to order. Women usually barter for bolts of coloured cloth or rolls of trim, which are taken home and used to tailor the garment for its intended owner. Old clothes not passed down are carefully stored, ready to be given to those seeking hospitality.

Livestock

Although most adventures are rarely focused on farm steads, a few animals are included here to give a general idea about how much they cost if they need to be replaced, accounted for in a theft law case, or part of liquidating a steading’s assets to pay off a weregild.

Other Sundries

Games Masters are encouraged to avoid focussing on the prices of other incidental articles since if an Adventurer owns, or works on a farmstead, such minor needs can be satisfied by the farm itself. If you need a few weeks worth of food then you ask the mistress of the house to withdraw some provisions from the storehouse. If you need a new pair of shoes, then ask Uncle Arngrim who will knock up a pair overnight.

Clothing

Article of Clothing	Description	Cost
Belt, leather	Any functional leather belt.	2 Pennies
Boots, felt	Knee length winter boots which that the feet against snow.	13 Pennies
Boots, leather	Leather Viking boots rarely rise higher than mid calf.	6 Pennies
Cap	A simple hat that covers the head down to the ears, lacking any brim.	3 Pennies
Cloak	A rectangular piece of fabric that is draped around the shoulders and pinned off-centre to leave the right arm free. Normally made from thick cloth to provide warmth and some protection against the rain.	2 Aurar
Coat, Rus	A knee length thick coat with a high collar and overlaps on the front for extra insulation.	12 Pennies
Dress	A woman's under-dress, usually of ankle length.	14 Pennies
Gloves	A pair of woollen finger gloves.	5 Pennies
<i>Hangerock</i>	A woman's apron worn over her under-dress and fastened at the shoulders with two broaches.	7 Pennies
Hat, brimmed	Any broad-brimmed hat, as favoured by Odin.	3 Pennies
Hood	A lined garment that covers the entire head and shoulders, leaving the face free. Hoods provide excellent protection against the cold, wind and rain.	5 Pennies
Leg Wraps	Two long, narrow strips of cloth that are wrapped about the lower leg, to gather in the bottoms of baggy trousers and provide them some protection from damp low lying vegetation.	1 Penny
Mittens	Wool or leather over-gloves that can be worn with or without gloves underneath and are sometimes fur-lined.	5 Pennies
Shoes, leather	Ankle-high shoes, fastened with a strap and toggle. Lacking tough soles, shoes and boots generally wear out quickly.	4 Pennies
Trousers	Viking trousers can be baggy or tight as desired by the purchaser.	7 Pennies
Tunic	A mid-thigh to knee length garment that covers down to the wrists. Tunics are the ubiquitous article of male clothing. Under-tunics are softer and lighter than over-tunics, which function more like a jumper when it is cold.	10 Pennies



Animals

Type of Animal	Description	Cost
Cow	A milk cow.	1 Eyrir
Dog	Trained hunting hound.	4 Aurar
Dog	Guard dog for steading.	5 Pennies
Goats	Meat and milk animals.	1 ½ Pennies
Hive of Bees	Used to get honey for eating and mead.	1 Penny
Mare	Female horse suitable for riding.	2 ½ Pennies
Ox	A bullock capable of drawing a plough.	1 Eyrir
Sheep	Kept for wool and milk.	1 ½ Pennies
Slave	Male slave for farm labouring work.	6 Aurar
Slave	Female slave for housework and concubine duties.	4 Aurar
Sow and Piglets	Pigs that can consume scraps to provide meat.	1 Eyrir
Stallion	Ungelded horse used for breeding or horse fights.	1 Eyrir

Landless Adventurers who wander the lands seeking adventure will probably find their personal needs satisfied by whomever they are lodging with. Truly hospitable hosts will give out spare changes of clothes and feed someone indefinitely. Need to travel to the next fjord over? Then a horse will be loaned to you. Such is the way that Viking society works.

Adventurers who swear fealty to a jarl or king become his huskarls. It is that lord's responsibility to ensure that his men are well clothed, armed, armoured and given plenty of food and drink. The Adventurer need not worry about small purchases since he can probably requisition anything he *legitimately* needs from the lords steading.

A campaign should emphasise that treasure or wages really have very little direct use. True wealth is in land ownership and famous gifts. Keeping tabs on money and accumulating supplementary material possessions is a fruitless activity. If players insist on micro managing their economy, a wise Games Master will either strip them of their funds, forcing them into a few years of active exile, or reward them with some land of their own so they no longer have to worry about it.

Failing that, simply make up a price!

Viking Ships

Long sleek shapes, high dragon headed prows and single square rigged sails, Viking longships are fearfully watched for from every coast, a portent of doom for many. However, not all Viking vessels are warships. The majority are traders or transports used for exploration, merchant voyages or colonisation.

The identifying features of a Norse vessel are a clinker built hull with overlapping strakes, which has a shallow keel so it can be beached safely. The hull has a pointed prow and stern, incorporating a side mounted rudder and a single mast from which a crossbeam supports a single rectangular sail. This simple design is both relatively easy to construct and fast in the water. Its mode of propulsion is flexible, taking advantage of the wind where possible but can run out oars and travel by rowing when necessary. This enables it to cross open seas, yet still be able to penetrate inland following rivers upstream.

This adaptability and swiftness is the reason the Vikings have ranged so far from their Scandinavian homes, excelling as traders and pirates. To reflect their somewhat specialised designs, the following ships have been split in two categories, warships and merchantmen.

Each ship detailed in this chapter shares the following Characteristics, whether the ship in question is a longserpent or a simple skiff.

Length: The distance from bow to stern.

Beam: The widest part of a ship – usually in the middle. Ships equipped with oars will have the beam of the ship increased when the oars are employed. The inclusion of oars is considered to increase a ship's beam to half again its original rating.

Draft: The depth of water needed for the ship to manoeuvre effectively and avoid running aground. This is the distance between the ship's keel and the waterline.

Freeboard: The minimum height between the ship's gunwale and the waterline. Comparing two ships' freeboards can help give the vertical distance that an Adventurer needs to achieve when jumping from one to the other.

Capacity: This indicates the cargo capacity of the ship in tons. This number reflects the ship's cargo capacity in addition to the weight of the ship's rigging, crew, provisions and so forth.

Speed: The speed at which the ship travels per Combat Action. A ship that relies solely upon sails for propulsion is dependent on the wind for its speed.

Seaworthiness: The ability of the ship to stand up to the rigours of sailing. All ships must undergo frequent maintenance in order to prevent their Seaworthiness rating from deteriorating.

Hull: The hull acts as the ship's armour, just as a suit of chainmail does for a man.

Structure Points: Essentially, Structure Points are a ship's Hit Points. Damage to these represents damage to the integrity of the ship itself and ships do not heal of their own accord. A ship must be hauled onto a beach or into a ship house for structure points to be repaired.

Ram: Viking ships do not mount rams per se, their design is not intended to take the strain of a severe forward impact. Their curving arched prows however could probably run over the gunwale of a smaller vessel if striking it amidships, crushing and possibly swamping it. If a Viking ship does attempt to ram, assume it inflicts 1D6 damage per four metres of movement it was travelling at. However, half of that damage should be applied to the ramming ship too.

Skill: Every ship has its own peculiarities and each design presents different challenges. This entry firstly denotes which skill is used when operating the ship (nearly always either Boating or Shiphandling). Also, though any ship can be operated under ideal conditions without the necessity of a Skill Test, when the ship and crew are called upon for more extreme endeavours, this modifier is applied to the test. Note that this modifier is in addition to any others that the Games Master feels are appropriate.

Warships

Collectively known as *Drakkar*, the hulls of Viking warships are long and narrow, optimised for speed. They possess at least 20 pairs of oars and carry large crews of warriors who, when necessary, take turns at the oars. The balance between speed and cargo capacity indicates whether a ship is intended for coastal raiding or sea battles. Most warships belonging to a jarl or king possess dragon figureheads but some ships have different animal figureheads for theirs, such as storks or bulls.

Snekke

A small longship designed to be easily beached or portaged. Their shallow draft allows them to range almost anywhere.

Hull: 4

Structure Points: 40

Seaworthiness: 20

Length: 17m

Beam: 2.5m

Capacity: 5 tons

Freeboard: 1.5m

Draft: 0.5m

Crew: 40 rowers, 1 steersman, and up to 10 extra crew

Speed: 30m at top speed (12 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +30%

Cost: 100 marks of silver

Skeide

A longship optimised for sea battles with a still narrow beam and little volume dedicated for cargo space. Its extreme design for speed makes it vulnerable in heavy weather.

Hull: 4

Structure Points: 60

Seaworthiness: 18

Length: 30m

Beam: 3.5m

Capacity: 10 tons

Freeboard: 1m

Draft: 1m

Crew: 60 rowers, 1 steersman, and up to 20 extra crew

Speed: 38m at top speed (15 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +20%

Cost: 150 marks of silver

Busse

A huge longship designed for coastal raiding. With a large cargo and crew capacity, it functions as troop transport capable of bringing back large amounts of plunder. The famous *Ormen Lange* (long serpent) of King Olav Tryggvason was of this class.

Hull: 4

Structure Points: 80

Seaworthiness: 22

Length: 40m

Beam: 3.5m

Capacity: 20 tons

Freeboard: 2m

Draft: 1m

Crew: 80 rowers, 1 steersman, and up to 40 extra crew

Speed: 34m at top speed (13 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +10%

Cost: 200 marks of silver

King Olaf's Levy for War

Soon after the king convoked a Thing in the town, and proclaimed to all the public, that in summer would go abroad upon an expedition out of the country, and would raise both ships and men from every district; and at the same time fixed how many ships would have from the whole Throndhjem fjord. Then he sent his message-token south and north, both along the sea-coast and up in the interior of the country, to let an army be gathered.

The king ordered the Long Serpent to be put into the water, along with all his other ships both small and great. He himself steered the Long Serpent. When the crews were taken out for the ships, they were so carefully selected that no man on board the Long Serpent was older than sixty or younger than twenty years, and all were men distinguished for strength and courage. Those who were Olaf's bodyguard were in particular chosen men, both of the natives and of foreigners, and the boldest and strongest.

— King Olaf Tryggvason's Saga

Merchantmen

Merchant ships, collectively known as *Kaupskip*, are the dedicated cargo carriers capable of sailing over open seas in relative security. With broader hulls they gain stability in exchange for speed.

Ferje

A small skiff or fishing boat used to transport cargo to and from an anchored ship, cross fjords or temporarily venture out into deeper water to fish.

Hull: 3

Structure Points: 20

Seaworthiness: 16

Length: 11m

Beam: 2.5m

Capacity: 15 tons

Freeboard: 0.5m

Draft: 0.5m

Crew: 2–4 men

Speed: 22m at top speed (9 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Boating +20%

Cost: 30 marks of silver

Byrding

A small trading ship that is capable of sailing long distances over open ocean. They normally cross between Iceland and Norway transporting cargoes. A responsive vessel, this ship is a perfect mid sized trading ship.

Hull: 3

Structure Points: 30

Seaworthiness: 24

Length: 14m

Beam: 3.5m

Capacity: 15 tons

Freeboard: 1m

Draft: 1m

Crew: 5–6 men

Speed: 28m at top speed (11 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +20%

Cost: 30 marks of silver

Karr

An early Viking design, this versatile ship was able to fulfil the function of both a merchantman and a warship. They generally had between 12 and 16 pairs of oars. Classic examples of this style are the Gokstad and Oseberg burial ships.

Hull: 3

Structure Points: 50

Seaworthiness: 18

Length: 20m

Beam: 5m

Capacity: 8 tons

Freeboard: 1m

Draft: 1m

Crew: 24 rowers, 1 steersman

Speed: 26m at top speed (10 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +10%

Cost: 80 marks of silver

Knarr

Broad but manoeuvrable, the knarr is a merchant ship able to traverse wide seas or rivers with equal ease. It has a foredeck and stern deck where rowing is done but the swell of the hull amidships is left open to ease loading and storing cargo.

Hull: 3

Structure Points: 40

Seaworthiness: 22

Length: 16m

Beam: 4.5m

Capacity: 22 tons

Freeboard: 2m

Draft: 1m

Crew: 6–8 men

Speed: 20m at top speed (8 knots)

Ram: None

Skill: Shiphandling +0%

Cost: 40 marks of silver

Viking Naval Battles

In the early years of the Viking Age, raiders and pirates usually sail the seas in ones or twos and any battles that occur are boarding actions rather than attempting to use the ship as a weapon itself. Viking ships, despite being excellent sailing and rowing vessels, are fragile constructions when it comes to ramming or being rammed.

As their mastery of shipbuilding grows, ever larger vessels are constructed capable of carrying warriors at high speed across the sheltered Danish and Baltic seas. Since their purpose is more of being rapid troop carriers than instruments of destruction, naval tactics adopt a novel way of fighting battles. One side, or both, simply lashes their ships together and forms a semi stable fortification to fight from. The largest ships are generally held at the centre with smaller vessels tied to either side.

King Olaf ordered the war-horns to sound for all his ships to close up to each other. The king's ship lay in the middle of the line, and on one side lay the Little Serpent, and on the other the Crane; and as they made fast the stems together, the Long Serpent's stem and the short Serpent's were made fast together; but when the king saw it he called out to his men, and ordered them to lay the larger ship more in advance, so that its stern should not lie so far behind in the fleet.

— King Olaf Tryggvason's Saga

The crews take up positions along the prows and sterns of the ships laying abreast one another, allowing them to concentrate their numbers without worrying about their flanks. From their positions they fire or throw missile weapons at their attackers,

including rocks and anvils, often using oars to prevent attacking ships from getting too close or to knock off potential boarders.

Fire is rarely used in large sea battles, since not only is there a risk of it spreading to all the ships involved, be they friend or foe, but also because ships themselves are valuable prizes in addition to their cargo.

Once the battle is over, survivors are normally allowed to depart in small boats, leaving their leaders and possessions behind.

Due to this rather simplified form of fighting, Games Masters do not need to worry about complex rules for naval engagements. If a ship wishes to avoid being drawn into a boarding action, then a simple Opposed Test of the two helmsmen's Shiphandling or Boating skills, with a -20% penalty for the slower vessel, is sufficient to resolve whether it managed to avoid the engagement.



VIKING RELIGION

It is customary also to solemnise in Uppsala, at nine-year intervals, a general feast of all the provinces of Sweden. From attendance at this festival no one is exempted. Kings and people all and singly send their gifts to the temple and, what is more distressing than any kind of punishment, those who have already adopted Christianity redeem themselves through these ceremonies.

The sacrifice is of this nature: of every living thing that is male, they offer nine heads, with the blood of which it is customary to placate gods of this sort. The bodies they hang in the sacred grove that adjoins the temple. Now this grove is so sacred in the eyes of the heathen that each and every tree in it is believed divine because of the death or putrefaction of the victims. Even dogs and horses hang there with men.

Furthermore, the incantations customarily chanted in the ritual of a sacrifice of this kind are manifold and unseemly; therefore, it is better to keep silence about them'

— Adam of Bremen 11th C.

The beliefs and religion of the Vikings are a fertile breeding ground for conflict and adventure. During the first half of the Viking Age most inhabitants of Scandinavia faithfully worship the Æsir, the gods of Asgard, and take care to respect the spirits of the land, the *landvættir*. Soon however, the spread of Christianity brings its pious priests to the shores of the southern Viking kingdoms and the church began a long struggle to gain a foothold in Scandinavia.

Due to the intolerant attitude of the priests towards the methods of the Old Faith, the church was not welcomed by the pagan inhabitants. Circumventing the common folk the priests threw in their lot with the slowly stratifying nobility, seeing an opportunity for mutual benefit. Thus began a time of religious conflict, which caused some kings to almost lose their rule and eventually helped contribute to the war for control over Norway. Towards the end of the period religious persecution led to the murder and torture of pagans, which in return caused those who feared the anger of the gods to attack the priesthood.

Many people fled Scandinavia for less troubled lands where the church was more adaptable to Viking superstitions. The priests eventually gave up trying to exterminate pagan practices and most Vikings happily took up the mantle of Christianity whilst simultaneously continuing to believe in Odin, Thor, Freyr and the rest of the Norse pantheon, continuing their worship in private.

Even after the religious persecution and the grudging acceptance of Christianity, the old ways of worship lived on. Up until 1078 the terrible sacrifices continued at Uppsala, showing that the church failed to establish a complete stranglehold over pagan beliefs until well beyond the end of the period.

Viking religion is, like their belief in supernatural creatures and magic, an eclectic and contradictory mess of animism, polytheism and creeping Christianity. No matter when you set a campaign, Vikings will offer sacrifices and pray to anything or anyone whom they think will aid them in their troubles.

Spirits, Gods and God

Scandinavians are primarily polytheists. That is to say, they believe in all gods and grant them equal respect, if not necessarily reverence. Thus throughout a year folk participate in communal ceremonies to the deities of the Norse pantheon, leaving none out for fear of offending them. Everyone knows about the gods, as the skalds frequently sing of their tales and deeds. A Viking is free to give worship to any of the Æsir he desires, at any time. There are no jealous and exclusive relationships.

Likewise, Vikings are also animists. They understand the existence of spirits and the need to show them respect else face petty but vindictive tricks when an angered *landvættir* takes revenge for some slight. Spirits are everywhere. They live on the farmsteads in the form of helpful *tomte*. They reside in forests as seductive *skogsfru*. Dangerous *sjora* such as *nykr* live in waterfalls and deep pools ready to drown foolish folk. Dark, wild places are to be avoided so that these less civilised *landvættir* will not be disturbed. The inhabitants of a stead often perform small rituals to placate the spirits, offering small gifts and places at their dining table to keep them happy.

Vikings who have been converted to Christianity, whether willingly or forced, completely ignore the Second Commandment, continuing to propitiate the *landvættir* and Æsir. Pragmatic and fatalistic as they are, they see no sin involved, merely necessity. Even the stave-churches built by the Vikings combine mythological figures and pagan symbols into the structure of an erstwhile house of god.

A fanatical believer in Christianity who puts aside the religion of his fathers will soon find himself ostracised from society – people believing that the madman will be struck down by some disaster and not willing to be caught in the wash of bad luck. Whether or not the subsequent misfortune is orchestrated by human hands or a divine, supernatural agency is for the Games Master to know and the player to guess at.

Of course most Scandinavians dislike the intrusion of Christianity into their lands and being told what they can and cannot worship. After all, no king can order them about in such a way, so why should a priest be able to? This cultural insensitivity leads to many violent conflicts and only ceases once hereditary kingships eventually start to replace the democratic freedoms of the people with feudalistic controls.

The Old Ways

A fundamental aspect of Scandinavian culture is how and why people worship the gods and spirits. Understanding this is vitally important because of the effect it has on historical and fantasy Viking campaigns.

One difficult concept to comprehend is this. Vikings do not generally pray to the gods and spirits as supplicants to request that a miracle occur; rather they propitiate them in advance to ward off *possible* tribulation and again afterward in thanks for withholding calamity. Or put in another way, they ask for the preservation of the normal status quo and are grateful for it.

When misfortune does arrive, as it inevitably does, then folk believe that they have offended a god or spirit by not paying it the proper attention; for example saying an inopportune thing, forgetting to thank them or not being generous enough at the last sacrifice to repay their beneficence.

Another unusual aspect of Scandinavian pagan religion is that there are *no* professional priests. Although Godi have a responsibility to perform the sanctification sacrifice for the *thing*, they are chieftains and law speakers, not religious guides. The head of the family is responsible for the sacrifices to gods and spirits on a farmstead and if he is ill or away from home, the next most senior family member will perform the rights instead. Aboard ship it is the captain who holds the duties to propitiate the sea and any man can make his own private sacrifice in thanks for surviving a voyage intact.

Sacrifices or *blot* as they are known, are held to gods and spirits throughout the year. Normally a sacrifice involves the killing of an animal at an altar of piled stones called a *horgr*, a sacred grove called a *lund* or a grave mound called a *haugr*. The blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled over the people attending the ceremony, before pouring the remainder onto the land, altar or barrow. The meat of the animal is then cooked, part offered to the beings propitiated and the rest consumed by the attendees.

Up until the advent of Christianity, there were few formal temples. The 'great' temple at Uppsala held shrines to Odin, Thor and Freyr but was a wooden building of very modest size, although as a sign of its status it was hung with a golden chain that encircled the building hanging from its eaves.

Instead most people held their sacrifices outdoors, since in many cases it was the natural environment that was considered holy and closer to the gods; or in a small shrine called a *hov*, which could be an outbuilding on a farm or someone's longhouse sanctified for the occasion.

The major communal sacrifices of the year were at:

- Yuletide when darkness was at its deepest and everyone offered food and drink to the gods to ensure the return of spring.
- Spring was when Odin received sacrifices to avert disaster in forthcoming wars.
- Autumn after the harvest had been gathered, to thank the gods especially Freyr, for protecting the crops.

A Pagan Sacrifice

'It was an old custom, that when there was to be sacrifice all the freeholders should come to the spot where the temple stood and bring with them all that they required while the festival of the sacrifice lasted. To this festival all the men brought ale with them; and all kinds of cattle, as well as horses, were slaughtered, and all the blood that came from them was called 'hlaut', and the vessels in which it was collected were called hlaut-vessels. Hlaut-staves were made, like sprinkling brushes, with which the whole of the altars and the temple walls, both outside and inside, were sprinkled over, and also the people were sprinkled with the blood; but the flesh was boiled into savoury meat for those present. The fire was in the middle of the floor of the temple, and over it hung the kettles, and the full goblets were handed across the fire; and he who made the feast, and was a chief, blessed the full goblets, and all the meat of the sacrifice. And first Odin's goblet was emptied for victory and power to his king; thereafter, Niord's and Freyja's goblets for peace and a good season.'

— Haakon the Good's Saga

Some very important *blot* are held every nine years, nine being a sacred number, which grant the ceremonies extra significance. The quote at the beginning of this chapter tells of a sacrifice held by the kings of Sweden to ensure that the land remains free from famine and plague. When the sacrifices failed as they sometimes did, the kings themselves were occasionally offered as sacrifices, such as the killing of king Domalde – who sacrificed oxen on the first year, men on the second and eventually was sacrificed himself on the third.

Of course people hold private sacrifices in their own steads, seeking the continuation of fertility or protection from fires. Ceremonies are even held aboard ship or in foreign lands. In *Gautreks' Saga*, when the fleet of King Vikar is blown off course and held ashore by contrary winds, the king decides a human sacrifice must be provided to Odin break the cursed weather. So the sailors draw lots and it is the King himself who is selected by the gods to be the sacrifice, hanged and impaled on a spear.

Another type of blood sacrifice is made at the start of each *thing*; blessing the gathering place, so as to ward off misfortune and maintain peace. This is the duty of the local Godi and requires formalised rituals such as wearing an arm ring, upon which oaths are sworn.

Other ritual sacrifices fill Scandinavian life. After fighting in a *holmganga* (duel) the victor usually makes a sacrifice of a bull, in thanks for his victory (not before to ask for it); and in Ibn Fadlan's account he speaks of Rus merchants who, in gratitude for selling their cargoes, make a follow-up sacrifice of sheep or cattle to one of the gods saying 'Truly, my Lord is content with me and has consumed the present I brought him'.

Rewards of Worship

Unlike the deities of other mythologies, the Norse gods do not appear to be particularly willing to intercede in the affairs of men. In the sagas the few times the gods respond to a mortal supplicant, they appear in person and use their own tricks and guile to try to solve a problem, in some cases failing completely.

The Æsir are not all powerful, all knowing forces of nature but rather appear to be great heroes capable of some amazing but personal feats. In fact the gods are often powerless to intercede for a mortal, simply because the fate of all men is predetermined by the Norns, to whom even the Æsir must bend knee.

A warrior may pray for victory on the battle field but whether or not he survives has little to do with Odin. The All-Father has no power to change the wyrd of his supplicant. If he meddles in the battle, driving fear into his worshipper's foes, then it is because of Odin's own hidden machinations. He will do nothing to directly help his faithful but will certainly punish those who fail to show him the correct respect.

Thus the faith of a Viking worshiper is a grim one. You propitiate because you must, since failing to do so brings misfortune. Yet even the most generous of sacrifices will not result in observable aid. Men must achieve their own miracles by wit and skill, not rely on the Æsir to nursemaid them.

This dour attitude combined with their informal polytheistic habits means that there are no cults dedicated to the Norse gods, at least none which offer any sort of reward for spiritual devotion.

Propitiating Gods and Spirits

Games Masters who wish to make more use of Viking religion and superstition should allow their players to propitiate the gods or spirits when necessary. An Adventurer who owns a steading, for instance, can attempt a propitiation to ensure the *tomte* of the farm remains happy, or those about to travel by ship may try to propitiate the gods to prevent a storm blowing up.

No special skill is required to interact with the gods or spirits, since these are ceremonies that everyone observes and performs from childhood. All that is needed is a suitable animal offering, the expenditure of a single Hero Point and a test against Culture (Viking) – which the Games Master should roll and keep the results hidden.

- A critical success indicates that the god or spirit is pleased by the offering and ensures good fortune smiles upon the venture and that it goes perfectly and profitably.
- A normal success determines that nothing bad occurs during the venture.
- A failure means that the god or spirit is piqued at something said or the meanness of the sacrifice and a piece of misfortune strikes during the venture, causing it to fail if not overcome.
- A fumble brings down the full displeasure of the entities, resulting in the venture failing disastrously.

What no Churches or Guilds!?!

Some Games Masters will be disappointed at the lack of Divine Magic churches or guilds for each of the Norse gods. Although the concept of Priests of Thor casting lightning bolts sounds pretty cool, not even the most fantastic of the eddas and sagas reflect this type of thing in their entertaining tales. What magic does exist in the stories is always a personal ability known by the hero or his enemy. A skilled seidr practitioner or shaman is more than capable of performing supernatural miracles.

Put simply, in *Legend*, the Vikings lack a formal priest class and their gods are incapable of granting flashy miracles.

However, not everyone wants to play in a historically based game world. Thus for campaigns where the players want to join churches and wield Divine Magic, the author suggests purchasing other *Legend* sourcebooks and adapting the applicable gods of the pantheons found in them into their Viking equivalents. For example, a fantasy church of Thor would probably match a fantasy Storm God and Tyr is fit for a 'Glorious Battle' God's church.

For example, Arngrim the Tall must face a terrifying berserk in a holmganga and decides to propitiate Tyr, asking to be warded from serious injury. Since he is not directly requesting victory the Games Master decides that the god will listen to the plea. Burning a Hero Point Arngrim sacrifices a horse and the Games Master tests Arngrim's Culture (Own) skill, rolling a success. The following day, during the duel Arngrim finds himself badly outmatched, already suffering several minor wounds. At a critical moment however, just as his arm is about to be severed, the berserk's sword splinters on Arngrim's silver arm ring, saving the pious Swede from being maimed. Although the berserk is briefly flummoxed, he wrestles Arngrim to the ground and wins the fight anyway but impressed by this good fortune the berserk decides Arngrim is a man of bravery and luck, dropping the law case entirely. Afterwards Arngrim sacrifices a bull to thank the god properly for his aid.

Viking Cosmology

The myths of the Vikings are rich with imagery. The formation of the world, giants and gods is a popular tale, as were the epics of their subsequent battles and adventures.

The Beginning

In the beginning there was no world, only Ginnungagap, the yawning void. Within the void coalesced the realms of Muspelheimr, the lands of heat and ashes to the south, within which lived Surtr the lord of fires; and Nifelheimr, the land of ice and frozen rock to the north. Down in the depths of the void lay Hvergelmir, the spring of life. From the well flowed 12 great rivers and as they flowed into the void froze, forming a gargantuan mountain of ice.

When the mountain rose to the heights of Muspelheimr and Nifelheimr, the ashes from the fires melted the ice, creating clouds of steam that blew north causing never ending drizzle and cold rain. From these mists, Ymir the father of the frost giants emerged, born out of the melting ice. With him was formed Audumla, a mighty cow whose milk nourished Ymir.

The shards of ice that splintered off Ymir became rime giants, the first was a six headed giant called Thrudgelmir, the second Bergelmir from which all the Jotnar were descended. To feed herself, the cow licked at the life giving salt in the ice, which arose from Hvergelmir. As she licked her tongue exposed a new being, on the first day his hair, on the second his head and on the third his entire body. This was Buri, the first of the Æsir, tall of stature, strong of limb and fair of face.

Buri had a son named Borr, who married a giantess named Bestla. From this union three great Æsir were sired, Odin, Vili and Ve. The sons and father banded together and fought a mighty battle against Ymir and his kin, slaying the colossal giant. From Ymir's wounds gushed torrents of icy water, which drowned all of the giants save Bergelmir, who built a boat with a roof and rowed to freedom with his family.

The Forming of Midgardr

Odin and his brothers took Ymir's corpse that filled the void of Ginnungagap and tore it into pieces with which they formed the world. His blood became the oceans, his flesh the land, his broken bones the mountains, his teeth the cliffs and boulders. The brothers took the ice-blue skull and used it to create the dome of the sky, supported at cardinal points by four dwarfs birthed for the purpose. Finally his brains became the clouds.

After the creation of the Midgardr, or middle earth, the Æsir sat in a ring and contemplated. From within the circle sprouted Yggdrasil, the world tree. Its branches rose up into the heavens to help support the sky. Its roots delved deep into the well of Hvergelmir.

The Æsir then gathered sparks flying up out of Muspelheimr and scattered them to form stars. They then drew molten gold from the lava of Surtr's realm and fashioned a beautiful sun-chariot that glowed with blinding light and heat. To it was hitched the horses Allsvinn and Arvak (Very-fast and Early-walker) with the maiden Sol to drive it. Before it went the moon-chariot pulled by Alsvið (Very-strong) driven by a boy named Mani.

The giants took offense at the workings of the Æsir and set two monstrous wolves, the sons of a giantess, to pursue the chariots; Skoll chases the sun and Hati the moon. When they occasionally catch their prey, their light is sometimes blotted out, so the inhabitants of Midgardr must make noise to scare off the wolves before they can consume their victims.

The Creation of Time

Norvi, a descendant of the giants that survived the great flood, gave birth to a daughter called Nott (night). In turn Nott had three children from three fathers; Aud, Jord (earth) and Dag (day). The Æsir gave Nott a chariot of her own to circle Midgardr, drawn by the horse Hrimfaxi (Frost-mane). Yet when they saw the radiant beauty of Dag, her son, they granted him a chariot too, drawn by Skinfaxi (Shining-mane).

As more things appeared in the world, more guardians were appointed to oversee them. The seasons were given to Winter, the grandson of the god Vasud the frigid wind, and Summer, the son of the god Svasud. Winter inherited a bitter temperament, always feuding with Summer, blowing terrible storms when they shifted their control to and fro.

Birth of the Alfar, Dvergar and Men

Whilst creating the earth and heavens, Odin and his brothers discovered maggots crawling in the dead flesh of Ymir. They took these creatures and from them formed beings. Some became the Alfar, or elves, and were granted their own realm of Alfheimr to rule over. Others became the Dvergar, the dwarfs, and lived in the dreary realm of Svartalfaheimr.

The Alfar were creatures of light and purity, who excelled in the skills of dancing, singing and joyful entertainments. The Dvergar were dark and grim, masters of craftsmanship and art, loving only the things they made.

A third race was created by the brothers. Askr, the first man, was formed from an Ash tree, Embla, the first woman, from an Elm. Odin granted the new people souls, Vili gave them thought and Ve gave them senses. The couple produced many children who populated Midgardr but their purity and innocence were corrupted by the jotnar, who took upon themselves human form and bred with mankind to create many evil creatures.

Asgardr and Yggdrasil

After their hard work the Æsir desired a home of their own. High in the branches of Yggdrasil, far above Midgardr, Odin laboured long and hard to shape Asaheimr, better known as Asgardr. This land was warm and beautiful filled with the halls of the other Æsir, children sired on female giants. Around Asgardr Odin placed the magical river Thund, which sweeps all those who try to cross down into Helheim, the land of death. To connect this realm with Midgardr was forged Bifrost, a rainbow bridge guarded against the approach of giants, that glowed in the light of the watch fire at its foot.

Three final realms came into being, each hosting a great tribe. Vanaheimr was the home of the Vanir and Jotunheimr the land of giants. The last and dourest was Niflhel, or Helheim, where the souls of those who died of age or misfortune went after death. This land was given over to Hel, a daughter of Loki who took up the mantle of their guardianship, ruling from her hall Eljudnir (Damp with sleet). Within the realm was

Halls of the Gods

The Æsir of Asgardr have their own halls, built to their wants and needs. For campaigns where Adventurers may receive divine visions, or actually journey to Asgardr, the following names and descriptions are provided:

- Bilskirnir (Lightning-crack) – Thor’s hall of 540 rooms located in Thrudheim (Field of the strong).
- Breidablik (Broad-shining) – Baldr’s magnificent hall where nothing unclean exists.
- Fensalir (Water-falls) – Frigg’s hall.
- Gladsheim (Bright-home) – The meeting hall of the Æsir on the plains of Idavoll.
- Glitnir (Splendour) – The silver and gold hall of Forseti, son of Baldr.
- Himinbjorg (Mountain in the clouds) – Heimdallr’s hall, located next to the Bifrost bridge.
- Noatun (Ship-yard) – Niord’s hall.
- Sessrumnir (Seat-room) – Freyja’s hall in Folkvangr (Folk-field) where those warriors who do are not chosen to join Odin’s Einherjar go.
- Sokvabekk (Deep-stream) – The crystal hall of Saga, daughter of Odin.
- Valaskjalf (Seat of the Slain) – Odin’s silver roofed hall in which his high throne Hlidskjalf stands.
- Valhalla (Hall of the Slain) – The hall where Odin’s Einherjar, the chosen of those who fall in battle, are hosted. It is located at the edge of Vigrid, the plane where the final battle will occur.
- Vidi (Wooden) – Vidar’s hall.
- Vingolf (Friends-hall) – The hall of the goddesses which lies upon Idavoll, the central plain of Asgard.
- Ydalir (Yew-dale) – Ullr’s hall.

Nastrond, a hall where no light reached, covered with serpent skins and dripping with venom, where the corpses of evil doers were sucked upon by a great wyrm. The entrance to Niflhel was guarded by the hound Garm who lay chained at the mouth of Gnipahellir (Mountaintop-cave).

Mighty Yggdrasil connected all the nine realms together, its three roots tapping the spring of life Hvergelmir, the well of fate Urdarbrunnr and the well of wisdom Mimisbrunnr. These enchanted waters gave the tree its strength and power.

Upon the tree live many creatures. The dragon Nidhoggr (Bites-in-anger) gnaws at its roots, four stags crop its branches, a wise eagle sits in its crown looking over the cosmos and a squirrel Rataosk (Teeth-that-find) darts up and down the trunk carrying insults between the eagle and the wyrm.

The Time of Great Deeds

After the nine realms formed, the Æsir began their great deeds. Odin sought knowledge exchanging an eye for a drink from Mimir's well and sacrificed himself to Yggdrasil hanging for nine days and nights to find the secret of the Runes. He then stole the mead of poetry from the giant Suttung, further enhancing his wisdom.

The Æsir met with the Vanir and began a great war but the Vanir proved their worth and honour, so the two tribes sought peace and exchanged hostages, hence Freyr came to Asgardr. Soon after came Loki and for a while worked with the Æsir against the giants but his heart was ever shadowed by his trickery and eventually jealousy was his and the Æsir's undoing.

Loki's trickery brought boons to the Æsir in the form of mighty weapons and magical treasures forged by the dwarfs. Greatest of all however was Thor's hammer Mjollnir, whose power could slay giant's with a single blow. He also brought many evils, two of them his own children, the huge ravening wolf Fenrir and the Midgardr serpent Jormungandr, fated to kill Odin and Thor at the end of the world.

The Nine Worlds

Much confusion abounds concerning the relationship of the nine worlds and how they connect with one another. Although they are variously described as lands, realms and worlds in the eddas, the tales often contradict one another. In some stories the lands appear to be physically divided by rivers or mountain ranges whereas other tales indicate more magical separations, such as the rainbow bridge connecting Asgardr with Midgardr.

No actual definition is provided here, save that Yggdrasil connects them all. For a fantasy Viking campaign it is recommended that Adventurers undertake spirit quests or utilise magical portals to reach the other realms, an elf-door in a hillside connecting to Alfheimr for example. For mythic campaigns it is probably better to have most of the realms physically connected so that heroes can surmount the barriers by wit and skill.

For easier reference the nine realms of Norse cosmology are:

- Nifelheimr – The land of ice and cold.
- Muspelheimr – The land of smoke and fire.
- Midgardr – Middle Earth where mankind resides.
- Alfheimr – The land of the elves.
- Svartalfheimr – The land of the dwarfs.
- Asgardr – The home of the warlike Æsir, reached only by the Bifrost Bridge.
- Vanaheimr – The home of the Vanir, gods of fertility.
- Jotunheimr – The land of the giants.
- Niflhel – The land of the dead.

The giants feuded long and hard against the Æsir, many battles and quests were pursued between the rivals. Amongst them were the theft of Mjollnir, the challengers and cheating of Utgardaloki, the horse race between Odin and Hrungrnir.

But doom foreshadowed the end of the Æsir. Driven by evil thoughts Baldr was killed by Loki, who thereafter prevented his return from the halls of Hel. This helped sunder the bonds between the Æsir and Loki who was eventually punished by being bound by the entrails of his son Narfi whilst serpent venom dripped into his eyes. When the earth shakes it is the painful writhing of Loki.

This final deed however, promulgates the eventual end of the gods. Odin retreats to atop his high throne, grimly watching the world for signs of the long foretold fimbulveter (Mighty-winter) heralding the end of the world.

Ragnarok

For the Vikings the cataclysmic battle of Ragnarok, twilight of the gods, has yet to happen. Although Odin knew that a great war would come, not even he could foretell the future. The Norns would not tell him what he desired, so in disguise he visited the wisest of all Volva who gave him this prophesy.

*Brothers will fight and kill each other,
sisters' children will defile kinship.
It is harsh in the world, whoredom rife –
an axe age, a sword age, shields are riven
a wind age, a wolf age – before the world goes headlong.
No man will have mercy on another*

After an eternity of chasing, the wolves Skoll and Hati will catch the chariots of Sol and Mani, devouring them. In the darkness that follows comes three years of terrible winter where many die of suffering and starvation. The bonds holding Loki, Fenrir and Garm, break allowing them to escape. Loki travels to frost giants and his bitter words raises a mighty horde.

Alerted by his far seeing eyes, Heimdallr will sound the warning blast on his magical horn, alerting the Æsir who muster with the heroes of the Einherjar to fight the final battle. This winding stirs the seas arousing Jormungand the Midgard Serpent to rise from the ocean depths. On the raging waves Naglfari, the ship formed from the nails of dead men, tears free of its moorings and captained by the giant Hrym carries the frost giants to war. Surtr leads an army of fire giants over Bifrost, which shatters under the army's weight.

In the titanic struggle Odin is slain by Fenrir, who in turn is killed by Odin's son Vidar who tears apart the jaws of the dire wolf. Tyr battles Garm the hound of Hel but hindered by his single hand both slay one another. Freyr, lacking his magical sword is slaughtered by Surtr. Heimdallr and Loki in mutual hatred kill each other. Thor in a

The Days of the Week

The Viking names of the weekdays are based upon names of the Norse gods.

English Name	Norse Name	Origin
Monday	Manadagr	Moon's Day
Tuesday	Tysdagr	Tyr's Day
Wednesday	Ódinsdagr	Odin's Day
Thursday	Thorsdagr	Thor's Day
Friday	Frjadagr	Freyr's Day
Saturday	Laugardagr	Washing Day
Sunday	Sunnudagr	Sun's Day

valiant struggle defeats Jormungand but nine steps later is overcome by the poison. The thrashing of the serpent causes a cataclysmic flood whilst Surtr will burn Yggdrasil and all the nine realms.

The only survivors of the battle will be the sons of Odin, Vidar and Vali; the sons of Thor, Modi and Magni; and the brothers Baldr and Hodr will return from the realm of Hel. Of mankind only Lif and Lifthrasir survive the flames to repopulate a rejuvenated Midgardr free of evil and misfortune.

The Gods

The gods of the Vikings are both the Æsir and Vanir who rule in Asgard and the giants who control the elemental powers. They have many tales associated with them, of which many still survive to the modern day. A Games Master who is considering running a Mythic Viking campaign should read the wonderful tales of the Norse gods to understand their personalities, motivations and use of trickery to survive against the ever present threat of the giants.

A quick overview of each god follows.

Aegir (The Ale Brewer)

The god of the sea. He is a giant, son of Mistblindi, brother of Logi and married to Ran. Aegir was a neutral deity with whom the Æsir remained cordial.

Baldr (The Bright One)

The son of Odin and Frigg, fated to be accidentally killed by his brother Hodr. Baldr is known as a gentle and wise god, for which he is fated to return after Ragnarok. He is also known as Balder or Baldur.

Bor (The Son)

The son of Buri and married to the giantess Bestla, the 'Little Sauna Woman', with whom he fathered Odin, Vili and Ve.

Bragi (Best, Highest)

The god of poetry and eloquence, patron of skalds. He is a son of Odin and Gunnlod, and husband to Idun. Bragi greets the new arrivals at Valhalla with songs of their heroic deeds.

Buri (Good Looking)

The ancestor of the gods. Freed from the primordial ice by the cow Audmula licking him free. Buri was the only god to die of old age since he lived before the Apples of Idun were grown.

Day

The son of Nott and Delling. He drives a chariot around Midgardr drawn by his horse Skinfaxi.

Delling (Dawn)

The guard at the hall Breidablik and lover of Nott. He is the father of his son Day.

Eir (Mercy)

Goddess of healing and medicine, a handmaiden to Frigga. She is the daughter of Njord and sister to Freya.

Fjorgynn

The god of weather and father of Frigga.

Forseti (The Presiding One)

The god of peace and justice, who lives in the hall Glitner. He is the son of Balder and Nanna.

Freyja (The Lady)

The goddess of seidr magic. She is one of the Vanir, daughter of Njord and sister of Freyr. She owns the necklace Brisingamen for which she slept with its four dwarf creators. She was once married to Od who disappeared and weeps tears for his loss.

Freyr (The Lord)

The god of fertility and protector of sailors. He is also one of the Vanir, who was exchanged as a hostage as part of the peace settlement between the Æsir and Vanir. Son of Njord and brother of Freyja, he owns many enchanted objects, the boar Gullinbursti, the ship, Skidbladnir and once owned a magic sword that fought by itself



but exchanged it to marry the giantess Gerd. He rules over Alfheim and fathered the royal line of the Yngling family.

Frigg (The Loving)

The goddess of prophetic magic and childbirth, she can see the fate of all but chooses not to prophesise. Daughter of Fjorgynn she is the wife of Odin and mother of six sons and one daughter, including Baldr and Hodr.

Fulla (The Filler)

The maiden sister of Frigga she bears a small chest containing the powers of life and death.

Gefjun (The Gift Giver)

The goddess of fertility, who married a giant and had four sons. When commanded by Odin to seek land from Gylfi the king of Sweden, the king amusedly promised her as much land as she could plough in a day. Changing her sons into oxen she ploughed a vast section of land, which she carried down to the bottom of the sea. She then married Skjold a son of Odin, birthed the royal line of the Skioldungs and became the guardian of all those who died unwedded, granting them a life of eternal happiness.

Gullveig (Gold Thirst)

A Vanir goddess who is the patroness of evil women. She came to live with the Æsir as a handmaiden of Freyja but her delight in practicing evil seidr caused the gods to cast her onto a fire three times to be burned. She survived each attempt so the Æsir magically bound her to the Ironwood in Jotunheimr. There she slept with Loki and bore him three monstrous offspring, Hel, Fenrir and Jormungand. The treatment of Gullveig caused the initial war between the Æsir and Vanir.

Heimdallr (Heaven's Mount)

The watchman of the gods. Heimdallr was the son of nine mothers (the sea daughters of Aegir) and a charm cast by Odin. At birth he was set within a small boat which washed up in Midgardr. There he taught crafts and social organisation to mankind, sleeping with three women who in turn gave birth to the thralls, farmers and noblemen. His mortal form dying of old age, he was sent back to Vanaheimr in the boat in which he arrived. There he was reborn to eternal youth and travelled to Odin, who asked him to guard the Bifrost Bridge. Heimdallr has teeth of gold, barely sleeps and can see and hear for hundreds of miles. He blows the magical horn Gjallar when visitors come to Asgardr.

Hel (Death)

The goddess of death and daughter of Loki, Hel rules over Niflhel where the dead who do not journey to Asgardr come. By Odin's will she commands the dead of all nine worlds in exchange for her oath that those sent to her are granted the hospitality of her hall, which has huge gates and a very high wall. Her appearance is half black (the colour

of long dead flesh) and half normal. Whilst her realm is cold it is not a terrible place but a hall of restful peace for those who die of old age or misfortune. She punishes evil doers by sending them to Nastrond.

Hermod (Fast)

The god of swift travelling, messengers and bravery. Hermod is a son of Odin and Frigga. He rescues Freyja from the giants in Jotunheimr. He alone volunteers to take the terrifying journey down to Hel to ask for the return of his brother Baldr. It is also Hermod who acts as a secret liaison between Freyr and Gerd to negotiate their wedding.

Hoder (War)

The god of war and a son of Odin and Frigga. Driven by an evil potion, which filled his heart with love for Nanna, Baldr's betrothed, he joined a war band of giants, in revolt against Asgardr. Blinded in the battle, they were defeated and the repentant Hoder returned to Asgardr with his brother Baldr. Tricked by Loki to fire an arrow of mistletoe at Baldr, he unwittingly killed his brother. None of the Æsir would harm Hoder in proper retaliation so Vali was born to perform the deed.

Honir

A warrior god respected for his aggressiveness and bravery. He was sent to the Vanir along with Mimir to seal the truce between them and the Æsir but when he refused to speak with the leader of the Vanir they beheaded Mimir and sent the head back to Odin in displeasure.

Idun (She Who Renews)

The goddess of eternal life, she is the guardian of the golden apples of youth and wife of Bragi. Each year she grants one of her apples to each of the gods.

Jord (Earth)

The daughter of Nott and Annar. She is the goddess of the earth and the mother of Thor.

Lofn (Love)

The goddess of passion and illicit love affairs, she removes the barriers between lovers.

Loki (Fire)

Originally the god of fire, his sly nature changed him to become a trickster god, capable of great cunning but flawed with a sadistic and cowardly nature. He is the son of giants Farbauti (Cruel Smiter) and Laufrey. He married three times producing many children. Firstly with Glut (Glow) who bore him two daughters, Eisa (Embers) and Einmyria (Ashes). His second dalliance with the giantess Angr-boda (Anguish-Boding) the shape-shifted Gullveig bore him the three monsters Hel, jormungand and Fenrir.



His third was with Sigyn who truly loved him. With her was birthed Vali and Narfi. Loki himself bore (as a mare) Sleipnir, the eight legged horse, after a mating with a giant stallion called Svadilfari. Loki is a famous shape-shifter, able to turn into a salmon, a fly, a horse and many other creatures. Responsible for the death of Balder, his is bound by the entrails of his son Narfi until Ragnarok whilst a serpent placed by Skadi drips venom in his eyes.

Magni (The Powerful)

The god of strength, Magni is a son of Thor and the giantess Jarnsaxa. He will slay the great wyrm Nidhogg at Ragnarok. With his brother Modi he will inherit Thor's hammer Mjollnir.

Mimir (The Murmuring)

A giant who was the keeper of Mimisbrunnr the Well of Wisdom. He granted his nephew Odin the chance to drink from the well in exchange for an eye. Mimir was the wisest of all folk, knowing everything. He was sent to the Vanir to seal the truce between them and the Æsir but was beheaded by the angered deities. His head was sent back to Odin who revived it using a magical galdr. The head now remains guarding the well where it sometimes speaks with the All-Father.

Modgud

The skeletal maiden who guards the Gjallarbridge over the river Gjoll in Jotenheim, which leads to Niflhel. All those who wish to cross must first give blood and tell her their name and family.

Modi (The Brave)

God of courage and son of Thor and the giantess Jarnsaxa. He is fated to survive Ragnarok with his brother of Magni.

Mani (Moon)

The god of the moon, Mani is the son of Mundilfari. He steers the chariot of the moon on its course, keeping ahead of the wolf Hati.

Nanna

The Æsir wife of Baldr and mother of Forseti, who dies of a broken heart after her husband dies and is burned with him on his funeral boat.

Njord (Stiller of Storms)

The Vanir god of seafaring, he commands the wind and waves. The son of Nott and father of Freyja and Freyr. He briefly married Skadi but broke up when neither liked the other's home.

Norns, the

The three norns are Urd ‘that which became’, Verandi ‘that which is happening’ and Skuld ‘that which must be’. They respectively represented the past, present and future. They are the guardians of Urdarbrunnr, the Well of Fate and they decide the wyrd of all men and gods.

*I know an ash that stands, called Yggdrasil
a tall tree, wet with white dews,
dews dripping down into the dales.
Ever green it stands over Urth's well.
From there come three maidens, deep in lore,
from the water that stands under the tree.
One is called Urth, the other Verthandi,
the third Skuld. Scores they carved,
laws they laid, lives they chose.
They worked Orlög for the sons of men.*

Nott (Night)

The daughter of Narvi and mother of Day, Nott is the goddess of night. She rides around Midgardr on her chariot drawn by Hrimfaxi, followed by her son.

Odin (Spirit)

The god of runes, shamanistic magic, battle and death. Odin is the chief of all the Æsir. He has many names and many disguises, which he uses when travelling the nine realms. His most common kennings are the ‘all-father’, the ‘terrible one’, ‘one-eyed’ and ‘father of battle’. Odin helped form the cosmos and was the first to discover the runes, after sacrificing himself on the world tree, hanging upside-down for nine days and nights, without food or drink, with his spear impaled into him. He is the bringer of terror on the battle field, casting his ‘battle-fetter’ on foes. He drank from Mimir’s Well in exchange for an eye. He stole the Mead of Poetry and quaffed deeply of its power. He owns two ravens, Hugin (Thought) and Munin (Memory), which fly across the worlds bringing him news of what occurs. He also has two wolves Geri (Greedy) and Freki (Ravenous), which accompany him everywhere and eat the meat from his plate as he only drinks wine. The magical spear Gungnir is his.

Odin has had many wives and many sons. With Jord he had Thor, with Frigga he had Hermod, Hoder and Baldr, with Rinda he gained Vali, with Grid was born Vidar, with the giantess Gunnlod (with whom he slept to gain the Mead of Poetry) came Bragi and with the nine daughters of Ran was produced Heimdallr. As if this was not enough he often meets with Saga in the crystal hall of Sokvabek and sometimes sleeps with Skadi his mistress of the Wild Hunt.



Ran (The Ravager)

The Vanir goddess of sea and death. She is the wife of Aegir and mother to nine daughters. It is her responsibility to collect drowned people in her net but being of malicious nature she sometimes uses it to drag still living men down under the waves.

Rind (Rime)

The goddess of the cold and frozen earth. Rind is a giantess and lover of Odin, with whom she bore Vali.

Saga (Seeress)

Goddess of recall and memory. An attendant of Frigga she lives in her hall beside the stream of time, from which she quaffs deeply, alongside her consort and drinking companion of Odin.

Sif

The goddess of summer and grain. She is the second wife of Thor with whom she bore Magni and Modi. Sif can shape-shift into the form of a swan. She once had her golden hair cut off by Loki but the dwarfs forged her new hair from pure gold, which magically bound itself to her scalp.

Sigyn (The Faithful)

The goddess of monogamy, Sigyn is the faithful Æsir wife of Loki and mother of Vali and Narfi. After her husband was bound and punished she remained with him, standing with a bowl to capture the serpent venom, which drips into his eyes. Occasionally she must empty the bowl, which is when Loki writhes in pain sending earthquakes through Midgardr.

Sjofn (Affection)

The Æsir goddess of love and passion, she prevents fights between married couples.

Skadi (Harm)

The bringer of snow and goddess of wintertime destruction. The daughter of the Giant Thjatsi she sought revenge for her father's death by the gods. Falling in love with Baldr she accepts a settlement of marrying one of the Æsir based on his feet but mistakenly chooses the most beautiful pair which belonged to Njord. Their marriage did not last and she married Ullr instead. With her scathing nature she leads the Wild Hunt.

Sol (Sun)

Daughter of Mundilfari and brother of Mani, she guides the chariot of the sun, bearing the magical shield Svalin (Cool) to protect herself from the heat. She is eternally chased by the wolf Skoll who will consume her before Ragnarok.

Syn (Truth)

The guardian goddess of doorways and love. An attendant of Frigga she guards the door to her palace, preventing access to those not invited. Once she has decided, nothing can sway her decision. She presides over law trials and her name is invoked whenever a decision is to be vetoed 'Syn is against it'.

Thor (The Thunderer)

God of lightning, thunder, craftsmanship, fertility, defence and strength. Thor is the son of Odin and Jord, and married to Sif. He protects Asgardr from the giants by the threat of his wondrous hammer Mjollnir and owns a magical belt called Megingjardar ('Strength Increaser') and a flying chariot pulled by two resurrecting goats. He is large and heavy, preventing him from using the Bifrost Bridge. Rather he leaves Asgardr by the north and wades through the sea to enter Midgardr. Hot headed he often slays giants out of pique and is doomed to face the great serpent Jormungand several times before he final slays it and is slain himself at Ragnarok.

Thrud (Power)

The unusually strong daughter of Thor and Sif. Promised to the dwarf Alvis in exchange for a deed, Thor cruelly tricked him causing the dwarf to turn to stone. She becomes one of the Valkeries.

Tyr (The One Handed)

The god of war and honour, he grants victory against the odds to those who deserve it. He presides over contracts, law cases and assembly votes at the *thing*. An older god from before Odin, no one knows where he came from. Tyr bravely agreed to place his hand in the mouth of Fenrir, when the gods were trying to bind the monstrous wolf, as a guarantee that Fenrir would be released if he could not break free; Tyr fully understanding that he was sacrificing his limb. When the gods betrayed their side of the bargain, Tyr had his hand bitten off but considered it a worthy exchange in order to keep the evil wolf bound.

Ullr (The Brilliant One)

The god of archery and skiing, Ullr is the patron of hunters. The step-son of Thor from a previous marriage of Sif, Ullr is one of the Vanir. His name comes from the Aurora Borealis, which lights up the heavens when he rules in Asgardr in the winter.

Vali

The son of Odin and the giantess Rind. He was birthed solely to avenge the death of Balder.

Valkyries, the (Choosers of the Slain)

The disir sent to select those warriors fallen in battle worthy of being brought to Valhalla, or serve the Einherjar in the evening banquets. Also known as Shield Maidens or Corpse Goddesses, they can shape-shift as swans or ravens, or they ride through the sky armed and armoured aback their horses.



Then light shone from Logafell, and from that radiance there came bolts of lightning; wearing helmets at Himingvani. Their byrnies were drenched in blood; and rays shone from their spears.

The number and names of the Valkyrjur fluctuate but the core ones are: ‘Hrist and Mist I desire should bring me a horn, Skeggjöld and Skogul, Hildir and Thrudr, Hlokk and Herfjotur, Goll and Geirahod, Randgridr and Reginleif. These serve ale to the Einheriar. Gunnr and Rota and the youngest norn, called Skuld, always ride to choose who shall be slain and to govern the killings.’

Var (Awareness)

The goddess of oaths and marriage vows. A handmaiden of Frigga she punishes those who break their oaths, especially those between men and women.

Ve (Holy)

Son of Bor and brother of Odin and Vili. He granted mankind perception.

Vidar

Son of Odin and the giantess Grid who will avenge Odin’s death after Ragnarok.

Vili (Will)

Son of Bor and brother of Odin and Ve. He gave mankind thought and motion.

Vor (Insightful)

The goddess of inquisitive perception, with Var she is a handmaiden of Frigga and helps punish those who break vows.

Divine Gifts

Games Masters who wish to run a heroic fantasy or a mythic Viking campaign can grant their players a Divine Gift, something they are born with which helps boost their natural capabilities. In the sagas are many examples of royal lines with traces of divine blood in their veins. Some of the greatest heroes appear to be superhuman, such as the unmatched strength of Beowulf, being able to wrestle Grendel. Other blessings are the immunities of berserks who use no Seidr or magic to gain their protections.

The following gifts can have a significant effect on a game, potentially bringing some imbalance to the difficulties faced by a party of diverse Adventurers. Care should be taken to craft challenges so that they are targeted for a single Adventurer, so that they do not inadvertently slaughter the group or leave one person feeling bored with nothing taxing their capabilities.

Each of these gifts is a single exclusive power that can only be taken during Adventurer generation. They are not intended to be stacked together. Saying that, these powers could potentially be duplicated by some gift of magical effect during a campaign, drinking from the Well of Mimir for example might replicate the gift of Sagacity.

Gifts of the Gods

Each of the following powers is either considered permanently active, such as a Characteristic increase, or costs the user a single Magic Point to activate with no chance of failure.

Agility

The gift increases the recipient's DEX to his maximum rolled value plus an additional 1D6.

Allurement

The gift increases the recipient's CHA to his maximum rolled value plus an additional 1D6.

Animal Tongue

The recipient can understand the speech of the birds and animals. What they say might not be particularly interesting however.

Bear Skin

The recipient owns a magical bear skin, which provides him with 7 Armour Points all over his body but only has a Strike Rank Penalty of -5. This protection only counts against iron weapons or fire and is treated as a normal bear skin against other types of damage (3 points). If the skin is lost, then if the Adventurer kills and skins another bear single-handedly, the new skin adopts the same powers.

Beguiling Voice

For the investment of a Magic Point the user can force *everyone* within audible range to turn and pay attention to the user, captivated by the tone and power of their voice. The user must first succeed in an unopposed Influence, Oratory, Poetry or Sing test to captivate his audience, after which he can retain their focus for as long as they can continue the performance. An aggressive action automatically breaks the effect of his voice.

Breathe Water

The recipient can breathe water as if it were air. They can still be strangled however if their windpipe is blocked.

Darksight

The recipient gains the Night Sight trait.

Endurance

The gift increases the recipient's

Ferocity

When fighting the recipient enters a berserk rage. During this time they may ignore any Resilience tests to resist wounds. Note that if they receive a Major Wound they still become incapacitated but ignore the chance of instant death or losing a limb.

Immune to Fear

The recipient automatically succeeds in any test against fear, magical or otherwise.

Lucky

Before any skill is rolled the user may spend a Magic Point to get an additional roll, picking the best result.

Natural Shape-shifter

The user may choose an animal whose average SIZ Characteristic value is no more than twice their own. The user can then change into that form at will, for the cost of a single Magic Point. Changing requires a single Combat Action and causes all the possessions of the changer to drop or split off from their body. The duration of the change is unlimited and there is no risk of losing their personality. The animal form has no additional protection other than its natural skin but retains any unusual forms of locomotion, perception or breathing it might have.

Rime Blooded

The recipient is immune to cold of any form.

Sagacity

The gift increases the recipient's INT to his maximum rolled value plus an additional 1D6.

Second Sight

The recipient gains a continual ability to see spirits and magic.

Strength

The gift increases the recipient's STR to his maximum rolled value plus an additional 1D6.

Swift Footed

This gift allows the user to run like the wind. Their natural movement rate is twice normal.

Vitality

The recipient cannot become ill or sick. In addition they never lose any Fatigue.

Wind Wise

The recipient can knot winds into pieces of rope or leather bags. Using the gift temporarily ties up Magic Points for each wind so captured but the wind is trapped within the knot, causing a calm for kilometres in all directions. If the knot or bag is undone, that wind is released anew and the Magic Points can henceforth regenerate.

Wolf Coat

Similar to the Bear Skin gift, a Wolf Coat only provides 6 Armour Points all over but has no Strike Rank penalty. The protection only counts against iron or fire, being considered a normal wolf skin against other forms of damage (2 points). Likewise the coat can be replaced if the Adventurer kills and skins the leader of a wolf pack single-handedly. CON to his maximum rolled value plus an additional 1D6.

VIKING MAGIC

Magic is a fundamental aspect of Viking superstition. Their world is filled with witches and sorcerers who can sing spells, rune carvers that can cut mystical symbols into charms, seers whom can foretell the future, shaman from the far north that summon the spirits and even shape-shifters who take on the form of animals.

In addition to these practitioners are numerous supernatural creatures, which have magical abilities beyond the understanding of common men. Even the gods use magic and possess enchanted items of wondrous power. Magic is everywhere.

Despite this prevalence, magic is generally regarded with suspicion. Using magic to defeat or curse one's enemies is not regarded as 'manly'; a good Viking should settle his problems openly with a sword, not secretly with a spell. As such many practitioners of the magical arts are regarded with fear, forcing many to keep their skills hidden. Only in the courts of jarls and kings are such folk tolerated, bound by oaths to serve their lord and not use their powers maliciously. Outside this protection and bond, they are forced to live at the edges of the wilderness outcast from society.

Magical artefacts are regarded in a slightly different light, as most are simply tools of supernatural power, which could gain their own fame. Some items however, have wicked reputations, cursed by their makers or the dying breath of those who owned them previously. Tyrfring is such a weapon, a sword that always takes the life of a man whenever drawn and fated to cause three great evils.

In *Vikings of Legend* the arts of Common Magic, Divine Magic and Sorcery are not used. To replace them, several new types of magic are introduced in this chapter. Spirit Magic remains but with a few minor changes to reflect the practices used in the Viking Age.

Using Magic in Viking Campaigns

A number of options are available to Games Masters when designing a Viking campaign. These should be carefully considered since the result can radically change the feel of the game

Historical Campaigns

If running a real world historical campaign, magic of course does not work. However, since most spells have little or no observable effect, Vikings witnessing rituals and incantations may still *believe* in the magic. In such situations the spell casting roll can be used to determine how believable the incantation was and whether the recipient of the magic suffers a psychosomatic effect.

For example, using a *galdr* to instil cowardliness in someone or giving a spurious prophesy of their doom, might actually result in the mechanical effects of a Demoralise spell.

Using magic in this way requires a delicate touch, since the effect can often be rather abstract and requires the player of an Adventurer affected by superstition to play along, regardless of the knowledge that it is potentially not real.

Playing of sorcerers or seers in historical campaigns can be an interesting challenge, since Adventurers must play the beliefs of those they cast magic on. Indeed, clever application of psychology can result in effects greater than any 'true' spell, a single doom-saying twisting the result of an entire battle for instance!

Fantasy Campaigns

In fantasy Viking campaigns magic is rare but potent. Adventurers are still based in the real world but spells should work as described later in this chapter. This can add a great deal of atmosphere to a game, especially considering how common folk fear and respect the paranormal.

Games Masters must consider the effects of including a magic user in their adventuring parties. Since magic is relatively unusual, a simple spell can potentially have an overwhelming effect with no counter spells or matching magics to neutralise it.

If one of the players is running a magic user, enemy sorcerers and supernatural creatures should be drawn to them as an infrequent occurrence to give some degree of challenge. In addition the Adventurer will attract a degree of infamy for their powers, making life difficult for both himself and his fellows. Conversely, Viking parties who lack a magic user can be augmented with the loan of rune charms or spirit fetishes to aid them in difficult adventures.

Mythic Campaigns

Mythic campaigns are those which take place across the other worlds of Scandinavian cosmology, allowing Adventurers to meet – or even be related to – the gods, aiding them in their battles against the giants.

In mythological games magic should be commonplace. Wondrous treasures, shape-shifting and oracular visions abound. Every Adventurer should know a few charms or own an item of power to be able to handle the monstrous challenges present in the nine worlds.

The Source of Magic

Magic comes from the Runes. They are the source of all wisdom and authority, existing from before the world began and will continue beyond the destruction of Ragnarok.

Such are their power that Odin quested long and hard to find and master them. He sacrificed an eye to drink from the well of wisdom, before sacrificing himself on the world tree Yggdrasil – hanging upside-down for nine days, impaled by his own spear – until the Runes appeared to him.

Now is answered what you ask of the runes,
 Graven by the gods,
 Made by the All Father,
 Sent by the powerful sage:
 It is best for man to remain silent.

Although there are many forms of shamanism and Scandinavian sorcery, ultimately they are just alternative paths to tap the same powers. Similar ‘magical effects’ can be conjured with a ritual chant, a rune carved piece of bone or summoning the right spirit. It is the way that these runes are invoked which differs.

Contrary to popular belief, a single Rune does not necessarily convey any power; it is their combination that invokes the magic. Charms and spells mentioned in the eddas often refer to the runes in plural. For example, in Egil’s Saga a curse is carved on a nidsong (scorn-post) in runes and the heroic poem *Sigrdrífumál* tells of ‘victory runes’ to be carved on a blade ‘some on the grasp and some on the inlay and name Tyr twice’.

The following runes are attributed to the Younger Futhark, which are those runic symbols in use during the Viking Age. Each has its own name and realm of effect, which can be extrapolated to be more inclusive. Game Masters can use these looser interpretations to assign individual charms with particular rune combinations.

Younger Futhark Runes

Name	Meaning	Suggested Magical Resonance
Fe	wealth	silver, cattle, land
Ur	iron	weapons, bull, beast
Thurs	giant	Thor, battle
As	Æsir	the gods, authority, law
Reidh	ride	horse, movement, ship
Kaun	ulcer	curse, pain, unhappiness
Hagall	hail	wind, storms, destruction
Naudhr	need	desire, lust, greed
Is	ice	cold, dark, hunger
Ar	plenty	happiness, fertility
Sol	sun	warmth, fire
Tyr	battle	victory, justice, honour
Bjarkan	birch	rebirth, healing, growth
Madhr	man	emotion
Logr	water	sea, lake, rain
Yr	yew	poison

Although the Runes are the keys to invoking magic, the energy to manifest a spell comes from the sorcerer. Each person has their own *hamingja*, which is their personal reserve of mystical power or, in *Legend* terms, their Magic Points. The Vikings think of *hamingja* as a type of fiery energy.

'Odin had the skill which gives great power and which he practiced himself. It is called seidr, and by means of it he could know the fate of a man and predict events that had not yet come to pass; and by it he could also inflict bane on men, or loss of soul or waning health, or also take wit or power from some men, and give them to others. But this sorcery is attended by such ergi (effeminacy) that many men considered it shameful to practice it, and so it was taught to priestesses.'

— Ynglinga Saga

Seidr Magic

Roughly translatable as witchcraft, the practitioners of Seidr are called *seidkona* or *seidman*. These titles generally have a negative connotation because of the harm that this form of magic can cause.

*'Shun a woman, wise in magic,
Her bed and her embraces:
If she cast a spell, you will care no longer
To meet and speak with men,
Desire no food, desire no pleasure,
In sorrow fall asleep.'*

Generally speaking, using seidr involves chanting or singing spells called *galdr*. There are many forms of *galdrar*, in the poem *Havamal*, Odin claims to have mastered 18 different *galdrar*, amongst which are many incantations to protect against iron or fire, loosen fetters, snare arrows out of the air or calm storms (see text box). In other sagas there are charms that can raise the dead to fight again, ease the pains of childbirth, drive someone mad or even cast illusions.

Seidr is often performed under the cover of a cloak or whilst sitting on a tall seat or platform called a *seidhjallr*. The top is reached by nine steps, nine being a magical number, the steps representing the nine worlds. Skalds were said to sometimes weave magic into their songs.

The greatest masters of Seidr are the elves and gods themselves, whose skill is such that they can invoke *galdr* in mere moments rather than spend minutes in clumsy ritualistic preparation, as mortals must.

Seidr (Pow x 2)

This Advanced skill is used to cast *galdrar* (verbal incantations) using ritual chants sung or spoken in a high pitched voice. The magic draws its power from the *sound* of the Runes, their vibrations conjuring mystical effects. Although Seidr and Rune Carving share the same base spells, their implementation is subtly different. A combined list of suggested *Galdrar* and *Galdrastafir* (mystic symbols) follows Rune Carving.

The List of Charms

The following exert is known as the Ljodatal, from the poem Havamal. It describes a list of charms know by Odin as recounted by himself. It gives a wide range of magical incantations, which are the source of much of the magic portrayed in the eddas and sagas. These are the basis for both Seidr and Rune Carving magic.

*The first charm I know is
unknown to rulers
Or any of human kind;
Help it is named,
for help it can give In hours of
sorrow and anguish.*

*I know a second that the sons of
men
Must learn who wish to be leeches.*

*I know a third: in the thick of
battle,
If my need be great enough,
It will blunt the edges of enemy
swords,
Their weapons will make no
wounds.*

*I know a fourth:
it will free me quickly
If foes should bind me fast
With strong chains, a chant that
makes Fetters spring from the feet,
Bonds burst from the hands.*

*I know a fifth: no flying arrow,
Aimed to bring harm to men,
Flies too fast for my fingers to
catch it
And hold it in mid-air.*

*I know a sixth:
it will save me if a man
Cut runes on a sapling's Roots
With intent to harm; it turns
the spell;
The hater is harmed, not me.*

*I know a seventh:
If I see the hall
Ablaze around my bench mates,
Though hot the flames, they shall
feel nothing,
If I choose to chant the spell.*

*I know an eighth:
that all are glad of,
Most useful to men:
If hate fester in the heart of a
warrior,
It will soon calm and cure him.*

*I know a ninth:
when need I have
To shelter my ship on the flood,
The wind it calms, the waves it
smoothes
And puts the sea to sleep,*

*I know a tenth:
if troublesome ghosts
Ride the rafters aloft,
I can work it so they wander
astray,
Unable to find their forms,
Unable to find their homes.*

*I know an eleventh:
when I lead to battle Old
comrades in-arms,
I have only to chant it behind my
shield,
And unwounded they go to war,
Unwounded they come from war,
Unscathed wherever they are.*

*I know a twelfth:
If a tree bear
A man hanged in a halter,
I can carve and stain strong runes
That will cause the corpse to
speak,
Reply to whatever I ask.*

*I know a thirteenth
if I throw a cup Of water over a
warrior,
He shall not fall in the fiercest
battle,
Nor sink beneath the sword,*

*I know a fourteenth, that few
know:
If I tell a troop of warriors
About the high ones, elves and
gods,
I can name them one by one.
(Few can the nit-wit name.)*

*I know a fifteenth,
that first Thjodrevir
Sang before Delling's doors,
Giving power to gods, prowess
to elves,
Fore-sight to Hroptatyr Odhinn,*

*I know a sixteenth:
if I see a girl
With whom it would please me
to play,
I can turn her thoughts, can touch
the heart
Of any white armed woman.*

*I know a seventeenth:
if I sing it,
the young Girl will be slow to
forsake me.*

*To learn to sing them, Loddjafnir,
Will take you a long time,
Though helpful they are if you
understand them,
Useful if you use them,
Needful if you need them.*

*I know an eighteenth that I never
tell
To maiden or wife of man,
A secret I hide from all
Except the love who lies in my
arms,
Or else my own sister.*

To cast a galdr the user must make a successful test of their Seidr skill. The success level and value rolled on the dice are used as the target number to beat if the spell can be resisted.

Successfully casting a galdr costs one Magic Point per point of Magnitude. Critically succeeding costs a single Magic Point less, Failure costs nothing and Fumbling costs the full amount but nothing happens. For progressive spells the user can select at what level of Magnitude the galdr is cast.

The casting time for galdr is far longer than is useful in a tactical situation. For each Magic Point in the spell, the caster must chant for a full minute. To compensate for this extensive preparation, the range of a galdr is effectively unlimited; save that it cannot cross large bodies of water and the caster must personally know or have an object belonging to the target. Thus a curse cast by a seidkona on Iceland could affect someone still on the island or one of its coastal islets but not a target in Norway for example.

The duration of a galdr, where applicable, is usually a day and a night. So, for instance, a hero could be ensorcelled with protective wards prior to fighting a battle the following day, or an enemy cursed with fear so that he will not turn up at a law case until it has ended. If desired, a successfully cast galdr can be ceased at any time prior to its natural termination.

Galdr require the user to openly chant its incantation. Gagging a seidr wielder or placing a hood over their heads will prevent them from further casting.

The number of galdr a user can learn is equal to one tenth of their Seidr skill (rounded up). Each time their skill raises enough to allow the attainment of a new galdr, they must spend a number of Improvement Rolls (as discussed previously) to gain it. These galdr never change once learned.

Once a galdr has been absorbed, the maximum Magnitude at which it can be cast is equal to the *lower* of either: the caster's INT divided by three (rounded up) or the user's Seidr skill divided by 20 (also rounded up).

For example Bjorn with a Seidr of 84% and an intelligence of 11 can cast any galdr he knows at a maximum of Magnitude of 4. Technically his skill would allow him to cast it at Magnitude 5 but his mind is incapable of manipulating it at that level.

Rune Carving Magic

*Know how to cut them, know how to read them,
Know how to stain them, know how to prove them,
Know how to evoke them, know how to score them,
Know how to send them; know how to spend them*

— Havamal

Rune Carving is effectively the skill of invoking the power of the Runes by engraving or marking their physical shapes into objects, rather than singing them aloud. Such inscriptions are mystical sigils, which are known as *Galdrastafir* and the item so enchanted is called a *Tauf* or talisman.

Practitioners skilled in the magical lore of the runes were known as *Vitki*, which means a ‘wizard’ or ‘magician’ and *Vitkar* a wise woman. There was great danger involved in carving runes, for incomplete knowledge could cause more harm than good.

*Those who carve without knowledge
Should not write the runes
Great misfortune will follow
When the secrets are misused
I have seen ten letters carved
Out of a bent bone
They brought on the pain
That tortured the young girl.*

Rune Carving can be performed on any solid surface the carver can incise. This can be stone or metal but due to the nature of investing one’s own magical strength into such talismans, these types of rune carving are generally avoided. Horn, bone, ivory or wood are more preferable substances to use for enchantments, being light in weight and thus easy to transport, simple to whittle the runes into and, most importantly, capable of being broken.

In actual fact a talisman need not be carved at all. A few practitioners, such as some of the Rus, tattoo *galdrastafir* into their own skin. This is a dangerous path for Rune Carvers since it makes the removal of their enchantments somewhat painful but it does ensure that their charms can never be accidentally lost or stolen. Some *Vitkar* are even able to weave or embroider *galdrastafir* into clothing, the shirt of Arrow Odd being a particularly powerful example, protecting him from the cold, drowning, fire, hunger and iron!

Although the spells that can be crafted are effectively identical to *Galdrar* incantations, carving charms has the benefit of making the magic permanent but at the expense of weakening the enchanter.

Many rune carvings were used to curse enemies rather than provide protection, healing or aid. Famous examples of these are Niding Poles, or Scorn-Posts, which were tall poles carved with runic insults and banes. An animal head or skull, usually that of a horse, was fixed atop the pole and it was enchanted with a ceremony to give it power.

By far the most skilful rune carvers are the dwarfs. Their mastery is such that they can craft wondrous weapons and artefacts unachievable by the mortals and gods alike.

'And when all was ready for sailing, Egil went up into the island. He took in his hand a hazel-pole, and went to a rocky eminence that looked inward to the mainland. Then he took a horse's head and fixed it on the pole. After that, in solemn form of curse, he thus spake: 'Here set I up a curse-pole, and this curse I turn on king Eric and queen Gunnhilda. (Here he turned the horse's head landwards.) This curse I turn also on the guardian-spirits who dwell in this land, that they may all wander astray, nor reach or find their home till they have driven out of the land king Eric and Gunnhilda.' This spoken, he planted the pole down in a rift of the rock, and let it stand there. The horse's head he turned inwards to the mainland; but on the pole he cut runes, expressing the whole form of curse.'

— Egil's Saga

Rune Carving (Pow+Dex)

Rune Carving is an Advanced skill used to create magical talismans. It covers the etching and enchanting of runic inscriptions into an object, which is powered by the temporary sacrifice of the caster's own Magic Points. A list of possible galdrastafir (mystic symbols) follows this section.

To create a talisman the user must make a successful test of their Rune Carving skill. The success level and value rolled on the dice are used as the target number to beat if the spell has been carved to deleteriously affect a target and the victim wishes to resist it.

Successfully enchanting a galdrastafir into a talisman costs a number of Magic Points equal to half its Magnitude (rounded up). Critically succeeding allows the cost to be rounded down (minimum of one MP), Failure costs nothing and Fumbling costs the full amount but the enchantment is unsuccessful.

If the enchantment succeeded then the Magic Points invested in the talisman do not regenerate until the Rune Carving has been sundered. Or to put it another way, the rune carver's Magic Points are permanently reduced by the number of points that went into creating the talisman, until the magic of that Rune Carving is ended.

The crafting time for a talisman is extensive. If carving the runes into a relatively soft substance such as bone or wood, the enchanter must spend one hour for each point of Magnitude in the spell. Carving runes onto hard substances such as stone, or tattooing or weaving galdrastafir, takes one day per Magnitude.

In return for significantly weakening their magical strength a rune carved talisman grants the following benefits:

- The power of the talisman is permanent, unless the galdrastafir has an instantaneous effect, in which case the spell remains on 'standby' until activated by the talisman's user.

- The magic of a beneficial talisman transfers to whomever holds it.
- The range of an offensive talisman is effectively unlimited – save that it cannot cross large bodies of water – as long as the caster personally knows the target of the curse or the talisman is formed from an object belonging to them.
- The talisman remains enchanted even after its creator's death.

Once a talisman has been created it can only be undone if the object upon which the runes are carved is broken. Talismans containing instantaneous spells automatically sunder themselves once their effect has been used. After an enchantment has been unravelled, the Magic Points originally invested in it can slowly regenerate.

The number of galdrastafir an enchanter can learn is equal to one tenth of their Rune Carving skill (rounded up). Each time their skill raises enough to allow the attainment of a new spell, they must spend a number of Improvement Rolls (as described earlier) to gain it. Once learned the galdrastafir can never be changed.

The maximum Magnitude at which a galdrastafir can be enchanted is equal to the *lower* of either: the caster's INT divided by three (rounded up) or the user's Rune Carving skill divided by 20 (also rounded up).

Galdrar and Galdrastafir

Literally chants and magical signs, the following spells can be cast using either the Seidr or Rune Carving skill. They use the following traits, which are slightly different, depending on whether the spell is cast as a chant or engraved as runes.

Enduring: If cast as Seidr the spell's effect lasts for a day and a night, or vice versa. If a Rune Carving then the spell lasts until the enchanted object is broken.

Instant: The spell's effect takes place instantly and then disappears. Instant spells enchanted as Rune Carvings work once (at a time of the owner's choice) and then shatter.

Magnitude (X): The strength and power of the spell. Also the number of Magic Points required to cast it (or half this value if engraved). If two identical spells are cast on the same target, only the stronger takes effect. They do not stack.

Progressive: If desired the spell can be cast at greater levels of Magnitude, increasing its Magic Point cost commensurately.

Resist (Persistence/Resilience): The spell's effects do not take effect automatically. The target may make an Opposed Test of their Persistence or Resilience (as specified by the spell) against the casting roll, in order to avoid the effect of the spell entirely.

Galdrar usually only have a single recipient, either the caster themselves or a target; have unlimited range overland; and require no concentration to use. Spells which divert from this default mention the change specifically in their description.

Animate Dead

Enduring, Progressive

Raises up freshly slain bodies to continue fighting after death. The number of corpses that can be simultaneously controlled is equal to the Magnitude of the spell. Corpses retain their original Characteristics and skills but must be literally dismembered or decapitated to cease being a threat. If a corpse is rendered non-functional, the magic can transfer to a new dead body in better shape.

Bar Spirit

Enduring, Progressive

Keeps unwelcome spirits at bay, preventing the recipient from being Discorporated, attacked in Spirit Combat or Possessed. The magic blocks spirits of up to 6 POW per point of Magnitude. Thus a Magnitude 4 Bar Spirit could block spirits of up to 24 POW.

Battle Fetter

Enduring, Magnitude Special, Resist (Persistence)

Also known as 'Weaken Courage' the target of this spell loses any hope of victory and suffers a terrible panic. They will try to avoid fighting and faced with battle will either run or surrender. If forced into a situation where they have no option left but to defend themselves, the target continues to defend at its full skill but only attacks at half (before modifiers) and may not cast or invoke magic. The effects of this spell are automatically cancelled by the Inspire Bravery spell and vice versa.

The Magnitude of the spell depends on the target: 1 for an animal, 2 for a person and 3 for a supernatural being.

Bind Form

Enduring, Magnitude 1, Resist (Resilience)

Prevents a shape-shifter from switching forms for the duration of the magic, thus trapping them in human or animal shape.

Blunt Weapon

Enduring, Progressive, Resist (Resilience)

This spell is a type of curse which is cast at a person, rather than his accoutrements. For every point of Magnitude, it reduces the damage dealt from any weapon, wielded by the target, by two.

Break Charm

Instant, Progressive

Break Charm is used to dismiss another galdr, rune carving or similar magic. The targeted spell is nullified if its own Magnitude is equalled or exceeded by that of the Break Charm. Successfully using this spell against a talisman causes the rune carved object to sunder.

Calm Passion

Enduring, Magnitude 1, Resist (Persistence)

Removes hatred, fear, worry, loathing or any other form of strong emotion from the target. If the target does not wish to be calmed then they are permitted a Resistance roll.

Deflect Arrow

Enduring, Magnitude 1

Allows the recipient to catch or deflect missile weapons. Catching requires a successful parry using their Unarmed skill. Deflecting can be done with any weapon, assuming a successful parry using the appropriate Combat Style.

Divine Wisdom

Enduring, Progressive

Calls upon the wisdom of the Æsir and Alfar to guide the caster, who receives such knowledge as a vision or dream. Each point of Magnitude adds a 10% bonus to a single Lore or Craft skill. The skill to be affected must be stated at the time of casting.

Dominate Being

Enduring, Magnitude Special, Resist (Persistence)

Controls the actions of the target, subverting their free will. The Magnitude of the spell depends on the target: 1 for an animal, 2 for a person and 3 for a supernatural being. The spell cannot affect gods or singular monsters such as Garm or Fenris.

Failing to resist the spell places the target completely under the mental will of the caster. However, forcing the target to perform a morally repugnant deed or act against its instincts grants a new opposed roll to break free. Blatantly suicidal commands automatically sever the control. Once the domination has been sundered the spell ends, leaving the victim (if intelligent) aware of being magically manipulated but not necessarily of whom the caster was.

If the spell is cast when standing or immersed in the waters of a sea or lake, then it can reach targets that reside in that body of water.

Ease Pain

Enduring, Progressive

Eases the debilitating pain-related effects of wounds, poisons or child birth. Each point of Magnitude adds a 10% bonus to Resilience tests. A warrior blessed by this charm can be a steadfast opponent, continuing to fight until maimed or killed outright.

Entrance Other

Enduring, Magnitude Special, Resist (Persistence)

Charms the target to feel feelings of love or loyalty towards the user of this spell. The effects are subtle leaving the person or creature its free will but always biased in favour of the caster and unaware of their enthrallment. The Magnitude of Entrance Other depends on the target: 1 for an animal, 2 for a person and 3 for a supernatural being.

Evil Eye

Enduring, Progressive, Resist (Resilience)

Produces one or more irritable blights, which haunt the target as if plagued by bad luck. The curse includes one effect for each point of Magnitude in the spell. The effects can be selected or rolled randomly. Use the following table to generate random consequences.

Fog Mind

Enduring, Progressive, Resist (Persistence)

Causes forgetfulness in the target. If the spell is not resisted, the caster can force the recipient to forget one 'thing' per point of Magnitude. The magic is quite versatile, allowing diverse application. A three point Fog Mind spell cast on the local ruler could for example, cause him to temporarily forget that a) he is the Jarl, b) he had exiled his brother for treachery and c) he was to muster his army to fight a battle that day. Lost memories return once the spell ends.

Free Fetter

Instant, Magnitude Special

Removes chains, bonds or any form of restraint from the recipient. The Magnitude of the spell depends on the type of binding used: 1 for leather or rope ties, 2 for metal chains, 3 for stone prisons and 4 or more for magical fetters – for instance the dwarf forged chain Loding may require Magnitude 4, with Dromi 5 and Gleipnir 6 respectfully.

Grant Victory

Enduring, Progressive

Calls upon the favour of Tyr and Odin to make the user more fearsome in battle. This spell adds +5% per point of Magnitude to the recipient's weapon skills. It does not increase damage.

Random Curse Table

D20	Curse	Effect
1	Attract Vermin	Wasps, lice, ticks, rats gather where he goes.
2	Blight Crops	Cannot grow any form of crops.
3	Break Objects	Always breaks objects such as crockery, chairs, weapons.
4	Clumsy Grip	Always fail rolls to catch objects, climb or resist Disarming attempts.
5	Damp Touch	Cannot light fires and established fires slowly smother in their presence.
6	Disfiguring Pox	No physical effect but looks awful and drives people away from close contact.
7	Distracted Attention	Always fails Perception tests due to something in eye, ringing ears and so on.
8	Draw Rain	The weather always rains wherever they go.
9	Enrage Animals	Horses, cows, dogs and such react aggressively to their presence.
10	Frighten Prey	Drives off all game or fish, preventing hunting or fishing in their presence.
11	Heal Badly	Wounds do not heal naturally.
12	Impotency	Cannot get an erection or fails to conceive children.
13	Irritate Others	Always fail any Commerce, Influence, Oratory, Seduction, or Sing skill.
14	Itchy Skin	Cannot wear armour or heavy clothing.
15	Lame Foot	Always falls over when jumping or attempting to resist Trip or Bash manoeuvres.
16	Nightmare Haunted	Can never sleep the night through, always have at least one level of fatigue.
17	Pervasive Stench	Smells very bad, no matter how often they bathe or wash.
18	Rotting Touch	Equipment, clothing and stored foods quickly rot.
19	Sickly Livestock	All animals owned slowly sicken and die.
20	Sour Taste	Everything eaten or drunk tastes foul, forcing a Resilience roll to keep it down.

Grow Strong

Enduring, Progressive

For every point of Magnitude of this spell, the recipient's STR score increases by +2. This may have an additional effect on skills and Attributes, such as Damage Modifier. The target's STR cannot be raised to more than twice its original value.

Heal Wound

Enduring, Progressive

For every point of Magnitude of this spell, the caster can repair one Hit Point of damage to an injured Hit Location. The healing takes the entire day and night of the

duration to complete. If the spell is terminated early, it grants a number of Hit Points in proportion to the time spent. For instance a Heal Wound 3, which is stopped after 16 hours only heals two Hit Points of damage.

Heal Wound works equally well whether cast on animals, people or supernatural beings but only affects Minor or Serious Wounds. Major Wounds such as severed or maimed limbs cannot be repaired with this magic; even the gods themselves cannot heal such wounds.

Hold Fast

Enduring, Progressive

This charm is used to stick things together or bind someone with magical fetters. When cast on an innocuous object, the next thing that touches it is held fast, unable to break the contact save with magic. If used to ensorcell bonds, the knots or clasps seal tight and cannot be undone.

This spell can be used to entrap unsuspecting victims, by casting it on a chair for example. Loki was once caught by this magic when visiting the hall of the giant Geirrod in falcon form, when his claws were held fast to a window ledge.

Inspire Bravery

Enduring, Magnitude Special, Resist (Persistence)

The target of this spell becomes fearless and unheeding of personal danger. The recipient's *attacks* with close combat skills are increased by half but they cannot attempt to evade, parry or invoke any magical gifts or spells. The effects of this spell are automatically cancelled by the Weaken Courage spell and vice versa. Willing targets of Fanaticism may surrender to the spell without resisting it.

The Magnitude of the spell depends on the target: 1 for an animal, 2 for a person and 3 for a supernatural being.

Instil Madness

Enduring, Magnitude 2, Resist (Persistence)

The target of the spell becomes mentally unstable, undermining their status and reputation. The mental problems begin subtly but are chronic enough to cause severe problems to their family or associates. This madness does not result in mindless psychopathic or suicidal tendencies but should be viewed as a way of ruining someone's life. The precise type of madness or insanity is up to the Games Master to decide, or a roll can be made on the following table.

Random Madness Table

1D8	Symptom	Explanation
1	Hallucinations	Begin to hear and see things which are not there.
2	Paranoia	Everyone and everything is out to get you.
3	Anxiety	Panic attacks when faced with stressful situations.
4	Withdrawal	No longer express any interest in life.
5	Distracted	Cannot concentrate or complete any task.
6	Aggressive	Become constantly angry and irritable.
7	Irrational	Act in a random and contrary manner.
8	Delusional	Lose touch with reality.

Propitiate Gods

Instant, Magnitude 3

A simple ritual that helps avert any disfavour from supernatural beings. The spell requires granting a sacrifice to the spirit or deity being propitiated. The result is either the withdrawal of any hostile feelings from the entity, or a vision in which the being shows what is wrong and how it may be fixed.

Quench Flame

Enduring, Progressive

A protective charm that protects the recipient from the effects of heat and flames. For every point of Magnitude of this spell, the effect of any fire is reduced by one step.

Question Dead

Enduring, Progressive

Permits the caster to ask a dead body as many questions as points of Magnitude invested in the spell. The corpse can only answer about subjects it knows about and must respond truthfully. For more abstract knowledge a roll can be made against a dead person's Lore skill. If the corpse does not know the answer, it still uses up one of the questions. The spell still works if cast on a severed head.

Reflect Charm

Enduring, Progressive

Any hostile spell of equal or less Magnitude than the Reflect Charm is turned back against its caster, who must resist their own magic if applicable. If the hostile spell has a greater Magnitude then it affects the recipient of the Reflect Charm as normal.

Remain Unseen

Enduring, Progressive

Known in Norse as the Helmet of Hiding (*hulidshjalmr*), this spell causes the recipient to fade from notice. For every point of Magnitude of this spell, Perception skills used to locate the recipient are reduced by 10%.

Second Sight

Enduring, Magnitude 1

Allows sight of supernatural creatures and the *fylgjur* (animal soul) of people. Like normal vision, Second Sight is blocked by interposing objects or cover. The spell also allows the normally invisible presence of magic to be perceived, allowing the viewer to spot enchanted items or curses.

Turn Dead

Enduring, Magnitude 1, Resist (Persistence)

Forces a draugr (or some other form of animated dead) to depart a place of haunting or sink back into the ground deprived of form, providing it fails to resist the spell.

Ward Injury

Enduring, Progressive

For every point of Magnitude of this spell, one Armour Point is added to every Hit Location of the caster. This stacks with any existing armour and is treated in the same manner for the purposes of the Bypass Armour Combat Manoeuvre.

This protection however, is only effective against a particular type of material. The sagas often mention charms that protect against iron, stopping swords and glaives but have no effect against stone tipped arrows or unarmed grappling. This spell can be cast several times on the same recipient, each Ward Injury affecting a different substance.

Weather Charm

Enduring, Progressive

Raises or lowers the strength of the wind and cloud cover by one step per Magnitude (see Weather tables on page 232 of the *Legend Core Rulebook*). The modified conditions are local (several kilometres) around the caster or the target the weather is sent against. If the caster wishes to manipulate weather over water, they must be present in or on the same lake or sea.

Weave Illusion

Enduring, Progressive

Hides the reality of the target from the senses of all observers. A target of up to 20 SIZ may be affected for each point of Manipulation. Thus a person can be hidden with a Magnitude 1 spell, whereas a horse requires Magnitude 2. Once an illusion (sjonhverfing) has ended it cannot be repeated in the same form but must change its nature on the next casting. The charm of Second Sight can immediately perceive any illusion for what it is.

Spa Magic

Spa is a form of divination. Commonly called *spa-craft* or *spae-craft* it allows its user to determine ‘that which was, is and will be’ by using dreams, intuition or mystical enlightenment. In effect, spa allows the user to glimpse or know the *wyrd* or *orlog* (fate) of persons as woven by the Norns.

Practitioners of spa-craft are normally women. They are called *spakona* (spa woman) or *volva* (prophetess). Of all the magical artisans, the seeress is by far the highest honoured in Viking society, often invited to the courts of jarls and kings. Indeed two of the most respected goddesses, Sif and Frigga, are noted *spakona*.

The divinations of skilled *volva* are so accurate that even Odin himself seeks their knowledge, once using his power over the dead to interrogate a *volva* in her grave.

Spakona often dress in ritualised clothing to proclaim their abilities. The following excerpt from Egil’s Saga describes a seeress in her full regalia. Of note are the blue cloak, the colour of death and catskin mantle and gloves, the cat being sacred to Freyja.

‘She came in the evening with the man who had been sent to meet her, then she was dressed like this, so that she had a blue mantle fastened with straps, and stones were set all in the flap above; on her neck she had glass beads, a black lambskin hood on her head with white catskin inside; and she had a staff in her hand with a knob on it; it was made with brass and stones were set above in the knob; she had a belt of touch-wood, and on it was a large skin pouch, and there she kept safe her talismans which she needed to get knowledge. She had on her feet shaggy calfskin shoes with long thongs and large knobs on the ends of those. She had on her hands catskin gloves, and they were white inside and shaggy.’

Divination can be a powerful tool to uncover hidden secrets, know what is happening elsewhere and foretell forthcoming events.

How to Handle Divinations

*‘It is time to speak as a thule, on the thule’s seat, at the Well of Wyrd;
I saw and was silent, I saw and thought, I listened to the speech of folk;
I heard deeming of runes, and they were not silent of redeg,
at the halls of the High One, in the halls of the High One, thus I heard tell’*

— Havamal

The power to see things which 'have, are and will' happen, can have a profound effect on a campaign.

Visions of the past or present are well within the Games Master's ability to control, releasing enough tidbits of information so as to give a spakona, or her petitioners, a valuable insight towards solving their difficulties.

Unfortunately, prophesying the future in roleplaying games is somewhat impractical. After all, the Game Master is not omnipotent and the randomness of dice rolls (or capricious players) can invalidate the simplest prediction.

Whilst Games Masters can use a prophecy as the dramatic basis for a scenario, or indeed an entire campaign; it can become problematic if the power to prophesise is left in the hands of an Adventurer. Probably the simplest way of dealing with prophecy is to keep spakona as minor background figures and never allowing Adventurers to play to a seer or seeress.

However, to help those who wish high levels of doom ridden divination, the Spa skill has been designed to shift the onus of creating prophecies from the Game Master to the player and expands its versatility so that it can be used for insights as well as to set a foretelling in place.

Once a prophecy has been made, there are several methods of handling its prediction in a campaign:

- **Railroad:** Since a person's wyrd is fixed within the web of fate, the Norns have already decreed what he must do and suffer. Upholding Viking superstition and fatalism, a Games Master is fully justified in warping campaign events to fulfil a prophecy. Strange quirks of fate are the tools the Norns use to ensure everyone abides by their foretold path.
- **Self-fulfilling:** Perhaps the most difficult type of foretelling to enact, it requires a careful game of psychological second guessing and manipulation of player actions. In effect the Games Master presents a prophecy that comes true *because* of what the Adventurers do to *avoid* it. This type of foretelling can be excellent if pulled off, the players realising that they caused the outcome themselves.
- **Loose Interpretation:** Prophecies that are worded very loosely, using *kennings* to further muddy the waters, can be left to their own devices. If done well, a mystical foretelling can be so open to interpretation that a Games Master can justify the eventual outcome in any way they like!
- **Temporary Sidestep:** Although even the gods themselves are bound upon the web of fate, Adventurers can have their doom or prophecy placed on a hiatus whilst they continue their life adventuring. Orvar-Odd's Saga is a case in point. Fated to die by his own horse the hero slays it and buries the body seemingly avoiding his doom. However, years later he passes back by the grave and disturbs the horse skull he finds there. A viper darts out giving him a fatal bite thus finally completing his wyrd.

Spa (Pow+Int)

Spa is an Advanced skill used to divine knowledge. With it an Adventurer can see the past, present or future, allowing them to make prophecies or gain insights into the fate of a person, family, tribe or nation. Such divinations cannot be resisted by any means since the *orlog* of every person is open to those with the power to read it.

The Spa skill is used in the following manner:

- The diviner should decide whether they wish to reveal the past, present or future.
- The diviner must know the subjects of the oracular ritual personally, or lacking such a relationship must be given or own an item of personal significance to those being divined, a blooded shirt or family icon for example. Distance has no effect on the divination.
- Preparation for the divination requires an hour of meditation, chanting or sleep per Magic Point invested into it.
- However the ritual is performed, the result of a divination usually takes the form of a vision or dream.
- It is the Games Master who rolls against the Spa skill to see if the divination attempt worked.

The Games Master should never reveal the actual roll, since in some cases the vision may turn out to be completely false. The effect of the roll depends on the level of success:

- A critical success provides a clear vision unequivocally answering the original questions or showing what will happen.
- A normal success gives veiled but truthful results, partially answering the questions with symbolic allusions or showing a limited version of what will happen.
- A failure results in a clouded vision providing no answers, or the sense that the Norns have hidden the wyrd for some reason. If the failure is a foretelling, this may undermine the reputation of the diviner.
- A fumble appears to be a critical success but grants false information, which will ultimately turn and harm the questioner – not the seer themselves, unless the seer was the originator of the enquiry.

Divining the Past: The diviner may reveal the past deeds of an individual or group. One question may be asked per Magic Point invested in the ritual.

Seeing the Present: The diviner may determine the current status of a person or group. This ritual costs one Magic Point per piece of information to be revealed, such as the location, health, wealth, emotion, fears, loves, hatreds, present activity and so on.

Foretelling the Future: The diviner may predict the fate awaiting the subjects. Quite literally the *player* chooses what will happen to the persons so affected by the prophecy. The Magic Point cost can vary dramatically depending on the orlog desired. Build up

the cost by selecting an option from each of the duration, reach and consequence tables and multiply the values together.

Time Frame of the Prophecy

Magic Points	Time Frame
0	Prophecy will occur in the lifetime or existence of the subject.
1	Prophecy will occur within a year.
2	Prophecy will occur within a month.
3	Prophecy will occur within a week.

Reach of the Prophecy

Magic Points	Reach
1	Prophecy will affect a single person.
2	Prophecy will affect a family or small group.
3	Prophecy will affect an entire clan, town or settlement.
4	Prophecy will affect an entire nation or race.
5	Prophecy will affect the entire world.

Consequence of the Prophecy

Magic Points	Effect
7	Auspicious Occurrence – Become a jarl or king, inherit great wealth, gain a legendary item, win a major battle, survive combats un-maimed.
5	Fortunate Occurrence – Join the household of a jarl or king, make a good marriage, win a minor battle, become the owner of land or ships, ignore a serious wound.
3	Beneficial Occurrence – Win a duel, survive next battle, sail the seas without sinking, improve your personal wealth, gain an ally.
1	Neutral Occurrence – Gain a contact, see a natural disaster, talk to a hero, travel to a remote place, find a long lost relative.
3	Adverse Occurrence – Lose some personal wealth, have weapon break in hand, be beaten by a rival, fall overboard, horse goes lame.
5	Baleful Occurrence – Lose land or property, succumb to a serious wound, defeated by an enemy, become sick, ship sinks, mount or livestock dies, family member dies, armour sunders, raided by pillagers.
7	Disastrous Occurrence – Lose kingdom, become maimed, suffers a fire and burn down, entire family killed, lose next battle, fleet sinks, declared outlaw, closest ally becomes enemy.

Once a prophecy has been divined, it can never be overturned or superseded by later prophecies. Additionally, until the prophecy has been completed, the Magic Points invested in the foretelling remain tied up, unable to recover. Thus using a prophecy to

destroy an enemy or promote a companion can weaken the seer for a significant period of time.

A successful prophesy might guarantee a result but the conclusion must still be earned by the Adventurer's own efforts, else the glory of the climax may fall to another, turn out to be a short term boon, or simply be converted into a failed foreseeing.

For example, foretelling that a close friend will become the King of Norway but making no attempt to engage in politics or raise an army to support the prophecy, may result in the Adventurer receiving the title of King in his absence – only to immediately lose the position to an ambitious family rival who was present with his huskarls.

The Spa skill can never be used by the diviner to influence or enquire about their own fate. Attempting to do so always ends in failure.

Shamanistic Magic

'The two brothers had but left the roadstead, when close beside their ship, up rose a walrus. Kormak hurled at it a pole-staff, which struck the beast, so that it sank again: but the men aboard thought that they knew its eyes for the eyes of Thorveig the witch. That walrus came up no more, but of Thorveig it was heard that she lay sick to death; and indeed folk say that this was the end of her.'

— Kormaks Saga

Shamanism is an ancient tradition in the Scandinavian lands. The Lapp people are traditionally shamanists and many tales exist of heroes travelling to the north to learn secrets from them. In fact many Seidr practitioners also dabble in shamanism since the Viking world is full of spirits, which not only must be propitiated to ward off their displeasure but are useful sources of power.

Viking shamanism is very similar to that described in the *Legend Core Rulebook* but has a few subtle changes.

Although spirits are capable of granting boons or inflicting terrible curses, they differ in one respect from normal *Legend* spirits in that very few are capable of discorporating a victim and may only do so if the person is sleeping or unconscious. Generally this requires that they be resting in the place where the spirit resides, as Scandinavian spirits rarely venture away from their sacred landmarks or herds unless a shaman binds them to a fetish. If Spirit Combat occurs, it takes the form of a dream or nightmare.

The only spirits available to Scandinavian shaman are Guardian Spirits (Fylgjur and Disir), Nature Spirits (Landvættir) and Curse Spirits (Mara).

Ancestor Spirits are propitiated but never manifested or bound.

Elemental Spirits are available but take the form of natural events or disasters, such as a forest fire or winter storm. They can never be physically manifested as a supernatural creature or within the shaman themselves.

Viking Elemental Spirits

As a general guideline use the following tables to determine the capabilities of an Elemental Spirit of that POW. These elementals only exist as a natural event or disaster, or the intangible guardian that protects against these occurrences.

Elemental spirits are capable of either harm or protection. If facing a natural calamity of its own type, an unbound elemental spirit can reduce the severity of the event by its own strength.

Earth Spirits

The following effects are cumulative. For instance if a POW 22 earth spirit causes three separate effects that victims must resist; falling over, being struck by terror and suffering physical damage.

POW	Extent	Manifestation
1D6+6	1m diameter	Localised ground tremor that requires unopposed Athletics rolls to remain standing.
1D6+12	10m diameter	Violent ground shakes that require an unopposed Persistence roll to not suffer terror as per the spell Battle Fetter.
1D6+18	100m diameter	Earthquake that causes trees to topple, buildings to collapse and boulders to roll free, requiring an unopposed Evade roll to avoid 2D6 damage to 1D3 locations.
1D6+24	1 km diameter	Minor landslide or avalanche that requires an unopposed Brawn roll to escape being trapped.
1D6+30	10 km diameter	Major landslide or avalanche that requires an unopposed Resilience roll to survive being crushed and buried.

Fire Spirits

Fire spirits manifest as wild fires, nearby vegetation or wooden surfaces breaking into flames. Once a fire has started, it often spreads beyond the control of the spirit that started it. Fire spirits are rarely used offensively. Not only are the flames likely to engulf the shaman too but will also create devastation to the environment, which will take generations to recover.

POW	Extent	Manifestation
1D6+6	1m diameter	As per Flame on the 'Fire and Heat' table in the <i>Legend Core Rulebook</i> .
1D6+12	10m diameter	As above but a Large Flame.
1D6+18	100m diameter	As above but a Small Fire.
1D6+24	1 km diameter	As above but a Large Fire.
1D6+30	10 km diameter	As above but an Inferno.

Water Spirits

Water spirits can cause flooding or create whirlpools big enough to drag ships under the surface.

POW	Extent	Manifestation
1D6+6	1m diameter	Mild current that prevents swimmers making headway unless they succeed in an unopposed Swim roll.
1D6+12	10m diameter	A riptide or vicious eddy drags swimmers under the surface unless they succeed in an unopposed Brawn roll.
1D6+18	100m diameter	Whirlpools engulf swimmers and drowns them unless they succeed in an unopposed Resilience roll.
1D6+24	1 km diameter	Tidal wave or river bore swamps and capsizes boats unless rower or helmsman succeeds in an unopposed Boating roll.
1D6+30	10 km diameter	Maelstrom that drags ships under unless the captain or helmsman succeeds in an unopposed Shiphandling roll.

Wind Spirits

Wind spirits bring changes in the weather and can modify wind strength and cloud cover.

POW	Extent	Manifestation
1D6+6	1m diameter	Raise or lower local conditions by one step on the 'Wind Strength' and 'Cloud Cover' tables in the <i>Legend Core Rulebook</i> .
1D6+12	10m diameter	Raise or lower local conditions by two steps.
1D6+18	100m diameter	Raise or lower local conditions by three steps.
1D6+24	1 km diameter	Raise or lower local conditions by four steps.
1D6+30	10 km diameter	Raise or lower local conditions by five steps.

Shamanic Fetches are handled in a different way. Scandinavian shamans focus more upon the ability to project their own souls as animals, rather than bonding with a powerful spirit ally. Upon the spirit plane the shaman always appears in his fylgjur form.

- A shaman's fetch is their *fylgjur* (see Viking Creatures page 171). The fylgjur does not have separate Characteristics but uses the shaman's own INT, POW and CHA since the fetch *is* the shaman's own soul. They are not a separate entity and the shaman gains no additional Magic Points for awakening their fetch.
- The shaman can fully control the powers of their fylgjur, such as sending it out of their body as an incorporeal spirit or in its physical form. Manifesting or sending forth their soul requires a successful test of the Shamanism skill and costs a single Magic Point.

- Similar to normal fetches, the shaman can use his fylgjur senses to see spirits, souls and magical auras, without needing to enter a trance.
- Unlike normal people, a shaman can manipulate his fetch to take on the aspect of several different creatures. Each 20% the shaman possesses in the Shamanism skill (rounding up) allows mastery of a new form. This costs a number of Improvement Rolls (as set by the Games Master); and once chosen this new animal form cannot be changed.
- Since the fylgjur is the shaman's soul, it cannot be in two places at once. Thus a shaman who sends forth their fetch lays helpless and unprotected. *'His body lay then as if sleeping or dead, but he was then a bird or animal, fish or snake, and travelled in a moment to faraway lands on his errands or those of other men'* – Ynglinga Saga

Shamanism is a very powerful art, almost without peer in the Viking world. Shamans are therefore treated with wary respect and the migratory Lapps left well alone for fear of the supernatural reprisals they can extract.

Shaman sometimes trade one-use fetishes for things needed by their tribe. These bound spirits count against the shaman's personal spirit limit until they are used, thus they are rarely granted except to tribal members or trusted friends and allies. If used by a non-shaman, the spirit performs a single service before returning to the spirit world.

Shamanism (Pow+Cha)

Shamanism is an Advanced skill used to control and communicate with the spirits. It works precisely like a combined form of the Spirit Walking and Spirit Binding skills found in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. Thus the skill can be used to:

- Enter a trance to observe or communicate with spirits.
- Send forth their fylgjur to the spirit world.
- Manifest their fylgjur as a physical creature.
- Engage in spirit combat to bind or convince spirits into fetishes.

Unlike Spirit Walking, Shamanism requires a preparatory trance lasting a number of *hours* equal to their species maximum POW minus their Characteristic POW to enter or observe the spirit world, or manifest their fylgjur. Magic Point costs remain the same.

Shape-shifting Magic

'A spell had been cast upon them, for which reason wolves' hides hung in the house overt them... Sigmundr and Sinfjotli put on the hides and were not able to come out of them, and the same power followed as before, and they also howled like wolves.'

— Volsunga Saga

Shape-shifting differs from an animalistic spirit sending, in that spirit forms are usually the fylgjur of a shaman, whereas a shape-shifter is the physical body of the user magically transformed into the animal itself. Shape-shifting requires the use of an animal skin to assume a new form. For this reason shape-shifters are known as *hamrammr* or skin-changers.

There are many shape shifting stories in the eddas and sagas, the gods themselves frequently transform their shapes to travel swiftly or hide their nature, using hawk skins or even the 'hide of a fly' for one of Loki's more amazing alterations. Fafnir's change into a dragon is another example of shape-shifting as is that of Bjorn, the father of Bodvar Bjarki, whose transformations were effected by means of a bear skin.

This form of shape-shifting has both advantages and disadvantages. On the beneficial side the shape-shifter can change form in mere moments, much faster than the fylgjur of a shaman, and does not leave a vulnerable, unconscious body behind. On the down side, mortal shape-shifters lose their sapience, retaining only a base animalistic cunning or drive and lose their ability to shift if lacking the skin of the beast to which they turn.

The best known shape-shifters are the warriors known as *berserker* (bear-shirt) and *ulfhedinn* (wolf-coat), whom use their animal-skin to induce their terrifying berserkerang. Such is the strength of their transformation that they are reputedly immune to fire and iron, although not to the teeth or talons of another shape-shifter.

Shape-shifting (Pow+Con)

Shape-shifting is an Advanced skill used to transform into the shape of a specific animal. This can be any type of natural creature native to the user's homeland and can include birds of prey or even whales!

Each incidence of the Shape-shifting skill relates to a specific creature. Thus to be able to shift into three different animals would require learning this skill three times, once for each creature.

To change into the animal form the user must possess the correct animal skin, spend a Combat Action and make a successful Skill Test.

- A critical success only costs a single Magic Point.
- A normal success costs the normal number of Magic Points.
- A failure also costs the normal number of Magic Points but the transformation fails.
- A fumble costs all of the user's remaining Magic Points and they cannot attempt to shape-shift again for a day and a night.

The cost of shape-shifting is proportional to the bulk of the form being assumed; 1 Magic Point per 3 SIZ of the creature. It costs an Adventurer nothing to return to their original form.

Since the animal shape is consistent with each transformation, an Adventurer that learns this skill should roll the STR, CON, SIZ and DEX of their animal form. If the SIZ of the beast is too large for them to transform, the Adventurer should re-roll that Characteristic or select a more reasonably sized animal.

During a successful transformation the Adventurer uses the physical Characteristics of his animal form but retains their own POW and CHA (where applicable). INT is reduced to 7, allowing the shape-shifter some cunning and an ability to recognise friend from foe.

Shape-shifters are immune to mundane harm but can be hurt by magic, ensorcelled weapons or the natural weapons of other shape-shifters. If the user suffers such damage as would be fatal if they transform back – a minor or serious wound as an animal, which would be a major wound as a human for example – then they are trapped in their animal form until they heal. This is dangerous however. Each day beyond the first a shape-shifter remains an animal, they must roll an unopposed Persistence test. Failure means that the shape-shifter loses their mind and will remain an animal.

Wondrous Items

In Scandinavian mythology, there are many wondrous items crafted by the gods and giants. By far the most skilled of all artificers however are the dwarfs. They forge the mightiest of weapons, the most beautiful of jewels and the cleverest of devices. Whilst their skill is without peer, placing their secrets beyond the grasp of Adventurers, their items may easily fall into the hands of heroes... more often or not fated to die due to the marvellous creation that has fallen within their grasp.

A few of the most famous artefacts are listed here, to give Games Masters the opportunity to make such devices available in their campaigns, or perhaps be inspired to produce their own versions.

Most of these enchanted weapons are very resilient to breaking; generally ignoring damage that does not come from another ensorcelled weapon or some mighty mythological creature, such as the corrosive blood of a troll or fire of a dragon.

Andvarinaut

The 'Andvari Gem' is a cursed ring that brings misfortune to all who hold it. Originally part of a treasure horde stolen from the dwarf Andvari by Loki as part of a weregild to pay for the accidental death of Ottar, the ring was given to Hreidmar, who was then killed by his son Fafnir out of greed. Fafnir shape-shifted into a dragon to protect the treasure but in turn was slain by Sigurd and the ring continued on a path of misery causing the death of whomever owned it.

Gazing upon Andvarinaut forces the observer to immediately make an opposed test of their Persistence against the ring's Instil Murderous Greed skill of 100%. Failure forces the victim to obtain the ring by any means necessary.

Magical Weapon Traits

A number of the following weapons have unusual powers or abilities not currently covered in the *Legend* rules. A number of new 'magical' traits have been added to represent the mythical abilities these weapons had in the sagas.

Creature Bane: The weapon was forged to kill a specific type of creature. Inflicting a wound on that species or race forces the injured creature to make an immediate opposed test of their Persistence against the attack roll. Failure results in immediate death.

Cunning Stroke: The weapon instinctively sneaks past the defences of an opponent. On a successful attack the weapon gains two free levels of the Combat Manoeuvre Bypass Parry. Thus it would reduce the size rating of a Viking Shield from Large to Small or a Viking Sword from Medium to none.

Enduring Wounds: Injuries inflicted by the weapon cannot heal naturally. The damage and any inability caused receiving it (such as unconsciousness or limb incapacitation) persists until the wounds are treated magically.

Faithful: The weapon will return to its rightful owner by whatever twisted fate necessary. Ownership can only be transferred if the current owner is defeated honourably and the sword claimed as spoils, or if he voluntarily passes it on.

Fights of Itself: The weapon can fight by itself, dancing in the air to inflict wounds on its owner's enemies. Although not wielded directly by its bearer, it has the same number of Combat Actions and uses his weapon skill to attack and defend. If the bearer is rendered unconscious or dead, the sword ceases to fight.

Keen Edged: A bladed weapon gifted with this trait can cut through armour or weapons with no apparent effort. It automatically cuts straight through any protection as if using the Bypass Armour Combat Manoeuvre. If the wielder uses the weapon to Sunder armour or weapons, then the blade also ignores the Armour Points of inanimate objects.

Never Misses: The weapon almost always hits its target, so that a failed attack roll is treated as a normal success instead, as if under the effect of the Divine Magic spell Sureshot (see page 125 of the *Legend Core Rulebook*)

Returning: If thrown or shot, the weapon returns to the hand or quiver of the user, ready to be used on his next turn.

Ægishjalmarr

The 'Helm of Awe' is the helmet of Odin, which inspires terror in his foes. All who gaze upon it must make a single opposed test of their Persistence against the Influence of the wearer. Failure results in suffering the effect of Battle Fetter for the remainder of their wearer's presence.

Brisingamen

The Brisngamen is the beautiful jewelled necklace of the goddess Freyja, who slept with each of its four dwarf creators (the Brisings) in payment for it. Disgusted by her acts Odin ordered Loki to steal the necklace and chastised Freyja for her infidelity, offering only to return it if she caused a war between two great kings.

Anyone wearing Brisngamen gains a +100% bonus to their Influence and Seduction skills.

Dainsleif

'Dain's Heirloom' is a blood thirsty sword that belonged to King Hogni. It is cursed so that each time the blade is drawn it kills a man. In combat it twists through defences and wounds made by it never heal naturally.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage		STR/		Combat	Magical	AP/
		Dice	DEX	Size	Reach			
Dainleif	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed, Impale	Cunning 2 Stroke, Enduring Wounds	12/20

'Thou hast made this offer over-late, if thou wouldst make peace: for now I have drawn Dainsleif; which the dwarves made, and which must cause a man's death every time it is bared, nor ever fails in its stroke; moreover the wound heals not if one be scratched with it'

Draupnir

'The Dripper' is the golden arm-ring of Odin, which produces eight new gold rings of equal weight on every ninth night.

Freyja's Feathered Cloak

A marvellous cloak of feathers belonging to Freyja, anyone donning the garment is instantly transformed into a falcon, able to fly great distances at speed.

The cloak grants the wearer the following skill: Shape-shifting (Falcon) 100%.

Hringhorni

Balder's mighty ship, the largest ever made, in which he and his wife Nanna were cremated after it was pushed out into the waves by the giantess Hyrrokkin.

The magic of Hringhorni is that it can carry an entire army or tribe with sufficient space for everyone aboard.

Gambanteinn

'Rod of Revenge' the dwarf forged sword of Freyr, which fights by itself and is fatal against the race of giants. The weapon was foolishly traded by Freyr to the female Jotun Gerdr as a sign of his love. Although his marriage made him happy, Freyr was eventually killed by the fire giant Surtr with his own blade.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage		STR/		Combat	Magical	AP/	
		Dice	DEX	Size	Reach				
						Manoeuvres	Traits	ENC	HP
Gambanteinn	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed, Impale	Giant Bane, Fights of Itself	2	18/20

Gjall

'Ringing Horn' is the horn, which Heimdall blows to announce portentous events. It is sounded each time the one of the gods crosses Bifrost to arrive in Asgard and wined more urgently when danger threatens. At the eve of Ragnarok Heimdall will sound to horn so loudly that all the nine worlds shall hear its tone. Heimdall normally conceals Gjall under the third root of Yggdrasil to prevent it being stolen by the giants, thus enabling them to attack Asgard without warning.

Gleipnir

'Open One' was the third of a series of magical chains used to bind Fenris. The first called Loding and the second named Dromi failed to restrain the monstrous wolf. The dwarfs forged Gleipnir from the sound of a cat's footfall, the beard of a woman, the roots of a mountain, the sinews of a bear, the breath of a fish and the spittle of a bird. The resulting binding was as thin as a ribbon but impossible to break.

Golden Hair of Sif

After Loki cut Sif's hair as a trick, the dwarf sons of Ivaldi forged new hair from strands of fine gold, which when attached to her head grew like real hair. Although lacking any significant power, the hair grants its wearer a CHA of 25.

Gram

'Wrath' was the sword of Sigmund, a gift from Odin who thrust it into the tree Barnstokk from which Sigmund drew it. Odin later shattered the blade to cause Sigmund's downfall and the fragments were later re-forged for his son Sigurd, by the dwarf Regin. To prove its worth, the blade cleaved through the anvil upon which it was forged and was used to slay the dragon Fafnir.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage STR/			Reach	Combat	Magical	ENC	AP/HP
		Dice	DEX	Size					
Gram	Double	1D10	9/7	L L		Bleed, Impale	Dragon	2	15/20
							Bane, Keen Edged		

Gullinbursti

‘Golden Bristles’ is Freyr’s magical boar made by the sons of Ivaldi. It is a deadly opponent in battle.

‘Sindri laid a pigskin in the hearth and bade Brokkur blow, and did not cease work until he took out of the hearth that which he had laid therein. But when he went out of the smithy, while the other dwarf was blowing, straightway a fly settled upon his hand and stung: yet he blew on as before, until the smith took the work out of the hearth; and it was a boar, with mane and bristles of gold. ... Then Brokkur brought forward his gifts: ... to Freyr he gave the boar, saying that it could run through air and water better than any horse, and it could never become so dark with night or gloom of the Murky Regions that there should not be sufficient light where he went, such was the glow from its mane and bristles’

Gungnir

‘Swaying One’ is the dwarf fashioned spear of Odin. Its rune carved tip is enchanted so that it never misses its mark, no matter how far away that target may be.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage STR/			Reach	Combat	Magical	ENC	AP/HP
		Dice	DEX	Size					
Gungnir	Single	1D8+1	5/5	M L		Impale	Keen	2	18/10
							Edged, Never Misses		

Hlidskjalf

The high seat of Odin set up in his hall Valaskjalf. Whomever sits in Hlidskjalf can see into all the nine worlds and nothing is hidden from their gaze no matter what shape or magic they use to hide.

The high seat provides Second Sight (as per the galdr) and adds 100% to the viewer’s Perception skill.

Jarngreipr

The iron gauntlets of Thor, which allow him to throw the hammer Mjollnir at his enemies and permit him to catch or hold glowing-hot iron – as when Geirrod threw a lump at Thor and he threw it back so hard it passed through an iron pillar and lodged

into the giant's body, killing him instantly. The magical gloves and following belt were gifts from the friendly giantess, Grid.

The iron gauntlets protect the wearer from any heat or fire damage.

Megingjord

Thor's 'Girdle of Might' that make him incredibly strong. It was the blessing of his belt that allowed him to drag up the Midgard Serpent during a fishing trip.

The magical belt doubles the user's normal strength. However, if the wearer takes time to muster their full might they can magnify their strength for a single action. Each round of delay further increments this bonus. Thus one round will triple the wearer's strength; two rounds quadruple it and so on.

Mistilteinn

The sword 'Mistletoe' is a famous man killer. In the hands of King Thrainn it slew 420 men and was buried with its lord after his death. It was recovered by a hero named Hromundr who entered the barrow and defeated the king who had risen as a draugr. The sword was later lost at sea due to witchcraft but found again in the belly of a pike fish.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage STR/			Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	Magical Traits	ENC	AP/HP
		Dice	DEX	Size					
Mistilteinn	Single	1D8	9/7	M M		Bleed, Impale	Cunning 2 Stroke, Faithful	2	12/20

Mjollnir

The 'Crusher' is Thor's famous hammer, which can slay giants or level mountains with a single blow. In addition to being a fearsome weapon, the hammer can grow or shrink depending on the desire of the wielder.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage STR/			Reach	Combat Manoeuvres	Magical Traits	AP/EN	CHP
		Dice	DEX	Size					
Gungir	Single	3D6	25/15	E M		Stun Location	Giant Bane, 2 Never Misses, Returning	2	21/20

'If he threw Mjollnir at something, it would never miss and never fly so far from his hand that it would not find its way back, and when he wanted, it would be so small that it could be carried inside his tunic.'

Naglfar

The 'Nail Ship' is the vessel constructed by the giant Naglfari to carry the giants to the final battle at Ragnarok. It is made out of the nails of the deceased, which has led to the tradition of trimming the fingernails of the deceased, to delay the eventual completion of Nagelfar.

Shoes of Light Steps

Worn by Loki, these shoes allow him to run over water or through the air as if it were solid ground.

Skidbladnir

'Covered with Pieces of Wood' is Freyr's magic ship. Constructed by the sons of the dwarf Ivaldi, the ship is capable of sailing across the seas and the skies, its sail always filling with a fair wind. It is large enough to hold all the Æsir and their horses but is collapsible and can be folded up to fit in a pocket!

Skofnung

'Gnawer' is the sword of King Hrolf Kraki, which imbued with supernatural hardness and sharpness, rings loudly whenever it bites bone (inflicts a Serious or Major Wound). In addition the injuries it gives cannot be healed until rubbed with the stone that accompanies it. The sword had two wyrds. Firstly it should not be drawn in the presence of women and secondly the sun must never shine on its hilt. Failing either will cause the blade to turn on its wielder.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage		STR/		Combat	Magical	AP/	
		Dice	DEX	Size	Reach				Manoeuvres
Skofnung	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed, Impale	Enduring Wounds, Keen Edged	2	12/20

'That's when King Hrolf rushes at him and hacked off both his buttocks, right down to the bone, with the sword Skofnung, the best of all swords to have ever been borne in all the north'.

Suttungmjadar

The mead of poetry was fermented from the blood of wise Kvasir, who was murdered by two dwarfs and his ichor mixed with honey. This magical mead was so potent the dwarves exchanged it for their lives to escape being slain by the giant Suttung. Odin later stole the mead from the giant and now guards it in Asgard, containing the three cauldrons named Odroerir, Bodn and Son. Drinking the magical mead blesses the imbiber great knowledge. It is said that Odin grants sips of this mead to skalds skilled in poetry.

Drinking a sip of *Suttungmjadar* either raises one of the imbiber's Lore skills or their Poetry skill to 100%.

Tyrfing

'Battle Fang' is an infamous blade that never misses a stroke, can cut through stone and iron and suffers no damage. Forged under duress by the dwarfs Dvalin and Durin, they cursed the blade so that it would kill a man every time it was drawn, perform three great evils and slay King Svafrlami who had forced them to make the sword.

Weapon	Handedness	Damage STR/		Combat		Magical	AP/		
		Dice	DEX	Size	Reach			Manoeuvres	EN
Tyrfing	Single	1D8	9/7	M	M	Bleed, Impale	Keen	2	15/20
							Edged,		
							Never		
							Misses		

Vidar's Invulnerable Shoes

The thick soled shoes of Vidar are formed from all the cast-off leather scraps that mortals trim from their own shoes. Invulnerable to damage they will enable Vidar to plant one foot on the lower jaw of Fenris enabling him to tear the monstrous wolf's mouth apart, thus finally killing him.

The shoes are stronger than iron and have an infinite number of Armour Points protecting the legs of the wearer.

Minor Magical Items

Many minor magical items can be created using the Rune Carving skill. A few of the following examples are items mentioned in the sagas, with suggested Galdrastafir to give them their potency.

- Fire Proof Tunic – A tunic ensorcelled with Quench Flame.
- Gloves of Healing Touch – Gloves enchanted with Heal Wound which affect what is touched, rather than who is wearing them.
- Helm of Beserkergang – A helmet engraved with the Ease Pain runes.
- Iron Proof Shirt – A reindeer-skin shirt enchanted with Ward Injury, known as *gorningstakkr* in the sagas.
- Legendary Weapon – A sword, axe or spear ensorcelled with Grant Victory or Grow Strong.
- Raven War Banner – A banner woven with many Battle Fetter runes.
- Shield of Warding – A shield graved with Deflect Arrow or Blunt Weapon.
- Wand of Dispelling – A stick or staff carved with a single use of Break Charm, which can be recharged with an appropriate investment of Magic Points.

These items could be heirlooms still in existence long after their creators have died. To determine the Magnitude of their effect, roll on the table on page 170.

1D100	Magnitude
01–20	1
21–50	2
51–70	3
71–80	4
81–88	5
89–94	6
95–98	7
99–100	8

Raven Banners

‘...the war-banner which they called “Raven”. It is said that three sisters of Hungar and Habba, the daughters of Lodbrokr, had woven that banner and completely prepared it during one single midday’s time. It also is said that in any battle where the signum was borne before them, if they were to obtain the victory one would see in the middle of the signum a living raven flying; but if they were about to be defeated, it hung straight without movement: and this always proved to be true.’

The Raven Banners were prophetic battle standards, which warriors believed in implicitly. Used by the Danes against the Anglo-Saxons, they infused the Vikings with the faith of Odin gazing down on them, ready to pluck up the bravest to be borne back to Valhalla. The Saxons on the other hand, thoroughly converted to Christianity saw the banners as pagan idols to be greatly feared.

It was the reputation of the banner’s infallible prophecies of victory, which perhaps won more battles for the Danes than their force of arms. The psychological warfare working precisely like Odin’s magical curse of battle fetter on everyone in the enemy army!

VIKING CREATURES

'We return now to tell of Gest. Towards midnight he heard a loud noise outside, and very soon there walked a huge troll-wife into the room. She carried a trough in one hand and a rather large cutlass in the other. She looked round the room as she entered, and on seeing Gest lying there she rushed at him; he started up and attacked her furiously.

They fought long together; she was the stronger but he evaded her skilfully. Everything near them and the panelling of the back wall were broken to pieces. She dragged him through the hall door out to the porch, where he resisted vigorously. She wanted to drag him out of the house, but before that was done they had broken up all the fittings of the outer door and borne them away on their shoulders. Then she strove to get to the river and among the rocks.

Gest was terribly fatigued, but there was no choice but either to brace himself or be dragged down to the rocks. All night long they struggled together, and he thought he had never met with such a monster for strength. She gripped him so tightly to herself that he could do nothing with either hand but cling to her waist.

When at last they reached a rock by the river he swung the monster round and got his right hand loose. Then he quickly seized the short sword which he was wearing, drew it and struck at the troll's right shoulder, cutting off her right arm and releasing himself. She sprang among the rocks and disappeared in the waterfall. Gest, very stiff and tired, lay long by the rock. At daylight he went home and lay down on his bed, blue and swollen all over.'

— Grettirs Saga

Mighty creatures and terrible monsters are a staple part of Viking tales. A highly superstitious people, the Vikings fear the unknown; dreading the spirits of the deep forests, of rivers and lakes and, of course, the dead. When a wild animal acts unusually it could be misinterpreted as being a shamanic fetch or a malicious shape-shifter.

Some awesome beings such as dragons exist in the eddas, together with colossal creatures birthed by the jotnar. Yet most are either humanoid or animal in form. The range of the truly fantastic is somewhat limited as the Scandinavians did not appear to have much imagination when compared to the chimerical wonders of other cultures.

This chapter is broken into three sections for ease of use.

- **Animals:** Characteristics of normal animals that can be freely encountered in historical or ‘real world’ campaigns.
- **Supernatural Creatures:** Fantastic beings that haunt the world, believed by all to exist but normally only met in fantasy campaigns.
- **Unique Monsters:** The legendary one-of-a-kind fiends that should only be faced in mythological campaigns where players are divine or semi-divine themselves.

Most of the following creatures should be used sparingly. Violent beasts do not regularly appear in waves to be slaughtered every Odinsday. Such occurrences are rare events. Bears generally avoid men, for example, but hunting down a dangerous wounded bear can make a memorable adventure.

Likewise, the *draugr* and *vettir* normally lie quiet in their graves and forests unless stirred to anger, usually from human meddling. As such they are rarely encountered. Meetings with these sorts of creatures should be very special events, both to enhance the scenario and to keep them mysterious and frightening. In fact if playing a purist historical campaign Adventurers will never be able to encounter such beings, merely the un-provable rumours of their malevolent involvement and recounts of terrified eye witness.

Mythological campaigns of course are a different matter. Being of *Æsir* or *Vanir* blood, Adventurers will be rubbing shoulders with giants on a regular basis or going off on monster hunts, which seems a popular pastime of the Norse gods.

Animals

Living in the bleak northern realms of Europe, the number and diversity of dangerous animals available to challenge Viking Adventurers is rather limited. The natural elements or men themselves are the most common foe in their sagas.

A few northern animals are described here, either due to the possibility of the creature:

- Attacking Adventurers out of hunger or anger.
- Being hunted for food or sport.
- Being used in animal fights for entertainment.

Smaller Scandinavian animals are not detailed since they pose no real threat to a hunter. These include Beavers, Ermine, Foxes, Hares, Lynx, Martins, Mink, Otters and Wolverine, most of which are hunted for their fur pelts – a valuable commodity for northern regions. Seals are also hunted, both for their skins and their meat.

The following Characteristics and skills are simply average values for a member of that species. Games Masters are free to create individual animals by rolling their Characteristics, or choosing a value within the Characteristic range. Older or more cunning animals may have better skills to reflect their experience. All of the animals described here use the *Monster Coliseum* convention of doubling Fixed INT to determine their number of Combat Actions and Strike Rank.

Fighting Quadrupeds

As a rule when four legged animals fight, the creature places its head towards its opponent. Given the size of most quadrupeds, it is difficult for a single human opponent to strike any location other than the forequarters, front legs or head of the beast. For this reason, it is suggested that when an Adventurer attacks such an animal, they roll 1D10+10 for the Hit Location. Of course, if the animal is surrounded by multiple foes, then the full range of its target locations should be available.

Aurochs

Huge forest cattle standing nearly two metres at the shoulder and weighing over a metric ton, aurochs are a giant Pleistocene species still common across Scandinavia but become rare by the end of the Viking Age. They are famed for their strength, which is why the Second Rune in the futhark is named after them. Hunting aurochs is a near suicidal pastime but very rewarding in terms of the quantity of meat provided.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	4D6+24	38	1–2	Right Hind Leg	4/12
CON	3D6+10	21	3–4	Left Hind Leg	4/12
SIZ	4D6+24	38	5–7	Hindquarters	4/13
DEX	2D6	7	8–10	Forequarters	4/14
INT	4	4	11–13	Right Front Leg	4/11
POW	3D6	11	14–16	Left Front Leg	4/11
			17–20	Head	4/12
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Tough Hide. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+2D8				
Magic Points	11		Traits: Trample		
Movement	12m				
Strike Rank	+8		Skills: Athletics 55%, Brawn 70%, Perception 60% Persistence 35%, Resilience 85%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Trample	H	T	1D6+2D8	—
Gore	L	M	1D8+2D8	As for Head

Combat Styles

Gore 60%, Trample 75%

Combat Notes

Aurochs prefer to fight by charging threats with their gore attack. If the target is knocked prone and continues to move, the aurochs will trample until the victim stops responding. A successful charge increases the Damage Bonus to 2D10. If lamed an aurochs continues to fight in place until it collapses from exhaustion.

Aurochs' horns are capable of both Sundering and Impaling and, if a foe is Impaled, the next Combat Action sees the bull aim to throw its victim with a toss of its head. If the impaled victim is conscious, he may pit either his Athletics or Acrobatics against the Brawn of the bull. If successful, he may land safely on his feet or all fours. If unsuccessful, or if unconscious, the victim suffers the equivalent to a five metre fall and lands prone.

Bear

Scandinavian bears generally leave men alone, giving settlements a wide berth. However, in early spring they awaken ravenous and are therefore dangerously unpredictable. Wounded bears often threaten humans (or their livestock) due to pain and desperate hunger. Killing a bear singlehandedly is a deed of renown; the few men who manage it wear the skin with pride.

A bear can be very fast over short distances, easily capable of running down a man but unable to maintain speed for long. Bears are also excellent climbers and can swim well.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+12	23	1–3	Right Hind Leg	3/8
CON	2D6+6	13	4–6	Left Hind Leg	3/8
SIZ	3D6+12	23	7–9	Abdomen	3/9
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	3/10
INT	5	5	13–15	Right Front Leg	3/7
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Front Leg	3/7
			19–20	Head	3/8
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Thick Fur. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D10		Traits: None		
Magic Points	11				
Movement	12m				
Strike Rank	+11		Skills: Athletics 65%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 85%, Stealth 35%, Swim 45%, Track 35%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Bite	S	T	1D8+1D10	As for Head
Claw	M	S	1D6+1D10	As for Leg

Combat Styles

Bite 75%, Claw 60%

Combat Notes

Bears rely on their fearsome claws first and foremost. Claws are capable of Sundering and a bear will try to rip through armour, or bypass it, to inflict the most damage. The claws are also used to Grip, thus allowing the creature to pull the opponent close for a bite – which can also sunder.

Bear, Polar

The largest and most aggressive species of bear known to the Vikings, polar bears live on the frozen arctic ice flows and coastline of northern Scandinavia, Russia and Greenland. It is a strictly carnivorous creature, dining primarily on seals and fish. They are sometimes hunted for their skins, which are very valuable.

Polar bears are excellent swimmers. They have little fear of humans and will often treat them as prey if they come into the bears' territory.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+21	32	1–3	Right Hind Leg	4/9
CON	2D6+6	13	4–6	Left Hind Leg	4/9
SIZ	3D6+21	32	7–9	Abdomen	4/10
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	4/11
INT	5	5	13–15	Right Front Leg	4/8
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Front Leg	4/8
			19–20	Head	4/9
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Thick Fur. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+2D6		Traits: None		
Magic Points	11				
Movement	15m				
Strike Rank	+11		Skills: Athletics 35%, Brawn 50%, Perception 60%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 90%, Stealth 45%, Swim 80%, Track 35%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Bite	M	T	1D8+2D6	As for Head
Claw	L	S	1D6+2D6	As for Leg

Combat Styles

Bite 85%, Claw 70%

Combat Notes

As per Bear.

Boar

Boars are wild, feral pigs with wiry coats, long tusks and extremely poor dispositions. They generally live in forested areas, foraging on nuts, roots, berries and fungi. Male boars are solitary for most of the year but will join herds during mating season. A herd or *sounder* is normally comprised of two or three breeding females and their litters of immature young, numbering up to 20 members. Both boars and sows will fight to protect their young, the tusk-lacking females biting instead.

Boars are ferociously territorial creatures that will attack a much larger creature without hesitation. They are also incredibly resilient to damage and do not need to make Resilience rolls against any wounds save Major Wounds.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+6	17	1–2	Right Hind Leg	2/5
CON	2D6+9	16	3–4	Left Hind Leg	2/5
SIZ	2D6+3	10	5–7	Hindquarters	2/6
DEX	3D6	11	8–10	Forequarters	2/7
INT	5	5	11–13	Right Front Leg	2/4
POW	3D6	11	14–16	Left Front Leg	2/4
			17–20	Head	2/5
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Tough Hide. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D2				
Magic Points	11		Traits: None		
Movement	8m				
Strike Rank	+11		Skills: Athletics 25%, Evade 60%, Perception 50%, Persistence 35%, Resilience 65%, Stealth 55%, Track 25%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Bite	M	T	1D4+1D2	As for Head
Tusk	M	T	1D6+1D2	As for Head

Combat Styles

Boars – Tusk 65%, Sows – Bite 60%

Combat Notes

The gore of a boar's tusks is ferocious and it can both Sunder and Impale, although it tends to use Bash as its primary Combat Manoeuvre if trying to escape a hunt.

Eagle

Eagles are the largest predatory birds in Scandinavia and prey upon creatures up to the size of full grown reindeer. A number of species are covered by these Characteristics, including White Tailed Eagles and Golden Eagles. They can also be used for large Ravens and Owls, the later possessing the Night Sight trait.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1D3+6	8	1–5	Right Wing	–/2
CON	2D3+3	7	6–10	Left Wing	–/2
SIZ	1D3+1	3	11–16	Body	–/4
DEX	3D6+18	29	17–20	Head	–/3
INT	4	4			
POW	2D6	7			

Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	–1D4
Magic Points	7
Movement	16m flying
Strike Rank	+19

Typical Armour: None

Traits: None

Skills: Evade 90%, Flying 90%, Perception 110%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 70% (100% for Owls)

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>SIZ</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Bite	S	T	1D4–1D4	As for Head
Claw	S	T	1D6–1D4	As for Body

Combat Styles

Bite 50%, Claw 70%

Combat Notes

Large birds of prey make their initial attack by diving out of the sky. Eagles gain a tremendous amount of speed when plunging from great height, increasing their Damage Bonus by two steps. Owls and Ravens do not usually dive such great distances and only increase Damage Bonus by a single step. Such aerial attacks normally strike without warning, allowing the bird to opt for the Choose Location manoeuvre, generally targeting the hindquarters of quadrupeds or the neck (head) of bipeds, using their strong talons to break the spine. Ravens lack the strength of eagle claws but have a more fearsome beak and thus swap the base damage values.

Predatory birds can sometimes be trained to attack targets that are not their normal prey. In such circumstances, they are often taught to Bash human opponents to try and knock them prone, or strike for the eyes in order to blind and cause pain and distraction. Diving attacks are considered charges, often forcing a target without a shield to rely on Evade to avoid being pecked or scratched.

Elk

One of the most common food sources for Scandinavian hunters, as well as a number of large carnivores, elk are a wary but dangerous species. Standing over two metres tall at the shoulder, a full grown elk generally only weighs half of what an average aurochs does. They dwell mostly in the depths of forests and swamps feeding on ground vegetation and small branches. Normally peaceful creatures they avoid contact with humans, moving with remarkable stealth.

The natural predators of elk are normally wolf packs or bears, from which they will run. If cornered they will turn and attack hunters, their hoofs as well as the impressive antlers of bull stags proving to be deadly.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+9	20	1–2	Right Hind Leg	1/8
CON	3D6	11	3–4	Left Hind Leg	1/8
SIZ	3D6+15	26	5–7	Hindquarters	1/9
DEX	2D6+6	13	8–10	Forequarters	1/10
INT	4	4	11–13	Right Front Leg	1/7
POW	3D6	11	14–16	Left Front Leg	1/7
			17–20	Head	6/8
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Hide and Horns. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D10				
Magic Points	11		Traits: None		
Movement	12m				
Strike Rank	+11		Skills: Athletics 60%, Evade 50%, Perception 65%, Persistence 35%, Resilience 65%, Stealth 75%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Antlers	L	M	1D8+1D10	As for Head
Hoofs	M	S	1D4+1D10	As for Leg

Combat Styles

Butt 70% and Kick 60%

Combat Notes

Elk normally use Bash or Stun Location to incapacitate foes, allowing them to flee from danger. They rarely try to kill, most deaths happening accidentally due the animal's size and strength.

Horse

Scandinavian horses are small and shaggy versions of their European cousins. Vikings primarily use horses for transport, as pack animals, hitched to draw sleds or riding them. Whilst not as big as normal horses, they are very tough, bred to survive poor grazing and harsh winters.

Horses are never ridden in battle, Vikings preferring to fight afoot due to the difficulty of combat from horseback.

Scandinavians enjoyed watching and gambling on animal fights. Horse fights were very popular, pitting stallions against each other in the presence of a mare in heat. Those that would not fight were goaded with horse-crooks. The Sagas often describe such contests developing into brawls between the horses' owners, over disputed results and lost bets.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+12	19	1–3	Right Hind Leg	2/8
CON	3D6+6	17	4–6	Left Hind Leg	2/8
SIZ	2D6+12	19	7–9	Abdomen	2/9
DEX	2D6+3	10	10–12	Chest	2/10
INT	4	4	13–15	Right Front Leg	2/7
POW	2D6	7	16–18	Left Front Leg	2/7
			19–20	Head	2/8
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Shaggy Hide. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	+1D6				
Magic Points	7		Traits: None		
Movement	12m				
Strike Rank	+9		Skills: Athletics 75%, Brawn 50%, Evade 40%, Perception 45%, Persistence 40%, Resilience 60%		

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Hoof	M	M	1D6+1D6	As for Leg

Combat Styles

Kick 60%

Combat Notes

Horses generally Bash their opponents. They can kick with their hind legs or rear and strike with their forelegs.

Hound

Scandinavian dogs come in two main breeds. Elghunds are trained for hunting large game such as elk or bears, whereas Buhunds are bred as herding dogs. Both are descended from wolves, cross-breed for size and strength to perform their jobs and survive winter weather conditions. The hearing and sense of smell of these dogs is acute, reflected in the Perception and Track rating.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1D6+3	7	1–2	Right Hind Leg	1/4
CON	3D6	11	3–4	Left Hind Leg	1/4
SIZ	1D6+3	7	5–7	Hindquarters	1/5
DEX	2D6+6	13	8–10	Forequarters	1/6
INT	5	5	11–13	Right Front Leg	1/3
POW	2D6	7	14–16	Left Front Leg	1/3
			17–20	Head	1/4

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Fur. No Armour Penalty
Damage Modifier	–1D4	
Magic Points	7	Traits: Night Sight
Movement	12m	
Strike Rank	+12	Skills: Athletics 65%, Evade 50%, Persistence 50%, Perception 85%, Resilience 50%, Stealth 45%, Track 85%

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Bite	S	T	1D6–1D4	As for Head

Combat Styles

Bite 50%

Combat Notes

These hunting and warding dogs are not trained to physically attack, rather they are supposed to hold quarry at bay and alert their master. If a dog is forced to enter combat, once it connects with its bite, it Grips the opponent acting as a –10% penalty to the target until forced to let go. Every Combat Action thereafter the dog may savage the location, inflicting damage without suffering any effect from possessing a negative damage modifier as it pulls and rends.

Reindeer

The most common species of deer in northern Scandinavia, reindeer are the jealously guarded animals of the Lapps, who base their nomadic lifestyle around seasonal reindeer migrations. Although noted for their impressive antlers, which grow on both sexes, hunting reindeer is normally dangerous due to the retribution of their Lapp guardians, rather than the deer themselves. The animals are sometimes semi-domesticated, often being used to draw sleds in the winter.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+6	13	1–2	Right Hind Leg	1/6
CON	3D6	11	3–4	Left Hind Leg	1/6
SIZ	3D6+6	17	5–7	Hindquarters	1/7
DEX	3D6+6	17	8–10	Forequarters	1/8
INT	4	4	11–13	Right Front Leg	1/5
POW	2D6	7	14–16	Left Front Leg	1/5
			17–20	Head	6/6

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Hide and Antlers. No Armour Penalty
Damage Modifier	+1D2	
Magic Points	7	Traits: None
Movement	12m	
Strike Rank	+13	Skills: Athletics 75%, Evade 70%, Perception 65%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 55%, Stealth 45%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Head Butt	M	S	1D6+1D2	As for Head

Combat Styles

Head Butt 50%

Combat Notes

Reindeer prefer to flee from danger, unless overwhelmed by hunger. Bull reindeer become aggressive during rut and cow reindeer will fight to protect calves. The antlers are capable of causing an Impale.

Shark

There are few dangerous sharks in Scandinavian waters, so attacks are normally a rare occurrence. One species, the Greenland shark, can reach up to seven metres in length. If brought to the surface caught in nets or attracted by the blood of a sea battle, it could be very dangerous to anyone falling into the water.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+12	23	1–3	Tail	4/8
CON	2D6+9	16	4–8	Hindbody	4/9
SIZ	3D6+12	23	9–13	Forebody	4/10
DEX	2D6+3	10	14	Right Fin	4/5
INT	2	2	15	Left Fin	4/5
POW	2D6	7	16–20	Head	4/8

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Thick Skin. No Armour Penalty.
Damage Modifier	+1D10	
Magic Points	7	Traits: None
Movement	16m	
Strike Rank	+7	Skills: Brawn 40%, Perception 75%, Persistence 40%, Resilience 60%, Swim 100%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	H	T	1D8+1D10	As for Head

Combat Styles

Bite 70%

Combat Notes

All sharks rely on their bite. Once a bite connects, the shark Grips. On the next Combat Action, the shark spins and rends; the Swim skill of the victim is reduced by half as the shark bites deeper, rips and attempts to drown its prey.

Snake

Snakes are a common motif in Scandinavian art and legend, being closely associated with dragons. When Loki was punished for his evil deeds, he was bound between three rocks, with a serpent dripping venom onto his face.

When shipwrecked on the coast of Northumbria, the famous Viking Ragnar Hairy-Brecks was captured by King Ælla and sentenced to be thrown into a pit of venomous snakes. Whilst being slowly bitten to death he legendarily sung the following song.

'It gladdens me to know that Baldr's father makes ready the benches for a banquet. Soon we shall be drinking ale from the curved horns. The champion who comes into Odin's dwelling does not lament his death. I shall not enter his hall with words of fear upon my lips. The Æsir will welcome me. Death comes without lamenting... Eager am I to depart. The Dísir summon me home, those whom Odin sends for me from the halls of the Lord of Hosts. Gladly shall I drink ale in the high-seat with the Æsir. The days of my life are ended. I laugh as I die.'

Despite their prevalence in the eddas, the only Scandinavian snake that is dangerous to man is the Adder. It can grow up to a metre in length and generally avoids contact, only biting if surprised or injured. An adder's bite is superficial unless it injects venom, which is rarely fatal but painful and can cause unpleasant sickness.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1D3	2	1-6	Tail	-/3
CON	2D6+3	10	7-14	Body	-/4
SIZ	1D3	2	15-20	Head	-/3
DEX	3D6+18	29			
INT	3	3			
POW	1D6	4			

Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour: None
Damage Modifier	-1D8	
Magic Points	4	Traits: Excellent Swimmer
Movement	6m	
Strike Rank	+18	Skills: Athletics 65%, Evade 70%, Persistence 45%, Resilience 35%, Stealth 95%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	S	T	None	As for Head

Combat Styles

Bite 65%

Combat Notes

Adders usually try to escape after they have bitten and do not engage in ongoing combat unless left with no choice – being tied inside a sack with a victim for example. Adder venom has the following Characteristics:

Application: Injection

Onset time: Pain immediately, nausea and vomiting after 30 minutes, loss of bowel and bladder control after 1 hour.

Duration: 1D2 days

Resistance Time: The victim must make a single Resistance roll when first bitten. Failure indicates that the series of conditions will take effect at the proper onset time.

Potency: Snake's CON x 5

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Pain, Nausea, Diarrhoea and Incontinence. The venom initially causes location bitten to be afire with pain, which gradually spreads into neighbouring regions. The victim then begins to throw up from nausea. The third condition has no in-game effect save that of embarrassment.

Antidote/Cure: A successful Healing roll will allow the victim to make a new Resistance Roll as per the Healing skill in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. Success prevents any further Conditions from taking effect.

Walrus

Huge seal-like mammals with prominent tusks and whiskers, a full grown male walrus on average weighs one and a half metric tons. Despite its fearsome tusks the creature actually feeds on shellfish and the occasional crustacean, using its extended canines for mating fights and pulling itself onto ice out of the water.

Unfortunately for the walrus it is a significant source of usable ivory, meat, skin and bone. Found in Greenland and the Svalbard Islands, it is possible for Vikings to go hunting for walrus, either by stalking them in the summer whilst they bask on beaches or during the winter, hunting them in boats.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+15	22	1–3	Tail	4/11
CON	3D6+6	17	4–8	Hindbody	4/12
SIZ	4D6+21	35	9–13	Forebody	4/13
DEX	2D6+3	10	14	Right Fin	4/6
INT	4	4	15	Left Fin	4/6
POW	3D6	11	16–20	Head	4/11
Combat Actions	2			Typical Armour: Skin and Blubber. No Armour Penalty	
Damage Modifier	+1D12				
Magic Points	11			Traits: None	
Movement	12m Swim				
Strike Rank	+10			Skills: Perception 50%, Persistence 55%, Resilience 75%, Swim 80%	

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Tusks	H	S	1D6+1D12	As for Head

Combat Styles

Tusks 70%

Combat Notes

On land a walrus rears and plunges its tusks into an opponent, sometimes impaling. However, the walrus is ungainly and cannot change engagement distance easily, so attacking a walrus with longer reach weapons often maintains the hunter's safety but normally results in the animal dragging itself into the sea and swimming away. Inuit hunters use harpoons for this reason.

In the water a walrus becomes a very dangerous foe, using its large mass to ram boats, sinking or capsizing them. Once a hunter is in the water, the walrus freely attacks; ramming the swimmer to Stun them or using their tusks to Grip the victim and drag them under. Either way the hunter normally drowns.

Whale

In Scandinavian waters can be found Minke whales, Humpback whales, Blue whales, Sperm whales, Orcas and Pilot whales. Generally the Vikings leave the bigger whales well alone, their ships being unable to withstand the irritation of a wounded leviathan. Whale hunting is done in small boats with harpoons but is very dangerous.

An alternative is to trap a pod of whales in an inlet or bay with a narrow opening. The Vikings then drive the whales ashore by chasing them in boats or firing poisoned arrows at them. One tale tells of a chieftain named Ottar in northern Norway who managed to kill 60 whales in two days with the help of five men.

Many whales eaten by Vikings are simply poor beasts, which become stranded on the shore, often provoking disputes between landowners and opportunistic gatherers as to who has the legal right to the meat, blubber and bone from the carcass.

The following Characteristics are for a small whale such as an Orca or Minke. Hunting, or being hunted, by such an animal could be an epic adventure in itself.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	4D6+30	44	1–3	Tail	6/19
CON	2D6+12	19	4–8	Hindbody	6/20
SIZ	4D6+60	74	9–13	Forebody	6/21
DEX	2D6+3	10	14	Right Fin	6/10
INT	6	6	15	Left Fin	6/10
POW	3D6	11	16–20	Head	6/19

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Thick Skin and Blubber. No Armour Penalty
Damage Modifier	+3D12	
Magic Points	11	Traits: None
Movement	14m	
Strike Rank	+11	Skills: Brawn 120%, Perception 75%, Persistence 65%, Resilience 100%, Stealth 70%, Swim 75%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	E	T	1D10+3D12	As for Head
Ram	E	T	Half Damage Bonus	As for Head

Combat Styles

Bite 70%, Ram 80%

Combat Notes

Orcas can potentially attack humans who are travelling across ice flows, using their bulk to overturn or break ice sheets. They can also grab targets standing at the water's edge on a moderately shelved beach, surging out of the water to bite, before rolling back into the waves. Orcas have frighteningly enormous mouths. They swallow most prey whole or sheer off mouth sized chunks with each bite. If bitten by an Orca, it generally does not matter what Combat Manoeuvre it uses.

Minke whales are not normally aggressive but being stabbed with a harpoon may cause the whale to turn on the boat, ramming it at speed or breaching next to the vessel to swamp it with water. Survivors of an overturned or sinking boat are left to drown.

Wolf

Wolves fight as a group. In combat, several of them target a single enemy, raising the chances that one of them will be able to get through any defence. Larger wolves of the pack will often attempt to throw an enemy off his feet with a Leaping Attack, allowing the remainder of the pack to rush in while the enemy is off balance.

Though wolves are hated by herders and farmers for their tendency to dine on livestock, they rarely attack humans. Some wolves could be driven by age or cunning to become opportunistic man-killers, giving rise to superstitious fears of the wolf being the offspring of Fenrir or the curse of a Lapp wizard.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	11	1-2	Right Hind Leg	1/5
CON	3D6+3	14	3-4	Left Hind Leg	1/5
SIZ	2D6+3	10	5-7	Hindquarters	1/6
DEX	3D6+3	14	8-10	Forequarters	1/7
INT	5	5	11-13	Right Front Leg	1/4
POW	2D6	7	14-16	Left Front Leg	1/4
			17-20	Head	1/5
Combat Actions	2		Typical Armour: Fur. No Armour Penalty		
Damage Modifier	None				
Magic Points	7		Traits: Night Sight		
Movement	10m				
Strike Rank	+12		Skills: Athletics 80%, Evade 65%, Perception 60%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 55%, Stealth 65%, Tracking 60%		

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	M	T	1D8	As for Head
Claw	M	M	1D3	As for Leg

Combat Styles

Bite 65%, Claw 50%

Combat Notes

As per Dog.

Supernatural Creatures

Viking belief of the supernatural coalesced into many strange creatures, some unique to Scandinavia, whilst others appear to be memories or legends, which travelled from other lands. What emerged from the fireside tales of dark winter nights formed the basis for much of Europe's mythological beings. It is from the Vikings we gained the elves and dwarfs, the physical revenants and such oddities as the kraken.

Unfortunately the eddas and sagas actually mention very few diverse supernatural creatures. What does exist in Viking folklore is a complex mishmash of confusing and conflicting names that makes it difficult to identify what a creature really is. For simplicity's sake, the following creatures have been gathered together under broad categories, with a list of their more common names.

- **Alfar** – Confusingly the title is used for the races of elves and dwarfs. Ljosalfar are considered elves of air and light, whereas Svartalfar are inferred to be dwarfs living below the earth. A third branch are the Dokkalfar who reside within Midgard in the hills and mounds.
- **Dísir** – A collective name for female spirits concerned with fate and fortune, specifically the Fylgja, Norns and Valkyries.
- **Draugr** – The restless and hungry dead, including *Haugbui* and *Aptrgangr*.
- **Dvergar** – These are generally thought of as the dwarfs, although some are named as, or after, elves! The dvergar Gandalf (Magic Elf) and Vindalf (Wind Elf) for example.
- **Jotnar** – Several races of giants exist; frost and rime giants (hrimthursar), fire giants (eldjotnar) and mountain giants (bergrisar).
- **Vættir** – Are the nature spirits or supernatural beings. Technically they include the Alfar, Dvergar, Jotnar, Æsir and Vanir each of which are considered specific families of *Vættir* but for the purposes of this book the *Landvættir* specifically are just spirits.

Supernatural creatures will not, of course, be encountered in historical or 'real world' campaigns, save for superstitious reference. They can appear in fantasy or mythological campaigns, where such beings freely exist.

Some of the powers and abilities described for these creatures are rather tenuous and lack specific game mechanics. This is intentional, to allow a Games Master a great deal of latitude in what such a supernatural being can do. The superstitious Vikings are often at a loss as to how to deal with such things, often seeking sorcerers to counter their powers with magic, or heroes to overcome more physical beasts with prowess. Such choices often fail, leaving a victim cursed or damned – a wyrd that could be passed onto successive generations. The moral of these tales is not to upset the spirits of the world in the first place, or make amends if you do!

Alfar

‘The Allfather has power, the alfar have skill, and the vanir knowledge’

— The Hrafnagaldr

The Alfar are the light or good elves of Viking mythology. They live in Alfheimr ruled by King Alf but occasionally roam Midgard where they sometimes sleep with humankind. The results of these unions are half-elves, gifted with the great beauty of their elf ancestry and are oft-times skilled in Seidr.

Alfar are semi-divine, linked with nature and ancestor spirits. They can cast off their physical aspects to pass through solid doors or walls. In addition they have powers of fertility and are faithful followers of Freyr. According to the Vikings there are several races of alfar, as recorded in the Prose Edda:

‘There is one place there that is called Alfheimr. People live there that are named the light elves (Ljosalfar). But the dark elves (Svartalfar) live below in earth, in caves and the dark forest and they are unlike them in appearance – and more unlike them in reality. The Light Elves are brighter than the sun in appearance, but the Dark Elves are blacker than pitch.’

Viking families often hold sacrifices to the alfar (*alfablot*), usually small offerings of food. In return the elf will sometimes perform a helpful task around the farmstead. Failing to sacrifice to them results in some malign misfortune, such as a barn burning down or stored grain to go mouldy.

An Alfr can even heal battle wounds if granted a significant sacrifice.

‘Thorvard healed but slowly; and when he could get on his feet he went to see Thordis, and asked her what was best to help his healing. ‘A hill there is,’ answered she, ‘not far away from here, where elves have their haunt. Now get you the bull that Kormak killed, and redden the outer side of the hill with its blood, and make a feast for the elves with its flesh. Then thou wilt be healed.’

The following Characteristics are for alfar in their physical form. However if they spend a Magic Point they can disincorporate, their body becoming intangible.



	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+3	10	1–3	Right Leg	–/5
CON	3D6	11	4–6	Left Leg	–/5
SIZ	2D6+3	10	7–9	Abdomen	–/6
DEX	2D6+6	13	10–12	Chest	–/7
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/4
POW	2D6+12	19	16–18	Left Arm	–/4
CHA	2D6+12	19	19–20	Head	–/5

Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour: Any
Damage Modifier	–1D2	
Magic Points	19	Traits: Life Sense, Night Sight
Movement	10m	
Strike Rank	+13	Skills: As desired by the Games Master

Magic: Alfar command spirits of the *Landvættir* and know some galdrar

As semi divine beings, alfar are effectively very skilful immortal creatures. In fantasy campaigns they rarely interact directly with humans save in response to a sacrifice (or lack of one) made to them. In such cases if the alfar is pleased it will heal someone of a major wound, rebuild a destroyed or dilapidated barn, grant twin offspring to livestock, harvest the crops and so on. An unhappy alfar will bring misfortune; souring mead, cause food to rot or livestock to become sick for example. In each of these cases the blessing or curse occurs overnight whilst witnesses are asleep. Their actual skills and magic do not need to be defined.

In mythological campaigns, alfar can become servants or loyal companions to heroic (or divine) Adventurers. Under these circumstances an alfar should be defined with skills appropriate to its position and profession. A loyal servant for instance may be less skilled in warfare but might be the equal of the Adventurers in social skills; whereas Gandalfir, the last king of the alfar may have magical and combat skills far exceeding those of the Adventurers.

Alfar are assumed to know the Shamanism skill with which they command the *Landvættir*. It is this control of nature spirits and knowledge of the Evil Eye galdr, which allows them to bless or curse their supplicants.

Disir

The *disir* are female spirits that are tied to fate or fortune. Both the Norns and Valkyries are disir but are mentioned separately in the Viking Religion chapter beginning on page 110.

Disir are usually bound to a particular clan or family. Servants of Freyja, they are fertility or ancestor spirits, which have some power to intercede with nature. When propitiated correctly the disir grant good luck. Such sacrificial ceremonies (*disablót*) are held in the autumn by the women of the household; and at the onset of winter too, the second with the family and guests attending.

New Trait: Ancestor Sense

The possessor of this trait can sense whenever a family descendant will face mortal danger. The semi-precognitive power gives enough forewarning to allow the ancestor to travel to the progeny and intervene if desired. It does not however, reveal the source of the danger or what will happen.

As tutelary beings, the disir act as guardians defending their family against malicious spirits or evil magic. They are jealous and judgemental guardians however. In one saga two brothers are directed to kill their brother by a disir and in the Saga of Olaf Tryggvason is the tale of Thidrandi, who is killed by nine disir because his family was planning to convert to Christianity!

When physically manifested disir appear as tall, proud women dressed in black, riding dark horses. They carry swords with which they can fight if necessary.

In fantasy campaigns a disir may make its presence known by shielding a pious sacrifice against some form of supernatural threat, whether a Seidr casting sorcerer or a physical monster. They may also whisper advice or guidance into the ear of a descendant. For the purposes of such games assume that a disir is normally invisible but once corporeal can only be harmed by magic or enchanted weapons.

Disir become somewhat redundant in Mythological campaigns where Adventurers may not be mortal and thus not fall under their protection. An angry disir may make excellent shield-maiden foe or companions however; perhaps even a possible wife to those worthy enough.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+6	13	1-3	Right Leg	-/6
CON	2D6+6	13	4-6	Left Leg	-/6
SIZ	2D6+6	13	7-9	Abdomen	-/7
DEX	2D6+6	13	10-12	Chest	-/8
INT	2D6+6	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/5
POW	1D6+15	19	16-18	Left Arm	-/5
CHA	2D6+6	13	19-20	Head	-/6

Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour: None
Damage Modifier	None	
Magic Points	19	Traits: Ancestor Sense, Life Sense, Night Sight
Movement	10m	
Strike Rank	+13	Skills: All common skills and sword combat at 100%

Magic: Can cast the following galdrar with no preparation time required: Bar Spirit, Battle Fetter, Blunt Weapon, Ease Pain, Instil Madness, Reflect Charm, Turn Dead and Ward Injury

Dragon

Save for the unique dragon in Beowulf, most dragons in Scandinavian legend are actually wingless serpents of great size that vomit poison rather than flame. Such creatures are described under Wyrms later in this chapter.

Draugr

‘During the first night, Aran got up from his chair and killed the hawk and hound and ate them. On the second night he got up again from his chair, and killed the horse and tore it into pieces; then he took great bites at the horse-flesh with his teeth, the blood streaming down from his mouth all the while he was eating. The third night Asmund became very drowsy, and the first thing he knew, Aran had got him by the ears and torn them off’

— Asmund’s vigil within the mound of his sword brother Aran, Gautrek’s Saga

Viking undead were known by several names. The *haugbui* is a dead body, which continues to guard its barrow from being plundered or desecrated. A *draugr* is an animated corpse that roams far and wide inflicting fear amongst those living nearby. Also known as an *aptrgangr*, an after-goer, these draugr are murderous creatures who consume the living to satisfy an unappeasable craving for life. Some draugr are the victims of drowning, returning from the seas as portents of doom.

All Scandinavian undead are corporal creatures lacking a soul. They are merely the corpse left after death, driven on by revenge or injustice. There are no such things as intangible ghosts or spectres in Viking superstition, although the body can move magically through earth and stone to exit their barrows without needing to dig their way clear. The draugr Killer-Hrapp uses this power to escape a combat in the Laxdaela Saga:

‘Then Olaf tried to rush Hrapp, but Hrapp sank into the ground where he had been standing and that was the end of their encounter’.

Draugr come in two colours, the blue-black of mottled bruises (as the goddess of the underworld) or the pale white of corpses. They can appear bloated or swollen to great size, gaining in weight as well as proportions. The body of the draugr Thorolf in the Eyrbyggja Saga grew so big and heavy it took levers to move him.

Of course with this growth comes an increase in strength and draugr often kill their victims by breaking their necks or crushing every bone in their body in tremendous bear hugs. Some draugr are invulnerable to iron until they are first defeated by hand-to-hand grappling.

The draugr of sorcerers and shaman can retain some magical powers beyond death. Notable examples are controlling the weather to prevent access to their barrows, whilst others can shape-shift into a variety of forms; generally ones with horrible mutilations such as flayed bulls or horses with no ears, tails and a broken back.

The Curse of the Walking Dead

In the Eyrbyggja Saga there is a tale about the village of Frodis-water, which soon after a portentous omen of a rain of blood, was cursed with a terrible sickness and the first to die arose as a draugr. As each person was killed by the touch of the creature, they themselves rose up afterwards as a draugr too. The following passages describe the aftermath of the death of the local shepherd...

'A little after that great hauntings befell; and on a night as Thorir Wooden-leg went out for his needs, and turned off aside from the door, when he would go in again, he saw how the shepherd was come before the door. Then would he go in again, but the shepherd would nowise have it so; and Thorir was fain to get away, but the shepherd went at him, and got hold of him, and cast him homeward up against the door. At this he was affrighted exceedingly; yet he got him to his bed, and he was by then grown coal-blue all over.

Now from this he fell sick and died, and was buried there at the church; but ever after were the twain, the shepherd and Thorir Wooden-leg, seen in company, and there from were folk full of dread, as was like to be. After Thorir's death a house-carle of Thorod fell sick, and lay there three nights or ever he died. Then one after another died, till six were dead; and by then it was hard on the Yule-fast, though at that time there was no fasting in Iceland.'

This story provides the basis for a classic zombie scenario, with a remote village cut off by winter slowly succumbing to the curse of the walking draugr!

'Then Thrain turned himself into a troll, and the barrow was filled with a horrible stench; and he stuck his claws into the back of Hromund's neck, tearing the flesh from his bones'

Destroying a draugr is often an incredibly difficult task achievable only by the strongest heroes. If invulnerable to iron the creature must first be subdued in a wrestling match. Once defeated, the draugr can be decapitated, normally using a named blade of noted quality or magical craftsmanship. Sometimes the head will try to rejoin the body, so it must be either physically blocked or stopped with some charm. Lastly the remains must be burned to ashes, which are then cast into the sea or scattered by the winds. Failure to complete every step means that the draugr will eventually raise again, no doubt to hunt down those who tried to destroy it.

'But the next morning he let bring his horse, and called his huskarls to him, and gathered men to him from the nearest steads withal; and then they fare out to Haltfoot's-head, and come to Thorolf's howe; and he was even yet unrotten, and as like to a fiend as like could be, blue as hell, and big as a bull; and when they went about the raising of him, they could in nowise stir him. So Thorod set lever-beams under him, and thereby they brought him up from the howe, and rolled him down to the seaside, and cut there a great bale, and set fire to

it, and rolled Thorolf therein and burned all up to cold coals; yet long it was or ever the fire would take on him. There was a stiff breeze, which scattered the ashes wide about as soon as the bale began to burn; but such of the ashes as they might, they cast out seaward; and so when they had made an end of the business they went home.'

— Eyrbyggja Saga

When a man dies and becomes a draugr, their STR and SIZ often increase. Re-roll those Characteristics and if higher, take the better result. The draugr loses their POW as they no longer possess a soul. Draugr wishing to use magic must first drain the life of a living creature to power the charm or summoning. CHA is re-rolled also but in this case the lower value is kept. CON, DEX and INT remain as before.

The following draugr is of moderate strength and size. More powerful examples exist but Games Masters should be careful to ensure grossly swollen draugr of huge proportions are not invulnerable to weapons, else Adventurers will find it impossible to defeat them.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	1D6+15	19	1-3	Right Leg	-/6
CON	As Before	11	4-6	Left Leg	-/6
SIZ	1D6+15	19	7-9	Abdomen	-/7
DEX	As Before	11	10-12	Chest	-/8
INT	As Before	13	13-15	Right Arm	-/5
POW	—	—	16-18	Left Arm	-/5
CHA	1D6	4	19-20	Head	-/6

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Either whatever was buried in or is invulnerable to weapons (GMs choice)
Damage Modifier	+1D6	
Magic Points	—	Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight
Movement	6m	
Strike Rank	+12	Skills: As Before

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Unarmed	S	T	1D3+1D6	As for Arm

Combat Styles

Unarmed 80% (or higher if a skilled wrestler before death)

Combat Notes

Somewhat slow and seemingly uncaring of weapons, draugr prefer to engage in close combat, using Grip to catch hold of their prey before crushing or strangling them. Due to their near invulnerability, or perhaps seeking a permanent death, they concentrate on attacking rather than defending, so that they never bother to defend themselves.

Grave Robbing

The presence of great wealth within the burial mounds of early Vikings attracted the attention of grave-robbers, both historically and in the literary record, such as the tale of Grettirs Saga.

'Grettir began to break open the mound, and worked hard without stopping until he reached the rafters, late in the afternoon. Then he tore them up. Audun did his best to discourage him from entering the mound. Grettir told him to watch the rope, 'for I am going to find out what inhabits the barrow.' Then Grettir went inside the mound. Inside it was dark, and the air not very sweet'

Grave-robbers had to be careful for *haugbui* were jealous guardians of their treasures, slaying those who would disturb the sanctity of their barrows.

'Grettir took all the treasure and carried it towards the rope, but as he was making his way through the barrow he was seized fast by someone. He let go of the treasure and turned to attack, and they set on each other mercilessly, so that everything in their way was thrown out of place. The mound-dweller attacked vigorously, and for a while Grettir had to give way, but finally he realized that this was not a good time to spare himself. Then they both fought desperately, and moved towards the horse bones, where they had a fierce struggle for a long time. Now the one and now the other was forced to his knees, but in the end the mound-dweller fell backwards, and there was a great crash. Then Audun ran away from the rope, thinking that Grettir must be dead.'

Beyond their awesome physical strength some *haugbui* also used magic to help defend their burial place against looters. Agnarr in Gold-Thorir's Saga sends dreams to his potential looter, encouraging him to despoil a different howe. The draugr sorcerer Mithothyn uses foul plagues (disease spirits) to defend his grave house.

Dvergar

The *dvergar*, also known as *svartalfar* or dwarfs, are small folk, originally created by the gods from the maggots that had crawled through the flesh of slain Ymir. *Dvergar* are smiths and craftsmen without match. Masters of secret knowledge they crafted the greatest treasures of the gods, Freyja's necklace, Thor's hammer, Sif's hair, Freyr's ship and many others.

Fearing sunlight, which turns them to stone, the *dvergar* live in *Svartalfheimr*, which reputedly lies beneath Midgard's surface and hoard their gold and jewels. Their avarice, cunning and maliciousness are legendary. Two dwarf brothers deliberately murdered Kvasir and brewed the mead of poetry (*Odhroerir*) from his blood. They sometimes steal women and children, seemingly because there are no female *svartalfar* to comfort them.

Dvergar are skilled in magic, particularly the runes. They never pass on their knowledge however, save to teach an occasional mortal the true art of smithing. If tricked, dvergar often place terrible curses on items that they were forced to make or riches are stolen from them, causing great harm to those who later own such treasures.

Although often grudging, ill tempered and untrustworthy, the dvergar can be loyal friends to men who treat them well.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+9	16	1–3	Right Leg	–/5
CON	2D6+9	16	4–6	Left Leg	–/5
SIZ	1D6+3	7	7–9	Abdomen	–/6
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	–/7
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/4
POW	2D6+6	13	16–18	Left Arm	–/4
CHA	2D6	7	19–20	Head	–/5

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Any
Damage Modifier	None	
Magic Points	13	Traits: Earth Sense, Dark Sight
Movement	6m	
Strike Rank	+12	Skills: As desired by the Games Master

Magic: Dvergar are masters of Rune Carving

Like their brethren the Alfar, Dvergar vary in skill and magical ability according to the style of campaign. As craftsmen however, the dvergar are peerless and should exceed well beyond 100%.

Fylgjur

The Vikings believe that everyone has a guardian spirit called a *fylgjur*, to help ward that person from harm. The *fylgjur* is part of the soul, which manifests in the shape of an animal. Normally this spirit only becomes visible when the person is asleep and its form is influenced by the personality of the person being guarded. The *fylgja* of brave men are fearless animals such as boars or bulls, those of crafty men might be foxes, whilst the guardian of a fearful person might be a timid hare or bird.

Traditionally it is polite to follow a guest outside when seeing them through the door, granting their *fylgja* a chance to catch up and not be caught inside. *Fylgjur* can alert their ward to danger, be it a looming accident or waiting enemy, in several ways. As an unseen spirit sometimes they bang on a nearby door or wall to draw notice to an approaching or hidden threat. At other times, the *fylgja* takes animal form and ventures from the sleeping person, passing on visions of what they see in the form of dreams.

Famous Dwarfs

- Alvis: Promised Thor's daughter for his wife in exchange for forging weapons for the Æsir but was tricked by Thor and turned into stone.
- Andvari: Cursed his treasure hoard stolen by Loki to pay the blood fine for Otr's death.
- Otr: A shape-shifter who delighted taking the form of an otter but was accidentally slain by Loki.
- Brokk and Sindri: Two brothers, who fashioned the spear Gungnir, hammer Mjollnir, ship Skidbladnir, ring Draupnir, Sif's golden Hair and the boar Gullinbur.
- Durin: Second in command of the dwarfs, who with the aid of Dvalin helped forge the sword Tyrting.
- Dvalin: The father of the dwarfs, who taught his descendents the power of runes.
- Fjalar: With his brother, Galar, he killed Kvasir and made the mead of poetry from his blood.
- Ivaldi: The sons of Ivaldi 'The Mighty' were Brokk and Sindri.
- Lit: The misfortunate dvergar cremated with Balder and Nanna.
- Modsognir: Chief of the dvergar.
- Nordri, Austri, Sudri and Vestri: the four dwarves, chosen by the gods to protect the four ends of the sky.
- Althjof: The 'Mighty Thief' maker and stealer of the sword Naglhring.
- Dvalin, Alfrig, Berling and Grer were the creators of the necklace Brisingamen.

Seeing one's own fylgja is a sign that doom is close at hand, since that part of their soul has detached itself in preparation for death.

Fylgjur can also be quite dangerous in their own right. Whilst manifested as an animal the spirit can interact as that beast, physically harming those it perceives as threats. An example from Hrolfr Kraki's Saga is Bodvar Bjarki, who falls asleep under a tree before a battle during which his fylgjar manifests in its bear form to aid his king.

'Hjorvardr and his men saw that a great bear went before the men of King Hrolfr, nearest to where the king was; he slew more men with his paws than five other warriors of the king; hewing- and shot-weapons bounced off him, and he broke under him both men and horses of the host of King Hjorvardr and all which neared him he crushed with his teeth, so that ill murmuring came into the host of King Hjorvardr... ..then the bear vanished away from the host, and the battle grew very heavy.'

Fylgjur are, for the purposes of *Legend* game mechanics, the 'fetch' of every Adventurer, whether or not they are shamanists. When viewed with some form of second sight or mystic vision, each person's fylgjur is revealed, allowing the viewer an insight into the personality and current temperament of those before them.



Unless an Adventurer is a full shaman who has mastered his fetch, players have no direct control over when their fylgjur acts or what it does. It is merely the form that they take in spirit combat; and a tool with which a Games Master might allow some supernatural intervention to aid the Adventurers.

For the expenditure of a Hero Point, an Adventurer can invoke his fylgjur to either:

- Grant an immediate premonition of imminent peril, hidden or not.
- Whilst sleeping, experience a dream revelation of nearby nefarious deeds.
- Manifest as an animal to physically aid its unconscious ward.

A shaman, fully awakened to the powers of his fylgjur fetch can command these abilities at will.

No Characteristics are given for fylgjur, since each one has its own distinct form. A table of example animals is provided though to randomly generate the animal. If desired, the Games Master can choose a fitting creature, which matches the personality of an Adventurer, or better still, allow the other players to vote on what they think is most suitable!

The STR, CON, SIZ and DEX of the animal are always those of an average creature of that species. However, its INT, POW and CHA (where appropriate) are those of the Adventurer. Fylgjur are normally immune to mundane harm but can be hurt by magic or ensorcelled weapons. Any damage inflicted on a physically manifested spirit harms the Adventurer also. Thus a critically injured fylgjur can cause the death of its host.

Fylgjur A

Dice Rolls 1D20	1D6	
	1-3	4-6
1	Aurochs	Maggie
2	Bear	Martin
3	Beaver	Mink
4	Boar	Mouse
5	Bull	Otter
6	Cat	Owl
7	Eagle	Raven
8	Eel	Reindeer
9	Elk	Salmon
10	Ermine	Sea Gull
11	Fox	Seal
12	Frog	Shark
13	Goat	Sheep
14	Hare	Snake
15	Hawk	Squirrel
16	Heron	Swan
17	Horse	Walrus
18	Hound	Whale
19	Lemming	Wolf
20	Lynx	Wolverine

Jotnar

The jotnar are the giants of Viking mythology. There are many different types of jotnar but they share the one simple aspect – they are all big or huge. Many of the Æsir are married to giantesses or are the children of them. Odin, Thor, Tyr, Heimdallr and Loki all have giant blood running in their veins, despite the fact that giants were viewed as the traditional enemies of the gods. Some giants maintained a close friendship with the Æsir seeking peace between their peoples.

Hrimthursar are the rime and frost giants. They originally lived in Niflheimr but almost all were drowned in the blood of Ymir when he was slain. From the survivors were descended the new races of giants, which spread across the worlds. Hrimthursar sometimes lure travellers in the cold, charming them with soft words so that they fall asleep and freeze.

Eldjotnar are the fire giants, who wait patiently in the realm of Muspelheimr for the day of Ragnarok. They are ruled by Surtr their lord who will slay Freyr in the final battle and destroy the world. Eldjotnar are rarely seen outside their volcanic lands.

Bergrisar are the mountain giants. They also live in Jotenheimr, literally Giantland. Utgard is the most prestigious stead of Jotunheimr, a mighty hall or citadel ruled by Utgardloki. The Bergrisar lack the cold or heat of their brethren but still possess great strength and often give birth to monstrous offspring, such as the wolves of Jarnvidr (Ironwood).

Despite a reputation for being dim-witted, not all giants are slow of thought. Mimir was a particularly wise giant who helped Odin on the path to wisdom. The giant was so sagacious that after his death, Odin kept Mimir's decapitated head to ask it questions. Utgardloki was particularly clever, managing to outwit even Loki himself.

Although the eddas and sagas relate tales of primordial giants of colossal size, the following giant Characteristics remain modest. In *Legend* a huge giant is near unbeatable, so to preserve game balance and instil some common sense in terms of Æsir-Jotnar marriages, these giants are more modestly scaled. This enables even normal humans the chance to defeat a giant in combat; a truly heroic deed.

Important or primordial jotun can be given more STR and SIZ to reflect their importance. Jotun chieftains should use 2D6+6 for intelligence to reflect their cunning.



	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6+12	23	1–3	Right Leg	1/8
CON	1D6+12	16	4–6	Left Leg	1/8
SIZ	3D6+12	23	7–9	Abdomen	1/9
DEX	3D6	11	10–12	Chest	1/10
INT	1D6+6	10	13–15	Right Arm	1/7
POW	3D6	11	16–18	Left Arm	1/7
CHA	3D6	11	19–20	Head	1/8

Combat Actions	2	Typical Armour: Thick Skin
Damage Modifier	+1D10	
Magic Points	11	Traits: None
Movement	12m	
Strike Rank	+11	Skills: As desired by the Games Master. Most skills are between 50-100%. Resilience is always a minimum of CON x 5.

Magic: Jotnar rarely use magic save for the occasional shape-shifting

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Reach</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>AP/HP</i>
Unarmed	L	M	1D6+1D10	As for relevant limb
Giant 1H Sword	H	L	1D12+1D10	6/12
Giant 2H Maul	E	VL	3D6+1D10	4/15
Thrown Boulder	E	—	2D6+1D10	—

Combat Styles

Weapon 70%, Unarmed 80% – tougher giants are more skilled.

Combat Notes

Jotnar weapons are bigger than human versions in terms of Size and Reach, inflicting more damage. Giants normally try to use Bypass Parry or Damage Weapon against an enemy's shield, to allow their crushing blows to land unimpeded. Another favourite technique is to use Bash in order to keep from getting swamped by multiple opponents. When throwing rocks, the missiles tend to Stun Location due to their inherent mass, in addition to any manoeuvre chosen by the giant.

Magic Notes

Fire giants are immune to cold and can control the weather in their realm to summon blizzards, call forth icy winds or invoke a freezing cold. Anyone caught outside shelter during these conditions loses a level of fatigue for each hour of exposure unless they can make an opposed Resilience test against the Giant's Persistence.

Fire giants likewise are immune to heat and can immolate themselves at will. At the start of each *round*, those in close proximity must succeed in an opposed test of their Resilience against the Giant's Persistence, or take 1D4 points of fire damage to all Hit Locations.

Those giants who live in the oceans, at the bottom of lakes or behind waterfalls can breathe water without harm. Sea jotnar in particular can control the weather upon the ocean. The maximum wind strength a giant can raise (or calm) is equal to his or her Persistence skill value.

Famous Giants

- Angroboda: Loki's lover and mother of Fenrir, Jormungand and Hel.
- Baugi: Brother of Sutting. He employed Odin, disguised as Bolverk, to reap his fields.
- Bergelmir: The only giant to escape the flood of Ymir's blood at the creation.
- Elli: Old age in the form of an ancient giantess who wrestled with Thor in Utgardloki's court.
- Farbauti: Loki's father.
- Fjolsvid: Guardian of Menglad's hall.
- Geirrod: Attempts to kill Thor in a duel.
- Gilling: Giant who, with his wife is killed by the dwarfs Fjalar and Galar.
- Gjalp and Greip: Geirrod's daughters who tried to kill Thor by drowning him in menstrual blood and then by crushing him against the rafters. Killed by Thor.
- Grid: Odin's mistress who loaned Thor her magic belt, gloves and staff for his fight with Geirrod.
- Gunnlod: Sutting's daughter who guarded the mead of poetry but was tricked and seduced by Odin.
- Hraesvelg: Creates the wind whilst disguised as an eagle.
- Hugi: 'Thought' an illusory giant who defeated Thialfi in a running race.
- Hymir: Owner of a giant cauldron that was taken from him by Thor.
- Hyndla: Discloses Ottar's ancestors to him while he is disguised as a boar.
- Hyrrokin: The puller of Balder's burial boat to the sea.
- Jarnsaxa: Thor's mistress and mother of Magni and Modi.
- Logi: Fire in the form of a giant who defeated Loki in an eating contest at Utgardloki's hall.
- Narvi: Father of night.
- Surt: Lord of Muspell and the fire giants, who will set the nine worlds alight at Ragnarok.
- Sutting: Son of Gilling and temporary owner of the mead of poetry.
- Thiaz: Abducted Idun and her golden apples but was slain by the gods for his deed.
- Thokk: The bitter giantess who prevented Balder's return from Hel.
- Thrym: Lord of the frost giants who stole Thor's hammer and was then killed for it.
- Utgardloki: Ruler of Utgard and a master of illusion, disguised himself as Skrymir to lure Thor and friend to his hall.
- Vafthrudnir: Was slain after being tricked into a knowledge contest with Odin.
- Ymir: The first giant whose corpse made the nine worlds.

Kraken

Although technically never named directly in any of the sagas, save as the sea creatures *hafgufa* and *lyngbaker*, the Kraken is a Norse monster of the late Viking period. They are giant squid, which cause mighty whirlpools that can sink ships. After storms or the naturally occurring maelstroms off the Icelandic and Norwegian coast, their bodies are sometimes washed to the surface.

The following kraken is a 20 metre long monster worthy to set upon a Viking longship. The two main tentacles are 15 metres long, whereas the lesser 'arms' are only five metres in length. Each limb is lined with suckers inside of which are viciously sharp hooks. At the base of the tentacles and arms is the feeding mouth, a large beak capable of shredding prey before it is swallowed.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+12	19	1-3	Body	3/15
CON	2D6+12	26	4	Head	3/14
SIZ	4D6+24	38	5	Arm 1	3/7
DEX	2D6+18	25	6	Arm 2	3/7
INT	6	6	7	Arm 3	3/7
POW	2D6+6	13	8	Arm 4	3/7
			9	Arm 5	3/7
			10	Arm 6	3/7
			11	Arm 7	3/7
			12	Arm 8	3/7
			13-16	Tentacle 1	3/13
			17-20	Tentacle 2	3/13

Combat Actions 4 Typical Armour: Thick gelatinous skin. No Armour Penalty

Damage Modifier +1D12

Magic Points 13

Movement 12m

Strike Rank +19

Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight

Skills: Perception 65%, Persistence 55%, Resilience 80%, Stealth 70%, Swim 100%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Tentacle Lash	L	VL	1D6+1D6	As for Tentacle
Arm Crush	H	VL	1D3+1D12	As for Tentacle

Combat Styles

Tentacles 75%

Combat Notes

Kraken normally attack with their two long tentacles, plucking up small prey, which is passed to the eight shorter 'arms' around its beak. Any attack by a tentacle or arm automatically gains the Grip manoeuvre in addition to any others won in combat.

Unless driven to a berserk fury a kraken usually attacks stealthily; plucking several victims from a ship to fill its stomach and retreating under the waves. If the kraken is upset with the ship itself, it will grasp the vessel and create a whirlpool to drag the entire ship under in 1D6+1 rounds.

Landvættir

Landvættir are the spirits of the land who control its fertility and fortune. They can live in the wilderness, residing in oddly shaped boulders, pretty pools or waterfalls; or they reside on farmsteads, looking after the running and protection of the stead.

Huldra

Wilderness nature spirits have a myriad of different names and titles. Collectively known as the Huldra Folk they encompass many of the stone, water or forest spirits such as *bergbui* (rock dweller), *Sjora* (water spirit) or *skogsfru* (forest nymph). A huldra can be of either gender.

Their powers are many and varied but normally they leave people well alone unless someone profanes their sacred location or they seek sexual gratification. Those who satisfy their desires are rewarded but those who fail to perform are often killed. However some huldra, like the Nykr, are naturally malicious seeking only to kill those who wander close enough to ensnare.

A huldra is normally an intangible spirit but can manifest a physical form of great beauty, which has a hidden animal or plant-like feature of some sort that can only be seen from behind; bark like skin on their back or a cow, fox or fish's tail for example. Although a manifested landvættir may be physically harmed, killing the body does not destroy the spirit, which may reform the following day suitably angered by the experience. To defeat or drive off the spirit requires magic or the protection of a shaman.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+12	19	1–3	Right Leg	–/4
CON	2D6+3	10	4–6	Left Leg	–/4
SIZ	2D6+3	10	7–9	Abdomen	–/5
DEX	2D6+6	13	10–12	Chest	–/6
INT	2D6+6	13	13–15	Right Arm	–/3
POW	1D6+18	22	16–18	Left Arm	–/3
CHA	1D6+18	22	19–20	Head	–/4

Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	+1D2
Magic Points	22
Movement	12m
Strike Rank	+13

Typical Armour: None

Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight, Recurring

Skills: Perception 80%, Persistence 75%, Resilience 60%, Seduction 85%, Stealth 90%

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Unarmed	S	T	1D3+1D2	As for Arm

Combat Styles

Spectral Combat 100%, Unarmed 75%

Combat Notes

A huldra is normally tied to a physical location – a rock, tree or pool – which is their home. From this place they can command the lesser Nature spirits residing in their domain. The physical form of the huldra must emerge from or dissipate into the object to which they are naturally tied. They cannot venture more than a quarter of their POW in kilometres away from their home.

Although physically strong, they are only moderately dangerous in combat unless they attack from surprise, often using their ability to shape-shift or seduce to bring a victim into intimate range. They either use their strength to strangle, or as in the case of Nykr, drag foes into rivers or pools of water to drown them.

Huldra cannot Discorporate an enemy but must battle them physically. However, they can summon and direct local Nature Spirits, which can be done automatically with the expenditure of a Magic Point.

Tomte or Nisse

Tomte are spirits that live on steadings, helping to look after the running of the farm. When manifested they take the form of diminutive, elderly men with full beards, dressed in woollen clothing and wearing a dyed woollen hood or cap. They are rarely seen however, only coming out when people sleep or using magic to remove themselves from notice. Despite their small size, rarely growing above waist height, they are ferociously strong, capable of performing superhuman feats of labour.

Although the tomte were generally beneficent spirits, they could become violent or even malicious if not kept appeased. A minor offence might result in the spirit boxing the offender's ears, whereas a catastrophic insult could cause the spirit to burn down a barn or kill all the livestock.

The way to insult a tomte could be any of the following:

- Changing the way the farm is run.
- Swearing or urinating in his presence.
- Failing to set a place for the spirit at the table.
- Playing loud music when it wants to sleep.
- Maltreating the animals on the farm.
- Forgetting to sacrifice food to it at the customary *blot*.

Conversely, a tomte will repay acts of kindness and respect, greatly reducing the work necessary to run the farmstead. Not only do they engage in physical labour but they also act to protect the stead and its family. For example, they drive away evil spirits or wake the occupants if an unnoticed fire breaks out.

For Characteristics and abilities, treat Tomte as Alfar; save that their STR is 2D6+18 and SIZ is 1D6+3. In addition tomte know the galdr magic of Remain Unseen.

Mara

A *mara* is an evil nightmare that ‘rides’ a human or animal as they sleep. They are considered the ill-intentioned sendings of seid-witches or Lapp shaman, who wish to punish or even kill a victim.

Mara are formless terrors, which enter a home through cracks in windows, knot-holes in wooden walls or even smoke holes in a roof. Although disincorporate, their presence can be sensed by the faint whispering noises of their passage. Once reaching the person they sought, they attack from the Spirit World, leaping atop and slowly crushing them as if under a great weight.

Externally the sleeping victim begins to slowly writhe and sweat, groaning from the assault but unable to move a limb to escape. The dreamer however, sees some dark presence resting upon their chest in a shadowy semblance of some sort of animal.

‘Drifa prevailed upon Huld by gifts that she should conjure Vanlandi back to Finland or else kill him. At the time when she exercised her seidr, Vanlandi was at Uppsala. Then he became eager to go to Finland; but his friends and counsellors prevented him from doing so, saying that most likely it was the witchcraft of the Finns which caused his longing. Then a drowsiness came over him and he lay down to sleep. But he had hardly gone to sleep when he called out, saying that a mara rode him. His men went to him and wanted to help him. But when they took hold of his head the mara trod on his legs so they nearly broke; and when they seized his feet it pressed down on his head so that he died.’

— Ynglinga Saga

In *Vikings of Legend* mara are considered to be the fylgjur of sorcerers skilled in shamanism, sent to possess the victim. The appearance of the mara depends on the animal soul of the sender. Spirit Combat can only occur when the target sleeps but once initiated the victim perceives their Magic Point loss as the gradually increasing weight of the thing on their chest.

If possession is successful, the fylgjur can either plague the victim with terrible dreams thought up by the sorcerer, or it can simply dissipate the soul of the victim, killing them.

Nyke

Nyke are malevolent spirits that adopt the forms of beautiful horses, which lure riders onto their backs. Once mounted the nyke then plunges into the nearby pool or river to drown the rider, who remains affixed to the horse. The only chance of survival is to

perform magical preparations before meeting the creature, refuse to be seduced into touching or mounting it, or attempt to kill the Nyke's physical form before drowning!

Nyke usually demand to be propitiated with human sacrifices or they begin to feast on those children living nearby. For Characteristics, see Huldra on page 205. Nyke in addition know the galdr magic of Hold Fast.

Orm

An orm or wurm is a serpentine, legless Scandinavian dragon. Although they lack the fiery breath of their continental cousins, ormar are possessed of terrible venom, which poisons and asphyxiates those who press too close.

The race of ormar is twofold. Those which live in the ocean deeps, sired by great Jormungand, are called sea serpents. Those that make their lairs in the barrows of old kings are known as dragons and are often winged. Few orm involve themselves with human folk. They are content to sleep upon beds of gold or lie in the depths wrapped around the wrecks of silver filled ships. They stir infrequently to eat but when they do their hunger is terrible.

These Characteristics can be used for either sea serpents or Scandinavian dragons. Sea serpents should treat any blow to the wings as a hit to the Body instead. A new hatched orm is three metres long and has a base STR and SIZ of 2D6 and scales worth two Armour Points. For every three metres of growth beyond that it gains two additional points of armour and a +6 bonus to its STR and SIZ.

The following orm is a modest specimen only 12 metres long, a suitable challenge for a great hero.

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D6+18	25	1-8	Tail	8/10
CON	2D6+12	19	9	Right Wing	8/5
SIZ	2D6+18	25	10	Left Wing	8/5
DEX	2D6+12	19	11-16	Body	8/11
INT	2D6+6	13	17-20	Head	8/9
POW	2D6+6	13			
CHA	2D6+6	13			

Combat Actions	3	Typical Armour: Scales
Damage Modifier	+1D10	
Magic Points	13	Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight
Movement	12m	
Strike Rank	+16	Skills: Flying 100%, Perception 100%, Persistence 80%, Resilience 80%, Stealth 75%



Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	H	L	1D8+1D10+Poison	As for Head
Tail	H	VL	1D6+1D10	As for Tail

Combat Styles

Bite 100%, Tail Bash 80%

Combat Notes

A crafty and cunning fighter, wyrms strike from positions of personal advantage. An orm in its lair will place itself to prevent being outflanked, such as at the end of the narrow entrance tunnel where only one foe can attack at a time. If caught or lured outside, a winged orm will take to the air, relying on its scales and aerial agility to protect it from arrows, whilst it scythes down enemies with its tail.

Sea serpents tend to wait in ambush underwater before trying to pluck a man off the deck. Gargantuan serpents might instead try to engulf the entire ship, crushing it in their coils. In such a case, each round use the tail attack to inflict constriction damage against the vessel's Construction Points, remembering to use the Hull to reduce damage first.

Ormar use their tails in preference to their heads, trying to knock opponents prone before biting them. Unless faced by weapons that can cause it significant damage, the creature does not bother to defend itself, only using its Combat Actions to attack.

Orm Venom

Application: Contact/Inhaled

Onset time: Asphyxiation immediately, necrosis occurs only if bitten.

Duration: 1D10 minutes

Resistance Time: The victim must make a single Resistance roll when first breathed upon. Failure indicates that the victim starts to suffer asphyxiation. Each bite requires an immediate Resistance roll to see if the accumulating necrosis effect is resisted.

Potency: Orm's CON x 5

Resistance: Resilience

Conditions: Asphyxiation, Necrosis. The dripping venom sublimates into a choking cloud, which gradually asphyxiates those in the Orm's immediate vicinity. Each bite however will accumulate necrotic damage to that location – 1 HP of permanent damage per failed save.

Antidote/Cure: A suffocating victim who staggers clear of the poisonous miasma into clean air will recover from the asphyxiation in 1D6 minutes. A victim who collapses within the cloud will die if not rescued and resuscitated. A successful Healing roll used to treat the necrosis will allow that location to heal naturally. Failure means the flesh is permanently destroyed. Only one attempt can be made per location.

Troll

Surprisingly the word Troll and its associated monster concept do not actually exist in the Viking period. However, for those who would sorely miss the ubiquitous troll, assume that they are a type of man eating ogre which dwell in watery places, such as deep fjords or behind waterfalls. Use the Characteristics of a jotun, give them water breathing and make them immune to weapons unless rendered incapacitated first by the use of wrestling – as per Draugr.

Were-creatures

Almost all monstrous were-creatures are either shape-shifters who have forgotten their humanity, or poor fools who have donned a cursed shape-shifting skin that they cannot remove. (Willing shape-shifters are handled using the Shape-shifting skill in the Magic chapter.)

Unlike the traditional lycanthrope of European legend, an accursed Scandinavian shape-shifter does not change his form back and forth according to the moon. They are either under a cyclical curse of the enchanted skin, every evening or every ninth day for example; or they are permanently trapped in the animal shape, only returning to human form when killed.

It was his custom to get up early and go about men's business or where there was smith-work...But every day when evening came, then he became peevish, so that few men could speak with him; he was prone to sleep in the evenings. That was said among folk, that he was greatly hamrammr; he was called Evening Wolf'

— Egils Saga

Unwillingly trapped within a different form, most folk become semi-sapient monsters, driven by impotent rage or a lust for killing, victims of the animalistic passions they have adopted. This often places them at odds with local inhabitants, especially if the beast develops a taste for livestock or human blood.

Due to the natural invulnerabilities they gain in their cursed shape, were-creatures can be very dangerous foes.

To generate the Characteristics of a were-creature, simply use the average STR, CON, SIZ and DEX values for that type of animal and make them immune to mundane damage.

Unique Creatures

The following creatures are legendary beings from Viking mythology. These include some of the terrible monsters destined to kill the gods at Ragnarok. To save space, rather than repeating Characteristics for creatures which may never be used, a guideline is provided to allow Games Masters to quickly stat out each one.

Legendary creatures possess these traits:

- Maximum values for their Characteristics.
- An additional 10 AP added to their natural Armour Points.
- A raised intellect, 7 for herbivores, 2D6+6 for carnivores.
- Carnivores can communicate with speech.
- The Size, Reach and Damage Dice of natural weapons, all raised by one step.

Although this list only includes famous creatures from the eddas, there is nothing preventing a Games Master from generating his own unique monsters, which can be found wondering the nine worlds.

Audumla

The primeval first cow of gargantuan size, born from the ice of Ginnungagap. Her milk fed Ymir, the first of the giants, and his offspring. The great cow fed on the salty rime surrounding Ymir, eventually freeing Buri from the ice. Audumla still grazes the inhospitable places of the nine worlds, licking ice and searching for salt. The maximised Characteristics of Audumla are of an auroch of triple STR and SIZ.

Fafnir

Originally a dwarf, the son of Hreidmar and brother to Regin and Ottr. When the cursed ring Andvarinaut was used to pay the wergild for his Ottr's death, Fafnir killed his father for the ransom and assumed the form of a dragon to better guard his treasure. Regin, also seeking ownership of the hoard reforged the sword Gram for the hero Sigurd, who slew Fafnir with it. The blood of Fafnir allows the drinker to understand the speech of birds and eating his heart grants an increase in strength. Fafnir is a traditional Dragon as described on page 64 of the *Monsters of Legend*.

Grendel

Grendel was a terrible man eating creature of iron claws and great strength, who haunted Heorot, the hall of the Danish king Hrothgar. Grendel kept to the darkness and lived in an underwater cave with his mother, an even more fearsome monster. Both were protected from harm by her spells, so that no warrior could harm him until the hero Beowulf arrived and possessing his own superhuman strength, ripped off Grendel's arm whilst wrestling. The following night Grendel's mother came to the hall to extract murderous revenge, forcing Beowulf to follow her back and swim down to the subterranean lair. Finding her hide to be protected by sorcery too, he wrestled once again before slaying her with a mighty blade found in the cave. Her severed head took four men to carry back to Heorot. Grendel and his mother can be modelled as trolls, as described in the previous section.

Fenrir

One of the three monstrous offspring of Loki and the giantess Angerboda, Fenrir had the form of a wolf. He was kept at Asgardr with the Æsir who grew slowly more frightened of him as he grew to gigantic proportions. The gods tried to trick Fenrir with a game where they bound him in chains. The monstrous wolf agreed to play, confident in his great strength. Twice they bound him and twice he shattered the links with ease. The third time however, they used a magical rope made by the dwarfs. Fenrir, suspicious of the binding, only agreed to be bound if someone placed their hand in his mouth as a guarantee that he would be released afterwards. Of all the gods only Tyr was courageous enough, so when the wolf was unable to break Gleipnir, his hand was bitten off. The gods took Fenrir and tied him to a great boulder (Gjoll) and drove it deep into the earth. Then, to make sure, they covered that rock with another huge boulder (Thviti). To gag Fenrir's howls of rage, they shoved a sword into his mouth so that the hilt was in its lower jaw and the point in the upper, which only made him howl more horribly. Fenrir is fated to kill Odin at Ragnarok. The maximised Characteristics of Fenrir are of a wolf of triple STR and SIZ.

Garm

The very hound of Hel, Garm is a guard-dog of enormous size and savagery. He was chained outside the cave Gniphellir, guarding the entrance to Niflhel. Whilst the hound has no particular enmity against the Æsir, it is fated to break its chain and die whilst slaying Tyr. The maximised Characteristics of Garm are of a hound of quadruple STR and SIZ.

Jormungand

Another of the three monstrous offspring of Loki and the giantess Angerboda, Jormungand was cast out of Asgardr by Odin and the wyrm landed in the ocean where it began to grow to titanic proportions. Thereafter it was known as the Midgardormr, or the Midgard Serpent. The serpent became a personal foe of Thor who met the creature twice, once in a test of strength when it was disguised by Utgardloki as a cat. The second on a fishing trip with Hymir, when Thor caught Jormungand and began to pull it up into the boat but the terrified giant cut the line before Thor could kill the wyrm with Mjollnir. Jormungand is fated to be slain by Thor at Ragnarok but the thunder god will be overcome by the serpent's venom. The father of all wyrms, large enough to encircle the world, is beyond the scope of even the gods themselves, so no characteristics are provided.

Nidhogg

The dragon that gnawed at the roots of Yggdrasil, Nidhogg laired near the Hvergelmir, one of three sacred wells. Nidhogg was also supposed to chew on the bodies of evil doers consigned to Nastrond the bleak beach full of serpent skin and awash with venom. The dragon feuds constantly with the great eagle, which rests at the crown of Yggdrasil, their insulting banter to one another carried back and forth by the squirrel Ratatosk. The maximised Characteristics of Nidhogg are of a dragon of double STR and SIZ.

Skoll and Hati

The giant wolves that pursued the sun and the moon, Skoll and Hati were among the warg descendants of the giantesses known as the Jarnvidur. When Skoll and Hati catch the two gods, it will herald in the Fimbulwinter, plunging the nine worlds into frozen misery. The maximised Characteristics of Skoll and Hati are of wolves of double STR and SIZ.

Lesser Legendary Creatures

Name	Description	Animal to Use ¹
Alsvið and Arvak	The horses that pull the sun.	Double sized horses
Fjalar	The cockerel who will crow to warn the giants that Ragnarok has arrived.	Double sized eagle
Gullinbursti	Freyr's golden boar that glows and can fly.	Triple sized boar
Gullinkambi	Cockerall who wakes the Einherjar and warns the gods that Ragnarok has arrived.	Double sized eagle
Gullfaxi	The giant Hrungrnir's horse.	Triple sized horse with triple the movement rate
Heidrun	Goat that supplies mead for the Einherjar.	Equivalent to a double sized elk
Himinhrjot	The giant Hymir's giant Ox.	Double sized aurochs
Hrimfaxi	Night's horse.	Double sized horse
Huginn and Munin	Odin's ravens.	Double sized eagles
Ratatosk	The squirrel that runs up Yggdrasil's trunk and carries insults to the eagle in its branches.	Equivalent to a double sized hound
Skinfaxi	Day's horse.	Double sized horse
Sleipnir	Eight legged horse owned by Odin. Sired by Svadilfari, the stallion and carried by Loki.	Double sized horse with five times the movement rate
Svadrilfari	Stallion that helped to rebuild the walls of Asgard. Sired Sleipnir.	Triple sized horse
Tanngnost and Tanngrisni	The two goats that pull Thor's chariot, who can be eaten and are reborn each morning.	Equivalent to double sized reindeer
Wargs	The numerous wolf offspring of the giantesses of Jarnvidur.	Double sized wolves (rolled not maximised)

¹ The descriptor *Double* or *Triple Sized* refers to the STR and SIZ Characteristics. The remainder remain intact save for the guidelines defined for legendary creatures.

VIKING CAMPAIGNS

*Cattle die, kindred die,
Every man is mortal:
But I know one thing that never dies,
The glory of the great dead*

— Havamal

Designing a Viking Campaign

As illustrated in the earlier chapters, the Viking Age is a blend of tradition, superstition, honour and treachery. The fluid mobility of social status, wealth and outlawry present fantastic opportunities for a Game Master to raise his Adventurers from obscurity as slaves or poor karls to becoming kings, just like Olaf Trygvesson, who, freed from slavery in Russia, experienced many adventures as a warrior, then a raider, before ruling over Norway! Or perhaps even the other way around, the Adventurers being the sons of a jarl who is overthrown and killed, spurring his sons to seek a lifelong quest for revenge. Socially in the Viking Age nothing is impossible because at the time, nothing was.

The Viking genre caters to every taste. It lauds heroism, integrity and honour. Yet it breeds ruthless ambition, calculated treachery and blood feuds. The combination of these apparent dichotomies is what gives the Viking sagas their raw feeling, where men are killed almost casually for the most minor of quibbles but a man can be rewarded or elevated for demonstrating bravery and honour in the face of death.

Roleplaying games set in the Viking Age possess the potential for an incredibly diverse range of events. Scenarios can include such things as discovering new lands, being exiled, corrupt law cases, slave uprisings, open murder, dangerous sea voyages, religious intolerance, supernatural creatures, family feuding, looting and pillaging foreign cities, war – the scope is near limitless! A good campaign will mix these differing occurrences together; keeping a couple as the core thread that draws the Adventurers along, whilst others can provide exciting diversions.

Before creating a Viking campaign, the Games Master should think carefully about the following issues. Each will have a significant bearing on how games are run, from cultural roleplaying to Adventurer survivability and thus the enjoyment that players will gain from it.

Family

Of the greatest importance to any Viking is their family. Although the father was the head of the household, his authority was not absolute; the mother often owning a great deal of influence in her own right. Sons and daughters are expected to respect their parents but once reaching the age of majority are not legally required to do so.

Thus there is a degree of social freedom within any family but only so far. A daughter who engages in an unapproved relationship before marriage may well find her lover slain for his disrespectful behaviour, whereas a son who angers his father too much might be disowned, kicked off the farmstead and left to find his own way in life.

Beyond the authority of the parents was the importance of kinship. In a society where law cases are decided by pseudo-democratic consensus, it is wise to keep on friendly terms with your brothers and sisters so as to draw upon the votes of their families' men folk. The number and reputation of your brothers, uncles and sons also has bearing on those who wish to declare a blood feud against you – the larger your extended family, the more intimidating the retribution your relatives might enact.

In general, family members are highly prized. Unless outlawed or disowned, your family will always provide you with a place to stay and food to eat, with the unspoken agreement that, if your fortune changes, you will return the generosity. A family member who reaches high station, perhaps becoming a chieftain or jarl, is expected to use nepotism to elevate the fortunes of his relations, granting them boats or lands of their own. Similarly, since at this time Scandinavia has no banks or professional money lenders, if you need to purchase something or pay off a weregild, then it is your family who combined their resources to help you out.

Wealth

Unlike some high fantasy games, the wealth of Adventurers is of considerably less importance in the Viking World. Since hospitality is freely given and there are very few available sources of equipment or possessions save for what you make for yourself, the need for ready money is undermined. A ship full of silver has no use when there is very little to spend it on.

Wealth is not really measured in how much jewellery or hack-silver you have squirreled away in a hole in the ground. Buried money can be stolen or will eventually run out. True wealth is land, legally free-held land beyond the reach of jarls and kings. A productive steading is the only thing guaranteed to provide a man and his family a means of independently supporting themselves. A freehold however is so valuable that it is rare to find anyone willing to exchange it, even for a shiplot of beaver furs.

Expensive goods and the profits from raiding still have some value however. Gifts are a standard way of showing friendship and improving one's own reputation and when the yearly market arrives some of it can be bartered for more useful items such as fancy clothes or new weapons. For those with a lust for adventuring, their accumulated

wealth could be used to pay for a ship to be built, fund an overseas expedition to find new lands (with an eye to becoming a landowner themselves), or raise an army of mercenaries to make war.

Thus wealth is not really an important objective to the average Viking. Land or rank is far more valuable.

Retribution and Blood Feud

A famous quote once said 'An armed society is a polite society'. Unfortunately during the Viking Age the opposite consequences occur. Since every free man has the right to bear weapons and is on the guard for any insult to his honour, fights are all too common. These resulted in frequent maiming and death, even when fought without weapons. Most of the Icelandic sagas are tragic tales of death and retribution, often leading to the eradication of entire families.

An interesting aspect of the Viking world is their attitude to this violence. Although killing per se was not a criminal act, the way you killed someone affected the punishments levied at the *thing* if you were brought to court over it. Accidental deaths, such as crimes of passion or negligence, were fined by compensation. Weregild however, could be refused, precipitating a vendetta between the killer and the dead man's family and friends.

A Viking who secretly assassinates another man is someone to be despised; those found guilty of it are often outlawed for life and all their possessions confiscated. Open murder is a different matter entirely. Any man who feels his personal honour has been irrevocably insulted by the deeds of another has the right to seek retribution. Normally a formal declaration of intent is made against the insulter, messengers sent to his family to give fair warning that his life is now under threat. Killing a man after declaring your intention was only punishable by temporary exile for up to three years.

Being outlawed is supposed to prevent the escalation of deaths, which accompany blood feuds. Unfortunately, those sentenced as outlaws are often pursued overseas by vengeance seekers and some feuds result in the loss of multiple generations of family members.

Games Masters with players who like to run particularly violent or belligerent Adventurers will find a Viking campaign well suited to the pursuit and indeed come-uppance, of causal violence.

Law and Order

The Vikings lack any form of police force. Social stability is maintained by convention, common sense and the law courts at the annual *thing*. With no dedicated law enforcers, most men have to protect their own property against theft, pillage or blood feud. This is why family and friends are so important. Acting dishonestly against one man of a community may cause the ostracism of the 'criminal' by other members of his society.

Since the law applies to all and the law is defined and voted upon by the common people, the majority of Viking folk are protected against the misuse of authority by their elected rulers. That is not to say that cases of bribery or intimidation are unknown but a godi, landsmann or jarl who fails to act with fairness to protect people from crime or unjust suffering soon finds themselves kicked out of office.

A man being persecuted or cheated can appeal to the local chieftain for aid. This help, if committed, is usually achieved by the ruler having a quiet word with the perpetrator to stop. Few relish the threat of a blood feud breaking out, since it destabilises a region and causes much destruction.

However, even the godi or chieftain have little direct power to directly intervene, as there are no provisions in law for a standing body of men to act as peace enforcers. The richest land owners might have a large number of house karls who can double as warriors but these are normally used to run their own steads. In addition, the concepts of arrest or imprisonment are alien to the Vikings.

If a fleet of raiders is spotted, a local chieftain or godi might be able to request the loan of men from the surrounding farmsteads to form a levy in order to protect the region. Such cooperative acts are necessary for group survival but are still voluntary. The concept of a professional standing army do not exist throughout the entire Viking Age, men have to be called to war from their farms at the *request* of the local jarl or king.

Combat

Combat in *Vikings of Legend* is very dangerous. There are few sources of magical healing and being permanently maimed is an ever present threat. Most Adventurers have to heal naturally, which can take weeks or even months to recover. Several guidelines should be used to ensure that players are not rolling up new Adventurers every week.

Frequency: Although most roleplaying games emphasise combat encounters to provide dramatic tension, a Games Master should understand that frequent combat is not sustainable. In a historical campaign wounds are persistent, so combat encounters should be paced to account for this. A Viking does not actually face combat that frequently, indeed most never draw their weapons for years at a time.

Combat should be saved for the climax of scenarios, at the end of an adventurous voyage to raid a monastery for example, or a duel at the conclusion of a blood feud. If running an epic quest away from the relative security of a farmstead, then give the Adventurers plenty of rest between violent encounters. After all, travelling takes a considerable time and plenty of other types of challenge can interpose during a scenario.

Intent: Another consideration of portraying realism is that fights need not end with killing. The *Legend* rules allow opponents to be defeated without unnecessary bloodshed. Defeat should not mean instant death. In many sagas a duel often ends with both antagonists becoming great friends, impressed with each other's prowess and

courage. In battle injured men are often left alive or offered surrender, permitted to live in exchange for their possessions or oaths. Games Masters should lead by example, capturing the Adventurers and seeking ransom for them or perhaps selling them into slavery. A live warrior is far more valuable than a dead one. With that in mind, the Combat Manoeuvres of Disarm, Trip or Damage Weapon can be used in preference to more lethal options.

Consequences: Simply slaying everyone who you fight with will eventually end up with an Adventurer being hunted by a veritable army of kinsfolk seeking revenge. Unnecessary killing often earns an Adventurer a less than popular reputation, which may cost him friends or allies. Likewise, Adventurers that fight too often may end up being maimed. This should be taken as a chance to roleplay, rather than the ruination of the Adventurer and Games Masters are encouraged to emphasise the reputations of warriors with peg legs, single eyes or one hand – after all Tyr the god of victory only had one hand too!

Pragmatism: Adventurers who are facing overwhelming odds are at liberty to disengage from a fight. Fleeing from battle often occurs in the sagas with no significant loss of reputation. Players should learn to judge their fights carefully and stack odds in their favour, rather than blindly leaping into the fire. If they do flee, then let them go. Unless they are raging berserks, most folks shy away from needless slaughter.

Opposition: The competence of the opposition in *Legend* is an important balancing act. Comparative skill is more important than the amount of armour worn. Games Masters who desire frequent combat should scale their foes' skills at between 20–30% lower than the Adventurers. This should provide a reasonably exciting combat in favour of the players but still retaining the chance of mishap.

Armour: Wearing armour is important if an Adventurer is planning to fight. Even a basic quilted byrnie can save a limb from being severed into 'just' a fracture.

Politics

Viking politics are focussed upon two aspects of society; the *thing* and personal ambition. Both are normally minor aspects of daily life unless a Games Master specifically plans his campaign to develop them.

The assembly at the *thing* often debates law changes, which can have special importance to Adventurers. For example, an Adventurer who favours settling his problems via duelling, may become worried if a request is raised by one of his enemies at the *thing* to make holmganga illegal and subject to fines. Another example could be if the regional jarl requests a law change that allows him to confiscate all ships for his personal use if he deems a sea-borne threat is likely, threatening the Adventurer's own vessel.

Since legislation must be voted upon by free men, it might fall upon the Adventurers to gather personal support so that such proposals never pass the vote to be entered

into law. Scenarios based on law changes may reveal massive corruption, bribery by interested parties or even intimidation tactics by rulers.

Personal ambition also calls for Adventurers to gather influence but this time to be elected into the office of godi, jarl or king. Since these are not inherited posts and rely upon the continual support of the people to retain, an Adventurer ruler may soon find themselves torn between the different issues which affect his partisans and allies, continually horse trading to maintain his authority.

Great fun can be had by using these assemblies and elections to make the Adventurers' lives hell, their adversaries using the law itself as a weapon against them. Of course a Games Master should take care not to alienate his players but simply wind up the tension of the campaign. Using politics to bring down a long term enemy, who uses the law or their position to remain beyond reach, can be an exquisitely satisfying experience for those who normally solve their problems with a blade.

Religion

Whilst there are very few game rules in *Vikings of Legend* to support religion as a source of magic, religion itself is still very important. Save for a few fanatics, Scandinavians are universally polytheistic and continue to worship pagan deities until after the end of the Viking Age.

A great deal of social conflict occurs between the Christian church and the pagan common folk. Although many of the trade settlements seem open to religious adoption and tolerance, the hinterlands are very resistant to the introduction of the 'White Christ' of the new faith.

Why this conflict occurs is an interesting question upon which a Games Master can base an entire campaign. Is the concept of resurrection distasteful to a warrior ethos whose pinnacle of achievement is to be taken to Valhalla? Or does baptism sever the link between a person and the pagan spirits, causing misfortune and crop failure?

Of course the conflict need not be a philosophical or magical one. Historically the adoption of Christianity was primarily driven by the kings, who saw within the church a way of unifying their countries, using religious law to enforce social conformity and pacification. In such a campaign, religion is merely the concealing face of a more nefarious political agenda.

The period of rule under Olaf Haraldsson in Norway was a particularly bloody one. In his struggle to continue the spread of Christianity, he threatened those unwilling to be baptised with the loss of their lives, their limbs and their property, burning shrines and icons of the old gods. Eventually in revenge for his excesses and authoritarianism his chieftains deserted him, giving their allegiance to Cnut and Olaf died in battle against his own people.

Magic and Monsters

Throughout the book the terms Historical, Fantasy and Mythic have been used to describe different types of campaign.

Historical campaigns generally refer to a type of game where magic is merely superstition, does not work and no supernatural creatures exist. Conversely, a fantasy campaign is one where magic and supernatural do exist. A mythic campaign not only allows magic but transports the Adventurers into the realms of divine beings.

A Games Master should carefully consider whether magic in their campaign is really magical, or simply trickery and psychology. For most forms of magic, save for Shape-shifting and Shamanism, the rules work essentially the same but the actual truth behind how it functions can be kept nebulous since there are few provably visible effects, only psychological ones. Remember that everyone in the Viking Age was intensely superstitious. People believe in the supernatural, even if it is complete mummery.

Of course, magic can be completely ignored by those wishing to run an enlightened historical game. But Games Masters are encouraged to squeeze as much prophecy, witchcraft, rune carving and shamanism as they can into their scenarios, even if they are outside of their Adventurer's abilities, since it builds up a vivid image of the Viking world as written in the sagas.

Likewise supernatural creatures need to be considered, because without many of the most interesting Scandinavian creatures, such as the draugr or huldra, a Games Master will be limited to using just men and animals as his foes. This need not be a detriment. A campaign based on the Rus expansion towards Byzantium can easily be run without such monsters, with bears, nomad archers and byzantine politics taking over as the main points of excitement.

Climate and Disasters

Life in the northlands is not easy. A bad summer followed by a worse winter can lead to starvation if not properly prepared for. The climate in northern Scandinavia is extremely tough, subzero temperatures in the -30° 's and a metre of snow for most of the winter can cut off farmsteads for weeks, granting some interesting possibilities for survival adventures. In the more mountainous fjords, avalanches are possible, although more people die from falling through thin ice when fishing or travelling along the open roads of frozen rivers.

When the spring comes rivers become raging torrents, lakes rise and forests flood becoming boggy and difficult to cross. Summer, especially in the north, becomes a living hell as mosquitoes hatch in vast numbers, their bites aggravating animals so badly that reindeer and elk flee to the top of hills to avoid the maddening plague. Viking settlers have no such option and suffer several miserable months being bitten to distraction.

Whilst the climate in the north is tough, the Vikings suffer less in the way of natural disasters. Off the Norwegian, British and Icelandic coasts great storms often occur,

making sailing at some times of the year exceptionally dangerous. Iceland itself infrequently suffers volcanic eruptions, the soot, ash and poisonous gases sometimes killing people and livestock.

Other than that, few cataclysms occur. There are no significant earthquakes, plagues bother them rarely and fires when they happen are limited to a single stead.

Like all epic disaster movies, a little goes a long way. Climatic difficulties should be used sparingly but when they do occur, they should provide a dangerous challenge. If the Games Master wishes a volcanic eruption, it should be a one off event.

Period

The period in which a campaign is set is an important consideration if the Games Master is planning to run a historical game. Political events can provide a backdrop or even a framework for scenarios. To find a period that will provide inspiration, Games Masters are encouraged to look at the timeline provided in the Viking Age chapter.

Of course a decision should be made on whether history can be changed in the game. If history is inviolate, it makes it difficult for Adventurers to achieve fame in their own right and forces the Game Master to keep key historical figures sacrosanct until certain events occur. Of course, Adventurers can still work behind the scenes to cause history to turn out the way it does, or alternately the players could unknowingly take the parts of real historic personages!

Without inviolate history, Adventurers can derail the timeline completely by their actions. This allows players the freedom to act without unnecessary constraint. In some ways this can be a very enjoyable option since you can then generate the future as desired and keep the more historically knowledgeable players guessing!

Using Sagas as Sources

One of the best things a Game Master can do before running any Viking campaign is to dip into the plethora of Scandinavian eddas and sagas. Most are available free on the internet to read, conveniently broken down into their component stories.

Most of the sagas are reasonably short and save for the odd piece of archaic language (due to many of them being translations nearly a century old) they are easy to read. Most are highly entertaining reads too, full of insults, treachery, strange magic and plenty of gruesomely described fighting scenes. Many of the quotes in this book have been taken directly from these stories.

'Then ran up a fellow of Thorir's and smote at Uspak, but he thrust forth his axe, and the blow took the shaft thereof and struck it asunder, and down fell the axe. Then cried out Uspak, and bade his men flee away, and himself fell to running; but as soon as Thorir arose, he cast his bill at Uspak and smote him on the thigh, and cut through it on the outer side of

the bone. Uspak drew the bill from the wound and cast it back, and it smote the man in the midst who had erst cut at Uspak, and down he fell dead to the earth.'

The benefits of reading a saga or two before running a Viking campaign are priceless. Not only do you gain a feel for the atmosphere and culture of their society but the brutal combats were originally inspirations for the *Legend* combat rules themselves. In fact a Games Master could simply take the plot of something like Egil's Saga or Grettir's Saga and use as is, with no work necessary for Non-Player Characters, locations or (where applicable) magic and monsters. An entire campaign written out for you!

Some recommended sagas are:

- Arrow Odd's Saga – A tale full of every type of magic, enchanted items, Lapps, giants and battles – even a description of an enemy getting his face ripped off! This rip-roaring adventure also has a classic example of wyrd, when Orvar-Odd succumbs to his fate he cleverly tries to avoid.
- Beowulf – Although this is an anglo-saxon story, it concerns the Scandinavian hero fighting Grendel and its mother in Denmark, followed by Beowulf's climatic battle against the dragon back in Gotland. An example of heroism and virtues important to Viking culture.
- Egil's Saga – The violent struggle between a warrior-poet-rune carver and king Eirik Blood-Axe and his witch wife Gunnhild. Full of treachery and atmosphere.
- Gautrek's Saga – A collection of humorous tales concerning the life of king Gautrek and the legendary story of Starkad, with lots of mythological insight and a good list of divine blessings and curses.
- Gisli's Saga – A story which focuses on family relations and a feud that starts with the revelation of past lovers and rapidly descends into murder, outlawry and concludes with a heroic battle to the death.
- Grettir's Saga – Grettir is a hero cursed with a violent temper and terrible luck, who spends his life outlawed trying to do the right thing and killing many monsters. The tragedy is full of evocative descriptions of his fights.
- Havamal – A short poem that describes the important virtues of Viking culture and also describes the gaining of the runes by Odin. An insightful work of wisdom.
- Heimskringla – The chronicles of the kings of Norway is a fascinating collection of stories concerning men who became rulers of Norway. Although lacking the traditional story elements, the accounts are still an enjoyable read and incorporate many descriptions of battles and high level politics. A must read for a pure historical game.
- Hrafnkel's Saga – The story of a duellist and devoted worshipper of Freyr who loses his faith after suffering humiliation in the law courts and the burning of his shrine. He travels, learning moderation before returning home to extract a just revenge on his enemies and ending his life as a chieftain.
- Hrolfr Kraki's Saga – The life and deeds of the legendary king, full of seidr, berserks, shape-shifters, treachery and battle. An exciting and magical tale.
- Laxdaela Saga – A tale involving a five generations long blood feud between the families living in an Icelandic valley. Myth, romance and the twisting of fate interwoven with bitter disputes over land, marriage, divorce and inheritance.

- Njal's Saga – Another epic tale concerning the inexorable destruction of families involved in blood feuds.
- Volsunga Saga – The legendary story of the rise and fall of the Volsung clan, with lots of revenge, meddling gods, giants, dwarfs, magic swords and of course Sigurd and the dragon Fafnir.

Viking Plot Seeds

The following section provides a multitude of plot seeds for a Games Master to use whilst first crafting their campaign. These ideas can be combined together to form more complex scenarios or can simply be randomly selected for sandbox style campaigns.

To flesh out these scenario seeds a Game Master need only come up with a half dozen Non-Player Characters to use as key figures during the scenario.

Hunting Scenarios

- When out hunting in the deep forest several days away from the nearest steading, the party discovers a blood splattered hunter's camp. Following tracks leads them to a pile of human bones and the tracks of an unusually large man eating wolf. The wolf proceeds to stalk them in a series of hit and run attacks in the night but when the party finally corner it they discover that there are two of them.
- The party end up in a coastal settlement and are invited to join a walrus hunt with one of the locals. After a successful hunt, at sea in a small kayak or skiff, an albino killer whale known as the 'White Death' turns up. With no chance of killing it they must escape by whatever means possible whilst it toys with them, slowly breaking their boat with each attack. Just before they reach shore, the whale capsizes the boat and they must all swim for it leaving their guide to be eaten. The whale will haunt their voyages for years afterwards.
- Invited to a steading for the Yuletide celebrations, the party are invited to participate in a hunt. A bull elk has been caught and a gold arm ring tied to its impressive antlers. The elk is released into the wild and the Adventurers, on skis, must try to track and hunt it through a gradually worsening snowfall, facing dangers from the other hunters as well as the elk itself.
- A deadly bear begins attacking nearby farmsteads killing entire families. The party must destroy it but the animal seems to possess near human cunning. After several brief encounters during times of darkness and a growing sense of supernatural menace, the bear is killed, only to be discovered that it was one of their enemies dressed in a full skin and using the claws to kill.
- The party are sent on a traditional boar hunt. Unusually there a several male boars in the sounder, one for each Adventurer, making it an exceptionally dangerous encounter.
- The party are asked to capture a live polar bear. After facing much danger on the voyage and travelling across the pack ice, they find a baby bear. The enraged mother soon follows.

Sailing Scenarios

- Rumours have been told about an island far to the north where a remote colony of monks was set up, with the intention of building a secure church for some mystical treasure. The trip is eventful with an incidental encounter with a sea serpent but on locating the small island it appears abandoned. Whilst exploring the ruins their ship is burned, isolating them with a group of hungry cannibalistic savages, the remnants of the original monks.
- Whilst sailing towards Iceland, the hull of the Adventurers' ship is found to be infested with worms and the vessel begins to slowly sink. Fortunately there is a small boat aboard that can carry off survivors. Unfortunately there are twice the number of crew members as there are spaces on the boat.
- During an erstwhile normal voyage the party's ship is attacked by another vessel crewed with foreign Vikings, intent on piracy.
- Aboard a trading ship full of cargo (hopefully their own) the party are struck by a summer squall, which soon grows into a full blown storm. The Adventurers have to struggle to survive against huge waves pounding of the ship's structure.
- Whilst on a fishing trip off the coast of Norway, one Adventurer catches a kraken. Enraged, the monster tries to sink the fishing boat by summoning a maelstrom.
- Sailing past an isolated craggy island, the Adventurers' ship strikes an unseen rock beneath the water and begins to sink. They must abandon the vessel and swim to the rocky outcrop with only whatever they can carry off the ship. The rock has a small cave where a hermit once lived, his bones still evident. The party must struggle to survive whilst someone with the Craft (Wood) skill builds a new boat from the timbers, providing the party can scavenge enough food and clean fresh water to survive.

Religious Scenarios

- The local Jarl turns up with an obsequious Christian bishop and his entourage in tow. He requests that you help clear land and protect the Christians whilst they build a stave church.
- After several years of famine the local folk have decided to perform a human sacrifice to bring back the favour of the gods. However, the selection of the victim is determined by drawn lots and by some dire fate one of the Adventurers is chosen. If he decides to run he will be hunted. If he stays, the draw is discovered to be rigged by an enemy.
- A frustrated Christian priest who has failed to convert anyone to the White God, becomes enraged and calls down a curse against the community. The following night the local shrine to Freyr and Thor burns down, provoking a range of opinions about the power of the new god or whether the perpetrator should be hunted down and killed. The priest however flees to the sanctuary of the local king.
- After a thunderstorm a handsome young man of huge musculature and an inability to speak is found lying next to the shrine of Thor, or where it used to be. Over the next few days he performs feats of incredible strength, including wrestling a bear or shattering a boulder, before mysteriously disappearing in the next thunderstorm several weeks later.

- On the way home after a late feast at a neighbouring stead, the Adventurers are ambushed by a gang of sword armed men who inflict a number of serious wounds before discovering they have attacked the wrong men. Apologising for the mistake they try to negotiate a settlement.
- During a fight against a band of outlaws attempting to steal some livestock, a mysterious man jumps into the fray to even up the odds, fighting like a madman. His evident skill turns the tide and if offered a reward merely asks to take shelter for a few days whilst he heals up. If the Adventurers agree, the man proves to be honourable and very hard working. A few days later however, a group of hard eyed men arrive seeking the stranger. It is evident that they wish to kill him but if prevented will arrive at the next *thing* with an accusation that the Adventurers aided an outlawed man.
- A marriage is set up between one of the Adventurers and a wealthy young woman of great beauty but dubious reputation. Despite any misgivings on the part of the Adventurer, his father thinks it is a good deal and seals the contract. However, just before the marriage the woman is found to be pregnant and the father withdraws the suit. The woman's family then bring a law suit for breach of contract.
- New tenants move into the neighbouring stading and soon the Adventurers notice that some of their livestock is missing. Laying a trap or succeeding in back tracking reveals that the new tenants have been stealing them. Accusing them outright brings a series of increasingly harmful acts of sabotage. Charging them at the *thing* backfires when it becomes apparent that the dishonest karl is related to the local godi.
- A package is delivered to an Adventurer by a man claiming to be an acquaintance of an old friend. The package contains the old friend's sword, a famous heirloom worth a jarl's ransom, which the friend wished to pass on before he died from illness. Soon however, the son of the deceased friend turns up demanding the blade as his rightful inheritance.

Monster Scenarios

- The father of the wealthiest Adventurer dies and is given a full ship burial, complete with grave goods. The ceremony goes well but several weeks later livestock begins to be found with their necks broken and throats torn out. Further investigation uncovers rumours that the dead father has been seen wondering about. Checking the barrow reveals that it has been plundered and his sword stolen. The Adventurers must either find the thief or deal with the draugr themselves.
- A number of children from the local steadings go missing. Each has vanished on the night of a full moon, their tracks leading to a mound reputed to be an entrance to Alfheimr. The Adventurers must enter the mound on the following full moon and challenge the elf who has kidnapped them to singing, dancing and poetry tests to recover each child. To aid them a wise woman skilled in seidr should be consulted for knowledge or galdr to win the challenges.
- An Adventurer is jokingly challenged to prove his manhood by slaying the troll, which local legend says lives under the nearby waterfall. A difficult swim gains entry into a dark grotto filled with ancient treasure but disturbs a real troll who has slept there undisturbed for decades. The monster is enchanted against iron and

huge to boot, thus its awakening promulgates a reign of terror over the region until the Adventurers think to search its hoard to find a weapon capable of harming it (which melts in the troll's blood afterwards).

- One of the Adventurers forgets to propitiate a long forgotten spirit. The tomte or nisse begins to play increasingly deadly pranks on them. At first his drinking horn spills over him, then the door slams on his fingers, a poisonous snake is left in his bed and so on. This continues until the spirit receives a proper sacrifice or it gives up in disgust and eventually attacks the Adventurer as an insanely strong midget.
- A jotun arrives at an Adventurer's stead and requests shelter. If invited in the giant begins making a pig of itself, eating all the food in the longhouse, followed by drinking all the beer and mead. If stopped the giant rebukes the host for his lack of hospitality and proceeds to smash all the posts holding up the roof trying to provoke a fight. If the Adventurer grits his teeth and fetes the giant to the best of his ability, when he awakes the following morning he will discover the giant has done him a good deed; ploughed his fields, removed all the stones from the ground, built a new longhouse or something similar.
- One of the Adventurers finds an Orm in his well. The beast will consume one of his livestock every evening and unless stopped will eat the people next if it runs out of animals.

Blood Feud Scenarios

- One of the Adventurers accidentally kills another man in a wrestling match. The man's relatives are unhappy that no weregild will be forthcoming since sporting accidents are exempt from compensation. So at every opportunity the dead man's family insult the Adventurer with increasingly provocative slander, hoping to spur him into an assault.
- The stupid brother of an Adventurer is unable to repay a debt and asks for financial support. The amount required is exactly the amount of wealth the Adventurer owns, so it is likely he will refuse. If he does not help, the brother loses his freedom and is sold as a slave to a wandering merchant, an Arab who sails away before the brother can be bought back. The seller has no compassion for his deed and gloats around the market about the unspeakable acts the Arab will use the brother for.
- On his deathbed the father of an Adventurer tells his son that he is the last member of a family who were once jarls in another country but they had all been killed when a rival burnt them alive in their longhouse, women and children too. Only he had escaped. He urges his son to not be the coward he was and return to their original home to extract just revenge.
- An Adventurer's uncle dies, leaving a large steading with no clear inheritor. Both the Adventurer and another cousin have a legitimate claim and the case goes to court. Unless the Adventurer does exceptionally well in some skill such as Oratory or Lore (Law) the cousin wins. Later on he boasts that he bribed the Godi to skew the case in his favour.

- One of the leading men in the region fancies himself as a ladies' man and forces himself on an Adventurer's wife, sister or daughter. When the case goes to the law court however, the man brings a veritable army of supporters with him to win the vote. The only option remaining, save to cowardly give up, is to invoke the right to settle the case by combat in a holmganga.
- An Adventurer with no remaining male relatives is approached one morning by several cold strangers. They ask his name and declare he is the last member of an extended family that their family has been feuding with for the last three generations. They also state that they intend to kill him and if they fail their remaining relatives will come to finish the job. After which they ride away to give the Adventurer time to prepare himself for being murdered. The Adventurer must find some way to prevent the fatalistic men from continuing the generations-old feud or kill all of them instead.

Political Scenarios

- Fed up with their corrupt chieftain, local karls approach the Adventurer with the best reputation and ask him to stand for the position of godi at the next *thing*. The current godi gets wind of the plan and begins to pressure the Adventurer and his friends.
- The Adventurers learn that the local ruler secretly murdered his rival in order to win the election to Jarl. Unfortunately up until now the Jarl has treated the Adventurers well and he is a level headed and wise leader. If they do not use the information to have him removed from office, the informant threatens to bring a charge against them at the next *thing* instead.
- After the locals legitimately refuse a call to muster, for an army destined to fight overseas against a hitherto allied region, the king turns up enraged that his orders have been ignored and pillages the region in petty revenge. The act of tyranny kills several of the Adventurers' family members. Since the king has an army, he cannot be stopped directly but the *Allthing* is scheduled for the following month and he can be legally charged with murder if enough supporters can be gathered.
- The king or jarl of a neighbouring region approaches the Adventurers to see if they would be interested in helping to overthrow their current ruler who is a petty, ignorant man.
- The poorest Adventurer in the party is tracked down by a group of Danish warriors and told that he is the closest surviving relative of their last king and that he has been elected as the new ruler. The amazing stroke of luck turns out to be less clear cut since the Adventurer is intended to be a puppet for one of the current jarls seeking power for himself.

Supernatural Scenarios

- After slaying her son, the Adventurers are cursed by a rune carving witch who sets up niding poles (curse poles) in a hidden location. They must try to trick the woman into revealing the location of the poles, since killing her will not stop the magic, or flee overseas where the curse cannot follow.
- At a feast hosted by the local Jarl, a volva with the power of prophesy makes an ominous foretelling that the Adventurers will cause the death of the lord. Obviously taken aback by the wyrd the jarl is stunned but his son leaps to his feet and orders the huskarls to kill the Adventurers, so precipitating a full blown feud. Wherever they go or no matter what they do the party will ultimately cause his death, even though the jarl wishes to have peace between them.
- Whilst travelling away from home, the Adventurers are invited into the hall of a tall man and fed a huge feast. During the night however, one of the Adventurer's fylgja manifests in its animal form and discovers that the host is a man eating giant who has hundreds of skeletons in his storehouse. When the Adventurer awakes he remembers his dream with crystal clarity.
- Travelling north to the land of the Lapps the Adventurers are offered magical fetishes of exquisite craftsmanship and some power in return for accompanying a shaman on his spirit quest to recover the soul of a young girl ensnared by a terrible raven spirit. During the quest the Adventurers must throw themselves in the path of the flocks of bird spirits that try to stop the shaman.
- Asked to travel into the deep forests to slay some awful wolf creature, the Adventurers must face and defeat a shape-shifter who has become trapped in his animal form. If lacking the magic needed to harm the creature a rune carved weapon can be found in the cave the wolf once used as its lair.
- Suffering an unusual string of bad luck, one of the Adventurers is told by a mysterious old woman that his family Dis has been captured by an evil seidkona. They must travel to her lair and break the binding that holds the spirit, which will then protect the Adventurers from the evil eye and foul magic whilst they slay the witch.

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A complete setting and background book for Legend, Vikings of Legend brings to life both the history and the myths of the most fierce-some warriors to take to the sea! From character creation to vicious foes to face in battle, Pete Nash leads you through everything you need to start a complete campaign based in Viking society. On top of all that, the text is completely designated as Open Content!



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