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the MAD PRIEST

CALL OF
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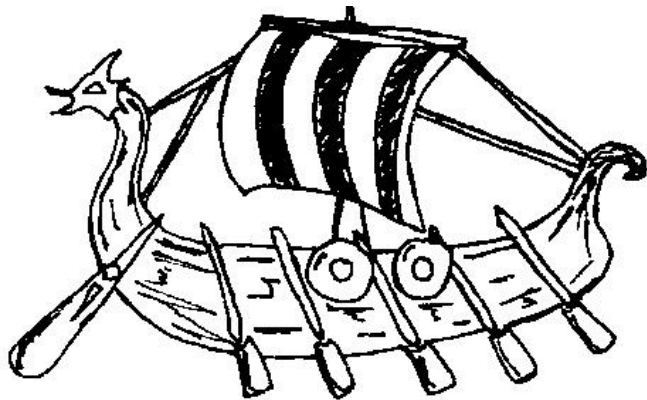
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INTRODUCTION

This scenario is suitable for 2 to 5 investigators. The scenario is set in the Viking era. The scenario is set in Iceland and starts in a small village near the volcano Hekla.

KEEPER INFORMATION

Iceland is a fascinating place full of legends and an interesting history. The adventure is set in the winter of the year 1104. This is also the time where monasteries were starting to be built by the Christians and the Christian faith was starting to spread. The scenario starts in a small village near the volcano Hekla, a volcano that hasn't erupted in quite a while. The adventure begins during the evening when a mad man approaches the village. The PCs will be at their own house going about their own business. The priest is looking for babies to complete his ritual to call upon Hel (the daughter of Loki, an avatar of Nyarlathotep, here represented as Aylith). He needs 3, he already has 2, and the third one will be the Chief's. The ritual will be performed at the top of the volcano Hekla. If the ritual will succeed then the volcano will erupt and the villages all around it will be destroyed along with the PCs and anyone else around. 5 pre-gen characters are provided for the adventure.

NEW RULE FOR THE SETTING (OPTIONAL)

While writing the scenario I based my story on the information provided in the BRP sourcebook "Mythic Iceland" published by Chaosium. An extra rule has been used during my test time with the scenario. Info about the new rule can be found below

Extra HP (Allegiance rule): *In Viking society religion is really important and depending on the deity worshiped the PCs could gain some extra HP. In the "Mythic Iceland" sourcebook at pag.23 more information can be found. These extra HP can only be used once a session. The pre-gen characters provided have already the extra HP included in their sheet.*

NEW SKILLS

Being set during a specific era, the characters will have different skills not found in other settings. The character sheets can be found at the Chaosium website. Information about these new skills can be found at p.25 of the sourcebook "Cthulhu through the ages" published by Chaosium.



The mad priest arrives

It's early evening, the sky is cloudy, and the village is lit by some torches. While everybody is having dinner, a really loud laugh is heard by the guards of the village, the PCs /other villages won't be aware of it. A man dressed in a dirty dark red robe arrives at the village coming from the woods nearby. He approaches the village gate and keeps laughing and speaking nonsense. The guards will approach first and take the man to the Chief's house. The PCs will be at their own house and won't be aware of what's happening outside. The keeper should ask what they are doing at the moment. After a while everybody in the village will hear the sound of the horn and will gather in the middle of the village. The Chief has called for an assembly. The mad man will be standing between the two guards on his knees; the Chief will introduce the problem to the community. The priest is still laughing and not speaking Norse. The Chief asks if anyone has seen this kind of robe before or understands what he is saying; a **REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE roll** will tell this is not a normal priest robe since they are usually brown. After 5min the priest will shout the following in Norse "It's coming! The awakening is upon us!" and then goes silent. A **SPOT HIDDEN roll** will show that he's wearing a necklace with a strange symbol (an elder sign); an **OCCULT roll** will tell that it's connected to some kind of obscure deity. It's evening/night so the guards will put the priest in a small storage house that is used as temporary jail (1 room, a pile of hay, the door is locked from outside, no windows).The night passes without any problem, some villagers were spooked by the old man but that was about it. If any PCs will wonder around the village in the middle of the night, and will get close to the jail, with a **LISTEN roll** they can hear the man mumbling something in a foreign language. They will not be allowed to get into the jail, the Chief has the key of the door. If they talk to the guards, they will just say what they heard and saw

During one of my play test, one of the players decided to stay outside the jail all night in order to help the guards in their job. If this is the case, that PC will need to rest the next day or get a penalty die for STRENGTH/DEX/CON rolls until he decides to get some rest.

The adventure begins

The next morning, when the guards go to check on the prisoner they find that he's not in the cell anymore. The door was locked from the outside and still locked when they got there. Inside the cell they will find that the wall shows sign of burning (resemble an oval; it was where the portal to the monastery was summoned, if any PCs touch the wall, it won't be hot, it will be the same temperature as the others and on the outside wall there won't be any trace of any burning), hay scattered everywhere, and writings made by blood. The guards will report to the Chief. He will call for another assembly, trying to ensure that everything is fine and that the prisoner has been taken care of, with a successful **INSIGHT roll** the PCs can tell the Chief is hiding something, a **STATUS roll** is required to get the chance to talk to him directly.

After the assembly is finished the PCs could go hunting, farming and so on. If the PCs want to check the jail, they must talk to the chief and **PERSUADE** him. If trying to talk to the guards, they will direct them to the Chief, they won't take any initiative. Depending on the time of the day the Chief will be at his home with his woman (morning) or he will be at the stables (afternoon) or the Chief will actually invite the PCs over for a dinner (evening). If the PCs checks out the jail, they will find under the hay more characters written in blood, an **OCCULT roll (hard)** can tell them that the writing is kind of a spell.

If one of the PCs will go hunting in the woods, call for a LUCK roll and if successful the PC will find a scorn pole facing the village. For more info check the passage below.

The crops are dead

Here is when things are starting to get bad. When the villagers get up for their morning routine, the farmers will find out that all their crops are dead, a **FARMING roll** will tell that it's not normal for crops to die over night even at these low temperatures. The animals are starting to get sick, some will have blood in their eyes, a **FARMING roll** will tell that it's definitely not a cold. There are standing stones in the village dedicated to Sif (the goddess of grain, harvests, fertility and farming). The villagers will gather around and make a prayer to her. In the afternoon a villager from another village arrives. He's bleeding. He tells them that he was hunting in the woods when something tried to grab him. He's still in shock but he can tell the PCs that some kind of large cat tried to catch him (it was indeed a ghoual cat, description on the NPCs stats page). If the PCs didn't go into the woods near their village before this scene, with a **SPOT HIDDEN roll** they can find a scorn pole (1-m high wooden pole, a head of a horse is put on the top facing the village) with a **KNOW roll** they know that the pole is used to make disturbances to people or place. Whoever destroys it will lose 1D4+2 point of luck.

The Chief's baby is gone

In the morning the villagers find all the farms animals in the village dead. The villagers might start to think that there is a connection between what's happening and the mad priest. The villagers won't have enough occult skills to understand so they will need to find somebody who does, with a successful **LUCK roll**, somebody in the village knows some hidden people who might know about this situation. If hidden people (for info and stats please check the NPCs page) are found, they will be friendly to that person in the village but will not speak to the PCs. The PCs won't see them, only the villager can. With a **PERSUADE roll**, the hidden people will make them visible so they can go on with the conversation themselves. If asked about the situation, they can say that they felt something is coming but not sure about what it is, only that is something that will change the earth forever. If the **LUCK roll** wasn't a success, the villagers will believe that more payers and offering will please the gods. When night comes, the Chief's family will lose their child. They will find out about that in the morning.

The priest entered the house during the night through a portal (they will find the same burning on the wall as in the jail), The Chief and wife didn't notice anything because they were under the influence of a spell. .

Has this happened before?

The chief's baby is missing. The earth starts to tremble (earthquake). Some villagers will run to the stones to pray to Sif. The bleeding stranger from another village has been taken care of and resting at one of the villager's house. If asked about any encounters with a mad priest, he will act surprised and tells them that a week ago a woman dressed with a robe (dark red robe with a necklace carrying a strange symbol) walked through his village. She was speaking in an unknown tongue for most of the time there; she looked like she was in some sort of trance. At a certain point before leaving the place, she cut her wrists and blood splattered on the ground. Then she walked back into the woods. They thought she was just a loony but then the next day, wherever the blood was spilt, the grass died, and then the animals started to get sick. That's why he was outside hunting, he was looking for food. If he's been asked about the woods, he says that she was coming from the woods that lead to the volcano Hekla.

If the PCs won't think of talking to the stranger, as soon as he heard about the missing baby he will get his stuff and get ready to leave to check on his village. If the PCs try to stop him with a successful **INSIGHT roll** they can tell that he's very worried about his village and his family.

The journey

It is said that woods in that area are haunted; a **REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE roll** will confirm that. Few people dare to go there, and who dares seldom comes back. Some villagers call that area "The forest of the dead". People say that something haunts the ground there. The chief will order the PCs to go and find the culprit. If there are only two players, two more men will go along the PCs as support.

The PCs will be contacted by the hidden people just before they enter the woods, asking them to retrieve a toy that one of the hidden children lost while playing in the woods near a small cave. It is forbidden for them to get too close to the woods but kids don't usually listen. If they accept, they will be given an amulet that will allow them to see it (it's a toy that resembles a duck, made from a rock). This is a red herring.

The journey to the monastery is not easy. It's winter so it's freezing. **CON** rolls should be made every hour, if fail they will be slowed down and penalty die will be added.

It will take them **1D2** days to find the monastery. The monastery is hidden in the forest. The woods are a cold place, dark and soundless. As soon as the PCs get deeper and deeper into the forest, the trees cover the sky. With a successful **LISTEN roll** they can hear the branches moving, with a successful **LISTEN/SPOT HIDDEN** they can hear/spot some grunts/shadowy figures lurking around, **SAN roll o/1d2**. The main threat here in the woods is the army of the dead (**Up-Walkers, 2/1D8 SAN LOSS** to see one of them) that are used to protect the area. If the PCs decide to spend the night without sleeping, any physical roll in the next day will have a penalty die. If somebody stays up at night, they will hear with a successful **LISTEN roll** the growl of the undead wandering in the forest. And with a **HARD LISTEN** success they can hear some chanting coming from up north.

If the players want some action, while travelling in the woods, they could encounter the undead and fight them. The PCs will need to be stealthy in order not to get spotted by the undead (**STEALTH** of the PCs vs **SPOT HIDDEN** of the undead).

The side quest (if accepted)

While journeying into the woods, a successful **LUCK roll** will make the PCs find the cave. If the **LUCK roll** is failed, then another one should be called every hour. The cave is small. Inside there are some bones, a successful **NATURAL WORLD roll** will tell that these bones definitely belongs to some animals. A successful **SPOT HIDDEN roll** will find the toy among the bones. If the PCs haven't fought anyone in the woods, a couple of wolves will attack the PCs outside the cave. A successful **LISTEN roll** will make the PCs aware of the wolves before they attack.

The monastery complex

The monastery complex is not as big as other monasteries in the country. It has a church, a small library, a dormitory. When the PCs arrive, they will notice (no rolls needed) some figures wearing a dark red robe wandering around the monastery carrying some torches. With a **LISTEN roll** the PCs will hear some kind of chanting coming from the church. The PCs will need to be stealthy to walk around the premises without being spotted by the priests. If they are found, battle will start. The priests won't know any spells and won't be good at fighting, after all they are priests not Viking warriors.

The dormitory will not contain any clues whatsoever. The library on the other hand will contain some books written in a language that none of the PCs could actually read, if they try to read them a successful **LITERACY** or **OTHER LANGUAGE roll** will be required. None of the pre-gen chars will be able to succeed in the roll.

The church

The front of the church will have some writing in Cthulhu language that will read like "The order of Hel" (handout), a successful **CTHULHU MYTHOS roll** will be needed to be able to read that, a successful **REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE roll** will tell them that it's not a language belonging to their area.

The church is not really massive. In the inside there are no traces of religious figures known to the Vikings. There are no benches either; there are some statues of some kind of deity (Aylith) with the body covered with branches like appendages, **SAN roll** must be called to see these statues **SAN loss 0/1d3**. Back of the altar a painting representing a female figure (similar to the statues) and some kind of thing above her. The thing has a horned head and a body made of tentacles (**SAN roll** required when seeing this 1/1D3). In the middle of the church some priests are chanting something in a foreign language (*VARF-SHUB-NIGGURATH! GABOTS MEMBROT!*). After the chant is finished on the altar's area a portal opens. The portal will take whoever enters at the top of the volcano, but nothing can be seen from the other side, **SAN roll** 1/1D3. With a successful **LISTEN roll**, babies cries can be heard coming from there. The PCs will have 1D6/8 combat round to get to the portal before it closes itself (which will end the scenario prematurely and it will lead to the bad ending). In the church there will be 1 priest per PC. The priests are just there to stall the PCs not to stop them.

The top of the volcano

The peak will be covered with snow. A cold wind is blowing. There will be 1 ghoulish cat per PC and the mad priest they saw at the village. There are 3 babies in front of the mad priest on the snow.

The priest is holding a ritual knife (the blade is black and the holding is carved to look like branches) and he is chanting something in a foreign tongue. Seeing this will take a **SAN loss** of 2/1D8.

If not stopped, the priest will kill a baby every 1 or 2 rounds (depending on how many rounds the final fight will be), then he will kill the last baby on the last round of the combat, unless interrupted..

When they notice the PCs, the mad priest will keep going with the chant and the killing. The ghoulish cats will attack the PCs. The ghoulish cats look like very large cats or large dogs. A thick, leathery hide covers their body which is utterly black in color. They have a set of horn-like appendages surrounding their heads and a long tail with spikes. The PCs will be on the opposite side of the volcano and would take them 4 rounds to get to the priest.

The final fight (bad ending)

The combat goes on for 1D8 rounds (at least 4 rounds), the volcano starts to tremble at half of that but only erupts at the last round, and unless they can stop the mad priest, the top will open and lava will start coming out from the hole. The priest will throw himself into the pit shouting "She has arrived! Long life to Hel!". The cats won't bother the PCs anymore and just stand there and wait the lava to kill them. This is a failure since the eruption will basically kill the PCs and most of the villages around the volcano.

The final fight (good ending)

The combat goes on for 1D8 rounds (at least 4 rounds), the volcano starts to tremble at half of that but only erupts at the last round, if they can get to the priest before the last round and kill/injure/stop him, the ritual will be stopped. When the priest is injured the cats will leave him and go away. The priest, angered, will fight the PCs until the end using the spells on his disposal and his ritual knife. As protection he will have already his magical shield on (check the Stats page for more info).

Rewards

- If they have found the toy, they will have new allies in the form of hidden people
- If they have stopped the ritual and kill the priest +1D10 to their Sanity
- If they saved the babies each PC's status will increase by 1D6

NPC Stat Blocks and Skills

Up-walker

The up-walkers are basically zombies. They usually fight with fists or biting. They can also use basic weapons as swords if given to. If the head is not cut off from the body, they will keep going.

STR 45 CON 40 SIZ 50 DEX 40 INT 5
 APP 10 POW 30 EDU 0 SAN 0 HP 10
 DB: 1D4 Build: 0 Move: 6

Attacks per round: 1

Bite 30% (15/6), damage 1D4
 Fist 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+db

Armor: Impales do only 1 point of damage; other attack results do half of rolled damage, round up any fractions.

Skills: Ride 50%, Stealth 70%, Climb 40%.

Sanity loss: 2/1D8 Sanity points to see an up-walker

Wolves

STR 45 CON 40 SIZ 50 DEX 45
 HP 6
 DB: none Build: 0 Move: 8

Attacks per round: 1

Bite 30% (15/6), damage 1D4

Armor: none.

Skills: Dodge 22%,Stealth 50%, Spot Hidden 50%

Cultists

STR 50 CON 40 SIZ 50 DEX 45 INT 65
 APP 45 POW 40 EDU 65 SAN 0 HP 8
 DB: none Build: 0 Move: 8

Attacks per round: 1

Knife 35% (16/6), damage 1D6

Armor: none.

Skills: Dodge 22%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 20%, Natural World 50%, Ride Horses 20%, Stealth 50%, Spot Hidden 50%

Ghoul cats

The ghouls look like very large cats or large dogs. A thick, leathery hide covers their body which is utterly black in color. They have a set of horn-like appendages surrounding their heads and a long tail with spikes.

STR 55 CON 35 SIZ 55 DEX 70 INT 35
 POW 55 SAN 0 HP 8
 DB: none Build: 1 Move: 9

Attacks per round: 2

Tail whip 45% (25/10), damage 1D10
 Claw 45% (25/10), damage 1D6+2
 Bite 35% (20/8), damage 1D8

Armor: 2-point leathery hide.

Skills: Dream Lore 20%, Jump 80%, Stealth 70%, Spot Hidden 70%, Track 85%. Dodge 60% (15/6)

Sanity loss: 1/1D6 Sanity points to see a Ghoul Cat

The mad priest



STR 55 CON 60 SIZ 50 DEX 70 INT 65
 APP 30 POW 70 EDU 65 SAN 0 HP 12
 DB: 1d4 Build: 1 Move: 8 MP: 15

Attacks per round: 1

Ritual Knife 35% (16/6), damage 1D6

Armor: Sorcerer's shield, 1 MP at the time. Will stop any attack as long as he has MP (depending on the damage of the attack).When the MP are gone the shield is broken.

Note: The MP will decrease by 2 each round because of the chant.

Skills: Dodge 35%, Fast Talk 50%, Insight 50%, Natural World 50%, Ride Horses 20%, Stealth 70%, Spot Hidden 50%.

Spells: Create Up-walker (Zombie), Mind Cloud (4MP), Enthral, Fear, Flesh Ward, Shield, Shriveling, Summon/Bind Ghoul cats, Winds of Desolation

Pre-gen characters

Voggur (the blacksmith)

STR 60 CON 60 SIZ 40 DEX 55 INT 50
APP 45 POW 45 EDU 50 SAN 45 HP 10
DB: none Build: 0 Move: 9 Luck: 35

Weapons

Fist 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+db
Battle axe (2H) 45% (22/9), damage 2D6, 1 attack per round

Armor: Heavy clothes 1D2-1.

Skills: Art/Craft 55%, Farming 30%, Dodge 27%, First Aid 50%, Insight 15%, Listen 45%, Medicine 5%, Natural World 30%, Occult 45%, Own language 50%, Persuade 30%, Regional knowledge 25%, Spot hidden 45%, Status 25%, Stealth 35%, Track 30%

Allegiance extra HP: 5

Hrappur (the hunter)

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 55 DEX 65 INT 50
APP 50 POW 45 EDU 45 SAN 45 HP 10
DB: none Build: 0 Move: 9 Luck: 50

Weapons

Fist 35% (17/7), damage 1D3+db
Bow 55% (27/11), damage 1D6+half db, range 30y, 1 attack, 6 ammo (arrows)

Armor: Heavy clothes 1D2-1.

Skills: Animal handling 35%, Dodge 32%, First Aid 35%, Listen 55%, Natural World 45%, Navigate 35%, Occult 35%, Own language 45%, Regional knowledge 25%, Spot hidden 60%, Status 25%, Stealth 50%, Track 40%

Allegiance extra HP: 4

Bjorn (the woodcutter)

STR 70 CON 60 SIZ 70 DEX 60 INT 50
APP 40 POW 45 EDU 55 SAN 45 HP 13
DB: 1d4 Build: 1 Move: 8 Luck: 35

Weapons

Fist 25% (12/5), damage 1D3+db
Shield (throw) 45% (22/9), damage 1D2+db, range 5y, 1 attack
Shield 30% (15/6), damage 1D3+db
Axe 35% (17/7), damage 1D8, 1 attack per round

Armor: Heavy clothes 1D2-1, Shield 1D3

Skills: Animal handling 20%, Dodge 30%, First Aid 35%, Intimidate 35%, Jump 35%, Listen 35%, Natural World 45%, Occult 35%, Own language 55%, Navigate 35% Regional knowledge 25%, Ride 25%, Skiing 35%, Sleight of hand 25%, Spot hidden 50%, Status 25%, Stealth 40%, Throw 45%
Allegiance extra HP: 4

Hrafn (the farmer)

STR 55 CON 65 SIZ 60 DEX 55 INT 55
APP 60 POW 60 EDU 45 SAN 60 HP 12
DB: none Build: 0 Move: 7 Luck: 40

Weapons

Viking spear (long) 40% (20/8), damage 2D6, 1 attack per round
Viking spear (throw) 35% (17/7), damage 1D4, 1 attack per round

Armor: Heavy clothes 1D2-1.

Skills: Farming 45%, Dodge 27%, First Aid 45%, Listen 45%, Medicine 5%, Natural World 45%, Navigate 35%, Occult 25%, Own language 45%, Ranged weapons (long spear) 40%, Regional knowledge 23%, Spot hidden 55%, Status 25%, Stealth 40%, Throw 35%, Track 30%

Allegiance extra HP: 5

Maldlr (the leatherworker)

STR 50 CON 50 SIZ 55 DEX 65 INT 50
APP 50 POW 40 EDU 45 SAN 40 HP 10
DB: none Build: 0 Move: 8 Luck: 50

Weapons

Fist 45% (22/9), damage 1D3+db
Broad sword 45% (22/9), damage 2D6, 1 attack per round

Armor: Heavy clothes 1D2-1.

Skills: Art/Craft 40%, Dodge 32%, First Aid 50%, Insight 25%, Listen 40%, Medicine 5%, Natural World 35%, Occult 45%, Own language 45%, Regional knowledge 25%, Spot hidden 45%, Status 25%, Stealth 45%, Throw 30%, Track 35%
Allegiance extra HP: 4