

CASTLES[®] CRUSADES

NINE WORLDS SAGA VOLUME I: HEL RISING



BRIAN N. YOUNG

NINE WORLDS SAGA

VOLUME I: HEL RISING

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This module starts the saga requiring at least 3-5 3rd to 4th level characters safely, possibly a few of lesser experience levels as well.

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HEL RISING

No one could explain why Denmark shook from its foundations or why its stones vibrated until only pebbles and powder remained from the endless fury. Villages were torn asunder by an unseen menace. The people fled, seeking shelter with their lords. The lords, however, could offer no protection, nor could they provide remedy for the devastation.

The Goðar prayed to the gods on high and made their sacrifices for a reply, but none came. These quakes were neither steady nor constant. They were erratic and shook buildings to their foundations. Peasants from the high hills spoke of a monstrous roaring that sounded when the world shook. Sailors mentioned that the seas raged, and it seemed as though all of Miðgarðr was falling into ruin. In fact, it seemed as though Ragnarök had begun.

The wise völvu whispered that Yggdrasil quivered to its roots. Even its branches trembled, as though its leaves would fall like rain any moment. Another concern amid the Eötenas tribes was the unexpected attacks by unknown raiders. They swept in on swift keels, dark and foreign in make, bearing dozens of deadly blades who slaughtered indiscriminately and without mercy.

All of this was merely rumor until the first warband reached our tribe. The skies were grey and damp, and the winds were strong,

gaining strength by the hour. The raiders' torches lit up the bleak countryside as they charged down in wild hordes, their deep horns echoing like howling beasts enraged.

We had never seen these raiders before. Their armor, helms and garb were similar to our own and to the peoples of Scandza in the north, but they were also very different. A demonic air was about them all. Shimmering red eyes shone beneath their helms, and their leader barked commands that thundered harshly. Only the name 'Skalla-grímr' was understood.

The damage they caused to us was unlike any that the northern peoples, or even the Roman Empire in the far south, had ever committed to each other. It was nightmarish. Few words can describe it, and those would only rekindle the horror. Those are memories I never wish to relive.

It is unfortunate that these pillagers' trail led us to two places: one to the innermost hills where the monstrous noises and tremors are originating, and the other...from the cold sea. We know they do not come from any land in Miðgarðr. Their few corpses show this, and so our band of warriors must sojourn the waves of Ægir to find them before they return again...



INTRODUCTION

This module not only accompanies the *Codex Nordica*, but it begins the adventure series labeled the ‘*Nine Worlds Saga*’. If it were an Old Icelandic or Norse recorded saga, it would be entitled *Níu Heimasaga*. Each module in this series brings the adventuring party closer to the root of it all. These events are masterminded by the troll-witch Angrboða, who in her death-slumber, has set forth awful events through nightmares and dreams from Járnviða. Angrboða’s children are monsters and among the most powerful entities in the Nine Worlds, and through them she enacts her grim retribution upon the gods.

Through this set of adventures, the players are taken on a whirlwind journey of many locations in the Nine Worlds as they unknowingly halt the arrival of the Final Winter. Each module will include the gist of the portion of the saga, where it lies within the overall series, and how it will progress to the next module for the Castle Keeper. The *Nine Worlds Saga* is a misnomer, intentionally misleading to not direct the players towards the overall plot involving the *Fimbulvinter*, or Final Winter.

This series will involve the Nordic gods, benign or malevolent, in the progress of the story. They will sometimes intervene indirectly or even make an appearance, much to the players’ dismay or astonishment. There is a linear overall story in this saga that will be given, but it is up to the players and the CK on how it is handled and by what road the destination is reached. Otherwise, there would be no logic or sense to the saga or progression of tales in this series. Each *must* be run in proper order to make sense, however, or they will never get to the correct final conclusion at the end of module 13.

Over the course of the story, the players will gather a mountain of data that will gradually overwhelm them until they may lose their ‘place’ in the saga. This is completely encouraged. Note keeping will be required if players want to be on top of matters and come out victorious in the end for their enemies will be many and treacherous.

This first adventure, however, is modest and sets the stage for the rest of the series. It will begin in the easiest manner possible, with conflict and in the familiar mortal world of Miðgarðr. Eventually, it will layer the many elements of the story upon that foundation. It is often easiest to draw in players’ interest to something new through conflict and the need for battle. It sets the mood and helps to establish the adventuring party’s strengths and character early on.

Do not expect the usual Viking or Norse clichés in this series. Those have been done to death by people that linger on the fringes of the culture but never delve too far in. This series, like the Celtic one before it, takes players into unfamiliar and unique places and changes them and the way we game. There are no dingy dungeons stuffed with nonsensical traps and impractical creatures in an illogical ecosystem. Instead, the Castle Keeper’s role becomes that of a storyteller of old.

FOR THE CASTLE KEEPER

This series can be either integrated into an existing campaign, or new characters can be made from the *Codex Nordica*. It is up to the CK to decide how he wants to set up the campaign. However it is decided, there needs to be a manner in which the player characters find their entry into the story, and this beginning adventure will leave plenty of room for that given the situation.

Provided below are the customary four adventure hooks that can be integrated into the backgrounds of the player characters to make them a part of *Hel Rising*. This module starts the saga requiring at least 3-5 3rd to 4th level characters, possibly a few of lesser experience levels as well.

HOOK 1: The adventuring party are mercenaries who have been traveling across the continent, or even across Miðgarðr and found themselves in Denmark around the time that these incidents began.

HOOK 2: One of the local rulers in Denmark has made a call to all able-bodied swordsmen and spell-casters to aid him in this time of crisis. He will pay well. What his situation is, however, has not been discussed, only that it requires some travel inland and some battle.

HOOK 3: The adventuring party has heard the rumors, or felt the quakes from the region of Denmark. They’ve seen the strange raiding ships and felt a need to act. They entered the country as outsiders, but are willing to help solve these problems before it becomes worse.

HOOK 4: The adventuring party happened across the smoldering remains of a village and its slaughtered people and animals during their travels. Quakes and distant monstrous roars issue from the direction of the tracks left by the raiders in the high hills beyond the bogs. That, alone is enough to tantalize...

The essential goal of the whole series is to find, and return to Vahalla, the Fimbulvinter Runes.

NINE WORLDS SAGA SERIES

- 1 *Hel Rising*
- 2 Oðin’s Fury
- 3 Crisis in Álfheimr
- 4 The Jötun’s Scheme
- 5 Witches of Járnviðr
- 6 Despair of Helheimr
- 7 Loki’s Wolves
- 8 Frejyr’s Hunt
- 9 Berserker’s Den
- 10 Dreker of Niflheimr
- 11 The Great Winter
- 12 Allfather’s Vengeance
- 13 Shattering of the Bones

In these thirteen modules, the thirteen Fimbulvinter Runes are sought after in modules #2-10. There is one rune for each letter in old Norse. They are not in order, however, and in some of the modules there will be two runes instead of one. It is worth mentioning that the number thirteen was an unlucky one in Nordic society and superstition. This notion has been inherited into modern times and used to good effect in the horror genre.

Together, in proper order, the Great Winter's Runes would appear as this: fimbulvinter. These Runes will be shown in each module, in some fashion, to display which are being sought after. The player characters will become both weary and used to hearing about the 'Casket of Bones' or 'kista av ben' in the series as they are a poetic kenning to the Ash wood case and the thirteen Runes they seek. Gradually, they will obtain the whole collection and must not be tempted to harness them separately or together in combination. Such power will be devastating and attract the attention of the gods, giants and other mighty entities along the way.

One additional and interesting element to this runic aspect of this series is the Odin's Runes set only available with the Codex Nordica's Kickstarter with pledges at \$49 and higher. These runes can be used as props in the game and handed out as they are found and obtained through the module series for a touch of tactile fun and realism. If ran correctly, it will take months of gaming through each module in the series, for the players to deduce what the meaning of the runes could be in Old Norse.

BACKGROUND TO THE STORY


From her tomb deep in the worm eaten soil of Ironwood, the fell Troll Witch Angrboða has sent orders to her daughter, the ruler of Helheimr, to rally her forces in preparation for the Final Winter. To set this in motion, a complex series of events must first transpire, and first on this list is the marshalling of raiders, men of both monstrous and mortal blood, to start pillaging the vulnerable worlds about Yggdrasil. Hel hired on a captain, a foul man named Skallagrímr, to command her longboats of expendables and harry the mortals of Miðgarðr. This will begin the chain of events leading to the Final Winter.

Angrboða, mother also of the World Serpent Jörmungandr, is aware of the massive dragon's whereabouts, and wants to agitate it. The Troll Witch commands Hel to send forces through Skallagrímr to find one of the World Serpent's exposed tail ends, which lies in Denmark. Skallagrímr is then to hack and hew into its scaly, venomous flesh. During this agitation, the worlds will shake. This will startle the gods and rouse them as well, while her other agents will commit various heinous deeds which will be revealed in other modules.

Hel will be involved in this adventure indirectly because the raiders are her investment, and their role is essential. She will place many obstacles in the adventuring party's path before the final battle with Skallagrímr. In the beginning, Hel won't see the party as a threat. However, if they thwart her plans, they will contend with her on a much more personal and terrifying level later in the series! They will encounter her again in the mod-

ule Despair of Helheimr, when Hel's personal grudge against the adventuring party will come full circle as they traverse her dismal world.

Skallagrímr sits in Ironwood, ordering his half-men to carry out Angrboða's nefarious deeds, though he is unaware of their significance. Mortal rulers plot to oppose him and muster forces to stop his raiders, hoping to find the source of the monstrous roars and quakes. Chief among these rulers, and the most effected, is King Hrólfr of Eucia in Jutland. Skallagrímr has given his longboat crews orders to wreak havoc across Denmark as he sacrifices his men to aggravate Jörmungandr. This is where the adventuring party enters into the story, thwarting his plans, if they are lucky.

The plan behind angering Jörmungandr is to distract the gods and divert their attentions to Miðgarðr while the many agents of Hel infiltrate Ásgarðr to steal Óðin's Fimbulvinter Runes that bring about the dreaded  or Final Winter. Unfortunately for Hel and Angrboða, their agents were themselves tricked by a Fylgja spirit summoned by a völva who foresaw this incident. This will be revealed in a future module in the series. As a result, the Runes slipped from their hands and tumbled across the Nine Worlds. Now, it will be a race to find them before Hel's people do and bring about the Final Winter and, eventually, Ragnarök. Not even Heimdallr from the Bifröst Bridge sensed this incident, and it will become a troublesome matter.

Needless to say, Óðin is not yet aware of this deception, and when his ravens alert him to it, his wrath will be brutal. It will become a three-way scramble for the Runes. One would imagine the gods would find the aid of the adventuring party useful, but they would, in fact, see it as invasive and offensive and none of their business. Once Skallagrímr's Revenge is completed, the adventuring party is well on their way to finding the first of the thirteen Runes to keep them out of the enemies' hands.

ACT 1 TURMOIL IN DENMARK

KING HRÓLFR'S HALL

In the northernmost region of Denmark, or Jutland, in the kingdom of Eucia, King Hrólfr Fagriðsson is hiring any able-bodied swordsmen and casters of the magical arts to help stop the strange quakes and foreign raiders. His fortress sits high atop a hill, walled and near a river, just miles from the North Sea. It is close to the epicenter of the disturbances.

Few have come to his call, though he has promised a bountiful reward. Hrólfr's grand, wooden hall of Kongensborg (detailed in Act 3 'Kongensborg: The King's Fort') is guarded by a palisaded series of ramparts in several layers with nearly fifty warriors at all times. It is a magnificent sight. Adventurers seeking to be hired will be guided into the gates by the king's men and led into his hall.

The devastation will be obvious. The fortress is in shambles, a broken mess that appears to be held together and secured by ropes and hooks. A dust cloud hovers over most of Denmark as

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far as the eye can see. Occasionally, a growling rumble can be heard in the distance. The Danes are anxious.

The king's people have refortified the fort's walls and other structures using wooden beams, earthen banks, etc. The old king is on his wooden and jewel encrusted throne, surrounded by advisors. Warriors stand in groups, their eyes gazing at the adventuring party in suspicion. King Hrólfr, is a blonde-bearded, well-dressed Nordic ruler. He carries a sword at his right hip, and there is worry on his face as he greets the adventurers:

"So you have come to my call for aid? You are here to help my kingdom in its hour of need? That is noble of you and worthy of the gods' notice. Perhaps you will earn your seat in their hallowed halls.

There are beastly howls rumbling in the Hills of Ormr to the south which coincide with the quakes that plague our land. Scores of people have fled from those hills to my kingdom and the surrounding territories, speaking of monsters and with terror in their eyes.

Dark garbed raiders have pillaged, burned and ravaged my realm, from the shores to those hills. Where they have originated I do not know, but they don armor and garb from lands that no one can claim as home. These raiders are half-monstrous with fiery eyes and grunt in a strange tongue I have not heard, yet I understand. Their longships are familiar but...different. There is no other way to explain it.

My advisors tell me that these raiders and quakes are the signs of a terrible calamity to come. They say that the gods are showering scorn down upon us for rejecting them for the Roman gods. Whatever it is, I want it to end, and I will give you a hefty reward for doing so. If you need a steed and supplies, I can give them to you, to send you on your way to the Hills of Ormr. It is a three day ride from here. First, solve the dilemma of the quakes before they tear our lands asunder. Once that task is accomplished, we shall deal with the raiders.

It does us no good to confront these foreign raiders in battle if the ground we fight upon is unsteady and precarious. First things first! I will give you 500 gold as a gesture of goodwill. More will await you based upon what you find in the hills. Then, we will discuss the matter of the raiders. This will be a profitable venture for you, I can assure you. I commend you for your bravery in this, and my people will breathe a sigh of relief when this is over."

NOTE: The first terrible quake the player characters experience erupts as the king speaks to the adventuring party. Suddenly the tall hill and the entire fortress rumbles and vibrates uncontrollably. Everyone reacts out of instinct and grabs onto something to stay where they are without falling. Player characters must make a dexterity check or fall to the floor during



the duration of the quake (5 minutes). Various objects fall to the ground, shattering upon contact, servants flee in terror, and the king grips his throne until he is white knuckled, seriousness in his eyes, his court sharing in the annoyance. It feels as though the fortress might slide off of the hillside into the valley below at any moment.

After the quake subsides and the dust clears, an uneasy peace settles over the throne room. The king stares at the adventuring party with an expression more stern than before:

"That was just a small example of our problem. The effects are as far reaching as the sea miles out to the Ninth Wave. Even Ægir and his Nine Daughters are disturbed by these tremors, and ships are tossed about on choppy seas. This did not start until a month ago, and it has only begun to build in intensity with each tremor. If this continues, my fortress will collapse and fall from this precipice, and there will be nothing left of Eucia. Nothing! This cannot be allowed to continue. Find the source of the quakes and the demonic noises in the hills before there is nothing left of my realm.

Do you make an oath of the rings to do this task for me strangers?"

If so, one of the king's elderly advisors steps forward from the shadows holding a richly decorated red case. Within, there are

several richly etched Nordic styled rings crafted out of gold (see ‘Codex Nordica’ Chapter Four) which are presented to the adventurers.

King Hrólfr stands and displays his own ring-covered right hand to them:

“By taking these rings, you swear unto me, King Hrólfr Fagriðsson of Eucia, that you will serve me until death takes you, or your mission is completed. You also swear, to be my vassals in arms. While in my retinue, if the need arises, you will fight for Eucia if the time of your ring oath is not yet fulfilled. By these words I do swear.”

The king and his court wait as the adventuring party (hopefully) repeat and swear the ring oath. If they refuse, they will receive no benefits from the kingdom. Henceforth, they will be treated as outcasts. Their efforts thus far will be forfeit, regardless of how grand and magnificent.

RING OATH SWORN & JOURNEY BEGUN

Once the Ring Oath is made, the King will have his servants begin to escort the adventuring party out of the fortress. They will be provided with necessary supplies, horses, etc and will be sent with them beyond the fortress without another word from the king. They will be given their payment in heavy wooden chests to make it easier to take with them.

The king’s business with the adventuring party is over for now. The after-effects from the quake are obvious. Fires, smoke, fallen homes, split earth, and suffering people are evident. The villagers gaze up at the adventuring party with mixed expressions of fear, hope, and anxiety as they pass through the large village. The shadow of the king’s fortress falls over the village and dust and smoke hangs heavy in the blue skies

To the south, beyond the village and the surrounding fields, are the distant grassy hilltops that hint at their destination – the Hills of Ormr. Guard towers and earthen ramparts protect the village from all directions, while scores of guards patrol the area. This region seems relatively safe from potential raids.

It takes a good amount of time to make it through the large village before finally reaching the countryside. The smoke from distant fires can be seen near the hills. The fires are scattered and hard to discern and could be the result of either the quakes or the raiders.

THE VILLAGE OF GLÚMR

The large village of Glúmr, named for its forgotten founder, is spread out over the high precipice of Kongensborg and is populated by several thousand.

The village has seen many rulers come and go since the first Eucian lord was crowned. The people have remained the same, though their loyalties were made to change by necessity with the shifting monarchies.

Since the start of Hrólfr’s blood-line, the village has been refortified and given his patronage. The village is still vulnerable to a serious, concerted attack by a large force, however. While the king will defend Glúmr within reason, he reserves his best men for the protection of Kongensborg.

Strangers traveling through the village maybe easily victimized by the wandering street urchins and thieves who lurk in the shadows. There are many cut-throats and out-of-work mercenaries in the village as well; most were displaced by the king and harbor a bitter resentment toward him.

This village is the largest urban area in Eucia, and Glúmr’s markets are fairly extensive with plenty of rare goods from distant lands to haggle on or barter for. The layout of the city is organized rather than haphazard, with the main avenue leading to the king’s hilltop fortress. The earthen banks and palisades surround the village from all side.

The local Goðar and völva operate a temple dedicated to the gods. It isn’t rich or elaborate, but the king plans on someday soon dedicating a portion of his wealth to making it truly worthy of the gods. Until then, the ancient, rickety temple-house is deemed a shame and blemish on the kingdom. Some even consider the temple to be an insult to the gods and, quite possibly, a curse in the making.

There is a beer-house in the village where the local rabble and those with questionable morals can be found. It is called *Sleipnir’s Saddle* and is a rough place patroned by many mercenaries-for-hire.

Most of Glúmr’s citizens are farmers or fishermen. Farms lay outside the village in all directions, many with livestock in pens and corrals.

TYRA THE VÖLVA

Riding south into Denmark, away from King Hrólfr’s fort and village, the adventuring party will notice the roads are bare and less traveled. Eucia feels empty and deserted, as though holding its breath. Occasionally, the quakes strike, and dust clouds fill the blue sky on the horizon.

While making their way further south, travelers become fewer and far between until, after many leagues none are found. Finally, the adventuring party encounter a, lone older woman. She is dressed in wildly stitched völva green robes, with a plethora of charms and amulets, greying black hair, a twisted wooden staff and seems to be traveling on her own. Her grey eyes are alight with an intelligent sort of madness, and there are faded tattoos on her skin. When she spies the party, she waves them down as they approach:

“Do you travel to whence the worlds quake and no brave soul dares to tread? Why do you do such a thing? My hermitage shook until I could stay there no longer, and I too was forced to leave. It is in the hills, in the rocks and caves that you seek.”

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Be wary of the terrible freeze and ice that will come in consequence of what you do today. An ashen casket and bones, remember, an ashen casket and bones within! There will be a suffering of the Nine. What has begun is merely an annoyance, but what will be is suffering!

Fierce will be the winds and the lashing ice from the skies.- inescapable. There will be nowhere you can hide once it has begun. Thirteen bones, just thirteen bones...

Now, be off toward the dangers you seek. From it, you will come away changed, and your eyes will look upon the world anew. Trust in your blade and incantations, for that will be all you have in the end. Remember, an ashen casket and its bones, it will be the sole meaning to all you are."

Tyra cackles and wanders off down the road, using her staff and mumbling. She will not elaborate on her words, nor will she clarify her ramblings.

She returns in the last Act of this adventure, however, during the siege of King Hrólf's fort by Skallagrím. She will then reveal the purpose of this adventure and those to follow in the series. Unbeknownst to the players, Tyra is essential to the storyline.

NOTE: The 'ashen casket and bones' refers to the thirteen Runes and their case that was taken from Oðin—the Runes that will possibly set the Fimbulvinter into motion. They are the entire basis for this adventure series. The nature of her words, however, is made to sound like a riddle and is meant to seem more like a reference to a coffin.

A TARGET OF DESTRUCTION

Many leagues after encountering Tyra and her madness, the adventuring party has made their way higher into the hills to discover the smoking, blackened remains of a village. They are able to see and smell its destruction before discovering the smoking village firsthand.

What they see spread over the hillside around them:

- Smoldering remnants of homes and people left where they fell, blackened and charred.
- Butchered livestock and horses with their entrails strewn about the earth. It appears that someone, or something, may have been gnawing on the remains.
- Children and elderly slaughtered mercilessly.
- Very little appears to have been looted. Food stores and items of value have been left behind.

This attack is not the style of any known enemies of the Danes or of those from the south or beyond the seas. It is monstrous in nature and appears to be killing for killing's sake only.

The tracks left by the attackers lead down towards the Hills of Ormr where the hovering dust clouds hang and the quakes

originate. It is obvious that the raiders did not care to hide their tracks after committing these atrocities.

The distant smoke from other villages can be viewed from this one in the region. It can be assumed they have suffered the same fate of this village. Counted, there are a dozen or more.

AMBUSH OF RIVALS

While on the journey towards the Hills of Ormr, the adventures trek into a slightly forested lowland region of Eucia. The party will unknowingly find themselves in the territories of a rival kingdom, the Gauti. The Gauti will be just as bothered by the raids and quakes caused by Skallagrím and looking for answers as well. As the adventurers travel towards the Hills of Ormr, King Finna Sigfrðrsson, of the Gauti, has an ambush party waiting in the hills for anyone that dares to cross into his territory.

Twenty men, armed and ready, lay in wait in the foliage on either side of the trail expecting the monstrous raiders of Skallagrím. King Finna's men will leap from the wilds intending harm unless they are stopped.

FINNA'S WARRIORS *X 20 (They are 3rd level fighters with vital statistics of HD 3d10, AC 13, and HP 30. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by spear (d6), battle-axe (d8), and dagger (d4).)*

Finna's men will prefer to capture the adventurers, disarm them and bind them by using ropes and shackles. Then, they will be taken to speak with King Finna, personally, about the strange calamities occurring in Denmark.

The adventurers will be taken to King Finna's fortress deep in the rival kingdom's land. The land of the Gauti is a lightly forested wilderness with rolling hills and many lakes and bogs. The distant tremors from the Hills of Ormr continue, regardless, and each time causes fear in the warriors.

DREKERHÖL – THE DRAGON'S HALL

King Finna resides in a magnificent fortress atop a hillside, heavily influenced by draconic imagery. Scales, teeth, and horns from many dragons intertwined are depicted in the architecture of this massive fortress. It stands alone, the region devoid of any local villages.

Even in this region, many miles beyond Eucia and the Hills of Ormr, dust clouds hover over the landscape as a result of the quakes. The adventurers will be led up through the fortress's gates and into Drekerhöl by the warriors. Still bound, they will be tossed to the floor before the king's throne in.

King Finna is a younger ruler, with long reddish hair, dressed in fine clothes. His brutish warriors and court advisors surround him in the great hall. The hearth fire is lit and roaring, his priestesses mumble worriedly to one side, and the servants scamper about in the shadows. The king will gaze down on the adventuring party in a matter-of-fact manner and speak to them:

"My men tell me that you are not with the raiders that have been harassing the land and the surrounding kingdoms. I am King Finna Sigfrøðrsson, descendant of Týr, and our kingdom has a problem. My captain believes you might have the answer to the quakes and the dark raiders. Who are you?"

NOTE: If the adventurers are hostile or foul-tempered towards the king, he will order his men to drag them below to a torture chamber (a dank, nearly lightless cell) to be ruthlessly beaten until they reveal what they know. If they are agreeable, the king has other offers to make with them.

"I will compensate you well in gold and silver if you help me solve these problems that disrupt Gauti. I will pay you even more if you work your way into the trust of King Hrólfr of Eucia. Find a way into his company, and make his realm vulnerable to attack. Then, I can take advantage of this weakness and finally see that Eucia destroyed. You see, my ancestors once ruled that land when it was just a rabble of disorganized tribes, and then they rose up and fought back. Hrólfr's grandfather led the uprising and drove us out. I will pay you handsomely to ensure that Eucia falls, so that Gauti might reclaim what was once ours long ago.

I will have a company of men waiting in the distant hills from their fort at Kongensborg, and when the signal is given, they can attack. My warriors will take the king from his throne and dispose of the rest of the Eucians, transforming the fort into a coastal outpost for Gauti. Upon completion of this task, I will reward you all a hundred pounds of gold and a place of trust in my kingdom."

NOTE: There are consequences for breaking a ring oath. In this case if the party breaks the ring oath to King Hrólfr of Eucia refer to the Codex Nordica.

TORTURING THE ADVENTURERS

If they are taken below to be tortured, they will be shackled by their wrists to hang in the chamber. It will not be long before King Finna's royal torturer arrives. He is a black garbed man in a monstrous mask with many wicked looking tools. One by one, he will torture the adventuring party, using sharp points, blades and tightening devices on fingers, joints and toes for endless hours.

This torture will cause d20 damage to each party member being maltreated for each hour until they talk (if they talk). King Finna will arrive often to ask them if they work for King Hrólfr, what they know, etc. He will gloat over their pain and make sure they know he is the one in charge. This torture will persist for what seems like days until death takes them, or they answer the king's questions.

They will only be freed if they talk or escape from this dire situation. Escaping will require plenty of luck and action. Drekerhöl has over 120 warriors and 50 servants in addition to the royal family inside its walls. The CK can arrange a crafty and tense side series of adventures whereupon the adventuring party fight their way out of Drekerhöl. King Finna will forever be an enemy if they return to northern Denmark, or make their presence known in the North Sea again. If he is crossed and is aware of their presence near his territory, he will hire mercenary Viking bands to hunt them down.

VALLEY OF THE SKULL STONES

Because the adventurers likely do not know the geography or lay of the land about Gauti or Eucia, it will be difficult to escape and find their way back to Eucia. King Finna's men took them by a route that was common (to them), and avoided the dreaded Valley of the Skull Stones.

This gloomy, rocky valley sits between several Danish kingdoms and has been controlled by two Jötnar since the time of the Æsir-Vanir War. No man has been brave enough (or strong enough) to slay them, and they have somehow been managed to avoid Þórr the Giant-Slayer.

Fasti and Gasti are brothers and have enslaved or fed on mortals that have wandered too close to their valley for a millennium. Now, the low areas are littered with the dry, broken bones of those victims, the skulls nicely set aside on higher stones as trophies in a gruesome display. The skulls are set as far as the eye can see, their paleness a stark contrast against the dark rock. The giant brothers are extremely protective about their skull collection. If the skulls are broken or damaged, they will panic and lose their concentration quickly.

Both Finna and Hrólfr have sent many men to their deaths over the years trying to rid the valley of the giants to no avail. They have both given up on trying to slay the Jötnar and have accepted it as fruitless endeavor. Each king hopes that slayers will come along and take care of their mutual problem or, perhaps, that the thunder god finally make his rounds to the region.

In one section of the dark rock valley are prisoners, primarily human, crammed by the dozens into a large cage. They are filthy and terrified, awaiting their awful fate—being eaten by the brothers. (The wooden cage door is bolted in place and will require a strength of 18 or higher to pry the lock open and free the prisoners.) These captives come from many regions in Denmark and beyond and will be more than happy to be freed by the adventurers. Sadly, most are poor commoners and cannot reward them with anything more than words and tears. There may be a few in the mob that are of noble status who could provide proper compensation should they be freed, if the CK wishes to add that extra element to the story. In addition, these captives can also be a collection of NPCs able to add even more to story if the CK feels the need.

Unfortunately, until the Jötnar are dealt with, the huddled prisoners will be completely useless. The Valley of the Skull Stones

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is only a quarter of a mile in length and in width as well, a mere fissure in the landscape in this part of Denmark. Neither Eucia nor Gauti openly contest their borders here. They would rather let the giants be the responsibility of their rival.

Fasti and Gasti both have engineered a road to cut through their valley to deceive travelers into making their way, unknowingly, into their trap. They will toss a massive, heavy weighted net onto their victims to take them (requires a dexterity check to escape). The net must take 40 HP to break out of it in places.

Gasti will boom aloud:

“Look at what we have here Fasti--strangers in our home. They have a different smell, which means they must taste different too. We will crush them, cook them and taste them before the others. I hate picking the metal bits from their squishy little bodies, though.”

Fasti grunts and nods and tries to drag the netted victims towards him. Both giants have deadly weapons by their sides and will use them if needed.

GASTI (He is a chaotic evil jötnar with HD 9d8, AC 17, and HP 72. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by 2 Fist (d8) and two-handed ax (d12). His abilities are rock throwing, and twilight vision.)

FASTI (He is a chaotic evil jötnar with HD 9d8, AC 17, and HP 72. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by 2 fist (d8) and club (d6+1). His abilities are rock throwing and twilight vision.)

If the giants are slain, their reward will be fairly high with the two kings. King Hrólf will pay 300 gold per giant while King Finna will pay 600. Each king must have proof brought back to

them that these giants are slain, proof that is not easily falsified (i.e. a giant’s severed head, etc).

THE HILLS OF ORMR

Quakes stir the region again, requiring everyone to do another dexterity check or fall to the ground in the chaos. Now that the adventuring party is close they can hear the monstrous roars echo from the rocky hills. These quakes jar the ground and split the earth until it seems that it will swallow up everything in sight if it continues.

Rocks tumble to the ground and are pulverized in the quakes, and the looming hills hum with a raging and mysterious fury. After a few minutes, the shaking subsides and everything is peaceful again in the hills.

The monstrous roars remain for a time, and they seem to echo, never sounding clear, but always resounding off of the earth and stones around the adventurers. A careful investigation of the rubble strewn hills reveals the broken bodies of men and half-men buried under the stones and earth scattered about. They number in the dozens and are ghastly in appearance. They do not appear to be fully human (these men are Troll blooded, see statistics). It appears they have been slain by natural causes during the violent quakes and upheavals in the area and not through battle.

These troll-men are garbed as Viking raiders, with mail shirts, iron helms, cloaks, trousers, round wooden shields, and swords. They have scaly, crusty, dark mottled faces with fangs and reptilian eyes. Somewhere beyond this area bestial grunts can be heard by more of these troll-men, and the aftershocks of the quake can still be felt, causing rocks to continue tumbling around them from the hills.

CAMP OF TROLL-MEN RAIDERS

Over the next hill sits a ramshackle campsite of these strange, bestial men (24). The quakes have nearly toppled the tents and the adjoining structures to the temporary settlement. Due to the constant quakes, the ground has been made unsteady and hard to traverse easily. Stealth will be nearly impossible.

The troll-men have a cooking pot over a fire, boiling human body parts into a stew. Many are relaxing with their guard down. They appear to have no spell-casters in the group, only these brutish raiders.

The camp sits in a small valley of rubble and dust with a trail leading to a set of larger, rockier hills (where Jörmunganðr's tail end is found). It will take a stealthy assault to surprise these men or just a straightforward attack.

TROLL-MEN RAIDERS *X 24 (These 2nd level chaotic evil fighters' vital statistics are HD 2d10, AC 13, and HP 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by broadsword (2d4+3), battle-axe (d8+3), 2 claw (d4), and bite (2d6). Their abilities are rend, darkvision (60 ft.), twilight vision, and regeneration 2.)*

If the battle with the troll-men of Skallagrímr either takes too long (longer than 15-20 rounds), or is too loud it will draw in the attention of the rest of his men that guard the cave where the World Serpent's tail lies. They will arrive in d8 turns ready for battle.

THE WORM'S CAVE

After the bloody battle with the monstrous men, the evidence and tracks lead from the valley out towards several rocky, looming hills where the destruction is far worse in scale than anywhere else.

Slain troll-men and boulders lie everywhere in the area about the entrance to a large cave. The destruction here is unmistakable and shocking, but the cause of death is difficult to discern. Another powerful quake hits, requiring another dexterity check with the same results if failed. Terrifying roars thunder from inside the cave, mixed with the grunts and mutterings of men. The world rumbles terribly for a long time and stones fall and shatter, causing dust to rise in the aftermath.

Though the quakes end, the roars do not. Rather, they continue, angry and laced with pain. The sounds are coming from deep within the cave. If the adventurers make their way into the cavern amid the destruction, what they find will be profound and disturbing:

- Multiple remains of slain, crushed and mashed troll-men are scattered about the large rocky cavern. They are flattened until nothing is left but a gory, pulpy mess.
- A group of living troll-men (12), have rigged a complex metal, wooden and rope-bound harness around a massive, dark green, scaly snake-like tentacle that juts out of the earth. It struggles and twists and is covered in black spines and swirly scales. Bloody, meaty chunks have been hacked

out of its mass by the troll-men until bone is exposed. The troll-men restrain it as they continue to butcher the tail. It is unable to escape or to defend itself.

- As the adventurers arrive, the troll-men hack another large chunk out of the scaly tentacle, causing the cavern to quake again and a deafening roar that comes from deep in the earth itself. This requires both a dexterity check to stand and a constitution check or lose hearing for d12 turns. This quake will make the battle against the troll-men difficult for obvious reasons.

The troll-men will attack the adventurers on sight, being forced to release the tail of Jörmunganðr.

NOTE: During this battle Jörmunganðr's tail will lash about the cavern wildly in fury. Each turn, there is a chance that it will strike one of the adventurers as they face the troll-men (or the NPCs as well). For the player characters, this chance is rolled first before any attack, spell or action, and is a 2 or less on a d10. If struck, they will take 5d6 damage on impact from the tail end but only due to it being restrained by the harness. If freed, it will do 10d6 damage instead.

There is no way the player characters would know the origin of the strange, monstrous tentacle or that it has anything to do with the World Serpent or any plot of Angrboða. It would be obvious that it belongs to something much larger and wishes to be freed.

Once the battle with the troll-men is over, if Jörmunganðr's tail is released from its harness and let go, it will slither back into the earth and away, leaving a steamy, bloody trail.

After this, the quakes will end (*until Ragnarök*), and the troll witch's malicious plot, though bungled by a wise völva's spirit, is over with elsewhere in the Nine Worlds. Unknown to the adventurers, Óðin has taken his attentions away from his feasting Einharjar in Valhöll and has sent his two ravens Huginn and Muninn to scout the worlds for the cause of the tremors.

Now the first piece of the mystery is in place. Who are these raiders? Why were they torturing this serpent's tail and causing quakes? Why are they destroying the innocent, and who sent them?

Taking evidence from the troll-men's camp and from the words of the king, the party knows the raiders have come from the northern coasts. Logically, their ships must be hidden in the rocky coves about twenty leagues distant. This places them close to the king's fort and villages in the north. Logically, the loss of contact between the troll-men in the hills and their kinsmen at the coasts will be noticed soon, and this forces the others to act. It will take the rest of the day to make the trip to reach the coasts and deal with the other monstrous men before they begin to respond to what happened here in the Hills of Ormr.

NOTE: If the player characters do choose to camp one night and take their time to regain their strength from this situation, it will give the three longships of remaining raiders time to realize what has happened. They will then start to pillage and burn the

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villages along the coasts near King Hrólfr's fortress in Eucia, stirring chaos in vengeance, following Captain Skallagrím's secondary orders to harry the peoples of Denmark.

ACT 2: LONGBOATS NO LONGER

THE TREK TO THE ÆGIRSJÓ

The ride to the North Sea coast will take 4-5 hours. Denmark will fall into peace after Jörmunganðr's release for a time. All roads to the sea are clear and unimpeded as this lull between dark storms sent from another world exists. With advice, the adventuring party is taken many miles around the boggy region and to the shore. The bogs are deemed a shortcut from the coasts to Kongensborg but are rarely used day or night due to the dangers within.

It requires scouting and intelligence checks (CL: 3) to spot the three dark longships hidden in the rocky coves among the crashing waves during the day, at night it is more difficult (CL: 5). Their dark forms are camouflaged against the waters and rocks.

Skallagrím's men have guards posted on each high rocky ridge (about nine, total) on the coast day and night. These ships are classified as Knörr craft in design, the typical open style 'Viking' longship, but possess touches from another world. A fire pot burns in each of the three ships to keep the men and their monstrous help warm, but that is the only light in view.

As with most ships, these are made to be fire-proofed, but this is limited and does not work as well as planned. They can be ignited, if done well. Fire wizards, sent to guide the crude raiders are one to each ship and are the leaders. They are named Ingi, Illfúss and Illugi. Each of these half-Eldjötmar wizards work for their true master Hel and not for Skallagrím (as will the other fire-wizards to appear during the siege of the king's fort in Act 3 of this adventure).

Each longboat is moored out to sea on long thick, corded ropes (2) and anchored by heavy bronze weights in the cove, their sail are tied up and oars put away. There is barely enough manpower left to man two ships after the battle in the Hills of Ormr. There are about five raiders per boat with a few to spare on guard in the ridges on the coast. The wizards stay aboard the ships by the fires and await word from their scouts from the Hills of Ormr.

HALF-ELDJÖTNAR FIRE-WIZARDS X 3

(These 5th level chaotic evil wizards' vital statistics' are HD 5d4, AC 11, and HP 20. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by long-spear (d8). Their abilities are immunity to fire (full), twilight vision and vulnerability to cold. Spells, 0 level: dancing lights, endure elements, ghost sound, mage hand, light; 1st level: burning hands, jump, shocking grasp, spider climb, 2nd level: continual flame, pyrotechnics, 3rd level: fireball.)

TROLL-MEN RAIDERS X 15 (These 2nd level chaotic evil fighters' vital statistics are HD 2d10, AC 13, and HP 20. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by broadsword (2d4+3), battle-axe (d8+3), 2 claw (d4), and bite (2d6). Their abilities are rend, darkvision (60 ft.), and rwillight vision, and regeneration 2.)

NOTE: During this fierce battle, on land and/or sea, one of the Eldjötmar wizards will speak to the adventuring party in a dire and cautious tone:

"What you have done will be noticed. Your folly will be seen by others' eyes in another world, and they will come on swift keels to avenge us. They will put an end to your meddling. Our leader, Skallagrím, shall come, and when he does he will not be alone. He will bring the fiercest of Helheimr to his aid and raze what is left of this mortal kingdom to the ground until nothing remains.

Skallagrím's rage knows no bounds, and there is nowhere you can hide. There are no walls that can protect you from his wrath. He will come soon, and when he does you will be erased from the dirt of Miðgarðr and its memory!"

The best solution is to slay them all and burn and sink the ships in the bay leaving no trace of them. Taking one captive for questioning and returning to King Hrólfr's hall may not be the best plan as the wizard will exploit the fortress before he assaults it.

THE BOGLANDS OF NÖRDEUCIA

The ride to the king's hall feels tense knowing that Skallagrím will come soon with his hordes, seeking revenge. It will take four or more hours to ride to King Hrólfr's fort from the coast using the normal route and time is of the essence.

A vast, hilly boggy region in Denmark stands before them. A thick, oozy fog drifts about this eerie region over the grassy hills and through the crooked trees. Passing through the boglands would require scarcely a few hours compared to the longer ride up the coast. It would be nearly a straight ride through the accursed region.

It won't take long for Skallagrím to notice what has transpired in Miðgarðr. It would be a matter of hours before he sends his necromancers to begin stirring the lands of Eucia to awaken from its darkest slumber and turn on its inhabitants. This will herald his coming soon (within 24 hours).

For the adventurers to maneuver carefully through the swampy hills they will need to be silent and do as little as possible. This will require them to do so for nearly eight leagues undisturbed by any temptation. This is assuming they would be even be aware of the dangers.

There are many supernatural temptations along the way in the bogs that may draw in and endanger the wandering adventurers.

The CK can decide when to use them on the journey through the dark, misty bogs:

- 1 IRRBLOSS:** From the thick swirling mists of the forested bogs, a call for help sounds. The voices of women and children can be heard, combined with ominous splashes. These noises will be dramatic and heart wrenching, inspiring anyone seeking to do right to find them and rescue them, if possible. Unfortunately, these are the **WILL O' WISPS** (d4) which will attempt to drown the would-be heroes in the bogs. *These chaotic neutral spirits' vital statistics are HD 6d8, AC 25, and HP 48. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by Icy Touch (d8). Their abilities are Immunity to magic and mist form.*
- 2 BØYG:** Within a confined pass of dense shrubs sits a hellish poisonous bøyg that will pounce on the vulnerable. It will constrict and bite to devour the prey. Unless it has been wounded within 75% of its Hit Points, it will remain and slay and eat as many victims and their animals as possible. *This chaotic evil monster's vital statistics are HD 3d12, AC 16 and HP 36. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks by bite (3d10). Its ability is constrict.*
- 3 VÆTTIR:** Ghostly white forms flutter about in the shadows and mists from the trees and bogs, always in the corner of sight. They nearly appear human-like at times but are gone in a second. The darker and more shadowy areas the adventurers wander into, the closer the vættir come to endangering them before they finally give in and assault them. They are the vengeful spirits of those sacrificed to the bogs and they will drag the victims into the waters to their doom. *These chaotic neutral spirits' vital statistics are HD 4d6, AC 15, and HP 24. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by Spear (d6), battle-ax (d8) and Broadsword (2d4). Their abilities are evade detection.*
- 4 HAUGBUI:** On the side of the trail in the mists sits a large barrow mound, its old stone door missing. A large, glittering tomb shimmers inside the mound. It is very easily noticeable. Within, are two ancient dead chiefs, from a time before the Danes, which are now viciously guarding their wealth inside. *These neutral evil spirits' vital statistics are HD 2d8, AC 12, and HP 16. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by slam (d8). Their abilities are Slow (-2 on initiative rolls).*

Leaving the terrible bogs behind, the adventurers see the fortress of King Hrólfr Fagriðsson a few miles on the horizon.

ARRIVING AT KONGENSBORG

The surrounding, defensible village and its peoples come into view as the adventuring party ride to Kongensborg. King Hrólfr's fort atop the rocky hill stands tall over the landscape. The gates into the village are opened to the adventurers without difficulty. Many of the peasants recognize them and cheer, knowing the mysterious quakes are over. The adventuring party are followed to the pathway leading up to the fort with celebration.

Two large ravens (Huginn and Muninn) soar in the skies above as the adventuring party enter the fort's gates. They squawk and glide before perching ominously on the walls of the fort. They both gaze down intelligently and carefully at the adventurers as they ride into the courtyard of the fort.

Once the adventurers' horses are taken from them by servants, Óðin's ravens fly away southwards towards the Hills of Ormr. If watched, there is a strangeness about how the two abnormally massive ravens interact, chatter, and move. It won't be obvious to the fledgling adventurers/players that these birds are in fact the Allfather's ravens sent straight from Ásgarðr.

Upon making their way into the grand timber and stone hall of the king, the adventurers notice several ill omens:

- One servant accidentally sets himself on fire with pitch as he was using it to oil various utensils. The fire grew so rapidly that the servant was consumed and was unable to be saved.
- A guard slipped from his post on a stair step, tumbling to his death.
- Óðin's ravens have been spotted in Kongensborg and chaos ensues.
- King Hrólfr's twelve völvu gather in his court, agitated and mumbling and with their magic knots and ropes in hand; the arrival of a 13th, Tyra, spooks the rest.

THE LATE HOUR OF REWARD

With the plethora of terrible omens following the adventurers into Kongensborg, the king was called to his hall to meet with the victorious adventurers. Throughout the fort, the servants, guards and citizens are unnerved by the omens.

King Hrólfr and his retinue arrive, groggy, but pleased to find the adventurers to hear their story of what happened in the last few days. The king smiles to them, goblet of mead in hand and speaks:

"I am pleased to see you have completed your quest and saved the realm from its dangers. I will kindly pay you a thousand gold if you request, or perhaps steeds, or even a ship from my fleet as a reward? You have earned it and will need it for future quests.

Tell me of what you have seen and learned in my lands. I need to know what horrors shook my kingdom and bled my people dry."

The king and his people will listen intently, hanging on their every word.

NOTE: Once the king is informed about Skallagrím's coming, a great concern grows and anxiety builds. His guards tense and place their hands on their swords, glancing at him.

King Hrólfr stares at the adventurers, pensive and worried:

“You say that the leader of these otherworldly invaders is coming here to exact revenge? A wizard told you this? I would give you the option of taking the rest of your reward and your leave of my kingdom, but you have made your Ring Oath. It has yet to be fulfilled.

You have confronted these monstrous men and their sorcery. You know what to expect. When they come I will hold you responsible for aiding us in the defense of Kongensborg against them. Only then shall you be free of your Ring Oath and service to me. Eucia will be greatly indebted to you.

Triple the watch. Rally my warriors and muster the rest to come to Kongensborg before the enemy arrives. We rest peacefully this night, if the gods will it, and then we finish this, what these creatures have started.”

From the shadows, the völva Tyra, crazy eyed and staggering, comes forward with her knotted rope in hand. She laughs grimly to the gathering:

“They are a ruse sent from Hel and nothing more. You and your kingdom are just convenient for a purpose beyond your own understanding. For an ashen casket full of thirteen bones that is all, and that was lost. Sent to tumble...

The earth shook for a dire purpose, and it shook many times across many worlds and it was for a purpose. Scattered was that purpose, lost in the Nine, and now the Nine shall not suffer for a time.

Skallagrímur is a pawn but you, King, are less of one in the sleeping witch’s scheme. What happens tomorrow will set the path towards seeking the missing bones taken from the Hall of the Slain.

Speak to me once more, if you survive the slaughter to come, and I shall tell you whence you must sojourn to find the first of these missing bones.”

Tyra’s words cast the king’s hall into silence. Her eyes are set on the adventurers as she speaks her last words. Having said her piece, Tyra melts away into the shadows of the king’s court, leaving it unsettled by her words.

King Hrólfr sits quietly, head resting on his hand brooding and confused. He nods to his captain of the guard, who leaves with men down a corridor. A frantic activity grows in Kongensborg in minutes.

The king’s advisors mumble, worriedly, behind him. The king continues speaking to the adventuring party:

“You will be given guest quarters, fed, bathed and treated as dignitaries in my hall. You have earned it. I believe you are crucial to what is happening and must remain with us. After we have dealt with this Skallagrímur, you can cast off your rings and be rewarded by my court treasurer...if we survive.

I suggest you rest well tonight and prepare for what may come. If Hel is involved, then we can expect terrible things and dark dreams. I will go to my chambers to be with my family, pray to the gods, and prepare for battle. Good evening.”

The king nods and leaves the hall with his retinue. Once the king is gone, servants and guards will escort the adventuring party to their chambers.

NIGHT OF MANY DARK DRAMAS

Hel will send many awful things to Kongensborg and its village of Glúmr to weaken and disrupt their rest for the next day. The goddess is bitter that the völva were able to foresee the future so thoroughly, laying waste to her careful plans. Now, in Helheimr, she summons many spirits and demons to Miðgarðr, aware that the adventuring party’s role in future events may thwart her plans altogether, unless they are stopped.

QUEEN KÁTA’S SEDUCTION

Due to Hel’s enchantments, Queen Káta, the statuesque and beautiful queen of King Hrólfr will creep forth late at night from her chambers to seduce one of the adventurers, male or female. It will be the player character with the highest Charisma attribute.

The queen, dressed only in her nightgown, will find her way to the adventurer’s chamber and lure him or her to a night of bliss. This is not the actual queen however but a Vardøger taking her place meaning that she has been eliminated by the evil shapeshifter (her body lies hidden somewhere in the flour mill store room).

Queen Káta’s copy will first try to seduce one of the player characters, then make an ‘accidental’ scene by being caught in the act by the servants or guards of the king. This will cause distrust and disharmony between the king and the adventuring party before the attack by Skallagrímur.

If, for some reason, the Vardøger manages to slay its seduced victim, or any of the adventuring party, it will assume their form and take on their character completely (use their attributes, etc).

The Vardøger will also try to create animosity among the adventuring party as well by using her queenly authority. She will do her best to confuse and strain relations.

The CK can make this situation as bad as he envisions based on the player characters present. This is a great opportunity to bring out many issues within the group and have them ‘explode’ in the king’s hall. It is an opportunity to provide some brilliant role-playing experiences.

VARDÖGER (*This chaotic evil doppelgänger’s vital statistics are HD 2d6, AC 10, HP 12. Its primary attributes are mental. Its attacks are by poisoned dagger (d4) Level 3 poison. Its abilities are doppelgänger.*)

HEL’S NIGHTMARE

Hel even has something in store for those determined enough to sleep and not wander the fort, hall or village that night. Her anger knows no bounds. In the grand scheme of things, she views the player characters as a minor annoyance and little more.

In her arrogance, Hel assumes that between her influences and Skallagrím’s assault the next day, the adventuring party will be slain and no longer a problem. From Niflheimr’s dismal depths and with the guidance of Angrboða, the nightmarish vision that will flood the slumbering adventurers’ minds will be thus:



Rolling, swirling dark clouds drop onto Miðgarðr from the skies. Where they fall, only darkness follows and all lights are extinguished. The sun is blotted out, fires are snuffed and the vision of man and beast are gone.

Entire villages and lands are engulfed by this undulating cloud. People flee from it and fight it, but it is too swift and ever reaching in its grasp. Each breeze and gust of air pushes it further and faster over the land until no one is safe.

Bleached bones are all that remain when the cloud recedes. From far inside the gloom, the groans of the lifeless echo. Their ghostly wails cover the countryside as the roiling clouds continue on their path.

Fortresses are swallowed by the life-seeking darkness, and only death is left in its wake. Miðgarðr trembles, and the dead begin to rise. A pale light shines in their eyes as they stand and organize by the thousands. The skeleton forces assemble in the wake of the hungry blackness.

Deep inside the blackness a pair of fiery eyes stand tall and a woman’s laughter can be heard, snide and wicked.

In the swirling gloom and chaos, a dark, limpid seashore comes into view. Dimly lit, a large monstrous Dragon-Ship is moored by a rope of slimy, human entrails. The ship appears...different in make. It is composed of millions of fingernails, browned and nicked with age, scale-like in form across the ghastly frame. Inside the hull, a thump occurs followed by tortured groans.

Among these tortured, ghostly voices, a few can be discerned. The voices of the adventuring party can be heard clearly. They are begging for help and freedom from this bondage in Helheimr, in the fell hold of Naglfar.

This nightmare will jar the sleeping adventurers awake and will thwart any attempt to rest. Hel’s haunting laughter and glaring eyes will linger to always bother those affected by this nightmare. This will continue into future modules in the series.

SPECTERS FROM NIFLHEIMR

At some point in the night, after the rest of Hel’s machinations were dealt with and survived, she will send her ghostly horrors to terrorize the corridors and chambers of Kongensborg. The Vættir (10) will flitter in the shadowy, torch-lit spaces in the old wooden hall of King Hrólfir with the intention to disturb and break whatever morale might be left before tomorrow’s showdown with Skallagrím.

The mischievously intent Vættir will fly up through Kongensborg’s well, located in the bottommost level of the fort and drift their way about the fortress to the main hall. They will seek out the adventurers, the king, his family, and his personal warrior retinue, to tire and terrify them.

It will take someone with cleric or priestly powers/spells to banish or drive away these spirits. If not, they will continue to appear and bother, horrify, and evade detection, until dawn.

These chaotic neutral spirits' vital statistics are HD 4d6, AC 15, and HP 24. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by spear (d6), battle-ax (d8) and broadsword (2d4). Their abilities are evade detection.

HEL'S HORRORS IN GLÚMR

If the adventurers want to spend the evening in the village below, Hel has plans there as well. She is thorough in her diabolical plans to ensure that her troll-man captain and his attacking forces will succeed.

SLEIPNIR'S SADDLE

As most likely, the adventurers may spend the evening in the beer-house carousing and listening to the gossip of the locals. Hel is aware of this and will use it to her advantage. She will infiltrate the most vile and weakest in the establishment.

These pawns of her being:

ALARR THE CUTTER: *He is a large, hairy mercenary with no scruples. He will be armed with a long Sæax sword taken from the lowland Frisians. Alarr is garbed in hides, scale armor, with a round shield and typical clothing for a Nordic warrior. Hel has promised him the adventurers' money from King Hrólfr, and told him where they have hid it as well, if he can take them down by force. Alarr is a practicing Berserker, though not a 'professional' one, and he will happily use this to his advantage in hewing down the adventurers if given the chance. Alarr is a 2nd level Chaotic Neutral Berserker with HD 2d12, AC 13, and HP 24. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by Sæax/Broadsword (2d4) and Battle-Ax (d8). His abilities are Oðin's Fury, Cleave Foe, Disarm Enemy, and the Speed of Oðin.*

VÁLI: *He is a wormy, sneaky little man. Váli is a great deceiver that uses the strangers' lack of knowledge to his advantage. He is a rogue by nature and incapable of physically harming anyone, but he will resort to tricks, poison and manipulation if he must. He is dressed in a non-descript manner with common clothing, dark and drab, to blend in easily. Váli will try to gain the adventurers' trust in the beer-house, and if that fails he will shadow them back to Kongensborg and make his way inside. Once there, he will set about to sabotage their efforts against Skallagrímr using every cunning trick he can muster. (Examples, opening gates/entrances to Skallagrímr's forces during the siege, setting fires, poisoning the water/food, foiling the adventurers' own plans and stratagems if he knows of them, etc.) Váli is a 3rd level Chaotic Neutral rogue with HD 3d6, AC 11, and HP 18. His primary attributes are physical. He attacks by Bola (d4), dagger (d4) Poison*

Level 2, and Shortbow (d6). His abilities are Back Attack, Cant, Climb, Decipher, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Pick Pocket, and Traps.

BORGA THE BUTCHER: *She is an exiled and shamed shieldmaiden from Sweden that seeks to redeem her honor. She is bitter and wrathful, blaming her shame on the gods and the wyrds, rejecting them all. In a dream, Hel told her how she could redeem herself. To do this she must find the adventuring party, join with them somehow, befriend them if possible, and then plant herself within King Hrólfr's hall before Skallagrímr's assault. Once the attack begins, her goal is to aid Skallagrímr in the most brutal way possible during the siege. Only then will she earn her place in Valhöll. If she fails, she will be doomed to end up in Niflheimr for her past shame. Borga does not care which side she fights for in this, but once she chooses, nothing will change her mind. Borga is a 3rd level Chaotic Neutral fighter with a HD 3d10, AC 15, and HP 30. Her primary attributes are physical. She attacks by Longsword (d8) and Piercing Ax (d8+1). Her abilities are Weapon Specialization: Longsword +1.*

IN THE DARK STREETS

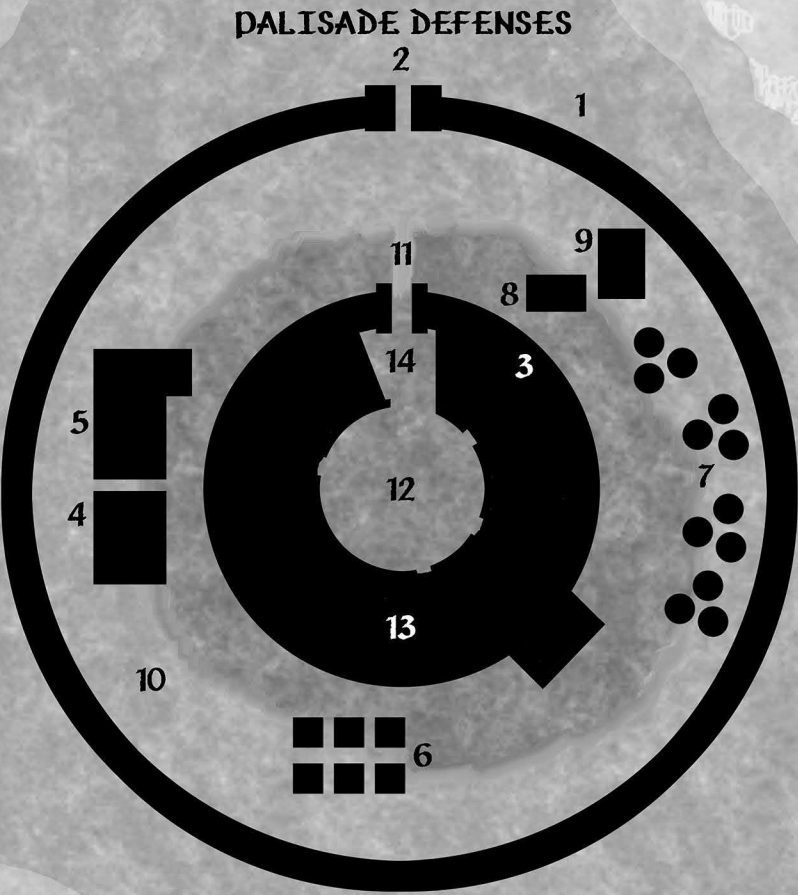
If the adventurers are foolish enough to be wandering the village at night, drunk or unaware, Hel has surprises in store for them there as well. She won't let any option remain unavailable to her. If Sleipnir's Saddle is somehow avoided, but the village is explored, there is another grim situation that she has in mind for them.

Hiding in the shadowed alleys between the stone, thatch and timber homes in many places are scores of her wulvers that rested amid the population in Glúmr to prey on them. By the light of the moon above, they will transform and run about the shadows ready to bring a gruesome death to any who fall in their path.

Hel's wulvers (9) will leap and move with astounding skill in the village to attack the adventuring party from all quarters once they are deemed vulnerable. They will howl, blood-curdling and half-sentient, to the moon as they descend on the adventurers from all sides (and any NPCs that are tagging along to 'join' them and earn their place).

WULVERS X 9 *(These Neutral shapeshifters' vital statistics are HD 4d6, AC 13, and HP 24. Their primary attributes are mental. They attack by bite (2d12), 2 claw (2d8), spear (d6), hand-ax (d6) and sickle (d4). Their abilities are wolf empathy.*

KONGENSBORG



ACT 3: GRIM SKULL'S RAGE

KONGENSBORG: THE KING'S FORT

This is the fairly detailed layout of King Hrólfr's high fort. The main reason this level of detail is provided is for the battle to come. Every nook and cranny, inside and out, of the Danish fort is shown some elaboration in case Skallagrím's siege finds its way there.

This fort is constructed from timber and stone, not mortared. The hillside stands over 150 ft. high from the surrounding countryside and can be seen for miles, even to the coast.

PALISADE DEFENSES: Massive wooden timbers have been placed at an angle outside the outer walls with the ends sharpened to deadly effect. There are dozens of these trunks, large and small, that surround the outer walls for defensive purposes. They will slow a charge and require a dexterity check to overcome. If a 1 is rolled then damage is suffered from the sharpened ends (d12).

- 1 OUTER WALLS:** Tall, 20 ft., wooden walls that roped around the fort with a space of twenty or more feet from the many structures and built up from an earthen bank. A walkway is behind them for the guards to use at all times.
- 2 MAIN GATES:** Built from piled stones and timber with two thick oaken doors and bar locks. Archers are posted here as well as guards with two boiling pots of pitch ready for use. The doors open outwards and have their hinges on opposite sides. This gate is made to be as difficult to enter as possible, unless excessive force is used (battering rams, etc).
- 3 INNER WALLS:** These wooden walls lead to the king's hall and garrison from the main gates. They have a walkway forming a chokepoint. They stand 15 ft. and encircle the fort and keep as a secondary defense. Before them are high, packed earthen banks with skulls and rotting heads of enemies on pikes. This leads to the inner gates and to the inner ward of Kongensborg.
- 4 GUEST STABLE HOUSE:** A long, stone, croft-style structure with a thatch roof that holds guests' steeds, up to thirty at a time.
- 5 ROYAL STABLES:** This large stable house holds the king's and his personal warrior retinue's steeds. It is very nice and spacious.
- 6 SERVANTS' QUARTERS:** These six small square buildings hold the many servants that toil endlessly to serve the royal household. Their entire families live inside these compact buildings and share the space.
- 7 GRANARIES:** These dozen silos hold grains for use in breads and other foods within Kongensborg.
- 8 BLACKSMITH:** The king's smith, Faði, works over the smolder coals in this smoky, hot building day and night.

Faði aspires to make items as worthy as Völundr someday so that his fame is far in the Nordic world.

- 9 ROYAL CARPENTER:** Hákon shapes, hammers, and lathes his wooden crafts for the royal family in this building. He is a gifted and extremely reputable carpenter. His handiwork is seen within Kongensborg and even beyond its walls in other lands and he has earned Faði's dislike.
- 10 LIVESTOCK PENS:** Fenced in and allotted; cattle, swine and chicken are kept for use by the royal household and are maintained by the servants.
- 11 INNER GATES:** These gates are simply two large, oaken doors locked by two massive timber bars but guarded by six armed men and archers. Generally, to get to this gate is difficult enough for most, but during a siege, it would not last against heavy force.
- 12 INNER WARD:** This courtyard enters into the area where the garrison and king's hall lay after passing through the inner walls.
- 13 KING'S HALL:** See Interior Description.
- 14 GARRISON:** See Interior Description.

GARRISON

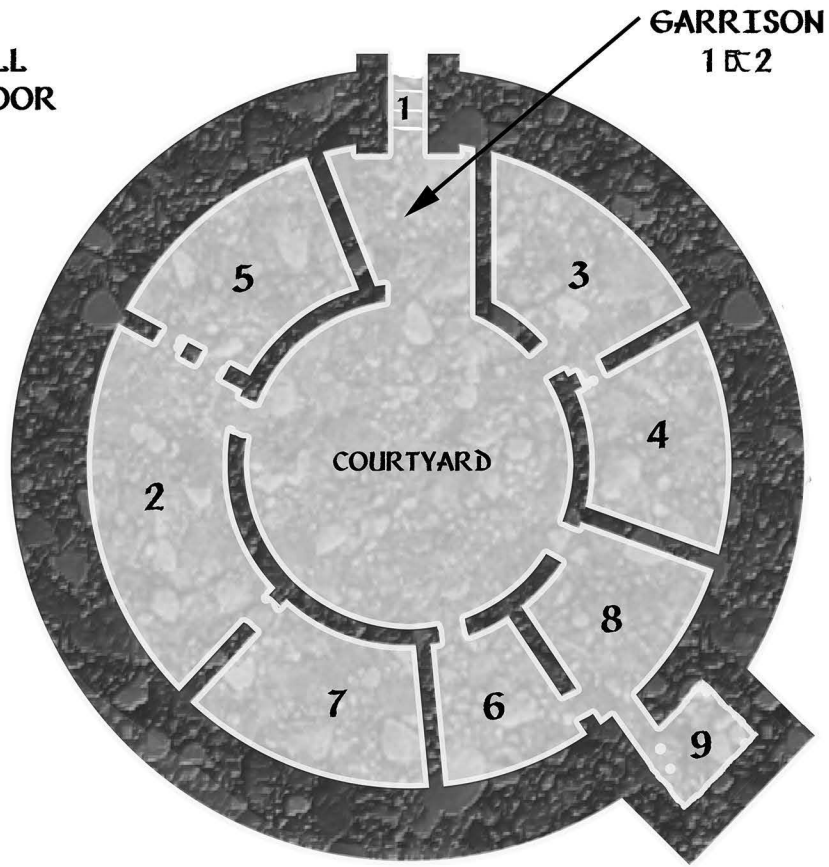
- 1 CLOAKROOM:** This entryway holds dozens of pegs for cloaks, garb, and gear before entering the warriors' quarters.
- 2 WARRIORS' QUARTERS:** This is the majority of the structure, forming the length of the long wooden building with bunks for over one hundred men. Broken into groups of twenty-five, it can house half of the king's men all at one time if needed. Usually, there is an average of 15-30 men here at any given time.

KING'S HALL

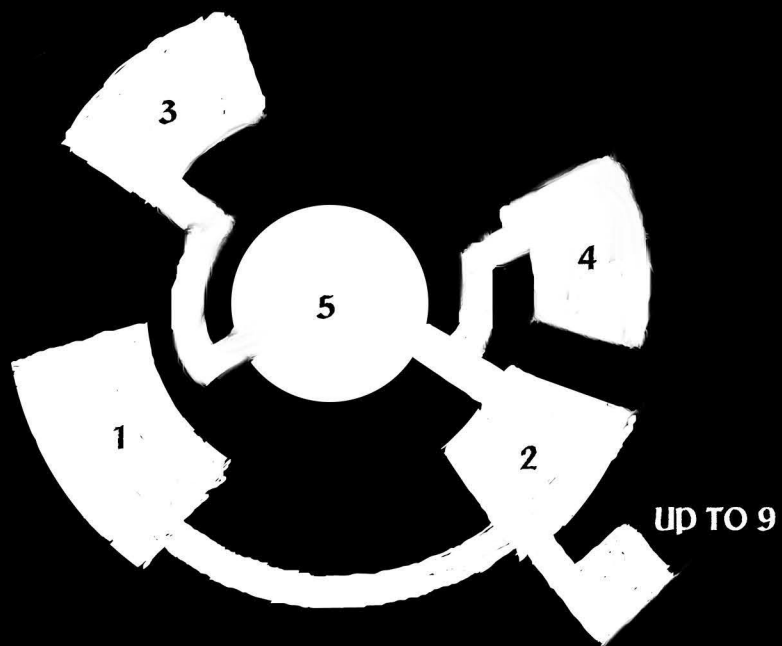
GROUND FLOOR

- 1 ENTRYWAY:** This small anti-chamber serves to prepare visitors to the king's grand hall. They can dry off from the weather, plan their words, etc here. It is finely decorated and constructed out of wood.
- 2 MAIN HALL:** King Hrólfr's hall has a large hearth pit in the middle with a spit for cooking, benches for his warrior retinue and guests, and an open ceiling for the smoke to leave and fresh air to enter. The walls are covered in artwork detailing images of the World Serpent and þór locked in battle amid its twisting tails. Shields, flags and weaponry hang about the hall. The king's throne sits high on a dais and is the first thing a visitor sees when entering the hall. There are six doors, four of which are for servants, one for the king and his personal guests, and one for visitors. There are a dozen warriors present with the king. When the king is not present, there are usually six guards in the hall. Nor-

KINGS HALL
GROUND FLOOR



SUBLEVEL



mally, the king's personal retinue of warriors (12) sleep in here at night and live in the hall.

- 3 KING'S CHAMBERS:** His personal room contains his massive bed, dresser, other furniture, and walk-in wardrobe. The walls are timber-framed, but built out of stone and the floor is tiled in granite for his security. Whale oil lamps light the chamber. It is large and rich. His personal possessions, of decent worth (Treasure Type 3 in 'Monsters & Treasures'), are here in a chest.
- 4 ROYAL FAMILY'S CHAMBERS:** The Queen Káta, their two children, daughter Amma (9), and son Efi (12) live here with their private servants. It is spacious and rich to match the king's own private chambers. (The wealth here, if collected, is valued at Treasure Type 2).
- 5 ROYAL KITCHENS:** This large chamber is made from stone as to not burst into flames from the constant fires as the cooks are preparing meals. A larder, many stores, and other areas for supplies are here and well-stocked and can last for several months if needed. There are also two ovens and a full supply of utensils and cutlery.
- 6 WATER CLOSET:** This small room sits a little to the side of the hall and is used for the purpose of relieving oneself. It consists of several wooden seats over a deep pit that uses gravity down the hillside without compromising the security of Kongensborg.
- 7 BATHING CHAMBER:** This large wooden chamber functions as a bath and a sauna both for the king and his guests. Hot water is brought in by the servants and placed in the stone and clay tub. Many herbal fat soaps are laid out for use and clean towels are always ready for use as well. This is a luxury that very few have.
- 8 SHRINE TO ODIN:** The kingdom of Eucia was long ago dedicated, by Hrólfr's grandfather Egill, to the Allfather. The shrine is tucked away in a niche in a wall and given a place of honor. It was said that Egill first slaughtered the earlier rulers that once dwelled here in a furious battle and the sky filled with ravens, specifically Óðin's, and he built the altar to honor him. It has been two generations since any signs from the Allfather have been seen in Eucia, but they have offered prayers and offerings in hopes that his fury and aid would come in times of need.
- 9 ACCESS TO SUBLEVEL:** These wooden stairs lead down to the darker level below the king's hall where prisoners are taken for interrogation. It also houses the armory and other practical storage rooms. Two guards are always posted here and one has the iron bolt that functions as the key to the door below.

SUBLEVEL

- 1 INTERROGATION CHAMBER:** Many prisoners have been tortured for information in this room of timber and stone. There are several sets of iron shackles nailed to

the blood-stained wall and floor. A table is covered in various insidious tools, sharp and deadly. Ropes hang from the ceiling for dangling prisoners in various positions while they are questioned. Roman iron bars have been scavenged and repurposed for use as a door into the chamber set on hinges.

- 2 ARMORY:** This large room is used to store a plethora of extra weaponry, armor and other gear for the warriors and the king's retinue. It is a large chamber with two guards at the door at all times.
- 3 TREASURY:** Four warriors are posted here day and night and possess a single key for the simple lock. Inside is the kingdom's wealth, in all its glory, stacked on tables, shelves and piled on the floor. Eucia is not a rich realm in comparison to many, but it has plenty to survive hard times. Skallagrím's raids have depleted the once vast treasury. (This is Treasure Type 5)
- 4 ALE STORE:** In this room are the caskets and barrels filled with ale, beer and a few imported alcohols from other lands that are meant for the king and his guests. He even has a few amphorae with valuable Roman wine taken from Byzantium.
- 5 WATER WELL:** This well goes deep into the hillside and carries fresh water up to the fortress for the people, ensuring healthy water in bad times. A bucket and wench system is used to carry the water up. The people are unaware that such a place is close to the world of Svartalheimr and its gloom, or to Helheimr where the Dead linger.

IF ONLY THE SIEGE OCCURS

While this is the most likely option for assault to come, it will be the most complicated to arrange for the CK. Skallagrím and his forces will arrive by the coast in their ships (See 'Meeting the Foe at Sea') and ride, charge, and fly to Kongensborg without delay. They will make the shore by noon the next day when dreary grey storms blanket the seas for miles around, lightning wracked and thunderous.

King Hrólfr's scouts are afield, double in number more than usual, on their swiftest steeds in all directions. The tension in the village and fort is palpable by dawn. No one has seen or heard from the king all morning. His retinue of warriors are present in his hall, dressed and armed for battle, but keep to themselves.

It won't be until an hour after Skallagrím's forces are ashore and making their way to Kongensborg that scouts frantically ride into the fort to inform the king of the enemy's arrival. Horns are sounded and preparations are made assuming only a ground attack is imminent.

Skallagrím will be using magical attacks and beasts as well as his troll-men in the assault of Kongensborg. There will be no way for the king or the players to completely anticipate what is to come.

The king placed fifty of his warriors in the village to guard its perimeter, but little more, expecting them to be overcome easily. If the player characters choose to take on Skallagrímr's forces in the village they will be only slowing a small portion of the whole. They can choose to do so bravely but the village will be razed to the ground and its people slain in the process of the siege of Kongensborg.

This is the step by step process of the attack on Kongensborg as strategized by Skallagrímr:

1 MAGICAL ASSAULT: Skallagrímr's 4 Fire-Wizards (See the Half-Eldjöttnar in Act 1) will ride on vogel-gryff (2) in the skies above the fort and rain down fireballs and other fiery spells onto the flammable fort before the ground forces even arrive. This terrifying attack will last 10 rounds. Their spells will be cast from wands and scrolls. There will also be monster attacks by the griffon-like beasts, targeting NPCs and player characters. Once the ground forces arrive below and start to terrorize the village, the mages will withdraw (for now).

2 RAZE GLÚMR: Skallagrímr and his forces will rush the minor defenses of the village, wasting no time getting to the roadway that leads up the fort on the hill. Skallagrímr will not confront anyone in the village streets. He will avoid them and not be drawn into these ploys, but will make his way to the main gates with determination. Any player characters stuck in the village during the attack will find it very difficult to gain access back to the fort during the siege for obvious reasons. Most of the people will have packed up their belongings before the attack and fled into the countryside, leaving only a brave or foolish few in the path of these terrible foes.

3 SIEGE OF KONGENSBOG: Skallagrímr's men will shower the inner walls with his arrows each round (3 in 10 chance any player character is hit by a d3 Short Composite Bows doing d8 damage each) while his two monstrous trolls use a battering ram to disable the gates. It will take them 3d4 rounds per gate door to batter them down unless stopped. Meanwhile, his troll-men (50) will try to scale the walls to face the king's forces and make their way to the hall.

4 REACH PRIMARY OBJECTIVE: Ultimately, Skallagrímr's plan is to slay the royal family, take over their great hall and make it his own, becoming the ruler Eucia. He will establish this kingdom as his earthly realm away from Järnvíða with the ambitious goal of building an empire. If he manages to do this, he will call upon an army of more monster-men and beasts to build his terrible kingdom in Miðgarðr. He is unaware that his purpose in Angrboða/Hel's scheme is now over, and he is expendable as far as they are concerned. Hel will no longer attempt to sabotage or weaken Eucia's resistance. Instead, she turns her attentions to finding the lost Runes of Fimbulvinter.

NOTE: This siege may take several gaming sessions to run thoroughly and should be intense. It would be handy for the CK

to refer to sources of similar sieges on a grander scale as the films Ironclad, The 13th Warrior, the attack on Helm's Deep shown in The Two Towers, and the battle at Minas Tirith in The Return of the King. These can give ideas for how to manage the damage, carnage and intensity of such a terrible attack.

IF SKALLAGRÍMR BREECHES THE GATES:

Should the Hel-born troll captain manage to breach the main gates, he will easily pass through the secondary inner gate before reaching the inner ward surrounded by his warriors and two trolls. If the adventuring party wish to earn their Ring Oaths or display their honor or prowess in battle, this is the time to do so! Skallagrímr will rush towards the great hall undeterred by all, with a singular goal in mind. From the skies, his fire-wizards will return on cue riding their vogel-gryffs to assist his entry. It will be a gruesome and trying moment in the whole of this siege and the defining moment in the entire module.

If the vengeful Skallagrímr reaches the great hall he will bash down the doors and charge inside, his men slaying any that stand in their path.

King Hrólf, decked out in mail, with shield, sword and, the finest garb will be waiting for them by the throne. His family will be hidden in the sublevel below at the water well with their royal attendants and a handful of guards.

If the player characters are present, they will hear him say to Skallagrímr boldly, sword drawn:

"You have come to my kingdom and hall with poisonous intent, foul monster; but you have, instead, discovered a stalwart king with the vigor and might of his ancestors behind him, ready to defend what is his to the last. I am King Hrólf Fagriðsson Egillsson of Eucia, and your last breath will be drawn in this hall."

The awful leader snarls and sends his trolls and men to dispatch the king (unless stopped). His other men will run rampant in the many corridors and chambers, like wild animals, looking for the rest of the royal family and vandalizing the hall as they go.

IF SKALLAGRÍMR SLAYS THE KING: Should the king or his family be slain, in the process, then the adventuring party is obviously rid of the ring oath, but they are also unable to be paid the rest of their due for their service to the kingdom. They must then deal with the consequences should Hel's captain and his men survive the battle and claim Eucia. If, both Skallagrímr and the king are slain, it will leave an open throne. This will leave the adventurers caught in the middle of a regal feud that will soon erupt in this part of Jutland.

IF SKALLAGRÍMR IS SLAIN: The most desirable outcome in this terrible calamity has the most simple answer: his forces will melt away back towards the coast. Without their leader, they are frightened and lost and only wish to be home. The king's men will ride them down, if possible, and slay them as they flee back to their ships along the coast. His wizards will no longer spend their efforts or magic arts on the king or his

people and return back to Niflheimr on their flying mounts, bitter and hurt. No one will avenge Skallagrímr. He had no friends or family, and Hel pulled him from the lowliest of dredges.

KING FINNA'S PLAN

If the adventuring party had a run-in encounter with King Finna in Act 1 and agreed to help him in toppling his rival, King Hrólfr, this is the opportunity. The King will send his promised extra men, numbering 50, into the eastern hills near Kongensborg, to await the signal.

These warriors will watch Skallagrímr's arrival and siege of the fort and on signal charge over the hills brandishing their spears and swords ready to enter any breach in the walls. They will be a third party in the fray, and unless the adventuring party forgets about them, it will be no surprise when another band of raiders arrive in the king's hall. They, too, will go straight for King Hrólfr and his family.

King Finna's warriors expect the adventurers' loyalty in matters but if they are betrayed, they will turn rotten. If King Hrólfr's men are alerted to them and attack, Finna's men will prey on them while assaulting the fort. They will light a beacon fire to alert 50 more warriors, and King Finna will know he is betrayed. He will have no choice but to declare all-out war on Eucia in the midst of Skallagrímr's attack.

King Finna won't even recognize the troll-man's vengeful attack as anything important and move in to reclaim the region fully. He will show no mercy to the player characters if they get in the way. Finna's attack won't take place until half a day after Skallagrímr's ordeal is over, however, and by this time the adventuring party should be well on their way to the next mission in module #2, 'Oðin's Fury'.

If the player characters return to Eucia, assuming they ever had the encounter with King Finna and the deal to sabotage King Hrólfr, they will find the kingdom now in the hands of Gauti. It will not be the same kingdom they left behind, and Kongensborg will, indeed, be a sea-fort for King Finna with no trace of King Hrólfr or his family. That lineage will be gone.

MEETING THE FOE AT SEA

If the adventuring party are extremely brave, or suicidal, they may wish to meet the invading forces of Skallagrímr as they arrive at shore. Dark, ominous storms will precede their longships (4) on the choppy waves by noon. It will be a long wait in the morning hours after dawn not knowing when exactly they will arrive. It will seem as though they may not come, and hope will be on the horizon. It is only a brief respite.

Unfortunately, for those who wish otherwise, Skallagrímr's four Knörr vessels will plow the foamy grey waves, their black sails and flickering fires in their pots visible through the sheets of rain. Thunder will rumble and lightning will flash around their four ships. Though small in comparison to other greater vessels, they hold a terrible crew.

Before the ships reach the shore, Skallagrímr's fire-wizards will fly aloft on the vogel-gryff beasts, acting as scouts as they make their way to Kongensborg to begin the first stage of the assault.

If the adventurers are lying in wait to make their ambush, they will need to hide from the wizards as well, or their attempts will be easily ruined and death and destruction will follow.

- Skallagrímr's forces are arrayed thus:
- Skallagrímr
- Giant trolls (2)
- Half-Eldjöttnar wizards (4)
- Troll-men (50)
- Vogel-gryffs (2)
- Human servants on ships (20)

If this battle is fought on the shores, the king maybe persuaded to donate a dozen or so men to the cause to aid them, but he will be hesitant. The fire-wizards will fly on to the hall, regardless. If need be, they will carry Skallagrímr there, leaving everyone else far behind. His goal is simple – kill King Hrólfr and take the kingdom for his own.

THOUGHT AND MEMORY ALOFT

As they were once seen before and dreaded the night before as the adventurers arrived at Kongensborg, Oðin's two ravens have returned to Denmark. He knows that whatever shook the Nine Worlds and Yggdrasil began here, and must know what it was. Thought has taken to flying low, studying every little minute detail of what transpires. Memory, on the other hand, takes to remembering it all and will later relay the events to the Allfather.

It was not mentioned earlier in this module, or in the Codex Nordica, but both birds can alter their size according to need. Often they are disguised as normal large ravens, but in this second appearance in the adventure they will be gigantic (about human sized with massive a wingspan). They cannot be harmed by any weapon or spell the players or NPCs possess, and it is not wise to attempt to harm them. Oðin would know and return the favor.

- **IF AT KONGENSBORG:** The ravens will ominously perch high on a wall, away from danger, and observe. They will occasionally pluck out eyes or entrails from the dead and dying around them, or even use their beaks to impale a stray person. They will squawk, their noises annoying, and if the king or Skallagrímr is slain in their presence they will dance about in a ghastly display, dipping their beaks in the gore before flying away back to Oðin above.
- **IF ON THE SHORE:** The ravens will behave the same here as they would in Kongensborg. If the player characters are victorious in this unlikely conflict, the ravens will

hop ship to ship and make a mess of them, setting fires and scaring the crew before flying up to Yggdrasil.

TYRA'S VOICE OF THE WYRD

The same völvá that has met the adventuring party twice before appears yet again, this time driven by the forces of the wyrd beyond Miðgarðr. She appears amid the bloody chaos and destruction in the battle and walks in a state that is guided by hands unseen and and speaks:

"...an Ash casket of bones was lost and must be found, scattered in the Nine. This blood and unnecessary slaughter was wrought by such a calamity.

This grim captain and his crew were but a pawn in a greater game, and their play is over at the king's table. The strings were cut, severed, and now the scattered bones must be found before those that took and lost them recover them. You will be the ones to find them before the others do.

To the world of Svartálfaheimr you, must journey to find the first of these bones. It tumbled far, it tumbled deep, into the smoky stones and where the echo of hammers and the glow of coals shine. Somewhere hence it lies, and somewhere hence you must find it.

Beware the bones once you have them. All thirteen together can bring terrible things bourn on ice and freezing winds. As chill as death, the bones be. The Nine Worlds shall see! Once you step into the realm of the Dökkálfar you must look for Boddí. He dwells in the Swamps of the Ketthontla. Boddí will guide you in finding the other bones...he will know.

Take a ship and sail north to the edge of Miðgarðr, to the Maelstrom of Bestla near Thule and be swallowed in by its hungry maw. There, you will find yourself adrift in Svartálfaheimr...if you survive. Beware of Yggr, the Terrible One, for he shall be in your way and make your quest difficult. Do not give him the Rune!"

Tyra staggers, weakened from her half-vision and falls to the ground. The other priestesses and servants go to her side to help her. After many minutes they find her dead, from exhaustion, her magic knot cord was bound tightly around her hands and wrists. She bound herself as if she was ready for the funeral pyre.

An awkward silence follows Tyra's word. If King Hrólfir survived the attack, he rewards the adventuring party and holds a special private court to decipher Tyra's words and the events that have transpired.

It is hoped that, by this time, the many clues have come together well enough to provide the players with some indication that something powerful and cosmic has occurred.

The king will speak to the adventurers one last time in what remains of his hall:

22 CASTLES & CRUSADES

"You can throw off your rings now, you no longer serve me. Your time in Eucia is done, and other worlds are now in your future. What I offered you was minor in comparison to what awaits. Battling this monstrous pirate captain and his men will seem like a distant memory when you walk in Ásgarðr without the benefit of perishing at the point of a spear or sword.

I would reward you with gold and silver, but I am afraid it won't take you as far as you need. Perhaps a ship would help you with some limited wealth for when you need it? I know not where or how you travel. Such things are not common knowledge. Not even the greatest of champions possesses the knowledge to sojourn the Nine Worlds. For that, I envy you.

While we rebuild our kingdom and establish more allies in case another threat returns, you will be in places that we only hear about in stories and legends. In haste, I will have a ship prepared, loaded down with supplies enough for several months, and give you an escort to it. This is assuming that Skallagrímr did not discover our fleet and lay it to ruin."

With a nod the king signals his people to begin preparations for the adventuring party. Although the mood is gloomy after the awful battle, it is lifting due to the hope and possibility that is now on the horizon.

Again the king speaks to them:

"You ask why not take underground passages straight to Svartálfaheimr? You will require a ship to take you to the many places you will need to go. Travel by foot is not enough, nor can it help you cross the vast seas which you must travel. I cannot promise the ship that I give you will endure what you put it through, for where you travel only the best built craft could sustain."

The king's porters and warriors will load and pack the adventuring party's supplies and gear up onto a small caravan of horses to take them to the coast to their ship. This can happen as soon as the aftermath of the battle is cleaned up, in a day or two, or quickly, it doesn't matter to the king. Either way, he has a kingdom to rebuild.

LEAVING OUT TO SEA

Unless one of the adventuring party is experienced in sailing or boats, the Knörr ship they were given will be completely unfamiliar to them. There are no lower decks, and it has enough room for the group and their supplies, one sail and its many oars.

The rolling grey waves of the sea come in from the equally grey sky with only Scandinavia to the direct north and the isles of Britannia and Hibernia to the west. The Maelstrom of Bestla

lies over a thousand miles to the north and will take months of sailing the cold, unpredictable seas.

King Hrólfr does not bother to send the adventurers off, personally. Rather, he lets his servants do so. The ship's sail is nondescript in its design--the king planned it that way. It is made of a blue-grey fabric.

In the cold, gloomy skies and seas, the ship bounces on the waves. The characters will likely be learning how to sail a ship for the first time at the end of this module. It will be a poignant moment in series, for this skill will become useful again and again in the future.

If the adventurers are observant enough, they will spot two ravens soaring high in the clouds. It should be pretty obvious who these two birds belong to by now. Óðin's ravens' deeds in

Miðgarðr are over for now. They have seen what was needed for him, and now he must act. He will need to prepare for where the clues lead him.

The word Svartálfalheimr was overheard by Thought and Memory as they perched atop the smoking, gory fort of Kongensborg after Skallagrímr's attack. Tyra's vision was true. The Allfather will, indeed, be there, but not as the unaware adventurers know him. Yggr will traverse the subterranean depths of Svartálfalheimr to find out what the nature of the quakes stirred by Jörmunganðr were about and what part the adventurers play in it all.

The slightly rocky and unsteady sail out to sea is peaceful when compared to the rest of the time spent in Denmark. Only endless, chilly seas, a mysterious whirlpool of legend await the bold adventurers.

END OF 'HEL RISING'
'ÓÐIN'S FURY' IS AHEAD.



CASTLES CRUSADES

HEL RISING

In the rough mountainous region of Ormr, the earth groans, turned this way and that by forces beyond understanding. The tremors send shock waves across the Nine Worlds, jolting the local kingdom of Eucia terribly. People, high and low, turn to their King, as is their right. But King Hrolfr is in the dark, as are his seers; so he must look beyond his wooden halls, calling to the stalwart heroes of his realm, brave adventurers to venture forth in his name and conquer the unknown.

Little does the King know that the quakes are brought about by a menace sent from the dismal world of Helheimr far below. Raiders carried by dark longships on ghostly winds have come with evil intent, but their goal here goes deeper than anyone could possibly imagine.

The adventurers must search out what is going on in the kingdom of Eucia, but to do that, they'll find more than they ever bargained for, because Hel has her fingers planted deep in the roots of all things. Before they can end the quakes they'll see this and so very much more . . . or die in the trying.

ISBN 978-1-936822-81-2



1818 N. TAYLOR, #143, LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207

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PRINTED AT CHENAULT & GRAY PRINT
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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