



UNTOLD SAGAS

LORE BOOK

SVILLAND
CAMPAIGN SETTING

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ON THE COVER

In this scene illustrated by Muhammet Feyyaz, we see a peaceful village in Svilland at dawn. Although the village looks simple, there are many sagas and secrets awaiting to be discovered.



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INTRODUCTION

There is a land in Midgard where a hard people live out their days, standing tall against all that ails them; against harsh howling winds, rough living conditions, and the constant threat of Black Winter looming over them. The dvergrs, half-jotunns and humanoids of Svilland roam the kingdoms of Alsvartr, Nionaem, and Green Lights of the East, seeking to eliminate all signs of this winter threatening to bring an end to life as they know it. They lean on their faith in the Gods and Goddesses and long for the day where they shall stand beside them in the final battle of Ragnarok; some waiting to stand with Loki and his children, and some, with Odin and his pantheon. It is said that when Loki is released from his bounds; when Jormungandr defeats Thor, when Fenrir devours Odin, and when Hel walks Svilland with her army made of the dead and the undead at the end of Black Winter; it will be the end of all things.

However, these lands were not always as they are now. Located to the south of the site of the fabled Aesir-Vanir war, Svilland has been home to many kingdoms that have not survived to this day; each contributing to the mosaic that is Svilland as we know it with their own culture and background. This book seeks to act as a guide to the history of Svilland to the present, and to provide readers with information on these past kingdoms, along with all other elements that contribute to its unique structure.

Below, you may find brief information on what each chapter in this book entails.

CHAPTER 1: BEFORE SVILLAND: In this chapter, you will find the stories of creation, the Aesir-Vanir war, Yggdrasil, and the early years of Odd's life; the mythical, tyrannical jotunn who brought the first signs of Black Winter to Svilland. All available information on the creation of the realms and of living things is recorded by the works of Nori the Sage. The most celebrated poems of the famed bard, as well as some information on the life of Odd are included in this chapter to have our readers experience the spirit of this fascinating and gripping time in history.

CHAPTER 2: FIRST AGE: This chapter provides information on the First Age of Svilland. As the first small kingdoms of Svilland such as Gjalfmarrheim, Fridaland, and Fjallborg enriched the land with each of their cultures; the Gods and Goddesses in Odin's pantheon were caught up in their own agendas. These agendas resulted in the first ever priestesses of the Temple of Freyja, the first ever Odin's Vargrs, and the first Fangs of Fenrir; all of which have remained prominent cults and organizations to this day. This was also the age when Odd, the tyrant, was bound to his throne in a deep sleep, giving hope to those seeking to flee from his treacherous tyranny.

CHAPTER 3: SECOND AGE: You may find information on the Second Age of Svilland in this chapter. While the kingdoms of the First Age dissolved into Eastern Horn and the territories of The Bear King, Odd was released from his chains, dvergrs came to Svilland for the very first time, and Loki started to build on his followers through the help of Hel, forming the cult of the Dead Tongue of Loki. In this chapter, you may find the epic tales behind all these phenomena.

CHAPTER 4: THIRD AGE: In this chapter, you may find the tales depicting how this epic nation rose from its ashes after a war that tore it to pieces, and how the old kingdoms turned into Nionaem, Green Lights of the East and Alsvartr; the current kingdoms in Svilland. You may also learn about the captivating origins of many cults and organizations that have survived to our day such as the Messiah Devoted, Frost Arrows, or Oath of the Phantom Queen; all of which still contribute to life in Svilland as we know it.



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BEFORE SVILLAND



BEFORE SVILLAND

Little is known about what the lands of Svilland resembled, or about who occupied these lands before the start of the first age. There is, thus, little known in regard to how these lands were first created as well. What we do know about this obscure time in history is all but legend, as most of what is known is attributed to the works of a bard who went by the name "Nori the Sage"; about whom not much information can be found except for his works.

His most acclaimed poems, based on which many Svilland myths about this time were created, are given below.



THE CREATION OF SVILLAND



*In the start, there was nothing.
And from it, allsprung.
In pairs disordered and opposing
Life came to be, with all that it's brung.*

*In the void of Ginnungagaap,
First heat, then cold burst forth
Both so different, but so strong
One settled in the South,
the other in the North.*

*In Muspellheim did settle the heat,
Where all the earth and air is fire
Tis' there that Surtr awaits its feat
Until the day when all will expire*

*The cold in the North grew and grew
Mist and ice there became one and all.
Midmost, the winds of Hvergelmir blew
To the rivers of Svilland; big and small.*

*The misty rivers of Niflheim,
Into Ginnungagap, did flow.
And there, with passing infinite time,
Layer upon layer of glaciers did grow.*

*From Muspelheim, came sparks and heat
To meet the glaciers in Ginnungagap.
And from this ice, a Jotunn-like shape
Came to be with each molten drop.*

*This being, of whom Ymir was the name
Is the largest creature to have ever existed
It is from Ymir that all creatures came
And for that to happen, it needed to be bested*



Along this Jotunn, a cow also came to be
Of whom Audhumla was the name
Drinking from the teats of this hornless cow
Mightier with each sip, Ymir became.

The cow, in turn, licked the ice around
Each lick revealed the shape of a man
This man was called Buri, and he is renowned
For with him, the lives of all Gods began.

The giant Ymir slept, and Buri too, alone.
And as it was both man and woman,
Ymir got pregnant and birthed on its own.
All other giants descended from its children.

To one of Ymir's spawn, his love Buri gave
And of that love, came a son named Bor,
Who in turn married Bestla, whose children paved
The way for Gods as we know it; and more.

So the spawn of Bestla, the brothers three,
(Who are better known as Odin, Ve, and Vili)
Grew here, in the void; trapped eternally.
With each day that passed, they began to see
That the road to salvation was through agony.

There, in the middle of ice and fire
In "nothing" did they ponder and talk
They all decided: to reach something higher
It was paramount that Ymir be caught.

A cunning plan made, the brothers three
And killed Ymir, the first chance they got.
The balance of opposites continued thusly,
For life in Svilland was borne of this rot.

They stabbed Ymir, the brothers three
Blood gushed from the wound
This blood would form the ocean and the sea
In all of Svilland, where life would resume.

The flesh of Ymir became the ground,
Its bones, they piled atop one another
These formed all mountains and hills in Svilland
Rough and harsh, and jagged and austere

The teeth of Ymir, the rocks in Svilland, are
And its skull is what forms the sky
And the sparks that came from Muspel, afar
Those are the stars you see, way up high.



Lastly, they made clouds from the brains of Ymir
To protect the living against light and heat
That's why when the sky is empty and clear
They say "Ymir's thoughts are in retreat"



YGGDRASIL



Yggdrasil, the ash tree of biggest might,
Or the "World Tree" as thou mayst have heard;
Is where great Odin, performing his rite
Hung for nine days, before, to life he returned.

Its roots are fed by the well-known three springs.
All in different realms, as laid out below.
Its branches, the nine realms connecting,
Some a mystery, and of some, we know.

First is Urdarbrunnr, in Asgard, where Aesir are
Spinning the fates of every being there'll be.
This is where all lives are formed from afar,
And thus our fates are weaved by norns three.

The second well; of which Hvergelmir be the name,
Bubbles in Niflheim, causing cold winds to blow.
This is where the serpent Nidhogg makes its way
Through Yggdrasil's roots, with its mighty gnaw.

The third is Mímisbrunnr, the well of Mimir
Where mighty Odin is known to lose an eye.
He thus became the "one-eyed God" here,
And earned the wisdom on which we rely.

With the branches, nine realms are connected.
Some of them we know more so than others.
And below, the names of all nine are said,
Though some, just that, for a lack of sources.

One is called Asgard, home of Aesir Gods.
Also there, the hall Valhalla lies.
It's where warriors who've beaten the odds,
Dine together with long-lost allies.

The second realm, Alfheim be its name
Is where the light elves happily reside.
The beauty of the elves is cause for its fame,
But not much else is known, Svilland-wide.



*Muspelheim be the third realm of concern,
Fire giants there follow Surtr's lead.
Every rock and creature there will burn,
Until Ragnarok, as such is our creed.*

*Of all realms, we've arrived at the fourth:
The misty glacial planes of Niflheim
The second plane to exist, where in the North,
Its frozen springs will gleam for all time.*

*Then there is Jotunnheim, home to giants,
Its halls, where most of the Jotunns roam,
Is too the birthplace of Odd the Tyrant,
About whose deeds there's many-a-tome.*

*Another: Vanaheim, home of the Vanir
although how many they are: unknown.
After the war between them and the Aesir,
All we know is, most were forlorn.*

*Svartalfheim, the home of the dwarfs,
The halls of which, beneath Svilland lie.
All metals, to any shape, they can morph,
Though their interests, with others may collide.*



*In Helheim, the dishonourable dead reside
In the silent darkness; cold, and endless
Awaiting Ragnarok, when with Hel they'll ride,
To bring us all to end, but for now they're helpless.*

*The final realm in our song you know closely,
Midgard be its name, and here Svilland dwells
Though harsh in weather it may well be,
We all get by, by strength or by spells.*

*Thus, such is the World Tree set,
From what I learnt from the bards I've met.
Though each realm's of its own song deserving
I've said what is known, with no debate concerning.*

THE AESIR-VANIR WAR

*Legend tells of a great war
with which, war was invented.
Filled with much agony and gore,
one more cruel, never existed.*



*'Twas the war between Aesir and Vanir,
to the North of Svilland, centuries ago,
where the Vanir used magic, while the Aesir
stuck to sword, and arrow, and bow.*

*To understand the reasons behind,
first their differences must be shown;
for, as in this song, thou shall find,
Much of the war remains unknown.*

*'Tis cunning to start with the Aesir,
for as the ones who've won the war,
much more is known than the Vanir;
as aft the war, most were no more.*

*The Aesir, heavenly Gods of the sky;
controlling such things as war or weather,
They're those keeping the Jotunns at bay,
'till Ragnarok comes, when all will wither.*

*The Vanir, diversely, Gods of the earth,
is the group of Gods of which Freyja's one.
Guiding fertility, commerce, and wealth,
they were in the end, the ones outdone.*

*The two, almost opposites-polar;
why tensions grew, be no wonder.
With each event, war was closer,
though the final drop be cause to ponder.*

*Most say, war started for a sorceress,
who was most precious to the Vanir.
A vagabond, she crossed most places, 'till
one day, she entered the realm of the Aesir.*

*She practiced Seidr magic of a kind rare,
which dealt with the fates of creatures.
And as she did in every lair,
she offered the Aesir her services.*

*At first, she brought them great deal o'mirth,
for the Aesir were unable to change their fate.
Neither was she, completely, as after birth,
our weaves of fate, the norns create.*

*Short-lived was the joy of the Gods,
for soon they were blinded by greed.
They first blamed her, for their odds,
were not so changed, as they might need.*

Then, this gift that first, they adored,
caused great unrest amongst the Gods.
For a wish that one God implored,
might not fit another one's.

Thus, they decided to burn her on a pyre,
but from ashes she was reborn in Hor.
Thrice she burnt, and thrice the fire
Would not kill her, just what she wore.

She was sent on her way, when finally,
all the Aesir could do was give up.
But little did the Gods know, she
being treated as such would be the last drop.

Many-a-scholar was heard to say
that this sorceress was Freyja the goddess.
This is not known, what's certain is the fray
finally broke out due to this sorceress.

Fear begets hate, and hate begets war.
Such has it been since this first war started.
In history, war always seeks more,
hence leaves behind the broken-hearted.



ASK AND EMBLA






Now we know, Midgard, our world
was created by th' brothers three.
At first alas, no purpose, it served;
for it was empty, from sea-to-sea.

They travelled far, travelled wide,
in search of a clever being.
To their dismay, they couldn't find
a single walking, talking thing.

Still, they loved their creation;
knowing full-well, it must be filled.
Or else, their acts won't be gumption,
Just innocent blood having been spilt.

One day, somewhere in the North,
They found two logs, there on the shore.
Much to their luck, the look of both
Reminded them of their own corps.



*Thus on the shore, the logs they placed,
and decided: "people " they'd be.
To them, our entire nation can be traced;
to the creations of Odin, Ve, and Vili.*

*At this point, it must be said,
The two logs were most distinct.
And thus both of them in us bred,
Some of our working instincts.*

*One of the logs was sturdy and stiff.
An unyielding wood; 'twas hard to bend.
Today, it makes weapons used in a tiff,
and also the tools that our hardships, mend.*

*The other was graceful, and quite resolute;
resilient too, undamaged by water.
And we, Svillanders, being astute,
use it in homes, boats, and furniture.*




*The brother Ve, gave the logs shape,
with arms and legs, and hands and feet.
He also made ears, eyes, and lips;
so they could hear and see and speak and eat.*

*Vili, gave them the will to be;
to talk and move, to listen and think.
Thus we gained ingenuity;
that which compels us to do anything.*

*Odin gave them blood and breath,
and "Allfather", he was thus.
He gave us life'n until our death,
father, he is to all of us.*

*They then made clothes, the brothers-three,
so their creations would be warm.
They then gave them names, and eternally
as Ask and Embla, the two would be known.*

*Such is the tale of Embla and Ask;
First woman and first man in Midgard.
This tale makes easier our divine task,
for we can know our end if we know the start.*





ODE TO ODD

*The stories of the Jotunns and Aesir
have all begun and ended in violence.
Ever since the brothers killed Ymir,
The Jotunns's acts are drenched in vengeance.*

*Such is the case for Odd's tale too,
'Tis tied to this act of the Gods.
For this act that started the feud
Also gave his ancestors cause.*

*To understand Odd's story,
You must first know that of Marr.
'Twas he, for honour and glory
sought to gather all the Jotunns.*

*To that end, he formed a tribe
of which Ymirauga was the name
To the story of Ymir, its purpose ascribed,
which seeks to bring the Jotunns fame.*

*As from Ymir the Jotunns've come,
They thought themselves superior.
Thus they refused to be glum,
And sought to crush the inferior.*

*Under Marr, the tribe grew and grew,
with each new day, new Jotunns came.
But deep in Asgard, if they only knew
that Thor's ear too, had caught their fame.*




*Thor thus travelled to Jotunheim,
fearing what the tribe might do.
He took an oath, this be the time,
Wherein his might, the Jotunns'd construe.*

*He met Marr, upon his arrival,
said "let this be a warning to all"
He defeated Marr in an epic battle,
relishing each blow before Marr's fall.*

*The Jotunns, seeing their leader's demise,
fled for fear they meet the same fate.
But there too, in the crowd's guise,
Odd was watching his father's defeat.*

*In Thor's eyes, Odd did see
the hatred he bore for all Jotnar.
He thus knew, for him there'd be,
No peace lest he avenge Marr.*

*For his father, though proud he be,
Had spent his life fighting for the right.
But now in Thor's eyes, he finally did see
There could be no end to their fight.*





LEGEND OF THE ODDBANE

Oddbane is the name of the magic spear that was used to impale the frost jotunn Odd. The legend of Oddbane explains how and why this spear was created and how it has changed the course of the history of Svilland.



ODD AND BLACK WINTER



It is believed that Ragnarok, the end of all life as we know it, will start with Black Winter; the last winter in existence that will last ages, and that will plunge all realms into chaos. It is also said that Black Winter will begin with the breath of a Frost Jotunn. Hence, it was no surprise that after the war between the Aesir and the Vanir; the Asgardians set their sights on the frost jotunns. Thus, right after the war, the Asgardians sent their warriors to Jotunheim to start a war with the frost jotunns.

At that point in time, frost jotunns lived with tribes. Some tribes were content to live in the peace set out before them, and chose to remain neutral in the quarrels of others. Some tribes believed that they were the physically strongest in all the realms, and that they could claim anything and everything if they so wanted. There was one particular tribe, however, that stood out.

This tribe remembered all too well that the three brothers created the nine realms using Ymir's body, and that the frost jotunns were forced to travel through their ancestor's blood to reach Jotunheim. They thus knew that everything they see, or touch, or eat, or drink is a part of Ymir, and by proximity, of them as well. This tribe called themselves Ymirauga and were the most brutal and clever tribe in all of Jotunheim.

When the Asgardians attacked, Ymirauga was being ruled by a frost jotunn named Marr. He saw the power of the Aesir as they struck the tribes around them, and was convinced that frost jotunns must unite against these Gods. Only then could the frost jotunns defeat them. Eventually, Marr succeeded and united the remaining frost jotunns under his banner, by defeating the chiefs of each tribe, which agitated the Asgardians.

After a heated discussion, the Gods and Goddesses decided that Thor himself would go to Jotunheim to stand against Marr, to which now he agreed with enthusiasm.

The battle between Thor and Marr was relentless and awe-inspiring. All creatures in all the realms held their breath as Thor slammed his hammer onto Marr with flashes of lightning



and thunder. When Marr's dead body hit the ground, all the remaining frost jotunns scattered in fear except for one; Marr's son.

Unfortunately for the future of the realms, the son of Marr also witnessed his father's fall. But more importantly, he saw the wrath in Thor's eyes, and only then understood just how much hate the Asgardians had for them in their hearts. Then and there, he swore on everything he valued, that frost jotunns would claim what is rightfully theirs, which was everything.

Run, Odd did; but he did not do so out of fear. He rather went away to work on himself, and to acquire enough knowledge and strength to turn his goal into reality.

After years of effort and training, Odd returned to the war-scarred lands of Jotunheim to rally every single frost jotunn to form an army. This time, the Asgardians didn't see Odd's army to be a deadly threat due to the low numbers of the frost jotunns, for many of them had died at the hands of the Asgardians. However, Odd's victories were harsh and swift, and in as little time as a week, he reclaimed the entirety of Jotunheim.

How Odd arrived in the area to the north of (what is now called) Svilland is a mystery. Some say that Odd himself discovered how to open a gateway to other realms while others say that he found Yggdrasil, The World Tree. In any case, Odd arrived and had the intention of invading the lands of the humans.

The Asgardians were angry, and Thor was especially furious. However, Odd was smart enough to know that his actions would anger Thor, and he made a plan accordingly. He had learnt how to use his breath to unleash the power of frost pumping through his veins onto whatever he wished. And the moment Thor set foot on the lands of the humans, Odd let out his freezing breath over the land. Thus, when Odd's breath froze the land in that instance, Black Winter was set in motion.

People living in the area started to run away both from the armies of Odd and the deadly cold of Black Winter. The Asgardians were struck by fear as they believed that this was the beginning of the end. The Allfather commanded each of the Aesir to make preparations to end this threat once and for all, saying that they had to strike Odd down together; with all of their might combined. Balder, however, knew there was no time to prepare and thus sought help from the best blacksmiths in all realms.

BALDER'S INTERVENTION

In the realm of Svartalfheim, dvergrs had been living in their magnificent cities that were made out of all kinds of metals and jewels. For a long time, dvergrs had lived in peace and prosperity, and many of them had started to focus on the progress of their civilization. They had developed new methods of building structures, had conducted research about the magical lands of Svartalfheim and about the might of runes, and most importantly had learned how to properly process different kinds of metals to craft tools and weapons.

Balder had been observing their advancement for a time and

when Odd attacked, Balder knew who to call on for help. The best blacksmiths in Svartalfheim were Brokkr and Eitri, who were also the only known members of Sons of Ivaldi.

Balder visited Brokkr in the guise of a red crossbill and asked that he and his brother make a weapon to end Odd.

Brokkr and Eitri discussed what they could craft and what they would want in return for days. In the end, Eitri decided to craft a spear that could chain a frost jotunn while Brokkr discovered that Black Winter creates a very rare resource, out of which perfect armor and weapons can be crafted; black ice. They forged a spear named Oddbane in return for a gateway to the realm of Svilland through which dvergrs would build a mine and take the black ice back to Svartalfheim. Balder agreed to these terms, but knew that if Odd found out about the dvergrs forging a weapon against him, he would fall upon Svartalfheim with all its fury. Balder thus created a gateway from Svartalfheim to Ymir's Lash in return for the spear, also ensuring that if Oddbane were destroyed or were to lose its power, it would be closed.

After they forged the spear, Brokkr and Eitri gifted the gateway to other dvergrs and they set up a large expedition to the mountains called Ymir's Lash. Meanwhile, Balder infused Oddbane with his divine essence.

SONS OF IVALDI

Sons of Ivaldi is a mysterious artisan guild whose members can craft wondrous artifacts that can turn many dreams into reality. It is said that they are the best crafters in all the realms. There is no known headquarters and its members do not reveal their identities. Svillanders only know the name Sons of Ivaldi thanks to the stories of Brokkr and Eitri, which is generally told by dvergrs. Some even argue that Brokkr and Eitri are the literal sons of Ivaldi, while all others are figuratively called "sons". Either way, no ordinary Svillander now knows about this secretive guild.

THE BROTHER'S BETRAYAL

In the north of Ymir's Lash, Odd's army was growing in numbers with each passing day. Odd was rallying not only frost jotunns, but all kinds of creatures under his banner, and he in return provided them with the powers of frost and winter.

While most humans in the area escaped to the south (to the lands that are now known as Svilland) some people did decide to join Odd's cause. After some time, the first half frost jotunns were born. Many of the frost jotunns were furious about this and saw the half-jotunns to be abominations; but Odd was fascinated and in awe. He had not known that this was a possibility, and was delighted at the developments as this

meant more warriors for him. He thus resolved he would need to fix this divide, and he adopted a half-jotunn named Volli as his brother.

Odd trained Volli to become a legend in his ongoing war. He treated Volli as his equal and demanded that everyone does so as well. It seemed that Volli would take over Odd's throne when the time came, but in his first battle, he saw the massacre and was appalled at the sight of the sheer violence. In an instant, Volli realized that they were not claiming their rightful land as they said; Odd's army was simply slaughtering anything in its path.

Volli wanted to change this, as he didn't want his big brother to be an object of hate. Because of this, he secretly sought to find a way to end this war and show the world that Odd is a fair ruler, rather than a tyrant. Balder, who had always been watching, saw the doubt in Volli's heart and began to whisper in his ear, telling him the truth behind this war.

In the meantime, Volli was becoming a powerful fighter and a brilliant frost jotunn, and Odd began to send him on missions. During one of his expeditions to a human camp to make sure everything was in order, Volli's life took an unexpected turn and he fell in love with a human. Some nights, he and his lover, Ingir, would meet in secret and talk for hours about how the world they lived in was actually the same, but how they were used to living differently. On such a night, Ingir told Volli she was pregnant. Volli was both elated and miserable, for he knew that if Odd found this out, he would be furious. Mating with humans was just a way for them to produce more expendable soldiers in the eyes of Odd. But fate was cruel and soon after the birth of Volli and Ingir's daughter, Odd found out about this illegitimate relationship,

and just like Volli had thought, he was disappointed.

Odd ordered Volli to get rid of the child, but when Volli refused to do so, he gathered warriors to hunt down both the daughter and Ingir. When Volli went to meet his family, he found their cold, dead bodies instead, slaughtered as Ingir was breastfeeding their daughter.

Volli was furious, and vowed to take revenge on Odd. He rushed to Odd's throne room and challenged Odd to a duel, which Odd accepted with a wicked smile.

Odd and Volli's duel was brutal and all the frost jotunns and half-jotunns watched this epic battle. Still, Odd was too strong for Volli to take down alone. When the battle was over, Volli lay on the ground barely breathing, and Odd, victorious, sat on his throne with great pride. In that very moment, Balder whispered to Volli one last time.

With his last breath, Volli reached out and grabbed the spear, Oddbane, which seemed to have appeared from thin air, and threw it at Odd with all his might. Oddbane flew at the speed of lightning and impaled the tyrant frost jotunn, pinning him to his throne. The moment the spear made contact with Odd's skin, there was also a flash of light after which chains burst out of the spear, and bound Odd in his place.

Odd was thus impaled and chained to his throne, although he looked like he was sleeping to the naked eye. On that day the frost jotunns under the command of Odd swore to free Odd from these chains and that when that day came, they would be ready to march again.

Meanwhile, humans and some half-jotunns crossed the mountains of Ymir's Lash, and found a land in which they could both live and get ready to face the Black Winter. They decided that this land would henceforth be called: Svilland.



THE TWO BROTHERS



*Gather 'round ye children, ye fathers and mothers,
And listen to the tale of the two famous brothers.
One named Odd, and the other called Volli,
What one called love, the other called folly.*

*On one mission he went, Volli fell in love
with Ingir the Human, and was hooked thereof.
The love they shared grew fast and wild,
And before too long, Ingir was with child.*

*Odd believed all humans had to pay
for crimes they'd committed along the way.
Hence, upon learning Ingir's condition,
Volli found he was of a complex disposition.*

*Volli hid Ingir and the babe, for sadly, he knew,
what his brother Odd was quite sure to do.
And upon learning the truth, alas,
What Volli feared most, did come to pass.*

*Two brothers; one Odd, and the other Volli,
What one called love, the other called folly.*

*One day, Volli visited their babe and Ingir.
And was met with a tragedy as big as Ymir:
With their babe in her arms, Ingir lay dead.
And upon seeing this horror, Volli's heart bled.*

*Volli found Odd, burning with fury,
And fought him in a battle of the utmost glory.
Volli bested Odd, and Odd bested Volli,
And brought a bloody end to both their story.*

*Two brothers; one Odd, and the other Volli,
What one called love, the other called folly.
Two brothers; one Odd, and the other Volli,
Both caused the other immense misery.*

FIRST AGE



CULTURE IN THE FIRST AGE

A vast land, covered with sheets of ice and snow, challenging every decision of its inhabitants, denying all comfort at every turn. Svillanders took the challenge and they hardened their bodies, minds, and spirits in order to survive it. While they adapted, their culture was reshaped with them.

There was no separation between the great grandparents of Austris, Mithals, and Vestris, as the events that were to push them apart had yet to occur. They shared a single culture with small local differences. An example of such a difference is the method of killing the sacrifice, which communities still debate; most say the proper method is to cut open the major blood vessels passing through the sacrifice's neck, few propose to stab the sacrifice through the heart, and fewer claim that it is best to bleed the sacrifice through its ankles.

Despite these trivial differences, Svillanders were strongly attached to their common culture in the First Age. Their beliefs, rituals, rules, and ambition kept them together. The Gods' immense influence during the First Age made this bond even stronger.



HUNTERS AND THIEVES



Upon their first arrival to Svilland, while they were nomads, people from the North were not prepared or properly equipped for settled life. They wore fur, carried small metal and wooden tools, used poorly crafted bronze weapons, and hunted with yew bows. Even though they possessed the knowledge of blacksmithing, carpentry, and weaving, they had few resources to use in such crafts.

The first talents to acquire in such a society were capercaillie hunting and meat smoking. Hens were rarely found on ground but cocks made tracks on snow; it was the children's duty to track those birds. The younglings were also taught to identify velvet foot and oyster mushrooms. They also foraged Svilland steinsopp mushrooms during their hunts in vast pine forests. As they got better at tracking and killing capercaillies, they would start hunting rabbits and foxes. In those hunts, they mainly used traps made from branches and sticks to capture the creature.

On the other hand, adults set their sights on larger prey. The most common of which were wild hog, black-collared sheep, and reindeer. Hunters would butcher wild hog for their meat and fat, sheep for their meat and fur, reindeer for their meat and antlers. They used yew bows and iron-headed arrows for such hunts.

BOUNTY OF THE FOREST

Hunters were exceptionally knowledgeable in foraging. It was crucial for a hunter to know what kinds of wild food resources were available for animals and what they preferred to eat. Utilizing this knowledge, they foraged various wild resources during their hunts.

In Svilland, the most common resources forests offered were velvet foot mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, Svilland steinsopp mushrooms, yew berries, juniper berries, lingonberries, pine nuts, and yarrow.

HUNTING THE BEAST

The most capable hunters sometimes went after bigger, faster, and stronger creatures to prove themselves to the Gods and goddesses. These hunts carried great significance between tribes.

There were three great beasts that a great hunter could challenge; a wolf, a moose, and a bear. Each of these hunts that ended in success, demonstrated that the hunter achieved perfection in the following aspects:

- Wolf: Fearlessness and resolve.
- Moose: Wits and stamina.
- Bear: Faith and strength.

Even if the great hunt was not successful, loved ones of the hunter would not grieve, as it was a worthy way of passing from this world. But, a hunter abandoning the great hunt would bring great shame, which, in some tribes, was punished by death.

Most of these great hunters decorated themselves with the fur of their great hunts. It was the utmost demonstration of the kings of the wild becoming the hunted.

HUNTING THE KINDRED

While some hunted wild animals to sustain their tribes, some turned their gaze upon other tribes. They tracked the weak-est groups and robbed them of their foods, and even clothes. These hunters were shunned by all nomads and called thieves. Their actions were not considered dying by the sword or honourable, but it played an important role in the birth of the warrior's path.

Armed with bronze swords, to strike down petty thieves, many Svillanders chose to adopt the way of the warrior, a path of honor, and the unspoken law that resides in every gentle heart.

Swift were the arrows of thieves, so, just were the shields of war. The first warriors were walking in the forest when they came upon a pine tree that had been struck by three lead spears. But though the spears had pierced the mighty pine, a deer laying by its side had been left unharmed. Impressed by the sturdiness of the tree, the warriors adopted this symbol and with the pine crafted the first round shields so they may too be as strong as the pine. Thus, Tyr had successfully bestowed his wisdom upon the mortals.



A SHELTERED LIFE



Fresh rivers full of fish, secure locations on top of hills, calm forests with plenty of wild resources; throughout their travels, some nomad tribes chose to settle in such regions. The long journey had started to take its toll on nomads and most of them lost their desire to chase a vague dream of a promised land. Only the most stubborn and the most faithful continued their undoubting march. Cold and savagery cleansed the marching band of their weaknesses, molding them into a dedicated folk with an unwavering will. Eventually, they arrived at their promised lands, ferocious saltwater stretching across the horizon, waiting to be claimed.

The first change that came with the early settlements was the shelters. Nomads used branches, bushes and animal hides to build temporary shelters; settlers, Svillanders, harvested oak wood from temperate regions of Svilland and a variety of pines from cold regions to build permanent cottages. They covered their wooden huts with clay and turf. In colder regions, they had large fire pits in the center of almost all houses.

Yet, not all nomads found comfort in communities and warm households; a handful of them preferred to stay on foot, embracing the wild.

PRIVILEGED

On their first arrival, mortals found abandoned settlements of the ancient past, swarming with magical beasts. These settlements were by no means ordinary, they were built with polished and well carved stones, rerouted roots of trees, and steel rods. Most of these settlements were located near unique landscapes that were hard to travel to. Some Svillanders

believed these settlements were built by the Vanir.

FARMS

Svillanders had always survived by adapting before the conditions had a chance to cause their demise, and they did so again in their settled lives. By the time small communities were formed, almost all households had several domesticated animals. The most common were goats, sheep and pigs. Goats were favored for their milk and pigs for their meat, while sheep were kept for their wool. In temperate regions, hens, geese, and ducks were more common besides goats, pigs, and sheep. Cows joined these animals later on. Owning a horse was rare and it was a sign of wealth.

Folks got the most out of their domestic animals. They used cows to plow fields, pigs to find rare mushrooms, chickens to clear their fields from bugs. When an animal got old, they were slaughtered and eaten; any part of the animal that couldn't be eaten was harvested to be made into clothes and ornaments. They drank the milk of goats, sheep, cows and also made butter and cheese. At this stage of settled life, weaving had not yet been mastered; people used slender wood sticks to knit clothes out of wool yarn.

Besides domesticating animals, the settlers cultivated various vegetables, fruits and herbs, such as: parsnip, cabbage, onion, peas, celery, horseradish, carrot, dill, strawberries, thyme, and mustard plants.

GIFT OF GRASS

Svilland was a cruel land. Even the most skillful hunter and the most determined farmer might fail to provide enough food to their families. In rare cases, parents abandoned their newborns, knowing that they had not enough food to feed them. Eventually, a kuning found three spirits trapped under the ice of a freshwater lake.

The wisest of seidrs among the kuning came together and decided to choose a plant as a gift to the new Svillanders. They chose the humblest of all, grass. As the ritual was performed, grass grew tall and nutritious seeds popped up at the top. The gift was ready to be delivered.

With a small ceremony, a group of kuning, led by a wise seidr, gave their gifts to Svillanders and explained. The blessed grass, named barley, was the gift of the spirits of the abandoned; let their fates not be shared by another. The spirits always made sure that, unlike themselves, the barley always found its way up to the surface from under the snow and ice.

Svillanders accepted the gift. They used barley in stews and soups, and made it into bread and beer.

CRYSTAL VOICE

Farmer women would call their cattle with a herding call, also known as kunling. They released their goats and cows to the mountains for them to graze on high quality grass. When the sun started to set, they sang to them from miles away with a clear voice that traveled across mountains and the animals would hear it and return to their farmers.

Some bards even used this call in their songs. Their voices would reach miles away which made the people, who heard

the singing, feel the vastness of the nature that surrounds them all. Kunling was also used to ward off predators.

LONGHOUSE

Logs protruding from the ground, reinforced with stone footings, lined with clay, and a curved roof supported by posts. The first longhouses were rather small compared to modern ones, yet it required great mastery over carpentry to construct such buildings. Depending on the region, they used oak or durable pine.

These buildings were built to act as common areas in villages, to house animals during the coldest seasons, to store crops and important tools, and, of course, to eat, drink, and sleep. Also, when a village had guests, they would stay in the village longhouse if no one offered them a bed.

There was no flooring in longhouses, just pounded earth. Inside, they had large fire pits to warm the place and cook meals. They also covered the interior with animal pelts for insulation. As these buildings had no windows or chimneys, the longhouses could get quite smoky. Svillanders burned local herbs in these fire pits to create pleasant fragrances.

Towards the end of the First Age, some families built their own longhouses to replace their wooden cottages.

LIGHTING THE PYRE

Warriors of the Aesir have traveled across villages to conduct ceremonies and attend to villagers in ways that their Gods

commanded. One of the most important ceremonies was lighting the first fire of a village. After building the main longhouse, villagers would call for an alle, or wait for one to come, to receive their blessings.

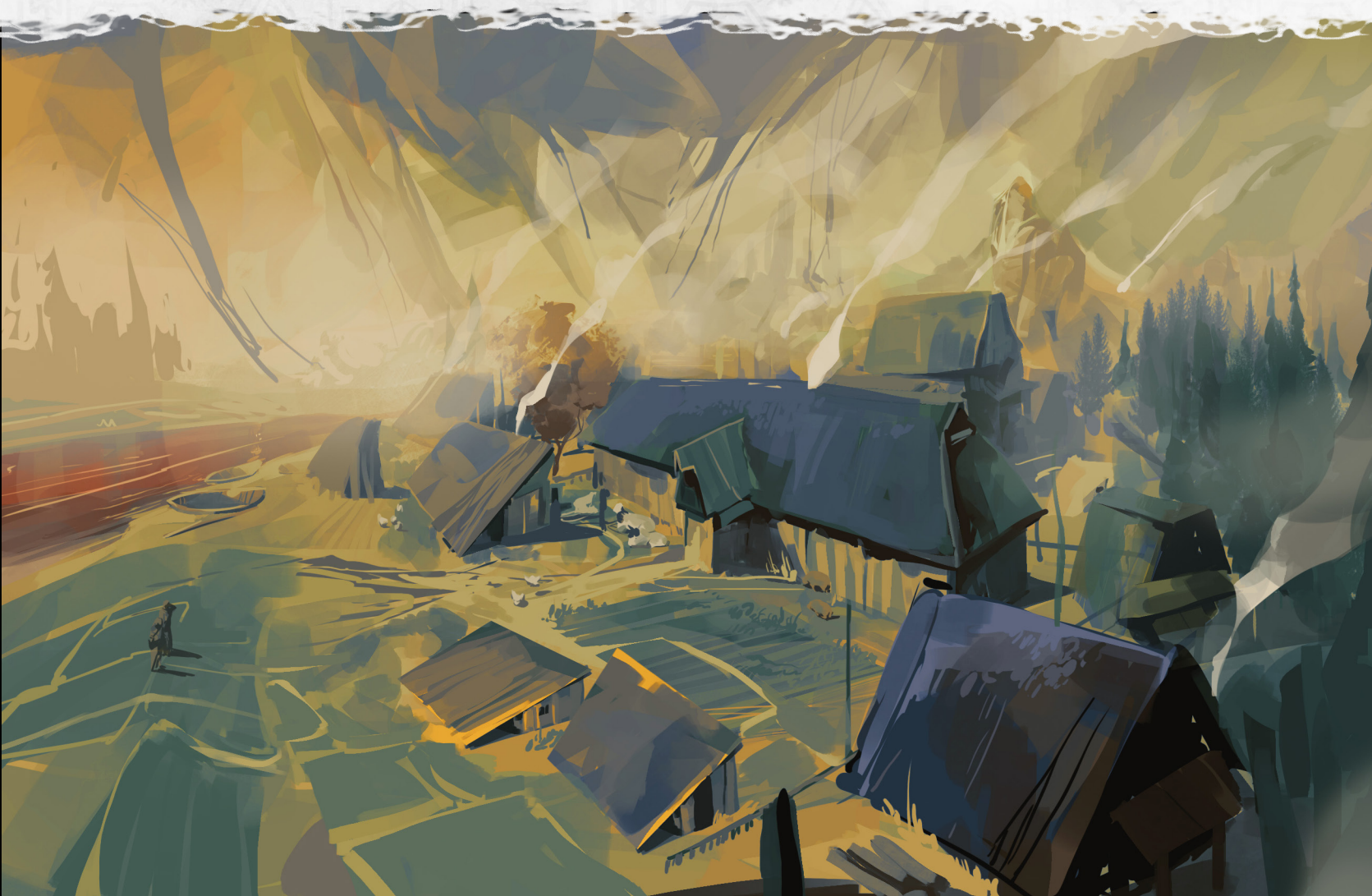
At the hands of an alle, an animal of the villagers' choosing would be sacrificed and butchered. Its meat and organs would be prepared for cooking, its blood and fat to make a soup, and its bones to be ground by the alle. Booming prayer would fill the longhouse while a crowd of silent eyes gazes upon the pit. Wood, laid inside the fire pit, would struggle against the commanding voice of the warrior, trembling, crackling, and eventually, burning. Then, a great feast would be held that lasted for days.

Before departing, the alle would bless the weapons in the village using the bone dust from the sacrifice. In many cases, as the blessed warrior grew more distant, roars, howls, and hoots rose up from the villagers to show their gratitude and reverence.

These fires once lit, were never to be quenched.

BLACK GOLD

A leap forward in blacksmithing happened when Svillanders started to make charcoal from pine wood. They dug giant pits, filled them with pine wood, covered the pits with turf, and slowly burned the wood for over 3 days. The result was charcoal and they used it to heat iron ore to the extreme. Before this process was discovered, they would use pine wood with runic magic to heat copper ore.



The use of charcoal in blacksmithing made it easier for Svillanders to shape iron. First, they made tools such as forks, knives, hammers, hoes, hatchets and nails. Then, they crafted weapons such as swords, axes, javelins and eventually, they made armor, mostly chainmail. Yet, though charcoal had made all this possible, it was not the thing that came to be known as “black gold”.

A bolt of lightning tore apart the night sky amid thundering echoes. Humbled was the earth at such a glorious sight. A gothi of thunder and sky rushed to the place where the lightning had struck. Three burning trees stood before the gothi, each touted marbled scars, and an old pine tree in between, still wet and alive. Three pyres scorched the moss covered elder pine, and it bled its precious inky wine. The gothi gazed from afar and dug enormous pits to distill the black gold, tar. Thus, Thor had successfully bestowed his gift upon the mortals.

Iron nails and hammers made larger construction projects possible and, by preserving the wood, tar made these projects feasible. The result, larger longhouses and the first longboats.



WINDS OF SOUTH



To master the sea, Svillanders had to first master various skills: carpentry, tar distillation, blacksmithing, and eventually, weaving.

They built their ships by building its outside first and then placing a frame inside. They nailed overlapping planks to each other and filled the spaces between with tar and wool to make it watertight.

Earlier vessels hadn't featured a sail. They were long, wide, shallow, and were powered by oars and brute strength.

SALT AND ROPE

Before they had boats, folks fished trout and eel in rivers using hooked spears. After they built their first boats, they also crafted nets using pine and animal hide and used it to fish herring and cod in open seas, and salmon in the deepwater near estuaries. During their fishing expeditions, which could take days, they encountered walrus and started hunting them for their tusks, hide, fat, and meat.

On boats, they pickled or dried fish for storage. On land, they smoked their fish. But, they needed a different way to use their limited storage space more efficiently on boats, so they used salt. In pools dug on land, they evaporated sea water, harvested salt, and used it to preserve their food. Also, they used salt with egg yolks to treat animal skins.

CLOTHES AND SAILS

The next step of conquering the sea was to harness the wind. To do so, Svillanders designed and crafted their first device, a warp-weighted loom. Using this new tool, they weaved a dense fabric from wool, called wadmal. To make sails they covered wadmal with tar and made it waterproof.

A beautiful bard, blessed with a silken tone, searched for a husband as good looking as herself. She found a lad, as strong

as a bear and warm of heart, though you wouldn't know it by looking at him. And look at him, you would not want to, for he was surely the ugliest among the walking. The bard prayed with her enchanting voice and Balder answered her call. On the edge of a cliff, the bard saw a beautiful goat chewing pale blue flowers from a long green plant. She sheared the goat and heckled the plant, made a cashmere coat and a linen pant. She gifted those clothes to the ugly man, attracted by his charms, three shieldmaidens made love to him. The bard lost a love which was false, it was Loki who answered her calls. Thus, Loki bestowed two gifts upon the mortals.

After this unexpected blessing from the God of mischief, Svillanders started to plant flax and domesticate cashmere goats. They built heckling houses and made flax into linen.

Wadmal, knitted wool, leather, linen, fur, and cashmere have been used by Svillanders to make clothes, and they are still the only materials available.

SAFE PASSAGE

Svillanders observed the waves and smelled the winds to navigate at sea. To navigate in such a primal way required great knowledge, keen senses, and in some cases it proved insufficient.

On a fast and small ship, whose sails were adorned with compass runes, eight warriors from eight villages fought to the death on a burning ship. The warrior from a northern tribe was the last person standing, their war cry was heard from the shore as their body burned, and their souls were carried to Valhalla. Gods accepted this sacrifice and placed the victorious warrior's soul upon the sky, shining bright and always pointing towards their tribe. Thus, the northern star was born.

All sailors carried waterskins full of water, which they never drank. They also regularly gave sacrifices to the sea. Both were to please Aegir and ask for a safe passage through endless depths.

KINGS AND WHALERS

It was a time when strong warriors started to take control of villages and became jarls. And, the first significant conflict between two jarls, both commanding three dozen soldiers, arose because of a neutral faction, whales.

One of the jarls was transporting a treasure of gold, silver, and wadmal, when their ship sank while passing through a fjord. A whale, probably mistook glittering gold for a school of herring, ate a large part of the treasure. The jarl started an expedition to hunt down the whale to reclaim the treasure.

Whalers would track the beasts, lure them near the shore using bait and magic, and stab them with long spears. The injured beasts mostly got stranded on beaches. Then, a group of butchers would harvest the animal on the beach for its meat, bones, and blubber. Then, the jarl's soldiers would come to check the animal's stomach for the treasure.

The jarl's gifted alchemist refined blubber into whale oil and used it to make lamps. This alchemist also created the first varnish by boiling a concoction of whale oil, linseed oil, and pine resin. Varnish became popular and other Svillanders started to hunt whales too.

Whalers, working under another jarl, found the treasure in a whale beached on their shore. When this was heard, the conflict between the two jarls began as they both laid claim to the treasure. Eventually, they came to an arrangement; they shared the treasure equally and declared the first formal law that even today almost all Svillanders respect: "All harvest from a beached whale must be shared among the hunter, shore's ruler, ruler's people, and people's neighbors."



AUTHORITY AND RESPECT



The First Age was the era of faith, courage, and honour. Svillanders were fierce and natural conditions only supported that. They fought against thieves, animals, jotunns, mythical beasts and while doing so, their faith in the Aesir never faltered. The best among these people were not just better than the others, they were great.

JARL

Some with a heart of a child, some with a heart of ice. Nevertheless, all who wished to lay claim to people's lands had to have the strength of body and will to do so. Those who ruled over a land with at least several households were called jarls and most of them were great warriors possessing a variety of skills other than fighting.

Jarls made the laws and commanded the local warbands that followed them. Most of the jarls made longhouses, used as common houses, their homes. The only places in lands ruled by jarls that were out of jarls' jurisdiction, were shrines, ritual places, and temples.

ALLE

Blessed warriors, who followed a path of a deity of their choosing, carried divine judgement among Svillanders. The rules and laws they obeyed and dictated were not of their choosing; their deities and more experienced alles taught them the unbreakable rules that they must follow. They dedicated their lives to their faith and fought battles in the name of the Aesir.

Their most important duties were to make sure that no one laid claim to shrines, ritual places, and temples; to conduct and oversee rituals, and to act as a medium between Svillanders and their Gods.

GOTHI

Not necessarily warriors, gothis too fought many wars in the name of their deities. They prayed and worked to strengthen their faith and to see and understand the divine workings as much as Allfather allowed. They channeled their Gods' will upon the land and studied their teachings. In temple hierarchy, an experienced gothi would outrank an experienced alle in matters related to divine.

Their duties were almost the same as the alles', except

gothis needed to perform more complex and intense rituals. Both gothis and alles were welcomed almost everywhere.

BERSERKER

A warrior kills to survive a battle, but a berserker kills to kill. Fighting like they had nothing to lose, they dominated battlefields with their unpredictable moves and irresistible strength.

Many berserkers were considered to be mad, and maybe this was true. Only a berserker knew the reason behind choosing a berserker's life as that life was extremely destructive for a berserker's body and their surroundings. Their diets consisted mostly of Svilland steinsopp, bear meat, and bear fat.

Berserkers wandered all across Svilland, usually alone, and were respected mostly because it was almost certainly lethal not to show respect to a berserker.



SVILLAND CUISINE



There were a wide variety of local delicacies in Svilland and many versions of the same dishes. Although their diets consisted mostly of meat and fish, Svillanders employed every resource they could put their hands on to diversify their cuisine.

Most Svillanders ate two meals a day, one at dawn and one at night.

SWEET GOLD

Shunned by society, the half-jotunns lived in the far corners of Svilland. They wanted to join the others in their progress, and in order to do so, they introduced the most tempting of their goods, honey. Collected from the hives of furred honey bees in cold regions, honey was the sweetest thing in Svilland by far.

After its introduction, several Svillanders tried beekeeping but failed miserably. For some unknown reason, furred honey bees were aggressive towards everyone except half-jotunns.

Although they still despised the half-jotunns, folks accepted them because of the honey they provided. The half-jotunns became more and more indispensable as the services they provided became essential for the production of mead.

SOUPS AND STEWS

Svillanders made any kind of meat into soups and stews. They would make ham broth, beef broth, lamb broth, goat broth, fish broth, and so on...

Usually, they added herbs, milk and spices, such as thyme, salt, mustard seeds, horseradish, to make broth into a soup. In some regions, they roasted spices with butter before adding this mix into soups.

WHORE SOUP

Ingredients: Oyster mushroom caps, Celery leaves, Parsnip, Butter, Fish stock, Beef stock, Water, Milk, Salmons, Dill, Salt.

First, roast roughly chopped oyster mushroom caps, celery leaves, and parsnip in butter until completely shrunken. Add salt.

While mushrooms roast, mix equal parts fish and beef stock in a cauldron and leave to boil. Add water and milk until it reaches the desired consistency.

Add fresh, cleaned salmon into the cauldron along with roasted ingredients, including butter. Boil until the salmon becomes flaky.

Finally, chop a bouquet of dill and add to the mixture. Take the cauldron off the heat.

Your soup is ready! Serve with fresh barley bread.

Stews, on the other hand, had chunks of meat and fat in them. They also mixed more vegetables into stews than they added to soups, and sometimes added fruits and honey to add mild sweetness. Most stews included peas.

WINTER'S FLAVORS

A strong and spicy aroma would fill longhouses, as meals were prepared. It was an ecstatic sensation to smell such an overpowering scent that warms people's chests in such cold days. It almost made the folks forget the chilling winter that was upon them at all times.

Enticing aromas would be unleashed from the cooked fatty meat and, as the outside became crispy and dark while the middle became soft and juicy. Herbs and spices like salt, horseradish, mustard seeds, and thyme, would enhance the enchanting cacophony of delightful fragrances.

Finally, a touch of sweetness, coming from mead and stews, would revive the senses.

SPECIAL DIETS

Different professions required people to adapt to different conditions. Masters of those professions changed their diets according to their needs.

WARRIOR RATIONS

Most of a warrior's work is to walk. Marching continuously meant a constant need for energy. Hence, they carried smoked fish and mead. It was easy to chew on smoked fish while walking and it was easy to carry, as it was light and compact. Some warriors preferred beer over mead and very few

preferred water.

HUNTER RATIONS

Like warriors, hunters traveled a lot, but in many situations stalking their prey required them to stay motionless for long periods. There was only one way to achieve that, eating lots and lots of animal fat. One might think this problem could be solved easily with magic and one would be extremely wrong to think so. Resorting to magical means in Svilland wilderness would only attract attention of the kind that no hunter would want.

Most hunters carried small pieces of animal fat that were roasted and then covered in barley flour to suppress the smell. A good hunter would only drink cold water during hunts.

FARMER RATIONS

A farmer's life was governed by the weather conditions and shadows. While the shadows were long, they worked to keep their warmth; while there were no shadows it was either noon, which meant the warmth of the sun allowed them a break, or night, which meant that it was time to go home. Unlike the rest of the people, farmers would eat a third meal during their noon break.

Farmer's meals varied from village to village, but one thing almost every farmer consumed during their noon break was bone soup. It was believed that drinking bone soup would strengthen the bones and strong bones meant more durability for farmers.

SAILOR RATIONS

Most Svilland sailors carried yew berries, juniper berries, lingonberries, strawberries, and goat's cheese. They also had some emergency smoked meat, but mostly ate the fish they caught, after drying it on the boat with the help of the harsh winds.

DVERGR RATIONS

Two common professions among dvergr were mining and blacksmithing. Both enjoyed pickled vegetables and salted onion, and drank mead during their work.

DESSERTS

Two fundamentals of most desserts were butter and sweetness, which Svillanders enjoyed in the form of plain and simple buttered bread with honey.

They also made sweet paste from berries and butter, and wines from berries and honey. It was not a rare sight to see a Svillander enjoying strawberry wine. But of course, the most common sweet beverage was mead.

FEASTS AND RITUALS

The conditions were unforgiving, so it only makes sense that reaching a milestone in life meant a great deal. Such events were celebrated to the fullest. Regardless of the complexity of divine machinations built upon the bedrocks of reality with edificial philosophy, it was very simple for most folks: punish crime, celebrate success, and please the Aesir.

NAMING

A baby resting on the ground on an animal hide would be picked up by one of the parents and as a gothi or an alle sprinkled water over the infant, the parents would utter a name. Then, all participants would draw the sign of the hammer in the air. The water was to purify the child while the sign was to invoke Thor's protection.

After the ritual, a traditional feast would be held and everyone would make a toast in the name of the newly named child.

MARRIAGE

Binding two mortal souls together meant reunification in the afterlife and was a happy occasion.

Early in the morning, the bride and groom would start to clean and decorate themselves. The bride's family would attend to the groom and vice versa. Once they were ready, usually at noon, they were taken to a ritual place. An alle or gothi, and in some cases a jarl, would place a hammer on the bride's lap and a bouquet of yarrow on the groom's lap. Then, participants would pray to Freyja, with the guidance of the conductor of the ceremony, while the couple held each other's hands. During these marriage ceremonies, families exchanged swords as a symbol of unity.

After the conductor declared the ceremony over, families would race to the place where the marriage feast would be held and throw axes at the top of its entrance. The first family to hit the top of the entrance won the race and the other family served food and drinks for the rest of the night.

After the feast was over, the newlyweds would take a keg of mead mixed with ale and depart for some private time where they got to know each other.

BATTLE MEDITATION

Preparing mind and body for battle was a private matter that had to be attended alone. The ritual itself was almost completely different for each individual. The idea was to meditate twice: in a place that disturbed the individual's mind but comforted its body, from daybreak to noon and in a situation that was harsh on the individual's body but comforted its mind, from noon to night. The final stage of meditation was a good night's sleep.

ODIN'S DAY AND MIDYEAR

Once a year, in the middle of coldest winter, Svillanders held 12 day-long feasts to celebrate Allfather's arrival in Svilland. They would pile heaps of wood, light huge bonfires, and sit around the fire to give each other gifts.

Although almost all events related to Allfather required sacrifices, this celebration did not; as it was wise to know when to kill. Instead, they hung wooden plates carved with runes, on tall trees and lit them up with magic.

At the same time with this celebration, seidr performed a ritual. They gathered in forests and offered gifts to trees to please their spirits. The goal of this ritual was to invite tree spirits back to the forests to prepare for the coming spring.

This intersection of Svillander celebration and seidr ritual caused conflict every year.

FUNERAL

There were three types of funeral ceremonies; burial, cremation, and ship burial.

Svillanders buried their dead if there was no authority present that could perform the cremation ceremony. A deep grave had to be dug and the body covered with heavy stones. Occasionally, they put runestones near graves.

If someone that could perform the cremation was available, they cremated their deceased, as they believed destroying the body would set the spirit free and the smoke helped the spirit reach the afterlife.

Ship burial ceremony was not common as it was not possible to regularly burn down ships. This ceremony was carried out only when a very important person died. The deceased would be laid in the center of a ship along with the person's important earthly possessions, and the body was anointed with fragrant oils. Then, the ship was released to open seas, and while sailing, it was shot with a flaming arrow. It was believed that as it burned down, the ship would sail to the afterlife with everything in it.

WINTER BRAWL

Gaining experience before participating in actual combat was crucial and increased chances of survival. Parents and their children gathered in snow covered plains and formed two armies; army of youth and army of adults. Adults would attack the youth army bare-handed and the youth army would try to stand its ground. Eventually, adults would win the battle to teach their children how to accept defeat. Afterwards, parents and children would feast together, sharing their experiences of the battle.

AXE DUEL

The key component necessary to end a conflict was violence. It was just that simple; two people dueled using only axes and shields; no magic, no special powers, and no armor. It was a duel to the death and the winner was considered to be right. Otherwise, the Gods would never let that person win, or at least, so they believed.

THE GREAT FEAST

On their arrival, Svillanders came upon living proof of the fabled war between the Aesir and Vanir. They encountered mythical beasts that were obviously not created by the noble Aesir. Their numbers were few but their strength was immense.

Displeased by their new lands being occupied by monsters, Svillanders took the matter into their own hands. Over decades, they hunted these monsters down, one by one. Everytime they successfully killed one of those beasts, they held great feasts that lasted for months.

It became customary to consume the flesh of the beast during a great feast.

MASTERS OF COLD

Lives full of losses and death gave rise to this ritual. Some people purged the pain that stained their soul by challenging the cold. Most of the practitioners of this ritual chose to do so after a loss of a loved one. The ritual required one to expose themselves to extreme cold during daylight.

REDEMPTION

Once a crime punishable by death had been committed, there was no escape. The guilty could only ask that their soul be redeemed.

A sword was tied to a tree branch 6 feet above the ground and the convict's feet were cut off from the ankles. If the guilty could stand up, walk towards the sword and grab it, their sins were atoned for and their head was cut off by an executioner. Otherwise, the guilty was left to die a dishonorable death.

LUXURIES

Clay pottery, wooden plates and cups, iron and bronze tools, bone trinkets; a variety of items made from various materials that were necessary for a Svillander in its daily life. Besides those items, some people desired for luxuries, such as silver, glass, and gold.

SHAPES AND PATTERNS

Buildings, tools, weapons, and clothes had images, basic runes, and combined runes carved, drawn and sewn on them.

FALSE BLOOD

Cold regions contributed beeswax, temperate regions contributed linseed oil, and in the middle they were mixed and refined followed by the addition of ochre. The result was red paint that started to be used widely across Svilland.

In the First Age, almost all images were sinuous and interlaced s-shaped beasts with paws holding the borders of the images, other

beasts, and itself. Another characteristic of the beast motif was its long and intertwined beard.

Using simple runes was common unlike the use of combined runes. Few possessed the knowledge of rune combining, and most of these people were runewalkers.

ORNAMENTS

Svillanders wore jewelry to show their status. The rich adorned themselves with gold and silver ornaments set with polished gemstones. Most ornaments worn by the rich were magical as craftsmen tended to add magical finishing touches to glorify their best efforts. Whomever they might be, no one could wear silver or gold holy symbols without the approval of the temples.

The poor used copper and pewter to make their own jewelry. They also used the bones of the animals they ate. Also, hunters used parts of their prey and warriors, especially berserkers, used parts of their enemies as adornments.

GLASS AND HORN

Both the stories of glass and horn were fabled.

Clear were the skies, while murky the intentions of the friend. A strong jarl married a just woman and time made them best friends. Six children were given to them by the Gods, against all the odds. Fallen ill the mother and the wife, six children rushed to the temples of the Gods. No one offered them any comfort. While praying near a small shrine, a gothi of Freyja heard the children's pleas and took an unearthly gift from the shrine, knowing its origin was divine. It was a glass cup. The children and the gothi gave the cup to the wife. Her husband filled the cup with her medicine, but through the transparent matter she saw the poison. Betrayed by her husband, who had unbeknownst to her succumbed to the desires of the flesh and lusted for a maiden, she stabbed him through the heart and continued living unladen. Thus, Freyja had successfully bestowed the gift of transparency upon her followers. Only Freyja gothis knew how to create glass.

A kind hearted woman was walking through a forest when she encountered a crippled man. Blood was oozing from his mouth and he spoke not but to cry for help. She came closer. There she saw a broken bottle with potion dripping out of its cracks. She searched for a vessel to collect the drops. As she was searching, a beam of light came down gently from the sky and scorched the snow as it hit the ground. A horn emerged from the boiling water. The horn hollowed in her hands as she grabbed it and pulled from the warm water. The woman filled the hollow horn with the potion and gave it to the young man, which healed his wounds. Thus, Heimdallr bestowed his gift upon the mortals.





MUSIC

Songs with poetic lyrics accompanied by throat singers, drums and horns. Most songs would be about life, death, war, and the hardships of life. Drums were used on ships to guide the oarsmen with a steady rhythm, and horns were used as a call to arms.

TATTOOS

Svillanders used wood ash to tattoo their skins. Most people, mostly warriors and altes, were tattooed from neck to toe. Their tattoos were dark blue in color.



HYGIENE

It was extremely important for Svillanders to stay clean, they liked being clean. They utilized a wide variety of tools to that end.

The first tools they made were from animal bones; combs and ear picks. They used very sharp iron razors to shave and shape their hair and beards. They even crafted tweezers from bronze. The bristle brush that was made from boar bristle was used during baths.

Common folk took baths at least once a week and people with more luxurious lives took even more baths; some jarls were known to take baths every single day. They brushed their bodies with bristle brushes and combed their hair and beard with water. They even took dips in hot springs.



KINGDOMS IN THE FIRST AGE

The lands, with at least two large settlements or tribes on it, that were claimed by a leader recognized as their ruler by the people, were called kingdoms. The first age kingdoms were petty compared to the second and third age kingdoms, but not always weaker.



TRIBES OF MORDVIGANE



Also known as tribes of the murder lands and tribes of the borderlands, this kingdom was a collective group of warrior tribes ruled by a runewalker berserker named Hilda, sister of Signe.

Both Hilda and her sister Signe fought in the war of the immortals against the Vanir long before Svilland and folks were known as Svillanders. Once the war was over, Vanir forces started to retreat from Svilland to the East. During their retreat, while Aesir forces were celebrating their triumph, a Vanir ripped an enormous stalactite from a cave ceiling and threw it towards the celebrating troops across a mountain. The stalactite tore and shattered Signe's chest and instantly she gave her last breath. In the next moment, Tyr raised his gaze upon the mountain range and declared the obstruction of the mountains unjust. The mountains withdrew humbly from the way of justice and made a pathway through a valley. Hilda sprinted across the valley and reached the murderer of her sister. She ripped open the Vanir's chest with her bare hands and ate its beating heart. Thus, justice was served.

Hilda rallied strong warriors into the East wetlands, believing that someday the Vanir would return to reclaim their lands. She formed different tribes in the swamp region and ruled over them, preparing them for the upcoming war. She ruled over hundreds of years, and even today, she wanders across the swamps, alone, waiting for the Vanir to return, as

her unending rage keeps her alive. No living being knows the fate of Hilda, sister of Signe.

MISTY SWAMPS

The forest wetlands of the east had unique resources endemic to the region. Two of the most important of these resources, which contributed vastly to the features of the landscape, were vapor fish and kerling cypress.

In the clean freshwaters of the swamp, Mordviganers fished schools of magical vapor fish. This fish had an elongated body with a length of 16 inches, comparatively small fins, and dark scales. While in a calm mood, it released vapor from its gills. Most parts of the swamp were covered in a mist because of this vapor. Mordviganers' diet mostly consisted of vapor fish and Svilland steinsopp mushroom.

Ascending from the waters of the wetlands, broad kerling cypresses stood tall and mighty. These trees grew to heights of more than 60 feet. They had an enormous trunk with greyish brown bark. The tree had long needle leaves which it dropped in extreme cold. When dropped, its needles turned soft and grey and stuck to each other; these tangled leaves hung from tree branches, resembling long grey hair. Tribes used kerling cypress wood to craft shields and bows, as its wood was durable and flexible at the same time and also rot- and water-resistant.

Hilda strictly forbade the tribes to share swamp resources with others because those resources were supplies needed for the upcoming war.



A SECLUDED SOCIETY

The first members of the tribes were all people who lived in the ancient age. Their methods were extremely primal and magical. They used copper weapons, enchanted with immense magical potential, and lived very uncomfortable lives. The only thing that kept them going was the next hunt, it didn't matter if it was for beast or not. Every person that lived in the tribes of Mordvigane was a warrior; bards, carpenters, blacksmiths, everyone was a warrior no matter what.

These people slept in shelters made from branches and bushes; some of them slept on top of cypresses and swamp oaks. Except for a few exceptions, they didn't have permanent shelters. Through all their lives they wandered across the swamp, waiting for the Vanir to come back.

THE RECOGNITION AND FALL

They arrived in the east swamp region of Svilland long before the first age. Several generations passed before Svillanders arrived, only Hilda remained unchanged. When the kingdoms of the first age started to emerge, Hilda sent word to them and told them that she claimed these wetlands long ago. None opposed her claim. She also told them that if any gothi, alle, or follower of Freyja should enter the swamp, they would be killed on sight. Vanir worship, including worshipping Freyja, was out of the question in the tribes.

The tribes existed from the ancient age to the end of the first age. Ironically, Vanir never came and they caused their own demise. In the absence of an enemy, they started to challenge each other to stay sharp. They killed each other in a quest for glorious battle and at the end of the first age, they were no more. No one ever heard of Hilda ever again, but some claimed to hear a chant of war from an ancient past still

echoing in the mists of the swamp.

"Eirolld! Vaskrold! Austrvegr ro uppreistir!"

"A bronze age! A brave age! The East will succeed!"

SLITHER SOUP

Ingredients: Vapor fish, Snake, Meadowsweet, Rock salt, Laugr runestone, Svilland steinsopp mushroom Clean vapor fish by scraping off its scales with a knife or an axe, cutting it open, removing its entrails and washing the cavity.

To clean the snake, first kill it by cutting its head off. Pull hard to remove the skin. Locate the heart and remove without damage. Cut the snake wide open and remove entrails, then wash thoroughly.

Using a laugr runestone, create a floating water bubble and place it above a fire. Crush a small piece of rock salt into a fine dust and add it to the bubble after it starts to boil. Remove the root of a meadowsweet and add the rest to the boiling water. Finally, chop the fish and snake into half fist sized pieces and add it to the water. Let it boil for a while.

Place the mushroom caps on embers until they are wrinkled and soft. Find a tree bark that can hold liquid. Put the mushrooms in the bark, then pour the soup in it.

Enjoy your slither soup.



KINGDOM OF GJALFRMARRHEIM

Two brothers, Fenmar and Oldir, lived on a mountain near the end of the Red River. Their parents had fallen weak to sickness and passed away. Older brother Fenmar fished for food, younger brother Oldir looked after their only goat. As they got older; Fenmar hunted for food, and Oldir made cheese. When they got even older, Fenmar got tired of Oldir's incompetence, and Oldir made wool clothes. Fenmar was angry with Oldir. He had been risking his life for years to feed his brother and all his brother had been doing was to waste all of his time on needless luxuries. Fenmar left his brother and journeyed to the West. Oldir never got the chance to show the runes he weaved on wool clothes and whispered to goat's milk to his brother.

Years had passed. Fenmar built a village on the West coast of Svilland and became both a jarl, and a gothi of Balder. Oldir claimed a village on the South coast, close to the end of the Red River; he carried the rune of magic, Ansuz, and married a beautiful woman carrying the same rune. Both brothers lived for many years without knowing of each other's fate.

One day, a traveler mentioned Fenmar during a feast in Oldir's village. Oldir summoned this merchant and listened to his brother's endeavors from him. The next day, Oldir ordered the construction of a gigantic longboat. He worked with 20 others and a talented carpenter who was also a gothi and a family friend, named Torsten. Together, they built a longboat that was 100 feet long; Oldir carved various runes on the hull for protection and integrity, while Torsten carved a dragon head out of oakwood, painted its chin red, and placed it at the bow of the longboat. They named it Raudskeggjadr. Oldir gathered his strongest warriors and cruised with his new longboat all across the coast of Svilland. One night, he looked towards the land and saw the lights of the village that his brother ruled. Oldir ordered his warriors to row towards the village which they did to the sound of drums.

Fenmar's scouts, while resting on the decks, heard a sound, a sound of a giant bird flapping its wings. Their gazes searched the horizon for the source of the sound, and when they finally saw the wyrm that was approaching their villages, they sounded the horns.

Dozens of torches were waiting on shore for the arrival of Oldir, or as he thought. Once the torches started to fly towards them, he realized that they were fire arrows. Oldir thought that his brother had betrayed him and Fenmar thought a wyrm was coming to destroy his village. It didn't matter, once the arrows had been set loose it was war and both brothers fell that night.

A judge was sent to investigate this event, by the order of Tyr's Judges. The judge revealed the truth; Torsten, the family friend of Oldir, was sleeping with Oldir's wife and he was a gothi of Loki. He carved an illusion on the dragon head that he placed on the ship which caused the misunderstanding. Torsten and Oldir's wife were executed for plotting against the ruler of their lands.

After the judge's departure, both lands were claimed by a gothi of Aegir, named Siegvén. She forced the south coast

village to migrate to the west coast village. She built longboats and carried the townsfolk with them; some boats never finished their journeys but it didn't bother her. After all, it was her deity who claimed those drowned souls. With the help of this fresh population she brought, she built smaller villages across the west coast and ruled over them. She created her kingdom from the ashes of the lesser two and named it Gjalfrmarrheim.

OFFSHORE WINDS

The first wadmál was weaved in this kingdom and made into sails for ships. The third ruler of Gjalfrmarrheim, named Gorm, ordered the construction of the first ships of Svilland. They had strict regulations for wadmál production insofar as dimensions and quality. They even used it as a currency in their trade and exported quality wadmál to other kingdoms and settlements throughout Svilland.

The people that lived near the coast fished salmon by the Van River estuary or herring on the open seas. Most of the others worked to gather wood and wool for the production of wadmál, tar, and ship planks.

THE LANDOR MINE

On the east side of the Landor Mountain, there was a miner's settlement between the tunnel entrances and the Van River. Soon after establishing her kingdom, Siegvén invited this mining village to her kingdom. They accepted her invitation.

The miners of the Landor Mines supplied coastal villages with iron. They had boats that could travel on rivers, which they used to transport ores.

AT THE MERCY OF THE TIDES

The people of the Kingdom of Gjalfrmarrheim celebrated a holiday that was unique to them. There were tidestones on coastal villages; tall boulders that were used to mark sea levels in order to measure the tidal changes and tell time. Once every year, the sea level would reach the highest mark. People would celebrate this event by feasting on mussels and offering sacrifices to Aegir.

Those tidestones played another role. To become a ruler of Gjalfrmarrheim, Aegir followers would challenge each other after a ruler's funeral, near a tidestone. They would drown other challengers and the last one standing would become the next jarl of Gjalfrmarrheim.

HAKARL

Ingredients: Grey shark

On a gravel beach, dig a shallow hole. Take care, there must not be seawater in the hole. Bring the shark near the hole. Cut the head off and remove the entrails without puncturing the guts. Wash the cavity with seawater and place the shark in the hole. Fill the hole and cover the shark with gravel, put heavy stones on top of it.



After 4 to 6 spring tides, remove the shark from the hole and cut it into large pieces, then puncture a hole in the skin for each piece. Hang those pieces from the hole and let it dry for at least two full moons. Check the meat for its texture and softness; there should be a brown crust covering it but its inside must be soft.

Clean the crust and slice the meat into very small pieces or strips. Cover your nose and enjoy your fermented shark.

SKINNAVARA TERRITORIES

For the sake of the land, its spirits, and inhabitants, wise people took responsibility and others supported them. Across the mountain range, Ymir's Lash, nomad tribes of kunings lived to sustain their elderly, who performed rituals to ward off the Black Winter.

Powerful seidrs among the kuning suggested erecting magical totems throughout Ymir's Lash to amplify their rituals. They carved the totems out of hemlock wood and placed them. They also dug 4 foot deep pits around the totems, as protection against the harsh winds, and built shelters in them. They used these shelters, made from ice, fur and bones, to rest during their travels. One woeful day, a sudden fierce blow of freezing wind slayed all the spirits that were guarding the hemlock totems. As the spirits screamed and died, the totems shattered and exploded, releasing all the magic stored in them, destroying the shelters around them. Seidrs decided that they needed help.

A group of kuning, that were the fastest among their kin, traveled to nearby villages to ask for help. Knowing the perils of the Black Winter, Svillanders offered a helping hand. Together they cleared the snow and ice on the mountains and opened roads to transport resources to and across Ymir's Lash. With the seidrs' instructions, black ice obelisks were erected in place of shattered totems and reinforced with wooden poles and iron nails. They also built new cedarwood shelters, more durable than former ones. Some runewalkers and gothis started to live with the kuning tribes, traveling across the mountain range, resting in cedar shelters, and helping with the obelisks.

The territory that spans across the mountain range, which had the black ice obelisks, cedar shelters, icy roads, and nomad kuning tribes in it, were ruled by a powerful seidr, called Haglkorn. He oversaw the events and rituals to oversee the cooperation between kuning tribes and others. He had a spirit companion. When he died, the spirit chose another seidr to join, and so on. The seidrs accompanied by this spirit were the rulers of Skinnavara.

BREATHTAKING VIEW

Early in the morning, when the sun starts to shine on Svilland, a fascinating view appears that can only be witnessed from top of the Skinnavara territories. At daybreak, winds of north would calm, clouds would descend to the skirts of the mountain, and the sun would brighten the blue, white, and green lands of the South and frozen lands of the North at the same time.

Although it was but a brief moment lasting an hour every morning, most Skinnavara seidrs meditated at that time to calm their nerves before the harsh winds that came after the brief tranquility.

UNDER THE WINGS

The great spirit of a red crossbill chose the rulers of Skinnavara. The great spirit accompanied the rulers all their lives and found a new ruler when the last one had fallen. The seidr that was accompanied by the great red crossbill had some distinctive physical features such as unnaturally red hair and beard, crooked front teeth, and claw-like nails.

These seidrs had the ability to communicate with birds, which was useful for learning what was happening across Ymir's Lash. They could also bless flocks of birds to give them protection against the freezing colds of the North.

TREE BERRY SYRUP

Ingredients: Juniper berry, Yew berry

Remove the seeds of the yew berries. Be extremely careful with the yew berries as the seeds and the whole tree, except the flesh of the berries, is poisonous and even small doses can be fatal. Wash the berries. Place the yew berries and juniper berries inside a very large pot. Add clean, soft snow.

Use your hands and feet to smash the berries. Remove the berries so only the juice remains in the pot. Place the pot above a small fire and stir it with a clean stick until it boils over a couple times. During this process, let a couple logs of cedar, hemlock, or juniper burn down and collect its ash.

Let the boiled juice rest for a short while. Put a handful of ashes inside the pot and mix it well. Cover the pot and let it rest for a day. Filter the mixture through a cloth (kuning didn't have proper cloth for filtering so they purified the mixture with magic to get rid of ashes) and boil it again until the mixture thickens. Remove the bubbles that appear while boiling. Let the mixture cool, pour it inside waterskins, and seal it.

Enjoy your tree berry syrup.



KINGDOM OF FJALLBORG



To the east of the Noble Woods there were small mountain groups. Together with his warriors, a leader, called Torfast, settled on one of these mountains. They were tired of fighting and decided that it was their time to farm and raise children. They built their village on a strategically advantageous point on the skirts of a mountain and started to live in their safe new home.

Most of the buildings of this village were made from spruce wood, except the stone temple dedicated to Thor. The temple was not a big one, its roof was made from wood, and it had an altar, decorated with gems. Taking their paranoia too far, they also built wooden walls around the village and became the first village that was fully surrounded by walls and watchtowers.

There was plenty of underground water which they used for farming, enough trees to make charcoal, tar, and planks. Wild animals were plentiful and the land was brimming with wild food. It was suitable for both hunting and foraging. The only problem was that there were no mineral deposits of any kind. Torfast searched for deposits around his village and in the mountain. He even collaborated with neighbouring villages to expand his search. One day, a mountain half jotunn came to the village; she sang a song she wrote during her travels. The song was about a hill that was covered in red soil. A few miners proposed that they should check this hill for deposits but Torfast refused. He wanted to dig deeper into the mountain. Torfast's son, Bjorn, took a group of warriors and went to check this red hill, ignoring his father's wish.

Bjorn and his warriors went to a neighbouring village and requested an alchemist to join them on their journey to examine the hill. The jarl of the village accepted their request. With the alchemist they traveled and eventually found the hill in the song. The alchemist collected samples of the red soil and found fossils of sea creatures. During their second day on the red hill, an earthquake shook them and after a brief moment a golem, made of hot boiling earth and dark boulders, rose from the red soil of the hill. With few losses, they retreated. The alchemist went back to their village to study the samples, while Bjorn and his warriors returned home. When they arrived, they found death. The village was burning, its people were dead, and a great wyrm was resting amidst the fire. Having no home to go back to, Bjorn and his warriors retreated towards the east where they met with Frida.

The alchemist studied the red soil and found copper, zinc, lead, silver, and gold. The word got out and reached Frida. She wanted to claim the red hill for these important resources. When Bjorn wanted her help to defeat the wyrm, she refused by saying that their village was already lost and besides, the village was an unimportant one. Bjorn and his warriors left Fridaland furious. They gathered mighty warriors from neighbouring villages and rallied to slay the great wyrm. Though they failed to slay the wyrm, they did manage to injure it severely. The wyrm escaped in panic and wreaked havoc on Fridaland territories. With the help of her troops, Frida was able to put the wyrm down for good and she got all the praise for it. While Frida was busy fighting the creature, Bjorn and

his forces marched to the red hill and slayed the golem.

Shortly after these events, Frida sent her troops to the red hill but they were confronted by Bjorn's forces and killed. Bjorn gathered all neighbouring villages together by convincing their jarls through intimidation and rebuilt his burnt village. He named his village Fjallborg and his territories became known as the Kingdom of Fjallborg.

THE RED SOIL

After the incident, the hill with the red soil was named Golem's Nest. It was located to the north of Fjallborg village. Golem's Nest became the most important source of precious metals for the kingdom. The red soil had a vast amount of copper, zinc, lead, silver, and gold in it, which were separated and refined by alchemists. Alchemists also made brass from copper and zinc, used to craft ornaments. It was common in Fjallborg for people to wear brass ornaments.

Some seids would come to Golem's Nest to study the marine fossils. They also realized that there were enraged ancient spirits 'n the belly of the hill, boiling the earth deep beneath their feat.

AGELESS FURY

The kingdom's capital was Fjallborg village. Thor worship was common, and the ruler was chosen by traditional axe duel. Every ruler of this kingdom had one thing in common, their hatred of Fridaland. The people also shared this hatred.

The warriors of Fjallborg had two duties, to protect villagers and raid Fridaland military outposts. Sometimes, absurd events happened such as a group of warriors getting drunk and raiding an outpost for fun and getting killed.

FEAST SOUP

Ingredients: Pig, Cabbage, Onion, Celery, Salt, Dried wild thyme, Butter

Burn the pig's bristle, scrape the burned parts with a knife. Wash it, remove its entrails and wash it again. Impale the pig with a long and sturdy stick. Cut the legs off and season it with salt. Put the legs inside the cavity.

In a bowl, mix chopped cabbage, onion and celery. Add salt and mix again. Fill the pig's cavity with the mixture and sew the pig shut. Then, cauterize any openings of the pig, including the sewn part, to make it watertight. Score the outer fat layer of the pig in a diamond pattern.

Inside a longhouse, fill the fire pit with charcoal and start the fire. After the flames go out, place the pig above the fire. Occasionally turn the pig to cook it evenly. Collect the dripping fat.

Melt butter in a pot, add dried thyme and stir. After the pig is cooked, glaze it with the melted butter. Remove the pig from the fire

and place it in a large pot. Cut it open and empty the liquids and vegetables into the pot. Let the pig rest for a short while and prepare it for eating. Add the collected dripped fat to the liquids, stir it well.

Enjoy your feast soup and glazed hog.



KINGDOM OF FRIDALAND



A father, a mother, two elder sisters, an elder brother, a younger brother, and two younger sisters, Frida's family was exceptionally large. Her parents were visionaries; they laid the foundation of the Kingdom of Fridaland. They made sure that their children got the best education; eldest sister became a strong Thor alle, elder sister a runewalker, elder brother a ranger, younger sister a bard, younger brother a blacksmith, youngest sister a farmer, and Frida became a medium between the strong elders and weaker younglings, a diplomat. In their own longhouse, on the west coast of the Red River, they organized regular feasts to find mentors for their children and to gather information about the land.

The family became stronger as time went by. They used their strength to help and unite the people on the west side of the Red River. The eldest sister smote the thieves that stole from her people, the elder sister warded the land against magical harm, and the elder brother devoted himself to the spirit of the Red River. They were the guardians. The ranger brother and the blacksmith brother worked together to find a way to mine tin from alluviums and craft it into pewter, made from tin and silver, which the blacksmith brother made into pewterware. Also, while the farmer sister fed the family, the bard sister fed their souls with music and poetry. And Frida held them all together. She made sure that her siblings' contributions to society were known.

They brought people together, one village at a time, and Frida became the mediator between all the villages from the Red River delta to Northern Peaks. Eventually, she became the ruler and her lands became known as the Kingdom of Fridaland.

DUTY AND FAMILY

While her reign was still new, a warrior called Bjorn and his warband came to Frida to ask for help during a feast. Their village was destroyed and seized by a wyrm. They asked for strong warriors from Frida, but she refused. Infuriated by her decision, Frida's eldest sister, Thor alle, refused her decree. The sisters argued and insulted each other in front of everyone participating in the feast. The eldest sister joined Bjorn and traveled to his village, towards the northwest. She died fighting the wyrm. Frida never forgave Bjorn for causing her sister's death.

MILITARY OUTPOSTS

After Bjorn injured the wyrm, it flew into Frida's territories and attacked her villages. Frida's forces slayed the injured wyrm. She was convinced that Bjorn somehow led the wyrm to her lands to take vengeance, so she ordered the construction of military outposts towards the northwest, where Bjorn and his warriors resided. People from the Kingdom of Fjallborg, the kingdom that Bjorn established a year after the wyrm event, took it personally and occasionally raided the outposts and killed the soldiers.

PRIDE

After the wyrm was defeated, people praised Frida for this victory, and it only made her more arrogant. During their time, siblings discussed the future of the kingdom and how to govern it. But, as Frida became more prideful, she disregarded her siblings' concerns and ruled as a monarch. The later rulers of Fridaland were always the eldest child of the previous one; ironically, Frida was not the eldest, nor the youngest.

The people of Fridaland started to resemble their leaders, and in some cases their unsubstantiated pride exceeded that of their prideful rulers'. They used pewterware made mostly from tin with a small amount of silver, and presented it as silver. They fought a few wars but they bragged about their military strength, they even went so far as to insult other folks' rituals by claiming other methods to be false and theirs to be true.

SMOKED ROT CHEESE

Ingredients: Rot cheese, Duck egg, Salt, Milk, Strong vinegar, Butter

Heat the milk in a pot to a fast simmer boils. Add strong vinegar and stir until the liquid becomes transparent. Remove the curd. Add the rot cheese to the curd and mix. Spread butter on a wadmál and place the mixture inside the cloth, tie to make a pouch. Place it on solid ground and put a heavy rock on it. After a couple days, put the cloth in a small wooden container pressed under a piece of wood weighed down by heavy rocks. Let it rest for a full lunar month.

Mix duck egg yolks and salt. Cover the cheese with the mixture. Dig a tunnel. In one opening, burn charcoal and place oak woods on embers. In the other opening, place the cheese, so that the smoke passes through it. Smoke the cheese from dawn to dusk. Put the smoked cheese in soft snow and cover it completely so that the cheese can't breathe. Let it rest for a minimum of three days.

Enjoy your smoked rot cheese.

FALL OF VIRTUE

Fall of Virtue is the name given to the events that explain Balder's death and its effects on Svilland. Since Gods are essential both for Svilland and Svillanders, one of the most beloved god's death heavily affected both the land and its people.

HOW BALDER DIED

Balder was one of the most beloved Gods of Svillanders. As the son of Odin the Allfather, Balder was a courageous and generous God who brought joy to the hearts of all who spent time with him. However, one day, he had nightmares of a great misfortune befalling him. With the fear of losing Balder, the Gods decided Odin should discover the meaning of these nightmares and prevent anything from harming Balder.

Odin, as Balder's father, set to searching for an answer in no time. The Allfather learned about a dead woman knowledgeable about such dreams, and disguising himself, mounted his steed, Sleipnir, to visit the woman living in the lands of the dead.

When Odin arrived at the inhospitable lands of the dead, he found halls decorated for a magnificent feast. Odin found the woman and asked about the preparations. The answer brought great sorrow to the Allfather. The woman happily discussed the calamity that would befall Balder and cause his ultimate demise until she noticed the desperation on the man's face and realized that the man was Odin himself.

After learning of the dire news, Odin returned to Asgard and recounted what he had discovered of the fate of Balder. Freyja wasted no time in visiting every being in all the realms, living or not, and asked for a promise not to harm Balder. Promises were made by all but one; mistletoe. Mistletoe said that one day Balder had stepped on it, and because of this Freyja couldn't get the promise of mistletoe. This was no great issue though, since how could a measly mistletoe harm a God in any way...

When Freyja returned with the promises, the Gods made a game out of the situation. They threw whatever they could find at Balder, rocks, sticks, and other things, none of which were harming him. Everyone was glad and laughing while the things they threw hit Balder and bounced off him. Yet Loki's mind was abuzz with knavish thoughts.

Loki visited Freyja in disguise and asked for the promises every being made. After a brief conversation, he learned about the mistletoe. His mind was brimming with mischievous ideas. He went and crafted a spear out of mistletoe. Later, he returned to where the Gods were throwing things at Balder and approached the blind God Hodr, who was staying out of the Gods' game. Telling Hodr that he must have felt lonely, Loki gave him the spear and pointed the blind god's hand to Balder. When Hodr threw the spear, it pierced through Balder and Balder gave his life in an instant.

This shocked the Gods. They could only stand in fear as Balder's death was a sign of Ragnarok, the bringer of their death and destruction of the universe.

It was Freyja who could gather herself enough to ask for a brave warrior that could journey to Helheim and talk directly to Hel herself about Balder's release. Hermod, the messenger of the Gods, son of Odin, and brother of Balder willingly accepted the mission. Odin, the Allfather, let Hermod ride Sleipnir on his journey to the land of the dead.

While Hermod was on his way, the Gods prepared a funeral fitting for a great king. They made the pyre out of Balder's ship, Hringhorni. But, when they tried to launch the ship, they couldn't. After the ship stuck in the sand and failed many times, they called for the strongest being in all the realms, a giantess named Hyrrokkin. Hyrrokkin approached the funeral riding a wolf whose reins were poisonous snakes. To move Hringhorni, she pushed the ship so hard that it caused an earthquake.

Gods, jotunns, dvergrs, elves, valkyries, all beings living in the Nine Realms attended the ceremony. They all mourned as the ship moved beyond sight in the ocean.

When she saw her husband lying in the ship, Nanna died of grief, and they placed her near Balder. Thor blessed the pyre's flames. Odin left his ring, Draupnir, in the flames, and Balder's steed was led into the pyre.

Hermod's voyage took nine nights. Through dark and cold valleys, he reached the golden bridge built upon the river, Gjoll, that led to Helheim, yet the bridge was guarded by a giantess, Modgud. Modgud asked Hermod his name and what he wanted. She also added that Hermod's walk is as noisy as a marching army, and his face is colorful, such as the living. Modgud approved Hermod's answers and allowed him to pass, saying that he should travel downwards and northwards.

Hermod reached the gates of Helheim and leaped over the gate aided by Sleipnir. In the halls of Helheim, Hermod found the throne of Hel and Balder, cold and pale, sitting on the most honorable seat, next to Hel. Hermod rested at night there. In the morning, Hermod talked with Hel, saying that all the living are in great grief of Balder's death, and Hel responded, "In that case, I will send Balder back if everything in all the realms weeps for him. Yet he stands with me even if a single one of them refuses to do so."

Hermod rode back to the Gods with the news, and the Gods wasted no time to send messengers throughout the realms. All the creatures wept, but one: Giantess Tokk, who was actually Loki himself.

So, Hel refused to let Balder live again, and imprisoned Balder in the coldest and darkest place in all Nine Realms, Helheim. It has deprived Svillanders of his blessing, and Svilland will never be the same.



ONE-DAY MASSACRE



As Svillanders learned how to live in the vast frozen wastes of Svilland and settled down, they also built temples for all the Gods and Goddesses. Life in Svilland was hard, and hope was of the utmost importance for Svillanders. Of course, it was Balder who brought the light that dispersed the darkness in Svilland and gifted Svillanders the flame of virtue. Also, Balder worked with dvergrs to create a spear that can bring down Odd.

To honor Balder, Svillanders built the most beautiful temples in his name. They revered the God of good and beauty in each sign of goodness and beauty they encountered in their daily life. Along with the temples, the number of Balder gothis has also increased, and as a result, the clergy has been formed.

The center of Balder worship was on the western shores of Svilland since the biggest and the most beautiful Balder temple, the House of Good, was built there. Svillanders used the most beautiful pine gathered from all of Svilland, and decorated it with jewels and runestones that even the best dvergrs crafters and runewalkers would envy. The air around the temple was always refreshing, and the temple grounds were always holy. Even a simple walk within the temple could cure your wounds. The temple was the shining beacon of good and virtue in Svilland, and forces of evil could not approach it.

However, the House of Good was not just the center of Balder worship in Svilland. It was home to the relics of Balder, and new followers. There were countless magic items, scrolls, rituals, sacred parchments, and many other wonders of Balder

within the walls of the temple. People even claimed that Balder himself visited the temple in the disguise of a little child or a lone wanderer.

Unfortunately, these were destroyed, forgotten, or lost with the destruction of the temple when Balder fell to Helheim.

When Balder fell, he kept his goodness and virtue, yet he also felt deep agony, disappointment, and loneliness. As a God who had powerful connections with Svillanders - especially with his alles and gothis - mortals who followed him also felt these emotions. When Balder fell, one of the darkest moments Svilland will ever see occurred. Half of Balder's worshippers couldn't overcome Balder's pain and went mad. Their alignments, characteristics, and understanding changed in an instant as the painful screams of a God were too powerful to stand against.

Throughout Svilland, crazed Balder followers started attacking everything they saw and seemed not to be able to stop for one day. They just wanted to kill, they just wanted to destroy, they just wanted to spread the pain...

For one day, maddened alles, gothis, and other worshippers wrought havoc on Svilland. The once-beloved heroes of Svilland murdered innocent people in a frenzy that would strike fear into even the most savage creatures of the Nine. They burnt down villages, destroyed sacred groves, attacked temples, and even killed each other. This day carried so many heart-wrenching tragedies that even nature itself couldn't do anything but cry. Birds did not sing, rivers did not flow, the wind did not blow, and dark clouds of heavy rain covered the sky for one week.

The grimmest and darkest of these events took place in the



House of Good. Since the temple hosted the most powerful alles and gothis of Balder, along with Balder's relics, acolytes, pilgrims, and the ones who search for healing, the madness incited bloody strife within the temple. Light and darkness, good and evil, virtue and wickedness, common sense and madness clashed within the temple on that day, and none would emerge victorious.

Relics were destroyed or stolen, leaders of the clergy butchered each other, and the temple was in ruins. Screams of the innocents were lost to the wind, the beauty of the temple was buried beneath the ground, and Svilland lost goodness while only the smell of blood and ash were left dancing in the air. It is said that the Gods couldn't bear the sight of the destroyed temple, and Freyja buried it in the depths of the soil along with the dead bodies. These disasters also buried orders of Balder worship that day, never to be wholly uncovered again.

This day, later called One-Day Massacre, was remembered as a disgrace in the history of Svilland.

At the end of the first day of his fall, one side of Balder remained the same, peaceful and good-hearted, but the other side embraced the pain and changed drastically. Half of Balder's soul turned into a vengeful and wicked god, whose only wish was to make others feel the same pain and fate he had felt while the other half stayed the same Balder Svillanders knew. As a result, Balder's maddened worshippers also embraced the pain and walked a wicked path, and the clergy of Balder split in two.



DIVINITY LOST



Balder's divinity has two different aspects. One is merciful and good, the other one is vengeful and evil. Since Balder embraces both of them, they share his divinity, which led to a problem for Svillanders.

It always pleases Gods when they have alles and gothis walking Svilland. They are the Gods' messengers and the hands of the Gods that swing a sword in Svilland when needed. So, they are watched over by the Gods and the Gods give them divine powers. Since Balder's divinity is of two parts and alles are the direct shadows of their deities walking in mortal realms (by making an oath to serve a god), Balder cannot grant the powers of an alle to his followers.

Although there were alles who were sworn to Balder, they lost their powers after the One-Day Massacre, and no alle of Balder has walked on the face of Svilland ever since.

Now, it is only the stuff of rumors that alles of Balder had immense healing powers and were masters of slaying evil.



CIVIL WAR



Apart from its divine aspect, the death of Balder also affected the political structure of Svilland. Some Svillanders tried to protect the Balder worshippers who walked the old path,

while others wanted to punish them. This pitted the two sides against each other and sometimes caused battles between them. Strife and injustice held the reigns in Svilland and plunged lands into a civil war.

Although the unhinged frenzy half of Balder's worshippers experienced in the One-Day Massacre eased, no one could recover the atrocities that had already taken place. People hunted evil followers of Balder throughout Svilland. In some places, people even hunted all worshippers of Balder, good or evil, since most Svillanders lost confidence in Balder's followers.

Also, Balder was the God of beauty. However, after he fell to Helheim, his beautiful face transformed just as his divinity and emotions. Although one part of Balder is as pure as it was, the other part of him is wicked and in agony. Just as the pain of Balder changed his worshippers, the faces of all followers of Balder changed, and in time, they all lost their beauty along with Balder. So, most people started to see them all as monsters without knowing the truth behind their faces.

Svilland's descent into chaos was a source of great pleasure for the followers of vengeful Balder. They kept doing what they wanted; desecration and slaughter. Followers of merciful Balder, on the other hand, were ultimately upset that others were suffering because of the conflict within their clergy.

To prevent the ongoing battles and chaos, good followers of Balder, and Tyr, justice itself, took some actions separately.

Tyr got involved in matters by appointing 22 of his followers. These followers tried to bring justice to the land.

Good followers of Balder thought it was better if they vanished for a time and operated in secrecy. So, they found a web of intelligence that can hide them and that will let them communicate with each other at the same time.

The civil war lasted six months. During this time, many Balder alles and gothis (both good and evil ones) were killed. Many, including neighbors and siblings, butchered each other either to protect or to kill good Balder followers. Relics of Balder were destroyed and stolen, all temples of Balder were burnt down, and innocents lost their lives.

Although the order was restored in the end, mostly thanks to the efforts of Tyr worshippers, Svilland still carries the marks of these scars.



THE ORIGINS OF TYR'S JUDGES



Tyr, God of Justice, wasted no time in taking actions to prevent possible injustices. Good followers of Balder shouldn't have been accused of the crimes committed by the other half, and further deaths had to be stopped before things got out of hand. If the good worshippers of Balder were also killed for the sins of evil, justice in Svilland would never be the same again.

So, Tyr visited his 22 most devoted followers by sending a vision to them. In this vision, the devotees saw twins. One wore a white robe and the other a black one. Both were held in the hands of Svillanders and placed on the same side a set of scales, burning red and hot. The robed figures were throwing the scales out of balance, only to be restored by the hands of Tyr's followers, who took the white robes and placed them

on the other side, the peaceful side of the scales. When these devotees awoke from the vision, they found a masterpiece of an iron warhammer and a golden holy symbol of Tyr in their hands. Tyr had ordained them directly, and they knew what must be done.

Without knowing each other, they started to operate throughout Svilland. They spread the will of Tyr, protected the good followers of Balder, and captured and judged the evil ones. They did not hesitate to stand against the ones who doubted their judgments and even killed them if needed with the power of their iron warhammers.

Throughout their campaigns, these 22 devotees found each other and gathered followers as people saw their quest as holy and just. When the civil war ended, they went to the lake that would come to be known as Iron Lake. There they built a glorious temple of Tyr.

The first 22 decided that although their quest had ended, a tradition must continue so that their apprentices or the apprentices of their apprentices could bring justice to the lands if the need should arise again. So, they threw their iron warhammers into the lake, to show that their quest had ended yet, the hammers could be taken back only by the hands Tyr sees fit. They named themselves Tyr's Judges and started to operate throughout Svilland to keep the lands in order.

Thanks to their efforts, they became a renowned and respected organization in no time. All kinds of wrongdoers, even kings and queens, knelt before them and accepted their fates.



THE ORIGINS OF THE FACELESS



Hunted and disgraced, good followers of Balder wanted to vanish for a time. They took what few relics were left and dispersed into the untouched wilderness of Svilland, taking different routes in distinct groups. They kept communicating through spells. Only a handful of them survived the next winter. As time passed, their faces were warped and Svillanders forgot their names.

During their isolation, they thought about the recent events, prayed to Balder, and sought a glimmer of light within the darkness. After days, even weeks of meditation and prayer, they realized it was Loki who caused the death of their beloved god, yet they also realized that they shouldn't seek revenge. Instead, they, and all Svillanders, could only reach salvation through one and only path: Forgiveness.

When they were sure that no one could recognize them anymore, they donned plain white masks with no facial features. They called themselves the Faceless, to show that both their faces and identities were no more, and they walked Svilland. They had two main quests. One was to carry on the old traditions of Balder worship, which is to slay monsters and protect Svillanders. The other, to find evildoers and put them on the path of good if possible, and if not, to kill. The Faceless also wanted to learn more about the methods, organizations, and followers of Loki, as they believed that they would have the chance to convert Loki to goodness by the wisdom of Balder.

The following diary pages were found by one of the first 22 of Tyr's Judges, Meril Hammerdottir. The pages belonged to a little family living in a small village 2-hours away from the House of Good and who were trying to escape the One-Day Massacre. Unfortunately, the chaos in Svilland corrupted and destroyed this little family beyond comprehension.

ESCAPING THE MASSACRE

Day 2: It is sad that we are leaving our home, our only home. Our little girl, Jorve, is running alongside the wagon, not aware of the evil surrounding us, smiling. Her joy lifts the burden and worry on our hearts, yet each time our eyes meet, I understand that both my husband Landar and I know that we will probably find use for our swords before the end of this.

Day 3: I can sense things, dangers before they happen. It is Odin's gift. And alas, I sense that there are people following us. Our plan is to pass through the forest, sending our horses on a different path while we try to get as far away as possible. Landar wants to keep our spirits high, but I can see that he is consumed by worries about death.

Day 5: We sent most of our food with the horses, hoping that we could hunt in the forest. But there is not a

single damn animal here!

Day 7: Yesterday and today, Iandar and I have not eaten. Jorve's survival is our top priority. I hope we can last a bit longer without food.

Day 8: We found traces of a hunt and some tracks, along with some wolves. There may be a little settlement nearby, somewhere we can restock food and fresh water. Also, a cutting wind rose today. I hope the wolves don't find us before we settle.

Day 10: Iandar could not walk any further when we settled. I can sense that the lack of food blurs my vision. Jorve has picked no flowers today, I think she too felt ill. We are lucky that we have winter clothes with us. Thankfully, the people in the settlement gave us food and water, and a place to sleep. I have missed sleeping so much. When we talked about the events in the west, they said that some Balder gothis attacked the village but they were thwarted the attack successfully. I think we can feel safe here. Yet, why do I sense danger still?

Day 12: Although we planned to leave today, Iandar fell ill. There is a wound in his left leg that prevents him from walking long distances. Unfortunately, only gifts of the Gods can heal it. I wish we could go to the gothis of Balder for help. We have nothing to do but wait.

Day 13: The elder of the village visited us today. He said they can take Iandar to the sacred grove nearby and ask for the Gods' blessing. They said warriors of the village will accompany him so that no harm would come on the way. I don't feel good about this, but Iandar insisted on going with them. He said that my unease is caused by the recent events. He told me all would be well.

Day 15: Iandar and the others left yesterday. I hugged him so tight, as if it were our last embrace. Jorve gave her father flowers and cried after they departed. Last night I had many nightmares, monsters chasing us, taking Jorve from me, killing....

Day 16: I could swear to the Gods that I heard wolf howls last night and saw fell shadows of beasts circling around our house. I have a strong feeling that Iandar is in danger and we must leave.

Day 17: We are leaving tonight. It was smart of me to hide my blade as a rune on my body. The villagers think me helpless, harmless... But they do not know I am a rune warrior.

Day 18: We left the village secretly and found some tracks we can follow to reach Iandar. Some wolves attacked us on the way, although I cut them into two, I felt dizzy at the end and fell asleep. Now, I am writing this diary while encaged by the villagers, and the dead bodies of two wolves are lying beside me. They will not tell me where Jorve is.

Day 19: I-They... they SACRIFICED Iandar... to... to Balder. We escaped one horror to fall straight in the clutches of another. They placed Iandar's head on a stick. His last moments of fear are etched into his face... Oh, Gods! Why have you forsaken us...

No! If I am to die, I will take some of them with me!

Day 24: They are not feeding me. I don't think I have strength enough to swing my sword. But I will kill at least one of them.

Where is Jorve?!

Day 26: Landar spoke with me. I think I am going crazy. His dead eyes stare at me, his pale lips move, sending deep and distorted words through the cold air. Freyja, please protect my little Jorve... Odin, please take me to Valhalla...

Day 33: Hello, I am Jorve. Elder Vargast is helping me so that I can write. Mother was ready to fight when her cage was opened, but she couldn't when she saw me. Then I leaped on her and ate her while she cried. Terror made her meat taste sweeter.

The aforementioned village has been found and was destroyed by the forces of Tyr's Judges. After a brief investigation, we found that evil followers of Balder visited the village just before this unlucky family reached it. They corrupted the villagers with their spells and madness. Elder Vargast and others were punished accordingly. Some of them, in whose minds a little sanity remained, were given the chance of blood eagle. Little Jorve was sent to Iron Lake for treatment.

THE ORIGINS OF TEMPLE OF FREYJA

In Svilland, survival is paramount. It is the basis of nearly every story written here. This is why Freyja, the Goddess of life, is one of the most important figures for Svillanders, as is her temple. The Temple of Freyja is a cult dedicated to protecting nature, Svilland, Svillanders, and life itself. These are the ideals on which the Temple is founded.

The founding dates back to the early years of the first age. While Svillanders were building themselves a new life here, a warband of 21 heroes felt honor-bound to protect them. The name of the warband was Axefall and their leader was Barbarian Queen Gillaug, whose gigantic greataxe has a legacy unto itself.

The Axefall had traveled Svilland, hunting vicious monsters, destroying haunting spirits, and helping Svillanders to build villages until they heard the dead were rising from their graves. Helping countless Svillanders had given them quite a reputation, and adventure called them, once again.

The Axefall went to the region that is nowadays known as Lagrheimr. There was a small community of people there who had been experiencing a series of unfortunate events; animals killed by shadowy figures at night, fewer hunting animals, rotten soil, painful screams heard in the night, and dead rising

from the ground.

To investigate the events, they stayed in the village for a few nights and while they were there, a sacrificial festival took place. While they were there, nothing bad happened. People slept well, no shadowy figures haunted the villagers or the animals. Even the hunters of the village could hunt some animals for the festival.

On the morning of the festival, the warband woke up to an empty village. All the people had just... vanished. Barbarian Queen Gillaug ordered the warband to stay and prepare for the night. Something was amiss, and whatever evil was there, it wanted the warband alive. So, the warband prepared their weapons to be especially effective against the undead, burnished their armor, and prayed to the Gods to see Valhalla if they died.

Queen Gillaug was a devoted Freyja worshipper. So, she went

to the nearby forest to pray. While she prayed, a fawn came closer and closer to Queen Gillaug. First, the fawn bent its head as if it wanted to be petted, and then walked deeper into the forest. When the Queen followed, she found a battleaxe made of thorns. Freyja had sent her a present, and she willingly accepted it.

When the day ended, and darkness fell, the missing people exited their homes. A rolling mist slowly filled the village, and the villagers walked toward the warband. They were acting as if controlled by some other creature. The warband did not want to kill the villagers, so they ran away and headed northwest.

While they fled, draugrs and shadowy creatures rose from the ground and cut off the warband's path. A bloody battle ensued. Thanks to their preparations, the Axefall stood fast against their enemies. For ghosts and other shadows, they used magical methods.

The enemy was so crowded that the warband slowly moved toward the northwest while battling without respite for three nights. At dusk before the third night, some warband members were slain, and the others were exhausted and injured. They found themselves trapped at the shores of a lake. The enemy surrounded them. While the warband was awaiting one last shattering blow from the enemy, the undead stopped in their tracks. The sea of undead parted, opening a path for their leader, a death spirit. Its presence brought with it the cold of Helheim, and its growls struck fear into the hearts of the warband. With each step the death spirit took, the sunlight vanished and night took the reins of the sky.

In their most hopeless moment, the lake glowed golden, piercing the darkness and filling the hearts of Axefall warriors with hope. The golden light flew through the air and embraced

the battleaxe Queen Gillaug had found in the forest.

Queen Gillaug moved to the center of the warband and ordered one last charge. Screaming the names of their ancestors, Gods, and Valhalla, the Axefall moved as one. The members protected their queen with their bodies and died before they reached the death spirit. Between the bodies of her loyal warriors, Queen Gillaug rushed forward and struck the spirit of death with the radiant battleaxe, destroying it in one fell swoop.

The death of the spirit destroyed the draugr and dispelled the magic that had bound the villagers, however, Queen Gillaug could stand no longer and succumbed to her injuries and to cold death.

The villagers removed the bodies of the Axefall and to thank them; prepared a tomb for the fallen. They buried all the Axefall's warriors there and named it Queen's Rest.

A young girl of the village folk named Eshilda was fascinated by the deeds of the Axefall, especially the heroic death of Queen Gillaug. A few nights before the burial, she saw a vision of Freyja crying golden tears for the Axefall. She took the holy symbol of Freyja from the neck of Queen Gillaug and thought that the lake was sacred, naming it Freyja's Tears, maybe giving the lake its true name.

She built a small temple on the shores of the lake and told the story of the Axefall and the lake to passing travelers. The Freyja followers who heard the story came to the lake, and with each new visitor, the temple grew. Eshilda created a tradition that protects Svillanders and Svilland at all costs, and it was named Temple of Freyja.

Although the story of the Axefall is long-forgotten, their deeds live in the actions of the Temple of Freyja.



THE ORIGINS OF FANGS OF FENRIR

The Fangs of Fenrir is a prominent cult in Svilland, who aims to liberate people's minds from the lies of the Asgardian Gods and Goddesses, to raise support for the misunderstood and mistreated Fenrir, and to do all they can to bring Ragnarok closer; so that their misperceived master can finally break free from his chains. Their members are usually those shunned by society, just as their master and savior was long, long ago. According to the legend of Ragnarok, Fenrir will devour the Sun and the Moon before he falls upon the Asgardians with righteous fury, and even puts an end to Odin the Allfather himself.

To understand how this cult came to be, one must first understand the legend of Fenris-wolf, or "Fenrir", as he is more commonly known; for the hate that bore the Fangs of Fenrir can only be understood by comprehending the cause of the hatred coursing through Fenrir's veins.

FENRIR IN LEGEND

Being a Half-Jotunn himself, Loki often found that he liked the company of the jotunns, sometimes more-so than those in Asgard, at least one of whom always seemed to be aggrieved or annoyed at one of his actions. Thus, he regularly travelled to Jotunheim, the home of his father regularly.

In one of his travels, Loki met the giantess Angrboda with whom he quickly fell in love (as much as his nature would allow him, which was a deep but fleeting kind of affection). He had three children with the giantess: a girl, a snake, and a wolf. Loki had other children, but for some reason he could not quite put his finger on, he felt a strange need to shield these three from what the realms may have in store for them. The second he looked into the eyes of his new offspring who looked all-too vulnerable in the vast, frozen, pale-blue background of Jotunheim, he resolved that he would leave them here with their mother rather than take them back to Asgard.

However, fate had other ideas as it so often does. That night, Odin had a vision about the end of everything. He saw Thor battling a great snake, the size of which even the wise one-eyed God had not seen before; and he saw the mighty God get bested. He saw a woman, one side of whose face was entrancing pure, serene; and the other side was that of a rotting corpse, leading a vast army of the dead. Finally, he saw the claws, the fangs and yellow, crazed eyes of a gigantic wolf before he awoke covered in sweat, shivering.

Although there was nothing that directly showed it, the Allfather knew in his dream that these were Loki's children. He sent out his ravens, Huginn and Muninn, to fly over the realms and find out with whom Loki had had the three kids. Before long, the ravens returned with the news that Angrboda the giantess was raising three children who fit the peculiar description of Odin; a small snake, a unique-looking girl, and a wolf cub.

Odin quickly gathered a council of his most trusted advisors, and travelled to Jotunheim to collect Loki's spawn so as to

delay his horrid vision. They were able to pick the children up with ease. However, it was evident that Odin could not live alongside the very things that would bring about his doom. Hence, new places were found for all three.



The snake, which was growing at an alarming rate, was placed in the seas that circles Midgard, where it could grow without harming others. Some Svillanders believe that earthquakes are caused by the movements of this giant snake, aptly called "Jormungundr".

The girl, who looked precious and innocent on one side, and dark and sinister on the other, was sent below, where she would be the queen of the souls unworthy of going to Valhalla or Fólkvangr, and which from that point on would be called by her name: Hel.

The small cub, Fenrir, was tied to a tree in Asgard, for the Allfather could not think of nothing better. It seemed that all the Asgardians feared the cub, as it seemed to grow in one day, the way a normal cub would grow in a year. Tyr was the only God who played with and petted the wolf, which was what he always seemed to want to do. Every time Tyr came around, his two ears would lift into the air, and he would frantically and happily started to run and jump around the tree to which he was tied; as much as his rope would allow. Tyr would smile at the slobbering face of his new friend, and after giving his head a couple of scratches, would playfully stick his hand in Fenrir's mouth, which would keep Fenris-wolf from closing it. His yellow eyes would then dart around with surprise and determination, amusing Tyr to no end. The two played such games together, every day, for a while.

Still, Odin watched, as Fenris-wolf continued to grow and grow with no end in sight. His presence frightened the one-eyed God, for he could not get his vision out of his mind. He called a meeting to discuss what must be done, at the end of which, it was decided that the wolf should be bound so as to delay the terrible fate that awaited them all if it were to ever break free.

The Gods found the strongest chains they could and went to the cub, whose ears lifted in anticipation as they approached. Making it seem like a game, they told Fenrir that some among them argued that he would be able to break such chains, while others said he couldn't. Fenrir, enjoying the game, boasted that those chains would not even be a challenge for him, and that they should chain away. The Asgardians chained him up, and after a couple of effortless stretches, Fenrir was able to break the chains. Fenrir was overjoyed at winning the game,



and gleefully celebrated his triumph, jumping about, all the while spouting gleeful warnings to the Asgardians to never underestimate him again.

The Gods thus decided to make a chain themselves. They made a chain of such strength that no god, goddess, or Jotunn would be able to break. They took it to the wolf once more, and said that the previous chain was too easy to break for him, and that he would have to face a real challenge if he wanted glory. Fenrir agreed once more, and conceded to being bound with the new set of chains.

This time, it was evident that the wolf was struggling to get out. He writhed and thrashed about for a good while, before he seemed to calm down as if losing all hope. Then, in one swift move, Fenrir broke the chains into a thousand pieces that were all flung into the air with the might of the powerful cub's final thrash. Fenrir was once again delirious with happiness; but when he looked at the faces of the Asgardians, he could see that they were disappointed in his triumph. This was the first moment that planted the seeds of hate in Fenrir's heart.

Fenrir brooded over what he saw; at how no one seemed to be on his side for the game that they were playing; not even his friend Tyr. In his loneliness, he thought about what he might have done to beget such a reaction from all who had beheld him up to that point. His father did not seem to care much about him, nor his mother, based on her tepid reaction to her children being taken away by the Asgardians. Now, in this new home, no one was on his side. He slept uneasily that night, his head filled with these ominous thoughts and questions.

Fenrir continued to grow. Odin had noticed the change in Fenrir ever since their second attempt at binding him. He no longer seemed to enjoy playing as much, and spent most of his time sleeping. Since he was getting suspicious, Odin knew that he would only have one more shot at capturing the beast once and for all. He thus sent a messenger to Svartalfheim, to commission a binding the likes of which no single thing, living or nonliving, has ever seen.

Using the sound of a cat's footsteps, the hair from the beard of a woman, the roots of mountains, the breath of a fish, and the spit of a bird; the dwarves made Gleipnir and sent it over to Asgard. Despite its strength beyond measure, the chain looked elegant like a silk ribbon, and was lighter than air itself.

Odin took Gleipnir to Fenrir, who laughed at the sight of it. He said that there would be no point in him trying to break free from its hold, for no one would hold him in high regard for besting a binding so flimsy. Odin, sensing the wolf's hesitation, decided to taunt him, saying that he was making excuses to try to mask his fear at being bested by the Asgardians. Fenrir objected, saying that he was too smart for the tricks of the one-eyed god, and that there was without a doubt something fishy about the challenge he was presented. Odin laughed, and applauded Fenrir on his creativity in finding an excuse for his cowardice. Then, he said that if Fenrir lost, the Asgardians would let him go with no hesitation. Agitated, Fenrir suggested that one of the Asgardians place a hand in his mouth as he performed the challenge. If he was unable to break his chains, and the Asgardians would not let him go as promised, he would bite down leaving the God or Goddess without a hand. Only in this way would Fenrir agree to being bound a third time.

The Asgardians looked at one another with hesitation. No one seemed willing to undertake such a burden. After a couple of minutes of nervous looks exchanged, Tyr stepped forward. He went over to the gigantic Fenrir-wolf, and placed his hand inside Fenrir's mouth; just as he had done many times before in play.

The Gods and Goddesses bound Fenrir with Gleipnir, squeezing him tight. Fenrir wriggled and writhed, stretched and roared; but was unable to break this silky, elegant-looking ribbon. The Asgardians began to laugh as it became evident that the wolf had been defeated. Fenrir desperately looked around hoping to see some movement indicating they were coming to untie him, just as they had promised. To his dismay, the Gods and Goddesses only laughed harder, proud of their triumphant deception.

Fenrir closed his eyes, with an agony that can only be understood by those who can pin down their loss of innocence to one moment. He knew then that he had been deceived, and that this moment would define every one of his actions to come. He looked at Tyr, his companion and playmate, and was astonished at the level of aloofness with which even he was able to disregard their friendship, and betray him. He bit down on the hand that was still in his mouth, and made Tyr the "one-handed God" as he would henceforth be known.

As Tyr staggered back, clutching his bloody stump, Fenrir growled and roared, and told the Allfather that he had sealed his fate right then and there. The wolf said that he would be free one day, and when he was, he would destroy the Allfather and anything else that may have been dear to him. He vowed to devour the sun and the moon, he said that all would become pale and dark and as lonely as the Asgardians had made his own life. He warned the one-eyed deity that he would rue the day of this betrayal, and that he had no one to blame but himself. Odin laughed at Fenrir, but he would later find that the wolf's words were burnt into his mind; picking at his conscience more and more with each passing day.

The Asgardians took a sword, and hammered Fenrir's jaw open, burying the giant sword deep beneath the mountains. The wolf cried out in pain, and laid there with its upper jaw reaching into the pale-blue sky, and its lower jaw firmly planted into the earth. His drool flowed from his mouth, down the mountains, and into what is now the lands of Svilland, forming a long, curving river. Legends say that this is the Van River, and that the river will not cease to flow until Fenrir goes free on Ragnarok. The Van River in Svilland is named after this legend, and it is said that one can reach the mouth of the great wolf by travelling through the Van River in Svilland; much like the cub in the following story is believed to have done so.



SOLVEIG AND HER CUB



In what is now the Kingdom of Nionaem and what was then a village in the Kingdom of Fjallborg, there lived a young woman by the name of Solveig. Her village, like many in the area, were avid supporters of the Aesir and of Thor in particular, and Solveig grew up listening to the stories praising Asgardians.

Solveig and her father, Bergljot the Blacksmith, lived by



themselves, as Solveig's mother had lost her life in the great battle against the wyrm that destroyed what was the first village of Fjallborg (see Kingdom of Fjallborg p. 34). She grew up listening to her mother's stories of valor, and dreamt that she would one day follow in her footsteps.

She had a happy childhood, filled with many fond memories and lots and lots of love. Still, she longed for the kind of glory that her mother had earned. The minute she was strong enough to do so, she joined the warband of her village and participated in her first raid to Fridaland, not knowing what awaited her in the midst of the battle that would define the rest of her life.

The raid was everything she had always hoped it would be; the smell of freshly spilt blood in the air, war cries ringing in her ears, and the neck of a filthy Fridalander in her hands, she felt more alive than she had ever done. But such is fate, is it not? What you think will happen very rarely unfolds.

During the raid, she fell in love with a young man from Fridaland by the name of Birger who once spared her life when she was cornered by a swarm of Fridalanders. Birger was as reluctant about the affair as Solveig was, as he was as loyal to Fridaland as Solveig was to Fjallborg. Still, the two young lovers met in secret whenever they could, for both of them felt an undeniable pull towards the other, however unfitting with their values this affair might be.

Still, her loyalty trumped her affection in the end and she returned home with a heavy heart. In a couple of weeks, she received word of Birger's death in the raid that superseded her own. She swallowed the grief that stuck in her throat like a stone, for days-on-end. To her dismay, her troubles would not stop there. In a couple of months, her tummy started to swell, proving her guilt for all her fellow-villagers to see. Panicked, she went to her father, to ask for his advice and for his mercy. But the minute Bergljot heard that his daughter had fallen to the charms of a Fridalander, he went into a fury that Solveig would remember until her dying breath.

He told her that she had betrayed everything he held dear, and all the things he had done to ensure her safety and security. Solveig tearfully begged her father to see reason, and to show her the same mercy that she was sure Thor would have shown her, if the God were in her father's place. Bergljot grabbed her by her throat and pushed her against the wall, and said the last words he would ever say to his daughter "The rules of our Gods and goddesses are black and white; there can be no mercy, nor exception." He then stormed off, seeking to gather the council to bring Solveig to justice. Solveig struggled to find her breath, and toiled to understand how her father could have turned so cold, and could even fathom losing her to such a dishonorable death. She looked at the small bump on her tummy, and wrapped her arms around it. She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and promised herself that she would not let the only thing left of her sweet Birger to be lost. She quickly gathered tools she would need to survive on her own, and started to run from the only home she had ever known.

Solveig was competent in almost everything; she could hunt and grow food, and she enjoyed solitude. The thought of living alone, did not scare her. She ran North, as far as her legs would allow her before they gave out. And there, close to the mouth of the Van River, she finally found a cave in which she could rest.

After she lit a fire, ate, and warmed her bones, she was forced to face the reality of her situation. Her father, who had meant more to her than all the realms combined, had pushed her aside in the blink of an eye; all because she fell in love. Still, looking at the small bump of her belly, she was not sorry that she did. Nothing, in her mostly unfortunate life, had felt as natural as the love she had with Birger. Her father's last words to her rang in her ears "There can be no mercy, nor exception in the ways of the Gods". She found herself thinking about all of the tales depicting the glory of the Asgardians, and she was astonished to see how much deception and lack of mercy there seemed to be in each of them. With these thoughts swirling around in her mind, she slept.

She spent her days before her birth in the lonely darkness of that cave. With each passing day, she found a way to make it cozier, and easier to live in. When she was done with it, she had made herself quite an acceptable living space; complete with the crib she made her unborn child, out of leaves, twigs and a piece of cloth from her dress. It wasn't much, but it was home.

With each passing day, the anger she bore her father, and the Gods and goddesses that had made him so blind that he was willing to part with his precious daughter for their sake. She felt deceived, betrayed, and alone.

One day, when she was more or less settled, she found herself picturing the life she would have had if both she and the father of her child had not been so blinded by their faith in Odin and his pantheon. How they could have ran off together to live in a cave such as this, and how both they and their child would know the joy of loving, and being loved in return. She then thought about Thor, the God to which her entire village was so devoted, and the values he represented; valor, honor, and loyalty. "Loyalty." she said to herself, smirking. It was the idea of "honor" and "loyalty" that had turned her father against her. But wasn't loyalty to family a form of loyalty as well? How strange... She had not thought about how paradoxical the Gods and goddesses of Asgard behaved in the stories she had heard. Never before had she thought about the Gods that were betrayed and shunned by the Asgardians. She thought about Loki, the trickster God, and prayed to him for his forgiveness, for she could only now see all the stories from his perspective. She wept for his three children, Jorgunmundr, Hel, and Fenrir; all of whom were taken from their mother with whom Loki had left his kids, and cast away to be trapped in different kinds of loneliness. She could not bear to think how each of them were still suffering; Hel with her army of agonized souls underground, Jorgunmundr in the depths of the Seas surrounding Svilland, and Fenrir with his jaw hammered agape... All because Odin deemed it should be so, all three turned into the monsters that he saw in his vision by his own hand...

There, in the darkness of her cave, she vowed that her child would not be brainwashed like the rest of the people she saw; that she would tell her child the truth about Asgardians. She would paint them as the liars and deceivers they are, and she would praise the Gods who fell victim to their sick games as the heroes they truly were.

Before long, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy with honey-colored eyes like his father. She called the boy "Ulfr", which means "wolf", and she called him "her little cub."

As there was nobody else around, the boy grew up exactly as she wanted him to. For about 13 years, the two of them lived together in this paradise that Solveig had created. And unfortunately, in the midst of her comfortable, love-filled home, Solveig had forgotten that the past has a way of catching up to everyone.

One day, as Ulfr was waiting for his mother to come back from her hunt, Solveig rushed into the cave, her eyes frantically darting all over in search of Ulfr. When her eyes met his, she ran to him, clutched his hands in hers, and said that he now needed to listen to her very carefully. Ulfr was a rowdy child, but he could sense the intensity in his mother's trembling voice and her terrified eyes. She took a piece of leather she had fashioned out of her latest kill, and started to fill it with all the provision she could get her hands on; meat, berries, nuts, you name it. She took the four corners of the leather and tied them together to make a pouch. As she did this, she told Ulfr that he needed to run, as far as he could, because there were some "bad men" coming to take her away. She had told Ulfr about what would happen if the villagers got their hands on her, and how there would be "no mercy in the ways of Asgardians". Remembering this, his eyes became wide, and he nodded, his little brain unable to grasp or handle the gravity of the situation. Solveig looked at Ulfr, ran her fingers through his hair, and kissed him on the forehead. "Be brave, little cub." she told him, "be brave, and don't you dare forget me". She then ran over to a small opening in the back of the cave, led Ulfr through it, and closed the hole behind him with a round stone. And thus, just as the "bad men" were entering the cave, Ulfr managed to escape.

FENRIR AND ULFR

Ulfr ran faster than he ever had. When he had been running for about 10 minutes, he heard the agonized scream of a woman, and he knew that his mother was no more. Remembering her words, and trying to be brave, he ran through his tears with a clenched jaw, and his heart was filled with burning hate and piercing pain the likes of which he did not think was possible.

When he was certain he was not being followed, he stopped. He looked around for the first time since he had started running. It would soon be getting dark. He decided to gather some twigs, and light a fire. His mother had taught him how to do such things, as well as to cook, and to hunt. The thought of this woman who had given him the only love he had ever known, and of what had happened to her brought a lump to his throat. He swallowed to make it go away, ashamed of the emotion he was feeling. He did not know where to go, nor what he was going to do. He was all alone, and utterly helpless.

He lit a fire, somewhere that was properly concealed by rocks, so he would not be found and his mother's sacrifice would not be in vain. His mother... She had done so much for him, and loved him so well all throughout his life. He fondly remembered her gentle voice calling him her little cub. And with that thought, an idea occurred to him.

One or two years ago, Ulfr and Solveig had come across the Van River, and she had told him how the river that gave it

its name was created, around the warm fire they lit together: When the Asgardians trapped Fenrir by means of Gleipnir, and hammered his lower jaw into the ground to forever keep it open, his drool had flown down to form the magnificent Van river, which would only dry out once true justice was served, and Fenrir was set free to play his part in the well-deserved end of Odin and his treacherous pantheon. Solveig had also said that legend says this river, the one they were looking at, had a gateway inside, leading to the legendary river itself.

Remembering this, along with many other morsels of wisdom his mother had provided him with over the years, he thought about how so many children were ripped from their families, and bound to a fate dictated by the pain they are put through at the hands of this evil pantheon or their supporters. He thought about how Fenrir, like himself, was just a babe when the Asgardians betrayed and trapped him. He thought about the final moments of his mom and how ill-fitting an end this formidable woman had met. "As ill-fitting as an innocent pup being captured by a cruel trap", he pondered to himself. And although he did not know exactly how he would do it, Ulfr knew that he had to find Fenrir, and pledge his allegiance to the mighty wolf. There, in the darkness of the opening he had found, under the accompanying flicker of the fire, he decided that he would find and follow the Van River until he found the Fenris-wolf.



Ulfr did not get much sleep that night. He was both in agony over losing the only person he had ever known, and giddy with the anticipation of the quest he was about to undertake.

It did not take long for him to discover the same opening that he and his mom had rested during their hunt. He was quite skilled in tracking, and had a brilliant memory, and was hence able to remember the important details of the route Solveig and he had taken. Thinking about how he would never get to hunt with her, or even hear her laugh again, he began to follow the river with a lump in his throat.

He did not know how long the road took. But he felt that years must have passed. He mostly traveled through the wilderness, although he also crossed some towns, resting in inns in exchange for hunting and cleaning services in places that seemed the least uncomfortable with his presence. Since the only remnant of civilization was what he had seen from Solveig, his general demeanor (not to mention his beliefs) was frowned upon by most people he met. In fact, it would be safe to say that the grief-stricken Ulfr did not make a single friend on the road. He was astonished to see how much support the false pantheon had in the realm, and how lacking support was for the true Gods and Goddesses. Still, he was cunning, and did not spout his opinions to all that would hear it. He simply preferred to keep to himself. Other than these rare occasions during which he was with others, he rested in the wild, brooding and pondering. All the thoughts that seemed to cross his mind simply made him fill with more hate.

Finally, he noticed multicolored wisps on the surface of the water, and he knew he was close to the gateway. When he noticed a red light, coming from the bottom like the light of a grand torch, he knew this would lead him to the great wolf; and he jumped in. He swam to the bottom with all his might, as fast as he could, fighting back the urge to go back up for air. At the bottom, he went through a doorway of red, floating lights and found himself in an entirely different world. He looked up,





and saw that he had reached the mouth of Fenrir. Upon seeing the magnificent beast who looked so helpless with his mouth agape, and his body distorted with the might of Gleipnir; he froze for a moment. It was both a majestic and a heartbreaking sight to behold. The mighty wolf's gaze met his, and the two stayed as such, eyes-locked on one another, for a long time. It was Fenrir who looked away first with an exasperated sigh before he went back to sleep.

Ulfr knew that he would need to win the wolf over, and he had thought about what he might do. He first tried reasoning with the beast. Pulling out the sword he acquired in his travels (which was but a simple shortsword) and lifting it up to the sky, he started to speak: "O mighty Hróðvitnir, I have come to pledge my sword to thee", he then plunged his sword into the earth with quite a flare and continued, "All my actions from this day forth shall be in your honor. All my deeds shall mirror your own, and all the blood sweat and tears that come out of this humble corpse shall not be in vain! I will avenge you, and praise your name. O, mighty Fenrisulfr, he who hath given me my name, tell me what you will have me do!"

The wolf looked at him in disbelief, and Ulfr thought he saw the lips of the seemingly motionless wolf curl into a smile. "Oh..." he said, lowering his sword, and looking at the wolf who obviously would not be able to reply.

He thought about how to communicate with the wolf for a while, before he noticed how one of the paws of Fenrir was close to the ground. Ulfr then told Fenrir that perhaps he could draw a line on the ground for yes, and a cross on the ground to mean "no". "We can work out the other details for the language later on" he said cheerfully. Fenrir was astonished at how seemingly unafraid the boy was of him, and this tickled him. Thinking that he did not have anything better to do, he begrudgingly drew a line on the floor. That line was the most beautiful thing Ulfr had ever seen. "Are you hungry?!" he asked, unable to mask the excitement in his voice. Fenrir, again, drew a line on the ground. "I'll bring you something to eat!" Ulfr said with a voice quivering with excitement before he ran off to hunt his new master some food that was fitting the God he was. Thus, Fenrir and Ulfr finally met.

The first couple of days were a little awkward, just as most relationships are in the beginning. Ulfr was dying for the love of Fenrir, and tried many different things to get the great wolf's approval. He groomed the fur of the great wolf, he poured water down its maw, he hunted for it and brought the rewards to it, and he even pulled a couple of trees (which were the equivalent of what a thorn would be for a regular-sized wolf) from its paws. Still, the wolf seemed mostly unenthusiastic about the language that Ulfr was so desperate to improve. Still, Ulfr was patient, and together they formed a language made entirely of signs. To make a new word, Fenrir would draw a shape on the ground, Ulfr would try to guess its meaning, and when he got it right, Fenrir would draw a line on the ground to mean "yes". As the days went by, Ulfr started to grow on Fenrir, and even started to peak his interest.

One day, he drew the symbol on the ground that Ulfr and Fenrir had decided would mean "why", and looked at Ulfr intently with its yellow eyes. "Do you mean, why am I here master?" Ulfr said, with hope in his eyes, as this was the question he had wanted the wolf to ask him ever since his

arrival. When the wolf drew a line on the ground, Ulfr began to tell Fenrir his story. He told him every detail; the love story of his parents, how the pantheon of Odin had let his entire family down, and how it ultimately led to the death of his mother. He told Fenrir that his mother knew the true Gods and Goddesses were Hel, Jomungundr and himself; and that she had raised Ulfr to be an avid supporter as well. This story grasped at the last ounce of mercy and love that the Fenrisulfr still felt. He looked at the boy, and pondered for a while before he closed his eyes to sleep on it. Thinking that his story had not had the effect that he wanted, Ulfr also went to sleep, disappointed.

When Ulfr awoke the next day, he found the wolf hard at work on markings that stretched as far as his arm could. He looked at the boy, turning its gigantic eyeball towards him, and grunted for him to approach. The boy was bewildered, excited, and scared all at once. When he got closer, he saw that the wolf had written out instructions for him to follow.

He had said that there would be a war, a great war at the end of all things, in which Fenrir is to play a big part. He wrote that he would devour the Sun and the Moon, and finally, the treacherous one-eyed God before all fell to darkness. The markings also said that he would need an army, a big army made of ferocious wolves, to stand against that of Odin and his pantheon. Ulfr would be tasked with raising this army, and trying to decrease the number of soldiers in Odin's army as much as possible.

The great wolf had also written out instructions for a gruesome ritual with which Ulfr was to build his army. These instructions laid out how to make a beast that was half-man/half-wolf. Thus, Ulfr became the first Svillander with the power to make a werevargr. All werevargrs we see today are the result of this moment in time.

After Ulfr repeated what he understood, and Fenrir drew a line on the ground to indicate he had it right, Fenrir stared at Ulfr, with a look that seemed to say "well, go!" And thus, Ulfr left the side of the mighty wolf God to carry out his instructions and spread his glory all over Svilland.

Ulfr travelled from village to village, gathering support for Fenrir, and adding to his personal wolf pack along the way. To his delight, it was not difficult to find people who were obviously shunned by society, and who were deemed worthless or simply miserable by what Odin and his pantheon stood for, and the pack seemed to grow and grow.

For a short while, the group called themselves "The Eyes of Fenrir", but for some reason, it did not seem to stick. Later, when a common villager that had witnessed the werevargrs called them the "Fangs of Fenrir", the name caught on, and they were so named.

As they spread a belief that is unpopular among most Svillanders, they never had an established headquarters, but rather lived a nomadic life, traveling from place to place with their pack. Still, they grew in silence immensely over the years, establishing themselves as one of the most prominent cults of the land. Members are usually seen collaborating with other cults or with the followers of those who were wronged by Odin and his pantheon. Their greatest enemy in Svilland is Odin's Vargr, whom they believe to sully the holy blood of the wolf.

THE ORIGINS OF ODIN'S VARGR

All the personalities in Odin's pantheon are complex in nature. None of the Gods or goddesses that grace the halls of Asgard are perfect, nor do they pretend to be. And perhaps none is as contradictory as the Allfather himself.

Odin is the God of honorable warriors, of noble rulers, of wisdom, and of glory. However, he is also the God most associated with the pursuit of more knowledge and more power at whatever the cost, mostly seeing no problem in resorting to lies and tricks to get his way. Although most tricksters worthy of the name worship Loki, there is still a respectable number of outcasts and outlaws who walk the path of the one-eyed God, and live their lives by the lessons they have learnt from his myths.

Odin proved time and time again that he was willing to do anything and everything for more wisdom, and hence, more power. In doing so, he perhaps unwittingly became father to all. To drink from the well of Urd, and thus to gain knowledge and wisdom beyond what he could fathom, he plucked out his own eye and threw it in Mimir's well; he thus became the God of the downtrodden. He hung himself from the world tree Yggdrasil to learn the magic of the runes from the norns who carved them on the roots of the great tree; he thus became a spellcaster, a shaman, and the father of all Runewalkers. There, he sacrificed himself to himself and died before acquiring the wisdom of the runes; he thus became the God of the dead. He lied to the dwarfs and fooled them into giving him the mead of poetry. He banished Hel, tricked Fenrir, and tied up Loki for fear of his own end; he thus became a God of tricks and of tricksters. But through all of these actions, he also became the God most associated with warriors, and of fighters in every sense of the word. In all these acts, Odin proved that he believes in struggling at all cost to get to a result; in the fight being the sole means for any cause. His many titles also include "Herteitr" which translates as "Glad of War" and "Hildolfr", which translates as "Battle Wolf"; names that clearly support this side of Odin.

Odin's Vargr is an organization that embraces these wild, wily, willful sides of the one-eyed God, established in the First Age of Svilland. They are made up of werevargrs whose sole purpose is to exterminate the enemies of the Allfather; Fangs of Fenrir being the first among them.

from the Jotunns, or any other enemy of Odin.

After Odin, Vili and Ve created the universe, the brothers went their separate ways. Used to the constant company of his brothers, the days seemed to have no end for Odin as he wandered through realms, alone. He thus decided to be alone no longer. He created two wolves to be his companions; one male, and the other female, one a deep dark gray, and the other different shades of brown. Their fur was so thick that it looked like their bodies were covered by a dense forest filled with soft yet spiky trees, giving them an image that was majestic and menacing at the same time. He named one of them Geri (for greedy), and the other Freki (for hungry), and he bid them that they would be his constant companions until he or they meet their end.

As time passed, Odin had many other companions, among whom were the two ravens Huginn and Muninn. When the two ravens flew over the worlds to gather information, they would also look for fresh kills for the two wolves and their seemingly unquenchable appetites. In return, the wolves would share the bounty of their kill with the ravens. To this day, ravens and wolves all over Svilland can be observed helping one another in a similar manner.

Other than the rewards of their daily hunts, Geri and Freki were fed with whatever provision was brought to the Allfather, as he could sustain himself on wine alone. He was also known to drink mead sometimes, if the mood should so strike him. But any other food, he would feed his beloved wolves. Sometimes, although it was rare, he would punish unforgivable crimes by throwing the one who committed said crimes to Geri and Freki, who would zealously tear the culprits limb from limb. Some say that this is where the popular Svillandic idiom "throw someone to the wolves" comes from.



ODIN'S FIRST VARGR



GERI AND FREKI



To understand the elements that make up Odin's Vargr, one must first know of Geri and Freki, their ancestors. The two great wolves act as companions and guards to the Allfather, and protect the borders of Valhalla against possible attacks

When Fangs of Fenrir was so named, and started to grow in power, it was not long before Huginn and Muninn saw this and brought word back to the Allfather. They told him how some of Svilland had started to consider certain actions of Odin and his pantheon to be selfish, greedy; and thus who had started to worship Hel, Loki, and Fenrir in their place. The wise God laughed, saying that it would take them ages to gather the support and devotion that he was already privy to. He therefore resolved that he would pay no mind to the acts of

the boy recruited by Fenrir (see Fangs of Fenrir Origin p. 43), nor to his followers.

That night, however, his bed was one filled with nightmares that left him drenched in sweat before he awoke with a gasp. He had had another vision of Ragnarok. But this time, there was something he had not seen before, or had not noticed: Before the great wolf swallowed him, and all turned to darkness behind its sharp fangs, he saw the mighty warriors that filled Valhalla fall at the claws of the wolf army that carried the symbol of the great wolf. He could still hear the screams of the honorable warriors who rallied behind him, who he had dragged into battle with him. He knew, in that moment, that he would have to respond to this threat.

When he woke, he called his beloved wolves Geri and Freki to his side, and told them that they would need to travel to Svilland to build him an army of wolves worthy of the great Allfather's name. He told them of how Fenrir's followers were turning themselves into vargrs, but said that this was a lowly kind of vargr, and that his own wolf-children would carry the holy blood of the noblest of wolves within them. With this, he told the two wolves exactly what they were to do.

Geri and Freki wasted no time, and travelled down to the lands they were already so familiar with as it has been their hunting ground many-a-time before. Though this time, they were looking for something specific. The Allfather had ordered them to find a youngling to raise as their own. He said that they would recognize the ward instantly for they'd be;

*In their demeanor, fierce but small,
With eyes that pierce one and all,
With hair of fire that all'd recall,
Though curled up into a ball,
Never again to be thrall.*

Thus, they ran all over Svilland, in search of this mystical figure. Freki was more optimistic than Geri was, for the latter could not fathom how they would be able to find a human that fit such a glorious description, and further, how they could possibly come to raise one as their own. As the days went on, and they did not find the child, it seemed that Geri would be proven right.

One day, as the two wolves slept in a comfortable opening covered by rocks and tree branches, they were awakened to a big commotion. They first heard someone panting as though they were struggling to catch their breath, a sound to which both vargrs raised both ears. The panting was getting closer with each passing second, the person attached to the sound must have been running from something.

When the panting was as close as it could be, it stopped getting closer. Now, the sound was muted, and whoever this person was, was starting to catch their breath. Geri raised its head a little to see over the bush concealing their location.

Between the dark green branches of the bush, there was a girl. She had hair the color of fire itself, and eyes that were a reddish hue of indigo. She was tiny, about the size of Geri, and was covered in scratches from her head to her toes. There were bites on her arms and her legs that looked as though they were made by a wolf, although she did not appear to be badly hurt. There in the cold, she struggled to steady her breathing as she crouched in front of the bush behind which Geri and Freki were hiding. Geri kept watching.

Not long after the girl had caught her breath, two men and a

woman came running to the clearing. Geri did not notice much about them, except for the symbol of the wolf around their necks. Geri was watching the girl. The minute she had heard them approach, she had concealed herself between the leaves of the bush behind which she was hiding. She covered her mouth with her hand, and waited. The woman looked around a little bit, and then growled in disappointment. Just as they were about to turn away, one of the men held up his hand, and started sniffing the air. Before long, his eyes were fixed on the bush concealing the girl, and a sinister smile crept over his lips. That is when Geri leapt forward with a harrowing howl, and wept the smirk off his face before he even knew what hit him.

Freki joined Geri, and they started to fight off the three together, as they had always done. The girl was shocked at the turn her fate had taken, and mesmerized by the view that she knew few would see in a lifetime. The man that Geri had attacked did not last long owing to the element of surprise, but the other two had turned into wolves, as she had seen them do once more in her village. She squeezed her eyes shut at the thought; for she knew that it was no more. She thought of the last moments of her mother, her brave, sweet mother who had sacrificed herself so she could live... She thought of how that man had laughed as he cut her father's head clean off... And as her mind raced with these thoughts and adrenaline pumped through her veins, she heard Freki's battlecry. It was as though a hidden force had been awakened inside her being. She would not let her last moments alive be spent in cowardice. She thus leapt forward with a scream, and flung herself on the shoulders of the first one she saw. Using her teeth, her fingers and her nails alone; she tore the woman's (the wolf woman's) face off. Now it was Geri and Freki's turn to be shocked. Unfortunately, seeing this to be his opportunity, the only foe left grabbed the girl by her neck, bit down, and flung her over to the left. Being the only one left though, he did not last long either.

Geri rushed to the girl's side; she was badly hurt. Geri had never seen a human fight with such ferocity, such vision... It was heartbreaking for this to be her end. And that's when Geri remembered the prophecy.

Geri turned over to Freki to find its two eyes meet its gaze. Geri looked at the girl, and back at Freki, and Freki nodded as if to say "I agree." They both knew what had to be done for the girl to survive.

They moved in unison, as though they were one body, one mind. Geri walked up behind the girl's head, and Freki her feet. The two wolves looked at each other, and at the same time, one bit down on the girl's ankle, and one on their own, pouring its own blood into the girl's mouth. For a moment, her face was filled with anguish, but the second the blood of the wolf touched her lips, she once again fell into the arms of a long, deep sleep.

Geri and Freki waited by the girl, as she writhed, tossed, and turned in the company of dreams filled with visions the likes of which she could not have imagined; visions of gore, and beauty, and freedom; visions of the wolf. The two wolves licked the scratches on the small extremities of the child, trying to heal and soothe their new cub. And there, in the cold, the new family rode out their first night together.

The girl awoke, and opened her eyes with the first lights



of the dawn. She looked at the two majestic wolves whom she knew would be her constant companions from that point on. Freki and Geri were sitting up straight, watching the girl intently. "Tell us your name, child," said Freki, in a language that only the wolves could understand. The girl replied in the same language, "Lífa." Geri and Freki nodded, "You are now called Vargrbarn" Geri said, and drew a line between them and the cub. "Neither your old name nor your old life can go further than here. You will always carry Lífa within, but if you are to be one of us, you shall first embrace our ways." The child nodded, and timidly moved forward. With the first step she took, she saw that her hands had been replaced with paws. "Don't worry," Geri said, "you will be able to go back to human form as well, you will even be able to become a combination of human and wolf – but first, you must grow accustomed to this form." The cub nodded. Freki stood up first, with determination and barely controlled glee, "Now, we move."

It was not long before Vargrbarn got used to her new form. She enjoyed the freedom of being a wolf, and found that she rarely felt the need to transform back into her human form. She had a new life, and a new family to replace the one she lost to that raid of the Fangs of Fenrir. The thought of that day would always bring tears to her eyes, but she would only run faster to have the wind wipe them away.

She told her story to Geri and Freki, and both of them

joined her in her grief. With each passing day, their bond was stronger, and they spent the time hunting, eating, bathing when they found water, and talking to one another about faith, fate and the future.

Lífa's former family were avid supporters of Odin, and she had grown up listening to myths about the great one-eyed God and his companions. She was now a proud part of that heritage. Sometimes when they were hunting, Huginn and Muninn would bring them clues about new kills, and bring them news of the Allfather. Having such a connection to the holiest of beings never ceased to move Vargrbarn.

Geri, Freki and Vargrbarn thus traveled as a pack until she was ready to make herself a companion of her own, just as her new family had made her into one. When years passed, and she and her companion had a cub of their own, the pack began to grow. Thus, there were two ways of making a new Vargr: two vargrs procreating, or someone worthy being chosen to join the pack. It was not long before the pack reached immense numbers, and felt the need to separate. After some time, these ferocious wolves acquired the title "Odin's Vargr", as they sought to crush the enemies of the Allfather, and praised his name wherever they went.

To this day, members of this great cult of wolves prefer to live in the wild and they always hunt in duos like their ancestors Geri and Freki.

SECOND AGE



KINGDOMS IN THE SECOND AGE

The kingdoms of the First Age merged, were conquered and destroyed. They were ruled by leaders, jarls, and jarls that ruled over jarls; the new kingdoms that were born out of the old ones were ruled by kings and queens.



EASTERN HORN



The first and most important political and military power of the Second Age was a kingdom called Eastern Horn. Its political influence came from the restructured relations of Fridaland diplomats, and its military might came from the migrated people of Fjallborg. The people of Eastern Horn contributed greatly to civilization; their most important contribution was soap.

THE TRUTH AND LYE

There was a man who lived in Eastern Horn. His wife started to complain about her hands being dirty after coming back from battle. The husband washed her hands repeatedly but the woman couldn't be convinced. The husband had doubts.

He was clever and ingenious. He made lye from oak ash and made the first soap from the lye he made. He washed his wife's hands with the soap, which convinced the wife that her hands were cleansed.

The husband was right about his doubts; it was not the dirt of the hands that bothered his wife, but it was the guilt of taking countless lives.

Eastern Horn lands spanned across to Shadowlow Mountains in the west from swamps in the east, and to ocean in the south from Northern Peaks in the north. Almost all kinds of resources were found in this kingdom's territory.

BEFORE EASTERN HORN

Fjallborg to the north-west and Fridaland to the South-East; the people of these two kingdoms despised each other from the depths of their hearts. Yet, decades of hatred was not enough for both folks to abandon their honor. And, in the end, honor united them.

A COMMON ENEMY

There was a proverb, "It was the last drop of mead that made the Jarl drunk." For the people of Fridaland, their ruler's undignified request was the last drop.

The 8th ruler of Fridaland, Leifnar, was the most arrogant of his line. He had no talent for fighting nor training, his control over his feelings was feeble, and he was distant to his people. One day, he got lost on the road while traveling from a nearby hot spring to his longhouse. A villager couple found him and offered food and warmth. During his stay, he fell in love with the wife of the villager. After a couple of days, his warriors found him and he ordered his warriors to kill the villager and take his wife with them. So they did. Word traveled fast and people started to attack military posts, demanding the release of the woman. When this was heard in Fjallborg, many warriors rushed into Fridaland. At the week's end, Leifnar was staked in front of his longhouse.

The woman was rescued with the help of the warriors of Fjallborg. For the first time since the establishment of both kingdoms, the people of Fridaland and Fjallborg feasted together to celebrate their triumph against an incompetent and cruel leader.

THE CURSED VILLAGE

After the celebrations, the warriors departed from Fridaland and journeyed back to their village only to find that it was no more. They learned from survivors that during their absence an avalanche had devoured the whole village. It was the second destruction of Fjallborg, which was enough for folks to consider it cursed.

The homeless warriors built camps and arranged search parties to look for survivors. They managed to find a few. When the fall of Fjallborg village was heard, people from Fridaland sent help. Together they searched and found as many survivors as they could. Yet, most of the townspeople died beneath the snow. After the rescue missions were over, they started to debate about reconstruction. Some of them wanted to clear the snow and rebuild the village, but some others wanted to leave this cursed place behind. The debates ended when draugrs started to rise from the snow that crushed the villagers. They abandoned the village and with that, Fjallborg was no more.

Some speculations were made. A survivor claimed that it was a frost jotunn's doing, while several others suspected a trolldfolk attack. Of course, angry spirits, Vanir beasts, and Gods' judgments were not out of the question. Yet, no one

knew exactly what happened.

FRJOSA GJOF

In the town of Fjallborg, a maiden there was,
Believed in her heart, in a hero's true love. Her
intentions were pure, she expected the same,
A man with a fierce soul that she wanted to
tame.

Amber-haired lady! Silver-eyed love!
Who weaved your beauty, who resides above?

Near the town of Fjallborg, a frost jotunn was,
Believed in his heart, in a maiden's true love.
Half-giant, half-man, his skin was milky pale,
Couldn't be unseen even after barrels of ale.

Sad little giant! Aggrieved big man!
Why are you defiant? What is your plan?

The maiden tended to a flower, barely alive, She
still waited for her dear beloved to arrive. The
jotunn walked far, searching far and wide, To
find is fair maiden, and with her unite.
Oh, spoiled maiden! Oh, foolish outcast!
Why flies the raven? Why forgo your past?

Across the mountain, far above the sea,
He searched for a gift for her eyes to see.
The jotunn quested for a charming flower,
Found a magical red rose near a seidr tower.
Crimson-haired lad! Copper-eyed boy!
Are you this mad? Is love just a toy?

Blew on the rose, with his freezing breath
To save the bloom, from its certain death.
The maiden recoiled as he approached,
She despised his looks, and everything froze.
Oh, shallow prettiness! Oh, hollowed lover!
One was heartless only for him to discover.

The second fall of Fjallborg was not of flame,
But the deaths and agony were exactly the same.
A snow-white blanket covered their shame,
No one knew who they were to blame.

They separated into four groups. The first group went west and settled in the Noble Woods. They built small houses from spruce wood with tar. They herded goats that they had brought with them, they foraged wild foods and hunted in Noble Woods. Their village was named Hranstoir.

The second group traveled south and settled on the plains. They built wooden houses from spruce trees, gathered from Noble Woods. Their surroundings were suitable for agriculture, so they cultivated several vegetables and lots of barley. They named their settlement Deildar.

The third group journeyed to the east and settled on a plain that was between trees and mountains. They built a small town with small huts made from crimson pine woods. The crimson pines were mostly found in the forest they settled by

in Svilland and its wood was extremely durable for a softwood tree. Also, it was the only pine tree with edible seeds, pine nuts. Hence, forestry improved in their village. They also planted several vegetables and plants, mostly pea, cabbage, and barley. The town was named Kolbovaik.

The last, and the largest group, traveled to the northeast of the Shadowlow Mountains, with the people of Fridaland that came for help. They built a big longhouse from larch wood gathered from the Austere Woods. They stayed in this longhouse for over a year. They hunted for food and the people of Fridaland also helped. During their stay, most of them worked to build houses in a place towards the northeast. Eventually, they abandoned the longhouse and settled in the town they built for over a year. The abandoned longhouse was used as a barracks for some time and then abandoned again. The new settlement, that was surrounded by large steppes, was called Vogsal. Most of them engaged in agriculture. The people of Vogsal were friendly with the half-jotunns and this amicable relationship was rewarded with trade for honey.

THE MERGE AND EXPANSION

Migrations from Fjallborg territories continued for a while, through new settlements, such as Kolbovaik and Vogsal. Eventually, a ruler named Sylva united these people with the people of Fridaland and established a kingdom called Eastern Horn. Nothing much was known about this young woman, except that she was a strong warrior and a master at heckling flax.

THE FIRST AND SECOND

The villages near the Red River, Vogsal, and Helgavatn were the first villages to accept Sylva's rule. Vogsal was the main source of plants and vegetables, Helgavatn was the source of most animal products, and villages near the Red River were the source of fish and flax. Also, people from Red River villages occasionally traveled to Drundan Mountains to mine lead glances and take baths in the hot springs nearby. Lead glance was the most important source of lead and silver. Eastern Horn also needed a place to gather quality wood, so they built Sangarholt in the Austere Woods. Another important resource was iron, which they bought from highlanders on Shadowlow Mountains, but it was not enough.

Sylva wanted to improve her kingdom's settlements and in order to do so she built towns near important resources. But the kingdom was vast and expanding, which made it harder to carry resources between villages. To solve this problem Sylva invested in horses. From a traveler, she learnt the existence of a kuning village, the Winter Lookout. She sent her husband to find a master horse tamer, believing that kuning were more capable at things related to wildlife. Months later, her husband returned with a kuning named Heide who was accompanied by 6 reindeers. She taught proper methods of horse taming across Eastern Horn and wanted nothing in return. Also, to a few rangers she showed that even a reindeer and a moose could be tamed to pull a sledge, but it required great talent and understanding. Her efforts made it possible for Sylva to facilitate logistics, and horse taming became more common. After her job was done, Heide left the kingdom and returned



to her village; Sylva's husband left Sylva and joined Heide, he never returned.

The second ruler of Eastern Horn was Sylva's only child, Vorgja. During his rule, he built four villages, two at the north end of Red River and two at the south end. The first one was Dockyard. This place existed before him, but was a very small village with few shipmakers. He rebuilt and improved the village, making it one of the most important villages in the kingdom. Then, he built Drumstone just because he wanted outposts on both sides of the delta. Thanks to his mother's investment in logistics, he built Nattafaravik and Molgor to completely take control of the Red River. The forest near Nattafaravik had two kinds of pine trees, one was spruce and the other one was sweet pine. Sweet pine trees were not very common in Svilland and were a great resource as its wood was durable and furred honey bees could use their resin to make honey. Also, the forest was crowded with lots of wild animals. On the other hand, building Molgor was a great waste of resources.

VAEGAR THE VOICELESS

The most accomplished ruler of Eastern Horn was Vorgja's son, Vaegar the Voiceless. He was calm and was also good with an axe. His mother claimed that he never cried as a baby nor was he ever foul tempered as a boy; actually, he never spoke a word all his life. Some believed that he only talked with animals, plants, or even soil. The most extraordinary thing about him was his diplomatic skills, which he was able to utilize without uttering a single word.

After Vorgja's unexpected death during a feast, which, according to people's beliefs, happened because the Gods wanted him in Valhalla, Vaegar claimed the throne by refusing it to his 3 siblings. After he became king, he started to travel to his villages and meet with his people. During his visit to Nattafaravik, he wanted to explore the nearby forest. Together with his retinue, he discovered a natural road through the pine forest. Also, he tasted pine honey in Nattafaravik and bystanders claimed that he liked the honey so much that he almost spoke a word. After his visit to Molgor, which was the last village to visit, he traveled back to Nattafaravik and passed the forest using the road he had found before. From there, he journeyed to Kolbovaik. The small town had no ruler and was a poor one. He brewed a barrel of mead from the pine honey he got from Nattafaravik and gave it to the people in Kolbovaik, promising more of it if they joined him. So, they did and in return, half-jotunns in Nattafaravik started to trade pine honey with Kolbovaik.

His journey was over and he met with all of his people, even added a new town to the kingdom. But still, there was a problem, there was not enough iron. After years of searching without no results, he came up with a plan, which was his last resort. He gathered professionals, travelers, mystics, warriors, and adventurers that he met on the road. Together they searched for ancient Vanir settlements. Their first finding was on the west side of the Red River. Between Freyja's Tears and the river, they found a half-buried treasure guarded by Vanir Beasts. They killed the beasts and dug up the treasure; there were several silver and gold accessories, a very long piece of greyish, thick, soft fabric, and an ancient loom. They held a

great feast. To mark his first victory against the Vanir, Vaegar ordered the construction of the first city of Svilland. Bards wrote songs about it, messengers were sent to every known village, and rituals were organized, Vaegar made sure that people would contribute to his dream. Lots of people migrated from the west during that time, and the ones that heard of the construction of the city came to claim their own spot. It was what Vaegar promised, any family that contributed to the construction of the city would be rewarded with a home of their own inside the secure city walls. He organized everything and entrusted the process to his brother. Then, he continued his journey to find Vanir settlements.

SOMBER VELVET

It took years to complete Vaegar's city, called Beruvik. It was the first city that Svillanders built and it became the capital of Eastern Horn. Inside the larch walls, between the half stone half wooden buildings there was a longhouse at the center of the city. Into that longhouse, the ancient loom was placed.

It was used to weave velvet, which was very different from weaving wadmal, and required mastery over the loom as it was magical. Any color of wool string that was used to weave velvet would come out grey from the ancient loom.

Decades after the city's establishment, replicas of the ancient loom were made but none of them attained the quality of velvet that was weaved with the ancient loom.

With his warband, he traveled to the east of the Red River. He was hoping to find one or two Vanir settlements that had good amounts of iron, instead he found many. There were iron, silver, and gold veins in the rocks surrounding the settlements, which were the result of Vanir magic. In some places there were even big chunks of these metals, the size of a small boulder, laying around. One little problem was, all of these settlements were protected by *Groove Guardians*. He ordered the construction of two villages to supply his expeditions and battles against the guardians, Chestnut Meadow and Bram. Chestnut Meadow was a farming village with houses made of chestnut wood, surrounded by beautiful chestnut trees and few crimson pines. Bram was a hunting village with small wooden houses covered with turf and townsfolk also herded animals. During Vaegar's campaign, harmful spirits and Vanir Beasts started to show up regularly in some forests. Hence, wooden walls were built around Sangarholt, Nattafaravik, and Bram. They became the first villages with walls in Eastern Horn.

His expedition to the east lasted for almost 80 years, which made people curious about the fact that Vaegar was not aging. He killed many guardians and claimed many settlements surrounded by valuable resources. Through his efforts, the kingdom of Eastern Horn prospered. At the age of 150 Vaegar died.

Olga The Watchful, one of the last people from Vaegar's warband said these words on her deathbed: "Oh, he spoke. Yes, he spoke. He couldn't reach for death as it was right behind him. He got tired and waited for death to catch up. And, he did speak. But not for anyone to hear. He did speak, he whispered beyond the veil. The breath coming out of his words blew the dim fire that kept his enemies bound to life. He spoke of death."

THE GREAT GRANDSON

After Vaegar's death, his grandson took the throne. His name was Galdan. He was the last ruler of the Eastern Horn that contributed to its expansion. Unlike his grandfather, he ruled from Beruvik and traveled only if absolutely necessary.

During his reign, western tribes started to raid Eastern Horn villages for their rich resources and luxuries. They were not organized and their assaults were unpredictable. To protect his kingdom, Galdan formed the first organized army and the East Rangers. The members of the East Rangers were chosen from people on the west side of the Red River who were married and had children. Their duty was to travel across border villages to the west and interfere with any possible attacks. They were provided with the best horses and specialized equipment. The soldiers for the army were chosen from the people on the east side of the river. The reason behind it was that Galdan wanted loyalty in the army and a reason to fight back and protect in the East Rangers. After the formation of these two organizations, a problem arose; it became complicated to pay this many people with equal resources.

Galdan consulted with Tyr's Judges to find a way to pay his soldiers equitably. They explained that there were costs for some of their divine spells and in order to precisely calculate the cost, they ground, weight, melt, and mold precious metals. They suggested that he should create small pieces of iron, silver, and gold of the same weight as there were three sides of justice: sacrifice, purity, and loyalty. Impressed by their wisdom, Galdan made his blacksmiths melt massive amounts of iron, silver, and gold to craft them into coins. He also made laws which described the details of Eastern Horn coins. Of course some people, mostly jarls, had to be executed before several traditionalist groups were persuaded to trade with these coins.

VALUES OF IRON, SILVER, GOLD

Iron. Weighs the same as a handful of wet soil. Mat enough to block your reflection, polished enough to mirror the sun. Bite it or jab it with a pointy knife; you shouldn't be able to nick it. It is bigger than silver and gold coins. Ten of them are worth a silver coin.

Silver. Weighs the same as an iron coin but is smaller. Bite it or jab it; you should be able to nick it a little, but not too much. Ten of them are worth a gold coin.

Gold. Weighs the same as a silver coin but is smaller. Draw two lines on a touchstone with

a gold piece of known quality and the gold coin, then compare the color. Ten of them are worth a soldier's annual pay.

In the last years of his reign, Galdan wanted to secure his kingdom on all fronts. Thus, he ordered the construction of Belmont Castle, the East Outposts, and the villages in the south, from the Tower Village lighthouse to the big oak tree. Unfortunately, he didn't live long enough to see them completed.

Many others came to the throne after Galdan, but the expansion days were over with his death.

FEASTS AND CELEBRATIONS

There were many varieties of local feasts, rituals, and celebrations; in Chestnut Meadow they celebrated chestnut harvest season, in Vogsal and Nattafaravik they celebrated honey season, in Beruvik they celebrated the anniversary of the city's completion, etc. But, Eastern Horn was a powerful kingdom that united different people and formed collective traditions. Because of this, some events were celebrated throughout the whole kingdom. Similar practices could be found in the western tribes, but the details and methods varied between the tribes in the west, unlike in Eastern Horn where the practices were pretty much standard.

GOLD DAY

Every year, before the arrival of harsh winter, the kingdom paid ten gold coins to all its soldiers and most of the soldiers would spend it the same night. It was a day that made both soldiers and merchants very happy. The best quality mead and barrels of wines from all fruits were stocked for this day, brothels were covered with the aromatic smoke of incense, animals were butchered and cooked whole.

It sometimes took several weeks for this celebration to end. There even was a story of a village that burnt down during the celebrations, as the whole village got drunk and sacrificed their village to the Allfather. After it was over, people would heat water inside big cauldrons and bathe together in the open.

THOR'S DAY

Only the gothis of Thor would realize the coming of Thor's Day. It could be anytime which was not possible to predict and find a pattern. When it came, Thor gothis would request sacrifices from nearby villages. Two willing slaves would be freed from their enslavement to live freely for a day. Then, at the next day's dawn, they would sacrifice themselves during a ritual dedicated to Thor.

A Thor gothi would prepare an altar and sanctify a chalice made of horn. Every attendee would decorate themselves with warpaints and watch the couple as they walked towards the altar, accompanied by the sound of drums. The couple would hold hands, the drums would go silent for the gothi to start the prayer. While the gothi prayed, people would bring

offerings from the season's harvest and place it around the couple's feet. Then, the gothi would slit both sacrifice's wrists and they would hold each other's arms, letting the blood mix. As they leave for Valhalla, they would become a family and the lands would be blessed by their noble sacrifice. Finally, the gothi would fill the chalice with the mixed blood and everyone would take a sip.

On Thor's Day no one was allowed to work. There was no punishment, but it was considered disrespectful to work.

FEAST OF THE FIGHTING MOOSE

Every once in a while, during the moose's breeding season, the people of Eastern Horn and the kuning came together to feast. There was no reason behind this and no one knew exactly how it started. In those feasts, everyone brought delicacies that were most foreign to the other group. These were great chances to taste and smell things that were completely unfamiliar.

The feasts would last as long as participants had a story yet to tell. Every night, during the feasts, people would gather to form a ring where a kuning and an Eastern would dance. The dance consisted of sudden moves that resembled the movement of an angry moose. During their dance, they would strike each other by taking turns and mostly with their heads. It was part of the dance and with every strike, people would cheer and laugh.



BEAR KING'S TERRITORIES



The western tribes were in disarray. In the east, Eastern Horn was established and its people started to shut themselves inside their walls. In the north, most kunings were busy helping seidr stop the Black Winter. No one cared about the poor people of the western tribes, not even themselves. They shunned themselves from civilization; they killed and got killed. The cycle continued, while the Eastern Horn prospered. It only came to an end when two great leaders united the west and gave them purpose.

BEFORE THE BEAR KING

The western tribes suffered because of their own weakness. They compensated for what they lacked in their personality through violence and force. Most of them fought aimlessly until the arrival of a great king. Before then, they were completely lost.

THE DROWNED HEIR

It all started with a western kingdom. At the beginning of the second age, the last ruler of Gjalfmarrheim passed away. To select the new one, six Aegir gothis met near the tidestones,



accompanied by their warbands. The first gothi was washed away by the tides. The second gothi was struck down. The third gothi was dragged beneath the depths, only an Aegir's coin left behind. The fourth gothi was pierced with a spear. The fifth gothi was choked to death. The sixth gothi stood victorious for a moment then sunk under the waves, never to resurface. Six warbands stood in silence. Every soul that witnessed the event knew what would come next. So, they stood in silence.

A bolt of salt water breached the warrior's skin, an arrow hit the caster in the eye, an enormous sword that resembled a jotunn's kitchen knife cut the archer in half; six warbands butchered each other. There was no ruler, which meant there was no longer a Gjalfmarrheim, and that meant there was no one to stop the tribes from avenging grudges. Eventually, the survivors went back home, and the word got out. Decades of subdued hatred released in a moment and all tribes went to war. They raided villages, killed people, looted their food, burned down houses, and they took what they wanted rather than what they needed. Only the strong and ruthless survived while the weak suffered and died.

This bloodshed was unnecessary even in the eyes of the Aesir. It was not the will to make a sacrifice that made them fight, it was greed and it was hatred. It only got worse when werevargs joined the fight.

CONTRIBUTORS OF GORE

Dozens of tribes, villages, warbands fought each other. Some fought to protect themselves, some fought for loot, and some for the thrill of the battle. Among these groups, four of them contributed greatly to this conflict.

Cannibals of Drekkka. Three cannibal tribes resided on Drekkka Mountain. One tribe ate their dead, that were not murdered, to absorb their power. The other tribe ate themselves, part by part, to improve personal awareness. The final tribe ate the people they killed, to taste the essence of sacrifice. Although all of these tribes were cannibals, only the last one became known as the Cannibals of Drekkka, because they were the ones that left the mountain to join the battle. They were not the best warriors but they were wild and unpredictable. They were feared not because of their talents, but because of their belief, which was, no person should be eaten by two. This meant that if ten Cannibals of Drekkka attacked somewhere, at least ten people would be eaten. It was possible to distinguish them because of their filthy looks and stench.

Berserkers of Gnopa. Far in the north, a coastal village named Gnopa was severely affected by the Black Winter. The villagers had lived in tents but the harsh environment made it nearly impossible to survive by primitive means. Even so, they didn't cut trees to make shelters, out of respect for the landspirits. The villagers were strong berserkers, but even for them it was not possible to survive. One day, a small hooded figure came from the north and taught the berserkers stonemasonry and left. Gnopa became the first village that was made from stone by Svillanders, but no one knew. After the fall of Gjalfmarrheim, a group of berserkers talked to the village leader. They wanted to leave this frozen land and claim a better one even if they needed to slaughter its inhabitants. The chief refused; this village was their home. The berserkers

that wanted to leave, attacked the chief. They wanted to take everyone with them; there was strength in numbers. The chief cut four berserkers open with a single blow. The others, who saw this, retreated. Some berserkers stayed with their chief, in their home, while others abandoned the village. The group that abandoned their home and joined the battle became known as the Berserkers of Gnopa. Ironically, the true berserkers never left their home.

Mystics of Djuprvatn. Near the depthless lake of Djuprvatn several tribes lived that shared a common tradition; they taught their children how to swim in the lake at a very young age. The children would dive into the lake and experience the abyss. To be exposed to something like that changed their views and personalities; their attitudes towards reality became mystical. They didn't intervene with the conflict directly; they helped other contributors if they found them interesting and relevant, although why or what is interesting or relevant for a Mystic of Djuprvatn, is not clear to any normal person. Their methods were enigmatic but yielded results. It was a lucky thing to be guided by one of these mystics as it could be life saving.

Impudent Wolves. During their most defenceless moments, warbands got attacked by werevargs. It was not known why they attacked, when they attacked, where they came from, and who they were. Most warriors would stop fighting with their current targets and refocus on werevargs when they attacked. The only thing that folks realised was that these impudent wolves would attack people that carried Tyr's holy symbol with extreme madness and brutality. They didn't loot a single grain or claim an acre of land, yet, they kept slaughtering.

SLON

As time passed, the tribes became more greedy, arrogant, and envious. They started to organize raids to the rich lands of Eastern Horn. It was lucrative at first but became unwise when Eastern Horn responded by founding the East Rangers. They were fast and versatile warriors who hunted down the raiders. A man, named Slon, looked at the western tribes and despised what they had become.

Slon was an orphan raised by a Mountain Jotunn named Hyndla. She found Slon, when he was a baby, resting on a rock. They lived together on the desolate mountains of the South-west. She told him old stories and taught him the sorcery of her kind. She raised Slon until he was no longer a child. Under his mother's guidance, Slon became a powerful sorcerer and the time came for him to meet with his own kind. His mother's last words to Slon before his journey were very concerning to him. "Your kin found many enemies but they forgot us. When the time comes, you will know what to do. There are too many jotunns on these mountains."

Slon traveled to the nearest village, which was one near the Brown Forest, named Bravik. When he met with other humans he realized how petty they were. In Bravik, he offered protection against the raiders but the folks underestimated him. He despised the pathetic squabbling of the tribes and wanted to unite the people. In every village he traveled to, he tried another method of persuading the people to join him. Every time, he failed. He knew what he must do, what his fate was, but he couldn't find the strength to do it until one day.

On that day, which was no different than any other, Slon made up his mind. He traveled to the first village that he ever went to, Bravik. He cast the most powerful spell that he knew. The ground trembled, fissures appeared across the village, and tremors collapsed every building. He journeyed across the west, accompanied by earthquakes, and united several tribes against a common enemy, Mountain Jotunns. He was able to ease the ongoing conflict between tribes. He hoped that the day when he must rally to the mountains and kill the jotunns would never come. But it did. Half of the western tribes were following the powerful sorcerer and they wanted revenge from the jotunns for their destroyed villages. The only person who knew Slon's secret was his husband, and he took it to his grave.

Slon gathered his warriors and prepared for the attack on the jotunns. As they departed the village where they had gathered, their march was intercepted by a large figure covered in fur.

THE BEAR KING

An orphan, just like Slon, he was left in the wilderness to die. While he was still a baby, he managed to crawl near a mother bear that was feeding her cubs and drank milk from the bear's teat. The bear tolerated the human child. One day, while he was still a baby, a creature attacked them and killed the cubs. The mother bear was devastated and left alone with the human baby. She embraced the baby and considered him her own from that day on. Years had passed, the baby became a child.

Together they played king of the mountain and fighting games; they climbed trees and swam in rivers. Mama bear taught her child how to protect himself and how to hunt for food. They traveled a lot until the day his mother got killed. They were traveling across a forest and he was collecting yew berries. When he returned to his mother, he found her dead on the ground with her stomach was cut open, her insides laid on the ground. He smelled three people approaching and quickly got inside his mother's stomach. Hunters tied the mama bear and dragged her to their camp. During the journey, the child chewed one of his mother's ribs and sharpened its tip with his teeth. The camp was located on a large steppe covered in soft grass; when they arrived, they placed the mama bear near a tent and rested near a fire. During their rest, the child jumped out of the mama bear and slaughtered the unsuspecting hunters with his mother's rib.

He cried near his mother for 3 days, covered in the hunters' blood. Finally, a gothi of the Allfather found the child. Using divine magic, gothi unraveled the past of the child, and felt obligated to help him. She approached the mama bear slowly, showing the child she was not a threat, and brought the bear back to life with the blessing of the Allfather. The bear's wounds closed and she opened her eyes; the child hugged her mama. The mama bear smelled the child for a moment, then left for the forest. It was time for her child to build his own life and the mama bear knew that.

HIS FIRST WEAPON

The child traveled with the gothi. She taught him the ways

of Svillanders. The bear child couldn't speak or understand human speech; it was a difficult journey they had embarked on. Yet, she was patient.

The gothi was traveling to search for runes across Svilland. They journeyed across the wilderness and rarely went to villages. Sometimes they encountered people but she got rid of them quickly. Rarely, they were attacked by bizarre creatures, she took care of them too with magic and an axe. But, it would be good for the child to master a weapon, she thought. They went to a village's blacksmith to find a proper weapon for the child. He tried a dagger, it was too small for his size; he tried a sword, but couldn't get comfortable with it. Eventually, he tried an axe but wanted something bigger and decided on a greataxe. The blacksmith made a bronze greataxe for the child.

HIS FIRST WORDS

When the bear child grew a little more, they started to search for runes on Ymir's Lash. The conditions were extreme on the mountain range and the child had to be able to look out for himself. They traveled from the Western Passage to reach the mountains. On the mountain range, there were tall wooden towers, surrounded by wooden settlements; all made from cedar. The amazing view from the top impressed the child very deeply.

They traveled across the mountain range for over a month, mostly feeding on reindeer and moose meat that kuning offered to them. At night, they covered themselves in fur and buried their bodies under the snow to sleep. Every morning their eyelashes were frozen. During their times on Ymir's Lash, Winterbury, and East Warden, they enjoyed their time with the kunings. The child admired seidrs; they were powerful figures with their respectful magic and costumes. It made him happy to see seidrs while they were on the road, with the antlers, feathers, furs, and bones they wore.

Their last stop in the North was East Warden. The village was surrounded by the most magnificent forest the child had ever seen. There were all kinds of pine trees in the vast forest, and the wildest of animals roamed freely. In the village, they met with the leader of the Skinnavara Territories, Lylia. She had bright red hair, claw-like nails, and crossed front teeth. She was beautiful in the eyes of the bear child. He spoke his first words to Lylia, "strong" he said; all emotions that filled his chest and raced his heart were the same, they were "strong" feelings. With a group of kuning, they continued their journey and arrived in a village of Eastern Horn that was called Molgor. They attended a feast in Molgor, the Feast of the Fighting Moose, together with the kuning. From Molgor, they went to Nattafaravik. Then, with a river boat, they traveled to the south with half-jotunn honey traders. In the dockyard, they found a trader and for a small fee they joined the trader's crew.

HIS FIRST BATTLE

The bear child was strong, but was still a child. So, they put him on drums; with his every hit, the crew would pull the oars. Their first stop was the Tower Village, where they put their sacrifices on an altar to ask for protection from Thor. Then, they journeyed to Norhufa, the village that was made from

island oak wood and full of squirrels, and bought barrels of the finest ale in Svilland and sacks of acorn in exchange for dried beef. From Norhufa, they traveled to the small town of Enkleistra and exchanged iron with obsidian. They continued towards the west and traded with several small settlements in a cove. Finally, they ventured towards the North and arrived at their destination, Dufansdalr.

The bear child and the gothi left the traders and set up a camp near Dufansdalr. They lived there for a while. She was old and tired; she needed rest. The boy grew older and became a man. She didn't want to die of old age, so once again, they went on a new journey. It was much shorter than the previous one. They made it to the small town of Mugdonvik, where a group of thieves attacked them. She immediately struck one down but the thieves were many, while the bear man was busy with three of them, the other thieves were able to kill the gothi. His blood boiled, every muscle in his body trembled with sorrow, and his body was filled with an uncontrollable rage. His skin thickened, body expanded, nails grew and became claws; he killed the thieves with his claws and teeth. After the slaughter, everything calmed down, and once again, he became a man. He stood near his mentor in silence, naked and covered in blood. It felt like it was his fate to witness loved ones' deaths, covered in blood, unable to do anything. He carried a boulder twice his size, and carved his mentor's adventures on it. He buried his mentor and put the tombstone on her grave.

"Here lies a mother with no children. Her stories will challenge even the most adventurous in the golden halls of Valhalla."

THE WAY OF THE BERSERKER

He wandered aimlessly for a couple days after his mentor's death. Then he realized that he wanted to see the sea, so he traveled to the west. When he reached the shore, he also found a stone village, Gnopa. A berserker, named Djoldar, found him staring at the sea. Djoldar was impressed by the bear man's endurance; it was not possible for a normal man to stand at the shores of Gnopa totally naked. The berserker approached the bear man and invited him to his village where they feasted together. They also gave the bear man a new iron greataxe. His old axe was fragile and small for his size. The townsfolk were kind towards him and the bear man started to like the place, but still, he was not happy to stay inside stone buildings. They made him a tent near the village.

Several seasons passed and he became more familiar with the berserkers. Eventually, they offered to teach him the berserker's way. He accepted, thinking that it might give him a purpose.

- A berserker must have an ambition. When they have a destination at heart, no force can lead them astray.
- A berserker must pay their respects to the Aesir and act accordingly.
- A berserker must teach their body their friends and foes. When the mind succumbs to frenzy, the body remembers who to strike.
- Feast on the beast that you respect the most. Their ways shall become yours.
- A berserker's fury is a tool for destruction and it's love is

a tool for protection. Use both wisely and share them with none.

The bear man searched his soul to find his ambition. He wanted to join his mentor in Valhalla with greater stories than hers. He already paid his respects to Odin and continued to do so with every breath. To teach his body friend and foe, he adopted other berserkers' methods; he hugged his friends frequently and slept together with loved ones. The beast he respected the most was bears, thus, he started to hunt and eat bear meat and fat. And like every other berserker, he never talked about his feelings. It was not a rule, but most berserkers ate Svilland steinsopp, which was a mushroom that grew almost everywhere on Svilland, and so, the bear man ate it too.

After his training was over, he went to the chief and said that his ambition was to die in glorious battle, leading armies of the west and asked the chief to join him. The same chief, who denied a request from berserkers to leave the village, joined the bear man. It was simply because of the spark in the bear man's eyes.

THE KING IN THE WEST

He started his journey accompanied by a dozen berserkers. Together, they traveled across wilderness and visited villages to find warriors that wanted to join them. They killed all warriors who refused the bear man's offer, but they left the people, who were not warriors, alone. His warband got bigger and bigger, almost enough to be called an army. The only thing between himself and domination of the West, was a man called Slon.

The bear man tracked Slon and found out that he formed an army to march to the Southern Mountains to fight against the jotunns. He knew of Mountain Jotunns; he encountered several of them during his travels. He knew that they were not a threat and wouldn't cause trouble for common folks that minded their own business. He hated lies and deception; they were the ways of the deceiver, not the Allfather.

With his warband, he went to the village called Hvannsavik and confronted the deceiver, Slon. The bear man introduced himself and shared his ambition with Slon. The two armies stood in silence, ready to fight. Slon and the bear man agreed on a traditional axe duel to settle this, and the winner would take the two armies.

Bear King to Slon: *"You are making this harder than it should be. When I hit something hard, it breaks. When I hit something soft, it bleeds. I will break you and make you bleed."*

And, the winner was the bear man, who became known as the Bear King. Slon smiled as he fell; he failed to unite the people of the West, but this man, who struck him down, succeeded. And now, he didn't have to kill the Mountain Jotunns. With a funeral pyre, the people of the West bid their farewells to Slon. The West stood strong and Slon joined others in Valhalla.

THE WESTERN TRADITION

The western tribes were more diverse compared to the eastern tribes. Hence, they hadn't shared a common tradition for a

long time. When the Bear King took control of the West, he introduced new practices to create a common ground for the tribes.

BOILED BULL VOMIT

Ingredients: Cow stomach, Barley, Salt, Pea, Dried herbs, Strong vinegar, Butter, Onion

The name of the dish is only accurate on the boiling part; it is made from cow stomach not bull and it had nothing to do with vomit. The stomach needed for the recipe is the first stomach of a cow which is the biggest out of four stomachs.

Mix equal parts vinegar and water in a bowl. Remove the insides of the stomach. Place the stomach inside the mixture. Let it rest for a night. Put the stomach on a log and scrape the outer membrane with your knife.

Chop onions and place them in a bowl. Add peas, butter, barley, and salt. Mix. Fill the cleaned stomach with the mixture. Tie the opening of the stomach and put it in boiling water. Start boiling after breakfast and it will be ready when shadows change direction. Remove from water and cut open. Season with plenty of dried herbs of your choice.

Enjoy your boiled bull vomit with dried herbs.

COWARD'S EXECUTION

A person who committed a coward's crime, such as betraying their warband, deserting a battle, and killing the defenceless, would be executed in a way that suited them. That person would be tied on a pole, upside down, with their heads placed in a bucket. Then, the executioner would carve the Allfather's rune on the person's chest and let them bleed. Their blood would fill the bucket and they would drown in their own blood. To die covered in enemies blood was a worthy death, covered in their own blood was not.

FEAST OF MARTIAL MIGHT

Inspired by the Feast of the Fighting Moose, the Bear King created this feast for his warriors to challenge each other with non-fatal feats of strength. It was crucial for them to learn their allies' strengths and weaknesses, if they wanted to triumph in battle. It was also to teach his warriors to control their feelings; if any attendee got too serious and tried to hurt someone, others would intervene and break their bones.

This feast was held every night, when there was no battle to fight. People ate and drank without restriction, they wrestled and danced, and made love.

FEAST OF THE ONE-EYED WARRIOR

When a strong warrior, an alle, a gothi decided to sacrifice their right eye to the Allfather, people would travel to the lake Djuprvatn. Mystics of Djuprvatn hosted these events; they set up tents and campsites for their guests. It was mandatory to bring food and drink.

After the campsites were readied, a mystic would tattoo Odin's Knot on the warrior. Then, the warrior would embark on a Great Hunt. If they abandoned the hunt, they became the hunted. If the warrior brought back one of the great hunts, the ritual continued. The Great Hunt could take days, weeks, even months; during this time, the people would feast and wait for the warrior to come back.

The hunted beast's hide would be made into an outfit for the warrior to wear. Then, the warrior would approach the lake and stab their right eye with a hot knife. The warrior would bend over to the lake and watch their own reflection as their eye leaked into the lake.

BATTLE'S OF SACRIFICE

The most devoted warbands, including the Bear King's, conducted this ritual before a battle. The goal was to prepare themselves to sacrifice their enemies to the Allfather. This ritual required the warrior to announce themselves to their enemies; the enemy must be aware of the warrior, otherwise the sacrifice wouldn't be considered worthy. The warrior shouted their prayer, which was as followed:

"I raise my weapon against my enemy, Valkyrie. Decide my fate! Witness me raven! Witness the glory in my enemies' fall! Give them strength! Give my enemies strength! So I can take them to Valhalla! Hail Thor! Hail Odin!"

KUNINGS AND SEIDRS

The native people of Svilland were the kunings. They were nomads that embraced a primal lifestyle. Among them there were people blessed by great spirits, called seidrs, who used spirit magic to protect the land.

At the beginning of the second age, the Black Winter started to grow stronger. To be able to fight back more effectively, seidrs decided to settle around the obelisks on Ymir's Lash. There were small cedar shelters surrounding the stones but it was not enough to host all seidrs that came to the mountain. Kunings built a road, called the Western Passage, to ease the travels of seidrs and supplied them with cedar wood. They built bigger settlements around the stones and built wooden towers that covered the obelisks. The leaders of the Skinnavara Territories, who were accompanied by the red crossbill, organized these constructions.

SETTLEMENTS

Although they were nomads, kunings too had settlements to rest in between their journeys. They didn't have farms near

those villages or domesticated animals. They were hunters and foragers; the villages were only for resting. Yet, there were tiny areas where outsiders cultivated cold-resistant plants; also, same outsiders herded small flocks.

WINTERBURY

The biggest kuning settlement was Winterbury. The village was a patchwork of shelters made from mammoth bone and skin, spruce wood, and stone. The stone buildings were built by short, hooded figures that occasionally came to this town. Only a young kuning woman, Alea, knew their true identity, because she had a lover among them.

Winterybury was very important for kunings because powerful seidrs assembled a council in the village, the High Seidr Council. Every six months, the members of the council gathered in Winterbury and decided their actions against the Black Winter. Alea was one of the members, the youngest High Seidr.

EAST WARDEN

The leaders of the Skinnavara Territories resided in the far East, near Ymir's Lash. The village had shelters made from a variety of pine woods. The shelters were big compared to other kuning villages and there were countless carvings on them. The road to the village was marked with roadstones, piles of rocks stacked together. It was called East Warden or Winter Lookout.

The leaders were also members of the High Seidr Council. Every six months, they traveled across Ymir's Lash to Winterbury, attended the council and traveled back to East Warden.

FRIED REINDEER TESTICLES

Ingredients: Reindeer testicles, Reindeer fat, A bowl-shaped rock, Hemlock's inner bark, Hemlock branch

Place the reindeer fat on the rock and place the rock on a fire. Cook until it releases all of its juice. Remove the solid fat.

Deskin the testicles and place it in the boiling fat along with the hemlock branch. After the testicles turn brown, remove them. Discard the branch.

Cut the inner bark of a hemlock tree in stripes and add them into the boiling oil. Cut the solid oil into small pieces and add them too.

Take the boiling bark and fat to another cup, cut the testicles in desired sizes and put on top. Enjoy your meal.



THE WAR OF HOOVES & CLAWS



In the second age, a war that shook the foundations of kingdoms and reshaped them entirely took place between Eastern Horn and the Bear King. Banners with a bear claw on one side and banners with a rearing stallion on the other.

BEFORE THE WAR

Even before the Bear King, the western tribes engaged in skirmishes with Eastern Horn. All tribes had their own reasons and lacked a common goal. On the other hand, the kingdom's only goal was to protect its people and riches from the attacks.

After the Bear King's appearance, the kingdom of Eastern Horn took more serious precautions. They built two more military bases near the Red River. One on the west side, Riverstorm, and one on the east side, Katzel. When the Bear King united all of the western tribes, the queen of the Eastern Horn, Aestrid, collected all iron coins in her kingdom and replaced it with more useless copper. She made iron coins into weapons for her army. The tension grew between the two factions.

The East Rangers and the Bear King's berserkers occasionally engaged in skirmishes in Bjornland. Eastern Horn built watchtowers on its borders, which the Bear King's warriors demolished overnight. Aestrid tried to engage in diplomacy but the Bear King had no such intention as his ambition was to die in a glorious battle.

THE FIRST MASSACRE

Despite all the efforts of the seidrs, the Black Winter was gaining strength. It was not just the ordinary cold that it brought, but it also froze people's minds and hearts. It sowed distrust. Its effects started to cause disorder on both sides.

Aestrid thought that they should help seidrs, that they might be able to utilize the Vanir artefacts, collected by her ancestors during the expansion of the kingdom, and their magic to help. The Bear King had a different idea. He was extremely discreet about it and hadn't shared it with anyone, even with his most trusted companions. One morning, they found the Bear King's tent empty; he was gone, which made everything worse. The skirmishes started to become bloodier and Aestrid's patience was reaching its limits.

During the first month of the Bear King's absence, rumors about their king's disappearance had started to spread. The western tribes were confused and Eastern Horn was scared. Two months passed. Berserkers started worry about an assassination; they wondered if Eastern Horn had the power to vanquish their foes without leaving any trace, was there a magic that powerful? Aestrid relocated her armies near Belmunt and across the river from Freyja's Tears. One more month passed. The tribes lost hope in their king's return and started to argue with each other, disorder grew. Several tribes disowned the Bear King and a battle between tribes shook the integrity of the West. During the fifth month of his disappearance, the king's most trusted warriors started to

leave their posts. Just like their king, they disappeared too. Even then, most of the West was still loyal to him. It took six months for the Bear King to achieve his goal and when he returned, the tribes had already eliminated the weak among them. He gave all Svilland a solid reason to fight and he had the strongest people following him.

Six months earlier, after he left without a word, he began his travel towards the north-east. He traveled to Deildar and next, to Kolbovaik. From there, he continued to Nattafaravik, using the Pine Pass. After stopping at Molgor, he ventured across the vast and wild forest. It was as beautiful as he remembered. Finally, he arrived in East Warden. In the village he asked for Lylia, hoping that she was still alive, and when he saw her the strong emotions hit him just the same as when he was a boy. He stayed in East Warden for a couple days and they shared their stories with each other. After that, Lylia left the village for an important meeting. The Bear King followed. Lylia journeyed across Ymir's Lash towards the west and he followed her from a distance. He knew that seidrs could be powerful and versatile, so instead of following Lylia he followed her tracks from afar. They arrived at Winterbury. He camped far away from the village; seidrs might commune with nature through spirits but he was born in it, no one could find him in the wild unless he wanted them to. By using a magical scroll that one of his runewalkers crafted, he placed his voice in the winds and released it for the voice to travel within the clouds. His most trusted warriors heard the call and traveled to the north to join their king.

Together, they waited for almost a week and finally, the time had come for them to make their move. The High Seidr Council gathered in the woods, near the village. They marched towards the primitive figures and whispered their prayers. The raven was watching, only it knew what was to come. They surrounded the council and shouted their prayers. They shouted the word "Valkyrie" and they shouted the names of their Gods. They shouted of strength and the halls of Valhalla. Some seidrs stood still, some tried to run. Some fought back, and some cried for help. Lylia looked the Bear King in the eye, she spoke no words but her eyes asked, "Why?" The Bear King raised his axe and answered before he struck her down.

"The most valuable sacrifice is the one that makes you think if it is worth it. Hail Allfather."

With every strike of his axe, he repeated to himself again and again, "It is the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do..." He was so obsessed with sacrificing the seidr to stop the Black Winter, he didn't even consult the idea with Odin gothis or alles. He did what a mad man would do, he butchered his way out of the problem without knowing if it would solve it. The sacrifice didn't work; he was wrong and he was unworthy in the eyes of the Aesir.

Days after the massacre, the hooded lover of Alea returned, only to find the cold bodies of the innocent and partially burned remains of his lover. He buried them all at the center of the destroyed village, near the ashes of the burned down Winter Watch and rebuilt the tower out of stone on their grave as a tombstone. He climbed to the tower and carved his last words upon it just before he jumped to meet with his lover; death wouldn't dare to keep them apart.

"In life, they watched the North to protect the South. Let this tower host their undying gaze upon all Svillanders and condemn their sins."

WHEAT

There were several bags of extremely rare wild seeds and magically created seeds in seidrs possession. The kunings hadn't been cultivating the land, which meant the seeds were not meant for it. Nevertheless, the Bear King's people looted them and in time, they were started to be used throughout Svilland. The two most important ones were apple and wheat. People in the south started to cultivate wheat instead of barley and apple added diversity as all other fruits were berries. There were also maize and grape seeds which were also widely cultivated in some regions.


WANDERERS

The spirits cried in agony. As they heard the screams coming from the forest, kunings in Winterbury rushed outside and witnessed the scene and they were terrorized by it. But, it was not over. Why should they stop now, the Bear King thought; why not sacrifice them all? They tried to run but the Bear King was faster; they tried to fight back but he was stronger. At the end of the day, the pure white snow around Winterbury was tainted with the blood of the fallen. His warriors looted the village and the congregation ground. The next day, they retreated back to their tribes. The Bear King had returned to his camp.

News traveled fast among kunings and the ones in cities started to retreat to forests. They traveled towards the north and East Warden. Hundreds of seidrs abandoned the cedar settlements, where they conducted their rituals to ward off the Black Winter, and went to East Warden. In the village they argued about what must be done. Some seidrs wanted to attack the Bear King's forces head on, some wanted to ally with Eastern Horn, and some wanted to unleash upon Svillanders the Black Winter that they had been holding at bay for so long. One seidr was convinced that this was not what fate had in store for them. She was the oldest among the seidrs in East Warden and she claimed that their revenge would not be taken in their current lifetime. Yet, it didn't stop some kunings, as they made a call to arms to take revenge from all Svillanders who desecrated the lands with their existence. Those kunings departed East Warden and started to travel across Svilland, searching for reincarnations of the high seidrs and taking revenge from Svillanders when they could. They became known as Wanderers.

THE WAR

After his return, the Bear King requested a parley with Aestrid for the first time. They met between Belmunt and Bjornland.




Aestríd was hoping to come to an agreement with the Bear King and end the conflict but it was not the case. Bear King said that Aestríd must thank him for stopping the Black Winter and bow before him. Aestríd was confused, it was seidr who were warding off the cold. No more, the Bear King said, they became worthy sacrifices for the Allfather. That moment, Aestríd realized what must be done. She drew her sword and landed a lethal blow on the Bear King. He would have been dead if his skin hadn't thickened as he transformed into a bear. With a single strike of his palm, he broke her chest and crushed her heart. After killing Aestríd and her guards, they returned to their camp, and the war had begun.

Aestríd's eldest daughter, Ygre, became the new queen of Eastern Horn and marched her armies towards the west. The first battle was fought in Bjornland. Eastern Horn armies were able to push back the Bear King's forces but Ygre had to split the army to protect the southern pass which led to Freyja's Tears. The battle of Bjornland lasted for a week; everyday, western forces retreated and eastern forces pushed forward. Eastern Horn was victorious in the first battle.

THE SIEGE OF RIVER END

After their first triumph against the West, Ygre continued her march towards River End. She built small military outposts during her march to supply her army with



rations. She wanted to establish solid borders and taking River End would enable her to do that in the North-west using the Van River. A small portion of western forces were in River End and they secured the village. The Bear King was retreating to Hvannsavik with the main forces. Ygre surrounded the village and laid siege for a month. During the siege, Deildar wanted to supply food to the villagers of River End but eastern forces didn't let them. Warriors from Deildar got help from Hranstoir's warriors and together they helped western forces that were under siege. After a successful attack from two different fronts, Ygre was forced to retreat to her Kroksberg outpost.

THE SOUTH COAST LANDINGS

An Aegir alle, who was commander of the Bear King, named Algar, led an attack on southern shores, using Norhufa as his base. They took control of the territory between Enkleistra and Drumstone. Several East Ranger troops tried to stop their march but they were all wiped out. Ygre had to divide her army and attention, which forced them to abandon several important border outposts.

Another western commander, called Olga, triumphed in a naval battle near Tower Village and took control of the lighthouse.

Ygre divided her army in four; the first and third army marched to Enkleistra,

the second army to Belmunt, and she led the fourth army to Hvannsavik. She thought that killing the Bear King in Hvannsavik would end the war. The first and third armies encountered no resistance, Algar's troops avoided any battle and marched towards Drumstone. It seemed like they were aiming for the naval bases of the kingdom.

THE BATTLE OF HVANNSAVIK

The fourth army marched to Hvannsavik, led by Ygre. She wanted to kill the king, take her revenge, and end the war. But when she encountered the Bear King's entire army, she immediately understood that she was wrong about the course of the war. She thought that they were crushing the West, yet the Bear King had amassed an army big enough to lay siege on Beruvik. The battle was short and ended in total victory for the West.

THE BATTLE OF RED RIVER DELTA

The queen was dead and Algar's forces were still marching to Drumstone. The commander of the first army stopped chasing Algar and retreated to Beruvik. Algar burned down Drumstone and continued his march. The third army continued their chase and finally caught up to them near the Red River delta.

The battle lasted over a day. Algar and his forces were wiped out and the third army suffered heavy casualties.

THE GREAT MARCH

Ygre's siblings couldn't agree on who would take the throne. The armies were retreating to Beruvik and morale was low. Then, the news of the Bear King's march reached the capital.

- **The Fall of Belmunt.** The Bear King obliterated the military outposts Ygre had left behind and continued towards Belmunt with his entire army. Soldiers in Belmunt were not scared and their commander considered the king's decision to attack the outpost very foolish. Belmunt was built on the foot of Shadowlow Mountains and it was impossible to besiege the outpost.

When the western forces arrived at Belmunt, the eastern soldiers prepared for an attack from below. Instead, the attack came from above. Together with the highlanders of the mountains, the Bear King took Belmunt and proved his military might. Without wasting any time, he directly marched to Beruvik.

- **The Fall of Tower Village.** The last western warriors that remained in Norhufa wanted to contribute to the great march and sailed to Dockyard. An eastern commander, Khalgar, defeated them in a naval battle. Khalgar sailed to Tower Village with the western banners that he acquired in his last battle and took the western forces by surprise. Once again, Tower Village belonged to the East.
- **The Fall of Beruvik.** With all of his might, the Bear King marched his army to Beruvik and laid siege on the city. Outside the gates of the city, they feasted for days. Horns and drums were never silenced. The Bear King demanded the heads of the kingdom's heirs that resided in the city.

Eventually, hungry and scared civilians attacked their own soldiers and opened the gates of the city to surrender. After the fall of Beruvik, the people of Eastern Horn started to take refuge on the east side on the Red River; mostly in Katzel, Katzar, Bram, and Dockyard. They also abandoned Riverstorm.

The Bear King settled near the Red River and sent his commanders to several fronts to take control of everything on the west side of the Red River. The great march was over but the war still continued.

THE RESTLESS HUNT

The Black Winter was still threatening the lands and the war was not going great for the Bear King. So, he thought that he needed more sacrifices. He knew that not all kunings were seidrs but there might be some seidrs among kunings masquerading as normal folks. There was no way telling the difference. The only option he could think of was to hunt down and kill all the kunings. A single seidr sacrificed as a result of a hundred dead kunings was still a win for the Bear King. Thus, he ordered the restless hunt.

THE SECOND MASSACRE

A commander named Breyja took control of Eastern Horn and started to fortify the villages that were on the east side of the river. She regrouped armies and set up a defence line across the river.

The Bear King knew that he needed more sacrifices to win the war. He gave the task to a group of werevargrs. The group traveled to the north and crossed the vast pine forest. After a long journey, they were able to find the East Warden. The plan was to sacrifice the seidrs who resided in the village, but it didn't go as planned. When they arrived, more than 500 seidrs were waiting for them with daggers in their hands. All of those seidrs slit their own throats, denying the Bear King his sacrifice. Wrevargrs could only watch the horrific scene unfold, as the seidrs fell one by one, gurgling blood in their mouths and falling tears on their cheeks.

THE BATTLE OF BRAM

Years had passed. After all the battles, all the strategies, the Bear King was still not able to cross the Red River. It made him angrier with every failed attempt. Eventually, he lost all his patience and gathered his entire army near the Red River. They forced their way to the other side by using boats and magic; with heavy casualties they were able to pass the river and defeat the forces defending it. The army marched for the nearest village, Bram. They captured the village quickly as there were so few people in it. The Bear King marked a stone near the village to celebrate his victory which was to pass the river.

Unfortunately for the Bear King, it was an ambush. Three armies led by Breyja, one from Katzel, other from Katzar, and the other from Chestnut Meadow, ambushed the entire western army in Bram. The battle of Bram was the bloodiest one that had ever been fought. The Bear King fell in the battle.

Svilland was in ruins.

NEW FACES IN SVILLAND - THE DVERGRS

When the arts of blacksmithing and runes are mentioned in Svilland, dvergrs are the first to come to mind. They are known to be clever, enduring, skilled, and extremely fond of the mines under the soil. Although these are true for most of them, they are shorter than the shortest summary of dvergrs. Now, we shall delve into the colorful dvergr culture and societal structure of the dvergers, along with how they affected the Svillanders.

Dvergrs' home realm is called Svartalfheim in the common tongue, Nidavellir in their own language; Dvergmer. When Balder decided to consult Brokkr and Eitri, the legendary dvergr crafters, about a weapon that can bring down the mighty frost-jotunn Odd, they demanded a steady gate from Svartalfheim to Svilland in return. This was to mine an extremely rare material that appears along with the signs of Black Winter. It is none other than black ice.

So, when the legendary spear Oddbane was crafted, Balder also kept his word and created the gate deep under the mighty mountains of Ymir's Lash, the elder mountains that are the natural borders of northern Svilland. Brokkr and Eitri gifted this gate to all dvergrs.



BLACK ICE



Black ice is a special material. It is tough and hard to process. Even touching it barehanded burns with the freezing cold. It appears very rarely and only when the Black Winter comes close. The stone itself is magical and has the ability to reflect spells if crafted by a master's hands. It also has strong connections to the cold and Black Winter. It is used by frost Jotunn cults in sacred rituals, especially by those who follow Odd.

Since the dvergrs are immune to the burning effects of black ice, they are the perfect candidates to mine and forge it.



THE THREE CLANS



Rulers of dvergr clans gathered and discussed who to send through the gate for one week. In the end, it was decided to send Three Clans through the gate to build a solid mining and transportation system. These clans were Goldglance, Runebearer, and Stoneborn.

Black ice is a rare material whose true potential and value

hadn't been discovered yet. So, members of Clan Goldglance were chosen, as they were the masters of appraisal and mining techniques. They were going to work as miners and experts to value the mines in this expedition.

The mines were unmapped and untouched. The black ice veins were new. So, members of Clan Stoneborn were chosen as they were the masters of mine building and safety. They were going to work as mappers and the military force in this expedition.

Many Vanir-originated monsters, guardians, and traps inhabited the depths of Ymir's Lash. So, members of Clan Runebearer were chosen as they were the masters of knowledge and runes. They were going to work as advisors in magic and monster slaying, and experts in unknown threats. They also kept logs of the expedition.



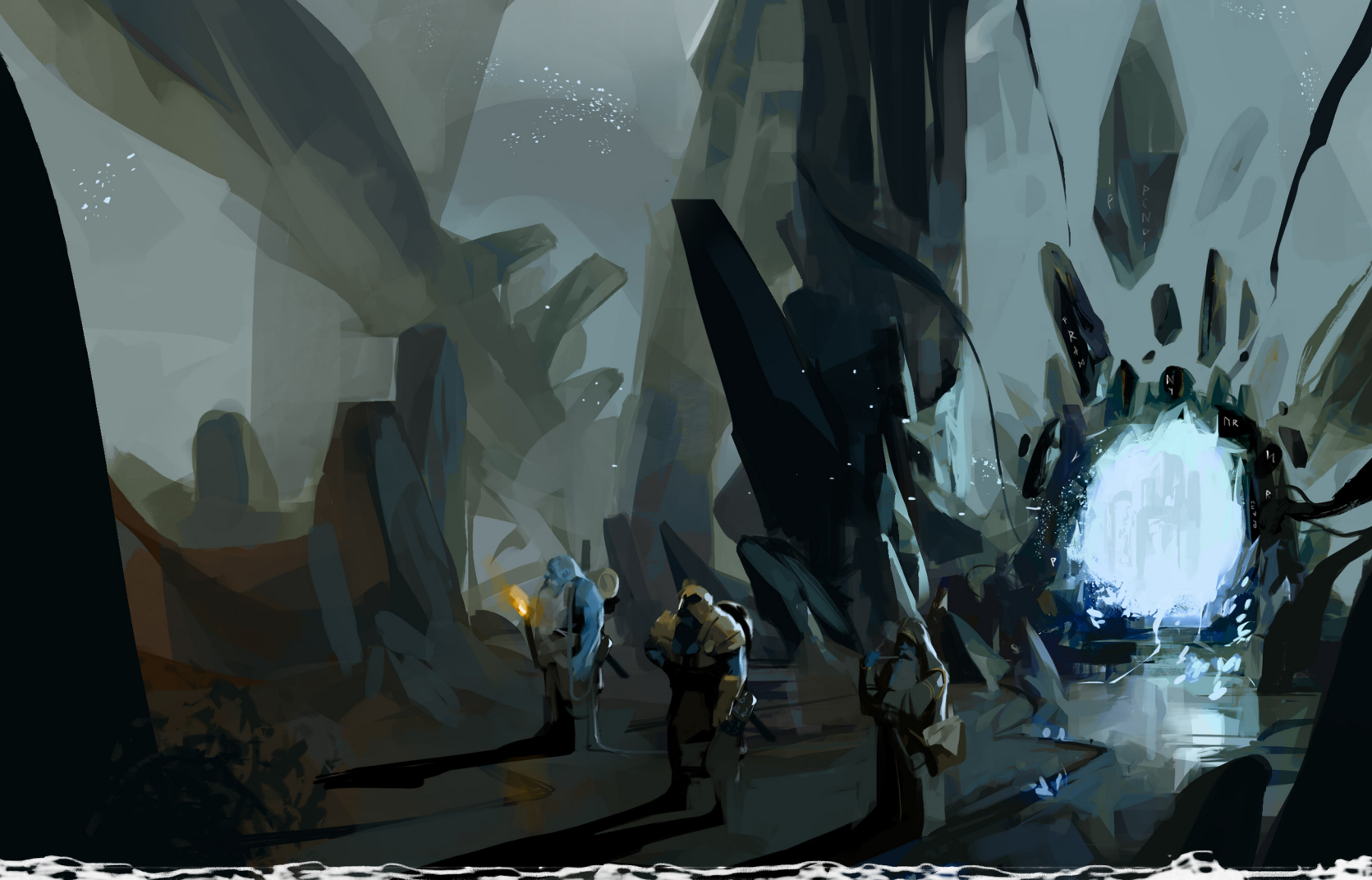
THE ARRIVAL AND THE FIRST BATTLE



When these 3 clans arrived in the depths of Ymir's Lash, they immediately started to work. Firstly, they built a headquarters together. Stoneborns prepared the headquarters' plans and gave directions to Goldglances. Goldglances quickly dug according to the plans. Runebearers buffed Goldglances and strengthened the construction sites with their spells.

THE FIRST BATTLE

While building the headquarters, an under mountain fortress to be precise, the members of these Three Clans waged their first battle against the spirits of the mountains and creations of Vanir. The dvergrs' presence made them angry. Their peaceful lives were disturbed and the idea of curious dvergrs running around with pickaxes and mining shiny things made them even angrier. So, the spirits showed themselves as earth elementals and attacked the fortress. They were slain by the members of Stoneborn. Especially, hammer-warriors of Clan Stoneborn performed quite a show with their rune-enchanted warhammers. However, spirits succeeded at killing 36 dvergrs.



The spirits retreated, only to return with a greater force, and the Three Clans were left with a vengeance.

THE FIRST FUNERAL

To honor their dead, the dvergrs forged a golden warhammer for each fallen dvergr. While forging, the blacksmiths carved the lost one's name within the weapon, believing that their souls would guide the warhammer to strike fast and true.

The funeral of these dvergrs was led by the highest-ranking gothi of Odin within these Three Clans; Mysgyw of Clan Goldglance. Mysgyw prepared stone sarcophagi for the fallen and guided their spirits for Valhalla with prayers. She also asked the fallen if they wanted to keep fighting. 12 fallen, 4 from each clan, answered, "Yes."

"Then," she continued, "We will construct bodies of stones that look like you, and you shall keep living within them."

The spirits replied, "Yes."

So, the dvergrs of the Three Clans constructed stone bodies, golems, for the fallen who still want to keep fighting alongside their brethren. They named these "The Ancestors".

After the funeral, the dvergrs kept working to complete the fortress. The construction was completed quickly thanks to the gate Balder created. Getting steady resources from Svartalfheim (especially soapstone, food and water) solved many logistical problems and expedited the process drastically. The dvergrs could start opening tunnels and mining black ice within one winter. But, first things first.

Before starting to mine black ice, they had to celebrate their victory and bless their new home, "Ymir's Pearl". The celebrations took seven nights and gallons of mead.

THE ANCESTORS

Starting with this funeral, the dvergrs kept asking the same question to the spirits of the fallen they deemed worthy. The Ancestors protected the dvergrs in every age and they continue to do so. Although their numbers are few, their power has always given confidence to the dvergrs.

The ancestors do not wander the world and do not seek adventure. They act when duty calls.

THE SONG OF BATTLE

After the battle, the bards did not want this story to be lost. So they made many songs of the Ancestors, bravery of dvergrs, and how dire the battle was. The following is nothing but a little piece of one of them.

*Of brave dvergrs, many there have been,
but the bravest the realms have ever seen
are The Ancestors, Ymir's Pearl they defend.
And try with all might to keep safe their brethren*

*When first the dvergrs underground, entered,
The Vanir spirits were displeased and angered.*



Thus, they flooded the dvergrs' fortress,
who'd claimed their lands that used to be chartless.

Day turned into night, night turned into day
Finally the spirits were on their way.
But the dvergrs knew not that the Vanir'd planned
to return after having their forces expand.

Upon their return, though the dvergrs were surprised
The spirits struggled to believe their own eyes.
For with hammer and blade, with shield and soot,
The almighty dvergrs made their attack moot.

Though grim was the air, for 36 they had lost,
Their new home was well worth this cost.
Thus they decided to bury their dead,
and with full force, move straight ahead.

The ending is twisted for this victory,;
From it borne warriors legendary,
Among those that died, some of their best,
were not quite ready to be put to rest.

Of clan Goldglance, the gothi Mysgyw
told the spirits "the choice is up to you,
"now that you've died you can be on your way
or, defend your kind as stones, if you stay."

Of the 3 clans, 4 each accepted,
and thus were the Ancestors created.
Of stone they are built, and so sturdy they are
That one hit from them, mountains, could mar.

The ancestors of might, so strong yet so selfless
Come to our aid whenever we're helpless.
When their friends with Odin in Valhalla dine,
They remain in Svilland to protect their kind.

Of brave dvergrs, many there have been,
but the bravest the realms have ever seen
are The Ancestors, in Ymir's Pearl defend.
And try with all might to keep safe their brethren.

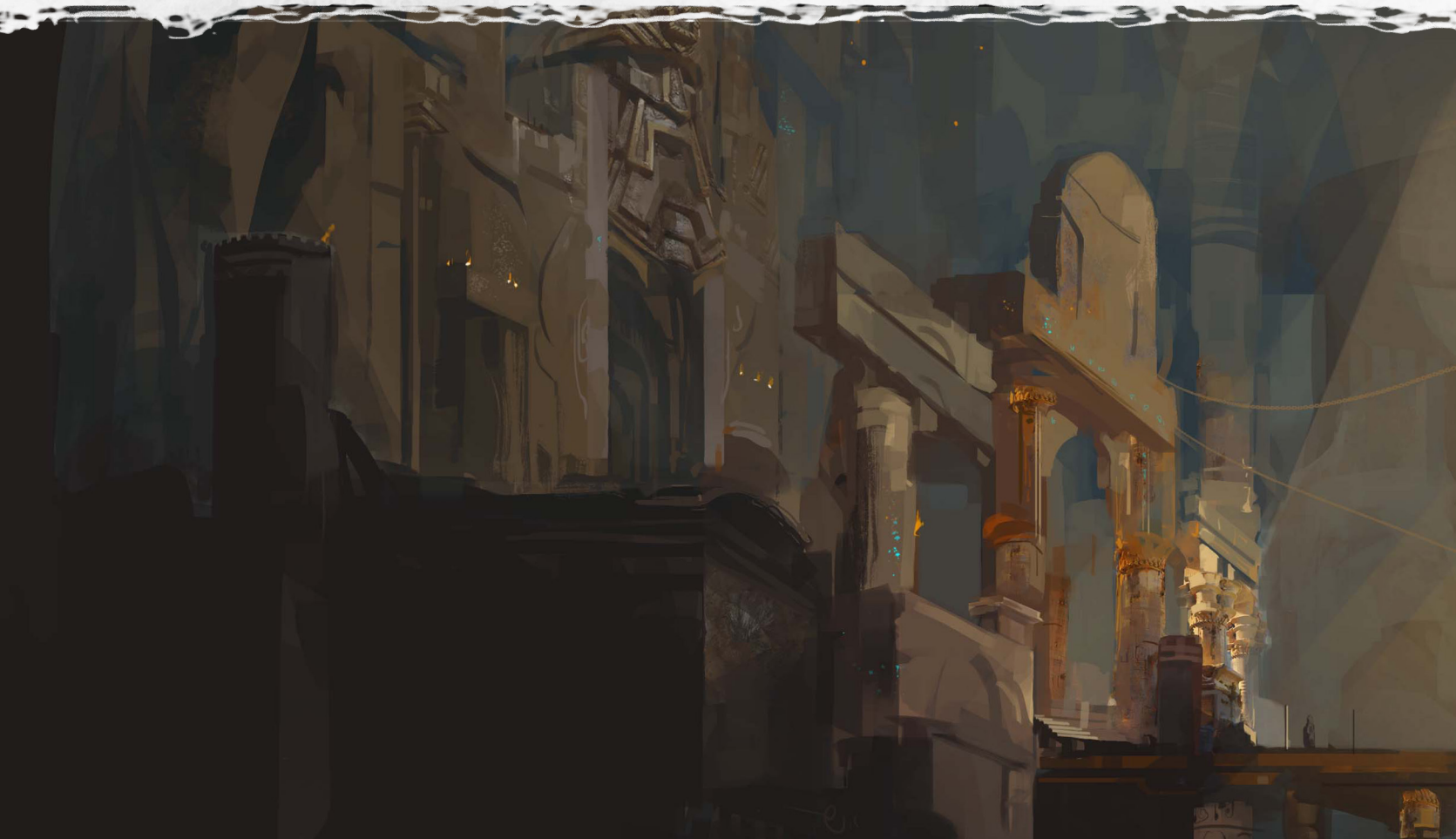
YMIR'S PEARL

This underground fortress is a masterpiece of stone-working. Its halls and facade are always illuminated with yellow-white light, thanks to the runes carved into the walls. Decorative jewels of many different colors reflect this light and fill some corridors and halls with delicate rainbows.

This fortress can house 500 dvergrs at the same time. It has many personal chambers, dining halls, forges, armories, training grounds, temples, and even a graveyard. Yet, it had no throne room at that time, and the chambers of Three Clans were not separated from each other. This was because the dvergrs working here were still under the rule of the dvergr king and queen in Svartalfheim, and no clan was higher than others in the hierarchy.

Runewalkers of Clan Runebearer carved the runes of cold and heat within the fortress so that the dvergrs could live in comfort and the food could be stored in cold rooms at the same time. Runebearers and Stoneborns worked together to arm traps inside and around the fortress to be ready for another possible attack.

Ymir's Pearl served as a home to the Three Clans for many winters until they were drowned in unimaginable perils.



DEEPER INTO THE MOUNTAIN

The dvergrs needed stable food and water sources under Ymir's Lash to keep the fortress alive without receiving constant support from Svartalfheim. To explore quickly, groups of 3 dvergrs were formed, one member from each clan.

However, the exploration groups constantly encountered grove guardians and different kinds of spirits both in the tunnels and during their searches. Although magical weapons were effective against them, the scholars of Clan Runebearer wanted to discover more effective methods.

The runemasters of Runebearer gathered the remains of earth elementals and spirits to study them. After a while, they discovered new runes that are especially effective against spirits and the creatures of the earth, thanks to nights-long studies. In no time, they carved these runes onto the weapons of all Three Clans. These runemasters also taught the runes to all blacksmiths, rune warriors and runewalkers.

With these new runes, the exploration groups easily dispatched any earth elemental, grove guardian, or spirit they encountered.

In the meantime, members of Clan Stoneborn kept building the mines and reached the black ice veins. After that happened; the battles and the lost ones, the dvergrs were starting to wonder if all of these were worth the effort. However, all their doubts vanished when they discovered the veins. The veins were beautiful and gigantic. They were sure that their ancestors were smiling at them.

With this discovery, everybody started work in no time; especially appraisers, blacksmiths, guards, miners, and logkeepers.

THE SECOND BATTLE

While dvergrs were expanding their territories, the spirits of the mountain did not forget the battle and sought revenge. During this time, they spread out and awakened grove guardians, the guardians that the Vanir created to protect the balance of nature. Some spirits went far and deep in search of way more dangerous foes to use against dvergrs; an Isa Worm and the trolldfolk.

ISA WORM

With skin that looks like a hard layer of ice, and tusks as sharp and crystallized as icicles, an Isa Worm is one of the deadliest predators of the cold places. They are extremely tough to kill thanks to their impenetrable skin and extremely powerful because of their gigantic size. Also, they are not picky about prey when they are hungry. And they are always hungry. So, the mountain spirits found one sleeping Isa Worm and awakened it to lure it to the dvergr fortress.

THE HOLLOW EYES - THE TROLDFOK

Some spirits sought out another force that could stand against the dvergrs and discovered a trolldfolk tribe called The Hollow Eyes living under the mountains.

The trolldfolk is a Vanir originated folk who had been populating the lands of Svilland winters since before

Svillanders arrived. They have strong connections with the spirits, nature, and Vanir. They generally live as tribes and each tribe has its own unique culture, which also gives a tribe its name.

The Hollow Eyes was one of these tribes. They lived underground, within the mountains, and had strong ties with spirits of the earth. These ties were so strong that the members of this tribe would their eyes out in a ritual and fill their eye holes with soil.

*The underground is dark
This way, our eyes we mark
In spirits' eyes, we rise again
Our eyes be the birthmark*

In this way, they created strong bonds with the mountain itself and gained the power to sense each movement around them within the earth, along with the ability to detect magical things in their surroundings.

Over many winters, they also learned how to craft items out of bones, stone, and ice. Spirit-enchanted bone spears, icy axes, stone, and bone armor were the height of fashion in the tribe.

Their unique senses also allowed their rangers to develop unique abilities and their shamans were able to move earth, shield themselves with rocks, or summon earth elementals.

All this combined with their regenerative powers, meant The Hollow Eyes were a strong tribe and could be a noteworthy enemy to the dvergrs. So, the spirits of the mountain called and they eagerly answered.

THE GREAT BATTLE

One day, miners of Clan Goldglance found Asgardian Metal within the mines, which was the last metal they expected to find. They knew that it was a sign from the Gods, proof that they had been watching, so they wanted to bring the metal back and show it to the other clans.

Legends say that Asgardian Metal is sent by the Gods to other realms from Asgard. It travels through the realms and lands on another realm with a purpose. This metal can only be shaped when the Gods see a fitting purpose and the weapon or armor is taken back when the quest is completed. Since they are sent by purpose, the item gains abilities according to the quest.

While they were returning from the mines a sudden earthquake struck. Some parts of the tunnels collapsed, but luckily they did not close the path between Ymir's Pearl and these dvergrs. Runemasters of Clan Runebearer decided that the earthquake was not natural. So, dvergrs of all Three Clans quickly gathered and started to prepare for a possible spirit attack, of course after securing the Asgardian Metal.

The dvergrs were expecting spirits, however, it was the members of The Hollow Eyes tribe that poured out from the earth. The dvergrs were surprised when they saw the raging trollds who had no eyes and were armed with bone, ice, and stone. Thanks to their unique senses, the trollds easily evaded the dvergrs' traps around the fortress and attacked with great ferocity.

When the dvergrs saw the trollds pass the traps and reach

the gates of the fortress, they also attacked with all their might. Runic spells of the Runebearers clashed with the spells of the Hollow Eyes shamans in midair while the trolld barbarians leapt over the dvergrs' rune warriors. The battle was so intense that within a few short minutes, one could not move without stepping over the bodies of friends and foes..

Although the dvergrs were prepared for a battle, the trollds were greater in number and they were using the environment in extremely effective ways thanks to their shamans. The fortress towers were strong and could withstand even the most fierce attacks by dvergr weapons. However it was not dvergr weapon the towers needed to contend with. When one of the towers of the fortress was destroyed by a trolld shaman who transformed into a gigantic earth elemental, the best blacksmith of the Three Clans, Murdus Runebearer ran into the fortress and took the Asgardian Metal. He knew that it was a sign and it must be used in this battle.

So, he heated. He heated the forge to melt the metal and to give it a shape of a maul. He hit the metal only three times. With each hit, he heard the voices of the Gods in his head and with each hit, the metal was forged as if shaped by the Gods themselves.

When Murdus left the fortress, the entire battlefield turned and stared straight at the maul. He slowly walked and handed the maul, later to be called Earthbane, to his wife, Nystdelle Stoneborn, the best warrior of Clan Stoneborn. She took the maul and charged into the trollds. She smashed the earth elementals, and the trolld shamans trembled. The dvergrs charged for a final attack under the leadership of Nystdelle. Although the trollds tried to brace for the attack, their lines were broken and the dvergrs' victorious war cries filled the tunnels. Yet, this was not to be the end of it. While the trollds of the Hollow Eyes were running away, the ground trembled again and the isa worm rushed forward. It caused an earthquake, during which Nystdelle couldn't keep her balance and the maul fell down to the hole from which the worm had come.

The worm attacked the dvergrs and devoured the unlucky ones. The dvergrs, tired and shaken, attacked the worm. The hungry worm's skin was impenetrable. So, The Ancestors jumped inside its maw. Their crafted bodies corroded as they cut the worm from the inside. When they spilled its guts, their bodies couldn't bear the damage any longer. The worm and the ancestors fell into the abyss.

At the end of the day, the mountain spirits were defeated again. They gave up and left the dvergrs alone. The Hollow Eyes retreated to their underground villages and started to recover. The dvergrs were left with their dead, and a burning wish for vengeance. The maul completed its mission and was lost deep in the mountain, as it was foretold.

THE GREAT MOURNING

The dvergrs mourned for seven nights. During this time, they collected the bodies of their dead, burnt the trolldfolk bodies, and looted the isa worm by cutting it into many pieces. The families of the dead came through the gate for the funeral.

All Three Clans worked together to create a special graveyard for the heroes of this war, the Hall of Glory, and decorated it with protective runes, ever-burning candles, and

statues of the fallen dvergrs, 201 statues in total. Each dvergr was buried under their statue along with their armor and weapons.

Mysgyw sent the fallen off on an eternal journey and prayed to send them all to the gates of Valhalla.

The Ancestors were gone. Many dvergrs were lost. The fortress was heavily damaged. Yet, nothing could stop the dvergrs. They kept going with a greater will and a sharper mind.

THE GREAT SONG

*'Twas long ago, though some may recall;
The day the dvergrs almost lost it all.
Of all the wars that the dvergrs have seen,
This was perhaps the worst there has been.*

*It all started when Clan Goldglance
Found metal of Asgard, by a rare chance.
Taking with them this rare metal,
The dvergrs went back, quiet and subtle.*

*While on their way, they felt the earth move,
However, unnatural this quake did prove.
Hence, at once the dvergrs there knew,
And understood what they were to do.*

*Deep in the mountains convened the Three Clans,
All heads together, made their battle plans..
Expecting spirits, they set many traps,
But they could not fathom what'd come to pass.*

*Hundreds of trollds rushed through their gates
The dvergrs then knew that the traps were a waste.
Greater in number, and learned in magic,
The trollds' presence, for dvergrs, was tragic.*

*Soon after came death in hundreds and thousands,
Some lost their children and some lost their spouses.
When all good seemed gone, and hope seemed to sleep,
Murdus Runebearer ran into their keep.*

*The metal he took, and shaped into a maul,
For with it, he knew that they would not fall.
For metal of Asgard is a gift of the Gods,
Sent with a purpose, to change the odds.*

*Nystdelle was the greatest warrior of all,
With the maul in her hand, they'd save their hall.
So Murdus the weapon gave to his wife,
Hoping, at last that she'd end their strife.*

*For a brief moment, there seemed to be light
As all the battlefield marveled at the might
Of Nystdelle, and of the maul alike,
Who both seemed to gleam with each pounding strike.*

*Alas, this would not be where the battle ended,
although their home, they'd valiantly defended.
Naught could save them from the isa worm,*

The trollds scattered, but out the earth it squirmed.

*It devoured the dvergrs, as survivors recount
With each passing moment, pressure did mount,
And when all seemed lost, and dark, and hopeless,
Awakened from their slumber all The Ancestors.*

*They attacked the worm with all of their might
Seeing them made dvergrs abandon their fright
As the beast's skin was too thick to cut,
They jumped in its mouth, to slice at its gut.*

*Victory was theirs, the wyrm they had slayed.
But it was now time for what they'd delayed:
In the wyrm's corpse, they too were destroyed,
And being put to rest, they could no longer avoid.*

*Thus unfolded the tale of The Great Battle,
For each that died during, there be a lit candle.
With their statues too, in Hall of Glory they stand,
'N remind us of those who helped keep this land.*

THE GREAT TIMES

After the Great Mourning, the dvergrs kept working harder than ever.

Clan Stoneborn cleared the collapsed tunnels and opened more of them. They also repaired the fortress. After the battle, Stoneborn commanders discovered more of their surroundings and possible enemies, preparing new military tactics.

Clan Goldglance created better and magical picks to mine black ice more effectively. Also, Goldglance blacksmiths started to work on crafting black ice armor and weapons.

Clan Runebearers kept writing the logs of the expedition and the tales of their battles. They also took some of the trolld bodies and worked on their regenerative powers and unique senses, later to be applied to armor, dvergrs as runes. They also fortified the defenses of Ymir's Pearl against spirits.

For many winters, the dvergrs expanded their territory and mines. They encountered interesting mountain creatures and spirits, yet none of them would be able to beat the dvergrs.

The tales of their battles and glory were heard by all of Svartalfheim. They were sending the best gifts to their King and Queen in their realm, and all other clans were jealous of the three clan's success.

But of course, everything must end. One day, later to be called Gatefall, the impossible came to be...

FALL OF THE GATE

When Balder died and fell in Helheim, the gate he created for the dvergrs under Ymir's Lash was also closed and crumbled into pieces.

The dvergrs had no idea about what happened. However, when some Balder allies and gothis went crazy and attacked everything near them, they understood that it had something

to do with Balder. When other gothis prayed for hours and asked questions to the Gods, they saw visions of Balder's death.

Now, apart from that, it was a life-changing event, this was a real problem since the dvergrs had no godlike powers. The gate was the creation of Balder and could only be activated with a godly touch. For days, the masters of Clan Runebearer tried, and ultimately failed, to understand the gate's inner workings and complex runes. During this time, the dvergrs succeeded in talking with their relatives in Svartalfheim by using various spells. Together, they tried to bring together all their knowledge about gates, but it was not enough.

One season passed and the Three Clans accepted that they were stuck there, alone. All of them met in the greatest hall of Ymir's Pearl. It was clear that they were realms away from their homeland. So, they had to decide their own fate. After nights of debates, they agreed that they should rule themselves and build a separate dvergr kingdom here until they could find a way to return to Svartalfheim, and keep fulfilling their quest, mining as much as black ice they could.

KINGDOM OF GOLDHAMMER

Every kingdom has to have a name and this new one was called the Kingdom of Goldhammer, in memory of the dvergrs who had fallen in the first battle.

Dvergr law requires two dvergrs to rule. So, a king and a queen, two kings, or two queens always sit on the ruling seats. The dvergrs chose the heroes of the second battle to rule, Murdus Runebearer and Nystdelle Stoneborn. They were experienced and skilled veterans who had proven that they could show wisdom and strength when necessary.

The dvergrs of the Three Clans came here as equals, and all they intended on keeping it that way. So, the chosen king and queen took a different clan name, Goldhammer. They were gifted with golden warhammers as a sign of power and status, and as a reminder of the fallen.

Thus, a new chapter started in the history of the dvergers.



A TIME OF CHANGE



After being cut off from the rest of the world, the dvergrs had to take some precautions and change their lifestyles a bit. There were no clan members, food, mead, water, or resources coming from the other side of the gate anymore. So, they needed to use their resources and work power well. The rangers of the Three Clans started to train others to hunt edible underground creatures and mountain goats.

Normally, they would have sent criminals back to Svartalfheim to be judged, but now they had to build a hall of justice, in which they erected a statue of Tyr along with an altar dedicated to him. Also, the dvergrs had visited Svartalfheim for ceremonies like atonement, coming of age, and weddings, however now they had to arrange these by themselves.

Since there was no throne room in Ymir's Pearl, the biggest hall was converted into one. In this hall they placed two identical thrones of black ice.

In the beginning, only experienced dvergrs were sent here, but now they also had new members. So, training grounds were built and they prepared an education system.

The biggest problems were certain spell components and mead. Agriculture was nearly impossible in the cold of Ymir's Lash and underground. Only certain plants survived there, mostly mushrooms. So, they decided to visit nearby villages to resupply. They had gold and they could craft nonmagical armor and weapons easily, which they could share with others. However, they already had enough enemies; spirits of the mountain, trolldfolk, grove guardians, and other creatures of mountain depths. So, they wanted to do this without drawing attention to themselves or revealing their identities and aims. They covered themselves in heavy robes and visited the nearby Svillander villages in small numbers. They did not show their faces. So, the very small number of Svillanders that had the chance to meet the dvergrs called them "the little mountain folk".

Winters passed and the dvergrs missed their mother-realm, their families, and old life. Some dvergrs died and new ones were born. However, they never forgot the heroes of their battles, who they were, and why they came here.



HORROR BENEATH THE MOUNTAINS



If we put the hardships of living under Ymir's Lash aside, the dvergrs lived in peace for many winters. They constantly searched for methods to repair the gate but failed every time.

The Three Clans' peaceful existence was endangered by one

more hardship with which to contend.

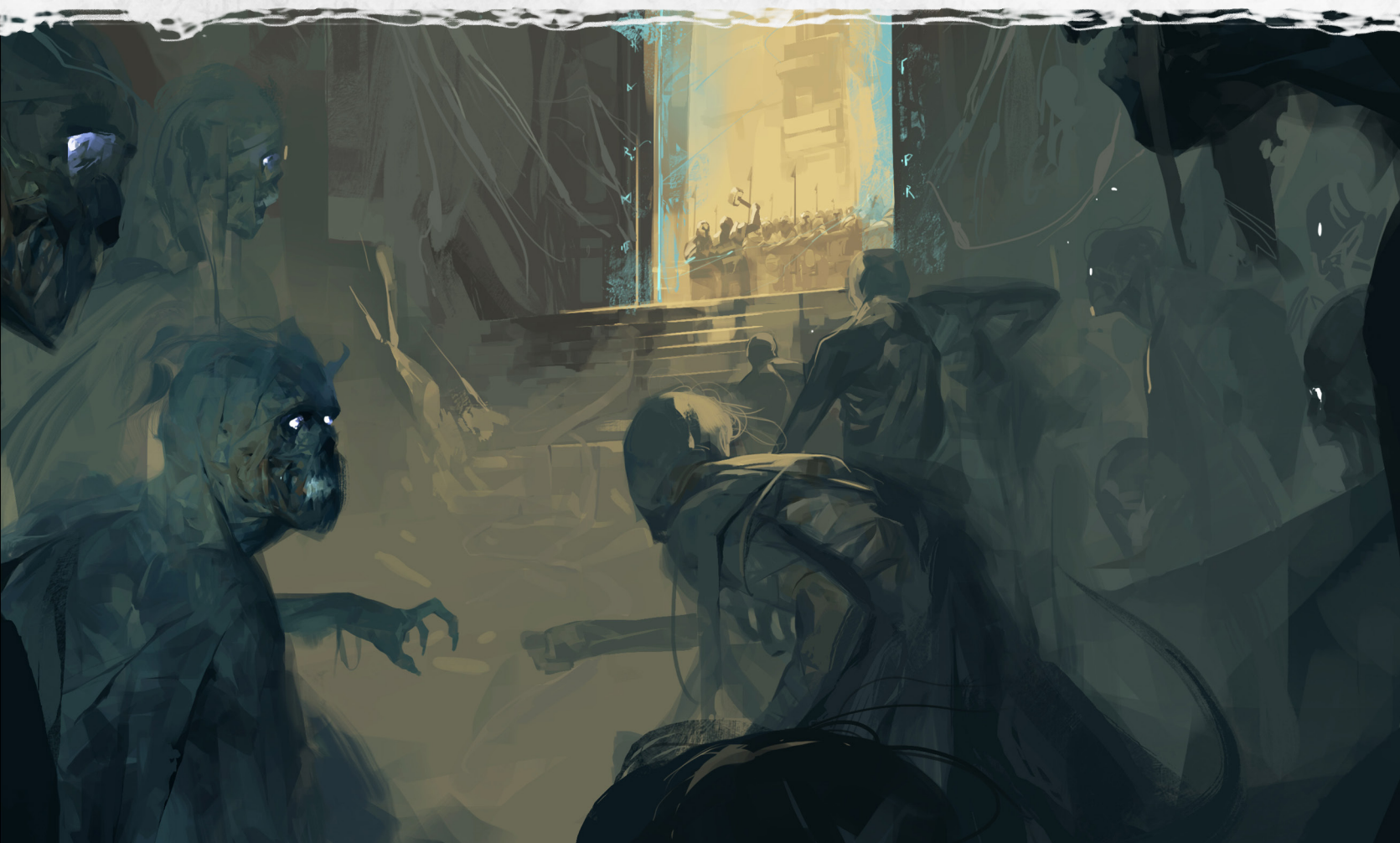
When the Bear King, the most merciless ruler Svilland has ever seen, massacred the High Seidr Council and the kuning in a corrupted attempt to stop the Black Winter, most of the spirits living in Ymir's Lash were enraged since they were friends with the massacred folk. The enraged spirits, later to be called dark spirits by the dvergrs, started to haunt every living creature living in the mountains. Broken and twisted, the dark spirits were full of anger and hatred, which led them to hunt the living and siphon their life force. It took seven winters for them to find Ymir's Pearl, the legendary underground fortress of the dvergrs. Until then, they hunted animals, grove guardians, trolldfolk, and other residents of the mountains.

The dvergrs noticed the lack of hunt. It was like the animals were slowly leaving the mountains. Then, the rangers found rotten plants and desecrated soil. It was clear that a curse had fallen on the mountain. When the news spread among the dvergrs, the gothis prayed for days to learn what happened. They saw visions of butchered people and w haunting the creatures in Ymir's Lash.

There were towers, outposts, on the outer parts of the mountain, which had been built upon the divinations about the war going on in Svilland. The dvergrs also lost the contact with the scouts in these towers.

It was clear that these dark spirits were inching closer each day and the dvergrs had to be prepared.

Dvergrs are a folk of work and study. During their previous battles against the spirits, they had discovered and developed many methods both to protect themselves against spirits of the mountain and to fight them. Thanks to these methods, they were able to stand against the onslaught of the dark



spirits. The defensive runes and prayers of protection held the dark spirits out of the fortress. The dvergrs working on the outside of the fortress battled against the spirits attacking them, and returned to the fortress with few losses. In the heat of battle, some dvergr bodies were left outside the fortress, and the dvergrs watched the bodies be consumed by the darkness and transform into creatures of shadow...

The dvergrs waited for thirty nights before they started to think that the dark spirits might never leave. The dark spirits' numbers had been increasing, "We are probably the only survivors," said Murdus to Nystdelle while watching the shadowy spirits fly around the fortress.

The Three Clans gathered in the throne room to decide what they would do. The gathering took ten nights. In the end, it was decided. They were going to war, again.

There was enough food and water within the fortress to prepare and execute their plan. These spirits were different, that's for sure, but the dvergrs could still fight them.

THE DARK BATTLE

The dark spirits had been waiting for the dvergrs. They were angry, they were hungry, they wanted only to consume the sweet dvergrs' lives.

The dvergrs were experienced. Their armor was blessed, their weapons were decorated with spirit-slaying runes, young dvergrs' hearts beat with the fear and the thrill of battle, and the veterans' hearts were filled with vengeance.

The dvergr criminals were visited by Byllev Goldglance, the highest-ranking gothi of Tyr within the Three Clans and the partner of Mysgyw Goldglance, and she talked to them;

I am talking to all of you in the name of justice, Tyr. You are criminals and being chained here is your punishment. However, Tyr saw small pieces of honor within your souls. You are given a second chance. There is an army of dark spirits waiting at our gates. They are here to kill your brethren, to eat their souls, and to turn them into monsters like themselves. You can either rot here, wait for the result of the battle in cowardice, and end up in Helheim, or you can come with us, take up arms, and fight! If you fight well, I don't know, maybe Tyr forgives you and you will be deemed as worthy by the Allfather. The choice is yours.

She left the doors open. Most of the criminals followed her and joined the fight.

Some of these criminals were sick of the Gods, duties, traditions, all other things. After they got equipment, they ran away, deserting their brethren.

When the gates of the fortress were opened, the dark spirits screamed in excitement. The dvergrs clad in black ice armor and weapons slowly walked through the gate, waiting in the line of protection that separated them and the spirits.

Murdus Goldhammer and Nystdelle Goldhammer took their place at the head of the dvergr forces. The couple was old now and this could be the last chance for a glorious death. They looked at each other, turned to the army behind them, and talked in unison;

*Spirits of The Ancestors! Gods and Goddesses!
The dvergrs are coming to you!*

*Today, the dvergrs strike the mountain itself!
Either we die thi sday, or the mountain falls!*

*Our brethren! Our family! The Three Clans!
Our fate is already in the hands of the Gods!
They already know if we live or die today!
And if you die, you shall feast with them tonight!*

Do not fear! Strike well!

ODIN! VALHALLA!

And they charged. They fought the enemy without blood with all the might they had. The defeat was not an option after all.

Outside the mountain, day turned to night and yet the battle waged on. The dvergrs were tired and they had suffered great losses. Yet, the dark spirits were countless and they did not tire for they did not live.

When the dvergrs were most spent, the dark spirits used their ultimate power. Altogether they created a pool of darkness in which the dvergrs weren't able to see and breath. When darkness fell, agonizing screams of dying dvergrs filled the tunnels. It was a real massacre, a mere reflection of what the Bear King had done...

When all hope was lost, Mysgyw, Murdus, and Nystdelle found each other in the darkness. Upon hearing each other's voices, they all understood what they had to do. Mysgyw closed her eyes, and by seeing the power the Allfather gave her, she drew her sacrificial dagger and slit the throats of Murdus and Nystdelle. The King and Queen willingly sacrificed themselves to save others, and Mysgyw offered their souls to Allfather in return for help.

The Allfather found these sacrifices worthy. Murdus and Nystdelle were accepted to Valhalla. He heard Mysgyw's prayers and a bright light filled the battlefield, dispersing the darkness. When the dvergrs looked at the light, they saw a Valkyrie in shining golden armor, wielding a golden spear. The Valkyrie's light burnt the dark spirits who started to run away screaming. While the dark spirits scattered, the Valkyrie turned to the remaining dvergr, their numbers more than halved in the battle, and said,

*Go deep or go out
Either way will result in another way*

She gathered the worthy souls before they also turned into the horrors and left. So ended the Dark Battle.

THE DESERTERS

First of all, you will find that this chapter is not as detailed as others since it was the will of the goddess of death to erase some information from history.

The criminals who did not join the battle ran as fast as they could and left Ymir's Lash. At the foothills of the Forbidden Peaks, they found a forgotten underground Vanir ruin and went in to use the place as a shelter. When they ventured deep enough, they were shocked by what they found. There were animals, trees heavy with fruit, rivers full of fish. The place itself was magical and untouched.

They lived there for a couple of nights and decided to build a new life. But, there was a problem. Who would be their rulers? The discussion quickly devolved into a fight and they did not hesitate to kill each other. Don Baltham, a dvergr who had been found guilty of theft and murder, killed the other would be leaders and took leadership for himself. The remaining dvergrs did not argue.

The place was full of resources and it was as if it renewed itself. So, they started to live in abundance. They commenced work to build a stone castle, Gurbolhrum, and lived there. Don Baltham refused the rule that dictates there should be two rulers and became a tyrant. He did not let the others build shrines to any Gods. It was Balder's fault that they were trapped here and the other Gods were no different.

Life was good, Don Baltham was a clever dvergr and a talented rune warrior. The others were no match for him in a fight. Some of them tried to dethrone him but after they were sliced in two by Don Baltham, the others did not even try to challenge him. However, this was not enough. Don Baltham knew that he would die one day and be punished by the Gods. So he searched for a way to become immortal.

The solution to his predicament found him in the magical ruins under the castle. He found a ritual of immortality written on the stones in the darkest corners of the ruins. So, he conducted the ritual to make himself and his daughters immortal. Yet, he forgot something. None could defy death.

The grim goddess of the dead saw Don Baltham's pathetic efforts and smiled. It was time for Hel to show her real power. She sent her rotting breath as a sign of her true might. In the last moments of the ritual, just when Don Baltham thought he had become immortal and beat the Gods, just when he was happier and more hopeful than he had ever been, the breath filled Gurbolhrum. Everything in the castle and in the underground ruins decayed in an instant, and creatures were raised from death as draugrs.

The ritual was completed, Don Baltham, his daughters, and even other dvergrs of Gurbolhrum became immortal as mere pawns under Hel's control...

Hel's minions destroyed all the wonders in the ruins and paced the halls of the castle forever. Since that day, only their unearthly growls fill the halls and corridors of Gurbolhrum.

THE FINAL DECISION

The aftermath of the Great Battle was disastrous. The remaining dvergrs gathered the bodies, transformed some of the great halls into tombs, and started to prepare a proper funeral. Although this was not the first funeral the veterans had attended, old or young, all dvergrs felt the same sadness. Mysgyw had prepared one great funeral and she was not happy with having to do it again. All of the fallen were buried with their armor, weapons, and other personal items. Ymir's Pearl was slowly becoming a tomb rather than a home.

The dvergrs were devastated by their loss. At least they witnessed that they were being watched by the Gods; they were not alone. This was only a test they had to endure and the Gods surely had plans for them. So, they had to gather themselves and decide their next move. Before falling into long debates, the traps, and the protective precautions were revisited and re-armed. The dark spirits were gone but it was

good to always be prepared.

The King and the Queen were gone. Firstly, the dvergrs chose new rulers. Because of their deeds, experience, and strong faith, Mysgyw Goldglance, and Byllev Goldglance were chosen by the dvergrs. They were given the golden warhammers of the previous rulers and they too changed their clan names to Goldhammer. So, the Two Queens started to rule the Three Clans.

Then, the dvergrs started to talk about their next move. They were clearly given two paths. Go deeper into Ymir's Lash or leave it. Executing either required resources and preparation. Food, water, work force, spell components, and many other things ran low after the Dark Battle. As a result, they decided to first regain what had been lost. They worked to replenish their strength for ten winters. During this time, they encountered a couple of dark spirits but they never attacked in as great numbers as they did in the Dark Battle.

Then, the dvergrs regrouped. Many things had changed since they first arrived there, yet many others had stayed the same. They debated night after night and still couldn't agree on what to do. So, they split up.

The Two Queens wanted to leave the mountain and follow the new paths the Gods had in store for them. They thought that this land was their realm before now, and there were adventures awaiting the dvergrs in Svilland. Some dvergrs, however, wanted to dig deeper. They believed that they were going to find either a way to rescue Balder from Helheim or a power to restore the gate within the depths of Ymir's Lash. Although there were members of all three clans within both factions, this was the last decision they took together; the Final Decision.

So, members of the Three Clans acted separately for the first time. The dvergrs called the ones who followed the Two Queens "those above", and the others went by "those below", yet there was no resentment between them. All of them knew that the other side would welcome them with open arms upon their return.

Those below were still loyal to the Two Queens, so they did not choose new rulers. They just stayed behind and kept doing what they came here to do. They dug deeper and deeper, battling dark spirits and creatures of the mountain.

It took the Two Queens and their followers one winter of travel to get out of Ymir's Lash. When they left the mountains, the bright light of the sun burnt their eyes. It took them a few nights to get used to. They traveled onward into a Svilland ravaged by the War of Hooves and Claws, the war between the Eastern Horn and the Bear King, a war that had lasted nearly 15 winters and had ended 2 winters ago.

It was Hanlon, later to be called Hanlon the Real King and the ruler of the North Assembly, and his forces who encountered the dvergrs first. Hanlon was 22 years old, yet he acted with wisdom far beyond his years and wanted to talk with the dvergrs. So, the Two Queens and Hanlon took turns to share their stories. Hanlon was absolutely fascinated by the skills (blacksmithing, runic knowledge, masonry, etc.) and knowledge of the dvergrs. He thought that their skills could be life-changing and offered the dvergrs a home and a chance to work together to rebuild Svilland.

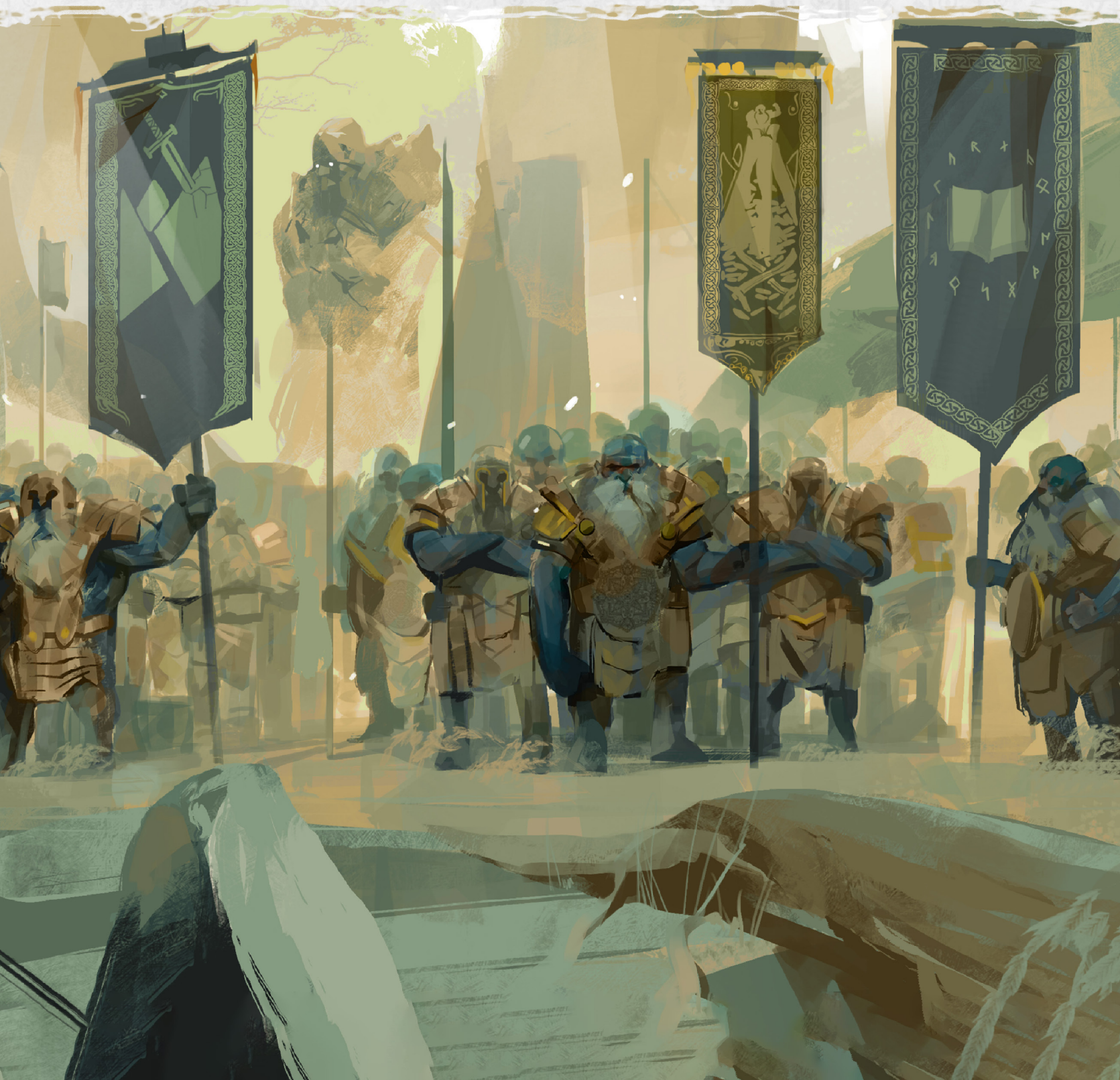
While the remaining ones dug deeper and deeper, the loyalists started to teach their ways, sell their crafts, tell their

stories, and find their own callings.

The Two Queens stayed with Hanlon to help him and support his rise to power since they saw him as worthy and honorable. They also wanted the dvergrs to spread out in Svilland and search for ways to repair the gate or to return to Svartalfheim. So, they built a magnificent stone castle, the most advanced structure that Svilland had seen and would ever see, inside the mountains north of Kolbovaik and named it Berzog'ul, The Home. It has stood as a dvergr base of operations in Svilland ever since. The gates of Berzog'ul are always open wide to any and all dvergrs, above and below. It is their home in Svilland.

The dvergrs under the rulership of the Two Queens built a large and bright town square at the entrance of Berzog'ul and put a huge stone statue of Balder in the middle of it as a sign of their deal with Balder, a sign of their respect to him and a reminder of their story.

Throughout the years, some dvergrs left Berzog'ul. Some even founded new clans and took new names throughout Svilland. Yet, they would never forget and never let others forget who they were, why they came, what their traditions were, and who ruled them...



AWAKENING OF ODD

Oddbane, the spear that binds the frost-jotunn Odd, starts to weaken after the death of Balder. Events concerning the Awakening of Odd take place after Oddbane is shattered.



GATHERING AT THE NORTH



When Oddbane broke, it shattered into thirteen pieces, and the chains that bound Odd vanished, causing the frost-jotunn tyrant to open his eyes anew. It is said that Odd was aware of the passing of time and of his surroundings while he was chained. All that time, Odd had waited and planned for the day he would be free, and now that the time had come, he was filled with a boundless fury. Anyone wandering beyond the mountains of Ymir's Lash heard his battlecry and knew. The frost-jotunns who had scattered after Odd's fall returned to the throne of their leader to celebrate his awakening. Some frost half-jotunns came to see the great tyrant Odd, and some to join his cause.

When the armies of frost-jotunns gathered, Odd quickly selected some of them and tested their skill. Only twelve frost-jotunns survived these tests, and Odd granted them the rank of Hersir, which means military commander. Each Hersir was given a piece of Oddbane, and Odd himself took the last piece; the head of the spear. The tyrant's first command to his Hersirs was to prepare for the battle ahead. And with this command, the preparation started.

They built a castle for Odd, and constructed barracks and longhouses for the army. Meanwhile, frost half-jotunns that saw Odd's strength were convinced that helping the frost-jotunns to claim Svilland was the only choice to survive. Some of them even believed living under the rule of Odd was better than living with the Svillanders. So, they traveled to Svilland to gather every frost half-jotunn to join their cause.



THE EVIL WITHIN, ODD'S OATH



When frost-jotunns arrived at Svilland, they quickly formed an organization named Odd's Oath and started to search other frost half-jotunns to "liberate" them in the name of Odd. Fortunately for them, many frost half-jotunns were living under bad circumstances, and were convinced that living with Odd would be better. Many of them were struggling to stay alive, and the others were hiding in remote locations, hiding from the rest who thought they were abominations.

After a winter had passed, Odd's Oath tripled in number and armed itself. Odd's Oath's ultimate goal was to weaken

the people of Svilland and to prepare Svilland for the arrival of Odd. With the increasing number of their ranks, frost half-jotunns' self-confidence pushed them to act recklessly. They started raiding villages and camps to kill everyone they could get their hands on, and to steal weapons, when many frost half-jotunns had joined the organization to help others like them. Thus, these actions caused a divide in Odd's Oath. Some of them still believed they needed to gather every frost half-jotunn they could find and travel to the land beyond the mountains of Ymir's Lash, while others saw the killings to be necessary and believed they themselves were the warriors of Odd. Meanwhile, the members of Odd's Oath were still recruiting and slaughtering everyone that crossed their paths. News of these actions traveled quickly in Svilland, and soon, a group of berserkers from the lands of Bear King found the hideouts of Odd's Oath.

The Berserkers massacred the ranks of the new army, all in one night. After the killings, the only living members were the newly recruited frost half-jotunns who didn't want to abandon the cause but who had never seen the armies of Odd or Odd himself. They knew nothing of what awaited them.



BREATH OF BLACK WINTER



After his awakening, Odd studied the history of Svilland and learned what took place while he was chained. When he learned about the fall of Balder, Odd realized that if he had the power of Black Winter once again, the Asgardians would be terrified, as there was now no one left who could defy him. So, he gave orders to his Hersirs and went on a journey; the same journey he went on many winters ago. No one knew where Odd went, or when he would be back, but everyone believed he would be back stronger.

After Odd's castle, Borgmar, was built, Odd came back. However, instead of traveling to his throne he climbed the tallest mountain in the north of Ymir's Lash and faced Svilland. Once again, Odd breathed the frost of Black Winter. The lands, already scarred by the previous Black Winter, were devastated. The area to the north of Ymir's Lash was already a harsh place to live in, but Odd's second breath made survival impossible.

The frost of Black Winter was so strong that the cold winds were felt, even from Svilland. Thus, the Black Winter came back to the realm of Svilland, stronger than before. Odd was coming and there was nothing that could be done.



REFORMING ODD'S OATH



Just like everyone, the surviving members of the Odd's Oath felt the cold of Black Winter. The discussions about the cold became quite heated as time passed, because everyone had different ideas about what it was, what it entailed, and how it exactly came to be.

In the end, the truth behind the foundation of the organization was forgotten and its members began to see Odd as a God and Black Winter as a blessing.

When the dvergrs came out of their mines in the mountains, Odd's Oath learned that black ice was the doing of Black Winter and believed this to be a message from Odd; signifying that he wanted to spread Black Winter and to help of his followers in Svilland help him.

Members of Odd's Oath took this message quite seriously and began to collect black ice, which was not easy because mines were still operated by the dvergr and raiding a mine would be a suicide mission. Hence, they used diplomacy.

By blackmailing everyone in their path, they secured resources to help them in their quest; weapons, recruits, and even gold. As such, Odd's Oath was reformed from a simple scouting organization to a hidden cult that schemed to aid the spreading of Black Winter.

Shortly after, a group of members discovered a ritual that gave them the ability to breathe cold, just like Odd, in which they had to use black ice. They called this ritual "Illuminating the Soul with Its Omnipotent Frost-Jotunn Origins", believing that the ritual would also transform them into Frost-Jotunns.

It is said that the members of Odd's Oath also had a manifesto of sorts, which they named "The Words", and wrote on a block of black ice. Only a part of it has survived to this day, and it is as follows:

*Our frozen Father in the North,
trusts the Oath to deliver
captors of our people to his fort,
until we die or they shiver.*

*All will feel the Oath's hand
that blessed us with Black Winter.
For all the people of Svilland,
This is salvation or cinder*

*In the north, in Borgmar
We know, our destiny awaits.
All brothers and sisters, afar;
claim your rights, claim your fates!*

*We took an oath, in the name of Odd,
For Jotunns; the rightful kings and queens,
Thus, we walk this righteous road,
To avenge what was; what should have been.*

*Odd's Oath will be heard,
Once the armies stand on the Lash,
The frost and the blade will replace the word,*

Enemies, buried and forgotten in ash.

*The lying Father of Asgard
at the hands of the Jotunns will suffer,
Even the all-mighty Thor will fail to guard,
And Odin will not their souls-deliver.*

*Our mission in this battle is clear,
We will conquer from within.
Before Odd arrives, Oath will sear th'
lands of Svilland, 'till all lights are dim.*



SILENCE BEFORE THE STORM



When the cold of Odd's breath arrived at Svilland, most people knew this was the beginning of the end; but only a few acted to delay what was coming. Kunings, who lived as nomads until now, received a calling from the seids in the north. The last cold was on its way and every Kuning had to help to stop it. So, most Kunings traveled to Ymir's Lash to help out with whatever they have to seidsr.

*Heed our call, brothers, and sisters!
The day of the last cold is nigh!
Heed our call, gatherers and hunters!
For the banner of Odd now flies high!*

*We ask your aid to help us fight,
Against this evil and its might.
Believe that we can cease this blight,
Believe and follow the spirit's light.*

HERSIRS

After Odd left for his journey to the unknown, his commanders Hersirs, started to make preparations. Every Hersir took care of different things.

DARRI, HERSIR OF BUILDING

The Hersir of Building was responsible for the structures in the city, Borgmar included. From basic housing to storage for food, from statues to longhouses; every structure needed to be verified by Darri. The location of a new building or destruction of a building is also decided by her.

SOMA, HERSIR OF MYSTERIES

The Hersir of Mysteries was the leader of the spellcasters in Odd's army. She was responsible with their training, and in making sure they stayed in shape. But Soma's main focus and desire was to understand the runes of Allfather and the ancient magic of the Vanir to use them against the enemies of Odd.

NARR, HERSIR OF PROTECTION

The Hersir of Protection was the chief of guards that protects their lands to the north of Svilland. There was no hierarchy among the guards. All guards reported to Narr, and he made whatever decision necessary. All of them wore a shoulder pad with a symbol on it, which consisted of blades that form a snowflake.

FULLA, HERSIR OF STRATEGY

The Hersir of Strategy consistently researched the lands they were meant to conquer and the people they were to fight. She devised a new plan for each battle. When the time of war came, Fulla made sure that there would be no surprises. She worked with the Hersir of War, Eya, to teach the warriors of her new strategies.

UGG, HERSIR OF CRAFT

The Hersir of Craft managed all blacksmiths, bowyers, and armorers. Ugg provided everything that the warriors of Odd needed. Armories are under Ugg's control and no one can take a weapon or armor from them without the approval of Ugg. He also works with Hersir of Mysteries to craft magic items.

NOTT, HERSIR OF KNOWLEDGE

The Hersir of Knowledge was the chief of Odd's spies. From time to time, frost-jotunn spies would sneak into the lands of Svilland. Their main goal would either be to cause a disturbance in a mine, or to steal some necessary resources from the trade route. They also gathered intel and guided Odd's Oath without letting anyone (including Odd's Oath) know it was them. Nott believed that Odd's Oath was doing their jobs for them; but as they were still half-jotunns, trusting them fully would compromise their missions.

FYLR, HERSIR OF THE DEAD

The Hersir of the Dead was the grave keeper of the frost-jotunns. He only had a few frost-jotunns that worked under him but Fylr thought that was enough. He and his people prepared graves and bonfires for the dead frost-jotunns, but there was also a rumor that they secretly studied the ways of returning the dead to life, to have them fight side by side with Odd's warriors.

KY, HERSIR OF HUNTING

The Hersir of Hunting and his hunters searched the frosted land to the north of Svilland for food. They were trained experts in survival and stealth. Ky's main plan was to hunt down or ambush their enemies, and by preparing with their daily hunts. For the hunters in Odd's army, a beast and a human are the same thing. They are both prey waiting to be hunted.

GAGR, HERSIR OF TREASURES

The Hersir of Treasure controlled the treasury of the city and

Borgmar. Everything looted was delivered to his place first, and he decided where and how the resource would be of use. Money meant little to frost-jotunns since there was no other city they could trade with. Therefore, it was no surprise that trade was conducted through the exchange of resources. Since Gagr held all the resources and split them as he saw fit, he was in constant collaboration with the rest of the Hersirs.

EYA, HERSIR OF WAR

The Hersir of War trained warriors and prepared them for battles. Every frost-jotunn in the city was Eya's squire. This meant that every frost-jotunn needed to learn how to fight, whether they were blacksmiths or cooks.

BORK, HERSIR OF LIFE

The Hersir of Life is the chief of healers. He and his frost-jotunns keep the city in good shape and prevented the spreading of diseases. Bork also taught his apprentices medicine techniques that they will use in battle. Herbal treatments were normally common among frost-jotunns, but finding herbs was hard in the frozen lands. Even with the herbs, healing would take some time without magic. They thus found the extreme solution of amputating a warrior and replacing the lost limb with a weapon.

HEDD, THE HERSIR OF COOKS

Hersir of Cooks was responsible for the cooks, who cooked in bulk for everyone. But in their spare times, apprentices of Hedd also crafted potions and tried to learn alchemy. Since alchemy was not a common craft among frost-jotunns, they studied the Svillanders, and their ways of employing the craft.



THE CITY AND BORGMAR



Borgmar had just started to be constructed when Odd went on his journey, and was complete one winter after Odd returned. This castle made out of stone and ice contains the broken throne of Odd. The crack on it caused by Oddbane is still there as a reminder for all saying, "We can survive anything; even the Gods' and Goddesses' wrath".

The city built around Borgmar was initially built as a place in which the warriors could spend their downtime, but it quickly became much more. It doesn't have a name per se; but the frost-jotunns simply called it "the city". The city was surrounded by stone walls, and a watchtower. It has a big military district that includes armories, barracks, and training grounds. The second biggest district in the city is the one that holds the tower of the Hersir of Mysteries, and the library of the Hersir of Strategy. Other districts consist of many stone houses, mess halls, blacksmiths, armorers, alchemist shops, and hunters' cabins.

Life within the city has not changed; everyone is always preparing for the upcoming war. The daily lives of frost-jotunns are based on two things: surviving the day, and learning from it. Since there is no class structure or hierarchy

within the frost-jotunns, the difference in opinions doesn't cause unrest, and internal issues are solved quickly (generally with a fight).



WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT



When Odd tried to conquer Svilland for the first time, he was stopped by Balder. Now, Balder had fallen, and Black Winter was stronger than before. All the frost-jotunns were expecting him to order a full-forced attack to the lands of Svilland, but Odd had different plans.

This time, Odd would take his time and prepare. With the building of the city and Borgmar, the frost-jotunns finally had a chance to gather their strength, to craft more powerful weapons, and to devise full-proof plans.

Svilland was changing as well; and new kingdoms and jarldoms were founded. The spies of Odd took advantage of these situations and interfered with humans' internal affairs. Odd was going to attack and conquer this realm eventually, but he was going to do it when Svilland was weak and his army was mighty enough to wipe all Svillanders off the face of the realms with a single attack.

He still waits for the right moment to unleash Ragnarok upon the Asgardians; the moment where the Allfather himself shall feel helpless.

THE ORIGINS OF DEAD TONGUE OF LOKI

Dead Tongue of Loki members are outlaws and outcasts who wish to aid Loki and his children in their deeds. Made up of necromancers, the cult builds an army of the dead to fight alongside Loki and his children as they fight Odin and the warriors from Valhalla in the final battle of Ragnarok.



HEL AND HERLU



Legend tells of the great love of Hel, some say the only one she has ever been capable of loving.

When Hel was first tasked with governing the dead, she was still young. She had long been fond of the dead, for they did not look upon her face with disgust or pity. But the fact was, she was a lonely child. She had had her brothers, of course, but Jormungundr and Fenrir had a much more violent idea of play than she would have liked. She usually just played along, though her heart wasn't in it.

One day, not long after becoming ruler of Helheim, she spotted Herlu as she looked over at the fields of the dead from her castle in the skies of Hel. He was a young man about her age who was not crying, or wailing as most new arrivals usually did, but building himself a home from whatever he could find. As she was watching him, he looked up at her, and though she must have been but a speck from where Herlu was standing, he smiled at her, and bowed his head in respect.

It was not long before she summoned him up to her castle to keep her company. When she asked him how he was so comfortable with the dead, Herlu said that he had lost his entire village at a very young age, and had been fascinated by death and the dead ever since. He had done as much research

about the dead as his life permitted, which had also come to an end during one of his experimental rituals.

Hel was fascinated by Herlu, and he was equally in awe of Hel. The goddess never let him out of her sight, and in the first few days of their companionship, the two talked about it all; life, death, the beginning, and the end. Hel had finally found herself a friend who would stick by her through thick and thin, and who was as close to being her equal as anyone could be.

The two taught each other everything they knew, and Hel was quite impressed at how much Herlu had to add to her knowledge even though most of his life had been spent in the lands of the living. He was able to animate the dead, to raise them, and to communicate with them in a way that was entirely his own. It also seemed the dead found Herlu to be a soothing presence. He still wanted to expand his knowledge and to work on his craft, which Hel allowed and supported by providing him with access to her immense library, a gift from her father, Loki. Herlu and Hel were both perfectly content in Helheim, and it seemed that there would never be cause for them to part.

Fate, as it often does, had other plans. Hearing about the presence of a man who was learned in the ways of the dead, Hel's father Loki travelled to Helheim to visit Hel, and asked to speak with her in private. Hel nodded for Herlu to leave them, and Loki started to speak as soon as Herlu turned the corner: "I've come for a matter of grave importance" he said, his

effortlessly mischievous eyes struggling to seem formidable, "I have decided to build you a passageway, from here to the lands of the living, where people will be able to travel to Helheim even if they are alive." Hel's eyes gleamed with joy at the thought. Her lips on the half of her face that resembled the living trembled as if trying to resist the urge to smile. She replied, "That would be very generous, father".

"You are the goddess of the dead, it was high-time you had followers among the living as well. For without death, there can be no life." Loki continued, and took a sip from the wine Hel had Herlu lay out for them. "I have one condition" Loki said, and for a moment it seemed that the trickster God feared his own daughter. "I must take Herlu with me, and take him back to the lands of the living. You will still have a connection but he will have to stay in the realms above. He is the only one among the dead you currently host who is so learned in the art of death; and there are none among the living who can outwit him," he spat out before looking up at the white irises of his daughter. Hel was looking at his face intently, with the aura of graceful gravitas that was always about her. Loki continued "You know what is coming. You know who goes to Valhalla to dine with Odin when they die. You know that they..." he looked over at the dead that were visible below, from the palace, "... won't be enough when the time comes."

Of course Hel knew. It was the reason Odin had feared all of Loki's children in the first place. But she was still hesitant. Herlu was the one and only object of her interest in all of Helheim. She nonetheless understood what her father meant. They would also need an army when the time came, made of warriors able to take on the likes of those dining in Valhalla. This would mean they would need to claim those warriors before they ever went to Valhalla, and Herlu was the only one she knew who was so well versed in the ways of death. "Very well," she said after a moment of silence, "but I will keep a part of his soul here with me. That is my one condition." Loki shook his head approvingly, and replied "Of course, but we must waste no time. I will wait here while you say your goodbyes."

Hel locked away a piece of Herlu's soul, to a location and in an object that is known only to her. Some say that it is hidden in the locket she always has on her person, decorated with an obsidian stone, although this is mere speculation. What is known is that Herlu went with Loki quietly, without protest. Thus, the first of Hel's many attempts to gain followers in the lands of the living was underway.



THE WAY TO HEL



The way to Hel has been a part of many sagas known in Svilland's history, one of the most famous being the story of Hermod's journey to Helheim to retrieve Balder (Fall of Virtue p. 36). Different bards and scholars have different accounts of what this road consists of, although most of them seem to agree about its general outline. The story below has been adapted from Hertha the Herald's works titled "Helheim: The Dead, The Living, and the In-between".

Herlu and Loki left Helheim as soon as Hel and Herlu said their goodbyes. The goddess saw Loki and Herlu off at the great

wall that encircled Helheim. Garmr, the great Hound of Hel tasked with guarding the gates of Helheim, snarled under his breath before Loki and Herlu turned the corner, but when he saw Hel walking behind them, he quickly skulked back into the darkness like a naughty puppy who knew it had been bad. "Your visit has proven most interesting, father." Hel said as she got ready to turn back, "I suspect this won't be the only one that does so."

Loki smiled, and replied, "No, I'm afraid not. Fare thee well, daughter."

Although neither Herlu nor Hel showed any sign of grief or sorrow, one can imagine Hel's disappointment in letting go of her favorite.

Loki and Herlu first walked upwards, climbing the tree of Yggdrasil. Although they were technically walking vertically, one would not have known it, for it seemed like the trunk of the tree was a road like any other in Svilland. As there was nothing to give them a sense of time, no one knows for how long the two travelled before reaching Gjöll, the vast river filled with clanging weapons.

Herlu looked at the great hole filled with all the different shades of gray, black and red and quietly wondered how many had witnessed the same. They crossed the bridge on which Modgud the jotunn stood with ease as she nodded at Loki to pass upon meeting his gaze.

The rest of the road was not a "road" as such, but a collection of connections to different realms. After walking for a while, Loki asked Herlu not to look and when he turned back around, there were three doorways standing in front of them. Loki looked at Herlu and said "Make sure you remember which one we pass through" before walking through the one in the middle.

With the first step, Herlu found himself in the middle of a great abyss. There were, again, three doorways in front of him, and after floating for a little while, Loki's hand (somehow) pulled Herlu from the doorway on the right.

This time, they were in a land of ice. There were great big structures all around them, and their surroundings glistened with a silver gleam. This time, there were three doorways on the ground, and Loki jumped through the one in the middle.

The Sun's glare made Herlu wince, and he knew he was in Svilland. Looking at the half-baffled Herlu, "I have built a maze through the realms," said Loki, "I will draw you a map so you can share this knowledge with those on our side." Herlu nodded. When he turned back around, Loki was gone. Herlu knew what his task was, and he was proud to have accepted it.

Herlu remains a man of mystery. No one knows what happened to him after he arrived in Svilland. Some say that Herlu is stuck somewhere between life and death, and that he still walks Svilland with his half-rotten complexion. It is said that he failed to return to life completely because a part of his soul remained in Helheim with Hel. All that is known is that he founded Dead Tongue of Loki some time in the Second Age of Svilland, and that he has taught many pupils how to manipulate the bodies of the dead since.

No one knows why the cult is named after Loki even though Herlu's first loyalty is to Hel, though it is said that this was Loki's doing, as he wanted to be credited as the head of their sect.

THIRD AGE



DVERGRS IN THIRD AGE

After long years of death and glory, the dvergrs built a home to which all dvergr can return one day and live within brethren, Berzog'ul.

They built Berzog'ul to stand as an example of marvelous dvergr craftsmanship. It is only a small reflection of their masterpieces in Svartalfheim. Meanwhile, Hanlon asked them to help rebuild since Svilland had experienced a harrowing war and the cities were devastated.

The main goal of the dvergrs was to find a way to return to their home realm. However, they heeded the parting words the Valkyrie bestowed upon them whilst leaving Ymir's Lash. So, there had to be a reason for them to live in Svilland. They had to experience new things that would reshape their fate. This was clearly the Gods' will. So, the Two Queens wanted to help Hanlon and other Svillanders while searching for a way to return home. However, achieving their goal was no easy feat, especially in a world where politics could destroy cities and easily make people kill their brethren.

So, the Two Queens gathered all dvergrs right before the statue of Balder after they built Berzog'ul and made the following speech together:

*Out brethren!
Glorious veterans of many battles!
Masters of gold!*

*Masters of runes!
Masters of stone!*

*Many winters ago, we came here with the blessings of the Gods
through the gift of Brokkr and Eitri.
We battled many times, against the foes we never knew existed.
In our darkest moment, the Allfather heard our prayers and sent us a
Valkyrie, proof that He is watching us.
By the Valkyrie's word we are here, and by the Valkyrie's word we
know that the Gods wanted us to come here!
It is our fate to explore this land. It is our fate to become a part of it.
From now and since then, you are free to wander in Svilland as it is
your duty.
Go and show the value of a dvergr's friendship is! Go and show how
knowledgeable and powerful we are!
Go and prove to the Gods that we are worthy!
But, beware.
Beware that the politics of this land swallows one easily. Do not be
another's puppets. Do not let others use your might and magic!
Do not forget and never let others forget who you are, why you came,
what your traditions are, and who rules you.
And do not forget! Berzog'ul is our home, your home!
Its doors will be forever open to you.*



With these words, a new adventure for dvergrs started in Svilland. Some dvergrs left Berzog'ul. Some others would leave and come back from time to time. The unique expertise and skills of different clans and individuals affected Svilland in many ways. Dvergrs' blacksmithing, stoneworking, and runic skills made life in Svilland what it is.

THE TWO QUEENS

The Two Queens lived and ruled in peace until their last moments. Odd's Oath, an organization that aims to kill Gods and see frost jotunn Odd rule all the realms, attacked Berzog'ul as they realized that the dvergrs were making Svillanders more powerful.

During the attack, Odd's Oath struck with the power of winter, half-frost jotunns, and one frost jotunn commander.

The commander started the attack by crushing the stone roof of Berzog'ul and jumping straight into the city. He culled ten dvergrs with a single blow. He was a ferocious foe, and the Two Queens couldn't let the jotunn butcher their folk. So they faced the commander. At the end of the dire battle, the Two Queens ripped the chest of the jotunn open and smashed his frozen heart. While dying, the jotunn turned into a pillar of black ice and exploded, scattering icicles. The Two Queens couldn't evade the icicles and died there.

Gaddan Goldglance and Bertna Stoneborn were a warrior couple. During the attack, three half-frost jotunns cornered them and shattered their weapons with ice magic. So, they headbutted their enemies and hit them until they were dead. Then, they took the jotunns' weapons and chased them until all were dead.

After the battle, Mysgyw's apprentice, Gremnir, prepared a funeral for their queens. After so many battles and funerals, it was Mysgyw that was sent to Valhalla this time.

After the funeral, the dvergrs gathered to choose their new rulers. It was clear that they would have many enemies in Svilland. So, they thought that the rulers should be military tacticians and tough warriors. Thanks to their prowess in battle, Gaddan and Bertna were chosen as the new leaders. To symbolize that it was a new age for dvergrs and the couple's deeds of battle, they were given a new clan name, Bronzehead.

THE ORIGINS OF RUNE KEEPERS

Thorolf Runebearer, a runewalker whose brother was killed by a rune warrior during the Odd's Oath attack, wanted to avenge his brother and left Berzog'ul. Before leaving, he crafted two battleaxes, one from the bones of his brother and the other from the bones of the half-jotunn who killed him.

He left Berzog'ul and started to walk towards eastern Svilland. He heard some stories about jotunns in the east. He got his books, the axes (the enemy and the brother he named them), and traveling items. There were some dvergr groups who had gone that way in recent years and Thorolf could

already see their effects on these parts. There were stone buildings, bridges, architectural embellishments, advanced jewelry, and many other things. Most importantly, he found a gold mine in Goldenhorn that had clearly been built and run by members of Clan Goldglance and Clan Stoneborn. He decided to stop there to see some familiar faces.

When he went to the town, he saw a dvergr funeral. After a quick investigation, he learned that there was a dark spell in the mines. He had already lost his brother, there was no need to lose more brethren. He decided to enter the mines to dispel the curse, he was a knowledgeable runewalker after all. The dvergrs in the town and some of the guards offered their help.

So they entered the mines. They found desecrated areas, Hellic runes, swarms of undead rats, and many more signs of evil necromancy. Thorolf easily dispelled the runes one by one. As they ventured deeper, they started to encounter miners raised as undead. Thorolf and the other dvergrs battled the undead until the end and found a runewalker who worshipped Hel. Thorolf lost many fellow warriors in the battle and had to slay them again since the cultist was raising them as undead. When they returned to the town with the bodies of the fallen after the battle, Thorolf thought about the recent events.

Thorolf always carried the Gods in his heart, especially Odin and Thor. Runes were Odin's gift to mortals and Thor was the warrior god. According to Thorolf's beliefs, runes shouldn't be used to kill Odin's followers. They are tools that can make life easier. What he had seen was wrong. On the other hand, the guards that helped him were fascinated by Thorolf's power and knowledge and wrote about him in their reports about the incident.

Word spread quickly in Thorath. When Queen Bergljot heard about Thorolf, she wanted to meet him in person.

Thorolf visited Thorath on a stormy day, which was deemed a good omen by the Queen. After their conversation, she offered Thorolf the chance to open a school in which he could train new runewalkers. But he declined the offer. He stated that he preferred a life of action to make right the wrongs he had suffered. This gave the Queen another idea and she made another offer. Thorolf was offered a chance to form an organization by which he could control the use of runes and hunt the enemies of Odin. He gladly accepted this one but only under some conditions:

- He would never become a plaything of the Queen or other rulers. He would serve no mortals, no kingdoms, since he served only the Gods, he served Odin.
- The organization would operate independently of the kingdom's politics, but they could give advice on arcane matters. If it served the Gods' will, they could give advice to other kingdoms.
- If one day an opportunity to avenge his brother presented itself, he would leave his duties in the organization and chase it.

The Queen gladly accepted these terms, since it was respectable and glorious enough to host such an organization.

So, the Rune Keepers were formed and they built a headquarters in Thorath. Thorolf gathered the rune warriors and the runewalkers he saw worthy and started to hunt the ones who use runes irresponsibly or wrong.

Thanks to their twin axes, Thorolf was called Boneaxe by the other members of the organization.



ANOTHER GATE, ANOTHER HOPE



Tumni the Wise was a member of Clan Runebearer, who left Berzog'ul to wander in Svilland. She was called wise since she was a very old and experienced dvergr. She always talked with a serene voice. Animals found peace, and berserkers found tranquillity near her. Although she was neither a runewalker nor a gothi, she knew a lot about runes and religion. She was not trained in fighting but she could swing a warhammer well enough to protect herself. And somehow she received visions of future events.

One day when she was in Berzog'ul, she dreamt of another gate as the one Balder had given them. But it was not underground, it was just in plain sight. So she started to search for it and found it in Vostordon.

What she found were two pillars that resembled an inactive gate. She named this landmark the Gate of Gods and started to wait there for the day it would be opened. For years, many dvergrs came there, found Tumni, and started to wait with her, creating a dvergr village of tents.

THE THREE KINGDOMS

Svilland was ravaged by war and left broken. Settlements were full of orphans and people without rulers. At the beginning of the third age, three kingdoms emerged in this war-torn land; one in the East, one in the West, and one in the center. These kingdoms had more sophisticated and distinct cultures than their predecessors, yet they also had a lot in common.



KINGDOM OF NIONAEM



After the fall of the Bear King, most of his followers started to abandon their posts. They returned to their homes and families, or at least to whatever was left from it. Some of them built new villages and hamlets or settled in different towns as they had no homes to go back to. Few among such people, there were some who were still loyal to the ways of the Bear King. A strong warrior named Klakkr, who had control over fire, was one of them.

Klakkr returned to Hvannsavik accompanied by three warriors and a healer. He built a longhouse and placed a throne inside. The throne was draped in bearskin and engraved with runes that praised the Bear King. He appointed himself king and ruled from Hvannsavik, yet he never stayed in the longhouse he built nor did he sit on the throne. Like the Bear King, he stayed in tents. He knew that claiming to be king meant nothing, that he must conquer the hearts of the people. Fortunately for him, he was one of the commanders that took his warband to the first massacre. He was also one of the few who looted bags of seeds from Winterbury. With a group of warriors, healers, and farmers, Klakkr journeyed across the Southern region of the West; the North region was not suitable for these seeds to grow. He offered wheat seeds to farmers across the land and his farmers, who journeyed with him, taught these people how to cultivate wheat. In exchange, he asked them to share a small portion of their wheat harvest with him. He made the same offer to all the villages in the Southern region. In time, almost all villages accepted his offer. With the wheat he taxed, he fed the people that were in need. He helped his people and in return, asked for their trust.

The one thing that could bring the people in the West together, other than food, was religion. Most Svillanders were religious but in the West, people took it to the extreme. It didn't matter for who you were or what you wanted, as long as you believed in and revered the Aesir. On the western shores, Aegir gothis' words were law but further inland, their influence was weak. Klakkr chose to invite Tyr gothis to earn the trust of the people. He built houses in inland villages and gifted them to Tyr gothis and alles, expecting them to uphold justice in those settlements. When this attempt was heard, Tyr's Judges sent their best judges to supervise Klakkr and investigate for possible malice. After all, he was one of the most trusted commanders of the Bear King. Yet, they couldn't

find anything unjust about his efforts to help the western people. After their investigations were finished, Klakkr gave the judges a reason to stay; he was distributing resources all across the West and offered Tyr's Judges the role of overseeing this work. That way, they could make sure that the distributions were made evenly.

Klakkr divided the West into four and appointed a warlord to each; Tyr's Judges arranged judges to accompany each warlord and act as consultants to them. The land to the north, around the Van River, was Snjarfold. The land to the west, along the shore, was Sea's Breath. To the south, there was a peninsula that Klakkr named Sea Horn and in the middle, there was the East Range. All was good except with Snjarfold. After a month, two heads came back from the north. The decapitated remains belonged to the warlord and the judge that had been sent to Snjarfold. The man responsible for the beheadings was Tothrum Warhammer, the dvergr ruler of the area. He made it clear that he had no intention of serving under any ruler, but Klakkr was ambitious. Tothrum was invited to Hvannsavik and he accepted. Klakkr put together a feast and welcomed Tothrum. Together they offered sacrifices to the Aesir and then Klakkr challenged Tothrum to a duel. Everything had happened so suddenly that no one had time to understand the severity of the situation. This duel could lead the people to war with dvergrs. The duel was intense, both parties were severely injured. Klakkr won the duel but surprisingly, he chose not to kill Tothrum. He had never actually wanted to kill Tothrum. Klakkr just wanted to establish dominance over him. He split the land of Snjarfold in two, east and west. The eastside was named Bjargfold and the westside was named Odleaf. Then, he made Tothrum the ruler of Bjargfold. Klakkr had to compromise on one thing; Tothrum didn't want any judges by his side. A judge's duty was to oversee the resource distribution to the region; if Bjargfold would have no judge then Klakkr wouldn't send resources to it. Tothrum agreed to give up a share in the resources in return for the right to rule unencumbered by a judge.

Keeping Tothrum Warhammer as his ally would prove to be the wisest thing Klakkr had ever done. Because of this arrangement, many dvergrs came down from the north towards the south and settled in hamlets and villages. They wanted to build stone buildings, walls, and cities with the westerners but Klakkr didn't let them. Though wise, he was still loyal to the ways of the Bear King. His son, on the other hand, respected the ways of the Bear King but refused old-fashioned methods. Ingmar, the heir to the throne, argued that building walls and castles were not against the laws of

nature. He said that it was like mastering a hunt but instead of the hunt, it was a way to master the landscape.

INGMAR THE OPPRESSOR

Ingmar had two sisters, one younger and one older. All three of them were trained by their father and were great warriors. But, the siblings didn't have contact with others while they were growing up and had terrible social skills. When they got older, this became a major problem as they found the affection they couldn't get from others between themselves. This affection evolved into something sick and corrupt. Eventually, they started to sleep with each other and became lovers. When Klakkr and his consultant found out about this, Klakkr had to kill the consultant to keep it a secret. He beat all three of his children half to death. Then, he sent his eldest to Odleaf, his youngest to Sea Horn, and he himself moved to Sea's Breath, leaving Ingmar in Hvannsavik which was a part of East Range during that time.

After that incident, Klakkr fell weak due to an illness. One morning, at high tide, he walked towards the sea and let the waves devour him. "A person can't choose how they born, but they must choose how they die", that he believed. After his father's death, Ingmar succeeded to the throne. Unlike his father, Ingmar did actually sit on the throne of Hvannsavik and the moment he did, the paranoia set in. Ideas of conspiracies consumed him. He saw enemies at every turn, at the borders, in the kingdom, in the city, in his court... He decided that these foes must never find out about his shameful

past. His first order as king was the assassination of his sisters.

Ingmar gave dvergr masons permission to construct stone walls and buildings. He even tasked them to build a wall around his longhouse in Hvannsavik. Also, dvergrs introduced soapstone which started to be used in making ovens. This sudden change came about when Alsvartr was established and posed a threat to Ingmar. Ingmar did everything in his power to facilitate the construction of secure cities, villages, and Kroksberg Castle. The castle was built as retaliation to Alsvartr constructing the Western Citadel. At the same time, the Wooden Castle was built to protect the border against any possible attack from Kolbovaik, the new capital of the Northern Assembly. Boundless Stronghold was built to protect the coastline against any possible attacks from the naval forces of Gudrick. Soon after, other castles started to be built as the tension between Nionaem and Alsvartr increased.

ALESON THE ARISEN

Ingmar was equal parts tyrant and visionary. He forced his people to improve and to adapt to the new age. But, his tyranny was not only for the good of his people and the sake of advancement. He also used his power and influence for his own amusement and needs. His appetite for fine food and married woman was widely known. At one time, spies from Green Lights of the East tried to exploit Ingmar's lust yet ended up dead. He had his vices but he was no fool. The last woman he pursued was Liv, the wife of Aleson the boatbuilder.

After a secret meeting with Hanlon the Real King, Ingmar



started preparations for a naval assault on Enkleistra. He tasked three boatbuilders to build his navy, one of which was Aleson. He built two warships with the help of twenty strong workers. Ingmar visited Aleson frequently in a small town called Nyrstadir to check the progress and the quality of his warships. During his visits, he also secretly seduced Aleson's wife, Liv. She was a delicate woman with a body that could lead any man or woman astray. Aleson found out about their clandestine meetings when he rushed back home to tell his wife that the ships were finished, only to find them naked under the covers. Enraged by his discovery, Aleson attacked Ingmar with his drawknife but during the struggle, his wife took the blow instead. Then, Ingmar's guards apprehended Aleson. Ingmar was well educated in history and was a traditionalist; he wanted to end this hostility the ancient way, with a tidestone duel. The guards took Aleson to the tidestones and Ingmar followed. The rules were simple: all must drown except the winner and no magic was allowed. Aleson was given a spear and Ingmar chose a bow and arrows; no rule specified which weapons could be used. It ended the moment it started; Aleson took an arrow to his chest and fell beneath the waves. Ingmar grabbed Aleson and pushed him, holding him under the water. The last thing Aleson saw as he struggled until his last breath was the distorted figure of Ingmar, looking down at him. Waves dragged his body offshore and the currents made sure that he met the bottom of the depths. Ran, the Mother of Waves, refused this sacrifice.

Wrathful waves approached from the horizon, growing bigger and bigger. Their arrival mauled the shores of Nyrstadir, tore down the ships and dragged Aleson's house out into the ocean's abyss. Rain and thunderstorms followed the wake of the sea. Every sane person ran away in fear but Ingmar stood with shit and piss leaking out from his pants. A spear, enchanted with swirling waters of cold saltwater, ripped off Ingmar's right leg and Aleson walked towards the shore from the sea. He looked at the broken man lying beneath his feet, crying, begging. He took a step and crushed Ingmar's skull on the sands of the shore. Thus, began the rule of Aleson. His throne, in the new capital Nyrstadir, laid empty except on a full moon, when the tides were at their highest.

MESSIAH DEVOTED

In every settlement in Nionaem, it didn't matter how big or small, there were altars or temples dedicated to Aegir; even in the ones that were ruled by Tyr followers. Aegir was the most worshipped Aesir in the region, as most people earned their living from the sea.

When Aleson had risen from the dead and been blessed by the seas, the followers of Aegir claimed he was the messiah of Aegir. In the eyes of Aegir followers, he became the most important man that had ever lived. They obeyed Aleson's every word and helped him rule Nionaem. Followers were sent to each coastal settlement to deliver the words of the messiah. The judge of Sea's Breath was relieved of their duties and a follower was appointed in their place. Followers of Aegir became the second organization that has control over Nionaem, together with Tyr's Judges.

VESTRI CULTURE

The people whose ancestors lived on the coasts of Nionaem are called Vestri. Most Vestris spend their time on or near the sea, are strong Aegir followers and, likewise, respect all Aesir. Their culture dates back to the Kingdom of Gjalfmarrheim and was affected by the ways of the Bear King in the second age. The two oldest traditions, the tidestones and wadmál, have their roots in Vestri culture. On the coasts of Nionaem, people still check the marks on the tidestones to tell the time and wadmál production is still a valuable and respected profession.

BOAT CARVING

It is customary among Vestri boatbuilders to carve s-shaped stylised beast heads to place in the bow of the ships or boats they have built. These wooden figures are also used as decoration and some Vestris place them on roofs or entrances. They also carve stylised interwoven animal shapes in tight patterns on the hulls of ships and boats.

SLEEP

Most Vestris are sailors or at least have decent experience in sailing. They know that most vessels tend to be crowded, making sleeping harder. Thus, they learned how to sleep sitting up with their backs against each other or a solid surface.

PLANKED SALMON

Ingredients: Cleaned salmon, Onion, Salt, Flour, Milk, Mead residue, Mustard seeds, Water, Malt vinegar

Using wooden nails, fix the cleaned salmon to the plank, scales down. Chop green onions and spread on the meaty side, season the fish with salt. Place the plank near a bonfire at an angle. Don't forget to change the position of the plank for your fish to cook evenly.

While your fish is roasting, prepare the stone bread. Mix five scoops of flour and two scoops of milk. Keep adding milk until your dough becomes workable. Add salt and the residue from bubbling mead. Knead the dough and roll into pieces. Let the dough rest until your fish is ready. Then, place a soapstone at the center of a fire, let it heat. Put the dough pieces on the stone and flip when cooked on one side.

Finally, if you want a sharp aroma, prepare the mustard. Get the mustard seeds that were rested in water overnight and put them in a mortar. Grind the seeds while adding a little water. Add malt vinegar and keep grinding until it becomes a paste.

Spread your mustard sauce on your freshly baked stone bread and place your salmon on it. Enjoy your planked salmon.

KINGDOM OF ALSVARTR

During the end times of the Eastern Horn, a warlord named Hazur ruled over Kolbovaik. He was very young and ambitious. He was not the best warrior but his skills as a leader were excellent. Also, he was a killer. During his rule, he killed many people and framed others for these murders. In the eyes of the people this made him a hero. He condemned more than a dozen souls to die for a crime that they didn't commit and people praised him for it.

During the war between Eastern Horn and the Bear King, Kolbovaik was besieged six times after the Bear King's forces settled near the Red River. With the help of his brother Hanlon, Hazur was able to defend the town for over four years. The town fell when Bear King's soldiers found the secret tunnels that people were using to smuggle resources into Kolbovaik. Hanlon escaped the town but Hazur was captured. The commander who took the town caged Hazur to send a message to the people. A couple of years later, the news of the Bear King's demise reached Kolbovaik and at the same time Hanlon came back with the help of the Asvaldssons clan. The invading forces had no intention of fighting an unnecessary battle after the death of their king, so they retreated from the town. Hanlon freed his brother but he was in very bad shape. It took several months for Hazur to recuperate from his two years of enslavement.

Hazur and Hanlon traveled to neighboring villages and hamlets to search for people in need and people who wanted to help. During their travels Hazur fell in love with Selvi from Bergljodottir clan and married with her. They had a child named Gudrick. His intention was to settle down and raise his child but fate had other plans. There was news of a new kingdom, Green Lights of the East. This meant that the East would probably try to take control of the villages to the west. And, once again, the people in the middle would suffer. Hazur couldn't let that happen, he had little good in his heart but he was a father and had responsibilities to his child. Together with Hanlon and allied clans, he arranged a meeting with the King of Green Lights of the East, Denil. In the meeting, Hazur gave Denil an ultimatum, saying that they would fight back against any attempt to conquer the west side of the Red River. He knew that he didn't have the power to stop a kingdom, and he had no intention of actually fighting. However, he had stood strong against a king before, and he knew that his fame would precede him. And so it did. Clan leaders, warlords and village chiefs came to Hazur to pay their respects and offer aid against the Green Lights of the East.

For many years, the clans stood strong together. Eventually, a time came for them to unite and become a kingdom. Preparations were made in Enkleistra, Hazur's new home. He didn't want to stay at Kolbovaik because it reminded him of his years in captivity. Hanlon traveled to Enkleistra from Kolbovaik to attend the coronation ceremony and the celebrations. He wanted to be at his brother's side when he became king of the united clans. Before the coronation, Hazur told Hanlon everything about his past killings, hoping that his young brother would forgive him. But Hanlon didn't. He drew his sword and cut his head clean off. He didn't falter, he didn't

flinch; he couldn't let any person who commits such atrocities live. He burned the house of the king and took the throne for himself. Hanlon became the king of Alsvatr.

GUDRICK MOONBEARER

Only the son of Hazur, Gudrick, witnessed the betrayal of Hanlon but kept it to himself. He left Enkleistra and traveled to the Grey Town, in search of justice. There, he asked Tyr's Judges to send someone to investigate the murder of his father, which they did. Gudrick waited for over a month with no money to spend, no place to stay; he even begged for food. After a month, they told him that the judge dropped the murder investigation to travel to Odleaf because of an emergency. Gudrick requested another judge to be sent but they refused as there were no judges available. He started his journey back home, tired and defeated.

On the road, between Drumstone and Vostordon, he encountered an adventuring group. They gave him food and clothes. He asked for their help to bring justice to Alsvatr but they were not interested. Gudrick found out that they were followers of Loki. They told him that this justice that everyone talks about was a false one and that one can only find true justice through one's own will. They also told him to travel to Selvagr and find the oldest man that lived there. Gudrick did as they told him and went to find the old man. Upon his arrival, he started asking about the oldest man in the village. Gudrick eventually found the old man chewing on the intestines of a deer. They sat near a fire and the old man explained. He too had been wronged by Tyr's Judges and had taken his revenge on them. Through a ritual, some people blessed him with a gift of the predator, the blessing of Fenrir. The old man said that he could take Gudrick to a pack and that they could bless him too and transform him into an apex predator. Gudrick accepted the old man's offer.

After the transformation, Gudrick continued his travels alone and renamed himself Moonbearer. He visited almost all the villages of Alsvatr and butchered innocents in his werevargr form. After the attacks, he would venture back to these villages and save them from the unknown evil creatures. Obviously, the moment he arrived, the attacks would end immediately. He terrorized folks and then came back and pretended to save. In a year, his heroism had started to be heard of all across Alsvatr and even in villages of other kingdoms. As he voyaged between the villages, he encountered the most wicked criminals and invited them to join him. Eventually, Gudrick had amassed a considerable number of warriors and criminals, not to mention the support of many villages in Alsvatr. During that time, Hanlon was busy keeping the kingdom in one piece and defending it against the West and East.

FESTIVAL OF LOYALTY

Festival of Loyalty is an event where people offer part of their valuables to the king to show their loyalty. It was Hanlon's second year as a king, and his second festival. Enkleistra was crowded with people from all across Alsvatr. Gudrick and his people stood amongst the crowd, waiting for the right time. One by one, families started to offer their gifts to the king.



After over a hundred families had gone before him, Gudrick confronted his uncle with an ornate gold box as a gift. He presented the gift to his uncle, the king. Gudrick stood before his uncle and opened the box to reveal the dismembered head of Selvi, Gudrick's mother. A month before the festival of loyalty, Gudrick had learnt that his mother and uncle were together. The morning of the festival, he killed his own mother for her betrayal of his father. After the box had been opened and its gory content revealed, a fight broke out between the followers of Gudrick and those truly loyal to Hanlon. Gudrick and his people butchered many nobles that day. In the fray, the uncle and nephew engaged in a magnificent sword fight. In the end, Hanlon was able to survive and retreat with a group of followers. Gudrick took the throne and Hanlon fled to Kolbovaik with four clans that were still loyal to him. And so, a massive force that could have conquered Svilland split in two and fought itself.

MITHAL CULTURE

When the Bear King settled near the Red River in the second age, thousands of people he brought together were scattered across the region that is currently known as Alsvartr. The children of these people would come to be known as Mithals. They are the most confused folks in Svilland, so confused that they can't even stay united among themselves.

NORTH MITHAL JEWELERS

There was an old agreement between the half-jotunns of

Nattafaravik and people of Kolbovaik which became a tradition over many years, the pine honey trade. Beekeeper half-jotunns would travel using Pine Pass to Kolbovaik to sell their products. From this exchange, a new method, still used by Mithal jewelers in the North, was born.

The method is to create a positive mold from beeswax and dip it in molten metal which gradually vaporizes the mold. This method gives jewelers fine control over their designs. The jewelry made by northren Mithals are used widely among Green Lights of the East nobility and are very expensive.

SOUTH MITHALS' WAR FEAST

This feast was introduced by Gudrick as he wanted his people to experience what it is like to feast on their enemies. After battles, Mithals of the south feed their enemies to pigs and feast on the pigs the day after. Other than that, they eat and drink normally, same as a regular feast. The first recorded instance of a warrior drinking mead from the skull of a fallen enemy occurred at one of these feasts.

TRADITIONAL CAPERCAILLIE

Ingredients: Capercaillie, Juniper berries, Salt, Lard, Onion, Water, Barley bread, Milk, Butter, Watercress



Pluck and clean the bird, tie its legs. Lightly crush juniper berries and stuff the bird with the crushed berries. Season the bird all over with salt, including the cavity. Heat lard in a metal pot and fry all sides of the bird in it until golden brown.

Remove the bird from the pot. Place sliced onions inside the pot and place the bird on the onions. It is important that the bird doesn't touch the pot. Add a little water, just enough to touch the bird. Put a lid on the pot and place the pot in an oven. Prepare the sauce while the bird is cooking.

Chop onions into large chunks and put them in a pot. Add enough milk to cover the onions. Boil. After boiling it for a while, remove the onions. Mince barley bread and add to the milk. Add butter. Mix thoroughly. Finally, add chopped watercress. Mix again and the sauce is ready.

Enjoy your traditionally prepared capercaillie.

assembly. They said that the six clans in the east were trying to form a pact to form a new governing body over the former lands of Eastern Horn and every noble easterner was invited to the assembly. Breyja and Villieldra attended the assembly which took place in a well-kept town called Kroksholt. There were six delegates for six clans, all arguing over a crown that didn't even exist. One of those delegates was a very young and charming man, named Denil. Even though he was young, his ideas were interesting and daring. The meeting was adjourned for a year because of disagreements between delegates. Breyja introduced herself and her wife to Denil and asked to learn more of his ideas. Denil and the couple got close and debated politics for days. Eventually, Denil moved to Greenwell where they continued their intellectual discussions. He was a Thor gothi, famous in his clan. His father chose him to join the debates as he had the sharpest mind in the family. Denil, Breyja, and Villieldra came up with a plan and executed it together.

Their plan was to challenge the swamp, venture deep into it, and return with a Vanir artifact, proving Denil's strength. Or atleast, the plan was to make people believe that they did. Breyja already had several Vanir artifacts of her own, leftover from Eastern Horn. All they had to do was to venture into the swamp, stay there for several days, and return with the artifact that Breyja would bring with her. Villieldra and Denil traveled to the neighboring village, Throrath, and from there to Eastern Look and finally to Thora Outpost. On their way, they announced their intention of challenging the swamp. People advised them not to, but it didn't stop them. Meanwhile, Breyja traveled to Kroksholt, continued north, and reached the lake at the skirts of a mountain. With an amulet which blesses the wearer with the ability to breath water, she dived into the lake and took the artifact that she hid years ago. The artifact's power was to open a small gate between two bodies of water or snow. She used it to travel from the lake to the swamp and met with her wife and Denil. Together they camped in the swamp, under the kerling cypress trees, for three days. On their fourth day, they started to hear a murmur coming from the mists. The sound got louder and more threatening. It was warning them and telling them to leave, though it spoke no recognizable words. Breyja used the artifact to open a portal between the waters of the swamp and the lake she had come from before. The gate didn't open but the artifact was pulled beneath the waters and a whirlpool was formed. Denil struggled to pull Villieldra and Breyja out of the water but finally he too got caught and pulled down. A hand reached in and grabbed Denil, pulling him back on the surface. He spewed water and tried to catch his breath. Moments later, he realised that all the trees around him were gone, sank, and there was no one around. He raised his haze to the sky and witnessed the mythical green lights of the east up close. Breyja and Villieldra were gone, dead. He traveled back to Thora Outpost, accompanied by the whispers of the mist which turned into a chant, almost like a warchant. When he got out of the swamp he found himself near the Blackash Outpost. Blackash was extremely far away from Thora Outpost and there was no way one could make the journey in five days.. The news of Denil traveling such a distance in such a short time from inside the swamp got out and people wanted to meet with him. He became a legend and took the throne,

GREEN LIGHTS OF THE EAST

Breyja, the commander who defeated the legendary Bear King, was an idealist who fought every battle to the bitter end. Her unwavering ideals kept her going and when she stopped to look back, she realized that there were none left who followed her. Even her kingdom forgot Breyja and without her, Eastern Horn fell apart. Luckily for eastern people, that was not enough for her to abandon her ideals. She returned from her crusade in the far west and settled in Greenwell.

Greenwell was a small, peaceful place with not much going on. People were mostly farmers and minded their own business. Breyja was the last queen of a kingdom, thus she had access to enormous riches; golds, magical items, and such valuables that she hid all across the East. Using these resources she hired help from locals and built the first vineyard of Svilland, using the seeds she had looted from Bear King's soldiers who in turn had stolen them from the seidsr. Near her vineyard, she built a longhouse where she slept and brewed her wines. Comfort and happiness was robbing her of her will to fight. Two years later, she married a woman named Villieldra. She was a traveler and she earned her living as a pyremaster. She traveled across the east, preparing flammable mixtures for signal towers and funeral pyres, also carrying a fire with her for villagers whose fires had been quenched. She was journeying across the Mudland, checking signal towers in eastern outposts, when someone brought her a pitcher of red wine as a gift and told that it was from a village called Greenwell. After tasting the wine she decided to visit Greenwell and when she did, she and Breyja fell in love and married.

In her third year in Greenwell, a group of red cloaked warriors visited the village and brought the news of an



uniting the clans into a single kingdom, Green Lights of the East.

BERGLJOT DENILDOTTIR

It was the monarch's duty to marry six people, one from each founding clans, and to have six heirs, one for each clan. Denil had four children in 11 years, and died when his eldest child was 16 years old. His name was Sturjorn. He was with his father when his father, Denil, collapsed without any warning or a sign of illness. He ruled for 6 days and on the seventh day, he told his brother Orrin what had happened just before his father's demise. After he explained everything to his brother, he too collapsed and died, just like his father. Orrin realised the curse of the story was passed to his brother by his father, and now to him by his brother. He ruled for over 10 years and during his rule, he ordered the construction of Thorath near Greenwell, to honor the story of Denil, Villieldra, and Breyja. But, the weight of the story was too heavy, he wanted to share it, which he did. He shared it with his daughter and died. The cycle continued. In time, the rule of having a child from each clan lost its meaning; yet, the throne was always succeeded by someone from Denil's bloodline, the ones who carried the story with them. And finally, the story passed down to Bergljot Denildottir.

She was a strong and remorseless ruler. She was neither evil nor good, but she was necessary for the survival of the East and she acted like it. Like most other rulers of the kingdom, she too took the throne at a very young age. Yet, unlike her predecessors, she made huge changes to improve her kingdom. The first thing she did was to reform the training given to soldiers in her army. She also changed their cloaks from red to green. She consulted with the most experienced combatants and worked hard to increase the military might of her kingdom. She is the founder of Thunderguard brigade. Most importantly, she is a Thor follower just like all her ancestors.

One thing has been bothering the queen since she took the throne. She has been hearing whispers of a long lost memory, a memory of a swamp and whispers of a woman that she can't understand at all.

"Aerrolld! Issvold! Edr austrvegr ro uppreistir!"

AUSTRI CULTURE

Hundreds of years of pride, elitism and arrogance has shaped their culture. They are the people of the East. They formed the strongest and richest kingdoms, they defeated the Bear King, and they built the greatest cities. Of course they used resources from Vanir settlements to get rich, got help from other Svillanders to fight against the king, and learnt masonry from dvergrs; yet, they are the noblest if you ask them.

RED GOLD

Some of the magical seeds looted from the slaughtered council took the form of a tree that yielded fruits. They were the seeds of an apple. Over years, Austri planted hundreds of these trees and harvested apples to make apple paste, cider, and cider

vinegar.

Both sweet and sour apples graced the gardens of the East. The taste of the fruit was foreign to Svillanders and it attracted many travelers. Apples were extremely expensive at first and it was not possible to use them in recipes because of their price. Nowadays, they were more common and some cooks started to add them to their recipes.

BUREAUCRACY

Austris love to complicate things to make them seem more important than they actually are. If the subject is not relevant to the Aesir, especially Thor, most Austris put their trust in multilayered processes designed to rule the kingdom, its settlements and organizations. It makes them trust their great kingdom, yet, it slows things down considerably.

This whole system of abstruse processes fails and gets ignored by everyone when the subject is war and the protection of the people. In battle, the kingdom's forces are swift and merciless.

TRADITIONAL CAPERCAILLIE

Ingredients: Cow tongues, Cow bones, Cow feet, Saltwater, Cabbage, Cider vinegar, Salt, Green onion, Chestnuts, Wild garlic

Put cow tongues, bones, and feet in saltwater and let rest for a day. Remove and rinse. Put tongues in one pot, feet and bones in another. Fill both pots with enough water to cover ingredients. Boil tongues for half a day. Boil feet and bones a day and remove the bubbles on top during the process.

Remove the tongues and peel the membrane off. Mince the tongue with your hands. Strain the tongue broth through a cheesecloth. Remove the feet and bones. Scrape the bone marrow. Strain the stock through a cheesecloth. Boil both the stock and broth until a log burns down. Add salt.

In a bowl, mix chopped cabbages, sliced green onions, and finely diced wild garlic. Make a little cut on the side of your chestnuts, boil them for an hour. Peel and crush chestnuts. Add crushed chestnuts to your greens, add cider vinegar. Season your greens, then put the minced tongues and bone marrows on top.

Mix the broth and stock, add cider vinegar. Enjoy your soup with your tongue salad.



THE ORIGINS OF FROST ARROWS

Frost Arrow is a criminal organization established in Alsvartr in the Third Age. They are known for sheltering all kinds of criminals and well-trained assassins.



A NEW HOME



At the beginning of the Third Age, while new kingdoms and jarldoms were forming, many people tried to take advantage of this lack of authority. People raided traders on the roads, pillaged unprotected lands, robbed desperate folks, and even declared themselves as the owner of leaderless villages. When the authority figures appeared again these people were declared criminals and search parties started to hunt down every single one of them. As winters passed, criminals scattered across the lands of Svilland hoping to find a place they could hide. A group of thieves escaped to the Sea Shield region of Alsvartr in search of the same thing, a home. Luckily they found a village named Bruskagar filled with people like them. All these criminals were here to lay low and get their lives together at the time the group of thieves arrived. It was nice that Bruskagar was out of the way, but this also meant they were on their own when it came to surviving. After some time, food became scarce and the people needed gold to get supplies from other villages. So, the group of thieves that arrived in Bruskagar started to work again. They all traveled to different settlements and accepted every job they found. And find jobs they did. A recent war a few winters past had left some unhappy with their standing. Assassins were in high demand. Some hired one because they wanted their title back. Some wanted to make the new mayor “disappear” and some just wanted to hire an assassin for good old fashioned revenge. In short, they were frequently contracted to kill and they were good at it. This newly formed band of criminals brought a lot of supplies to Bruskagar in a short time. With these new resources, they built a hidden underground hall for those who need to hide from justice.



AN ARROW TO THE HEART



The jobs were going great, Bruskagar was growing and every evil-doer in the village started to feel at home. But, as their numbers grew, so did the need for more weapons and armor. They needed to complete more jobs, and fast, to sustain their society. Trying to approach a target took too much time, so an old hunter in their ranks started to train people in archery while a runewalker had the idea of carving a rune on the arrows. The people of Bruskagar were wielding bows and

arrows carved with runes of frost in no time.

Svillanders were already aware that these people were good at killing, but now, with new equipment and training, they were also fast and invisible. Once they agreed to do the job, all it took was an arrow to the heart and it was done. On a job to kill a wealthy young Mithal named Jerrik, an assassin born and trained in Bruskagar botched things. He was supposed to silently break into the house of this wealthy man and put an arrow through his chest. The thing was, this wealthy man had hired a warrior to protect him. The warrior spotted Jerrik and a chase ensued, first in the house and later in the nearby village. While Jerrik was running, the warrior kept shouting that he was an assassin. Many people, including guards and adventuring parties in the village, tried to stop Jerrik. It is said that Jerrik killed more than twenty people single-handedly before returning to the house and finishing the job. Svillanders found the dead bodies after that night, killed by an arrow and frozen. After this event, people named these assassins Frost Arrows. Jerrik proudly returned to Bruskagar and instead of claiming his prize, he gave all the gold to the organization so they could build a new base of operations.



RISE OF FROST ARROWS



After Jerrik’s gesture of giving the prize to the organization, many assassins did the same thing and it quickly became a rule. With the increased income, assassins built a proper hideout with beds, an armory, and a mess hall. Criminals all across Svilland wanted to be a part of this newly founded guild. The Guild of the Frost Arrows accepted their reputation and chose Jerrik as the first proper guild leader. Under the command of Jerrik, Frost Arrows scattered to every town and accepted every job they could find. But, returning to Bruskagar after every mission was becoming a difficult task. It was hard to carry all the resources they had collected and since they had made a name for themselves, the number of people looking to destroy them had increased. As a solution, Jerrik bought land from many towns, villages, and cities in Alsvartr. Frost Arrows built longhouses, orphanages, and sometimes just houses as a front for their operations. Under each of these structures, a small hideout is available to not only any member of the Frost Arrows who should need one, but also to any criminal seeking refuge, for a price of course.

After many hideouts were built and the headquarters established, Jerrik started to give focus on the training of new

recruits. The rules were simple: Every new recruit must be better than the last and every single one of them must be loyal to the guild.



BECOMING A FROST ARROW



To become a Frost Arrow, or just an Arrow as the guild members call each other, one must first find one of their hideouts and just wait for a member to come to find you. Once another Arrow finds you in the hideout, they decide whether you can handle a job or just want to infiltrate the guild. If they think you can do jobs for the guild, they put you on some contracts and expect them to be completed without issue. When you have completed the given jobs, the member of the guild gives you the signature armor and bow of the Frost Arrows. Then congratulations, you become a Frost Arrow. Many people think that's it, just a couple of jobs and it is done. But the truth is, once you wield the bow and take the title of Frost Arrow, another Frost Arrow starts to follow you. Once you have completed enough contracts and earn enough coins, they attempt to kill you and claim your prize. If you survive the assassination, they invite you to Bruskagar and begin your training as a proper Frost Arrow assassin. Because of how they choose new recruits, anyone who seeks Frost Arrows usually finds the recruits that have not yet been initiated. So, those recruits they do find can tell them nothing because the recruits themselves know nothing.

*In the cold of Svilland
And in the night of Alsvatr
You can become an arrow that takes a life
or you can become a body that lies on the snow, lifeless.
The only difference is,*

are you strong enough to release the strings?



LIFE AS AN ASSASSIN



The life of an Arrow as an assassin begins as soon as the training in the Bruskagar starts. The new recruits stay at the headquarters and spend their days learning how to shoot an arrow, how to run away or hide in different terrains, and how to break into a building or pick a pocket. After they have successfully finished their training, they can accept a job from the Wall of the Dead. The Wall of the Dead can be found in every hideout and at the headquarters. There are names scrapped to the wall and to accept a job, Arrows scratch out the name of the target and etch their own name or something that indicates who took the job. It is called Wall of the Dead since every name that is written on the wall is as good as dead once an Arrow scratches it out. Once an Arrow takes a job, they don't have a time limit or a specific way they must follow. As long as you can kill the target as soon as possible and without a problem, everything is permitted. An Arrow can use the hideouts in other settlements for as long as they want, to plan the assassination, resupply or just to rest. And finally, once the job is done they return to the headquarters in Bruskagar and report to Jerrik. The leader of the guild, Jerrik, then contacts those who wanted the target dead and claims the bounty for the guild. Half of the gold gained from the jobs is taken by the guild and the other half is given to the Frost Arrow who completed the job. For other kinds of jobs, people may make a special request from a Frost Arrow, but whether they take the job or ignore it is all up to that Arrow. All gold the Arrows make from other jobs is their own but many still choose to give half of the income to the guild.



THE ORIGINS OF LEAGUE OF HODR

League of Hodr is the name of an umbrella organization that includes different kinds of criminal groups. They generally work as mercenaries or smuggle weapons all over the lands of Svilland.



In the Third Age, the number of criminals increased due to wars and shifting power dynamics. While some people were branded as outlaws some became outcasts. Either way they were shunned from society and many of them started to wander from settlement to settlement or tried to build a life in the wilderness. But still, these people needed gold or supplies to survive. So, those who want to live a non-criminal life started to work as personal guards and mercenaries. Others, however, became smugglers, thieves, and even assassins.

An alle of Tyr, Tove was the member of a group that hunted down thugs and murderers. She and her allies traveled all Nionaem territory to find criminals and deliver them to the justice of Tyr. While Tove and her group were raiding a hideout that was believed to shelter murderers, she found a room full of children. The rest of her party killed the criminals one by one as she talked to the children and asked them why they were here and what these people had done to them. The children's answers were shocking, these "bad people" were their parents and they were doing all these evil deeds just to feed and protect the children. Shocked, Tove "rescued" these kids and completed the quest bestowed upon them once again. From that day forward, on every mission, Tove became more and more forgiving towards criminals, and instead of killing them, she started to help them. This new attitude troubled the others in her group and finally, one day, Tove asked them to help a group of smugglers to earn some gold to survive. Her group quickly declined her request and stated that if she did this, they would have to hunt her down just like any other criminal. They said Tyr would not be pleased with her actions. Nevertheless, Tove helped the smugglers and her group attacked them. In the battle between former friends, Tove was victorious but her oath to Tyr was broken and she was stripped of her divine powers once and for all. She knew this would happen but not helping these people would have been the same as killing them. After her fall, Tove started to stay with these smugglers and named them the League of Hodr because just like Hodr, life had deceived them and they had done something they would come to regret. With the help of Tove, they could redeem themselves, not in the eyes of the Gods and goddesses, but in their own eyes.

*Come gather ye bandits, ye killers and thieves
and marvel at the tale (that) make weak one's greaves.
'Tis the tale of Tove, brave as she was,*

She had to change her ways to find her true cause.

*Long long ago, being an alle of Tyr,
she'd fill the hearts of the evil with fear.
Her name made each knave shake in their boots,
For they knew she'd punish them for all their past loots.*

*But as luck would have it, all this would change,
When she saw something she thought quite strange.
In a den of murderers, at least she'd thought it was,
She began to question her personal laws.*

*For there, she thought, killers she'd find,
But rather, she found a new frame of mind.
Huddled up were the bairns of the killers,
Who'd only been killing for their sons and daughters.*

*Hers is the foundation for all that we stand
To our brothers and sisters we'll always lend a hand.*

*Now down was up, and up was down
For she had gained all her renown
By punishing the bad, giving them a fight;
Now white was black and black was white.*

*Thus, she had "justice" redefined,
keeping all she saw in mind.
She was still just, but more refined,
Rather than cruel, she resolved to be kind.*

*She helped those she saw in need,
But the rest of her pals were peeved.
For with her they did not agree,
'bout what justice needed to be.*

*Hers is the foundation for all that we stand,
To our brothers and sisters we'll always lend a hand.*

*Once her friends, now her enemies
Sought to bring her to her knees.
Though her former allies succeeded not,
Her bond with Tyr had turned to naught.*

*Now she had new allies, though different they were,
They were the ones who saw true value in her.
For hers is the foundation for all that we stand
To our brothers and sisters we'll always lend a hand.*

OUTCASTS! UNITE!

The Brothers of Hodr continued their illegal work of smuggling to feed their children and themselves, but never hurt anyone innocent. Tove became a leading figure in no time but she declined the role of leader. She believed they didn't need a leader as long as everyone did their job. On a job to smuggle weapons for a group of people on the border of Nionaem and Alsvatr, Tove realized that there were groups like these people who were trying their best to survive. So, she decided to leave the Brothers of Hodr and seek other groups that needed her help. But before she left, she selected someone to settle disagreements, someone to teach newcomers their ways, and someone to protect them in troubled times. These people became the first judge, elder, and sergeant of the Brothers of Hodr.

Tove traveled to the lands of Alsvatr. She found and helped many groups of outcasts and criminals. Her only request from these groups was to justify their crimes in some way. After helping many different groups in their struggle to survive, Tove coined the name the League of Hodr and united all the different groups under this name. From that moment forth, all the groups were named brigades and they had to help each other to survive. Every brigade was still a separate entity but they were also together in a sense. Tove's movement was heard of by outcasts all over Svilland and soon after, they started calling themselves the League of Hodr. Different kinds of groups sent word, stating that they wanted to join. Tove accepted every group and person that could justify their past crimes. Sadly, in a mission to liberate a group of criminals in Nionaem, Tove and some people from a brigade were ambushed by a group of gothis and alles of Tyr. No one from the brigade, not even Tove, made it out alive. Tove's death caused grief throughout the brigades and the League of Hodr mourned her loss. Many brigades felt vulnerable and leaderless, although Tove hadn't wanted to be seen as a leader. While the circumstances were desperate, the first brigade that was formed by Tove started to contact others and suggested that they need to select someone to be a judge, someone to be an elder, and someone to be a sergeant because that was Tove's last deed before leaving them. So, every brigade followed these instructions, and giving these titles became a rule for the League of Hodr.

BRIGADES

Every brigade in the League of Hodr works on their own and their terms. This means that while some brigades smuggle weapons, others may choose to work as mercenaries or thieves. Some brigades even gather up enough gold to buy land and build longhouses as a guild house or an inn. Because of these differences, brigades tied to the League of Hodr take names in accordance with their line of work. Those who smuggle become Smugglers of Hodr, mercenaries become Arms of Hodr, those who wish to stay as criminals become

Eyes of Hodr, and those who settle down or run inns become Hearth of Hodr. There are many different groups in the League of Hodr and they may have different names. Members of the League of Hodr recognize each other by a bracelet called Vow to the League. This bracelet is made out of metal and it features the image of two cupped hands holding a coin. The coin is not used as money and it is engraved with a special rune.

Since there is no central command, to become a member of the League of Hodr one must get in touch with a brigade. All brigades have the right to accept new members but they may have different rules or even tests. To form a brigade, a group of people must earn another brigade's trust, and that brigade will inform other members of the League that a new brigade has been formed. A brigade usually has twelve members but it can have more or fewer members. A minimum of two members is enough to form a new brigade, but forming a brigade with only a few members is dangerous. Therefore, there aren't many brigades with less than six members.

SMUGGLERS OF HODR

The most common brigades among the League are the smugglers. Since the brigades help each other often and are scattered all over the lands of Svilland, smuggling becomes the easiest job to make some gold. Weapons, food, people, and valuable items are some of the things that are smuggled, but they don't smuggle any magical items. Due to the possibility of magical items being traced by magical means, smuggling them is considered risky.

Most of the smuggling brigades are located in settlements with harbors or near borders.

ARMS OF HODR

Many people in the League of Hodr choose to live a life without crime due to their past. Yet, as an outcast, finding "normal" jobs is hard. So, they become mercenaries. Mostly, they protect those who are in need and try to avoid jobs that require raiding. Unlike other brigades, Arms of Hodr doesn't usually dwell in settlements. Instead, they travel the lands of Svilland to find work and earn some gold.

If someone needs protection, Arms of Hodr help without batting an eye.

EYES OF HODR

Breaking in, stealing, and killing can get someone enough coin to build a life but once they get a taste of gold, it becomes a slowly consuming poison. They always have to live looking over their shoulders. Eyes of Hodr brigades are filled with people like these. They can do any job as long as they gain something, and unlike other kinds of brigades, many of them don't hesitate to attract the attention of those who hunt them down.

Eyes of Hodr still follows the rule that requires them to justify their past crimes but no one expects them to justify their crimes after they joined.

HEARTHS OF HODR

Every brigade in the League of Hodr works for hire except for Hearths of Hodr brigades. These brigades built their own “guild houses” and inns. Their main purpose is to offer a free meeting point for all members of the League. While other brigades are handling their own works, Hearths of Hodr help them by providing shelter, food, weapons, and sometimes loans. Unlike most of the members, their location is known. Thus, they avoid criminal activity if possible.

Most of the Hearths of Hodr brigade members are those who just want to live a quiet life or those who wish to retire but still want to help their family.



TOVE'S NIGHT



Once every winter, most of the members of the League meet in one of their inns to celebrate Tove's death. They believe Tove accomplished her purpose as a mortal by creating the League and helping everyone. Thus, they believe Tove is feasting

with the Gods and goddesses in Valhalla. Members of the League drink and dance all night, tell stories and initiate new members by drinking more.

GAME OF SHIELD

When every member is drunk enough, they start to play a game called Shield. This game consists of two players. One of them holds a shield and the other one throws an axe to break the shield. If the player who throws the axe misses the shield, the two players switch roles until the shield breaks. A player loses when the shield breaks while they are holding it. Since Tove's Night is a crowded event, many people want to participate and the game of Shield is played as a tournament. This means that the rules of the game change as such: A player wields the shield and the others take turns to throw the axe. When a thrower hits the shield, they return to the end of the line and wait their turn to throw the axe again. If a thrower can't hit the shield they must wield the shield and the one who wields the shield before becomes a thrower and joins the line. A player is disqualified when the shield breaks while they are wielding it. The last one standing wins the game.

THE ORIGINS OF LIGHTFINGERS

Green Lights of the East was established on the former lands of Eastern Horn as a result of the Bear King and his warriors being defeated. The new kingdom was one of hierarchy in which the rich and wealthy were at the top.

As with most wars, Eastern Horn had its traitors who had supported or helped the Bear King rise to power, for one reason or another. Some were not happy that they had merged with people they spent ages fighting (First Age Kingdoms Fridaland/Fjallborg p. 29), some wanted more power and thought they would be able to claim it with the Bear King in charge. Some simply wanted chaos over order, which the Bear King seemed to offer. In any case, they were left penniless after they backed the wrong proverbial horse. They and their successors were shunned by society as a result, and it was not long before they started to resort to criminal means to make a living.

The cult of Lightfingers was established a lot more organically than the other cults in Svilland. They were the ones who were cast out by society, and thus were pushed to find each other one way or another. They chose dishonorable methods and criminal jobs to survive, and it was not surprising that they followed in the trickster God and his kin, thinking about their activities. They chose Loki as their savior and made every form of manipulation, trickery and thievery their own brand of worship.

Today, Lightfingers still mainly operate in Green Lights of the East. The majority of their operations concern stealing from the rich-folk to give to the Temple of Loki, who in turn

help out any cult that has to do with Loki and his children financially. Still, any form of manipulation and trickery is the bread and butter of the common Lightfingers member.

There is a ballad sung in certain celebrations, or when a member is inebriated and is missing the camaraderie of their fellow cult members. Though there are different versions, one of the more popular renditions is given below.

*There once was a lass, both pretty and sweet,
Who had no fortune to help her eat.
She and her mother, her mother and her
Were poorest of the poor, and it only got worse.*

*Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.*

*Though she grew up in Green Lights of the East,
She was not invited to glorious feasts.
While all the rich ate herbs, fruits and meat,
She and her family had next to naught to eat.*

*Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.*

As the days went by, it only got harder;
As the poor suffered, the rich lived in ardor.
Rúna was poor; though lazy she was not,
Each and every day, she tried to change her lot.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.

No matter what she did, she could not find a job,
Wherever she turned, she seemed to find a snob
Who did not care how hard she would work,
And met all her tries with a snide smirk.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.

One day, she lost what little love she had,
When her parents died at the hands of some lad
She alone cared, which Rúna's heart did break,
As she prayed to Freyja for their soul to take.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.

There was no one who answered her prayers,

And as all slept sound in their lairs,
Rúna wandered the cold and empty streets
And wondered how people could others mistreat.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.

One day it seemed she could no longer cope
And just as she was about to give up hope,
Her new family, with us, she found,
And with us, forever, she's bound.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.

For when we are outcast by the rest's grimace,
They do not know all that they miss.
As on the path of the shifty one we walk,
And find our way through both air and rock.

Oh Rúna Liv, Poor Rúna Liv,
Shame, you had but one life to live.
Though we alone saw what you had to give,
Through this song, forever you shall live.

THE ORIGINS OF MINDTAKERS

Items of an ancient past that were buried beneath the soil, drowned in both fresh and saltwater, scorched under the sun for a thousand years, and used by foolish people. These were the artifacts left by the Vanir, and fueled by their mysterious magic.

During the third age of Svilland, the concept of adventuring and treasure hunting became more common. People sought thrills and riches. The most unfortunate of these people found artifacts of immense power, created by the Vanir, and tried to use them for their own benefit. A few survivors of such attempts were eternally cursed by the ancient magic, not just their bodies but souls too.

These people wandered across Svilland with thoughts in their heads that didn't belong to them. More than one

person lived in their heads. These thoughts guided them and forced them to search for anything related to the Vanir. They searched everywhere, even other people's thoughts. They consumed the brains of the people who knew something, anything about the Vanir. And each time they ate another brain, a new voice appeared in their heads; more thoughts occupied their minds and as these voices grew louder, their own thoughts became quieter.



THE MUSINGS OF A MINDTAKER



I lost count of how many...
Am I one? No, two... or three?
Or five, or six, or seven, or eight?
I must confess I cannot wait
for the gates of Hel to open wide,
for there, I alone can bide;
if I'm still me when I'm put to rest...
I curse my hands that opened that chest!

THE ORIGINS OF OATH OF THE PHANTOM QUEEN

*Death... Madness... Massacre... Screams... Blood... Disappointment... Spirits... Enraged... Why... Sacrifice... False... Bear King... Bear Boy...
Disappointment... Death...*

Lylia opened her eyes in the colorless lands of spirits. Her chest was filled with anger and disappointment. The Bear King, how could he?

All her life she grew up with stories of the dead, lived with spirits, and believed that she would reincarnate as another part of nature when she died. But nothing happened. Here she was, standing in the middle of the spiritual reflection of the beautiful mountains, Ymir's lash. She had watched the spirits of her friends depart to other realms or be one with the earth, sky, water; with nature itself. Yet there she stood, waiting for her call.

For many years, she roamed the spirit realm. She answered the calls of other seidrs, feasted within the halls with other spirits, listened to nature, solved their problems, and traveled across Svilland as a spirit. In other words, she was a spirit adventurer. However, after each adventure, she realized that she couldn't forget her former life. Two things that she couldn't banish from her thoughts; the betrayal of the Bear King and her duty of keeping the Black Winter at bay. Her unfinished quest and strong emotions would not let her spirit go free.

She pondered for a while. It was clear that she was too connected to Svilland, so why should she want to depart? Even if she was not living, she could still help the folk. She also heard the news about the war and the Bear King. Perhaps there were Svillanders worthy of her deeds.

So, she started to search for a Svillander who would act as her emissary in the living world and so found Helga.

Helga was an old Svillander. She was known as Three-Fingered Helga since she lost two of her left hand fingers in a battle years ago. She was a wise and tenacious warrior. She

was a respected figure in the community and many came to her for advice.

When Lylia died, her mind became more open to the whispers of spirits and nature. This meant that she had the ability to foresee events to the extent that it is whispered to her. She was told that Helga of Sea Shield would be attacked by Loki's followers to be raised as a draugr. Loki's folk would visit her in the disguise of people in need and strike Helga when she least expected it. So, Lylia visited her in her dreams, showing visions of the danger. Lylia used her seidr powers to persuade her. The visions were almost real. Unsure of what to do, Helga started to wait with a blade ready on her belt.

That day, a group of people visited Helga's village claiming that they were attacked by a trolldfolk tribe nearby and sought help. Contrary to the villagers' good intentions, Helga refused to help. Upon refusal, the followers of Loki raged and showed their true intentions, attacking Helga and the villagers. Thanks to the warning of Lylia, Helga survived.

That night, Lylia visited Helga again, showing her true form instead of mystic visions. She said that there were many enemies of Svilland and its good folk, and that she needed an emissary to spread her word without revealing her true identity. Living a peaceful life in a small village, Helga thought this to be a chance for a glorious death, she accepted the offer. The next day, she went to the villagers and told them about her dreams and the mission of the mystical spirit who would later be named Phantom Queen.

This is how Helga started to gather followers and train them for potential battles. Although their numbers were small and their area of operation narrow, their precise actions are precious for Svilland.



THE BALLAD OF THE QUEEN



*Through Bear King's hate, there grew
a bud of hope, he could not construe.
For when he cut down the seidr Council,
Lylia the Seidr blessed us with counsel.*

*We'll forever be in the queen's debt,
for she does not forgive, and does not forget.*

*She never sleeps, nor does she rest.
Through her wisdom, we pass each test.*

*Blessed are those Helga does deem
worthy to hold in high esteem.
May our fates, by the norms, have been
weaved in favor of our Phantom Queen!*



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