

SOMETHING ROTTEN IN NOVGORBY

An introductory **Vikings & Valkyries** adventure for first level characters, written by **Gabriel Hunter**

Some illustrations copyright © Clipart.com



Introduction

This short *Vikings & Valkyries* adventure was designed with first level characters in mind. It also happens to correspond to the following rolls on the Adventure Plot generator given in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 34-35):

Patron = 4, populace of a village.

Main Location = 4, a dangerous forest.

Secondary Location = 5, perilous mountains.

Adventure Goal = 5, rescue important captive.

Complication = 2, two parts, roll another location.

The location of this scenario has been deliberately kept vague so it could be placed anywhere suitable for the Maze Master, either in *Beornia*, *Havmark* or *Vedland* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, pp22-24 & 28 for more details about the Norse lands).

Welcome to Novorgby

Over the course of their travels through the Norse lands, the adventurers happen to stay for a few days (or at least for a single night) in the village of Novorgby; if the characters do not know each other, they could meet while attending Novorgby's renowned Winter Meet, a large annual fair where many Norse men and women gather to trade all sorts of goods and services.



- Mmmh... There's something rotten in Novorgby...

If the party includes at least one Prince, the characters could stay as guests of the local chieftain, Ulfgar the Grim, allowing the Maze Master to start the adventure with a typical Viking evening of feasting, mead drinking, arm-wrestling, axe-throwing and other typical Viking games (as detailed in *Vikings & Valkyries*, p 15-16).

If the Maze Master is planning to use this adventure as the start for a campaign, do feel free to incorporate each player's background into the region (e.g. born in *Novorgby* or a nearby village; family, friend or love interest in the village; etc.) so as to make it an important place to get back to or start from, rather than being just a name on a map.

Being at a crossroads, the village has always benefited from the attention of many passers-by (travelers and merchants alike), but never enough to become a full fledged city due to its wilderness location. However, the Winter Meet (an idea of a previous Chieftain to attract people to the village in the less frequented winter months) has rapidly grown in popularity and is now a regional event of importance, spanning a full week of trade, barter and feasting. During that time, the local population of 100 goes up to nearly 300! Merchants and craftsmen of all types will also peddle their wares in the covered marketplace built for the occasion.

Lodging can be found at the *Hovedhallen* (Main Hall), for *Princes* and their following; the local inn, the *Golden Axe*, can hold up to 50 people (at 4 to a small room); the local tavern, the *Red Horn*, another 30 sleeping on the floor; whilst the rest seek bed and board at villagers' homes.

Most villagers take much pride from housing a renowned adventurer (not least because it's also customary to share one's wealth with one's host, which has led to some battles for the hosting of returning heroes among the villagers).

The people of *Novorgby* are typical Norsemen, valuing hospitality and bravery, as well as a good time, but being wary of magic and quick to anger.

A couple of NPCs are described more fully below, but the Maze Master is encouraged to flesh out a number of other denizens of *Novorgby* to add color to the village and bring out that Viking way of life (whether it be it a burly innkeeper with battle-scars; rowdy city guards trading tall stories and mead mugs; an aloof warrior maiden; a brooding smith; or a suspicious Chief's counselor).

Even if most of *Novorgby* welcomes the influx of money and reputation brought about by the *Winter Meet*, seeing it as a wonderful opportunity for trade and commerce, some could do without the crowds and the bad elements it also brings each year. The events unfolding in this adventure will surely make these critics rather more vocal.

Basic Storyline

One night, when almost everyone is sleeping, the alarm horns will sound, abruptly waking the adventurers, as a monster is sighted just outside the village.

Quickly dealt with by the local chieftain's huscarls, this seemingly-resolved matter will take a dire turn as it is discovered that, at the same time, a fair damsel was kidnapped by another group of monsters (Trollmen) who have since fled with their victim into the woods.

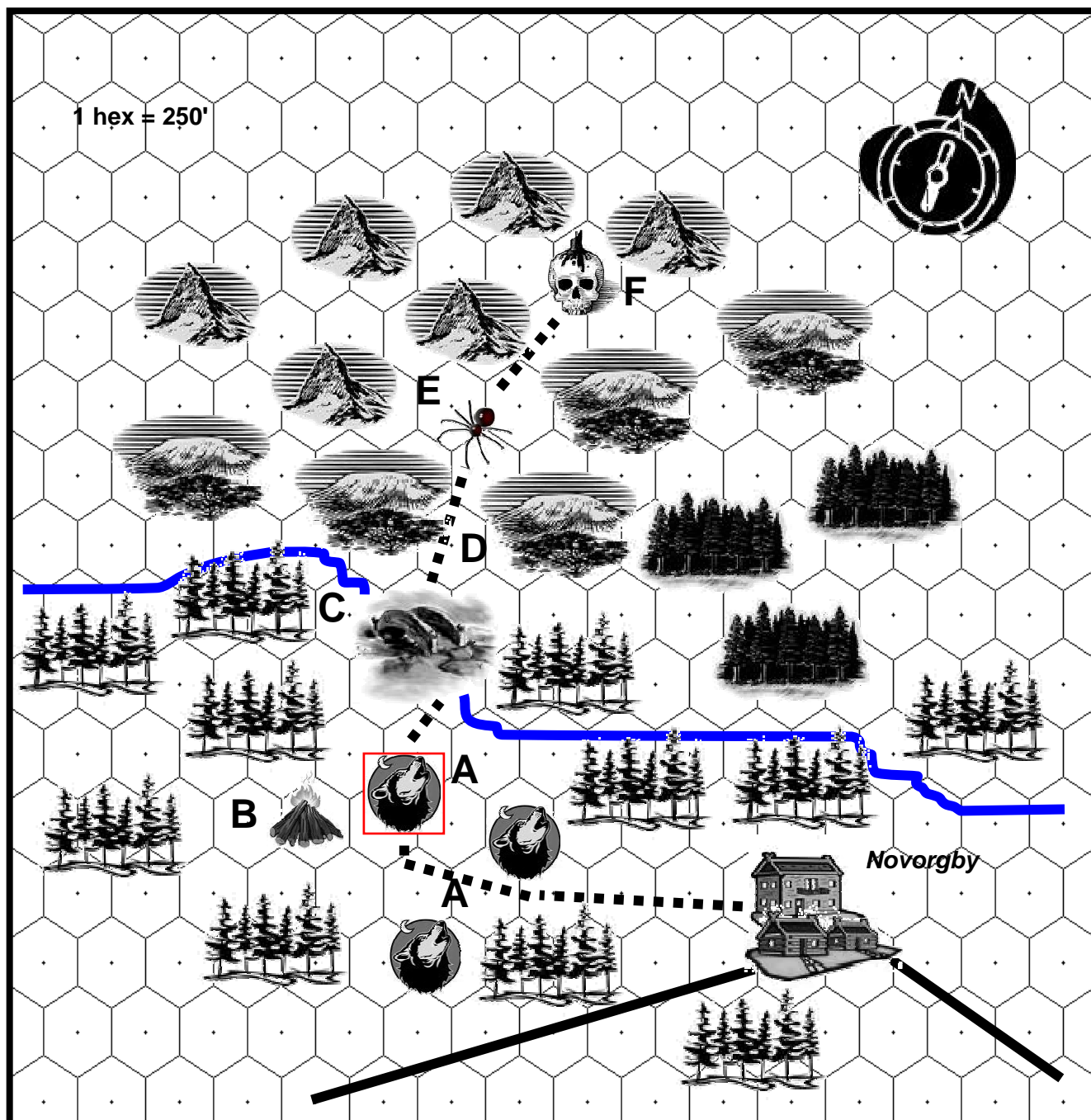
Asked to lead a search party for the missing girl, the adventurers must follow the trail of the captors before the incoming snow storm erases their tracks and any chances of finding her alive and well. In their hurried race through the nearby forest to rescue the unfortunate maiden, the party will first have to confront or evade a pack of wolves and their surprisingly-cunning leader, a red-eyed *Dire Wolf*.

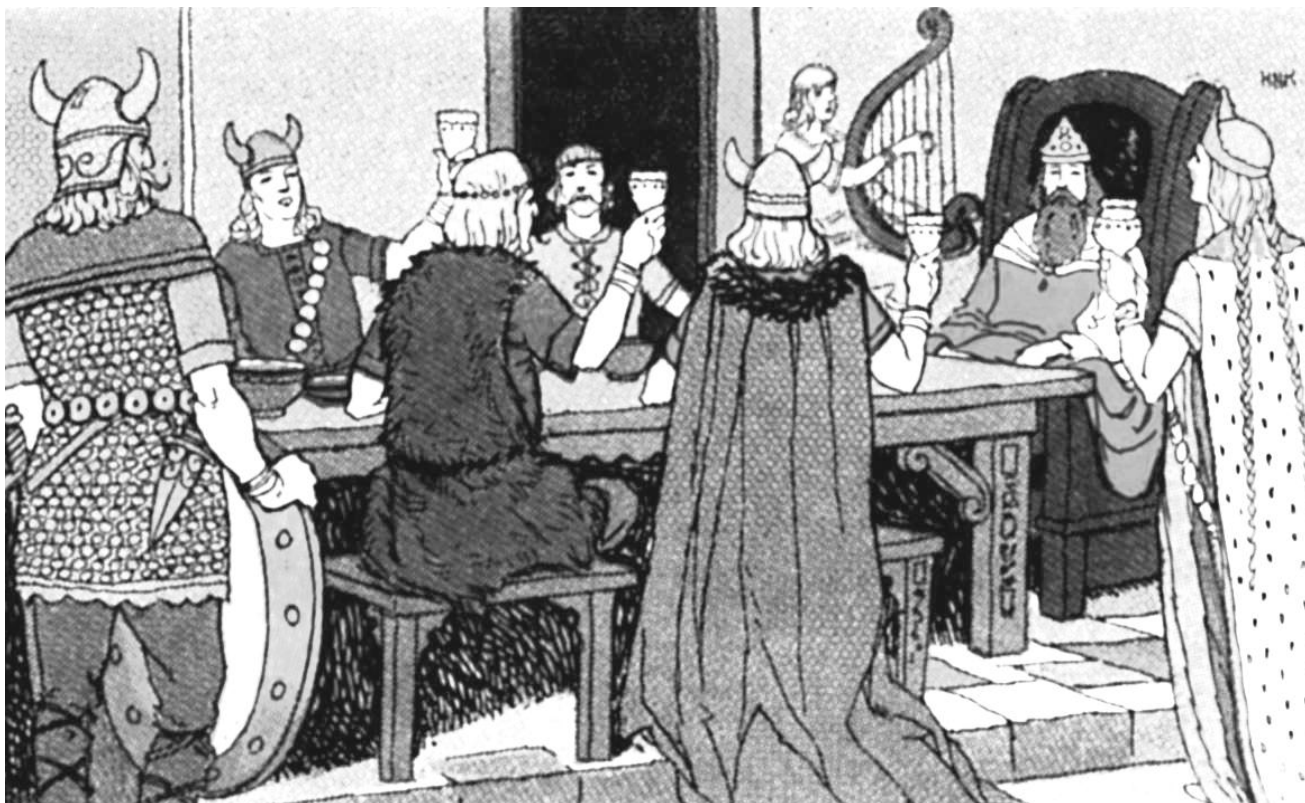
Then, climbing the treacherous mountain path which will hopefully lead them to the captors' hideout, they will face the icy breath of a monstrous *Ice Spider* (new monster) who is blocking their path.

Finally, upon arriving at a strangely-warm cavern, the adventurers will join battle against a band of *Trollmen* and their brutish commander, Grodd the *Half-Giant*.

During the ensuing feast in honor of the new heroes, a malevolent illusion will give a chill to the villagers and the adventurers as the hidden mastermind behind the events is finally revealed as a *Dark Elf* – an ill omen for the future of *Novorgby*...

Adventure Map : Novorgby Area





Celebrating the Winter Meet in the grand Viking tradition

The Gathering

The Winter Meet is one of the best times for adventuring Norsemen and women to either recruit henchmen, find a part-time or full-time employer, as well as buy, sell or trade goods, ranging from the mundane to the exotic, or simply renew contacts with old friends and make new ones.

Prospective patrons and job-hunters usually meet at the inn, the tavern or the main hall to discuss their needs and qualifications all weekend.

Outside, in the marketplace, goods of all types, but mostly weapons and 'magical' charms (with no real power in game terms), are offered, bought or traded amid the same cacophony of voices and sounds.

Of course, such a large gathering of Norse men would not be complete with the mandatory drinking contests and other typical Viking games (arm wrestling, shield running, axe throwing etc) – along with some more refined entertainment, allowing Skalds to demonstrate their musical, poetic and storytelling skills.

The Storm and the Hunt

After the news hits that someone has actually been kidnapped by a band of foul monsters, the Chieftain will quickly marshal a small rescue party (no more than 1d6 huscarl NPCs, because he dares not leave the village undefended, especially with a snowstorm starting), and he will ask for the aid of the adventurers if they are present (or readily accept their help if they offer it).

Tracking the kidnappers will use the rules set in the *Mazes & Minotaurs* Players Manual p45, but using a base of 10 instead of 15 (easier to track in the snow), but increase this difficulty by 2 per hour once the snowstorm hits, bringing with it high winds and deteriorating visibility. If the adventurers are having trouble following the trail, or get lost, the Maze Master should have them meet *Eirik the Bold*, a hunter who can provide assistance and/or shelter. See the end of the adventure for Eirik the Bold's statistics.

While the snowstorm rages (it will start at the beginning of Part Two and last for 2d6 hours), use the rules given below for *Snowstorm Exposure*.

Snowstorm Exposure

Each full hour without proper protection (fur boots, mittens, hats, coats etc) from cold requires a *Physical Vigor* saving roll: the first roll has a target number of 5, the second one a target number 10, the third one a target number of 15, and so on.

Failure on any of these rolls will mean that the character suffers 1d3 Hits of damage.

Furthermore, each hour in the storm also requires a *Danger Evasion* Roll (plus any *Hunting* bonus) at the same target numbers to avoid getting lost.

Also, keep in mind that snow is considered *difficult terrain* for movement (*Players Manual*, p20).

The Scenario

Part One: Meeting in Novorgby

Having traveled, together or apart, from their respective «starting points», the adventurers finally make their way to the somewhat remote village of *Novorgby*, where they are to attend its renowned Winter Meet (see

The crowd of adventurers, merchants and travelers is filling the streets and public places of the small community, with lineups in front of the local inn, the Golden Axe, the tavern and the main hall. If the party includes a *Prince*, they will be the guest of the local chieftain, *Ulfgar the Grim*, at the Main Hall. If not, they may be lucky enough to acquire a room at the inn or the tavern or they may end up at a villagers' house.

During the night, the adventurers are suddenly awakened by shouts and screams coming from outside. Quickly putting on clothing and grabbing weapons, they follow the running guards toward the village's gate where a small crowd is already present. Outside, while a snowstorm is slowly starting to take hold, a battle is raging between a seemingly mad Cave Bear, the chieftain and a couple of guards.

The Maze Master can either describe the outcome of the combat as a cut-scene, where the combined strength of the assembled warriors wins the day over the fearsome red-eyed beast, or actually play it out, with or without the adventurers' intervention, making sure the animal is slain in the end.

A close examination of the bear carcass will reveal a strange fire-like mark on its forehead.

Part Two: To the Rescue

The sighs of relief after the victory over the crazed bear quickly turn to gasps of dread as new shouts and screams erupt from the other end of the village. Quickly following the chieftain and his huscarls to the latest trouble spot, and expecting to find another beast assaulting the walls, the gathering crowds are taken aback to learn that another group of monsters has seemingly kidnapped a helpless woman.

After gathering vital information from witnesses, it appears that *Sigrif*, the daughter of the village's recently-deceased priest of Frey, was taken by a small group of monsters, who promptly left with her. From the descriptions given by the witnesses, the adventurers should be able to identify the creatures as Trollmen.

Deciding to send a rescue mission, the chieftain dispatches them (and hopefully the player characters) on the monsters' trail before it disappears under the increasingly heavy snow.



A treacherous Trollman

This part of the scenario uses the **Novorgby Area** map (see p 3). Assume that it takes 1 hour to cover a 1-mile hex in this difficult terrain on foot.

A: Wolf Territory

Hurrying in the snow, trying not to lose the tracks, you suddenly see gray shades coming out of the woods, a faint growl coming from their open maw as they leap into attack.

A pack of **Common Wolves** is hunting in the area and the adventurers (and/or Ulfgar's Huscarls if they are apart) will have to confront them while tracking the *Trollmen*. See *Handling the Opposition* next page for some suggestions. Stats for Wolves can be found in the *Creature Compendium* (p125).

As you stumble upon the wolves' den, a dark knot of tree trunks, you immediately notice that their leader is bigger and stronger-looking than the others, his fur more whitish than gray, made even more menacing by the eerie red glow of his eyes.

The last encounter will also feature the pack leader, a **Dire Wolf** (*Creature Compendium* p126) with glowing red eyes. After the combat, a close examination of the wolf's body will also reveal a strange fire-like mark on its forehead.

Searching their den will unearth a small horn-like vial, probably lost by a previous victim, bearing a rune which magicians will recognize as the rune of Loki and holding some hot reddish liquid.

See *Loki's Draught* next page for a description of this magical potion.

Loki's Draught

Drinking one of the 1d6 doses will give its user protection from the effects of normal cold and add a +4 bonus to *Physical Vigor* saving rolls against supernatural cold for 1 hour.

However, the heat from the magic will force the removal of outer clothing, including armor, unless the drinker succeeds at a *Mystic Fortitude* roll versus a target number of 10.

B: Hunter Cabin

As you come across a clearing in the woods, you see a small cabin in its center, the axe stuck in a log and the pelts half finished outside, betraying the probable presence of a local hunter.

This is the hangout of *Eirik the Bold* (see below for full description), who could also be encountered in the forest nearby looking for game or roaming wolves.

C: Old Bridge

At the end of the woods, crossing the half frozen river beneath it, lies a small stone bridge in obvious need of some repairs, but still safe enough to support travelers, if not a horse and carriage.

D: Mountain Path

Beginning in the rolling hills at the foot of the daunting mountains ahead, a small and sinuous-looking path climbs up rather rapidly, disappearing into the shadows of the rocks forming the peaks blocking the way.

An *Athletic Prowess* roll vs the usual target number equal to the character's *Encumbrance* (plus applicable snowstorm modifiers +2/hr) is required to avoid a 2d6' fall off the treacherous path.



Watch out, there's a Dire Wolf about!

Handling the Opposition

The adventurers will have to face a number of opponents in this adventure, including a pack of *Common Wolves*, their *Dire Wolf* leader, an *Ice Spider*, and finally a small gang of *Trollmen* and their *Half-Giant* leader, all of which can spell doom for the party if the Maze Master isn't prepared.

At the Maze Master's discretion, the villagers sent on the rescue mission can act as either backup, if the adventurers have problems, or as quickly-killed "expendables" to show "how the monsters work". If the group splits to cover more ground or because they would be too numerous for the planned monsters, the Maze Master can also use cut-scenes involving the local chieftain's Huscarls (Minor Soldier NPCs) to foreshadow the trouble ahead.

The first encounter (**Wolves & Dire Wolf** pack leader) should not be too difficult (say at one wolf per two party members) which the Maze Master can then double (i.e. up to one wolf per party member) if all goes well for the second brush with the wolves, finally adding the pack leader for the last encounter. An injured or less battle-ready party could also easily «miss» that last encounter in order to avoid crippling them.

The **Ice Spider** should at least scare the party a bit, so if they dealt with the wolves relatively easily, have the spider sneak on the least dangerous party member first and use its *Entangle* ability on him (Target number 19 instead of 15 due to surprise). Make effective use of its size to knock the adventurers about (*Danger Evasion* roll at 19 to avoid being displaced 10' away) instead of simply attacking them.

As noted in the description of this new creature, any adventurer using fire (natural or magical) upon the spider will immediately get its undivided attention until that particular threat is dealt with. If the party is weaker, however, the Maze Master should give them a chance to sneak up on it first, or – if you really feel generous – roll a boulder on its head (treat as a 2 or 3d6 *Crushing Missile* attack, requiring a *Feat of Strength*).

The **Trollmen** represent a rather stronger menace than the wolves but should receive a similar treatment (if the party hasn't so far been overwhelmed, two *trollmen* per member is suggested). However, if he is not sure about the level of danger, the Maze Master can subtract one or two from the total – e.g. six or seven trollmen for an adventuring party of four).

Grodd the Half-Giant is the big boss of the adventure and as such fighting him should be suitably challenging. If the party is weaker, the Maze Master should have him unable to *Charge into Battle* because of *Close Quarters* due to the cave's tunnels. Maze Masters wanting to give a more serious challenge to their party (either because they had an easy time of the earlier parts of the scenario, or are of a higher level) can even go so far as to replace the *Half-Giant* with a suitably taxing *Troll* (*Common, Cave, Green, Shadow or Stone*).

Do not forget that Norsemen live for the battle, so don't make it too easy, and keep it bloody!

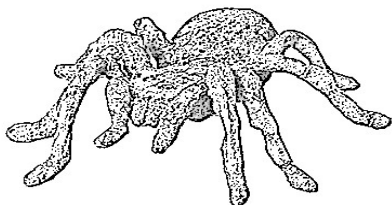
E: Ice Spider Lair

Struggling against the increasing snow and winds, you suddenly spot a large unmoving form ahead. Squinting, your heart skips a beat as you realize there's an enormous white and blue spider in the middle of the trail, waiting to attack.

This is the lair of the *Ice Spider* (see details below and the **Handling the Opposition** section above for some guidelines on this encounter).

Probing around will reveal its hiding place (Detection roll vs a target number of 15 plus applicable snowstorm modifiers +2/hr), and searching it will uncover an *Amulet of Thor* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, p48).

Ice Spider



Taxonomy: Monster

Description: Rumored to have been magically created, these huge white and light blue spiders can attack two medium-sized opponents at the same time, and usually live in the colder climates of the north or on top of icy mountains.

Size: Large

Ferocity: Aggressive

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 90'

Initiative: 14

Melee Attack: +5

Damage: 2d6 (hooked legs)

Defense Class: 17

Hits Total: 24

Detection / Evasion: +2 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +2

Special Abilities: Camouflage (Detected on 19), Entangle (Icy Breath, 20' range, Might 20), Stealthy (12), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility, Wallcrawling.

Awards: Glory 130, Wisdom 20.

Like Frost Giants (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, p 42), Ice Spiders are completely immune to all cold-based damage – but they also suffer double damage from all fire-based attacks. There is no additional Glory or Wisdom award for this ability/weakness.



Can Grodd really be the BRAINS behind all this?

F: Half-Giant Cave

Finally reaching the end of the Trollmen's trail, despite the now heavy snowing and the winds, you manage to spot the kidnappers' hideout, the entrance to a small cave in the side of the mountain where they have taken the poor girl.

As you approach and make out shadows on the walls made by the fire burning inside, you steel your resolve and prepare to face a last challenge as a great roar echoes from within the cavern, making you wonder what you are about to confront...

This is the hiding place of the *Trollmen* and their monstrous leader, *Grodd*, the *Half-Giant* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, pp38 & 40 and *Handling the Opposition* above for some guidelines on this encounter). If they can sneak in, the party can take on the two *Trollmen* guarding the entrance before the others join in.

The captured girl, *Sigrid the Fair*, is huddled in fear in one corner of the cave.

Searching the cave after defeating the kidnappers will turn up a *Sword of Tyr*, a *Belt of Protection*, an *Amulet of Horsemanship* and a *Perpetual Drinking Horn* (see *Vikings & Valkyries* pp47-49)

A close examination of the half-giant's body will reveal the same strange fire-like mark as before on its forehead. Inquisitive adventurers may also notice that even allowing for the fire within, the warmth in the grotto is unnaturally high, and seems to be coming from the reddish-tinted walls.

Aftermath

The snowstorm ended, the return to Novorgby is much easier, and the adventurers are greeted as heroes by the villagers and attend a special banquet in their honor where they are asked to recount their courageous deeds against the foul beasts that dared to kidnap the poor Sigrid.

Abruptly interrupting the loud merriment, the ghostly head of a Svartalf suddenly appears, hovering over the table amid gasps of surprise, and laughing evilly before shouting: "Fools, enjoy your pitiful feast while you can! You may have defeated those pathetic trolls, but you have not heard the last of Amaroq the Black!" and disappearing just as quickly, his wicked laughter still echoing around the walls of the now silent main hall.

With the safe return of *Sigrid* to the village, the Winter Festival can continue where it was interrupted, although not with the same enthusiasm as before. People will talk about the rescue, but also about the ominous threat of the Svartalf. Some will leave the village early, maybe never to return; and by the following spring, despite *Ulfgar the Grim*'s best efforts to play things down, *Novorgby* will have gained a reputation in the surrounding neighbourhood as a place to avoid.

Rewards

The adventurers will receive the equivalent of 5 gold coins each in ornamented equipment (worth twice the usual price) from *Ulfgar the Grim* if they manage to save *Sigrid*.

Warriors will also receive 10 Glory each for that action, and 75 Glory each if they vanquish all monsters in the adventure without outside help.

Magicians will receive 30 Wisdom each for finding at least two of the fire-like marks on the monsters and noticing the unnatural warmth of the *Half-Giant* cave.

Hunters will gain 50 Experience Points for successfully tracking the *Trollmen* to their lair or preventing the party from getting lost in the snowstorm (**Thieves** can also get 50 Experience Points for that action).

Loose Ends

While not apparent at first, the kidnapping of young *Sigrid* is anything but coincidental and has been, in fact, entirely engineered by *Amaroq the Black* to gain possession of one of the 9 pieces of the *Krown of Kommand*, a dread artifact used to control giants.

Unknown to her, the medallion she inherited from her father (who incidentally, was killed by a *Dire Wolf* while investigating the source of a mysterious corrupted energy close to the village) was imbedded with a stone from the terrible magic item. Those who know her well will notice she no longer has the medallion she wore before her abduction (she will say that she probably lost it during the struggle of her journey to the cave). It would be even more upsetting if anyone were to know that a fire giant is held in a magical sleep deep under the village, and that *Amaroq* intends to use the *Krown* to wake him up and wreak havoc on the region.

Ulfgar the Grim



Level 3 Prince, age 35, Chieftain of *Novorgby*.

Personality: Stern and stubborn, courageous in combat and in his political duties; Ulfgar believes that the needs of the many outweighs the needs of the few.

Attributes: Might 14, Skill 15, Luck 19, Wits 13, Will 17, Grace 11.

Combat: Initiative 17, Melee +7 (+9 w/Great Axe), Missile +7, BDC 16, EDC 18 (22 w/Helm), Hits Total 21.

Weapon of Choice: Great Axe.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +7, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort +8 (+9 w/Helm), Physical Vigor +8.

Personal Charisma: +7 (+10 with Reputation bonus).

Background Talents: Sailor, Warlord.

Languages Known: Norscan, Firian

Patron Deity: Tyr.

Mythic Items: *Helm of Protection* (+4 EDC, +2 MF), *Axe of Conquest* (+2 Melee).

Ulfgar is an illegitimate son of King Rothgar of Beornia. He was sent away with his mother while still a young child, to avoid "political complications" and has never claimed his heritage. He is still angry at his "father", and settled in *Novorgby* some years ago, after roaming the seas in search of adventure, where his leadership and prowess have led him to become a celebrated chieftain.

Sigrid the Fair



This beautiful girl is the daughter of the village's priest of Freyr and its most eligible maiden, even though her obvious intelligence has stopped many from courting her. As far as stats are concerned, she should be treated as a noncombatant Minor NPC (see *Maze Masters Guide* p25).

Amaroq the Black

As a Dark Elf, Amaroq the Black has the same stats and special abilities as an Alseid (see *Creature Compendium*, p 5).

Having found an entry to *Midgard* from *Svartalfeim* via a cave near *Novorgby*, Amaroq was plotting to take over the local trolls in the region when he spied the village priest's frequent travels to the nearby river. Curious, he soon discovered a portal of power leading deep underground where he found a sealed chamber protected by powerful magic. Searching his arcane lore-books, he learned of an ancient battle from the *Age of Legend* during which the gods trapped a ferocious lieutenant of *Surtur* deep under the earth. Wanting to keep that secret all for himself he used a magically enslaved *Dire Wolf* to dispatch the nosy priest, but not before noticing the glow of his medallion when near the portal.

Madly seeking the answer to this new discovery, he finally recognized the jewel from a picture of the *Krown of Kommand*, an ancient artifact used by *Surtur* to insure the loyalty of rebellious giants, which was rumored destroyed by the gods during their last battle with the Jotuns. Amaroq has devised a cunning plan to take it back from the villagers...and will continue his search for the remaining pieces.

Eirik the Bold



Level 2 Hunter, age 23, Free Hunter.

Personality: Cheerful and unruly with people, watchful and disciplined in the wilderness; Eirik loves the great outdoors and especially despises "unnatural" creatures.

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 15, Luck 13, Wits 15, Will 13, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 14, Melee +4, Missile +5 (+2 dmg vs Beasts or Monsters), BDC 12, EDC 13, Hits Total 13.

Weapon of Choice: Bow

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +4, Danger Evasion +5, Mystic Fortitude +4, Physical Vigor +3.

Personal Charisma: +2 (+4 w/ Reputation bonus)

Special Ability: Hunting Bonus +4.

Background Talents: Woodsman, Mountaineer.

Languages Known: Norscan, Kvenish, Alfian

Patron Deity: Uller.

Mythic Items: *Bow of the Elves* (no penalty while moving, 600' range)

The hunter known as *Eirik the Bold* is a well known character in the region, who lives in a cabin in the woods near *Novorgby* and trades furs and meat for other goods. He has acted as a guide for a number of travelers seeking to reach hard-to-find places and is rumored to have saved many from an untimely demise, including a *Wood Elf* who has since become a friend.