

HELLFROST

THE EOSTRE FESTIVAL





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BY PAUL “WIGGY” WADE-WILLIAMS

EDITING & PROOFREADING: SCOTT ALAN WOODARD

COVER, GRAPHIC DESIGN & TYPESETTING: ROBIN ELLIOTT

COVER ART: EMPTY ROOM STUDIOS

INTERIOR ART: GONG CREATIVES



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Unlike other *Hellfrost* adventures, this one lacks combat. It focuses not on exploring ancient trap-filled tombs or slaying nameless foes, but on a low-key yet important event in the lives of the citizens of Rassilon. Typically, events such as this are handled during the downtime between adventures, with rewards covered by the Glory bonuses for advancing a Rank, but this adventure fulfills a vital role in *Hellfrost*. It shows the characters a world beyond the tombs, the monsters, and the treasure, and introduces them to the people with whom they must interact in their daily lives; the people who, hopefully, will one day come to regard them as heroes.

Aside from some vague geographic notes, the adventure has been set up so that the GM can place it in any part of Rassilon where Saxa make their homes. Environmental conditions are entirely dependent on the chosen locale. The Saxa village does not feature on any official *Hellfrost* map, again to allow the GM freedom of choice as to the exact setting.

Since the story is set around a Spring festival to Eostre, it thus takes place in Eostremonan. Depending on the geographic region, the temperature can range from chilly to positively frigid. See the *Savage Worlds* rulebook for the effects of cold weather and the *Hellfrost Players' Guide* for how the rules work in this setting.

A selection of pre-generated Novice characters can be found at our website, www.tripleacegames.com.

GM BACKGROUND

In many fantasy games the focus is purely on slaying monsters and taking their treasure. Such worlds are little more than large storehouses of adventuring sites ripe for plundering. *Hellfrost* is different. Yes, many of the adventures will involve combat against monsters, avoiding devious traps, thwarting vile plots, and the acquisition of wealth, for this is what drives many players, but it is also a world about people. The characters are not just war

machines bred to slaughter—they are citizens of Rassilon and its many diverse cultures.

The story takes place during a one-week long festival to honor Eostre. The ceremony marks the start of spring and the better times ahead, and is a time for celebration and hope. Over the week, the characters will (hopefully) participate in a number of challenges. The adventure is not stage managed to ensure the heroes win—some individuals may be victorious, while others will suffer ignominious defeat. Such is life!

The tale is set in and around a small town ruled by a Saxa jarl, Cuthwulf. A Saxa character may be related to Cuthwulf by blood and be at the festival with his kin, or perhaps his clan may owe him allegiance and thus be in attendance at the ceremony. Since the festival doubles as a market, the characters may simply be in the vicinity looking for bargains or to resupply. Those of religious nature may be here to honor the gods. If this is the first ever *Hellfrost* adventure you play, perhaps recognition at the festival kick-starts the characters' adventuring career.

THERE'S NO PLOT?

This adventure focuses purely on the contest. In order to prevent it becoming a series of boring die rolls, the GM must don his roleplaying hat and work to his best ability to bring the festival alive. During the contests, NPC actions should be described in as much detail as the players will accept, with any predetermined results serving as guidelines as to how the action unfolds.

While the story revolves around the Eostre festival, there is an entire town to explore. However, nothing beyond a few names and places is detailed within the text, and no map is provided. As such, the player characters should be free to meet other people of interest as they wish. These incidental encounters are left for the GM to determine as they arise, but could become the start of new friendships or animosities.

The jarl is only one step down from the local king, and

thus a man of some wealth and power. This should be reflected in the town. Almost anyone the characters care to search for, in terms of general professions, is likely to be present, barring those found only in specialist centers or places which require a very large population. Although there are only two full temples (those to Eostre and Sigel), all the gods have a shrine and an attendant priest, though most of these are transient, erected solely for the festival. Similarly, while the Saxa favor skalds, other sorts of magicians may be present, attracted by the festival and market or making their home near the jarl's court.

Similarly, the GM can introduce subplots set during the contest. Several ideas are detailed below. One reason for not including a subplot is to allow the GM to reuse NPCs and tie the ritual into events in his particular campaign. Consider the festival a backdrop, onto which the GM can paint any story he wishes.

- **Abduction.** The festival has attracted many important persons, their families, and their followers to Nohaut. While the obvious targets are the most influential people, these are also the best guarded. Focus instead on lesser, but no less important, figures. The cult of Vali may kidnap a cleric of Eira, their natural enemy. An enemy lord may try to abduct the Eostre Maidens, around whom security is surprisingly light, to disrupt the ritual. Alternatively, go for the rule of numbers—the disappearance of a single peasant will not raise many eyebrows, but should a few go missing, questions will be asked.

- **Murder!** The oldest hook in the book is a murder. As a minor subplot, a murder might be quite mundane, perhaps the result of a family feud or a heated argument gone too far. Expanded into a more in-depth plot, the murder may be related to an assassination attempt against a powerful NPC, perhaps even Jarl Cuthwulf.

Of course, the murder may be incidental to the subplot. For instance, a cleric of Vali may have been trying to poison the drinks used in the Contest of Stamina when he was discovered by a court official. The cleric murdered the official, but had to hide (his sabotage unfulfilled) because of his victim's cries for help. Undeterred, the cleric

will try to strike again. Can the heroes unravel the true mystery before all is too late?

- **Theft.** Big markets draw big crowds, and not all those attending are of lawful nature. As the old saying goes, "Where there are goods, there is greed." Of course, no petty theft is worthy of the heroes' investigations—that is what Thieftakers are employed for.

Whatever item has been stolen, it should be of great value. It might be a noblewoman's precious jewels, possibly ancestral items, or a relic from one of the temples. Likewise, the thief should be no ordinary criminal. A cultist to one of the dark gods, a renegade mage, or a sinful cleric stripped of his powers and out for revenge are all worthy antagonists.

RANDOM EVENTS

These events can be used during the festival to throw a few wrenches into the works. Have each character participating in the contests draw a card before each of the five main events. On a Club suit, check the table below.

Entries marked "*" may occur multiple times. The event may affect different heroes or the same character multiple times over the course of the adventure.

Entries marked "***" may occur multiple times, but the same hero may never be affected more than once. If he draws the event again, treat it as no event instead.

All other entries occur only once and should be crossed out when used. If one of these eliminated events occurs again, treat it as no event. GMs are free to invent their own events; either replacing used ones or replacing any listed below.

Card	Event
2-3	Throw The Match*: An NPC of means and influence (nobleman, rich merchant, or spellcaster works well) approaches the character just before he enters the contest and makes an offer. If the character throws the match and does not come in the top three, he will earn 500 gs. Should he refuse or fail to

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

The Eostre festival takes place over one week, beginning on Waescdaeg and ending on Heafoddaeg of the following week. The adventure is broken down into a series of events (labeled E in the text), which occur in strict order. Between these events, the heroes are free to act as they wish.

Day	Events	Notes
Heafoddaeg	E0	Arrival in Nohaut
Waescdaeg	E1, E2, E3	Marks the start of the festival. On this day are held the introductory feast and blessing ritual.
Marketdaeg	E4, E5, E6	A grand market is held. The contestants have the day free.
Monandaeg	E7	The contest begins with the poetry competition.
Sunnandaeg	E8	The drinking competition.
Healfdaeg	E9	The physical challenge.
Milcdaeg	E10	The horsemanship challenge.
Endedaeg	E11, E12	The observation event is held. Also sees the closing of the market, the weddings of the fortunate competitors, and the final religious festival.

- 4–6 achieve this (perhaps due to lucky die rolls) he gains the Minor Enemy Hindrance.
- Trash Talk*:** Cissa the Berserk threatens the hero with grievous harm unless he lets the berserk win. Make an Intimidation Test of Wills. Because not every contest has the contestants in face-to-face opposition, the outcome works slightly differently. If the next contest does not allow Cissa to make a direct roll against the hero, the berserk may instead impose a single –2 penalty on one roll made by his victim. This roll must be nominated *before* dice are rolled. Otherwise, Cissa gains the +2 bonus to his next roll against the hero as normal.
- 7 **Sudden Snowfall*:** The weather turns foul and the heavens open, albeit briefly. During this bout, treat the lighting conditions as Dim. In addition, the ground becomes very slick, imposing a –1 penalty on any physical Trait roll. This has a direct impact only on the physical prowess, speed, and observation challenges.
- 8–9 **Cheating*:** The hero is approached before the next contest and offered the chance to cheat. See **Cheating Aplenty** on page 9 for details. The contestant's offer relates to the next contest only. So if the hero is about to enter the test of stamina, he is only offered the potion to stave off drunkenness.
- 10 **Betting Heavy*:** Someone of note has a lot of money resting on the character winning the next contest and mentions this to them as they approach the arena. He offers the hero an incentive to win—20% of his winnings (equates to 200 gs). A victorious character is duly rewarded and may have acquired a new friend.
- Jack **A Smile and a Wink**:** The hero has an admirer who shows his or her affection with a smile and a wink. The character receives a boost to his confidence. He gains one benny, which can only be used during the forthcoming contest. Whether the admirer wants a romantic liaison or perhaps has some other motive for supporting the hero is left to the GM to determine.
- Queen **I Love You**:** A spectator of whatever sex the hero favors declares undying affection. They keep calling out to the hero during the next contest, distracting him at inopportune moments. The GM receives 3 special bennies during the contest. He can use them to force a hero to reroll *any* die roll made by the hero during the contest. Obviously, it is wise to save these for when the character rolls extremely well. Excess bonus bennies are lost after the contest. A victorious hero is presented with the opportunity to engage in

- romantic activities with their admirer after the contest. This may be a one-night stand, lead to a long love affair, or possibly annoy the NPC's spouse, sibling, guardian, or bodyguard.
- King **Delayed**:** Some issue causes the character to miss the first round of the next contest. His saddle may have been incorrectly fastened (or sabotaged), he is called away to attend a person of note (who may or may not know anything about the supposed meeting), his ale mug may have a hole in it and need replacing. In the test of speed and observation, the character starts one round behind his rivals, placing him at a disadvantage, but one he can recoup with a little luck. In the other challenges, he is penalized two places once the final order is decided.
- Ace **Blessings & Curses*:** A priest (pick a religion) gives the hero a blessing on a red suited Ace or curses him on a black suited Ace. The blessing or curse is not magical, though it does affect the hero for good or ill. If blessed, he receives +1 to all rolls in the forthcoming contest. A curse imposes a –1 penalty.

HEAFODDAEG

The characters begin outside the town of Nohaut, which is ruled by Jarl Cuthwulf, a respected Saxa nobleman of strong morals and religious conviction. Over recent weeks, Cuthwulf's heralds have roamed nearby lands, telling of a grand market to take place on Waesdaeg of the third week of Eostremonan, after which will follow a religious festival. The heroes' reasons for attending the market are left up to them.

EO. ARRIVAL

The heroes arrive at Nohaut on Heafoddaeg, one day before the festivities begin. Standing atop a hill, they gaze down onto the town of Nohaut, blanketed by a thin layer of crisp snow which fell in the night.

Despite the snow and icy winds still haunting the lands, many others have answered the heralds' call, for Nohaut's population has overflowed into the grassy fields beyond the main fortifications. Within the main ditch and rampart, the dwellings are typical Saxa longhouses. A haze of smoke drifts lazily over the settlement, for there is little wind.

Outside, surrounded by a wooden palisade, lies a vast sea of tents. Even from your distant vantage point, the cries of hawkers and clerics, the screams of excited children, and the mooing, baaing, and

braying of livestock fill the air. A queue of visitors is lined up outside a gate into the palisade, awaiting acceptance into the tent town. A second enclosure, with a double palisade, stands empty on the far side of town.

Joining the back of the queue, it takes several hours for the heroes to reach the front. Every now and then a mounted huscarl rides up and down the line, shouting out for patience and that all will receive welcome in due course.

No one seems to know why Cuthwulf has arranged such a large market so early in the year, though rumors among the visitors are rife. Allow each character a Street-wise roll. With success, the hero learns the market is religious in nature, though Cuthwulf has never before called a market to honor Eostre. On a raise, the character discovers the market has been called to honor Eostre in a special festival. Grand prizes are on offer in some sort of extended competition. On a critical failure, the adventure hears that Cuthwulf is about to declare war on a neighbor and is seeking both divine assistance and swords for hire.

On finally arriving at the gate to the new palisade, a weary-looking herald flanked by dour-looking huscarls enquires to the characters' names and social status. All the heroes are greeted courteously, though with no fawning of groveling unless they somehow outrank the jarl. The characters are each asked whether they vow to obey the laws of hospitality. Those replying affirmatively are given a stamped brass disc bearing Cuthwulf's heraldic symbol—a wolf's head.

Anyone saying "no," even jokingly, is turned aside—the herald has a huge queue of folk to process and is in no mood for humor. The hero may rejoin the queue, at the back. By the time he is seen again night is falling.

"Keep this safe," says the herald. "This token shows you are duly welcomed to the festival by Jarl Cuthwulf. If you are asked to produce it by a representative of Cuthwulf and cannot do so immediately, you will be thrown out of Nobaut as a breaker of the peace and potential enemy of the realm."

Depending on their social rank, the characters are assigned different sleeping quarters.

Status Assigned Sleeping Quarters

Noble* A sleeping bench beside the hearth in a local noble's hall within the town proper. Each noble may take one other character with him, for nobles are expected to have a steward, herald, or huscarl at their side.

Cleric/Mage Clerics of Eostre (either faction) and Sigel have sleeping space in the appropriate temple, which also lie within the main town. Other clerics and non-noble mages are assigned lodging with a local family, who treat the characters with great respect.

Merchant Erect a tent in the palisade area reserved for merchants. Fine tents with a wooden cot, strongbox (empty), and table and two chairs can be rented for 1 gs per day if the hero does not own one.

Crafter Erect a tent in the palisade area reserved for crafters. A good quality tent with a wooden cot and a strongbox (empty) can be rented for 5 ss per day if the hero does not own one.

Others Erect a tent in the main communal area. A basic tent can be rented for 1 ss per day if the hero does not own one.

Frostborn** Erect a tent at the back of the communal area, among the slaves and peasants. No tents are rented to such characters, for they are distrusted in Nohaut.

* Includes nobles of the Magocracy.

** Includes all hrimwisards who announce their status.

The heroes have little to do for the rest of the day, save erecting tents if they so need and meeting their hosts. As with other NPCs not central to the plot, no stats or descriptions are provided. Basic archetypes from the *Hellfrost Bestiary* and the Allies Personality Table should suffice. Unless a hero deliberately shuns company, he is invited to some sort of small feast held by others of his social class that night.



Just before dawn, heralds traipse through the sludgy snow, for none fell last night, blowing horns and waking the town with cries of, *"All are to assemble at the base of Moot Hill at Second Gaet!"* (That's two hours after dawn.)

EL. AN ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE

As the heroes make their way to Moot Hill (a tall, flat-topped hill which lies just outside the town's fortifications), they find themselves rubbing shoulders with thegns and haulds, crafters and merchants, peasants and huscarls. A general buzz of curiosity circulates amongst the crowd.

Once everyone is present, Cuthwulf and his council, bedecked in their finest furs and adorned with golden torcs and circlets, climb the hill and take their position. Silence slowly falls across the crowd as the nobles look down upon the populace. When all is silent, Cuthwulf addresses the audience.

"Loyal kinsmen, neighbors, and strangers, I bid you welcome to Nobaut in peace and friendship. My heralds, sworn to secrecy, have revealed nothing of the meaning of this gathering, but all of your questions will soon be answered, I can assure you."

"Spring is soon to be upon us once more, as Thrym is driven back by the merciful gods. The omens tell of a need for a festival to bless these lands, so let it be known that a festival to Eostre will take place beginning on Monandaeg.

"During the festival, five challenges will be issued. These shall be judged by the Eostre maidens, girls to be chosen from our own lands to represent Eostre. Any man or woman of good character, whether he is a freeman or noble, kinsman or stranger, may enter these challenges, so long as he be loyal to the gods of good grace. If you wish to attend, make your way to the temple of Eostre now and give your name to my heralds before nightfall.

"Those crafters and merchants among you are at leave to erect your stalls and prepare your goods, for tomorrow shall be the great market. Other guests may pass your time with dancing and singing in praise of the gods!"

As soon as the jarl stops talking, the air is filled with a multitude of conversations, with farmers promising to enter for their ancestors' sake, young women dreaming of being named Eostre Queen, and thegns talking of marrying good Saxa stock. Everyone is excited.

It's up to the characters if they wish to partake or not. Normally the NPCs' actions are predetermined, so the focus remains on the heroes. However, players of non-participating heroes can aid the GM during the contests by actually playing an NPC and making die rolls and speeches as appropriate. *In such cases, the predetermined text and results should not be used.*

Once at the temple, the characters are informed that each contest is scored, and that whoever accumulates the most points over the five tasks will be declared the winner. Hence, the more contests one enters, the greater one's chance of victory overall. The contests are to be of words, physical prowess, stamina, speed, and observation. No amount of bribery, threats, or pleas to aid a fellow cleric can get them to reveal more.

Contestants are warned that any use of magic will result in expulsion from the festival and may, at the temple of Eostre's discretion, be viewed as a religious crime. If found guilty, the offender could be fined a large sum of money or sold into slavery to till the fields of Nohaut.

The use of herbal remedies is considered cheating, not to a lesser extent than employing magic. Anyone found cheating by means of herbal brews is disqualified from the contest in which the brew was used and scores no points for that event.

E2. MEETING THE RIVALS

Later that night, as Sigel sinks west, Cuthwulf throws a huge feast in the double-palisade enclosure, to which everyone above the rank of slave is invited. There is

no defined seating order beyond Cuthwulf's table, to which none of the characters are invited to attend. Venison, roast boar, and mutton are roasted over make-shift hearths, while great slabs of cheese and bread are handed out. Mead is reserved for nobles—others must settle for ale.

Part way through the revelry, before the serious drinking and dancing begins, Cuthwulf stands and addresses the crowd.

"Kith, kin, and guests," he roars over the dull murmurings pervading the crowd, "the contestants are named!" A cheer ripples through the audience. "At midnight, we shall begin the blessing ceremony!" As the crowd begins speculating on who the champions might be, servants place three intricately carved wooden chairs behind the jarl. Each is adorned with images of plants and animals.

Saxa characters and clerics of Eostre, who will have witnessed similar but not identical events in their youth, automatically know the blessing festival is a routine part of such a ceremony, and makes the gods aware of who is championing them. The contestants will also have a chance to meet each other, make boasts to the crowd, and to view the young ladies that stepped forward to be Eostre maidens. Other characters need to make a Knowledge (Folklore or Religion) roll to learn these facts.

Cuthwulf stands and calls for silence before making a short speech.

"The gods are pleased by your support for this festival and the omens are good! As is tradition, I will first call upon the contestants to stand before you. When all are assembled and known, the maidens will be brought out, so that all may see the Eostre maidens and the honor they bring their families.

"The challengers are known to my council and to the gods, now let them be known to you! Each must face a test of words, physical prowess, stamina, speed, and vigilance before they may claim their prize. Let the challengers be called!" With that Cuthwulf sits back down. His chief skald, identified as Regdi Wulfricsunu by a local sitting near you, steps forward to perform the calling.

Start the introductions by calling a hero and let him decide what to do when he reaches the front of the crowd. Traditionally this is the time to make boasts about prowess and the things you will do if chosen as victor. Each character must make a Persuasion roll (a skill some may lack). Modifiers can be awarded to the players for particularly good or poor speeches. Brief but meaningful words are better than a long-winded monologue.

Success earns the hero an extra benny and a raise two. These represent crowd support, and can be spent

only during the contests. The NPCs' brief speeches are detailed below, along with notes as to how the crowd reacts.

Sitting in one of the chairs is bad form, as these are reserved for the Eostre brides. Whilst doing so does not damage the ritual, it does cause loud fits of laughter from the crowd and the hero is likely to receive a rude, but popular, nickname, such as "the Maiden" or "Fool's Love". He suffers a -1 penalty to Charisma for the rest of the adventure. Intersperse the remainder of the heroes with the NPC contestants below until all are introduced.

Aldhelm: *"With Thunor's blessing I will bring glory to my ancestors."* The crowd responds to the local boy with wild applause. Aldhelm earns an additional two bennies, despite his few words.

Coelric ("celrick"): *"Poor of land, but strong of heart, I vow to win one of the maidens as my bride."* Polite claps and a few cheers are heard, for Coelric is poor but popular. He earns an extra benny.

Hussa ("hoo-sah"): *"Let it be known to all that if I win the contest outright I shall host a feast for all who support me!"* This earns wild cheers, although technically it is a form of bribery. Hussa earns an extra benny.

Penda: *"I have lands plentiful with crops and I swear to win myself a bride worthy of my status and position."* Penda is disliked locally, and the clapping is half-hearted. No extra bennies are earned.

Cissa ("kee-sah"): *"I am Cissa the berserk, chosen of Tiw and victorious in all that I do. No man is my equal and I bow only to the gods! I vow to win the stamina contest! Let no man stand before me!"* Cissa is met with a torrent of boos and jeers for his arrogance. He earns no extra bennies.

Once all of the contestants have been called, Cuthwulf stands again and calls upon Eostre to bless the contestants. The high priestess of the temple, a disciple of Eostre Plantmother, steps forward from her seat at the high table. She intones a prayer to her deity, calling on her favor for those who would champion her, and then slaps each contestant across the face with a holly branch, symbolically driving out any evil spirits.

After the blessing is concluded, Cuthwulf hands proceedings over to his skald again, who introduces the maidens to the contestants.

E3. THE EOSTRE MAIDENS UNVEILED

The Eostre festival is dedicated primarily to the goddess of the same name and welcomes back spring. It also once had an older meaning, being an ideal time for men and women to marry and begin procreation. As such, the call has also gone out to single women of the jarl's lands (who wish to be wed) to offer themselves to the winners, who will have proven their worth as good husbands. Three such women have stepped forward to accept possible husbands. Being Saxa, they are well protected by their fathers and brothers from those who may wish to sample the goods beforehand.

"The first of our maiden's fair is the Eostre Queen, chosen by the runes in front of the noble women and freemen's wives of my land. She is Cwenburh ("qwen-bur"), third daughter of Thegn Aethelred, loyal noble to Jarl Cuthwulf. Renowned for her skill at weaving, Cwenburh's breathtaking beauty is known to all in these lands. Dressed in green with a crown of early spring flowers, she is a sight to behold and a perfect representation of the beauty of spring." True enough, Cwenburh is stunningly beautiful. Many of the married men are receiving stern looks from their wives.

"The second, known as the Eostre Princess, is Gytba ("gitba"), daughter of Theobald, a notable thegn. Dressed in yellow and carrying blue flowers, she represents the fertility of the living". Her costume contrasts with her shock of red hair. She scowls at the assembled populace, cursing at a few who demand to have a "closer look."

"Lastly, and known as the Eostre Maiden, is Eadbild ("aid-billed"), second daughter of Oswulf, a huscarl of good ancestry. Dressed in brown, with a garland of flowers, she represents the fertility of the earth." The local women have done well to make her look pretty, for she can best be described as "homely," if one is being polite. A few cruel "oinks" circulate the crowd, much to Eadbild's obvious dismay.

"As all can see, there are but three maidens and only three husbands can be chosen. The contestants must battle for the right to win of these three blessed brides, and let the best men win!"

"For ladies who wish to compete, or men who do not wish the great honor of marriage, Cuthwulf, most generous of lords, has arranged a prize of gold."

With the blessing and introductions complete, the feast continues with renewed vigor. Characters who signed up for the competitions find themselves the center of much attention and speculation. Heroes who want to pull out of the competition now suffer a -5 Glory penalty for dishonoring Jarl Cuthwulf and offending Eostre. Eventually, everyone tires and heads to their assigned sleeping quarters.

MARKETDAEG

The heroes have many duties this day, such as attending blessings and feasts, but they also have time enough to engage in shopping, gossip, and even a little cheating. The three events in this section may occur in any order the GM desires.

PRAISE TO VAR

At dawn, the merchants gather to perform a ceremony to honor Var. After consulting the previous night, Var's visiting priests have nominated one of their number to be acting high priest based on his previous year's profits. While there may be a cleric of Var among the heroes, his ledgers are not going to be a patch on those of a full-time trader. Hence, while the hero may participate in the ritual, he will not be appointed leader.

The high priest, Profiteer Thosa ap-Gobert, stands in front of the makeshift shrine to Var and reads out the names of all the clerics present. As the names are called, each one steps forward and nails a single gold scield to the base of the wooden shrine. This is then marked down in their ledgers. Thus, all the trading clerics begin by making a symbolic loss at the start of the week's trading.

Thefttakers meanwhile go around the stalls and offer the merchants protection. This service isn't free, but only merchants with a sizeable security force can afford not to take up the offer of Var's protection. Those willing to pay the fee (50 gs) have their canvas covering painted with Var's holy symbol as a warning to thieves.

With the dual rituals complete, the high priest blows a horn hung around the shrine. Not long afterwards, the center of Nohaut is abuzz with sellers and buyers, all clamoring for the best deals. At dawn, the horn is blown again and trading ends for the day. The horn is blown

each dawn and dusk to signal the start and end of the trading day.

E4. THE MARKET

Marketaeg has been set aside as a grand market day, while during the rest of the week the market is a regular one. Traders from across the region are in attendance, bringing with them many unusual goods.

As Nohaut is a town, all V and T Availability goods are available as standard throughout the week. On Marketdaeg, C Availability goods are also for sale in abundance. As the week progresses, the inventories dwindle via steady sales, and the merchants raise the prices to ensure their remaining stock fetches a healthy profit.

During Marketaeg, City goods can be purchased at the basic prices listed in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*—no markup is applied. For each day thereafter, the cost rises by +10%, to a maximum of +50% after five days (this is the standard price increase for C goods in a town).

E5. TIME TO KILL

There is time during the days for the characters to size up their competitors, learn more about the Eostre maidens, and discern the nature of the competitions. Heroes wishing to dig up some dirt must resort to Streetwise. Because the characters will not know whether the stories

they hear are truthful or not, the GM should make the rolls in secret on the characters' behalf. These can be made individually or as Cooperative rolls.

Unfortunately, the competitors have limited time thanks to other duties required of them, not to mention entertaining the crowd of well-wishers they have drawn. As such, each competitor may make a total of two Streetwise rolls. Those not taking part in the contests may make a total of four rolls. Each roll must be focused on one specific rival, maiden, or contest—the heroes are unlikely to learn everything they want to know.

Information learned on a successful Streetwise roll is given below. Text in parentheses is false, and is revealed on a failure. Certain information, such as the raid mentioned under Coelric's entry, has no bearing on the adventure, but can be used by the GM to create new adventures.

RIVALS

Aldhelm: Squeaky clean, that one. No one has anything bad to say about him. He's poor, for sure, but very



popular. (He's a real charmer. Some folks, not me mind you, claim he's a secret follower of Vali).

Cissa: Be wary of this one. His temper is matched only by his deceitful nature. (Cissa acts big and tough, but he's a coward at heart).

Coelric: Coelric wants to do better with his lot in life and this may be his chance to prove himself to Cuthwulf, especially since Cuthwulf is planning a cattle raid soon. (Coelric has squandered his family fortune and is destitute. He's probably bribable.)

Hussa: He may be generous, but he'll do anything to win more glory for himself. (Hussa seeks glory at any cost. I saw him buying something from a peddler. Looked like some sort of potion.)

Penda: He may be rich, but only because his slaves do all the work. He hasn't got the energy to stand most of the time. (Penda has more than enough wealth to bribe the judges.)

MAIDENS

Cwenburh: Aye, she's a pretty one, but spoiled beyond belief and a poor housekeeper. She'd better be a good weaver because her husband will need to find the income from somewhere to support her. (She may be pretty on the surface, but apparently that's the effect of some sort of relic she wears. Underneath that fine exterior she's a shriveled old hag.)

Eadhild: Ugly as a cow's backside, but they say she has a way with the people. She runs her father's lands for him and they're prosperous enough. (Her father's lands are prosperous enough, but only because Eadhild follows an outlawed sect of Eostre that practices human sacrifice.)

Gytha: Don't let her looks deceive you, boy—she's a hellcat! It'll take a proper man to tame her heart. (Her father entered her into the competition as he can't wait to be rid of her and her violent temper. They say she's got berserk blood in her veins.)

CONTESTS

Observation: The finale is a hunt for birds' eggs, hidden in the wilds. (Nasty test, this one. You have to stand in an open field while archers fire blunt arrows at you. Last time this contest was held a man lost an eye!)

Physical Prowess: The huscarls have set up a course littered with obstacles, so as to test every aspect of physical endurance. (Sharpen your sword, boy, for you'll need it! And make sure you pay the healers well, for they'll be overworked this day!)

Speed: Four legs are better than one, so folk say. This is a test of your ability to ride a horse. It's a test of speed and skill. (Cuthwulf keeps a pack of vicious hunting dogs. You'll have meat tied to you and then given a head start. Now you know why it's a test of speed!)

Stamina: What better test of stamina for a warrior than drinking until you collapse! Look at it this way, the drink is free! (Ah, they used to call that the Test of Pain

in my days. You have to run a gauntlet of commoners who swipe at you with sticks. They say nobles get special attention, if you know what I mean.)

Words: Being a Saxa isn't all about violence, y'know. The Unknowable One is the father of poetry and you'll need to compose a poem. (This is a test of words and quick-thinking. It's a riddle contest.)

E5. CHEATING APLENTY

Though the festival is religious in nature, the prizes (both the girls and the money), are attractive propositions. This, in turn, prompts more than a little cheating. During Marketdaeg, the heroes are visited in random order (starting with the player to your left and working clockwise is one method you could use) and offered certain perks in return for goods. Players should be offered these boons away from the other players—it is up to the players to decide if they want to share information.

Honest heroes may decide to turn in the person offering the service to Cuthwulf for punishment. The NPC is fined 50 gs and expelled immediately. This action earns the honest hero +1 Glory for his virtue, but it means any character coming after him cannot be offered that service. Unfortunately, all the NPCs were approached first, so their cheating is not hampered.

Observation: One of Cuthwulf's mead-hall servants offers to sell eggs in advance of the competition. Gold eggs cost 50 gs each and silver eggs 15 gs each. Acceptance gives the hero automatic points at the end of the great egg hunt. This offer is made to *every* contestant!

Physical Prowess: A seedy merchant has an herbal brew which will boost the heroes' strength. In game terms, it grants +1 to Climbing, Strength, and Swimming rolls. He asks the princely sum of 100 gs.

Speed: One of the stable hands offers an herbal salve which is to be rubbed into the horse's flesh before the event begins. It increases the stamina of the horse, granting +1 to Riding rolls made in the event. He charges 50 gs.

Stamina: An itinerant herbalist offers to sell a potion to stave off the effects of alcohol for 50 gs. Acceptance, and drinking it just before the competition starts, grants a +1 bonus to Vigor rolls for the purpose of remaining sober during the contest.

Words: A visiting skald offers to teach a special poem, praising both love and battle, for a mere 50 gs. Acceptance gives the hero +2 to his roll on the day of the contest.

CHEATING CONTESTANTS

Aldhelm plays it straight and does not resort to cheating.

Coelric buys two gold eggs and one silver egg.

Hussa opts to purchase just a single silver egg.

Penda, not the manliest of men, buys an herbal brew for the drinking contest, two silver eggs, a brew to boost his physical prowess, *and* a salve to help his horse.

Finally, Cissa purchases four gold eggs.

● MONANDAEG ●

The poetry competition begins just before midday on the moot hill. A large crowd has gathered. Ale and food are available from the stores of the noblemen and from freeman of generous nature.

PRAISE TO THE UNKNOWNABLE ONE

Poetry has long been used by the Saxa to praise heroes, ridicule foes, and honor the gods. The Unknowable One is the patron of poetry. After playing several rounds of stone–parchment–knife, the visiting clerics of the Unknowable One appoint a temporary spokesman. Given that Rank and experience play no part in this election, a player character cleric may be appointed high priest. Have the player play out a game of rock-paper-scissors with all the other players and the GM. If he wins the majority of games, he is appointed as the Unknowable One's high priest in Nohaut for the week.

A player character high priest may perform any rite he wishes, with little risk of offending his god. Otherwise, the elected spokesman is Eadgifu, an attractive female with a vocabulary that would shame a battle-hardened warrior. She recites a well-known poem in reverse, while her comrades silently dance around her, their hands clasped over their mouths.

Once this is done, Eadgifu lines up the other clergy and calls out loudly, proclaiming a poem shall be sung to honor all the nobles of Nohaut. As one, the assembled clergy line up, drop their pants, and fart loudly. Although there a few sour faces among the crowd of onlookers, most of them, Cuthwulf included, laugh heartily.

E7. CONTEST OF WORDS (POETRY)

All Saxa know something of the poetic art and the heroes get their chance to prove this in the competition. Each contestant is called in turn (arrange any order you want) to stand atop the hill and recite his poem to the crowd and the Eostre maidens. The judges, the three Eostre maidens, then award points as applicable.

Seeing as how the brides-to-be do the judging, there is naturally a certain element of charm that goes into their decision and the event is often seen as an opportunity to flirt outrageously and to show off any wealth a contestant may possess.

MECHANICS

Heroes may either role-play their hero reciting a poem first, in which case the GM can award bonuses (or penalties) to their total score, or simply make a Knowledge (Folklore) roll. The NPC contestants tell tales as detailed below. No die roll is made for them unless a player has control of one or more. Instead, the numbers in parentheses are their final scores (see below).

Aldhelm (11): Aldhelm composes a poem to honor the maidens fair and speaks about each of their strengths. Regardless of whether he is run by a player or remains an NPC, the crowd goes wild!

Cissa (2): Cissa tells a graphic tale of bloody but heroic battle, going into gory detail and scaring the young maidens.

Coelric (5): Coelric recites a simple poem about the jarl, but fails to impress many with his words of glory and bravery.

Hussa (9): Husa tells of how Sigel won Eostre in a contest of love, wooing the maidens with his tale.

Penda (1): Penda suffers from a bad bout of nerves whilst retelling a tale of a hero fighting a dragon, and makes a complete mess of things. He is eventually booed from the hill by the crowd.

SCORING

To calculate a hero's score, add his Knowledge (Folklore) roll to his Charisma. Negative Charisma warrants as a negative modifier. Record the totals on a scrap of paper.

Once the competition is over, actual points are awarded. The character with the highest score receives a number of points equal to the total number of contestants. Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts.

If die rolls are tied, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point. For instance, if there are a total of eight competitors, the marks would normally be scored from 8 (for the victor) down to 1 (for last place). However, a hero and Aldhelm both score 11 points. They share the top score of 8 points. Whoever comes next scores just six points, rather than seven, as there is no second place position.

● SUNNANDAEG ●

The next competition takes place at the bottom of the moot hill, where a large table has been placed. The crowd, kept amused by numerous barrels of free ale, surrounds the event area ten deep and is already in a jovial mood when the contestants arrive. Cuthwulf, his nobles, and the Eostre maidens sit atop the hill, looking down on the event.

PRAISE TO EOSTRE (BOTH ASPECTS) AND GULLVEIG

Gullveig, a minor deity, is the Mead-Thane of the Gods, and attributed with having created mead. He is the patron deity of all brewers.

Once the crowd is assembled, the resident high priestess of Eostre walks up to each maiden, the local

brewers trailing behind her, bearing jugs of their finest. The cleric bows low before the Eostre Queen, Eostre Princess, and Eostre Maiden, for they are symbols of the goddess manifest on the mortal world. Each brewer then offers the maidens his jug, from which they take a small sip. Cuthwulf is then offered a drink. During this time, the priestess intones prayers to both aspects of Eostre, for bees are required for mead and plants for beer and wine.

Once this is done, the high priestess calls the names of each of the other greater gods. As their names are intoned, the brewers pour a measure of their jug onto the ground to sate the deity's thirst. Finally, the priestess blesses each cask from which the contestants will drink as well as each mug they will use.

E8. CONTEST OF STAMINA (DRINKING)

The contest is simply a case of drinking more than your rivals while staying conscious. To liven up the event, since watching grown men get drunk can be boring, various drinks have been produced from Cuthwulf's stores, and at the start of each round a spectator gets to nominate which drink everyone will quaff. Roll randomly on the table below. All contestants drink the same alcoholic beverage during that round.

To score the event, the GM needs a piece of paper with the names of the contestants, their Vigor die type, and several columns for the rounds that pass. Each round, he records the drink's plummeting Drunk value (see below). Because the type of drink downed each round is random, the GM will need to roll for each NPC in turn as the rounds take place.

MECHANICS

Unlike the modern world, the idea of a measure is virtually unknown. Most drinks are served in pint flagons, regardless of their alcoholic content. Each type of drink is given a points rating, as shown below. Every hero has a Drunk rating equal to 2 + half his Vigor die type. When a drink is quaffed, subtract the points from the Drunk value. Record this on the sheet provided on page 20.

A hero can keep drinking without effect so long as the Drunk value is positive. Once it reaches zero or lower, the character must make a Vigor roll with a penalty equal to his current Drunk rating (rounding down as normal).

Success: The hero remains sober.

Failure: The hero becomes drunk, but still remains in the competition. While drunk and conscious, the hero has +1 Toughness, but suffers a -1 penalty to all Agility and Smarts rolls, including linked skills.

Special Failure: If the hero rolls a 1 on his Vigor die, regardless of his Wild Die, he vomits and is out of the contest.

Critical Failure: The drinker passes out for 2d6 hours and is out of the contest.

The roll is repeated for each drink thereafter. If the

penalty equals or exceeds the drinker's full positive Drunk rating, any failed roll automatically causes the hero to fall unconscious for 2d6 hours.

One point is recovered for each hour a hero goes without an alcoholic drink. Recovering drunks receive a -1 penalty to all Traits rolls upon waking until the Drunk rating rises back to zero.

ALCOHOL TABLE

d20	Drink	Points
1-2	Brandy	5
3-5	Wine	3
6-11	Mead	2
12-17	Strong ale	1
18-20	Weak ale	0.5

Example: Gerwin the Stout has Vigor d8 and a Drunk rating of 6. He downs 6 pints of strong ale, leaving him with a zero Drunk rating. He passes his Vigor roll and is tipsy, but not inebriated. He then downs a small beer. This leaves him on -0.5, so the roll is made with no modifier. Gerwin manages to make the roll.

He is then measured a pint of brandy. Gerwin finishes the drink, leaving him on -5.5. He fails his Vigor roll at -5 and launches into loud, drunken boasting. Gerwin forces down another brandy, leaving him at -10.5! Unsurprisingly he fails his Vigor roll spectacularly. Because the penalty is equal to or greater than his normal Drunk rating, Gerwin collapses for 2d6 hours.

Gerwin is out for 6 hours. When he awakens, his Drunk rating is still -4. Gerwin will be nursing a pounding headache for four hours.

CHEATING

Penda swills his herbal brew before the contest begins, granting him +1 to his Vigor rolls for the duration of the contest.

In any round in which brandy or wine are nominated as the drinks, Penda tries to cheat by spilling most of his drink down his front. Eagle-eyed heroes may make Notice rolls at -2. Calling in a judge results in Penda's immediate disqualification (he scores no points for this contest). Otherwise, Penda suffers only half the penalty from those drinks.

In round five, if still standing, Coelric, probably quiet drunk, vows that he will fight bravely if chosen by Cuthwulf to take part in his next overseas raid.

In round seven, Cissa, if still conscious, leans over to a randomly selected hero and threatens to kill him unless he throws the next round. Cissa is not joking and, given a chance in a future adventure, exacts his revenge on the hero unless he fakes passing out.

SCORING

The winner is the contestant who lasts the longest before being ruled ineligible to continue. He receives a number of points equal to the number of contestants.

Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts.

If the number of rounds a contestant lasted is tied with another, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point. For instance, if there are a total of eight competitors, then the marks would normally be scored from 8 down to 1. However, a hero and Cissa both last ten rounds. They share the top score of 8 points. Whoever comes next scores just six points, rather than seven, as there is no second place position.

HEALFDAEG

Having sobered up after the previous contest, the characters are awakened early and led to the fields outside the town. Here, the huscarls have arranged an obstacle course!

PRAISE TO TIW

God of warriors, Tiw is also the chief deity of physical strength and stamina. The clerics of Tiw gathered in No-haut have chosen their leader based on age and experience—this is not a Novice player character, though he is of course allowed to participate in the ritual. To qualify, a participant must possess a shield and a single-handed weapon. He is loaned a throwing axe for the duration of the ritual.

Led by the appointed leader, the clerics and any lay worshippers who wish to participate, line up. All have naked chests, on which are painted Tiw's holy symbol in animal blood or blue woad. The clergy take up positions in the front, with the other worshippers arrayed behind. A battle chant is then performed, with the clergy performing an intimidating cry and the laity banging their weapons against their shields in a steady rhythm. As the chant ends, the worshippers turn away from the crowd and hurl their axes at imaginary foes.

E9. TEST OF PHYSICAL PROWESS (OBSTACLE COURSE)

Saxa warriors pride themselves on more than just their ability to fight. Physical prowess (in all forms) is regarded as the sign of a "real man." In order to help prove their worth, the contestants must overcome a number of physical challenges. However, the contest is not just one of pure strength, but also of general stamina, for the course is spread out over several miles, and is thus a race, as well.

Cuthwulf's skald addresses the contestants and crowd once everyone is gathered.

"Ahead lies the physical test, a test designed by Cuthwulf's own huscarls!" A huge roar echoes through the crowd as the huscarls beat their

spears on their shields in recognition of the praise. "Many different obstacles await the brave and noble contestants. Watch them sprint and ensure long distances, climb and balance, and lift and dodge! Cheer each along, for they are all worthy entrants!"

It is clear from the sideways glance the skald gives you that his personal feelings are different to his flowery words.

You are called to stand beside the skald. "When the horn blows," he says, "you may begin!"

The obstacle course comprises ten distinct stages. All contestants run the test in turn, thus prolonging the enjoyment for the crowd. To speed up play, though, you can either pair up a hero with an NPC and roll dice while the other players shout and jeer like the crowd, or just have everyone roll each stage simultaneously.

Each stage requires a Trait roll of some sort. Marks are awarded based on the outcome of the roll, as shown below. This simple system takes into account speed, flair, prowess, retries, and so on. Regardless of the outcome of each roll, contestants move to the next obstacle after the appropriate roll is made. Entrants may *not* aid each other through Cooperative rolls.

Result	Points
Raise	2
Success	1
Failure	0*
Critical Failure	-1**

* On stage 7 the hero must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

** The contestant must make an Agility roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises.

THE COURSE

Stage	Feat	Trait Roll
1	Sprint	Agility
2	Climb wooden scaffold	Climbing
3	Balance along narrow beam	Agility
4	Jump water-filled ditch	Strength
5	Long run between obstacles	Vigor
6	Swim across a pond	Swimming
7	Dodge blunt arrows	Agility
8	Long run between obstacles	Vigor
9	Lift a heavy log off the ground	Strength
10	Final sprint for home	Agility

CHEATING

Although there are stewards positioned around the course, cheating can still occur.

SCORING

Once the competition is over, actual points are

awarded. Tally up the individual points for each stage. The character with the highest score receives a number of points equal to the total number of contestants. Second place takes one less point, and so on down to the last place contestant, who collects a single point for his efforts. If die rolls are tied, those contestants score equal points. Others are marked down by one point.

MILCDAEG

Bruised and fatigued, the contestants are called to the jarl's stables shortly after dawn. Waiting for them are Cuthwulf, several huscarls, the skald, and the master of horses. Each contestant must now select a mount in preparation for the next event. Have each hero make a Riding roll while he examines the horses. On a raise, he selects a fine steed, which grants him +1 to Riding rolls. A critical failure means he chooses poorly, and the nag gives a -1 penalty due to its clumsiness, slowness, or general poor health.

PRAISE TO FREO

While Eostre Animalmother is patron of animals, horses are most commonly associated with Freo, god of travel. Freo's clergy in Nohaut run a simple race, without the aid of magic, to determine who shall lead their rituals. A non-contestant player character cleric of Freo may make an Agility roll. If he scores a raise, he wins the race and may conduct the ritual. Otherwise, victory goes to Bassa Cerdicsunu.

The horses chosen by the contestants are paraded in front of the cleric, who daubs a cartwheel on each one's flank in white paint. Each also has words whispered into their ears; blessings and protective prayers to help keep the beast safe during the race. Next, Bassa places his ear next to the horse's mouth. Whatever it utters is not in human speech, and thus is meant for Freo's ears only.

During this part of the ceremony, a cleric of the Unknowable One rides up to the contestants, a hobby horse between his legs. "Neighing and rearing," the Trickster asks Freo's cleric to help calm his horse. Although disgruntled at the interruption, Bassa knows better than to complain—better to go along than face further ridicule. As Bassa draws near, the hobbyhorse "bolts," and the Unknowable One's cleric sprints off, waving one arm wildly and crying out for someone brave to save him. A gang of screaming children gives chase, finally managing to capture the wayward hobbyhorse and bring it under control. The children are then rewarded with candied apples.

Once the commotion has ended, Bassa removes his boots and throws them to the crowd. That the boots come very close to hitting the Unknowable One's cleric cannot be accidental, can it?

E10. TEST OF SPEED (HORSEMANSHIP)

Horsemanship in combat is not a prized Saxa trait,



for traditionally they ride up to battle, not into battle. As such, this test is not one of cavalry skills but of the ability to control a galloping horse. This may come as a disappointment to any Anari warriors, for the Anari armies regularly use cavalry.

The contest is a simple race around the outside of the town. All the riders are racing together and against each other. The race is handled abstractly through a slightly modified version of the Chase rules.

Place counters on the table to form a square measuring six counters to a side. One of these should be of a different color, as it marks the start/finish line. Each contestant should have a miniature to help track his position. The heroes begin on the start token. To win, the rider must move around the square (in the same direction as the other riders) and finish back on the starting marker.

Riding rolls are made each round. A raise moves the contest by *three* markers, a success by *two*, and a failure by *one*. Note that this is different to the core Chase rules—since the race follows a finite track, it makes little

sense for a failure to result in no discernible movement, though a critical failure means the rider has fallen. He must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from Bumps and Bruises. Next round he may remount, at a cost of -2 to his Riding roll.

Physical contact between contestants is prohibited, but the Force maneuver is permitted (running someone into a wall or fallen tree), as is Distract. Push may be used, as may Parallel and Hold Steady.

Action cards are dealt as normal during the race.

CHEATING

Penda pretends to groom his horse before the race, and makes great pains to be seen by the maidens caring for his animal. He is secretly applying the salve he purchased. This grants him +1 to Riding rolls.

Cissa surreptitiously tries to cheat during the race. Should he end up within one Range Increment of a fellow rider, he tries the Parallel maneuver at -2 penalty the following round (assuming the intended victim is still within range). With success, he draws level and swings a wild arm at his rival, incurring a -2 penalty to his Fighting roll for the multiple actions. If he rolls a 1 on his Fighting roll, he is spotted by a judge stationed on the palisade wall and ordered to drop out of the race. Otherwise, he gets away with the blatant foul. If a hero elects to copy the berserk, the same rules apply with regard to being spotted.

SCORING

Points are awarded in the order the riders cross the finish line, with the victor taking as many points as there are contestants, second place one point less, and so on down. Because of the use of cards to determine initiative, no two riders will ever cross the line simultaneously—someone will always be ahead or behind by a nose. No score sheet is required for this event as the outcome is straightforward—just mark the scores down on the master score sheet.

● ENDEDAEG ●

At last, the final day of the contest draws near. Although many merchants have departed, the crowd remains strong. With just one event left, the crowd is beginning to speculate on who will be the eventual winners.

PRAISE TO RIGR

Rigr is a vigilant deity, and he dislikes his clergy wasting time performing rituals. In order to appease their god, the clergy of Rigr quickly make their way down the line of contestants, daubing stylized eyes on their foreheads in vegetable dye. Blessings are uttered for keen eyesight and the temptation to avoid distractions.

EII. CONTEST OF VIGILANCE (EGG HUNT)

Eggs are strongly associated with Eostre. They symbolize the awakening of spring after the hardness of winter, and as such are a symbol of rebirth. Many children hunt for normal or candied eggs hidden by their parents during Eostre festivals. Cuthwulf, however, has supplied wooden legs decorated with gold and silver leaf.

The egg hunt gives each contestant a chance to leap up the leaderboard by finding gold or silver eggs hidden in the lands around the town. The spectators may roam as they wish, and everyone knows they will try to aid their chosen champion in any way they can. Contestants are allowed to bring along up to three helpers, who may search for eggs, carry food or water, or drive away wild beasts. These should be present at the start of the race so all may see who is helping whom. It also presents a way of having other heroes involved if they are not contestants. Otherwise, assume normal citizens come to the aid of each hero. The helpers each have Notice d4 and aid through the Cooperative Rolls rule.

The hunt begins at the base of Moot Hill just before dawn on Endedaeg. The local nobles, the contestants, the maidens, and many bleary eyed freemen watch as the sun breaks the horizon. As it does, Cuthwulf speaks to the contestants.

"You have until the last rays of the sun have gone to return here with as many gold and silver eggs as you can find. These have been hidden in the wilderness within a twenty mile radius of this bill. Run like the wind and may Freo and Thunor be at your back and Rigr guide your eyes!"

With that, the game is afoot and contestants begin running in all directions. Although the contest is broken down into ten phases, there are also five events that should be inserted to break up an endless die rolling session. You can either have the characters all run into the same encounters or split them between various heroes as you see fit.

MECHANICS

The event is broken down into ten one hour-long slots, during each of which every contestant must roll their Notice. Helpers are Extras with Notice d6 and no other skills of use. They aid through making Cooperative rolls. The heroes can work together (if they so wish) by traveling in a Group. However, each character can only make a single Notice roll in any hour. Thus, he can search for himself or aid a companion through Cooperative rolls, but not both.

Success gains the character a silver egg while a raise nets him a gold. Failure indicates an hour of fruitless searching. On a critical failure, the hero uncovers a real egg by mistake. Any contestant may forgo two Notice rolls to automatically locate a silver egg through a

systematic search, or **four** rolls to retrieve a gold egg. Although this method guarantees results, it offers less potential reward.

There are events that may distract the heroes from their goal. Some events are beneficial, some are not. Check with the actual event below for more details. It is up to the players whether they are traveling together or going separately. For each hour, deal each player character contestant a card—heroes who are not contestants but who are aiding a comrade do not receive a separate card. If a hero draws a Club *and* there is an event during that hour, then the character encounters it. Multiple heroes drawing a Club at the same time have the same encounter simultaneously. Note that the cards are only used to determine events—Jokers have no effect on play.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Hour 2) Young Maidens Fair: As the heroes run through a stretch of wood they spy a small group of maidens, dressed all in browns and greens, beckoning for them to join them in the woods. The maidens are clerics of Gersemi, a minor deity allied to Eira whose worshippers believe in free, consensual sex. They have also been using certain charms to enhance their beauty. As such, male heroes must make a Spirit roll to resist the lure.

Heroes who openly choose to spend time with them must roll their Vigor. Success allows the character to satisfy the maidens and still make a Notice roll this hour, though at -4. A raise allows a Notice roll at -2 and leaves the girls very happy. A failure means the character has “wasted” an hour. With a critical failure the character falls asleep. He cannot make a Notice roll for this hour or the next one!

Hour 4) A Friend in Need: As the heroes crest a small hill, they spy a body on the path in front of them. The sides are lightly wooded, but a successful Notice roll reveals no sign of ambush. Heroes checking the body discover it is Coelric, the poor thegn. On a successful Notice roll, the character discovers a broken tree stump nearby. It has blood on one end.

Coelric is still alive, as is evident from his rising and falling chest, but has suffered a head wound. To wake Coelric requires a successful Healing roll. Otherwise he remains unconscious. Though grateful to his rescuers, he cannot recall who hit him, but does remember seeing Cissa the berserker lurking nearby in a suspicious manner. Coelric then struggles to his feet, shakes his head, and, after checking his pouches, says “*He’s taken all my eggs. Two gold and three silver! Sigel curse his bones! I can carry on now, thank you. When the culprit is caught and punished, I promise you a share of the weregild as thanks.*”

Unscrupulous heroes may search Coelric’s body for eggs—there are none. Whoever knocked him out has also taken his eggs!

Heroes who stopped to help Coelric suffer a -2 pen-

alty to their Notice roll for this hour. Those who did not try to rob him gain +1 Glory.

Hour 5) Rough Justice: This event should occur after the previous one.

Further along the road, the heroes spy two people facing each other. One, a large man in a bearskin, is waving a sword at the other. Deducing who they are without approaching requires a Notice roll. Success reveals it is Cissa and Hussa. Should they approach openly and ask what is going on, both NPCs start speaking. Cissa warns the heroes to “Leave now or dine with Scaetha tonight!” whilst Hussa pleads “He’s stolen all my eggs!” Neither offers any further explanation. The heroes have several options.

Pass by: Whatever the quarrel, it is not the heroes’. They may make a Notice roll without penalty.

One-on-One challenge to Cissa: Cissa, never one to turn down a fight, agrees, but will only fight one party and the duel ends when one participant surrenders. Naturally Cissa goes berserk if he can.

Jump Cissa en masse: A safer option, but also costing each hero a point of Glory.

Demand Cissa return the eggs: Requires an Intimidation roll opposed by Cissa’s Spirit. Only one roll is allowed, though it may be a Cooperative roll.

When the fight is over, either Cissa or one or more heroes will likely be unconscious (or dead). Once again, there are multiple options available to the heroes, especially if Cissa is unconscious.

Search Cissa: Cissa has a grand total of six gold eggs and six silver eggs on his person.

Return eggs to Hussa: Hussa claims to have had two gold eggs and three silver on him when he was robbed. This sounds like a lot and heroes may wish to make Notice rolls at -2 to see if Hussa is lying. With success, the character believes the man is pulling a fast one. If questioned about this, Hussa admits that he only had one gold egg and three silver, but thought he deserved recompense (Hussa actually only had three silver eggs and he bought one of those).

Return eggs to Coelric: When the heroes eventually catch up with Coelric they may wish to return his eggs—two gold and three silver. Coelric is telling the truth, but he bought some before the event started.

Keep all Cissa’s eggs: The heroes may wish to keep all the eggs. Hussa whines but is powerless to do anything about it.

Should all of the heroes be incapacitated or killed, Cissa moves on without robbing them. Hussa, however, waits until Cissa goes and then robs the heroes, taking one egg from each of them.

In truth, Hussa robbed Coelric, but Cissa saw him. Acting with a sense of honor not normally found in berserks, Cissa chased down Hussa and had just “persuaded” him to hand over the eggs when the heroes arrive. Hussa does not wish to admit to being a common thief, and pay weregild for wounding Coelric, and Cissa has no desire for the heroes to help him dispense justice.

Any interference in the argument gives the heroes a -4 penalty to their Notice rolls for this phase of the hunt.

SO WHO HAS ALL THE EGGS?

To make things a little easier on the GM, here is a list of how the contestants stand at the end of the hunt. This assumes that a) Cissa was defeated, and b) the heroes kept all the eggs. Make adjustments as necessary based on their generosity. The number in parentheses indicates their score for the event. GM's will have to adjudicate any other events that may affect these totals.

Aldhelm—ends with one gold and six silver eggs (9).

Coelric—recovers to find one gold and 4 silver eggs (7).

Hussa—manages to find two gold and three silver eggs (9).

Penda—has ten silver eggs (10).

Cissa—recovers to find one silver egg (1).

However, if the heroes do not interfere with Hussa and Cissa in any way, the final tally is as follows:

Aldhelm—ends with one gold and six silver eggs (9).

Coelric—recovers to find one gold and 4 silver eggs (7).

Hussa—manages to find two gold and three silver eggs (9).

Penda—has ten silver eggs (10).

Cissa—recovers six gold and six silver eggs (24).

Hour 8) Riddle Me This: This event is suitable for all the heroes, even if they are in different groups, and each should receive a different riddle, even if they are travelling together.

Nearing the end of the contest, the heroes come across an old man camped by the side of the road. He wears a large cloak and a wide-brimmed hat, which covers the left side of his face in shadow. A brace of rabbits cooks over a small fire. He bids the heroes to join him.

"You are contestants, are you not? I come from Cutbwulf, who offers the wise a boon if they can answer a simple riddle. If you fail, you must take the time to dine with me. Do you accept or wish to pass me by?"

Heroes choosing to pass may carry on and test Awareness with no penalty. Those who wish to stay are asked a riddle. Only contestants may answer a riddle and only one is asked per hero. Four riddles are listed below. Answering the riddle requires a successful Common Knowledge roll at -4, a Knowledge (Riddles) roll, or the player's ingenuity.

(1) *"I wish I had what I had yesterday. Exhauster of men, retarder of words, yet originator of speech. What did I have?"* [Answer: ale, wine, strong drink].

(2) *"Who is the one who traverses hard paths he has trod before? He kisses very rapidly, has two mouths, and walks on metal alone."* [Answer: hammer].

(3) *"What is the huge one that passes over the earth,*

swallowing lakes and pools? He fears the wind, but he fears not man, and carries on hostilities against the sun." [Answer: fog].

(4) *"I saw maidens like dust. Rocks were their bed. They were black in the sunshine, but the darker it grew the fairer they appeared."* [Answer: embers in a hearth].

With success, the hero is rewarded with a golden egg. Heroes who fail to answer their riddle must remain with the stranger and eat, losing any chance of making Notice roll this phase. Refusal to do so after giving an oath incurs a -3 Glory penalty.

Hour 10) A Private Ceremony: With the village in plain sight, the heroes encounter a group of Saxa holding a private religious ceremony to Thunor. They offer the heroes a place in the ceremony, which they promise will not take long. Those who take up the offer make their Notice roll for this phase at -2, but earn Thunor's blessing. The next time the character falls, he suffers only half damage as a strong wind acts to cushion his fall (indoors or outdoors).

Followers of Thunor who refuse to participate automatically fail their Notice roll this hour. Others who decline may roll Notice as normal, for little time is wasted.

SCORING

Each gold egg returned is worth 3 points and each silver egg 1 point. Unlike the other competitions, the contestants are not sorted into ranking order and awarded points. Instead, the points are added directly to the overall scores. This competition can thus drastically change an entrant's fortunes in the overall standings.

THE WINNERS

Tally up each competitor's score for the three contests. Whoever scores the most points is the overall winner, the next highest point tally takes second place, and so on. Any of the NPCs who score in the top three claim a bride as their reward.

Whoever wins has the choice of receiving 2,000 gs in goods or jewelry or taking the Eostre Queen as his bride. He also gains +5 Glory.

Second place receives 1,000 gs or the hand of the Eostre Princess. He receives +3 Glory.

Third place claims 500 gs or the hand of the Eostre Maiden. He gains +2 Glory.

All other contestants earn 100 gs and +1 Glory due to a rise in reputation for helping honor Eostre.

E12. THE WEDDINGS

The final night is the grand ceremony to Eostre at which animals are sacrificed and their blood sprinkled on the soil, alcohol is drunk by the barrel load, couples get frisky, and prayers are offered to all the benevolent gods. There may be a fight between Coel-

ric and Cissa, or Cissa and one or more of the heroes. These can be as bloody as the individual GM wishes, but remember that they come before any court cases (see below).

Any wedding ceremonies are performed on top of Moot Hill and officiated by Cuthwulf in front of the assembled populace. Around him are the families of those involved, as well as his nobles and bodyguards. The ceremony itself is a typical Saxa affair and ends with Cuthwulf striking a hammer against an anvil three times, once for Sigel, once for Eira, and once for Eostre. As the third hammer blow sounds, the ceremony is concluded and the wedding pronounced official. Each marriage is for a three-year period.

Characters that chose to marry may discover their wife is not quite what they had hoped for.

Cwenburh is a spoiled rich kid and the last of Whitburh's daughters to wed. Whilst she is skilled at weaving and possessing of a beauty that rivals that of many faerie queens, she is also lazy, deceitful, and wanting of extravagant items, preferably of foreign origin. Every year, the poor sap who wins her as a bride must come up with gifts worth at least 1,000 gs or face her wrath. After three years without such a gift, she refuses to renew her marriage contract declaring her husband unsuitable.

Eadhild may only be a farmer's daughter, but she knows how to run a farm stead, making her an attractive bride from that point of view. She is not a show-case bride and her looks can really only be described as ugly, but she is loyal and possesses all the skills a good wife should have. Although she could be a master weaver, her duties running the farm have not allowed her to exploit her full potential.

Gytha wants to be treated as a man and to become a warrior. She is attractive (though prone to freckling in the summer months), and an excellent talker, but most often uses her voice to curse men who eye her up. Any man marrying her will have a fight on his hands trying to make her toe the line and perform women's work, though she is a competent housekeeper.

WEREGILD AND COMPLAINTS

Once the festival is over there may be a number of cases that need to be heard by Cuthwulf. Regardless of the heroes' actions, Coelric brings a case against Cissa, demanding weregild from the cowardly blow he received from Cissa during the egg hunt. Naturally Cissa maintains his innocence. Cuthwulf finds him guilty but Cissa and his kin refuse to pay the 3,200 gs penalty, thus initiating a blood feud (possibly a future adventure).

Cissa may in turn bring legal action against any heroes who attacked him. Before the case is heard, his brother, Athelwulf, also a berserk, approaches the heroes and threatens them with violence unless they plead guilty and hand over the appropriate weregild. Refusal leads to a feud with a powerful berserk family.

TAKING A WIFE

Women in *Hellfrost* are expected to stay at home. This in no way makes them little better than domestic servants or baby-making machines for the woman runs the household, and usually with a rod of iron. Thus, it is she who holds the keys to the coffers, not her husband. Many are the skald's stories of fierce warriors who quail before the authority of their wives!

STANDARD RULES

A hero with the Rich or Very Rich Edge has a source of income from somewhere. While the hero is away adventuring, he needs someone to look after his income—an ideal role for the new wife. A character who takes one of the maidens as a wife gains a boon or bane, depending on which girl he chose. These modifiers remain in place for the duration of the marriage.

Cwenburh: Lazy, deceitful, and prone to fritter away money (on herself), a character who marries Cwenburh gains a Very Attractive wife but loses half his annual income due to her incompetency and frivolous spending.

Eadhild: A skilled and frugal housekeeper, Eadhild graces her husband by increasing his income by 50% through hard work, shrewd bargaining, and diligence.

Gytha: This wild mare has no intention of being shackled to a homestead, regardless of its annual income. Instead of acting as steward she trains with the warriors. Income drops by 25%. She is Attractive but curses like a soldier (Minor Habit).

EXPANDED RULES

If you are using the optional Land Management system from the *Hellfrost Expansion* book, the maidens have the following relevant stats should they be appointed as seneschal:

Cwenburh: Stewardship d4 -2, Charisma +4. Cwenburh has an additional -2 penalty to her Stewardship rolls because she is lazy.

Eadhild: Stewardship d10, Charisma -2. Eadhild may reroll one Stewardship roll per year, as if she spent a benny.

Gytha: Stewardship d4, Charisma +1. If appointed as castellan, a role she would prefer, she has Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d8, and the Command Edge.

BESTIARY

Only the competitors for *The Eostre Festival* are detailed here. In order to ensure there is some challenge to the heroes, all are Wild Cards. For other characters the party may encounter, consult the *Hellfrost Bestiary*.



ALDHELM THE FARMER

Aldhelm comes from a poor, but well-liked Nohaut family. Honest, upright, gentle, and kind, Aldhelm does not have a bad bone in his body. He has no delusions of grandeur upon entering the competition. He seeks only a wife and a chance to prove himself a worthy husband. He has aspirations of becoming a skald, but lacks the funds to travel in search of a suitable master from whom to learn the art. His Knowledge skills include his Scholar bonus.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (Folklore) d8+2, Knowledge (Riddles) d8+2, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d4, Taunt d4, Swimming d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Charismatic, Scholar (Folklore & Riddles)

Languages: Auld Saxa, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), short spear (Str+d6, Reach 1).



CISSA THE BERSERK

A visitor from distant lands, Cissa is both all that is good about berserks and all that is wrong. He is loyal and brave and a skilled warrior, but he is also arrogant and overconfident, not to mention cruel, short-tempered, and bloodthirsty. His true reason for entering the competition is simply to prove he is the best at whatever he does. If he wins a wife, then that's all the better—someone to give him children and help secure his family line should not be overlooked.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Boating d8, Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Riding d8, Taunt d8, Throwing d10, Swimming d8

Charisma: -6; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 10; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Bloodthirsty, Heroic, Loyal, Mean, Overconfident, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Improved Block, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, War Cry

Languages: Battletongue, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), pot helm (+3), medium shield (+1 Parry), battle axe (Str+d8), two throwing axes (Range: 3/6/12, Damage Str+d6).



COELRIC THE POOR THEGN

Coelric is a poor thegn loyal to Jarl Cuthwulf. He inherited his lands from his father, but his skill lay in war, not managing crops and peasants. Away for many years on campaigns in Vestmark, his lands have suffered bad harvests and mismanagement. Recently returned to his ancestral stead, Coelric has discovered he is flat broke. Too proud to beg for assistance from his liege, he hopes to change his fortunes by winning the contest and receiving Eostre's blessing upon his farmland.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d6, Swimming d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Hindrances: Loyal, Overconfident, Poverty

Edges: Command, Connection (Saxa nobles), Noble

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain shirt (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8).



HUSSA THE RICH THEGN

Another of Cuthwulf's thegns, Husa is both a military man and an astute steward. His lands are prosperous (well, as prosperous as any can be), his peasants are content, his loyalty to Cuthwulf is absolute, and his borders are well defended against bandits and raiders. All he lacks is a good wife, something he intends to rectify via the contest.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Boating d6, Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8, Shooting d8, Throwing d10, Swimming d4

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Loyal

Edges: Command, Connection (Nobles), Fervor, Hold the Line, Very Rich

Languages: Anari, Saxa, Trader

Gear: Chain hauberk (+2), medium shield (+1 Parry), long sword (Str+d8), fine jewelry, horse.



PENDA THE LANDOWNER

A rich landowner from a neighboring region, Penda is overweight and underworked. His body and coffers have grown fat on the labor of indentured servants, servants forced into his service by the very taxes he placed on them. Now, they work for free to repay their debts. He seeks a wife, but since he cannot attract one through courtship, he intends to win one in the contest. A poor excuse for a man, he has no compulsion about cheating.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Greedy (Minor), Obese, Stubborn, Ugly (bloated body)

Edges: —

Languages: Saxa, Trader

Gear: Short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4).

SCORE SHEETS

These sheets are designed to help speed up play and organize the outcome of events. As noted in the adventure text, pre-determined scores for NPCs should be ignored if a player is controlling the NPC.

MASTER SCORE SHEET

Record the overall score awarded for individual contests on this sheet.

Contestant	Words	Stamina	Physical	Speed	Observation	Grand Total
Aldhelm						
Cissa						
Coelric						
Hussa						
Penda						
[Hero #1]						
[Hero #2]						
[Hero #3]						
[Hero #4]						
[Hero #5]						
[Hero #6]						

CONTEST OF WORDS

Contestant	Roll	Final Score
Aldhelm	11	
Cissa	2	
Coelric	5	
Hussa	9	
Penda	1	
[Hero #1]		
[Hero #2]		
[Hero #3]		
[Hero #4]		
[Hero #5]		
[Hero #6]		

CONTEST OF STAMINA

Contestant	Drunk Rating	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5	Round 6	Round 7	Round 8	Round 9	Round 10	Round 11	Round 12	Round 13	Round 14	Final Score
Aldhelm	5															
Cissa	7															
Coelric	6															
Hussa	7															
Penda	5															
[Hero #1]																
[Hero #2]																
[Hero #3]																
[Hero #4]																
[Hero #5]																
[Hero #6]																

CONTEST OF PHYSICAL PROWESS

Contestant	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9	Stage 10	Total	Final Score
Aldhelm												
Cissa												
Coelric												
Hussa												
Penda												
[Hero #1]												
[Hero #2]												
[Hero #3]												
[Hero #4]												
[Hero #5]												
[Hero #6]												

			Citizen				Human Noble Coelric the Poor Thegn
			Citizen				Human Nobleman Hussa the Rich Thegn
			Citizen				Human Villager Altheim the Farmer
			Citizen				Human Villager Penda the Landowner
			Village Militia (Axe Thrower)				Human Warrior Cissa the Berserk

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SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

The start of spring is marked by numerous festivals to Eostre, and this year is no different. Jarl Cuthwulf is hosting a grand, week-long festival, combining religious activities with five tests of skill, stamina, and ingenuity. Rich or poor, young or old, brave or cowardly, all may enter in the hope of taking away one of the fabulous prizes on offer!

This adventure takes a step away from the routine of bashing monsters and stealing treasure, instead focusing on roleplaying, exploring events beyond adventuring, and making new friends and enemies during a major festival to the goddess Eostre.

This adventure contains a range of Figure Flats.

Hellfrost[™] is an epic fantasy setting for the award winning *Savage Worlds*[™] roleplaying game.



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