

THORCAL

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

STARTER



THORGAL

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

◀CREDITS▶

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Special thanks to Mateusz Gamoń for consultation and help with the project.

First edition — Dark Rabbit
publishing house
NIP (Tax Identification
Number): 9372748337
Ul. Szkolna 15a
43-300 Bielsko-Biała
Poland

ISBN 978-83-962518-6-2

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♦ INTRODUCTION ♦

Welcome to the wondrous, adventurous world of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*! If you dream of adventures like those experienced by the characters in the Thorgal comic books, you're in the right place. Here you'll find all the rules you need to roleplay such heroic stories, along with examples of characters, an introduction to the game's setting and a ready-to-play scenario. You only need a group of friends, some dice and the power of your imagination.

But let's start with the basics.

WHAT ARE ROLEPLAYING GAMES?

A roleplaying game is a form of entertainment, usually designed for several people (preferably at least three, but you can play with only one friend, or even on your own). It does not need a board or pawns. Before starting the game, the participants divide various roles among themselves, but the focus is still on having fun together. One such role is the Game Master or Game Mistress (abbreviated as the GM — and this is how we are going to refer to that person from now on), responsible for making sure that the game rules are observed, as well as describing the in-game surroundings and playing the various background characters. Other participants take on the roles of the main characters, the People of the Stars, who — just like Thorgal — are trying to survive in the freezing Northland, which has now become their

new home. In this way, you are jointly creating an interactive story, inspired by events from the comic books. The course of the adventure depends on decisions taken by the players and their consequences. The characters take specific actions and the GM describes their effects. How will it end? Well, you must find that out yourselves.

TO START THE GAME, YOU WILL NEED A FEW THINGS:

1. This book.

If you are the GM, you should read it in full, paying special attention to the scenario. In places, you will find references to detailed rules for specific situations. However, if you are going to play one of the player characters, do not read the scenario — otherwise you will spoil the fun for yourself. Roleplaying games can be compared to an amateur theatrical performance where actors don't know the script, so they are forced to improvise — which leads to some extraordinary situations. Remember that no one expects you to know all the rules by heart — the GM will explain them in detail when the time comes. Still, it never hurts to at least skip through the basics. Important note: This book is intended only as an introduction to the world of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*. The upcoming full version of the game's core rulebook will contain more detailed information, as well as guidelines for creating your own, unique characters.

2. A set of dice.

In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, you are going to use several types of multi-sided dice, namely twenty-sided (d20), ten-sided (d10) and six-sided (d6). You probably know d6 from traditional board games. You can easily find d20 and d10 in hobby stores, both online and offline. The dice are rolled whenever it is not possible to predict the exact effects of a specific action (usually, you either succeed or you don't, but sometimes it also matters how much you succeed or fail by). The rules specify which dice you should roll in a given situation, when asked by the GM. Sometimes you have to roll several dice — in this case, the number preceding the type of dice tells you how many dice of a given type you are supposed to roll. For example, 2d20 means two twenty-sided dice. Remember: the higher the result, the better!

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3. A group of friends, a place where you can play undisturbed, and some characters - you'll have to create those first.

Roleplaying games are a form of entertainment focused first and foremost on social interactions. So, we recommend you start by playing with people you know well, so all of you feel at ease. Remember what you are there for — to have a great time together! So, the atmosphere should be as friendly and casual as possible. Choose a nice, comfortable place, where you enjoy spending time, bring some snacks and just have fun! During the game, you will also need Character Sheets with detailed descriptions of your characters. Ready-to-play Character Sheets in digital form can be downloaded from the Internet free of charge.

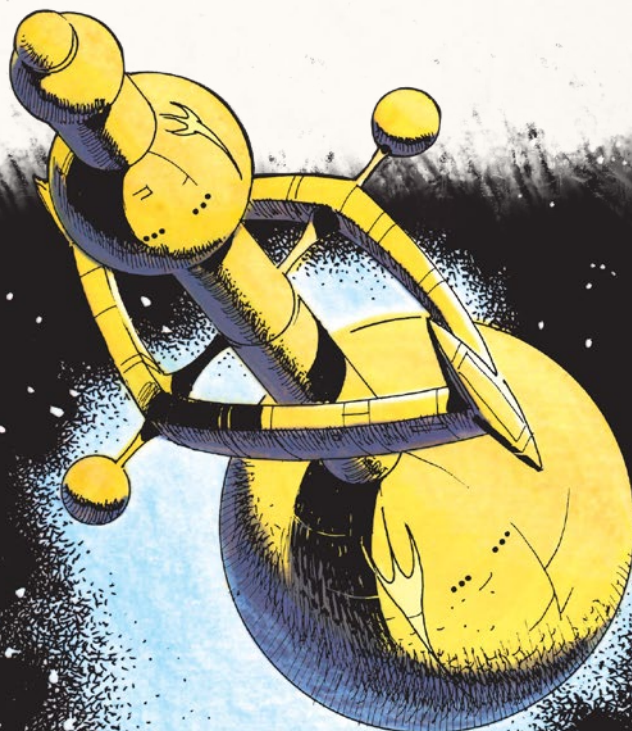
WHO AM I IN THE WORLD OF THE GAME AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, you assume the role of one of the People of the Stars, whose spacecraft crashed on Earth. Together with other survivors, you have ventured into the forest wilderness of Northland, only to discover that those lands are inhabited by members of a far less advanced civilization — people calling themselves Vikings. You split into smaller groups to fit in with the local communities more easily, especially as there are so many similarities between you and them. And yet, as the People of the Stars, also called Atlanteans, you still remain under the gods' watchful eye, and your destiny is to support the common people in their efforts.

You have powers that make you stand out from others, giving rise to legends. You are different from them, but it is that very difference that binds you together. In addition, you are perfectly aware that, as soon as the common folk find out the truth about you, they will start to fear you. However, you can inspire awe as well as fear — everything depends on you.

What do the Atlanteans do? Well, despite their space origins, they do not differ much from 'ordinary' Vikings — not in looks, speech or behavior. They even practice the same professions, such as hunters or lagmen (lawspeakers), join raiding expeditions or prove their worth in battle as berserkers. What is more, because of their powers, they often perform special functions in their communities, becoming seers or volvas (witches) foretelling the future. They start families, and can pass down their supernatural abilities to their children. Still, the Atlanteans are closely observed by powers much greater than themselves. The gods are watching their every step, perceiving them as a potential threat.

Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game focuses on fantastic, breath-taking adventures and fighting against destiny, but it is also a story about building and developing a community that becomes your safe haven. Just as Thorgal in the comic books always returns to his home and family, so in this game each adventure ends with the characters' homecoming and reunion with their loved ones. Your adventures can be set in places you are familiar with, as well as entirely new locations. You can follow in Thorgal's footsteps, or take a completely different path. It's all up to you.



THE STORY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STARS

Long ago, strangers came to Earth from the stars and established a great civilization called Atlantis. They claimed to be the children of Poseidon — and yet their world disappeared under the sea. In just one night, the splendid cities of the Atlanteans were engulfed by the waves. Only one of them, located in North Africa, survived the cataclysm, but it wasn't long until it too ceased to exist, buried by the sand. One might think that the Atlanteans were cursed. Or was it a punishment for putting too much trust in technological development? It is said that ruins of that once monumental metropolis can still be found in the desert, inhabited by the last of the Atlanteans — degenerate, cruel and stupid.

Having witnessed the doom of their civilization, the Atlanteans decided to leave the inhospitable planet and embarked on a long journey aboard their spacecraft. Soon, they found a new home on a distant planet, Kritias. However, they failed to treat it with respect. Overexploitation resulted in the depletion of natural resources and the People of the Stars eventually faced a threat that had long been considered a myth — the desert around them was expanding.

Then, they remembered the Earth, as if realizing that the place they had once left could prove to be their salvation. So, a giant spaceship set off on a return journey. Its commander was a man named Xargos, Thorgal's grandfather. However, the crew mutinied against its captain and exiled him. Xargos landed on the Earth in an escape pod and, having learned about the birth of his grandson, he started watching the boy discreetly. Meanwhile, the mothership survived a rough landing in the distant north, but was too badly damaged to continue its voyage. From then on, it was supposed to serve as a shelter for the survivors, but soon a dispute flared up and the crew split into two opposing factions. Consequently, Thorgal's parents sailed off in a damaged boat towards almost certain death, while a group under the command of Mestor and Slive stayed in the north.

This marked the beginning of the end for the colony. The Atlanteans tried to gain control over the people of the North, raiding and plundering their villages. In this way, they captured slaves, who were sent to work in coal mines to provide the fuel necessary to heat those parts of the ship that were still operational. And yet, the People of the Stars were dying out, as their colonization quickly turned into a fight for survival. It was not supposed to be like that. According to the mission data stored in

the onboard computer, the original plan involved the extermination of all people on the Earth to make room for the Atlanteans. A deadly fungus, engineered specially for that purpose, is still waiting somewhere in the vast bowels of the ship...

Today, the spacecraft resembles a tomb, where Slive lives alone, with only a handful of her fellow crew members, all of them in hibernation, for company. But the People of the Stars still live among us, scattered among towns and villages. They can be traders as well as warriors, archers as well as vagabonds. They try to lead a normal life and not attract attention to themselves. But they are different from other people. And they have powers that inspire fear and hope in equal measure.



Slive

Also known as Slive-Who-Never-Dies or the Queen of the Island of the Frozen Seas, came to Earth from Kritias as a young, idealistic girl. She believed that the planet could be a new home for the Atlanteans. She fell in love with a young man named Minoe, who loved her in return, sharing her passion for the world and naive optimism. But Minoe died and Slive's heart hardened. With time, she took control of her shrinking group of survivors and enslaved the local people, proving to be a worthy opponent for the Vikings. For ten years, she was held prisoner by Gandalf the Mad. Finally, she managed to escape, but lost an eye in the process. She also tried to pair Thorgal off with her daughter, but the plan failed and the girl died. Then, Slive lost all hope and allegedly chose death. However, some claim that she did not depart from this world, but fell asleep in her ice palace. After all, she is Slive-Who-Never-Dies.

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Thorgal comes from the stars and owes his names to the gods.

He was found as an infant by a Viking king, Leif Haraldson, returning from one of his raiding expeditions. The baby was traveling in a weird-looking capsule that disappeared without a trace soon afterwards. In the face of such a strange occurrence, Leif came to the conclusion that the boy's appearance must have been the work of supernatural forces. Hence, he named the foundling after two powerful gods — Thor and Aegir. And so began the story of Thorgal Aegirsson.

Leif raised Thorgal as his own son. Unfortunately, after Haraldson's death, his power was seized by Gandalf the Mad, for whom Thorgal was, at best, a troublesome outsider, and at worst — a rival to the throne. In fact, Thorgal himself did nothing to avoid being branded a misfit by the brutal Viking community. He despised violence and used it only in self-defense. Most of the time, he preferred to keep to himself, hunting and composing songs, but he was also capable of showing astonishing courage at need. What is more, he sometimes disappeared for weeks at a time. However, his most serious transgression was that he dared to fall in love with Gandalf's daughter, Aaricia.

Leif and the other Vikings were not aware of Thorgal's true origins, but even if they were, it would be beyond their comprehension. Besides, Thorgal's heritage is vague even to himself. His parents were not gods, but a couple in love, Varth and Haynee, who came to Earth aboard an Atlantean spaceship. He was born in exceptionally dramatic circumstances that marked him for the rest of his life.

During the space voyage, Haynee became pregnant. Varth came into conflict with Xargos, the ship's commander, staged a mutiny, and eventually took over control of the spacecraft. Xargos, shot out in an escape pod, sped away towards his own destiny, while the new captain made an attempt at landing, with fatal consequences — the spacecraft crashed far in the north. When it proved damaged beyond repair, the situation led to another split in the crew. Varth and his pregnant wife took the risk of crossing the sea in a drakkar, while the other survivors decided to stay with the shattered vessel. After some friction within the latter group, the leadership was taken over by a pragmatic and ruthless woman named Slive.



Meanwhile, during her desperate voyage, Haynee gave birth to a son. However, while she was in labor, a violent storm broke out. Haynee, convinced that the drakkar was bound to sink, did the only thing she could think of — she put her newborn child in an escape pod and lowered it into the sea. The boat sank, and almost everyone aboard, including Thorgal's mother, perished in the waves. The only survivor was the boy's father, Varth. By a fortunate twist of fate, the escape pod with the child inside was found by Leif Haraldson. As for Thorgal's real father, he crossed paths with his son many years later... under dramatic circumstances.

HOW TO BEGIN

To embark on your first adventure in the world of Thorgal, you have to start by creating your character — a sort of alter ego you will portray in the story you and your friends will create together. Your character can be inspired by the characters of the comic book: Thorgal, Kriss or Jolan, but roleplaying games are all about inventing unique characters to join the ever-expanding game universe. In fact, you can think of the game as a series of comic book adventures making up a saga about the daring deeds of your own party. To make things easier for you, several ready-to-play characters are included here, together with their descriptions.


In the full version of the game, you will find guidelines for creating new characters from scratch.

Playing a character is not as hard as you might think. First, try to imagine that individual. What does he or she look and dress like? Is there anything peculiar in his or her manner of speaking? Does the character have any distinguishing features (one or more)? Then, think of that person's motivation. Why is the character doing what they do? What is his or her driving force? This can be a challenge, especially if you have no prior experience with roleplaying games, so in this book you can find descriptions of five ready-made characters. All you need to do is read them and give free rein to your imagination. You can even draw a portrait of your character. Once you get to

know your alter ego, it's time to start playing the role! Roleplaying is really not difficult. You can do it any way you want and only to the extent you feel comfortable with. Some speak in the first person, others change their voice, and still others simply describe what their characters are doing. Whatever you choose, remember the focus is on having fun, so you should never do anything you're not comfortable with. Of course, your roleplaying style can change over time. Still, you should never forget two very important facts:

1. Your character is not you. Characters in the game are described with the use of certain parameters that make up their characteristics (we will discuss them later on). Thus, their knowledge is limited only to those areas they are familiar with. Let us say, for example, that you are an experienced engineer. This does not mean that engineering is your character's area of expertise as well.

2. Think as your character would think. Good roleplaying requires consistency. If you want to make your character authentic and believable, he or she cannot make decisions that would go against his or her previous declarations. For example, if your character is very cautious by nature and usually avoids direct confrontations, it would be hard to explain why someone like that suddenly decides to launch an all-out attack on a pirate camp, charging at the enemy head first. It's more likely that he or she would try to solve the matter without resorting to violence — whether through negotiations, or more sophisticated methods (such as slipping poison into the pirates' food or drinks).



SO, YOU CAN SEE THAT
ROLEPLAYING IS MUCH EASIER
THAN IT SEEMS AND — MOST
IMPORTANTLY — IT IS GREAT FUN
FOR EVERYONE PARTICIPATING IN
THE GAME.

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HOW IS MY CHARACTER DESCRIBED?

Each character is described using statistics, or 'stats'. These are numerical values showing how good (or bad) a given character is at something. Stats are divided into 3 general categories:

Primary Stats (abbreviated as PS)

reflect the characters' physical fitness and efficiency, including their Constitution (CON), Agility (AG) and Perception (PER), but also their mental abilities and personality traits, such as Intelligence (INT), Composure (CP) and Verve (VER). All of them fall within the range from 1 to 10, with 3 as the average value for People of the Stars, but the more, the better.

Derived Stats (DS)

on the other hand, represent all characteristics, which — as the name suggests — are derived from Primary Stats. For example, Athleticism indicates how fit and supple a character is, which is calculated by adding the values of his or her CON and AG. All Derived Stats for the ready-to-play characters are already worked out.

Skills

The third category are skills, corresponding to various areas of the characters' expertise, developed through training and practical experience. Skills are linked to individual Primary Stats in groups of three, as appropriate. For example, Craft, General Knowledge and Arcane Knowledge are attributed to Intelligence (see the Character Sheets for details). In most cases, you will add the value of a specific skill that might prove useful under the circumstances and the PS it is connected with. Suppose the characters strain their eyes to see something on the horizon; you would add the values of their Perception and Sharp Senses. The higher the value of the skill, the better. However, if the value is 0, it does not mean that the characters are completely unable to take any actions requiring that particular skill — in this case, the only value taken into account is that of the PS.

In addition, some characters have special powers, similar to those in the comic books. Their effects are explained in the descriptions of individual characters.

HOW EXACTLY DO I PLAY THIS GAME?

In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* players create fantastic stories together, based on adventures described in the comic books as well as their own creativity and imagination. While the GM keeps track of the game and makes sure that all the rules are observed, other players focus on portraying their characters as the plot unfolds.

However, in some situations, it is not enough to describe briefly what has just happened. For example, what if a character running down a corridor suddenly notices that part of the floor has collapsed? Of course, he or she does not want to fall into the gap, so the player declares that the character jumps across. However, the GM decides that the character fails and falls into the hole. This decision is not only controversial, but also potentially unfair to one or both parties. To avoid such arbitrariness, we need some clear rules to resolve such situations.



DICE ROLLS AND CHECKS

In Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game all situations with unpredictable outcomes are clarified through checks. Whenever a check is required, proceed as follows:



1. Take two d20 (i.e. twenty-sided dice). They must be of different colors or sizes, as you have to decide which one is the Destiny Die and which one is the Luck Die before you roll them.

2. You and the GM jointly decide which skill or stat is to be checked. Let's say you want to find out whether you can repair a shield damaged in the last fight. In this case, first add the values of your Intelligence and Craft. For the purpose of this example, let's say the result is 12. Now back to the dice. As you already know, one of them is the Destiny Die and the other is the Luck Die. Take both dice (remembering which one is which) and roll. First, check the result rolled on the Destiny Die and add it to the sum of your Intelligence and Craft. Let us say you have rolled 5, which — together with the total of the Primary Stat and the skill (Intelligence and Craft, in our example) — gives 17.

3. The GM compares your result with the check's Difficulty Level. In Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game, Difficulty Levels (abbreviated as DL) are as follows:

Easy	10
Standard	15
Hard	20
Very Hard	25
Extreme	30
Legendary	35
Godlike	40

Hitting an enemy in combat depends on the target's Defense and is calculated based on a slightly more complex formula (which we'll discuss later on).

4. For a check to be successful, the total result must be at least equal to the target DL set by the GM. In our example, the DL is Standard, that is 15. Your result is 17, which is a success! Well done! The shield is repaired, ready for the next fight!

GODS' GRACE

So, what is the Luck Die for? Just as Thorgal fights against his destiny, your character can also challenge fate. You have Gods' Grace equal to your Verve. Whenever you don't like the result on the Destiny Die, you can replace it with the one rolled on the Luck Die. However, each time you do this, your Gods' Grace is reduced by 1. But don't worry — it is automatically restored at the beginning of the next game session (that is, a single meeting during which you roleplay your adventure).

SHIFTS

You also have other tools you can use to tip the scales in your favor. First and foremost, you have a number of Shifts at your disposal, equal to the value of your Composure. When you use a Shift, you can increase (or decrease) the result on the Destiny Die (or the Luck Die) by the Shift value. However, each time you do this, the Shift value is reduced by one; for example, if you have 3 Shifts, the first time you use one you can modify the check result by 3; the next time, you modify it by 2; and so on. Only one Shift can be used to modify a specific check, and the result cannot be increased to more than 20, or decreased to less than 1 (the maximum and the minimum values on a d20). Damage rolls cannot be Shifted. Shifts are restored at the beginning of each game session.

RE-ROLL

If you have appropriate abilities, you can also use Re-Rolls. Whenever you don't like the results on either die and you still have at least one Re-Roll left, you can roll the dice again! It is as simple as that. However, once the dice are Re-Rolled, you have to accept the new results, they cannot be Re-Rolled a second time for the same check.

DOUBLES

The last tools at your disposal are Doubles, or the situation when you roll the Destiny and Luck Dice and get the same result on both of them. In this case, you add the value of the checked skill (but not the Primary Stat!) to the check result again. For example, let's say your Agility is 4 and your Reflex is 3. So, to make a check, you have to roll

the Destiny and Luck Dice and add the sum of the checked skill and the Primary Stat, which is 7. You roll 12 on both dice. Together with the added up values of your Agility and Reflex, this gives 19 (which is enough to succeed at a check at Standard DL). However, the same result rolled on both dice means Doubles, and Doubles mean that you again add the value of your Reflex, 3, to your check result. So, the total result is 22, which is enough to succeed at a Hard check. If you decide to Shift the result by 3 as well, you succeed at a Very Hard check!

BAD LUCK

When you roll 1 on the Destiny Die, it means Bad Luck. In this case, the check is an automatic failure and you cannot use Gods' Grace, Shifts or Re-Rolls to modify the result. Your turn ends.

CRIT

When you roll 20 on the Destiny Die (or swap the Luck and Destiny dice using Gods' Grace to get

a 20), fortune smiles upon you! This is a critical success or 'Crit', meaning that the check is an automatic success, whatever the DL of the check.

JINX

Sometimes not everything goes as intended. In certain situations, specified by the rules (usually under unfavorable circumstances that make it much harder to succeed at a given task), the GM can put a Jinx on your character. A Jinx is usually applied to a single check or lasts for some predefined time, but its effect is always the same: you cannot use Gods' Grace, Shifts or Re-Rolls to modify check results while Jinxed.

So, now you know all the basic rules of Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game. The most important combat rules will be explained in detail during the game, in reference to the scenario included below. More detailed rules will be provided in the upcoming core rulebook.



◆ THE WORLD OF THORGAL ◆

THE SECOND EXPEDITION, ALSO KNOWN AS THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

Xargos' expedition was not the only one that set off from Kritias. After it left, living conditions on the planet deteriorated even further. Natural resources were all but depleted, forests turned into deserts and dead fish were washed ashore by the waves of poisoned oceans. Power shortages resulted in people dying of cold, hunger and disease in hospitals that could not function without energy.

No one knew what had happened to Xargos. Many believed that his ship had never reached its destination. Others, however, openly accused Xargos of treason — according to them, he had landed on the Earth, declared himself a king and purposefully broken off contact, unwilling to share power with anyone else. Soon, the anxiety of the residents of Kritias turned into panic and, seeing no option other than escape, they started building new spacecraft. The Atlanteans preferred to face the dangers of the cosmic void than stay on their dying homeworld.

But the ships, however big, could not hold the entire population. People were battling for every seat. Under such circumstances, the Kritias authorities decided that one of the spacecraft would take only children and teenagers, as their survival was deemed crucial for the entire civilization. The ship was called the *Spesse*, meaning 'hope' in the language of the Atlanteans.

The passengers of the *Spesse* were mostly offspring of the elite, accompanied by a small group of commoners, selected by lot. Daughters were torn away from their mothers, sons from their fathers, siblings were separated by force. It was decided that the expedition was to be led by several officers under command of a certain Egron, who enjoyed a reputation for being a competent, although strict, captain.

The *Spesse* set out on her maiden voyage into deep space. Egron was accompanied by a small group of officers, but no one thought of making room for caregivers, teachers or other educators. The underlying idea of the expedition was clear: save as many children as possible. However, the decision-makers failed to take one thing into account: the restless nature of young people.

The trouble began with a cryostasis system failure. Members of the expedition woke up too soon,

while there were still several months before the *Spesse* was expected to reach her destination. The majority of passengers were teenagers from wealthy families who took everything for granted and were not used to following orders. The leader of the disgruntled youths was Raycor, the son of a man who oversaw the *Spesse*'s departure. Apparently, the unscrupulous, quick-tempered youngster took after his father in character. He asked himself a simple question: why should they listen to the adults, if there were so few of them?

Raycor gathered a group of like-minded teenagers around himself. They broke into the armory and murdered most of the officers, sparing only the lives of Egron and several others who could pilot the ship. The rest died a violent death. They were unable to protect themselves against Raycor, as no adult Atlantean could find it in themselves to hurt a child. Raycor declared himself captain and the vast majority of young passengers supported his leadership, if only because of the lack of other candidates. Only a group of children gathered around Divia, a brave girl from a poor family who got her seat aboard the *Spesse* after her name was drawn in a lottery, distanced themselves from the situation.

It was Divia and her friends who took care of Egron and the other surviving officers, bringing them food and medicines. Meanwhile, under Raycor's command, the ship was turning into a display of bravado and cruelty. Young people, bored with the long flight and lacking any kind of supervision, did whatever they wanted, including many shameful and utterly immoral deeds.

Seeing this, Egron decided to crash the ship on approach to landing, but he wanted to save Divia and her kind-hearted friends. So, the plan was simple: just before the landing, Divia would take her group to the rescue pods and, after the pods were launched, Egron would crash the *Spesse* into the rocks of the North Sea. Unfortunately, not everything went as planned.

Divia and her friends reached the capsules and were safely shot out towards the Earth, but meanwhile a fight broke out on the bridge between Egron and Raycor. The boy succeeded in beating Egron, but failed to avoid a crash. He only managed to adjust the course, so that instead of hitting the rocks, the *Spesse* came down in the waves of the North Sea.

Some survivors managed to get out of the sinking ship. They escaped on anything that could float.

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Many lost their lives in the icy-cold waters, but some — either alone or in small groups — reached the shore to start a new life in this strange and dangerous land called Northland. Did Raycor survive? Did Egron go down with his ship, as befits a real captain? That we do not know, but rumors are circulating that one or the other has been spotted here or there. Apparently, they are gathering their strength and looking for allies to resolve their conflict once and for all.

And the *Spesse* lies asleep at the bottom of the sea, until someone awakens her.

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF THE STARS?

Earth was the home of their ancestors, but they left it long ago to settle on the planet Kritias, in another part of the galaxy. Unfortunately, the natural resources of Kritias were soon depleted and the People of the Stars were forced to set out on a journey back to Earth aboard a spacecraft called the *Spesse*. However, the ship crashed on approach to landing and the surviving passengers — either alone or in small groups — dispersed all across the North to start a new life in this inhospitable land.

They are humans and do not differ from other people in appearance. At first glance, it is virtually impossible to distinguish them from other residents of Northland. Anyway, they try not to draw attention to themselves. After such a long and dangerous voyage, all they want is a normal life and they are afraid that revealing their secrets would only bring new misfortunes upon them. Of course, not everyone shares that point of view.

The People of the Stars have special abilities. Some discovered them by accident, while others use them purposefully for their own or other people's benefit. Some can move, or even destroy, objects using only the power of their minds, while others communicate telepathically, talk to animals, levitate, possess superhuman strength or impose their will on other people without saying a word.

Each gift is individual and unique, but it can also be a curse, as the tough people of the North have little

tolerance for otherness... the People of the Stars are perfectly aware that, as strangers from another world, here on Earth they are nothing more than guests. They live among the Vikings as farmers, warriors, traders or skalds. They work like everyone else, run their households, start families and have children. But they do not forget their heritage and, whenever they look at the stars, they think of the home they were forced to leave. They do not flaunt their special abilities and, in most cases, use them only in emergencies. Still, there are some among them who crave power and riches and are ready to go to any extremes to get what they want.

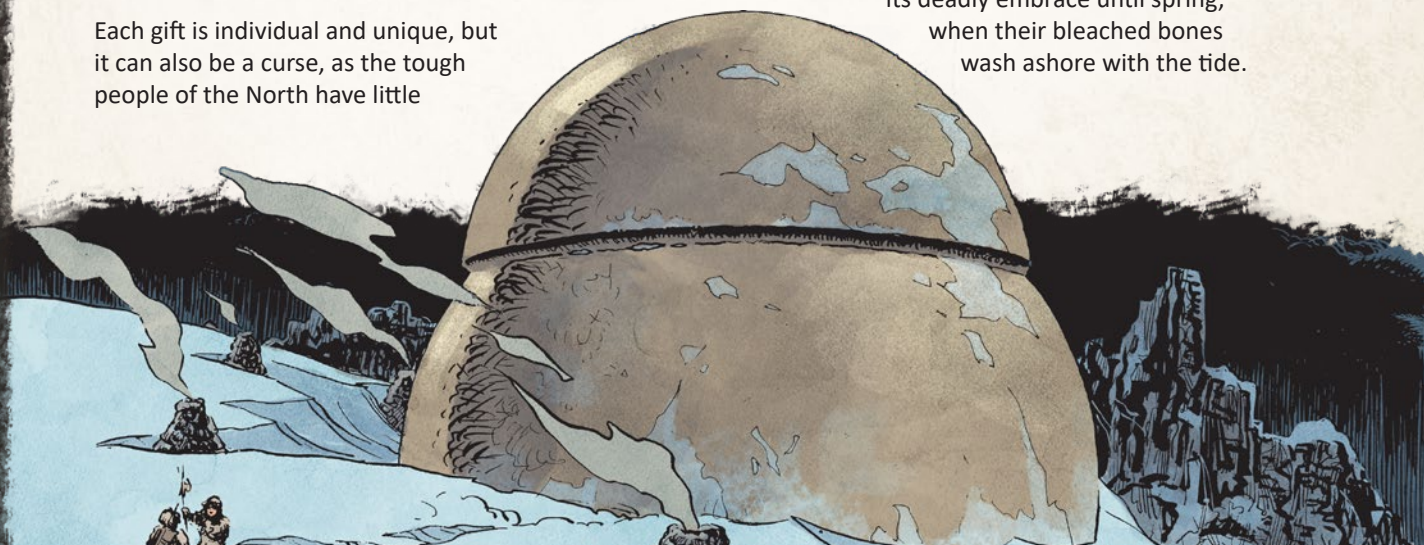
NORTHLAND

Nothing can compare to the majestic landscape of Northland that unfolded before the eyes of the shipwrecked Atlanteans after they reached the shore — the soaring mountains and vales with fruit trees in full blossom, the tundra-covered plateaus, the blue glaciers and steep-walled fjords brimming with salmon. They could hear the distant howling of wolves and the thunder of waterfalls. Waves were breaking on the rocks of countless islands scattered in the icy sea. No one has yet explored them all, so who knows what secrets they hold?

The forests surrounding human settlements are full of wildlife, including elk, wolves and musk oxen, but none of those animals is half so dangerous as the most feared of all predators — the bear. Still, there are many other threats lurking in the woods. Apart from bands of outlaws living by robbery and wild, primitive tribes, the forest has another, more mystical aspect — it is inhabited by all sorts of otherworldly creatures that are spoken of in folk tales.

It is an inhospitable land. Summer is short, flooded with the blinding light of a sun that does not set for weeks, reflecting off the white sand of the beaches. In winter, on the other hand, impenetrable darkness falls over the entire Northland. Woe betide sailors who fail to return home in time!

They are trapped in the ice and held in its deadly embrace until spring, when their bleached bones wash ashore with the tide.



VIKING LIFE

Vikings live in small communities — the population of a typical village rarely exceeds one hundred people. Contrary to popular belief, raiding foreign lands is not their main occupation. As a matter of fact, they live mostly by fishing and agriculture. Most of that work is done by men, while women focus on housekeeping and raising children.

Villages are, in most cases, located on the seashore, as harbors are necessary for trade and occasional raiding expeditions. The locals live in longhouses — low, wooden buildings, usually consisting of a single, spacious room, where all household members sleep one next to the other, together with the animals. Only the wealthiest among the Vikings, called jarls, can boast houses with more than one room.

Vikings choose jarls from among their own number, so they rise to power using their personal authority. In other words, a foolish, incompetent ruler who terrorizes his subjects would not rule for long and Gandalf the Mad seems to be the exception that proves the rule. In addition, a very important function in the Vikings' society is performed by a governing assembly called a Thing. Thus, those notorious 'barbarians' are, in fact, much more democratic than we used to think.

The majority of Vikings are free people: farmers, craftsmen, warriors and traders. Other residents of the village are servants brought from foreign lands by raiders, usually against their will, to carry out the most tedious tasks.

Viking cooking is rich and diverse. They certainly eat better than most other people in Europe. In Thorgal's household, meat, seasoned with mustard, coriander and caraway seeds, is served on a regular basis — mostly pork, but beef and mutton are not uncommon. Vikings never say no to reindeer and elks, too, eaten with bread made of beans, grain and tree bark. As regards fish, herring reigns supreme, washed down with beer brewed with yeast, water and mead. Many Vikings hope that one day they meet the legendary goat Heidrun that, instead of milk, gives that most desired beverage.

Thorgal used to be a skald in his early years and, even though opinions regarding the quality of his voice were divided, he did have a gift for storytelling. As Vikings are known for their love for good tales, skalds are always more than welcome in every village they visit. In exchange for the display of their skills, they are offered food,



drink and a place for the night. Another popular entertainment is hnefatafl, a board game similar to chess. Many players have lost their fortunes when luck deserted them and some — like a certain dwarf, for instance — were even forced to give up their own names...

The world of the Vikings is full of gods. The most important of them, Odin, is known for his habit of wandering the earth in the guise of an old man, accompanied by two ravens. As regards other major deities, one should not forget about Freya — a sorceress of stunning beauty and the goddess of love, desired by gods, men and giants alike. And there is the infamous shapeshifter Loki — a drunkard, scoundrel and father to monsters, capable of the meanest tricks and the most terrible atrocities. His scheming resulted in the death of Baldur, a gentle, benevolent god whom no creature in Northland would ever want to hurt. However, of all the deities in the Nordic pantheon, the one that enjoys the greatest popularity among the Vikings is Thor — the mighty god of thunder, wielder of the famous hammer and slayer of monsters. Still, one must admit that gods of the North have little real love for humans and often use them as pawns in the games they play with one another. Thus, Vikings constantly try to win their favor by making offerings and naming children in their honor — for example the name Balder is derived from Baldur, whereas Thorgal was named after Thor himself.

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In this demo version of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, serving as a prelude to the full version, you can choose from five ready-to-play characters. The scenario is designed for four players (including the GM), so you will need at least three of them, but there is no reason why all five characters should not take part in the adventure. So, each player chooses his or her alter ego in the game. All characters are inspired by those from the Thorgal comic books and practice professions characteristic of the residents of Northland.

These are: Viking, berserker, archer, lagman and rogue. Each character has different special abilities, called edges, and some of them additionally possess Atlantean Powers — see the details in their descriptions.



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◆ LAGMAN ◆

A lagman, also known as a lawspeaker, holds a special position in the society of Northland. Despite the fact that individual communities are not united under a single ruler, only a fool would think that they do not come under the same, universal laws. Even though there are individuals who call themselves kings, in fact, the entire administration of Northland is based on Althings, or meetings of the most influential among the local rulers. During those meetings, alliances are forged, new laws are established and judgments are passed. Obviously, their workings are known only to the participants. So, how can other people know if their representatives correctly understood and conveyed everything that was said and done during Althings? In order to prevent any 'misinterpretation' of the law by the local jarls, so-called lagmen have been appointed. These are individuals who know all the laws by heart and can recite them from memory. They are also supposed to offer advice and point out any deviation from the established rules.

Lagmen can be found in every decent village in Northland. As most of the Vikings' culture is based on oral tradition, lagmen are required to have excellent oratorical skills. Thus, a lagman is not only a public official of sorts, but also a wise man or woman cultivating the memory of past glories. Lagmen are appointed by the local ruler, but the title is not hereditary — candidates must work for the position with their knowledge, analytical mind and fair judgment. In exchange, they are treated with respect by every member of their community.

A good example of a lagman to be found in the comic book is Hierulf the Thinker, an old friend of Thorgal's family. Hierulf was sent by the Althing to oversee the rule of Gandalf the Mad after the death of Thorgal's foster father, Leif Haraldson. He was characterized by deep wisdom and the courage to protest against any violation of the eternal laws, held sacred for generations.



PIRRA

Pirra is a young girl with raven-black hair, who, before arriving on Earth, used to spend much more time studying the ship's extensive archives than giving in to growing moral corruption like the majority of her peers aboard. Apart from expanding her knowledge, she found solace in remembering a home she would never return to. When she and her companions reached the shores of a strange land, swept by icy winds, she did not know what to expect from the future. Luckily, her exceptionally receptive mind, excellent memory and ability to learn quickly soon proved to be invaluable assets that helped her open a new chapter in her life. A old, fatally ill Grimsnes lagman was about to give up the ghost, when, lying on his deathbed, he looked into the eyes of this strange young creature and saw something that convinced him to share his knowledge with her — well, at least a large part of it. Pirra absorbed every word like a sponge absorbs water, staying by his side until his last moments. The village chief, Reinn, was so impressed with the trust the dying lagman put in her that he took it for a sign from the gods — apparently, it was their wish that the girl become the late lagman's successor.

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Reinn made all the necessary arrangements, and Pirra, as the new lagman of Grimsnes, built quite a reputation for herself. Her counsel was always good and wise and all visitors to the village were deeply impressed with her 'supernatural' knowledge. If they only knew how close they were to the truth... The people of Grimsnes have already grown so accustomed to the new situation that they cannot imagine what they would do without Pirra as the guardian of laws and adviser on matters both mundane and extraordinary. What is more, Pirra has become a local healer, known for her 'magic hands,' capable of healing even the deepest wounds. People say that it was Eir herself who endowed the girl with divine powers, but the truth is quite different. Having arrived on Earth, Pirra discovered that something had changed inside her, as if stress caused by the events that took place on the Spesse and the resulting shipwreck unlocked something in her mind. Whatever it was, it gave her powers that she now tries to keep secret from everyone except her fellow Atlanteans.

Since Reinn became a widower last year, Pirra, filled with compassion, has been trying to offer him some consolation and help him in any way she can. Consequently, the relationship between the two has been growing increasingly more intimate. As of now, she is officially an adviser to the village chief, but fate works in mysterious ways...

Pirra is a very open, kind-hearted, and well-liked character, smiling almost all the time. Still, she is always guided by rational thinking, so she strongly opposes everything she considers utter nonsense and it is not easy to change her mind. Hence, it is hard for her to find a common language with children, as she takes their words far too seriously, apparently unable to comprehend their natural naivety.

EDGES

Distraction

You can talk someone to death. Quite literally. Taking advantage of a given person's lack of knowledge, as well as your incredible improvisation skills, you completely absorb that individual's attention. Consequently, the target is too overwhelmed by the torrent of words spilling from your mouth to be able to react. It does not have to take long — just long enough for one of your companions to plunge a knife into the enemy's back. Interestingly, the trick seems to be equally effective when used against animals. Once a turn, as a move action, you can make an opponent lose his or her next move or combat action (your choice) — or both of them, if you decide to spend 1 Gods' Grace. The edge can be used only once against the same enemy in a given combat.

Support

Your advice is considered invaluable, even if you are not sure whether it is actually worth anything. The most important thing is to put people on the right track, so they can find the solution themselves. Once per round, as a Reaction, you can grant an ally within medium range a +5 bonus to any check (after the dice are rolled). The edge can be used as many times during one session as the value of your Verve.



LAGMAN – ATLANTEAN POWERS

Visions of Bygone Days [basic]

Cost: 2

Range: Medium

Difficulty: 15

Effect: A character protected by this power can use it to gain a +2 bonus on any check, except for hits in combat and checks connected with the use of powers. The effect lasts for 12 hours or until the first time it is used. The bonus is granted before the dice are rolled.

Detoxification [basic]

Cost: 4

Range: Short

Difficulty: 13

Effect: You can detect all poisons, magic potions and similar substances in your own or another character's body. Then you can neutralize one of them.

Health Restoration [greater]

Cost: 6

Range: Short

Difficulty: 18

Effect: A creature of your choice regains Vitality equal to 1d20 + the value of your Verve. You can use this edge to heal yourself.

Boost: As above, but the range is increased to medium.

Power Dispersion [greater]

Cost: 4

Range: Short

Difficulty: 21

Effect: You can detect any supernatural effects affecting a specific character (possession, witchcraft, powers, etc.) and neutralize one of them. This also applies to any effects improving the abilities of your enemies.

VIKING – ATLANTEAN POWERS

Wound Healing [basic]

Cost: 4

Range: Medium

Difficulty: 14

Effect: A creature of your choice regains Vitality equal to the value of your Verve.

Mental Strike [basic]

Cost: 2

Range: Medium

Difficulty: 13

Effect: Zadajesz wybranej ofierze 6 obrażeń (zbroja nie zapewnia ochrony przed tym efektem).

Spirit Lifting [basic]

Cost: 2

Range: Medium

Difficulty: 12

Effect: You make a living creature of your choice resistant to Fear. If the target has already been under the influence of Fear, the power is activated immediately. Otherwise, it provides protection for 12 hours.

The Viking's stats are provided on the next page.

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The people of Northland are well-known for their perseverance, strength and courage. This results not only from the harsh climate of their homeland, but also from their way of life. Farmers do what they can to feed themselves and other members of their communities, even though nature itself seems to be against them. Hence, whatever cannot be grown, bred or made, must be seized by force — either claimed by the hunters, or taken from another man. For that reason, the bravest and most daring warriors band together to embark on raiding expeditions, and thus prove their worth in combat — but also to steal whatever they can lay their hands on. Those terrifying warriors, commonly known as Vikings, are notorious among the residents of overseas lands. Usually, the name is used in reference to all Northlanders, even though it is not so much a background as a profession. For real Vikings are not born, but made through experience.

Vikings are a cross between pirates, explorers and daredevils of unbridled courage. They set off on journeys into the unknown and battle stormy weather, rough seas and their own hunger to achieve their goals. Each time they set sail, they look death in the eye, but they'd sooner laugh in its face than tremble in fear. Vikings are well-known for their toughness and tenacity, allowing them to reach places that others can only dream about. They can fight, hunt and kill without remorse. In addition, they are skillful craftsmen. After all, raiding expeditions are organized only once in a while and in the meantime someone has to provide for the family. And what if they do not have a family? Well, some of those who are not in a hurry to return to their hearths and homes establish colonies in virgin lands. Others become mercenaries and adventurers, for the way of the Viking is seldom a peaceful one. And even though all those brave warriors have a lot in common, they can also be strikingly different from one another.



The best example of a Viking to be found in the comic book is Thorgal himself. He is an exceptionally versatile character, more than capable of handling himself in melee and ranged combat alike, as well as a skillful sailor and fearless explorer. What is more, he can quickly adapt to a new, unforeseen situation and stay calm in any crisis. Fighting an uneven battle against gods and his own destiny, he never relies on his supernatural abilities, but only on his training and experience.

MEDIOS

Medios is a brawny man with fair, cheek-length hair and a braided beard. As a participant in the events that took place aboard the *Spesse*, he was forced to resort to violence too many times to survive. When the ship crashed, he felt a sort of relief, as he'd known all along that nothing good would come of the voyage. Having arrived in Grimsnes together with other survivors, he quickly realized that in this strange new world he found himself in, brute force was a much more effective solution than trying to talk sense to someone — well, at least in most cases. To prove his worth, he signed on for raiding expeditions, but of many deeds he committed during those raids he would rather not speak. However, he achieved his goal — expendable at first, with time he won the deep respect of the entire community. Over the years, he watched many of his companions dying in faraway lands, while he somehow always managed to survive and return to Grimsnes with

looted treasures... and tragic news for the widows. Northland changed Medios forever. He grew indifferent to the inevitable violence that he once despised. The mighty gods whose names are called on by other vikings during raids mean nothing to him. Eventually, he came to the conclusion that everything he has witnessed and experienced is just the natural course of events, for only the strongest can survive... at the cost of the weak.

At present, Medios is held in high regard as a veteran of many expeditions across the sea. He has become the right-hand man of the village chief, Reinn, who trusts him completely in all matters concerning Grimsnes' defense. This does not mean, however, that Medios is just a brute looking for a fight — quite the contrary. Whenever he spends some time in the village, between raids, he gives himself over to smithery to soothe his nerves. He does not want to remember anything that happened during the expeditions. He also greatly enjoys every moment spent with his family — a wife and a six-year-old son, Mikael. However, recently the atmosphere at home has been rather cool and Medios suffers because of the growing distance between him and his wife. He already knows that he must prepare himself for a battle tougher and more demanding than any he has ever fought — he wants to rekindle the flame of passion in the heart of his beloved.

As a very down-to-earth person, Medios is easily irritated by any nonsense. He has his habits, rituals that allow him to keep his mental balance, and any change to that routine makes him furious. But he is not prone to sudden fits of rage. Instead, he just gives the culprit a piercing look, cold enough to freeze the very soul. If he can look like that at people he loves, it's frightening to think what his enemies must see.

EDGES

Armorer

Every now and then, some piece of equipment you use during your expeditions gets damaged or just wears out. Sometimes this is due to the weather, other times — the difficult terrain, and still other times — someone who tries to gut you. You can modify your armor to protect those areas of your body that are usually uncovered, increasing the Protection provided by all your armor by 1. Additionally, such armor protects you against any type of attack, even Atlantean Powers, magic, etc. However, the edge cannot be used to modify armor belonging to other characters in the same manner.

Old Campaigner

You have been to a lot of places, seen a lot of things. The story of your life is written in scars covering your body. Still, this is nothing to brag about — such is the life of a Viking. You do not even know how many expeditions you have been on — you lost count a long time ago. Your muscles tighten before you even have time to think, making your movements all the more swift and precise. As a free action, until the beginning of your next turn, you can increase two of the following values: hit, Defense, Reflex, Athleticism or damage dealt by 3. The edge can be used as many times during one session as the value of your Composure.

The Atlantean Powers wielded by the Viking are described on page 17.

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◆ BERSERKER ◆

Berserkers are fearsome warriors of Northland. They are known for demonstrating virtually superhuman strength and courage verging on madness, as well as a complete disregard for wounds inflicted by the enemy. But this is only one side of the story. In fact, berserkers put themselves into a sort of trance — a state of mind that allows them to give free rein to their primal nature. For that purpose, they use *tyggegumi* — powdered dried mushrooms they chew before the fight. Apparently, long-term consumption makes one immune to its toxic compounds, so if you are not a berserker, you'd better not try it. The most notorious band of berserkers serves under the command of a certain Moldi the Furious. They carry out their raids from one of the islands in the Orkney and Hebrides archipelago, spreading terror among the residents of coastal villages scattered all along the Northland shore.

Of course, they are not the only berserkers to be found in the North. Some of them choose to serve their local lords, either as regular soldiers or members of their personal guards. Others wander from place to place as sellswords, offering their skills to whoever can pay. Still others become brigands, making their living through murder and robbery. Whatever the case may be, being a berserker is not so much a 'profession' as a way of life.

Berserkers are deeply rooted in Northland traditions. Most of them believe they have been chosen by Odin, the greatest of all Nordic gods. Throwing the hides of wild animals over their backs, they try to establish a mental connection with their spirit animal — usually a bear, but wolves are not entirely uncommon. Berserkers who wear bearskins are, in most cases, loners traveling through the wilderness, from one village to another, in search of worthy opponents whom they can challenge to a fight to prove their worth to their god. Those wearing wolfskins, on the other hand, prefer to band together in packs, just like their spirit guides. The presence of a berserker in a Northland village is nothing out of the ordinary. Sometimes they choose worthy and willing candidates, who are then granted the privilege of initiation, so the tradition can be passed down to future generations — for the glory of Odin!

Perhaps the best example of a berserker in the comic book is the above-mentioned Moldi the Furious. Cruel and quick-tempered, he makes a perfect antagonist. But not every berserker is like that! Admittedly, they are impulsive by nature, but in most cases loyal to those whom they serve.



ENNAN

Ennan is a broad-shouldered man with a truly impressive build. His shaggy fair hair and thick, slightly darker beard are usually a complete mess and the same applies to his garments. But Ennan does not care for such trifles. Shortly after his arrival in the village, about 10 summers ago, he tried to give some meaning to his existence — to find a purpose, a goal to pursue. When the mission of the *Spesse* ended in disaster, he was broken in spirit and more frustrated than ever before — a shadow of his former self. While his companions were doing everything they could to prove their usefulness to the residents of Grimsnes, he shunned people and disappeared to the forest for days on end to give vent to his anger by cutting down trees. It was there he met a berserker living in complete isolation, like a hermit. Before long, his initial curiosity turned into fascination with that mysterious stranger and his way of life. At last, Ennan found the purpose he was so desperately looking for. Bjorn showed him the way of the

berserker and introduced him to the foundations of his faith. He also told the young man about Odin, the king of gods, and Valhalla, while Ennan was listening carefully; and the more he learned, the more convinced he was that their encounter in the forest was not a coincidence at all. It must have been the Norns, the weavers of fate Bjorn spoke about, who crossed the threads of their lives. The catastrophe of the ship and the fate that befell his homeworld must have been their work too. Now everything made sense and Ennan understood that only by proving his worth to Odin would he be able to tip the scales of fortune in his favor.

And so Ennan began the long training to connect with his primal, animal self. One day he returned to Grimsnes wearing the skin of a bear he claimed to have hunted down himself. Unfortunately, Bjorn did not survive, so it was now up to Ennan to continue the work of his mentor. From that moment, Ennan has been held in very high regard by the people of Grimsnes, who see in him a living manifestation of the primal forces of nature. They believe that, as long as the berserker is in the village, he can protect them against any danger. Truth be told, it is a sort of respect mixed with fear, as Ennan terrifies them no less than he terrifies his enemies. Still, they feel much safer knowing that they have him on their side.

Three years ago, Ennan helped to deal with a group of bandits who stole goats from one of the local farmers. To this day stories about a 'bear' keeping guard over Grimsnes are circulating in the area. However, for Ennan it is of no importance, for that very day the farmer's daughter caught his eye and now he steals a glance at her whenever she passes by. Actually, he keeps an eye on her much more frequently — every time the girl walks into the forest alone, he is watching her from afar to make sure no harm comes to her. The berserker keeps promising himself that one day he will muster the courage to tell her how important she is to him. But not today. No, not yet.

Ennan is a man of few words and as such, he might seem a bit grim. He can spend a relatively long time in someone's presence and not talk to that person at all. Admittedly, having

been living in the solitude of the forest for such a long time, he is not accustomed to small talk (or any kind of conversation, to be honest), but that is not his only problem. In fact, Ennan is a very shy person — and he is often furious about it. Deep inside, he feels lost and insecure, and desperately in need of company.

EDGES

Deep Wounds

When you were initiated into the way of the berserker, you were taught that, if you have to bite, bite till they bleed. The same applies to slashing, stabbing, beating and smashing, although in combat you will probably use your weapons more often than your teeth. Whenever the highest value is rolled on at least one of the dice you roll for damage in melee, roll one additional die of the same type and add up the results to find out how much total damage is suffered by the opponent. The effect can be applied once to each blow and, if you happen to score the highest result on two or more dice of different types (d6, d10 or d20), you can choose which die to roll.

Call of the Wild

Just as wild animals go mad when they smell blood, so do berserkers let themselves be controlled by their primal instinct, whenever their blood is spilled. You can Re-Roll any check made during combat (except for damage rolls). However, to use this edge again, you must be first wounded by an opponent.



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Even though the warriors of Northland are usually depicted as raiders armed with axes and swords, many of them are excellent archers. Admittedly, a true Viking believes that only those who die with blade in hand are worthy of being admitted to Valhalla, but contacts with other cultures — and especially their warriors — have changed the Northlanders' way of thinking a lot. Consequently, archery, previously only acceptable in hunting, has become widely popularized. With new types of bows and lethal crossbows being introduced, ranged combat is no longer branded as dishonorable. Nevertheless, traditional duels are still settled with melee weapons.

Archers of Northland usually do not serve in regular units. Instead, they are highly specialized warriors, entrusted with the most challenging tasks. After all, in addition to their mastery of the art of archery, they must be trained in closed combat, in case someone dares to challenge them to a duel — or just gets too close. Stories about archers and the astonishing feats they are capable of are widespread all across the North. Local rulers prefer to have them at their side, so they often enlist their services, if only to be sure that it will not be one of their arrows that sends them straight into Hel's cold arms.

The best archers often travel to take part in various tournaments and compete for fabulous prizes. Lucky champions can easily get rich, but also make themselves some powerful enemies. Perhaps the best-known archery competition in the region is the one organized by the Lord of Umbria. For the prize offered, the winner could buy ten boats.

Good examples of archers to be found in the comic book are Tjall the Fiery and his uncle, Arghun Tree Foot. Both of them are excellent bowmen, who know how to make the best use of their skills even in a seemingly hopeless situation. What is more, Arghun is also a master fletcher and bowmaker.



DELONDRA

Delondra, a woman with short, dark gold hair, is a born fighter. Having been trained from early childhood in using ranged weapons by her father, over time, she developed both a steady hand and an eagle eye. Following the catastrophe of the *Spesse*, she was long unable to recover from the shock, but her fellow Atlanteans eventually succeeded in raising her spirits and making her realize that without her they had little chance of survival. And so, by the time they arrived in Grimsnes, Delondra was already an excellent huntress. She managed to keep the survivors alive using only primitive, hand-made tools. Having settled in the village, she decided to use her newly-acquired skills for the benefit of the local community. She quickly mastered the art of archery, and even though a bow was not such an effective and easy-to-use weapon as those she was accustomed to on her home planet, it was no less lethal.

The people of Grimsnes hold Delondra in very high regard because of her combat skills, as well as her knowledge of the forest, where she seems to feel as comfortable as in her own house. As for her, she is absolutely enchanted with the beauty of the Northland landscape she can admire every time she goes on a hunting expedition. In addition, all villagers have been greatly indebted to her since, in her second year in the village, a group of bandits murdered a local farmer's son and stole the herd of sheep the boy was tending. Delondra immediately picked up the trail and killed the entire band, each with a single arrow to the head, without making the slightest sound.

Delondra has put down deeper roots in the village than most of her shipwrecked companions. She married Sven, a local fisherman, with whom she has a seven-year-old daughter, Astrid. Delondra knows that her child might sooner or later develop powers similar to those wielded by other Atlanteans in the village, even though she has never demonstrated such abilities herself. She tries to prepare herself for that moment, as she does not want her daughter to be insulted or exposed to ridicule.

Delondra, much like other residents of Grimsnes, is a very pragmatic person, but in her case it is something more than just common sense. She seems to be on alert all the time, as if enemies were lurking around every corner, and nothing escapes her vigilance. She prefers to eliminate any threats from a distance, before they have time to get any closer. When talking to someone, she usually does not look in their eyes and appears uninterested in what they say, with her gaze fixed on the distance, but in fact she always listens very carefully.

EDGES

Master Archer

You are a virtuoso, playing the string of your bow like minstrels play the strings of their lutes. And each of your songs is a killer — in every sense of the word. When shooting a bow, you are never given a Jinx penalty (arising, for example, from bad visibility or shooting at multiple targets).

Deadly Precision

It takes more than a steady hand and an eagle eye to be a good archer. It takes training. Lots, and lots, and lots of training — hard, wearisome and exhausting, but profitable nonetheless. Every time you make a successful ranged weapon attack, you roll one additional damage die and ignore the lowest result.

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◆ ROGUE ◆

For many residents of the North, rogues are no better than common bandits. And even though they might not be entirely wrong, there is still a subtle difference. You'd better think twice before calling a rogue a bandit, as they are not the types to let such slander go unnoticed. So, what is a rogue? Northland, however dangerous, is not entirely uncivilized, and Vikings, despite their reputation as savage barbarians, have their own laws and generally accepted rules they live by. Those who have been declared outlaws are, in most cases, just common criminals that no one cares about. In order to survive, they band together in armed groups, as it is always much easier to ambush and rob people when you have the advantage of numbers. Still, those bandits must always be on their guard, as they never know who is going to put a dagger in their backs. Rogues, on the other hand, might be at odds with the law sometimes, but they can hardly be called outlaws. A rogue is someone who never misses an opportunity to get what he or she wants by whatever means necessary and has no qualms about it, whether it involves theft, burglary or cutting somebody's throat. It has been mentioned that bandits must always watch their backs, lest

someone try to stab them with a dagger. It is perhaps not hard to guess that the dagger in question usually belongs to a rogue.

Rogues are mostly lone wanderers, who only occasionally join organized groups of travelers — and if they do, they usually disappear with their companions' valuables shortly thereafter. A rogue's life is hard and full of dangers, but many find themselves tempted by the visions of adventures and riches they could lay their hands on. So, rogues must know how to fight, but they must also know when to back away from a fight. In addition, sometimes they have to rely on their wits and personal charm. Every so often, rogues decide to join some group and stay for a while, as sooner or later anyone gets tired of having to watch their back all the time. In exchange, they can offer a wide range of unique skills, as well as a willingness to undertake tasks that proud Vikings would never even think to stoop to.

A perfect example of a rogue to be found in the comic book is Kriss de Valnor herself, who is no stranger to thievery, deceits and plots and has no scruples about betraying her companions when an opportunity to get rich arises. Despite all that, she can also show her human side, given the chance, especially when someone trustworthy appears in her life.

LAVOS

Lavos is a vigorous young man with a clean-shaven head, who loves adventures more than anything. He is a born opportunist and never misses a chance to use the situation to his advantage. Even as a child, he did not hesitate to put the blame for his own wrongdoings on others and always knew instinctively when it was better to make a run for it before things turned really ugly. With such an attitude, it was not easy for him to adapt to life in a community of proud Vikings. However, as a man of many talents, he soon decided to pursue the career of a mercenary, whether as a guard for merchants, an assassin, or a debt collector. Lavos has a habit of disappearing from the village every now and then, only to return some time later with money to support himself until he vanishes again. The villagers have already learned not to ask him what he was doing during his absence. They prefer to treat him with respect, even if that respect is undeserved. For, despite being a rascal to the core, Lavos is also a skillful craftsman who, in addition to knowing his way around a hammer and anvil, can help with building a house.



In Lavos' mind, the time he spent in Northland dragged on unbearably, as days turned into weeks, and weeks into months. Finally, he decided he must do something to stop wasting his talents, break the routine and make the most of the present! He is ready to try anything just for the thrill of it: risky stunts, thievery, attempted seduction of a neighbor's wife — you name it. Of course, he tends to get himself into trouble in the process. However, recently something changed... A group of merchants arrived in Grimsnes, accompanied by a young girl named Inga, the daughter of one of them. When they set off towards the next village, something made Lavos follow them. Soon it turned out that instinct did not fail him — the group was ambushed by brigands. Lavos decided to intervene, but despite his best efforts, Inga's father did not make it. The girl, devastated by her loss, returned to the village with Lavos to bury the body at the local cemetery. Since that day, he and Inga have stuck together and Lavos, for the first time in his life, cannot get rid of the feeling that he could have done more to save the girl's father...

Lavos is a very eloquent, lively character. He likes to crack jokes, even though others don't always share his sense of humor. He is impatient and tends to be insolent when bored with someone's empty talk. Still, deep inside, he is a very good-natured and helpful person, hiding behind the mask of someone who doesn't care for anyone or anything.

EDGES

Dishonorable Attack

Well, as regards honorable combat, you can hardly be considered an expert. On the other hand, it is always better to live without honor than be honorably dispatched straight to Valhalla. But let us be honest, you and Valhalla? Pigs will sooner fly! Once per combat with a given opponent, when you succeed in wounding the enemy, his or her next attack is an automatic failure.

Swifter than a Shadow

They cannot hurt you if they cannot see you. They cannot see you if you are swifter than a shadow. This edge can be activated once per combat scene, as a free action. Then, enemies will not be able to hit you unless they roll a Crit. The effect lasts until the beginning of your next turn.



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♦ RUNNING THE GAME ♦

As has been mentioned, one of the players will take the role of the Game Master or Mistress (abbreviated as the GM). If you are that lucky person, let us briefly explain what you are supposed to do and what you should expect while running adventures in the world of Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game. More information will be provided in the upcoming full version of the game's core rulebook.

To put it simply, the GM is one of the participants in a roleplaying game. However, in contrast to the other players, he or she does not play the role of one specific character.

The tasks of the GM are as follows:

- Preparing the scenario for an adventure (at the moment, you do not have to worry about that — a ready-to-play scenario, Melkora, is included in this book).
- Knowing the rules of the game (detailed descriptions of all rules, as well as references to relevant pages, are provided later in this book).
- Playing the roles of Non-Player Characters (NPCs) convincingly enough to make the other players feel that they are talking to someone who really belongs in the world of the game. Just try not to overdo it. Remember that no one expects you to be a professional actor and your friends should be perfectly satisfied if, for example, you change your voice or add some characteristic mannerisms (tips on roleplaying NPCs are included in the scenario).
- Running the game and controlling its pace (i.e. keeping the right balance between action-packed scenes and less eventful parts of the story — too much of one or the other tends to be tiresome), as well as maintaining a good and friendly atmosphere during the game (reacting when someone oversteps the boundaries or tries to provoke a fight) and making sure that no one steals the limelight (some players like to be the center of attention, while others might struggle to break through, but everyone should be given an equal opportunity to take part).

The GM moderates the game to make sure it is fair and enjoyable for every participant (including the GM). But do not forget that you are creating this story together and the other players are equally responsible for making it great fun for each and every one of you.

Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game tells the story of the Atlanteans who used to live on the Earth, but were forced to leave it and go to the stars, only to return 12,000 years later and discover that their ancient home is now ruled by somebody else. Just like Thorgal and his children, who have Atlantean blood in their veins, the Player Characters are either survivors of a spacecraft catastrophe, or their descendants. Their ship, called the *Spesse*, crashed some time after the *Atlantia*, on which Thorgal's parents came to Earth. Thus, the events in the game are likely to coincide with those known from the comic books and you can either use the latter as the starting point for your adventures or create your own, alternative stories, only partially inspired by the original Thorgal storyline. Of course, there is no reason why you should not start your own saga, taking place in parallel to the events depicted in the comic books, and portray your own, original characters. However, you should remember that the game's mechanics assume that all Player Characters are Atlanteans, as only they are able to harness supernatural powers, like Jolan, Louve, Tanatloc or Ogotai.





Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game is all about making the players feel as if they were actually taking part in adventures similar to those described in the comic books. Thorgal often embarks on expeditions, during which various extraordinary events take place, and then he returns home, only to set out on another voyage some time later. In the meantime, he keeps fighting for his loved ones, even when fate is against him. Hence, expeditions are also the central theme of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* scenarios. Player Characters are confronted with specific challenges (some of which can be quite time-consuming) and, if they manage to survive, they return home, usually rich not only in treasure, but also in experience. Then we have Downtime, when the characters focus on running their households and strengthening their bonds with their loved ones. They also learn new things — anything that might prove useful during the next expedition, whenever it should occur. As individual expeditions can be mounted a month, several months, or even an entire year apart, a series of such adventures can take place over a time span of many years, just like those in the comic books. Still, the characters' home (usually their village) and the community that accepted them and offered them a safe haven in this strange new world plays a very important part in their lives.

Characters in *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* are no ordinary men and women. As descendants of the ancient Atlanteans, they are capable of truly astonishing feats. Whether to reveal their supernatural abilities is up to the players, but remember the residents of Northland could react in much the same way as the tribes of Central America reacted to the powers displayed by Varth,

who was declared a god and given the name Ogotai. In other words, the Player Characters can just as easily rise to fame or make themselves some powerful enemies. After all, Thorgal is perhaps the best example that the Atlanteans tend to be a thorn in the flesh of the Nordic gods. On the other hand, it might be a good idea to introduce that motif to scenarios in your adventures. However, do not forget that the focus should always be on the characters, their decisions and consequences of their actions — otherwise players will feel they are watching a show, instead of being active participants. If the story you are creating together is to be engaging and important to the characters, they must be confronted with moral dilemmas, knowing that every choice they make is bound to affect not only their own future, but also the fate of their loved ones. One example of such a dilemma can be found in the introductory adventure Melkora included in this book.

Characters in *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, despite being much more powerful than ordinary mortals by virtue of their supernatural abilities, are not immortal. When the tragic moment comes, a player whose character dies a more or less violent death can create a new one. However, you must always remember that all Player Characters are Atlanteans, so introducing a new party member might not be as easy as it seems. In such a case, the best solution seems to be to continue the game either as a son or a daughter of the deceased (provided that the unlucky character had any offspring), or as another Atlantean, who arrives in the village, following rumors about extraordinary feats that the locals are reportedly capable of. As many People of the Stars survived the wreck of the Spesse and at least some of them might have fathered or given birth to children, the population of the Atlanteans in Northland is expected to grow.

In this book, you will find an adventure entitled Melkora, which serves as an introduction to the world of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*. Read it (preferably more than once) before you sit down to play. Remember that no one expects you to know every single rule by heart. If, during the game, you will find it necessary to stop for a moment to consult the relevant rules, just do it — that is what they are for. Of course, you can also improvise.

More information about the game universe, including additional monsters and character archetypes, as well as more detailed rules, will be provided in the upcoming full version of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* core rulebook. We wish you many successful expeditions and, most importantly, a lot of **great fun!**

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Introductory scenario for Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game

There are places whose names are used to frighten children into obedience. Places that their mothers avoid and even the bravest of men never call by name and avert their gaze from. However, this fear is not fear of those places as such, but of evil lurking in the shadows. The forests growing on steep mountain slopes are dark, but the real veil of darkness is woven of the secrets hidden in their depths.

Welcome to Melkora, an adventure that will introduce you to the world and mechanics of *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*. If you are the GM — go on reading. However, if you are going to take part in this adventure as one of the characters, it would be better to stop reading now. Otherwise, you risk spoiling the fun not only for yourself, but also for the other players.

The adventure is designed for five players (including the GM) and the action takes place in Grimsnes, a village on the west coast of Northland. It is situated on a low cliff overlooking a picturesque fjord. Down below, at the foot of the cliff, there is a fishing harbor. To get there, one has to descend a set of steep steps carved in the rock. The scenario assumes that the events take place in the summer, when the weather is much more favorable than in the winter.

IMPORTANT NOTE!

Two of the ready-to-play characters, Medios and Delondra, have children. If you want to make the party even more motivated, at least one of them should take part in the adventure — their offspring will be among the kidnapped youngsters (which makes for a good starting point). However, if no one chooses Medios or Delondra, it should not be much of a problem — you only need to change certain elements in descriptions and replace their child with another boy or girl from the village. In the event both Medios and Delondra are in the party, you must decide whose child is kidnapped before the game begins. Of course, there is also the option that both Mikael and Astrid are abducted.



Read or paraphrase the following description to the other players:

Grimsnes is a medium-sized Viking village, with a population of about 100 people. The majority of the buildings are situated on top of a low cliff with a breathtaking view across the fjord and a small rocky cove at its foot, some 50 meters below. The village consists of 12 longhouses. Those constructions, characteristic of the Vikings, provide shelter for both people and animals. It is not hard to guess what the locals' main occupation is — nets can be seen everywhere and the air smells of smoked fish. It is a peaceful place. But not for long...

In general, the village is self-sufficient, as its residents engage in fishing and animal husbandry (raising mostly pigs, goats and poultry), as well as attempts at forcing the infertile soil to yield as good a crop as possible — which is no small challenge. Hence, the people of Grimsnes are sometimes left with no other choice than acquiring grain at other villages in the area and, when forced by circumstances, they set out on raiding expeditions to bring in spoils for trade. The chief of the village is Reinn Bardsson, a well-built man in his forties, who owes his position to luck and courage in equal measure. He took part in many expeditions and turned out to be the only one to live long enough to deserve the respect of the entire community. In addition to farmers and fishermen, the village can also boast a blacksmith, an exceptionally talented boatbuilder, a leather worker and a weaver.

Grimsnes is surrounded by dense, coniferous forests. Nearby, across the stream, there is a cemetery with burial mounds. To the east of the village, soaring mountains loom on the horizon.



Many of the village residents are children, and the story revolves around them.

The People of the Stars came to Grimsnes about 10 years ago and have been slowly assimilating into their new surroundings ever since. Passing themselves off as wanderers from the south, they proved their worth and were eventually allowed to settle in the village with the same rights as other residents. Now, few remember that they used to be strangers — they have become an integral part of the local community and some have even started families.

Time passed, and the scales of fortune finally seemed to be tipping in the Atlanteans' favor... until a terrible blow struck the village.

Read or paraphrase the following description to the other players:

After several days of heavy rain, the sky is finally turning blue, the clouds are dispersing and the sun is coming out in all its radiant glory. Children, bored with the prolonged inactivity, are bursting with joy and look forward to playing outside the village. Their mothers warn them not to approach the edge of the forest, lest they fall into the clutches of the ancient witch Melkora.

When Johann, the youngest son of a local fisherman, runs into Grimsnes, crying and shaking all over, at first it is hard to get anything out of him. Then, sobbing uncontrollably, he says that the children he wanted to play with in a small clearing on the outskirts of the forest have been kidnapped by 'a big man.' He arrived late and all he saw was something very big disappearing into the forest, carrying a sack on its back, from which the wailing of the other three children could be heard.

There is no time to waste! You take up your arms and rush to the edge of the forest, in search of the missing children, especially since one of them is the offspring of a member of your party! All of Grimsnes is counting on you, knowing that you are special and your courage has no equal. In the clearing, you discover footprints left in the fresh mud by enormous bare feet. They do not look like anything you have ever seen before. The trail leads deeper into the forest. Following it should not pose much of a challenge, but nothing can prepare you for what you are about to see...

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In Melkora, the characters are caught up in the middle of the action and start by following the trail of a creature. But what exactly is that creature?

The beast that kidnapped children playing in the clearing is a troll — a hideous abomination descended from mythical giants. Its name is Ulgur and, even though it understands human speech, it does not speak. Despite the fact that, at this stage in the adventure, it is the troll that poses the immediate threat, it is by far the least of problems to be faced by the party. Ulgur is only a servant to a woman known in folk tales as Melkora, the witch of the woods. She lives in a hidden valley, where time runs much more slowly than everywhere else. Melkora believes that only through sacrificing those who were never fated to grow into adulthood is she able to feed the valley's mysterious power — the source of eternal life. Thus, for over 10 years now, Ulgur has been kidnapping children from nearby villages at its mistress' behest. The 'witch' keeps them for company, only to sacrifice them on her ritual altar when she gets bored with them.

But this is only one side of the story. Melkora is a name from folklore, while the woman's real name is Cassandra. She is a survivor of the crash of the *Atlantia* — the first Atlantean spacecraft sent to Earth from Kritias, before your ship followed in its wake. She is also a relative of Xargos, the ship's commander who was exiled as the result of a mutiny. When she woke up from her hibernation in the cryochamber and found out what had happened to Xargos, she decided to leave the *Atlantia* in secret, afraid of sharing the same fate. She fled south, as far as she could, until she reached a cleft in the side of a mountain and some strange instinct told her to go inside. In this way, she discovered the hidden valley and quickly realized that the place is a space-time anomaly. What is more, she could apparently influence it. Eventually she came to the conclusion that voices in her head must belong to the gods and the giant tree growing in the middle of the valley must be the legendary tree of the goddess Idunn, whom she'd heard about during her journey. The truth is that Cassandra is slowly losing her mind, and is no longer able to distinguish between reality and her own delusions. However, one thing cannot be denied — time in the valley seems to stand still, so the kidnapped children never grow up.

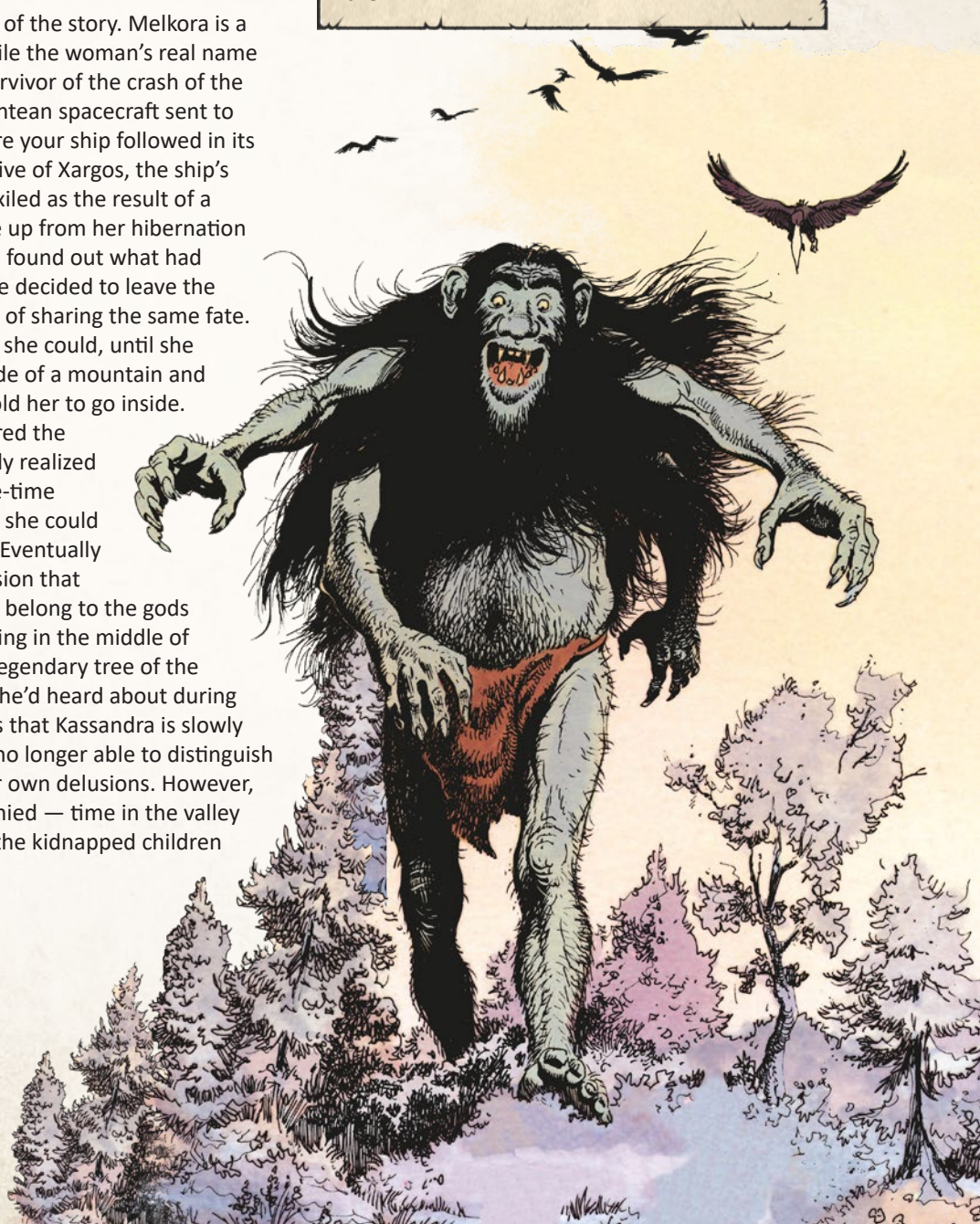
The Player Characters' mission is divided into the following 3 stages:

- **The journey, during which the party follows the trail left by the troll, until the characters find the cleft leading to the valley.** In the meantime, they have to deal with various threats lurking in the forest and then, having reached the valley, they are confronted with a most bizarre situation.

- **The confrontation with Cassandra and freeing the children.** How the situation is resolved depends largely on choices made by the Player Characters.

- **Return to the village and Downtime.**

At this stage in the game, characters can use treasures and other resources acquired in the course of the adventure for the benefit of their village, as well as to strengthen bonds with Non-Player Characters who are close to them.



◆ STAGE 1 — JOURNEY TO THE HIDDEN VALLEY ◆

THE RAVINE

Read or paraphrase the following description to the other players:

You set off at noon. You are now entering a dark forest of tall spruce trees. The people of Grimsnes have believed for generations that somewhere in the depths of the woods, perhaps in some cavern, Melkora is lying in wait. Who knows, maybe there is a grain of truth in those stories...

Giant footprints lead off to the east, in the direction of the nearby mountains. The creature you are following moves quickly due to its size, which is evident from the broken branches above your heads. The day is slowly drawing to a close, when you encounter the first obstacle on your way...

The tracks the party is following cross a six-meter deep ravine, with a fast-flowing stream at the bottom. Where the trail ends, the current is partially blocked by broken branches and the pent-up water, unable to find an outlet, creates a natural pool. It is time for the party to make their first checks.

See: Making checks, page 45

The most obvious way to overcome the obstacle is jumping across, which requires a successful Standard Athleticism check; the characters take a run-up and jump. If fortune smiles on them, they land safely on the other side. However, if the check is a failure, they splash into the icy water six meters below. Luckily, thanks to the branches blocking the current, the unfortunate characters do not have to worry about being carried away by the rushing stream and the water cushions their fall. Now their only problem, apart from being soaked through, is getting out of the ravine. This can be done in several ways:

- One of their companions can throw them a rope to help them climb out, which does not require any checks. Then, they can either make another attempt or — if at least one of the other characters has already crossed to the other side — finally leave that wretched place behind.
- Alternatively, the characters can try to climb up the steep walls, overgrown with tree roots, but this

requires a successful Hard Athleticism check. In the case of a failure, they do not suffer any damage, but only get even more wet.

Of course, the players can also come up with another way to get across the ravine. They can, for example, fell an old, decayed tree that grows nearby (which requires a successful Hard Constitution check) and use it as a footbridge. Or they can throw a rope across, tie it around a tree trunk on the other side and either walk along it (which requires a successful Hard Reflex check) or cross underneath it, holding on with their hands and feet (in which case they will have to pass a Standard Athleticism check).

All characters who have succeeded in avoiding an ice-cold bath continue the journey without further complications. Those who have not been so lucky must make an Exhaustion check. On a failure, the effect lasts until the soaked-through characters take a rest by a fire and dry their clothes.

See: Exhaustion, page 50.

Picking up the trail on the other side of the ravine is easy and does not require any checks.



IT'S A TRAP!

Wandering through forests of Northland is never safe — in addition to many natural threats, one can easily come across all sorts of outlaws and other dregs of society. One such band of brigands in ragged clothes has set up an ambush for the party. Their number depends on the number of players — there should be one thug for each Player Character. They are hungry and desperate and, after the troll just walked past them when they were hiding among the rocks, they have come to believe that the gods are on their side. So, they have decided to attack and rob the wanderers.

It is already getting dark when the party, still following the tracks, reaches the foothills of the mountains, where the terrain gets noticeably steeper. Then, suddenly, howling brigands in wolfskins lunge at them, apparently trying to frighten them to gain an advantage. One of them is an archer, armed with a bow. The thugs first appear at a medium range.

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To resolve the combat, you need to be familiar with the relevant rules, as well as the definitions of a round and a turn, and the applicable movement mechanics — see: Round and turn, page 45; Melee, page 46; Ranged combat, page 48; Movement, page 48; Vitality as the characters' health indicator, page 49; and Shields, page 50.

If the characters decide to use their powers, see: Using supernatural powers, page 51.

When all brigands but one are defeated - dead, unconscious, or otherwise unable to keep fighting - the last remaining thug will yield, begging for mercy. Surviving bandits can be either put out of their misery or spared in exchange for information. When roleplaying questioning any of them, remember that they are distressed, desperate and torn between rage and fear for their lives, so they will alternate between threats and pleas for mercy.

What the brigands know:

- A giant creature walked past them some time ago (how long ago exactly, no one is able to say — well, people did not wear watches in those days). It looked like an oversized, hairy man and was carrying a sack, from which they could hear the wailing and crying of children.
- The thugs call the creature a troll.
- The creature was heading east.
- If the characters follow the troll, they will reach 'a cracked rock' — a cleft in the side of a mountain, wide enough to walk through easily. People say that it is the entrance to Niflheim — the land of the dead — and it is better to keep away from it.



Consequences

If the characters eliminate the brigands, they will no longer pose a threat to their village. In this case, during the Return (which will be discussed later on), any 'Attack!' result is interpreted as 'Nothing special.' In this way, Grimsnes will be able to enjoy its peace a while longer.

If the party eventually lets the brigands go, but does not treat them kindly, they will join another band and vent their rage by attacking the nearest village — which happens to be Grimsnes. In this case, during the Return, any 'Nothing Special' result will be interpreted as 'Attack!' Well, apparently no good deed goes unpunished.

If the party spares the life of at least one of the brigands and shows some goodwill to them, they watch the characters closely from a hiding and then follow them to their village to offer their hunting skills, along with some fresh game. In this case, during the Return, any 'Nothing Special' result will be interpreted as 'Gift from the Gods!'



THE CRACKED ROCK

By the time the party arrives in a small valley crossed by a shallow stream, the sun has already disappeared below the horizon. The night is bright, as there is a full moon. Following the tracks left by the troll, the characters reach a waterfall tumbling down a vertical rock face. Behind it, they can see an enormous cleft stretching all the way from the top to the bottom of the rock and fading into darkness.

Read or paraphrase the following description to the other players:

Following the bottom of a narrow valley with steep rock walls on both sides, you hear the thunder of a waterfall, which is getting increasingly louder. When you reach the end of the gorge, the sound of rushing water is deafening. The smooth, vertical rock face behind the waterfall looks as if it has cracked from top to bottom. The cleft is wide enough for at least three people to walk side by side. The trail leads to the waterfall and disappears.

Read or paraphrase the following description to the other players:

When you walk out of the cleft, a bizarre sight meets your eyes. What you see is another valley, but this one is strikingly different from the one you have just left.

It seems to be walled in by towering mountains. Trying to climb the steep, almost vertical rock faces would be certain death. At the bottom of the valley, you can see broadleaved trees, which is strange, considering the mountains in the area are almost entirely covered by spruce forests. The largest of them, growing in the center of the vale, looks like an apple tree of gargantuan proportions. The sky that stretches over your heads is blood-red and the sun is nowhere to be seen, despite the bright daylight.

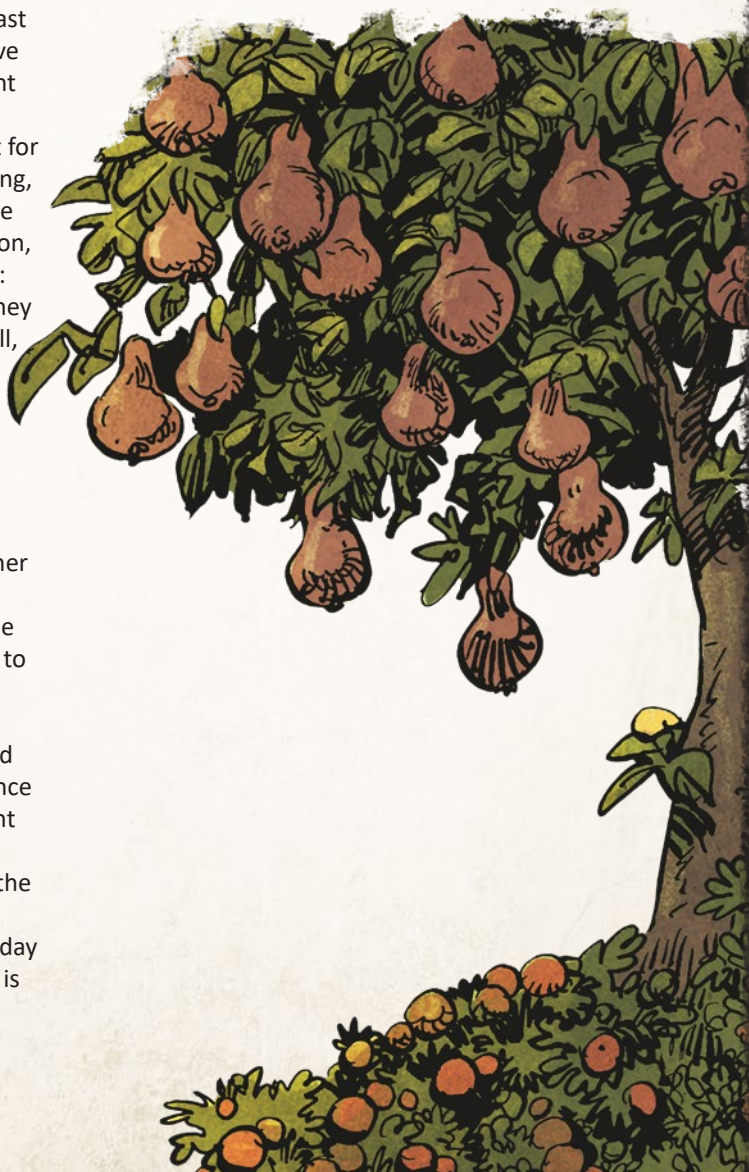
A twisting path leads down, into the heart of the valley, and you could swear that the sound coming from there is... children's laughter!

By now, there is a reasonable chance that at least some of the Player Characters are tired (i.e. have a level of Exhaustion) or wounded after the fight with the brigands — or even both, if they are particularly unlucky. If the party decides to rest for the night and continue its journey in the morning, they should be allowed to do so. In this way, the characters can neutralize the effect of Exhaustion, as well as regain some of their lost Vitality (see: Vitality as the characters' health indicator). If they decide to pitch camp at the foot of the waterfall, they will not be disturbed by anything except the characteristic sounds of the forest at night.

INTO THE CLEFT

It seems that the creature the party is tracking disappeared into the depths of the cleft, together with the kidnapped children, as suggested by a toy found nearby — a whalebone horse that the characters immediately recognize as belonging to one of the children.

Passing through the cleft takes between ten and twenty minutes, as the characters have a distance of several hundred meters to cover, which might make them suspicious — and rightly so. The uneven ground slopes down gently and finally the party reaches the other end of the cleft, which opens into... another valley! Whatever time of day it was when the characters entered the cleft, it is daytime now. In the valley, night never falls!



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◆ STAGE 2 — THE HIDDEN VALLEY ◆

The party is entering the hidden valley — a place beyond time and space. The valley cannot be seen from above and the only access is through the cleft in the rock. How was that passage created? That we may never know.

The hidden valley has several very important characteristics:

- Time has basically stopped there, so anyone staying in this place seems not to age at all. This also affects the metabolism — all processes are slowed down to the point where one does not feel hunger or the need to sleep, but wounds do not heal either. However, that seemingly idyllic world also has a darker side. If someone stays in the valley longer than a year (although the party will not be able to find this out), the 'normal' passage of time takes a heavy toll on such person — in fact, if they ever decide to go back through the cleft, they start growing old so fast, that they literally turn to dust by the time they reach the other end. Both the Player Characters, and the children from the village — provided that the party succeeds in rescuing them — are safe from that effect (unless, of course, they decide to spend an entire year in the vale), but all other 'newcomers' are warned by Cassandra not to leave the valley under any circumstances. The 'witch' tried to do it herself some time ago, feeling tired of living in hiding, but, on her way towards the exit, she noticed what was happening to her and turned back immediately.

- Ulgur the Troll is the only creature that comes from the hidden valley and as such it remains immune to the negative effects of the slowed-down passage of time. It cannot speak in any known language, but Cassandra is able to communicate with it telepathically. Ulgur's main task, which the troll has been

fulfilling for centuries, is to protect the giant tree that grows in the middle of the valley. Most of the time, the troll is asleep in its lair and only leaves it once in a while to carry out some mission it is charged with by its mistress, or to make a circuit of the area (which happens even less often). Having returned to the valley, it handed the children over to Cassandra, and then went back to sleep.

- Despite the fact that, in the valley, one does not feel hunger, there is still plenty of delicious food all around — the trees are ripe with fruits and bushes are bending under the weight of berries. The branches of the largest tree, which Cassandra believes to be the Tree of Idunn, the goddess of spring, are laden with apples. The mysterious power that slows down the aging processes seems to have no influence on plants, as they produce fruit in the normal way.

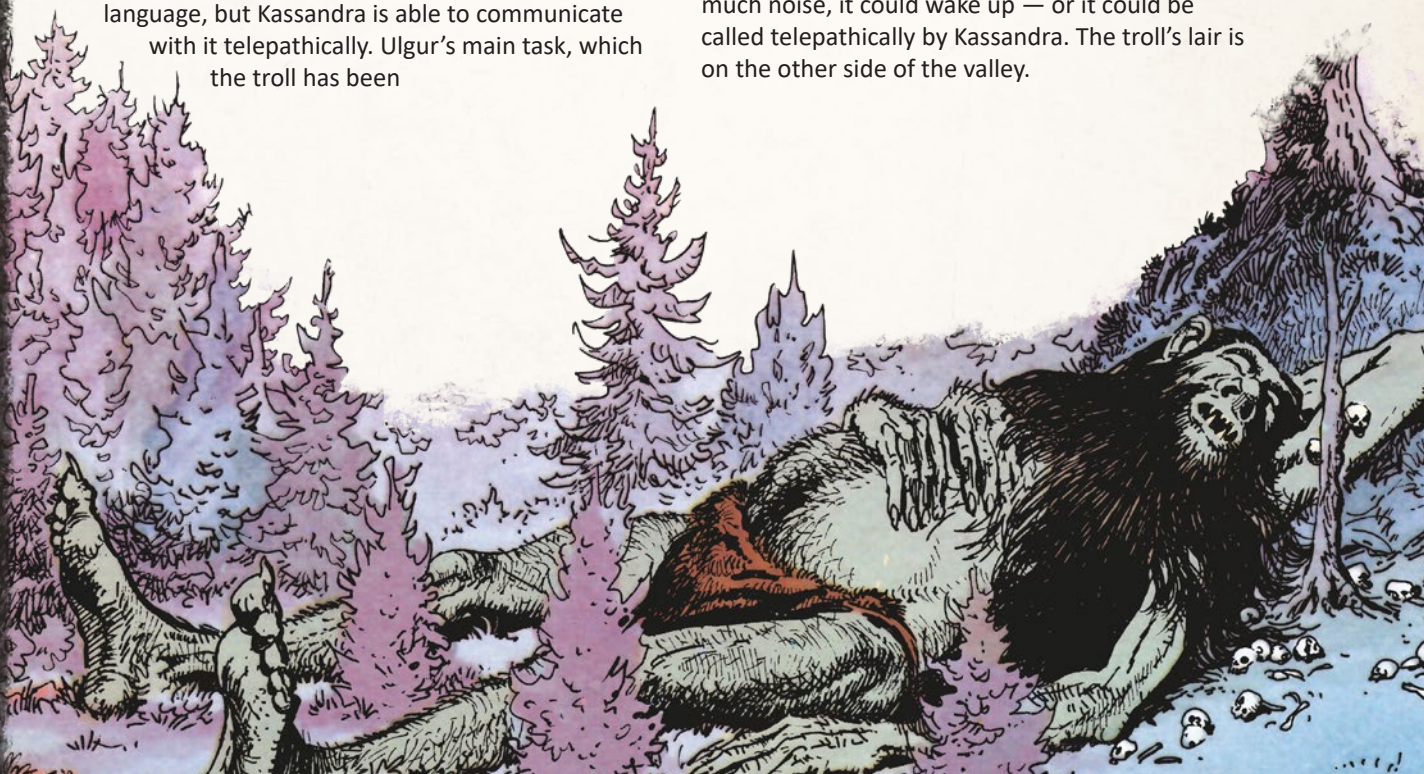
- If the Tree of Idunn is destroyed, for example burnt in a fire, the cleft in the rock face — the only way back to our world — will close up forever.

- The valley is around one and a half kilometers long and, as has already been mentioned, it is walled in by impassable mountains.

WHO CAN BE MET IN THE VALLEY?

Having entered the hidden valley, the party can meet the following characters:

- Ulgur the Troll — the guardian of the Tree of Idunn. Luckily, the creature is asleep at the moment. However, if the characters make too much noise, it could wake up — or it could be called telepathically by Cassandra. The troll's lair is on the other side of the valley.



TIPS ON ROLEPLAYING THE NPCs

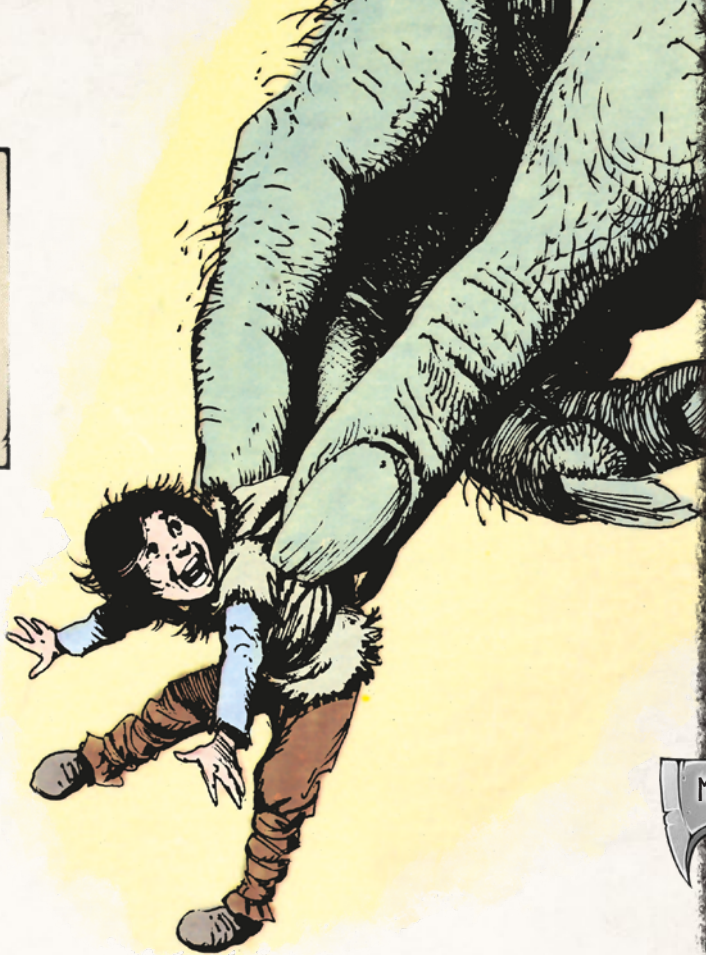
Ulgur is unable to communicate except through a series of growls and snarls. It behaves like a wild animal and this is exactly how it should be roleplayed — as a huge, humanoid bear (although it does not look like a bear at all!).

- Kidnapped children. There are twenty of them in total — ten girls and ten boys. Once in a while, Cassandra dispatches the troll to snatch children from the nearby villages and bring them to the valley. Then they are locked in caverns hidden between the roots of the enormous apple tree until they soften up and grow to trust their kidnapper. Eventually, they get too strongly attached to her to even think of escape — not to mention that the prospect of being chased by a troll is enough of a deterrent. The children (except for those from Grimsnes) have been in the valley for several years at least and they have already forgotten what their lives used to be like before they got there. Now, they spend all their time playing and eating delicious fruit, as happy and carefree as any children could be. They are provided with shelter and places to sleep in tree houses, wooden cabins perched in the branches and reached using rope ladders.

They feel safe in the valley, but that safety is only an illusion. Once in a while — but not too often — one of them suddenly disappears, only to be replaced by another not long after. Whenever that happens, Cassandra explains that the child must have run away and got lost somewhere beyond the valley. But the truth is much darker — such a boy or girl is either devoured by Ulgur (by way of a reward for the troll's loyal service), or sacrificed on the altar at the roots of the Tree of Idunn, while the other children are asleep. That usually happens when Cassandra gets bored with one or other of her captives, or when they get too curious and inquisitive for their own good.

The three children kidnapped from Grimsnes are currently locked up in the caverns at the roots of the Tree of Idunn, so the other children can't hear them crying (they have been told to stay away from the caverns).

Children from the vale are afraid of adults, as Cassandra has warned them against brigands, but they are also curious, so, if the party convinces them there is nothing to fear, they will come closer and flood the characters with questions — as children are wont to do. However, they will not be persuaded to leave the valley, and if the party



tries to remove them by force, they will scream. Cassandra (or Melkora, as the children often call her) seems to play the part of a strict aunt — beloved and dear to her charges, but also commanding respect. There may be some things she does not allow them to do, but she is nice to them and they can play whenever they want!

Children will be more than willing to show the valley to their new friends, but they will keep away from two places: the troll's lair (Cassandra says Ulgur is our dog — it protects us, but we better not tease it or it bites) and the opening at the roots of the apple tree (Only bad children go there!). They will also warn the party that Melkora is best avoided (She REALLY doesn't like strangers, even nice ones like you!).

EXAMPLES OF NAMES

As it is highly unlikely that the players will want to know the names of all the children in the valley, we do not provide a complete list. Instead, the GM can use any of the following names, whenever necessary.

Boys' names: Arne, Birger, Bjorn, Erik, Frode, Gorm, Halfdan, Harald, Knud, Kare, Leif, Njal, Rune, Sten, Skarde, Toke, Torsten.

Girls' names: Astrid, Bodil, Frida, Gertrud, Gro, Estrid, Hilda, Gudrun, Gunhild, Helga, Inga, Liv, Signe, Sigrid, Revna, Tove.

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The kidnapped children are between 10 and 12 years old. If they are to be roleplayed convincingly, they should not differ much from average boys and girls of that age. However, remember that these particular kids have been in almost complete isolation for a long time — they are naive and curious, but cautious at the same time. Most importantly, they are bound to bombard the strangers with question after question, without giving them any time to answer. The characters may feel overwhelmed, but they must keep themselves in check — if they lose their tempers the children, scared by the sudden outburst of anger, will run away crying.

Kassandra is often called Melkora by her young captives, since the witch from folk tales was the first thing that came to their minds immediately after being kidnapped, before they learned her real name. She spends most of her time meditating in her cabin high in the branches of the Tree of Idunn. As she does not like to waste her energy without good reason, she is unlikely to leave her retreat, unless alarmed by something (e.g. screams from the children, Ulgur roaring, a burning smell or a direct attack on her tree house). She checks on the children every few hours to make sure they are fine, and then goes down to the caverns to feed the three who were kidnapped from Grimsnes.

She does not expect visitors, so the party should not have much of a problem with sneaking past her and the children will not turn their new friends in, unless mistreated.

Despite feeling relatively safe in the valley, Kassandra is still afraid that sooner or later, colonists from the *Atlantia* will find her and she will end up captured or possibly dead. Unfortunately for the party, she is capable, to some extent, of reading minds, and she can communicate telepathically. So, if the characters try to talk to her directly, the 'witch' will immediately recognize them as Atlanteans. Then, she will panic and it will not be easy to calm her down.

Kassandra does not realize that she is sinking deeper and deeper into madness and all she wants is to keep the things as they are. Thus, she will not hesitate to call Ulgur, if she feels that either herself or the children could be in danger. The troll is an excellent climber, so reaching any place in the branches, no matter how high, is child's play for it.

TIPS ON ROLEPLAYING THE NPCs

Kassandra speaks in a drowsy manner, slurring her words, but only as long as she does not explode in anger — then her voice grows sharp as a blade and she starts talking fast, like a wind-up toy. One could even get the impression that she has two different personalities. What is more, some time ago she began referring to herself in the plural (our name is Kassandra), which only testifies to her growing paranoia. She is also pathologically distrustful, never looks other people in the eyes and prefers to keep her distance. All that, in combination with her wild appearance (fragments of leaves entangled in unkempt, matted hair, tattered clothes made of whatever dirty rags she could find) truly makes one think of a witch from folk tales.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Characters in *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, just like those in the comic books, are often put in situations when they have to make difficult and fateful decisions. In most cases, they have several options to choose from. Will the characters try to solve the problem without resorting to violence, as Thorgal prefers to do, or will they follow the example of Kriss de Valnor and confront the enemy head on? Well, that depends on the players.



The following are several possible solutions that they are likely to come up with, based on the individual skills and abilities of their characters:

Striking a deal with Cassandra

This option assumes that the characters will not be hostile towards Cassandra, when the children lead them to her or when they sneak up to her cabin. As mentioned in her description, Cassandra will not be happy with their visit, to put it mildly. Convincing her that no one is going to hurt her requires a Hard Charisma check.

In the case of a **failure**, the 'witch' will demand that the party leaves the valley immediately, before she calls the troll. If necessary, she will defend herself.

In the case of a **success**, Cassandra will believe the characters and tell them of a problem she has been struggling with for some time now. If the unwanted guests want to prove their goodwill, they will help her solve it. In the other room of her tree house, one of the children is fighting a fever due to acute poisoning (probably from eating a toxic plant). Pirra is able to neutralize the toxin, using her Detoxification power. Alternatively, a successful Standard Survival check allows someone to find a herb that brings down the fever.

If the characters succeed in healing the child, Cassandra will tell them her story, revealing her true name and identity, as well as her blood relationship with Xargos, the captain of the Atlantia. She will also ask them to keep all that information to themselves. In exchange, she will let them leave the valley with the children kidnapped from their village. However, if they ever come back, Ulgur will deal with them.

Kassandra will lead the party into the system of caverns stretching deep under the giant roots of the Tree of Idunn. On their way, they will walk past an altar stained with children's blood, but Cassandra will refuse to talk about it. She will only mention that the tree must be nourished, for such is the will of the gods who rule this land. When they finally reach their destination, Cassandra will open the door secured with a crude latch and children will run out of the cave.

Now the party can safely return to their village. However, the characters can also decide that leaving Cassandra alive is a very bad idea and try to resolve the matter by force — in this case, the 'witch' will call her loyal servant, Ulgur.

Eliminating Cassandra

Any option involving a physical confrontation with Cassandra means additional trouble, as Ulgur, having received a distress signal from its mistress, will rush to her aid. Cassandra's powers allowed her to establish a mental connection with the troll, so now she is able to wake the creature up using only her thoughts. This does not mean, however, that Ulgur will arrive in time to help her. In any event, the beast will be out for blood. Cassandra herself, as an Atlantean, could prove to be a major challenge for the party, but she is not half as dangerous as Ulgur.

The very sight of the troll is enough to make one's blood run cold. Hence, the characters will be required to make a Standard Fear check. If Medios is in the party, he can use his Spirit Lifting power to inspire courage in the heart of anyone who has given in to fear (including himself). The fight with the monster will provide the characters with a perfect opportunity to prove themselves in combat.

See Fear, page 50



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A clever party can come up with the idea of laying an ambush for the troll. Ulgur is not a particularly sharp creature, so it will most probably fail to spot the trap, thus making it all the easier for the characters to finish it off (or at least limit the risk of ending up a bloody mess). Digging a pit is not an option — the party doesn't have the time or tools for that, not to mention there is very little chance of it going unnoticed. However, the characters can use ropes, tree trunks and other things in their immediate surroundings. They do not even have to describe the trap mechanism in detail. A successful Hard Survival or Trickery check should be enough. If the plan succeeds, the troll will lose 25 Vitality (damage is not reduced by armor). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Remember that the troll regenerates each round!

Solving the matter quietly

If the characters prefer to solve matters quietly, they can try to sneak up to the caverns at the roots of Tree of Idunn (of course, they first must discover where the kidnapped children are kept), free the kids and leave the valley without making a noise.

The other children have been instructed to stay away from the entrance to the caves. As they most probably follow the party's every step, they will have to be distracted, which will require a successful Hard Stealth check.

When the characters enter the caverns, they will hear children crying; however, to find out where exactly the sound is coming from, they will have to succeed at a Standard Sharp Senses check. In the case of a failure, they will lose too much time wandering around the labyrinth of caves, while the 'witch' is preparing to feed her captives. The check can be repeated, but on a second failure Cassandra will come around the next corner. How will the party react? Two possible solutions have been described above.

On their way to the children's cell, the characters will walk past a crude altar stained with blood, which might give them something to think about, especially if they have not yet met Cassandra.

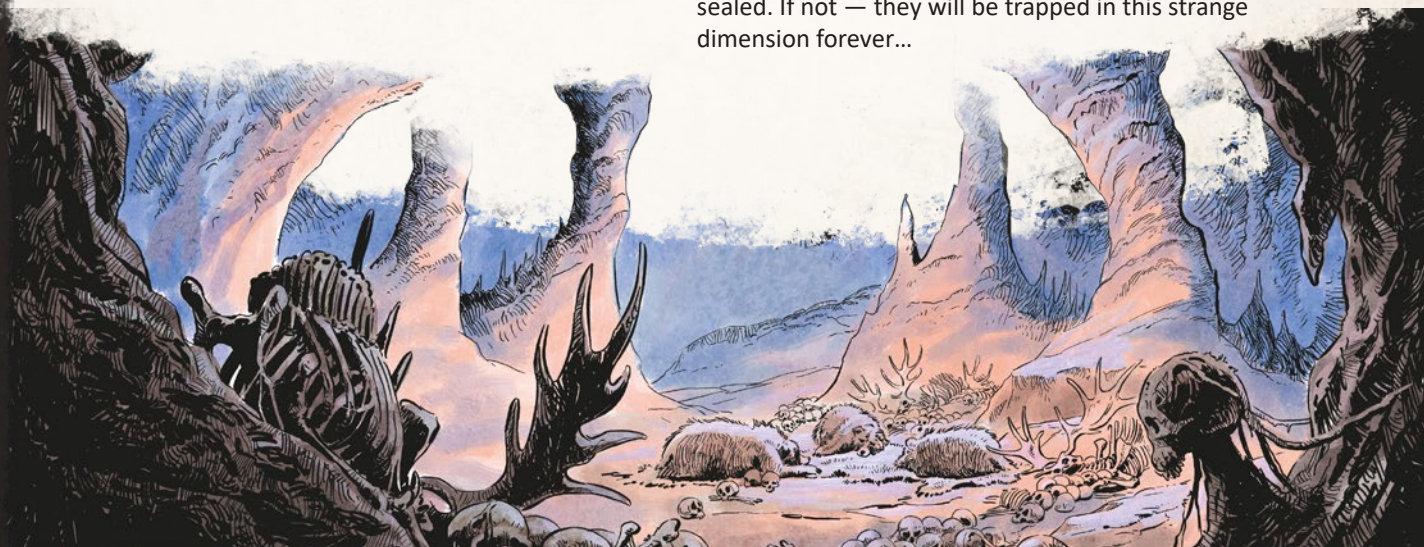
When they finally reach the cavern where the children are kept, all they will have to do is break down the makeshift door, which is easy and does not require any checks. Leading the kids out of the caves without being noticed is a much more difficult challenge. If the other children living in the valley realize that strangers are trying to 'steal away' three of their own, they will raise the alarm (in that case, see: Eliminating Cassandra). To sneak out quietly, the party will have to succeed at a Hard Stealth check. If the plan is to work, every character must pass the check, but each DL above Hard achieved in that check can neutralize one failure of another character (this mechanic reflects the fact that members of the party support one another and, should any of their companions make a potentially fatal error, this can be immediately rectified).

GETTING OUT OF THE VALLEY

If the characters are lucky and smart enough, there is a good chance that they will get out of the valley with the rescued children. However, depending on the choices they have made so far, they may have to face the following consequences:

- **Kassandra and Ulgur are dead** — in this case, there is no reason why the party should not take the treasures collected by the 'witch.' They could prove of much use during Downtime. What to do with the twenty children trapped outside of time is a completely different matter. Any attempt at leading them out of the valley will have fatal consequences — as soon as they enter the crack in the rock face, they will begin to age, and the further they go, the worse it will get. On the other side of the cleft, they will turn to dust. Will the party decide to leave them in a place where they have plenty of food and will never get old? What will happen to them?

- **The characters set the Tree of Idunn on fire** — in this case, they need to hurry up, as the earth is shaking violently and the cleft, which is the only way in and out of the valley, is closing up. If they have succeeded in freeing the children, they will manage to escape before the passage is completely sealed. If not — they will be trapped in this strange dimension forever...



- If **Kassandra survives**, she will continue to kidnap children, but if the characters help her, she will tell Ulgur to stay away from the place where the last 'delivery' came from. Thus, Grimsnes will be safe... but for how long? If the characters succeed in sneaking out of the valley together with the children, it is certain that Ulgur will appear again in the vicinity of their village.

The journey back home will be uneventful. The characters are in no rush now, so they can choose the safest route for the children. And so the adventure ends, and you can move on to collecting your rewards, and then to the next stage in the game, which is called Downtime.

REWARDS

The greatest and most important prize for your participation in the adventure is, of course, the fantastic time you have spent together, and the story you have created. Still, it is always nice to get something extra. In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, rewards come in the form of various resources to be used by the players to develop not only their characters, but also the settlement they embark on their expeditions from — in other words, their home. For completing an adventure, the party receives the following rewards:

Experience Points (XP)

These are a sort of currency spent to boost the characters' abilities. To upgrade a specific skill, the player has to spend an amount of XP equal to the target skill level (so, to advance from level 0 to level 1, you have to spend 1 XP, but the cost of further advancement from level 1 to level 2 is 2 XP, and so on). The cost of increasing a Primary Stat is always 10 XP, regardless of the level. In addition, in the full version of the game, you will be able to purchase additional special abilities, called feats. XP are also used to develop Bonds, but this is discussed in detail later on.

In general, for their contribution to completing an adventure, the characters should be given 3 XP each. However, at the end of the scenario, the GM can decide (possibly in consultation with other players) that those of you who have displayed the greatest initiative, inventiveness and roleplaying skills should be awarded 7 XP each.

If you think that 7 XP is too much, but 3 XP is not enough, 5 XP seems to be a perfect compromise.

Treasures

instead of describing each precious item the party finds in detail, and trying to estimate its value in gold, in *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, the characters acquire 'treasures', which can be used later for the benefit of their home village. Whether the characters find any treasure depends on their actions. If, for example, they defeat the leader of a band of raiders, they will be able to claim the bandits' loot (or send someone to collect it later). However, if the party runs away without putting up a fight, the treasure will remain in the hands of the plunderers. Treasures are an abstract measure of wealth and the amount gained depends on the risk associated with their acquisition. Usually, the party finds one treasure. Two treasures are a huge prize and three — fabulous riches. Still, a treasure doesn't always take the form of a room full of gold coins — it could just as easily be a single, priceless jewel.

If the characters succeed in defeating Kassandra and her troll, and rescuing the kidnapped children, which is no small feat, do not hesitate to reward them with all the precious items the 'witch' has collected over the years — 2 treasures in total.

If the children are saved through negotiations and diplomacy, the party can be awarded with 1 treasure — something one of the kids has found in the caverns and cleverly hidden away from 'Melkora.'

DOWNTIME

In the comic books, Thorgal undertakes many expeditions, but all he really cares about is to return home safely and be reunited with his loved ones. The characters in *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* likewise embark on all sorts of quests, leaving their soulmates and other villagers behind. Then, having completed their mission, they return to their village to find out what has changed during their absence — just like Thorgal. For the gods are cruel and are only waiting for the Atlanteans to leave before putting their friends and neighbors to another test. Besides, the game is set in times that could hardly be called peaceful.



For game purposes, the village of Grimsnes has the following stats:

Defense (measures and resources for protecting the village): 1

Prosperity (the capacity to feed all the residents): 3

Fortitude (the villagers' indomitable spirit): 2

Stability (the general condition of the village): 5

Their respective meanings will be discussed shortly. Simply put, the party's goal is to increase the village's Stability, or at least prevent it from decreasing. The higher the Stability, the better (the maximum is 10 and the minimum is 0).

However, let's start by explaining exactly what Downtime is.

Downtime is the period between the end of one adventure and the beginning of another. The characters return home, solve problems that have arisen during their absence, develop their village, improve their skills and strengthen their bonds with their loved ones. During Downtime, players are given an opportunity to create their own unique stories focusing on their characters and serving as interludes between expeditions. They spend time with their families and make decisions regarding the future of the village. In short, Downtime is the period when the characters deal with consequences of their actions.

Downtime is divided into 3 phases: Return, Progress and Rest.

RETURN

This is the moment when — just like in the comic books — the characters return from an expedition and find out what has happened in the village during their absence. First, the GM rolls a d10 and checks the result:

• 1–4. Catastrophe! The village was struck by some natural disaster, for example an extremely violent storm, flood, avalanche or disastrous fire, and suffered extensive damage. The villagers are tough people, but will they muster enough courage and strength not to give in to despair? Make a Fortitude check to find out. Success increases (and failure decreases) the village's Stability by 1.

• 4–7. Attack! The village suffered a coordinated attack (by brigands, wild tribes, mercenaries or even a pack of wolves). Its residents had to put up a hell of a fight to drive the enemies off. Make a Defense check to find out if they succeeded. Success increases (and failure decreases) the Stability by 1.

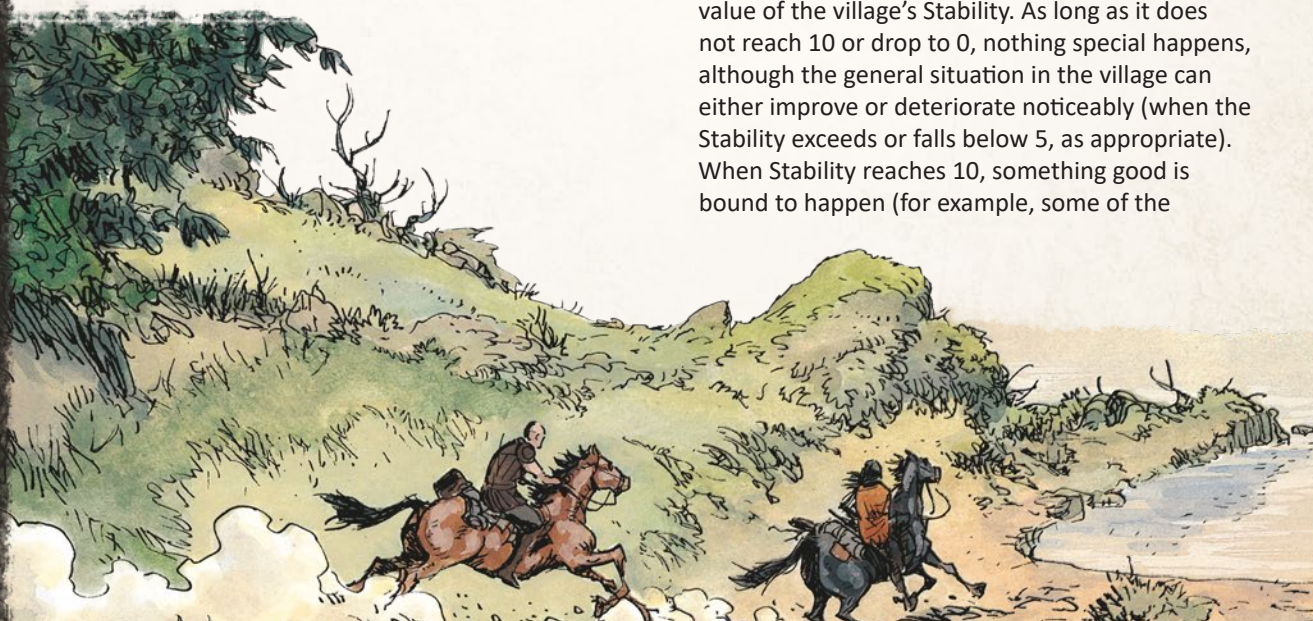
• 8–9. Nothing Special. In the dangerous world of the Vikings, a moment of peace is a rare luxury. So, enjoy it while you can.

• 10. Gift from the Gods! Once in a while, but not too often, fortune smiles on the good people of your village. For example, an exceptionally large deer is hunted down or an extremely valuable item is found washed ashore... Whatever the case may be, Stability is increased by 1.

Whenever you are required to make a check concerning any of the above-mentioned stats, you roll a d20 and add the current value of that stat to the result. The DL of each such check is always Standard. The result cannot be modified in any way (i.e. you cannot use Gods' Grace, Shifts or Re-Rolls).

Regardless of the check result and its consequences, you also have to find out whether your food supplies are sufficient to feed the entire village. Make a Prosperity check. Success increases (and failure decreases) Stability by 1.

The next and final step is checking the current value of the village's Stability. As long as it does not reach 10 or drop to 0, nothing special happens, although the general situation in the village can either improve or deteriorate noticeably (when the Stability exceeds or falls below 5, as appropriate). When Stability reaches 10, something good is bound to happen (for example, some of the



characters may become parents), and when it gets down to 0, a great tragedy befalls the village. As it is not possible for your characters to reach either of those two extremes at the end of this adventure, the relevant rules will be explained in the upcoming core rulebook.

PROGRESS

This is the phase that immediately follows the Return. During their expeditions, the characters will acquire all sorts of treasures that may contribute greatly to the development of their village. Treasures can be spent to increase the village's Defense (for example, by training the locals in using weapons, hiring mercenaries or building fortifications — the players can come up with their own ideas, but any such suggestion must be first approved by the GM), Prosperity (for example, by building an inn, expanding trade or improving soil cultivation methods) and Fortitude (for example, by erecting a temple dedicated to a specific god, sponsoring a magnificent sculpture by a village artist or organizing a festival to uphold the local traditions). Village stats are increased in a similar way to characters' abilities, i.e. you have to spend as many treasures as the target level of advancement. So, to advance from level 1 to level 2, you have to spend two treasures, the cost of further advancement from level 2 to level 3 is three treasures, and so on. From the narrative point of view, the higher the level of a specific stat, the more advanced the solutions which can be applied. For example, if, at level 2 of Defense, the characters decide to build a palisade, at level 3, it can be replaced with a stone wall, and at level 4 they can erect a small, fortified stronghold.

REST

This phase begins with a feast organized to celebrate the party's happy return and the many feats of strength and glory accomplished by its members. It lasts until the next expedition (the phase, not the feast). Rest is the time the characters devote to self-improvement (i.e. increasing their stats by spending XP to advance to higher levels in various skills, purchasing feats, etc.), as well as strengthening bonds with their loved ones.

In addition to the values of individual stats, the Settlement Sheet includes information on the characters' Soulmates, along with the level of Bond they are linked by.

A Soulmate is a person close to the character's heart — someone to whom the character always returns (just like Thorgal returned to Aaricia). Soulmates provide your characters with a feeling of safety, stability and purpose, and can potentially

give them children to follow in their footsteps in case of their unfortunate death (or old age).

A Bond is the measure of intimacy between your character and his or her Soulmate. It is developed during the Rest phase, to reflect the time spent with that special person and the effort put into building the relationship. Each Soulmate starts the game with their Bond at level 0. To advance to the next level, you spend XP in the same way as for skill development — that is, the cost is equal to the target level. During one Rest, you cannot increase your Bond by more than 1 level. However, long separation weakens a Bond. Thus, if you decide not to develop your Bond during a given Rest, you must spend 1 XP to maintain its current level. Otherwise, the value drops by 1.

The higher the Bond level, the more benefits it can bring to the character — and, with time, to the entire village.

Bond level 1. During the next expedition, you are provided with additional protection against Bad Luck. This means that, once per session, when you roll a 1 on the Destiny Die, you can change that result using Gods' Grace, Shifts or Re-Rolls, and your turn does not end. Fate can play tricks on you, but you will not let it stand in your way when someone close to your heart is waiting at home for your return.

Bond level 2. In addition to the benefits you gain at level 1, you are given one additional Re-Roll per session. The stronger the Bond, the greater your determination.

Bond level 3. In addition to benefits you gain at lower levels, your Soulmate becomes a pillar of the community and does everything in his or her power to protect the home you are building together. During the Return phase, when the GM rolls the dice to find out what happened in the village during your absence, your Soulmate can add 1 to the result of one check of your choice made in that phase (after the roll for that check is made).

When the party has worked through all the Downtime phases, the characters are ready to embark on their next expedition. As well as the upcoming *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game* core rulebook, we will publish more ready-to-play scenarios that allow you to continue your adventures in the universe of the comic books. Will you follow in Thorgal's footsteps? Or maybe create your own, original saga? **It's up to you!**

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KASSANDRA, ALSO KNOWN AS MELKORA

Kassandra is a slender, scruffy-looking woman with beautiful green eyes, gray hair and deep wrinkles on her face. Her looks are deceiving; she is actually in her thirties, but an attempt at leaving the valley after over a year of hiding left an indelible mark on her. She is wearing whatever tattered rags she has managed to find or tear off some random corpse.

CON	AG	PER	INT	CP	VER	AT	F	VIT
4	4	4	7	4	7	8	70	50
Ranged Combat			5	9	Arcane Knowledge			7 14
Toughness			2	6	Charisma			5 12
Reflex			6	10	Star Heritage			6 13
Sharp Senses			5	5	Willpower			7 14

Special:

Kassandra can use Shifts and Gods' Grace in the same way as Player Characters.

Unbending:

Once per combat scene, as a Reaction after a failed defense check, Kassandra can turn that failure into an automatic success. This applies to Willpower defense checks against Atlantean Powers, Toughness checks, etc.

Arcane Mastery:

Once per scene, Kassandra can use an Atlantean Power as a free action (but she still has to pay the cost, achieve the target DL, etc.)

Ranged weapons	Attacks	Hit	Damage
Longbow	1	7/7/6/6	1d10 + 11
Melee weapons	Attacks	Hit	Damage
Knife	2	6	1d10 + 4
Defense	23	Armor [light] 8	

EQUIPMENT

When fighting with a knife, rolling Doubles on a hit check results in a Piercing attack.

Greater Atlantean Power: Shroud of Death

Cost: 9

Range: Long

Difficulty: 20

Effect: The target loses 1d10 Vitality (damage is not reduced by armor). Additionally, the target's Gods' Grace and Shifts are both reduced by 1 at the end of each round. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to Kassandra's VER.

In combat, Kassandra will mostly attack using her Atlantean Power. However, if any of her opponents gets too close, she might be forced to use a knife. If Ulgur is unable to come to her aid, she will first use the power and then run amok, lunging at enemies with a knife.

Telepathy:

Kassandra can read minds and communicate telepathically. Thus, lying to her requires a Willpower check at Very Hard DL (Kassandra does not make any checks because she believes that whatever information she extracts from other people's minds must be true).



ULGUR, TROLL FROM THE HIDDEN VALLEY

Ulgur is a 2.5-meter tall giant, looking like a stooped, hairy man with hideously deformed facial features, bulging muscles and a sagging abdomen. In addition, it stinks horribly, as it is not in the habit of washing itself — well, unless it accidentally falls into a river. Ulgur is a troll, a creature from popular folk tales. Any wounds it suffers at the hands of its enemies heal incredibly fast and human meat is its favorite delicacy. What brought it to this part of the North? Well, that is yet another of the many mysteries that Northland holds.

CON	AG	PER	INT	CP	VER	AT	F	VIT
10	4	4	2	4	3	14	-	80
Paws	4	14	Sharp Senses	3	7			
Toughness	4	14	Stealth	2	6			
Reflex	2	6	Willpower	8	11			
Survival	5	9						

Special:

Ulgur can use Shifts and Gods' Grace in the same way as Player Characters.

Regeneration:

Once per turn, as a free action, the troll regains 10 Vitality (unless it is already dead).

Vomit Acid:

As part of a combat action, the troll can make a special attack; each opponent engaged in melee with the creature must succeed at a Very Hard Reflex check or suffer 2d6 damage (not reduced by armor).

Large

Each creature smaller than Large is given a +2 hit check bonus

Fear

Standard Willpower check — see: Fear

Ranged weapons	Attacks	Hit	Damage
Thrown boulder	1	14 / 14 / X / X	1d20 + 10
Melee weapons	Attacks	Hit	Damage
Massive paws	2	16	1d6 + 15
Defense	23	Armor [standard]	10



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SAVAGE BRIGAND

A desperado in dirty old rags and poor-quality leather armor who, thanks to a series of unfortunate events (or his or her own bad decisions), has chosen to live by robbing people. Brigands have been living in the forests around Grimsnes for many years. Sometimes, they even dare to pay a visit to the village by night, but that happens rarely, if ever.

CON	AG	PER	INT	CP	VER	AT	F	VIT	
4	3	4	3	3	3	7	-	15	
Brute Force			4	8	Ranged Combat			4	8
Toughness			2	6	Stealth			2	5
Reflex			3	6	Survival			3	7
Weakness: When more than half of the brigands are dead, the rest will either flee or surrender, unless they succeed at a Hard Willpower check (each rolls separately).									
Ranged weapons			Attacks		Hit		Damage		
-			-		-		-		
Melee weapons			Attacks		Hit		Damage		
Axe			1		10		1d10 + 10		
Defense				22		Armor [light]		6	

ARCHER BRIGAND

This brigand looks as ragged as the rest of the band but, unlike them, he has a bow and knows how to use it. In addition to shooting arrows treacherously from a safe distance, the archer hunts game to feed his group.

CON	AG	PER	INT	CP	VER	AT	F	VIT	
4	3	4	3	3	3	7	-	15	
Brute Force			4	8	Ranged Combat			4	8
Toughness			2	6	Stealth			2	5
Reflex			3	6	Survival			3	7

Weakness:
When more than half of the brigands are dead, the rest will either flee or surrender, unless they succeed at a Hard Willpower check (each rolls separately).

Ranged weapons		Attacks	Hit	Damage
Bow		1	10 / 10 / 10 / X	1d10 + 10
Melee weapons		Attacks	Hit	Damage
Axe		1	10	1d10 + 10
Defense		22	Armor [light] 6	



♦ RULES ♦

MAKING CHECKS

In Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game, checks are made by rolling 2d20 (i.e. the Destiny and Luck Dice) and adding the following values to the result:

- the sum of the checked skill and the Primary Stat it is attributed to, or
- the value of a Derived Stat, or
- the value of a Primary Stat only.

The goal is to achieve a result greater than or equal to the Difficulty Level (DL) set by the GM. If the total result of your check is at least the target DL, the check is a success. Any other result is a failure.

Check Difficulty Levels are as follows:

Easy	10
Standard	15
Hard	20
Very Hard	25
Extreme	30
Legendary	35
Godlike	40

If a 1 is rolled on the Destiny Die, the check is an automatic failure and the character loses all his or her remaining actions for that turn.

On the other hand, if a 20 is rolled on the Destiny Die, the check is an automatic success, regardless of the target DL.

ROUNDS AND TURNS

A round is a unit of time in the game, usually in combat. One round corresponds to about 5 seconds of in-game time, but this does not mean you have only 5 seconds of real time to make a decision! A round is supposed to illustrate what the participants in a given encounter are able to do within 5 seconds.

In each round, each Player Character or NPC gets a turn, and may perform one or more actions.

At the start of each encounter, you make an Initiative check to establish the order characters act in each round. For that purpose, you roll 2d20 (remembering which of the dice is the

Destiny Die and which is the Luck Die) and add the sum of your character's Agility and Reflex to the result rolled on the Destiny Die (or the Luck Die, if you switch the dice using Gods' Grace). Once established, the initiative order stays the same each round until the end of the encounter.

The character with the highest Initiative acts first, and then the one with the second highest result, and so on. In case of a group of opponents of the same type (e.g. a band of raiders), only one check is made, meaning that they act simultaneously, but their individual actions are still resolved through separate checks.

Initiative is mostly used in combat.



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WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR TURN?

You can make **1 move action** and **1 combat or utility action**, in addition to **up to 4 free actions** in a round. You can take a **second move action** instead of your combat or utility action; this doesn't affect your free actions.

Move action

A move action allows you to shorten or extend the distance between you and your target by one range. Ranges will be discussed shortly, in the combat rules.

Combat action

As part of a combat action, you can attack an opponent or use your powers. One combat action only allows you to use one Basic or Greater power, but you can carry out more than one attack (this will be explained in more detail later on, in the combat rules).

Utility action

As part of a utility action, you can do something other than attacking the enemy, for example climb a wall, take a shield off your back or drink a potion.

Free action

Free actions are all sorts of simple activities (like saying something quickly, for example), but they also allow you to use Basic Powers or activate your special abilities (including those from your feats or edges). A Reaction is a special type of free action — subject to the limit of 4 free actions in a round, you can use your Reaction even in an enemy's turn, provided that you have a special ability that allows you to do that.

MELEE



Whenever swords, axes, fists, fangs or claws are used in combat, the melee rules apply. If you and your enemy are no further than 1 meter apart, you are locked in melee (i.e. you are at close range to each other). Even if your character is armed with a ranged weapon (e.g. a bow), the confrontation is still resolved using the melee rules.

When you fight at close range, bashing the enemy with a melee weapon is much easier than shooting. Thus, whenever you try to use a ranged weapon in melee, you expose yourself to an attack. In this event, your opponent can strike one additional free blow at you (the check is made before you take the shot). This is called an opportunity attack. Each opportunity attack is a Reaction and each character can use only one Reaction per round in this manner.

In melee, your hit check result is calculated according to one of the following formulas:

CON + Brute Force skill + Accuracy + 2d20 roll result (when your combat style is based on delivering as hard a blow as possible)

AG + Finesse skill + Accuracy + 2d20 roll result (when your combat style is based on quick reactions and exploiting opponents' weak points)

CON + Unarmed Combat skill + Accuracy + 2d20 roll result (when you fight without any weapons or with an improvised weapon)

If you gain any bonuses (for example, from your feats or edges), you add them to the total check result. Accuracy is a bonus which depends on the weapon you are using. On the Character Sheets, all the relevant values are already added up, so you only need to roll 2d20 and add the number rolled on the Destiny Die (or the Luck Die, if you switch the dice using Gods' Grace) to that subtotal.

Okay, now you know your hit check result. What next? The GM compares it to your opponent's Defense. If you meet or exceed that value, you score a hit.

And now the best part of every combat — checking how hard you whack whatever foul thing dares to stand in your way! In the stats table for each weapon (or unarmed combat style), the 'Damage' entry specifies how many dice of a given type you roll to determine the damage dealt, and any additions to the dice. So, you take the required dice, make a roll and calculate your result as per the table (for example, 2d6 + 5 means that you have to roll two six-sided dice and add 5 to the result).

However, the damage dealt may not be the value the target's Vitality is reduced by. First, you have to deduct the Protection provided by your opponent's armor. Only then will you find out whether you succeeded in wounding the enemy.

When the Vitality of a hostile NPC drops to 0 or below, that NPC is eliminated.

When you roll 2d20 and a 20 is rolled on the Destiny Die, you score a Crit! In addition to the automatic success, the following special rules are applied:

1. **Piercing** — for the purposes of that hit check, the Protection of the enemy's armor is halved.
2. **A chance to deal even more damage** — roll one additional damage die (of the same type) and use the higher of the two results.

The same rules are applied when you are attacked by your enemies.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As part of a combat action, you can carry out more than one attack, if your weapon's stats allow that. Check the number under the 'Attacks' heading to find out how many attacks can be made with a specific weapon in one round. Each additional hit check result is calculated in the same way as the first one.



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RANGED COMBAT

If you prefer to keep your enemies at a distance, whether with the help of your bow, crossbow, or energy bolts, it means that ranged combat is your thing!

First, it should be noted that shooting at a target locked in melee with one of your allies is quite a daunting challenge. In this case, your shot is Jinxed (which means that you cannot use Gods' Grace, Shifts or Re-Rolls to modify the check result).



In ranged combat, your hit check result is calculated according to the following formula:

PER + Ranged Combat skill + Accuracy + 2d20
roll result (when you use a bow, a crossbow, or any other missile weapon)

If you have any bonuses (for example, from your feats or edges), you add them to the total check result. Accuracy is a bonus which depends on the weapon you are using. The Accuracy of a ranged weapon also depends on the distance between the shooter and the target. For this reason, hit stats in the Character Sheet are provided for four different ranges: short, medium, long and extreme, and an X means that a given weapon cannot shoot effectively at that range. Before you take the shot, the GM must specify what range you are at in relation to your target.

Then, the GM compares your result with the enemy's Defense. If you meet or exceed that value, you score a hit.

The final step is rolling for damage, which is done as described for **Melee**.

The rules for Crits are the same as in melee.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As part of one combat action, you can take more than one shot, if your weapon's stats allow that. Check the number under the 'Attacks' heading to find out how many times you can shoot a specific weapon in one round. Each additional hit check result is calculated in the same manner as the first one. Remember that some weapons must be reloaded before taking another shot!

MOVEMENT

Moving from place to place outside of combat is easy — the GM estimates the distance between you and the place you want to go, and the time required to cover it. In combat, however, specifying the distance between opponents is much more important, especially when they use ranged weapons.

In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, movement is measured in abstract ranges. At the beginning of each combat, the GM declares what range the opponents are at in relation to one another. Then, the characters can use their move actions to shorten or extend that range. The number of

move actions needed to change the range (i.e. move towards or away from the target) depends on which of the five ranges you are at.



Close range

Whispering distance. You are close enough to make a melee attack or use an item that is activated by touch. Moving from close to short range (or vice versa), if entering or disengaging from melee, takes 1 move action, even if the actual distance is only a few steps.

Short range

Normal conversation distance. Moving from short to medium range (or vice versa) also takes 1 move action.

Medium range

Loud conversation distance. Moving from medium to long range (or vice versa) requires 2 move actions, as the characters have a greater distance to cover.

Long range

Shouting distance. Moving from long to extreme range (or vice versa) requires another 2 move actions, as well as an Exhaustion check at Standard DL — on a failure, the character is Jinxed until after taking a rest.

Extreme range

A distance that makes any verbal communication impossible. As has been already mentioned, shortening the range from extreme to long takes 2 move actions, plus an Exhaustion check.

Remember that every time you change range in combat, your relative position on the battlefield changes accordingly. For example, if you are at a medium range in relation to two different opponents and decide to run towards one of them, that range is changed to short, but at the same time the range between you and the other enemy is extended to long.



VITALITY AS THE CHARACTER'S HEALTH INDICATOR

In *Thorgal: The Roleplaying Game*, Vitality is the maximum damage a character can take before losing consciousness or — in the worst-case scenario — dying.

Whenever characters are wounded in combat or experience other harmful effects, their Vitality is reduced accordingly.

When it drops to 0, they lose consciousness and are no longer able to defend themselves. Any further damage continues to reduce Vitality below zero. When the characters have suffered twice as much damage as their maximum Vitality — hail the fallen heroes, for tonight they feast in Valhalla!

Example: The character's Vitality is 20. When it drops to 0, he or she loses consciousness, but is still alive. The character dies only after suffering 20 additional damage, i.e. when his or her Vitality is reduced to -20.

When a character's Vitality is reduced to 0, any action resulting in increasing it to 1 or more (for example, using a special power) brings that character back to consciousness. In addition, after the combat, each character can make a check to heal wounds. This can be either a General Knowledge or Survival check, and the effects depend on the DL achieved:

- If your score would succeed at a **Standard DL**, you regain 1d6 Vitality (or increase it to 1, if it dropped to 0 or below by the end of combat).
- If your score would succeed at a **Hard DL**, you regain 1d10 Vitality (or increase it to 5, if it dropped to 0 or below by the end of combat).

Of course, wounds also heal naturally. For each 12 hours of rest, you regain an amount of Vitality equal to your Constitution.

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EXHAUSTION

Sometimes, being exposed to extreme weather or straining oneself too much takes a toll and characters begin to feel tired, which is reflected by levels of Exhaustion. The game's mechanics provide for two such levels, but in the adventure included here you will only have to deal with the first one, or none at all.

When the GM asks you to roll for Exhaustion, you make a Standard Toughness check. On a success, your character fights off fatigue. On a failure, he or she is overcome by Exhaustion (first level) and Jinxed until after having a proper rest.

FEAR

Some of the creatures your party may be confronted with are so horrifying that they can strike terror even into your brave hearts. Whenever that happens, a Fear check must be made. This is usually a Standard Willpower check (unless the monster's description states otherwise). On a success, characters muster up their courage and act normally. On a failure, characters are paralyzed with fear and given a Jinx penalty to all their checks. But don't worry — the Fear check is repeated at the beginning of each turn, until characters finally conquer their fear or the threat is effectively eliminated.

SHIELDS

Some characters are equipped with a shield (described under 'Shield' heading in the Character Sheet). It provides them with additional protection in combat. If you use a shield, once per turn you can declare that you are using it to defend yourself against a successful attack carried out by the enemy. In this case, damage dealt is reduced by half (the rule applies to both melee and ranged attacks, but not to damage inflicted by Atlantean Powers). However, your shield will not serve you forever — it is bound to break sooner or later. Each shield has a different maximum number of uses, depending on its type. Each time it is used, you decrease that value by 1. When it drops to zero, the shield is no longer fit for combat and must be repaired.

To repair the shield, you need access to smith's tools, a few hours of time, and the Craft skill at level 1 or higher. Then you make a Craft check at the DL specified in the shield's description. On a success, the shield is as good as new. On a failure, you waste 2 hours in fruitless attempts to repair it, but in vain. However, you can repeat the check. If you roll a Crit, the time required for the repair is shortened to one hour.



USING SUPERNATURAL POWERS

Characters who can use special powers must make a Star Heritage check to do so. In this case, players roll 2d20 and add the sum of their characters' Verve and Star Heritage skill to the result rolled on the Destiny Die (or the Luck Die, if they switch the dice using Gods' Grace). Each power has a different target DL you must achieve to use it effectively. And what if you roll more than the required minimum? All the better for you! Your check result is also the target DL of the Willpower check your opponent must pass to fight off the effects of your power (if possible, as some effects cannot be neutralized, unless they affect the enemy directly).

To use a specific power, you also need an appropriate amount of Focus, specified in its description (and deducted from the current value of that stat). Focus is a sort of mental energy required to concentrate on producing the desired effect.

Focus is restored by:

- rest — 1 point for each hour of relaxation;
- sleep — 2 points for each hour of good, sound sleep.

A Crit rolled when using a special power means one of two things (your choice):

- the Focus cost is reduced to 0,
- the total check result is increased by 5.

If you roll a Bad Luck result, your character's turn ends.

In addition, some powers can be **Boosted**. A Boost increases the power's base DL by 5. Then, if you succeed in the check, you can use additional effects of that power, according to its description.

Oh, one more thing. Unless a specific description states otherwise, it is assumed that powers pass through all physical barriers, so no armor can protect the characters against them. If a given power deals damage, a successful Willpower check, whose target DL is always equal to the result of the Star Heritage check achieved by the power wielder, reduces the damage received by half.



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