



Grim HOLLOW

VALIKAN CLANS



THE RAIDER'S GUIDE TO
VALIKA



5E
COMPATIBLE

HOLGAR

THE SEA OF TURMOIL

TYBURN

HOLGAR STRAIT

BORGUND

GRENSFAL MOUNTAINS

HAFYSOR MOUNTAINS

TOCKAN PASS

FROSTMERE STRONGHOLD

THE VALIKAN CLANS

FOXWOOD RANGE

THRULL

FROSTMERE

LOST-KEPPMIR

HALSFJORD

GRARJORD

THE TEETH

SKARFANES

RAGVALL

ERLEFORT

NORDENLAND

THE EMPIRE





CINDERGHAST

SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE

CINNABAR

ASTRIK MOUNTAIN

VOLGEN

FORT KENTIGERN

KANDAR

NJUKCA MOUNTAINS

COLD IRON KEEP

LAKE JAKKAN

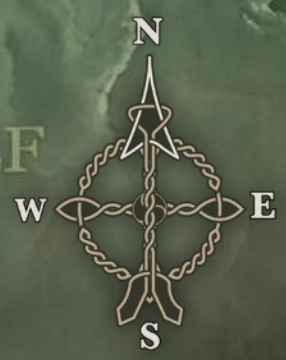
HRIST

ORMRALVA RIVER

SOLHEIM

ISBRYTERALVA RIVER

SHADOW STORM GULF



SKUGGISKOGR FOREST

SUMMERHELM

RUNEHEIM

MT. VENGEANCE



THE SEA OF TURMOIL

THE VALIKAN CLANS

SHADOW STORM GULF

THE BÛRACH EMPIRE

THE OSTOYAN EMPIRE

CHARNEAULT KINGDOM



GULF OF LIONS

CASTINELLAN PROVINCE

SANTE VIEGRE



THE RAIDER'S GUIDE TO VALIKA





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Introduction

Near the end of 2019, Ghostfire Gaming crowd-funded our first RPG book, with the help of many dedicated fans and gamers. That book, the *Grim Hollow Campaign Guide*, introduced the gaming community to our brand-new setting, in all its dark-fantasy, twisted-fairytale, grim-tinged glory.

The *Campaign Guide* introduced players and gamemasters alike to the world of Etharis: a land where the gods had perished, leaving behind only twisted Arch-Seraphs and Arch-Daemons in their place. A land where the only thing more corrupting than the magical arts were the powerful agents of the Arcanist Inquisition who looked to quell the use of magic. A land where magical plagues brought low the common folk, where undeath was both a curse and a convenient method to rule for long periods of time, and where strange frigid fire ravaged the northern tundra.

The fan response to our new setting was overwhelmingly positive. Players who craved the dark-fantasy flavor in the RPG made it clear that Etharis was a world they wanted more of. So more they got.

We followed the *Campaign Guide* with the *Grim Hollow Players Guide*. Even more gamers and fans joined us in this crowdfunding effort. Together we expanded upon the player content already published in the *Campaign Guide*. Strange new races appeared to show the unique and bizarre elements of Etharis. New subclasses, spells, transformations, equipment, and more were provided to make playing a *Grim Hollow* campaign something much different than a typical fantasy campaign—something much darker and more dangerous. And that was just the characters!

Finally, we rounded out the world of Etharis with the crowdfunding effort of the third installment in the campaign world's core book triumvirate: *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*. More than ten-thousand dedicated fans helped us bring this creation to life. The creatures of the *Grimoire*—from the curious to the catastrophic—gave GMs more information about the world of Etharis, and more ways to challenge, terrify, and delight their players.

Knowing that fans of *Grim Hollow* might want some published adventures to guide and inform their own campaigns, we published our first Fable: *Citadel of the Unseen Sun*. This adventure gave GMs and players a closer look at the land of Ostoya, and told the story of how the sun was stolen from the sky there—and how the land came to be ruled by monsters.

We left Etharis for a bit, looking to help GMs and players tell some different types of stories. But we always had *Grim Hollow* in our hearts. We continued to play our games and campaigns there. We continued to think about what the various campaigns set in Etharis might look like.

And now we're back in Etharis! In your hands (or on your screens), you have the first of the regional guides for the *Grim Hollow* setting: *The Raider's Guide to Valika*.

Valika is a land where the horrors of Etharis are as much natural as they are supernatural. The frigid arctic landscape makes survival difficult, even when ravaging beasts and spectral entities are not bearing down on you. The very air can defeat you unless you're prepared. The lack of vegetation threatens populations with starvation.

Where there is a lack of resources, of course, your suffering neighbors rarely hesitate in taking from *you* what *they* need to survive. Raiding is a way of life in Valika, a methodical and ritualized social construct that sees martial power as a tool for survival. But even that tool must be wielded carefully.

The clan structure of Valika helps bring people together to survive in the harsh environs, as well as provide a sense of purpose and identity. The fortunes of the various clans rise and fall, evolve and stagnate, as the seasons and the years pass. Several long-standing clans can point back to the first humans in Valika to their clans' origins, while new clans form regularly in an attempt to find new ways of living and surviving in Valika.

Regardless of the differences between Valika and the other lands of Etharis, a few aspects are always true of a *Grim Hollow* campaign: the world is a dark and dangerous place, seeking power in the wrong places can be dangerous for your soul, and something terrible from times past is just a heartbeat away from becoming your current ruination.

As with the previous *Grim Hollow* content, some mature themes inform the Valika setting. Advice is given throughout the book for how to alter or downplay these themes, but the violence and cruelty of surviving in a land such as Valika is intertwined with the stories and themes that naturally flow out of such a land.

All that said, we hope that in this book you find inspiration for Viking-themed play, for stories of survival and redemption, and for campaigns suffused with frost-tinged horror.

Sharpen your axe. Set sail in your longships. Pull your fur cloak tight around you. The lands of Valika beckon!



Chapter 1:

VALIKA GAZETTEER

Far to the north, at the frozen edge of the main continent of the world known as Etharis, lies Valika, the homeland of the people collectively known as the Valikan Clans. Each day, the hardy folk who dwell in Valika face the dangers of the elements, spurred on by the harshness of their faiths, always keeping in mind the numerous battles fought in the name of survival.

Even the citizens of the nations bordering Valika know little about the place, as it's not a land that one might casually visit or travel through. Most of the tales of Valika are told by friends and family of unfortunate individuals taken by a Valikan raiding party. Very few of those taken ever return, and those who do return speak of harsh treatment in an even harsher land.

While Valika is an immense tract of frozen territory, most people outside of that realm only know of a small area of Valika known as Grarjord. This is the most temperate and least dangerous section of Valika, leading some to refer to all of Valika as Grarjord. The rest of Valika, of course, is many times more dangerous, inhospitable, and monster infested than Grarjord.

There are no political boundaries in Valika—no carefully worded treaties bind a clan to one place or another. Certain

areas of the northern reaches have names that are sometimes used to differentiate regions, but no maps or surveyors claim a specific point where one region ends and another begins.

If someone denied that the rest of Valika is much different than Grarjord, anyone who has been forced to live in those other areas can tell them better. To the northwest of Grarjord is Thrull, a land ruled by the most violent and dogmatic of the Valikan Clans. From the extensive shoreline of Thrull, these clans launch their daring raids against other clans, as well as some of the villages and cities of the southern lands.

Kandar, east of Grarjord, encompasses the central region of Valika, and the mountains there offer shelter for some, but pose unending dangers for others. It is the realm settled by some of the less hostile clans of Valika, at least currently, although it's unwise to test the patience or prowess of any northerner, regardless of clan or affiliation.

Volgen and Cinderghast rest at the far eastern end of Valika, acting at the most distant and mysterious regions of the north. Both of these areas hide deadly secrets, known only by a few of the most hardy and intrepid clan members who stand watch against the evils that seek to escape into the rest of Valika.

The Valikan Clans

The harsh environs of Valika force those living there to do whatever they must to survive. The first step is often banding together into clans to defend against the relentless land and weather, as well as the formidable predations of other clans' raiding parties. The fortunes—and sometimes even the existences—of Valikan clans rise and fall from year to year, season to season. Harsh climates, rampaging monsters, and ancient threats make survival in the northern lands of Etharis a constant struggle.

Six major clans have grown and survived in Valika for countless generations. While their continuing existence is by no means assured, and even though the clans' fortunes and supremacy over each other wax and wane, they've each achieved a level of safety and sufficiency that hint at continued long-term viability.

Lesser clans also spring up and compete for resources and political power. Few last more than a few seasons before they either dissolve of their own accord or are conquered and assimilated into a victorious raiding clan.

Each clan has a unique social structure, specialty, and outlook. Some cling to the old ways of raiding and thrall-

dom, relying on intimidation and force of arms (and magic) to survive. Others are slowly moving toward a more peaceful existence, using trade, diplomacy, and espionage to gain valuable resources.

CURRENT CLAN WARFARE

The current political and social configuration among the clans pits the three western clans, located mainly in the land known as Thrull, against the three clans of the eastern reaches of Kandar. The western clans—Rune, Sýr, and Völgr—look to expand into the territories of the eastern clans—Mithra, Limgri, and Morgöng.

In a world where clans raid to survive, an outsider might not know the difference between raiding and warfare. However, the philosophical differences between the two power groups in Valika are threatening to push the struggles from necessary and acceptable raiding into outright warfare.

Raiding is an accepted, expected, and even highly ritualistic component of the lives of clan members and others residing in Valika. Killing is eschewed when possible, and plunder is preferable to slaughter (more about the rituals and unwritten laws of raiding are discussed in the **Raiding Rules** section).

IN THRALL TO THE VALIKAN

The fear of Valikan raids runs deep among the people of Etharis, all of whom have heard the tales of Clan Völgr's berserker fury, the strength of Clan Sýr's arms and armor, and the potency of Clan Rune's destructive magic. When Valikan longships sail south in the first days of each new spring, settlements along the coast from Kulen Sound to the Gulf of Lions look to the security of their food and trade goods, their livestock and valuables. But as the people of the Bürach Empire and the Charneault Kingdom begin the suspenseful watch for longboats advancing from the gloom of first light, they understand that they and their families are some of the most valuable spoils to the raiders of the north.

A History of Servitude. Valika is a land built on the labor of folk stolen from other homelands and bonded to servitude under Valikan lieges. Raiding for thralls is so old a tradition among the clans that many Valikans, mostly those under the banners of the Thrull-based clans, have no perspective to even question the practice. The north is a harsh land sparsely covered by small settlements, where folk understand that they are responsible for their own survival. But the number of people needed to work the rocky fields, to delve the mines, to crew fishing boats on the rough waters, and to hunt the fast-moving game herds of the north has never been matched by the available population of the clans. So, millennia ago, those clans looked southward for the folk they needed to keep their settlements and their culture alive.

The Valikan clans raid each other endlessly, to be sure. Folk captured by another clan can be bonded into servitude as easily as the folk of foreign lands. But such local raids effectively see the clans only trading members back and forth, and so they focus more on the theft of resources, livestock, lore, and portable wealth—leaving thrall raids to the reaving fleets of the south.

The Bond Term. Thralls brought north by Völgr raiding fleets start as connected to the clan who took them, and as such they are temporarily settled into Völgr villages along Thrull's west coast. Some of those thralls remain with Clan Völgr in the end, but most spend their first weeks in Thrull waiting to be sent to serve other settlements around Thrull, and possibly to serve other clans.

When a thrall is formally accepted for service into a clan, they are given a bond term that defines the length of that service, from one year (for skilled laborers with abilities in high demand) to five years (for unskilled laborers or people who cause their captors any grief on the voyage north).

The lives of bonded thralls cover the broadest possible range of treatment, and the hardship of life in the north is shared by all folk. But for the vast majority, the bond term of servitude is a painful trial but not an insurmountable sentence. Thralls are a part of their community, living, working, and eating alongside the clanfolk they serve. What small leisure time the folk of Thrull are afforded is earned by each thrall's labors as well.

Thralls even enjoy the same freedom of movement within their settlements as folk of the clan, though they understand that fleeing into the wilds of Thrull, even in the summer months, involves perils that none could face alone. Thralls captured alone outside of their communities are easy fodder for the Prismatic Circle's sacrifices, the wild beasts of Valika, or the weather.

It would be a mistake, though, to equate thralldom in Valika with any term of unskilled labor or apprenticeship, for the life of a bonded thrall is dependent entirely on the will of the liege chief, family, or settlement they are bonded to. And the hard lives endured by many clanfolk leave them largely indifferent to how hard the lives are of those who serve them.

Freedom and Return. When a thrall's bond term ends, they are free to reclaim their lives, with the circumstances of their servitude shaping the outcome. Some freed thralls are invited to join the clanfolk among whom they've worked and lived—and a surprising number are keen to do so, particularly those who have been well treated and have learned valuable skills through their period of labor—for it's important to remember that nowhere in Etharis offers the promise of an easy life.

Some freed thralls are given the option to travel with hunting parties, merchant caravans, or other groups heading south, on the first stage of the journey to return to their homelands. Some are laughingly invited by their former lieges to make that journey alone, with those unable or unwilling forced to remain in remote settlements as clan laborers—no longer bonded, but no less free than they were as a thrall.



THE PRISMATIC CIRCLE

If the land of Thrull, and Valika as a whole, have a reputation as a land built on blood and malice, it is the druids of the Prismatic Circle who have forged that reputation—and who faithfully embrace the fear that reputation continues to spread. Preaching a hunger for blood and destruction that grows seemingly stronger each year, the Prismatic Circle is dedicated to violence, reaving, and sacrifice in the name of ancient prophecy.

Visions of the Past. It was the elemental druid Kybard whose long-ago visions set the future of Thrull in motion. Believing that the Great Prismatic Wurm Gormadraig had not actually been slain by the Seven Heroes of legend—Kentigern, the sorcerer Rune, Sýr the Seven-Bladed, Völgr Clad-in-Iron, Limgri Lightbringer, Morgöng Shadestrider, and Mithra of the Silver Harp—Kybard saw in his visions the great wurm sleeping beneath earth and sea, ever threatening to wake. Knowing that the return of Gormadraig would herald the end of the world, Kybard understood that only by demonstrating that the lands of the north remained dedicated to conflict, raiding, and bloodshed could the Great Prismatic Wurm be kept quiescent.

The druids of the Prismatic Circle spend much of their time traveling across Thrull between the ritual sites known as Sentinel Woods (see “Locations”), where great sacrifices are made of magical trinkets triumphantly taken from the southlands, stolen livestock barged north throughout the raiding season, and humanoid victims—both the condemned of the Thrull-based clans and thralls marked as offerings to slake the hunger of Gormadraig’s sleeping spirit. The total number of Valikan warriors fallen over a century of raiding, southlanders killed defending against the longboats’ attacks, and victims slain as part of the Prismatic Circle’s rituals might never be known. With each new raiding season, the ground beneath the Sentinel Woods grows ever darker with blood.

Hjadana’s Rule. The Prismatic Circle is led by the Grand Druid Hjadana (see “Important NPCs”), who upholds the sanctity of Kybard’s visions, and whose fervor drives the cycles of raiding and ritual murder that have allowed the Prismatic Circle to hold the fealty of the clans of Thrull and Grarjord for generations. The Circle is formally defined as a communal organization, in which the grand

druid calls on the insight and suggestions of all when forging doctrine and interpreting the rites of divination meant to seek signs of Gormadraig’s sleep growing restless. In practice, though, Hjadana acknowledges the advisors she knows will support her without challenge. The Prismatic Circle has been a dictatorship since her ascendance just over two decades ago.

The members of the Prismatic Circle know and accept that they have neither the numbers nor the power to stand against any organized assault on their order. It is known and accepted that the druids’ power relies on the fealty of the clans—and on the fervor Hjadana has stirred in the warriors of Clan Völgr. Clan Völgr is the most loyal of the three western clans, serving as the circle’s military might.

More and more of late, though, indifference to the circle’s will spreads through the ranks of the Valikan clans, including the leadership of Clan Sýr and Clan Rune. In the eyes of many, Hjadana already appears to be one step ahead of potential challenges to the Prismatic Circle’s authority, understanding that any breach in the unified will to fulfill a continued destiny of raiding and blood would quickly tear Thrull apart.

Voices of Dissent. No member of the Prismatic Circle dares to openly criticize Hjadana’s rule over the order—and even those who do so privately understand that they put their lives in peril. Within the last five years alone, a half-dozen druids who publicly called for greater representation of voices among the grand druid’s advisors died in an accident and ambush while traveling to the Sentinel Woods. And in that same time, rumors outside the circle have begun to whisper of a cadre of druids within the order who are actively plotting Hjadana’s downfall. Not to end the evil that the Prismatic Circle calls for in the name of Kybard’s prophecy, but to create a new organizational structure for that evil.

These druids have read the signs of more and more non-Völgr clanfolk acknowledging fealty to the Prismatic Circle in word only, and of the raids of Clan Völgr bringing back less tribute each year. Likewise, they watch the rise of other druidic orders opposed to the circle—the Cult of the Great Wurm and the Revenants—as they grow ever bolder in their attempts to destroy the Prismatic Circle. Against all these threats, the druids fear that Hjadana’s iron-fisted control of the order might eventually be its undoing.



CLAN RUNE

Life among the Rune clan is no less arduous than for others in Valika. However, the clan's deep connections to magic give its people a unique focus among the northlanders, and a notably broader worldview than that of many other clans provides an advantageous perspective.

The clan is named for the sorcerer Rune, the legendary spellcaster who joined Kentigern to free the north from the scourge of Gormadraug, the Great Prismatic Wurm. One of the most formidable of Kentigern's companions, Rune was also one of the most widely traveled, appearing in ancient tales from across Etharis.

In the tales of Valika, Rune is best known for helping hold back Gormadraug's elemental powers during the battles that allowed the Seven Heroes to finally face off against the Prismatic Wurm, and for imprisoning the fire elementals of Cinderghast. It is those legendary tales of spellcraft and magic against which the folk of Clan Rune measure themselves as they carry on Rune's legacy.

Sheltered by Spellcraft

The settlements of Clan Rune are predominant in the south of Thrull and into Grarjord, spreading out on tracks and roads radiating from the clan seat of Halsfjord like spokes on a wheel. Though other clans also raise walls around their settlements in stone, Rune settlements are immediately recognizable, even at a distance, by the smooth, unrippled nature of their stonework, raised as they are by clan wizards shaping successive castings of the *wall of stone* spell.

Unlike most other clans, the folk of Clan Rune are usually unbothered about settlements growing to expand outside



their walls, trusting magical wards and the reputation of their spellcasters and item crafters to dissuade the attention of raiders and more intelligent predators.

Indeed, wolves and other beasts often avoid Clan Rune villages, apparently able to sense the protective magic there. Raiders from other clans are generally not as insightful as the beasts, but even the attacking forces of those clans quickly and violently learn the perils of attacking a seemingly poorly defended Clan Rune village.

Defenses of Magic. The wards Clan Rune's casters typically place around settlements cover a wide range of spellcraft and ritual magic. After dark, many settlement gates are adorned with a *glyph of warding* and similar protective spells. Abjuration spells such as *alarm* and *guards and wards* are used to secure a settlement's walls and the longhouses where arcanists practice and hone their art. In the event of trouble, the guards in even the smallest Clan Rune villages have access to runestones channeling potent magic.

When raiders do target Clan Rune settlements, they often do so masked and far from their home territories, following a circuitous route back to their homes after the raid. Fear of Rune mages using divination magic to locate raiders or the relics they've seized runs high among those who don't understand the limitations of such magic. As a result, most of the successful raids against Clan Rune are undertaken by other members of Clan Rune, who are uniquely positioned to know how to counter or avoid the defenses of their magic-wielding kin.

A Life of Magic

Magic lies at the heart of Clan Rune life, touching on the day-to-day existence of every clan member. Not to say that every member of the clan is a spellcaster or item crafter,

for those with the talent for channeling magic are no more common among Clan Rune than in the general population. But a devotion to magic is universal among the people of the clan, giving every member touched by magic the best chance to fulfill their gifts, creating a social infrastructure that sees magic thread through every part of clan life. In this way, the members of Clan Rune, and all of the clanfolk of Valika, are more enlightened on the power and viability of magic than those of the “civilized” south who support the Arcanist Inquisition.

Some southlander tales speak of the fell magicians of Valika as masters of destructive magic and deadly elemental forces—for the simple reason that most southlanders’ experience of Clan Rune magic comes in the form of Valikan reavers activating runestones to unleash fire, thunder, and doom against the settlements targeted by their raids. In truth, though, raiding magic is only a small part of the culture and customs of the clan, which revolve around a de facto worship of magic and arcana in all its forms.

The Arcane Way. Clan Rune’s children are raised collectively, with smaller settlements featuring a single communal nursery school. Larger towns establish multiple schools to serve connected families or neighborhoods. Adults and older adolescents take part in nurturing and teaching the youngest clan members, with spellcasters entertaining babes and toddlers with minor tricks of illusion, summoning, and transmutation—and watching carefully to see which children are inspired by such demonstrations or show the first hints of magical talent themselves, sometimes even before they learn to speak.

If a member of Clan Rune demonstrates a talent for the arcane arts, they begin a course of training under their settlement’s arcane masters, from moderately experienced mages found in even the smallest settlements, to powerful archmages overseeing the magical training centers of Halsfjord. At least once every three years, every caster of Clan Rune journeys to Halsfjord for assessment and advanced training, with many clan mages choosing specific areas of study and specialization on the advice of a Halsfjord master.

Nonmagical Lives. A majority of Clan Rune shows no aptitude for spellcraft or artifice, or if they do, their talents never expand beyond the shaky manipulation of cantrips and other minor magic. But those folk are no less important to the clan’s magical traditions and can freely choose among the many secondary vocations essential to the clan. The best scribes and researchers are held in as high esteem as spellcasters in Clan Rune communities, as are the crafters who master the delicate art of constructing runestones into which magic can be channeled.

As with all the Valikan clans, a significant number of Rune folk step into the ranks of the warriors who defend and safeguard clan settlements and their magical research. Some of those warriors are arcanists in their own right, focusing on spells of defense and battle. A significant number of Rune warriors have striven and failed to master the arcane arts; the opportunity to wield runestones is a satisfactory compromise.

All Voices Heard

Of the major Valikan clans, Clan Rune enjoys one of the most representative political structures. Each village or smaller settlement is controlled by an overseer, elected during a vote at the summer solstice by all folk of the settlement fifteen years of age or more. Larger towns typically have an overseer council of three elected officials, while the clan seat at Halsfjord is overseen by the Council of Rune—thirteen councilors elected by the folk of the city to govern the clan as a whole. Members of the Council of Rune typically number among the most experienced spellcasters or artisans of the clan. Each must have served at least five years as the councilor of a smaller settlement before being able to stand for nomination to the Council of Rune.

The authority of local councilors is absolute in matters governed by clan laws, which have long been codified and recorded in written form. However, when clan members in dispute with each other disagree with a councilor’s decree, appeals can be made to the Council of Rune. In settlements large and small, each councilor possesses a copy of the voluminous tome known as *Rune’s Laws*, though these legal doctrines were only first formalized long after the death of the sorcerer for whom the clan is named.

Fealty and Ambition. Though it occupies little territory in Thrull itself, Clan Rune remains firmly loyal to the precepts and leadership of the Prismatic Circle—at least on the surface. The clan demonstrates its fealty by continually honing the power of the runestones that fuel the success of Thrull’s raids into the southlands.

But those who watch such things note that it has been nearly a decade since clan chief Ordun Doransson (see “Important NPCs”) last made embassy to Tyburn, and that under his direction, the centers of magical training in Halsfjord have expanded their research and spell work beyond the clan’s traditional strengths. Rune magic and item crafting are still the stock in trade of Clan Rune, but many of the clan’s arcanists now match the best spellcasters of the southlands in their mastery of magical lore.

In recent years, Clan Rune’s raiders have made forays into the lands of the Bürach Empire to bring back spellcasters—including several clandestine and daring missions to seize students traveling to the magical colleges of Erlefurt to begin their studies. Once bound into clan service as apprentices, many of those students elect to stay in Halsfjord and continue their studies even once their bond term is complete, embracing the traditions of rune magic that are practically unknown in the south.

It is also common practice for Rune raiders to seek out those being held by the Arcanist Inquisition, freeing them and bringing them back to Valika to become new clan members. As with the students captured in Bürach, many of these spellcasters happily remain with Clan Rune, grateful to be rescued from certain death at the hands of the Inquisition.

Measured Justice. The cohesive legal codes of Clan Rune rely less on capital punishment than many clans. The Rune proscribe execution only for those convicted of murder or sexual assault, with affected victims and family

members able to petition for conversion of the sentence to a ten-year period of bonded thralldom. The condemned are typically offered to the druids of the Prismatic Circle for sacrifice, but where an easier end seems warranted, an overseer council can order death by painless poison.

For all other offenses, guilty parties are required to effect reconciliation by making restitution for property damaged, destroyed, or stolen, or by entering short periods of bonded thralldom to those they have wronged, typically between a season and a year in duration.

Matters of justice in Clan Rune settlements deemed beyond the capabilities of local overseers are the purview of traveling mage-advocates based out of Halsfjord, all of whom wield truth magic. Both accusers and accused are questioned under magical oath to determine the veracity of their claims and counterclaims, with anyone speaking false accusations subject to sanction by the advocate. But with the threat of magically compelled confession comes an incentive for guilty parties to flee their communities before being found out, to make new lives elsewhere under other names. It is suspected that many of the mages aligned with other clans once served Clan Rune, but they fled to hide dark secrets in their past.

Magic and Mastery

As the foremost practitioners of magic in Valika, the people of Clan Rune are universally content in the knowledge that they are the greatest of the clans of Thrull. But the subtle nature of that expertise in magical crafting and spellcasting means that most clanfolk have no need to flaunt that superiority to Clan Sýr or Clan Völgr, happy to let their power speak for itself.

The number of Rune settlements in Grarjord means that the clan is secretly on good terms with the smaller “free clans” of that southern territory, who are always eager to trade food and goods for magic items and spellcasting services. Around larger Clan Rune settlements, quiet arrangements are often made to have smaller clans raid against Clan Sýr and Clan Völgr, giving Clan Rune access to the wealth of those settlements without risking direct confrontation with the larger allied clans.

Somewhat ironically, the folk of Clan Rune often have problematic relationships with their clanmates. The mages of the clan understand the power inherent in even the slightest advances in magical practice and theory, and such advances are highly coveted. Clan Rune settlements are thus often tempted to raid each other, intent on stealing magic items, research materials, spellbooks, and anything else that might fuel advances in their own crafting, spellcasting, and arcane research.

“The eastern settlement recently made a new discovery. That power should have been ours. I’m sure we will get in there and resolve that quickly.”

- Mage of a western Clan Rune settlement

CLAN SÝR

The most legendary metalworkers of the north hail from Clan Sýr, founded by and named for Sýr the Seven-Bladed, the thrice-condemned warrior and weaponsmith who made their name among the Seven Heroes who defeated Gormadraig. Little is known of Sýr’s life before they entered Kentigern’s saga, aside from the death sentences imposed on them by various chiefs of the ancient clans, dwelling outside the territory of the elementals that ruled the northern wastes.

While they lived, Sýr resisted all attempts by the skalds and lorists to unlock the secrets of their past, though it is generally accepted that their seven blades were each commissioned works, originally undertaken by Sýr for powerful chiefs and warriors. Incomplete tales also suggest that Sýr kept all those weapons for themselves—even after having pocketed their extraordinary commissions—judging in the end that each was too beautiful and too deadly to ever be handled by another.

Stone and Steel

Clan Sýr’s settlements, found across Thrull and in parts of northern Kandar, are unusually common north of the Circle of Shadow, the imaginary line across Valika that marks the place above which the sun does not rise on the Winter Solstice. With their elemental forge fires burning constantly, even the smallest villages stand out as bright points of warmth and light in those lands swallowed by the months-long darkness throughout winter.

With most Sýr settlements rising around deposits of iron, copper, tin, silver, gold, and rarer adamantine in the mountains and beneath the tundra, the longhouses, buildings, and settlement walls of the clan are raised in mortared waste rock, with buildings roofed in durable copper or bronze that patinas to a bright blue-green. At the center of each settlement stands the central furnace known as the Heartforge, at which metalsmiths practice their trade.

In many settlements focused solely on mining, and in the satellite farming and hunting settlements that support the clan’s metalworking centers, a Heartforge simply stands as an eternal and communal flame in a central public courtyard. At the same time, larger metalworking towns sometimes have smaller secondary forges, reserving the Heartforge for the labors of the most respected and skilled crafters and smiths in that area.

Clever Trap Masters. The arduous life of the northlands produces more than its share of capable warriors among the folk of Clan Sýr. But with weapon and armor-smithing viewed as a superior enterprise to the usage of those tools, the defense of Sýr settlements is generally left to bonded thralls taken from the southlands and bartered from Clan Völgr. Most Sýr settlements feature relatively few guards, trusting instead to the cunning mechanical traps that are a byproduct of Clan Sýr’s mastery of metalwork.

Elaborate spring snares that can bind an intruder’s feet and hands are a first line of defense for most Sýr settlements, scattered around stout walls to deter intruders, and





set into those walls to leave would-be climbers dangling helplessly. In every settlement, the gates are protected with hidden nets and spring-thrown daggers, with familial wealth guarded by strongboxes warded with needle traps and knockout poison. Most Sýr traps are designed to incapacitate foes or inspire their surrender without serious injury, as the clan understands that would-be raiders are more valuable as healthy servants or ransomed prisoners than as casualties requiring healing and long-term care.

The Way of the Forge

Dedication to fire and metal is the way of Clan Sýr. Though clan artisans produce great works in wood, stone, leather, and even paper, metalwork is seen as the greatest craft and the highest art. Sýr's children are allowed to whittle and shape wood and soft tin as soon as they can be trusted with a crafter's tools. They study the theories and processes of metallurgy in anticipation of being allowed access to the forges where their elders toil. And almost universally, they grow up aspiring to their people's legacy of smithing the finest arms and armor in Etharis.

A Hierarchy of Experience. At ten years of age, each member of Clan Sýr is bonded to the Järnförning, a hierarchy of labor, responsibility, and authority that shapes the lives of all clanfolk. The Järnförning is both guild and school, set up as twelve tiers—called “nivåer” by clan tradition—of knowledge and skill running the range from apprentice to clan master. Adolescents and thralls in the first nivå begin their first formal apprenticeships in forge craft and metalwork. Those with unusual skills of craft or artisanship are quickly singled out for special training and expedited advancement to higher nivåer.

Each increase in rank comes with greater responsibility, greater income, and a chance for greater renown. Still, because it is well known that not everyone can attain the rank

of clan master, most Sýr folk are content with their eventual ranking in the Järnförning, which they hold until they die. Smiths, forgehands, and miners who must retire due to injury are given special status, becoming the teachers and trainers of new first-nivå apprentices.

Within each nivå, internal hierarchies are established based on skill and seniority. Every forgehand accepts that their skills are not so rare as those of the master smiths who direct their labors. But those smiths just as readily acknowledge that the skill necessary to keep an elemental forge blazing at exactly the right temperature is what allows their work to shine, just as the forgehands laud the work of the miners whose practiced toil lets them carefully extract the best ore the north has to offer.

The Proof of Labor. Clan Sýr takes on many new thralls each year, both those claimed by local Sýr raids and by the seasonal reaving of Clan Völgr into the southlands, when thralls of different skillsets might be exchanged between the clans. Many of those thralls live outside the Järnförning, used as assistants in the mines, field laborers, and servants. But anyone with an interest in metalwork—and especially those with experience in smithing from other lands—is welcomed into the hierarchy of the forge workers and given every opportunity to make a place for themselves.

The clan has welcomed many dwarves, elves, humans, and others from the southern nations into its ranks once their term as bonded thralls has ended. Many of Sýr's greatest smiths and metalworkers were originally southlanders—including the present dwarf clan chief, Brokyr Bladesinger.

Among the Sýr, folk are judged on their willingness to work and their love of the metalworking tradition above all else. Familial ties are important in all the clans, but nepotism has no place when there is important work to be done, and this rule is especially embraced in the Järnförning.

Hierarchy and Rule

The politics of Clan Sýr are tightly connected to the hierarchy of the Järnförning. Each settlement, large or small, is led by three wardens, each of which must be a member of the highest nivå found in that settlement, and who are voted into service by other members of the same nivå. In the event that a nivå has fewer than ten members, the next-highest nivå members vote as well, preventing higher-ranked clan members from other settlements surreptitiously taking over smaller villages and hamlets. Because the importance of individual settlements is reckoned by the rank of their leaders in the Järnförning, lower-ranked settlements often make overtures to folk of higher rank with an ambition for leadership.

The Sarvif's Rule. The clan chief of the Sýr is known as the Sarvif by long tradition, after the name of the chief who first bound a half-dozen disparate clans under the Sýr banner. Chiefs rule until death or retirement, with many stepping down at a relatively young age to allow a favored successor to replace them. Candidates for Sarvif must have been members of one of the top three nivåer of the Järnförning for five years or more, and they are elected by popular vote among the leaders of each Sýr settlement. Those leaders either travel to Borgund during the one-month election period to cast their votes, or send those votes sealed into special lockboxes held in Borgund and distributed for this purpose. These boxes, built on a centuries-old design by master locksmiths, are said to be protected by Clan Rune magic and impossible to open without the keys held by the three wardens of Borgund, guaranteeing the security of the vote.

Duty and Service. The cruelty of thralldom is an accepted part of life in Valika, but the folk of Clan Sýr work harder than most to ensure fair treatment for their bonded

servants, especially those who are companions in the Järnförning. Sarvif Brokyr Bladesinger (see “Important NPCs”) is a former thrall herself. Her past inspires the clan chief to maintain optimal working and living conditions for those bound to Sýr's service.

Though the thralls of the clan have no more true freedom than any others serving in Thrull, they are treated better than many, and those who wish to return home after their term of service ends are able to accompany Sýr caravans across the tundra and into Grarjord before making their own way south.

For all thralls, the threat of being claimed and sacrificed by the druids of the Prismatic Circle is a constant source of anxiety, but the laws of Clan Sýr are built to protect all those who serve the clan regardless of status. From Borgund to the smallest hamlet, each Sýr warden is sworn to see the laws of the clan enforced diligently in and around their settlements, allowing them to dutifully turn over prisoners convicted of the worst crimes to the druids of the Prismatic Circle, and minimizing the number of potentially talented thralls given over to the blood rites.

Penance Through Demotion. The justice system of Clan Sýr revolves around the importance of rank to the people of the clan, with those found guilty of noncapital crimes demoted to a lower nivå in the Järnförning for a set period, with a commensurate loss of status and income. The specifics of such demotions are determined by the three wardens who lead each Sýr community. Minor offenses such as drunken brawling or petty theft might garner a few months' demotion of one nivå. More serious offenses such as aggravated assault or arson might see a guilty party demoted to the lowest ranks of the Järnförning for multiple years—or for life.

Those guilty of murder or sexual assault can be sentenced to death by bleeding or, more likely, given over to the druids of the Prismatic Circle for sacrifice. Capital punishment can also be imposed under certain circumstances for Sýr folk who raid against their own settlements, but the black-market value of the arms and armor the clan produces is sometimes too tempting a target for lower-ranked clanfolk struggling to get by.

Justified Pride

The people of Clan Sýr are on generally good terms with folk of Clan Völgr and Clan Rune, acknowledging that Völgr warriors are the best wielders of the weapons and armor that are Sýr's greatest pride, and that the magic of Clan Rune is instrumental in shaping the elemental forge fire and enchanting the finished products that allows Sýr to rival the best metalworkers in Etharis.

Nothing offends most members of Clan Sýr more than seeing someone of another clan attempt metalwork, including making repairs on Sýr-crafted arms and armor. Most spellcasters of Clan Rune know that they use spells such as *mending* on Sýr goods at their peril. A Sýr crafter can spot the telltale signs of such magical repair work in an instant—and will often seek out the mage who made those repairs to explain their displeasure in person.





CLAN VÖLGR

When most folk of the Etharis southlands think of Valika, they think of Clan Völgr, whether they know that name or not. The shape and power of the north is defined by the predations of Völgr raiders, and the attacks they've made against seaports, fishing villages, and river communities across the southlands of Etharis for generations.



The clan is named for Völgr Clad-in-Iron, one of the Seven Heroes who slew the Great Prismatic Wyrms Gormadrag and gifted all Valika to the humanoids who now dwell there. Völgr was a legendary warrior, said to never remove the scarred black-iron full plate for which he was known, and trusting his companions to deal with all conflicts not best defeated with steel and blood. The folk of the north endure more than their share of such conflicts even today, and Völgr's clan embraces that hardship more than those of any other clan. They are dedicated to the arts of battle and the thrill of violence—and to the knowledge that by the violence they offer to the world, they keep that world safe from ruin.

Hearth and Home

With its fate and fortunes tied to the longboats that comprise the reaving fleet of Thrull, Clan Völgr's settlements are mostly set along the coast, with smaller satellite villages, rarely more than two days' ride inland, supporting the coastal towns with farming and forestry. This concentration of the Völgr along the northwest coast lends itself to a sense of isolation among

the clan. That isolation is exacerbated by the clan seat and the main operations of the reaving fleet being centered in distant Tyburn on the island of Holgar.

Safe Within Walls. Völgr settlements are practical and utilitarian, their design reflecting the stoic and hard-living ethos that drives the clan. Even the smallest villages feature a spiked stockade wall of wood or stone for protection against predatory beasts and monsters; wolf packs and polar bears are a significant threat along the coast in the autumn and spring. Against the more frequent threats of raids by other clans, those walls feature guard ladders or small towers where sentries watch the tundra by day and dark. Settlements clustered close enough together often utilize beacon cauldrons set atop towers adjacent to the wall, which are kept filled with dry wood ready to be doused in whale oil and set ablaze in case of attack, signaling the allied settlement for aid.

Within its walls, each Völgr settlement is dominated by one or more longhouses raised of stone, sod, or timber, depending on local resources. Smaller houses and huts are scattered around a longhouse, with walls of the same materials and roofs of hide or thatch. The importance of the stockade wall to the Völgr mindset means that if a settlement ever grows to the point of needing additional houses, a new walled settlement is typically raised nearby, rather than risking houses outside the wall. Several of Thrull's larger Völgr towns show their origins as slow-growing clusters of hamlets and villages, surrounded now by a larger wall but with sections of older walls incorporated into their expanded construction.

“My daughter was not cut out for a life as honor-filled as this. She left, like a coward, in the dark of night. Whether she lives or not is of no concern to me.”

- *Clan Völgr matriarch*

Blood and Steel

Life among the Völgr revolves around raiding, and the clan's children are prepared for rough, violent lives from the time they can talk. Adolescents are encouraged to solve all interpersonal conflicts by force, as a means of teaching both physical resilience and the value of teamwork to take down stronger rivals. For most Völgr, by the time they are eligible to undertake their first raid at age fifteen, claiming glory, blood, and plunder in the southlands becomes their life's ambition and greatest goal.

Rough Upbringing. As toddlers, Völgr children are assembled into learning and play groups called troops, where they are looked after and taught by bonded thrall caregivers. Each year at the winter solstice, these troops are split apart and recombined, forcing children to continually forge new allegiances—and to learn the value of not becoming overly attached to those around them. Formal weapons training for the Völgr begins at age nine, though most children learn how to handle themselves in a fight long before that. At that same age, children also enter service in the fields and on Völgr fishing boats, building up strength and learning to love life on the water.

The first raid at age fifteen is a milestone for all Völgr, but it is understood that each warrior must learn the ways of true battle in their own time. For the most part, the youngest raiders are content to fight in backup positions on their first raids, and a youngling whose ambition oversteps their skill in a way that leaves them injured—or far worse, injures another Völgr—stands to lose much respect among their elders. But with each successive raid, the life of a clan warrior soon becomes balanced between reaving, training for the next seaborne assault on the southlands, and embracing the teachings of the Prismatic Circle that define the Völgr hunger for conquest.

To Save a World. A love of battle and subjugation drives the Völgr, and many among the clan would certainly cling to their traditions of reaving even without a larger sense of purpose. But for most members of the clan, raiding is not simply an exercise in profit and domination—it is a spiritual campaign on which the fate of their world depends. The druids of the Prismatic Circle call for blood, violence, and sacrifice from the clanfolk of Thrull, the most dire aspect of which is the execution of hundreds of humanoids and thousands of head of livestock each year at the ritual sites known as Sentinel Woods, scattered across Thrull.

Truth of Self. It is almost unheard of for any member of Clan Völgr to eschew the rites of raiding and the embrace of violence as a way of life. Those who begin to realize at a young age that they are not cut out for the

brutality that is their birthright invariably leave the clan, sometimes of their own volition, but sometimes driven out after confessing their fears to friends or family. Many who flee Völgr villages in winter die before reaching sanctuary. Those who survive typically seek succor in the settlements of other clans but must often accept a year or two of bonded service before being allowed to petition for entrance into the clan. Those who can make it to the territories controlled by one of the Kandar-based clans, however, often find more welcoming acceptance—for anyone brave and resourceful enough to refuse the power of the Völgr and survive have something to offer.

Strength of Rule

The hierarchy within Völgr settlements, as within the clan, is established by dominance, with the strongest and hardest inevitably rising to positions of authority in their raiding parties and home villages. But strength is reckoned in many ways among the Völgr—the most powerful warriors often willingly pay fealty to figures with weaker physical and martial attributes but have proven leadership and tactical acumen.

Standing atop the clan power structure, Chief Nolgr Magnusson (see “Important NPCs”) has ruled the Völgr for nearly thirty years, and anyone who whispers that the nearly fifty-year-old warrior is slowing down had best not let that view get back to him. As clan leader, Nolgr is also Keeper of the Three Tribes, a title bestowed by the Prismatic Circle, which effectively makes him master of all the Thrull-based clans.

In his role, he has continued the bloody legacy of reaving he inherited from his father, upholding the tenets of the Prismatic Circle that call for battle above all else, extolling the belief that only the sacrifice of blood can keep the world safe from the Prismatic Serpent's awakening, and preaching that belief with a voice carrying the cutting edge of steel.

The Old Ways. Nolgr has always handpicked the high captains who lead Clan Völgr's raids, with those captains embracing to a soldier their chief's favor for shock and awe over caution and care. And while the brutal raiding tactics Nolgr demands have made Thrull's raiders the most feared warriors in all Etharis, they have allowed the southlands and Kandar to respond to the predictability of those tactics.

Thus, as the Thrull reaving fleets continue to favor bold confrontations with increasingly well-defended harbor towns, eschewing stealth raids or easier attacks against smaller coastal settlements, the returns on Völgr raids have begun to fall off in recent years.

More and more, quiet whispers among lower-ranked warriors are calling for an alternative to Nolgr's single-minded focus on grandiose battle, and toward a more council-based approach to raiding strategy. But as long as Nolgr maintains his hold on power—and the favor of the Prismatic Circle—the way of the Völgr seems unlikely to change.

Brutal Justice. Tales of the Völgr's execution rites have long been spread across the southlands by those threatened by the clan's longship assaults. These include the con-

demned having their lungs cut out while still alive, being tied to the ground and eaten alive by starved dogs, or being bound to stakes along the low tide line and slowly drowned as the sea rises around them. However, former thralls returned from Thrull to their homelands never speak of having witnessed such rites. In truth, these horrors are mere tales, spun intentionally by the Völgr to inspire southlanders to surrender when the raids come.

In settlements adhering to Völgr law, the condemned are universally given over to the Prismatic Circle to be sacrificed. In the event illness or injury would end the condemned's life before the druids can claim them, the law orders execution by heavy axe, usually wielded by the leader of the settlement or a ranking warrior.

But execution is the proscribed punishment for a wide range of offenses in Völgr settlements and lands, including murder, sexual assault, assault on a family member, and conducting unwarranted raids against other Völgr settlements. The question of what constitutes a *warranted* raid accounts for endless legal discourse in Völgr lands.

For lesser crimes, victims are typically allowed to name their own preferred manner of restitution from the guilty, typically involving material compensation in the form of goods or land, a term of bonded service not to exceed ten years, or the ability to land a single nonlethal blow while the accused is held fast.

Dominant Mindset

The Völgr typically perceive the relationship between themselves and the other clans as a harmonious one—because the Völgr are entirely confident that their clan enjoys clear dominance over those other clans. Among the lesser clans, the Völgr are generally treated with a respect that reinforces this notion, but when Völgr travelers find themselves in the lands or settlements of Clan Rune or Clan Sýr, they are often shocked to find the people of those clans insistent on being treated as equals—and to discover that threats of violence aren't as readily accepted a means of dealing with such effrontery as they are back home.





CLAN MITHRA

Of all the clans of Valika, Mithra is the most cosmopolitan and the most inviting to people from beyond Valika's borders. Governed by their elected leader Queen Andrea Helsing, the folk of Clan Mithra see themselves as a force for order in the chaos that surrounds them. While some view themselves as the light shining through the last vestiges of a dying world, others contend that the world has always been dying, gods or no, and the wisest course is to get on about the business of living well until death takes the last person standing.

Named for Mithra of the Silver Harp, Clan Mithra takes the legacy of the musical ability and world-spanning knowledge of their namesake seriously. While there is no established college in Hrist, the Skald Library, where the Lord Edda was codified, is treated as a most holy place. Poetry and song competitions are common, and quarrels are frequently settled through flytings, rhyming battles-by-insult.

Important Settlements

The largest population center for Clan Mithra is Hrist, home of the queen's seat. The entire architecture of Hrist centers on the Great Hall, a long structure with a roof the shape of an upside-down longboat. Local legends have it that when the ice receded from the north following the defeat of Gormadraug, the Seven Heroes fled the rushing currents in a longboat that had once belonged to the old gods. Mithra sang its course straight to the Grensfal Mountains, which alone remained above the icy seas. When the last of the water flowed to the seas, the heroes came down from the



mountains and built the Great Hall of Hrist, using their boat as the roof for their new home.

Whether the legend has any merit, the Great Hall itself is a significant structure, built to the strength of a fortress. When Hrist was a smaller settlement, an earthen ring surrounded the entirety of the town's homes. But as Hrist has grown, it has expanded well beyond the original walls. The sprawling city has erected and fortified three earthen rings as fortifications, with additional sprawl beyond these defenses. Most of the homes within the center two rings are smaller versions of the Great Hall, though most have thatched roofs instead of richer wooden ones.

Although the majority of the residents of Hrist belong to Clan Mithra—and indeed, a majority of Clan Mithra resides in Hrist—the city itself is very cosmopolitan. The two inner rings are the homes of mainly Valikan clanfolk, particularly the closest allies of Mithra: Limgri and Morgöng.

In days before the conflicts with Thrull became more frequent and warlike, the city frequently welcomed people of Clans Völgr, Sýr, and Rune. With the rise in violence, however, few people of those clans have remained in the center of Kandar, and Clan Völgr members have been actively discouraged from entering the city. Those who have remained from the other two clans face scorn and mistrust from their neighbors, even if their families have resided in Hrist for generations. The hold that the Prismatic Circle maintains over these clans is seen as a corruption of all that is right in Valika.

The outer ring and the outlying buildings were built to make foreigners from the south feel most welcome. While many Valikans see the southerners as weak-spined or dishonorable, even these strange folk and their foreign ways are welcomed in Hrist. Several southern nations have political representatives that have recently moved to Hrist.

They live in the third ring of the city when they're not in attendance at the great hall.

Merchants from all over the world travel to Hrist to trade in goods from the northlands, particularly reindeer hide from the north's nomads and iron and weaponry smithed by the dwarves living deep within the Grensfall Mountains. These dwarves have an arrangement with Clan Mithra, sending them well-made goods in return for necessities like food and for information on the movements of hostile raiders in the area.

Beyond Hrist, Clan Mithra holds several jarldoms, with citizens spending a brief growing season in the fields before traveling for trade and tales. In ages past, Clan Mithra had participated in the types of raids still practiced by other Valikan clans, but as their settlements have grown, and trade has become the greater part of their economy, the raids have generally been replaced by althings, nation-wide meetings where Mithran jarls and leaders from the other Kandarb-based clans gather to make judgements and pass laws.

With Queen Andrea as the war leader for all three of the Kandarb-based clans, these althings have become more frequent. As the tides of war swell, many of the farmers have been asked to leave their growing seasons and take up stations at strategic watching posts, ready to face down their foes. Following the line of the Grensfall Mountains across the plains to Summerhelm, Clan Mithra has positioned encampments for their warriors, sharing the responsibility with the other clans for their supply.

A Life of Song

Music rings from every corner of Hrist and is at the center of every Mithran settlement. While not every person within Clan Mithra is a professional musician, children are taught to sing as soon as they can speak. Smiths sing along to the beat of their hammers, farmers sing in their fields as they plant and harvest, and oar-rowers keep time in thunderous harmony. Even when their tunes don't carry the power of magic, the folk of Clan Mithra believe that some esoteric blessing enfolds their work when it's accompanied by musical notes.

Due to this focus on music and performance, there's a strong bardic tradition within Clan Mithra. Storytellers and skalds frequently recite epic poetry to the background of drums, and chants or choruses are part of any epic recitation. The people of Clan Mithra don't view this as arcane magic; this is simply the power of story and song, writ large over their way of life.

Melding Song and Battle. While it's commonly said that every member of Clan Mithra is a musician, and that if you cut them they bleed song, not every member of Clan Mithra is a warrior. Though martial sport is common and training begins within villages during youth, it's understood within Mithran culture that the arts of war are among the highest callings, but not everyone can aspire to feats of strength and martial skill. Those who are martially inclined, however, are among the most respected in their society. Warriors are expected to be well-educated, relying as much on their wits and tactics in battle as their strength of arms.

Clan Mithra has a well-organized military, having recently borrowed rank and structure from southern cultures, while also keeping an emphasis on individuality. Each jarl pledged to Queen Andrea is responsible for providing a number of warriors each season, based on the population of their jarldom. Most villagers are trained, to some degree, and may serve for a season before returning home to their families and other occupations. Others consider themselves professional soldiers, serving their jarls and the Mithran army full time. These year-round warriors are known as the Varangus, and they are considered the most elite of Clan Mithra's soldiers.

Within the army, rank is determined not by martial prowess but by balance of skills. Those promoted to the highest ranks are often soldiers, selected from within the Varangus, who display the greatest understanding of strategy, politics, and diplomacy. The drotten—or highest generals—are assigned command over the hersir, commanders who serve above a unit of fifty soldiers. In cases where warriors of equal skill and strength are vying for the same position, the final position is determined by a flyting.

In addition to their contributions to the Mithran army, many jarls keep a "hird" year-round, a group of loyal warriors and advisors who serve in military matters of the jarldom. The jarls who live along the river Isbryteralva also maintain "hafna"—units dedicated to crewing longships.

Flytings. The public spectacle of a flyting is a much-loved tradition within Clan Mithra and has become something of a tourist attraction for southerners and other visitors to Hrist. A flyting can be called to resolve simple quarrels—a married couple in Hrist, unable to determine whose extended family they should visit for the holidays, might call a flyting of their neighbors to gain an external ruling on the issue. Flytings used for frivolous or small arguments tend to be quite tame: the insults slung at each other are going to be remembered the next day (or that evening in a shared bed). The contest is often less about the insults or their veracity and more about the rhyming skill and humor displayed at the event.

Flytings outside a family tend to have more provocative insults—which can be true or completely invented. Facts are not relevant in a flyting. The contest is waged based on who can best sway the audience. Such contests proceed in this fashion:

1. A judge is selected, typically from among the elders in attendance. If there is a known skald among the audience, they are the most likely candidate for judge. The judge is not the arbiter of the decision, however; it's the judge's job to watch not the contestants, but the audience, to determine who has won over the greater share of attendees.
2. The contestants take the stage. This can be atop a long table in a great hall, standing on barrels at a street corner, or standing on the bar-top of a tavern, if the barkeep allows it.
3. The opening insults are exchanged. These establish the names of the contestants, the grievance they are settling, and their relationship to each other.

4. Further insults fly, becoming more provocative and outlandish with each round. Well-practiced competitors save their best insults for later in the flyting, knowing that they may not even get a chance to use them if they win the audience over too quickly, while less-experienced competitors lob their lowest insults too early, running out of material before the flyting is called.
5. The judge calls an end to the flyting as soon as the crowd has chosen a clear winner. This means that flytings can be quite short, or can go on for an entire evening, depending on the celebrity of the combatants. The better known the contestants in the flyting, the more material the audience is familiar with, and the wider the breadth of the material the opponents choose from.

While there is no legal framework to a flyting, the honor of the competitors is at stake. Any competitor who did not adhere to the outcome of a flyting would be ostracized by the audience and would not be challenged to future flytings.

The style is used to settle grievances, determine who will hold positions within the army, or who will advance beyond an apprenticeship. In contests at holidays and community celebrations, there are frequently prizes of mead—and tradition dictates that the winner of a flyting also invites the loser to drink, to smooth over any remaining hard feelings from the insults.

Politics

Like Clan Rune in Thrull, Clan Mithra has a representative political structure. Villages hold “things” (sometimes called “moots” by outsiders), meetings similar to the large-scale althings, in which they elect an overseer. All townsfolk over the age of fifteen can vote at the thing.

However, in practice, the same overseers tend to hold their positions for multiple terms, and heated disagreements are more likely to be solved through flytings, or arbitrated by a traveling skald, than through elections. Summer solstice celebrations bring out the most mellow attitudes of Clan Mithra, making the timing of their things less conducive to political judgments.

Overseers appoint a Voice, usually from among the best musicians and skalds, to travel to the larger things of the jarldom in which they reside. While jarls are also elected, their positions tend to stay within their families, blurring the lines between democracy and a hereditary monarchy.

At the fall equinox althing, set at the end of the annual harvest celebration, the jarls elect a king or queen from among themselves. Again, unless there is a conflict or a challenge, this frequently falls along the inherited lines. The ruler of Clan Mithra plays a delicate game of courting the jarls’ support to maintain their power. Jarls are expected to bring a portion of their harvest to Hrist as a tax; in turn, the clan’s ruler is expected to provide defenses for the various jarldoms and settle disputes fairly.

The spring equinox althing is where matters beyond Clan Mithra are settled. All the Valikan clans are invited to attend, although since the beginning of the extended hostilities, only the clans of Kandar have attended. In addition to Mithra, Morgöng, and Limgri, the minor clan Svalr and

the dwarven Grensfall settlement also send representatives. Southern nations are invited to send their representatives to attend as well, but they are not given a vote.

Lawspeakers and Written Law. Clan Mithra has a long tradition of the office of the lawspeaker, a skald who has memorized the law and the rulings held by a thing or althing from year to year. However, as writing and codifying the Lord Edda became central to culture in Hrist, laws were also written down. In Hrist, the lawspeaker, still a skald, serves as much as a librarian to the vast writings of law collected from the villages and jarldoms.

Most common grievances are settled without a thing or court judgment, but when a judgment must be rendered, a jury of peers presided over by the lawspeaker and the local leader (overseer, jarl, king, or queen) is gathered to listen to witnesses. Most guilty verdicts are resolved through fines. Those unable to pay the fines may commute their sentence to a period of thralldom under the victim or victim’s family until balance is restored.

More serious crimes, such as treason, murder, and sexual assault, call for the execution of the criminal, with the victim or the victim’s family able to claim the right to deliver this justice themselves. In a case where no victim wishes to serve as executioner, the lawspeaker dispenses poison to bring the guilty party’s death. Victims or their families can petition the jury to convert the sentence to ten years of thralldom as restitution.

Criminals who do not belong to the clan structure, but who are too dangerous to place into thralldom or to be required to make restitution, are sent to Cold Iron Keep, to be imprisoned until Clan Mithra’s ruler decides what to do with them. Thus far, these powerful enemies are beyond the scope of what Kandar has ever handled. Very few travelers wind up at Cold Iron Keep, but those who do are kept under the tightest wards and locks Clan Mithra can provide.

Relationships

It’s an old saying among Clan Mithra that those who tell the story determine history. Thus, Clan Mithra always seeks to be the voice telling the story. This tendency is one recognized by their allies in Clan Morgöng and Clan Limgri, and the others use that narrative to their advantage as much as possible, dealing either in secrets or in the promise of lost knowledge.

By establishing themselves as the center of diplomacy, as well as holding the largest city in Kandar, Clan Mithra is frequently considered the face of a more civilized Valika among the southern nations. They are not particularly well-liked by the Svalr—but, then again, the Svalr tend to stay to themselves, as they value their independence. They sometimes see the overly structured Mithrans as a threat to their life in the north.

The greatest foes to Clan Mithra are the clans of Thrull, whose incursions have forced the Mithrans to develop and hold their standing armies. Preferring diplomacy, Queen Andrea still hopes that there can be a solution to the conflict beyond the continued loss of life. Thus far, violence seems to be the only answer their foes will accept.



CLAN MORGÖNG

Despite siding with Clan Mithra and Clan Limgri in the current battle against Thrull, Clan Morgöng is the clan most likely to identify with the motivations of their western neighbors. The people follow a yearly cycle of a short planting season before raiding through midsummer, which leads to a short harvest followed by further raids. The year concludes with a long winter at home, sharing and exchanging secrets gathered along their voyages.

Due to their violent and dangerous lives, Clan Morgöng has often used raids to increase their population, taking thralls from among the southern villages they raid along the eastern coastline of Etharis. Since many of those folks are under the heavy and imposing thumbs of the Ostoyan Crimson Court, a better life often awaits in Valika. Thralls are given a term of service, after which they may return to their homelands, but the people of Clan Morgöng seek to encourage thralls to become part of the clan once their term is complete. Thus, thralls are frequently treated, from the beginning of their term, as part of the family holding their service. The result is that Clan Morgöng is even more diverse than the more cosmopolitan Clan Mithra.

The diversity in appearance benefits Clan Morgöng in another way: they send spies both to the north and south, dealing in secrets more than any other export. Because there is very little in the way of a central government among the clan's settlements, these secrets are frequently traded among the various villages as well. While no one member of Clan Morgöng knows all the secrets of the clan, the clan as a whole is said to know the entire world's hidden thoughts.



Settlements

The capital, if it can be called that, of Clan Morgöng is Summerhelm. The city has a long history of being held by various clans, but it has now been held by Morgöng for a couple generations. The current ruler, Chief Jarl Birger av Summerhelm, is the son of Erik Knudsson, grandson of Knud the Bear, who conquered the city.

Jarl Summerhelm is less interested in the well-being of a city he never expected to hold than he is in expanding his influence beyond its borders. Thus, Summerhelm is rife with crime, and the city supports a healthy black market. Merchants from the southern nations frequently visit Summerhelm on their way to and from Hrist, selling off supplies of Full Moon Extract before traveling to the better regulated city of Clan Mithra, and purchasing Dreams Leaves from the drug-traffickers of Summerhelm on their way home.

While Summerhelm is their largest population center, Clan Morgöng has more settlements than any other clans. These are mostly small—no more than one hundred residents each—and composed of citizens who are part-time farmers, part-time raiders, and full-time spies. Family units tend to be very close, trusting each other first and foremost, their local communities next, and the larger sphere of Clan Morgöng last. They don't trust anyone beyond that.

Clan Morgöng settlements are the farthest south of all the Kandar clans, though a few minor, unaffiliated clans also reside in the dense forest of Skuggiskogr. The majority of the settlements are along the coast south of Solheim, where Clan Limgri's territory traditionally starts, as well as along the Isbryteralva river.

Homes are typically built from stone, as lumber is at a premium except along the edges of the Skuggiskogr (and even then, what resides within those woods, both humanoid and monstrous, makes harvesting difficult). Wood is typically reserved for the building of longboats, and retired longboats that have suffered too much damage to sail may be patched up to be used as the roofs of buildings. Thus, visitors to a Clan Morgöng village come away with the sense that they're sailing upside-down on dry land.

Sharp Daggers, Quick Minds

As raiders, members of Clan Morgöng value martial skill from an early age—not only to pillage other settlements, but to prevent raids on their own homes as well. From an early age, all children are taught to wield daggers and short swords, weapons that can be used for speed as well as stealth. Lightweight shields are also central to the combat style of Morgöng warriors, preferring them to heavier armors and weapons that would impede a sailor in the event of a shipwreck.

Children are also taught riddles, almost from birth. During the long winter months, riddle contests are a central part of village life, with the cleverest minds posing the most difficult riddles. Villagers come together over warm fires to solve increasingly complex puzzles. These riddles become the basis of a village-wide code, used when conveying secrets. A discussion about a double-yolked egg laid by a red hen sounds innocuous to strangers, but to locals, it might convey a message about a red-haired shield-maiden carrying two packages to deliver to a nearby settlement.

A Life on the Water. Combat and riddles are a way of life among Clan Morgöng, and living on the water is as natural as breathing to the clanfolk. The people of the Morgöng settlements, with the exception of Summerhelm, exist with the expectation that their world is the water, and the water is their world. While the northernmost river villages tend to have smaller ships, all the coastal cities create beautiful longships, frequently decorated with dragons and serpents.

The fierce individualism of the Morgöng people exists in all places except at sea. There, the trust built among a community is vital. At sea, the ship captain, or skeppare, is as respected as any god. That doesn't mean a skeppare doesn't listen to their crews—the best captains certainly do—but when a decision is made and an order is given, the skeppare has the final word. The whim of the sea may change in an instant, and commands must be followed quickly and without argument for the safety of the entire crew.

Likewise, while at sea, fights between crewmembers are not tolerated. Fighting is left for those the crews are raiding; any disputes among crewmembers are shelved and resolved once back on land.

Politics

There's very little in the way of a centralized government guiding Clan Morgöng. Jarl Summerhelm holds a hereditary title; village leaders are typically the eldest villagers, those who have survived the most raids or weathered the most winters. When attending the althing in Mithra, however, representatives of Clan Morgöng

act as though they are the elected voices of their people, and they frequently decide among themselves, when they arrive, who will serve as their lead representative. They then present this person as though they are a duly selected leader from within the clan, regardless of whether they hold any position beyond the annual althing. Like the water they revere, the members of Clan Morgöng embrace the ever-changing tides of power.

Ship captains, or skeppare, are elected from among the crews they lead. Crews are typically forty or fifty people per longboat, with smaller crews for boats that only traverse rivers. Ships are the property of the village as a whole, maintained through the shared responsibility of the villagers. Everyone knows that the village's livelihood depends upon the upkeep of its ships.

After two years, thralls are allowed to sail on a longboat crew; after two more years of good service, they may also vote in elections for skeppare. There have been many cases of thralls in their later years of thralldom being promoted into positions of power—or maybe even becoming skeppare in their own right.

Lawspeakers. As a matter of pride, Clan Morgöng has no written records. Laws are memorized by a lawspeaker, typically a skald, who then interprets disputes based on prior precedence. Typical punishments include fines, brief indenturement as a thrall, or an alternate form of action that rights the wrong. Petty thievery against other villagers may be accepted once, but repeat offenders risk being exiled from the village.

The serious crimes of murder and sexual assault are not tolerated; killing is allowed (and, on rare occasions, encouraged) on raids, but never at home, and sexual assault is forbidden even on raids. These, along with intentional damage to any of the village's watercraft, are viewed as the most grievous crimes and are punishable by execution.

Summerhelm holds with these same values, but the lawlessness of the city means that common grievances and thievery are an expected part of life in the city. Many thieves who are exiled from their villages end up in Summerhelm, sometimes becoming an agent of their village's interest within the city and trading secrets to get back into their community's good graces.

Relationships

While no one in the north would ever accuse a person of Clan Morgöng of being a thief and a charlatan to their face, the people of Kandar tend to use the expression “you can only trust a Shade as far as you can Stride”—a reference to the legendary Morgöng Shadestrider, the clan's namesake.

Despite that lack of trust (which the people of Morgöng return), Clan Mithra relies on Clan Morgöng to keep watch on all the events of the surrounding world, supplying Hrist with information about the position of enemies to the west and trade to the south. Clan Morgöng has kept an open mind about possible alliances with the clans of Thrull, never limiting their options, but as yet, their loyalty remains with Kandar. But their loyalty remains reserved for their own people first.



CLAN LIMGRI



The frigid north is a hard land, and no one knows this better than Clan Limgri. The nomadic people of the clan traverse the northernmost parts of Kandar, many of them living half the year in full darkness. It's a life that suits Clan Limgri, as their beliefs are rooted in the end of the world: darkness has come, the gods are dead, and everything must end.

Of all the major clans of Valika, Clan Limgri has learned the most from the Svalr, the original people of the north. From this now-minor clan, the Limgri learned how to herd reindeer, how to build shelters from snow, and how to write magic onto their own bodies. Unlike Clan Rune, with its sophisticated understanding of magic, the people of Clan Limgri have a limited understanding of traditional tattoo magic, having borrowed it from Svalr, combined it with rune magic, and adopted it as their own.

Settlements

The only notable settlement of Clan Limgri is Solheim, a somewhat ironically named city that spends almost half the year in darkness. It's the southernmost territory of Clan Limgri, and perhaps named after the sun because it does have a few hours of light, even in the darkest days of winter.

Solheim can't really be termed a city, although it has the largest population and marketplace of the eastern Volhalvoy, the peninsula that stretches from Solheim to Volgen. As a port city, Solheim has the most frequent visitors, and what grains and vegetation are available for trade are made here; the nomadic family units of Limgri stop into Solheim several times a year to resupply.

The majority of Clan Limgri have no permanent settlements. They keep separate summer and winter settlements,

with structures that may disappear in the snow from year to year. Family units and communities tend to travel the same paths across the north, guiding their reindeer herds to better grounds after they've eaten what little vegetation grows at any one location.

Most traveling settlements use portable homes adopted from the Svalr, the *gamme* (which the Svalr call the "goahti") and the *lavvo* (or, in Svalr, "lavvu"). A *lavvo* has three central poles, placed in a tripod, and then a number of support poles secured for stability. Hides and imported textiles form the outer shell. The full structure is low to the ground, only a little taller than a standing human adult, to withstand the high winds that blow across the snow, and to allow smoke from the central fire within to escape.

A *gamme* is larger, is frequently covered with peat, moss, or timber, and is where central gatherings are held. Some of the most northernmost winter settlements feature homes made of blocks cut from ice and snow, which may withstand the seasonal drifts to be found the following year or may need to be rebuilt on an annual basis.

Due to their far-ranging travels, the Limgri nomads are also the primary harvesters of Dreams Leave in Kandar. The rare herb only grows in the northernmost lands, a region the clan knows well. Among their own family units, they use it as an anesthetic and medicine; addiction to the herb is almost unheard of among Clan Limgri. In Solheim, the herb is sold for its medicinal purposes. Buyers from Clan Morgöng frequently purchase the herb to take to southern Kandar. What these merchants do with the substance after it leaves Solheim is beyond Limgri's purview or care.

The nominal leader of Clan Limgri is Taala Brightstar, an elderly druid who serves as the advisor to Jarl Angrboða Grata of Solheim. Taala employs a number of ravens to carry messages throughout the north, providing a sense of community among the disparate nomads.

“Any druid worth their grain of snow or batch of soil has come out of Limgri. You won’t find better people to get their hands on any herb you need.”

- A chatty barkeep

The End Is Come

As the stories tell it, Limgri Lightbringer, the namesake of Clan Limgri, was a devoted follower of the god of the sun. Limgri instilled in her people a love for the divine, and the view that something sacred exists in every living thing. Clan Limgri holds the light from the life-giving sun as especially holy.

That belief remains firmly rooted in the Limgri, but it has become twisted with despair. The gods are dead or gone. Limgri’s own patron has long since disappeared. While the Lord Edda may still retain the name of the forgotten deity, the people of Clan Limgri no longer remember it. They know only this: when all the gods are dead, the end of the world has come.

This core belief of the people of Limgri has divided settlements along two lines. Some of the families traversing the north believe that, as heirs to the Lightbringer, they must do all they can to maintain the life that still exists in this harsh land. Each blade of grass, each newborn reindeer, each bird of the air: these are meant to be cherished and protected. In order to bring this protection to Kandar, the people of Clan Limgri have adopted whatever traditions fit within their lives, whatever religions the nations of the south have passed along with their trade. Calling themselves Lightbringers, these devotees of life strive to protect all that they see, and frequently wear sigils of any divine source that might listen.

The Lightbringers also raise a number of druids within their settlements. The belief that nature herself is holy is one that resonates with the original teachings Limgri left for her people. Thus, any child born among the Limgri with a talent for nature magic is encouraged to develop their skills. These druids are also frequently the herbalists of their communities, trading knowledge and supplies when they cross paths with another nomadic group.

A small sect among the Lightbringers seeks to not only preserve life, but to save the world and stave off the end times. One of the most vocal proponents of this philosophy was Guhjdäl, a druid from among the nomadic families. Ten years ago, Guhjdäl was captured in a Völgr raid near the family’s winter lodgings—she has not been heard from since. Her family assumes her dead; her younger brother, Marteinn, had her tattoo patterns copied onto his face. Not a druid but a skald, Marteinn tells stories of his sister, casting her as a hero who saves the world.

The second belief among the Limgri lives in the nomads who call themselves the Rökkva, or the Twilight. Among the Rökkva, the end of the world is not something to be post-

poned; all life is headed toward death, and rebirth can only happen when the world is fully destroyed. If the gods are dead, they cannot be reborn until all life has joined them.

The Rökkva see the spread of coldfire from Volgen as a sign the end is nigh. While the Rökkva do not necessarily seek to cause this destruction and death, they view it as inevitable and something to be lauded. Among the Rökkva, there are warlocks who believe they have gained their powers from Death itself. They are not necromancers, but nevertheless focus on powers that bring rot, decay, and icy death to those who attempt to delay the inevitable through healing or resurrection magic.

Written on the Skin

Most members of Clan Limgri are adorned with tattoos on their faces, so they can be seen despite the heavy fur coats they wear as a shield against the north. Tattoos may also be inked onto limbs or torsos, but a clanfolk’s facial tattoos are the most important. These are designed and inked on occasions of the completion of an important personal event: assisting the birth of a reindeer calf, saving the life of a family member, the hunting and slaying of a ferocious beast. They can also commemorate a much smaller event: the first time skinning a fox or sewing a pair of mittens for the first time.

Some tattoos, when done in the right ritual context and drawn with the right runes, can also have a magical significance. Those drawn and inked by runecrafters can give the wearer significant magical effects. While the magic is not as precise as those of Clan Rune, it is no less powerful.

Limgri tattoos are inked by older women of the family, usually the one who is the best seamstress or has the steadiest hands. If a family group has a runecrafter among them, other family units frequently search them out during their yearly travels to gain magical enchantments for their own families.

Coldfire. Of all the Valikan clans, the Limgri are the most threatened by coldfire, yet they understand and worship its power. Their herding paths pass near Volgen, and they have seen the threat of coldfire grow and expand. Though there are few Limgri nomads to spare within their communities, many young people have chosen to join the monks of Kentigern, trying to understand and control the coldfire’s expansion.

Among the Rökkva, however, coldfire is viewed as a possible blessing. Some believe that the power inherent in their tattoos is empowered by the coldfire. They try to meditate in the presence of the substance, and more fanatical clanfolk sometimes rush into the coldfire to become consumed and empowered by it.

If coldfire spreads throughout the north, the Rökkva reason, and was then released upon the southern lands, the world might be reborn of ice and flame. There have been discussions among the Rökkva of trying to weaponize coldfire, of intentionally spreading it beyond its current borders. They have yet to take any action, however, as there is still much debate about whether it would actually bring about the end of Etharis.

Politics

Like Clan Morgöng, there's very little central government ruling Clan Limgri. Family units operate independently, although they do gather for celebrations four times a year, on the solstices and equinoxes. As far as the other Clans are concerned, Jarl Angrboða Grata of Solheim and Taala Brightstar speak for the clan. In most cases, this is true: while the jarl and the druid have little impact over how the families and communities are organized, they are the two most in touch with the rest of the elders and leaders among the clan.

Among the small groups of traveling nomads, Limgri's druids and warlocks are most likely to take on leadership positions. However, Clan Limgri also has a number of skalds who learn and recite the lore and songs of their people. Unlike the more scholarly skalds of Hrist, who study the written word as well as memorizing the sagas, Limgri skalds are always trying to learn new stories, and then tell those stories in ways that most please their own communities. In terms of religion—the most popular tales among the Limgri—this leads to some interesting interpretations that the southerners who practice those religions would not recognize as their own.

The Law of Hospitality. There are few codified laws among Clan Limgri, although each community may have specific laws and penalties for transgressions as enacted by their own leaders. Across the clan, murder and sexual assault are considered the gravest transgressions, and those who commit such deeds are abandoned in the wilds on their own. Without supplies or a community, abandonment in the wilds means almost certain death.

Abandonment's opposite is used as the one governing law of Clan Limgri: hospitality. Any strangers found in the northern wilds are welcomed into the community gamme to stay as long as they need. Strangers are never denied food and drink; all that the Limgri have is shared with those they encounter in the wilderness.

For this reason, the Limgri frequently find themselves victims of Völgr raids; their generosity is taken advantage of by scouts, who then report the nomads' location to Völgr raiding parties. Unwilling to change their own cultural laws, the Limgri, through Jarl Grata and Taala Brightstar, have petitioned for the Clan Mithra armies to extend their outposts further north. Queen Andrea has provided those warriors in exchange for Clan Limgri taking control of Cold Iron Keep, which houses the most dangerous, non-Valikan criminals in Kandar. Bodil Garðr, a Limgri skald from Solheim, serves as commander of the keep.

Relationships

Due to their generous natures and cultural insistence on hospitality, as well as their adoption of any religion that might stave off the end of the world, other Valikan clans tend to view Clan Limgri as gullible. That is, until they themselves end up in the northlands, alone, in six months of darkness. Then, they rejoice at the laws of hospitality that allow them to survive.

The closest allies the Limgri have are the Svalr, from whom they learned much of their way of life, and in turn the Svalr accept the presence of the Limgri on their traditional lands. Overall, however, the Limgri keep to themselves, raising their herds, waiting for the end of the world.





LESSER CLANS

Life in Valika is dominated by the politics and settlements of the six major clans: Clan Völgr, Clan Sýr, Clan Rune, Clan Mithra, Clan Limgri, and Clan Morgöng. But dozens of smaller clans exist as scattered enclaves across the length and breadth of Valika.

These clans range in size and strength from a couple small settlements of less than twenty members, to some that, with a little luck, might soon grow to rival the leading six. An increase in size and power, of course, risks becoming an attractive target for the raiding parties of other clans, which could lead to not just loss of life and resources, but the total annexation of the smaller clan into the victor.

The lesser clans listed here are just a few of the more notable ones, important in the political or economic landscape of Valika for some reason. GMs are encouraged to create their own clans to fit their needs, either as allies or foes of the characters.

The Svalr

The Lord Edda begins with the primordial land: legends of the frigid north before humans journeyed into its frozen wilds. But that's the Valikan legend. There was something in the north even before the Valikan clans, some say.

The Svalr know they have always been in the north. They believe they are the north. During the age of elementals, they walked among those powerful beings. Though the wiles of Gormadraug were always a danger, the Svalr made the wilds their own.

Since the Svalr have always been and will always be—or so they believe—the disappearance of the gods has meant

little to them. The threat of the Prismatic Circle is, they believe, someone else's problem. They are the north, and they will remain the north after any and all intruders perish or leave.

While the Valikan clans regard the Svalr as a minor clan, the Svalr know very well that they're separate, and they only acknowledge the Valikans in their territory when necessary. The exceptions are their tentative relationships with Clan Limgri and Clan Fialla. The nomads of Clan Limgri share much of the same territory in Kandar, and thus the Svalr took the early Valikans under their wing, teaching them how to survive the north. The Svalr who migrate into Thrull are also tentative allies with the minor Clan Fialla, who they respect for their hunting skills and the ingenuity of their floating settlements.

The Svalr are bound by rules of hospitality, much like those they taught Clan Limgri in earlier days, but they frankly don't care much about the plight of the Valikan clans. If the world burns south of them, that's a problem for the people of the south. The hospitality practiced by the Svalr is, indeed, more of a performance than altruism. The Svalr look for the slightest offense, which allows them to turn away troublesome interlopers with a clear conscience.

The lives of the Svalr revolve around tending to their reindeer herds or hunting along the coast or high in the mountains. Because many Svalr are nomadic, they rely on their reindeer and sled dogs to haul their goalti and lavvu structures from one location to the next. The dogs are constant companions to the Svalr; Clan Limgri skalds spread news of these canines being supernaturally smart and athletic. If this is the case, however, the Svalr have not revealed the secret.

The Svalr have also not fully revealed the secrets of their tattoos. The language of their tattoos is older than the runic magic used by the Valikans. While many are ornamental—the Svalr sometimes say that you can read the story of their lives on their skin—others are thought to have even greater powers than those wielded by the other clans.

HOMES FOR TRAVEL, HOMES OF SNOW

While the Svalr, like Clan Limgri, are primarily nomadic, herding reindeer to wherever the vegetation will support them, there are several settlements along the northern coast of Kandar and into Thrull. Along the Sea of Turmoil, the Svalr hunt seals, whales, gigantic ice crabs, and elasmosauruses. The settlements here consist mainly of round snow houses, built of blocks of snow and ice, with holes at the top for smoke from central fires. The largest permanent settlement, Eallit, is north of the Njukca Mountains, west of Volgen and Fort Kentigern.

The Njukca Mountains themselves, named for the gigantic swans that live in the tallest peaks, have a variety of animals to hunt. The swans are dangerous prey; their beauty in flight is only matched by their bad tempers, and many hunters have met their death by the birds' furious beaks. Nanuqsauruses also roam the mountains and the tundra beyond; the feathered dinosaurs are valued for both their meat and their hides. Cadeer, frostbite foxes, and snow puffers are all frequent Svalr prey; hides that are not used by the Svalr community are traded with Clan Limgri or Clan Fialla.

RECLAIMING CINDERGHAST

The Valikan stories describe Cinderghast as the home of fire elementals—the clans sing the praises of the sorcerer Rune, who trapped the great fire salamander Ixlalu there. But the Svalr remember a different history. In times long ago, before the Valikans fought Gormadraum, Cinderghast was once fertile, full of budding flowers, stout trees, and medicinal herbs, both mundane and magical. There was once a large farming settlement there, called Varra, the Blood of the Land.

When Rune trapped the fire elementals in Cinderghast, the shape of the land changed. Volcanoes tore the ground, burning Varra to ash. The fields of green, and the lush beauty of the island, vanished under molten rock.

Some Svalr have determined the way to restore Varra is to free the fire elementals from their prison. One brave youth, known among the Valikans as Ánda the Fox (see "Important NPCs"), has enlisted skilled magic users from other clans of Kandar in an effort to destroy the prison. Ánda himself is a warrior of great skill, as well as a keen-eyed tracker. Signe Livsdóttir, a Rökkva of Clan Limgri, is a runesmith tattooist who believes freeing the fire elementals may hasten the end of the world. Skarde Leifsbairn, a skald of Clan Mithra, believes weakening the prison may free the fire elementals to counter the reach of coldfire. And Randi of Clan Morgöng has joined the team for reasons of her own. Thus far, the team has succeeded in weakening the original bonds, but whether they can—or should—destroy the prison is anyone's guess.

Clan Fialla

Along the west coast of Thrull, the folk of Clan Fialla make their mark as hunters of the great whales, whose pods traverse the waters of the north in all seasons. The Fialla don't dwell in coastal villages, however. Established instead upon the sea itself in great flotilla settlements, Fialla dwellings and longhouses are framed in whalebone, walled in whale leather and driftwood, and kept afloat on air bladders stitched together from whale skin, shaped and sealed by Clan Rune magic.

Bounty from the Sea. Though enough whales ply the sea between Skarfaner and Tyburn to guarantee good hunting even in the lean winter months, summer is Clan Fialla's season, marked by the migration of thousands of whales from the waters of southern Etharis and beyond. Longboats hunt their prey in packs, aided by orcas controlled and trained by clan shamans to help split single whales off from the larger pod. Through the summer and fall, whales taken by Fialla hunters are butchered and rendered on great rafts, producing copious supplies of whale oil and meat, salted and sun dried, that the clan trades for all its other needs.

Freedom from Fear. The Fialla are unique among the clans of Thrull for relinquishing the bond term of any thralls they take in trade from other clans. Any of those thralls who wish to freely stay in the clan's floating villages are given full clan status. Those who wish to depart are allowed to do so—though many choose a life among the Fialla because they understand the risks of being captured again before having any chance of reaching their former homes.

Fialla settlements are among the few places in the north to find aquatic elves and other water-breathing humanoids, descendants of thralls who joined Clan Fialla after escaping Völgr raids. Many of those water-breathing folk work with the orca pods trained to the clan's service—including some who ride orcas at the head of the hunting packs.

An equally unique aspect of life among the Fialla is that their floating settlements are rarely, if ever, the targets of raids by other clans. Though raiding on the open ocean presents difficulties, the great stocks of whale meat covering drying rafts in the summer months present a rich potential prize for a raiding party. But Fialla enclaves are protected by their hunting orcas, which can shatter the hull of a raiding longboat in seconds. As such, all but the most desperate raiders have long learned to leave Fialla settlements alone.

"The orcas are our greatest allies. They guide us, protect us, and sustain us. Clan Fialla makes sure they are treated with the amount of respect they deserve. I train them exceptionally. Don't tell anyone, but I trained this one to perform with a ball."

- Clan Fialla shaman

Clan Graevar

Scattered across the tundra between the ranges of the Haeyisor and Grensfal Mountains, Clan Graevar communities are built around small mining operations that delve into flows of ancient volcanic rock deep beneath the soil. But unlike the mines of the master metalsmiths of Clan Sýr, these dig sites produce diamonds—the legacy and lifeblood of Graevar’s people.

The value of Clan Graevar’s diamonds alone would make them a major political force in any other part of Etharis. But in the lands of Thrull, where the needs of the people are largely supplied by pillaged goods and bonded labor, luxurious diamonds have precious few uses. Clan Graevar has set themselves up as trade brokers in Skarfanes, acting as intermediaries and warehousemen when goods needed in the northlands must be purchased from the merchants of the Bürach Empire rather than directly traded for the goods of Thrull.

Wealth in Excess. In Skarfanes, the diamonds of Clan Graevar often end up traded for use as spell components, both by the merchants of the south and the spellcasters of Clan Sýr, who have an ever-present need for them. The magic that Sýr trades in return helps to protect Graevar settlements and mine sites. Still, the most valuable diamonds mined by the Graevar—great stones valued in thousands of gold pieces—are all but untradeable in the north, representing more wealth present in entire villages. The large stones are not appealing to southern merchants as they are difficult to transport and less suitable for opulent jewelry.

Secret Retribution. The leader of Clan Graevar is the half-orc retired miner Arshant, a charismatic figure whose usual smile hides a hardened heart. Twenty years before, Arshant’s grandmother Ilgir was clan chief, outspoken in her criticism of the blood rites of the Sentinel Woods performed on behalf of the Prismatic Circle. In response, Ilgir was taken as sacrifice for those rites, after a bloody raid by Prismatic Circle druids and Clan Völgr warriors that left a hundred Graevar dead.

So it was that when the druid Guhjdäl (see “Important NPCs”) sought out Arshant’s aid against the Prismatic Circle ten years ago, the clan leader granted it willingly. Since that time, the most valuable diamonds claimed by Graevar miners are hidden away as soon as they are wrested from the ground, becoming the foundation for the castings of *resurrection* that have allowed Guhjdäl and her followers to bring thousands of Prismatic Circle sacrificial victims back to life.

To cover their actions, the folk of Clan Graevar spread tales of having diamonds stolen in regular deadly raids by Guhjdäl’s followers—even as they forge close connections with Clan Rune as a hedge against any move by Clan Völgr to annex Clan Graevar on the orders of the Prismatic Circle. Though threats have been made, along with at least one attempt on Arshant’s life by Völgr warriors, the clan leader only grows more defiant, privately vowing to continue to feed any resistance to the depraved sacrifice rites that anchor the power of the Prismatic Circle druids.

Clan Ragvall

(Clan Ragvall is highlighted in the accompanying adventure *Saga of the Seasons*. It gives players the opportunity to create and play characters in a newly formed Valikan clan. The information here provides the basics.)

Clan Ragvall is the youngest of the Valikan clans. The founding of the clan started with a schism. A charismatic raider named Hrafen av Skeir boldly split from Clan Völgr, taking with him his most trusted warriors, and about one hundred other clanfolk who saw him as a steady leader that outshone the power-hungry Nolgr Magnusson, chief of the Völgr.

Hrafen and his schismatic followers traveled south along the coast of the mainland, visiting fishing villages and denouncing Chief Magnusson as a tyrant who made new laws at his whim, raiding not for the glory of his clan or the glory of the gods, but to feed his insatiable ego. Few listened, but those who did joined Hrafen in their search for a new homeland.

In time, Hrafen had gathered five hundred Valikans from all walks of life—thralls, farmers, warriors, and even a deposed chieftain—and from all six of the major clans. They traveled ever southward until the snows of winter hemmed them in and they were forced to settle upon the shores of the Teeth, a rugged land near the border of the Bürach Empire.

As hunger set in and faith in Hrafen’s leadership faltered, a warrior discovered a statue buried in the snow. This monument was to the legendary shield maiden Ragvall the Blade-Breaker, who fought alongside the Seven Heroes who tamed Valika after defeating Gormadraug. The dispossessed saw this as a sign, and Hrafen declared his people to be the clan of Ragvall. All despair was struck from their minds, and they worked as if divinely inspired to build their new home on the shores of the Teeth.

Though many died that winter of cold, hunger, and exhaustion, Clan Ragvall survived. The winter snows slowly recede as spring dawns upon the new clan’s first year. The other Valikan clans watch them with bated breath, for many powerful warriors and artisans were involved in its founding. They stand apart from both Kandar and Thrull, and all signs and portents reveal that this new clan may spark change throughout Valika.





The Land of Valika

To southerners looking northward towards the arctic wastes of Valika, the whole region might seem to be a singular chunk of ice covered in ravaging barbarians. To those in the know, Valika's people and locales are as diverse from each other as Bûrach is from Ostoya.

It's important to remember too that Valika's internal borders are not sharply drawn and guarded, as they might be in the south. Unless there is a specific mountain range or river cutting through the landscape, a clan living within Thrull or Grarjord might not know exactly where they are. Only when they encounter another clan's hunting or raiding parties do border delineations become important.

Large, permanent communities are also rarer in Valika than elsewhere in Etharis. Villages tend to spring up in places where arable land, extensive wildlife, and defensible surroundings are found. Some of the southernmost regions have seen more extensive population growth recently as the xenophobia of the Valikans gives way to trade and diplomacy.

THRULL

The area known as Thrull stretches from the island of Holgar in the far west of the northlands—home to the city of Tyburn and the seat of the Prismatic Circle—to the foothills of the Grensfal Mountains that shield the city of Hrist

against land raids from Clan Völgr. Thrull is the dominant culture in Valika, at least as far as the major clans are concerned. And because those clans define the raiding culture by which Valika is known, so too do folk across Etharis acknowledge the primacy of this province and its people.

Holgar and Tyburn

The island of Holgar in the northwest of Valika is one of the most forbidding locations in an overwhelming dangerous landscape, and it's the foundation of the power that shapes all of Valika. The port city of Tyburn on Holgar is the seat of Clan Völgr, the site from which Völgr-helmed longships set out on their legendary raids. It is also the base of operations for the Prismatic Circle, whose sacrificial blood rites have come to define the Valikan lands in the minds of most folk of the south—and which might be all that keeps the world from falling into ruin.

The Prismatic Circle. Holgar was the site where the elemental druid Kybard first advanced the belief that Kentigern and his six heroic companions had not truly slain Gormadraug, and that the Great Prismatic Wurm only slumbered beneath earth and sea. The faith that Kybard founded believes that Gormadraug's waking will herald the end of all things, and that only blood and battle can keep the great serpent confined to slumber. As Kybard's nascent beliefs spread through the leaders of the Valikan clans, they became the foundation of a theocratic power structure whose apocalyptic fervor has long held sway across Thrull.

The Hollow Hill. A mile north of Tyburn's walls, what appears at first to be a dense forest grove rising defiantly from the rocky ground is actually the impenetrable wall of a living fortress. Hundreds of great oaks are raised and strengthened by magic, surrounding and protecting the mounded hill within their perimeter that is the sanctum of Hjadana, Grand Druid of the Prismatic Circle (see "Important NPCs"). Within the labyrinthine array of tunnels and caverns inside the Hollow Hill, the druids of the Prismatic Circle engage in secret rites of divination meant to measure the sleep of Gormadraig, the Great Prismatic Wyrm. Air and earth elementals can be summoned by any druid of the Prismatic Circle within the Hollow Hill, access to which is forbidden to anyone not of the circle or invited by Hjadana directly.

Power and Fear. The druids of the Prismatic Circle technically hold no power on Holgar or in Tyburn, as the place is under the rule of Clan Völgr. But their faith and its blood rites are held sacrosanct by Nolgr Magnusson—the chief of Clan Völgr, Keeper of the Three Tribes, and master of Tyburn. As such, faith in the Prismatic Circle effectively makes Tyburn a theocracy and extends the circle's power across all the Thrull-based clans.

To many across Etharis, Tyburn is a name that carries dread. The fell city of the northlands is the sanctum of the Valikan reavers whose magically-fueled raids scour the coastlines and rivers of the Bürach Empire, and reach as far south as the Kingdom of Charneault. Former thralls who have made the successful return to their homelands speak in dread whispers of the blood rites of the Prismatic Circle, with countless victims sacrificed at sites across Thrull. Many of those survivors' stories paint the folk of Tyburn as uniformly dedicated to the Prismatic Circle—zealous warriors ready to die in the name of blood and battle. But the truth is more complicated than that.

One City, Many Backgrounds. By the standards of many of the southern realms, Tyburn is a city in name only. Its defensive walls are rough-piled stone, with larger buildings and longhouses framed in wood, and smaller houses and huts raised of turf and roofed in thatch. But this rustic facade conceals a surprisingly cosmopolitan nature, built on the grim bounty of raiding. For generations, the wealth, art, and people of western Etharis have passed through Tyburn thanks to the plunder gained through raids, giving the folk of the city a rare degree of insight into the lands of the south. Many here are descendants

"I snuck around to see one of their rites as a child. Sometimes, in the dark, I can still feel the blood that ran across my feet. I've never felt clean. I scrubbed my skin raw but still had to cover the stains it all left for days. There are nights that I forget I got out."

- A despondent regular at the tavern

of former thralls who stayed in the north, adopted into major or minor clans, even as they retain connections to their ancestral cultures.

Steel and Sorcery. As the seat of Clan Völgr, Tyburn is home to some of the best warriors in Thrull—life here is dedicated to the combat arts. Open training grounds are scattered across the city, overseen by retired veterans or active reavers recovering from injuries. But though Clan Völgr and the Prismatic Circle control Tyburn, Clan Rune and Clan Sýr are well represented as well. Most of the armor and weapons used by Clan Völgr is forged in Borgund, but Sýr forges tucked in close to the city walls handle repairs to the gear of returning raiders, and craft tools and agricultural implements used across the island. In magical workshops, the Clan Rune mages of Tyburn hone the elixirs and runestones used in raids, and assess magic items and lore brought back from the lands of the south.

The Long Day and Night. Set above the circle of shadow that marks the boundary of endless days and nights as the seasons turn, Holgar and Tyburn are shrouded in complete darkness throughout the long winter. During that time, the city is lit by ritual druidic witchlight, shining like a spectral beacon across the ice-choked sea. The dangers of weather and endless night ensure that few travelers venture forth from Tyburn during winter.

During those dark months, the theocratic hierarchs engage the captive population of the city in apocalyptic sermons, reinforcing the fear of Gormadraig's awakening. The preaching whips up the morale and fury of the city's raiders as they wait for the advance of spring that opens the sea to their longboats once more.

During the summer raiding season, the folk remaining in Holgar dedicate themselves to agriculture, taking advantage of the druidic magic that fuels the vitality of the fields and orchards spreading out around the city walls. Those fields are worked primarily by thralls, whose numbers increase when the raiders return, and whose labors help keep the folk of Tyburn alive when winter returns once more.

Borgund

The city of Borgund in the Armarka Mountains is the largest settlement in the north of Thrull, and the seat of Clan Sýr. Said to have been first settled while Sýr the Seven-Bladed still lived, the upper levels of Borgund spread along a series of stepped mountainside terraces lined with stone-walled houses. But the true size of the city becomes apparent only once visitors pass into Sýr's Well, a set of slow-sloping ramps that descend from a broad central court atop the highest terrace, down into the stony depths of the mountain. Long tunnels radiate out from the foot of the well like spokes, with hundreds of chambers and halls sharing space with the great underground forges—the legacy of Clan Sýr and its people's legendary skill with metalwork.

With much of Borgund set within the mountains of the far north, the half-year of night that descends across the region in winter is of little concern to those who dwell here. Borgund's halls and tunnels are a warm warren of magical rune light, making this one of the most pleasant places to

spend the long winters in Valika. The heat of the forges balances the chill of stone, with fresh air constantly cycled into the depths through elaborate ventilation tunnels.

City of Forges. Borgund is a hub of manufacturing for Clan Sýr's hallmark weapons and armor, and the site of the classrooms and training forges where young clanfolk and thralls are trained. More so than in any other area of Thrull, many of Borgund's thralls elect to join Clan Sýr once their term of service is up, dedicating themselves to the artistry of metal. As a result, Borgund boasts more dwarves, elves, and other folk of the southlands than any other settlement in Thrull.

The approach to the city is marked by the columns of smoke that rise from its underground furnaces, and by the clusters of smaller mining communities that pull iron, copper, tin, silver, gold, and adamantite from within the mountains. Most of Borgund's food is grown in towns and villages spread through the foothills and tundra to the east of the city, imported throughout the growing season and stockpiled for winter. Trade in arms and armor is the baseline of the city's economy, both for the use of the clanfolk in neighboring villages, and to be sold and traded through settlements farther south.

Ancient Halls. The underground halls of Borgund were not excavated by Valikans, though talented stonemasons and thralls worked over long years to bring those halls to their present state. The depths were first accessed by accident, when the folk of the minor Armarka clan took refuge in the peaks that now bear their name. Who crafted the ancient tunnels and vaulted chambers remains unknown, and though the original finished stonework in the depths bears hints of dwarven skill, the dwarves of the southern realms have no known legends that speak of the site.

Deeper and Darker. The inhabited depths of the city are not the only spaces excavated by the long-lost builders of this place. Since the earliest exploration of the tunnels, collapsed walls and secret egresses have revealed other caverns and passageways beyond the main level, twisting down and away into darkness. Those who dwell here call this ancient section "The Deeps."

The deeps are dangerous, said to be filled with dead ends, steep switchbacks, **gozomites** (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*) and other monstrous predators, and ancient stone prone to collapse. As well, official forays of Clan Sýr's explorers have observed that many of The Deeps' passageways appear to change their pitch and orientation between one survey and the next. Whether this shifting is some sort of disorienting effect of the old stoneworks or marks the presence of stone-shaping elemental forces has never been confirmed.

Officially, all entrances from Borgund into The Deeps have been permanently sealed off. Unofficially, a number of sites within the city offer access, including Glowlight Goldsmiths (a front for a well-organized criminal guild smuggling arms to Summerhelm in Kandar) and a ravine along the edge of the aboveground city that is easy to find but treacherous to descend.

Frostmere

Frostmere, the stronghold of the Melwarg frost giants, which shares its name with the frozen lake upon which it rests, has never been explored by humanoids. When the giants came to the northlands, they claimed the lake and the lands around it, clearing out humanoid settlements that once stood nearby in a bloody purge, and raising their great fortress of ice as a sign of their power.

Cold Conflict. The giants of Frostmere nurture a hatred of humanoids, and clanfolk traveling the tundra must be constantly vigilant for signs of giant patrols. Winter wolves loyal to the giants serve as the giants' vanguard, stalking the tundra all but invisibly when the snows come. Those who come into conflict with the giants are typically killed on sight—the Melwarg hold no thralls and take no prisoners.

That said, a minority of the frost giants are content to simply ignore "the warm folk," as they call the clans. An even smaller number sometimes quietly befriend humanoid travelers, trading for jewelry, fruit, textiles, and more. On occasion, giants content to deal with folk of Thrull make short-term alliances with Clan Völgr parties crossing the tundra for raids into Kandar, especially if those raids target settlements loyal to the Cult of the Great Wyrms (see "Grenhildr" in the "Important NPCs" section), a group the giants abhor.

Ghost Lodges. Around the perimeter of Frostmere, the Melwarg giants use powerful sorcery to raise domes of ice they call "ghost lodges" in their tongue. Generally appearing within a day's walk of the lake, these lodges act as forts and waystations for giant patrols ranging farther into the tundra. The locations of the lodges change each season, with the giants abandoning the sites at midwinter. The magic of those lodges quickly unravel as new lodges are raised miles away. Some sages of Clan Sýr believe that the placement of the lodges might be keyed to sites where the giants sense elemental power, but what use they make of that power has yet to be determined.

Explorers brave enough to have slipped inside abandoned lodges before they crumble away to frozen shards report seeing strange shrines of black ice at their heart. What power these shrines are meant to tap into remains unknown, but hint at what power is channeled within the fortress of Frostmere itself.

The Foxwood Range

The **frostbite foxes** of the north (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*), hunted and trapped for their resilient, weatherproof fur, are an important part of Valikan clan culture. The moon druids of an order known as the Fox Whisperers are instrumental to the long-term health of fox stocks, shepherding packs of these valuable creatures and ensuring that hunting and trapping don't deplete their numbers. But one druid of that order, Njavesh (see "Important NPCs"), has taken her dedication to the foxes to another level.

Respite and Protection. The Foxwood Range is a narrow vale in the Grensfal Mountain foothills, comprising a network of warren tunnels and dens providing safe haven for frostbite foxes to whelp and raise their young in

spring. The unique geography ensures a large number of foxes disperse back into the wilds for autumn and winter trapping.

Packs of frostbite foxes, led by elders awakened by Njavesh's magic, range out from Foxwood to patrol the tundra of central Thrull, on the lookout for lost travelers. Their particular focus is seeking newly released thralls attempting the arduous journey south to their former homelands. These foxes lead their charges along safe trails, even hunting to help feed those unable to do so themselves. Some of the more resolute enforcers of Clan Völgr take exception to this mission and gladly make the southward journey of thralls fleeing from Thrull less hospitable. But countless incidents in which Völgr raiders have been stalked and routed by fox packs numbering in the hundreds have convinced most of the warriors to leave well enough alone.

Ice-Oil Springs

Resembling the temporary pools that appear across the tundra after heavy rains, ice-oil springs are areas of ground where chaotic elemental power produces a wellspring of clear oil bubbling up from the ground. Called "ice-oil" by the people of the Valikan clans, this viscous liquid burns clear and hot, but is so volatile that it can ignite even in the absence of heat and spark. It is seldom used in day-to-day life but has become an instrumental part of Valika's battle against the spread of coldfire.

When ice-oil is thrown or dropped onto coldfire, it ignites with the slightest spark or flame—and sometimes even without it. The intense heat of its burning smothers the coldfire like a blanket, with rivulets of flaming ice-oil said to be drawn toward coldfire's blue-white flames like metal to a lodestone.

Ice-oil springs erupt, flow, then become dormant relatively quickly on the tundra, making luck and timing essential to their discovery and harvest. But that harvest is often complicated by the long enmity between the folk of Thrull (where ice-oil springs are most likely to appear) and Kandar (where the fight against coldfire is most intense). Excursions of Kandar oil tappers often patrol beyond the western foothills of the Grensfal Mountains in search of new springs, but are at constant risk of being attacked and seized by Thrull patrols.

Lost Keppmir

The cluster of towns that were once the seat of power of Clan Keppmir fell to ruin long ago, when the members of that minor clan engaged in a fell bargain with a daemon for their well-being and security. Today, their name lives on only with the monsters they became (as detailed in *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*).

Horrors of the Past. Like Clan Keppmir's history, the site of the clan's bargain and horrid fall has been lost to memory, concealed now beneath lichen and sea mist somewhere along the west coast of Thrull. But explorers who stumble upon the ruins of those villages while traveling the coast, or sailors putting in at what looks like hospitable beach while seeking shelter from storms, might spot the faint lines of foundation stones where houses once stood.

Travelers who don't flee the area at once find themselves suddenly walking within a spectral tableau as homes, long-houses, corrals, and stockade walls phase into view—magical illusions fueled by the psychic energy that scarred these settlements when their people were taken.

At the same time, a rising mist coalesces to take the form of the faceless apparitions of children, mouthlessly screaming for the parents who bargained their lives away for the promise of succor from the Great Prismatic Wyrms. The flare of corrupted magic that fuels these visions quickly attracts **blightwinds** (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*) that feed on any living creatures they find.

Thankfully for those making an escape from the lost villages by water, no Keppmir dwell along the shore of their former villages, fearing the memories that might revisit them should they ever return here.

Sentinel Woods

Those journeying across the tundra of Thrull for the first time, whether traders or thralls from the southlands fleeing servitude under the clans, are often instinctively drawn toward great groves of oak trees that occasionally rise from the endless landscape of rock, grass, and lichen. But those who seek shelter in those groves flee as quickly, as they come to understand the true nature of the towering trees—and to see the bone fields at the foot of those trees, that mark a century of bloody animal and humanoid sacrifice in the name of the Prismatic Circle.

In every season except the darkest months of winter, the druids of the Prismatic Circle make regular pilgrimages to the dozens of widely-scattered oak groves known collectively as the Sentinel Woods. These great clusters of trees are known to be magical sites by anyone cognizant of the normal range of flora found in the north—oaks are typically unable to grow in such a landscape. But an even darker magic makes its presence known to any who step into the eternal shadow of the groves, steeped into soil turned blood-black by generations of murderous sacrifice.

Articles of Faith. When the druids of the Prismatic Circle come to a Sentinel Wood, they drive before them hundreds of half-starved sheep, pigs, and cattle stolen by their followers during raids on the southlands and sent north by barge. Behind them march squads of Clan Völgr warriors, singing songs of blood and glory. And between warriors and druids, hemmed in by spears and shackled with strong ropes, come the fearful or defiant humanoids slated for sacrifice. Whether condemned criminals, escaped or insubordinate thralls, those who have crossed the Grand Druid Hjadana, or folk of lesser clans selected at random when the ranks of the condemned are too thin, all know that they march to their doom.

Within the Sentinel Wood, shrouded in the silver light of a full moon, the druids of the Prismatic Circle chant the litanies of their order, shaped by the visions of Kybard, who foresaw the Great Prismatic Wyrms Gormadraum awakening to destroy the world, and who laid down the foundations of assault and sacrifice that would prevent that fate. Then at the next dawn, when the litanies are done, the killing begins.

Blood, Rite, and Butchery. Over a period of excruciating days, the livestock are killed first, dispatched by the Völgr with axe and sword. Druidic magic placates the beasts before their slaughter, preventing mass panic and stampeding. But even still, the scent of blood rises so thickly from the ground of the groves before the end that the last of the animals go to the darkness screaming.

When the time for humanoid sacrifice comes, victims are walked a few at a time across the blood-soaked ground where the animals were slaughtered, corpses lying where they fell. Having watched that slaughter, conducted by Völgr warriors in a state of near-ecstatic frenzy, many of the victims have already mercifully passed beyond the point of comprehending their fate, with some even falling to blessed unconsciousness and death by fright as they are tied to the sentinel trees.

These trees are the Prismatic Circle's altars of sacrifice, so named for the druids' belief that the great oaks stand vigil above the underworld where Gormadraug sleeps, their roots drawing the blood of sacrificed creatures downward. Four druids attending each sacrifice first speak Gormadraug's tale aloud. Then, working together, they flense each victim's skin from their body with ritual chanting and razor-sharp knives.

During the humanoid sacrifices, the druids also sacrifice magic trinkets stolen from the southlands, incorporating them into their murderous rites. A victim lashed to a sentinel tree might be tortured with magic weapons or have magic armor or clothing nailed to their flensed flesh. Some might be force-fed magic potions, with the druids hoping that some error of miscibility will add to a victim's suffering.

The Empty Woods. When the last humanoid sacrifice has been conducted, the druids and Völgr warriors eagerly watching the rites immediately depart, for by tradition, no one can linger in any Sentinel Wood between times of sacrifice. Animals and people are left where they died to feed the crows and wolves over long months, with the next group of druids who come to each Sentinel Wood entering another part of the grove where previous victims have long rotted away to nothing but scattered bones.

When Clan Völgr patrols pass a Sentinel Wood, the warriors always draw near it seeking intruders, not entering the trees but circling around them in search of trespassers. This is especially true of the followers of the druid Guhjdäl seeking to undo the sacrifices already completed, and also true for the forces of the lycanthrope insurgent Lief Sarvif, who looks to set up ambushes in advance of the next rites. (See the "Important NPCs" section for information on both these figures.)

The Thunderstones

Traversing the endless blank tundra of central Thrull is never an easy task, especially in the seasons of storms and darkness. As guideposts for travelers, Clan Rune has long maintained a series of magical stone obelisks every thirty miles along the main trail extending from Borgund down to the Töckan Pass leading to Halsfjord. These thunderstones pulse at regular intervals with a deep magical booming sound that is undisturbed by the strongest storm winds, allowing clanfolk and explorers to orient themselves along that well-traveled route even without the sun or stars.

Although following the thunderstones can protect from the scourge of becoming lost in the endless tundra, the route can raise the risk of dangerous encounters.

Polar bears, ankhegs, and other tundra predators have learned that humanoids are drawn to the booming echo of the thunderstones, and sometimes lie in ambush near the stones.



GRARJORD

Often the entirety of the north is called Grarjord by southerners, and southlanders still refer to the lands of the Valikan clans by this ancient name. But with the political divisions of east and west growing ever sharper, the northern clans now define their homelands as Thrull and Kandar, with only the southern reaches between Thrull and Nordenland still clinging to the name and history of ancient Grarjord.

The Free Lands

The open tundra, steep peaks, and thick forests of Grarjord are nominally under the control of Thrull, and folk here acknowledge the authority of the Rune, Sýr, and Völgr clans, and of the Keeper of the Three Tribes in Tyburn. In reality, the folk of Grarjord enjoy a modicum of independence that harkens back to the earliest days of settlement in the north.

Many minor clans gravitate to this territory to avoid the militaristic posturing of Clan Völgr farther north, and the clashes between warriors of that clan and the folk of Kandar are constant across the Thrull tundra. However, the struggle for resources is no less acute here than elsewhere in Thrull and Kandar. The relationships between clans in Grarjord is often defined by raiding and blood feuds.

Halsfjord

Set along the southwest coast of Grarjord, the city of Halsfjord is the seat of Clan Rune and a repository of magical knowledge to rival any of the colleges of Erlefurt in the Bürach Empire. The natural defenses granted by the Teeth—the series of long, fjord-cut peninsulas that give the northlands the appearance of a great beast set to consume the south—help to make Halsfjord one of the best-protected sites in Valika, as its residents understand all too well the value of their knowledge and craft. Raids by war bands under cover of night or storm are a constant threat, with many minor clans intent on forcefully bringing knowledgeable Clan Rune mages or artificers into their service as thralls.

The Beacon City. Halsfjord rises along steep-sloping hills from the long fjord that shares its name, and can be spotted in all but the darkest storm nights by the magical beacons blazing brightly atop the parapets of the city walls. Though their foundation stones were laid by hand, those walls have been rebuilt and raised countless times by magic, and are rumored to be imbued with subtle and dangerous arcane defenses.

Numerous ships and almost as many caravans journey to Halsfjord in the traveling seasons, with the city importing most of its food and sundries in trade for magic. Halsfjord's markets stand outside the city walls for security and are well guarded by both Clan Rune mages and mercenary Clan Völgr warriors, with the former making use of truth magic to guarantee the latter's loyalty.

Rune's Last Rest. Halsfjord was the final home of the sorcerer Rune, who retired there shortly after her magic helped imprison the fire elementals in Cinderghast. Little more than a stockade village at the time, Halsfjord soon

became a center of magical lore and training, as the best mages and artificers of Clan Rune sought out the great sorcerer's knowledge. The oldest traditions of magical training in the modern city date to those times, and the schools Rune and her followers set up are known today across Etharis.

The Sorcerer's Secrets. Some histories speak of Rune leaving the city for a secret excursion into the Grensfal Mountains, from which she never returned. Other tales suggest she died quietly at home among her many friends and followers, who spread tales of her disappearance to help maintain the mystique of her life even after death. Regardless of the truth of her actual end, rumors have long suggested that Rune maintained secret magical workrooms in or beneath Halsfjord that were sealed up after her death, which still hold powerful secrets and even more powerful magic. Every discovery of a secret door or previously hidden cellar in the city brings a rush of excitement with it, and many long-term residents have spent time exploring mundane crawlspaces or poring over old street maps trying to discern where Rune's lost lore might be hidden.

Some say that the *Staff of Ixlalu*, the great salamander who ruled Cinderghast, is among the treasures Rune left secured behind powerful wards in Halsfjord. With that staff's power instrumental in turning Cinderghast into the prison it is today, many sages believe that finding it might help rebuild the volcanic isles' slowly failing wards. Others maintain that Rune must have hidden the staff to keep it from Ixlalu, and that returning it to the world will inevitably feed the salamander lord's power.

Skarfanes

The town of Skarfanes was once a Valikan watchpost and waystation on the peninsula of the same name, where the reaver fleets of Tyburn would put in for rest and resupply on their way south. But as the city of Erlefurt across Kulen Sound grew in size and importance as the Bürach Empire's greatest center of magical learning, the empire grew increasingly nervous about the proximity of Skarfanes and the reaver fleets passing through it.

Imperial Outpost. For long years, Bürach ships out of Erlefurt skirmished with reaver fleets sailing south from Skarfanes, and with the settlement's garrison longboats that sailed the sound even in winter. But then in a swift military operation some sixty years past, Skarfanes was raided by a full fleet of the Bürach Empire and seized by Imperial forces. However, rather than using the takeover as a beachhead for a full expedition into the peninsula against the Thrull clans, the empire declared Skarfanes an open settlement and trading hub.

Today, Skarfanes is controlled largely by clan traders, even as it's protected by an imperial garrison set up as a satellite of the garrison in Erlefurt. The town is a sprawling settlement of huts and homes, clustered around longhouses and warehouses and surrounded by a formidable stockade wall built of imported timbers. Four gates mark the entry points into the city, but just as many locals live outside Skarfanes as inside, with most of the minor clans of Grar-

jord maintaining permanent steadings within sight of the walls. Moreover, after three generations, intermarriage between the imperial occupiers and local clanfolk has created a mixed culture unique to Skarfanés.

Prosperity and Progress. It was never a secret that the Búrach Empire's transformation of Skarfanés was an attempt to quell the threat of raids from the north. By encouraging trade with the Valikan clans, it was hoped that the people of those clans would recognize and embrace a less-costly path to prosperity than the grim tradition of reaving. But the folk of the empire still fail to fully grasp the fell teachings of the Prismatic Circle that underlie the predations of Clan Völgr and the reaver fleets, making the Skarfanés experiment a mixed success at best.

The town is a frequent focus of raids by Thrull clans, some seeking plunder but others nurturing a longer-term dream of driving the imperial garrison back across the sound. However, the garrison has rebuffed more than one raid with the support of local Valikans, who have learned that Skarfanés is worth more to them as a center for trade and commerce than as a mere waystation transporting stolen goods north for the prosperity of Tyburn and Clan Völgr alone.

Isolationism and Intrigue. The official stance of the Prismatic Circle—and thus of the major clans of Thrull—is one of isolationism, with trade between Thrull and other lands formally forbidden. All commerce in Skarfanés is thus officially considered black-market trade. The three major clans of Rune, Völgr, and Sýr have no official contact with Skarfanés merchants. However, some members of the three clans secretly trade with the smaller clans of Grarjord, knowing that those clans trade through Skarfanés in return, eventually filtering the goods back to the three major clans.

The only items of trade that are strictly prohibited in Skarfanés are weapons, armor, and magic. Though the impeccable metalworking skill of Clan Sýr and the magical crafting of Clan Rune is highly sought after in the southlands, the leaders of Clan Völgr take a hard line against improving the defenses of the lands their reaving fleets will inevitably target in seasons to come. When weapons, armor, runestones, and elixirs are sold through Skarfanés, they must be carefully smuggled to avoid the attention of Völgr agents. To avoid such attention, many seeking to sell contraband instead seek the black market in Summerhelm (see the “Kandar” section).

Ragvall Village

Ragvall Village is the sole settlements of its namesake clan, home to no more than three hundred intrepid souls. The village was founded on the shores of Akkeri Bay, one of many inlets amidst the ragged southwestern coast of Valika called the Teeth.

The village's houses are made of stone or timber, and it lacks any sort of large machinery such as mills or foundries. As a village in its first year, its only possessions are what its people can carry on their backs, their livestock, and the buildings they've managed to establish.

Ragvall Village is divided into four main regions: the North Shore, the South Shore, the Farmsteads, and the Sheltering Wood, as described below.

South Shore. The south shore of Akkeri Bay is the heart of Ragvall Village. Most villagers live in pitched-roof houses near the shore or nestled in the woods on either side of the slow, meandering Garthor River. The chief's longhouse, Hrafensheim, looms over the village square as a meeting place and stronghold.

Farmsteads. South of the village center are Ragvall's outlying farmsteads. Dozens of small farmers tend their fields from spring planting to the autumn harvest. The largest farms are worked by the Bennuson family or villagers in the employ of the Grindalsson family, a pair of feuding families that are both pillars of the Ragvallen community. These fields are separated by stone walls only tall enough to keep wandering livestock out. Together, the farms in Ragvall Village produce hay, barley, beans, peas, cabbages, and onions.

North Shore. The northern shores of Akkeri Bay are sparsely populated and mostly home to folk whose professions take them from Ragvall Village each day. Hunters, trappers, fishers, shipwrights, and warriors-in-training make their homes here. At the edge of the shore is the village's only lighthouse. The lighthouse's keeper has recently gone missing, and rumors have begun to spread of a curse reaching up from the depths of the sea, claiming him.

Sheltering Wood. North of Ragvall Village is an ancient, dark wood that shelters the settlement from the snowstorms that blow across Grarjord. Ragvallen hunters tracked elk in these woods during their first winter, but found that its boughs shelter not just game, but also an insular enclave of elves. And when winter's days turned black as pitch, the hunters found true evil stalking its paths.





KANDAR

The area known as Kandar reaches as far to the northeast as Volgen, which was once an island but is now connected to the mainland by a coldfire glacial bridge. The more populated regions are far to the west, near the center of the peninsula, at the Grensfal Mountains and the disputed lands adjacent to Thrull. There, the united troops of the Kandar clans of Mithra, Limgri, and Morgöng keep watch. The more temperate Summerhelm in the southwest provides a southern border for the major Kandar clans, though a city even further south, Runeheim, is nominally within Kandar's borders (Runeheim is detailed in *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*).

Despite Kandar's diplomatic efforts, the people of Etharis still first associate Valika with the greater violence of Thrull. Kandar's desire for peace has allowed them to make inroads with the southern nations, but the wilds of the region, the facial tattoos worn by many of the northerners, and the reputation of their neighbors leave the people of Kandar fighting against stereotypes from any foreigners within their lands.

Hrist

Though the cultures of the three major Clans of Kandar are quite divergent, if there is a cultural center of Kandar, it is Hrist. This cosmopolitan city has the feel of a hill fort that has grown beyond its origins, a fortress that has expanded to become a merchant city. Although the majority of the residents of Hrist are Valikan—most

belonging to Clan Mithra—a foreigner could walk down the main streets of the city and feel at home, surrounded by humans, elves, dwarves, dragonborn, half-orcs, and others from nearly any nation of Etharis. Hrist welcomes all people within its borders, especially if they intend to aid Kandar against Thrull's invasion, or offer good terms in a trade. And preferably both!

The Circles. The people of Hrist reside in three distinct circles, separated by two walls (no wall encloses the outer circle). The inner circle, the oldest part of the city, holds the Great Hall. It is also where the residences of the oldest families in Clan Mithra are nestled. Relatives of the various jarls frequently stay in homes in the city, petitioning Queen Andrea for favors for their jarldoms. Smithing and jewelry-making families, both Valikan and dwarven, have homes and workshops in this portion of the city. A few other craftspeople, if they become wealthy enough, buy a property within the inner circle, but openings to move inward are few and far between.

The middle circle is the second oldest part of the city, is much larger than the inner circle, and is home for the majority of the Valikans who live in Hrist. Merchants and craftspeople, skalds and artists, make their homes here. The middle circle houses the Skald Library and the Kaupang, Hrist's vast marketplace.

The outer circle spreads beyond the city walls, and includes the foreign quarters, where traders and diplomats reside. The outer circle has the most inns and taverns in Hrist, many of which are in more southern styles, as they were built by travelers to the area. The outer circle of Hrist

also has a popular marketplace, and items that border the edges of Hrist's legality are far easier to purchase in the outer circle. The barracks are also in this part of the city, with soldiers from all Kandar coming to Hrist to train and learn the tactics of the Mithran army.

The Great Hall and the Queen's Seat. The largest building in Hrist is the Great Hall of Queen Andrea Helsing, who has held the title for the past thirty years. The Great Hall itself belongs to no one family, though it has long been the center of Clan Mithra. The ruler of Clan Mithra has long resided in Hrist, and though the Helsing have been those elected rulers for seven generations, all of Clan Mithra remembers a time before that, when the Sommers family ruled.

It is that long heritage that gives names to elements within the Great Hall. The Sommer Throne, for example, is an intricately carved wooden chair, said to be engraved with runic magic. In the tales of Hrist, the seat is said to grant wisdom and longevity to the ruler of Clan Mithra.

The Skald Library. Very few libraries in Etharis rival the collection held in the Skald Library, although many of the relics and artifacts are not bound books. While traditional academics are in short supply in Kandar, the clans have a long, long oral tradition that stretches back to the battle against Gormadrag. When the Valikan clans decided to codify those oral legends into the Lord Edda, skalds and lawspeakers from across the north gathered in Hrist, committing their stories to paper. Several versions of this manuscript are kept in pristine condition in the Skald Library, and the skalds who visit the library frequently argue over which details from the earlier manuscripts should have made it into the final, codified version.

In addition to the written cultural record of Valika, the Skald Library contains written laws and judgments, as dictated by lawspeakers from various clans and jarldoms across Kandar. The collection has also expanded to hold treaties and merchant agreements, as well as copies of historical records from the southern nations.

But while these historical and legendary records hold prominence within the building, another section is growing and expanding, enough that the skalds are making plans to create another branch of the library. This new wing would house the ballads, songs, and romances collected from every corner of Etharis. Curated by Stjarna Skalddóttir of Clan Limgri, a devotee of the Lightbringer faith, this collection is meant to offer a ray of hope, shining in the darkness of Etharis.

Seiðr & Cider. The best-known tavern in Hrist abuts the Skald Library; its name is a jest about forbidden arts of magic, which no respectable person would practice. This is a primary location for flyting competitions, and flytings that occur at the Seiðr & Cider are the ones most talked about throughout Hrist following the event.

In reality, however, the Seiðr & Cider is run by a retired wizard, who does practice the kind of magic frowned upon by most Valikans (excluding Clan Rune). This distaste and distrust for the arcane has led Trygve Brewer (see "Important NPCs") to keep his former profession secret. Though

Trygve is content with his current life, he does have a number of magical items in his home behind the tavern, left over from his younger days.

Holmgang Arena. While the citizens of Hrist's inner circle would like to believe their city is a law-abiding haven for all people and cultures, the outer circle is well beyond the more structured and codified behaviors endorsed by Queen Andrea and her followers. One of the most popular sites of debauchery in the outer circle is Holmgang Arena, where fighters compete for a championship title. These fights are unhindered by any sense of honor or fairness; instead, combatants are allowed to have at each other with any technique or style they choose until one surrenders or dies.

The current champion of Holmgang Arena is Bjørn Painbringer, also called Bjørn the Beast. At almost eight feet tall, this half-orc is a member of Clan Morgöng, known as much for his trickery in combat as for his vast, brute strength. He's held the title of champion for a full year—if he holds it through the next midwinter, Bjørn will be the longest champion the arena has seen.

The Rookery. An unassuming hostler, known by the name Revna (see "Important NPCs"), serves as a stable keeper at the entrance to the middle circle, and many of the horses and sleigh- and sled-animals visiting Hrist are kept there while their owners have business at the great hall. However, Revna is also the spymaster of Queen Andrea, a member of Clan Morgöng who has declared her fealty to the war chief—at least for the duration of the Thrull invasion. The stable is two stories, and in the rafters, Revna keeps a parliament of ravens, who carry messages to and from her contacts throughout her clan.

The Greater Jarldoms

While Hrist is the largest city in Kandar, its vassal towns are also well established. Many are farming communities farther south, eking out a living in the unfriendly climate. Clan Mithra currently has six jarldoms, each of which has several villages under its rule. The largest of these is Eikenbu, on the border of Skuggiskogr, currently ruled by Jarl Hakon Hendersson, a warrior of some renown and Queen Andrea's most loyal jarl.

"I was so excited on my first day at the Skald Library. I was there to look for the recently finished transcription of Kandar's early raids, but I found the original transcript of a story my mother told me as a child. It is a truly wonderful place."

- A Skald Library frequenter

Summerhelm

The city of Summerhelm, the seat of power of Jarl Birger av Summerhelm, is the second largest settlement in Kandar, but otherwise bears little similarity with Hrist. While Hrist prides itself on being the height of civilization in the north, a city of honor and welcome in a world gone mad, Summerhelm embraces the chaos of the dark days of winter and sleeps away the longer sunlight of summer.

The Summer Palace. Unlike most of Kandar, Summerhelm's construction is more like what is found in the southern kingdoms, with the Summer Palace being the greatest example. The large fortress is built like an Ostoyan Castle and was likely held by the ancestors of that nation in the distant past. But deeper inside the building, it's clear that humans were not the original builders of this monument to strength. In the depths below the palace, hallways are shaped from stone that appears untouched by mortal hands. Heat rises from the lowest levels, and a clever system of conduction allows this heat to spread throughout the building, even in the coldest days of winter. Rumors say that elements are trapped within the palace walls; other stories suggest that the walls themselves are magically wrought. Still others say the original fortress upon which the palace sits was built by the gods before they disappeared.

The most foreboding story of the palace's construction, however, is that the bowels beneath are the tunnels hewn by Gormadrag's body. Some say that the dragon's scales are embedded in the walls, and it's the power of the sleeping dragon that brings the palace its heat.

Jarl Summerhelm is uninterested in the truth, though he has employed a number of mercenaries and adventurers in an effort to secure any unknown passages into and out of the castle. Several have been discovered, which only convinces the jarl that more remain to be found. The jarl is also frequently absent from the city, traveling to various southern nations, using his title and money in an attempt to gain prestige beyond the walls of his home country. The result is that his mercenaries frequently have the full run of the palace, and many old treasures could easily make their way out of Summerhelm in those warriors' capable hands.

The Dream Market. Beyond the palace, the city of Summerhelm is enclosed by a tall stone wall. Locals suggest that it must have been built by giants, because even during the light of summer, the wall casts lengthy shadows across Summerhelm, making it feel as though the city exists in a perpetual twilight.

This shadowy atmosphere perfectly suits the needs of the many illicit merchants that make the city their home. Though there are many storefronts that appear to be on the right side of Kandar's cultural laws, the greater center of commerce is known as the Dream Market. As Jarl Summerhelm's attention towards the city has dwindled, the Dream Market has become more open about its wares.

Despite the supposed forbidden trade between Kandar and Thrull, many of the Dream Market's merchants are from western lands; more still come from the south, selling Full Moon Extract in exchange for Dreams Leave. Weaponry, frequently ill-gotten, goes for reasonable prices, and magic charms, both real and fake, fill the tables of the market.

Solheim

The smallest of the three cities of Kandar, Solheim is a port city that was once the religious center of Valika. Now, it sits on the Shadow Storm Gulf, bereft of faith, existing but no longer thriving. The shipyards are Solheim's one remaining pride, and a great hall, where Jarl Angrboða Grata holds her things, continues to be kept up as well as any residence. Still, the overarching atmosphere of doom pervades the city, even in the months when the sun shines the longest.

The Sun Temple. With the death of the gods, the most beautiful building in all of Solheim, a temple to the sun, was abandoned. Now this ruin of a religious building sits prominently in the center of the city, its roof long since decayed. The result, however, is that during the light months, sun shines into the temple at angles that highlight specific objects and runic inscriptions in the walls.

Few people of faith remain in Solheim, and fewer still visit, but those who have been within the sun temple in the long days of summer say that messages play across its walls, divulging secrets about the future. Tienne Corleon, an elven druid, has been living in Solheim for six years, trying to decipher the Sun Temple's hidden mystery.

Runecrafters and Tattooists. Within the walls of Solheim, runecrafters and tattoo artists sometimes meet to share their trade secrets, and to exchange enchanted tattoos with others who share their ways. While most of these tattoos are reserved for members of Clan Limgri or, should they request it, the Svalr (who only rarely travel to the city), the artists have been known to perform their craft on foreigners and non-Valikans, if they can perform a feat of skill or strength. Each artist has a different preference, but all wish to see a display of prowess; some will challenge the applicant to a contest of wits, using Morgöng-style riddles to confuse their hapless visitors.

The contests are frequently drawn along the lines of which belief system the artist belongs to. The Lightbringers only ply their trade on those who seek to be heroes in a falling world, who want to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Members of the Røkkva, however, are likely to bestow power upon anyone they think might cause the most destruction.

"There's something in the Sun Temple. Something old and wonderful and terrible. It's not a creature, of course. It's a presence. If you enter the place when the sun is at its peak in the summer days, the way the light strikes the ruins and illuminates some of the words and runes and etchings, it provides a message. If someone could figure out that message, they could gain control over that presence."

- Superstitious Solheim resident



Cold Iron Keep

Nestled in the Jakkan Mountains, Cold Iron Keep is where the people of Kandar store criminals who cannot be dealt with according to clan law. For the most part, this means outsiders, or those Valikans who would resist the death penalty—or for whom death would be too easy a release from their responsibility. Though the abandoned fortress originally fell into the hands of Clan Mithra, Queen Andrea years ago assigned control of the prison to Clan Limgri, in exchange for stationing her troops farther north to protect the nomads from Thrull raids.

Hidden Secrets. No Valikan wants to acknowledge Cold Iron Keep. It's a desolate place, meant to keep those the people of Kandar would like to forget. This dungeon of Valika's lowest became home to Commander Bodil Garðr, warden of the prison. Though Garðr is a skald from Solheim, her tales were frightening, and her call to bring about the end of the world, in line with her Rökkva devotion, made Jarl Grata concerned about unrest in the city. In Cold Iron Keep, Commander Garðr has full authority over criminals who, frequently, also wish to see the world burn.

But if it's going to burn, it will do so under Garðr's command. Garðr has a plan to make use of the prisoners, either for the war effort (which enables her to continue to draw resources from Clan Mithra and the army) or for her own ends.

Evil Origins. The keep itself was once the fortress of an evil mage, Mordu, who was defeated by heroes whose

names have been lost to history. While the mage perished, his spirit still lives within the walls, and many secrets of the fortress are yet to be unlocked. The building, raised by magic from the mountains themselves, has three levels; the top level is one story above the surrounding ground surface, while the third is below ground. Garðr's offices are on the top floor, where she constantly hears the whispers of Mordu as she goes about her work.

The ground floor is where the scholars, skalds, and druids stationed to the keep perform their experiments. The inmates live below ground. Many of the inmates are worth study, particularly the vampire frost giant, Jormund, who is encased in a quartz coffin. But the most important of the inmates for study is Gorm, a man consumed—but unharmed—by coldfire. He pledges to end the world when his foot touches snow.

Binding Experiments. As tempting as this promise is for Garðr, she has other plans. One of the runesmiths among the researchers is a fellow member of the Rökkva. Together, the pair have discovered a way to bind the inmates with a *geas* tattoo. This allows Garðr to assign the criminals with a mission and order them to return when it is complete—or the tattoo will detonate, doubling the harm caused by a normal *geas* spell. Now that the tattoo has been perfected, Garðr is ready to unleash her prisoners on the world—or, to start, onto Thrull, to see what damage they can cause Kandar's enemy.

Lake Jakkan. With the Jakkan Mountains on three sides, escape from Cold Iron Keep is almost impossible. The only way to reach the keep is by crossing Lake Jakkan, a frigid body of water that is also home to a terrible beast. The creature residing in the lake has the upper body of a caribou and the lower body of a beluga whale. Its branching antlers are each tipped with a flickering flame of cold-fire. The sailors that bring the prisoners to Cold Iron Keep whisper about sightings of this monster, sure that its antlers will cause the lake to freeze over, killing them all instantly. Some of the sailors even believe that the flickering cold-fire on the creature's antlers are the souls of those it has dragged beneath the surface, down to a watery grave.

Whether this creature is real or illusionary is unknown. The greater secret, however, is that there are tunnels beneath the water's surface that flow directly into ancient levels of Cold Iron Keep, below the currently occupied floors. What uses those tunnels and what danger they might pose to the inmates, only time will tell.

"My great-grandmother was a wicked woman. When she died, we discussed her life at the edge of Lake Jakkan. We fled when the shadow of the Beast passed. My great-grandmother is certainly among the souls on the Beast's antlers."

- Cold Iron Keep transport soldier

The Grensfal Mines

Within the Grensfal Mountains, there is a small mining community led by dwarves, an unobtrusive group of miners and smiths who ply their wares in Hrist, and mostly keep to themselves. At least this is what the people of Kandar believe. In truth, the Grensfal Mountains hide a vast number of dwarves, some of whom consider the mountains their ancestral home, and more of whom are escaped thralls from Thrull who have been taken in by their northern cousins.

The Great Collapse. In ancient times, well before the Age of Expansion, vast underground roads connected the Rock-Teeth Mountains to the Grensfal and Jakkan Mountains of Kandar. When Gormadraug was defeated, the elementals who had once viewed the north as their demesne went into a frenzy that shattered these mountainous passages. The dwarven cities within the Jakkan range collapsed, leaving only the dwarves of Grensfal to survive. Though they did their best to clear the tunnels to their sister nations, the damage was too extensive. Unsure what dangers the surface might hold, the dwarves dug themselves deeper into the mountains, risking the monsters in the bowels of the earth rather than face the elementals that still raged above.

As the years went on, the dwarves became even better adapted to darkness and life underground than their peers. But some still longed for moments of sun, and a community

returned to the upper mines their great-great-great-grandparents had abandoned. Finding veins of gold and gems still rich for mining, the dwarves returned to work, crafting weapons and armor and tools to rival the most beautiful found in the lands above. With their supplies ready to trade, they traveled to the surface once more.

The Emergence. The world had changed, and humans now populated the surface—though their settlements were still few and far between. The city of Hrist welcomed the dwarves, not realizing that they had subterranean neighbors. The dwarves of Grensfal established themselves as valuable craftspeople and merchants.

Most of the surface dwarves from Grensfal wear tinted glasses, unable to stand even the weak sun of the north for long. The highest levels of the mine are known simply as Grensfal Mine; the lower levels are unexplored by outsiders, but travel deep, deep below the surface, to realms of bioluminescent fungi and underground hot springs. The deepest dwarves have begun to gain some bioluminescent features as well, and most are unable to return to the surface or be blinded by the light, even in the depths of winter.

Ormrvalva

The Ormrvalva flows into the eastern Jakkan Mountains, snaking through the hills like its namesake. But its shape is not the only reason the Ormrvalva bears its serpentine name. The river is home to ice vipers, swimming poisonous snakes that thrive in the cold waters.

The mountains surrounding the Ormrvalva are home to cadeer, frostbite foxes, and poffers. But while the hunting along the river valley should draw Clan Limgri or the Svalr, the dangers of the river herself are too great. Even Clan Morgöng sailors leave the river once it flows into the Jakkan foothills. The serpents below the water's surface are trouble enough, but the danger worsens on land. Though the snakes spend much of their time below the waves, they nest on ground. Thus, the Ormrvalva's banks are lined with viper pits, hidden by the snow, into which unsuspecting travelers might fall.

Despite these dangers, some do risk Ormrvalva's hazards for the promise of treasure. There is said to be a spring at the mouth of the Ormrvalva that flows with liquid mithril. Many hopeful travelers have tried to reach the mouth, but few have survived, and those who do are too haunted to reveal the river's secrets.

The Border Tundra

Between the southern reach of the Grensfal Mountains and Summerhelm is a long, barren tundra, unsuitable for farming even for the short times of year the rest of Kandar allows for planting and harvesting. These lands are where Queen Andrea has stationed the majority of her soldiers. Borrowing from Clan Limgri's mobile housing, the army utilizes reindeer and ice drakes to transport tents and lavvo to the various points on their watch. While the entire border cannot be covered with troops, units of one hundred soldiers move under the command of a hersir, who in turn follows the orders of the drotten in charge of the border.

Varangus Gertrud av Hrist is the drotten currently in charge of the border patrols. She is stationed at a wooden fort at the very southern tip of the Grensfall Mountains. The fort is still new—a result of needing a defensive position to protect the settlements to the east from Thrull raids—and while the drotten had wanted to name it Fort Mithra, Queen Andrea felt that might exclude the Mithran allies who had provided so many troops to the joint army. Thus, the fort is yet unnamed.

Skuggiskogr Forests

Despite their southerly location, the Skuggiskogr Forests never become brighter than at half-dusk. The shadows within the vast canopy blot out even the summer sun. Though the Valikan clans do take resources from the edges of Skuggiskogr, using the pine wood for their longboats, they rarely traverse deep within the shade of the enormous trees. Even the mightiest warriors among the clans have a tendency toward superstition, and the shadows of the woods give good reason for wariness.

Strange Ecology. The Skuggiskogr are home to many natural animals, but they are also home to fey creatures of all sorts. One of the fiercest of these is an old **epachrach**, whom Mithrans living on the borders of the woods call the Guardian of the Forest. With twisting tusks like the branches of an oak and moss-like hair growing on its head, the mammoth creature travels through the trees with an impossible grace for its size.

Travelers who must enter beneath the canopy encounter strange and dangerous things in the shadows. **Grief eaters** are known to prey on the unprepared, and wild **insics** watch for musicians to travel into the woods, hoping for instruments to inhabit. A parliament of **ravens of ill omen** is known to roost within the branches of Skuggiskogr, and **pucks** roam freely, playing their malicious tricks to the pain, or death, of travelers. **Will-o'-wisps** try to draw wanderers deeper into the woods, where bogs pose hidden dangers, especially in the winter, when falling into even the smallest frozen pond could cause hypothermia and death.

Ancient Threats. But more dangerous than any of these creatures is the presence of **Runa Banasár**, a one-time leader of a forgotten Valikan clan, now a **memori lich**. Though much of her undeath has been spent traveling the world, she has recently returned to the north, her motives unknown. Villagers and farmers from Clan Mithra's jarldom of Eikenbu have started to disappear. While Jarl Hendersson initially suspected Thrull of raiding, the silence of the attacks—if they are attacks—has left her mystified. There are no signs of violence, a sure indication that Thrull is not behind the disappearances. And yet, people are missing, all their belongings left behind but their weapons. The thought that a force might be building an army so close to Eikenbu is a growing concern for Jarl Hendersson and Queen Andrea both.

Despite the dangers, Skuggiskogr also holds a small enclave of the Redclaws, a circle of druids whose primary enclave is deep within the Njukca Mountains. In the southern woods, the Redclaws seek to preserve the forest

from those who would overharvest her trees; in fact, the Redclaws may well lead travelers to fey creatures that would pray on strangers to keep the woods from harm.

The Njukca Mountains

The Njukca Mountains are one of the true beauties of Kandar, both during the months of light and absolute darkness. Named for the giant swans that reside within the highest reaches, the mountains are home to bountiful natural wildlife, despite their sparse vegetation. The animals living within the range have learned to thrive in Njukca's harsh conditions, and where the mountains border the sea, polar bears are known to build their dens.

The mountains are also home to the nanuqsaurus, a feathered dinosaur with a hide built to withstand the cold temperatures. These predators sometimes face off against the giant swans for dominance in the territory, leading to legends that snow squalls along the northern coast are caused by battles between the two species. The swans also have a reputation for being as carnivorous as the dinosaurs, making both dangerous to encounter.

The Svalr and Clan Limgri have additional legends of people within the mountains able to take the form of swans themselves. In some tales, these people appear human; in others, they have features like elves. The most fantastic of these stories feature the swan people leaving their skins behind when they change shape—and note that without their skin, they're unable to shape-shift. Some members of Clan Limgri even claim to be descended from the swan people of the mountains, but there is little proof that the people even exist, let alone intermarried with the Valikan clans.

But the rumors of the swan people provide good cover for the Redclaws, who base their center of operations out of the Njukca Mountains. Though this circle of druids operates throughout Kandar, their main enclave lies nestled in one of the Njukca's valleys, and hidden from the outside world. All the Redclaws are shapeshifters, many of them werebears—but perhaps there are also swanfolk among their ranks. The final test for any Redclaw hoping to join the circle takes place at a crystalline lake of pure, natural ice water, high in the Njukca Mountains. Those who pass the test are not allowed to speak of it; those who fail say only that even in failure, there is beauty. Unlike many of the Valikan clans of Kandar, those who join the Redclaws believe that the world might yet be saved, but only if the Prismatic Circle of Thrull doesn't destroy it first.

Those swans that live in the Njukca Mountains have to be possessed! Those terrors eat everything, I stand by the fact that they ate my neighbor's hound.

- Kandar resident



VOLGEN & CINDERGHAST

Though the north poses many dangers to travelers and residents, the greatest hazard from the land itself is the coldfire spreading from the Volgen peninsula. Once an island resting off the mainland, Volgen is now connected by a coldfire-infused ice bridge. The entire peninsula of Volgen and the Cinderghast islands are cloaked in solid darkness throughout the winter, with not a single hour of daylight, and then the weak and distant light of the sun promises a full summer without darkness.

The lands are also ravaged with blizzards, further limiting visibility even in the summer months, and the jagged landscape of ice spires makes navigation difficult, as so many of the landmarks look the same—or shift due to the frequent storms. It's no wonder the Valikan clans believe Gormdraug's heart lies hidden somewhere in this frigid region.

Fort Kentigern

Originally built as a monastery for an order of contemplative monks, Fort Kentigern has become the last shield between the coldfire waves and the rest of the northlands. The high keep is built in a style similar to the fortresses of the south, with thick stone walls shaped by both craftspeople and mages. Here, the Order of Kentigern gathers, not for contemplation, but as defenders of the living—and, perhaps, the world.

Independent Order. Unlike the rest of Valika, the clans hold no sway in Fort Kentigern. Once a person has joined the order, their past is forgotten; their life becomes devoted to one single cause. A majority of the order is drawn from Valikans, but people from all over Etharis count themselves among their number.

While some members initially retain their suspicions concerning arcane magic or the faithful, they soon realize that any skills brought to bear against the coldfire have their value. The Order of Kentigern's accepting and inclusive outlook is not out of philosophy, but out of necessity: all are welcome in the fight, for as long as they are able to fight. And many, many members of the order die in the line of duty. Some adventurers join their number for a time, then leave to pursue other missions. While the order would prefer that people fully commit, they are, as a whole, practical enough to never refuse help, even if it is temporary.

The order's penchant for ignoring their volunteers' pasts has made Fort Kentigern a welcome home for reformed criminals and exiles. Some people even take on new names when they arrive at the fort as a way to separate themselves from their past. The members who permanently dedicate themselves to the order undergo a purification ritual, where they touch their skin with flame to symbolize burning away their past and accepting the trials and tribulations of their new future.

Defenses. The fort's curtain walls are 10 feet thick and sport defensive siege weaponry. The ramparts are lined with catapults, trebuchets, and ballista, all of which are designed to hurl flaming pitch into the cold blue flames. The ramparts also feature enclosures where evokers can hurl their own fireballs to the grounds below.

Many mundane animals reside in the stables—reindeer are a favorite for the terrain and for slower journeys, but some intrepid members of the order have also trained polar bears and giant lynxes as war mounts.

The most popular mounts of the Order of Kentigern, however, are the ice drakes. To be elevated to the rank of lieutenant or higher, members of the order must master

riding in flight. Flying squads of order bombardiers are the first to leave the fort when a flare of coldfire is spotted. The mounts are trained to carry barrels of explosive oil, and the riders are well-equipped with other explosive grenades.

And yet, despite all the efforts of the Order of Kentigern, the coldfire continues to freeze Valika and its people. Of the few settlements that once existed on Volgen, only a handful now remain, and even those have shrunk as their residents flee the danger—or die before they are able to run.

Frozen Cinnabar

A recent casualty of coldfire, Cinnabar was a Clan Morgöng fishing community, now encased in ice. Like the other settlements in Kandar, Cinnabar had a Great Hall, as well as residences for the families who lived there. They now stand as icy monuments to the coldfire that swept through the village—and to the unlucky residents whose bodies have become icy statues.

But coldfire doesn't burn or freeze ghosts.

The village is now haunted by the souls of the villagers who perished there. These spirits have congregated around a single hearth of coldfire that burns at the center of their Great Hall. A rescue mission, sent by the Order of Kentigern to see if anyone could have possibly survived a week after the village fell, has since disappeared, and their souls have joined the number of undead floating within the Great Hall.

The ghosts seek vengeance for their ill fates, but their vengeance has no target: coldfire is a tyrant without a form to take vengeance upon. The ghosts wait, growing their own army of souls with any travelers who dare make their way into Volgen.

The Snow Queen's Palace

Despite the dangers, there are a few who reside within the cold, and one of these is an ancient figure known only as the Snow Queen. Her palace rivals those in Charneault, the fine details of its architecture twisted in impossible, fractal shapes. The Svalr say that the Snow Queen has been in Volgen longer than the Valikan clans have been in the north.

Some say the Snow Queen is an elemental, a remnant of the early days when the dragon ruled. Others say she is an undead mage, or a fey creature of great power. A rare few believe that it was the Snow Queen who taught the Svalr their tattoo magic and Clan Rune their runesmithing. All claim she holds court within the throne room of her grand palace, host to any who travel there—not due to a code of hospitality, but because she craves company. Some who visit are allowed to leave, but many, many more are held within her enchantments, unable to ever return to their homes or lives.

Still, the power of the Snow Queen is said to be vast, and she has collected valuable treasures in her hoard, including a strange, magical mirror said to not only view any land she chooses, but also cast her will upon those within her gaze. The tales of the Snow Queen blessing those brave enough to seek her out with magical tattoos and other enchantments are common enough to lure adventurers—if they can survive Volgen to reach her palace at all.

Cinderghast

If the Lord Edda is to be believed, Cinderghast has always been a place better suited to fire elementals than humans, and the state of the volcanic islands now supports this theory. But the Svalr tell of a time when the settlement of Varra flourished there, its soil fertile, its crops rich, its people happy. When Rune of the Seven Heroes trapped the salamander Ixlalu there with a curse, the land erupted into the poisoned landscape that now exists.

Though few dare visit these islands with their active volcanoes and treacherous waters, a few scholars have braved the journey to find that the Svalr tales have merit. Cinderghast has a vast ruin, covered in ash and buried in rock, where an ancient city once stood. What little has been uncovered by shifting magma and erosion reveals many of the same markings on stone that the Svalr use in their tattoos, indicating that this was a city that belonged to the Svalr. However, there are also stone-shaping techniques that indicate the construction was performed by elemental hands. This suggests to some that an alliance once existed between the Svalr and the elementals, though whether such an accord was the working of Gormadraig or despite him is a matter for debate.

In modern times, the islands are bound by a curse that makes study of the ruins difficult. Some areas of the islands are blocked to mortal travel; though visitors can see where they would like to go in the distance, when they walk toward their destination, they find themselves turned around and back at their point of origin. This is the nature of the spell binding Ixlalu and his army of salamanders and fire elementals to Cinderghast.

But the bonds of that spell are weakening, in part thanks to the efforts of a party of adventurers led by Ánda the Fox, and the smallest of the fire elementals are beginning to escape. Ánda and his peers believe that freeing the elementals would release a strong tool against coldfire. But after being trapped for hundreds of years, the fire elementals may have their own motives—and may seek revenge on the heirs of the sorcerer who imprisoned them: Clan Rune.

“When I was really young, my siblings told me that if I wanted to be warmer I should take some supplies and walk to Cinderghast. It was supposed to always stay nice and warm, and you would never have to stoke a fire or wrap yourself in layers of pelts. I talked for years about how much easier and nicer it would be to live in Cinderghast. That was silly of me! My friends had to tell me about its history!”

- Young Clan Rune trainee



Important NPCs

The NPCs in this section are meant to serve dual purposes: to be important figures that the characters can interact with, while also being figures that long-term plots, stories, and adventures can center on.

ORDUN DORANSSON

The chief of Clan Rune since wresting that title from his mother nearly fifteen years ago, Ordun is a powerful mage with even more powerful ambitions. Already showing innate magical talents as a child, Ordun was trained by his mother, Doran, who had shaped the power of Clan Rune for more than thirty years. For her, that power was linked inexorably to the tenets of the Prismatic Circle, and it was under Doran's control that Clan Rune perfected the arts of magical destruction, shaping the potent runestones that fueled the fury of Thrull raids against the lands of the south.

The Vision of Youth. Though Ordun's skill with shaping the magic of lightning and fire was second to none, he came eventually to see Clan Rune's focus on such spellcraft as little more than boon work, done at the behest of the Prismatic Circle and Clan Völgr, and creating the impression that Clan Rune were lesser partners in the power of Thrull. In his adolescence, Ordun tried in vain to steer his mother's

mind toward a greater state of independence for Clan Rune, but her dedication to the grim faith of the Prismatic Circle had set her mind. So, when Doran died during a prismatic drake attack while on a pilgrimage to Tyburn, Ordun quickly named himself her successor—and successfully stood down challenges by six of her closest apprentices and followers to claim the clan chief's role.

Plans and Power. Ordun cuts an imposing figure, with a shadowed complexion and sun-bright hair under-shaved and braided. Protected against the elements by his magic, he usually goes bare chested even in the coldest weather, presenting an intimidating presence to all those who meet him. By presenting himself not just as a formidable rune mage but a potent war chief, Ordun has positioned himself in his people's eyes as an equal to Nolgr Magnusson, chief of Clan Völgr and anointed as Keeper of the Three Tribes by the Prismatic Circle. And as Ordun has done so, the pride and independence of Clan Rune has grown.

Few people in Thrull have any doubt that Ordun looks forward to an excuse to challenge Nolgr Magnusson one day, but so far, both chiefs have been careful not to raise the other's ire. Ordun is wise enough to know that the backing of the druids means toppling Magnusson from power will require patience and careful action—perhaps aided by magic heretofore unseen in the north, which his most trusted apprentices and acolytes are rumored to have been crafting in secret for years.

NOLGR MAGNUSSON

Chief Nolgr Magnusson of the Völgr is effectively the leader of all Thrull, though the power he wields requires a defter hand and is less absolute than many observers of the bloody politics of Valika might guess. As the chief of the Völgr clan, Nolgr is the war leader of his people, personally leading raids against lesser clans, the lands of Kandar, and the peoples of the south for nearly three decades. As Keeper of the Three Tribes, he has been invested by the Prismatic Circle with an extra level of authority over Clan Rune and Clan Sýr, at least ceremonially. And Nolgr is a master of ceremony, and a leader whose charisma and personal magnetism have proved nearly as deadly as his axe hand.

Blood and Birthright. Nolgr is descended from a line of clan chiefs, and wears his patronymic like a badge of honor. His father, Magnus Roöldson, was a legendary reaver who vastly expanded the range of Thrull's raids into the southlands. Over a long series of summer campaigns, Magnus's longboats attacked not only the Charneault Kingdom, but first pushed up the great rivers of that land, laying claim to the bounty of its fertile fields. When his father died in a drunken longhouse brawl, Nolgr killed his older sister Fryda and drove his five-year-old brother Karas into exile in Kandar as he secured his claim to the chief's role.

Defender of the Faith. Nolgr has a close relationship to Hjadana, the Grand Druid of the Prismatic Circle, and proudly acknowledges that this relationship is the foundation of his power in Thrull. When the seas close for winter and the Völgr raids are done, he returns to Tyburn, splitting his time in the dark months between the clan's high longhouse and the Hollow Hill that is the sanctum of Hjadana and the druids of the circle. Rumors swirl constantly that one or more of Hjadana's five children have been fathered by Nolgr, but neither has made paternity claims.

Furious Future. Though nearing fifty, Nolgr Magnusson retains all the strength and passion of his youth, at least to outward appearances. He towers nearly seven feet tall, his face and arms an unbroken field of tattoos and weathered scars, and his hair is worn long and unbraided. Through drawing near to the age that his grandfather Roöld was when he stepped down as clan chief with honor to make way for Nolgr's father, the chief shows no interest in anything but a continued life dedicated to blood, battle, and loot.

The Völgr warriors who raid with him sing his praises in the longhouses of Tyburn throughout the winter dark, and laud his name when shouting of the power of Thrull spreading ever farther across Etharis. But when their chief and his chosen captains are at a safe distance, those same warriors whisper that Nolgr does not strike as fearsome a presence on the raiding fields as he once did. More than once in the last three years, the clan chief has suffered injuries from blows that would never have landed even a few years before, and a number of Prismatic Circle warrior-druids now fight close to his side at all times in case their healing powers are needed.

HJADANA

The Grand Druid of the Prismatic Circle for just over twenty years, Hjadana is the spiritual leader of all the Thrull clans, at least in theory. But where the people of the clans might sometimes flag in their obeisance to those dedicated to ensuring that the Great Prismatic Wyrm remains forever asleep, the close ties between Hjadana and Clan Völgr ensure that the folk of Thrull at least fear the Prismatic Circle. For Hjadana, that is enough.

The Peril of the Past. The reappearance of coldfire in the northlands fifty years ago catalyzed the fervor of the Prismatic Circle, who for fifty years had preached the awakening of Gormadraig was nigh unless Valikans took action. According to the druid Kybard who founded the circle, blood and sacrifice were the price that must be paid to keep Gormadraig quiescent, so that the folk of the north would need to embrace the old ways of battle, fury, and sacrifice forevermore.

When coldfire came back to the northlands, the druids of the Prismatic Circle saw it as a sign that the Great Prismatic Wyrm was beginning to wake, and the southland raids for which blood is both cost and reward intensified. The dread blood sacrifices that are the dark cornerstone of the circle's faith take the lives of dozens of criminals and thralls each year, along with animal sacrifice that slakes the ritual sites known as the Sentinel Woods with blood.

Controlling the Clans. The Prismatic Circle has never held true political power in Thrull and stands outside the tripartite clan structure that defines authority in western Valika. But since the clan leaders of old pledged the folk of Rune, Sýr, and Völgr to the teachings of Kybard, the druids of the circle have been the de facto power behind the chiefs. Thrull is effectively a theocracy in the eyes of Kandar and the lands of the south, with Hjadana seemingly uniting all Thrull under a single vision of battle and sacrifice. But the single-minded focus on reaving that has granted Clan Völgr a special place in the circle's favor has been slowly chipping away at the clan unity Hjadana desires.

The grand druid's closeness to Chief Nolgr Magnusson of Clan Völgr, and the Prismatic Circle's presence in the Völgr clan seat of Tyburn, ensures that the bonds between the druids and that clan's warriors and raiders remains strong. But rumors suggest that the Prismatic Circle has spies in the closest circles of advisers around Clan Rune chief Ordun and Clan Sýr chief Brokyr Bladesinger, monitoring the aspirations of those leaders and their adherence to the tenets of the druids' grim faith. Ordun in particular has developed a reputation for demonstrating just enough fealty to the Prismatic Circle to avoid the appearance of insubordination, even as he nurtures a sense of independence among his clanfolk. It is thought by many that if Ordun were to relinquish his position—by choice or otherwise—Hjadana would be quick to place herself in a position to help choose his successor, with the backing of Clan Völgr's warriors if necessary.

A Mother's Guidance. Hjadana has five children, all bearing their mother's ice-blue eyes, petite frame, oak-brown hair, and pale countenance. The identities of their fathers have never been announced or claimed, though many speculate that Clan Völgr chief Nolgr Magnusson is among them. The oldest of the children is Lessa, who at sixteen is their mother's chief acolyte and second-in-command within the Hollow Hill that is the sanctum of the Prismatic Circle druids. The younger children are likewise acolytes of the circle, but have received dedicated training in the combat, metal craft, and magic that are the hallmarks of the three clans. Hjadana has often spoken of how her children's upbringing represents the deference and respect she feels for the ways of all three clans. But many of those who know her ambition and her hunger for unity quietly wonder whether the Grand Druid has plans to one day see the Prismatic Circle, Clan Rune, Clan Sýr, and Clan Völgr all brought under her indirect control, whether her children are placed in the clans as key advisers or installed as chiefs in their own right.



BROKYR BLADESINGER

A dwarf captured as a child out of the city-state of Liesech and brought north as a thrall by Valikan raiders, Brokyr Bladesinger is perhaps the most talented smith in Thrull. Just past her seventieth year but appearing younger by far, she sports the immaculately braided black hair, sideburns, and deep complexion common in the southlands—and has been chief of Clan Sýr for nearly three decades.

A Life of the Forge. The daughter of veteran metalsmiths, Brokyr had taught new tricks of forging to her superiors even before the bond term of her thralldom had ended, and she elected to stay in Borgund when granted her freedom. Working her way up to the top nivå of that city's metalworkers over the next two decades, her petition to be accepted into Clan Sýr was backed by Gaerhalm, the clan chief before her.

Brokyr's status as a southlander never threatened her place in the clan, with the folk of Sýr revering talent at the forge above all else. But when she placed herself in consideration to replace Gaerhalm after his death, her relative youth at age thirty—and with her long-lived dwarven heritage making her appear younger still—was a challenge to be overcome. In the end, she and Gaerhalm's cousin Caerdar undertook a forge trial that saw each attempt to craft a finer blade than the other. But rather than the brutally utilitarian greatsword of Caerdar's design, Brokyr shaped a handaxe of sublime and deadly beauty that won her the title of sarvif of Clan Sýr.

Aesthetic Ambition. Sarvif Brokyr dedicates her life to raising the standards of the weapons and armor crafted by Clan Sýr, directing the forge masters who work under her to experiment with new techniques and approaches to their art and craft. Though she retains few memories of her childhood in Liesech, Brokyr has learned much of the ways of the southlands through thralls brought to Borgund for terms of service, and spends at least one month in summer touring Sýr settlements in Grarjord, speaking to traders and thralls concerning events in the south. She is particularly interested in new developments in armor and weapon craft out of the dwarven city of Stehlenwald, and the Völgr raiders know they risk her personal wrath if dwarf thralls from that area are not sent directly to Borgund.

Secret Wealth. Over the decades since Skarfanes became a trading hub under the control of the Bûrach Empire, ambitious crafters within Clan Sýr have been known to divert supplies of arms and armor into the hands of clandestine traders willing to run the risks of smuggling such gear through Skarfanes or into Summerhelm. Since Brokyr rose to Sýr Sarvif, she has been vocal about setting checks and regulations into place meant to cut down on the amount of Sýr goods funneled into the markets of the south. But what only her closest advisors realize is that her incentive for doing so has been to take clandestine control of the black-market selling of Valikan weapons and armor—and to ensure that the profits from such undertakings remain with Clan Sýr. Over long years, Brokyr has managed to secret away an enormous amount of wealth in the form of southern Etharian coin. But what she plans to do with this bounty remains to be seen.

“The tale of Lief Sarvif is mystifying. Everyone hears a different moral. Maybe it warns against rebellion; maybe it means to look for strength in numbers.”

- *Campfire storyteller*

LIEF SARVIF

The name of Lief Sarvif is known across Thrull and Kandar, and increasingly in the lands south of Valika. The story of this lycanthrope insurgent is told and retold in the north, but whether as a tale of warning or a story of hope depends on the listener.

From Thrall to Wolf. Captured during a Thrull raid into Kandar, Lief was a young laborer brought into service as a thrall to a small Clan Sýr outpost. Assigned a bond term of working rocky farm fields just south of the circle of shadow, Lief and his fellow thralls were subjected to backbreaking working conditions and the malicious will of their liege lord, Thallas—a cruel overseer who routinely ignored the orders of the wardens of his village to treat his thralls equitably. When Lief made a stand against this treatment, Thallas promised to name him an agitator and send him to be sacrificed beneath the Sentinel Trees. In response, Lief attacked Thallas with the same whip the overseer used to threaten thralls, and Lief fled into the Grensfal foothills.

Exhausted by his flight and near starvation, Lief was saved by a most strange turn of events. Attacked by a huge wolf under the full moon and left for dead, he felt the power of lycanthropy coursing through him, transforming and healing him, and granting him the strength to survive. Over a barely remembered year, Lief learned to master his curse, and swore to use the power granted to him by fate to fight back against all who built their lives on denying freedom to others. Returning to the village where he had been held, he tore Thallas’s throat out and freed the thralls still there. Then he invited those who would fight with him to accept his bite, and Lief’s pack was born.

Lord of the Pack. Having claimed the name “Sarvif” for himself from the title granted to the chief of the hated Clan Sýr, Lief has built up a werewolf pack some hundred strong over his exile. Most are thralls freed from servitude during bloody raids on villages across Thrull. However, a good number of the pack’s disciples were once free clanfolk seeking an excuse to turn away from the blood rites of the Prismatic Circle.

Using stolen longboats, the pack moves freely along the coasts of Grarjord and Thrull from a well-defended island within the Teeth. Nearly two dozen raids against the island by smaller clans seeking to reclaim freed thralls have ended disastrously, but the will to make a larger response remains elusive. Clan Völgr’s leaders maintain that because Lief escaped from Clan Sýr’s bond, it is up to the leaders of Sýr to put his rebellion down. But the Clan Sýr chief Brokkr

Bladesinger has called Lief’s actions a direct response to the policies of the Prismatic Circle—policies that some believe gives Brokkr a certain amount of empathy for the pack’s goals—and has formally invited the druids to make their own response.

A Free Clan. The success of Lief Sarvif’s raids have surprised him almost as much as they’ve shaken the clanholds the werewolves have routed. And this has put the pack leader in a position of uncertainty as regards his future moves. Many of Lief’s followers have already begun to clamor for him to declare himself the leader of a new clan, potentially drawing in other minor clans who chafe against the power of the Prismatic Circle. With these allegiances, the werewolves could forge ties with the clans of Kandar that might remake Thrull. But although Lief has already entered into discussions with the Redclaw druids of Kandar for formal support of his campaign against the Prismatic Circle, he is wary of raising the stakes of his battle if open clan warfare is the likely result.



GRENHILDR

The druid Grenhildr was once one of the brightest lights of the Prismatic Circle, and a protege of Grand Druid Hjadana. But a near-death experience on the winter tundra changed her, leading to a schism of faith that might tear Thrull apart.

The Salvation of Gormadraug. Separated from the other members of a party returning from Borgund to Tyburn in the last days of light, Grenhildr was lost in a deadly blizzard and thought to be dead. But when she reappeared in Tyburn at the turning of spring, she brought with her a tale of having been saved and fed by prismatic drakes, and spending the winter in a sheltered cavern where Gormadraug the Great Prismatic Wyrmspoke to her. Grenhildr told of how Gormadraug's long sleep was causing the wyrms' power to fade to any who would listen, and how the north would come to apocalyptic ruin if that power ever ends.

The healers of the Prismatic Circle marked Grenhildr as suffering from some unknown trauma after her season-long ordeal, but the young druid would not be quieted. In the Hollow Hill, she used unknown magic to slay a number of elementals in the circle's service, claiming that Gormadraug would draw strength from feeding on their power. A death sentence was passed upon her in response, but more unknown magic allowed Grenhildr to escape Tyburn, and to carry her beliefs into the tundra and beyond.

The Cult of the Great Wyrms. Everywhere Grenhildr travels, she preaches her belief that sacrifice in the name of Gormadraug will bring the Great Prismatic Wyrms back to the world and prevent the destruction of clan culture across the north. The most zealous supporters of the Prismatic Circle, including the warriors of Clan Völgr, treat her as a heretic. But many of the other folk of Thrull have proven surprisingly open to her views, having seen a century of the Prismatic Circle's calls for blood and battle achieving little except the renewed resurgence of cold-fire—which Grenhildr maintains is a sign of Gormadraug's strength, and his antipathy toward those who refuse to aid in his awakening.

Members of what both Grenhildr and her foes call the Cult of the Great Wyrms operate in secret, exchanging hidden signs to identify each other, and gathering for fell rites in which elementals are trapped and sacrificed to feed Gormadraug. And though the cult's numbers are still relatively thin, the disappearance of a number of mages of Clan Rune in areas where Grenhildr's followers are known to operate have led to whispers that magic-channeling creatures of all kinds might be targeted for the cult's fell rites.

"She looked so different when she came back. It was hard enough to imagine she survived the winter. But maybe some part of her did die. Who's to say?"

- Tyburn watchman





GUHJDÄL THE REVENANT

A decade ago, the druid Guhjdäl was kidnapped by a Völgr raiding party in Kandar and returned to Thrull, marked as another of that season's sacrifices within the Sentinel Woods. Guhjdäl was a member of the Lightbringers, and one of the brightest voices of that tradition who believe that preserving life is only the first step in a necessary fight against forces that threaten the destruction of the wider world.

For her spellcasting prowess, the veteran druid was offered a place in the Prismatic Circle. Guhjdäl, for her beliefs, which she defiantly proclaimed to her captors even as she swore to never serve their evil faith, was tortured for seven days before being ritually slain. The Prismatic Circle used healing magic to keep her alive while the skin was slowly flensed from her body. When the mercy of death finally took her, Guhjdäl's last thoughts were of her family, of lost opportunities to do good—and of revenge.

The Revenant. Days later, with the druids departed and the remains of those sacrificed alongside her nearly stripped to the bone by wolves and crows, Guhjdäl awoke. Her body had been made whole, and the ropes that had tied her to the Sentinel Tree were torn through. The druid had no sense of what power or fate had returned her to life, and still doesn't to this day. But she felt the magic it had left in her, elevating her spellcasting prowess to allow her to cast the powerful *resurrection* spell—and making it clear what she was meant to do.

Death and Life. For ten years, Guhjdäl has moved clandestinely across Thrull, visiting the Sentinel Woods in the aftermath of sacrifices, using *resurrection* to bring back victims of the Prismatic Circle. Over the years, she has gathered followers to her cause, naming her order “the Revenants,” continually expanding its reach and power. Fellow druids have been drawn to her mission, many successfully dedicated to reaching the heights of power required to cast *resurrection* themselves, with the torture inflicted on the Prismatic Circle's victims putting them beyond the reach of other life-restoring magic. But it is the leaders of Clan Graevar, who Guhjdäl approached when first returned to life, who are perhaps most important to the order's work, with the gems they clandestinely provide marking that clan's hatred of the Prismatic Circle and fueling the Revenants' magic.

Second Chances. It isn't known how many victims of the Prismatic Circle the Revenants have returned to life, but those who follow the actions of the group believe their resurrections might number in the thousands. After resurrecting the victims, who have been badly traumatized by their experiences, the Revenants give them what succor and guidance they can, and bring the recently raised to sanctuary settlements dedicated to protecting them, providing them new names and new lives. Many of these communities are the holds of smaller clans who had good folk taken by Prismatic Circle druids anxious to meet a sacrifice quota, and whose faith in the circle has been shattered as a result. But many smaller settlements of Clan Sýr and Clan Rune are also known to be sympathetic to the Revenants' cause.

Army of the Returned Dead. Many of those the Revenants save stay with the order, dedicating their skills of combat, crafting, magic, and more to Guhjdäl's work. And as the ranks of her followers grow, the druid has begun to dream of expanding her mission beyond simply responding to the Prismatic Circle's depredations. For with enough followers, including many bearing the stark memories of having been executed and brought back to fulfill a greater destiny, she hopes to build an army dedicated to breaking the Prismatic Circle's power in Thrull.

The Prismatic Circle has long been aware of Guhjdäl's work, of course, and the druid has a sentence of death hanging over her in Clan Völgr lands. But Hjadana, the Prismatic Circle's Grand Druid, has so far eschewed orders for direct action against Guhjdäl and her followers, understanding that undoing the relatively small number of resurrections the Revenants perform is simply a matter of offering more victims to the Sentinel Woods each year.



NJAVESH LUUNSDÓTTIR

The druid Njavesh is the master of the Foxwood Range (see “Locations”), and one of the best sources of information for characters traveling the tundra and the Grensfal foothills. Born into the Fox Whisperers druidic circle like her parents before her, she was already one of that circle’s most gifted casters and shapechangers before striking out on her own at fifteen.

Master of the Tundra. The lore Njavesh knows of the northern tundra includes the tales of the Fox Whisperers, the details of her own two decades of wandering Thrull, and the secrets that the frostbite foxes share with her. Travelers and adventurers who seek her out can make contact with the awakened foxes who patrol her territory. Those asking to meet with the druid in appropriately respectful fashion are led to wherever she happens to be roaming, but foothills travelers who have been injured or who are hunted by Völgr forces and others will often inspire the foxes to bring Njavesh to them.

SINFIOT THE SEEKER

Said to be the best tundra guide in Thrull, the ranger Sinfiot is the north’s most legendary tracker and hunter—of escaped thralls. A lanky warrior born to Clan Völgr, he is easily recognized by his tangle-locked blonde hair, threaded with salt-dried fingers claimed as trophies from his most recent catches.

A Murderous Legacy. Sinfiot was a well-known raider in his youth, with a reputation for leaving no foe standing.

More than once, his hunger for death brought him into conflict with his reaver captains, with Sinfiot continuing to fight alone after surrender had been offered and a cessation of hostilities called.

Sinfiot’s career as a raider ended during a series of successful assaults against villages on the river south of Altenheim in the Bürach Empire, led by Völgr clan chief Nolgr Magnusson. With the longboats filled to overflowing with food, loot, and thralls, Nolgr ordered the fleet back to the sea even as imperial forces advanced from their capital city. But Sinfiot defied those orders, convincing three companies of warriors to join him in a foolhardy assault against the Bürach line. Only Sinfiot was said to have survived, escaping capture to make his way back north on foot.

Exile and Extermination. Returning to Tyburn to what he thought would be a hero’s welcome, Sinfiot found himself arrested and set for execution on Nolgr Magnusson’s orders. But with a combination of charisma and murderous fury, Sinfiot escaped to the mainland, where he took up his new life.

Though thought of as a hero among many of the Völgr, Sinfiot has so far shown no interest in establishing himself as the leader of an independent clan. A lone wanderer, he steals what he needs and attacks anyone who crosses him, wandering Thrull, Grarjord, and Kandar through most seasons. He follows signs and rumors of thralls either fled from servitude, or freed and making their way south to their homelands, ready to exact murderous vengeance for what he perceives as a betrayal of the Valikan way. But he watches also for Clan Völgr hunting parties, who have standing orders to slay the Seeker on sight.

SKALLAGRIM AV IARUN

One of the best-known mage-advocates of Clan Rune, Skallagrim spends their life wandering a regular circuit of smaller settlements across Grarjord and the borderlands where that territory becomes the wider tundra of Thrull. In addition to meting out justice in the smaller villages of Clan Rune, the advocate dedicates their life to hunting down those who have fled their communities to escape the justice of truth magic, and to avoid atoning for their crimes.

Determined Justice. With an eidetic memory said to have been made even sharper by magic, Skallagrim claims that they can remember the name and description of every person of Clan Rune who has chosen to flee their former life rather than face judgement under the law. The number of people they have delivered to justice—or driven from Valika entirely after revealing their subterfuge—numbers in the hundreds. And even nearing fifty years of age, the perpetually tanned, blonde-haired Skallagrim shows no sign of slowing down. Only in the darkest months of winter do they cease their wanderings, returning to Halsfjord to teach their investigative and tracking techniques to other advocates.

Crossing the Clans. As strongly as they are revered as a force for justice in Clan Rune, Skallagrim has a somewhat darker reputation among the folk of Clan Völgr and Clan Sýr. For in addition to seeking out secret criminals in Rune settlements, the advocate is known to make longer forays out into the villages and towns of the northern tundra, seeking those who have fled Clan Rune's justice by swearing fealty to Sýr or Völgr leaders. When they undertake these expeditions, they often seek the assistance of explorers and adventurers to assist them, offering attractive terms and payment in advance. They describe their interest in those they seek as “personal business,” and admits to being a bounty hunter of sorts if pressed. But when they capture their quarry, they use teleportation to spirit them away to Halsfjord for trial, Skallagrim's short-term allies end up facing the ire of that quarry's friends and family, who often have no idea why their companion has been taken.

QUEEN ANDREA HELSING

The best-known name in all Kandar is Queen Andrea Helsing of Hrist. Leader of not only Clan Mithra but the elected war chief of the united alliance of Kandar clans, Queen Andrea is a ruler who must balance the needs of the various clans with the threat of Thrull in the west. While she might claim to have never wanted such responsibility—and truly, she never wished for war—her ambition and desire to drive change and progress in Kandar would have led her to such a position even without the threat of invasion.

Though much of her childhood was spent in Hrist, Helsing traveled throughout Kandar with a diplomatic mission from Clan Mithra to the other clans during her youth. She was part of the entourage not as a diplomat herself, but as a bodyguard to Urda Longsight, a Clan Mithra seer and poet. The ancient woman took Helsing under her wing, and though the young warrior never took to the reading of runes or entrails, she learned a great deal about patience and lis-

tening—and how knowing what someone wants can be used as leverage when forming alliances or compromises. Some say that the queen, now in her middle years, is still advised by the shade of the seer, who died ten years ago of old age.

Once known as a golden-haired shield maiden, Helsing has grayed over the past several years, not only due to her growing age but her worry over Kandar's fate. Helsing shows her battle scars with honor, frequently wearing sleeveless tunics under a fur cape, so that the old injuries are obviously displayed on her pale arms.

Plans for Progress. Helsing is dedicated to the survival of Kandar, free from the Prismatic Circle and the threat of Thrull. She has no philosophical or cultural problem with her fellow Valikans across the border, but she seeks to keep the Clans within Kandar unconquered. To do so means forming alliances beyond historical treaties and althings. It means reaching to the southern lands.

Fighting against the prejudice that all the people of the northlands are barbarians has been a struggle, and one of the ways Queen Andrea counters that image is by supporting Hrist's cosmopolitan look and atmosphere. She welcomes trade with other nations and pursues alliances from those who would offer military or magical aid.

In addition to her political alliances, she has savvy when it comes to working outside the rules. She frequently has her agents hire adventurers for tasks related to the war effort, or in creating situations that would lead other cities and nations to ally with Kandar. If some of these missions seem to walk a thin line along the edge of honor, well, she's not the one carrying them out—that ethical question rests solely on those she has hired.

REVNA HOSTLER

Among Queen Andrea's most reliable agents is Revna, her spymaster and a member of Clan Morgöng. The people of Hrist know her simply as Revna Hostler. A woman of slight build and middling height, Revna has hair that's not quite blond but not quite brown, and skin that's neither pale nor sun-kissed. Her unassuming appearance that is, in all ways, unremarkable for Hrist allows her to go unnoticed in the city and beyond.

In her guise as a stable keeper, Revna runs a building called the Rookery, where many travelers in Hrist keep their mounts during their visit to the city. The stable also houses a parliament of ravens, who carry messages from Revna to her agents in the field. The location is perfect for a constant stream of messages going in and out, and many of Revna's agents walk through the stables to deliver their news with no one the wiser.

Revna's musculature appears to be built entirely by her work with the animals—barn upkeep involves heavy physical labor. But in truth, she trains relentlessly to keep her reflexes sharp and her senses sharper. The spymaster is deadly with a blade, silent as ice, and subtler than a shadow. None of this shows in her pleasant-but-dull demeanor with customers, who have typically forgotten about her only moments after they've interacted.



ODIS

Another current resident of Hrist, Odis is a foreigner to Kandar dedicated to the study of the Great Wyrn and coldfire. The elf is a scholar, but also a capable mage; the latter has proved less useful in the library of Hrist than it has in the wilds of the north. Odis has made two excursions into the territories of Clan Limgri, but the first winter expedition failed miserably, returning when it was clear he and his hired team had not provisioned correctly for the long winter months. The second expedition traveled during the summer and made it to Cinderghast for two months of study before having to return farther south, where the sun appeared for parts of the day.

Odis's studies have led him to conclude the war itself may be responsible for waking the Great Wyrn—and Thrullish sacrifices, if they are as wretched as they sound, certainly make matters worse. His hypotheses about the return of the Great Dragon have been largely dismissed as panic-raising, and his defeat in two public flytings has led him to reconsider his approach to sharing information with Valikans.

In the meantime, however, he has begun to revisit whatever records can be found in the Skald Library, looking for a new lead that will counter the effects of coldfire, and worse. He's struck up a friendship with Trygve Brewer of the Seiðr & Cider tavern, where he spends his time whenever he comes to a line he can't interpret. Trygve provides Odis with relevant cultural knowledge to illuminate the Lord Edda, and Odis continues to spend money on cider and mead in Trygve's establishment—as well as providing an easy target for would-be flyters.

TRYGVE BREWER

Proprietor of the Seiðr & Cider, Trygve Brewer has done every possible thing to hide his former life—except sell off or destroy the tools of his past. Trygve is a member of Clan Rune who, in his youth, joined an adventuring party that traveled across Valika, even making their way south to Runeheim. An encounter with the Blood Daggers cult in that city went poorly for the group, however, and Trygve escaped—leaving his companions to their fates.

Weighted with guilt around betraying his companions (though staying would have meant his death as well), Trygve fled to Hrist, denying his affiliation with his clan or with magic at all. He took a job with Frode Brewer as an assistant brewer and found he was good at the work. Within a few years, he married his employer's daughter, Liv, and the pair positioned themselves to take over the Seiðr & Cider in Liv's father's old age.

Frode Brewer still resides with Trygve and Liv in their home behind the tavern, and Liv is expecting their first child. Trygve is content with this life, but still wracked by guilt over the loss of his friends; he keeps a trunk of his magical equipment and tools in a hidden trapdoor beneath his bed.

VARANGUS GERTRUD AV HRIST

The Varangus of the Mithran army are some of the most skilled and committed warriors of the north, accolades all the truer for Varangus Gertrud av Hrist, drotten of the army at the borderlands between Kandar and Hrist. She is also

one of the few drotten to have risen to such a lofty position without having a familial connection to Clan Mithra. Gertrud is a downcast (see *Grim Hollow: The Players Guide*), a lesser angel who has retained none of her angelic powers—but the loss of those abilities has given her a firm sense of purpose. She has embraced her mortality and devoted her life to defending Kandar from whatever enemies may come.

In her previous life, Gertrud never rose to a position beyond common soldier, but her many years of experience in battle served to elevate her above her mortal peers. But she views herself primarily as a defender, and thus her sense of strategy is sometimes criticized by other drotten, who would take a more aggressive approach.

The Loneliness of the Unnamed Fort. The drotten's current post is at a fort at the southern tip of the Grensfal Mountains, making it the fort nearest to Hrist. The location is not without difficulties, however; the terrain makes direct travel to Hrist challenging and slow. Gertrud relies primarily on the ravens to communicate with the queen.

Gertrud's status as drotten and her heritage set her apart from her peers, making it difficult for Gertrud to form connections. Her sense of duty helps alleviate some of her loneliness, and her devotion to Clan Mithra's cause of forming alliances and wholeness in the face of invasion and destruction are a solace on darker days. Her other bright spots are primarily in the personal letters she receives from Revna, with whom she is gleefully in love (though she has no idea whether Revna returns those feelings).

But despite her personal feelings of loneliness, the Varangus remains focused on the mission, and she takes to the field alongside her troops as much as her largely administrative and tactical position allows.

BODIL GARÐR

Skald Bodil Garðr never intended to become a military commander. She was quite content proselytizing about the end of the world, sharing her stories of doom so successfully that she was deemed a threat to the city of Solheim. But her exile—supposedly an honor—from Solheim has only furthered her devotion to the Rökkva religion. She wants to hasten the end of the world, and as commander of Cold Iron Keep, she's been unwittingly handed the tools to further those goals.

Commander Garðr was an accomplished skald with a fair hand at runesmithing before she was assigned her current position. As she began interviewing the inmates kept in Cold Iron Keep, she contemplated how she could bind them to her will, sending them out on missions, nominally to stop Thrull's invasion of Kandar. Putting criminals to use, supposedly helping them to rehabilitate themselves, appealed to Queen Andrea Helsing, who has put more funds into Bodil's research.

Bodil is a tall woman with rich walnut skin and a knife-bright smile. She wears her long hair in a complicated pattern of intertwined braids; these are, themselves, a rune working, granting her a protective aura. She dresses simply, carrying with her a shield and baton that double as a percussion instrument as needed—she's perfected a

metal-drumming technique that allows her to accompany herself in the skaldic tradition, should the need arise.

A full hird of one hundred soldiers serve at Bodil's command, giving Bodil the rank equivalent to a hersir in the Mithran military structure. These soldiers are on rotation, as with the rest of the military, as no Varangus have volunteered to serve at the keep. This suits Bodil, given that she means to keep her full plans for the inmates a secret.

Twelve scholars and mages also serve at Cold Iron Keep, including runesmith Tove av Eikenbu, a Clan Mithra convert to the Rökkva. While Tove is the only one to fully understand Bodil's plans, the rest have enthusiastically taken up the problems of maintaining the dangerous inmates, including what might be required to use them in the field. The team is preparing to send their captives on their first mission, a result that will either further protect Kandar—or bring the apocalypse one day closer.

JARL BIRGER AV SUMMERHELM

Jarl Summerhelm is a man of misery. Despite his position of power, he has no desire to actually rule. Instead, he seeks glory and respect from others, and is easily swayed by those who flatter and court his affections. This makes the jarl sadly easy to manipulate, particularly by the spies and thieves within his own Clan.

In fact, Clan Morgöng so despises Jarl Summerhelm, it has become a game to see who among them can play the greatest prank on the man, without destabilizing their hold on Summerhelm itself. The position of the city and its black market are far too useful to the clan to be lost. Thus, Jarl Summerhelm has been “invited” to banquets in cities to the south, only to discover that the leaders there never sent such a request for his presence—if they even exist at all. Undeterred, Jarl Summerhelm believes that such pranks are mere opportunities for him to cement goodwill among other leaders, and a surprising number of those attempts bring him exactly what he wants: respect in the moment, if not long term.

The rulers of Runeheim (see *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide's* adventure “Facets of Darkness”) have taken notice of Jarl Summerhelm's easily-swayed nature, and intend to expand their influence further north. Whether this is to expand their control over the Dream Leaves market in the southern lands or to eliminate the flow of Dream Leaves into their city depends on the results of that adventure.

Other black-market merchants have interests in keeping Jarl Summerhelm in power, if only because a shift in power would upset their operations in the city. Clan Völgr, on the other hand, see Summerhelm as a strategic outpost from which they could expand their reach into Kandar.

The interests in his city have done little to deter Jarl Summerhelm's traveling, however; he has even refused Clan Mithra's offer to help guard the city against incursions, instead relying on mercenaries and adventurers to defend the city. Where he gets such impressive funding is unclear, though Jarl Summerhelm often appears to be an idiot, it's possible he has motives—and resources—no one else is yet aware of.



TAALA BRIGHTSTAR

The speaker of Clan Limgri, Taala Brightstar has seen many threats in their long life, but none so frightening as the dual disaster of war with Thrull while coldfire expands its grasp of the north. The elderly druid fears for the future of their people, and does everything they can to ensure that Clan Limgri, along with the other clans of Kandar, will see the new world when it comes.

Taala was raised among the wandering Limgri with their family, and was marked as a seer at a very young age. Their talent for nature magic blossomed while Taala was still a child, and they plagued their family by running with the reindeer—sometimes in the *shape* of a reindeer—making it difficult to keep track of the youth.

As they aged, Taala's temperament evened out, but they still prefer to wear a furred or feathered form to walking with humans. The latter has become a necessity, however,

not only due to Taala's aging body (even shapeshifting has failed to relieve their arthritis), but due to their position as an advisor in Solheim and the central point for all of Clan Limgri's complaints and concerns.

Taala, as a follower of the Lightbringer philosophy, believes in making life as full of beauty and peace for their people as possible. They seek to support the efforts of the Order of Kentigern in staving off coldfire, and speak on behalf of Clan Limgri at all things to request protection for the northern clan from Völgen raids. Taala has also tried to reach out to the Redclaws, hoping that the secretive order will accept aid and support from the united Clans in order to face off against the Prismatic Circle, but the Redclaws remain elusive, perhaps because Taala is only skilled at shapeshifting and not a true shapeshifter.

Despite all the troubles plaguing the world, Taala has not lost hope. Taala views themselves as a spiritual heir to Limgri Lightbringer, and is dedicated to shining that light against any shadows that encroach on Valika.

THRULLDR

A giant of a werebear, Thrulldr spends his time equally between his human and bear forms. The leader of the Redclaws can trace his family lineage back to Kentigern of the Wastes, but his hulking appearance is due more to the transformation he underwent as a boy than his Valikan heritage. Even in human form, Thrulldr's body is covered with dark hair so thick it might as well be fur, and he proudly displays a braided beard that extends down his chest.

Among his people, the Redclaw druids, Thrulldr is known for his great rumbling laugh and his generous spirit. But until anyone enters the circle he considers his family, the huge man treats them with suspicion, or even derision. To Thrulldr, druids who have undergone a final transformation to give their bodies a second, permanent shape, are not close enough to the wild to be trusted.

For clanfolk who fear Thrull's invasion, or coldfire's looming presence, the Redclaws offer a kind of hope for another path, one that embraces their harsh natural world rather than fighting against it. Farmers, raiders, and fishers look to the Redclaws in one of two ways: 1) if it gets worse, we can always seek the Redclaws for shelter, or 2) at least it's not so bad that we've considered joining the Redclaws!

Thrulldr views all recruits to the circle as potential allies, but he withholds judgment until an older member of the circle can speak for them. The Redclaws are primarily druids, but other shapeshifters are among their number, and the final test—the transformation into one of the werecreatures within the ranks of the circle—is not determined by skill with nature magic, but strength of heart and will. In this way, Thrulldr has built a widespread following, all beholden to him as their alpha, but few gathered in one place.

The Redclaws include both natural-born and transformed shapeshifters. Thrulldr has two daughters who serve as his advisors. His elder daughter, Yrsa, is a werebear like her father, and has chosen a path of battle rather than magic. Yrsa guides a small community of Redclaws who live along

the Ormrálva. Thrulldr's younger daughter, Thyra, prefers human form to such an extent that rumors circulate among the Redclaws that she cannot shapeshift (never in front of Thrulldr, who would see such comments as a deadly insult). The snow-skinned Thyra, whose platinum hair blends into the tundra, is undisturbed by such rumors, however, as it allows her to keep her other form a secret—and her father uses her as his agent beyond the borders of Kandar.

It was Thyra who made the first inroads with the Sarvif werewolves of Thrull. She travels between Lief Sarvif's pack and the Redclaw enclave in the Njukca Mountains, where her father keeps his primary den, working out the details of their mutual defense treaty. The Sarvif werewolves are the best lead Thrulldr has to directly combat the Prismatic Circle, and Thrulldr aches to meet the war-hungry druids of Thrull by giving them the war they seek—and ending them.

ABBOT SANRUN

A bald half-orc is not what many expect to encounter when they seek out the head of the formerly contemplative Order of Kentigern, but this is exactly what they find in Abbot Sanrun. Old enough to remember a time before the current coldfire crisis—and yet still appearing in his prime—the abbot has a mournful aura. Though he maintains a welcoming and friendly air, especially when greeting recruits to the order, there is always a sense of how much the world and its crises weigh on this man, who intended a life of quiet solitude, not war.

Originally a member of Clan Mithra, Sanrun is fully devoted to the Order of Kentigern, and is dismayed at the lack of funding the order has been receiving since the border war began. In fact, Sanrun believes that Kandar and Thrull must unite to face the coldfire crisis, before it freezes the entire north. But such calls for peace are largely ignored in Hrist (or may be the reason Sanrun's funding has been reduced).

Despite this loss, Sanrun has expanded his work in recruiting those who would keep coldfire at bay, reaching out beyond the borders of Kandar and into the southern kingdoms. He is particularly interested in bringing evokers and alchemists into the order, as the first are able to combat coldfire directly with their spells, and the second create the tools with which the rest of the order fights. Alchemist's fire, burning oils, and exploding casks are among the explosives collected by the Order of Kentigern, and Abbot Sanrun constantly frets that they won't have enough.

That they will never have enough.

Still, despite his sorrowful attitude, Abbot Sanrun runs a tight organization, giving rank and status to each member so they know whose commands to obey and where they fit in the hierarchy. The order's training grounds within Fort Kentigern are extensive, and their work with ice drakes, polar bears, and giant lynxes requires many riders and handlers who are skilled with animals. Druids who are unable to take the final step to join the Redclaws frequently make their way, after their failed test, to the Order of Kentigern, where Abbot Sanrun welcomes them with open arms.

ÁNDA THE FOX & COMPANIONS

Ánda the Fox grew up on tales of Varra, a city of fertile lands, warmed from within the earth to be the most bountiful place in all the north. Varra was a paradise for the Svalr.

And the sorcerer Rune, one of the Seven Heroes of the Valikans, ruined that for the Svalr. While Kentigern and their companions are lauded as heroes by the Valikans, the Svalr see them as the first colonizers to the northlands. Ánda listened to these stories, to the tales of the way things once were, and a passion grew in his heart.

He would be the one to see Varra restored. He would free the elementals trapped there unjustly by the sorcerer Rune, and usher in a new golden age. Varra's paradise would once more be home to his people.

But Ánda was no sorcerer himself. His face bears the tattoos of his many accomplishments—the longest shows how he led a small team on an elasmosaur hunt, bringing in the longest specimen his people had seen. His skills are as a warrior and a leader, and because of this, he has recruited others better suited for the work of an elemental prison break.

His first recruit was Signe Livsdóttir of the Rökkva and Clan Limgri. Signe's family and Ánda's had crossed paths many times; though Ánda disagrees with Signe about the necessity of the end of the world, he respects her talents as a runesmith and tattooist. Signe has even designed tattoos of protection for Ánda and the rest of their companions, to keep them safe on their quest.

Randi, a raider of Clan Morgöng, encountered Ánda and Signe after a wreck; the two saved her life, and she, in turn, joined their cause. They know little of her past, and though she appears to trust them with her life, she has not yet trusted them with her story, as is frequently the way of Clan Morgöng.

Skarde Leifsbairn is the last member of the group, and they intentionally sought Ánda out. How the rumor came to the Mithran skald is something none of the rest of the companions have been able to determine. However Skarde discovered Ánda's intentions, the skald fully believes in the cause. They believe that releasing the elementals might be exactly the tool the north needs to fend off the coldfire crisis—after all, if the fire elementals once supported the paradise of Varra, as Ánda claims, couldn't they also heal the Volgen peninsula? Skarde and Signe constantly bicker over the results, as Skarde's hopeful nature grates on Signe's nerves, and her dour determination offends Skarde's sensibilities.

While the four have already begun weakening the prison, they haven't yet undone all the parts of the curse. Skarde believes that the group may need to acquire Ixlalu's staff, which Rune stole, in order to fully remove the curse. But Ixlalu's staff has been lost to history, and they can't follow every rumor of its presence and still make headway on their own. For now, they've continued to chip away at the spell, despite the constant dangers of the Cinderghast environment.



Adventure Concepts

The lands of Valika are ripe for adventure, regardless of whether the characters are clanfolk or southerners looking to make their fortunes in the (seemingly) untamed wilds of the tundra. The accompanying adventure, *Saga of the Seasons*, provides a great template for your own adventures. The following adventure concepts can be added to any campaign, or you can expand them to be the centerpiece of a larger story.

If you are going to be a player in a Valikan campaign, we recommend leaving this section for GMs only so as not to spoil the adventures they may create from these seeds.

COLD HEARTED

For Low-Level Characters

This adventure can take place in spring, summer, or autumn, but works best as a summer story. Near a small settlement where the characters are traveling or staying, the locals panic at the sight of a **carnivorous cow** (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*) dragging a body across the tundra. The hunger-cursed creature is quickly put down (with the help of the characters, if you want to start the adventure with combat). The body turns out to be Hals Konstan, a local artisan who disappeared a year ago—and whose partially eviscerated corpse is frozen solid. You can decide what type of artisan Hals was, perhaps in conjunction with tying him to Clan Rune or Clan Sýr.

With no signs of a coldfire incursion in the area, the frozen body creates quite a mystery for the characters. If

the characters have previous experience with investigation scenarios or looking into supernatural events, you might have them sought out by Hals's spouse Ola Skrivar, who yearns to know how their beloved died. Alternatively, Hals might be known to one or more of the characters, with that personal connection inspiring the need to investigate.

Missing Person. Looking into Hals's last movements before he vanished while returning home alone from the local alehouse, the characters can interact with a number of people he was close to:

- Ilbmar Lokken, a fellow artisan who had a violent falling out with Hals.
- Ragna Eidsness, a trader who brokered Hals's work, and who Hals claimed owed him money.
- Vetle av Schou, a local healer who had been treating Hals for an injury to his hand.
- Gustu Evansbaern, Hals's former spouse and still on good terms with him.
- Karinna Jáhkot, Gustu's current spouse who was notably jealous of Hals before he died.

You can attach clues to any of the NPCs, using each to spark roleplaying encounters that should lead eventually to the house of the healer Vetle for the climax of the adventure.

Cold Storage. The upper floor of Vetle's small house is set up as a healer's studio with a small workroom for crafting herbal tinctures. But characters who search around the house suspect that Vetle knows more than he's revealed regarding Hals's disappearance, or can detect magic discover a damaged root cellar door concealed under shrubbery near the house. The root cellar is a magical cold room that once held Hals's body (and which the carnivorous cow broke

into). A trap door at the bottom of the cellar leads to a secret alchemist's laboratory where humanoid organs are used in the creation of powerful potions and elixirs.

The Healer's Secret. When the characters finally face off against Vetele in a location of your choice, he uses the **berserker** stat block, but replaces his greataxe attack with casting *fire bolt* at 5th level (+5 to hit, 2d10 fire damage, range 120 ft.), and is able to use his Reckless trait to grant advantage on that ranged spell attack.

In the aftermath, notes in the lab reveal that Vetele is actually Gunnar av Formo, a former Clan Rune alchemist and artificer who fled his home settlement two years before, after having been caught using a corpse (dead of natural causes, supposedly) in his alchemical experiments. You can decide what accident or discovery caused Vetele to murder Hals and hide away his body a year before, and whether any other unexplained disappearances in the area might also have been the work of the evil alchemist.

THE HEIR OF VÖLGR

For High-Level Characters

A mercenary band appears in the foothills of the Grensfal Mountains, led by one calling himself “the Heir of Völgr.” A human in his thirties, this warrior claims to be Nolgr Magnusson's younger brother Karas—returned from exile in Kandar, and prepared to challenge his brother for the leadership of the Völgr clan.

The Exile Returned. This adventure might begin with the characters meeting the so-called Karas by happenstance while traveling, with Karas's mercenaries lending them aid during an attack by **polar bears** or a **remorhaz**. Alternatively, characters with strong connections to the three main clans might be charged with investigating the rumors of Karas's presence in the east, whether to assess the power of his claim (for agents of Clan Sýr or Rune) or to find and kill him (for a party allied with Clan Völgr). You could frame this adventure as an arduous expedition across the tundra and through small communities, as the characters deal with natural threats and hazards, seek out those who've seen Karas's band on the move, and react to attacks from the Heir of Völgr's scouts and outriders.

Allies of the Heir. Assuming the characters aren't on the simple mission of assassinating Karas on Nolgr Magnusson's orders, this adventure can follow a path of roleplay-heavy espionage or straight-up strategy and conflict, as the characters decide how they want to aid Karas with his quest. Combat-focused players and characters (especially characters with strong ties to Clan Rune or Clan Sýr, or who nurture a hatred for Clan Völgr or the Prismatic Circle) might want to immediately help Karas build his army, then act as his captains in a campaign-altering assault on the leadership and power structure of Clan Völgr.

For players more into espionage and roleplaying, the adventure could play out with the characters convincing Karas to first establish himself as a leader in Thrull in his own right, using their own experience and connections to

help him do so. Such an adventure might culminate in a clash against Nolgr and his loyal forces—or Karas might simply wait for Nolgr to die or be pushed out by someone else before publicly claiming his Völgr birthright.

Truth and Consequences. Whether Karas is the true younger son of Magnus Roaldson sent into exile by Nolgr, a known charlatan, or an earnest impostor taken in by a false tale peddled to him as a child is up to your determination. Even if Karas is not a true heir to Völgr, the characters might decide that he will make a better leader for the clan regardless. But in that case, their quest to see him claim the clan seat in Tyburn might become more complicated, as those who learn the truth must be effectively countered—or eliminated.

LARS LARSSON'S LAST VOYAGE

For Low-Level or High-Level Characters

For the past month, along the coast of Thrull, fishers and longboat crews have reported sighting a grim and fearful apparition. On nights of fog and no moon, a faint light drifting across the water resolves itself into the spectral form of a longboat with a ghostly crew. The boat is recognizable as a vessel from Tyburn's reaving fleet, captained by Lars Larsson, which vanished on the return journey from the southlands a year ago.

Those who have witnessed the ship report seeing Lars at the helm, shouting unintelligible commands that have his crew throwing ghostly grappling hook lines at observers' vessels. But ships snagged by those spectral ropes, or those that intentionally draw near the ghost longboat, have come under sudden attack by water elementals. All cursed with seeing the ghost ship flee from it now.

Voyage into Darkness. To get the characters into this adventure, they should either have a reason to seek and pursue Lars Larsson's ghost ship or be lost at sea after dark and have no way to escape the apparition when it appears. Whether the characters intentionally draw close or are snagged by spectral grappling lines, the waters around their boat suddenly erupt with **steam mephits** (for a low-level party) or **water elementals** (for a high-level party). But even as the characters fight, the crew of the ghost ship join them, revealing that the spectral apparition isn't simply trying to draw unwitting crews into elemental ambush.

The Island of Souls. With the elementals dispensed with, Lars beckons the characters to follow him, his longship turning for open sea. Characters who do so (or whose vessel is grappled and towed) eventually spot a ghostly glow on the sea, marking an extradimensional nexus from which a rocky island rises. The full scope of the threats the characters might face on that island is up to you. You could create a full exploration adventure—with the subtext that exploring the island is what doomed Lars Larsson and his crew. But that crew is anxious to get revenge, and the spirits accompany the characters to take on creatures that haunt the island—a mix of **elementals**, **mephits**, **wraiths**, or **shadows**, depending on the characters' level.

“I watched those ‘men’ you could say, swinging those lines toward us. When the second one hit the ship, the sea was rougher than I’d ever seen.”

- A sailor who lived to tell the tale

If you use this as a low-level adventure, having a ghostly crew at their back creates the potential to have the characters face off against more potent foes than they might normally take on. Such an approach might see the characters rolling attacks for Lars’s crew, who use the **berserker** stat block but are undead, whose attacks overcome all resistance to weapon damage, and who are resistant to damage from nonmagical weapons.

The Chalice of Life and Death. At the apex of a longer island expedition, or as a single-shot goal for a shorter adventure, the characters must retrieve a magical chalice floating above a rocky pool at the island’s heart. The chalice is protected by powerful magic that slew Lars’s crew to the last, their magically-preserved bodies still lying around the pool. But overcoming that magic involves a puzzle challenge of your determination, which savvy characters might be better at (even at low levels) than Lars’s hardened battle-focused followers were.

Homeward Bound. With the chalice claimed, the unfinished business that kept Lars and his crew locked to the mortal realm is completed, and the spectral figures fade away. The island vanishes as the characters return to the mainland with the chalice, whose powers and place in the campaign are up to you to determine. By bringing back the bodies of Lars and his crew for proper rites, the characters can also gain favor with Clan Völgr. For a final bit of action, you could have the island start to collapse in on itself as its extradimensional magic fails, giving the characters a ticking clock to get the bodies back to their own vessel.

RAID ON ASHNAL’S TOWER

For Low-Level Characters

The tower of the retired Clan Rune mage Ashnal is known to be a repository of powerful magic and valuable lore. But Ashnal’s dangerous reputation has long dissuaded would-be raiders from attempting to break into the windowless tower, set atop a remote hill a day’s walk from the nearest village.

When passing through a settlement, one or more of the characters accidentally bumps into Ashnal while the mage is shopping in the local market square (if the characters don’t know Ashnal by reputation, the locals quickly warn them who they’ve inconvenienced). After angrily admonishing the characters, Ashnal takes hold of his purchases and teleports away, leaving the characters to notice a notebook the mage must have dropped when jostled.

Ashnal’s Journal. A combination diary and to-do list, the notebook Ashnal dropped offers up all kinds of useful information—including the pass phrases that allow the powerful wards of the mage’s tower to be temporarily bypassed. Learning of the regular market schedule the mage keeps, the characters have the opportunity to journey to the tower, facing minor encounters with a pair of white **wolves** who guard its approaches. The pass phrases in the notebook are confirmed to be genuine when they open the front door. But even with Ashnal away, the tower remains a challenging site to navigate.

Visiting Hours. As the characters explore the tower’s multiple levels, they come up against a number of threats:

- Animated books in a magical library (treated as **flying swords** that deal bludgeoning damage) grow irate if disturbed.
- Multiple construct servants (use the **homunculus** stat block) recognize that the characters are intruders and try to harass them. The characters quickly come to understand that reprogramming the self-healing constructs is easier than defeating them.
- A **zombie** butler in the visitors’ lounge insists on sitting the characters down for tea, whether they want to partake or not.
- Ashnal’s **white dragon wyrmling** pet (summoned from a different world) occupies the mage’s bed when he’s away, and is furious at being disturbed.
- A nervous **commoner** apprentice of Ashnal’s convinces themselves that the characters are powerful clan leaders on a visit the mage forgot to schedule. While nervously taking the characters on a guided tour, the apprentice accidentally sets off multiple magical wards that the characters must deal with.

Wrapping Up. This adventure can end in two ways. The characters might successfully abscond with valuable lore and a reprogrammed construct servant, making names for themselves as a raiding party—and possibly earning the ire of a powerful mage in the process. Or it might be revealed that Ashnal intentionally dropped the notebook, wanting to attract and assess the skills of young adventuring group for a mission of his own. This latter ending might see the characters become associates of the mage, providing additional hooks for later raids or missions to investigate mysterious magic in Thrull or beyond.

THE SUMMONED SPIRE

For Low-Level Characters

A great rocky spire some hundred feet high and fifty feet across appears overnight in a remote area of the Garjord tundra, with no signs of it having erupted from the ground or fallen from the sky. The characters might be drawn to investigate when they come across the spire on a journey, or when word of the site’s appearance is brought into a settlement where they’re staying.

Searching around the base of the spire reveals a fissure and a dark interior space beyond. Characters who enter discover a network of tunnels and caverns with unusual

gravity, erasing any sense of up and down, and extending far enough to suggest that they are infused with extradimensional magic. You can use this setup to build out a cavern crawl of any size, incorporating the following features:

- Chambers channeling elemental energy—acid, cold, fire, and lightning—act as gauntlets to be passed through and protect valuable consumable magic the characters can use.
- A number of chambers equal to the number of characters are dedicated to lost gods of the north. Each chamber offers a magical boon a character can claim, but that boon comes with a price of your determination.
- Undead **oblivion leapers** (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*) stalk the characters, their eerie singing and whistling heard as they follow the party through the extradimensional maze. Based on the undeads' tactics, the characters can infer that they were spawned from Clan Völgr warriors who died during their own incursion of the spire.

The Bigger Picture. When the characters' adventure is done, you determine whether the spire's appearance was a random one-off manifestation of magic, or whether it connects to forgotten prophecies of old. The spire might be the first of many to appear across Valika, each marking a site of elemental power. You can decide whether that power can be channeled in the fight against the spread of coldfire or the return of Gormadraug—or whether the spires must be breached and their power shut down before they begin to curse the lands around them.

THE TRANSFORMING STORM

For Low-Level Characters

In the dead of winter, a minor-clan hamlet, locked down during a three-day blizzard, is hit by a storm of wild magic that turns its residents into ice mephits. When one resident manages to flee to a nearby Clan Rune settlement, artificers there quickly put together a magical antidote that can be delivered in the form of hurled snowballs. But someone must carry the antidote through bitter cold and a blinding storm, then apply it to the mephits against their will. Thankfully, the characters are on hand to get the job done.

Incursion and Rescue. This scenario works best if the characters are the only adventuring types in the Clan Rune settlement, or have previous experience dealing with inclement weather and unusual situations. As the adventure unfolds, they must face off against the following:

- While the characters travel to the cursed hamlet, a **polar bear** stalks them, looking for an easy midwinter meal.
- A group of **ice mephits** have set up a cordon around the hamlet, forcing the characters to contend with the curse—and the fact that mephits reverting to their humanoid form do so naked, and must be quickly taken to a place of warmth and safety before they freeze.
- In the hamlet's longhouse, more mephits have imprisoned the few locals resistant to the curse inside ice-barred cages, terrorizing them until the characters intervene.
- As the mephits fall to the characters' magic snowballs,

the last of them combine their forms into a mighty megamephit, using the **ice mephit** stat block with four times normal hit points, double damage on its Frost Breath, and a four-attack Multiattack action.

Mission Complete. When the mephit threat is ended, the characters receive rewards from the grateful villagers, and might be called upon by Clan Rune for special assignments.

WOLF MOON

For Low-Level or High-Level Characters

On a night lit by the full moon, a village the characters are traveling through or staying at comes under attack by a pack of wolves whose ferocity and bloodlust seems unnatural. Terrified travelers arriving in the village at sunset report that the wolves have the local roads locked down and the area surrounded as night falls.

The Siege. Packs of **wolves** led by **dire wolves** make a number of attacks against the village, with the characters joining ranks with fierce locals to drive them back. Any character able to speak with animals, or a local druid NPC, hears the dire wolves snarling orders to “Bring forth Ørjona,” but no one in the village knows that name.

The Watcher. At some point during the siege, one of the characters spots firelight in the distance and realizes that someone has set up a camp from which to direct the wolf attacks. The characters are joined by Lessa av Sogard, a local scout, as they make their way to the camp, hindered by the light of the full moon. If this is a low-level adventure, additional villagers can accompany the characters as well. Unless the magic available to a high-level party makes the journey to the distant camp moot, this part of the adventure features environmental challenges as the characters try to stealthily move under the light of the moon.

Jakob's Wrath. Arriving in the camp (whether successfully by stealth or magic, or having been captured or driven forward by wolf patrols), the characters discover that the raid is directed by an evil **werewolf** named Jakob. For a high-level adventure, Jakob is a **fzeglai** or a **fzeg**, from *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*. Once a member of Lief Sarvif's pack, Jakob was driven out for his insubordination and bloodlust (after which he was transformed from werewolf to fzeglai or fzeg, as appropriate). Since creating his own pack, he has obsessively pursued a woman he once loved named Ørjona—who is revealed to be the scout Lessa who accompanies the characters, having changed her name and uprooted her life when she learned of the violent Jakob's pursuit of her.

The adventure concludes with a battle against Jakob (with captured characters first having a chance to free themselves). Lessa, having intentionally joined the characters to face off against Jakob, fights at their side, using the **spy** or **assassin** stat block as appropriate for the level of the adventure.

In the aftermath, the characters might help to disperse the wolves—or to claim leadership of the pack, whether in their own name or with the goal of returning the creatures to Lief Sarvif's pack.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING BREWER

For Low-Level Characters

Trygve Brewer (see “Important NPCs”) is a retired adventurer and wizard from Clan Rune, something he keeps secret from everyone in his life, including his pregnant wife, Liv, and his father-in-law, Frode. When he receives a message that one of his old adventuring companions is alive, and in Hrist, he rushes out to meet his friend—only to vanish. Trygve’s wife and friends have no idea where he’s gone, or why.

This adventure serves as an introduction to Kandar and Hrist, setting the tone for further adventures in Valika. While the adventure itself is about being haunted by the past, adding *actual specters* or *wights* to the adventure to amp up the horror elements would not be out of place.

The characters are launched into this adventure when Odis (see “Important NPCs”) approaches the group to investigate his missing friend. The elf scholar was concerned about Trygve Brewer’s health, but Trygve’s wife, Liv, admitted that Trygve has been missing for three days. Her husband is very secretive, so she has been hesitant to reach out to officials to search for him.

A Secret Life. Liv is also hesitant to trust the characters, but at Odis’s urging, she tells the adventurers what she knows, which isn’t much. Three days ago, a bland-looking woman Liv thinks might be a hostler arrived at the Seiðr & Cider tavern with a message for Trygve. After he read it, he said he needed to run an errand, and Liv thought nothing of it. But then Trygve never returned.

The adventurers can gain further information about Trygve’s last known locations by interviewing Frode, who remembers when Trygve first arrived in Hrist. Frode figured out back then that Trygve was from Clan Rune but has never revealed his secret, and only does so now on high social rolls from the characters. The adventurers can also search Trygve’s room in the house behind the tavern, and with challenging searches can discover the secret panel under Trygve’s bed, where the chest containing his old adventuring gear is hidden.

The Rookery. Liv or Odis can direct the adventurers to the Rookery, where Liv thinks the hostler who delivered the message works. While Revna Hostler (see “Important NPCs”) isn’t inclined to share any private information of her clients, because Trygve is missing, she’s willing to reveal the contents of that message to the characters if they will accomplish a task for her. Depending on what the players would enjoy most, this could be a random encounter—fight the **dire rats** or an **urban ooze** in her basement, for example—or a skill-based mission in the markets of Hrist. If you’re using this adventure to set up a further campaign, whatever task Revna gives the adventurers can start seeding hints about future adventures.

Revna also keeps a log of messages, and characters who want to avoid working with her might be able to sneak into the rafters where the ravens are kept to retrieve a record of the message themselves. Whether on their own or with Revna’s help, they discover that Trygve has been summoned to the Holmgang Arena by someone named Kåre Stormaxe.

Holmgang Arena. The arena is an illegal fighting ring, where warriors compete for the title of the strongest. While most of the bouts are single fighter, it turns out that the current high-profile series of fights people are betting on are paired matches: one warrior, one wizard. Because so many people are leery of magic, this event has an illicit feel, and the matches are a fight to the death.

The arena is full of black-market activity, and Dream Leaves are plentiful here. Plenty of colorful criminals spend time within these walls, but the fighters themselves are kept within the enclave, and those preparing for this particular match are not allowed to leave the arena until after they’ve finished competing. Trygve and Kåre are, of course, one of the teams preparing for this combat. To be allowed in the competitor area, the characters may either enroll in the lower tiers of combat and fight in the arena themselves, find a way to sneak in, or bribe the “guards” to get inside. Once they find and confront Trygve, they may choose to find a way to help make sure that Trygve and Kåre win their match, whether through honorable or dishonorable means. Honorable characters might go to Trygve’s home to retrieve his adventuring gear; less honorable adventurers might choose to poison competitors or find a way to weaken the competition to make sure that Trygve and Kåre survive.

If Trygve survives the match and returns home, the adventurers are paid by Odis—if dishonorable characters didn’t reveal Trygve’s story to his family or friends, they might also choose to extort him for a reward as well.

ALONG THE FRONT LINES

For Low-Level or High-Level Characters

All of Kandar watches the border tundra, waiting for more than skirmishes to move the war deeper into Kandar’s territory. There’s no shortage of need for soldiers, or adventurers, to be Kandar’s shield. When Völgr warriors begin to amass in the tundra, it looks like a focused siege may soon begin.

Call to War. This adventure—which can launch or fit into a greater war campaign—begins with the adventurers being called to join the army. They might be Valikan citizens whose numbers have come up in their jarl’s pledge of soldiers, or they could be adventurers who are enlisting for a season’s pay. Before they can even report to their hersir, however, they encounter a small band of Clan Völgr raiders. As they battle, it quickly becomes obvious that these raiders are already dead—which means that someone is commanding undead in the battle between Thrull and Kandar. For low-level adventures, **zombies** or **skeletons** wearing Völgr gear work well for this introduction; higher level parties might face off against **corpse walkers** from *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*.

The Unnamed Fort. When they arrive at the fort, they report to their hersir—only to find that the hersir has never returned from a mission with other troops. They reach the walls of the fort not a moment too soon—another, larger group of undead are attacking. Adventurers and their fel-

low soldiers can stave off this attack through the weaponry on the walls (ballistae, trebuchets, catapults, burning pitch, and so forth), or they can descend into the fray. Creative players should be rewarded for thinking outside the box in how to defend the fort. The undead should be routed, with a small band returning out into the tundra, leaving a trail behind them.

After the battle, the adventurers are called to report to Varangus Gertrud av Hrist, who explains that these undead attacks have been plaguing her troops along the border, although this is the first outright assault on the fort. She sends the characters after the escaped undead, hoping to track them to whoever is behind the attacks.

Braving the Tundra. As the adventurers follow the undead deeper into the tundra, avoiding both the undead troops and the real Völgr raiders is a greater challenge. If the players are built well for the wilderness, give them a chance to use their nature skills to conceal their progress and to track down the undead lair. For more combat-heavy groups, encounters with Thrull warriors can either make them nervous about using their resources as they cross the tundra or give them a chance to resupply by stealing the raiders' gear, as well as striking a blow against Kandar's enemies. Diplomacy-focused parties might even ally with Clan Völgr raiders also seeking to put an end to the works of this necromancer.

Whether by skill or because Clan Völgr is also looking for this location, and their battles have led them here, they ultimately reach a stone tower—something that looks as though it should not exist in the tundra. High-level parties might encounter an actually-transported tower or find that the illusion of the tower is effectively a portal to the tower's actual location in another part of Etharis—any magic that seems too overwhelmingly powerful for the world amps up the stakes. Low-level parties should see the tower having its stone construction completed by undead minions hauling blocks from somewhere deeper in the tundra.

Skalds and Skeletons. The culprits behind the rise in undead preying on both Clan Völgr and the Kandar border soldiers are a **necromancer** and a bard of the **College of Requiems** (*Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*). At lower levels, the bard is the powerful brains of the operation, and the necromancer is a thrall of the bard, unwilling to attack the adventurers outright. At higher levels, the bard is a supporting **Dirgemaster**, and the necromancer is the greater direct threat to the adventurers. Combat is a likely option to resolve the undead threat, but some adventurers may want to discover the reason behind this incursion. In fact, the pair are exiles from Clan Völgr with motives of their own.

Depending on the direction of the campaign, the two either seek to subdue the Kandar border on their own, thus getting back into the good graces of the Prismatic Circle (a goal at odds with the circle's own plans of sacrifice, which don't involve undead). Or they are seeking to get back at Clan Völgr for their exile, and they had no intention of sending the undead after the Unnamed Fort; the science of necromancy is dodgy, and the undead don't always follow their instructions as precisely as the necromancer would like.

In the latter case, the characters could further encourage them to continue their fight against Thrull and form an alliance. However, if the characters have already killed too many undead, or if they made a temporary alliance with Völgr raiders to get here, this is a harder sell—and turning on the Völgr raiders leads to combat regardless.

If they survive, the adventurers return to the Unnamed Fort to report on their results. While Varangus Gertrud av Hrist is reluctant to accept an allegiance with a necromancer, she acknowledges the importance of having whatever allies they can gain in the war effort, and lauds the adventurers for their successful mission. If they defeat the necromancer, they receive unabashed praise and a field promotion with the promise of even more important missions in the future.

THE CURSE OF HVÍTRHVALR

For High-Level Characters

Whaling is a way of life for the Svalr in the northern reaches of Kandar, but there are some among the Clan Morgöng raiders and hunters who seek whales not for food for their families, but for the rich oils in their blubber. One of these hunters is Captain Tréfótur, a grizzled man with a wooden leg. He has sworn to pursue and kill Hvítrhvalr, the whale responsible for his lost leg, even if his mission kills him and his entire crew.

The sailors from Tréfótur's own village have abandoned him due to his fixation on Hvítrhvalr, which has led to the captain seeking to hire non-Morgöng sailors. Any new sailors who sign along with Tréfótur don't know about this dark obsession, and see a whaling expedition as a way to earn coin.

For the characters, however, there's a deeper mission: the whale Hvítrhvalr is known to have a thick hide that has been pierced by many weapons, including Bane-Slayer, the legendary double-bladed sword of the heroes Kentigern and Thorgard. While this rumor may be unfounded (Thorgard took the sword to the west to conquer new lands when he disappeared, and Hvítrhvalr is hunted in the waters to the east), certain interested parties would like to see the whale destroyed and the weapons removed from its hide, legendary or not.

This adventure is best set in the perpetual low-light of summer in the north, rather than the dark days of winter.

The Voyage. The sea voyage starts out from Solheim and sails along the coast toward Volgen. Though initially all goes well, the closer the ship gets to Volgen, the colder it becomes. The threat of coldfire along the coast requires either a fight against the coldfire itself (if the characters have access to enough natural or magical fire), or taking the ship farther into open water to avoid the coldfire coast. In open waters, the ship encounters an **water elemental** and several **ice mephits**, intent on sinking the crew.

The Storm. Monsters aren't the worst danger of the northern waters; after the ship rounds Volgen, a storm threatens, and snow and ice rage down on them. Allow the characters a chance to save their longship through their

own skills and talents, but the odds are against them. Ships that are blown off course crash onto the volcanic Cinderghast islands; the boat can be repaired with parts culled from similarly crashed longboats on the islands' shores, but the characters must fend off the fire elementals that have broken through the weakened prison holding them in check. Even ships that survive may choose to wait out the storm by coming in to anchor off the Cinderghast isles and be equally threatened by elementals.

The Whale. Off the coast of the Cinderghast isles, Tréfótur spots it: the white whale! Whatever state of repair the longboat is in, he demands that the crew return to the water to hunt the great whale. Here the crew can mutiny (Tréfótur can be played as an **Unfinished** and revealed to be undead all along, or as a powerful, high-level rogue, whose obsession grants him the fighter **Second Wind** ability once in this combat). They can also choose to follow their captain to Hvítrhvalr, in hopes of slaying the creature in a climactic battle. Hvítrhvalr should offer a substantial challenge, and has a pod of undead narwhals (also called corpse whales) at its call. If you want to add a skill-based challenge, the characters can attack Hvítrhvalr with a harpoon and have the whale drag them through the icy seas, and all the while, they must keep their boat from sinking due to any damage it took during the storm.

On success, Captain Tréfótur promptly dies in ecstasy after finishing his quest, leaving the characters in charge of the longboat and any treasure they're able to retrieve from Hvítrhvalr's flesh.

ÄTTESTUPA SQUAD

For High-Level Characters

Cold Iron Keep is where the most notorious prisoners and criminals in Kandar—mainly foreigners outside the Clan structure—are sent. After months of preparation, Commander Bodil Garðr is ready to send the inmates out on their first mission against Thrull: they will obey, or they will be destroyed by the runic *geas* tattoos inked on their foreheads.

This adventure assumes the characters are either inmates themselves, or have been hired by Bodil to accompany the inmates on their quest. The job is to cross the Thrull border to where Grenhildr, the leader of the Cult of the Great Wyrms, has gathered members of her cult in preparation for a slaughter of captured Valikans.

The Crew. For this mission, Bodil has assigned the adventurers to travel with some of her star inmates.

- Astar, a sorcerer whose desire for beauty has turned her so unspeakably ugly that she can turn people into stone. Her face is hidden behind a mask.
- Riven, a shape changing cultist who can wear the faces of others.
- Jormund, a frost giant vampire, woken from his slumber to join this mission.

All three of the inmates have their own motives, but are bound by the *geas* to complete this mission. Notably,

however, there are no limits in their *geas* about how much carnage they can cause while working for Bodil.

The Cult of the Great Wyrms. Grenhildr (see “Important NPCs”) has raised a massive cult surrounding her, claiming that enough slaughter will wake the Great Prismatic Dragon Gormadraug. She has captured over three hundred Valikans and travelers for this purpose, and she plans a great ceremony of slaughter to happen on midwinter, in the foothills of the Grensfal Mountains.

Crossing the Mountains. The fastest way to the location Bodil has identified for this ritual is over the mountains surrounding Cold Iron Keep. Frost Giants populate the range along the route Bodil has identified for the safest crossing. There's a tunnel route, as well, but it goes through the deep mines of the dwarves, and in addition to the bioluminescent dwarves of Grensfal not wanting to reveal their existence to the surface world (thus protecting that secret at all costs), the usual dungeon horrors reside in the depths of the mountains. The party could also attempt to fly across the mountains on ice drakes Bodil has somehow commandeered from the Order of Kentigern.

The Mission. Stop the ceremony. Keep the crew in check. Kill Grenhildr if possible.

While freeing all the sacrificial victims would be, of course, optimal, their survival is secondary to the mission of countering the ritual of the Cult of the Great Wyrms and taking out as many of the cultists as possible. And, if all those deaths wake the Great Prismatic Dragon after all? Bring on the end of the world...

OUTFOXING THE FOX

For High-Level Characters

Ánda the Fox is on a mission: weaken the prison holding the fire elementals on the Cinderghast islands and set them free. To do this, he has determined that he needs to find the *Staff of Ixlalu*, the great salamander who once ruled the fire beings of Cinderghast, and who is now bound behind the prison with them.

While Ánda and his team work to weaken the prison on their own, he has hired the characters to track down the staff. But other forces seek to keep the prison from falling. Abbot Sanrun of the Order of Kentigern believes that the staff can be used against the coldfire threat, and such a use for the staff will not unleash mad elementals onto Kandar. The abbot has also contacted the party, hoping they will bring the staff to Fort Kentigern instead of to Ánda.

Finding the Staff. While many rumors have placed the staff in Thrull, beyond wards in Halsfjord, recent rumors have claimed a black-market merchant brought the staff to Summerhelm, intent on selling it there. Due to the dangers (and slow speed) of travel, the characters may start their adventure in Summerhelm, in the black markets, trying to acquire the staff for themselves.

They're not the only interested party, however. Cultists, criminals, and Clan Rune operatives in the city are also after the staff. The party have to be the first ones to purchase—or steal—the artifact, then make their way out of the city.

Pursued by Competitors. If the characters acquire the staff first, they have to travel north, all the way to the Cinderghast isles (or Fort Kentigern) with the weapon, pursued by the same operatives working to acquire the staff in Summerhelm.

- The most direct escape route from Summerhelm is through Skuggiskogr, where the party can hire or arrange for a boat at the mouth of the Jakkan River to take them up the northern coast. However, Skuggiskogr is home to not only **dark mist stalkers**, but **Runa Banasár** (see *Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire*) and her growing army. If Runa discovers the characters and the weapon they carry, she fully intends to claim that power for herself.
- The land route to the Cinderghasts or Fort Kentigern is longer, but sea-wary or forest-wary characters may prefer to travel to Hrist instead. But the city provides no real haven; the same factions operating in Summerhelm also have operatives in Hrist, and a team of **fiendish contractors** have also caught wind of the weapon's movement; they seek to contract with the party, guaranteeing them passage to the destination of their choice, as well as fame and glory, in exchange for their souls. And these fiends won't take no for an answer.

Closer to the Destination. No matter which potential employer the characters choose, the other goes after them, not trusting them to deliver the staff. If the party chooses Ánda, Abbot Sanrun sends a patrol from Fort Kentigern, on their ice drakes, planning to use the same techniques on the PCs they use on coldfire: bombing from above. If the PCs head to Fort Kentigern, they face off against Ánda's high level team, along with a loyal pack of supernaturally-large sled dogs (**dire wolves**).

The Elementals. If the characters choose to deliver the weapon to Ánda, or if Ánda successfully takes the weapon from them to make his way to the Cinderghast islands and the party chooses to pursue, they are present when the elemental prison breaks open. The elementals are not pleased with their long imprisonment, and before Ánda is able to broker a treaty, they launch a devastating attack on all mortals present. Their number is so overwhelming the whole army cannot be defeated. The characters might:

- Seek to reignite the prison. To do so, they have to get the staff into place and perform a ritual while keeping the elementals—and some of Ánda's party—at bay.

- Kill Ixlalu. If they can reach the salamander king and kill it, they may be able to stop the attack.
- Convince Ixlalu to hear them out. The salamander is out for blood, but even an enraged elemental can be reasoned with, given the right incentives.

Long ago, Ixlalu hated Gormadraig, and the party may be able to convince Ixlalu to turn his rage against the coldfire of the Volgen peninsula rather than the characters. What impact this has on Kandar and the Order of Kentigern going forward—or whether the elementals then become a greater hazard to the peninsula than the coldfire was—is unknown.





Chapter 2:

CHARACTER OPTIONS

Characters in a Valika campaign must have a different set of skills and a different worldview than those in a typical dark fantasy campaign. Whether they are members of an existing Valikan clan, free agents starting a new clan of their own, thralls escaping from the clutches of a marauding clan, or foreigners striking out into the cold of the north on a quest, the

Valikan campaign character can draw from the resources described in this chapter.

Two important elements of a Valika campaign are clan affiliation and Valikan subclasses. Using these new rules to create characters and guide their class progression can make characters that fit nicely into the feel of the icy reaches of Valika.

Character Creation: Clan Affiliation

The northern regions of Etharis, known collectively as Valika, are harsh—only the most extraordinary and powerful individuals can survive there without help from others working toward the same goals. Valikan clanfolk have learned they must band together to survive, and their ancestors have given them the wisdom and knowledge to do that.

A strong sense of purpose and camaraderie can unite people, even when they originate from a wide variety of lineages and backgrounds. This clanship provides a shared history and culture they can draw upon for their identity. Most clans are quick to welcome into their fold anyone willing to work for the good of the group.

As a result, an individual's clan matters far more than their racial heritage or lineage when determining their abilities and talents. Clans of Valika have many humans among their numbers, but they are far from the only members of any clan. Because of centuries of thralldom and intermarriage with those who've come north of their own accord, the traits of the characters are very different from those elsewhere in Etharis.

Characters in a Valika-themed campaign can choose a different method of character creation based on their clan affiliation, building a clan identity instead of limiting oneself to the racial templates provided in other books.

CLAN OVER SPECIES

Players in a Valika-themed campaign can start as members of one of the six major clans. At the GM's discretion, the character might also be from one of the other clans, or even from a clan of the GM's or player's own devising. Mix and match the traits provided here to create a list of traits that the player can choose from in creating a character of that clan.

Appearance. When creating a character using the Clan Affiliation rules, a player may choose their appearance. They can use any races or species already existing in the *Grim Hollow* setting, any monstrous species, or even alternatives from other Fifth-Edition products. Other attributes like size or shape can also be selected, with the understanding that the character should be humanoid shaped unless the GM says otherwise.

Ability Scores. Assign ability score modifiers to represent the character's physical and mental characteristics. These bonuses do not need to match the race or species selected as the basis for the character. A character can have a +2 bonus to one score and a +1 bonus to a second, or a character can choose three ability scores to each gain a +1 bonus.

Size and Speed. The player may also select either Medium or Small as their size. Medium characters have a base movement speed of 30 feet, and Small characters have a base movement speed of 25 feet.

Traits. The character gains three traits from the General category, representing their inherent abilities. Once that step is complete, a character chooses a clan and can select five traits from their clan list, the various traditions and cultures of each clan influencing the training and available expertise the character can draw upon.

Clan Rune, for example, specializes in magic, so their traits often relate to spellcasting and arcane knowledge. Selecting a Clan Affiliation does not bind a character to their clan in future interactions, but it's meant to provide a more specialized history in association with their background and explain the origin of a character's abilities and traits.

Some traits listed in the following section may be selected multiple times to amplify their effects. In that case, the limitation on selecting each trait is listed within the trait description. After character creation, the GM may allow a player to select a clan trait in response to a significant event or instead of selecting an Ability Score Improvement upon leveling a character.



General Traits

Aquatic
 Arboreal
 Artificial Form
 Brave
 Breath Weapon
 Darkvision
 Fey Ancestry
 Natural Attack
 Poison Tolerance
 Powerful Build
 Standing Leap
 Toughness
 Well Protected

Clan Limgri Traits

Animal Friend
 Arcane Tutelage
 Armor Training
 Athlete's Spirit
 Born Healer
 Divine Sangromancy
 Driver
 Elemental Affinity
 Giantslayer
 Magical Insight
 Moved by Faith
 Natural Camouflage
 Pack Tactics
 Polyglot
 Power Nap
 Skirmish Tactics
 Weapon Training

Clan Mithra Traits

Armor Training
 Commanding Insight
 Creature Cover
 Driver
 Eager Deceiver
 Firm Influence
 Friendly Ear
 Giantslayer
 Gifted Performer
 Inborn Perception
 Instrumental
 Persuasive Knack
 Polyglot
 Power Nap
 Slide By
 Touch of the Past
 Weapon Training

Clan Morgöng Traits

Armor Training
 Commanding Insight
 Creature Cover
 Eager Deceiver
 Fade Away
 Friendly Ear
 Giantslayer
 Inborn Perception
 Instinctive Stealth
 Intuitive Acrobat
 Mindful Investigator
 Natural Camouflage
 Nimble Moves

Power Nap
 Shroud of the Wild
 Slide By
 Weapon Training

Clan Rune Traits

Animal Friend
 Arcane Tutelage
 Armor Training
 Connection to Nature
 Elemental Affinity
 Firm Influence
 Giantslayer
 Keen Survivor
 Inborn Perception
 Lucky
 Magical Insight
 Natural Camouflage
 Nature's Voice
 Persuasive Knack
 Power Nap
 Touch of the Past
 Weapon Training

Clan Sýr Traits

Animal Friend
 Armor Training
 Artisan
 Athlete's Spirit
 Commanding Insight
 Craftsman's Cunning
 Driver
 Giantslayer

Inborn Perception
 Keen Survivor
 Mindful Investigator
 Natural Camouflage
 Nature's Voice
 Persuasive Knack
 Polyglot
 Power Nap
 Weapon Training

Clan Völgr Traits

Athlete's Spirit
 Armor Training
 Driver
 Firm Influence
 Giantslayer
 Inborn Perception
 Instinctive Stealth
 Intuitive Acrobat
 Keen Survivor
 Mindful Investigator
 Natural Camouflage
 Pack Tactics
 Power Nap
 Relentless Endurance
 Savage Attacks
 Skirmish Tactics
 Weapon Training

TRAIT DESCRIPTIONS

Animal Friend

Your clan has a strong connection to nature, and you have learned the best way to gain an animal's trust. You gain proficiency in the Animal Handling skill.

Animal Ally. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Animal Handling ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Aquatic

Your body is adapted to water, through webbed hands and feet, gills, or some other feature. You gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed.

Amphibious. If you take this trait a second time, you can also breathe both air and water.

Arboreal

Your ancestors lived in the trees, and you've maintained some of their agility. You gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.

Brachiation. If you take this trait a second time, you can move by brachiating, swinging through the trees at a rate equal to your climbing speed.

Arcane Tutelage

Intensive study in the practical applications of the arcane has allowed you to tap into a natural ability for magic. You learn one cantrip of your choice from any spell list and can cast it using the associated ability score: Intelligence for wizard spells, Wisdom for cleric and druid spells, and Charisma for bard, sorcerer, and warlock spells. If the spell appears on multiple spell lists, choose one to determine the spellcasting attribute for that spell.

Arcane Savant. You may take this trait multiple times, selecting a different cantrip or selecting a 1st-level spell from the same list as a cantrip you have previously chosen. You may cast that 1st-level spell once without expending a spell slot, and regain the ability to do so when you complete a long rest.

Armor Training

Through practice or training you know how to move and defend yourself while wearing armor. You gain proficiency with light armor.

If you take this trait a second time, you gain proficiency with medium armor and shields. If you take this trait a third time, you gain proficiency with heavy armor.

Artificial Form

Rather than being born, you were created by magic or artifice. This unnatural origin lends you certain advantages, but forever marks you as different. You are immune to disease and don't need to eat, drink, sleep, or breathe. You still need to rest for a full 8 hours during a long rest.

This trait cannot be taken if you have the Power Nap trait.

Artisan

Your clan is proficient in the production of material goods, and you have been trained in the necessary tools for their manufacture. You gain proficiency with one set of artisan's tools.

Versatile Artisan. You may take this trait any number of times, selecting a different set of tools each time.

Athlete's Spirit

In the north, athletic prowess and competition are a common pastime, and your clan excels in such challenges. You gain proficiency in the Athletics skill.

Athlete's Resolve. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Athletics ability check at advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Born Healer

Through training or necessity, you have learned how to deal with serious injuries. You gain proficiency in the Medicine skill.

War Doctor. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Medicine ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



Brave

You have a fire in your blood that drives you onward when many others would falter. You have advantage on saving throws to avoid being frightened.

Infectious Bravery. If you take this trait twice, you may use your reaction to bolster the spirit of your allies, granting one ally who can see or hear you advantage on a saving throw against being frightened. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Breath Weapon

Whether drawn from draconic blood or otherwise, you possess the inherent ability to channel energy through your breath. Choose a damage type: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or poison. Then choose an area of effect: a line that is 5 feet wide and 30 feet long, or a 15-foot cone. When you use your breath weapon as an action, each creature in the area must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw with DC 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus, or take 2d6 damage of the chosen type. The creature takes half as much damage on a successful save. The damage increases to 3d6 at 6th level, 4d6 at 11th level, and 5d6 at 16th level. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Commanding Insight

Dealing with people has given you a keen eye to their motives and mannerisms. You gain proficiency in the Insight skill.

Exceptional Insight. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Insight ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Connection to Nature

The natural world has a strong impact on life in the Valikan clans, and your clan in particular studies it with an almost holy reverence. You gain proficiency in the Nature skill.

Bond with Nature. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Nature ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Craftsman's Cunning

While many clanfolk can craft items, you have made a study of their history and cultural impacts as well. When you make an Intelligence (History) check related to an item, device, building, or material and you have proficiency in the associated artisan tool, you are considered proficient in History and can add double your proficiency bonus to the check instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

Creature Cover

A tactic favored among the smaller peoples of Etharis, you have learned how to take advantage of larger creatures to fade into the background. You may attempt to hide when concealed behind a creature that is at least one size larger than you.

Darkvision

Your ancestors were either subterranean or predatory in nature, but whatever the reason you are at home in the darkness. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Improved Darkvision. If you take this trait twice, the range of your darkvision increases to 120 feet.

Divine Sangromancy

The blood of angels flows in your veins. Whenever an allied creature within 30 feet of you regains hit points, you may spend a Hit Die and add the result to the amount of hit points gained by the ally.

Driver

Raiders often travel by longship, traders by cart or sled, and the occasional gnomish inventor by means unbelievable, but you have been trained in controlling such methods of transportation. You gain proficiency with either land or water vehicles, or with navigator's tools.

Eager Deceiver

Lying is more of an art than a science, and you consider yourself an artist. You gain proficiency in the Deception skill.

Expert Deceiver. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Deception ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Elemental Affinity

The Valikan clans are steeped in elemental energy, and your clan in particular is in tune with it, either through reverence or opposition. Choose a damage type from the following list: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. As a reaction to taking damage from the selected damage type, you may gain resistance to the selected damage type until the start of your next turn. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Elemental Immunity. If you take this trait twice, you gain immunity to the selected damage type instead of resistance for the same duration.

Fade Away

You have been inducted into the secret arts of stealth known only to a select few. As a bonus action, you successfully hide from any creatures that can see you, effectively becoming invisible until the start of your next turn. You become visible again early if you attack or cast a spell. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

Fey Ancestry

The fey have a strong affinity with enchantment and magics that befuddle the mind. Being part fey yourself, you have some natural resistance to those effects. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed.

Fey Blooded. If you take this trait twice, magic cannot put you to sleep. In addition, you enter a trance state instead of sleeping, meditating deeply for 4 hours in order to gain all the benefits that a human does from 8 hours of sleep. You cannot benefit from the Power Nap trait if you take this trait twice.

Firm Influence

Yours is the steady hand that ensures things run smoothly, and the battle cry that strikes fear into your enemies. You gain proficiency in the Intimidation skill.

Terrifying Influence. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Intimidation ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



Friendly Ear

Everyone has secrets, and you are adept at teasing them out of people. By conversing with a creature for at least one minute, you can attempt to charm them. The creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw, the DC of which equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier, or be charmed by you for one hour. You also learn one piece of information that the target knows that relates to the topic of your conversation, at the GM's discretion. Regardless of whether or not the target makes the save, they remain unaware of your attempt. Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a short or long rest.

Giantslayer

Giants are common in the north, and so are the tactics for dealing with them. The fact that some smaller creatures have applied this knowledge to more common humanoids is a point of some contention. When you hit a creature at least one size larger than you with a weapon attack, you may deal additional damage to it equal to your proficiency bonus. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Gifted Performer

You shine in the spotlight. When you want them to be, every eye is on you. You gain proficiency in the Performance skill.

A Sight to Behold. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Performance ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Inborn Perception

In the north, what you don't see often kills you. You gain proficiency in the Perception skill.

Piercing Perception. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Perception ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Instinctive Stealth

Unseen is unharmed. You gain proficiency in the Stealth skill.

Calculated Disappearance. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Stealth ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Instrumental

The bards and skalds of your clan have taught you the basics for making music. You gain proficiency with two instruments of your choice.

Virtuoso. You may take this trait any number of times, selecting different instruments each time.

Intuitive Acrobat

Some few in the Valikan clans have come to favor flexibility and agility over strength, and willingly teach any who will learn. You gain proficiency in the Acrobatics skill.

Stunt Expert. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Acrobatics ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Keen Survivor

Though trade and farming both provide much food and material to the clans, knowing how to survive in the wilds remains a valuable skill. You gain proficiency in the Survival skill.

Determined Survivor. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Survival ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Lucky

Ask anyone and they'll tell you that some clans seem to have the luck of a daemon. Others insist they just know the best way to make the most of a bad situation. When you roll a 1 on a d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Magical Insight

While lacking an established college of magic, several clans have made it their business to keep up to date on advances in the arcane sciences. You gain proficiency in the Arcana skill.

Magical Historian. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Arcana ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Mindful Investigator

Raiders need to know how to properly search for loot, but spies and those seeking justice also find great value in uncovering what others would prefer remain hidden. You gain proficiency in the Investigation skill.

Thorough Sleuth. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Investigation ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Moved by Faith

Your clan has taught you a great deal about the various religions of the south, in addition to the various rituals of your own land. You gain proficiency in the Religion skill.

Force of Faith. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Religion ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Natural Attack

You possess claws, fangs, or some other type of natural weaponry. Your unarmed strikes deal damage equal to 1d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier, and the type of damage is either bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing based on the type of natural weaponry you choose.

Natural Camouflage

Time in the wilderness has given you experience in how to remain unseen. Choose an environment: forest, hills or mountains, tundra, underground, underwater, or volcanic. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide while in that environment.

Nature's Voice

Animals and animate plant life have their own, simple methods of communication, which you have been taught. Through sounds and gestures, you can communicate simple ideas to Beast- and Plant-type creatures. This gives you no special ability to control such creatures, and you can't understand or learn information from them.

Nimble Moves

Light fingers make light work, as many a criminal will attest. You gain proficiency in the Sleight of Hand skill.

Exquisite Legerdemain. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Sleight of Hand ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Pack Tactics

Your clan knows the value in numbers. You have advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of your allies is within 5 feet of that creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Persuasive Knack

Your clan often must negotiate or sway others to their cause, and teaches these methods to their members. You gain proficiency in the Persuasion skill.

Tongue of Gold. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any Persuasion ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Poison Tolerance

Your body is unusually resistant to toxins. You have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

Poison Resistance. If you take this trait twice, you also gain resistance to poison damage.

Polyglot

Kandar in particular sees the value in learning languages other than Valiki. You learn two languages of your choice.

Language Expert. You may take this trait any number of times, selecting different languages each time.

Unless allowed by the GM, you may not select secret languages such as Druidic or Thieves' Cant.

Powerful Build

A sturdy build grants those of your lineage greater strength and leverage. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift. A Small creature with this trait may use weapons with the Heavy property that they are proficient in as if they did not have that property.

Power Nap

When taking a short rest, you may choose to sleep for 1 hour. If you do so, you reduce your exhaustion by one level, and regain one Hit Die in addition to the other benefits of a short rest.

Relentless Endurance

Fury drives you onward, beyond normal endurance. When you are reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, you can drop to 1 hit point instead. You can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

Savage Attacks

Raiding clans have learned strategies for delivering brutal strikes to their enemies. When you score a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, you can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

Shroud of the Wild

The most talented hunters are taught how to hide in the open, taking advantage of every subtle change in the environment. You may attempt to hide when only lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, mist, or some other natural phenomena.

Skirmish Tactics

Striking quickly and moving out of reach is a popular tactic for confusing and harrying a more powerful enemy. When you hit a hostile creature with a weapon attack, you may take the Disengage action as a bonus action until the end of your turn.

Slide By

You've been taught the methods for slipping through a packed crowd or maneuvering around a lumbering giant. You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours.

Nimble Passage. If you take this trait a second time, you no longer treat other creatures' squares as difficult terrain.

Standing Leap

Powerful legs allow you to launch yourself incredible distances. Your long jump is up to 20 feet and your high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Incredible Leap. If you take this trait a second time, your long jump increases to 30 feet and your high jump increases to 15 feet. If your walking speed is lower than your long jump, you can only leap a distance equal to your walking speed.

Touch of the Past

Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it, so say your clan elders. You gain proficiency in the History skill.

Sought Memories. If you take this trait twice, you may choose to make any History ability check with advantage. You may use this feature a number of times equal to twice your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Toughness

Your lineage makes you more resilient than normal. Your hit point maximum increases by 1, and it increases by 1 every time you gain a level.

Weapon Training

All the clans know the value of weapon training. You gain proficiency with two weapons of your choice.

Weapon Specialist. You may take this trait any number of times, choosing different weapons each time.

Well Protected

Scales, thick skin, or some other type of natural protection guards you from injury. When you are not wearing armor, your AC is equal to 13 + your Dexterity modifier.





New Transformations

The following new transformations use the same rules as those detailed in *Grim Hollow: The Campaign Guide*.

Transformations are magical or eldritch changes that transform a creature (including characters) into something different. The mental and physical alterations to the creature come with potential benefits, but also terrible side effects that can make survival more difficult, especially when common folk see the monster that the creature is becoming. These benefits and drawbacks are represented in the rules by boons and flaws. These are listed under the transformation features for each transformation.

Giant

Guards brace the large wooden door against the hulking creature on the other side. As the door explodes into splinters, the guards scatter across the room, pushing one another down or in the giant's way to ensure their own safety. The giant makes short work of the smallfolk, throwing their bodies around like ragdolls before making her way deeper into the keep for its food stores.

As the brown bear rushes towards him, the giant lowers himself into a squat and prepares for the impact. At the moment they meet, the giant lets out a belly laugh, putting the bear into a headlock and wrestling it to the ground. The two twist around on the ground for several minutes before the bear gives up and sits in the dirt beside the giant. "Good boy," the giant says, before throwing a large fish to the ground.



Giants are relics of a harsher time in the world, long before the gods tamed Etharis to allow for the rise of smaller peoples. Most of the giants of Etharis were eliminated over the centuries, but their magical influences, both beneficial and cursed, still linger in pockets around Etharis. Many of the giant clans of old strode the lands of Etharis.

The frost giants were most prevalent in their frozen ice castles. The fire giants often warred with them, rising from their magma-filled, subterranean volcanic strongholds. Even the stone, cloud, and storm giants found refuge in the lands of Valika. Of course, no place was safe from the ravages of the brutish hill giants, and their ogre, troll, and ettin servants.

This history meant giants excelled at surviving, most famously through their extraordinary size and the capacity for violence that size allows. Giants were a clannish people who respected physical strength, and some postulate that the native people of Valika still have giant blood coursing through their veins.

Those who transform into giants may do so because of that giant heritage. Others may come across some latent giant magic trapped beneath the ice or in long-forgotten giant strongholds. Those transforming into giants might find acceptance with the limited number of giants who still call Etharis home, but only after proving themselves worthy of respect by way of personal might or incredible bravery and wit.

BECOMING A GIANT

Few mortals have ever transformed into giants or, more accurately, few mortals have survived the experience. Those who were able to transform had some ancient ancestry that included giants, completed one of a handful of arcane procedures, earned the blessing of a giant high

priest, stumbled upon some ancient eldritch giant magic, or a combination of these. Becoming a giant isn't just about growing in size—it also relies on tapping into the primordial prowess of the giants that allowed them to survive against the wilds when the world was new.

Growing in strength as a giant often means setting aside planning and reason for instinct and action. Most giants don't sit around a table plotting the downfall of their enemies; instead, they take the most direct route to their foes and pummel them into submission with their bare hands. Those who show loyalty to their clan, exhibit formidable physical strength, and display decisiveness in war and other contests grow in titanic power.

TRANSFORMATION FEATURES

A Giant has the following transformation features:

PREREQUISITES

Ability Scores: Strength 13

Roleplay: Complete an arcane ritual, consume a giant's heart stuffed with alchemical compounds and mashed caterpillars, earn the favor of a giant tribe and undergo a ceremony performed by one of their high priests to bestow the gifts of their titanic ancestors upon you, or accidentally stumble upon ancient giant magic.

Some of your abilities require your target to make a saving throw to resist their effects. The saving throw DC is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Transformation Save DC} = 8 + \text{your proficiency bonus} + \text{your Strength modifier}$$

LEVEL MILESTONES

The following are examples of possible level milestones for the Giant:

- Defeating a creature larger than you.
- Intimidating a group of creatures smaller than you into running away or obeying you.
- Overcoming a challenge with an extraordinary feat of strength or excessive violence.
- Eating a creature the same size as you or larger.
- Leading a tribe of giants into battle against another tribe of giants.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 1

Starting at the 1st level of transformation, you gain the following Transformation Boons and this level's Transformation Flaw (or the Alternative Flaw).

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Giant Form

Your Strength score increases by 2 and your Constitution score increases by 1. An ability score cannot be increased beyond 16 in this way.

You become a Giant in addition to any other creature types you are. Spells and abilities that affect giants of a specific CR have no effect on you.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Growth Spurt

Your body swells as muscles grow and bones elongate, a painful transformation that ends in a towering stature. If your size is smaller than Large, it is now Large. In addition, your maximum hit points increase by 5 and increase by 5 again each time you gain a new Giant transformation level. Your new larger size does not change your weapon damage.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Big Appetite

As your body has grown, so has your appetite. While you once subsisted on a few pounds of food a day, you now must eat one livestock animal a day to feel nourished. You must eat at least 2 gp, or about 200 lbs., of food each day. You cannot gain the benefits of a long rest on a day where you have not eaten enough food.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Heavy Soul

Your gigantic size extends to your soul as well, making it heavy and burdensome to call back from the beyond. When a creature attempts to return you to life using *revivify*, *raise dead*, or a similar spell or effect, it must provide material components worth twice as much as the spell specifies.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

At the 2nd level of transformation, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Foe Thrower

When you are grappling a creature, you can use your bonus action to hurl the creature up to 10 feet. If the creature is smaller than you, this distance is increased by 10 feet for each size category it is smaller than you. For example, if you are Large and the target is Medium, you hurl it up to 20 feet.

If the creature lands in an unoccupied space, it must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. If the creature lands in a space occupied by another creature or would pass through a space occupied by another creature as part of being thrown, the thrown creature immediately falls prone and the other creature must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 + your Strength modifier damage and be knocked prone. Increase the damage by 1d6 for each transformation level above 2.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Giant's Strength

Your Strength score increases by 2, to a maximum of 22.

In addition, when you raise your Strength score using an Ability Score Increase feature, you can increase it to a maximum of 22.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Titanic Resolve

When you take damage from a weapon attack, you can use your reaction to shrug off the worst of the harm. When you do, you gain temporary hit points equal to the damage taken from the triggering attack. While you have any temporary hit points granted by this boon, you have resistance to piercing, bludgeoning, and slashing damage.

You can use this boon a number of times equal to your Strength modifier (minimum once), regaining all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Groundshaker

Your steps sound like falling trees and no matter how careful you are, you almost always leave destructive signs of your passing. Creatures have advantage on ability checks made to notice you and follow your trail.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

At the 3rd level of transformation, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Ferocious Slam

Your hands sprout jagged growths, visibly pushing through the skin of your knuckles. You can use your fists to make melee weapon attacks as a bonus action. When you hit with your fists, the strike deals 2d6 + your Strength modifier piercing damage instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

Once per turn, when you deal damage with your fists, you can immediately expend and roll a Hit Die to magically regain hit points equal to the result of the roll + the damage you dealt with your fists.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Mountainous Physique

You leverage your towering physique for greater feats of athleticism. Your base walking speed increases by 10 feet.

In addition, you count as one size larger than you are for the purposes of determining what size creatures you can shove or grapple, your carrying capacity, and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Titanic Wrath

When you hit a creature or object with a melee weapon attack, you can channel the wrath of the titans to wreak havoc on your foes. When you do, that attack, and all melee weapon attacks you make until the start of your next turn, deal an additional 1d12 damage.

You can use this a number of times equal to your Strength modifier (minimum once), regaining all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Boot Quaker

No matter what your intentions truly are, you can't help but provoke feelings of fear in smaller creatures. You have disadvantage on Charisma ability checks made against creatures smaller than you, unless you are attempting to intimidate or frighten.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

At the 4th level of transformation, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Enormous Size

You go through another excruciating transformation of flesh and bone that concludes with you nearly doubling in size again. If your size is less than Huge, it is now Huge, and your reach increases by 5 feet. In addition, your maximum hit points increase by 20.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Greater Giant's Strength

Prerequisite: *Giant's Strength*

Your Strength score increases by 2, to a maximum of 24. In addition, when you raise your Strength score using an Ability Score Increase feature, you can increase it to a maximum of 24.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Swallow Whole

You can use an action to attempt to ingest a creature within 5 feet that is smaller than you that you have grappled. When you do, the creature must make a Strength saving throw.

On a failed saving throw, you swallow the creature whole. A swallowed creature is incapacitated and takes 13 (2d12) acid damage at the start of each of its turns, and it has full cover from all creatures. At the end of a swallowed creature's turn, it can make a Strength saving throw. On a success, you vomit the creature up into an unoccupied space of its choice within 10 feet of you.

You can only have one creature swallowed at a time. You can vomit up a creature you have swallowed into an unoccupied space of your choice within 10 feet as a bonus action on your turn.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

The Bigger You Are

Your prodigious size leaves you vulnerable to creatures whose size make them nearly beneath your notice. Creatures who are at least two size categories smaller than you (Small if you are Large, for example) score critical hits on a roll of 19 or 20 on attack rolls against you.



Wyrms

A knight rides across a bridge towards a decrepit keep, trusty steed beneath her and lance tucked beneath her arm. The wood beneath her horse's hooves shudders with each heavy footfall from a yet unseen creature leaving the shadows of the keep. By the time the wyrm's head is out of the shadows, coldfire is already bursting from its mouth, freezing the knight and her trusty steed where they stand.

A wyrm sits on her pile of gold, content in the size of her growing hoard. Out of the corner of her eye she spies a halfling slinking along the perimeter of the room. She pretends to curl up on her pile and close her eyes, only to lurch with ophidian speed and snap her teeth around the halfling when it reaches out to grab a treasure.

Wyrms are akin to dragons in certain aspects of appearance and behavior, but they are infused with the primordial power of Gormadraug's coldfire. Like the mythical Prismatic Wyrm, Wyrms are motivated by their hatred of those who have wronged them and desire to secure a comfortable life for themselves. Wyrms enjoy the benefits of Gormadraug's strengths but are also bound by many of his shortcomings.

BECOMING A WYRM

Becoming a Wyrm requires communing with Gormadraug by displaying an aptitude for pyrrhic victory in the name of revenge, or absorbing a portion of his essence from either coldfire or his physical remains. The Prismatic Wyrm's enemies are many and have made efforts to scour his likeness from the face of Etharis, so obtaining such a relic is a difficult task even for the most seasoned adventurer. For those who seek the power of dragons and coldfire, however, there is no greater prize.



Every step along the path of growing in power brings a Wyrm closer to the image of Gormadraug. Inevitably, the powers granted by this transformation draw a Wyrm into conflict with Gormadraug's enemies, such as the Arch Seraphs or other primordials, and their minions. As a creature fueled by hatred, destroying the Prismatic Wyrm's enemies is the quickest way to gain more of his strength.

TRANSFORMATION FEATURES

A Wyrm has the following transformation features:

PREREQUISITES

Ability Scores: Constitution 13

Roleplay: Find one of Gormadraug's eggs hidden in the frozen wastes and imbibe its yolk raw, walk into an inferno of coldfire while shouting a fervent prayer to the Prismatic Wyrm, catch the attention of Gormadraug's sleeping consciousness by committing an act of revenge at great personal cost.

Some of your abilities require your target to make a saving throw to resist their effects. The saving throw DC is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Transformation Save DC} = 8 + \text{your proficiency bonus} + \text{your Constitution modifier}$$

LEVEL MILESTONES

The following are examples of possible level milestones for the Wyrm:

- Striking terror into the hearts of mortals such that they are compliant to your whims.
- Thwarting the plans one of the other primordials.
- Dealing a grievous injury or setback to one of the other primordials.
- Initiating or spreading a massive outbreak of coldfire.
- Making contact with Gormadraug's sleeping consciousness.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 1

Starting at 1st level, you gain the following Transformation Boons and this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Wyrms Form

Your Constitution score increases by 2 and your Charisma score increases by 1. An ability score cannot be increased beyond 16 in this way.

You gain the Dragon creature type in addition to any other creature types you are. Spells and abilities that affect dragons of a specific CR have no effect on you.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Glittering Scales

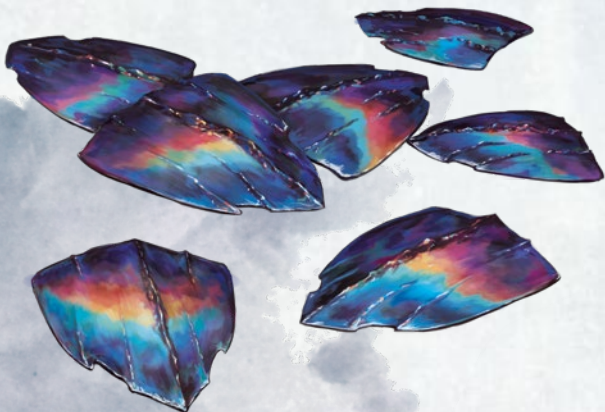
You are covered in glittering dark scales that shimmer with a rainbow hue in the light, and your body has partially transformed into a sinuous draconic shape. You gain the following benefits:

- While you are not wearing armor, your AC equals 13 + your Constitution modifier.
- You have resistance to cold damage.
- Your teeth sharpen, your hands turn to claws, and you have grown a tail. You can use any one of these to make unarmed strikes. If you use your tail, your reach is increased by 5 feet. When you hit with one of these natural weapons, the strike deals 1d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier damage, instead of the normal damage for an unarmed strike. If you use your teeth, the damage is piercing; if you use your claws, the damage is slashing; and if you use your tail, the damage is bludgeoning.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Somnolent Curse

You share Gormadraig's curse: easily set to sleep but rarely refreshed by the slumber. Your current hit points are considered half of what they are for the purpose of the *sleep* spell. When you finish a long rest with one or more levels of exhaustion, you lose a level of exhaustion as normal but gain no other benefits of having finished a long rest.



TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 2

At 2nd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Coldfire Breath

You can use your bonus action to exhale a blast of coldfire in a 15-foot cone. When you do, each creature within the cone must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 cold damage. In addition, terrain within the cone is now burning with coldfire for 1 minute. Each time a creature starts its turn in, or moves through, a space with coldfire in it, the creature takes 3d6 cold damage. Increase the damage for both initial and lingering effects by 1d6 for each transformation level above 2.

You can use this boon a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum once), regaining all expended uses after finishing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Draconic Wings

A pair of leathery wings emerge from your back. While you are not wearing armor, or are wearing armor suited for your wings, you have a flying speed of 30 feet.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Make Lair

You have learned how to twist the natural geomantic energies of a place to your liking, giving you the ability to create a lair. To do this, you must remain in the same 100-foot-square area for at least 8 hours a day for 7 days. At the end of this time, the area is your lair until you use this boon again to make a new lair. You gain the following benefits in your lair:

- You cannot be surprised, and have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.
- You can store treasure and gold in your lair. When you finish a long rest in your lair, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the gp value of the treasure and gold in your lair, up to a maximum of half your maximum hit points.
- Your lair is filled with snowflakes glowing in blue flame. During combat, on initiative count 20, you can choose any 10-foot-square area in your lair. Each creature within that area must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 cold damage and have its movement speed halved until the end of its next turn.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Hateful Heart

The hate of Gormadraig against those who have wronged him also flows through you. Celestials and elementals, other than those composed of coldfire or otherwise allied with Gormadraig, count as hated enemies for you. You have disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls while you can see a hated one within 60 feet, unless you are making an attack roll or effort to harm one of those particular hated enemies.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 3

At 3rd level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Frightful Presence

As an action, you can let out a courage-wilting roar. Each creature of your choice within 60 feet must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature succeeds at one of these saving throws, or the minute of being frightened passes, that creature cannot be frightened by this boon again for the next 24 hours.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Prismatic Scales

Prerequisite: *Glittering Scales*

The glittering scales multiply across your body as it swells and distends, your shape becoming even more draconic and even less humanoid. With each passing day you more closely resemble the Prismatic Wyrms himself. You gain the following benefits:

- If you are smaller than Large, your size increases to Large.
- The damage from your bite, claw, and tail increases to 2d6 + your Strength or Dexterity modifier.
- You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Wing Buffet

Prerequisite: *Draconic Wings*

Your wings have grown stronger. The flying speed granted by your wings increases to 40 feet.

In addition, you can use your bonus action to flap your wings, causing a tremendous, localized wind. When you do, each creature within 10 feet of you must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be knocked prone or pushed 10 feet (your choice).

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Tundral Temperature

You are uncomfortable in hot climates. While you are in hot climates, you must rest for twice as long to gain the benefit of a short or long rest. In addition, you exude frigid cold, causing vapor to rise around you while in hot climates. You have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Perception) checks made in areas where the temperature is above freezing.

TRANSFORMATION LEVEL 4

At 4th level, you can pick one of the following Transformation Boons. In addition, you also gain this level's Transformation Flaw.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Indestructible Heart

Like Gormadraig, your heart is made of indestructible magical ice. No matter how you die, even if you are disintegrated, your heart remains. While you are dead, each day that passes your body regenerates around your indestructible heart, until a number of days have passed equal to your maximum hit points. On that day, you return to life in the location of your heart with five levels of exhaustion.

A creature can delay your regeneration by keeping your indestructible heart soaked in fresh blood. This requires at least one pint of blood that must have been taken from a creature with an Intelligence greater than 3. After 24 hours, the blood loses its potency and unless it is refreshed with new blood your heart resumes the regeneration process.

At your GM's discretion, they may specify a legendary quest needed to overcome your heart's indestructible nature, allowing it to be permanently destroyed.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Legendary Resistance

When you fail a saving throw, you can use your reaction to succeed on the saving throw instead. When you do, you must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

You can use this reaction a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum once), regaining all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

TRANSFORMATION BOON

Primordial Coldfire Breath

Prerequisite: *Coldfire Breath*

When you use your Coldfire Breath Transformation Boon, you can choose to increase the size to a 30-foot cone or increase the initial and lingering cold damage dealt to 6d6. If you expend two uses of your Coldfire Breath instead of one, you can choose both.

Finally, you regain one use of your Coldfire Breath when you finish a short rest.

TRANSFORMATION FLAW

Rising Rage

The desire for revenge has poisoned your heart as surely as it did the Prismatic Wyrms'. When a creature deals damage to you, you consider that creature a hated enemy for the next 10 days. While that hated enemy exists, you are distracted and have disadvantage on all ability checks that are not made directly against a hated enemy.



Advanced Backgrounds

Advanced backgrounds are an alternative to the standard background system, allowing your character's past to continue to develop as you play. You can read more about advanced backgrounds and how to incorporate them into your campaign in the *Grim Hollow Campaign Guide*. The following new advanced backgrounds follow the rules described in that book.

VALIKAN

Valika is a land of ice and snow with a long and storied history. The climate, terrain, and heroes of the past all offer valuable lessons to those willing to learn. Valikans carry these lessons with them wherever their lives take them. Learning how to survive in harsh conditions is a necessity, but learning how to thrive in them is something unique to the people who make Valika their home.

Skill Proficiencies: Choose one from Animal Handling, Athletics, History, Nature, Perception, or Survival

Languages: Valiki or Primordial

Equipment: A set of traveler's clothes, an animal pelt cloak, a tinderbox, and a pouch with 5 gp

Ice Fisher

In the frigid lands of Valika, the earth gives little as predators fight for prey. You have found your calling fishing the icy waters of the region, for though the land may be sparse the sea is bountiful. Despite this abundance, ice fishing is no easy work. You spent years learning how to safely navigate across iced over bodies of water, identify which sea creatures are safe to eat, and endure long periods of waiting in freezing conditions. Although a successful haul doesn't earn you quite the same glory as a victorious raid, you are used to being respected for your part of keeping your community fed through even the harshest winters.

Skill Proficiency: Survival

Tool Proficiency: Water vehicles

Additional Equipment: A fishing rod, fishing tackle, a jar full of moist dirt and bait, two fishing nets, and an ice pick

BOUNTIFUL HAUL

When you spend an hour fishing a body of water home to fish or other marine life, you can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, you catch enough fish to feed yourself and ten other people. If you share your haul freely with other humanoids, and they aren't already hostile towards you, they are more likely to be friendly with you and possibly even share information or resources.

RANK 1 – ANGLER

You are either still an apprentice or recently finished your apprenticeship and continue to work with a team of other ice fishers. When you're on the job, your primary responsibilities are to check lines, haul in nets, and repair rods and traps.

Holdings:

- A rickety rowboat with oars that have seen better days
- A small stand in the nearby market to sell your catch
- A bed in a communal lodge

Progression: Make a name for yourself by catching a whopper of a fish or some other sea creature of unusual size or coloration.

RANK 2 – PISCATOR

You are a fisher of repute in your community and your stall sells out within hours of opening. Other experienced fishers come to you to discuss techniques and observations about fish migration patterns. You have one or two stories about sea monsters you've seen and know several more told by others you trust in your trade.

Holdings:

- A new or well cared for two-person rowboat
- An apprentice fisher
- A lucrative fishing spot you've told no one else about

Progression: Catch a rare or unheard-of sea creature, develop a new fishing technique, or recover the remains of another ice fisher so they can be properly laid to rest

RANK 3 – SKIPPER

You now run a team of apprentices and less experienced fishers. Although you do plenty of fishing on or near the shore, or in freshwater rivers and lakes, you also fish on sea excursions that last days or weeks. You are known for the consistency of your hauls and the occasional rare or exceptional quality catch. There are rumors your talent for catching fish is a result of a tryst you once had with a merfolk.

Holdings:

- A sailing vessel large enough for a crew of four to eight people
- A license to dock at regional ports for no additional cost
- A medium sized stand in the market
- A humble house big enough for a small family

Progression: Defeat a monster or particularly vicious sea creature, such as a shark or giant squid, that threatens you and your crew

RANK 4 – LODGE MASTER

Novice and experienced fishers alike seek your counsel and teaching. You have established a lodge where you train others in the techniques you've mastered. Merchants visit your lodge to offer bounties for certain varieties of fish and sometimes even a specific sea monster. You have cornered most of the local fish market with your mastery of fishing and deep knowledge of regional bodies of water.

Holdings:

- A sailing vessel large enough for a crew of two dozen people
- A loyal crew large enough to operate your vessel
- The master suite in a fishing lodge on a lake or the coast

**Musher**

The snowy terrain of Valika can be treacherous, but you have learned to traverse it with speed and grace using animal-drawn sleds and sleighs. The most common animals are dogs and reindeer. You have learned to care for, raise, and train these animals to draw such vehicles, as well as how to maintain and repair the vehicles themselves. As a musher, you might find work as a courier, delivering bulk goods, or transporting people from one isolated community to another. Even in the most inclement weather, you can drive your team long distances to finish the job.

Skill Proficiency: Animal Handling

Tool Proficiency: Snow vehicles

Additional Equipment: A backpack, a flask, a mess kit, 10 days of rations, a signal whistle, a two-person tent, and a pouch filled with dried meats

PACK MASTER

When you spend at least an hour with up to 10 domesticated or herbivore animals and succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, the animals become friendly towards you. They remain friendly to you until you or your companions do something to harm them or you are away from them for 8 hours or more. If the beast is familiar with commands, or can be trained to understand commands, it obeys your commands to the best of its ability while it is friendly to you, unless doing so would cause it harm, put it in danger, or overtly harm another creature it is friendly towards.

RANK 1 – BEAST KEEPER

Although you know how to drive a sled, your primary responsibilities are caring for the dogs and reindeers of more experienced mushers. Although less exciting than carving through the ice and snow, caring for the animals is a responsibility of vital importance. These animals must be kept healthy, in shape, and well trained if they are going to successfully pull passengers and cargo across Valika.

Holdings:

- A snow vehicle big enough for one person and 200 pounds of cargo
- A small pack of dogs
- Reins and harnesses

Progression: You progress when your master promotes you or when no one else is available to make an important delivery and you must step up to do it yourself.

RANK 2 – DOG SLEDDER

You have gained sufficient experience dog sledding that it is now your primary responsibility. You may dog sled competitively as entertainment for others but more likely you are involved in the delivery of parcels from your own community to nearby settlements. On rare occasions, especially when time is of the essence, you may transport a client or participate in a search and rescue.

Holdings:

- A snow vehicle big enough for two people or one person and 400 pounds of cargo

- A large pack of well-trained and well-fed dogs
- A cabin to live and work out of with an attached kennel for the dogs

Progression: Win a dog sledding competition, rescue someone who would have died of exposure otherwise, reliably deliver parcels and packages between surrounding settlements for a year or more.

RANK 3 – SLEIGH DRIVER

You've proven yourself as a dog sledder and have now taken on the more expensive, and lucrative, responsibilities as a sled driver. If you live in an isolated settlement, you are one of the most important members of the community as your sleigh is the most reliable and safest method for getting people and resources in and out. If you live in a large settlement, you may work with apprentice dog sledders who move smaller hauls while you move cargo in bulk or transport the wealthy who wish to travel in style.

Holdings:

- A snow vehicle big enough for four people or one person and up to 1,200 pounds of cargo
- A few reindeer
- A small farmstead where you can raise, feed, and care for reindeer

Progression: Fight off a deadly wild animal or monster to protect your cargo or passengers, escort a noble or other person of influence a long distance safely, successfully drive a sled or sleigh on a route famously believed to be too dangerous for travel.

RANK 4 – TUNDRA TRAILBLAZER

Your name is synonymous with dog sledding and sleigh driving throughout Valika. When you aren't finding new routes across the snow-covered region, you're training future dog sledders and sleigh drivers. The wealthy and powerful ask for you by name when they need to travel by sleigh.

Holdings:

- A snow vehicle big enough for eight people or one person and up to 2,500 pounds of cargo
- A herd of reindeer
- A large farmstead



Skald

Although literacy has increased in Valika since ages past, there is still a strong oral tradition of reciting legends and tales of old. Skalds are the keepers of this tradition. Accuracy is highly important to skalds, as well as Valikans generally, so storytellers in this tradition focus first on memorizing the facts and sequence of events in any legend they hope to retell. Once they have mastered the facts, a skald begins crafting their own version of the story by including a series of flourishes and details that are understood by the listeners to be non-canonical additions to the tale. Some skalds become popular for weaving a particular detail or theme into each of the legends they tell, while others become popular for their voice acting, ability to emote, or evocative gesticulation.

Skill Proficiency: History

Languages: Two additional languages

Additional Equipment: A tankard, ink, an ink pen, and 10 pieces of parchment containing your own storytelling notes

LOCAL LEGENDS

When you spend an hour retelling famous legends and stories and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check, the people who listened to your tales are willing to share any local information that might conceivably help you craft a new story about their community. Examples of such information might be long-held family secrets, the name of the settlement's biggest crime boss, or the specific location a local hero was buried after her untimely death.

RANK 1 – LOREKEEPER

You are an apprentice to a more experienced storyteller. Your role as an apprentice is to dedicate yourself to memorizing historical facts as taught by your master. Occasionally, when your master performs, you are asked to tell a short interlude story, or a small segment of a larger overall story being told by your master.

Holdings:

- A donkey, old reindeer, or some other affordable mount
- A room at an inn you're welcome to stay in free of charge, provided you tell a story each night you stay

Progression: Impress your master or a wealthy sponsor with the accuracy of your knowledge of legends.

RANK 2 – STORYTELLER

You have begun to find your own voice as a storyteller and effortlessly weave in details that draw listeners' attention. You can be found most nights at a tavern or other public venue spinning tales for all who would listen. Many skalds never make it past this point, content to share their deep knowledge of Grarjord's history for food, drink, and lodging as they travel the land.

Holdings:

- An apprentice
- A horse, reindeer, or other mount of good quality
- A small trunk of props to use when telling stories

Progression: Discover a previously unknown fact of a known legend or research and fashion a new story based in real historical events.

RANK 3 – LEGEND SEEKER

You are no longer content with telling familiar stories and now seek out new legends or new facts of well-known sagas. Though you still spend much of your time telling stories to captive audiences, you also spend time exploring ancient ruins and the sites of major events, hoping to glean new information about the happenings there. An especially talented skald can turn a minor piece of local folklore into the next must-hear story.

Holdings:

- Your own copy of the Lord Edda
- A rare historical artifact you discovered on your journeys
- Free lodging in any settlement provided you perform a story or two every week

Progression: Spend years traveling Valika learning about regional histories, visiting historical sites, and regaling audiences with your tales.

RANK 4 – GRAND SKALD

You are a living encyclopedia of Valika's history. As such, the various political factions of the region consider you a person of honor and show you deference, provided you don't explicitly take a side in their conflicts. The common

folk see you as a conduit between the grim present and the legendary past, a symbol of hope that the heroes that once saved the world may one day return or that new ones inspired by your tales might take their place.

Holdings:

- Dozens of less experienced skalds vying to learn from you
- A standing invitation to tutor the children of the wealthy at a rate that would afford you a luxurious lifestyle
- A book of your own writing that serves as an addendum and expansion of the Lord Edda

TALENT LIST

Valikan

Beast Whisperer *
Calloused Hands *
Camper **
Disciplinarian *
Drunkard *
Forecaster *

Hard-Working *
Local Historian *
Navigator *
Solidarity **
Temperature Tolerance **
Wayfarer *

* Talents noted with an asterisk can be found in the *Grim Hollow Campaign Guide*.

** Talents noted with two asterisks can be found in the *Grim Hollow Player's Guide*.





Valikan Subclasses

Survival in Valika requires different skills than surviving in the more civilized areas of the south. The traditions and techniques of raiding, for example, call for those who might be adept with magic to be better with weapons than a typical arcanist.

The subclasses provided here include a few options that use the format of standard Fifth-Edition subclasses. However, a new type of subclass is also introduced, one that is powered by a new feature called Martial Maneuvers. These allow classes that are normally focused on simple martial powers to add a bit of mystery and flair to their abilities. Alternatively, classes that generally rely only on spells gain some abilities that provide them with a bit of front-line power.

These Martial Maneuvers draw upon two elements: maneuvers and maneuver points. A specific set of maneuvers are provided for each subclass. Each maneuver costs a set amount of maneuver points to use. The pool of maneuver points grows as the character gains levels, and many classes have a way to spend other class resources (such as spell slots) to gain extra maneuver points.

Maneuvers and Multiclassing. Multiclassing with more than one class with maneuver mechanics is not recommended. The interactions between subclasses and expanded maneuver point pools can lead to significant power imbalance between characters. However, if GMs allow characters to multiclass in this way, a character can pool their maneuver points from each subclass and spend them on any set of maneuvers they have.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS AND THE SAGAS

The warriors of Valika are masters of the blade. Though clan chieftans often have soothsayers, diviners, or druids to warn them of danger, magic is nonetheless treated with suspicion. Magic is the realm of trickery and deceit—the domain of monsters and evil spirits, unless that magic is wielded by warriors.

Warriors are strong and courageous, unlike cowardly and duplicitous mages. This chapter details the fighting stances and maneuvers used by the warriors of Valika. A warrior's martial prowess melds blade skill and magic together into an art worthy of an arcane warrior.

Myriad myths surround the origin of these disciplines, and each clan claims that one of the disciplines was invented by their clan's legendary hero. These disciplines are often called “sagas” by those who use them because they see themselves as following in the footsteps of great past heroes while carving their own heroic tale. Over many years, the Valikan clans have learned the martial disciplines used by their rival clans, with their warriors using a variety of styles, though most clans follow a single discipline.

Ancient Heroes

Ten Sagas are told and retold throughout the Valikan Clans. Each saga focuses on a mighty hero or cunning trickster famous (or infamous) throughout Grarjord. Though these heroes are remembered by the farmers and traders of Valika for their mythic deeds, warriors and raiders also remember them for their combat styles. These heroes were renowned for their unique combat styles, and the clans have expanded upon the maneuvers demonstrated by these heroes in the sagas into full schools of bladecraft.



Barbarian: Path of the Carrion Raven

Barbarians who walk the Path of the Carrion Raven wield the warrior spirit of a blood-soaked raven blessed with the gift of speech. This carrion bird aided Kentigern on his quest to slay Gormadraig so that the raven might feast on the heart of the Prismatic Wyrn. This path is popular among wanderers of the inhospitable wastes of Valika—yet most remain mistrusted outsiders, even among the hardened Valikan clans. They don't mind.

Barbarians who embody the Saga of the Carrion Raven prefer the company of beasts. This close proximity to animals grants them deeper insights into the raven's search for power and survival at any cost. To them, it's a high compliment. To other Valikans, it marks them as outsiders to be feared and kept away at spearpoint.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn an additional maneuver at 6th, 10th, and 14th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your barbarian class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Path of the Carrion Raven table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

USING MANEUVERS

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Constitution modifier

PATH OF THE CARRION RAVEN

BARBARIAN LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	6	3
4th	8	3
5th	10	3
6th	12	4
7th	14	4
8th	16	4
9th	18	4
10th	20	5
11th	22	5
12th	24	5
13th	26	5
14th	28	6
15th	30	6
16th	32	6
17th	34	6
18th	36	6
19th	38	6
20th	40	6

FERAL CELERITY

3rd-level Path of the Carrion Raven feature

Your rage grants you animalistic speed of action. As part of the bonus action to enter a rage, you can make one weapon attack. Additionally, you gain the ability to concentrate on maneuvers, even while you are raging. You still cannot concentrate on spells while raging.

RAVEN'S SPIRIT

6th-level Path of the Carrion Raven feature

You gain proficiency in the Animal Handling skill. If you are already proficient in it, you gain proficiency in your choice of one the following skills instead: Athletics, Nature, or Survival.

In addition, you can cast *speak with animals* as a ritual.

FEROCIOUS RAGE

10th-level Path of the Carrion Raven feature

When you enter your rage, creatures of your choice within 10 feet that can see you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your Martial Maneuvers save DC. On a failed saving throw, the creature is frightened of you until the end of its next turn.

VIOLENT HUNGER

14th-level Path of the Carrion Raven feature

When you deal damage to a creature with a weapon attack and roll the maximum result of one of the damage dice, you can spend 1 maneuver point to roll another die of the same type and add its result to the damage dealt by the attack. You can do this once per attack.

CARRION RAVEN MANEUVERS

The Saga of the Carrion Raven speaks of a talking raven with the power to transform into any animal he had eaten to wield their powers. His tale intersects with Kentigern and his companions on their journey to slay the Great Prismatic Wyrms Gormadraig, where the raven appeared, offering to help in exchange for the chance to eat the Prismatic Wyrms' heart. As the story goes, the raven taught the heroes how to fight with the ferocity of the north's fiercest predators and fly with the speed of their fastest birds.

Warriors who practice the Saga of the Carrion Raven trust in their instincts, and embody the cunning, resilience, and power of the natural world. Masters of this saga learn to knit their flesh, take flight, and even adopt the shape of the beasts they've so long emulated.

These maneuvers can be used by anyone who studies the Carrion Raven saga.

Apex Dominance (5 points)

You can use an action and spend 5 maneuver points to attempt to sunder your enemy with excessive force. When you do, a creature within your reach must succeed on a Strength saving throw. If the creature is currently grappled by you, it has disadvantage on this saving throw.

On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 6d10 force damage. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage. If damage from this maneuver reduces a creature to 0 hit points, it immediately dies as you rip it apart.

Axolotl's Regeneration (2 or 6 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 or 6 maneuver points to regenerate your body. When you do, you regain 1d12 + your Constitution modifier hit points. If you spent 6 points, you also regrow a lost limb or organ of your choice.

Bestial Transformation (8 points)

You can use an action and spend 8 maneuver points to cast *polymorph* targeting only yourself without providing material components. However, you can only transform into a beast with a CR of half your level or lower, and you retain your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. Constitution is your spellcasting ability when you cast the spell in this way.

Call of the Beast Lord (5 points)

You can use an action and spend 5 maneuver points to howl, calling a bestial spirit to your aid. When you do, choose any beast with a CR equal to or less than your level to appear in an unoccupied space of your choice within 60 feet.

A beast conjured in this way disappears when it is reduced to 0 hit points, after 10 minutes, or when you lose concentration on this maneuver (as if you were concentrating on a spell). The summoned creature is friendly to you and your companions. The creature shares your initiative but takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys your verbal commands (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to the creature, it defends itself from hostile creatures by taking the Dodge action.



Carrion Feast (4 points)

You can use an action and spend 4 maneuver points to feast on an enemy's waning life. When you use this maneuver, make a melee weapon attack. On a hit, the attack deals an additional 5d6 necrotic damage and you gain temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Falcon's Glide (1 point)

When you fall, you can use your reaction and spend 1 maneuver point to slow your fall to 60 feet per round for 1 minute. If you land before this time elapses, you take no falling damage.

In addition, as a bonus action on each of your turns for the duration of this maneuver, you can spend 1 additional maneuver point to gain a fly speed of 30 feet until the end of the turn.

Feral Fighting (1 point)

You can use a bonus action and spend 1 maneuver point to fight with beastlike fury. When you do, make a single unarmed strike against a creature. On a hit, you can roll 1d8 in place of the normal damage of your unarmed strike.

Hibernating Bear Recuperation (5 points)

You can spend an action and 5 maneuver points to put yourself into a deep and restful sleep for the next 10 minutes. During this time you have resistance to all damage except psychic and, when you take damage, you can choose to remain asleep or wake up. If you sleep for the entire 10 minutes, you gain the benefits of having completed a short rest, immediately end any poison affecting you, and lose one level of exhaustion.

At the end of this sleep, you can spend and roll any number of Hit Die, adding your Constitution modifier to each Hit Die rolled, gaining temporary hit points equal to the total.

Pack Leader (1 point)

When an enemy creature within 5 feet of you is attacked, you can use your reaction and spend 1 maneuver point to make a melee attack at the same enemy creature. When you do, the triggering attack has advantage.

Predator's Howl (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 maneuver points to emit a terrifying howl. Two creatures of your choice within 30 feet of you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is frightened until the start of your next turn. Each time the frightened creature takes damage from weapon attacks, they take an additional 1d6 psychic damage.

Shape of the Behemoth (3 points)

As an action you can spend 3 maneuver points to embody the power of nature's largest beasts for 1 minute. When you do, your size increases by one category to a maximum size of Large. In addition, for the duration your reach increases by 5 feet, your weapon attacks deal an additional 1d6 damage, and you gain 1d6 temporary hit points at the start of each of your turns. This maneuver ends early if you lose concentration (as if you were concentrating on a spell).

Slippery Otter (1 point)

You can use a bonus action and spend 1 maneuver point to embody the grace and endurance of an otter in water. For the next hour, you have a swimming speed of 30 feet and can hold your breath for a number of minutes equal to twice your Constitution ability score. While in the water, you can take the Dash action as a bonus action.

Snout of the Bloodhound (1 point)

You take a minute and spend a maneuver point to attune your senses to your surroundings, enhancing your senses of smell, sight, and hearing for the next hour. During this time, you gain the following benefits:

- You have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Wisdom (Survival) checks to track
- You add your proficiency bonus to initiative checks
- You do not have disadvantage on attack rolls against invisible creatures

Stoic Oxen Spirit (2 points)

When you become charmed or frightened, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to immediately end the triggering charmed or frightened condition. In addition, you have advantage on attack rolls against the creature who attempted to charm or frighten you until the end of your next turn.

Trampling Bull (3 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 3 maneuver points to channel the charging bull, moving up to your speed. While moving this way, you can move through the space of creatures of your size or smaller, but you must end your movement in an unoccupied space.

Each creature whose space you moved through must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and take bludgeoning damage equal to 1d8 + your Strength modifier.

Tusks of the Rampaging Mammoth (3 points)

You can use an action and spend 3 maneuver points to strike an enemy with the overwhelming force of a rampaging mammoth. When you do, make a melee weapon attack against a creature within 5 feet. On a hit, you deal 3d12 damage in addition to your attack's normal damage. If the creature is Huge or smaller, you push the creature 15 feet.

Woolly Beast's Hide (2 or more points)

When you are hit by an attack, you can use your reaction and spend 2 or more maneuver points to use the resilient parts of your body to shield your vulnerabilities from harmful damage. When you use this maneuver, roll 1d6 for every 2 points you spend to use this maneuver and reduce the damage from an attack by the result. After taking any remaining damage, you also gain temporary hit points equal to the result of the roll.



Bard:

College of Legends

Bards of this college study the Lord Edda, which holds the sagas of Valika's ancient heroes and can harness these legendary spirits to enhance the abilities of their allies. These bards pursue the mastery of storytelling as an art form to inspire their companions to emulate these legends.

When the bards of this college aren't counseling their companions with wisdom from the Lord Edda, they often adventure to recover lost artifacts from those stories or investigate the alleged locations of the beloved sagas. These bards don't try to reconcile the truth that the lessons of some of the sagas contradict each other. For them, the apparent contradictions are just another facet of the wisdom that can be gleaned by studying the legends.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

3rd-level College of Legends feature

You have trained as the heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know two maneuvers of your choice from any martial maneuvers from any other subclass with this feature. You learn one additional maneuver at 6th and 14th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the College of Legends table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your bard magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert bard spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3
6th-7th	4
8th-9th	5

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

COLLEGE OF LEGENDS

BARD LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	3	2
4th	4	2
5th	5	2
6th	6	3
7th	7	3
8th	8	3
9th	9	3
10th	10	3
11th	11	3
12th	12	3
13th	13	3
14th	14	4
15th	15	4
16th	16	4
17th	17	4
18th	18	4
19th	19	4
20th	20	4

MANY STORIES INSPIRATION

3rd-level College of Legends feature

Starting at 3rd level, you become proficient in your choice of History or Religion, and you can add your Charisma modifier on checks to recall information using either skill.

Additionally, when you use a maneuver, you can expend one use of Bardic Inspiration. Roll a Bardic Inspiration die and subtract the result from the maneuver point cost of the maneuver. Once you use this feature, you can't use it on a maneuver from the same saga until you finish a long rest.

SAGA SAVANT

6th-level College of Legends feature

When you aren't telling stories of legendary heroes, you're rehearsing the next retelling. You learn two maneuvers of your choice. These do not count against your maximum number of maneuvers known. Each time you finish a long rest, you can replace one of the maneuvers you know as a result of this feature with a different maneuver.

LEGENDARY PROWESS

14th-level College of Legends feature

When you expend a spell slot to gain maneuver points, you gain twice as many maneuver points as normal.



Cleric: Willing Vessel

Clerics who devote themselves entirely to the tales of the past lose some of their own mortality, becoming an empty vessel to be filled by the gods. Though these gods are dead, some of their will lingers on and lives within those rare clerics who enter a state of prayer so deep that their will is no longer fully their own.

Many Willing Vessels follow in the footsteps of Limgri Lightbringer, the member of Kentigern's Seven Heroes who defeated Gormadraug. Limgri was a beacon of hope and kindness in dark times, but also a fearsome opponent on the battlefield. Harboring a spirit of divine will, Limgri was able to command the souls of those who faced them in battle, as well as stir the spirits of their allies.

DOMAIN SPELLS

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the Willing Vessel Domain Spells table. Once you gain a domain spell, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. Domain spells that don't appear on the cleric spell list are nonetheless cleric spells for you.

WILLING VESSEL DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>command, divine favor</i>
3rd	<i>augury, enhance ability</i>
5th	<i>bestow curse, tongues</i>
7th	<i>banishment, death ward</i>
9th	<i>commune, hallow</i>

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know two maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Willing Vessel Domain table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your cleric magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one cleric spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert cleric spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost after a long rest if not used.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3
6th-7th	4
8th-9th	5

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

WILLING VESSEL DOMAIN

CLERIC LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
1st	1	2
2nd	2	2
3rd	3	2
4th	4	2
5th	5	3
6th	5	3
7th	6	3
8th	6	3
9th	7	4
10th	7	4
11th	8	4
12th	8	4
13th	9	5
14th	9	5
15th	10	5
16th	10	5
17th	11	6
18th	11	6
19th	12	6
20th	12	6

DIVINE POSSESSION

1st-level Willing Vessel feature

When you take this domain at 1st level, you learn some of the talents of the entity that possesses you, gaining proficiency with martial weapons and heavy armor.

Additionally, you are safeguarded against being possessed by entities you do not willingly give yourself to. At the end of your turn, if you are possessed by a creature, that creature is forced out of you, appearing in the nearest unoccupied space that it can fit in, and the possession ends.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: DIVINE STANCE

2nd-level Willing Vessel feature

At 2nd level, your martial training allows you to develop a battle stance suffused with divine power. As a bonus action, you can enter this stance for 1 minute and choose two of the benefits below. At 6th level in this class, you gain one additional benefit, and at 18th level in this class, you gain all of the benefits.

Divine Armor. You gain a +1 bonus to your AC while in this stance.

Divine Heroism. At the end of each of your turns for the duration, you gain temporary hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

Divine Shroud. When a creature you can see would make an attack against a creature that isn't you, you can use your reaction to give that creature disadvantage on the attack roll.

Divine Punishment. When you deal damage with a melee weapon while in this stance, you can reroll any roll of 1 on the weapon's damage dice, but you must use the new roll.

Divine Resilience. The first time you would be reduced to 0 hit points while in this stance but not killed outright, instead you can drop to 1 hit point.

EXTRA ATTACK

6th-level Willing Vessel feature

At 6th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

DEVOUT SACRIFICE

8th-level Willing Vessel feature

When you reach 8th level, you learn to channel your sacrifices to bolster your allies. When you take damage from an attack from a creature you can see, you can use your reaction to target an allied creature within 30 feet of you that you can see. That creature regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt to you by the triggering attack. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency modifier, regaining all uses on a long rest.

DIVINE AVATAR

17th-level Willing Vessel feature

At 17th level, your connection to the divinity within you allows you to temporarily channel raw divine energy, like the gods of old. As an action, you can spend 6 maneuver points and become divinely empowered for 1 minute.

While empowered this way, luminous wings sprout from your back, giving you a flying speed of 60 feet. You also have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects, and you have resistance to radiant and necrotic damage.

For the duration, as an action, you can choose to either make a ranged spell attack against a creature you can see within 60 feet, dealing 6d8 radiant damage on a hit, or touch a creature within 5 feet and restore 6d8 hit points.

"When I let them possess me, I am complete, fulfilled."

- An experienced Willing Vessel

WILLING VESSEL MANEUVERS

The Saga of the Willing Vessel teaches warriors to risk their lives by zealously crusading for their ideals. Such warriors are on the front lines of every battle. Their maneuvers aid in striking with immense power and shrugging off blows that would slay a lesser warrior. They can manipulate their life force and those of their foes to grant themselves additional power.

Blessed Steel (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points and bless your armor and weapons. For 1 minute or until you lose concentration, you gain a +1 bonus to AC if you are wearing medium or heavy armor, a +1 bonus to AC if you are wielding a shield, and a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with a melee weapon you are wielding.

For each additional 2 maneuver points you spend (up to 4 additional points), increase the bonus provided for wearing armor, shields, and to attack and damage rolls by 1.

Divine Awe (1 point)

You inspire awe with your battle prowess. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point, forcing that creature to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or drop prone and become frightened of you until the end of its next turn.

Divine Edict: Destroy (4 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 4 maneuver points and enter a divine violent frenzy for 1 minute. For the duration, you have advantage on melee weapon attacks and your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 2d8 necrotic damage. At the end of your turn, you take 1d8 psychic damage if you have not made a melee weapon attack roll against an enemy creature this turn.

Divine Edict: Protect (4 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 4 maneuver points and enter a divine protective fervor for 1 minute. For the duration, allied creatures within 10 feet of you gain +2 bonus to their AC. Additionally, you can use your reaction when a creature within 10 feet of you takes damage to redirect the damage to yourself instead. You have resistance to any damage you redirect in this way. If you end your turn and are not within 10 feet of an allied creature, you take 1d8 psychic damage.

Ghostly Avenger (3 points)

You are guarded by a shred of your god's will, which appears as a ghostly figure clinging to your shoulders. As a reaction, when you take damage from an attack from a creature you can see within 30 feet of you, you can spend 3 maneuver points and manifest this will.

You gain resistance to the damage from that attack and the ghostly figure lashes out, dealing damage equal to the damage you took from the attack to the creature that made the triggering attack. This damage is radiant or necrotic (your choice).

Heretical Brand (3 points)

You strike an enemy, declaring them an offense to your god. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 3 maneuver points to mark it with a darkly burning sigil for 1 minute. While marked, you can use your bonus action to cause the creature to make a Constitution saving throw. The creature takes 2d6 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Impelled Attack (1 point)

Your faith guides your hand. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 maneuver point and make one weapon attack.

Overpowering Will (5 points)

As an action, you can spend 5 maneuver points and touch a humanoid, giant, or dragon, forcing it to succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be overwhelmed by your divine will for 1 minute or until you lose concentration.

While overwhelmed, the creature takes no actions or movement on its turns. Instead, whenever you take an attack action or move, the creature takes the same attack action or moves if it can, as directed by you. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

The affected creature's attack actions mimic your own. For example, if you hit a creature with a sword, an affected giant might use its club or slam attack.

Creatures do not move into obviously dangerous situations, like into a raging fire or off a cliff, but might move into dangerous situations they cannot perceive.

Soul Twist (2 points)

Your weapons can damage a creature's soul. When you hit a creature that isn't a construct or undead with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 2 maneuver points to deal an additional 2d6 necrotic damage to the creature and it becomes poisoned for 1 minute if it fails a Constitution saving throw.

Spirit Surge (2 points)

You bless your attack as it strikes, healing allies and dealing extra damage to foes. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 2 maneuver points to deal an additional 2d8 radiant damage, and an ally of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you regains hit points equal to this additional radiant damage.

Warded Vessel (2 points)

As danger looms, your divine connection rises to protect you. As a reaction, you can spend 2 maneuver points and reroll a failed saving throw.

Whispers of the Divine (1 point)

As an action, you can spend 1 maneuver point and present your holy symbol to afflict the mind of a creature within your reach. For up to 1 minute, the first time the creature makes an attack roll or casts a spell, it takes 2d8 psychic damage unless it succeeds on a Wisdom saving throw. This does not prevent the creature's attack roll or spell from being cast.

Cleric: Winter Domain

In the lands of the far north, winter dominates everyday life. In winter, light fails and harsh storms drive Valikans indoors to huddle around the warmth of their feeble fires. Beasts and monsters roam freely, even to the very gates of the clan settlements. Even in the warmer months, every task, from farming to raiding, is performed with the intent of preparing for the harsh winter. With the power it holds to determine the fates of all who reside in the clans (as well as the deaths of existing deities), it's no wonder there are those who have taken idolizing the harsh cold and darkness and treating it as the source of a new faith.

Priests of Winter teach that the brutal arctic climate is the source of the Valikan clans' strength. Like winter itself, hardship is inevitable, and it is through enduring times of loss and scarcity that people grow strong. The coldfire crisis and the fall of the gods have led this new faith to declare that the world is entering its own winter season, a time of strife and pain that the people of Etharis must endure to grow strong. The more extreme believers actually embrace the coming darkness, believing that the greater the suffering, the better for the world. These radicals undergo ritual scarification by exposing themselves to extreme cold, leading to a bluish-gray cast to their extremities that they refer to as the Frostbite Brand.

DOMAIN SPELLS

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the Winter Domain Spells table. Once you gain a domain spell, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. Domain spells that don't appear on the cleric spell list are nonetheless cleric spells for you.

WINTER DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
1st	<i>grease*</i> , <i>inflict wounds</i>
3rd	<i>gust of wind</i> , <i>hold person</i>
5th	<i>protection from energy</i> , <i>sleet storm</i>
7th	<i>death ward</i> , <i>ice storm</i>
9th	<i>cone of cold</i> , <i>hold monster</i>

*the spell's effect manifests as a slippery sheet of ice

BONUS CANTRIP

1st-level Winter Domain feature

When you choose this domain at 1st level, you gain the *ray of frost* cantrip if you don't already know it. This cantrip counts as a cleric cantrip for you and does not count against the number of cantrips you know.

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

1st-level Winter Domain feature

You gain proficiency with heavy armor. You also gain proficiency in the Survival skill.

CHANNEL DIVINITY: STRENGTH THROUGH SUFFERING

2nd-level Winter Domain feature

Starting at 2nd level, you can empower an ally to overcome hardship and rise to greater heights. As an action, choose a creature within 30 feet that you can see.

If the creature has less than half their hit points remaining, it gains advantage on their next attack roll before the end of your next turn, and can spend one Hit Die to regain hit points as if they just finished a short rest.

If the creature is suffering from any levels of exhaustion, they gain a +5 bonus on the damage roll for their next successful attack and lose one level of exhaustion if it hits.

BITING CHILL

6th-level Winter Domain feature

Starting at 6th level, whenever a creature you can see within 30 feet takes cold damage, you may use your reaction to grant that creature either resistance or vulnerability to that instance of damage. If the creature already has resistance or immunity to cold damage, that instance of damage ignores the resistance or immunity instead.

You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

POTENT SPELLCASTING

8th-level Winter Domain feature

Starting at 8th level, you add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with any cleric cantrip.

CHILD OF FROST

17th-level Winter Domain feature

At 17th level, you gain resistance to cold damage and learn *freezing sphere*. You may cast this spell once per long rest as a 6th level spell without spending a spell slot, and if you refrain from firing the sphere the orb it creates lasts until your next long rest. When that time expires, the orb vanishes instead of exploding.

"Valikans need the cold. It drives us. It is our strength."

- A reverent Winter Priest



Druid: Circle of Stoneraisers

Druids of this circle are pillars of strength and endurance. They are inspired by the Saga of the Stoneraiser to enhance their physical bodies with immovable power, rather than transforming into the shape of beasts.

The traditions of the Circle of Stoneraisers are some of the oldest in Valika, as evidenced by the standing monoliths scattered through the land, many of which predate Valika's oldest settlements. Countless legends surround these standing stones—with some even saying they mark the places on Gormadraig's body where the serpent was stabbed by Kentigern's spear. Even today, common folk know better than to move or deface these standing stones, lest the slumbering serpent be awakened.

Those in the Circle of Stoneraisers are able to interact with these megaliths and draw incredible strength from the power of the land itself.

CIRCLE SPELLS

Your mystical connection to the land infuses you with the ability to cast certain spells. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, you gain access to circle spells. Once you gain access to a circle spell, you always have it prepared, and it doesn't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. If you gain access to a spell that is not a druid spell, it is considered a druid spell for you.

DRUID LEVEL	CIRCLE SPELLS
3rd	<i>hold person, shatter</i>
5th	<i>glyph of warding, meld into stone</i>
7th	<i>stone shape, stoneskin</i>
9th	<i>hold monster, wall of stone</i>

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know two maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 3rd, 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your druid class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Circle of Stoneraisers table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your druidic magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one druid spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert druid spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost after a long rest if not used.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3
6th-7th	4
8th-9th	5

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

CIRCLE OF STONERAIERS

DRUID LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
2nd	2	2
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	4
6th	5	4
7th	6	4
8th	6	4
9th	7	5
10th	7	5
11th	8	5
12th	8	5
13th	9	6
14th	9	6
15th	10	6
16th	10	6
17th	11	7
18th	11	7
19th	12	7
20th	12	7

PULSE OF THE FUNDAMENT

2nd-level Circle of Stoneraisers feature

Your body and mind resonate with the elemental power of primeval earth. You gain tremorsense with a range of 30 feet. Within that range, you can effectively see anything that isn't flying, incorporeal, or behind total cover, even if you are blinded or in darkness. Moreover, you can see an invisible creature, unless the creature successfully hides from you.

Additionally, you gain one point of Constitution, and proficiency with heavy armor.

"You cannot play hide and seek with a stoneraiser. They can spot you quicker than the wind alerts the animals to your presence. The land just gives you away."

- A Valikan who lost a game

BODY OF TOWERING STONE

6th-level Circle of Stoneraisers feature

As a bonus action, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape feature to raise a hulking stone suit of heavy armor from the ground that magically binds to you. To use this bonus action, you must be standing on a surface containing stone, natural earth, or ice.

When you create the armor, it is covered with mystical glowing runes that allow it to move and bolster your physical strength and durability. While wearing the armor, you gain the following benefits:

- Your AC becomes 18 and can't be lowered.
- Your walking speed becomes 20 feet, and you can't benefit from a flying or swimming speed.
- Your melee weapon attacks count as magical for the purposes of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks.
- You have advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws.
- Your melee weapon attacks are made with advantage.

While wearing the armor, your AC cannot be increased by shields or other armor, you have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, and you immediately sink to the bottom of bodies of water and cannot swim.

The armor lasts a number of hours equal to half your druid level (rounded down). The armor then falls apart unless you expend another use of your Wild Shape feature to use this feature again. You can doff the armor as a bonus action, at which point the armor breaks and crumbles into pieces.

SECRETS OF THE STANDING STONES

10th-level Circle of Stoneraisers feature

The Circle of Stoneraisers have inducted you into their inner circle, teaching you their mastery of the monoliths that dot the Valikan landscape.

Using these secrets, you can spend 1 hour to magically raise a 10-foot tall standing stone carved with mystical runes. Any druid can activate a standing stone by touching it as an action. Standing stones have AC 18 and 44 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Once you raise a stone in this way, you can't raise another until you finish a long rest, or you spend a spell slot of 5th level or higher to do so. Additionally, you can target an existing standing stone created by yourself or another druid that you can see and make a DC 15 Wisdom check as an action. On a success, the stone is destroyed. On a failure, you can't interact with that standing stone for 8 hours.

These standing stones produce a variety of effects based on their runes, as listed below.

Stone of Night's Shroud. When activated, this stone generates an aura with a radius of 30 feet. It stays activated for 8 hours. Within this area, you and your allies gain a +5 bonus to Wisdom (Perception) checks and Dexterity (Stealth) checks, and any light (including campfires or torches) isn't visible outside the area.

Stone of Blazing Valor. When activated, this stone generates an aura with a radius of 30 feet. It stays activated for 8 hours. Within this area, you and your allies add 1d4 to your attack rolls and saving throws, and can't be frightened.

Stone of Forbiddance. When activated, this stone magically wards a door, opening, or 5 foot area within 30 feet of the stone. Creatures are instinctively aware of the forbidden passage or area, sensing a magical and soul-chilling energy once they approach within 5 feet of it. A creature that crosses the forbidden threshold or area takes 42 (12d6) necrotic damage. Once this stone deals a total of 150 points of necrotic damage, it crumbles and can't be raised again until you complete a long rest.

Stone of Passage. When activated, this stone instantly transports you and up to eight other willing creatures along an extradimensional pathway to a corresponding permanent stone elsewhere in the world. These stones must be made in pairs, and if one is broken nothing happens when the other is activated.

LIFEGUARD PATTERN

14th-level Circle of Stoneraisers feature

While Body of Towering Stone is active, any critical hit against you becomes a normal hit.

Additionally, while Body of Towering Stone is active, whenever you heal another creature, you gain the same number of hit points that creature gains.



STONERAISERS MANEUVERS

These maneuvers can be used by anyone who studies the Stoneraisers saga. The Saga of the Stoneraiser teaches warriors to become immovable pillars of strength and inscrutable intention, like the mighty standing stones that dot the Valikan landscape.

Alter the Board (3 points)

Your control of the earth allows you to alter the positions of other creatures by shifting the very ground they stand on. As a bonus action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to target a number of Large or smaller creatures that are touching the ground equal to your proficiency bonus within 60 feet. Unwilling creatures must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw to avoid being pushed up to 15 feet along the ground in any direction.

Blood from a Stone (1 point)

As a reaction, when you are hit by an attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to convert some of your pain into healing energy for your allies. If you take five points of damage or more, roll 1d6 and add your Wisdom modifier, assigning the result to a creature you can see within 60 feet. It regains that many hit points.

If you take 15 damage or more, you can spend a second maneuver point to increase this roll to 3d6. If you take 30 damage or more, you can spend a third maneuver point to increase this roll to 6d6.

Defensive Detonation (5 points)

If Body of Towering Stone is active, as an action, you can spend 5 maneuver points to cause your armor to explode, creating a shockwave of magical energy and shattered stone. When you use this maneuver, your armor is destroyed. All creatures within 30 feet of you take 10d6 force damage and fall prone.

A creature that takes damage from this maneuver must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pushed 15 feet away from you.

Diamondskin (4 points)

You reflexively harden your skin against damage. As a reaction to taking damage of any type except psychic, you can spend 4 maneuver points to gain resistance to it for that single attack.

If the damage you took was nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, you ignore it completely. If the damage was dealt by a nonmagical melee weapon, that weapon breaks unless the wielder succeeds on a Dexterity saving throw.

The stones whisper me their secrets.

- Circle of the Stoneraiser druid

Gleaming Whorl (3 points)

As an action, while Body of Towering Stone is active, you can spend 3 maneuver points to cause your armor to flare with glowing runic symbols, drawing the ire of nearby foes. Creatures within 30 feet that can see you must make a Wisdom saving throw when you use this maneuver. On a failure, they have disadvantage on all attacks that do not target you until the start of your next turn.

Creatures immune to being charmed aren't affected by this maneuver.

Hold Ground (3 points)

When standing on stone or natural earth, you can use a bonus action to spend 3 maneuver points to stomp your feet into the ground, locking yourself in place and giving yourself superior footing. Your speed becomes 0 and you have advantage on saving throws against being moved, and immunity to the prone condition for 1 minute.

Additionally, you have advantage on melee attacks while you are in this state.

You can end this maneuver as a bonus action.

Jaws of the Earth (8 points)

As an action, you can spend 8 maneuver points to cause the earth to constrict any creatures within a 10 foot radius circle you can see within 60 feet. Each creature caught in the circle when it opens must make a Strength saving throw, taking 12d6 bludgeoning damage and becoming restrained. A creature takes half damage and isn't restrained on a successful save.

A restrained creature can escape the crushing earth by using its action to make a Strength check against your maneuver save DC. On a success, it escapes and is no longer restrained. Another creature can also pry the jaws open by using its action to make a Strength check against your maneuver save DC.

Razor Burst (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to target an area of stone or a stone object no more than 5 feet in any dimension and cause it to magically explode, blasting shrapnel into the surrounding area. All creatures within 15 feet of the explosion must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d4 piercing damage on a failed save or half as much on a success.

If a Large or smaller creature is standing on the point you choose to explode, it also falls prone if it fails its Dexterity save.

Runes of Reprisal (1 point)

While Body of Towering Stone is active, the runes carved into the armor can retaliate against your enemies. As a reaction to being hit by an attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to create a blinding flash of magical light. All creatures within 10 feet of you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or take 2d6 radiant damage, and if the creature who made the triggering attack is affected, they are also blinded until the start of your next turn.

Stonespur (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to cause a blunt spike of stone, roughly 1 foot wide and 15 feet long, to erupt from the ground at a point you choose within 60 feet.

If a creature is hit by the spur, it must make a Strength saving throw. On a failure, it takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage and is thrown 20 feet away from the spur. It takes half as much damage on a success and isn't pushed. The ram cracks and falls apart when it hits a creature.

Tremorcraft (1 point)

With a subtle movement, you shift the ground beneath your opponents. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 maneuver point to target one Large or smaller creature or object touching the ground within 30 feet of you, which must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be moved 5 feet horizontally in any direction.

You can move one additional target per extra maneuver point you spend.

Uplift Ridge (2 points)

As an action, when standing on stone or natural earth, you can spend 2 maneuver points to slam your foot against the ground to create a ridge of stone that emerges from the ground and lasts for 10 minutes. The ridge is 6 inches thick, 10 feet long, and 3 feet high.

The ridge grants cover to creatures behind it. A Medium creature has half-cover, while a Medium creature that is prone, or a Small or smaller creature, has total cover.

Well of Rolling Pebbles (5 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 5 maneuver points to draw a deep breath and ground yourself, creating a supply of small rolling pebbles that draws other creatures to you until the start of your next turn. Hostile creatures within 60 feet of you must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pulled up to 30 feet toward you. If a creature ends this movement adjacent to you, you can make a single melee weapon attack against it (no action required).

Additionally, whenever any creature in this maneuver's area tries to move in a direction other than directly towards you, it must make a Strength saving throw. On a failure, its speed is reduced to 0 until the start of your next turn.

Wrecking Ball (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to manipulate the ground beneath your feet so that each of your steps launch you forward with increasing force, moving in a straight line up to your speed. While moving in this way, you can move through the space of creatures of your size or smaller, but you must end your movement in an unoccupied space. Each creature whose space you moved through must succeed on a Strength saving throw or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage and fall prone.

If you use this maneuver while Body of Towering Stone is active, it instead costs 4 maneuver points, and creatures make their Strength saving throws with disadvantage, taking 8d6 damage on a failure and falling prone.



Fighter: Blade Breaker

Fighters who emulate the legends of the Blade Breaker strive to be the embodiment of change. Their blade and warrior's spirit are tools through which they project their will upon the world in the form of martial magic. Many who follow the Saga of the Blade Breaker are stubborn, and would sooner force reality itself to bend before their desires than change their ways. Some are idealists, who have a vision for a better world and would do anything to achieve it. Others are tyrants, and see the world as putty to be molded, and all its inhabitants as mere hindrances to their ultimate glory.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Blade Breaker Chart below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength or Dexterity modifier (your choice)

BLADE BREAKER

FIGHTER LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	6	3
4th	8	3
5th	10	4
6th	12	4
7th	14	4
8th	16	4
9th	18	5
10th	20	5
11th	22	5
12th	24	5
13th	26	6
14th	28	6
15th	30	6
16th	32	6
17th	34	7
18th	36	7
19th	38	7
20th	40	7

STANCE OF THE BLADE BREAKER

3rd-level Blade Breaker feature

At 3rd level, your martial training allows you to develop a battle stance, chosen from the list below. You gain an additional stance when you reach 7th, 10th, and 15th level in this class.

When you roll initiative, you can choose to enter one stance that you know. You can also change between stances you know as a bonus action.

Adamantine Bull – You crouch low to the ground, holding your weapon close to your body, prepared to charge. While in this stance, whenever a creature of your size or smaller hits you with a melee weapon attack, you can use your reaction to push it away. The creature that

attacked you must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pushed 5 feet away from you.

At 18th level, the creature is pushed up to 10 feet instead.

Iron Punisher – You hold your weapon overhead, preparing to bring your blade down like an executioner's axe, but leaving you open to attacks. While in this stance, your melee weapon attacks have advantage, but all attacks against you also have advantage.

Additionally, at 18th level, your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 2d6 damage while in this stance.

Steel Serpent – You shift your weight forward, poised to strike like a viper. While in this stance, your reach increases by 5 feet on your turn.

At 18th level, your reach increases even when it's not your turn.

Weightless Mithral – You shift your weight to the back of your feet and prepare to move at the slightest provocation. While in this stance, you have advantage on Dexterity saving throws.

Additionally, at 18th level, you can take the Dodge action as a bonus action.

UNYIELDING DETERMINATION

7th-level Blade Breaker feature

When you reach 7th level, your unshakable will allows you to persevere through any hardship. You have advantage on saving throws made during your turn.

BREAKER OF MINDS

10th-level Blade Breaker feature

At 10th level, your prowess at shattering blades and armor extends to harming the will of your foes. If you are grappling a creature, you can spend a bonus action and up to 3 maneuver points. When you do, the grappled creature takes 1d6 psychic damage for each maneuver point you spent.

ADRENALINE RUSH

15th-level Blade Breaker feature

At 15th level, the thrill of battle resonates magically within your body. When you use your Second Wind, you also regain maneuver points equal to half your fighter level.

BLOODED CLARITY

18th-level Blade Breaker feature

At 18th level, when you become wounded, your senses heighten and your focus improves. While you have less than half your hit points, you add a d10 to the first attack roll or saving throw you make each turn.

Additionally, while you have less than half your hit points, maneuvers you use cost 1 less maneuver point to use (minimum 1 point).

BLADE BREAKER MANEUVERS

These maneuvers can be used by anyone who studies the Blade Breaker saga. Tales of the Blade Breaker focus on his relentless determination, which granted him seemingly inexhaustible strength and a mystical ability to shape reality.

Arcing Iron (1 or more points)

You swing your weapon in a wide arc, catching additional foes. As a bonus action, you can spend 1 or more maneuver points to empower your next melee attack this turn. When you make that attack, make an additional attack against each additional creature within your reach, spending 1 maneuver point per additional creature targeted.

Armor-Crushing Blows (4 points)

When you hit a creature with an attack, if it is wearing armor, you can spend 4 maneuver points and deal no damage with that attack. Instead, the target must make a Dexterity or Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, their armor is damaged. A creature with damage armor has its AC reduced by 2. If this maneuver is used on damaged armor, that armor is destroyed or otherwise rendered unusable. This maneuver has no effect on natural or magical armor.

Blade Breaking Blow (4 points)

When you hit a creature with an attack, if it is wielding a weapon, you can spend 4 maneuver points and deal no damage with that attack. Instead, the target must make a Strength or Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, one of their weapons is damaged. A damaged weapon deals half as much damage. If this maneuver is used on a damaged weapon, that weapon is destroyed or otherwise rendered unusable. This maneuver has no effect on natural or magical weapons.

Blade of Eternal Demise (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points and imbue your weapon with magic and declare a single creature. For the next 8 hours, that weapon is magical and if it deals damage to the declared creature, it also reduces the target's maximum hit points by same amount. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest.

If the declared creature dies from damage dealt by the imbued weapon, it cannot be returned to life by magic for as long as the weapon is touching the creature.

Commanding Grasp (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points and attempt to grab a creature at a distance. Choose a creature of your size or smaller within 30 feet that you can see. The target must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be teleported to an unoccupied space next to you and become grappled by you.

Contest of Wills (1 point)

As a bonus action, you can spend 1 maneuver point to face down a creature you can see that can see you in a contest of wills. Make a Charisma (Intimidation) check contested by the target's Charisma (Intimidation). The

creature that succeeds has advantage on attack rolls against the other creature until the end of its next turn.

Disarming Swipe (2 points)

You can target your foe's weapon instead of their body. When you hit with a melee attack, you can spend 2 maneuver points and deal no damage with that attack. Instead, the target must succeed on a Strength or Dexterity saving throw (its choice) or be disarmed. A disarmed creature drops any weapons or shields it is holding.

Helmsplitter (4 points)

When you hit a creature with an attack, you can spend 4 maneuver points and that creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become stunned until the end of its next turn. If you had advantage on the attack, the target has disadvantage on the saving throw.

Iron Tempest (4 points)

As an action, you can spend 4 maneuver points and make a weapon attack against a creature. Until the end of your turn, whenever you hit with a weapon attack, it deals 2d6 additional damage and you can make an additional number of attacks equal to your proficiency bonus, but each bonus attack must be against a different target.

Refusal to Bleed (1 point)

As a reaction when you take damage, you can spend 1 maneuver point to roll a d10. Add your fighter level to the number rolled and reduce the damage by that total.

If the triggering damage is from an attack, you can spend 3 additional maneuver points to reduce all damage from the creature that attacked you by the same total until the start of your next turn.

Steely Determination (1 point)

When you use your Second Wind, you can spend 1 maneuver point and regain an additional number of hit points equal to your fighter level.

Unstoppable Missile (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points and throw a melee weapon you are wielding, affecting an area the size of a 5-foot-wide line that is 30 feet long. Each creature in the line must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take damage equal to one roll of that weapon's damage dice plus your Strength or Dexterity modifier (your choice).

For each creature that takes damage from this maneuver, you can spend 1 maneuver point and that creature takes an additional 2d6 damage of the weapon's type.

Wall of Blades (2 points)

When you are hit with a weapon attack, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to make a weapon attack against the creature attacking you. You can replace your AC with the result of this attack roll until the beginning of your next turn, including against the triggering attack, potentially causing it to miss.

Fighter:

Mammoth Hunter

The inhospitable north is teeming with alpha predators, huge creatures that don't need vegetation to survive: their prey are the smaller creatures that prowl the tundra. And you are one of those smaller creatures.

Specialized hunters make stalking and killing these dangerous creatures their prey, training themselves in surviving in harsh conditions, dealing with hostile terrain, and tracking the large beasts to strike at the most opportune moments.

These hunters can feed their clanmates for weeks on the meat of these creatures. Their parts are often used in crafting the tools of survival. Some practitioners of magic might even barter valuable resources for pieces of the beast. Regardless, the beasts are valuable when dead and a threat when alive.

CAUTIOUS ATTACKER

3rd-level Mammoth Hunter feature

When you choose this archetype at 3rd level, you are specially trained to fight massive foes. Gain the following benefits against creatures of Large size or larger:

- Once during your turn, you can deal an additional 1d6 damage when you hit with a weapon attack. This increases to 1d8 at 10th level and 1d12 at 15th level.
- You have advantage on ability checks made to escape from a grapple or avoid being trampled.
- You have advantage on Strength or Dexterity saving throws triggered by nonmagical attacks of Huge or larger creatures.
- Gain advantage on Intelligence (Nature) and Wisdom (Survival) checks when investigating their habitats.

CAUTIOUS APPROACH

7th-level Mammoth Hunter feature

Starting at 7th level, you know the risks of a predator's devastating attacks, and you master the art of avoiding the most dangerous blows of your opponents. When you would suffer a critical hit by a foe's melee weapon attack, you can use a reaction to make the attack a normal hit instead. In addition, if the creature is Huge or larger, you can make a weapon attack against that creature as part of the reaction.

FRIENDLY FORCES

10th-level Mammoth Hunter feature

At 10th level, you gain the ability to maximize the coordination of attacks with your allies. When you use your Action Surge, all allies within 30 feet that can hear you may make a weapon attack as a reaction.



MAMMOTH SLAYER

15th-level Mammoth Hunter feature

Starting at 15th level, you can use the extra damage dice from Cautious Attacker on each successful weapon attack rather than once per turn.

HEROIC SACRIFICE

18th-level Mammoth Hunter feature

Starting at 18th level, you learn how to make one last-ditch effort to bring down a foe. As a bonus action, you can expend up to 10 of your Hit Dice to bolster your next attack. If that attack hits, add the Hit Dice to the attack's damage. The Hit Dice are expended whether the attack hits or misses. These dice are not doubled on a critical hit.

Immediately after the attack is resolved, you must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 10 + the number of Hit Dice expended. On a failed save, you fall unconscious with the effort for 1 minute. This ability cannot be used again until you complete a short or long rest.



Monk: Way of the Dying Light

Monks who follow this tradition understand that strength is weakness, and self-sacrifice is the surest path to victory.

The Way of the Dying Light believes that mortal flesh is intrinsically impure, and only true death can ultimately purge one's everlasting soul of sin. Their gruesome practices and strict punishments are considered barbaric by many but have made them a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. Monks who follow the Way of the Dying Light

are taught to welcome death, to rejoice in suffering, and to strike at evil when least expected; the moment in which all seems lost.

Monks within the sect of the Dying Light take stringent vows when they are initiated into a monastery. These vows gradually teach them to embrace the sensationless void of death, through vows of silence, vows of sightlessness, extreme fasting, and isolation. Some even swear off touch by daily consuming a tincture that numbs their sense of touch.

One of the Seven Heroes' companions, a being known as the Dying Light, was said to have taken vows that allowed her to remove herself from all mortal sensation, and travel between the realms of life and death. Some legends even say she saved Kentigern from death, knowing that it was not yet his time. No monk since has successfully followed in her footsteps. All who deaden their senses have simply died—an event that is nevertheless celebrated by their peers.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers.

A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Way of the Dying Light table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Transform Ki Points. Your ki can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend 1 ki point to gain 1 additional maneuver point. Up to your proficiency bonus worth of ki points can be converted to maneuver points per long rest. These additional points are lost after a long rest if not used.

“What could bring more honor to anyone than their death! If only everyone treated death with the same sanctity that they treat life. Our desire to sacrifice and bleed for a cause is just as powerful as the hope for living another day. Our strength bleeds!”

- A Way of the Dying Light monk

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

WAY OF THE DYING LIGHT

MONK LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	6	3
4th	8	3
5th	10	4
6th	12	4
7th	14	4
8th	16	4
9th	18	5
10th	20	5
11th	22	5
12th	24	5
13th	26	6
14th	28	6
15th	30	6
16th	32	6
17th	34	7
18th	36	7
19th	38	7
20th	40	7

REVELATION OF PAIN

3rd-level Dying Light feature

As you lose hit points, you turn the burden of suffering into an advantage. The table below shows what happens as your hit points are reduced. These effects do not stack.

REMAINING HIT POINTS	EFFECT
Lower than your hit point maximum	You have a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls with unarmed strikes.
Lower than half your hit point maximum	You have a +3 bonus on attack and damage rolls with unarmed strikes.
1 hit point remaining	You have a +5 bonus on attack and damage rolls with unarmed strikes.
0 hit points remaining	As a reaction, you can spend 1 ki point to regain 1 hit point when you are reduced to 0 hit points. You regain this ability when you finish a short rest.

SCARS OF PENANCE

3rd-level Dying Light feature

You gain proficiency with whips and flails. These weapons also count as monk weapons for you.

Additionally, when you are wearing no armor and wielding no shield, you revel in the pain of combat. When you take damage from a weapon attack, once per round, you gain a +2 bonus to your AC until the start of your next turn.

MORTIFICATION

6th-level Dying Light feature

When you are hit by an attack, you can use your reaction and choose to take half damage from the attack. You regain ki points based on the damage resisted, based on the table below:

KI POINT RECOVERY

DAMAGE ABSORBED	KI POINTS RECOVERED
5 or less	1
6–10	2
11–20	3
21–30	5
31–50	10
51–100	15
Over 100	20

Once you use this ability, you cannot use it again until you take a short or long rest.

SALVATION IN SORROW

11th-level Dying Light feature

A voice of redemption spurs you on, driving you to keep fighting even when you are in the pits of agony. If you have fewer hit points than half your hit point maximum (ignoring temporary hit points), you may, as an action, spend ki points to gain temporary hit points.

You gain a number of temporary hit points equal 1d10 x the number of ki points you spend.

MARTYR'S ALTAR

17th-level Dying Light feature

Death is your final act of service. When you die, you release a cry of anguish that shocks your enemies and emboldens your allies. Enemy creatures within 60 feet of you are stunned for one round, and allied creatures within 60 feet of you regain all their hit points.

DYING LIGHT MANEUVERS

These maneuvers can be used by anyone who studies the Dying Light saga. The Saga of the Dying Light teaches warriors to accept the inevitable and survive despite hardship. Inspired by the teachings of an ascetic who transcended the realms of life and death, this saga's maneuvers involve turning a foe's attacks against them, mirroring their motions, and allowing yourself to be put in harm's way, drawing strength from loss.

Agonizing Lash (3 points)

The bite of your weapon inflicts incredible pain. When you hit a creature with an attack, you can spend 3 maneuver points to force it to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature becomes wracked with agonizing pain until the start of your next turn. While in this state, the creature can't take reactions, and can only do one of the following on its turn: use its movement, take an action, or take a bonus action.

If you use this maneuver with a flail, it deals an extra 2d8 damage.

Bitter Blood (4 points)

Your blood magically becomes acidic and deadly to others. When a creature within 5 feet of you deals damage to you with a melee weapon attack, you can use your reaction to spend 4 maneuver points to deal the same amount of damage to them as acid damage, and they must make a successful Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of their next turn.

Canticle of Disaster (3 points)

You chant a hymn of mourning, rhythmically mortifying your flesh with your fingernails. You can spend 3 maneuver points to activate this maneuver as an action and then maintain it by concentrating on it for up to 1 minute. For the duration, whenever a creature you can see within 60 feet makes an attack roll, you can inflict 1d10 points of slashing damage to yourself (no action required) to force it to make the attack roll with disadvantage.

Charge of the Doomed (4 points)

As an action, you can spend 4 maneuver points to move up to your speed and make one attack with advantage at the end of this movement. This attack deals an extra 2d8 damage per every opportunity attack that targeted you this turn.

Deflect Magic (5 points)

This technique allows you to deflect harmful magic with your bare hands. When you are hit by a ranged spell attack, you can spend 5 maneuver points to attempt to deflect it as a reaction. When you do so, the damage you take from the attack is reduced by 2d10 + your Dexterity modifier + your level.

If you reduce the damage to 0, you can catch the spell. If you catch a spell in this way, you take 1d4 damage of the type of damage the spell deals per level of the spell. You can then redirect it, choosing a new target within 30 feet and making an attack roll against them using your Dexterity modifier and proficiency bonus.

Final Rapture (10 points)

The fervor of battle drives you on, allowing you to ignore fatal wounds and endure until the day is won. When you are reduced to 0 hit points, you can spend 10 maneuver points as a reaction to gain the following benefits for the next 1d4 rounds:

- You remain conscious and aren't incapacitated.
- You are immune to all damage.
- You can use your reaction to end any condition on you as soon as you gain it.
- When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can end this maneuver early to cause that creature to make a Constitution saving throw. If it fails, it dies. On a success, it takes 10d10 radiant damage.

When this maneuver ends, you die.

Intercepting Throw (2 points)

You use a hostile creature's momentum against it, punishing it for the sin of carelessness. As a reaction to a creature hitting you with a melee attack, if your attacker is no more than one size larger than you, you can spend 2 maneuver points to force it to make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the attack misses instead, and the creature falls prone.

Litany of Mortality (3 points)

If you have half or fewer of your maximum hit points remaining, you can point at one creature you can see within 60 feet as an action, spend 3 maneuver points, and recite a litany that echoes with the sound of dolorous bells. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or take 1d12 psychic damage, and the next attack made against them before the end of your next turn is made with advantage.





Mark of Anguish (3 points)

When you hit with a melee attack, you spend pay 3 maneuver points as a reaction to mark the target of your attack with an unsettling glyph where your strike connected. The Mark of Anguish remains for 1 minute or until it's consumed.

Attacks against a marked creature have advantage. Additionally, a creature marked by this maneuver takes extra radiant damage equal to $2d8 +$ your Wisdom modifier the next time it's hit by an attack, after which the mark disappears.

Parting of the Veil (10 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 10 maneuver points to you utter a sacred mantra that grows in power as you near death. Each creature that you have attacked this turn that can hear you must make a Charisma saving throw.

On a failed save, a creature suffers an effect based on your current hit points; these effects are cumulative:

- **100 Hit Points or fewer:** Disadvantage on the next saving throw it makes before the start of your next turn.
- **50 Hit Points or fewer:** Disadvantage on all attack rolls for 1 minute. It can make a Charisma saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success).
- **25 Hit Points or fewer:** Vulnerability to one damage type of your choice for 1 minute.
- **10 Hit Points or fewer:** Stunned for 1d4 rounds. It can make a Charisma saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Sanguine Charity (2 points)

The pain you feel reassures you that your sinful nature is being purified, giving you the strength to carry on. As a reaction to taking damage, you can spend 2 maneuver points to gain temporary hit points equal to $1d10 +$ your level.

Turning of the Wheel (2 points)

When all seems lost, you spring to your feet with a flourish and knock your enemy down, suddenly reversing the tide of battle. As a reaction to being attacked while you are prone, you can spend 2 maneuver points to target an enemy within range and stand using no movement. If the target creature is Large or smaller, it is knocked prone, and you can make a melee attack against it.

Unnerving Flagellation (2 points)

Your disregard for your own body disquiets your enemies. As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to deal your current weapon's damage to yourself. Hostile creatures within 60 feet that can see you must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or take the same amount of damage to yourself as psychic damage. If you are using a whip or a flail, creatures make this save with disadvantage.



Paladin:

Oath of the Undying Flame

Paladins are rare among the Valikan, but those that don the heavy armor of an inspired warrior draw from the tales of the Undying Flame. This mythic hero rallied his community in the darkest winter Grarjord ever saw and tended a flame that lasted an entire winter.

Paladins that embody this saga are bolstered when fighting back-to-back, and their very presence goads their allies to superhuman feats. The fire they wield acts as a vital tool for survival in the chill north, but these warriors do not hesitate to turn it into a weapon in the name of justice.

OATH SPELLS

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed in the Oath of the Undying Flame Spells table. Once you gain access to an oath spell, you always have it prepared and these spells don't count against the number of spells you can prepare each day. Oath spells are paladin spells, regardless of whether they appear on the paladin spell list.

OATH OF THE UNDYING FLAME SPELLS

PALADIN LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>alarm, guiding bolt</i>
5th	<i>continual flame, enhance ability</i>
9th	<i>beacon of hope, elemental weapon</i>
13th	<i>aura of life, fire shield</i>
17th	<i>circle of power, flame strike</i>

CHANNEL DIVINITY

3rd-level Undying Flame feature

When you take this oath at 3rd level, you gain the following two Channel Divinity options.

Burning Blade. As an action, you can imbue a weapon with the spirit of eternal fire. For 1 minute, the weapon erupts in searing fire that emits bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light 10 feet beyond that. When you hit with an attack using the weapon, it deals additional fire damage equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1 damage). If the weapon is not already magical, it becomes magical for the duration.

You can end this effect on your turn as part of any other action. If you are no longer holding or carrying this weapon, or if you fall unconscious, this effect ends.

Warmth of the Hearth. You can use your Channel Divinity to warm the hearts and bodies of your allies, granting them resistance to winter's chill. Choose any number of creatures within 30 feet. For 1 minute, those creatures have advantage on Constitution saving throws, and whenever one of those creatures takes cold damage, that damage is reduced by an amount equal to your Charisma modifier (to a minimum of 1 damage prevented).

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, learning certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes of old is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Undying Flame Archetype table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your paladin magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one paladin spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert paladin spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost after a long rest if not used.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

HAMMER AND ANVIL

3rd-level Undying Flame feature

When an ally hits a target within 5 feet of you with an attack, you may use your reaction to immediately make a melee weapon attack against that target as well. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus, and regain all uses upon completing a short or long rest.

BLAZING STANCE

3rd-level Undying Flame feature

At 3rd level, your knowledge of the Saga of the Undying Flame allows you to develop a battle stance chosen from the list below. When you roll initiative, you can choose to enter one stance that you know. You can also change between stances you know as a bonus action.

You gain an additional stance when you reach 7th level in this class, another when you reach 15th level, and a fourth at 20th level.

Blazing Charge

As you run, your body becomes wreathed in flames. If you move at least 10 feet on your turn, you can have the flames lash out at any point during your movement. When you do, each creature within 5 feet of you must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d6 fire damage.

At 15th level, each space that you move through on your turn is set aflame with burning cinders. Until the start of your next turn, it becomes difficult terrain, and deals 2d6 fire damage to any creature that begins its turn there or enters it for the first time on its turn.

Flamebearer

Your allies' melee attacks deal extra fire damage equal to your proficiency bonus while you are within 5 feet of their target.

At 15th level, this extra damage doubles to twice your proficiency bonus.

Heroic Protection

You can protect allied creatures within 5 feet by taking on some of the harm that befalls them. When such a creature takes damage, you can choose to reduce that damage by your proficiency bonus. If you do, you lose hit points equal to your proficiency bonus.

At 15th level, the reduction equals twice your proficiency bonus.

Braced Against the Cold

The fire burning within you staves off even the grim chill of death. You don't fall unconscious while at 0 hit points, but you are still dying and making death saving throws as normal. While conscious in this way, you cannot be stabilized by a successful Wisdom (Medicine) check.

AURA OF THE HEARTH

7th-level Undying Flame feature

When you reach 7th level, you learn to share the warmth of your convictions with those around you. You and friendly creatures within 10 feet glow with fiery protection. A creature that hits one of you with a melee weapon attack takes fire damage equal to your proficiency bonus.

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

INSPIRING SHOUT

15th-level Undying Flame feature

Upon reaching 15th level, you learn to kindle the fires within your allies with words of encouragement and praise. As a bonus action on your turn, you may choose an ally within 60 feet who can hear you and bolster their resolve. The target gains 2d6 temporary hit points and can immediately expend and roll a Hit Die to regain hit points equal to the result plus their Constitution modifier. You may use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses upon completing a long rest.

OATH OF THE UNDYING FLAME

PALADIN LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	4
6th	6	4
7th	7	4
8th	8	4
9th	9	5
10th	10	5
11th	11	5
12th	12	5
13th	13	6
14th	14	6
15th	15	6
16th	16	6
17th	17	7
18th	18	7
19th	19	7
20th	20	7

DEFENDER OF THE HEARTH

20th-level Undying Flame feature

At 20th level, the spark of the Undying Flame swells in your heart. As an action, you can wreath your body in its sheltering fires. You gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You have immunity to cold damage and fire damage.
- You project an aura of flame in a 30-foot radius around you. When a creature other than yourself enters that area for the first time on its turn, or starts its turn there, choose whether it regains 2d6 hit points or takes 2d6 radiant damage.
- Activating a maneuver costs 1 fewer maneuver point, to a minimum of 1.

Once you use this feature, you cannot use it again until you complete a long rest. However, you may expend 6 maneuver points to use this feature again before completing a long rest.



UNDYING FLAME MANEUVERS

The Saga of the Undying Flame teaches warriors to protect their allies and draw strength from them. These maneuvers grow in power the more allies such a warrior is surrounded by, and allows them to command their allies with their deep understanding of battle tactics.

Clarion Call (4 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 4 maneuver points to issue a rallying call to all your allies. When you activate this maneuver, and again as a bonus action on each of your turns for 1 minute, choose a willing creature that can hear you within 120 feet. That creature may use its reaction and immediately take the Attack (one weapon attack only), Dash, or Use an Object action.

Defender of the Fallen (2 points)

When an ally you can see becomes incapacitated (such as being reduced to 0 hit points), you may use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to command your allies to rally around them. You and any number of allies within 60 feet who can hear you, up to a total of three creatures, may use their reaction to move up to their speed directly towards the incapacitated creature.

Engulfing Flames Smite (4 points)

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can spend 4 maneuver points to cause your weapon to burst with flame. The attack deals an additional 3d6 fire damage and the target is engulfed in flame for up to 1 minute. While engulfed in flame, the target takes 1d6 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. The creature can use its action to douse the fire, ending the effect early.

Flame of the People (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points and stoke the warmth of the Undying Flame within the hearts of your allies. All creatures of your choice within 30 feet gain 2d6 temporary hit points, resistance to cold damage, and advantage on Wisdom saving throws to avoid being frightened. These effects last for 1 minute.

Heroic Defense (1 point)

When an ally within 5 feet of you is hit with an attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point as a reaction to trade places with them, becoming the new target of the attack and potentially causing the attack to miss if your AC is above the attack roll.

Iron Hide Forging (5 points)

Calling on the Undying Flame, you temper your body into an iron-like toughness. As an action, spend 5 maneuver points. You gain 100 temporary hit points. While you have temporary hit points granted by this maneuver, you have advantage on all saving throws. You lose all temporary hit points granted by this maneuver at the end of your next turn.

Myrmidon's Pledge (2 points)

You can spend 2 maneuver points as an action, pledging to defend a friendly creature you can see within 30 feet. For up to 10 minutes, as long as the creature is within 30 feet of you, it has resistance to all damage. Each time the creature takes damage while this maneuver is active, you take an equal amount of psychic damage. This maneuver ends early if either you or the target creature is reduced to 0 hit points.

Press the Advantage (2 points)

When a creature you can see within 60 feet is knocked prone or incapacitated, you can spend 2 maneuver points to command an ally who can hear you within that range to use their reaction to move up to their speed towards the fallen creature and make one weapon attack against it.

Raid Leader's Strike (2 points)

As an action, you spend 2 maneuver points to make a single weapon attack against a creature. If you have more allies within 5 feet of you than the target has allies within 5 feet of it, this attack deals an additional 2d6 radiant damage.

Reformation Gambit (3 points)

As an action, spend 3 maneuver points and bark orders to reposition to up to five target creatures within 60 feet that can hear. Each target can immediately move up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Shield Wall (1 point)

As an action, you can spend 1 maneuver point to plant your shield and bellow a command to your allies to form up around you. Until the end of your next turn, your speed becomes zero and all attacks against you are made at disadvantage. Any ally within 5 feet of you holding a shield can choose to gain the effects of this maneuver for the duration.

Stirring Command (1 point)

You can spend 1 maneuver point as a bonus action to issue a command to strike. Choose one ally within 30 feet who can hear you. That ally can immediately use their reaction to make one melee or ranged attack against an enemy.

Sword of Light and Flame (3 points)

As an action, spend 3 maneuver points to cause one weapon you hold to erupt with flame for 1 minute. Your weapon casts bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light a further 30 feet. Choose one creature within 60 feet of you. Each time that creature takes damage within your weapon's light, it takes an additional 1d6 fire damage. Your weapon attacks deal fire damage instead of its normal damage type. Creatures reduced to 0 hit points by any attack benefitting from this additional damage cannot be raised as undead for 1 year.

Tactical Repositioning (1 point)

As a bonus action, you may spend 1 maneuver point to provide cover for a nearby ally's movement. One ally you touch can immediately move through your space and into any unoccupied space adjacent to you (no action required). This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.



Ranger: North Wind

Rangers who emulate this archetype draw their power from the winds that scour the arctic tundra. No matter where in the world they find themselves, these rangers always feel the bracing chill of the north wind at their backs.

Harnessing the power of the winds allows North Wind rangers to move swiftly across the battlefield while slowing or freezing their foes in place. Thrown weapons in particular become more deadly in their hands, flying with uncanny precision to strike their marks with the force of an avalanche. More powerful practitioners can call the winds themselves to scour the battlefield or immobilize their foes with bonds of ice.

Martial Maneuvers

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the North Wind Archetype table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your ranger magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one ranger spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert ranger spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost if unused after a long rest.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.



Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier

NORTH WIND

RANGER LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	4
6th	6	4
7th	7	4
8th	8	4
9th	9	5
10th	10	5
11th	11	5
12th	12	5
13th	13	6
14th	14	6
15th	15	6
16th	16	6
17th	17	7
18th	18	7
19th	19	7
20th	20	7

MISTRAL STANCE

3rd-level North Wind feature

At 3rd level, your knowledge of the Saga of the North Wind has allowed you to develop a battle stance chosen from the list below. When you roll initiative, you can choose to enter one stance that you know. You can also change between stances you know as a bonus action.

You gain an additional stance when you reach 7th level in this class, another when you reach 11th level, and a fourth at 15th level.

Aeolian Leap

You crouch low to the ground and prepare to leap out of the way of incoming attacks. While in this stance, whenever a creature misses you with an attack, you can use your reaction to cause the creature to take cold damage equal to your proficiency bonus, and you can move up to 5 feet in any direction.

At 15th level, you can move up to 10 feet in any direction and this movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Blizzard Cloak

You cloak yourself in the swirling flakes that reshape the snow-covered land. When a creature within 30 feet targets you with a weapon attack while you're in this stance, you can use your reaction to send a gust of snow-laden wind towards them. That creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your Martial Maneuver save DC or have disadvantage on attack rolls until the start of their next turn.

At 15th level, the creature is instead blinded until the start of its next turn if it fails the save.

Mistral Ward

You call upon the icy winds of the tundra to ward away heat. While in this stance, you have resistance to fire damage.

At 15th level, whenever you take fire damage, you can use your reaction to gain immunity to fire damage until the start of your next turn.

Zephyr Dance

You rest your weight on your tiptoes and feel the wind gather beneath you. While in this stance, opportunity attacks against you are made with disadvantage.

At 15th level, you can make a melee weapon attack as a reaction against a creature that misses you with an opportunity attack. If your attack hits, that creature's speed is reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn.

SEEK THE HORIZON

3rd-level North Wind feature

At 3rd level, you learn some of the tricks associated with your saga's hero. As an action, you can touch a melee weapon with the Thrown property and whisper an ancient traveler's prayer, doubling that weapon's range. This effect lasts for 10 minutes or until you use this feature again.

ONE WITH THE WIND

7th-level North Wind feature

When you reach 7th level, your affinity with the strong winds of the north has inured you to their effects. You ignore all penalties for being in an area of strong winds and cannot be pushed or knocked prone except through magical means, and you have advantage on saving throws against being pushed or knocked prone by magic.

BOUNCING THROW

11th-level North Wind feature

At 11th level, your mastery of throwing weapons allows you to perform seemingly impossible feats. Once per turn, when you hit a creature with a ranged weapon attack using a weapon with the Thrown property, you may immediately make a second attack against another target within 10 feet of the first with the same weapon. This attack uses the same modifiers as the original attack and, if the second attack hits, the weapon flies back to your hand at the end of your turn.

CALL THE NORTH WIND

15th-level North Wind feature

When you reach 15th level, you can summon the chill winds of the far north to your side. As an action, you may cause strong winds to swirl around you out to a distance of 120 feet for up to 10 minutes.

While the winds persist, once per turn when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you may spend 2 maneuver points to deal an extra 2d6 cold damage to that creature. The target must then succeed on a Constitution save against your Martial Maneuver save DC or have its speed halved until the start of your next turn. If the creature fails the save by 5 or more, it is restrained until the start of your next turn instead.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



NORTH WIND MANEUVERS

Those who study the North Wind saga can use these maneuvers. This saga teaches warriors to be flexible, evasive, and fight from a distance. Most of these maneuvers can be used with ranged attacks, not just melee attacks as the maneuvers of other sagas. Some even teach how to concentrate elemental power into their melee weapons to shoot blades of wind or extending the reach of their blade.

Aeolian Sentinel (1 point)

The spirit of the north wind heightens your reflexes. As an action, you can spend 1 maneuver point to quicken your weapon strikes. Until the start of your next turn, you may make a number of opportunity attacks equal to your proficiency modifier without spending your reaction.

Blades of Winter (2 points)

As a bonus action, you spend 2 maneuver points to summon and attack with a handaxe made of glacial frost. Treat this weapon as a handaxe but it deals cold damage instead of slashing damage. If you hit a creature with this handaxe, you can teleport to an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the target. The handaxe melts away at the end of your turn.

Blade Which Cuts the Wind (1 point)

You call forth the power of the scouring icy wind into your blade. As a bonus action, you spend 1 maneuver point to empower a weapon you possess. Until the start of your next turn, you can use that weapon to make ranged spell attacks (range 60/180) in place of melee weapon attacks, dealing cold damage instead of the weapon's normal damage type.

Evasive Shot (1 point)

When a creature misses you with a melee attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point and use your reaction to leap 10 feet away without provoking opportunity attacks. When you land, you can make one ranged weapon attack against that creature.

Frostbind Strike (3 points)

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can spend 3 maneuver points to summon frigid winds to howl around the creature. The target takes 2d6 cold damage, and it must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or have its speed halved for 1 minute. If the target fails its save by 5 or more, it is restrained for 1 minute instead. The target can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Glacial Impact (4 points)

You spend 4 maneuver points and take the Dash action to execute a massive leap up to your speed, landing in a burst of frost. Each creature within 10 feet of you when you end this move must succeed on a Constitution saving throw, or take 2d6 cold damage and have their speed halved until the start of your next turn. If they fail the save by 5 or more, the ice restrains them instead.

Howl of the Winds (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to yell with elemental force. Each hostile creature that can hear you within 60 feet must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A frightened creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on it with a success. Any friendly creatures within 60 feet are emboldened, gaining an additional 10 feet of movement speed for 1 minute.

Razor Wind (3 points)

As an action, you spend 3 maneuver points to rush forward on a blast of arctic wind, lashing out at the enemies in your path. You may move up to 30 feet in a straight line and make one weapon attack against each hostile creature you pass within reach. Each creature you hit must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or have its speed reduced by 10 feet until the start of your next turn. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Snowblind (2 points)

As an action, you spend 2 maneuver points, swinging your weapon in a wide arc, sending a blast of snow-laden wind at your foes. All creatures in a 30 foot cone must succeed on a Constitution saving throw, or be pushed 10 feet away from you and be blinded until the end of your next turn.

Staggering Gust (1 point)

When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to unleash a blast of wind, putting them off-balance. You can use a bonus action to make a ranged weapon attack with a thrown weapon that ignores the normal disadvantage penalty for making a ranged attack in close combat.

Storm Cudgel (4 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 4 maneuver points to invest your weapon attacks with the power of the northern gale. For 1 minute, your weapon attacks deal an additional 1d6 cold damage, and creatures hit by these attacks must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pushed 10 feet away from you by a blast of arctic wind.

Volgenreith (2 points)

When you hit with a ranged weapon attack using a thrown weapon, you can spend 2 maneuver points to call forth a powerful gust of wind, sending you flying in its wake. The wind moves you up to 60 feet directly toward your target. When you land, you can use a bonus action to make a melee weapon attack against the target if it is within your reach.

Windborne Speed (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to summon the strength of the winds to propel you forward. For 1 minute, your speed is increased by 10 feet and you may take the Dash action as a bonus action on your turn.



Rogue: Dark Envoy

Rogues who study the way of the Dark Envoy are masters of betrayal, styling themselves after Morgöng Shadestrider, the legendary diplomat and assassin. Cloaked in pleasing illusions, they grow close to their enemies and sever their trust—and their lives.

In recent times, an ambitious cult of Venin, Arch Daemon of Deception co-opted the martial techniques of Morgöng Shadestrider. This schism within students of the Dark Envoy saga is known to few Valikans. To them, assassins are all the same sort: dishonorable, cruel, and sometimes useful to have around in a raid, so long as no one finds out. The faction loyal to Shadestrider's legacy uses their talents to fortify their clans against its enemies while those following Venin seek influence and power for their own sake.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn an additional maneuver at 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Dark Envoy table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modifier

DARK ENVOY

ROGUE LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
3rd	6	3
4th	8	3
5th	10	3
6th	12	3
7th	14	3
8th	16	3
9th	18	4
10th	20	4
11th	22	4
12th	24	4
13th	26	5
14th	28	5
15th	30	5
16th	32	5
17th	34	6
18th	36	6
19th	38	6
20th	40	6

KILLER INSTINCT

3rd-level Dark Envoy feature

Your intimate familiarity with death has given you insight into how to quickly end the lives of your enemies. Your weapon attacks score a critical hit on a result of 19 or 20 on the d20 roll.

DEADLY FOCUS

9th-level Dark Envoy feature

You can spend 1 minute patiently observing an area, tracking the movements of all creatures within it and readying yourself to eliminate them all in a single instant. You become focused and must concentrate to maintain your focus as if concentrating on a spell or maneuver. Your focus ends when you spend it, when you lose concentration, or after 10 minutes pass.

You can spend your focus when you deal Sneak Attack damage on your turn (no action required). You can deal damage equal to a roll of your Sneak Attack dice to two additional creatures you observed using this feature.

The damage is of the same type as the initial attack, and the additional targets must be within reach of the melee weapon or within range of the ranged weapon you used in the initial attack. The number of additional creatures taking this damage increases to three at 14th level and four at 18th level.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

TENEBOUS STEP

13th-level Dark Envoy feature

When you start your turn in dim light or darkness, your speed increases by 10 feet until the end of your turn.

IMPROVED DEADLY FOCUS

17th-level Dark Envoy feature

You can gain focus for your Deadly Focus feature as an action instead of spending 1 minute to do so.

"I used to be good friends with a member of the Dark Envoy--well, I didn't know it then. I guess the good friend part is a lie too. They got close to me but only to kill my boss. Who's dead now. Yeah, 'good friend' probably wasn't the best term to use. I liked that boss too. Gave me extra food when there was any spare. Last day on that job was mopping up the blood. His lunch was too mangled to even have a bite of."

- *A hungry Valikan*

DARK ENVOY MANEUVERS

The Saga of the Dark Envoy recalls the exploits of Morgöng Shadestrider. Although a diplomat, Morgöng excelled in ending problems before they began—often in complete silence and under the cover of darkness. While others in Kentigern's company sought glory and honor, Morgöng achieved success with subtlety and efficiency.

Practitioners of the Saga of the Dark Envoy employ the same discretion and ruthlessness. They enfeeble their opponents, striking with a hail of attacks to end fights as quickly as they began. Masters of this saga learn to manipulate shadows and illusions, keeping their enemies too disoriented to strike back in the brief time they have left.

Blade of Obscuring Shadow (2 points)

You can envelop your weapon with writhing shadows ready to blind your foes. Spend 2 maneuver points and use an action to make a single melee attack or a ranged attack with a thrown weapon against a creature. On a hit, the target suffers the attack's normal effects and must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of its next turn.

Caitiff's Gambit (2 points)

When a creature within 5 feet of you is hit by an attack, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to seize that moment of weakness. Make a single weapon attack with advantage against the same creature.

Cunning Dodge (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 maneuver points to take the Dodge action.

Cunning Plot (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 maneuver points to take the Ready action.

Death's Door (4 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 4 maneuver points to become a conduit between the world of the living and the dead, allowing you to usher your enemies into the afterlife with greater speed. When you do, roll 5d6 and record the result as your threshold. Immediately after you deal damage to a creature with a weapon attack, if its current hit points are equal to or less than your threshold, the creature immediately dies and this maneuver ends.

Unless it ends early as a result of causing a creature to die, this maneuver lasts for 1 minute or until you lose your concentration (as if you were concentrating on a spell). Until this maneuver ends, roll 2d6 at the start of each of your turns and add the result to your threshold.

Enshadowed Celerity (2 points)

When you roll initiative, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to move with supernatural speed. When you do, add your proficiency bonus to the initiative result. For the next 10 minutes, your speed increases by 10 feet.

Entropic Needle (5 points)

You can use an action and spend 5 maneuver points to choose a creature you can see within 60 feet. A thin needle of black miasma shoots off in its direction. Make a weapon attack against the creature with this shadowy needle, which is considered a simple weapon that deals 1d4 piercing damage, and has the finesse and thrown weapon properties.

On a hit, the needle buries itself into the creature for 1 minute, or until you lose your concentration (as if you were concentrating on a spell). During this time, the creature takes an additional 1d6 necrotic damage whenever it takes damage from any attack.

If the creature's current hit points are below half of its hit point maximum, the additional damage increases to 2d6.

Felling Sweep (1 point or more)

You can use a bonus action and spend 1 or more maneuver points to sweep low to the ground, attempting to knock your enemies off balance. Choose a number of creatures equal to the maneuver points you spent that are within 5 feet of you and which are no more than one size category larger than you. Each chosen creature must succeed on a Strength saving throw or fall prone.

Flickering Shadow Evasion (2 points)

When you are hit by a melee attack, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to flicker away.

Make a Dexterity (Stealth) check. If the result is higher than the creature's attack roll against you, the attack misses, and you can teleport up to 10 feet to an unoccupied space you can see.

Hail of Needles (5 points)

You can use an action and spend 5 maneuver points to cause nearby shadows to coalesce into a swarm of needles and rain down on your enemies. Choose a point within 90 feet. Creatures within 10 feet of the chosen point must make a Dexterity saving throw. This saving throw is made with disadvantage if the creature is in dim light or darkness. The creature takes 5d10 piercing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Heart-stopping Strike (5 points)

When a creature starts its turn within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction and spend 5 maneuver points to strike before it acts. Make a weapon attack against the creature. On a hit, your attack deals damage as normal, and the creature must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature's turn immediately ends.

Mirror Blade Technique (3 points)

You can use an action and spend 3 maneuver points to conjure an illusory double of your blade, which strikes in unison with your own before vanishing. Make a single melee weapon attack or a thrown ranged weapon attack against a creature with advantage. The attack deals an additional 1d6 cold damage, or an additional 3d6 cold damage if both rolls would have hit.

Phantom Needles (3 points)

You can use an action and spend 3 maneuver points to cause shadows to coalesce around your hand, creating four phantasmal needles. Make four weapon attacks, one with each of the needles, which are considered simple weapons that deal 1 piercing damage and have the light, finesse, and thrown (30/60) properties.

If all four needles hit the same creature, the target must make a Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature either falls prone or is restrained against an adjacent solid surface (your choice) until the start of your next turn.

Phantom Step (1 point)

You can use a bonus action and expend 1 maneuver point to walk with spectral grace, moving up to your speed. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks, and you can move through creatures provided you do not end your move in the same space as a creature.

Shadow Army (2, 4, 6, or 8 points)

You can use an action and to spend up to 8 maneuver points, summoning one shadow copy of yourself with every 2 points spent. Each shadow appears in an unoccupied space of your choice within 60 feet. Your shadows exist for 1 minute or until you lose your concentration (as if you were concentrating on a spell).

Your shadows' AC is equal to your own. They are your size and use your bonuses for ability checks and saving throws. If a shadow takes damage, roll 1d4. On a result of 1, the shadow is destroyed. Otherwise, the shadow takes no damage. Your shadows are immune to all conditions.

For the duration of the maneuver, you can use a bonus action to silently control your shadows, causing each to move up to 30 feet as you wish and make one melee weapon attack against a creature within 5 feet of the shadow. Your shadows attack using your attack bonus as if it used a nonmagical copy of a weapon you hold. Additionally, creatures adjacent to your shadows can provoke opportunity attacks from them using your reaction if they move more than 5 feet away from your shadows.

Shadow Striking Technique (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 maneuver points to bind a shadow to your weapon. For the next 10 minutes, your attacks with this weapon deal an additional 1d8 necrotic damage and its reach increases by 5 feet.

Shape of Darkness (8 points)

You can use an action and spend 8 points to make your body turn ethereal, transforming into pure darkness. For the next 10 minutes, you gain the following benefits:

- You can see normally in darkness, both magical and nonmagical, to a distance of 120 feet.
- You have resistance to nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- While you are in dim light or darkness, each turn you can use a bonus action to teleport to an unoccupied space within 30 feet that is also in dim light or darkness.



Sorcerer: Living Blade

The bloodlines of the ancient heroes of the Valikan sagas have all been lost, save one: that of the hero known as the Living Blade. Sylfrván was said to have been one with her blade. Both bore the same name, and neither was separable from the other. You are of her bloodline, and the magic that runs through your blood prickles when you grasp a blade's hilt.

Living Blades are famous across Valika, but rare—the power of Sylfrván is passed down in a matrilineal line, becoming more apparent as these scions age. Occasionally the bloodline lays dormant and skips a few generations, but typically, a family will know they are descendants of Sylfrván. Often they live in isolation, ready to train new Blades as they appear.

In recent years, others outside the bloodline, even those who aren't women, have displayed the talents of the Living Blade, for reasons none can explain.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know two maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 3rd, 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Living Blade Sorcerer Origin table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your sorcerer magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one sorcerer spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert sorcerer spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost if unused after a long rest.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3
6th-7th	4
8th-9th	5

Sorcery Points

Your sorcery points can also be spent to power your maneuvers. Whenever you spend maneuver points, you can choose to spend sorcery points instead, but at twice the cost. For example, if a maneuver costs 2 maneuver points, you can instead pay 4 sorcery points to use it.

You can split point costs across your maneuver and sorcery points, too. For example, if a maneuver costs 8 maneuver points, you can pay 7 maneuver points and 2 sorcery points to make up the deficit.

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

LIVING BLADE

SORCERER LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
1st	1	2
2nd	2	2
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	4
6th	5	4
7th	6	4
8th	6	4
9th	7	5
10th	7	5
11th	8	5
12th	8	5
13th	9	6
14th	9	6
15th	10	6
16th	10	6
17th	11	7
18th	11	7
19th	12	7
20th	12	7

SHARPENED SOUL

1st-level Living Blade feature

You gain proficiency with shortswords, longswords, and scimitars, and you can use any of these weapons as an arcane focus for your spells.

Additionally, as a bonus action, you can spend one of your sorcery points to summon any sword you can see within 30 feet to your hand. If another creature is holding the weapon, you can attempt to magically disarm them by forcing them to make a Dexterity saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, the sword flies into your hand.

STANCE OF SPELL AND STEEL

1st-level Living Blade feature

Your magical birthright allows you to learn the two battle stances below. When you roll initiative, you can choose to enter a stance that you know. You can also change between stances you know as a bonus action.

You can only enter a stance as long as you're not wearing armor or wielding a shield.

Knife Which Sails Through the Air

Your innate magic lifts you and your weapon into the air so your feet barely brush the ground as you soar across the battlefield, and the hilt of your weapon floats just beyond your fingertips. While in this stance, your speed is increased by 10 feet, you ignore difficult terrain, and you gain an additional 5 feet of reach when wielding a melee weapon

Crossed Blades of the Defender

You and your blade act as one, prowling defensively like a wolf defending her den.

While in this stance, your speed is reduced by 10 feet, you cannot be disarmed, and you gain a bonus to your AC equal to your Charisma modifier.

EXTRA ATTACK

6th-level Living Blade feature

You can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. Additionally, you can cast one of your cantrips in place of one of those attacks.

RESONANT EDGE

14th-level Living Blade feature

When you cast a spell while holding a sword, the blade becomes charged with arcane magic. Each spell you cast charges the blade with force damage equal to twice the level of the spell. The total amount of force damage you can store in your blade is equal to ten times your proficiency bonus. The next time you hit a creature with a charged weapon, the weapon deals additional damage equal to the stored force damage and the charged damage resets to 0.

You can also spend a sorcery point to release all charged energy from your blade, making a ranged spell attack as a bonus action. This attack fires a magical projectile from your weapon with a range of 60 feet. On a hit, it deals force damage equal to the total energy you released.

SPIRIT OF THE LIVING BLADE

18th-level Living Blade feature

You gain the ability to call upon the enduring essence of your ancestor to aid you in battle. As a bonus action, you can transform one blade in your hand into the legendary weapon. For 1 minute, it becomes a magical longsword with a bonus to attack and damage rolls equal to your Charisma modifier, and it sheds silvery light that emanates as bright light from you in a 30-foot radius, and dim light for 30 feet beyond that.

You and any allied creatures within 60 feet cannot be frightened, and gain temporary hit points equal to 1d4 + your Charisma modifier at the start of each of your turns.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

LIVING BLADE MANEUVERS

These maneuvers can be used by anyone who studies the Living Blade saga. The Saga of the Living Blade teaches warriors to entrust their life to their blade. A spirit lives within all things, and weapons worthy of a great warrior are imbued with a spirit that guides its wielder and forms an unbreakable bond with them. Such a bond prevents warriors from being disarmed, allows them to gain deep insight into the fighting style and abilities of their foes, and even allows them to touch the spirit of the weapons wielded by their enemies.

Atomizing Blast (6 points)

As a reaction to a creature making a melee attack against you, you can spend 6 maneuver points to add +5 to your AC against that attack. If this causes the attack to miss, you catch it with your blade, creating an intense discharge of atomic energy at the moment of impact.

Creatures within 20 feet of you, excluding you, take 5d8 radiant damage, and must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d8 fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. Creatures that fail the saving throw are also pushed 20 feet away from you.

If this maneuver reduces a creature to 0 hit points, they disintegrate. A disintegrated creature and everything it is wearing and carrying, except magic items, are reduced to a pile of fine gray dust. The creature can be restored to life only by means of a *true resurrection* or a *wish* spell.

Bitter Vortex (3 points)

As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to raise your weapon above your head, summoning a blast of cold that painfully slows your enemies. All creatures within 15 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 4d8 cold damage on a failed save, and half as much on a success. Creatures that fail the save also have their speed halved until the end of their next turn.

Blade of the Wyrmslayer (2 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to chant the ancient ballad of Sýr, granting you the power of the deathrunes placed on his blade by the first sorceress. You can maintain this maneuver by concentrating on it as if it were a spell, and by paying the point cost at the start of each subsequent turn as a bonus action.

While this maneuver is active, one sword you wield deals an extra 3d6 necrotic damage on a hit, and creatures hit by the blade cannot regain hit points until the maneuver ends.

Bolt of Destruction (6 points)

You leap forward with incredible speed, streaking across the battlefield like a flash of lightning, before striking at your target with extreme precision. As an action, you can spend 6 maneuver points to target one creature or object you can see within 90 feet. You move in a straight line towards the target, ignoring creatures of your size or smaller, landing in the target's space. The target is pushed 5 feet

horizontally into an unoccupied space, and then you can make an attack against them with advantage. If this attack hits, it deals an additional 8d6 lightning damage.

Any creatures in your path when you leap to your target must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d6 lightning damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. Objects in your path when you leap to your target automatically take 8d6 lightning damage, and 4d6 force damage. If this reduces them to 0 hit points, they are obliterated and you pass directly through them. If this does not reduce them to 0 hit points, you take 4d6 force damage and stop moving.

Dimensional Skewer (3 points)

You pull a creature through a dimensional portal into your waiting blade. As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to target one creature within 90 feet you can see. The target creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw, or it vanishes and reappears in an empty space within 5 feet of you, and you can make one attack against it with advantage.

Additionally, if the target creature is Large or smaller, it is stuck on your sword and grappled until you use your weapon to make another attack.

Electric Lash (1 point)

Your strike delivers a bolt of lightning to the target that arcs from foe to foe. When you hit a creature with an attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to deal an extra 1d6 lightning damage to them and up to three other enemy creatures within 5 feet of the target.

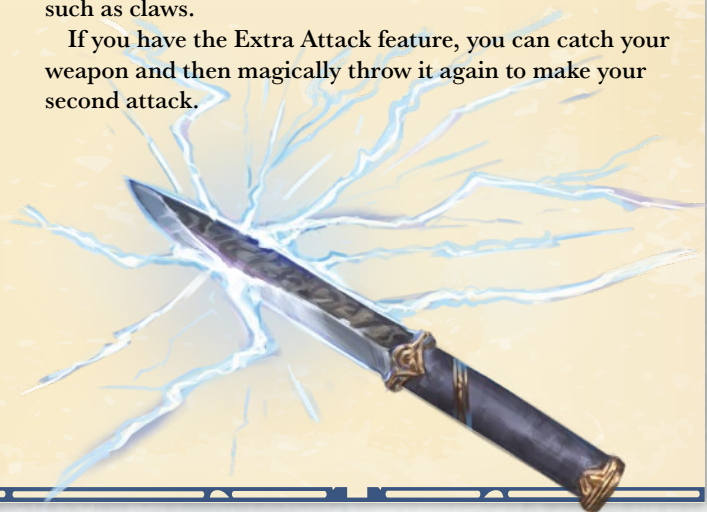
Elemental Gift (2 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to magically bind the elements to the weapons of your party. Choose one of: fire, cold, or lightning. Until the end of your next turn, creatures of your choice within 15 feet deal an extra 1d8 damage of the chosen type whenever they hit with a weapon attack.

Gyrfalcon Strike (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to hurl your blade at a creature and have it magically return to your grasp. Make a melee weapon attack against one target creature within 60 feet as if the target was in reach. You cannot use melee weapons that are attached to you, such as claws.

If you have the Extra Attack feature, you can catch your weapon and then magically throw it again to make your second attack.



Hypnotizing Blade (8 points)

As an action, you spend 8 maneuver points to weave a scintillating pattern in the air with your sword, mesmerizing your foes. One creature of your choice within 30 feet who can see you takes 2d8 psychic damage, and must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes blind (as per the blinded condition) to all other creatures except you until the start of your next turn.

Additionally, at the start of your next turn, you can use an action to force the creature to make another Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature is stunned until the start of your next turn. This stun ends for a creature if it takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

Keen Backswing (2 points)

You and your weapon work in perfect harmony, turning a miss into a deadly opportunity. When you miss with a melee weapon attack, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to make another attack against the same target with advantage.

Lethal Orbit (8 points)

As a bonus action, you can spend 8 maneuver points to cause your weapons to float around you, spinning in a ring. For 1 minute, or until you lose concentration, you have advantage on melee attacks and your melee attacks deal an additional 1d8 damage. Whenever a creature moves within 5 feet of you, you can make a melee attack against that creature (no action required).

Additionally, you gain an extra action on each of your turns. This action can be used only to take the Attack action.

Phaseshift Strike (4 points)

Unleash a blow that temporarily knocks an enemy out of phase with the material plane. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 4 maneuver points to deal an additional 4d6 force damage to the target creature, and they are also knocked into another dimension, reappearing 15 feet directly away from you. They must make a Dexterity saving throw with disadvantage when they reappear or fall prone.

If a creature teleported by this maneuver reappears inside solid material, such as within the wall of a cave, they take another 3d10 force damage and are instantly shunted to the nearest available space.

Quantum Exchange (2 points)

As an action, you can spend 2 maneuver points to magically reach out with your mind and switch the dimensional properties of two of your allies. Two allied creatures you can see within 30 feet swap positions.

Spacecleave (3 points)

Your weapon splits the fabric of space itself, allowing you to conjure an ally through the tear it leaves behind. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can

spend 3 maneuver points to target one Large or smaller ally within 60 feet and teleport them to an empty space within 10 feet of you. The allied creature can then make one melee attack with advantage.

Sunder Spell (3 points)

This maneuver allows you to destroy magical effects with your weapon. When you hit a creature or an object with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 3 maneuver points to end one spell of 3rd level or lower on the target. To attempt to end a spell of 4th level or higher on the target, make an ability check using your spellcasting ability. The DC equals 10 + the spell's level. On a successful check, the spell ends.

Thunderous Shunt (1 point)

At the moment of impact, your weapon creates a concussive shock that causes your enemy to stagger back. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to deal an extra 1d6 thunder damage, and the target must succeed on a Strength saving throw or be pushed 5 feet away from you.

Viper Parry (1 point)

You magically enhance the speed and potency of your blade, using the reflexes of a viper to interrupt an advancing enemy. As a reaction to a creature coming within reach of your weapon, you can spend 1 maneuver point to make one melee weapon attack against them and move 5 feet.

If the attack hits, the target takes an extra 1d6 poison damage, and they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or their speed drops to 0 for the rest of their turn.

Warptether Mark (1 point)

Your strike magically binds you to a creature with space-warping energy. When you hit a creature with a melee weapon attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to mark the target. If the marked creature is still within 30 feet of you at the start of your next turn, you can teleport to an unoccupied space within 5 feet of them without using any movement (no action required).

Whispering Blades (1 point)

The sigh of a blade slicing the air speaks to you, allowing you to intuit an imminent mistake. As a reaction to an enemy creature missing you or one of your allies with a weapon attack, you can spend 1 maneuver point to make a weapon attack with advantage against the attacking creature if they are within reach.

Wrathful Flame (3 points)

You reach through the spirit of an enemy to the essence of their weapon, instilling it with burning rage. As an action, you can spend 3 maneuver points to target one enemy creature you can see within 60 feet. That creature must make a Charisma saving throw. On a failure, their weapon bursts into flame, dealing 5d6 fire damage to them, and forcing them to drop the weapon. If the creature is not wielding a weapon, or has a weapon stowed, nothing happens.



Warlock: Gormadraug

You can hear the breathing of the Prismatic Serpent that coils around the world. You feel the coldfire of its breath upon your flesh. You can taste the rime of the northern seas upon your lips. Long has Gormadraug slumbered, and long may it yet slumber before the world's ending. Even if that day is far off, your patron grants you power on one condition: that you hasten that day's arrival.

Nearly all Valikans have a healthy mistrust of magic, but the hierophants of Thrull despise you over all others. To them, you are a sign of the world's approaching end—a weed in the garden of life that must be torn out by the root before it can go to seed. They preach that those who claim to hear the voice of Gormadraug are mad, that they only hear the corrupting voice of one of the Serpent's panjaiaans—its elemental servitors—for the serpent could not possibly speak while it still slumbers.

The truth likely matters little to you, for you are to be persecuted by the fearful and faithful regardless of who exactly speaks to you in whispers. You may not be an agent of evil, but your powers were still granted to you by the enemy of all Grarjord, and for that, you know that you must keep your power hidden.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained to emulate the antihero of ancient history, the Prismatic Wurm, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know three maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn an additional maneuver at 6th, 10th, and 14th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the dark dreams of Gormadraug's would-be victories is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Gormadraug table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your warlock magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one pact magic spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert pact magic spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost if unused after a long rest.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Warlock Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier

GORMADRAUG

WARLOCK LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
1st	1	3
2nd	2	3
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	3
6th	6	4
7th	7	4
8th	8	4
9th	9	4
10th	10	5
11th	11	5
12th	12	5
13th	13	5
14th	14	6
15th	15	6
16th	16	6
17th	17	6
18th	18	6
19th	19	6
20th	20	6

PRIMORDIAL TONGUE

1st-level Gormadraig feature

You can speak, read, and write Primordial.

In addition, Gormadraig's authority rings in your speech. When you make a Charisma ability check against an elemental to command or intimidate it, you have advantage on the ability check.

"A visitor came seeking ancient Primordial texts, dressed more ruggedly than a typical scholar. The texts are off limits, but soon I was leading them to the back against my will. They picked up some of the material and began reading aloud. I was petrified."

- Skald librarian

WYRM WINGS

6th-level Gormadraig feature

You can use your bonus action to cause phantasmal wyrm wings to appear on your back, granting you a flying speed of 60 feet for 1 minute. During this time, when you deal damage with a maneuver or warlock spell of 1st level or higher, you deal an additional 1d6 damage to one target creature, or 2d6 damage if the target creature is a celestial.

You can use this bonus action a number of times up to your proficiency bonus, regaining all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

LESSON IN SUFFERING

10th-level Gormadraig feature

The Prismatic Wyrms has taught you to turn suffering into will. When you take damage equal to or more than half your level, you can use your reaction to regain 2 maneuver points. You can use this feature a number of times up to your proficiency bonus, regaining all uses when you finish a long rest.

WAKING THE WYRM

14th-level Gormadraig feature

As an action, you can cause Gormadraig to stir beneath the earth causing fissures of elemental power to explode on the surface. When you do, you create five fissures in spaces of your choice within 300 feet. These fissures are 5 feet wide and 15 feet long and remain for 10 minutes.

Creatures standing on a fissure when one opens up must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, they take 1d10 + 5d8 damage. On a successful saving throw, they take half as much. The first time each turn a creature moves through one of these fissures, or ends its turn there, it must repeat this saving throw. The elemental fissure releases a constant flux of primordial power, causing the damage type to fluctuate as well. Use the result of the 1d10 to determine the type of damage dealt each time a creature takes damage from a fissure by referencing the Waking the Wyrms Damage Type table below.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

WAKING THE WYRM DAMAGE TYPE

1D10	DAMAGE TYPE
1-2	Acid
3-4	Cold
5-6	Fire
7-8	Lightning
9-10	Thunder

GORMADRAUG MANEUVERS

While a history shaping figure in his own right, Gormadraug is no hero. Though his power and resilience continue to influence world events, his story is marked by one defeat after another. For this reason, the maneuvers granted by the Prismatic Wyrms are reflections of his jealous longing to be more like the heroes of Etharis—each maneuver is co-opted from another saga, twisted by Gormadraug's dreams to reflect his own draconic and elemental might. In his fitful rest beneath the earth, the Prismatic Wyrms long for the day when the story of his victories to come erases the memory of all other sagas from the people of Etharis.

Bloodthirsty Strike (4 points)

You can use an action and spend 4 maneuver points to feast on the spilled blood of an enemy. When you use this maneuver, make one melee weapon attack. On a hit, the attack deals an additional 5d6 necrotic damage and you regain hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Bloody Revenge (1 point)

Your blood has become caustic with Gormadraug's bitter hatred, granting you an unlikely defense. When another creature hits you with a melee weapon attack, you can use your reaction and spend 1 maneuver point to spray a 15-foot cone of acidic ichor from the wound. This cone must include the space occupied by the attacker that triggered this maneuver. Each creature within the cone must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 acid damage.

Coldfire Strike (1 to 5 points)

When you hit a creature with a weapon attack you can spend 1 to 5 maneuver points to enhance the attack with coldfire. When you do, you deal an additional 1d4 cold damage per point spent.

If you spend 3 or more maneuver points, the surrounding area erupts into coldfire. Each creature of your choice within 5 feet of the original target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 2d4 cold damage.

Defeated Wyrms' Retreat (2 points)

You can use an action and spend 2 maneuver points to move with the serpentine grace of the Prismatic Wyrms. For 1 minute, your movement speed is increased by 10 feet and you may take the Disengage action as a bonus action on each of your turns.

Dragon's Scales Defense (6 points)

Calling on Gormadraug to cloak you in enduring strength, scales cover your body. You can use an action and spend 6 maneuver points to gain 100 temporary hit points. While you have any temporary hit points by this maneuver, creatures who deal damage to you with a melee attack take 2d6 cold damage. You lose all temporary hit points granted by this maneuver at the end of your next turn.

Emperor of Earth Edict (3 points)

Gormadraug lends some portion of his dominion over the elements to you, allowing you to command the very earth. You can use a bonus action and spend 3 maneuver points to target a number of Large or smaller creatures that are touching the ground up to your proficiency bonus within 60 feet. Each creature must make a Strength saving throw or be knocked prone or pushed up to 15 feet along the ground in any direction (your choice).

Gormadraug's Disdain (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and spend 2 maneuver points to express your supernaturally enhanced disdain towards a creature you can see. Make a Charisma (Intimidation) check contested by the target's Charisma (Intimidation). If you succeed, you have advantage on attack rolls against the creature until the end of your next turn.

Inured to Pain (2 points)

Gormadraug has suffered greatly at the hands of many and has gifted you a measure of his resilience. Immediately after you take damage, you can use your reaction and spend 2 maneuver points to gain temporary hit points equal to the damage.

Rimespiked Step (2 points)

You can use a bonus action and expend 2 maneuver points to fly to an unoccupied space of your choice within 30 feet. As you use this movement, you leave ice spikes in the spaces you pass through. Any creature who starts its turn or moves into a space containing ice spikes takes 1d8 cold damage. These ice spikes melt at the start of your next turn.

Stormbreak Strike (2 points)

You can use an action and spend 2 maneuver points to transform a weapon in your hand into a bolt of lightning and hurl it at an enemy of your choice within 60 feet. Make a melee weapon attack against the target. On a hit, you deal the weapon's normal damage, but the damage type changes to lightning and each creature within 10 feet of the enemy must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 2d6 thunder damage. The weapon returns to your hand immediately after the attack.

Wounded Ego Resilience (1 point)

When defeat seems imminent, you can channel a small measure of the Prismatic Wyrms' self-hatred to attempt to rise above your own shortcomings. When you fail a saving throw, you can use your reaction and spend 1 maneuver point to reroll the saving throw, using the new result if it is higher. If you still fail the saving throw, you take 1d6 psychic damage (which cannot be reduced).



Wizard: Burning Mind

Wizards who study the Saga of the Burning Mind learn that a keen mind is sharper than any blade. Moving at the speed of thought, these blade-wielding wizards mete out death with preternatural precision.

Burning Mind practitioners are few, as the art can only be passed down via bloody ritual to an apprentice that already carries the gift of magic, a rare gift indeed. To be a Burning Mind is to be both magic and death incarnate, and many superstitions surround them.

The flames of these rumors are fanned by their behavior on the battlefield—a Burning Mind knows that their incredible power comes at the cost of a shorter natural lifespan, so they never surrender, never retreat, never hold anything back.

MARTIAL MANEUVERS

You have trained in the manner of heroes from the old sagas, and now you can perform certain martial maneuvers. A maneuver requires you to spend maneuver points to use it.

You know two maneuvers of your choice from the list below. You learn additional maneuvers at 3rd, 5th, 9th, 13th, and 17th level. Each time you learn a maneuver, you can also replace one maneuver you know with a different one you can learn.

Maneuver Points

Channeling the heroes from the old sagas is no easy task, and your pool of maneuver points represents the limit of your abilities to do so. Your class level determines the number of maneuver points you have, as shown in the Maneuver Points column in the Burning Mind table below. You regain all spent maneuver points at the end of a long rest.

Your wizard magic can bolster your capacity to use maneuvers. As a bonus action, you can expend one wizard spell slot to gain additional maneuver points. You can convert wizard spell slots you have into maneuver points based on the table below. These additional points are lost if unused after a long rest.

SPELL SLOT LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS
1st-3rd	2
4th-5th	3
6th-7th	4
8th-9th	5

Using Maneuvers

You can use one maneuver during each turn. Some maneuvers require concentration, as if concentrating on a spell, or certain conditions to use. Some maneuvers will require your target to make a saving throw to resist the maneuver's effects.

Martial Maneuver save DC: 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier

BURNING MIND

WIZARD LEVEL	MANEUVER POINTS	MANEUVERS KNOWN
2nd	2	2
3rd	3	3
4th	4	3
5th	5	4
6th	5	4
7th	6	4
8th	6	4
9th	7	5
10th	7	5
11th	8	5
12th	8	5
13th	9	6
14th	9	6
15th	10	6
16th	10	6
17th	11	7
18th	11	7
19th	12	7
20th	12	7

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

2nd-level Burning Mind feature

You gain proficiency with martial weapons and a gaming set of your choice.

CHAIN OF SKULD

2nd-level Burning Mind feature

Your body and mind become intrinsically linked, forged together as one by the Star of Skuld, the rune tattooed into your skull. You gain the following abilities:

- When not wearing any armor or wielding a shield, you can add your Intelligence modifier to your initiative rolls and passive Wisdom (Perception) score. Additionally, your AC equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Intelligence modifier.
- Your swords count as an arcane focus, and you can perform the somatic components of your spells and maneuvers even while holding two weapons.

BLOODY TALON GRIP

6th-level Burning Mind feature

Your skill with blades makes you a terrifying storm of flashing steel. Attacks you make with a melee weapon are magical, and you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn. This feature does not stack with extra attacks granted by other classes.

SOULPYRE

10th-level Burning Mind feature

The magic coursing through your blood spurs you on in the heat of battle—at a cost. As a bonus action, you can sacrifice one of your Hit Die to assume a flame-wreathed form with heightened abilities. To maintain this form, you must sacrifice one Hit Die at the end of each of your turns.

While in this form, you cannot be knocked prone or stunned, and you add your Intelligence modifier to your attack and damage rolls with weapon attacks.

If you are reduced to 0 hit points while in this form, you can choose to explode, dealing 35 (10d6) fire damage to all creatures in a 20-foot radius, and you die. Your form remains intact, allowing resurrection magic to work on your body.

AUTOMATIC ARITHMETIC

14th-level Burning Mind feature

From 14th level, the calculations required to maintain a spell can be completed by your subconscious, leaving you free to focus on battle. When casting a spell that requires concentration, that concentration cannot be broken by taking damage.

BURNING MIND MANEUVERS

Warriors who study the Burning Mind Saga learn to move at the speed of thought. Their awareness and reflexes are honed to a razor's edge. Maneuvers of this saga allow warriors to move in seemingly unnatural ways, gliding across the battlefield, reading a foe's intentions, and reacting before their enemy can act.

Comet Tail (8 points)

You launch yourself across the battlefield, burning foes with your fiery trail. You activate this maneuver as an action and spend 8 maneuver points. As part of this action, you can fly in a straight line up to 60 feet in any direction, leaving a 15-foot-wide blazing streak of fire. Any creature caught within the fiery area must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 5d10 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If you end this movement within 5 feet of a creature, you can make an attack against it with advantage.

Crimson Spirit (2 points)

You burn with an arcane power made more potent by the spilling of your blood. As an action, you spend 2 maneuver points and make a melee weapon attack. On a hit, this attack deals an extra 1d4 damage of the same damage as the attack for every 10 hit points you're currently below your hit point maximum.

Grim Retribution (1 point)

You punish your opponents' mistakes with austere precision. You activate this maneuver as a reaction when another creature misses you with a melee weapon attack. You can then spend 1 maneuver point and make a melee attack against that creature, or you can activate another maneuver by immediately paying its maneuver point cost, but you can only target the creature that triggered this reaction.

Lightning Break (3 points)

Your quickened reactions allow you to counterattack where there is seemingly no space to act. As a reaction to being hit by an attack, spend 3 maneuver points to make a melee attack against the creature that hit you. If your attack hits, you can make one additional melee attack for every additional two maneuver points you spend, and the creature has disadvantage on any other attacks it makes against you this turn.

Serpent Shift (1 point)

You manipulate a foe using your footwork and momentum, switching places with them. As an action, spend 1 maneuver point and choose one Medium or smaller creature within 5 feet of you; they must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw, or you trade places with you, and you can then move up to your speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Shadowhound (1 point)

You read your opponent's moves, predicting their next steps before they know what it will be. As a reaction to a creature within 5 feet of you moving away from you, you spend 1 maneuver point and make an Intelligence check contested by the creature's Dexterity check. If you win the contest, you follow that creature as they move, keeping in step with them. You may only follow them as far as your maximum speed allows, and you cannot follow them if they utilize a type of speed you do not have, such as flying or burrowing. At the end of this movement, you can make a single melee attack against that creature.

Shield Jab (2 points)

Your assault puts heavy pressure on your enemy's defenses. As an action, spend 2 maneuver points and target a creature within your reach. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or have its AC lowered by 4 until the end of your next turn. If you succeed with another Shield Jab against the same creature on your next turn, the AC loss is cumulative, otherwise the creature's AC resets to its normal value. If a creature's AC is reduced to 0 in this way, it's stunned for 1 minute.

Sól Valtiva (10 points)

You ignite your weapon with the fires of the sun. As a bonus action, you spend 10 maneuver points to activate this maneuver for up to 1 minute.

While this maneuver is active, your weapon casts bright light for 60 feet and dim light for 60 feet beyond that. Your weapon also deals an additional 2d6 radiant damage and 2d6 fire damage on a hit, growing brighter with every strike.

After you have dealt at least 100 damage with your weapon, it burns with an unbelievable intensity until the maneuver ends. While the maneuver is still active, the next time you hit a creature that has 100 hit points or less, you can choose to reduce the creature to 0 hit points rather than roll damage and immediately end this maneuver.

Staunch Parry (4 points)

You employ split-second precision to deflect even the most staggering of attacks. When hit by an attack, you can use your reaction and spend 4 maneuver points to activate this maneuver. Roll a d20 and add your Dexterity and Intelligence modifiers to the result. If the result is equal to or greater than the triggering attack roll, you parry the attack causing it to miss; otherwise, you take half the damage of the attack.

Swervestep (3 points)

As an action, you spend 3 maneuver points to cause your form to intensely vibrate, making it difficult for your foes to follow. Attacks made against you before the end of your next turn have disadvantage. If an attack misses you, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against that creature with advantage.



Rune Magic

The practice of runecraft is native to Valika, and those who live in the north all understand the power it can have. Valikans often seek out those with the knowledge of rune working to help them protect their tools, weapons, or themselves.

The origins of rune magic are ancient and murky. Some sagas say the sorceress Rune herself invented them, while other tales imply that she was named for them by her skill in working their magic. In any case, those who weave power by the magic of runes now have their own traditions and their own name. Those who can work runes are called an Erilaz.

Runes can have a wide range of uses: guiding travelers home, protecting people from harm, or inflicting bad luck on an enemy. The runes given in this section are just a few of those that exist in Valika, and an enterprising GM is encouraged to create more!

RUNES

Runes can be laid upon objects or people, and they always require a physical representation in the form of a symbol. These symbols are like those used by the Valikan clans for writing, but they are not exactly the same, and simply inscribing them from memory does not instill them with power—the rituals required to successfully mark something with a rune are more obscure.

Interference. Each object or person has a finite amount of space for runes to be laid upon. This doesn't correlate with actual surface space; rather, too many runes affecting the same thing can start to interfere with each other and cancel each other out. A more powerful Erilaz can lay more runes upon the same target, but few reach this level of mastery.

This is also why creatures can't benefit from more than one rune-marked amulet or tattoo at once. However, a single character could wear an amulet, bear a tattoo, wield a weapon, and use a runestone at the same time. They just can't use multiples of any single type at once.

Runestones, Amulets, Markings, and Tattoos

Each rune produces a different effect depending on what it has been laid upon.

Runestones. These palm-sized stones are marked with a single rune and are single-use items—once they have been used, they crack and become inert. Each runestone can be activated by anyone holding it as a bonus action.

Amulets. Runes can also be laid upon amulets that are worn around the neck. These amulets do not break when used (unless stated otherwise), and instead impart a passive benefit to the wearer without requiring attunement.

Weapons. Runes can be marked onto weapons, usually by carving them carefully into the surface of a blade or scratching them into the wood of a haft. These markings can have a variety of effects and are permanent unless otherwise noted.

Tattoos. Marking a person directly with a rune is not often done, but it is possible if one can find an Erilaz skilled enough to work the rites on flesh. These markings tend to hold great power, but at a cost.

In the table below you can find the ability each rune has when placed upon a runestone, amulet, weapon, or a person. Not all runes can be placed on all of these options.

RUNE FEATS

To use runes successfully, you must be trained in the creation of the runes. This training is represented by feats.

Erilaz Apprentice

Prerequisite: character level 4 or higher

You've learned the basics of Valikan runecrafting from an Erilaz adept. You gain the following benefits:

- When you gain this feat, choose 4 runes that you know.
- You can immediately create 4 runestones. Each time you gain a level, you can create 4 more runestones with a rune that you know.
- Spell attacks made with runes created by an Erilaz apprentice are made with a +4 attack bonus, and saving throws against those spells are DC 12.

Erilaz Adept

Prerequisite: character level 8 or higher, Erilaz Apprentice

You've gained additional power in the arcane art of Valikan runecrafting from an Erilaz master. You gain the following benefits:

- When you gain this feat, choose 2 additional runes that you know.
- You can immediately put a rune onto 1 nonmagical weapon or amulet. Each time you gain a level, you can put a rune onto another nonmagical weapon or amulet.
- Spell attacks made with runes created by an Erilaz adept are made with a +7 attack bonus, and saving throws against those spells are DC 15.

Erilaz Master

Prerequisite: character level 12 or higher, Erilaz Adept

Through practice and study, you've become a true master of Valikan runecrafting. You gain the following benefits:

- When you gain this feat, choose 2 additional runes that you know.
- You can immediately put a rune onto a creature's skin in the form of a tattoo. Each time you gain a level, you can put another rune tattoo onto a different creature.
- Spell attacks made with runes created by an Erilaz master are made with a +10 attack bonus, and saving throws against those spells are DC 18.



RUNE TABLE

NAME	RUNE EFFECT	NAME	RUNE EFFECT
Ev (Light)	Runestone: Casts <i>daylight</i> centered on the stone. Amulet: Continually sheds bright light for 30 feet, and dim light for a further 30 feet when worn. Weapon: Sheds bright light for 20 feet when wielded and deals an additional 1d4 radiant damage on a hit.	Haug (Force)	Runestone: Creatures within 20 feet must make a Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. Amulet: Ranged attacks have disadvantage to hit the wearer. Weapon: On a hit, creatures must succeed on DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed 10 feet away from you.
Uth (Dark)	Runestone: Casts <i>darkness</i> and <i>silence</i> centered on the stone. Weapon: Magical darkness spreads to fill a 10 foot sphere around the weapon when wielded, and on a hit, the weapon does not reveal the wielder's position if they were hidden. Tattoo: You gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, darkvision out to a distance of 60 feet, and the Sunlight Sensitivity trait.	Veer (Speed)	Runestone: Casts <i>haste</i> on the holder of the stone. Amulet: Wearer gains an additional 10 feet of movement. Weapon: You can make one additional attack as a bonus action with this weapon on each of your turns.
Yoz (Turning)	Runestone: Undead creatures within 60 feet take 30 radiant damage. Amulet: Undead creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls that target the wearer. Weapon: On a hit, undead targets must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become turned, as though affected by a Cleric's Channel Divinity: Turn Undead.	Ost (Strength)	Amulet: You have advantage on Strength saving throws. Weapon: You can double your Strength modifier when making attack and damage rolls with this weapon. Tattoo: You gain two points of Strength and two points of Constitution, but you permanently lose 10 feet of movement speed.
Syn (Magic)	Runestone: Roll 1d6, and recover one spell slot of a level equal to the result. Amulet: The wearer has advantage on saving throws against magical spells and effects. Tattoo: You gain a permanent +2 bonus to spell attacks and to your spell save DC. You also permanently lose two points of Constitution.	Jald (Thunder)	Runestone: Casts <i>thunderwave</i> with twice the usual area and damage. Weapon: On a hit, deals an additional 2d6 thunder damage and emits a thunderous boom audible for 300 feet.
Set (Flame)	Runestone: Casts <i>burning hands</i> at 4th level. Amulet: Wearer gains a breath weapon as if they were a dragonborn with red dragon ancestry. Weapon: Deals an additional 1d6 fire damage on a hit.	Trygg (Luck)	Runestone: You gain advantage on the next attack roll or ability check you make. Weapon: Once per day, when you miss with this weapon, you can reroll your attack roll. Tattoo: You can reroll any attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you make one time, and you must use the new result. If you do, hand the die you used to the GM—at any point in the future they can spend that die to reroll any attack roll, ability check, or saving throw you make, and you must use the new result.
Skor (Cold)	Runestone: Casts <i>cone of cold</i> . Amulet: Wearer gains resistance to cold damage. Weapon: Deals an additional 1d6 cold damage on a hit.	Od (Death)	Runestone: Casts <i>raise dead</i> (no diamond needed). This takes the full casting time, instead of a bonus action. Amulet: The wearer has advantage on death saving throws. Weapon: On a hit, deals an additional 1d8 necrotic damage, and you regain 1d4 hit points. Tattoo: When you deal damage, you regain hit points equal to half the amount of damage dealt. You cannot regain hit points any other way.
Vem (Poison)	Amulet: Wearer gains resistance to poison damage. Weapon: Deals an additional 1d4 poison damage on a hit, and the target takes another 1d4 poison damage at the start of their next turn. Tattoo: You gain immunity to poison damage and the poisoned condition. Additionally, when another creature touches you or casts a spell on you that restores your hit points, they take 1d4 poison damage.	Frith (Life)	Runestone: Casts <i>heal</i> . Amulet: The wearer is under the effect of the <i>death ward</i> spell. The first time the spell activates, the amulet breaks. Tattoo: When you touch a creature, you can spend your Hit Dice by rolling them, transferring a number of your hit points to the creature equal to the result.



Equipment

From the runestones and weaponry of Thrull to the musical instruments and fur cloaks of Kandar, the people of Grarjord produce a broad range of complicated equipment. The harsh environment and brutal fields of battle have necessitated ingenious inventions, both for survival and savage combat.

WEAPONS

Weapons are common across Valika—few people (if any) have none—and few are surprised to see a well-armed stranger. Spears are hugely prolific, followed closely by axes, while swords—a speciality of Clan Sýr’s smiths—are marks of status and highly prized. The older a sword becomes the more status it brings among the Valikan clans...and the more powerful it is believed to be.

The warring of the clans has also led to the development of other popular weapons. You can find a description of each weapon and any special properties it has immediately below. Weapon statistics are given in the table that follows.

WEAPON	COST	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
Langseax (Long-knife)	3 gp	1d6 slashing	1 lb.	Finesse, light, special
Skeggøx (Bearded Axe)	5 gp	1d8 slashing	2 lb.	Light, special
Langgøx (Long-axe)	3 gp	1d8 slashing	4 lb.	Reach, two-handed
Atgeir (Mail-piercer)	5 gp	1d10 piercing	10 lb.	Heavy, reach, special, two-handed
War Pick	10 gp	1d12 piercing	18 lb.	Heavy, special, two-handed

Langseax (Long-knife)

A single-edged, one-handed blade, not unlike a machete. The langseax is an extended version of the shorter seax—not quite a sword, but close enough to do the job. The langseax excels in close-combat fighting.

Special. While you are wielding a langseax and either grappling a target or being grappled by a target, you have advantage when attacking that target with the langseax.

Skeggøx (Bearded Axe)

Named ‘bearded axe’ for the long blade that curves down from the bottom of the axe head. The design gives the axe a larger cutting area without adding more weight. Not to mention the hooked beard makes for a nasty backswing.

Special. When you make an attack against a target that is wielding a shield, you can choose to make a special attack that does not deal damage. Instead, on a hit, you hook their shield and yank it from their hands to the ground unless they succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw.

Langgøx (Long-axe)

The “long-axe” allegedly takes inspiration from weapons discovered by raiders who claim to have sailed farther afield and made contact with people from other lands. Its blade is paper thin and lethally sharp, affixed to the end of a long haft that can be swung with two hands.

Atgeir (Mail-piercer)

Also known as a “hewing spear”, the atgeir is essentially a Valikan glaive—a long, bayonet-like blade fixed to a spear-length haft that can be used for either stabbing or cutting. The weapon is lauded and admired for its ability to make short work of armor.

Special. The atgeir ignores AC from mundane armor (not including shields or magical armor).

War Pick

It was only a matter of time before someone caught in a tight spot without their axe picked up their ice pick instead. The war pick is the same basic idea, but bigger, and rarer—war picks are most often wielded by clan chieftains or other honored warriors in a clan. You really do not want to be on the receiving end of this thing, especially if the blow strikes true.

Special. When you make an attack with a war pick, your critical chance range is increased by one step. For example, if you would normally score a critical hit on a 20, you can score a critical hit with a war pick on a 19 or a 20. If you would normally score a critical hit on a 18-20, you can score a critical hit with a war pick on a 17-20.



ARMOR

Surviving Valika's landscape often comes down to the clothes on your back and how well they can protect you, whether from blades, arrows, hungry jaws, or the ever-present, ghostly fingers of the cold.

Armor is not as common in Valika as it is elsewhere in Etharis, if only due to a lack of materials. Metal is so valuable that it is typically reserved for weaponry, and the frosty weather demands that any armor must be comfortable to wear over clothing that can insulate against the cold.

ARMOR	COST	AC	STR	STEALTH	WEIGHT
Fur	3 gp	11 + Dex modifier	-	-	15 lb.
Gambeson	10 gp	12 + Dex modifier	-	Disadvantage	25 lb.
Lamellar	50 gp	15	Str 12	-	30 lb.
Kite Shield	20 gp	+3	Str 13	Disadvantage	12 lb.

Fur

Fur armor is usually made from thin leather lined with animal pelt, and while it does not provide much in the way of protection, it does help stave off the cold, giving a +1 bonus to your Warmth Rating, as though it were an Accessory (see "Clothing"). Fur armor made by the Svalr is often believed to be magical.

Gambeson

A gambeson is a form of padded cloth armor, typically with a high collar to protect the neck. They can be surprisingly heavy and effective at stopping a deadly blow, but they tend to be bulky, and harder to move in than thinner armor.



Lamellar

Valikan warriors typically eschew heavy armor, as it is hard to make and to maintain. Those who can afford it wear chain mail, but there is a cheaper option for those who want more protection than that of layered cloth. Lamellar armor is made by sewing together many tiny plates called lamellae. Making lamellae only requires rudimentary blacksmithing skills (and the time to sew them together), making it more affordable to make and repair than mail.

The stats given for lamellar armor in the table below assume the plates are made of hardened leather, but lamellae can also be made of steel; metal lamellar uses the same statistics as splint.



Kite Shields

The kite shield is a Valikan invention for use in mounted or shipboard combat. The long, teardrop-shaped bottom extends down to cover the thigh, giving it better coverage than your average Valikan round shield, but making it more unwieldy to use on foot.

Special. Using a kite shield makes walking more difficult. Anyone wielding a kite shield incurs a 5-foot penalty to their walking speed.

CLOTHING

Clothing is incredibly important across Valika, both practically and culturally. Every type of clothing is available in a range of styles—baggy, tapered, bright, drab—and different communities, from as large as entire clans to as small as minor settlements, each have their own signature patterns and designs. Tight clothes are considered fashionable by some, and overly ostentatious by others. And all of it has to be warm!

Clothing is also an important part of the Valikan ideal of hospitality. The manual labor required to make a set of clothes is significant, but any spare clothing a homestead has are expected to be given to travelers if they are poorly outfitted for the weather and in need of help.

Each of the clothing options below offer a Warmth Rating. You can read more about Warmth under “Optional Rules: Hypothermia.”

CLOTHING	COST	WARMTH RATING (WR)	WEIGHT
Linen Tunic	3 gp	+3	2 lb.
Woolen Tunic	8 gp	+6	
Fullcloth	25 gp	+4	5 lb.
Linen Cloak	5 gp	+3	
Woolen Cloak	18 gp	+4	
Fur Cloak	40 gp	+5	7 lb.
Leather Cloak	20 gp	+2 (+1 AC)	
Accessories	2 gp	+1 per accessory	

Tunic

Tunics come in a wide range of cuts, but all are designed to conserve valuable fabric. Some are made of linen, others of wool—wool tends to be warmer, but linen is more comfortable against the skin if the wearer doesn’t have an undertunic. Silk can also be used to trim a tunic, but must be imported, making it rare, expensive, and a sign of incredible wealth.

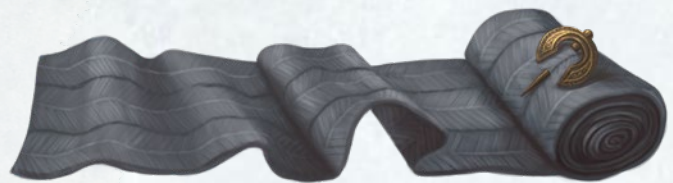


Fullcloth

Worn underneath other layers, fullcloth covers the body from the ankles to the shoulders and is made of layered linen and wool. Wearing fullcloth is a luxury generally reserved for when one is expecting hard travel, such as over a mountain pass, for example.

Cloaks

Cloaks are a staple for travel, and some of the most elegantly embroidered and lavishly decorated garments available. They come in a broad range of materials, typically fastened with ornamental pins that serve as an indicator of status even more so than the cloak itself. Enchanted cloak pins that never come loose are highly sought after.



Accessories

Many other items of clothing can help stave off the cold too; hats, mittens, coats, undertunics. A very common accessory is the legwrap—a roll of woolen cloth that can be wound around the calves from the knee down and tucked into the wearer’s boots to keep the legs warm. Each accessory worn adds +1 WR regardless of what it is.

ADVENTURING GEAR

Successfully traversing the dangers of the north means being well prepared. A lot of the tools and equipment common among northern folk can already be found in the core rules, including sleds, medicine, hunting traps, and more. The list and table below offer a few extra items that are not covered in the core rules but are prevalent across Valika.

ITEM	BENEFIT	COST	WEIGHT
Ice Axe	Grants advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to scale ice.	2 gp	3 lb.
Ice Fishing Kit*	Proficiency with this kit allows you to add your proficiency bonus when making a check to gather food in areas such as frozen rivers or lakes.	15 gp	7 lb.
Leash	Grants advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks when attached to an animal.	2 gp	4 lb.
Skates*	While on ice you gain an additional 15 feet of movement, and you make weapon attacks with disadvantage.	12 gp	10 lb.
Skis*	Doubles your maximum speed when moving downhill on snow, halves your maximum speed moving in any other direction.	20 gp	30 lbs.
Snow Goggles	You automatically succeed on Constitution saving throws against snow-blindness.	30 gp	1 lb.
Snow Vehicle*	If you have proficiency, you can add your proficiency bonus to any check you make to control a snow vehicle.	100 gp	80 lb
Star Arrow	Creates a light in the sky visible for 1 mile.	100 gp	1 lb.
Sun Compass	Grants advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate during the day.	5 gp	-
Valikan Ship Lantern	Casts bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. Can't be put out by water.	10 gp	2 lb.

* Requires proficiency

Ice Axe

A short-nosed tool similar to a miner's pick, useful for scaling walls of ice when climbing and typically used in pairs.

Ice Fishing Kit

A small bundle of tools used for cutting holes in thick ice and catching the fish and other aquatic creatures that swim beneath.

Leash

A woven cord of leather, sometimes with a muzzle, ideal for keeping hunting dogs or other animals at your side.

Skates

Thin blades of metal that can be tied to the bottom of a pair of boots, allowing for faster travel across icy surfaces.

Skis

Long strips of treated wood that can be tied to the wearer's boots like skates, allowing for faster travel across mountains snow or ice.

Snow Goggles

Designed by the Svalr, these goggles are frequently made from wood or bone, and feature thin slits or crosses that reduce the amount of light exposed to the eyes, helping prevent snow glare in bright areas.



Snow Vehicle

The simplest version of a snow vehicle is a one-person sled pulled by at least four Medium-sized animals, such as dogs, or by two Large-sized creatures. For a snow vehicle pulling more than one person and their normal gear, at least two additional Medium or one additional Large creature must be employed.

Star Arrow

An arrow tipped with a head that burns bright white when lit on fire. Designed by Clan Sýr, these arrows not only burn with intense light, but catch the air as they fall, drifting slowly to the ground.

Valikan Ship Lantern

A lantern designed for use in the rain and snow, with a brass enclosure that keeps it safe from wind and water.





Chapter 3:

SURVIVAL IN VALIKA

The inhospitable lands of Valika have forced those living there to take extreme measures to survive. Since agriculture is limited to certain regions of Valika—and even then, there’s a terribly limited growing period—the permanent residents have made other accommodations to gain the resources needed to survive. Those “accommodations” have historically been violent.

Raiding. Valikan traditions rely on raiding to gain food, drink, natural resources, finished goods, commodities, and even clan members. The scope and tenor of this raiding changes over time, and each clan has relied on raiding to a greater or lesser degree as nature and circumstances dictated.

Exploring and Settling. During those times when raiding is impossible, difficult, or eschewed by a clan, other methods are employed. Attempts to create new, self-sufficient settlements meet with mixed results, and even those settlements that manage to thrive for a short time often meet a bad end. Exploration to find optimal areas to establish new settlements are a constant undertaking in Valika, particularly for those clans that, through necessity or choice, give up on raiding for a time.

Trading. More recently, some clans have turned to trading rather than raiding to meet their needs. While trading has always been a tool in the clans’ toolbox, the most aggressive clans treat mercantile activity as a last resort, a blight on their fierce and proud traditions. The clans actively opening trade routes and seeking trade partners with the southlands are finding early success. Whether that success continues or not will surely influence their futures.

All For Survival. All these elements of Valikan life—be it raiding, exploration, founding settlements, or trading—all come back to a central theme: survival. From the nomadic tribes of the far north to the more settled inhabitants of cities like Tyburn and Summerhelm, a nagging, gnawing doubt infests their collective psyches: can we just survive to the end of this season?

This section of the *Raider’s Guide to Valika* contains an in-depth examination of these different aspects of survival for those adventuring or making a home in Valika. Rules for raiding settlements, for exploring the unforgiving lands of Valika, for establishing and growing new settlements: all of these and more are highlighted in these pages.

Raiding

Stories of Valikan raids have spread far and wide throughout Etharis. These tales, mostly repeated by those who’ve never set foot anywhere near Valika, or even in those places that have been raided by the clans, speak of wholesale slaughter carried out by mindless savages.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Mostly...

The most important thing to note is this: raiding, as it is carried out in Valika, is much different than warfare. In fact, Valikan raids are governed and managed by centuries-long customs and traditions that are almost a legal or bartering system all their own. The clans’ southern targets are ignorant of these unwritten rules, leading to the proliferation of the rumors of diabolical savagery. Of course, for some of the clans, diabolical savagery is not far from the truth.

THE ETHOS OF RAIDING

To an outsider, raiding appears barbaric. And in a lot of ways, it is. Taking essential goods from someone else, attacking (and possibly killing) them in the process, and even abducting people cannot be excused as anything other than evil acts. Doing these things to ensure the survival of yourself and your people muddies the ethical waters a bit, but it is still obviously an act that hurts others.

The complex social, economic, and even religious structure that raiding supports in Valika can be best understood through the lens of survival. Most raiders, even as they take from other

clans (and sometimes even different branches of their own clan), are cognizant of the situation of the defenders. Whenever possible, the raiders do not pillage or kill indiscriminately.

Even the most violent raiders among the Valikan clans make every effort to never kill a defender when it is possible to temporarily disable them. Stealing more resources than you need, or taking too many resources that might risk a settlement’s ability to survive, is also a violation of the current raiding code in Valika. After all, if you doom a settlement to annihilation, you can’t take what you need from them the following year.

THE ECONOMICS OF RAIDING

In fact, one of the occupations within a clan hierarchy involves learning and tracking the resources and situations of each of the clan’s raid targets. The information about the settlement is gathered from a spy or traveling skald before the raid. This information is used to determine exactly how many resources, including food and thralls, can be safely extracted to maintain the balance for everyone involved.

For those communities in the raiding proximity of a particularly active clan, false information may be spread to people whom those communities believe to be spies, indicating that the community has fewer resources than they actually do. The community might plan and set aside resources particularly for the raiders they know are inevitably going to be arriving during raiding season. This sometimes avoids bloodshed for all sides of the conflict.

THE COST OF SURVIVAL

Raiding takes its toll on both the raiders and the defenders. Every raider lost on a raid is one fewer defender when the monsters come in the winter. Every day spent training a new raider is one less day doing other work that might benefit the clan in some other way. Gathering and creating the resources used in raiding is also a drain on a clan settlement's time and energy. The leaders of each community, in consultation with the leaders of the clan as a whole, must carefully decide what resources are spent where each season.

It is not unusual for settlements of the same clan to be forced by clan leaders to give away resources within the clan when called up. These resources might be given freely, if begrudgingly. However, it is not unusual for settlements belonging to the same clan to raid one another when the need becomes so great that survival is at stake.

RAIDING AS WORSHIP

As we have seen, raiding is more than just chaotic violence—it's a carefully considered and managed ecosystem of resource allocation and dispersal that has been ritualized and accepted by most permanent inhabitants of Valika. It is more than that, however.

Valikans have taken the absence of gods in Etharis as a life lesson. Whatever force towers over the gods, ruling reality itself, obviously judged the gods as lacking, and that is why they perished. The Valikan clans do not plan to make that mistake. They treat shows of strength, even in assaulting and possibly killing others, as a continuing proof of their worth. Survival is the ultimate goal of life both here and in the afterlife, and being the strongest and most able warrior is the ultimate display of fealty to the universe.

RAIDING RULES

To run a raid in your Valikan-themed game, you must first decide how abstract you want the raid to occur in terms of gameplay. Do the players only wish to play their characters, focusing on what happens in the combats in which they fight? Or do they want to take command of the entire raiding party, strategizing the best place to marshal their resources?

How to Raid

A raid is split into five parts, regardless of whether you are using an assault- or commander-style raid:

- Phase 1: Preparation
- Phase 2: Commanding Raiders
- Phase 3: Storming the Stronghold
- Phase 4: Return to the Longships
- Phase 5: Downtime Activities

For either type of raid, it's assumed that the player characters are the leaders of their raiding party and participate in the raid. Still, there are two very different ways to run the raid—either as an “assault-style raid” that is heavy on the combat but potentially more satisfying for combat-ori-

ented players (and running like a normal adventure), or a resource-management minigame called “commander-style raids,” where several smaller conflicts can be resolved through a series of checks before the final assault.

Raiding Feats

Raiding feats are presented later in this section, providing the characters certain abilities and bonuses that come into play during a raid. Many of them provide benefits that interact with the commander-style raiding rules. These feats could also be altered to be equally useful during assault-style raids.

Alternatively, the feats could be turned into special abilities that a GM allows characters to choose from outside of the Fifth-Edition feat system. This allows characters to still feel like experienced raiders without needing to be on raids to take advantage of the benefits.

Assault-Style Raids

Should the players wish to focus only on their characters and their conflicts during a raid, the assault-style gameplay is likely the best option. In this type of play, the characters work with the knowledge they gain during the preparation phase to plan their raiding, then they undertake first the conflicts leading toward the stronghold area of the raid site. After clearing the path to the targeted stronghold, they take on the forces there.

In many ways, an assault-style raid can be run similarly to a dungeon crawl. The characters must defeat the challenges in front of them, leading to a main battle, and then the characters must retreat with their ill-gotten gains. If they rest, they risk encountering enemies (determined by the GM) as the enemy reinforcements arrive to protect the raid site.

Everything Else Happening. With the assault-style play, the GM adjudicates the conflicts taking place “offstage.” Decisions about the success of these other conflicts can be made unilaterally based on the success of the reconnaissance, can be determined through rolls as described in the commander-style raiding rules, or simply determined in a way to make the narrative more dramatic and interesting.

Commander-Style Raids

In commander-style raids, the characters still take part in all phases of a raid. However, during the second phase (“Commanding Raiders”), the characters don't take part in “normal” Fifth Edition-style combat. Instead, they command their raiding party to attack and plunder locations within a raid site, all while pushing their army towards a stronghold—a fortified location which contains the most treasure within the raid site. Once the characters' raiding party reaches the stronghold, the third phase begins (see “Storming the Stronghold”), and the characters form a strike force to rapidly infiltrate and plunder the stronghold, using the core Fifth-Edition combat rules.

The Valikan adventure *Saga of the Seasons* uses these rules when the characters command their clan's warriors on daring raids. It can also be used when defending your home turf from invading raiders.



Commander-Style Raids

The commander-style raiding rules let you represent all of the interactions within and consequences of all the steps in a raid, ranging from planning the raid to the actual conflicts to the post-raid activities. While the commander-style raid rules provide a solid experience, the tastes of each gaming group are very different. GMs are invited to make tweaks—large and small—to these rules to make them work best for the enjoyment of their players and groups.

RAID SITE

The beating heart of these rules is the raid site. This is much more than simply a visual representation of the raid area—it is the outline and flowchart of the setting, the defense forces, the rewards gained for a successful raid, and more. Examples of raid sites are provided later in this section, along with tips and tools for creating your own raid sites. The *Saga of the Seasons* adventure book also provides examples of raid play that can be a model for GM-created raids.

Map and Flowchart. On the surface, a raid site is a beautiful map of a region, complete with settlements, forests, lakes, and so on. However, the map is actually a flowchart in disguise. Each feature on the map is a conflict zone the characters can attack, conquer, and gain resources from. Often, you can attack multiple conflict zones at once. There are some zones that can't be attacked until your army has conquered a zone blocking it—like a

castle you can't attack until you've conquered the mountain pass defending it.

The final “blocked zone” is the raid site's stronghold—the location that, once attacked, causes the raid to shift from the big-picture overland conquest phase to the small-scale strike force attack on the stronghold. The “flowchart” of a raid strips away the pretty aesthetics of a raid into a straightforward “information map” showing the areas that must be conquered before the raiders can access the stronghold, or providing multiple paths to the stronghold, or offering tantalizing extra conflict areas that aren't key to the overall success of a raid but might offer valuable resources at the cost of diverted attention to the main goal.

Size and Scope

Raids can be carried out on a settlement as small as a tiny farming hamlet to as large as an international trade port. Raiding a small village might mean dealing with a few pockets of pitchfork-wielding farmers before getting to the central livestock pen. On the other hand, raiding a city is a more complex affair, with several bottlenecks manned by heavily-armed city guards needing to be breached before getting to the city treasury.

The encounters within a raid site, like a normal Fifth-Edition adventure, should be appropriate for the characters' level and overall power. Low-level characters with small raiding parties are best suited to raid small villages, while higher-level characters with large raiding parties at their disposal can be expected to lead raids against well-fortified settlements.

SIDEBAR: THE BALANCE OF RAIDS

Raids carried out by the Valikan clans fall within a narrow window of challenge and reward. The point of a raid is not to conquer an area, take everything, and totally subjugate the population. That is warfare, not raiding, and requires a much greater number of warriors and many more resources than a raid.

The typical objective of a raid is to gather the greatest number of resources while risking the least number of lives and resources in the attempt. A raid might see the raiders defeat the entire defending force, including the leaders, ransack their stronghold for food and supplies, and even spend the night there, but then retreat to their longships come morning.

If the defenders in a raid are obviously overwhelmed by a superior number of attackers, they likely surrender without a fight. In these cases, there is no need to run a full raid using these rules. However, sending that many raiders out into the wild means fewer warriors are defending the clan's settlement, which could be a target of another clan's raid (or worse yet, the army of a neighboring land).

It is reasonable to create a raid site that is obviously much too extensive and well-defended for a raiding party to defeat it entirely. These raid sites require a raiding party to carefully target just the areas with the most valuable and necessary resources, and then retreat swiftly before a counterattack can be summoned. While these types of raids can be more dangerous than targeting a smaller settlement, the potential for valuable plunder is higher as well.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION

The preparation phase of a raid is about gathering and utilizing intelligence about the raid site, either through covert surveillance or targeted information gathering. Then the raid leaders make plans about how many raiders and which resources to employ during the raid.

This phase works similarly regardless of which raid playstyle you're using. Using intelligence and employing resources wisely is key to a successful raid. Likewise, having incomplete intelligence about enemy defenses and numbers could prove catastrophic, ensuring a negative outcome before the raid even starts.

Longships

A Valikan raiding party typically leaves their home with one longship for every 25 warriors on the raid. Each longship can carry 50 warriors, or replace 1 warrior with 100 lbs. of resources or plunder. At the GM's discretion, if the longship is damaged, such as during battle, it must be repaired during downtime (see "Phase 5: Downtime Activities," later in this section).

Resources

All raiders rely on three core resources: timber, which is used to build ships and shields; stone, iron, and other metals, which are used to create weapons and other supplies; and raiders, without whom no battles could be fought. All clans spend time gathering resources before going on raids, and thus have a stockpile of resources they take with them to conduct repairs and create new tools during downtime. The optional *Quartermastering* rules (see "Optional Rules" later in this section), provide a more in-depth way to manage your resources.

Typically, the vast majority of resources used in a raid are gathered before the raiders depart their home. They can gather more by spending downtime (see "Downtime Activities" later in this section). Keep in mind, however, that downtime can also be spent to construct useful supplies like shields and casks of drake fire that will allow your raiders to defeat their foes more easily.

TIMBER

The raiders may acquire timber to create new gear or reinforce their vessels and craft supplies. A group of raiders sets out from their village with a certain amount of timber (measured in pounds). In *Saga of the Seasons*, this amount is determined by the characters' actions in previous chapters of the adventure. In your adventures, it could be determined by how much preparation they have made in the first phase of the raid, or how much timber they've collected in previous adventures or raids.

Using Timber. A raider with proficiency in woodworker's tools can fashion whatever tools are needed and to implement simple but effective repairs. Repairing ships or creating new supplies is a downtime activity that the characters can lead during a raid. See "Downtime Activities" later in this section.

Gathering Timber. As a downtime activity, the characters can lead an expedition to gather timber and iron. See "Downtime Activities" later in this section.



STONE, IRON, AND OTHER METALS

Basic materials or metals such as stone, iron, and copper can be acquired during a journey through environments that have them naturally occurring, such as mountains, arid hills, and badlands. These mineral resources are collectively called “iron” for simplicity.

Using Stone, Iron, and Other Metals. A raider with proficiency in smith’s tools can create supplies that can aid in battle. Creating new supplies is a downtime activity that the characters can lead during a raid. See “Downtime Activities” later in this section.

Gathering Iron. As a downtime activity, the characters can lead an expedition to gather iron and timber. See “Downtime Activities” later in this section.

RAIDERS

Raiders are warriors with a specialized skill set. Although they are living beings, they can still be created from the raw materials of members of a clan. The specifics of finding suitable raiders and turning them into a well-trained raiding force is covered in “Downtime Activities” later in this section.

Optional Rule: Quartermastering

Before the raiding process, it is often necessary to acquire, create, or otherwise source needed supplies such as additional food and clean water, repair materials for ships, and obtain and distribute raiding equipment. A quartermaster is also in charge of handling foodstuffs during the journey, ensuring that skins are full of water, mead, or oil, and so on.

Resources. In addition to the appropriate tools for the service to be performed (such as leatherworker’s tools for repairing sails or woodworkers tools for repairing small portions of a ship), a character needs raw materials worth half of the item’s cost. This cost is determined by the severity of the damage or impact. For example, a missing 2-foot by 4-foot section of sail may only cost 2 gp. A character can acquire up to 30 gp worth of supplies per week while journeying to or from a raid destination. Larger tasks and more impactful repairs can be performed over multiple weeks of travel but must be completed prior to completing the raid.

Multiple characters can combine their efforts by using this downtime activity. Additionally, each raider in the party consumes the equivalent of 1 gp worth of materials per week be it food, basic equipment maintenance, or some other similarly basic need. Materials and goods that a quartermaster acquires during a raid voyage that aren’t used can’t be saved and don’t roll over to the next raid voyage, except in rare circumstances as determined by the GM.

If a quartermaster can’t procure enough goods for the raiding party, the raiding party acquires 1 disadvantage die per 1 gp of missing goods. Disadvantage dice are used in any d20 checks made at the raid site, applying to each d20 roll the characters make until all disadvantage dice are expended.

All characters that participate in this activity must be proficient with the tools needed to perform the repairs or with the skills associated with the desired task, such as using Survival to hunt for food if the raiding party is low on supplies. A raid requires a quartermaster if the journey from origin to destination is one week or more. Additionally, raids require one quartermaster for every thirty raiders.

Special. One week of journeying for a raid requires approximately 5 gp of repair and upkeep for each vehicle used by the raiding party. This assumes that weather is mostly fair and that few obstacles such as dangerous creatures are encountered.

RAIDING WITHOUT A QUARTERMASTER

Raids can be performed without a quartermaster. If the journey is one week each way or less, there is no penalty. For each additional week of travel between the origin and the destination, all Raiding Rolls are made with a -1 penalty if there are not enough quartermasters to cover the entire raiding party.

Optional Rule: Hunting and Foraging

Raiding is a grueling activity, and keeping the raiders fed during a voyage is a challenge. One or more raiders proficient in Survival can attempt to gather food for the raid group. This time could be spent fishing or whaling, going onto land to hunt game or find edible plants, or stealing food from lightly guarded areas.

At the end of a week of foraging in this manner, a gathering check must be performed. The DC for the check is as follows:

- Plentiful Game & Resources: DC 8
- Limited Game & Resources: DC 13
- Rare Game & Resources: DC 18

For each raider that engages in gathering resources in this manner, the DC of the check is reduced by 1. On a successful check, the foragers provide $1d6 \times$ the amount of the success \times the raider’s Wisdom bonus or proficiency bonus (whichever is higher) pounds of food. The raider then repeats this die roll to determine how many gallons of fresh water are found. The amount of the success is determined by this formula:

$$\text{Raider's d20 roll} - \text{DC} = \text{success amount}$$

Example: Raider rolls a 15 in a plentiful area (DC 8). They have a success amount of 7, so they would find $3 (1d6) \times 7 \times 3$ (proficiency bonus) pounds of food for a total of 64 pounds for the next week’s consumption.

Special. While it is assumed that a raid departs with enough basic resources, a hunter can bolster a quartermaster’s efforts (see the downtime activity “Quartermastering”). This is especially important if the weather is hot, which would require double the normal amount of food and water for the raiders, or if emergencies are encountered during the voyage. It’s important to remember that the raiders will still need food and water for their return trip.

Optional Rule: Scouting

Well-planned scouting is often crucial to a successful raid. Before commencing the raid, a raiding party may choose to deploy one or more scouts. Doing so adds additional time to the raid (a minimum of one downtime day, regardless of the number of scouts used) and may add benefits to the activity. Inversely, there is a chance that if a scout is not used, a raid may go poorly as the raiding party may find that they are ill-informed of developments at their target destination during their journey.

Scouting. A raider chosen to scout must succeed on three out of five different ability checks. The GM determines which ability checks are appropriate. For example, a GM may decide that a scout will need to use:

- Athletics to climb into an observation post or outrun pursuit by patrols
- Stealth to sneak into the vicinity of the raid site
- Perception to observe their defenses
- Insight to correctly gauge the rotation of observable guards
- Nature to determine the contents of a raid site
- Arcana to notice any magical defenses at the raid site
- Survival to find the best locations to observe the raid site
- Investigation to make correct assumptions about elements of the target that cannot be directly observed, such as hidden traps
- Deception or Persuasion to escape unscathed from an encounter with a merchant or woodcutter
- Further Stealth checks to sneak back to the raiding party

A scout with the **Cunning Raider** feat likely has advantage on these checks. The GM should work with the scout to best determine what type of narrative deployment and selection of skills should be used—the raiding character may have some interesting and unexpected ideas!

Perfect Success. If the scout (or scouts) succeeds on all five ability checks, they gain excellent intelligence on the raid site. They learn all of the relevant data contained on the raid site: the exact number of minimum raiders to conquer a conflict zone, the DCs of the checks, the resources to be gained at each zone, which zones bar the way to the central stronghold, etc.

Success. If the scouts score three or four successes, they still learn the exact minimum number of raiders needed to attack a conflict zone and the DCs, as well as which zones are required to advance on the stronghold, but they don't know the exact resources at each zone.

Failure. If a scout does not score at least three successes, or the raiding party fails to send a scout at all, the consequences could be dire. Scouts who fail have a 50 percent chance of being captured.

Whether the scout is captured or not, the raiders still learn from other sources the general layout of the raid site, how many zones there are, and the relative locations of the zones at the site. However, they do not know the exact number of minimum raiders needed to attack a zone. Provide numbers that are within two of the number (plus or minus) by rolling a d4.

Remember that if the minimum number of raiders is not sent to that conflict zone, the raiders at that location automatically fail and are captured.

RAIDER NUMBERS GUESS CHART

d4	Minimum Zone Raid Force Guess Number
1	Actual number minus 2
2	Actual number minus 1
3	Actual number plus 1
4	Actual number plus 2

Additionally, the raid site may be tipped off that a raiding party is nearby. Worse still, the raid site may mobilize their own force to strike back against the raiders! Raiding is an important part of the game's narrative and culture, and such dramatic failures are encouraged to be treated in the most heroic and cinematic way possible.



PHASE 2: COMMANDING RAIDERS

This phase of the raid comprises a series of skirmishes in which the characters serve as commanders and tacticians for the raiding party. The size of their raiding party and the special resources they have at their disposal are determined by the preparations the characters made in Phase 1: Preparation.

Raiding Turns and Events

This phase of a raid is measured in turns, with each turn taking 1 hour of in-game time. This time can be adjusted to be longer or shorter at the GM's discretion, based on the size and scope of the raid site and attacking force.

Targeting Conflict Zones. The characters can order a simultaneous attack on as many conflict zones as they have raiders to spare in a single turn. Completing the raid in fewer turns reduces the chance enemy reinforcements show up, but spreading the characters' forces too thin in a single turn lowers the odds of successfully capturing a conflict zone. This encourages the players to raid quickly while also prioritizing their vital objectives.

Turn Count. A turn ends once the Raiding Roll has been made for all conflict zones attacked during the turn. Typically, the next turn begins immediately, and the characters must assess the state of their raiding party and choose to retreat, which ends the raid, or take another turn by launching attacks on new conflict zones.

In this phase, events can occur on certain turns that cause certain conflict zones to disappear (as civilians flee), become harder to conquer (as they're reinforced with troops), or new conflict zones to appear (which are typically mandatory obstacles that must be conquered to reach Phase 3 of the raid). For more information, see "Reinforcements" below.

Reaching the Stronghold. Certain conflict zones must be conquered before attacking the raid site's stronghold. If all zones blocking access to the stronghold have been conquered, the characters can choose to start Phase 3: Storming the Stronghold at the end of a turn.

In short, a single turn during Phase 2 of a raid looks like this:

- First turn begins.
- Players assess their warriors and supplies, choosing which conflict zones to attack on this turn.
- Players assign a number of warriors and resources to each selected conflict zone, which can't exceed their current count of warriors or supplies.
- Make a Raiding Roll (see "Raiding Rolls" below) for each targeted conflict zone, determining the outcome of that attack.
- Assess warriors and resources lost or gained in the attack and adjust resource totals.
- If there are no other conflict zones blocking the raid site's stronghold, the players can choose to move immediately to Phase 3. Otherwise, a new turn of Phase 2 begins, or the players decide to retreat.
- A new turn begins. The GM describes the effects of any events that occur at the start of this turn.

Retreat

Retreat is expected when raiding. Unlike a war of conquest, raiders attack fast, plunder as much as possible, and then leave just as fast as they arrived. During Phase 2 of a raid, the characters can order a retreat at the end of any turn. Once the characters call a retreat, advance to Phase 4: Return to the Longships.

Reinforcements

Each raid site has a "timer" in this phase. At the start of certain turns listed in the raid site's description, the Raiding Roll DC of certain conflict zones can increase, the plunder gained for capturing certain zones can decrease, and more.

Reinforcements don't typically arrive on consecutive turns. In most raids, changes only occur starting on turn four, usually on even-numbered turns, and usually with the change being forecasted by read-aloud text the turn before it happens. You can make your raid more frantic by decreasing the amount of time before reinforcements start occurring, or increasing the frequency with which they occur. Just be careful to make it clear to the characters that this is happening. Surprises are okay once in a while, but a tactics game is best when the characters have a chance to plan around negative outcomes.

For examples of this system, see the raids in chapter 2 of *Saga of the Seasons* or the "Example Raid" later in this chapter.

Raiding Rolls

If the GM is running a commander-style raid, the conflicts in Phase 2 are resolved by using Raiding Rolls to determine outcomes and consequences. The resources that the characters marshal, and how those resources are employed, modify the rolls.

It is important to understand, and ensure the players realize, that Raiding Rolls and these rules in general involve an abstraction of the results and narratives. It is possible that the characters are injured, lose resources, incur negative consequences, or even be knocked unconscious as part of this abstraction.

If players are unwilling or unable to accept these consequences playing out in an abstract manner, the assault style of raiding might be more appropriate for their enjoyment. That allows them to manage each interaction they have as a normal Fifth-Edition encounter.

ASSAULT STYLE

If the Game Master is running an assault-style raid, these skirmishes can be run as combat encounters using normal Fifth-Edition rules. They should be on the easier side in terms of challenge, with the understanding that the next phase ("Storming the Stronghold") will contain more challenging encounters, and the characters will have time to take short rests during the raid, but not long rests.



Raid Sites, Maps, and Conflict Zones

Phase 2 of the raid takes place in conflict zones on an overland scale, generally featuring multiple locations, structures, and terrain elements. Creating a map, even one that is hand-drawn and not to scale, provides a prop that the characters (and their players) can point at and better decide how to allocate their resources. The map should contain all the conflict zones that can be encountered during the raid, as well as give the players a method to better visualize and understand the reconnaissance information they may have collected during Phase 1.

Conflict Zones. The conflict zones on the map represent the defensive positions the defenders have established: important bottlenecks in the terrain, stores of valuable resources that are the target of the raid, or other areas of importance. Overrunning some of these areas with the raiding forces might be necessary to reach the final stronghold, while others might be optional areas that hold value but are not required to claim total victory in a raid.

A raid should have multiple conflict zones for the characters to conquer. Some of these zones *must* be conquered to open a path for the characters to storm the stronghold (the third phase of a raid). Other zones are optional and provide additional resources that are added to the raiders' stock of resources gained from the raid.

Assessing Conflict Zones. The GM knows the stats of a conflict zone, such as the Raiding Roll DC required to conquer it, and what rewards it grants when conquered. These details are private and shouldn't be shared. However, each conflict zone has some flavor text that should give the players a hint of what special supplies can be used to gain a bonus when attacking it, if any. For example, tall shields grant a bonus to raiders attacking guard towers full of archers. Its flavor text could include: "The archers in these towers have clear sightlines, making it easy to attack you unless you bring your own cover."

Allocating Raiders. To conquer a conflict zone, the characters must first command their raiders to attack it. Each conflict zone has a minimum number of raiders

needed to attack it. The raiders know the minimum number of raiders needed at each conflict zone if they took the time and effort to prepare and scout the area. If they failed to do so successfully, consult the *Raider Numbers Guess* table above to give them an estimate of those numbers.

Assigning more raiders beyond that minimum grants bonuses to the Raiding Roll that increases the odds of success. Spreading your forces too thin makes it less likely for you to succeed but moving too slowly can also cause problems; the circumstances of battle change at certain turns during the raid, such as enemy reinforcements arriving, or fleeing peasants escaping the conflict with their valuables.

The characters have a finite number of warriors at their command once the raid starts—and in long raiding campaigns, warriors are persistent between raids, meaning suffering strong losses could prevent future raids entirely. If they run out, they're beaten. There's no getting more warriors unless they spend gold and downtime to hire mercenaries (see "Downtime Activities" later in this section) or until they return home to train new raiders.

Spending Supplies. The characters have special supplies at their disposal that can improve their odds of success at conquering a conflict zone without spending additional raiders. For specific examples, see "Supplies" later in this section.

Raiding Roll Chart

Conquering a conflict zone requires the players to make a successful Raiding Roll. Rather than using a d20, the Raiding Roll is 2d10, and potentially modified if the characters sent more than the minimum number of raiders to a conflict zone, used special resources, or tapped other bonuses or penalties.

Doubles! If both numbers rolled on the d10s match, the result of the attack is a Critical Victory or a Critical Defeat, regardless of how many points the Raiding Roll DC passed or failed by. See the "Casualties in Victory" and "Casualties in Defeat" tables below.

CONFLICT ZONE TYPES

CONFLICT ZONE	MINIMUM RAID FORCE	RAIDING ROLL DC	PLUNDER (RESOURCES)	PLUNDER (WEALTH)
Shrine	3	8	2d4 captives	Religious iconography and art. Their value in gp is a number of d6 equal to the Raiding Roll DC (e.g., 7d6 gp).
Rural Settlement or Homestead	3	9	1d6 × 10 lbs. lumber, 1d4 captives, 1d4 horses (see “Supplies,” below)	Livestock, weapons, toolkits, game kits, and jewelry. Their value in gp is a number of d4 equal to the Raiding Roll DC (e.g., 8d4 gp).
Fortified Village	4	10	2d6 × 10 lbs. lumber, 2d8 captives, 2d10 horses (see “Supplies,” below).	Livestock, weapons, toolkits, game kits, and jewelry. Their value in gp is a number of d4 equal to the Raiding Roll DC (e.g., 10d4).
Fortified granary or other rural storage	6	13	Food, which adds 1d4 to the first Raiding Roll made next turn	Livestock, weapons, toolkits, game kits, and jewelry. Their value in gp is a number of d4 equal to the Raiding Roll DC (e.g., 13d4).
Monastery	10	14	1d6 × 10 lbs. iron, 2d6 captives	One uncommon magic item, one <i>potion of healing</i> . Religious iconography and art; their value in gp is a number of d6 equal to the Raiding Roll DC (e.g., 7d6 gp).
Military Encampment (watch tower, camp, roadblock, etc.)	12	14	2d6 × 10 lbs. iron, 2d8 captives	One uncommon magic weapon or armor, one common potion. One piece of jewelry worth up to 100 gp.
Military Fort (hill fort, bivouac, gate, etc.)	15	15	2d10 × 10 lbs. iron, 3d8 captives	Two uncommon magic weapons or armor. Three pieces of jewelry worth up to 100 gp each.
Redoubt (castle, university, cathedral)	20	18	6d10 × 10 lbs. timber, 4d10 × 10 lbs. iron, 4d8 captives	One rare magic item and one uncommon consumable item, and up to 100 gp of other items. One piece of jewelry worth up to 500 gp.

Conquering a Conflict Zone

Each conflict zone has several traits:

Type. The settlement’s description and purpose. Military fortifications are generally more difficult to raid than peaceful or rural settlements. The *Conflict Zone Types* table shows some common types of conflict zones that you can use to create your own raids.

Minimum Raid Force. The minimum number of raiders needed to attempt a Raiding Roll at a conflict zone. Generally, the higher the minimum raid force is, the higher the Raiding Roll DC.

Raiding Roll DC. The number that the Raiding Roll needs to meet or exceed to conquer this zone. This is a suggested DC, and it might be higher or lower depending on the specifics of a zone. For example, a castle’s distant watch post conflict zone might only be DC 10, while zones near the castle would have a much higher DC. Typically, conflict zones with a higher DC have more loot.

Plunder (Resources). This conflict zone has resources or supplies that can be plundered, in addition to gold. When you conquer a conflict zone, you gain these resources.

Plunder (Wealth). This conflict zone has items or money that can be plundered. When you conquer a zone, you gain these items.

Assigning More Raiders. Assigning more than the minimum number of raiders to a conflict zone grants you a bonus to the Raiding Roll. Every time you assign an extra number of raiders equal to the minimum number of raiders to a conflict zone, you gain a +2 bonus to that Raiding

Roll. However, the maximum bonus you can receive for assigning more raiders is limited to +4.

For example, if the minimum number of raiders needed in a conflict zone is 3, sending 6 raiders provides a +2 bonus to the Raiding Roll, while sending 9 raiders provides a +4 bonus to the Raiding Roll.

Making the Raiding Roll. Once you’ve determined all the modifiers from the size of your raiding force and any special resources you’re using (see “Supplies” below), roll 2d10, and add all bonuses and penalties you have on the roll. If the result of this roll meets or exceeds the DC of the Raiding Roll, your raiders successfully conquered the conflict zone. The type of victory is up to the player to decide—they might choose to have won through stealth, or brute force. They might decide to slaughter everyone in the zone, or they may let them flee. The GM can decide if the narrative method of conquering the zone has any mechanical implications for future attacks in this raid.

For example, some of the defenders at a particular conflict zone may be unhappy with their leaders. A raiding strategy that employs mercy might earn a +2 to the next Raiding Rolls, while a particularly vicious attitude in the raiding strategy might place a -2 penalty on the following Raiding Rolls.

Note the result of this roll and compare it to the “Casualties in Victory” or “Casualties in Defeat” tables below to determine how many raiders were lost in the attack. In all cases where a percentage is referred to, round down. However, there is a minimum of 1 in all cases.

CONTENT WARNING: CAPTIVES, THRALLS, AND SLAVERY

Real-world Viking raiders often captured people just as often as they did material wealth. These people would serve them as slaves (“thralls”), and sometimes be pressed into battle on the raid in which they were captured. In Valika, the clans of Thrull are the primary practitioners of thrall-taking, whereas the Kandar clans are attempting to move away from the practice. You should talk with your group about whether or not they want their game to include the taking captives and making them thralls in a session zero before you start raiding.

If this is a topic your group is comfortable with exploring in your game, your clan now has a moral quandary: only the bloodthirsty clans of Thrull take thralls and force them to fight. You may add greater force to your army by taking captives, but that would make you just as heartless as the worst stories of savage Valikan raiders.

The number of captives that can be taken from a conflict zone is listed in the “plunder” section of the Conflict Zone Types table above. These captives can be pressed into service as warriors, increasing the number of warriors you have available in raids.

Victory: Plunder and Casualties

When you successfully conquer a conflict zone, you gain resources and any benefits inherent in the zone, but possibly lose raiders.

CASUALTIES IN VICTORY

RAIDING ROLL RESULT	CASUALTIES
Same as DC	Pyrrhic Victory. One Special Raider is killed, if any are present. Half of all plunder at this location is lost. 50 percent of assigned warriors are killed.
Succeeded by 1-5	Hard-won Victory. Half of the plunder at this location is lost. 25 percent of assigned raiders are killed.
Succeeded by 6-10	Excellent Victory. Victory with minimal losses. 10 percent of assigned raiders lost.
Succeeded by 11-15	Remarkable Victory. Victory with no losses.
Critical Victory! Succeeded by 16 or more	Epic Result! Victory with surprising good fortune. One warrior becomes a Special Raider, and twice the listed plunder is found.

The resources plundered from a conflict zone are listed in the zone’s description, and these resources are added to your stock of resources after the raid is fully concluded. Resources found that can be used as part of a raid can be employed in future conflicts in the current raid.

Retreat: Plunder and Casualties

When you fail to conquer a conflict zone, your raiders must flee or get captured.

CASUALTIES IN DEFEAT

RAIDING ROLL RESULT	CASUALTIES
Failed by 1	Effective Retreat. One Special Raider is killed, if any are present. 50 percent of assigned warriors are killed. Half all assigned supplies are lost.
Failed by 2-5	Costly Retreat. All assigned Special Raiders are lost. 75 percent of assigned warriors are killed. All assigned supplies are lost.
Failed by 6-10	Horrific Retreat. All warriors, including Special Raiders are lost, except for one survivor. All assigned supplies are lost.
Critical Defeat! Failure by 11 or more	Disaster! All warriors, including Special Raiders, are lost. All assigned supplies are lost. The enemy rallies, and the turn counter increases by one (see “Reinforcements” earlier in this section).

Option: Taken Captive

It’s more likely that the raiders lost at a conflict zone are taken captive rather than killed. This allows the defenders to ransom captives back to their clan for valuables or resources. They could also become thralls to the defending clan. This could become a story-focused point and give the characters a reason to launch another attack!

Preventing Casualties

Losing raiders is costly. Replacing raiders when far from home is an expensive and morally complex question, as mercenaries can be hired with hard-earned gold, and captives can be armed and pressed into service. Whenever casualties occur, the characters can spend a *potion of healing* or a casting of *cure wounds* (or other magic that restores hit points) to prevent that casualty. If a spell is used, one raider may be saved per level of the spell slot used (for example, if *cure wounds* is cast at 3rd level, 3 raiders can be saved).

It’s important that characters know that spending spell slots to save their warriors will give them fewer resources to spend in Phase 3: Storming the Stronghold.



Supplies

Supplies can be crafted out of resources during downtime or plundered from conflict zones. You can assign supplies to a conflict zone you're attacking once you've assigned warriors, but before you've made the Raiding Roll. Each supply adds a bonus to the Raiding Roll.

Additionally, some conflict zones have special traits that cause supplies to have additional effects. Some effects are positive. For example, shields halve casualties when attacking a conflict zone defended by archers, in addition to the bonus they grant to the Raiding Roll. Some special effects aren't so useful. For example, casks of drake fire can cause wildfires that destroy the conflict zone's plunder.

Due to the wear and tear of battle, half of the supplies you send to a battle are destroyed at the end of the battle. For example, if you equip a group of 10 warriors with tall shields, you gain 5 tall shields back after the battle; the others were destroyed. Some supplies, like drake fire casks, are consumed completely on use.

Supplies include but are not limited to the following:

- Horses or other land mounts, which help crossing vast overland distances
- Drake fire casks, which light darkness and ignite flammable material
- Tall shields, which block projectiles
- Battering rams, which knock down barriers
- Important NPCs, with their own unique traits
- Enchantments, with their own unique traits
- Other supplies may be available

COMMON SUPPLIES

RESOURCE NAME	RAIDING ROLL BONUS	SPECIAL
Horses	If opponents aren't mounted or indoors, gain +1 if at least half of attacking warriors are mounted. Gain +2 when all warriors are riding.	Allows mounted raiders to attack two adjacent conflict zones in one turn but can't add new warriors before attacking.
Drake fire casks	Gain +2 when you use a cask; casks can be used after making the Raiding Roll and can turn a failure into a success. Casks are consumed when used.	Lights houses and forests on fire, destroying all plunder in that conflict zone. Consumed on use.
Tall shields	Gain +1 if at least half of attacking warriors are holding a shield. Gain +2 when all warriors have a shield.	Casualties are halved against conflict zones defended by archers.
Battering ram	Gain +4 when attacking a conflict zone with fortifications like walls or gates.	Consumed on use.

HORSES

Valikans don't load horses onto their ships when going raiding, and rarely bring them home. However, they're more than happy to ride them into battle if they've plundered mounts from a village. Riding horses is effective when fighting opponents on flat ground, granting a +2 bonus to the Raiding Roll.

To gain the +2 bonus from horses, you need to assign a number of horses to a conflict zone equal to the number of warriors attacking that zone. If you assign horses to only half your warriors, the bonus is +1.

DRAKE FIRE CASKS

Drake fire is an alchemical compound that bursts into flames when exposed to water. A small cask of drake fire is rigged with a small water pouch. When the cask is broken by hurling it against a hard surface, the concoction explodes.

If a group of raiders is equipped with a cask of drake fire, they can use it to gain a +2 bonus on the Raiding Roll. This bonus can be gained after the roll has been made, potentially turning failure into success.

When raiders use drake fire casks against flammable material like forests or straw-roofed huts, they destroy any plunder that could have been gained from that zone.

If used during combat, it is an action to throw a cask up to 30 feet. It is otherwise identical to a *fireball* spell cast at 3rd level (spell save DC 13).

TALL SHIELDS

Most Valikan warriors carry wooden shields into combat, but these round shields are most effective in hand-to-hand combat. When faced with a barrage of arrows, Valikans use tall shields, positioned overhead, to advance in a single unit. Using these tall shields grants a +2 bonus to the Raiding Roll. Additionally, casualties are halved when using shields in a conflict zone defended by archers.

To gain the +2 bonus from tall shields, you need to assign a number of shields to a conflict zone equal to the number of warriors attacking that zone. If you assign shields to only half your warriors, the bonus is halved to +1.

BATTERING RAM

This simple siege weapon can be carried by a group of warriors. It has a single purpose: to bash down weak points in fortifications, like gates or cracked walls. If a battering ram is assigned to a conflict zone, the warriors attacking that zone gain a +4 bonus to the Raiding Roll if it's defended by fortifications.

You only gain this bonus if the conflict zone has stationary defenses; a battering ram is too cumbersome to be effective when battling a highly mobile foe.

"The best feeling in the world is training a raided horse. Wrangling and re-domesticating a horse to be a loyal friend is one of the greatest post-victory victories a raider can experience. Raiders' favorite tales usually involve bonding with a special horse."

- Excerpt from *Raiders Guide for Children*

PHASE 3: STORMING THE STRONGHOLD

Each raid site has a central stronghold containing this area's most valuable treasures and resources, but also its most powerful defenders. If a raid site is small and doesn't have any conventional fortifications like a keep or church, this location is represented by a stout house, a well-built barn, a stone armory, or something similar. Once any conflict zones preventing the characters' raiding force from storming the fort have been conquered, Phase 3 can begin.

Once this phase begins, the characters (and perhaps one or two NPCs) become the main strike force. All remaining raiders move in to attack the fort as well, keeping the stronghold's forces from boxing the characters' strike force in during their own attack. The players can't assign any more raiders to conflict zones once the storming of the stronghold begins.

Areas of the Stronghold

Storming a stronghold is similar to exploring a dungeon. The main difference is that everyone in the stronghold knows they're under attack. Just like a dungeon, a stronghold is broken down into areas (typically rooms, but they could be courtyards or other discrete areas). An area of the stronghold is labeled on its map and described in the text. Some areas have treasure, some have enemies, some have traps or hazards, and most have a mixture of two or more of these elements.

Hit 'Em Quick, Get Out Fast

Valikan raids are lightning-fast affairs, carried out by small forces against highly defensible positions. Raiders rely on their team's ability to fight, plunder, and retreat before their target can fully muster their defenses or call reinforcements from outside the raid site.

Just like in Phase 2, it's the GM's job to count how many turns have elapsed since the start of the raid. In this part, turns are six seconds long, just like a regular combat round. After a certain number of turns pass, the challenges they face in certain areas of the fort grow more deadly, as described in the "Prepared" section that appears in some raid sites.

If the characters don't defeat the stronghold's commander before the number of turns set forth in the raid site description passes, reinforcements arrive outside the fort to start causing casualties among the raiders besieging the stronghold. Unless the characters want to incur further casualties and get captured (or worse), they must break off the raid and retreat immediately. There's no shame in withdrawing—ensuring that raiders only die for a worthy cause is an honorable part of Valikan culture.

"There is one very important factor to always keep in mind when raiding. They know you're coming. They are prepared. They are waiting—for you."

- Excerpt from *Raiders Guide for Children*

Treasure on a Time Limit

Strongholds are brimming with valuable treasure and resources that lure characters to spend their turns picking locks or smashing chests. If raiders think they can defeat the stronghold's commander before their raiders start taking losses outside, they're welcome to let the treasure wait. However, if they think they'll need to make a hasty retreat, it might make more sense to plunder the stronghold first, and then cut and run if the situation takes a turn for the worse.

Retreating

Unlike in Phase 2, the characters can order a retreat at any time. The only catch is, they need to conduct the retreat in tactical movement on the 5-foot-square grid the stronghold is drawn on. Typically, to retreat, the characters must make it back to the place on the map they entered from. However, you can decide that reaching the edge of the map in another way allows them to retreat. Making a new exit in a Bûrachi chapel by busting through an ornate stained glass window is a distinctly Valikan way of retreating, after all.

Fighting the Commander

Each destination has a commander, and potentially sub-commanders in a larger raid site. Without those commanders, the stronghold's defenses fall into chaos. The commander is invariably an extremely challenging fight.

When building a raid, a good rule of thumb is to make the commander's Challenge Rating equal the average level of the characters. This may seem unusually low, but keep in mind that most strongholds are brimming with other, weaker foes, and the time limit means that the entire raid on the stronghold is likely to be one long combat encounter, with no opportunity to rest.

Defeating the Commander

If the characters manage to defeat the raid site's commander, they gain temporary control of that destination. A number of things happen when the commanders are defeated:

- Unless otherwise stated, all remaining creatures in the stronghold surrender or flee.
- Reinforcements do not arrive outside the destination, and the characters' raiders can enter the destination's gates and fortify it against attack themselves.
- The characters can claim any treasure within the stronghold.
- Sometimes, if a stronghold's commander is killed while a subcommander is still alive, that subcommander has the courage and charisma to prevent their allies from panicking. This person becomes the new commander, and they must be defeated to conquer the stronghold.

It's not the Valikan way to set down roots in a conquered raid site and rule it like warlords. The characters are free to do so if they wish, but establishing and defending a fortress in hostile territory is beyond the scope of these raiding rules.



PHASE 4: RETURN TO THE LONGSHIPS

Eventually, the characters and their raiders must return to the longships and set sail with their plunder and their dead. Typically, Valikan ships are never far from a raid site, even if the site was approached overland. Longships can sail in open waters and upriver, so anywhere there is water, a raid can be exited via longship.

Typically, it's simple to retreat to the longships, and no checks need to be made and no casualties are incurred in the process. In certain desperate situations, such as if there are fortifications overlooking a city's harbor or a river-gate blocking easy access, the characters must fight their way through to escape any pursuers who might arrive after the raid has concluded.

In instances where the raid is taking place on land rather than via water, the phase remains the same. It is assumed that once the raid takes place, the raiding party uses land mounts and vehicles to remove themselves and their plunder from the area, retreating to a safe place free of pursuers. Only if the raid goes poorly and the raiding party must fight their way out should you play this phase out as combat.

PHASE 5: DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Presented here are several new downtime options that a character may choose to take if they want to engage with raiding activities in some way.

A raid is a lengthy endeavor. In Valika, most raiding clans battle all throughout the season of summer (as in chapter 2 of *Saga of the Seasons*). Between raids are often weeks of downtime spent repairing vessels, foraging for resources, crafting supplies, training raiders, and more.

The downtime activities presented here take place as part of the total raid activity, and if you use more downtime days than one-half of what the raid would normally offer, the entire raid duration is extended by that many days. All raiders participating in the core activity must expend the full number of downtime days from the basic activity.

Repairing Ships

Prerequisite: *Have at least one damaged longship*

When raiders depart from their settlement, they leave with a certain number of longships—typically 1 for every 25 warriors they leave with. Given 1 week of downtime and 100 lbs. of timber, they can repair one damaged longship. The characters must spend this week of downtime leading and overseeing the effort to repair the ship.

Additionally, given 4 weeks of downtime, 500 lbs. of timber, and 50 lbs. of iron, they can construct a new longship which can carry 50 raiders, or 100 lbs. of cargo in place of 1 raider.

Hunting

Managing food supplies isn't a part of this raiding system; it's assumed that your raiding party has sufficient rations in dried meat and salmon jerky. Nevertheless, fresh-cooked meat always bolsters a raider's spirits. The characters can spend 1 week of downtime hunting. To do so, the characters must make several ability checks.

Finding Tracks. One character makes a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a success, they find a game trail; record the result of the check for later. On a failure, the hunting expedition was fruitless, and the downtime is spent in vain.

Pursuing Game. One character makes a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check to stalk the game and clear a path for the other characters. On a success, the character manages to corner the animals; record the result of the check for later. On a failure, the game is scared away and the downtime is spent in vain.

Ambushing Prey. All characters make a ranged attack roll to fell their game. Take the average of all the rolls and record it.

Overall Success. Add together the three numbers you recorded. The total is the number of warriors you're able to feed with fresh meat. If at least half your warriors are fed by your hunt, you gain a 1d4 bonus to all raiding rolls for the next 4 weeks. If at least 25 percent of your warriors are fed, you gain a +1 bonus to raiding rolls for the next 4 weeks.

“Victories can happen between raids as well. Activities like hunting are beneficial to the continuation of successful raids and raiding party morale!”

- Excerpt from *Raiders Guide for Children*

Gathering Resources

The wilderness of Etharis is filled with strange creatures and unsettling magic, but it's also rich with timber and iron. If the characters are running low on these valuable resources, they can spend 1 week of downtime to lead an expedition into the woods. The more warriors they take with them, the more likely they are to return with a lot of resources. However, it's harder for a large expedition to retreat from attacking monsters.

Party Size. The characters can bring up to 50 warriors with them; any more is too cumbersome to hunt with.

Roll for Resources. At the end of the week, roll 1d100 and add the number of warriors the characters brought with them. They return with that number of pounds of timber, and half that number of pounds of iron.

Roll for Danger. At the end of the week, roll 1d6. On a result of 1 or 2, hostile creatures emerge from the woods and attack, killing 1d10 warriors before an effective retreat can be staged. If the characters brought more than 25 warriors with them, 2d10 warriors are killed instead.

Sailing South to Market

There are a number of small villages along the coasts of Etharis that are more than willing to trade with Valikans in exchange for peace. There are even some local mercenaries who would gladly raid alongside the Valikans for a payment of gold up-front.

Resources for Sale. Timber can be purchased in 50 lb. bundles for 5 sp per pound. Iron can be purchased in 50 lb. bundles for 1 gp per pound. The rare materials for creating drake fire (see “Crafting Supplies” below) can also be purchased at market for 100 gp per cask.

Mercenaries for Hire. Mercenaries can be hired for 10 gp per week, with the first week up front. No more than 10 mercenaries can be hired per week. Each hired mercenary increases your raiding crew's number of warriors by 1. Whenever warriors die, assume that mercenaries die first.

Crafting Supplies

Raiders have a number of supplies at their disposal beyond mere swords and axes, as described in Phase 2. The characters can spend downtime and resources to craft these supplies. They can spend proportionally fewer resources to create fewer supplies than listed, but it still takes the listed amount of downtime.

Horses. Horses are animals and can't be crafted out of timber and iron. They can only be procured by plundering them from conflict zones and strongholds.

Drake Fire Casks. Drake fire is an alchemical admixture made from powdered iron, sulfur, and herbs. The characters

can spend 1 week of downtime, 50 lbs. of iron, and 300 gp of rare reagents purchased at market (see “Sailing South to Market” above) to create 3 casks of drake fire.

Tall Shields. These sturdy wooden shields protect from arrow barrages. The characters can spend 1 week of downtime, 200 lbs. of timber, and 50 lbs. of iron to create 20 tall shields.

Battering Ram. This powerful siege weapon can batter down fortifications. The characters can spend 1 week of downtime, 100 lbs. of timber, and 25 lbs. of iron to create 1 ram.

ASSAULT RAIDS: RAIDER NPCs

If you're playing an assault-style raid, you may want to have several raider NPCs join the characters in tactical combat to simulate the presence of other important members of the raiding party. These NPCs might also join the player characters in Phase 3 of commander-style raids, giving the small assault team a little extra power. These NPCs can be played by one or more of the players or by the GM, as needed.

When the characters enter combat with their raiding party, you can add 1–3 raider NPCs to participate in the fight—enough to show the characters that they have allies on their sides, but not so many that running combat becomes cumbersome.

Raider Template

Any humanoid creature can become a raider. When an NPC becomes a raider, it retains all its statistics except as noted below.

Fearsome Display (Recharge 6). The raider can make a Charisma (Intimidation) check against one foe within 30 feet as a bonus action with a DC equal to 8 + their proficiency bonus + their Charisma modifier. If this check is successful, the target is frightened of the raider for 1 minute or until either creature is reduced to 0 hit points.

Special Raiders

While the characters are generally the leaders of a raiding party, being the most powerful and most important members of the group, there might be other notable members that can play an important role in the raid. These individuals are referred to as “Special Raiders.”

In addition to being an NPC that might take part in the tactical combats of the raid, as described previously, these Special Raiders act as a resource that provides some special mechanical benefits.

For example, a mage from Clan Rune who accompanies the raiding party would have a mage stat block but might also count as a cask of dragon fire during Phase 3 of the raid (from casting spells), except the benefit can be used once per raiding turn. An ogre thrall might be a Special Raider that adds +1 to the Raiding Roll wherever it is allocated during the raid, but it is the first casualty of a raiding location where raiders are lost.

Gaining and losing Special Raiders can happen during a raid, as described earlier in this chapter.

ASSAULT RAIDS: RAIDING FEATS

If you are running raids as a series of combat encounters, rather than as a large-scale tactical campaign, then your characters might want to take feats that represent their skill at acting as leaders of a raid group.

Characters do not need to have any of the raiding feats presented here if they wish to participate in a raid, though they may find these options incredibly helpful!

Cunning Raider

Prerequisite: *Novice Raider feat*

You have a knack for finding the exact right time and place to strike during a raid—and more importantly, you always seem to know exactly where the best loot is hidden.

- You have advantage on one attack roll or saving throw that you make while raiding. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus.
- If you would fail a Stealth check during a raid, you can instead choose to succeed. Once this ability is used, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.
- When rolling for raid plunder, you can roll twice and take whichever result you prefer.

Novice Raider

You've received basic raider training from your allies.

- Increase one ability of your choice by +1, up to a maximum of 20.
- Choose one skill associated with the ability score you improved with this feat, such as Stealth if you chose Dexterity. You have advantage on ability checks when using that skill.

Resolute Raider

Prerequisite: *Novice Raider feat*

Just because raiding is chaotic doesn't mean that you are. You are resolute, standing strong amidst the events that would unravel even your strongest opponents.

- When raiding, you are unaffected by enchantment spells such as *calm emotions*, *confusion*, and *fear*. This also includes effects that would duplicate such effects.
- You automatically succeed on concentration checks made to maintain concentration on your spells during a raid.
- When raiding, you have advantage on Wisdom-based ability checks and saving throws.

Savage Raider

Prerequisite: *Novice Raider feat*

You live for the chaos and convoluted moments that inevitably occur during raids.

- When raiding, you can use your bonus action to move with supernatural alacrity. For one minute, you act as if you are affected by the *haste* spell. This effect does not stack with *haste* and can't be dispelled. You can use this ability a number of times equal to

your proficiency modifier, regaining this ability after finishing a long rest.

- You can choose to automatically succeed on one saving throw made during a raid. You can choose to use this ability after you roll the die but before you learn the outcome. Once this ability is used, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.
- When raiding, you have advantage on Charisma ability checks and saving throws.

Raid Commander

Prerequisite: *You have participated in three or more successful raids, and you have at least two or more other raiding feats.*

You've seen what can happen during raids and are generally prepared for it. You gain the following benefits due to your experience:

- When raiding, if one of your raiders that you can see or hear and that can hear or see you would fail an attack roll or saving throw, you can use your reaction to instead force that roll to succeed. This ability can only be used a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus during each turn of a raid.
- When raiding, your allies within 10 feet of you that can hear or see you have advantage on the first attack roll they make against a target.
- When raiding, your allies can use the Dodge action as a bonus action on their turn so long as they are adjacent to you. This ability can be used even when you are unconscious, but not if you are dead.

Raid Leader

Prerequisite: *Raid Commander feat, and you must have participated in five or more raids.*

You've learned some hard lessons about the realities of raiding. Your presence is now more formal than active, but it is by no means diminished. Rather, your mere presence during a raid can bolster your raiders' temperament and reinforce their resolve as they pillage and rampage. Raid commanders often defer to you for advice, and less-experienced raiders know without a doubt that you are in charge. You gain the following benefits due to your experience:

- When raiding, your raiders have advantage on Intelligence and Wisdom saving throws so long as they can hear or see you or one of your raid commanders (specifically, someone with the Raid Commander feat).
- Increase your Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom by +1, up to a maximum of 20.
- You have advantage on ability checks that you make as they pertain to your current, active raid.

Example Raid

The following sections present a sample raid site extracted from the Saga of the Season's adventure and is intended to illustrate the structure of a large-scale invasion on a regional-scale map, whether the characters are attacking the site or for a raid defense scenario as described later in this chapter.

The area descriptions for the raid site provided below are for a standard commander-style raid. Each conflict zone identifies the minimum force required, a raiding roll DC, plunder to be gained, and any additional factors that could affect attempts to conquer the zone.

SAMPLE RAID SITE

EVENT: THE FIRST RAID

Prerequisite: Made camp outside Aristadt

Questgiver: Hrafen av Skeir

Location: Aristadt Village

Downtime: 1 week

Content Warning: War, civilians in peril

When the raid begins, read or paraphrase:

Your raiding party has arrived on the outskirts of Aristadt, a small hamlet of trappers and falconers in western Nordenland. Nestled between mountains and lakes, this charming village is lightly defended and is easy prey for most Valikan raiders.

What zones of the village will you send your warriors to first?

Resources and Supplies

If the characters or GM don't wish to track the raiding crew's inventory throughout summer, the party begins this raid with the following spread of resources and supplies instead:

- 100 warriors
- 500 lbs. of timber
- 250 lbs. of iron
- 1 cask of drake fire
- 10 tall shields
- 1 battering ram

The bonuses granted by these supplies are described in chapter 3 of *Raider's Guide to Valika*. If the players have fewer warriors and supplies than this, this raid may be more difficult than expected.

Aristadt Valley Features

Aristadt Valley is a charming dale with no dangerous terrain that affects its conflict zones.

Conflict Zones

The following conflict zones can be targeted in this raid. The GM's map of this region shows which conflict zones must be conquered as a prerequisite to attacking others or for reaching the village longhouse (this site's stronghold).

V1: FOREST'S EDGE HOMESTEADS

Minimum Force: 10 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 7

Supplies Bonus: —

Plunder: 500 sp, 100 lbs. of timber, and 10 horses

Captives: 10 captives

A simple wooden palisade draped with the gray falcon banner of Aristadt Village stands on the village outskirts. These homesteads have banded together for safety, and though their palisade walls protect them from wolves, they provide little defense against armed raiders.

V2: VILLAGE MEWS

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V1 or V7

Minimum Force: 10 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 5

Supplies Bonus: —

Plunder: 25 lbs. of iron

Special: If not conquered by the start of turn 2, reinforcements arrive in zones V3 through V8 (see "Developments" below).

The falconers of Aristadt keep their raptors in large birdhouses called mews. The falcons and their trainers reside in cottages resting between the two lakes. They seem to have few possessions, and while they aren't warriors, they seem prepared to defend their homes.

V3: LAKE RUHIG DOCKS

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V1 or V7

Minimum Force: 5 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 7

Supplies Bonus: Tall shields

Plunder: 100 lbs. of timber, and a +1 longbow

Captives: 5 captives

Rowboats and docks line the shore of the southwestern lake. On the lake sits an island with a shrine visible upon it. The village militia has barricaded the docks, prepared to die to defend the shrine. Several boats on the lake are filled with archers, ready to attack from afar.



V4: VILLAGE LEATHERWORKS

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V1 or V7

Minimum Force: 10 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 8

Supplies Bonus: Drake fire causes instant victory with no casualties but destroys all supplies and kills all potential captives

Plunder: 100 gp, 150 lbs. of timber, 50 lbs. of iron, and a suit of +1 leather armor

Captives: 10 captives

These wood-walled houses are dedicated to the tanning of hides and the creation of leather goods. A stone wall with a simple gate surrounds the tannery, and a group of villagers defends it fiercely with crude spears.

V5: SHRINE TO ULMYR

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V3

Minimum Force: 10 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 3

Supplies Bonus: —

Plunder: Art worth 500 sp and diamonds and incense worth 100 gp

Captives: 40 captives

A shrine to Ulmyr, the dead god of the Norden forests, stands tall and proud on this island. The shrine is undefended; the priests and huddled civilians here put up precious little resistance.

V6: TRAPPERS' COTTAGES

Minimum Force: 10 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 5

Supplies Bonus: —

Plunder: 200 sp worth of furs

Special: If not conquered by the start of turn 2, reinforcements arrive in zones V2 through V8 (see "Developments" below).

Fur trappers hunt animals for their pelts in the nearby coastal woods. They notice your force as it emerges from the woods, and several prepare to sprint in the direction of the village longhouse, while most ready simple bows and spears.

"While fur trappers may be considered some brand of artisan, they are apt at defense. They have a keen eye and sense of hearing. How can you trap otherwise?"

- Village elder

V7: BERGMANN'S BRIDGE

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V6

Minimum Force: 5 warriors

Raiding Roll DC: 8

Supplies Bonus: Battering ram

Plunder: 100 lbs. of timber

A wooden bridge spans a wide, lazy river. On the other side of the bridge stands the village longhouse. A gate on the other side of the bridge can be opened and closed, but it is currently open.

V8: VILLAGERS' ESCAPE ROUTE

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V3 or V7

Minimum Force: 20 raiders

Raiding Roll DC: 5

Supplies Bonus: —

Plunder: 100 lbs. of foodstuffs, trade goods worth 500 sp, 200 lbs. of timber, and 100 lbs. of iron

Captives: 50 captives

The villagers have hastily arranged four covered wagons and oxen to escape the battle of Aristadt. If you can catch them in time, the wealth they're fleeing with can be yours.

V9: THEGN RUTGER'S LONGHOUSE

Prerequisite: Must have conquered zone V4 or V7

Once reached, the characters can choose to end this event and attack the longhouse directly. This begins **EVENT: THE FIRST CONQUEST**.

Developments

Certain conflict zones change at the start of the following turns of this raid:

Turn 2: If both the Village Mews (zone V2) and the Trappers' Cottages (zone V6) have not been captured by the start of this turn, the occupants warn other areas of the approaching raiders. The Raiding Roll DC of all zones increases by 2, and the Raiding Roll DC of Bergmann's Bridge (zone V7) increases by 5 (to DC 13).

Turn 4: The commonfolk gathered at the escape point flee into the mountains, leaving behind everything they can't carry. The Raiding Roll DC of zone V8 drops to 0. However, the commonfolk have set simple traps, which can still cause casualties. The plunder drops to 25 lbs. of foodstuffs, trade goods worth 100 sp, 50 lbs. of timber, and 25 lbs. of iron. No captives can be taken.

Turn 6: After six hours, the villagers fully fortify the longhouse. All areas within the stronghold gain the benefits of being Prepared. See the "Prepared" section in **EVENT: THE FIRST CONQUEST**.

Example Stronghold

Presented below is an extract of the first stronghold assault scenario found in the *Saga of the Season's* adventure. Not shown but also required is the tactical map of the stronghold, which would illustrate the location similar to what you might use for “typical” Fifth Edition-style combat encounters.

SAMPLE STRONGHOLD

EVENT: THE FIRST CONQUEST

Questgiver: Hrafen av Skeir

Location: Aristadt Longhouse

Downtime: 1 week

Content Warning: War, civilians in peril

The Ragvallan raiding crew has besieged the village longhouse of Aristadt, giving the characters the opportunity to plunder it. Here, the characters have two options: plunder what they can and then get out before reinforcements arrive, or slay this fort's commander and conquer it for themselves.

This longhouse is the seat of power for a Norden thegn named Gorman Rutger (LN, male dwarf **noble**). He is a coward who relies on his soldiers to save him.

Aristadt Longhouse Features

The areas of the Aristadt longhouse have the following features unless otherwise stated in that area's description:

Ceilings. The indoor areas of this longhouse have 15-foot-tall ceilings.

Light. The indoor areas of this longhouse have no windows and are dimly lit by fire pits or oil lamps.

Wooden Walls. This longhouse is made of wood and is flammable. If fire damage is dealt to the walls of this longhouse, all adjacent 5-foot spaces catch fire at the start of each subsequent turn until the entire longhouse is aflame. A creature that starts its turn in a burning square or enters it for the first time on a turn takes 2 (1d4) fire damage and can't breathe until the start of its next turn.

Areas of the Aristadt Longhouse

The characters begin the longhouse raid in area L1, the fort's entry courtyard. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters begin the attack:

The village longhouse is simple but large; it's easily large enough to hold a feast for every man, woman, and child in Aristadt, and then some. Your warriors have rallied around the outside of the longhouse, clashing with small groups of villagers swooping in on horseback to hurl spears before fleeing.

“Get in!” shouts Chief Hrafen av Skeir, who stands with the other warriors. “Move quick, grab the loot and run! Only try and seize the fort if you think you can do it as fast as lightning!”

L1: ENTRY COURTYARD

Once the characters enter the stronghold, read or paraphrase the following:

Standing before the front of the longhouse's oaken double doors is a group of warriors from the thegn's personal guard. Four are dressed in simple, unpolished chainmail. The fifth, their leader, is a scarred man with an eyepatch and wispy white hair. He's clearly seen at least sixty winters, but he holds his sword well.

“Valikans,” he growls. He speaks the Valikan tongue with a Valikan accent. “Brutish dogs. Depart now, lest I put ye down like the curs ye are.”

Thegn Gorman Rutger's commander of the guard, a former Clan Völgr warrior named Lars One-Eye, is prepared to meet any Valikan invaders in a duel to the death. He tries to stall the characters in a one-on-one duel to buy time for the thegn to rally his reinforcements (see “Developments” below).

Hostile Creatures. The following hostile creatures are in this area:

- Lars One-Eye (CN, male human **veteran**)
- Four **guards**

Prepared. If the stronghold is in a prepared state, the following changes occur:

- A wooden barricade (Large object, AC 14, 30 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage) has been erected in front of the main door to area L2.
- The guards in this area are behind the barricade, and they attack using their crossbows.

L2: THEGN'S HALL

The thegn is nowhere to be seen in his hall. Villagers who fled to this stronghold huddle beneath benches, clutching their valuables and praying that you won't notice them. Valuables are strewn about the room, upon tables and benches. Several doors are open, revealing stables and a dairy to the west. Two doors on the back wall, behind the thegn's throne, are closed.

The thegn has locked himself in his bedchambers (area L6) and commanded his guards to protect him and the commoners in this hall, but the thegn's safety comes first.

TO BE CONTINUED...

The remainder of the stronghold would detail each location the characters could explore during the raid.

Raid Defense

Nowhere in Valika is safe from the raids—even the settlements of raiders themselves! There’s always a chance that a location that is known or loyal to the characters will be raided. If the characters are fortunate, the raid will occur while they are present and can marshal their forces, but this isn’t always the case. When those instances occur, the location will need to rally to its own defense.

Some raids are led by Valikan warriors, and others are led by monsters—as in chapter 4 of *Saga of the Seasons*. When your home settlement or an allied one is raided, the characters and their warriors can spring to its defense.

TWO STYLES

Just like when your clan goes on a raid, defending from a raid can be done in one of two ways: assault- or commander-style gameplay.

Assault-style games can be run as a series of combat encounters leading directly into one another. This means that this style of defense gives the players less agency in the overall defense effort, as they’re reacting to threats as they appear. This style suits gaming groups that like the small-scale tactics of individual combat encounters but aren’t as concerned with battlefield strategy.

As before, commander-style rules use an overland-scale map of the raid site the characters are defending, and a map of their raid site’s stronghold. The tables are turned here; now it’s their stronghold that is filled with valuable resources and they must protect it from being besieged and plundered. This is the style of raid that will be discussed in the rest of this section.

SETTING UP A RAID

One of the most dramatic moments is the time right before a battle. Everyone knows an attack is coming, and all they can do is make ready. In this time, both the players and the GM have a variety of things to do.

Below are the guidelines for creating a basic raid defense scenario. Other raids, such as the one in chapter 4 of *Saga of the Seasons*, are more elaborate.

Establish Resources

Resource management is a vital part of raiding, especially because raid seasons are generally a full season—thirteen weeks—long. A clan that is expecting to be raided can assume three or four raids to occur over the course of a season with two or three weeks of downtime to recover in between attacks.

Because of this, it’s important for the players to have a firm grasp of what resources are available to them. Some basic guidelines for their starting resources at the start of a season are:

- **Small Settlement (Village):** 500 lbs. timber, 250 lbs. iron, 100 warriors
- **Medium Settlement (Town):** 1,000 lbs. timber, 500 lbs. iron, 200 warriors

- **Large Settlement (City):** 2,000 lbs. timber, 1,000 lbs. iron, 400 warriors

Timber and iron can be spent upgrading your fortifications, and your warriors are needed to man these defenses (see “Creating Fortifications” below).

Time is also a sort of resource. The earlier the characters know that their settlement is going to be attacked, the easier it is to defend it. If the GM tells them through one of their clan’s scouts that a Thrull raiding party has been spotted by a distant outpost and will arrive in four weeks, that’s four weeks they have to upgrade their fortifications and gather resources. Learning of the attack when it’s only 1 week away is a much stricter timeline.

Creating Fortifications

Depending on the story, either the GM or the players can set up the defenses for a defensive raid. If the characters are coming from afar to defend an existing settlement, it makes sense for the GM to create it. If the characters are fortifying their own clan’s village, then they can use the rules below to establish their raid site.

MAPPING THE SITE

Regardless of who does it, creating a map of the settlement is essential. The enemy raiders are targeting the players’ stronghold. To reach it and break in, they must first conquer several fortifications blocking their access.

Underlying the story details of this map is a connected series of raid locations describing possible lanes of attack. In our example raid site of Aristadt Village shown in the preceding pages, areas V1 and V6 are the locations where the assault can begin.

CREATING FORTIFICATIONS

The attackers start their offensive in one or more of the outer fortifications. Conquering an outer fortification opens access to additional inner fortifications behind it. Continuing with our Aristadt Village example, conquering fortification V1 allows them to target areas V2, V3, and V4 but no other locations until additional areas are conquered.

Each fortification has standard statistics describing their defense capabilities as showing in the following examples:

RANK 1 OUTER FORTIFICATION EXAMPLE

Minimum Force: 5 defenders

Maximum Force: 10 defenders

Raiding Roll DC: 13

Continuing with the Aristadt Village example, the inner fortification sites (areas V2, V3, and V4) could have the following statistics:

RANK 1 INNER FORTIFICATION EXAMPLE

Minimum Force: 10 defenders

Maximum Force: 20 defenders

Raiding Roll DC: 15

A structure’s minimum force is the minimum number of warriors that characters can assign to defend a site. The maximum force is the maximum number of defenders

that can be assigned to it. The Raiding Roll DC is the number that the attackers have to match or exceed to conquer a site.

If the characters build their own base, they can decide what type of structure each fortification is. Whether a structure is a watchtower or a fortified bridge doesn't affect its game statistics.

UPGRADING OUTER FORTIFICATIONS

The main way that the characters can customize their defenses is by upgrading them. Each fortification in a raid site starts at Rank 1. An outer fortification can be upgraded only once, to Rank 2. By spending 200 lbs. of timber, 100 lbs. of iron, and 1 week of downtime, the characters can upgrade a Rank 1 fortification to Rank 2.

Rank 2 Outer Fortification: +5 Minimum Force, +10 Maximum Force, +2 Raiding Roll DC

UPGRADING INNER FORTIFICATIONS

Inner fortifications can be upgraded just like outer fortifications. However, they can be upgraded twice, first to Rank 2, and then to Rank 3. By spending 200 lbs. of timber and 1 week of downtime, the characters can upgrade a Rank 1 fortification to Rank 2. By spending 200 lbs. of iron and 1 week of downtime, the characters can upgrade a Rank 2 fortification to Rank 3.

Rank 2 Inner Fortification: +10 Minimum Force, +20 Maximum Force, +2 Raiding Roll DC

Rank 3 Inner Fortification: +20 Maximum Force, +1 Raiding Roll DC

REPAIRING FORTIFICATIONS

When a fortification is conquered, it is also damaged. Until it's repaired, Raiding Rolls made against that fortification have advantage on all future raids. It can be repaired by spending the fortification's rank 2 upgrade cost and 1 week of downtime.

ASSIGNING DEFENDERS

At the beginning of a raid, the players can assign their warriors to their fortifications. If a fortification has fewer than its Minimum Force assigned to it, then Raiding Rolls against it have advantage. Every time you assign an extra number of raiders equal to the minimum number of raiders to a conflict zone, you gain a +1 bonus to its Raiding Roll DC. You can't assign more raiders to a fortification than its Maximum Force.

If the players have any warriors left over after assigning their defenders, these warriors are held in reserve. If warriors die during the raid, these reserve forces can be allocated during the raid at the start of the defenders' turn.

SETTLEMENT SIZE AND LANES OF ATTACK

The size of a settlement should determine how many lanes of attack exist. A Small Settlement (Village) may have three lanes of attack with two fortifications protecting the stronghold. A Medium Settlement (Town) might have four lanes of attack (A, B, C, D) and three fortifications per lane (A1, A2, A3, etc.), while a Large Settlement (City) could

have five lanes of attack with four fortifications blocking access to the stronghold. As before, the GM can modify these guidelines to suit their scenario.

Create Waves of Invaders

Compared to setting up fortifications, the waves of invaders are simple! The type of creature they are, whether they're Valikan raiders, rampaging beasts, hordes of undead, or even giants is largely a matter of flavor. All you have to do as the GM is decide:

- How many waves there are
- What lane of attack (A, B, or C) each wave attacks
- What bonuses each wave has to the raiding roll
- If waves have any special effects that occur after attacking

WAVES OF ATTACK

All raiding parties have only so many warriors before they run out of steam, or decide that it's not worth fighting on. The GM doesn't need to worry about micromanaging how many warriors the attacking force has; they only have to worry about how many waves of attack there are.

You can modulate the difficulty of a raid by reducing the number of waves (easier) or increasing that number (harder). Typically, an Easy raid has 3 waves or fewer, a Normal raid has 4 waves, and a Hard raid has 5 waves or more.

LANES OF ATTACK

Each raid site has at least three different lanes of attack. In the example village flowchart above, there are three lanes, A, B, and C. When a wave launches an attack against a lane, they attack the outermost unconquered fortification. On the first turn, a wave attacking Lane A can only attack fortification A1. If they conquer that fortification, and attack Lane A again next turn, they move on to A2. However, if they attack Lane B next turn, they must attack B1, because it hasn't been conquered yet.

A wave can choose which lane it wants to attack at the start of each turn.

You can modulate the difficulty of a raid by allowing each wave to attack multiple lanes at once. Typically, an Easy raid can only attack one lane per turn. A Normal raid can attack 2 lanes per turn, and a Hard raid can attack 3 lanes per turn.

RAIDING ROLL BONUSES

Whenever a wave makes a Raiding Roll, it rolls 2d10 and adds a certain bonus to it. The higher a bonus to raiding rolls an attacker has, the better odds of success they have. This represents the physical strength and cunning of the attackers.

Typically, an Easy raid has a +1d4 bonus to Raiding Rolls, a Normal raid has a +2d4 bonus, and a Hard raid has a +4d4. However, if you decide that a wave can attack multiple lanes, each additional lane past the first suffers a -1d4 penalty. A wave can never have a negative bonus.

For example, a Normal wave attacking three lanes must decide which one is attacked at +2d4, which is attacked at +1d4, and which is attacked with no bonus.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Some waves, particularly those made up of warriors with special items or of monsters with supernatural powers, can afflict fortifications with negative effects, even if an attack fails to conquer a fortification.

You can modulate a raid's difficulty by determining how many waves have any special effects. Typically, an Easy raid has only 1 wave with a special effect. A Normal has 2 waves with an effect, and a Hard wave has 3 or more waves.

Some effects include:

A Thousand Cuts. After each attack, this fortification's Raiding Roll DC is decreased by 1d4 until the end of the raid.

Breaching Tactics. This fortification's Raiding Roll DC is decreased by 2d6 until the end of the next raider turn.

Encircling Flames. After this attack, no new warriors can be assigned to this fortification, or moved from it to another fortification.

Flight. If an effect prevents a lane from being attacked, this wave ignores that effect.

Noxious Fumes. After this attack, half of this fortification's defenders are killed.

Prepare the Stronghold

The players need to prepare their stronghold. This stronghold must have a 5-foot-square grid tactical map. Their goal, if the stronghold is breached, is to kill the attackers before their treasure and resources are stolen.

NUMBER OF ENTRANCES

The more ways in and out of a stronghold, the harder it is to defend. Most strongholds have one large door that leads to their main hall. The larger a stronghold is, however, the more likely it has other small points of entrance and exit. Typically, a Small Settlement (Village) has a stronghold with only one entrance. A Medium Settlement's (Town) stronghold has two, and a Large Settlement (City) has at least three.

NUMBER OF ROOMS

The size of a stronghold is paramount to its defense. Typically, a Small Settlement (Village) has a stronghold with one large central room and four small side rooms. A Medium Settlement's (Town) stronghold has two large rooms and six small rooms. A Large Settlement's (City) stronghold has four large rooms and twelve small ones.

RESOURCE PILES

When the stronghold is breached, count up the number of timber and iron resources the characters have. Every 100 lbs. of resources becomes a resource pile that takes up a 10-foot by 10-foot space. The characters can decide where these resource piles are stored within their stronghold.

A raider can pick up and steal a pile as an action on its turn. If that raider leaves the map, it escapes with those resources. If a raider is killed, any resources that it has taken falls in the nearest unoccupied spaces to where it was standing.

Create a Goal

The raiders have a goal in this raid. For human raiders, it's typically to steal as much treasure as they can from the stronghold without being killed, and then retreat. For monstrous raiders, it's typically to kill everyone in the stronghold and turn it into their den. Once the GM knows what their attackers' goal is, they're ready to run a raid.

RUNNING A DEFENSIVE RAID

Once preparations are complete, the raid can begin. The raid begins as soon as raiders reach the outer fortifications. Just like commander-style offensive raids, Phase 1 of a defensive raid is an overland battle using an abstract flowchart of locations, and Phase 2 is a combat encounter using typical Fifth-Edition rules inside a stronghold.

Phase 1: Defending Fortifications

This phase takes place in turns, which are approximately 1 hour each. As the GM, you can decide if turns are longer or shorter, depending on the size of the settlement and the pace of the battle. This phase lasts until one of two things happens:

- The raiders run out of waves of warriors to attack with, as determined by the GM. The raiders are defeated and must retreat or be captured.
- The raiders reach the defenders' stronghold, and Phase 2 begins.

First, the raiders take a turn to attack. Then, the defenders can take a turn to reallocate their warriors to fortifications.

RAIDERS' TURNS

On raiders' turns, they send forth a wave of attackers. If this wave can attack more than one lane, choose the order in which they attack these lanes, and then make raiding rolls for all of the lanes in order, using the correct bonuses (see "Raiding Roll Bonuses" above).

Conquering a Fortification. If a Raiding Roll is successful, that fortification is damaged, and half of the warriors defending it are killed or captured (GM's choice). The other half are able to flee. If the Raiding Roll succeeded by 5 or more, all of the warriors defending it are killed or captured.

Repelled from a Fortification. If a Raiding Roll fails, the raiders do not conquer that fortification, and that wave is defeated, but the defenders still take casualties. Roll 1d10, and that number of warriors are slain in the attack. If the Raiding Roll failed by 5 or more, the defenders take no casualties.

Defeat Condition. If the raiders' turn ends without reaching the stronghold and it has no more waves remaining, they are defeated and the raid ends.

Reallocate Warriors. The defenders can reassign which fortifications their warriors are protecting. Warriors currently deployed at a fortification can swap to any fortification in a different lane by spending 1 turn moving. During this time, they can't defend either the fortification they've just left or the fortification they're heading to until

they arrive at start of the defenders' next turn. Undeferred warriors can be deployed from their stronghold immediately at no cost. Warriors currently deployed at a fortification can fall back to a different fortification immediately as well.

If deploying warriors to a fortification would exceed that fortification's Maximum Force, any excess warriors are undeployed and return to the stronghold. A defender may wish to reallocate more warriors than necessary to a fortification in case that fortification suffers casualties before reinforcements arrive.

Warriors can also be undeployed to send them back to the stronghold at any time. They arrive in the stronghold at the start of the defenders' next turn, and can then redeploy anywhere at no cost, as stated above.

DEFENDERS' TURNS

The most important thing that defenders can do is observe where their enemies are attacking from, and allocate their warriors where they'll be most useful. This is especially true when the defenders are low on resources and don't have enough warriors to fully stock all of their fortifications.

Special Traits. Sometimes, the defenders have special options available to them due to story reasons. They can use these supplies or traits on their turn. If any resources, like spell slots, are expended during this phase, they won't be available in the next phase.

Defensive Spells. Spells that protect an area of effect, such as *globe of invulnerability*, can be used to protect one fortification. Spells of 3rd-level or higher increase the Raiding Roll DC by 2; spells of 5th-level or higher grant a further +2 to the DC; and spells of 7th-level or higher grant a further +4. This bonus lasts until the end of the turn.

Explosives. Explosive items or area-of-effect offensive spells (like *fireball* or *glyph of warding*) can be used to trap or counter-assault a fortification that was conquered on the previous raiders' turn. By spending an item of this sort, or using a spell slot of 3rd-level or higher, the lane that this fortification was in can't be attacked during the next raiders' turn. Spell slots of 7th-level or higher prevent a lane from being attacked for 2 turns.

Healing. During the defenders' turn, the characters can expend one or more *potions of healing* to reverse an equal number of casualties that occurred in the previous raiders' turn. Healing spells can be used as well, saving one warrior per level of the spell slot used. For example, if *cure wounds* is cast at 3rd level, 3 warriors can be saved.

REACHING THE STRONGHOLD

Once any inner fortification is conquered, this phase ends and the raiders storm the raid site's stronghold. The remaining defending warriors swarm to protect the stronghold while the raiders send a strike team to plunder the stronghold while the player characters strive to defend it. Should the characters abandon the stronghold and choose not to defend it, the raiders are automatically successful, and plunder all of their resources.

Phase 2: Attack on the Stronghold

Once the stronghold has been breached, typical Fifth-Edition gridded combat engages. Ultimately, encounter design and the flow of combat is in the GM's hands. However, here are some guidelines that will make designing and running the combat in this phase easier and more exciting.

CREATE CREWS

Raiders often attack in small groups, called crews. These crews are led by one strong warrior and two to four lesser warriors. A crew's leader should have a CR equal to or slightly lower than the characters' average level. Likewise, their warriors should have a CR that's roughly half the characters' average level.

If the characters are very high level, there might not be enough NPCs with a high enough CR to build crews in this way. In this case, you can build weaker crews than suggested, but have multiple crews enter the stronghold at once.

ATTACK IN THREE WAVES

Having a conflict constantly escalate is dramatic and interesting! Three waves is a good rule of thumb. Overall, select enough monsters or NPCs to create an encounter that is Deadly or twice the Deadly value using the Fifth-Edition encounter-building rules. Then, divide those creatures into three waves. The first wave should have roughly 25 percent of the total monsters. The second should be 50 percent. And then the final wave should be 25 percent again, but also include the strongest "boss monster" of the raiders' force.

SPREAD OUT AND HAVE MULTIPLE TARGETS

Because this attack on the stronghold is built from multiple crews of attackers, arriving in multiple waves, they can target different areas of the stronghold simultaneously to pillage and escape most efficiently. Some crews can even have a vendetta against the characters, harrying them with attacks while the characters struggle to devote their attention to stopping the thieves.

LOOT AND SCOOT

Once all of the enemies in the stronghold are dead or have fled, this phase ends. Once a foe departs the map of the defenders' stronghold, they're considered protected by their raiding party and are beyond the reach of the defenders.

Ending the Raid

Once Phase 2 ends (or Phase 1 ends in defeat for the raiders), this raid is concluded. The characters now get to assess the damage, how many resources they have left, and prepare for future raids.

If the enemy was defeated in Phase 1, any defenders that they took captive (as opposed to killing, at the GM's discretion), are saved and returned to the defenders' stock of warriors.

Survival and Exploration

Moving through the razor-sharp ice crystal blowing across the arctic tundra, a group of heroes must both find a way to brave the cold and find sustenance while seeking the lair of beasts that threatens nearby settlements.

Scouts for a clan that was recently raided and in need of food finds tracks indicating a large herd of reindeer are nearby. Needing the meat and the milk from the creatures, the scouts must follow the tracks and secure the herd, while at the same time, avoiding the ogres that have been hunting in the area as well.

In these cases, knowledge of the natural surroundings, quick decision making, and careful planning are just as important as a strong sword arm and a mastery of devastating magical attacks. A slow death by starvation, hypothermia, or natural disaster is more likely than a quick death by ravaging beasts in the less-hospitable parts of Valika.

However, in the campaigns and stories we play, those environmental-induced dangers often lack the drama and excitement most players are seeking. While they have many different thoughts and opinions on the role of character deaths in games, few players would contend that “you failed your Survival check, so you freeze to death” is a more exciting and memorable demise than “you failed your saving throw and the wizards’ spell immolates your body as you attempt to flee.”

Death may come to characters in fantasy RPGs, but we’re more likely to accept deaths that are dramatic and meaningful. So how do we make a setting, a game style, and a campaign where survival—where the challenges presented by the setting and the environment—is just as memorable and important as the challenges presented by the dangerous creatures that stalk the world? Let’s explore!

SURVIVAL STORIES IN FANTASY GAMES

If you ask fantasy RPG players about survival in their games, most are either going to bring up Survival as a specific skill, or they are going to think of the overall survivability of their characters in relation to the threats provided by the various monsters in the setting. Survival is simply thought of in terms of staying alive when facing monsters during adventures.

This may seem counterintuitive when you look at the wide variety of settings—both homebrew and published—in which these games take place. How many settings think of themselves as being very different from other settings, as being extremely dangerous, as being challenging because the world is savage and the environment hostile? Despite these claims, the settings in question aren’t terribly different in how the campaigns and adventures set within them seem very similar to each other, or to the campaigns set in more civilized worlds.

What makes these settings so similar in story or campaign play, despite their claims of danger or uniqueness? It’s generally because the places offer many civilized areas, places where the characters are safe and the players rely on

as havens. These metaphorical points of light offer refuge and safety in an otherwise dark and dangerous world. The issue with a “points-of-light” type campaign or setting is that if the characters never leave the light, or if they’re always within easily navigable distance of light, the whole world might as well be light. Therefore, if you want to create a campaign or a story that brings survival into a more prominent role, the first thing you must do is snuff out those points of light. You must either make safety unreachable, or at least very hard to access and maintain.

ADDITION THROUGH SUBTRACTION

As we already saw, a campaign that is centered around a civilized area (or areas), or that frequently visits civilized areas, offers characters a safety net. All the food, water, equipment, shelter, resources, and respite the characters could ever want is at their disposal—whether they get it for free or must pay for it or steal it, those resources are there. That means even if the setting world itself is hostile and the environments challenging, survival is an assumption rather than an impediment, struggle, or important goal.

To make a setting or a world where survival is an interesting or dynamic element of the campaign, specific elements that are taken as granted in most fantasy games need to be removed or restricted. More importantly, those elements that make survival a given must be removed on a long-term basis, and they need to be constantly under threat of removal when they do exist. The aspects of the campaign that many players take for granted, or that are considered a given in most game settings, need to be earned through play, guarded as the precious commodities they are, and nurtured to ensure they bear fruit now and in the future.

What are those elements? The first, and most important, is shelter that allows both protection from the elements and access to safe rests. Accessible food and water, which takes hours of steady effort to find and prepare when not readily available, are another element that can be removed in a campaign and setting that wants to highlight survival as a major plot point. Easy access to material goods like weapons, armor, and adventuring gear also deemphasize survival in a setting.

Removal of these setting elements can make for an interesting campaign, but the next step is equally important. To make lack of essential resources an integral, valued, and story-rich part of the game, that scarcity also needs to be gamified in a way that meshes organically with the rest of the campaign.

GAMIFYING SURVIVAL

The next step, after thoughtfully and carefully removing elements from the setting, is to make sure that the survival element of the game is fun, dramatic, and story-enhancing rather than being onerous. So what are some of the pitfalls of a so-called “survival-focused campaign?”

One of the common pitfalls in a game that focuses on survival as a story driver is the unnecessary reliance on detailed bookkeeping as a way of “gamifying” survival:

how many days of food or water does one have, how much of a particular resource can a character find, how long does it take to find those resources, etc.? While a dedicated minority of players and gamemasters tolerate, or even relish, extensive bookkeeping in their games, a majority of players don't want, or actively avoid, tracking resources in such a highly detailed manner.

This means that, if we are to create a fun game that highlights survival as part of the story, we need to find a way to introduce rules, mechanics, strategies, and consequences that enhance fun in a fair but easy-to-use manner that also fits into the game as a whole. But sometimes the rules we have at our disposal, and that make sense in the narrative, detract rather than add to the fun of the game. Exhaustion is a prime example.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Making the existence of civilized settlements (or a lack thereof) an important part of a survival-focused campaign can go far in making memorable games, stories, campaigns, and adventures. These settlements provide obvious benefits for the characters' survival, but they also provide potential benefits that become an important and memorable aspect of a campaign:

- **Places of Respite:** With long and short rests being crucial elements of a game, places to undertake those rests in complete safety are important to the story and pacing of the game. Without a secure location with shelter, food, drink, and protection, taking rests should be difficult, if not impossible.
- **Places of Replenishment:** Most living creatures, even in fantasy worlds, perish without a constant supply of safe food and water. Civilized settlements not only offer a location to store and protect large amounts of those vital resources, they can act as a place to produce them. Settlements often inhabit spaces in the world where potable water or arable land are present.
- **Places of Production:** In addition to food and water, settlements are places where people can specialize in producing goods and services. While most production within settlements founded in hostile environments focuses on the creation of essentials (food, water, shelter, etc.), areas where stability has been achieved see an influx of creators of other goods and services. For adventurers, this might be weapons, armor, potions, scrolls, magic items, adventuring gear, and more.
- **Places of Game-Mechanics Access:** This is the least-used aspect of civilized settlements in most fantasy RPG settings, but it can be one that adds the most interest to stories, especially stories of survival. In many games, game-mechanical elements like spells and subclasses are treated as a given. If they are in a book, players simply assume they are always available at any time, and game masters are often hesitant to deny or limit those mechanics. In the Valika, however, many ancient sites of great power are trapped under the ice. Who knows what secrets might be locked there?

What does this mean? Gamemasters can limit the available spells, subclasses, magic items, and other mechanics. Players want to rely on a certain spell or feature from a subclass or feat? Perhaps these game elements are only available as other individuals in the world experiment and strive and investigate. Not only are settlements valuable for normal resources, but they may also play a huge role in attracting the folks who can teach the characters how to access certain game mechanics! (We discuss this more later in this chapter.)

CREATING AND MAINTAINING SETTLEMENTS

If the characters need vital resources or specific game mechanics to achieve their adventuring goals, but they can only access those things by helping to build and maintain settlements amid the harsh environs of Valika, you can bet that settlements quickly become a priority for characters. Players pay much closer attention to the inhabitants and details of a settlement than they might in other campaigns if those settlements offer elements essential to their successes.

As these settlements play a more significant role in the campaign, finding a way to gamify the creation, maintenance, growth, and protection of the settlements is important. Typical adventures—find treasure, defeat monsters, gain experience, and solve larger problems—become much more interesting when they are weighed against, and hopefully integrated more closely with, adventures (and time spent) focusing on the establishment and maintenance of one or more settlements in the regions the characters spend their adventuring time.

Steps for Establishing a Settlement

Assuming the characters are going to be adventuring in areas with no safe and permanent settlements, the following steps are useful in planning adventures and campaigns that take settlements into account for the characters' long-term survival. These steps reference the Exploration rules from earlier in this chapter.

1. CLEAR THE AREA

Before a settlement can be established for long-term usefulness, the area where the settlement will reside needs to be cleared and made safe from existing threats. For example, if the characters think that a series of underground ruins from the time before the Great Prismatic Wyrms Gormadraug was defeated by the heroes of Valika, they may want to establish a settlement in the midst of those ruins. Perhaps a vicious band of kobolds currently inhabits that area, making it particularly dangerous. Driving away those kobolds is the first step in process, which is made even harder as the characters must not only defeat the kobolds, but they must also find food, shelter, and other necessities while doing so.

2. FIND THE IDEAL SETTLEMENT LOCATION

Once the area of the settlement is cleared of immediate threats, the characters must use their knowledge and training to find the best place to establish the settlement. While they could consult allied NPCs, the characters might have to rely on their own talents to make these important decisions—and they'll get the face (or enjoy) the consequences of their work.

Use the chart below to determine the results of the characters' checks to determine the best location for a settlement. A character who spends 8 hours exploring potential settlement sites can attempt an ability check. Based on the area, the check could include proficiencies in History for using past knowledge to determine current situations, Investigation or Perception to find hidden problems, Nature for locating potential natural hazards, or Survival for ascertaining assets or liabilities in an area.

SETTLEMENT LOCATION SUCCESS

ABILITY CHECK DC	SETTLEMENT POSSIBILITIES
5 or less	Poorly chosen area. The settlement rating cannot rise about 4 unless it is abandoned and re-established at better site.
6-10	Questionable area. The settlement rating cannot rise above 8, and drawing settlers to the area is difficult.
11-15	Passable area. The settlement rating cannot rise above 12.
16-20	Above average area. The settlement rating cannot rise above 15.
21-25	Excellent area. The settlement score rating at 18, and settlers are more willing to move and settle in the area.
26 or higher	Optimal area. The settlement rating could reach 20 with enough time and attention. Settlers are eager to move and settle in the area.

3. ATTRACT SETTLERS

The new settlement cannot thrive without individuals to live and work there. This recruitment of settlers might fall upon the characters. While the settlement initially needs hardy folks as adept at fighting as managing the necessities of survival, such as building and growing or hunting food, the settlement could later recruit artisans to provide more specialized goods and services, such as magical research or weaponsmithing. As the settlement grows in population, size, and safety, more individuals and specialists are likely to travel to the place and set up their places of business.

The settlement rating for a settlement is based on the number of settlers who eventually take up residence in the area and contribute to the maintenance and protection of the settlement. The settlement rating assumes that the settlement can offer safe lodging and food needs for those who settle there. If outside threats, environmental challenges, or lack of resources do damage to the settlers or the settlement, the settlement cannot grow until those problems are overcome, usually with special attention from the characters. That attention could include special adventures to address the problem, downtime days spent focusing on the problem, or other methods of attention and care.

SETTLEMENT RATING

RATING	FEATURES
1-2	Tent village. Few permanent structures. Minor agriculture progress with security handled by the settlers as needed. Less than 30 permanent inhabitants.
3-4	A small hamlet. An equal number of permanent and temporary structures built. Agriculture progress expands so that half the population can be fed without the need for hunting or foraging. From 30 to 60 permanent inhabitants.
5-7	A small village. More permanent structures built than temporary ones. Agriculture progress expands so that the population can be fed mostly with agriculture. From 60 to 100 permanent inhabitants.
8-10	A thriving town. A central area of business is surrounded by living areas, with agricultural activities taking place within a day's cart ride of the town center. From 100 to 400 permanent inhabitants.
11-13	A small city. The city center grows out, as does the working and living areas of residents. Defensive fortifications protect the inner areas of the settlement. From 400 to 1000 permanent inhabitants.
14-15	A large city. The threats from without are generally less severe than threats of crime within. Police force grows to match any military presence. From 1000 to 5000 permanent inhabitants.
16-18	A metropolis. The city grows beyond its proposed borders. From 5000 to 10000 permanent inhabitants.
19-20	A megalopolis. Multiple large settlements linked together. The area is self-sufficient for survival resources, and there is a standing, professional military force to protect the area from outside threats. More than 10000 permanent inhabitants.

4. ACCESS BUILDING MATERIALS

What will the settlement look like? What materials will the structure be built from? How easy will it be to gather and use the building blocks of the settlement? All these questions can be answered in a variety of ways in a campaign, and the extent to which the characters participate in the procurement of those materials can vary. Are the materials available naturally within the region? Do the characters have to clear that area of danger to allow settlers to access the materials more easily? Do the materials need to be obtained from a different area, forcing the characters to escort the caravans carrying them through dangerous territories?

The answer to these questions is best answered through actual adventures in the campaign, challenging the characters to explore, plan, defeat potential enemies, forge agreements with others, etc. As with the other parts of these campaigns, the pacing of the campaign should alternate between pursuing major PC goals and plot points, ensuring the survival of the PCs is being tested, and spending time and resources to find and deliver the building materials.



5. BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Once the settlers are drawn to the area, and the resources they need to build the settlement are gathered, the building of the settlement's infrastructure can begin. Unless the characters' skills and backgrounds provide proficiency in this sort of work, they are best employed by protecting the workers, continuing to explore, gathering resources, or rooting out other dangers in the area.

Once the required amount of time is spent (1 month to create a settlement rating 1 area), the settlement is assumed to be a safe haven for rest, assuming there is no dangerous creatures in the area that would threaten it—including other hostile settlements nearby.

Take the Challenge Ratings of the nearest threats to the settlement, and add them together to get a danger rating. If the settlement's rating is higher than or equal to the danger rating, the settlement is considered safe. That does not mean it cannot be attacked, it simply gives the players the option to rest without having to post guards.

6. ESTABLISH AGRICULTURE AND TRADE

With the infrastructure in place, the settlement needs to be able to support itself through either growing or obtaining the standard resources of survival such as food and potable. This requires areas of agriculture, trade routes to places that have supplies for trade, protected hunting grounds, and the like. As with finding a location, finding materials, etc., this is best handled through adventures and downtime. Full adventures where characters drive away predators from agricultural fields or patrol trade routes to eliminate hazards and other threats. Assume that a settlement can only grow (gaining a higher settlement rating) if the agriculture and trade can proceed unhindered.

7. GROW AND MAINTAIN SETTLEMENTS

A settlement will likely start as a small thorp, with only a few settlers and little infrastructure. As the characters' adventures provide them with more wealth, probably in

the form of precious metals or gems or trade goods, they gain both the material wealth and the growing reputation that would bring more settlers searching for safety and a place to join a growing community.

To grow from a settlement rating to the next higher rating, an amount of time must be spent equal in months to the rating being achieved. For example, to move from a rating 3 settlement to rating 4, four months must pass as the building and growth happens. This assumes no interference by the characters. If the characters pour significant resources (wealth, downtime, adventuring time, etc.) into assisting with the growth, this time can be decreased significantly at the GM's discretion.

8. PROTECT

The difference between a higher danger rating and a lower settlement rating determines how likely the settlement is to survive without direct protection from the characters. This could be shown through direct attacks on the settlement by the threats of the area, but it could just as easily be explained through the failure of the settlers to successfully maintain agricultural efforts in harsh conditions or to easily find natural resources important to survival. Dangerous environmental effects of the realm also threaten settlements as much as any monster or predatory groups.

Once a settlement rating is equal to or higher than the danger rating for the area around the settlement, it can be considered safe enough to defend itself from the typical threats in the area without the direct intervention of the character. That doesn't mean, however, that a new threat won't later appear in the area that threatens the settlement anew.

When the GM desires, they can roll a check to see if the characters can safely rest in the settlement. If the danger rating is higher than the settlement rating, roll a d20. If the roll is lower than the difference between the settlement and danger rating, their rest is interrupted by a threat that the settlement can't handle on their own. For example, a settlement with a rating of 4 within a territory with a danger rating of 10 is interrupted on a d20 roll of 6 or lower.

Even if the roll succeeds, that doesn't mean the danger disappears. It only means that the characters can get a full long rest without getting interrupted. There may be some damage to the settlement, some settlers may be killed or injured, or some other negative effects may be absorbed by the settlement. At a GM's discretion, enough damage to a settlement might cause the settlement rating to be reduced by one or more points.

SHORT-TERM SURVIVAL IN VALIKA

The focus on survival in these rules has covered long-term survival. The majority of Valika is inhospitable to life in general, so characters must be willing to invest time, energy, and resources into securing their long-term safety. However, short-term survival is an important feature in Valika campaigns as well. Without a steady source of food or shelter during overland travel, exploration, and downtime, simply getting to an adventuring site or goal might be as dangerous as the end-challenge. A week-long journey from a safe settlement into the wilds of Valika might be an adventure in itself.

To make short-term survival both fun and exciting, work the encounters and the time spent foraging into the plans for your adventure and campaign. A day spent foraging—and dealing with the threats in the area—means one less day to complete other goals. Characters who took steps ahead of time to gather food and water for their trips should gain benefits for not having to spend time doing so in the present.

WORKING WITH EXISTING SURVIVAL MECHANICS

The existing Fifth-Edition rules don't address survival in a deep or satisfying way. Rules for foraging and survival are paradoxically simple and hard to reconcile. A character needs a pound of food and a gallon of water each day to survive. Half rations can sustain a character for a limited time, and Constitution checks are required for half water consumption to avoid gaining levels of exhaustion. (We've already talked about the unsatisfactory nature of exhaustion as a consequence for failing survival-based checks like this.)

More concerning, the SRD rules do not specify how much food and water can be found in the wilds. (This information is provided only in non-SRD rules.)

Adding to this uncertainty are rules that seem to bypass the normal survival rules. The ranger's Natural Explorer feature allows for finding double the normal food when foraging in the wild (although the amount remains a mystery using only the SRD rules). Low-level spells like *goodberry* and *create or destroy water* can completely remove the need to forage, sustaining 10 people each day for the low cost of two spells slots. This allows even a first-level character to sustain several people forever, assuming they can rest each day to replenish their spell slots.

While it's not recommended to eliminate these resources over the length of a campaign, it's not unreasonable to want to highlight the drama of survival in a dangerous world without having a magic button pushed repeatedly eliminate all the challenge completely.

So how does one keep the challenge?

First, keep the pressure on the characters by combining survival with other adventure considerations. Characters using spell slots to alleviate their hunger and thirst should not get a free pass—that choice should have consequences as they are challenged by other encounters that call for combat.

Secondly, they should have to work for those shortcuts. Spells like the ones mentioned earlier might not be available to the characters until someone proficient in magical research can be drawn to a settlement the characters frequent. And the settlements would have to reach a certain safety rating before such a person would settle there. Alternatively, some spells might be locked away at long-forgotten sites in Valika's wilds, and the characters must adventure in those sites before they have full access to the spells. This provides the characters with difficult and dramatic choices: travel to the place where the spells might be located, leaving a settlement unprotected or some other threat unaddressed in the interim.

SURVIVAL AND HIGHER LEVEL PLAY

The consensus on high-level play in Fifth Edition is that the characters have much more power and survivability than the comparable Challenge Ratings at those levels. As characters gain levels, it becomes harder and harder to challenge them. Survival is no different in this case.

The availability of powerful spells—even those as low as level 3—tends to eliminate any need to worry about food, water, or even shelter in the most hostile environs. *Tiny hut*, a level 3 spell, allows a group of characters to take a long rest in practically any environment. *Magnificent mansion* is a spell that can accommodate 100 individuals, the size of a small village, for 24 hours. With resources like this, high-level characters, especially spellcasters, could maintain small settlements magically indefinitely.

One way to challenge high-level characters, then, is to make adventures and challenges that invite characters to use resources to protect others in large settlements, while at the same time taking on normal combat challenges in adventures. Characters at higher levels may be nigh-indestructible, but the settlers who they count on to maintain settlements are not.

OPTIONAL RULES: SNOW BLINDNESS

While snow blindness isn't a danger everywhere in Grarjord, it will quickly become an issue for anyone caught on a snowfield or mountaintop on a particularly sunny day. The glare produced by light reflecting off brilliant white snow can burn the eyes easily, and in severe cases, cause lasting damage. Snow blindness also occurs after the fact, usually several hours after exposure.

After being in a bright, snowy area for longer than an hour, a character must make a Constitution saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is equal to 8 + the number of hours spent in the area. On a failure, the character gains the Sunlight Sensitivity trait for the next 24 hours. On a failure of 5 or more, the character is blinded for the next 12 hours.

OPTIONAL RULES: HYPOTHERMIA

At all times, the cold must be kept at bay. People dwell on it day in and day out. Is there enough firewood? Do I have enough to wear? Enough to eat?

Bite

Using these optional rules introduces a constant hazard to your game called **Bite**. Bite is a general measure of how cold conditions are, factoring in all the various elements of weather that can change the temperature.

Bite is represented by a number—the higher the Bite, the colder your present surroundings. The GM is free to decide that the Bite of an area has changed whenever it makes sense and is appropriate. Below are some ideas on how much Bite is suitable for various conditions.

WEATHER CONDITIONS	BITE
Indoors or near a fire	0
Outdoors – sunny day	+2
Outdoors – cold day	+4
Increasing windchill	+2
Nightfall	+4
High Altitude	+3
Blizzard	+8

During summer seasons in Valika, the weather is generally comfortable enough that Bite is not a factor. But during the other seasons, Bite could become a factor. You can obtain a Bite score using the table above: the Bite of a sunny day in winter might be 2, and then might increase to 4 during a session of play as conditions change and the wind picks up.

Managing Bite

Keeping warm isn't difficult—every piece of clothing you wear that has a Warmth Rating (WR) helps. Each point of WR you have cancels a point of Bite.

For example, if a player character is wearing a linen tunic (+3 WR), a woolen cloak (+4 WR), and a hat, gloves, and legwraps (+1 WR each), they have a total WR of 10. The character can resist the effects of Bite until it exceeds 10. If they enter an area with 11 Bite or higher, they start freezing to death unless they can manage to heat themselves up.

Characters in a tough spot might need to get creative. Can I increase my warmth with a fire? Can I increase my warmth by drinking mead? The GM is free to adjudicate here, but here are some suggestions:

Increasing Warmth with Fire or Hot Water. This should work fine, perhaps giving a boost of 3 or 4 WR for a limited time. Characters that already have hypothermia cannot be heated up by intense heat, however; they need to warm up slowly.

Increasing Warmth with Alcohol. In a game that aims to replicate the feel of a mythic saga, a GM can consider allowing mead or other alcoholic beverages to stave off Bite (despite what we know to be true of alcohol's effect on body temperature). One way to handle this is to give a

temporary boost to WR for a few hours, that inverts once time is up. For example, +2 WR for 1d4 hours, and then -2 WR after that, until the character finishes a long rest.

Failing to Manage Bite

When Bite exceeds a character's WR, they are 'exposed' to however much Bite is left over after applying their WR. For example, a character with a WR of 10 in an area with 12 Bite is exposed to 2 Bite.

When exposed to Bite, a character must make a Constitution saving throw. The DC of this saving throw equals 12 + the amount of Bite they are exposed to.

On a failure, the character becomes hypothermic. Hypothermia has levels: mild, moderate, and severe. As with exhaustion, the effects of these levels stack. A character must repeat the Constitution saving throw against hypothermia once every hour. On a failure, they gain another level of hypothermia.

Finishing a long rest removes one level of hypothermia, provided the character rests in a warm place.

LEVEL	SYMPTOMS	EFFECT
Mild	Shivering and inability to concentrate. Pain in extremities. It can be hard to tell when someone is experiencing the early stages of hypothermia.	Once every hour, the creature takes cold damage equal to twice the amount of Bite they are exposed to.
Moderate	Amnesia, confusion, slurring of speech, loss of fine motor skills.	Disadvantage on attack rolls and Dexterity checks. Spellcasters cannot concentrate on spells.
Severe	Cold and inflamed skin, hallucinations, heavily reduced reflexes.	Speed halved. Creature cannot take reactions. Creature gains vulnerability to cold damage.

SEVERE SIDE-EFFECTS

Creatures with severe hypothermia also exhibit strange and frightening behavior, the most common being paradoxical undressing. When a creature develops severe hypothermia, they must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they become disoriented, combative, and confused, believing they are burning up and overheating. They remove their clothing unless they are grappled or restrained, or magic is used to convince them to not disrobe.

As long as they have severe hypothermia, the creature gains the following flaw: *I'm convinced I have to cool down or I'll die.*

"I have had the distinct displeasure of seeing an extreme case of Bite exposure. The poor man believed he was seeing ghosts and almost stumbled off a cliff."

- Local healer



Chapter 4:

VALIKAN THREATS

The environs of Valika can be home to any threat, but some monsters and enemies to the player characters are specific to the northern climate and political structure of Valika. Some of these monsters or humanoid creatures are spawned by the environment, while others exist in the arctic wastes despite the harsh geography and climate.

Grim Hollow: The Monster Grimoire contains over 400 monsters that you can use in your Grim Hollow campaigns, specific to this setting. More importantly, several monsters provided there are native to Valika. The list below highlights these creatures:

- **Prismatic Drake:** Said to be children of Gormadraig, the Great Prismatic Wyrm, prismatic drakes frequent the northern reaches of Valika. Legends say they want to bring about the return of their rumored progenitor. Sorcerers or warlocks who foolishly try to tap into Gormadraig's power may be transformed into prismatic drakes. Visions and compulsions prompt prismatic drakes to perform tasks that might lead to waking the sleeping wyrm.
- **Gegazol:** There's a saying that Gegazol and the icy north share the same birthday. For as long as the Valikan Clans have told tales around their life-giving fires, their stories spoke of Gegazol's rage—though none who live have seen her. In the early centuries, Gegazol was a living dragon, many say an offspring of the Prismatic Wyrm. It is believed the Gegazol lost her life in an epic battle with a powerful daemon, and now the two entities—daemon and dragon—live within the same undead form.
- **Keppmir:** Clan Keppmir was once a powerful maritime clan, but they are no more—at least in their humanoid forms. When the clan's chieftain was tricked into making a pact with a daemon, the clanfolk were transformed into twisted aquatic creatures that hunt the frigid coastal waters of Valika.
- **Panjaians:** Panjaians are humanoid creatures who bridge the divide between mortal creatures and Primordials. Different types of panjaians serve the various Primordial masters. Recently, however, there are rumors of panjaians encountered with the ability to resist, and even control, the coldfire that ravages areas of Valika.
- **Memori Lich/Runa Banasár:** A memori lich is a warrior who became immortal through eldritch means, much like an arcanist gains immortality by becoming a lich. Runa Banasár is a former clan chieftain who performed this difficult feat. Her undead form wanders the lands of Valika to this day. What she wants and where she can be found is a mystery.
- **Coldfire Ooze:** Coldfire can sometimes congeal into an amorphous creature that moves with a seeming intelligence and purpose. These congealed horrors are called coldfire oozes. They combine the hardness of a typical ooze with the dangers of coldfire.
- **Frostbite Fox:** Unnaturally adapted to living in the arctic, frostbite foxes are a predator in the north. While their fur is valuable in making clothing that helps the wearer survive the cold, they are far more dangerous to hunt than a normal fox.
- **Cadeer:** These creatures can survive the harsh climate of Valika, and their ability to absorb magic makes them valuable companions to clanfolk who have been able to learn their secret and domesticate them. Clan Rune spellcasters hate and fear the creatures' secrets may be strengthened and used against the spellcasters.





Coldfire Premonition

The scout claimed the creature she saw was Gormadraig returned, but I knew she was wrong because she had lived to tell me about it.

Elemental Scourge. Coldfire has reawakened in the distant reaches of Volgen. Many horrific tales travel south from that icy hell, yet none are more unsettling than encounters with immense wyrms of living ice and coldfire. These monsters spread their elemental scourge wherever they go. Witnesses to their destruction warn that these creatures are premonitions of a world in which Gormadraig, greatest of the primordials, has returned.

Vision of an Icy Future. Gormadraig is the progenitor of coldfire, a scourge which burns across eastern Valika leaving icy devastation in its wake. The druids of the Prismatic Circle are skeptical that tales of the so-called coldfire premonitions are true. But if they are, perhaps they're conjured from the very dreams of Gormadraig itself— dreams in which the Prismatic Wyrms rises again to end all mortal life on Etharis once and for all.

Image of the Wyrms. A coldfire premonition takes the shape of a wolf-headed, many-legged serpentine wyrm. It is wrought of solid ice and wreathed in frigid, blue flames. The mythical depictions of Gormadraig mirror this terrible image. The coldfire premonition is therefore a spectre of every Valikans greatest dread.

SALVAGE

The coldfire premonition explodes into a hail of ice when it dies, showering the area in coldfire. Characters savvy enough to quench its remains with hot, red flame can salvage frigid shards of its body. These shards have turned black and shiny, like obsidian, but remain burning cold to the touch. The shards can be used to craft 20 arrows or crossbow bolts. These missiles count as +3 ammunition that does an additional 7 (2d6) cold damage on a successful attack. A proficient weaponsmith must spend 8 hours and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check to create the missiles.

LORE

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival): The coldfire premonition wreathes itself in a blizzard of showering coldfire. Blue flames explode in the area near the premonition, dealing cold damage to everyone they touch.

DC 20 Wisdom (Survival): As a creature made entirely of coldfire, it seems likely that hot, red flame will annihilate it with ease. However, stories warn that the premonitions own flames react explosively to the sudden introduction of burning flame.

COLDFIRE PREMONITION

Gargantuan Elemental, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 297 (18d20 + 108)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	12 (+1)	22 (+6)	1 (-5)	19 (+4)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Str +12, Dex +6, Con +11, Cha +0

Skills Perception +9

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, unconscious

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages —

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the coldfire premonition fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The coldfire premonition has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Coldfire. The cold damage the coldfire premonition deals ignores cold resistance. Creatures immune to cold damage treat their immunity as resistance to cold damage instead.

Coldfire Form. The coldfire premonition can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the premonition or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) cold damage. In addition, the premonition can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 11 (2d10) cold damage.

Frigid Demise. When the coldfire premonition dies, its body is enveloped in a coldfire explosion that sends frigid shards in every direction. All creatures within 30 feet of it must make a DC 18

Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Ignite. If a creature or a flammable object takes cold damage from the coldfire premonition, the target ignites. Hot fire smothers coldfire; until the target is dealt fire damage, it takes 5 (1d10) cold damage at the start of each of its turns.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The coldfire premonition makes two attacks: one with its Bite and one with its Tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) cold damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage and the target is knocked prone.

Rain of Coldfire (Recharges 5-6). The coldfire premonition roars as icy shards burst from its body and rain coldfire down around it. 1d4 coldfire hailstones strike the ground at points of the premonition's choice within 120 feet of it. Each hailstone creates a 10-foot radius patch of coldfire. Each creature that starts its turn in this area or enters it for the first time on a turn must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 16 (3d10) cold damage.

REACTIONS

Explosive Combustion. When the coldfire premonition takes fire damage, a burst of coldfire of equal intensity explodes from its body. All creatures within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take cold damage equal to the fire damage that triggered this reaction.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The coldfire premonition can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The premonition regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Tail. The premonition makes a tail attack.

Icy Shield (Costs 3 Actions). The premonition casts *wall of ice* (spell save DC 18).

Coldfire Wall (Costs 3 Actions). The premonition casts *wall of fire* (spell save DC 18); the spell deals cold damage when cast in this way.



Coldfire Undead

The shambling forms glowed with a sickening blue light. When they were done with the village, their numbers had tripled.

Animating Cold. While the primary danger of coldfire is burning, the horrible substance also has the power to animate dead creatures under specific circumstances. While many undead are powered by necrotic energy, coldfire undead are animated and powered by coldfire.

Ghouls and Zombies. At this point, scholars and scouts have only seen evidence that the coldfire creates two types of undead creatures: ghouls and zombies. These creatures differ in their power and abilities, with the ghoul able to create zombies from their victims.

SALVAGE

The blood of coldfire undead freezes in its lifeless body. The blood from four bodies can be thawed and turned into a *potion of resistance (cold)* with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check by someone proficient with alchemist's supplies working for 2 hours.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (Religion): Coldfire undead are powered by coldfire rather than necrotic power. They have no special vulnerability to radiant damage and cannot be turned.

DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana): The coldfire undead act very much like other undead, and they share many of the same traits. However, the power of the coldfire gives them some extra power and makes them more dangerous. They can spread coldfire, which can only be countered by exposing a burning victim to fire damage.

COLDFIRE GHOUL

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Wis +4

Skills Perception +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Coldfire. The cold damage the coldfire ghouls deals ignores cold resistance. Creatures immune to cold damage treat their immunity as resistance to cold damage instead.

Create Zombie. A humanoid killed by cold damage from a coldfire ghouls rises one hour later as a coldfire zombie under the GM's control.

Ignite. If a creature or a flammable object takes cold damage from the coldfire ghouls, the target ignites. Hot fire smothers coldfire; until the target is dealt fire damage, it takes 5 (1d10) cold damage at the start of each of its turns for 1 minute.

Turn Immunity. The coldfire ghouls is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The coldfire ghouls makes two attacks: one with its Bite and one with its Claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) cold damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

COLDFIRE ZOMBIE

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 8 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d8 + 18)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Wis +2

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Coldfire. The cold damage the coldfire zombie deals ignores cold resistance. Creatures immune to cold damage treat their immunity as resistance to cold damage instead.

Coldfire Fortitude. If damage reduces the coldfire zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is fire or from a critical hit. On a success, the coldfire zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Ignite. If a creature or a flammable object takes cold damage from the coldfire zombie, the target ignites. Hot fire smothers coldfire; until the target is dealt fire damage, it takes 3 (1d6) cold damage at the start of each of its turns for 1 minute.

Turn Immunity. The coldfire zombie is immune to effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Coldfire Spray. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) cold damage.

GM Advice: Undead are common enemies in fantasy roleplaying games, which can make them seem mundane and unthreatening to veteran players. Resist the urge to use coldfire undead early in your campaign. Build suspense by having your NPC's only whisper about them around winter campfires. Remind players through roleplay of the existential terror of reanimating after death. Then, one particularly cold night during a billowing storm, when flickering blue flames appear on the horizon, have these terrifying coldfire monsters slowly emerge from the darkness!



Dinosaur, Valikan

Clan shamans tell young clanfolk that the tiniest ice crystal is as dangerous as the largest beast in Valika. Those shamans never met a Valikan dinosaur.

Prehistoric Remnants. While creatures like dinosaurs and dragons once dominated Etharis, those beasts are all but extinct across the length and breadth of the continent. However, the inhospitable and isolated nature of the Valikan landscape has shielded some of the dinosaurs from the causes of their southern brethren's extinction.

Water-dwelling Behemoths. The elasmosaurus lives in the lakes and coastal ocean waters of Valika. They are too large to live on land, so they dwell in the waters, allowing their long necks to snake out and eat their prey. Their bulk allows them to break any ice that might form around them. They are particularly fond of grasping struggling prey in their strong jaws and holding them underwater to drown them for easy dining.

Feathered and Fearsome. The nanuqsaurus is well suited for the arctic climates of Valika. Their fluffy white feathers protect them from the cold, while helping them blend in to surprise their prey. Similar to a tyrannosaurus in size and strength, a nanuqsaurus is one of the most fearsome nonmagical creatures native to Valika.

SALVAGE

A single elasmosaurus can feed an entire Valikan village, assuming anyone is brave enough to attack and kill one. It takes 8 hours and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to harvest the meat from an elasmosaurus. This provides enough meat to feed 60 people for a day.

The feathers of a nanuqsaurus can be enchanted and formed into a *cloak of elvenkind* that functions only in freezing temperatures. Someone who has proficiency in tailor's tools can make this cloak in 4 days, using reagents worth 400 gp. Somebody must cast *pass without trace* on the cloak on two out of the four days of its making.

LORE

DC 10 Wisdom (Survival): Both these dinosaurs, despite their bulk, can surprise unwary hunters. The elasmosaurus hides beneath the water and reaches out with its snakelike neck to nab prey. The nanuqsaurus, on the other hand, blends into snowy or icy terrain with its white feathers.

DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana): The feathers of the nanuqsaurus can be fashioned into a cloak that, if enchanted, allows a wearer to blend into snowy environs.

ELASMOSAURUS

Gargantuan Beast (Dinosaur), Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 297 (18d20 + 108)

Speed 10 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	7 (-2)	21 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Con +9

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 39 (6d10 + 6) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 18).

BONUS ACTIONS

The elasmosaurus can move a grappled target up to 30 feet, always within 30 feet of the dinosaur.

NANUQSAURUS

Huge Beast (Dinosaur), Unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 157 (15d12 + 60)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	10 (+0)	19 (+6)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +5

Damage Immunities cold

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Snow Camouflage. The nanuqsaurus has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy or icy terrain.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The nanuqsaurus makes three attacks: one with its Bite and two with its Tail. It can't make a Tail and Bite attack against the same target on the same turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 34 (4d12 + 8) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 20). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the nanuqsaurus can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.



Gegazol

“The Scourge of the North is an undead dragon named Gegazol. If I hear her name, I get the hell out of there. She’s powerful, cunning, and treacherous. And she’s rarely alone—she always has one army or another behind her.”

Ageless Threat. There’s a saying that Gegazol and the icy north share the same birthday. For as long as the Valikan Clans have told tales, their stories spoke of Gegazol’s rage—though none who live have seen her. In the early centuries, Gegazol was a living dragon, many say an offspring of the Prismatic Wyrms Gormadraig. She lived, that is, until she attacked a daemon. The battle was ferocious, as the dragon and fiend fought for life. Gegazol won, tearing the fiend in half, but her victory had a price. As the daemon’s ichor flowed upon the dragon, it killed and later cursed her body with the filth of undeath. Gegazol raged at her reawakening and proceeded to tear at and destroy her own undead body, only to reform later near the body of the vanquished daemon. The skull of the demon acts as the dragon’s soul vessel.

There’s an essential link between Gegazol and the daemon skull. Whenever the dragon’s undead body is destroyed, it reconstitutes dramatically. First, the stained bones appear, followed by the rotten muscle, tattered flesh, rotting teeth, and a maggot-infested tongue. Gegazol is helpless in this transformation. She can’t touch the skull—subtle enchantments steer her away. Gegazol has lost track of how many times she’s been restored near the skull.

Scourge of the North. Gegazol subjugates and wars for many reasons. First and foremost, she does so to protect her soul vessel. She wars to control the actions of pesky and curious mortals. Beyond protecting the daemon skull, Gegazol has a hard time rationalizing her decisions. She isn’t entirely in control; she’s being manipulated.

To Gegazol, her mind is her own, but deep down, something else swirls. The daemon’s psychic essence intermingled with the dragon’s consciousness when her body became undead. The daemon’s essence either refuses to or is incapable of communicating with any creature. It can’t speak; the skull is silent. Its mind can’t be reached via magic.

Delusional Destiny. A mind under extreme pressure breaks. Gegazol is cunning, often lucid, and by no means addled, but she is prone to intense stubbornness and unshakable belief that her destiny is to become Queen of the World. It’s a lofty goal, given that she has yet to conquer even a fraction of the North, but she has time on her side.

Gegazol both longs for and fears war. She remembers her death, and many deaths since, leaving her hesitant to muster her undead army and march south again. As the festering will of the daemon prods her, however, it’s only a matter of time before the Valikan Clans learn the myths of her existence are all too real.

Undead Nature. Gegazol doesn’t require air, food, drink, or sleep.

GEGAZOL’S LAIR

The Scourge’s lair is the sinkhole cave on an island off the northernmost shores of Etharis, north of even the raging coldfire. In this cave, the daemon’s skull sits. It rests at the bottom of a deep, wet cavern upon a pedestal carved into the earth. Magic wards protect the crack above the skull. Gegazol’s Immortals, a brutal cadre of undead warriors the dragon created or conquered, guard the expanded catacombs around the shrine. Gegazol needs no rest, but between campaigns, she lounges within the shrine, curled around the skull’s pedestal. The whole place stinks of decay, making the site nauseating. While in her lair, Gegazol’s Stench radius increases to 120 feet.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Gegazol takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects. Gegazol can’t use the same effect two rounds in a row.

- Tendrils of necrotic power rise and reach for living creatures within the lair. Each living creature in the lair must attempt a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 13 (3d8) necrotic damage and gain one level of exhaustion until initiative count 20 on the next round.
- Gegazol crashes her wings upon the ground, and rime spreads in a sphere with a 120-foot radius around her. This sphere spreads around corners and creates difficult terrain made of ice. Creatures in that area must make a DC 21 Constitution saving throw. Those who fail take 18 (4d8) cold damage and are grappled (escape DC 21). On a success, the creature takes half the damage and isn’t grappled. The difficult terrain disappears on initiative count 20 on the next round.
- Gegazol creates an opaque wall of black ice on a solid surface she can see within 120 feet of her. The wall is made up of twenty contiguous 10-foot square panels that are each 2 feet thick. When the wall appears, each creature in its area is pushed 5 feet out of the wall’s space, appearing on whichever side of the wall the creature wants. Each 10-foot section of the wall has AC 5, 60 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to acid, cold, necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. The wall disappears when Gegazol uses this lair action again or when she dies.

SALVAGE

Gegazol’s lair holds a hoard gathered over the centuries. She has spread this loot among various vaults and chambers, and her Immortals guard these treasures. Her treasurers—a trio of compulsive vampires—keep careful records of the hoard in a library within the lair’s inner vaults. Each record contains a great deal of knowledge about the fates of various objects, and sometimes the vampires track a treasure beyond its gifting and engage in occasional quests to regain a lost valuable. Each historic tome from the library is worth at least 100 gp to the right collector. Enterprising adventurers could use any of these books as a guide to searches for lost treasures.

GEGAZOL

Gargantuan Undead, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 462 (25d20 + 200)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	14 (+2)	26 (+8)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	23 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Int +10, Wis +9

Skills Perception +9

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Draconic

Challenge 24 (62,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +7

Ice Walk. Gegazol can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost her extra movement.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Gegazol fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Gegazol has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation. If destroyed while her soul vessel remains intact, Gegazol's unconscious body rejuvenates within 5 feet of the soul vessel, where she regains 78 (12d12) hit points each day. When she has regained half her hit points, she regains consciousness.

Stench. Any creature not immune to the poisoned condition that starts its turn within 30 feet of Gegazol must succeed on a DC 23 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the start of that creature's next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to Gegazol's stench for 1 hour.

Turning Defiance. Gegazol and undead within 120 feet of her have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Gegazol can use her Frightful Presence. She then makes three attacks: one with her Bite and two with her Claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (2d12 + 8) piercing damage, 9 (2d8) cold damage and 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 23 Strength saving throw or fall prone.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Gegazol's choice within 120 feet of and aware of her must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Gegazol's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Breath of Long Night (Recharge 5–6). Gegazol exhales frozen material and rot in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) cold damage and 45 (10d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Those who fail the save also gain two levels of exhaustion until the end of Gegazol's next turn, and those who fail by 5 or more are also blinded for 1 minute. A blinded creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Gegazol can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Gegazol regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Daemon Sight. Gegazol gains truesight out to 120 feet until the end of her next turn and can make a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail. Gegazol makes a Tail attack.

Wings of Winter (Costs 2 Actions). Gegazol beats her wings. Each creature within 30 feet of her must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage and 9 (2d8) cold damage, and then fall prone. Gegazol can then fly up to half her flying speed.

DAEMON SKULL SOUL VESSEL

The ancient daemon skull that serves as Gegazol's soul vessel possesses infernal power, giving it the means for mischief and self-preservation. It has AC 6, but it's immune to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks, as well as cold, fire, necrotic, and psychic damage. It's immune to all conditions, and it has a +7 bonus to all saving throws, making saves against spells and magical effects with advantage. The skull has 200 hit points.

When harmed, the skull sends out a psychic alarm.

Gegazol and her Immortals can sense this alarm, provided they are on the same plane of existence. Also, when a creature deals the skull damage, that creature must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or take psychic damage equal to half the damage the creature dealt.

If her soul vessel is destroyed, Gegazol can't rejuvenate. When her body is destroyed again, she dies.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (History): Gegazol, Scourge of the North, is an ancient dragon transformed into an undead horror millennia ago. Tales as old as creation tell of her infrequent but violent assaults on lands south of her lair, and all lands of Etharis are south of her lair.

DC 15 Intelligence (Religion): Not only possessing great physical power, defenses against magic, and an undead army at her back, Gegazol, like a lich, has a soul vessel that harbors her undead soul and can rejuvenate her body when Gegazol is destroyed. It's said that this vessel is a massive daemon skull, and that the dragon keeps it hidden in her lair.

DC 20 Intelligence (History): Gegazol calls the undead who serve her Immortals⁷. Among them are vampires, ghouls, and undead that are even more powerful. Given many of these undead have fallen in her wars and powerplays, the Immortal title is aspirational.







Hunting Orca

The only thing more frightening than an orca to a person sailing in choppy arctic waters is an orca that has been trained to attack.

Enhanced Killers. The magic that infuses the waters around Valika left these marine mammals with an uncanny intelligence and wisdom. Some of the more nefarious residents of the north learned about this, and they located and trained these beasts to do their bidding. These orcas can track sailing vessels that are many miles away, and once found, the hunting orcas can smash a ship to flinders, leaving the crew helpless in the freezing waters.

SALVAGE

The brain of the hunting orca has been altered by the magic of Valika. If the brain is extracted and consumed within 1 hour of the hunting orca's death, the consumer gains the benefit of the *enhance ability* spell, but the effects last until the creature finishes two long rests. The bear's endurance version of the spell refreshes temporary hit points each time the creature takes a short or long rest.

LORE

DC 10 Wisdom (Survival): Hunting orcas are magically enhanced creatures, allowing them to be trained for hunting and attacking in the water under the control of the trainer. They have been known to track and locate specific vessels that are miles away. They are also adept at damaging vessels.

DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana): The brains of hunting orcas are edible, and they can bestow enhanced abilities on the person consuming the brain.

HUNTING ORCA

Huge Beast, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 126 (12d12 + 48)

Speed 0 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +5, Survival +5

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands one language known by its trainer

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Echolocation. The hunting orca can't use its blindsight while deafened.

Hold Breath. The hunting orca can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

Keen Hearing. The hunting orca has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Siege Monster. The hunting orca deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 30 (4d12 + 4) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Tail Slap. If it starts its turn within 5 feet of a water vessel, the hunting orca can automatically deal 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage to the vessel. This damage is not doubled by the hunting orca's *siege monster* ability.



Ice Crab

The meat of the giant ice crab is a delicacy to clanfolk all across Valika. Alas, clanfolk are a delicacy to the giant ice crab as well.

Shelled Menace. A lack of natural predators in the arctic waters and shorelines of Valika have allowed ice crabs to flourish. While there are huge numbers of normal-sized ice crabs spread across the shores of Valika, a monstrous variety have emerged, threatening those who hunt and fish along the shorelines.

Touched by Elemental Cold. Giant ice crabs have been infused with elemental cold, making them immune to the frigid temperatures, as well as magical cold. Additionally, when they hold a creature in their pincers, the victim is overwhelmed with waves of freezing energy.

SALVAGE

It takes 1 hour and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to harvest the meat from a giant ice crab. This provides enough meat to feed 20 people for a day. Someone who has proficiency with cook's tools can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to prepare the meat in a way that brings out its magical nature. Anyone eating the meat prepared in this way gains resistance to cold damage for 24 hours. The meat must be prepared and consumed within a day of killing the crab to gain this magical benefit.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (Nature): Giant ice crabs thrive in the frigid waters of Valika, both on the coast and in the lakes and rivers. They are deadly predators known to consume humanoid who wander too close to their watery hiding places.

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival): The giant ice crab's claws spread a soul-numbing cold into creatures they grab. Very few creatures can last for more than a few seconds in the grasp of a giant ice crab.

DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana): If prepared properly, the meat of a giant ice crab can bestow some resistance to the elements for a short time. Rumors of people caught in blizzards but surviving thanks to consuming the ice crab's flesh have spread throughout the clans.

GIANT ICE CRAB

Large Beast, Unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities cold

Sense passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 4 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Amphibious. The giant ice crab can breathe water and air.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant ice crab makes two Claw attacks. If both Claw attacks hit the same target on the same turn, the creature is restrained (DC 16 escape). The giant ice crab may not make claw attacks while it has a creature restrained in this way.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Freezing Pinch. If the giant ice crab begins its turn with a creature restrained in its claws, the crab can attempt to freeze its prey as a bonus action. The restrained creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 28 (8d6) cold damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. Creatures who fail the saving throw also have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks until the end of their next turn.



Ixlalu

Trapped in the depths of Cinderghast is the Salamander Monarch Ixlalu. Its salamander and fire elemental servants wait patiently to be freed.

Monarch of the Salamanders. Ixlalu came to Etharis from the fire realm at the creation of Etharis. It brought many salamander and fire elemental servants with it. It warred first with Gormdraug but was pushed to the northern reaches of Valika. After the Seven Heroes defeated the Great Prismatic Wyrn, the hero Rune dealt with the threat that Ixlalu posed.

Island Prison. Rune used the magic of the magical staff that Ixlalu wielded to bind the fire creatures, imprisoning them on the island of Cinderghast. The island, magically connected to a realm that made it temperate and arable, was turned into a noxious wasteland.

IXLALU, THE GREAT SALAMANDER

Huge Elemental, Neutral Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 250 (20d12 + 120)

Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +8, Con +11, Wis +7

Skills Perception +7

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Ignan, Valiki

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +5

Heated Body. A creature that touches Ixlalu or hits Ixlalu with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Ixlalu fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Ixlalu has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ixlalu makes two melee weapon attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (4d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, Ixlalu can automatically hit the target with its tail, and Ixlalu can't make tail attacks against other targets.

Charring Blast (Recharge 4–6). Ixlalu unleashes a magical fiery explosion in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point within 150 feet of it. Each creature in that area must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 55 (10d10) fire damage and is stunned until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't stunned.

REACTIONS

Explosive Combustion. When Ixlalu is damaged by a weapon attack by a creature within 15 feet of it, Ixlalu can make a tail attack against the creature with advantage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Ixlalu can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Ixlalu regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Tail. Ixlalu makes a tail attack.

Scamper and Slam (Costs 2 Actions). Ixlalu can move up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks, and Ixlalu also makes a slam attack before or after the movement.

Charring Blast (Costs 3 Actions). Ixlalu's charring blast attack recharges and can be used. The targets of the attack are not stunned on a failed saving throw.

SALVAGE

Ixlalu's inextinguishable heart can be used to create a *brazier of commanding fire elementals*. Someone proficient with alchemist's supplies must spend 10 days infusing it with 5,000 gp of powdered rubies and casting *confusion* upon it each day, before finally housing the remains in a specially-crafted iron container worth at least 1,000 gp.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (History): Ixlalu is a mythological figure that is supposedly a contemporary of the Seven Heroes that banished Gormadrag. If the myths are true, the hero Rune imprisoned Ixlalu on the island of Cinderghast.

DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana): Ixlalu is the monarch of the fiery elemental creatures called salamanders. It is likely encountered with a retinue of those creatures.

DC 20 Intelligence (History): Ixlalu is connected to a magical staff that is supposed to hold tremendous power.

GM Advice: Ixlalu is likely to be encountered deep inside his lair. Trapped beneath the islands of Cinderghast since mythic times, Ixlalu's presence has created many environmental hazards. These could inspire traps and challenges your party must overcome while exploring Ixlalu's lair. Falling rocks, noxious fumes, heated vents, and lava flows could all heighten the danger and excitement of exploring Cinderghast.

In addition to elemental minions, Ixlalu could also have lair actions to make fighting it even more challenging. The scenery inside its lair could quake with tremors or explode with fire. Perhaps loose stones fall from the ceiling during combat or fissures open beneath the characters' feet. Whether you give Ixlalu lair actions might depend on whether you think your players are ready for the extra challenge.



Prismatic Circle Agents

The blood spilled by the agents of the Prismatic Circle could fill an ocean. Then they'd find a way to drown sacrifices in that ocean.

Bloody Sacrifices. With that belief dominating their thinking, the agents of the Prismatic Circle administer to an ongoing campaign of raiding and sacrifice. While the leaders of the Circle have no clan themselves, they rule over the three Thrull-based clans, requiring them to provide both animal and human sacrifices to keep Gormadraug asleep.

Small, Tight Network. While the leadership of the Prismatic Circle relies on Clan Völgr raiders for much of their power, they also maintain a network of spies and informants that helps them maintain their power. Druids are the backbone of the network, traveling throughout

Valika to make sure their plans come to fruition and maintain the many groves of Sentinel Woods, where the sacrifices to assuage Gormadraug take place. The shaman of the Prismatic Circle lead druids or raiders into areas that have become problematic to Circle activity. Finally, the spies are sent into areas important to Circle plans to root out traitors, locate enemies, gather intelligence, and assassinate problematic individuals.

SALVAGE

Prismatic Circle agents often carry *potions of healing* for themselves, or poisons to use against enemies. The hand scythes used by the Prismatic Circle druids are magical weapons that have the same statistics as a *dagger +1*, but cannot be thrown effectively.

PRISMATIC CIRCLE DRUID

Medium Humanoid (Any), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 14 (hide armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +6

Skills Nature +3, Perception +6, Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Druidic, Valiki

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Spellcasting. The Prismatic Circle druid is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14; +6 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following druid spells prepared:
 Cantrips (at will): *guidance, produce flame, resistance*
 1st level (4 slots): *charm person, fog cloud, thunderwave*
 2nd level (3 slots): *flame blade, moonbeam, pass without trace*
 3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, sleet storm, wind wall*
 4th level (3 slots): *blight, ice storm*
 5th level (1 slot): *contagion*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Prismatic Circle druid makes two Scythe attacks.

Hand Scythe +1. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) radiant damage.

Blood Boil. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (6d6) necrotic damage, and the target's speed becomes 0 until the end of the target's next turn.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (History): The leadership of the Prismatic Circle resides in the city of Tyburn on the island of Holgar, and they rarely leave that haven. However, their agents travel throughout Valika, and into other nations of Etharis, to do the bidding of their masters.

DC 15 Intelligence (Religion): The Prismatic Circle believes that the Great Prismatic Wyrms Gormadrag will awaken and destroy the world unless it is kept in slumber by frequent blood sacrifices—including humanoid blood. This makes the members and agents of the Circle incredibly dangerous in their unquestioning and maniacal fervor.

PRISMATIC CIRCLE SHAMAN

Medium Humanoid (Any), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 15 (leather armor, shield)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	15 (+5)	10 (+1)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +3, Perception +5, Persuasion +7

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Valiki

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Magic Resistance. The Prismatic Circle shaman has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Icy Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) cold damage.

Bloody Bolt. *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30 ft., two targets. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) cold damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Blood Curse. The Prismatic Circle shaman can place a blood curse on an enemy creature that the shaman can see within 60 feet. The curse lasts for 1 hour, and up to 4 creatures can be cursed at once. While cursed in this way, a creature takes an additional 5 (1d10) necrotic damage once per turn the first time it takes damage. The curse ends early if the shaman is killed or if a shaman uses a bonus action to remove the curse or move it to a new target.

PRISMATIC CIRCLE SPY

Medium Humanoid (Any), Unaligned

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 143 (22d8 + 44)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +6, Wis +5

Skills Deception +7, History +4, Investigation +4, Persuasion +7, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Valiki, three other national languages

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +4

Assassinate. During its first turn, the Prismatic Circle spy has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Lone Target. If the target of a weapon attack made by the Prismatic Circle spy is not adjacent to an ally, the attack deals an additional 14 (4d6) damage of the attack's type.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Prismatic Circle spy makes three attacks with its Rapier, or two attacks with its Longbow.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be pushed 5 feet or knocked prone.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be pushed 5 feet or knocked prone.

BONUS ACTIONS

Elusive Steps. The Prismatic Circle spy takes the Dash or Dodge action.



Snow Swan

The feathers of the snow swan may seem downy and soft, but their razored and frigid edges prove otherwise quickly. Even the wolves of Valika eschew hunting the great winged birds.

Localized Threat, Mostly. The giant snow swans originated among the tallest peaks of the Njukca Mountains. Whether their great size and power was a naturally occurring phenomenon, or if magic was involved in their evolution, is unknown. What is not in doubt is the havoc even a single snow swan can wreak on a hunting party or trade caravan. Sightings of these creatures has spread throughout all of Valika, however. The clans of Kandar have tried to tame them, with bloody and unsuccessful consequences. As an alternative, the clans try to lead their enemies into areas where they know the swans hunt, unleashing the beasts on their unsuspecting foes.

SALVAGE

Someone who has proficiency with leatherworker's tools can fashion the hide and feathers of two giant snow swans into leather armor, studded leather armor, or hide armor. Leather and hide require 8 days of work and extra materials worth 50 gp, while studded leather requires 10 days and 100 gp. Somebody must cast *resist elements* on the armor at least once during the process. A creature wearing the armor has resistance to cold damage.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (Nature): Giant snow swans are generally found near the Njukca Mountains. They are impossible to train in any reliable way.

DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana): When in battle, the swans can release a burst of rime-infused feathers that freeze anything in the area.

GIANT SNOW SWAN

Large Beast, Unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 105 (14d10 + 28)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +5

Skills Stealth +7, Survival +5

Damage Immunities cold

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant snow swan makes two Bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Feather Shards (Recharge 5-6). The snow swan shoots forth a burst of icy feathers, targeting all creatures within 15 feet of it. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 21 (6d6) cold damage. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.



Völgr Raiders

The raiders of Valika strike fear in the hearts and minds of coastal villages throughout Etharis. And the raiders of Clan Völgr are the fiercest of all.

Feared Among the Fearsome. The Valikan Clans have earned a well-deserved reputation of being the most fearsome raiders Etharis has ever known. Raiding is a way of life, a means of survival in a harsh land. The raiders of Clan Völgr are a special breed, however. They combine the expertise of raiding with the single-minded fervor of the plans of the Prismatic Circle.

Ships on the Horizon. Raiding parties of Clan Völgr raiders scour the coastlines of Etharis looking for loot, wealth, supplies, and thralls for capture. While the parties are comprised of mainly typical warriors, special

combatants can be found among their numbers. These experienced raiders have gained experience and special abilities that make them more dangerous. For example, they are all expert swimmers.

SALVAGE

Although the raiders of Clan Völgr often use mundane equipment, they sometimes have magical equipment or runes. However, their lives are highly valued. If they are taken alive, they can be ransomed back to their clan or the Prismatic Circle. A raider veteran can fetch 25 gp, a raider lieutenant 250 gp, and a raider captain could bring up to 1000 gp.

LORE

DC 10 Intelligence (History): The raiders of Clan Völgr are among the fiercest in Valika. They are merciless in their plunder, and fearless in their demeanor.

RAIDER VETERAN

Medium Humanoid (Any), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)

Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +1

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Valiki

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Water Tactics. The raider veteran ignores difficult terrain when moving through water that is not over their head.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The raider veteran makes two Handaxe attacks.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Quick Stand. The raider veteran can stand from prone as a bonus action that does not cost any movement.



RAIDER LIEUTENANT

Medium Humanoid (Any), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +3

Skills Athletics +6, Intimidation +3

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Valiki

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Water Tactics. The veteran raider ignores difficult terrain when moving through water that is not over their head.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The raider lieutenant makes two Spear attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60, one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Intimidating Shout. The raider lieutenant targets one creature that it can see within 20 feet of it. The target must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target deals only half damage with weapon attacks for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

BONUS ACTIONS

Quick Stand. The raider lieutenant can stand from prone as a bonus action that does not cost any movement.

GM Advice: The Prismatic Circle have specific goals they'll only trust to their personal agents. Circle druids, shamans, and spies will likely accompany Völgr raiding parties. Mixing these two groups of enemies together will make fighting them feel more dynamic and dangerous. Your players must contend with both aggressive martial combatants and blood-wielding mages. The Prismatic Circle shaman's curse is particularly deadly to characters beset by Völgr raiders, while the raider captain's guiding words can make the Prismatic Circle spy's damaging attacks even more devastating.

GM Advice: The Völgr raider stat blocks can be used to represent raiders from other clans as well with some simple inclusions or adjustments. Raiders from Clan Limgri might benefit from the effects of rune magic tattoos (see Chapter 2). Raiders from Clan Rune might be led by a **mage**, while raiders from Clan Sýr might wield adamantine or silvered weapons. Agents or outcasts from the Redclaws may also hide among raider's ranks, allowing you to employ lycanthrope stat blocks.

RAIDER CAPTAIN

Medium Humanoid (Any), Neutral Evil

Armor Class 18 (studded leather and shield)

Hit Points 119 (14d8 + 56)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Athletics +7, Intimidation +5, Perception +4

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Valiki

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Water Tactics. The veteran captain ignores difficult terrain when moving through water that is not over their head.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veteran captain makes three Battleaxe or three Longbow attacks.

Battleaxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage if wielded with two hands.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Quick Stand. The raider captain can stand from prone as a bonus action that does not cost any movement.

REACTIONS

Guiding Words. The raider captain can allow an ally it can see within 60 feet to gain advantage on a weapon attack roll or saving throw. If the attack hits, the ally does an additional 11 (2d10) damage of the type normally done.







THE SEA OF TURMOIL

THE VALIKAN CLANS

THE BÜRACH EMPIRE

THE OSTOYAN EMPIRE

THE ROCKTEETH MOUNTAINS

THE GREY SPINE

THE BLACK MOUNTAINS

CHARNEAULT KINGDOM

CASTINELLAN PROVINCE

GULF OF LIONS



HOLGAR

THE SEA OF TURMOIL

TYBURN

HOLGAR STRAIT

BORGUND

GRENSFAL MOUNTAINS

HAEYSOR MOUNTAINS

TOCKAN PASS

FROSTMERE STRONGHOLD

THE VALIKAN CLANS

FOXWOOD RANGE

THRULL

FROSTMERE

LOST KEPPMIR

HALSFJORD

GRARJORD

THE TEETH

SKARFANES

RAGVALL

ERLEFORT

NORDENLAND

THE EMPIRE





CINDERGHAST

SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE

CINNABAR

ASTRIK MOUNTAIN

VOLGEN

FORT KENTIGERN

KANDAR

COLD IRON KEEP

NJUKCA MOUNTAINS

LAKE JAKKAN

HRIST

ORMRALVA RIVER

SOLHEIM

ISBRYTERALVA RIVER

SHADOW STORM GULF



SKUGGISKOGR FOREST

SUMMERHELM

RUNEHEIM

MT. VENGEANCE

THE RAIDER'S GUIDE TO VALIKA

CAMPAIGN GUIDE

WELCOME TO VALIKA!

Only the hardest souls can hope to survive the frozen homeland of the Valikan Clans. This treacherous and mythic realm, at the edge of the known world, seeks to destroy all who dwell here. The Valikans have endured for centuries against war among themselves, hungering monsters born of the cold, and the unforgiving environment. Their shared history is detailed within this tome, as are their cultures and ways of survival that make each clan unique.

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