

5E

# BEOWULF

AGE OF HEROES



MONSTER-SLAYING ADVENTURES FOR ONE GM AND ONE PLAYER  
FOR THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE ROLEPLAYING GAME

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Dedicated to all those who battle monsters.  
*“Sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills, headlands broad, their haven was found”*

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A donation has been made from the sale of this book to anti-racism charities.

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## FOREWORD

BY MARIA DAHVANA HEADLEY

Some scholars speculate that the epic poem *Beowulf*, which exists in a single manuscript dating to roughly 1050AD, is actually a transcription of a multi-night oral performance, crafted piecemeal between the 8th and early 11th centuries, by a variety of performers, each one altering on the fly. If so, it was a collaboration between many voices, over many years, and those voices mattered, the poem being altered by every poet and performer who encountered it.

A poem with a history this long is a poem in which everything imaginable has happened, whether by improvisation, or by aggressive editing. We don't know all the twists and turns the *Beowulf* poem took in the years before it was written down, and in the thousand years since, it has continued to change, through translator's choices. Sometimes, when I think about *Beowulf*, I like to imagine a version, told in say, the year 775, an elderly embroiderer in the women's wing of a castle changing events to suit her listeners, ending the story early, as her audience bites their threads and ties their knots. Did *Beowulf* always win his battle with Grendel's mother? Maybe in *The Embroiderer's Version*, Grendel's mother ended the battle kneeling on *Beowulf's* chest, her needle sticking into his heart.

Playing a game like this one is, in some ways, similar to the path I took when translating this epic into contemporary poetry. Your path as a player is constructed of encounters, each one with many possibilities – just as my translator's path through each Old English word offered possibilities that would ultimately change the resonance, scope, and meaning of the entire story. It's possible to think about *Beowulf* simply, as a fixed text, heroes and monsters, brave deeds, but to think of it that way neglects the wide range of possibilities inherent within it. Through a text like *Beowulf*, we can get a sense of shifting understandings about the key elements of our own society – after all, heroes, adversaries, and notions of “good kings” are fundamental parts of society to this day, albeit slightly recast.

*Beowulf: Age of Heroes* offers the opportunity to analyze the ways that someone looking to gain status might frame his adventures, and to equip oneself to discern moralities, weigh loyalties, and battle strategically. It's possible to linger under the mere with Grendel's mother, to consider what might motivate a monster to attack a hall with the multi-year tenacity displayed by Grendel, and to investigate what sort of invasion might make a dragon so angry that they set the world on fire.

We can also try on different guises: does heroic behavior make one a hero? What if you have some qualities that would normally be found in the monster category? Is there a version of the story in which you're the monster, and everyone in the hall, even though you used to wear glittering armor, is convinced that you're now a creature attacking from out of the dark? All of those possibilities are inherent in every monster-hero story, and in *Beowulf*, they're front and center. By the end of the poem, after all, our hero has died by dragon fang, his final hoard-claim a heap of cursed gold. His people look to the future with horror, as their king left no heir, and died without making any plan for their safety. Over the course of the story, *Beowulf* has tried on a variety of roles, ranging from Boy Warrior, to Loyal King's Right Hand, to Good King, to, ultimately, Irresponsible King. Through all these roles, he carries with him qualities that are found in only one other character – Grendel, the monster. Both *Beowulf* and Grendel, the poet takes pains to tell us, are capable of slaying thirty men in a single blow, and both are stronger and bigger than anyone else. They don't need to wear armor, or wield swords. They battle hand to hand, well-matched. The difference between them is all in their choices. One path, into the hall to kill, and another, into the hall to preserve. Those choices, though, are storyteller's choices.

Stories offer justification for intense acts, as well as opportunities for unexpected empathy, analysis of wrongdoing, and brainstorming of better ways to build societies. The *Beowulf* story is no different. Experiencing a story like this one through RPG is an invitation to imagine and elaborate upon the world of the poem from the inside. To play this game is to link hands with a long chain of poets, performers, and translators, as well as with the heroes and monsters of their imaginations, all of them equipped with stories of their own, just under the surface of simple categories. It's up to you to imagine the complications, to engage with the potential for pain as well as for courage, and to ultimately build upon all of this to craft your own path from an ancient text to a modern understanding.

— Maria Dahvana Headley  
*Beowulf: A New Translation*

## INTRODUCTION

*Take the role of the Hero, gather your followers, board your ship and ride the whale road in pursuit of your wyrd!*

*BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* gives you an early medieval, mythic setting in which a lone Hero battles monsters. Intended to be played by one Player and one GM, *BEOWULF* adds a layer of new rules to Fifth Edition that enable you to enjoy duet play.

Before you dive into the Age of Heroes let's talk a little about what *BEOWULF* is, what it is not, and a little bit of history of the project.

*BEOWULF* is all about stories like the one we see in the ancient poem *Beowulf*. You'll notice that throughout this book we use *BEOWULF* to refer to the game setting and rules, and *Beowulf* to refer to the poem.

We imagine in *BEOWULF* that the exciting events of your campaign are being told at the hearth by a storyteller (or *scop*, as the Anglo-Saxons called them) around the same time the *Beowulf* poem was written down.

This idea of a fireside tale means *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* is not intended to simulate historical fact. The setting, characters and events that unfold within it are intended to be firmly *mythical*. We take that to mean content that has the spirit of the old tales, and evokes their atmosphere. This means they can be larger than life, details can be made up, embroidered and exaggerated on the hoof, and no one needs to worry too much about doing their homework. It is not possible to get it "wrong".

*BEOWULF* *does* assume at least *some* interest in the early-medieval period of the Anglo-Saxons, their world, and their stories. We assume that you want to play in a series of adventures that are something like the *Beowulf* poem. *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* has been designed to be very flexible in approach to setting, with the intention of making it all as much *fun* as possible: doubtless, the more you learn about the period, the more historical detail you can add to your game, and indeed we find that a very satisfying way to play. But *BEOWULF* also works with only a passing knowledge of the historical poem and the era it evokes, and there's certainly enough here to get you started.

## SO WHAT IS BEOWULF?

*Beowulf*, the poem, is one of the oldest written works in the English language. As such it's been studied by scholars of English literature for decades. The poem itself concerns itself with the titular hero, *Beowulf* - a member of a warrior elite with significant physical and martial talents that set him apart from his fellows. Events in the poem are thought to have taken place some time in the first half of the first millennium of the Common Era (or CE, formerly known as AD). Upon hearing the sad tale of Heorot, *Beowulf* sails from his native Geatland, in what is now southern Sweden, to Denmark.

Once in Denmark, *Beowulf* makes the acquaintance of the king of the Danes, Hrothgar, whose mighty hall Heorot has been cursed with the attentions of the murderous Grendel: a foul monster from the dawn of time, the spawn of Cain, an enemy of God. *Beowulf*, being a hero, vows to rid Heorot of the beast, and sets about doing just that.

This simple narrative forms the basis of BEOWULF adventures: That a hero seeks out adventure around the modern-day Baltic and North seas, hunting down Monsters causing problems for communities, and slaying them for the good of all.

There are many different translations of the poem from its original Old English. Some are in the public domain, others are newer translations. We heartily recommend those by JRR Tolkien, Seamus Heaney and Maria Dahvana Headley. You'll find more recommended and useful reference works in the bibliography at the back of this book.

## THE GAME

With the scheduling-friendly nature of duet play, we want BEOWULF to be really easy to pick up, put down, and pick up once again. We've created a lot of really cool accessories to enhance the campaign that you will build one-on-one, and we've provided things to do between sessions for both the GM and the Player, in order to build a story, and a world, together.

The structured approach of BEOWULF is intended to remove some of the burden from the GM, and streamline easy play for two players. Rather than struggling to get a group of five to all meet at the same time, and then herd cats to get them to follow an adventure, BEOWULF offers something a little different, which is hopefully a little easier to play in those times where you just want to enjoy some simple adventure with a friend!

## THE HISTORY OF BEOWULF

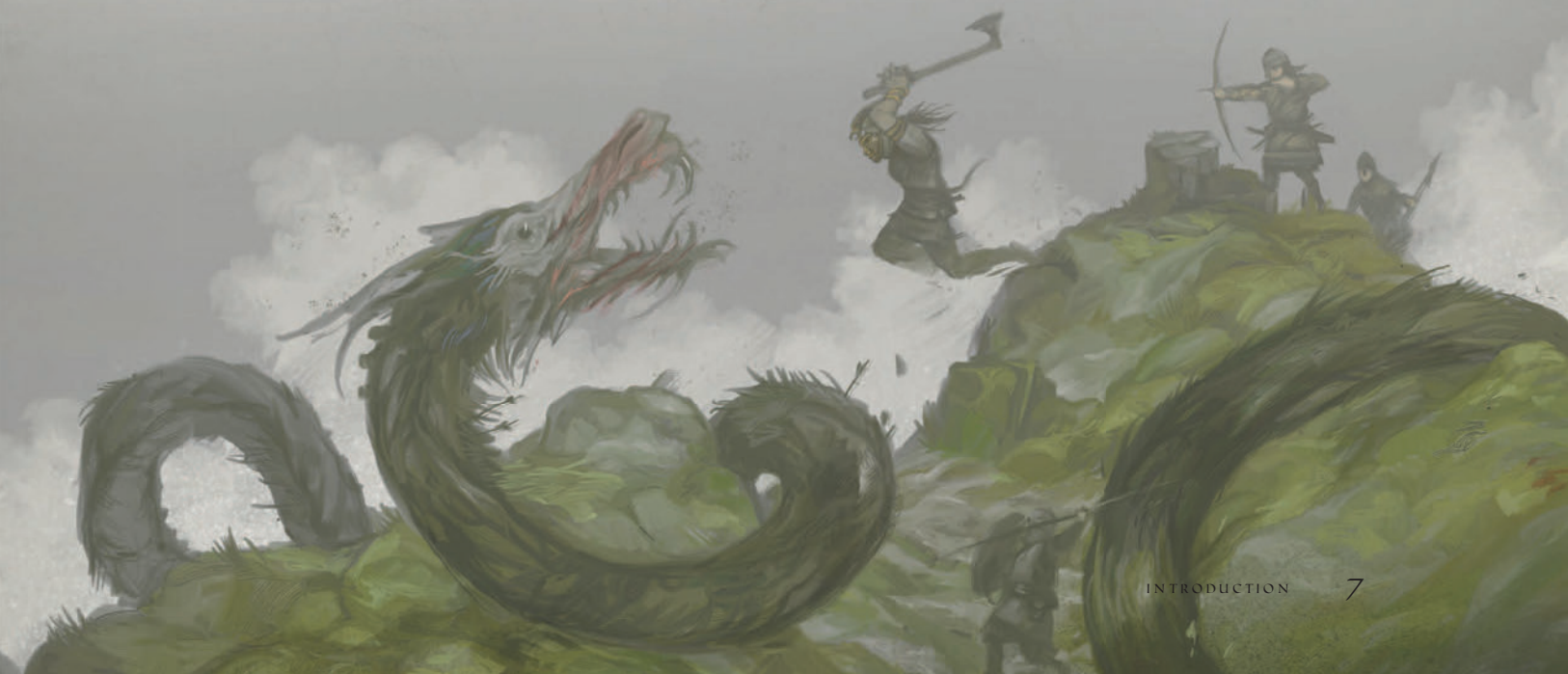
BEOWULF was one of our very first projects at Handiwork Games. As a team, we were looking for something that would stretch our existing skills, while allowing us to do our best work. We also wanted to produce something with an original idea at its heart.

We were all interested in producing something with a "dark ages" feel, and as we trawled through our research material, we kept coming back to Beowulf. It is the original source of so much in fantasy adventure, and the idea of the lone hero really appealed. The idea of a lone hero also gave us a unique goal for the setting. Could we make 5th Edition really sing with just one player?

After a year of work designing the new systems, and testing them out, we released "The Hermit's Sanctuary" a free, full-length introductory adventure for BEOWULF: Age of Heroes. It was nominated for two ENnie awards, and has been downloaded many thousands of times. It's now also available in print. We highly recommend it as a place to get started. Our website at [www.handiwork.games](http://www.handiwork.games) has even more BEOWULF resources and accessories to inspire your games.

Lastly for this introduction, a heartfelt thank you to our backers, who pledged their hard-won hoard to strengthen our sword arm and make BEOWULF: Age of Heroes a reality.

Go now, and set sail for *the Age of Heroes!*



PART ONE  
THE WORLD OF BEOWULF







*A trusted ship- weathered and watertight  
will far carry a brave bench crew  
A wide wave bound world  
Strange lands sipping the sea's edge  
Breakers booming- heralding heroes beaching  
await that noble keel's gravel grinding!  
A thousand whale roads to win renown and riches  
In Angle-land's mead sweet meadows  
The Dane's cold cliff wics  
Or burnished Micklegarth's black sea  
The Ghassanid's glaring dust-dry deserts  
To the blinding bright snow on Upsala's mounds.*

## THE BEOWULF SETTING

### THE AGE OF HEROES

*Then on the strand, with steeds and treasure  
and armor their roomy and ring-dight ship  
was heavily laden: high its mast  
rose over Hrothgar's hoarded gems.*

*A sword to the boat-guard Beowulf gave,  
mounted with gold; on the mead-bench since  
he was better esteemed, that blade possessing,  
heirloom old. — Their ocean-keel boarding,  
they drove through the deep, and Daneland left.*

*A sea-cloth was set, a sail with ropes,  
firm to the mast; the flood-timbers moaned;  
nor did wind over billows that wave-swimmer blow  
across from her course. The craft sped on,  
foam-necked it floated forth o'er the waves,  
keel firm-bound over briny currents,  
till they got them sight of the Geatish cliffs,  
home-known headlands. High the boat,  
stirred by winds, on the strand updove.  
Helpful at haven the harbor-guard stood,  
who long already for loved companions  
by the water had waited and watched afar.*

In days gone by, remembered now only in song and story, the world was occupied by two great seas. Around the edge of this *Whale Road*, were clustered a constellation of tiny kingdoms.

It is a place of myth and memory, of half-remembered places and peoples. Of a thousand meadhalls and a thousand kings and queens sitting upon their treasure-seat, each leading a people for good or ill, scattered about the two great Northern Seas.

Some kingdoms abide close to the bustling sea-borne highway, with vigorous trade and a flow of peoples from all over the world. Others are distant, dangerous, mysterious, mist-shrouded and forgotten, awaiting rediscovery.

In these times, the vast majority of travel is by ship and boat. The land away from the sea is dominated by *The Forest*: an impenetrable, ancient thicket that has never known the bite of an axe, nor a fire that could threaten it — deep and dense and unending, an *Ur-forest*, full of peril and woe from the beginning of time. But the sea is alive with ships, plying their trade, carrying warriors and great heroes from place to place.

Geography in the Age of Heroes is known not by maps but remembered in place names, and the people of the stories that unfold here are ancestors, antecedents, and moral examples.

At the edges of this world a horde of Monsters constantly seek to destroy the world of people. Whether they are the children of Cain, devils from Hell, the spawn of the giants, or ancient

primordial evils, their common aim is destruction, mayhem and murder. Beyond the light of the fire, away from the good cheer of the meadhall, very real evil is lurking, waiting to devour the unwary, the foolish, and those who stray too far from the path. The darkness is alive with malignant menace.

Arrayed against these Monsters are Heroes: individuals of great strength and valour who are able to stand against Monsters. They are prepared to travel beyond hearth-light and safety in order to engage the enemy wherever they might be found: to give battle and overcome the foe by strength of arms, by daring deeds, and by wily wits and bold words.

### THE REAL WORLD

To understand the setting of *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes*, it is worthwhile taking a little bit of time to understand the historical world from which the *Beowulf* poem springs.

We cast a wide net for inspiration — *BEOWULF* is not intended to be a slavishly historical setting. It is an unashamedly fantastical adventure game about heroes and monsters and the mighty tales told about their exploits: just like the poem that inspired it. That to which we want to be faithful is not historical fact, but the *feeling* and *atmosphere* of the *Beowulf* poem. Learning a bit about the people who made that poem, how they lived, how they thought, and their range of experience and belief is clearly helpful.

### THE ANGLO-SAXONS

In the history of our own world, the Anglo-Saxons were a varied group of so-called Germanic peoples, who migrated to the British Isles from around the middle of the fifth century. Their point of origin was northern mainland Europe, what we now call northern Germany and Denmark. Several groups arrived around the same time — the Jutes, the Angles and the Saxons, who together became known as the Anglo-Saxons.



The British Isles were home to a variety of Celtic peoples (a term which is hotly debated, but which is easily recognised and understood) whom, in large part, the Romans had colonised and ruled. Due to troubles elsewhere in the Roman Empire, the Romans began to withdraw from Britain in the latter part of the 4th Century CE.

There is much debate among historians on exactly how and why the people who came to be known as the Anglo-Saxons began to settle in the British Isles. We know that rising sea levels affected the habitability of their homeland, and that there was the potential of new land in which to settle in return for mercenary work in the British Isles.

Their homelands in Northern Europe had never been colonised by the Romans, and they brought a new culture to their new home. One which was neither Celtic nor Roman in nature. The Anglo-Saxons were a highly poetic, artistic people, despite their warrior culture, and they valued different things than their Mediterranean predecessors. They were initially “pagans”, which was a cause of great difficulty to the Christian Romano-British. In later centuries the Saxons famously converted to Christianity, began writing, and building in stone. Initially however, the Anglo-Saxons built no cities, preferring to live in family groups clustered

around communal halls, and worked the land. They did not re-inhabit abandoned Roman London for over a century, having no need or use for it.

They brought with them memories of their ancestors’ culture, religion and way of life, and many centuries later, after the conversion to Christianity, these echoes and memories were written down in the poem Beowulf. The game, BEOWULF: Age of Heroes, aims to enable you to tell stories set in that half-remembered, ancestor-world of the northern seas. It seeks to take full advantage of unreliable narration and half-recalled places with familiar names and lost peoples and fictional monsters remembered as fact. Anywhere from 300 CE to 900 CE is fair game for inspiration, and that’s a very long period, with a lot of different sources to draw on.

The single most important thing to understand about the setting of BEOWULF: Age of Heroes is that everything that happens in your adventures is being related by a fireside story-teller or scop from the Anglo-Saxon world. The story is framed by their knowledge and experience. Not all of it needs to be strictly true, nor historically accurate, and all good stories stretch and weave the facts like strands of iron in a sword blade.

Welcome to the Age of Heroes!

## AN IMPORTANT NOTE

In BEOWULF: Age of Heroes you’re given a series of tools which are designed to help you create an epic saga for your singular Hero. They’re highly focused on reflecting the themes and tones of the epic Beowulf poem and its contemporaries like the Finnesburg Fragment.

But they are also a framework into which you can insert *your own* particular interests and knowledge. If you want to tell a story that’s more like the popular novels and TV shows roughly inspired by this era, then you should do so without any feeling of transgression at all. These rules are firmly intended to facilitate what you want to do, and to free you from a need to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history or literature.

The great strength of the Beowulf poem is that we can all recognise the ingredients — a brave hero, a trusted crew, a voyage across the sea to a beleaguered land, an exchange of hard words with a boastful rival, a fight with a monster, a feast! Another monster! And so on. We can recognise these stories in every culture around the world, and they are core to the human experience. This means you can take inspiration from everywhere!

The setting of BEOWULF: Age of Heroes is a decidedly mythic one. It’s a world both imagined and dimly remembered, full of wonder and mystery. It is not intended to be any kind of accurate simulation of 600 AD in the North and Baltic Seas, and so you shouldn’t feel constrained by a need to “get things right”.

The aim of the setting is to help you get the tone, feel and atmosphere of the great Anglo-Saxon poems. The unfolding world in which your adventures take place *exists to tell those stories*. It provides what is needed to tell the great tale that you’re discovering, rather than being a fixed place that has its own permanence or “canon”. The narrator cannot ever be fully trusted to be true to a modern, scientific notion of geography, time or distance. For that, most pointedly, is not their job.

The setting of BEOWULF is a structure from which you can take flight into your *own* stories. This chapter presents the guiding lights that should help you navigate, and keep the tone of Anglo-Saxon epics. Anything you can bring to it will help make it your own, and we do not judge whether that’s worthy historical knowledge, your favourite historio-mil-sim novels, or just a binge-watch of a TV show about vikings.

ICELAND  
PAPARS

THE GREAT OCEAN

FAROE

SHETLAND

ORKNEY

HARRIS

CAT

SKYE

PICTS

DAL RIATA

FOTLA

CIRGINN

THE NORTH SEA

GAEELS

FIH

GODODDIN

UL NEILL

STRATHCLYDE

BERNICIA

IRELAND

UL AID

CUMBRIA

DEIRA

CONNACHT

MEATH

MANAW RIGGED

NORTHUMBRIA

LINDSEY

MUNSTER

LEINSTER

GWYNEDD

ELMGT

IRISH

THE IRISH SEA

POWYS

WELSH

MERCIA

ANGLIA

DYFED

THE SEVERN SEA

GWENT

WESSEX

ANGLO-SAXONS

SUSSEX

DUMONONNIA

THE SOUTH SEA

ANGLO-SAXONS

SUSSEX

KENT

THE SOUTH SEA

SALIANS

BRETONS

FRANKS

FRANKIA

VISIGOTHS

# THE WHALE ROAD IN THE AGE OF HEROES

A MAP OF PEOPLES AND PLACES  
IN WHICH MANY OF BOTH ARE  
DRAWN FROM CENTURIES OF  
TALES AND WHOSE NAMES AND  
PLACEMENT ARE AT BEST  
UNRELIABLE





FINNMARK

SAMI

NORWAY

NORWEGIANS

THE BOTTOM SEA

FINNALAND

FINNS

SAKSA

HEATHORCAMS

SVEARLAND

SVEAR

SCYLDINGS

WÆGMUNDINGS

GEATLAND

GEATS

WULFINGS

LIVONIANS

LATGALIANS

LAND OF THE BALTS

SELONIANS

JUTELAND

JUTES

ANGLIA

THE ANGLES

DENMARK

DANES

BALTIC SEA

LITHUANIANS

CURONIANS

SKALVIANS

YOTVINGIANS

THE FRISIAN SEA

SAXONS

HUGAS

SAXONY

WENDELS

GIFTHS

PRUSSIANS

HERULS

LANGOBARDS

FRISIA

FRISIANS

HEATHOBARDS

BRONDINGS

POLES

THURINGIANS

WYFINGS

RUGINS

ALAMANNI



GEPIDS

GREUTHUNGS

BURGUNDAS

OSTROGOTHS

A reading list is provided in the appendices at the back of this book to help you learn more about the historical period if you wish to do so. Historical study can teach us a great deal, and help us understand the scope of an Anglo-Saxon story. Due to the lack of written records about this time, a great deal remains mysterious and unknown.

For the purposes of our adventure game we are very happy to provide tools to fill in those gaps with matter of the right mythic tone, even if it diverges from strict history. Indeed, we encourage you to keep one foot in the history, and the other in wild, fantastical, heroic adventure!

## THE WHALE ROAD

At the heart of the world lie the two great seas. One to the East and one to the West. Beyond the Eastern Sea lies impenetrable forest, and trackless, frozen wastes. To the west lie the Isles of Britain and Ireland, known by a hundred different names, and home to a hundred peoples and their kings and queens. Beyond them lie an endless ocean. Who can say what might await a ship brave enough to navigate those trackless waters?

The coasts that frame these two seas are etched by a thousand coves, harbours, inlets, river mouths, towering cliffs and a million beaches of shingle, shale and sand. The land itself is broken into islands beyond counting.

The people who live all around the Whale Road are great shipbuilders, and skilled sailors. Clustered around the edges of the sea are countless ports and harbours and shipyards. It is never

hard to find crew members for a ship, nor for a Hero to find a ship at need, and the people of the Whale Road hold in high regard the ability to ply the tides.

## THE LANDSCAPE

The land around the Whale Road is an epic and heroic one. Doleful crags and heather-topped tors overlook wide misty meres and windswept saltwater lakes. Great fjords and sheer-sided valleys are carved into the rind of the world. Spaces are broad, spreading silent fenlands are without end. Rolling, stream-scored heather moors play home to great boulders abandoned by giants.

In summer, the days do not end, and in winter the night is endless. A brooding melancholy blows across the North.

Set against this mighty landscape, people are very small. Even the boldest human endeavours and great deeds of the mightiest heroes are insignificant when compared to the great bones of the earth. The breath of the world, the endless tears of the rain, the baking sun in the summer months all remind the traveller that they are without consequence, and that the world is huge and without a care for the petty wyrd of human beings.

## MEADHALLS

Cast all across this wide land, like playing pieces flung across a close-woven cloak, are meadhalls. These longhouses are the centres of civic life, places where people communally live, the homes of rulers, and most importantly, they are displays of wealth and power.

## ON MAPS

A good look at a modern day map of the North and Baltic seas is highly recommended for inspiration. The boundless archipelagos of islands that throng these waters are very inspiring. It is rightly called the Mediterranean of the North! If we mentally remove all modern national boundaries, and consider the possibilities of countless fiefdoms, the avenues for adventure are endless!

The people of the Whale Road have no clear idea of geography in the way we do in the modern world. They lack satellites and planes, and indeed accurate means of measuring distance. They navigate by the stars and by lodestones, and with information handed down over generations, knowledge kept safe in place names rather than in bird's eye view maps.

And so it is we can explore a shifting, unreliable geography without fear of contradicting any tyrannical map. The mysterious island fiefdoms in need of a hero's help are always right where they need to be.

The Whale Road is measured less by miles and more by the skill of the sailor, and the craft of the shipwright, and the needle of the sailmaker. A sailor of average skill might cross from one point to another in three days. A famed Hero, deft in the ways of sail and swell, might be able to shave that travel time to just a single day and night. This is something to be encouraged. Heroic voyages are best not measured by modern day means nor modern ideas.



A meadhall is the predecessor to the castle. It is an impressive and defensible building, and home for a king or queen. Almost any settlement of note will be centred around a communal meadhall, where its people gather. Meadhalls range widely in size and luxury, and the measure of a meadhall reflects strongly on both the community and its leader.

The presence of a meadhall at the heart of any settlement is intrinsically tied to the way of life being remembered in the *Beowulf* poem: a settlement without a meadhall of some kind is a sign that it lacks a leader, and therefore it is little more than a farm, or series of farms with scant community or leadership.

In physical form, a meadhall is most often a large rectangular building, with a pitched roof. Sometimes the roof will reach to the ground and be covered in turf, sometimes the carved roof beams are exposed where they reach the ground. Other times the roof is made of wooden shingles, or reeds, or a thatch of straw.

The gable ends usually feature a V of carved heads — entwined beasts or screaming gods, that traditionally keep the household safe.

The foundation is often a half floor of stone walls, with a timber construction resting on top. There is plenty of storage underneath such a raised floor, and poems like the *Finnesburgh Fragment* mention the ‘booming’ of the hall floor, due to this drum-like construction.

Most meadhalls have two sets of doors, one set into each of the longer sides. The poems tell us that these are considered highly

defensible, even when the rest of a hall is on fire, which can seem odd to our modern sensibilities. But they do provide a narrow, defensible killing ground, impassible to a shield wall. Only the bravest warriors would attempt to breach them with a full contingent of defenders inside.

### HOLD THE DOOR!

That “a door” is considered an important defensible feature speaks to the scale of warfare in the Age of Heroes. Most “battles” in this era are what we might consider small-scale skirmishes, with a few dozen warriors on each side. This is a significant feature of the time — a hundred warriors is a large warband, and a ship or two of warriors can accomplish world-changing deeds. The lands around *The Whale Road* are not heavily populated, there is no notion of “countries”, and Kings and Queens rule over small kingdoms, rather than large nations.

The larger the meadhall, the more likely it is to have adjoining rooms, and a need to have pillars supporting the roof. Pillars are often carved and decorated, and the walls hung with tapestries. The wooden joints might be expertly carved and joined, or reinforced with praise-worthy metal fittings.

A large central hearth is used for cooking and heating. Around it are arrayed mead benches, where the members of the household and community sit to eat and socialise. At one end, or perhaps in

the centre of one side of the oval of benches, is a raised area where the ruler of the hall sits on their treasure seat. There is plenty of room to circulate and talk.

A meadhall is home to professional storytellers — scopas — who tell the gathered people entertaining and instructional tales, like the poem *Beowulf*. Feast days are observed in the hall, as well as community meetings, ring-giving, and judicial gatherings.

People beyond the ruler and their immediate family may well sleep in the meadhall on a regular basis. Travellers, merchants, warriors pledged to the ruler, important craftspeople and others may well bed down in the hall rather than using homes of their own.

Scattered around a meadhall might well be found groups of buildings dedicated to its service — places where craftspeople live and work, and where food is made and stored. They are most often rectangular with pitched roofs, although the more ancient style of roundhouse is also still in use.

In contrast to meadhalls, other, lesser buildings tend to be quite simple in construction, with wooden frames and wattle and daub or plank walls under a reed thatched or wooden shingle roof. Indeed, they are not built to last — in history we see Anglo-Saxon settlements slowly moving across the countryside as timber buildings are built anew, rather than old ones being repaired. Wood and space tend to be in plentiful supply, in a sparsely populated landscape. Settlements tend not to be fortified with walls or palisades of stakes: a heathguard and a sturdy hall door is a more-trusted defence.

## KINGS AND QUEENS

A meadhall is traditionally raised at the command of a ruler — a king or a queen, a lord or lady, chieftain, Hero or war chief — or possibly one of their ancestors. What they call themselves is often up to them, and traditions vary. Whatever they are titled, the ruler of a settlement is intrinsically tied to the building, the land, and the health of their people. Being a hall-builder is an important mark of status, and shows a significant generosity to the community.

Similarly, it is very important that a ruler win the affection and loyalty of their people by the giving of gifts, and the ruler of a meadhall is the arbiter of who gets what. This might be a benevolent and kindly rule, enacted with the best interests of the community at heart. A good ruler may simply organise and steer a gracious community. Or it might be a tyrannical reign, where favourites are gifted wealth and privilege, and rule is maintained by the bullying and starving of those outside of favour. Most fall somewhere in between.

Like in all things, the Anglo-Saxons storytellers of *Beowulf* and other similar works have many poetic and euphemistic terms for a ruler — in a land where written language is a new innovation, a

mastery of spoken words is highly significant. And the words for a ruler tell us a lot about the way they are viewed.

Chief among them is “*ring giver*”. The giving of rings — be they arm rings, neck rings, or finger rings, or indeed other kinds of treasure or war gear — falls to the leader of a settlement, and this giving is highly symbolic of the bonds that hold life around the Whale Road together. The throne is similarly referred to as the “treasure seat”, indicating the function of the ruler as a custodian and arbiter of wealth.

And so we have the strong impression that a ruler is one who gives gifts, and those onto whom they bestow their generosity give loyalty and service in return. It is openly a two-way street:

A good king or queen is generous, wise and honest, and as a direct result their people are loyal, happy and healthy, and well looked-after. A bad king or queen is mean, foolish and tells lies, and as a direct result, their people are unhappy and sickly. Indeed the term “poorly”, meaning ill, could be seen to be related to this phenomenon.

If a meadhall has problems, it is very much the duty of the one who sits on the treasure seat to cause those hurts to be mended.

Around the Whale Road, inheritance of power along family lines is not a given. While daughters and sons may well be best placed to acquire the leadership of a settlement, it is the tradition that the strongest rule. So if a rival is able to win the right support by gift-giving, and a display of feats, or simply by brute force, they may take a throne. If this is done with the support of the community, then it is all for the best, and would not be considered an ill-won crown.

This giving of gifts in return for loyalty is a core value of the *BEOWULF* setting, and a great many customs and expectations spring from it. One’s word as bond, death before dishonour, the idea that outliving one’s king or queen in battle is deeply shameful — all of these resounding Anglo-Saxon vales arise from this social glue of gift-giving in return for service, and we see this in the *Beowulf* poem, the Finnsburgh Fragment, the Battle of Maldon and others.

### TITLES FOR RULERS

Bretwalda (a king over kings)  
 King, Queen, Lady, Ring-giver  
 Ealdorman, Elderman, Earl, Elder  
 Chief, chieftain  
 Thegn (the noble servant of a higher king or queen, who might oversee a small kingdom)  
 High Reeve  
 Reeve (a local ruler, under a higher king or queen)



## LOYALTY AND HOSPITALITY

The household of a ruler is honour-bound to respect the gifts they are given by giving good service in return. Loyalty is a highly-prized virtue, and in a dangerous and largely lawless world, it is easy to see why: there isn't an awful lot holding life together. One might observe that the later Anglo-Saxon obsession with written law is a result of worrying about the fragility of society where behaviour is based solely on loyalty and gift-giving.

And so loyalty really matters in the Age of Heroes, and is a consistent moral theme of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

A ruler of any repute will maintain a household of warriors — a hearth guard — providing them with war gear and gifts to ensure their service and bind their loyalty to them. These warriors will live in the meadhall or close by.

Warriors who have taken gifts from a lord are expected to follow him or her to death. Surviving a battle in which one's ruler falls is one of the most shameful things to befall a warrior. While a warrior is in the service of a ruler, they are expected to offer complete loyalty.

Similarly a leader is expected to share their wealth appropriately, and be wise in who they favour.

The tradition of giving gifts in exchange for good behaviour extends beyond the walls of a meadhall. *Hospitality* is a very important virtue, and one which echoes the ring-giving of a ruler. In a world without a dedicated hospitality industry, without inns or hotels, offering hospitality, and respecting its rules is of vital importance.

Giving a stranger shelter and food is the measure of your decency. Accepting hospitality, and respecting the laws of the house are equally important: physically attacking a host or a guest once they have been welcomed to share a hearth is *unthinkable*, outside of the direst provocation.

Reputation matters: being in a position to be generous, and also being able to display wealth, is a display of reputation — not solely for wealth's sake, but because it shows you have *won favour by being a good person*.

## PERSONAL WEALTH

The vast majority of people around the Whale Road display their wealth about their person, in the form of jewellery and decorated goods. While most buildings are little more than large huts, jewelled and enamelled cloak pins and brooches are commonly worn, and can run the gamut of worth from a basic copper pin to a priceless enamelled master-crafted golden brooch. The poorest person might well own a carved wooden or antler comb, made wonderful with interlaced carvings.

Arm rings of precious metals are common, as are neck and finger rings. Belt buckles and strap ends can be highly embellished with fine interlaced and geometric patterns. Jewellery is frequently decorated with animal designs and has its own language of symbolism which varies by location.

Clothing for most people is typically a couple of layered and belted tunics over trousers, which are bound below the knee to keep them from flapping in wet and muddy conditions. Cloaks are commonly worn, fixed with a decorated pin.

In common with most eras in history, women often cover their hair with a cloth covering. Aprons for women are common in domestic settings. Women traditionally wear strings of glass and amber beads between two brooches on their aprons.

Clothes are commonly made of wool, flax and linen, dyed in bright colours, and edged with attractive woven borders.

## WERGELD

In a society where there is no written law, and no centralised municipal authority to enforce it, and where gift giving is the basis of community, and displayed wealth is a symbol of your goodness, a human life has a traditional worth in silver. "Wergeld", literally "man-gold".

This life-price is traditionally paid to the family of anyone who is killed, whether in anger or by accident. Most often this is paid by the killer, or the person deemed responsible for the death, and it is meant to end any likely feud. The price to be paid varies by the social standing of the person who died.

## NO INNS!

In the world of the Whale Road there are no inns to be found — they haven't been invented yet! Meadhalls provide a place for newcomers and travellers to sleep, bringing them right to the heart of the community to both display largesse, but also to keep an eye on them! In places without a meadhall, travellers who observe the laws of hospitality can expect to find a welcome at any hearth, and if they are turned away or treated meanly as a guest? Well that is the beginning of many a tale. It is shameful for a host to be unable to spare food and lodging for the night, and equally shameful for a guest to behave poorly in response to hospitality given.

## MEN AND WOMEN

Under Anglo-Saxon law, free women had the same legal rights as free men. In *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* we make no distinction between men and women characters. Where differences of dress or roles are called out they are purely for thematic, decorative interest and role-playing opportunities. All Heroes are exceptional individuals, doing exceptional things.

Wergeld might also be paid by a ruler to settle a dispute. In a settlement with limited individuals and resources, keeping the peace is a tricky and important business! It is significant to note that by incurring a fine of wergeld an individual is not only being punished by way of the immediate loss of wealth, as we would see a legal fine today. The person paying wergeld is losing part of their future ability to *display wealth*, and *give hospitality*. This marks them out socially as a less-good person.

It is of note that the new faith of the Church is changing local laws, and wergeld is being replaced by capital punishment for murder.

In all of these customs — loyalty, hospitality, ring-giving, personal reputation, mead halls — we see the results of a low-population, agriculturally based, largely pre-literate, warrior society. The roots of these customs, in providing and protecting social order, where little else exists to do it, are worth remembering when playing *BEOWULF*. There aren't a lot of people about, society is agricultural, there are only small amounts of specialisation and division of labour, and so communities all rely on one another to some degree. Social order is not enforced by any dedicated group of police or watch, and authority comes very directly from the support of the people, and if not, it comes directly from strength of arms.

## COMMON PEOPLE

In historical Anglo-Saxon society, especially in late Saxon times, we see complex strata of social classes. In the ancestral Age of Heroes this is of less significance. Most people in the Age of Heroes are simple folk: subsistence farmers living in extended family groups that span three generations, within a day's walk or ride of a mead hall. The head of a poor household probably owns a spear, and might be called to join battle as part of a body of fighting people called a *fyrð*. Most hope to leave battle to warriors who live in and around a mead hall in more direct service of the local ruler, and richer, more powerful farmers who are likely to own more elaborate wargear. To that end they're happy to deliver a portion of their produce to the local chieftain.

A farm or smallholding looks and functions much like a mead hall on a smaller scale. There is a central longhouse where an extended family lives, cooks and socialises. A proportion of the building will be given over to housing animals, which provide additional heat. The head of the household determines what the people living together do, and what they receive in return.

The people who live in a dwelling like this are expected to share the beliefs of their ruler, but they might not do so. Provided they do not openly spread dissent, such differences can be overlooked in the name of the general peace.



## SLAVES AND SLAVERY

Slavery was an aspect of Anglo-Saxon life, although it is not mentioned in the poem *Beowulf*. It is important to make two points around slavery.

Firstly, if the topic of slavery is something you are understandably unhappy with including, then simply ignore it and do not include it. It is not a feature of the *Beowulf* poem, and there is no pressing need for a heroic adventure tale to bother itself with such things. It is not a necessary inclusion for “realism” in a game featuring monsters.

Secondly, if slavery is something you do choose to include, it is important to draw the distinction between the unprecedentedly cruel and racist slavery of the transatlantic slave trade, and Anglo-Saxon slavery. While equivocating on degrees of slavery has clear dangers, in Anglo-Saxon times slavery was not based on what we now call “race” — a concept that would be likely unrecognisable to an Anglo-Saxon. It was also possible for slaves to own possessions and money, and eventually work their way out of slavery.

In lean times, historically, poor families would sell themselves into the state of slavery rather than starve, with the hope they could later buy their freedom, and there existed clear laws on the treatment of slaves, which were much more benevolent than those of the transatlantic slave trade a millennium later. See page 72 for more details.

The rise of the church saw mass-freedom of slaves in Anglo-Saxon England, and the same is true in our fictional *Whale Road*. Upon conversion, the first thing a king or queen is likely to do is to free all the slaves in their kingdom. All of these things might prove useful springboards for a story.

## SCOPS AND SMITHS, POETRY AND IRON

Within society there are some professions which are considered special. Scops are the storytellers, minstrels and poets of the age. They might wander the land, earning their living by telling tales in a new place each night. Or they might be resident at a meadhall. Scops help preserve order with their instructional tales, and they are the bringers of news and relaters of reputations. As such, they enjoy some protections beyond the common laws of hospitality. No ruler of any repute would harm, or allow harm to befall a scop.



Everything that happens in a BEOWULF: Age of Heroes game is considered part of a scop's tale, or even the retelling of the scop's tale. Thus all inconsistencies and deviations from strict history are excused. The GM need not have an encyclopaedic knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history or myth, since the world is a wide one, stories are handed down from every age, and every scop tells the tale in a different way.

Another craftsperson of note is the smith. Smiths delve into the earth and transmute its base bounty into swords, spears and tools of all kinds. They are the source of wealth and power, and provide the physical counterpart to the word-horde of the scop. A smith of skill is held in high prestige, and is vital to the wellbeing of a settlement. A smith may be given privileges and influence not enjoyed by other craftspeople.

## PLACES AND PEOPLES AROUND THE WHALE ROAD

The poem Beowulf mentions several different peoples that live around the Whale Road. We also know of many other peoples living in what is modern-day Europe during this time. This is a messy and fuzzy set of names and places, and the Age of Heroes, with its own fuzzy and messy definition, is free to fully embrace this.

Many countries and peoples listed here enjoy a mythic status, whose precise whereabouts on a modern map is unknown, unreliable, or apparently entirely mobile depending on the tale. Many of their names are related. Kingdoms and people appear and disappear within the time period of the Age of Heroes, and a storyteller would have no issue with this, and might well use the name of a people to identify a time period: *"In the times when the Kingdom of Bernicia ruled the lands that now fall under the auspices of the Kings of Northumbria..."* might well be deployed in the same way as *"a long time ago in a galaxy far far away"*. The heroic tales of BEOWULF: Age of Heroes are not bound by any strict historical definition of time or place.

Those places and peoples further away from the Baltic and North Seas are more mysterious to those who live around The Whale Road, and the Forest which surrounds those northern lands is at once considered impenetrable and impossible to navigate, while people from beyond those places readily appear as a result of trade and travel. Such is the logic of a story.

Each set of peoples listed here would not necessarily recognise themselves by these names, and the idea of nationhood is as yet unknown. There are very few national boundaries or borders — rather areas of influence where a people live or can extend power.

Each people or place listed comprises allied, extended-family groups that make up small kingdoms, that in turn pledge loyalty to a single ruler. In effect they are groupings of broadly allied folk, or those who share a common sense of ancestry. Even within such loosely defined groups there is plenty of room for disharmony and dynastic struggle.

This means that the Gamemaster is fully licensed to create additional peoples with appropriate names for their own tales, and to place peoples wherever they see fit in the loose timeframe of their story. Searching any of these names online provides copious further inspiration.

## MODERN NATIONS: OLD PEOPLES

- **Sweden:** Geats, Scyldings, Svear, Wulfings, Gutes
- **Denmark:** Danes, Jutes, Angles, Saxons, Heruls
- **Norway:** Norwegians
- **Finnland:** Finns, Sami, Saksa
- **The Baltic:** Balts, Greuthungs
- **France and the Low Countries:** Franks, Frisians, Visigoths
- **Germany:** Alamanni, Saxons, Thuringians, Hugas, Heathobards
- **Poland:** Lombards, Bulgards, Hugas, Hunaland
- **Romania, Hungary:** Gepids
- **Spain:** Visigoths
- **Italy:** Burgendas, Heruls
- **Scotland:** Cat, Ce, Circinn, Dal Riata, Fortriu, Fidach, Fotla, Gododdin, Lothian, Northumberland, Pictland, Strathclyde
- **England:** Anglia, Bernicia, Deira, Dumnonnia, Elmet, Essex, Lindsey, Mercia, Kent, Northumberland, Sussex, Wessex, Rheged
- **Ireland:**
  - **Places:** Ailech, Airgialla, Connacht, Leinster, Mide, Osraige, Munster, Thomond and Ulster.
  - **People:** The Uí Néill, (The Descendants of Niall), The Connachta, The Eóganachta (the kingdoms of Munster, Desmond, and Carbery), Scots
- **Wales:** Gwynned, Powys, Dyfed, Glywysing, Ceredigion, Gwent

In the Age of Heroes, many groups who may not have all existed at the same time in history are available to the story, and the storyteller who is relating the Hero's tale might well deliberately use place names that their audience would recognise just to add that bit more veracity to the tall tale. Thoughts about the nature of peoples living around the Whale Road are inconsistent and vary by tale and region.

## GODS AND MONSTERS

If the peoples of the Whale Road didn't have enough troubles, they also have to contend with Monsters: huge, malignant, and apparently ancient creatures that lurk at the fringes of settled areas, always looking to cause mayhem, to eat people, and destroy the middle-world of humanity.

The origin of monsters is a matter for some debate, and sits at the heart of the two vying philosophies of the age: The Old Ways and The Church.

## THE OLD WAYS

The Old Ways says that self-evidently the world of people is doomed, Monsters are unstoppable, the family of gods that live in the upper world are largely fickle and often of dubious character. The Monsters will inevitably destroy everything, or only be

stopped by cataclysmic war: the world is doomed to an endless cycle of conflict, and so the very best you can hope for is to make a mighty end for yourself, and thereby be remembered.

The Old Ways tells us that existence is split into three worlds — the upper-world, the middle-world, and the world-beneath. Human beings, giants, elves and dwarfs all live in the middle-world. The gods live above in the upper-world, and the dead inhabit the world-below. Linking them all is the great world tree. All of these worlds are doomed to an eternal cycle of destruction at the hands of monsters who lurk at the fringes of the world, gnawing at the roots and branches of the world tree, slowly extinguishing life wherever they find it.

The Old Ways are highly traditional, and very much favour the spoken oath and ancient traditions of honour and hospitality as a practical way for good people to behave. In the absence of written language, personal honour is of huge importance.

The Old Ways favour strong ancestral and family connections. They favour a traditional and sustainable way of life that respects a wider natural world and does not put humanity at the centre of existence. Humanity is very much part of a wider tapestry of being, and the gods simply “are”, as are the monsters. And there isn't very much to be done about that.

By far and away the most popular gods of the old ways are Woden, Thunor, and Tir, which is potentially testament to the warrior culture of the first Anglo-Saxons to the British Isles.

The gods do not *care* for humanity as such, and have plenty of problems of their own. They are perpetually at war with the Giants — a villainous folk of primordial trolls, ogres, and hideous monsters.

The Old Gods favour strength, self-determination, loyalty to tradition, and sacrifice. They are quite a fierce bunch, who do not seem to have much time for mortals. The Old Gods do however respect human heroes, or those who struggle against overwhelming odds, and reserve benches in the golden-roofed meadhalls of the afterlife for those who die glorious deaths in battle.

Less heroic individuals can win the favour of the Old Gods by making sacrifices and observing rites and rituals. The Old Gods also provide select humans with the secret knowledge of magic, spells, amulets and talismans, which can be used to alter the world around them. For those who possess the secret knowledge, communing with the Old Gods, or spirits of ancestors can allow divination of the future.

Across the breadth of the Whale Road, the old gods are known by many different, but similar names. They have complex and sometimes contradictory roles, spheres of influence and relationships — indeed sometimes their actual identities appear

to overlap, and their relationships and lives are not bound by a single linear narrative or continuity: they are after all, gods. Finding such things hard to unravel is proof of their divinity. The idea of linear time experienced by human beings might be the result of the warp and weft of their *wyrd* (see below), which does not apply to the gods. They do not have a consistent motivation, appearance, relationships, timelines or identities. And this is greatly compounded by the fact different peoples in different places around the Whale Road know them by different names, and revere them with different rites.

It is highly likely that a human being having otherworldly qualities, like great strength or skill, or experiencing inconsistencies of identity might be considered closer to the gods.

There is great variation in the way in which these gods are perceived by those who revere the Old Ways. Some believe them to be actual beings who can be encountered in this middle-world of men. Others see them more as symbols of different aspects of life, and by calling on the assistance of a god, a worshipper is focusing on that set of notions, hoping to receive inspiration and guidance by virtue of that focus.

Sitting somewhere in between these ideas are those who believe the Old Gods are the mighty ancestors of present day kings, who watch over the world as all ancestors do.

In most places there is no priest class for the Old Ways. Rulers of a kingdom or a household lead worship of the Gods as necessary, presiding over rituals and feast days, and ordering the building of shrines and designating areas as sacred. It is not unknown for special individuals to advise a local ruler in the Old Ways. This might be by dint of their age, or by their unusual or magical nature.

## THE GODS OF THE OLD WAYS

### WODEN/WODAN/WOTAN/ODIN/OTHIN/GODAN

Woden is king of the gods, long-bearded ruler of secret knowledge, poetry and magic. He is the leader of the wild hunt and ancestor of kings.

Woden learned the script of runes by hanging himself from the world tree and impaling himself with a spear. By doing so, Woden travelled to the magical other or under world and won secret knowledge beyond death.

He has one eye, and is usually accompanied by two ravens and two wolves. He carries a staff or spear and is known for travelling widely, riding his eight legged horse, which can travel on land, on water and even into the sky. Because of his wide-ranging travels, Woden is frequently absent and unavailable to both his family and his worshippers.

Woden is the husband of Frigg, and father of Thunor and Tir, and rules the afterlife from his golden *Farhall*, where dead heroes go to feast. He has two identifiable characters — that of the benevolent and wise father, and that of the jealous tyrant, and he routinely swaps between them.

It is not unknown for Woden to demand human sacrifice. His shrines are often closed and mysterious places. Enclosures which only priests may enter, containing rune poles and severed animal heads.



## THUNOR/THOR/DONAR

God of thunder and the sky, fighter of the giants. Thunor is the hammer-wielding god of storms and strength. Thunor is an extremely popular god, with his red hair, and bristling red beard. Riding his goat chariot across the world, Thunor battles giants and monsters to great effect. He is both a prolific lover, with many children to many different mothers, and a fighter, battling any number of monsters.



Thunor is generally more personable than Woden, being interested in many of the same things mortal heroes are invested in — fighting, drinking, riding around in his goat-chariot and making love to as many people as he can manage. Many proponents of the Old Ways wear the hammer symbol of Thunor.

Thunor's shrines are usually stout oak trees or sacred groves of ancient trees, especially those struck by lightning that still live. Offerings of mead and ale are thought to please Thunor. Followers of the Old Ways commonly wear a hammer or axe head amulet in honour of Thunor.

## TIR/TIW/TYR/THYR

The One Handed God of war and victory, Tir is the son of Woden and brother of Thunor. He frequently battles monsters and giants with Thunor, though he is more known for being wise in the ways of battle and wargear than his brother, who is known more for brute strength. Tir's rune is often carved into weapons to make them stronger.

Tir is also the god of assembly and discussion, presumably due to its adversarial nature.

Animal sacrifices are often made to Tir for good fortune in struggles or battle, and shrines to Tir are often placed near springs or rivers, nearby trees being hung with the wargear of fallen enemies.



**FRIGG/FRIGE/FREA/FRI/FRIJA/FREYA**

Goddess of foresight, healing and magic, wife of Woden, Frigg is sometimes revered as the earth itself. Many believe that while Woden discovered runes and magic, Frigg was the one to share them, and she favours women as being more magical than men. Sometimes Freya is a separate goddess of romantic love and sex, sometimes she is considered the same goddess.

Frigg's shrines are often found beside a family hearth, being one of the few examples of "indoor worship", most Old Gods preferring to be recognised under the open sky.

**FREY/FREYR/FRIKKO**

God of fertility, the harvest, and peace, as well as good rulership, and sometimes brother of Freya, Frey rides a great magical boar made by dwarf smiths — the barrow boar. He owns a dwarf-made magic ship, a dwarf-made sword that can fight by itself, and a number of magical horses. Frey is called upon to help with peace and prosperity.

Frey is most often recognised by blood sacrifices in fields. The precise rite being determined by which aspect of Frey is being invoked.

**OTHER GODS**

There are many other gods to be found in the Old Ways, both related to Woden's family, and entirely unrelated and local. Many settlements have either their own versions of the main Old Ways gods, or entirely individual local deities who are related to them, however distantly.

There are an older layer of gods from even older peoples, gods known to predate Woden and his family. These are largely mysterious and frightening to the peoples of the Whale Road.

Each time a Hero sets sail they might well encounter a different version of the Old Ways. There is no centralised authority or organising body with any power to enforce conformity.

The names of the gods vary by kingdom, and how they are worshipped, and the forms their shrines and rituals take varies just as much.

## ON THE GODS OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ANGLO-SAXONS

Describing the old ways based on surviving history is a tricky thing. Our historical sources for Anglo-Saxon pagan religion are *extremely* scant.

We know the Anglo-Saxons are a branch of the Germanic people as are the Norse, and they probably share an ancestor religion. So we can attempt to backwards engineer some Norse mythology. However our written accounts of Norse gods and religion are from historical Christian and Islamic writers who are not especially invested in a thorough investigation of so-called “Pagan” practices. Most of what we know about the Norse gods comes from a Christian Snorri Sturluson in 13th century Iceland. Icelandic Norse paganism in the 13th century is very likely to be quite different to early Anglo-Saxon belief in the 6th century.

We know surprisingly very little of how people worshipped in pre-Christian times, and we are right to be suspicious of the little we do know.

A great deal of conjecture has arisen around the worship of early Germanic, Norse and so-called Celtic gods, particularly following the up-surge of interest in what we might call “folk identities” in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many ideas about what “pagan” people actually *did* as part of their spiritual life stem from that time, rather than any hard historical evidence.

No one is able to say for sure precisely what early religious practice looks like in the first millennium CE. We can import ideas from other places — the shamanic practice of the Sami people is often used in this way, for example. But we have contemporary sources that mark the Sami out as different to those people from further south in the region, and so it is very difficult to be sure if such imports are worthwhile.

Similarly, Sami people are existent today, and their beliefs exist in the present day. While, for most of us, we are less likely to encounter a religious Sami person as we are a religious Christian, we have here used a layer of fictionalisation to separate what we present in this setting from real-world beliefs. Similarly, modern day self-identifying “pagans” hold earnest and real beliefs. We strongly encourage research into the roots of pre-Christian worship, as it is a fascinating topic. A reading list is provided at the end of this book.

## THE CHURCH

The Church is a fairly new religion to the lands of Whale Road, offering the idea that humanity is in fact not doomed to an apocalypse of monsters from which there can be no survival for anyone, other than warriors favoured by the fickle and unknowable gods.

The monsters that plague the human world are the spawn of Cain, cast out by God, and it is the duty of good people to resist and overcome them, with God’s help.

Monsters beset those who lack faith, or who have succumbed to the wiles of the great enemy, but the God of the Book has set an example in the Harrowing of Hell wherein, after his self-sacrifice on a cross of wood, the saviour entered hell and did battle with its demons and devils, not to acquire secret knowledge of magic like Woden, but to bring all people hope of a possible victory over death.

The Church champions literacy, at least for the ruling classes, and encourages contemplation: the written rule of law, and treating all others as of equal worth, are new ideas. The Church also promises a personal relationship with a benevolent creator God who hears prayers and assists the weak, provided they are faithful. Heroes are ordained by the God of the Book to help others.

The Church stands against animal and human sacrifice, and against human slavery.

The Church of the Book also provides a network of churches, abbeys and monasteries which provide help to the needy, as well as teaching to those who are willing to learn. Through the power of literacy they are able to organise over long distances, and promote the rule of consistently applied law, custom, and peace between kingdoms that recognise the church.

In the eyes of the followers of the Church, the accompanying mercantile and military benefits very directly demonstrate its truth and value.

## PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

In the Age of Heroes, the structure of the early Church is not set in stone, figuratively or literally, and is largely at the service of the tale. There are certainly priests, monks, nuns, and they operate from a network of churches, monasteries, and abbeys. These are all relatively new institutions, and many variations are found around the Whale Road.

In some places in Gwynedd, for example, Followers of the Church can be found living in common, sharing all material possessions, and referring to all the members of their community as “saints”. In contrast, in the extreme East of the Whale Road, there are few established Church buildings, and the Church is composed solely of dedicated emissaries of the church attempting to spread their message.



## A NOTE ON CHRISTIANITY

You may be alarmed by our free and easy inclusion of Christianity in a roleplaying game: modern-day faiths these days are points of contention or a subject best avoided at social gatherings. Christianity in the 21st century can be a controversial topic for many people.

Clearly, if we are to deal with the topics of the Beowulf poem then it would be wrong to simply ignore it for being controversial, some 1500 years later. The poem has a clear Christian aspect. So it is that within this setting, whenever we talk of “the Church” or “the faith of the Book”, terms deliberately employed to put in a little bit of distance, since we are referring to a largely fictional derivation of early Christianity.

It is worth noting however, that in the earlier parts of the first millennium, what was called Christianity would be almost unrecognisable to modern-day Christians. The very concept of there being a single Christian god of three indivisible parts was a matter of discussion. Whether Jesus Christ was actually an incarnation of the Christian God or not, was also yet to be decided, and this was a hotly debated topic in the early church — historically, Christianity came very close to having two gods. The bible was yet to settle into its current form, and King James was a *thousand years* away in the future. The bible you may be thinking of simply does not exist, and in the Heliand, the surviving Anglo-Saxon gospels, if we squint we might see some rather uncanny parallels between God and Christ and Odin and Thor!

In history, there are very good reasons why Christianity spread and caught on. They’re likely to be a mix of the influence of the rich and powerful Roman church, which in turn influences the powerful nature of the Frankish Empire.

Christianity appears to enter the Anglo-Saxon world via alliances with the powerful Franks in mainland Europe. The advantages of this original “European Union” in terms of trade and military support are hard to ignore, and one had to be a Christian to join that club.

Christianity also promoted literacy among the ruling class, which is clearly a very powerful and worthy tool. The insular (or “celtic”) church in the north and west of the British Isles consistently made efforts to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and with their centres of book-making they could be seen to embody the idea of literacy as a virtue.

Christianity also outlawed animal sacrifice and had prohibitions on human slavery. These factors, alongside the hope of personal redemption proved to be a powerful force in the first millennium of the Common Era.

It is also significant that Christianity was not the dominant, nor established faith during the fuzzy “ancestor” period in which our stories are set, and that can be difficult to grasp when we are so used to a particular faith representing the establishment. Early Christianity was an in-coming religion, and a radical force for change in terms of challenging the long-held conservative ‘paganism’ of the British Isles.

If you wish to project *contemporary* Christianity, with 1500 years of anachronism, back into sometime around 500CE then you’re welcome to do so in your own games, but that is resoundingly not the intention of BEOWULF: Age of Heroes. Reading and research into the early Christian church of the Anglo-Saxons is a truly fascinating subject, and one we highly recommend pursuing.

## CONFLICTS OF FAITH

In the Age of Heroes, the Old Ways are just that — old. They’re well-established and commonly found all around the seas that comprise the Whale Road. The new faith of the Book is in its infancy, but has taken root in many of the kingdoms.

The Age of Heroes represents a mindful phase of religious differences — in the poem Beowulf we see these two philosophies contrasted and engaged in a conflict of conscience. While there are those who are strongly committed to their given faith, conversion happens in both directions, and they are a matter of conscience, and do not often occur at sword point.

Great violence in the name of religion comes later in the historical timeline — where faiths have settled into more organised religions capable of representing powerful material interests, and religious beliefs become banners for groups to rally around and weaponise. The miserable and shameful idea of organised religious genocide is yet to arrive in The Whale Road, largely for material reasons.

And so The Age of Heroes holds the perhaps idealised view that these different philosophies existed concurrently and largely peacefully — although forceful and dramatic discussion of philosophy doubtless occurs in the name of great stories.

In general terms, and despite exceptions where stories demand it, the already polytheistic believers in the Old Ways do not find the idea of additional gods frightening or threatening as such — the God of the Book is very likely The Allfather in another of his guises. They may find the practices of the Church odd, or nonsensical, but then they may find the shrines in the next kingdom down the coast odd or nonsensical too, since there is no centralised, organised, international “pagan” faith.

The Church does not have sufficient established power to exert violent force, and at this stage in its development we deem it to be entirely a spiritual movement. It functions in a peaceful phase of conversion through spreading its message of hope and personal redemption in contrast to the doom-laden beliefs of the Old Ways. Reading and writing are of clear benefit to rulers, and an end to slavery benefits anyone at risk of being taken as a slave, or indeed anyone who already is a slave.

As in history, people will be expected and considered to hold the same faith as their ruler. In practice many do not, and many common folk pragmatically mix the new ways of the Church with the Old Ways, either seeing no difference between them, or hedging their bets and gaining the benefits of both.

## WYRD

A deeply held belief in the Age of Heroes, common to all, is that of *wyrd*. A person’s *wyrd* is their destiny, fate or doom. This belief that everyone has a destiny is held in common among both followers of the Old Ways and The Church. The notion of *wyrd* sits just as happily with the idea of the Old Gods’ Wyrd Sisters, who weave the pattern of each life on their great loom at the foot of the world tree, as it does with “the will of God” for the new faith.

*Wyrd* is a somewhat complex idea for us modern people. It is not as simple as a preordained future. It’s a mixture of unfolding events, and a force which is something akin to karma, but which depends on courage rather than good deeds.

This is a very important concept to the people of the Whale Road, and it is core to their understanding of the world and life. Everyone has a fate, or doom, but this can be understood and influenced. Attempting to ascertain what that is, and change it, can be powerful motivations for Heroes.

*Wyrd* is inextricably entangled with the idea of the Hero. The special individual, chosen by fate to achieve great things. It is also very strongly linked to a mythical and poetic Northern melancholy, and sense of inevitable doom, which is an important feature of both *Beowulf* the poem and *BEOWULF* the game setting.

A belief in *wyrd* means that divination is very significant in the lives of people around the Whale Road. Omens and portents can be found all around, if one only knows how to read them. Portentous predictions of the future might spring unbidden into the minds of those sensitive to them, or might be read in animal entrails, or the flight of birds. The drawing of rune stones, or the shaking of sticks can also be used to divine the future.

Women are thought to be better at divination and seeing the future than men, and the word *wyrd* in Old Germanic is a feminine noun. Wise women are common to both the Church and the Old Ways, and there’s a clear continuity between the two. A ruler might consult the omens with a priestess of Freya, or might travel to an Abbey to consult with the nuns there on courses of action.

## FAITH IN GAME TERMS

Every aspect of the setting in *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* is there to further enrich game play. We want an Old Ways-aligned Hero to be able to parlay with a Christian Queen. Or have Followers who represent a mixture of philosophies. For the single reason that that makes for better, richer stories, like *Beowulf*.

We have no interest in judging which alignment is more right, more sympathetic, or better, and in any part of this book where that is apparent is our failing to communicate. These faiths simply exist, as they do in the *Beowulf* poem, and different people earnestly believe different things.

A different setting might deploy deeper, more aggressive conflicts, and judge one “side” to be more right or wrong

than another. That isn’t necessary or helpful for the Age of Heroes, where religious differences are a backdrop to the gleeful, monster-slaying adventure we read of in the *Beowulf* poem.

One great advantage of duet play is that the campaign can centre on a single character, and the people they meet, and the conflicts arising can be focused on their singular world view, and whether those interactions challenge it, or reinforce it. Play doesn’t need to grind to a halt as a group of player characters debate the issues of the day!

The most clearly committed religious person in the story is usually the storyteller themselves — which in our case is the Player of the Hero, who decides their course of action.



## THE WIDER WORLD

There is a world beyond the Whale Road, although our stories do not focus specifically on it. Anything or anyone coming from beyond the Whale Road is seen through the northern European lens of the story teller.

Historically, there is international trade in the first millennium CE, with groups like the Rahadanites, and traders from Constantinople and Rome travelling great distances, from the Western reaches of Europe to China. Gold flows up from Africa into what is modern day Spain. Baltic Amber and Frankish swords are sought after the world over. Modern historians tell us that there is much more movement of people, goods and ideas than we once believed to be the case.

The North of Europe at this time is however something of a backwater, in the great tale of history. But that doesn't mean the people were any less complex, the art any less amazing,

the music less accomplished, the scenery more mundane, or the food less tasty. Civilisation, science, literature and art that we inherited in our modern Western World might well be occurring in Constantinople and Baghdad. But *adventure* and *Monsters* are happening in the North!

In *BEOWULF: Age of Heroes* our stories are from the "ancestor time" and are indeed *stories*. That means that there is no reason not to see glimpses of that wider world. A dark-skinned trader from the south, or a wandering hero poet from Baghdad are completely reasonable and exciting inclusions, and there's simply no reason not to include people from the wider world in your stories. No truly great story deals with average numbers, average people or boring conformity with assumed facts. If it is amazing or wonderful, heroic or epic, it belongs in the Age of Heroes.



## NEW RULES FOR BEOWULF: AGE OF HEROES

This section introduces the new 5e rules that accompany, and are intertwined with, the BEOWULF setting. It is intended to provide both an introduction now and reference section for later.

These rules have been specially designed to help you create stories that evoke the feeling of mythic adventures in the ancestral Anglo-Saxon world for just one Player and one GM, while layering onto the 5e rules set you already know.

### OF HEROES

#### THE HERO CLASS

BEOWULF is centred around the Hero class, created specifically for this setting. The Hero class features six subclasses, each of which are centred around an ability score.

There are no so-called “races” in the world of BEOWULF: all Heroes are human beings. The benefits gained from a character’s heritage in the regular 5e rules are here folded into their background. During character creation simply skip the “race” selection step.

The full details of the Hero Class are on page 48.

#### ALIGNMENT AROUND THE WHALE ROAD

Heroes are assumed to be largely “good” in nature, and driven to help those in need of help. Or, at the very least, they are driven to accidentally do good by fighting Monsters. Rather than choosing a traditional alignment, Heroes decide whether they follow the Old Ways of the traditional gods like Woden, Thunor and Tir, or if they follow the newer teachings of the Church. Some Heroes remain decidedly on the fence, picking to follow neither, or both (Neutral). Traditional alignment from 5e does not play a part in BEOWULF: Age of Heroes.

#### WYRD

*Wyrd* is a person’s fate, doom or destiny. Heroes have a very strong sense of *wyrd*, and thereby gain the ability to access the advantages of being singled out by the Old Gods, the will of the God of the Church, or simply by luck.

Due to the influence of their fated destiny, a Hero can use an alignment die. The die used is dependent on the Hero’s alignment.

#### USING THE ALIGNMENT DIE

The alignment die is part of having a heroic *wyrd*. Whenever a Hero makes a roll with advantage, they may chose one of the dice they are about to roll to be representative of their alignment — be it the will of the Old Gods, a respect of tradition, a divine omen, or a part of the God of the Book’s divine plan.

If that die is then selected to be the result of the roll, then the Hero gains inspiration, whether the roll succeeds or not. They might take a loss in the short term on a failed roll, but are rewarded with inspiration by their *Wyrd*, or fate. It is helpful to roll d20s of different colours to make identification that much easier.

There is no limit to the number of times a Player may use an alignment die.

**Alignment Die.** *Before you roll with advantage, choose one of the d20s to be your alignment die. If you select that die as the result you gain inspiration.*

#### FOLLOWERS

By virtue of being Heroes, player-characters enjoy the company of a number of *Followers*. Followers are a new kind of non-player character who are considered to be in the company of the Hero, unless otherwise directed or stated.

Followers step in and out of the limelight as required, and otherwise just appear in the background, without needing much attention.

Followers have a number of features called gifts which can be deployed by the Player. You can read about Followers in more detail on page 82.

## SHIPS

Every Hero begins their life of adventure with the ship and crew needed to navigate the Whale Road. Heroes also always have access to a replacement ship should theirs be lost. There is always a story-based explanation for where a new ship comes from, whether it is a gift from a local ruler, or won from pirates, or an abstraction of hitching a lift to a friendly harbour and there being gifted a ship by a local personage of importance.

A Hero can always find a ship, or do what is necessary to return to the state of owning a ship. Even if it takes a little time and involves a little bit of story to get there.

Ships enjoy their own set of new rules. You can find them on page 74.

## THE SHIP'S CREW

The crew of a Hero's ship are considered even further into the background than Followers. They have their own special rules on page 74.

## GIFTS AND BURDENS FOR SHIPS AND OTHER ITEMS

Uniquely in BEOWULF, NPCs and items have or can gain *gifts* and *burdens*. Gifts make items and NPCs stronger or more powerful, while burdens make items or NPCs weaker or less

powerful. Ships, swords, Followers can all enjoy both gifts and burdens. These are collectively referred to as "tags". Sometimes tags are called out in adventures to allow special new options to be explored.

## EQUIPMENT AND WARGEAR

BEOWULF: Age of Heroes uses a unique equipment list to reflect the kinds of weapons, armour and gear found in this setting.

Weapons and equipment also gain some new inherent properties by virtue of this being a setting aimed primarily at duet play. With one Player, there is more time to consider options without boring anyone else. With a very strong setting focus, there are special rules designed to reflect the special kinds of fighting encountered in the Age of Heroes.

Shields and helmets are more useful than in regular 5e games, and some weapons possess extra properties to circumvent shields and helmets. Armour types in BEOWULF are more limited in type, but a little more varied within those types: heroes wear a lot of mail.

You can read more about new inherent properties, gifts and burdens for wargear on page 68.

## SPEARS ARE ALWAYS AVAILABLE

In the Age of Heroes, a Hero can *always* find a spear. Whether a Follower passes one to the Hero, whether there's one in the hold of the ship, or a freshly encountered NPC is prepared to make a gift of a spear, a Hero can always lay hands on this signature weapon of the age.

Rather than make the Player tortuously explain how they acquire a weapon if needed, we simply state a spear is always available.



## OF ADVENTURE

### THE PORTENT

The *portent* is a piece of poetry randomly created at the beginning of an adventure. It might represent the reading of omens, a message from God or the gods. It might be a snatch of a song overheard by the Hero, or the prophesy of a wise member of the ship's crew. The delivery of the portent can take many forms.

The portent is created by the Player rolling dice, and the results create a line of verse as well as stocking the inspiration pool (see below). The GM also uses the results to generate some encounters for the voyage the Hero inevitably undertakes.

### THE INSPIRATION POOL

The *inspiration pool* is a unique addition to the 5e rule set. Inspiration tokens are allotted to three different groups, which can be accessed during the adventure in different ways. This can make the adventure a little easier (and more decidedly heroic) for the Player, or a little more challenging if things don't go their way.

The three different groups within the inspiration pool are:

- **The Hero pool**, which the Player can access when they need some inspiration. In order to gain inspiration from the Hero pool, the Player must in some way link the current events to the text of the portent.
- **The Follower pool** can be used to give Followers the benefit of inspiration. In order to gain inspiration from the Follower pool, the Player must in some way link the current events to the text of the portent.
- **The Monster pool** is for the GM to use. In order to gain inspiration from the Monster pool, the GM must in some way link the current events to the text of the portent.

A Hero or Follower or Monster can only have inspiration or not have it: inspiration in BEOWULF works the same as it does in the core 5e rules. Inspiration cannot be stacked.

A Player *can* draw an inspiration token from the pool and save it for later use, provided they can link events to the content of the portent.

The Inspiration Pool is not restocked during an adventure, and once spent, inspiration tokens from the Pool are put to one side. They do not return to the pool.

You can read more about the Inspiration Pool on page 97.

### VOYAGES

Every adventure in the Age of Heroes begins with a sea voyage. The setting is made up of settlements flung far and wide around the Whale Road, and so a journey by ship is almost always necessary. The Voyage rules provide some brief encounters to begin the adventure, and get things started. They are also intended to interact with Followers more than the Hero, emulating the kinds of episodes we see in epic stories and sagas of sea voyages. Voyages at sea are not intended to be a main focus of BEOWULF adventures, but these rules provide a little thematic colour and set up the manner in which the Hero arrives.

### SOCIAL STAT BLOCK

BEOWULF introduces the idea of *foreground* NPCs who use a special stat block. This stat block formally sets out their motivations, what they know about the mystery of the Monster, and structures the way in which the Hero can access their favour or displeasure.

The purpose of the social stat block is to aid the GM in the structuring an investigation into the nature of the Monster and how it can be defeated. Using this option allows for webs of interconnected NPCs to be built up relatively simply and consistently.

You can read more about the social stat block on page 111.

### THE DEFEATED CONDITION

In the Age of Heroes not all adversaries need to be slain in order to overcome them. While hit points are intended to be something of an abstraction and, just as in the core 5e rules, reaching zero hit points does not necessarily mean death, BEOWULF takes that a little further with the *defeated* condition. This is intended to save the singular Player from protracted combats, to add some variety to battles, to reflect the themes of the setting where skirmishes are not necessarily fought to the death, and to prevent the goodly Hero from having to murder everyone who crosses their path with ill-intent.

Most creatures in BEOWULF have a criteria in their stat block under which they gain the defeated condition. While subject to the defeated condition a creature may not attack. Such a creature is no longer a threat to anyone, and will seek to act in self preservation, rather than aggressively.

Examples of criteria to gain the defeated condition:

- When a friendly creature within sight is wounded this creature becomes defeated.
- When this creature's shield is broken it becomes defeated.
- When this creature reaches half of its maximum hit points it becomes defeated.
- When half of this creature's allies are killed it becomes defeated.
- When this creature is in sunlight it becomes defeated.
- When this creature is damaged by fire it becomes defeated.

Creatures may respond differently to being defeated, and how they do so is up to the adventure and the GM. Once subject to the defeated condition a creature may:

- have its fighting spirit broken and will immediately attempt to flee, never to be seen again
- surrender to the creature who inflicted the defeated condition
- become doomed to die from wounds, slinking away never to be seen again
- be in some way disarmed, or transformed
- become vulnerable to suggestion or command by a Hero
- be permanently pinned, imprisoned or immobilised
- become harmless in some other way the GM invents to fit the circumstances

As a rule of thumb, the majority of mundane adversaries will simply flee or surrender when defeated. It is important to note that when subject to the defeated condition, the creature will respond in good faith, and is always genuinely defeated. This is suited to the kind of mythic, saga-logic of Beowulf the poem and BEOWULF the game. While a wily creature may use the *appearance of being defeated* as a trick, no creature should ever break the rules of the actual defeated condition in order to trick the Hero. Defeated is defeated.

## MONSTERS AND MONSTERS

BEOWULF introduces the concept of the capital-M *Monster*. A Monster is the “big bad”, the climactic adversary of an adventure, and the focus of a Hero's quest. These Monsters enjoy some slightly different concepts than the average adversary.

You can read more about adversaries and Monsters on page 181.

## UNDEFEATABLE

*Undefeatable* is a special trait possessed by some creatures. It is generally reserved for capital-M Monsters. Seeking the method by which this trait might be removed is frequently the core task at the heart of a BEOWULF adventure.

**Undefeatable.** *This creature is immune to the defeated condition. When an undefeatable creature takes damage from any source it only takes 1 point of damage.*

## ACHIEVEMENT XP

BEOWULF offers an optional advancement system in addition to those found in the core 5e rules. *Achievement XP* offers a list of achievements within a scenario. Once a certain number of these achievements have been unlocked, the Hero levels up. This allows the GM to set both heroic deeds that count towards advancement, alongside more thematic or tonal rewards, as well as providing the potential for special achievements and discoveries outside of the usual XP awards.

You can read more about Achievement XP on page 130.

## TREASURE

Treasure in BEOWULF is measured on pounds of silver (£). Most treasure is comprised of decorative goods like arm rings, neck rings, enamelled cloak pins, precious drinking vessels and the like. Coins also exist, and many communities rely on barter. For convenience, treasure and prices are rated in pounds of silver. Precisely what comprises those pounds of silver is often up to the GM and the Player to narrate.

## JOURNALING

Followers also introduce a unique new feature of BEOWULF: Age of Heroes: downtime player journaling. Between sessions, the Player may choose to write a story of the exploits of their chosen Follower, and thereby develop that Follower's abilities and deepen their character. So while the GM creates the next adventure, the Player also has an active role to play.

You can find out more about downtime journals and journaling on page 134.

PART TWO  
CREATING A HERO







*A wonder of wordhoard - stood in high prow'd splendour  
A raven crested royal helm broods over a noble brow  
A headland of swords, honed spear and seax  
Blades all eager for battles baying  
She bore a a brynne 'gainst the blizzard of swords  
A wolf in the sheepfold of fearful foe-men!*





## CHARACTER CREATION

*Beowulf spake, — his breastplate gleamed,  
war-net woven by wit of the smith:—  
“Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac’s I,  
kinsman and follower. Fame a plenty  
have I gained in youth! These Grendel-deeds  
I heard in my home-land heralded clear.  
Seafarers say how stands this hall,  
of buildings best, for your band of thanes  
empty and idle, when evening sun  
in the harbor of heaven is hidden away.  
So my vassals advised me well, —  
brave and wise, the best of men, —  
O sovran Hrothgar, to seek thee here,  
for my nerve and my might they knew full well.  
Themselves had seen me from slaughter come  
blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound,  
and that wild brood worsted. I the waves I slew  
Nicors by night, in need and peril  
avenging the Weders, whose woe they sought, —  
crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,  
monster cruel, be mine to quell  
in single battle!*

Creating a Hero for BEOWULF: Age of Heroes follows most of the standard procedures for making a 5e character, with just a few differences:

- First, all Heroes are human. You’ll choose a background and a quirk along with your basic values from this section.
- Your character will be of the Hero class. You’ll select your heroic tale at 1st level.
- Third, as part of making your character, you will make some choices about your equipment and your ship.
- Fourth, each Hero is entitled to a feat that they can select at 1st level. You must meet the prerequisites for that feat.

## OPTIONAL RULES

We end this chapter with some additional rules if you want to use BEOWULF with more than one player.



## THE PEOPLES OF BEOWULF

The Heroes of BEOWULF are each unique, exceptional individuals. They may be paragons of their homeland, or have defied their people in order to seek adventure. Use the following rules to create your Hero.

**Age.** Most Heroes begin their career as young adults, often held to be the middle teens (15 or 16), and are ready to step into the world.

**Alignment.** Some Heroes are steeped in The Old Ways, some are fully converted to The Church, others are Neutral and try to avoid an official answer.

**Size.** Almost all Heroes are Medium size.


**Speed.** Heroes have a walking speed of 30.

**Ability Scores.** Improve one of your ability scores by 2 and then choose any other ability score and increase it by 1.

**Feats.** Choose one feat that you meet the prerequisites for from the list on page 77.

**Languages.** You speak the language of your homeland and know some of the Trader’s Tongue, an argot used among those who sail the Baltic and North Seas.

**Quirks.** In order to make your Hero complete, choose or roll for one of the individual quirks listed opposite.


 ID12 | QUIRKS

1	<b>Brave.</b> You have advantage on saving throws against being frightened.
2	<b>Determined.</b> You have advantage on saving throws against being stunned.
3	<b>Fey Ancestry.</b> You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put you to sleep.
4	<b>Forge Born.</b> You are resistant to fire damage.
5	<b>Giantcunning.</b> Whenever you make an Intelligence (Legends) check related to the works of the giants, you are considered proficient in Legends and add double your normal proficiency bonus to the check, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.
6	<b>Lucky.</b> When you roll a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check or saving throw, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll.
7	<b>Nightvision.</b> You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light.
8	<b>Nimble.</b> You can move through the space of a creature that is of a larger size than you.
9	<b>Enduring.</b> When you take damage, you can choose to make a Constitution saving throw with the damage total as the DC. On a success, you take only half of the damage. You can only use this feature once per long rest.
10	<b>Resilient.</b> You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.
11	<b>Stealthy.</b> You can attempt to hide even when obscured by a creature that is at least one size larger than you.
12	<b>Winter Walker.</b> You are resistant to cold damage.



## BACKGROUND

Choose one of the following:

### ADRIFT

You have no clear memories of your past, at least up to a certain point. You might have suffered an accident or been wounded in battle. No matter the cause, your personal history is currently a mystery to you.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Insight, Perception

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** one of the following: a book in a language you can't read, an engraving of a person or group of people that you don't remember, a musical instrument or set of tools that you don't remember how to use.

### FEATURE: FAMILIAR FACES

Once per adventure, you can spend inspiration and select a non-player character. That character knows something of your Hero, though it may be difficult to learn that information if the NPC is hostile or indifferent to the Hero. If it requires effort to learn something from the character, the Hero receives either an Advancement award or Meeting XP for their level (see page 134) for successfully revealing it. If the character is friendly, then they should provide assistance to the Hero during at least one scene in the adventure.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Characters that are Adrift have gaps in their memory and might either be excited or deeply disturbed by whatever they can learn of their past.

IDS	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I am easily frustrated by my memory loss and am often angry without a clear reason.
2	I greet each day as a new chance, because I remember that I was given a chance to start again.
3	I often feel a great sense of loss, made even stronger by the fact that I don't know exactly what I am mourning.
4	I try to be friendly to everyone. Since I don't know how I treated people before, I figure it's always better to be nice.
5	I never start a conversation and always try to listen carefully, trying to draw out clues from what is said.
6	I don't like to sleep, since I see people and places in my dreams that I don't recognise.
7	I'm certain that people are always talking about me behind my back and I find it hard to hide that frustration sometimes.
8	I am excited to visit new places, because there's a chance that I might one day find my home.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Truth.</b> I can't remember my past, so my only hope is honesty.
2	<b>Memory.</b> I desperately chase after anything that might restore my mind.
3	<b>Caution.</b> I don't know who you are and I barely know who I am.
4	<b>Friendship.</b> I know what it is like to lose everything, so I cling to those who are currently in my life.
5	<b>Uncertainty.</b> I like to be unpredictable, because then other people might understand how I often feel.
6	<b>Patience.</b> I am willing to wait and watch, rather than open my mouth and speak in error.

ID6	BOND
1	I have one memory, something that I don't quite understand. But if I ever had a chance to learn more, I would do anything to pursue it.
2	There is one person who was the first person I met when I awoke. I would do anything to keep them safe.
3	Worrying about the past is useless. I look forward to the promise of tomorrow.
4	I need my ship. Without the ability to reach new lands, my quest is hopeless.
5	I want to become famous, so that I can share my story and perhaps be recognised.
6	I look forward to my dreams, because I don't feel lost then.

ID6	FLAW
1	I am frightened of learning more about my past. Sometimes I run away from knowledge instead of towards it.
2	If you make me believe that you know about my past, I will believe almost anything that you say.
3	I consider myself unknowable — all I have is a mask that I wear to others and there is nothing underneath.
4	I have no confidence in myself, since I have no idea what I can do.
5	I have no blood relations, no past and no future.
6	I sometimes lean on my memory loss as a crutch and am secretly afraid of learning my past.



## AVENGER

Only the most foolish and those soft people of overgrown meadhalls say that there are no monsters in the world. But you never doubted and never will — such a monster killed your family. You might have hidden from the monster or been absent because of some errand, but it is certain that only chance allowed you to live. You have sworn an oath — you will destroy the monster that slew your kin.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Nature, Survival

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** an heirloom of those that you lost.

### FEATURE: POWER IN SORROW

Your grief does provide one benefit to you and that is that you will not relent until you have fulfilled your oath. Once per long rest, when you are reduced to 0 hit points you can use this feature to restore 1 hit point.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Avengers are often focused on the quest, sometimes to the exclusion of other goals.

IDS	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	It is better to live each day to the fullest, for one may die at any time. Caution and patience are for cowards and weaklings.
2	Ignorance and inattention slew my family, more than any monster's claws. I strive to always be aware of my surroundings.
3	A sin in pursuit of vengeance is no sin at all.
4	I answer to no worldly power, because my quest is beyond such trifles.
5	Those who I loved died alone and helpless. I surround myself with friends and lackeys so that I will not be like them.
6	I complete any task I am given quickly, for I may meet my end at any time.
7	I must always be ready in body and mind to gain retribution for my family.
8	Each morning is a new opportunity for justice; each sunset a failure.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>An Eye for an Eye.</b> All of my current adventuring is but preparation for the day when I will hunt my family's killer. I plan to exact a precise revenge upon the monster, cut by cut and pain by pain.
2	<b>Saviour of Others.</b> While I will destroy the monster that slew my family, it will not return them to life. But if I can save others, at least I will spare them my pain.
3	<b>Determination.</b> I will allow nothing to get in the way of me getting my revenge.
4	<b>Dispassionate.</b> I cannot allow my feelings to cloud my judgement and prevent me from doing what must be done.
5	<b>Practised.</b> I must be ready and able to deliver vengeance at any time and by any means at hand.
6	<b>Sorrow is My Burden.</b> It is better for me to experience more pain and loss because I am used to it.

ID6	BOND
1	I will make sure that my friends are witness to my triumph or ultimate failure.
2	I am the only one who can complete this mission.
3	I have a reminder of my destroyed family, if I ever lost it I would become aimless.
4	I have given my solemn word to complete my mission and will take no other oaths until it is complete.
5	I look forward to the day when the monster that haunts my dreams is slain because I will be free then.
6	I feel a kinship to the monster I hunt; neither of us belong to civilisation.

ID6	FLAW
1	Whenever I hear a rumour of the monster that killed my family, I must investigate, even if it means disrupting my current mission.
2	I secretly fear finding my family's slayer, for if I am victorious I will have no reason to live.
3	I am certain that I will die like the rest of my family.
4	I am obsessed with learning about all manner of monsters.
5	I cannot show fear, even when retreat would be the wisest course of action.
6	Any weapon that breaks or any Follower that flees danger is a traitor and only worthy of ridicule.



## CHOSEN ONE

You were selected by some sort of prophecy, perhaps as a young child or when you came of age. There is some purpose that you must complete and your people have made sure you know of it. You never had any choice about whether or not to pursue this mission and the prophecy has made those decisions for you.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Legends and either Religion or Insight (choose one)

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** Letters or a book of philosophy about the prophecy, a kit for your tool proficiency

### FEATURE: TOUCHED BY PROPHECY

You have some sense of how your life is supposed to unfold and are very sensitive to any deviation from that plan. Once per long rest, when a d20 shows either a 1 or a 20 as the result, you can choose to reroll that die. You must accept the new result.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Characters who are Chosen Ones understand deeply the nature of prophecy and portents.

ID8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I find relief on the Whale Road or in the wilderness, it is the only place where I can feel free and not burdened by my destiny.
2	The prophecy is but a goal to strive for, it is not something to be bound to, despite every choice I have ever made seeming to fit within it.
3	I spend all my spare time contemplating the prophecy so that I can be better guided by it.
4	I seek knowledge of other prophecies and how they were fulfilled, hoping for insight into my own situation.
5	I left (or was sent away from) my home due to the prophecy and I hate it.
6	I place trust in my destiny and my decisions and actions are carefree because of this trust.
7	Anyone who doubts the prophecy intrigues me, because I only know it as a source of certainty about my life.
8	I love to hear about other prophecies so that I don't feel so alone.



ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Preparation.</b> Since I know what my goal is, I should always have a ready plan.
2	<b>Destiny.</b> What happens is fated to be; there is no sense in struggling against it.
3	<b>Freedom.</b> I struggle against my given destiny but always worry that my choices are but another step along a path already made for me.
4	<b>Humility.</b> I may be chosen for great deeds but it is not because I myself am special.
5	<b>Fairness.</b> I walk the road of fate, I must be careful at every turning.
6	<b>Reflection.</b> I must always try to understand my fate, though I cannot cheat it or turn from it.

ID6	BOND
1	My faith in the words of the prophecy is absolute.
2	I feel a connection to the one who gave my people the prophecy originally.
3	I have never known a time where my destiny was undecided.
4	The prophecy that concerns me is but part of a larger work, which I search for.
5	There is some action I must take or some item I must find in order for me to continue along the prophecy's path. And when this task is done, there will be another.
6	I seek a contending prophecy or an alternate explanation, so that I can be free of my burden.

ID6	FLAW
1	I am certain that my people have misinterpreted the prophecy and that I will fail them.
2	The prophecy does not predict any lasting defeat of my enemies, it is just one more part of a destiny that ends with the ruin of the world.
3	My life or death is but one more small part of a greater plan; I myself am inconsequential and just a pawn on the board.
4	I want to believe anyone who promises to release me from my destiny.
5	If you do not believe in the prophecy, you do not believe in me.
6	If I ever thought that the prophecy no longer applied to me, I would be destroyed.

## NOBLE'S BLOOD

You are a born leader, perhaps the child of a chieftain, noble family or even a king or queen. While your station benefits you greatly, you also keenly feel the weight of expectations upon you. For this reason or another, you have decided to go forth and prove yourself in the world before returning to your responsibilities in your homeland.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Legends, Persuasion

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** A signet ring or other symbol of your station, a kit to match your tool proficiency

### FEATURE: COMMAND PRESENCE

You are used to the burdens of leadership and know how to motivate people to exceptional prowess. As an action, you can revive a spent Follower or restore Hit Dice equal to your proficiency bonus to a character (they cannot recover more than their maximum Hit Dice). You must take a long rest before using this feature again.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Aware of both privilege and responsibility, you must walk a careful line in order to keep your place in the world.

ID8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I was born into my position as others were born into theirs. This is as it is supposed to be and struggling against it is hopeless.
2	I'm used to people listening to me and my ideas and thus will readily speak my mind.
3	I am well-versed in worldly and scholarly knowledge — I know much, including the extent of my own ignorance.
4	I am proud of my homeland and will tell many stories of the glories of my ancestors.
5	I will show my courage even against impossible odds, this is my responsibility.
6	A king is nothing without their lords; a lord is nothing without their warriors; a warrior is nothing without their common folk.
7	I like to impress others with my fair speech and rich accoutrements.
8	I am used to the finer aspects of life. While I have chosen a life of adventure, I still sometimes grumble at the dirtier aspects.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Knowledge.</b> My education allowed me to understand that there is more to life than our ordinary days. I seek to learn more.
2	<b>Responsibility.</b> I have obligations both to my lord and to my lessers, each in turn.
3	<b>Might.</b> I was born into power and it is my right to exercise it.
4	<b>Prowess.</b> My forebears were warriors who won their positions of leadership and I intend to do the same.
5	<b>Vengeance.</b> I would lay down my life for my lord or kin.
6	<b>Generosity.</b> To be a well-known ring-giver is the highest of praise.

ID6	BOND
1	I have a signet ring or other device upon my person that proves my identity. I keep it close always, since without it I would just be another nobody.
2	I have a friend or Follower that has faithfully served me since my youth. I go out of my way to make sure both that they are always nearby and always safe.
3	There is another lord that I respect and honour other than my own, I seek alliance with them.
4	My family might make me known, but my weapon makes me famous.
5	I have a gaming set which I am fond of, for war upon the board sharpens the mind for war on the field.
6	I am only as good as my word, and my word is an iron-clad promise.

ID6	FLAW
1	I have a hard time relating to the common folk and often make unfortunate assumptions.
2	I am easy to anger and have a tendency to take offense at the smallest slight.
3	I seek power for itself, instead of using it to help those I am responsible for.
4	I am inattentive and easily distracted.
5	I have realised in my heart of hearts that only an accident of birth separates me from the low-born.
6	It seems that the poor having nothing other than joy and the rich live in fear and under the threat of war.





## THE FOUNDLING

You might have been orphaned by disease or war, or found as a mysterious stranger as a child. In any case, you do not have a secure place in your homeland, for whoever took you in cannot claim you by blood. Thus, you have ranged out, looking for new opportunities and perhaps some knowledge of your bitter past.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Animal Handling, Survival

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** A tool kit to match your proficiency, some memento of your original home.

### FEATURE: READY MIND

You are used to dangerous and unpredictable situations. Once per short rest, you can grant yourself advantage on your initiative roll as long as you are not surprised.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Foundlings have seen some of the worst of the world and are often ready to face it on their own terms.

IDS	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I have had a lot of experience along the way and I can see almost any issue from more than one point of view.
2	I like to talk to folks that I meet, even though I'm often nervous.
3	I don't feel safe when exposed and will always strive to remain in control of a situation.
4	I am wary of those who are kind; I think they're hiding something.
5	I have suffered terribly in my past but as a warrior all of my pain must remain locked within my heart.
6	I still have some hope of finding my original home.
7	Words mean little to me, gold and silver speak much louder.
8	I struggle to control my emotions, for better or worse.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Self-determination.</b> I chafe under the command of others and always want to be able to choose my own way forward.
2	<b>Fairness.</b> I judge others by their words and actions, not appearance or lineage, because I want the same respect for myself.
3	<b>Ambition.</b> I am destined for more and I will achieve it.
4	<b>Kindness.</b> I desire to give others what I was denied.
5	<b>Directness.</b> Those who speak with overly-fair words are hiding ugly truths.
6	<b>Peace.</b> I want an end to the nightmares and memories of pain, though I doubt it will ever come.

ID6	BOND
1	Though I may not have a blood-bond, there is someone among the folk that took me in that I would die for, because of all that they have given me.
2	I feel a connection to my pet, who knows more than most my struggles and failures.
3	Without my friends I would be lost and useless.
4	I have no bond, unless it is with loneliness itself.
5	I tend to collect broken objects, always intending to repair them.
6	I value my ship above my friends, it is my only home.

ID6	FLAW
1	I am prone to terrible nightmares that recall the most dreadful parts of my past. I often scream and thrash about during these sleeping fits, which are beyond my control.
2	I am not interested in a fair fight. I want to win by any means necessary.
3	I always feel apart from others, even if they seek to include me.
4	I cannot bring myself to fully trust anyone, I'm always afraid they will dispose of me.
5	I tend to do bold and foolish things in order to attract attention.
6	I throw myself into relationships and friendships, hoping to connect with others.



## THE BELIEVER

You are an ardent believer in your faith and strive to promote it. If your alignment is The Church then you feel compelled to spread the word of Heaven and its vision of peace. If your alignment is the Old Ways then you instead strive against the new teachings, and are certain that the world is doomed to a great darkness out of which a new world will be born. If you are Neutral then you profess balance, taking the best teachings of The Church along with the wisdom of the Old Ways.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Persuasion, Religion

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** Either a prayer book or religious trappings (a symbol of one of the Old Gods, a crucifix, etc.), a kit for your tool proficiency.

### FEATURE: THE POWER OF FAITH

Your alignment is of the utmost importance to you and it manifests in an understanding that others do not possess. When you have activated your Alignment Die (see page 28) and would normally lose it, you may instead keep it (you can still use either die's value as your result). Once you do this, you cannot use this feature again until you take a long rest.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Possessing a deep well of strong faith, a Believer thinks often about the world and their place in it.

ID8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	The Book teaches that the faithful should bring the light, and with it burn out evil wherever it may be found. <i>or</i> I learned in my youth that darkness is as inevitable as night following day. But out of that darkness will come a new dawn.
2	I have spent more time in study and meditation than I have among regular folks and I sometimes offend people accidentally.
3	I have a stark worldview and those who disagree with my beliefs are wrong-headed fools.
4	I have love for everyone I meet and a message for them.
5	There is value in listening to everyone's beliefs, I can always find a way to connect their ideas with the truth.
6	I have a quiet certainty about me and I believe in leading by example.
7	I love to talk and share stories, some call me over-friendly but I just want to make sure everyone knows about the truths of the world.
8	There is no point in preaching to anyone, all I can do is follow my faith and not trouble others.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Charity (any).</b> I hold that being generous in word and deed is the best way to convince others of my sincerity.
2	<b>Proud (Old Ways, Neutral).</b> To claim honour that I have earned in battle or in peace is no bad thing. <i>or</i> <b>Modest (The Church).</b> I do not brag about what I have done. Heaven is the only witness that matters.
3	<b>Honesty (any).</b> Lies and deceits are the worst offence against others, for if one cannot speak truly, how can you profess to believe anything?
4	<b>World-wise (Old Ways, Neutral).</b> Only by recognising people's most base desires can I encourage them to strive for higher ideals. <i>or</i> <b>Discrete (The Church).</b> I must serve as an example to others, denying myself worldly pleasures to live by Heaven's example.
5	<b>Destiny (any).</b> I believe that I was put here and now in this middle-world to lead others and I will not fail even though I may falter.
6	<b>Certainty (any).</b> My beliefs are mine own and no one can dissuade me.

ID6	BOND
1	I possess an oracular animal, a friendly creature that travels with me that provides me with insights by its behaviour or utterances. Such a beast can count as a Noble Animal Follower (see page 85).
2	I owe my life to a person of faith and that's why my belief is so strong now.
3	My obligation is to the common folk, they need to know the truth.
4	There is a special place where I discovered my faith, I return to it whenever I can.
5	My faith is rooted in the book, for unchanging truths are therein inscribed in permanent form.
6	I found my faith in quiet isolation, I think best in the same conditions.

ID6	FLAW
1	I am too trusting of others who share my alignment.
2	I too often turn to strict rulings from my faith rather than understanding a person's unique circumstances.
3	I am a sucker for a sob story and too generous for my own good sometimes.
4	I don't have many questions about the world; I'm too sure I've got it all figured out.
5	I believe there is an answer for all of life's concerns within the teachings of my faith.
6	I am indecisive since I believe I need to fully understand something before making a decision.

## FORMER FOLLOWER

You used to be in the service of another hero until they declared that you were ready to adventure on your own. Now you are the master of your own destiny and no longer a servant of another's fate.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Athletics, Legends

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** A kit to match your tool proficiency and some heirloom of your past (not weapons or armour but something else)

### FEATURE: OF COMMON STOCK

Now that you are the leader of a crew, you are careful to remember your former life and outlook. You connect easier with the average sailor or warrior than many of your station, motivating them with encouragement and a sense of shared suffering. Once per adventure, you can spend inspiration in order to add one point to the Followers' inspiration pool.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Your previous adventuring experience colours your view of the world.

ID8	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	I have fought monsters before and remember the terror and the thrill.
2	It is hard for me to make friends, many of my old ones are dead.
3	I can tell you many stories about monsters and adventure.
4	I do not give up easily and it is hard to make me change my mind.
5	I joke easily and often. It's my way of dealing with stress.
6	There are some secrets that I must take to my grave. They weigh on me.
7	I worry sometimes that I will never attain the station or capabilities of my former master.
8	Even the lowest crewmember is capable of great bravery.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Excellence.</b> I have been in the presence of true heroes before and I strive to achieve their greatness.
2	<b>Danger.</b> It is only in the thrill of battle that I feel truly alive.
3	<b>Command.</b> I have always wanted to be the one giving orders and always want them to be the right ones.
4	<b>Legend.</b> All of us die. Only some of us are remembered forever in story and song.
5	<b>Independence.</b> I chose to make my own way in the world and prove my worth to everyone.
6	<b>Pride.</b> Few can understand what we heroes accomplish. Even fewer can do it.

ID6	BOND
1	If I was given the chance, I would serve my old master again.
2	My former leader saved my life. I never leave a warrior behind.
3	If I give you my word, I will fulfill my oath or die trying.
4	There was the one that got away. If I ever find that monster again, I will do anything to slay it.
5	I carry a precious gift from my former master, it means the world to me.
6	My weapon is an extension of my will.

ID6	FLAW
1	I have trouble respecting those who refuse to take up arms against a threat.
2	I made a mistake once that cost many of my friends their lives. I live in terror of making that mistake again.
3	I'm too quick to fall into the habit of taking orders instead of giving them.
4	I am too friendly with my Followers and they do not always respect me.
5	I feel like I have something to prove and, unfortunately, the person I want to prove it to is not here.
6	I might have ready words for any situation, but I am overly cautious when action is needed.



## EXILE

You were cast out from your homeland after some transgression. Now you wander the lands, perhaps looking for a new home, absolution from your crimes or perhaps the release of death itself.

**Skill Proficiencies:** Persuasion, Survival

**Tool Proficiencies:** Any one of your choice

**Equipment:** A memento of your homeland, a kit to match your tool proficiency

### FEATURE: SEASONED DIPLOMAT

You are used to dealing with many different people and have learned how to interact with them without giving offence (perhaps by bitter experience). During a social interaction, if you fail a check by 5 or more, you instead use the first failure entry.

### SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Your personality is defined both by your past and your present circumstances.

IDS	PERSONALITY TRAIT
1	My secret wish is to die, but I must find a worthy foe. I am doomed to fight monsters until one overcomes me.
2	I was cast out of my homeland for using my gift with words most unwisely. Nowadays, I am much more cautious in what I say and do.
3	I tell everyone I was cast out, but in truth I left on my own volition, for my own reasons.
4	I have a story for every situation. Some of them are even true.
5	The reason for my exile is personal and highly embarrassing. I won't share the truth with anyone.
6	I left my homeland because someone challenged me and this is the way I will prove myself.
7	I left a dangerous enemy behind and I sometimes worry that they hunt me to this day.
8	There is always something new to see and I try to focus on the future instead of the past.

ID6	IDEAL
1	<b>Travel.</b> I long to see as much of the world as possible. I always want to crest the next hill or wave.
2	<b>Diversity.</b> I enjoy seeing new faces and learning new ways of doing things.
3	<b>Joy.</b> It is each person's responsibility to find what they enjoy in life and pursue it.
4	<b>Stories.</b> All of life is an attempt to do something worthy of being remembered.
5	<b>Home.</b> I hope to accomplish something so spectacular that I am welcomed back with open arms to my homeland.
6	<b>Isolation.</b> I don't belong in society and travelling allows me to be happy.

ID6	BOND
1	I will never give up on my family, even though they are lost to me.
2	I am a stranger in this land and it is my responsibility to both learn and teach others.
3	I had a travelling companion over the course of my exile, I would do anything for them.
4	I ache for my homeland and speak of it often, though I will probably never return.
5	As long as tomorrow comes, there is always hope.
6	My ship is the way that I find new places and thus new hope.

ID6	FLAW
1	I am never happy staying anywhere for long. Eventually, I must continue on.
2	I do not trust others easily and they must prove themselves to me.
3	There is no shame in living life to excess and indulging yourself.
4	I am reckless with my life and sometimes others' as well.
5	I talk too much.
6	I am prone to brooding on what I have lost.



## THE HERO CLASS

*Boots crunch down on the shingle shore. First over the rail, the Hero has arrived!*

*The long sea voyage behind them, and with their companions at their back, they advance up the strand, a choir of seabirds heralding their arrival. Resolute in answering a desperate plea for aid, the Hero comes to seek out the Monster that plagues this land. And when they find it, they will slay it.*

*The scop's tales say the creature is impossible to kill, a night stalker, a corpse-maker, a child of Cain, sent by the very devil to beset the people of this island. Others know a different song: one that says this monster was always here, waiting from the dawn of things for the end times to come and the slaughter to begin.*

*All agree that it cannot be killed. But the impossible is no obstacle to the Hero, righteous in their wyrd, favoured by fate, splitter of shields, sailor of ships, captain of the spearband, one in a thousand. The meadhall on the cliff awaits...*

## HEROIC DESTINY

A Hero is not merely someone tough, nor someone who is adored. A Hero is the chosen of the Wyrd Sisters that weave every person's fate, singled out to do the impossible. To travel where others cannot go, and to perform impossible deeds. Not merely well-trained, clever or strong, a Hero is different.

Capable of navigating the seas of adventure alone, while also drawing to them a band of trusted companions, a Hero is a unique figure, doomed to have stories told of their exploits for evermore.

A Hero is driven to help, to use their extraordinary potential in the service of others, and to oppose the Monsters who ordinary men and women cannot hope to defeat.

Whether it is in order to be remembered, to make a good death, make peace with the past, or simply to do the right thing, is a matter for the heart of each Hero.





## STRENGTH OF ARMS

Favoured by wyrd as they are, a Hero can take more punishment, and in turn deliver a punishing wound-dole. They are blessed with a ship and crew, and Followers besides. And when they act in concert with their wyrd, their powers are all the greater.

## CREATING A HERO

As you make your character, think about what called them to the life of the Hero, and the kinds of battles they will undertake.

Think about what drove your character to face fearful dangers around the Whale Road.

Do they simply wish to challenge themselves, or are they trying to prove something to somebody else? Are you searching for someone or something? Did your Hero commit some terrible deed for which they must atone, or are they simply driven by a need to serve a greater good? Do they seek fame and glory? Or do they just desire to see as much of the world as possible?

Consider how they feel about home. Do they long to return, or do they avoid doing so? Perhaps they are conflicted: thinking

fondly of home, but also craving new adventures and new friendships. Or perhaps when they are with their companions aboard ship, or in a strange new land, they have all the sense of home they need.

## CLASS FEATURES

As a Hero, you gain the following class features.

### HIT POINTS

**Hit Dice:** 1d8 per Hero level

**Hit Points at 1st Level:** 10 + your Constitution score

**Hit Points at Higher Levels:** 1d8 (or 5) + your Constitution modifier per Hero level after 1st.

### PROFICIENCIES

**Armour:** All armour, shields

**Weapons:** Simple weapons, improvised weapons, martial weapons

**Tools:** None

**Saving Throws:** Choose one from Dexterity, Constitution or Wisdom; chose another from Strength, Intelligence or Charisma.

**Skills:** Choose three skills.



## EQUIPMENT

You start with the following equipment, in addition to any equipment granted by your background.

- A spear
- **(a)** Knee-length mail hauberk with a shield or **(b)** mail corslet and either a cone-boss shield or an metal-rimmed shield.
- **(a)** a martial weapon and an iron-ribbed helm or **(b)** two martial weapons
- **(a)** a hunting bow and twenty arrows or **(b)** angon or **(c)** a sling and twenty bullets
- A hero's kit

### THE HERO

LEVEL	PROFICIENCY BONUS	FEATURES
1st	+2	Wyrd, Heroic Tale
2nd	+2	Fighting Style, Mighty Mettle
3rd	+2	Tale Feature
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
5th	+3	Extra Attack
6th	+3	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
7th	+3	Tale Feature
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
9th	+4	Indomitable
10th	+4	Tale Feature
11th	+4	Counterattack
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
13th	+5	Additional Fighting Style
14th	+5	Tale Feature
15th	+5	Relentless
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
17th	+6	Ferocious Onslaught
18th	+6	Tale Feature
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement or Feat
20th	+6	Hero's Doom

## WYRD

Due to the influence of their fated destiny, a Hero can use an alignment die. The die used is dependent on the hero's alignment. At the start of a session, a Neutral character can choose between using the Church die and the Old Gods die.

**Alignment Die.** Before you roll with advantage, choose one of the d20s to be your alignment die. If you select that die as the result you gain inspiration.

For more detail, see Using the Alignment Die on page 28.

## HEROIC TALE

When creating your character you choose a heroic tale that represents the ability score your Hero most strongly represents. The tale you choose grants you features at 1st level and again at 3rd, 7th, 10th, 14th, and 18th level.

## FIGHTING STYLE

At 2nd level, you adopt a particular style of fighting as your specialty. Choose one of the following options. You can't take a Fighting Style option more than once, even if you later get to choose again.

### Desperate Duelling

When you are wielding a melee weapon in one hand and no other weapons, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.

### Great Weapon Wielding

When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack you make with a melee weapon that you are wielding with two hands, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or a 2. The weapon must have the two-handed or versatile property for you to gain this benefit.

### Shield-Strong

When you are equipped with a spear in one hand and a shield in the other, you gain an additional +1 bonus to AC.

### Hammer-Handed

When you take the attack action and have at least one hand free, you may make an unarmed or improvised weapon strike as a bonus action.

## MIGHTY METTLE

Also when you reach 2nd level you can spend a bonus action, inspiration, and one or more Hit Dice to grant yourself temporary hit points. You receive hit points equal to your level in this class plus the total rolled on the Hit Dice. You do not add your Constitution modifier when using Hit Dice in this manner.

## ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT OR FEAT

When you reach 4th level, and again at 6th, 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

Instead of raising ability scores directly, you can instead select a feat, see page 77. Most feats raise one specified attribute by 1 in addition to their other features.

### EXTRA ATTACK

Beginning at 5th level, you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

### INDOMITABLE

At 9th level, you can reroll a saving throw that you fail. If you do so, you must use the new roll, and you can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest.

### COUNTERATTACK

Starting at 11th level, when a creature within your reach makes a melee weapon attack against you and misses, as a reaction you may make a single melee weapon attack against that creature.

### RELENTLESS

Beginning at 15th level you can keep fighting despite grievous wounds. If you drop to 0 hit points and don't die outright, you can

make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. If you succeed, you drop to 1 hit point instead. Each time you use this feature after the first, the DC increases by 5. When you finish a short or long rest, the DC resets to 10.

### FEROCIOUS ONSLAUGHT

Starting at 17th level, as a bonus action you may spend inspiration to make a powerful attack with a melee weapon. If the blow hits your weapon shatters, destroying the weapon, and it does an extra 2d8 damage, plus another 1d8 for each gift your weapon has (if any), and it is an automatic critical hit.

When you do damage using this feature you gain a level of exhaustion, and must take a long rest before using it again.

### HERO'S DOOM

At 20th level you can use your bonus action to nominate one creature. It loses the undefeatable condition if it has it. If your hit points are equal to or above one quarter of your maximum hit points, reduce your hit points to one quarter of your maximum.



## HEROIC TALES

Heroes come in many different shapes and sizes, and their heroism takes different forms. Heroes choose one Tale to follow. Each Tale is based on an attribute score.

### BENCH BREAKER

The strongest of Heroes, the bench breaker relies on brawn and sheer strength to overcome their foes. Able to impress those around them with their sheer physical presence, they are expert wrestlers, renowned for their physical prowess and feats of raw muscle power.



#### Imposing Presence

Starting at 1st level when you choose this tale, you may use Strength instead of Charisma when making an ability check with the Intimidation skill.

#### Wrestling

Beginning at 3rd level, you may choose one of the following options. You may pick additional options from this list at levels 7, 10, and 14. When you pick a new option you may also trade an existing one for a different one. If the option calls for a saving throw, the DC is 8 + your Strength modifier + your proficiency bonus.

- **Bear Hug.** When you successfully grapple a creature, you may spend inspiration to also attempt to shove it prone.

- **Cunning Warrior.** As a bonus action, you can shove or grapple a creature.
- **Iron-fisted.** The damage of your unarmed strikes is 1d4 + your Strength modifier at 3rd level. At 7th level, the damage die increases to 1d6, then 1d8 at 10th level and finally becomes 1d10 at 14th level.
- **Oaken-thewed.** If you are not holding a weapon or shield in either hand, your grappling and shoving checks are made with advantage.
- **Piercing Strike.** Damage you cause using grappling, shoving, or unarmed strikes ignores resistances, and reduces immunity to resistance.
- **Pin.** A prone creature grappled by you has disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity ability checks.
- **Pummel.** When you do damage with your unarmed strike, you can spend inspiration to force the creature to make a Constitution saving throw. On a failure it is stunned until the beginning of its next turn.
- **Quick Reflexes.** When a creature moves into your reach, as a reaction you may attempt to shove or grapple it.
- **Reversal.** If you succeed at a Strength check to resist another creature's grapple or shove, as a reaction you can attempt to use the same maneuver against that creature.
- **Strangling Grip.** If you grapple a creature using both of your hands, the creature must succeed at a Constitution saving throw in order to breathe or speak. Until the grapple ends, the creature takes 2d6 plus your Strength modifier bludgeoning damage at the beginning of each of its turns. Creatures that don't breathe are immune to this feature.

#### Immovable and Unstoppable

Beginning at 7th level, you have advantage on any Strength checks made to avoid being moved against your will, or to break free of any restraints.

#### Amazing Might

Starting at 10th level, you gain proficiency in Athletics if you do not already have it. Additionally, when you spend make a Strength (Athletics) check to lift, move, or damage an inanimate object you add double your proficiency bonus.

#### Heroic Muscle

At 14th level, you may, at the GM's discretion, spend inspiration to be able to attempt a feat of strength that would otherwise have no chance of success, but any required ability checks are made with disadvantage.

#### Brute Force

Beginning at 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** This creature gains the defeated condition if an unarmed attack reduces it to less than one quarter of its maximum hit points.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.

## SWIFT-BLESSED

The most nimble of Heroes, the swift-blessed are physically adroit and lithe, with a quickness of touch and a crafty way. Light on their feet Heroes of this kind are lightning fast in battle, relying on speed rather than strength.

### Trickster

You may perform sleight of hand with small items that can be hidden in pockets or sleeves. Onlookers might believe something supernatural has occurred — possibly granting you advantage or disadvantage on your next Charisma check. You gain proficiency in the Sleight of Hand skill if you do not already have it.

### Artful Dodge

Starting at 3rd level, you may spend inspiration to take the Dodge action as a bonus action.

### Evasion

Beginning at 7th level, when you are subjected to an effect that allows you to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, you instead take no damage if you succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if you fail.

### Deadly Feint

Starting at 10th level, when you use your reaction to make a melee weapon attack, you may attempt to trick your opponent into exposing itself to a deadly strike. Instead of making an attack roll, make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check contested by the target's Wisdom (Perception) check.

If you win the contest, you hit and score an automatic critical. Once you do damage with this feature you cannot use it again until you take a short or long rest.

### Epic Reflexes

At 14th level you have advantage on all Dexterity saving throws.

### A Deadly Flight

Beginning at 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** This creature gains the defeated condition if a ranged weapon attack reduces it to less than one quarter of its maximum hit points.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.



## OX-SPIRITED

The most enduring of Heroes, Ox-spirited are Heroes able to endure extremes of physical punishment, whether through their mental determination, bullish physical endurance or a combination of both.

### Stonebelly

When you choose this tale at 1st level, you have advantage on any saving throw or ability check made to resist the effects of any poison (including alcohol).

### Glutton for Punishment

At 3rd level, as a bonus action you may spend a Hit Die to gain resistance to one type of damage of your choice, and critical hits of the selected damage type also become normal hits. The effect lasts until the beginning of your next turn.

### Endless Endurance

At 7th level, you have advantage on saving throws made to avoid levels of exhaustion.

### Force of Will

Beginning at 10th level, whenever you are stunned or paralysed, as a bonus action you can spend inspiration to negate the effect.

### Unyielding Stamina

At 14th level, you can spend a bonus action to recover hit points equal to 10 plus your Constitution score. You must take a long rest before using this feature again.

### Contest of Will

Beginning at 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** This creature gains the defeated condition if it fails a Constitution saving throw against an effect and you pass the saving throw against the same effect.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.



## RIDDLE-REAPER

The cleverest of Heroes, a riddle-reaver uses their brains first, and their spear second. Cautious tacticians, and incisive thinkers, this kind of Hero uses their quick thinking and sharp planning to overcome foes.

### Perceive Weakness

Starting at 1st level when you choose this tale, if you spend an action studying a creature, you identify all resistances, immunities, and vulnerabilities of the creature.

### Preparation

Beginning at 3rd level, if you spend one minute preparing for a challenge, you may grant inspiration to yourself and as many allies as your Intelligence modifier. Using this feature requires that you are able to observe or otherwise study something about the challenge, such as a battlefield, an NPC to be fought or negotiated with, or a barrier to be passed.

You may use this feature a number of times equal to your Intelligence modifier, and you regain all uses after a short or long rest.

### Truth-seeing

Starting at 7th level, you have a keen ability to discern the flaws in illusions. You have advantage on saving throws or ability checks versus illusions, disguises, or other sensory tricks.

### Anticipation

Starting at 10th level, if you have knowledge of a creature's special feature, you have advantage on saving throws against that feature. You acquire sufficient knowledge of a feature:

- After you, or a creature you are observing, makes a saving throw against the feature.
- At the GM's discretion, from a firsthand account by a survivor of the feature.

### Warning Shout

Beginning at 14th level, allies within 30 feet who can hear you share your Truth-seeing and Anticipation features.

### The Logical Outcome

At 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** You spend an action to force a speaking creature to make an Intelligence saving throw. If it fails, and its current hit point total is lower than yours, it is defeated. The DC for the saving throw is 8 plus your Proficiency Bonus plus your Intelligence modifier.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.



## COUNCIL-CALLER

The wisest of Heroes, the council-caller is a deep and insightful contemplator, rich in empathy and life experience, potentially beyond their years. Old-souls and mystical Heroes, this kind of Hero uses their awareness of the world around them and their refined common sense to their advantage.

### Insightful

Starting at first level when you choose this tale, when you make a Wisdom (Insight) check to discern something about a creature who shares your alignment, the roll is made with advantage.

### Subtle Omens

Beginning at 3rd level, you become receptive to omens about the near future, whether you find them through the study of animal bones, the patterns of living animals, or simple quiet contemplation. You describe a potential course of action to the GM who responds with one of four possible omens: *weal* for good results; *woe* for bad results; *weal* and *woe* for mixed results or *nothing* for uncertain or unremarkable results. You must take a long rest before using this feature again.

### Twist of Fate

Starting at 7th level, when you make an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check, but before you know whether it is successful, you may spend inspiration to re-roll the die. You must use the new result.

### Foresight

Starting at 10th level, your dreams and visions give you signs of things to come, if you can interpret them. Whenever you finish a long rest, roll two d20 and record the results. When you or a creature within 30 feet of you makes an attack roll, a saving throw, or an ability check, you can replace the roll with one of your two Foresight rolls. Each of the two rolls can be used this way once, and if either remain unused when you take your next long rest they are lost.

### Strength of Conviction

Starting at 14th level you have advantage on all Wisdom saving throws.

### Vision of Secrets

At 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** This creature gains the defeated condition if you succeed at a Wisdom (Insight) check with the DC equal to 20 plus twice the creature's Wisdom modifier. You must use your action to make the check and then your action on a subsequent turn to reveal the creature's secret.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.





## HONEY-TONGUED

The most charismatic of Heroes, the Honey-tongued are experts in people, skilled in the ways of swaying others to their way of thinking. Whether very attractive to the eye, simply delightfully charming, or extremely forceful in will, this kind of Hero has no problem in gathering others to their cause.

### Glamour

When you choose this tale at 1st level, strangers are easily awed by you. If you spend inspiration on your first Charisma check with a stranger, success will produce a dramatic or improbable result. What this means is up to your GM, but examples might be a guard defying orders to let you pass, a hostile enemy backing down from a fight, or a suspicious chieftain suddenly taking you into their confidence.

### Heroic Presence

Beginning at 3rd level, when another creature within 30 feet of you that can see you makes an ability check, saving throw, or attack roll, as a reaction you can cause the roll to be made with your choice of advantage or disadvantage. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1). You regain all uses on a short or long rest.

### Force of Personality

At 7th level, you and friendly creatures within 10 feet have advantage on saving throws against charms and enchantments.

### Clarity of Mind

Starting at 10th level, as an action you can spend inspiration to try to dispel a magical effect on another creature. Make a Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion, your choice) check versus a DC equal to the original saving throw. If there was no original saving throw, use 10 plus the spell slot level used, or the lowest level the spell can be cast at for innate magic. On a success, the creature is freed from the effect. After using this ability you must take a short or long rest before using it again.

### Peacemaker

Starting at 14th level, as an action you may attempt to halt a combat. Each creature within 60 feet who can hear and understand you must make a Wisdom saving throw, with a DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Charisma modifier. A creature that fails the save takes the Dodge action on its turn. At the beginning of your next turn if no one has made an attack roll since your last turn the combat ends and you can speak for up to one minute. Afterwards, the combat might resume, depending on the GM's ruling. You must take a short or long rest before using this feature again.

### Instill Doubt

At 18th level you can spend a bonus action to give a creature the following feature:

**Defeatable.** This creature gains the defeated condition if you use your action and succeed at a Charisma (Intimidation) check with the DC equal to 20 plus twice the creature's Charisma modifier and the creature's current hit point total is lower than yours.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.



## EQUIPMENT AND SHIPS

*Beowulf donned then his battle-equipments,  
Cared little for life; inlaid and most ample,  
The hand-woven corslet which could cover his body,  
Must the wave-deeps explore, that war might be powerless  
To harm the great Hero, and the hating one's grasp might  
Not peril his safety; his head was protected  
By the light-flashing helmet that should mix with the bottoms,  
Trying the eddies, treasure-emblazoned,  
Encircled with jewels, as in seasons long past  
The weapon-smith worked it, wondrously made it,  
With swine-bodies fashioned it, that thenceforward no longer  
Brand might bite it, and battle-sword hurt it.*

Though Heroes in BEOWULF would readily do battle with bare hands, it is an unusual warrior which possesses no weapons or armour. Similarly, every character relies on their Followers, their crew and their ship to deliver them to their adventures. This chapter covers both the wargear and ships of Heroes but also the concerns of ordinary folk, to help the Gamemaster bring the world to life.

### WEALTH AND CURRENCY

The kings and queens of BEOWULF might have won their land by conquest but they maintain it by being ring-givers who reward service with treasure. A Hero is rewarded richly for their service, often receiving treasure equivalent to several pounds of silver. They in turn spend money for the upkeep (or betterment) of their ship, to reward their Followers and pay their crew.

In prepared adventures we often provide a simple monetary value expressed as pounds of silver (£) given to a Hero, but the actual rewards might well be bands of gold, chests of silver pennies, precious gems, intricate pieces of jewellery and other precious

objects. For simplicity's sake, all wealth can be expressed in £ of silver, and we don't worry too much about the precise constituents making up that wealth.

From their reward-hoard, a Hero is expected to provide lesser treasures to their Followers, each of which has a minimum price to keep them happy (pages 86-87). This price is measured in shillings (abbreviated 's'). In the days of our tales, the value of shillings varied wildly from place to place and from time to time, but for convenience we have set the standard exchange rate at 40 shillings to 1£.

The crew of the ship must also be paid, which is normally done from the upkeep cost. But a wise Hero might wish to reward their crew for their efforts. But even a shilling is too much wealth for regular folk's everyday business. So they will likely be paid with silver pennies. Again, the value of these pennies ranges considerably but we will set ours at 6 pence to the shilling as a matter of course.

Traditionally, these coins were abbreviated 'd' (for the latin denarius) but we will make one more consideration and use 'p' for pennies instead.

In review:

1£ = 40s and 1s = 6p, so 1£ = 40s = 240p

For the most part, the lands around the Whale Road rely on barter and gift giving, but that sits alongside the convenience of coin-based currency.

### WARGEAR

Weapons, armour, shields and headgear comprise your Hero's wargear. For BEOWULF, the heavy armours found in other settings are not available. In the Age of Heroes your shield and your helmet are more important pieces of equipment.





**Weaponshirt.** This warrior's undergarment, worn beneath all kinds of mail offers some protection in its own right. Padded with horsehair or wads of rags, or layers of cloth, the weaponshirt gives warriors a bulkier, more imposing appearance. Generally made of linen, a weaponshirt might be made of animal hide or leather.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
1£	11+ Dex modifier	—	8 lbs.	—



**Iron-ribbed Helm.** A common metal helmet, constructed from several plates, reinforced by iron ribs. Sometimes just a metal cap, sometimes with cheek pieces and nasal guard. Where a nasal is present, metal eyebrows or spectacles might also be found.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
1£	+1	—	3 lbs.	—



**Mail Corslet.** A sleeveless, or short-sleeved shirt of interlinking iron links, with every fourth link riveted together. When worn it is assumed to be worn over a weaponshirt, the benefit of which is included in its statistics.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
4£	13 + Dex mod (max 2)	—	20 lbs.	—



**Scale Mail Harness.** A rare kind of protection, scale mail armour is made of many overlapping metal plates like the scales of a fish. More commonly found in the mysterious lands to the south, scale mail gives a very impressive appearance, and so is favoured by those Heroes looking to be noticed.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
2£	14 + Dex mod (max 2)	—	45 lbs.	Noisy

**Swine-crested Helm.** As every child around the hearth knows, a boar atop a helmet provides extra protection, and its upstanding horsehair crest makes a Hero even more visible on the field of battle.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
3£	+1	—	4 lbs.	Robust



**Battle-masked Helm.** A helm that includes a full faceplate is a treasure of great worth. The battle mask is most often worked into the likeness of a Hero or god of battle, and is an unnerving piece of wargear to encounter on the battlefield. The enclosed nature of the Battle-masked Helm provides extra protection against blows.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
10£	+2	—	8 lbs.	Noisy, Robust



**Long-sleeved Mail Byrnie.** A harness of close-fitted mail which includes full arm covering, and a short apron of mail over the upper legs. When worn it is assumed to be worn over a weaponshirt, the benefit of which is included in its statistics.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
10£	15	—	40 lbs.	Noisy



**Knee-length Mail Hauberk.** A great harness of mail which covers from the knees to the chin. Often donned by the most prodigious of thegns and favoured warriors, a hauberk of this type is a mighty gift or expensive purchase. When worn it is assumed to be worn over a weaponshirt, the benefit of which is included in its statistics.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
15£	16	Str 13	55 lbs.	Noisy





**Shield.** As ubiquitous as the spear, almost all warriors carry a shield as an essential piece of protective equipment. Round in shape, and built from linden or ash wood planks, a shield is surprisingly light and mobile. All shields are held by a grip in a central iron boss, which is riveted to the planks. The shield's face is covered with painted leather or linen to give the planks more strength. With sufficient skill, a shield can be used as a second weapon, to attack as well as defend. A strap attached to the boss can be used to carry the shield on a warrior's back when not in use.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
1s	+2	—	5 lbs.	—



**Cone-boss shield.** Fitted with a protruding iron boss, this shield is easier to use offensively.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
3s	+2	—	6 lbs.	Battering



**Metal-rimmed Shield.** Making the shield heavier, a rim of iron also protects it against blows to the edge, making it more robust and harder to splinter.

Cost	Armour Class (AC)	Strength	Weight	Properties
10s	+2	—	8 lbs.	Robust

## ARMOUR SUMMARY

NAME	COST	ARMOUR CLASS (AC)	STRENGTH	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<b>Light Armour</b>					
Weaponshirt	1ℓ	11+ Dex modifier	—	8 lbs.	—
<b>Medium Armour</b>					
Iron-ribbed Helm	1ℓ	+1	—	3 lbs.	—
Mail Corslet	4ℓ	13 + Dex mod (max 2)	—	20 lbs.	—
Scale Mail Harness	2ℓ	14 + Dex mod (max 2)	—	45 lbs.	Noisy
Swine-crested Helm	3ℓ	+1	—	4 lbs.	Robust
<b>Heavy Armour</b>					
Battle-masked Helm	10ℓ	+2	—	8 lbs.	Noisy, Robust
Long-sleeved Mail Byrnie	10ℓ	15	—	40 lbs.	Noisy
Knee-length Mail Hauberk	15ℓ	16	Str 13	55 lbs.	Noisy
<b>Shields</b>					
Shield	1s	+2	—	5 lbs.	—
Cone boss Shield	3s	+2	—	6 lbs.	Battering
Metal-rimmed Shield	10s	+2	—	8 lbs.	Robust

**Axe.** A common hand weapon, which is cheap to make and very versatile. It is burdened with agricultural overtones - that is to say, warriors of renown tend to look upon the simple axe as beneath them. Or perhaps, more practically, if a smith is forging an axe, they may as well make a pair of spears. But a Hero of humble background may choose to wield an axe as a marker of their origins.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
20s	1d6 slashing	2 lbs.	Light

**Club.** Simple to make and readily available, the club is a weapon steeped in mythological overtones. A Hero that wields a simple club must be pure of purpose and a formidable foe.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
5p	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lbs.	Light

**Javelin.** Another very common weapon of the age - almost every warrior who can afford to do so will carry two or three javelins in their shield hand, ready to be flung at enemies as shield walls close. A javelin comprises a simple light wood shaft, and a small, sharp iron head. Different designs of head proliferate, and the shafts are often stained and decorated. A Javelin can also be used as a spear in hand-to-hand fighting.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
4s	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Thrown (range 30/120)

**Seax.** The seax is the weapon that gives the Saxons their name. A single edged war-knife of considerable refinement and complexity of shape, the seax is usually worn hung horizontally from the belt within easy grasp. It is the perfect weapon for fighting in the shield wall, and while it can cut, it has a long stabbing point for piercing mail in-between shields. There are many beautiful variations on the design of the seax, and its accompanying decorated sheath. Traditionally women wear a seax hung on a cord around the neck.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
16s	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Finesse, Light, Thrown (range 20/60)

**Spear.** The spear is by far the most common weapon found around the Whale Road in the Age of Heroes. Relatively simple to make in its common form, easy to use, the spear is made of a pointed, double-edged iron head with a split socket for the shaft, which is hammered shut and riveted. The shaft is usually made of ash, but hazel and oak are not uncommon. More unusually a spear shaft might be made from apple wood or maple. Some spear heads are long, and designed to pierce mail, others are broader and intended to be used with a cutting motion. The head of a spear can be as cleverly made as a sword blade, rich with pattern-welded snake patterns. Shafts are often painted or stained, and decorated with metal rings.

*Always spear-ready.* A spear is always available to a Hero - whether a Follower has a spare, is happy to give up their own spear, or if there is one in the hold of the Hero's ship, a spear can always be found at need. A local ruler will always be happy to gift a Hero a spear.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2s	1d6 piercing	3 lbs.	Thrown(range 20/60), Versatile (1d8)

**Staff.** While not a commonly used weapon, a large trimmed stick can certainly be wielded by a warrior to significant effect. Most commonly made of ash, staves might be made of oak, alder or even yew. It might be decorated and stained like a spear shaft, though this would be an unusual weapon when spears are so common and effective.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
10p	1d6 bludgeoning	3 lbs.	Two-Handed

**Hunting Bow.** While not designed for use in war, a bow that can bring down a deer can certainly inflict wounds on a human opponent. It is also commonly found in any community.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
5£	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Ammunition (range 80/320), Two-handed

**Dart.** A small javelin, or an entirely iron throwing weapon. Commonly used by ancient peoples at the fringes of the Whale Road and at the edges of the Forest, darts are looked down upon by more grand warriors, but are nonetheless useful in war.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2p	1d4 piercing	—	Finesse, thrown (range 20/60)

**Sling.** The traditional weapon of a shepherd or a youngster, a sling is not to be underestimated. Considerable skill is required to use a sling to hit and kill the wolf that threatens a flock of sheep, and someone who can do that can certainly use it to serious effect against other foes. The sling is another weapon rich in the stuff of folklore, and makes a memorable weapon as the signature of a Hero.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
5p	1d4 bludgeoning	—	Ammunition (range 30/120)

**Angon.** A specialised type of javelin, the angon is the shield-killer. It has a long iron head specifically designed to pierce the wood of a shield and then bend, rendering the shield too cumbersome to use. This heavy metal throwing spear is equally not something a Hero wants piercing their hide.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2£	1d8 piercing	3 lbs.	Thrown (range 20/30), Splintering

**Bearded Axe.** An axe specifically made for war, the bearded axe has a hooked “beak” under its cutting edge, which is designed to hook an opponent’s shield. Often very graceful in design, a bearded axe is a fearsome anti-shield weapon.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2£	1d8 slashing	4 lbs.	Versatile (1d10), Hooking

**Dane Axe.** A long-hafted heavy-headed axe, the dane axe is feared across the length and breadth of the Whale Road. A shield splitter, and mail breaker, using a Dane Axe is the choice of the bravest warriors, who forego the use of a shield in order to increase their offensive power.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
9£	1d12 slashing	7 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed, Splintering



**Fransiska.** A throwing axe of Frankish origin, the Fransiska is a wicked, but gracefully curved axe that sits in pairs in a warrior's belt. The Fransiska is another weapon that is used as shieldwalls draw together, or as Heroes close for single combat. It is fearsomely specialised, having no use as a tool, and so the carrying of a brace of Fransiska demonstrates murderous intent or ability.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
1£	1d6 slashing	3 lbs.	Thrown (range 20/30)

**Great Axe.** A long-shafted axe, lacking the specialisation of the Dane Axe, but nonetheless a formidable weapon, used by warriors who spurn the protection of a shield. Many would question the sense of abandoning a shield to wield an axe in two hands, but its ability to deliver terrible wounds in a single blow makes the great axe an attractive weapon for some Heroes.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
6£	1d12 slashing	5 lbs.	Heavy, Two Handed

**Great Club.** Crude, but effective, a great hunk of tree limb used as a weapon. Ripe for becoming the signature war tool of a Hero, a great club might be favoured by those who cannot afford iron, or by those who wish to signal they do not relish the spilling of blood. Of course, there is no doubt that a blow from a great two-handed club will spill blood as readily as any spear point.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
10p	2d6 bludgeoning	10 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed

**Great-Spear.** This is any spear of unusual length, the staff bound by more rings and protected by iron studs. It takes greater strength and expertise to use than the average spear, and often features a more craftily-made, hard-filed head. Doubtless featuring a shaft painted and stained, the head often etched with runes.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2£	1d10 piercing	6 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed, Reach

**Long-Seax.** A single edged sword, with a similar shaped blade to the seax knife. Sometimes hilted like a more conventional double-edged sword, the seax might not have any kind of cross guard. Some might argue that all seaxes are the same, be they knife or sword-sized. Those Heroes who fight with a long-seax might beg to differ.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
10s	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Finesse, Light

**Sword.** The sword is the king of weapons. It is largely symbolic of nobility and the warrior class, and what better weapon for a Hero? A sword has no function as a tool, and is purely the domain of the warrior. It takes significant resources to produce, and so a sword is a prized possession, and incredibly precious. Due to a lack of high quality iron around the Whale Road, swords are laboriously and constructed by pattern welding. This forges together strands of different types of iron - some more flexible, some harder for holding an edge. And together they make a wondrously patterned blade, rich with smoke or snake-like patterns. Scabbards are scarcely less impressive, heavily ornamented and decorated. The hilt of a sword might well be ornamented with a ring, symbolising the owner's service to a ruler.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
5£	1d8 slashing	3 lbs.	—

**Winged Spear.** A specialised spear with a cross piece fitted or forged across the base of the head. This is designed to hook an enemy's shield and pull it away from them, allowing blows to slide past. Sometimes the winged spear is called a boar spear, due to its similarity to the hunting weapon, with a cross piece designed to prevent an enraged, pieced animal sliding up the shaft.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
2£	1d10 piercing	3 lbs.	Two-Handed, Hooking

**War Bow.** A heavy bow, designed with the slaughter of warriors in mind. Strong enough to pierce the links of mail, and with much greater range than a simple hunter's bow. A war bow is fashioned of a single piece of yew, with the heartwood providing strength and the sap wood elasticity. The string of a war bow is made of horse hair or animal gut. Occasionally such a bow might be made from animal horn, though the understanding of this way of making bows is not common-place.



Price	Damage	Weight	Properties
10£	1d8 piercing	2 lbs.	Ammunition (range 150/600), Heavy, Two-handed

## WEAPONS SUMMARY

NAME	PRICE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	PROPERTIES
<i>Simple Melee Weapons</i>				
Axe	20s	1d6 slashing	2 lbs.	Light
Club	5p	1d4 bludgeoning	2 lbs.	Light
Javelin	4s	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Thrown (range 30/120)
Seax	16s	1d4 piercing	1 lb.	Finesse, Light, Thrown(range 20/60)
Spear	2s	1d6 piercing	3 lbs.	Thrown(range 20/60), Versatile (1d8)
Staff	10p	1d6 bludgeoning	3 lbs.	Two-Handed
<i>Simple Ranged Weapons</i>				
Hunting bow	5ℓ	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Ammunition (range 80/320), Two-handed
Dart	2p	1d4 piercing	—	Finesse, Thrown (range 20/60)
Sling	5p	1d4 bludgeoning	—	Ammunition (range 30/120)
<i>Martial Melee Weapons</i>				
Angon	2ℓ	1d8 piercing	3 lbs.	Thrown (range 20/30), Splintering
Bearded Axe	2ℓ	1d8 slashing	4 lbs.	Versatile (1d10), Hooking
Dane Axe	9ℓ	1d12 slashing	7 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed, Splintering
Fransiska	1ℓ	1d6 slashing	3 lbs.	Thrown (range 20/30)
Great Axe	6ℓ	1d12 slashing	5 lbs.	Heavy, Two Handed
Great Club	10p	2d6 bludgeoning	10 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed
Great Spear	2ℓ	1d10 piercing	6 lbs.	Heavy, Two-Handed, Reach
Long-seax	10s	1d6 piercing	2 lbs.	Finesse, Light
Sword	5ℓ	1d8 slashing	3 lbs.	—
Winged Spear	2ℓ	1d10 piercing	3 lbs.	Two-Handed, Hooking
<i>Martial Ranged Weapons</i>				
War Bow	10ℓ	1d8 piercing	2 lbs.	Ammunition (range 150/600), Heavy, Two-handed



## PROPERTIES FOR WARGEAR

For the Hero's wargear, there are three kinds of properties: inherent, burdens, and gifts. Inherent properties are like the ones present in the core rules, they are features that the weapon has as part of its core design and you can't add or remove them without altering the weapon into something else. Burdens are negative features, sometimes due to the equipment's construction, but often a result of battles. Gifts are improvements to equipment that often the Hero must seek out, might receive as a reward. Or may be able to commission a craftsman to create for them (see "Smithwork" on page 133).

### NEW INHERENT PROPERTIES

The following properties can be built into weapons. If a property is not listed here, refer to the core rules.

**Battering.** This weapon can be used to bash an opponent when using the Bashing Strike feat. (see page 77).

**Hooking.** A hooking weapon has a feature which allows it to catch the rim of a shield and pull it away from the user. When you score a critical hit you can choose instead to hook the shield. A shield that has been hooked provides no bonus to AC until the beginning of the shield user's next turn. A hooked shield is considered violently pulled aside, temporarily creating an opening in the shield user's defense. It is not broken or dropped.

**Massive.** This weapon requires a Strength of 15 or higher to wield successfully. A creature using it with a lower Strength does not add its Strength modifier when the weapon does damage as it must use all of its effort just to control the weapon.

**Noisy.** This piece of armour has multiple components that often bang together, applying disadvantage to stealth attempts while wearing it.

**Robust.** When using a robust shield or helmet you may spend Inspiration to ignore the effects of a critical hit or splintering strike.

**Splintering.** A splintering weapon can be used to destroy an opponent's shield or helmet. When you score a critical hit you may choose to instead splinter your opponent's shield or helmet, destroying it. Certain properties can prevent this effect.

### BURDENS

The following are negative properties that can be applied to wargear. Some burdens can be removed, it is up to the GM to assign a cost and/or time requirements — removing a burden can be an important part of some adventures.

**Broken (any piercing or slashing weapon).** This weapon was destroyed and no longer fully effective. If you continue to use it, any successful strike causes the minimum possible damage (e.g. if you normally do 1d6 + 3 points of damage with the weapon, you do 4 points instead).

**Inferior Materials (armour only).** When this armour receives a critical hit it is considered destroyed and no longer provides any protection. Such armour often comes with a reduced cost.

**Weighty (any).** This piece of wargear is one and a half times its normal weight, due to its construction.



### GIFTS

**Formidable (helmet or shield).** The piece of equipment gains the robust property.

**Deadly Sharp (any piercing or slashing weapon).** This weapon improves your chances of a critical hit by one. For example if you normally score a critical hit on a 19 or 20, using this weapon you score a critical hit on an 18, 19 or 20.

**Hooked (any piercing or slashing weapon).** This weapon gains the hooking property.

**Impressive (any weapon).** This weapon is one that carries great cultural weight. A person carrying such a weapon is very likely a mighty warrior, and well-skilled in the weapon's use. They are not lightly given nor lightly owned. Carrying an Impressive weapon gives you advantage on appropriate Charisma checks.

**Shield-boss (shield only).** This shield gains the battering property.

## NORMAL GEAR

The table on the following page gives a listing of items that are likely to be available for purchase at any sizeable settlement. However, it is likely that the ship might already have some items (see 'Ship's Stores', below) so these prices are mostly for the GM to use to represent the expenses of any common folk that the Hero meets.

## NORMAL GEAR

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT	ITEM	COST	WEIGHT
Arrows (20) (Ammunition)	8s	1 lb.	Ladder (10-foot)	5p	25 lbs.
Sling bullets (20) (Ammunition)	2p	1.5 lbs.	Vellum (1 sheet)	5p	—
Barrel	16s	70 lbs.	Pole (10-foot)	2p	7 lbs.
Basket	3s	2 lbs.	Pot, iron	16s	10 lbs.
Bedroll	8s	7 lbs.	Pouch	4s	1 lb.
Bell	8s	—	Quiver	8s	1 lb.
Blanket	4s	3 lbs.	Ram, portable	1£	35 lbs.
Bucket	3p	2 lbs.	Rations (travel, 1 day)	4s	2 lbs.
Candles (2)	1p	—	Rope (50 feet)	8s	10 lbs.
Chalk (2 pieces)	1p	—	Sacks (2)	1p	½ lbs.
Chest	1£	25 lbs.	Shovel	16s	5 lbs.
Clothes, common	4s	3 lbs.	Sleep Sack, Leather	10s	5 lbs.
Clothes, fine	3£	6 lbs.	Soap	1p	—
Clothes, traveller's	16s	4 lbs.	Tent (2-person)	16s	20 lbs.
Crowbar	16s	5 lbs.	Tinderbox	4s	1 lb.
Ink (1 ounce bottle)	2£	—	Torches (2)	1p	2 lbs.
Ink pen	1p	—	Waterskin	2s	5 lbs. (full)
Jug	1p	4 lbs.	Whetstone	1p	1 lb.

### BUYING EQUIPMENT

The above prices represent what an average seller might expect to get for an ordinary item of that type. Most sellers are willing to make trades, and smaller villages might do a lot of business in only a notional sort of currency. The smith knows his shovel is worth at least a dozen shillings, but the butcher is going to pay him in trade and a bit of coin in order to make it easier on both of them. These prices are subject to fluctuation, especially if an impressive looking Hero-type barges into the market, jingling a purse full of heavy coins. For this reason, most Heroes prefer to assign a more discreet Follower to the task when the supplies need to be restocked. Very often, a ship will be restocked via the hospitality of a local leader. This might come with strings attached.

A Hero enjoying the hospitality of a local ruler may well be given whatever they need by local people, provided they keep the laws of hospitality, and prove useful to the community. If they accept such gifts, there is an expectation that they will return the favour with services rendered.

### SHIP'S STORES

As part of preparing for and going on adventures, it is assumed that the Hero's ship is properly stocked, and there is a monthly maintenance fee that covers this and minor repairs and upkeep

on the vessel. However, even the most well-stocked ship's stores are not an infinite supply cabinet. If a Hero needs an item and it's likely to be onboard ship, they can find the first one without any trouble. If they need a second one, the GM will evaluate how reasonable that request is, and might deny it or approve it. For a third request, the GM is advised to deny it, unless it is an extraordinary common thing onboard ships (e.g. rope).

### THE HERO'S PACK

Each Hero begins with some adventuring gear assembled together in a pack. The Hero's pack includes the following:

- A leather sleep sack, which you use aboard the ship when sleeping to keep dry and to stow your gear when not in use.
- A thick woollen blanket
- A tinderbox
- 10 torches
- 10 days of rations
- A waterskin
- 50 feet of rope

## TOOLS

A tool or toolkit helps you do something that you could not normally do otherwise, like repair a ship, build a wall, or play a musical instrument. Your background or feats give you proficiency with certain tools. Proficiency with a tool allows you to add your proficiency bonus to any ability check you make using that tool. Using a tool or toolkit is not tied to a single ability, since proficiency with a tool represents broad knowledge of its use. For example, the GM might ask you to make a Dexterity check to carve a fine detail with your woodcarver's tools, or a Strength check to make something out of particularly hard wood. Followers often have gifts that imply their possession of a toolkit. It is assumed that some part of the rewards that they receive are used to keep that toolkit well-supplied.

TOOLKIT	COST	WEIGHT
Brewer's kit	4ℓ	9 lbs.
Carpenter's kit	1ℓ	6 lbs.
Climber's kit	5ℓ	12 lbs.
Cobbler's kit	1ℓ	5 lbs.
Cooking kit	8s	8 lbs.
Fisher's gear	16s	5 lbs.
Gaming kit	4s	1 lb.
Herbalist's kit	1ℓ	3 lbs.
Jeweler's kit	5ℓ	2 lbs.
Leatherworker's kit	1ℓ	5 lbs.
Mason's tools	2ℓ	8 lbs.
Musician's instrument*	1-6ℓ	1-10 lbs.
Potter's tools	2ℓ	3 lbs.
Smith's tools	4ℓ	8 lbs.
Tinker's kit	10ℓ	10 lbs.
Weaver's tools	8s	5 lbs.
Woodcarver's kit	8s	5 lbs.

\* The Hero can specify a type of instrument and the GM will assign a price.

## BURDENS AND GIFTS FOR NORMAL GEAR

The following are a list of modifiers for regular equipment and tools in order to present some variety to what is on offer:

### BURDENS

**Clumsy (toolkits).** This toolkit is awkwardly constructed or made for an esoteric technique. When you first use this tool you have disadvantage on your checks until you succeed at a check, at

which time you have adapted to the tools and make further ability checks as normal.

**Deficient (toolkits).** This tool or set of tools is weak or lacks necessary items. When using this kit if you roll a natural 1 on your ability check then the kit is no longer functional and must be replaced before you can use it again. Such kits are usually half the cost of a better made set of tools.

**Fragile (tools, metal or ceramic items).** These items are easily broken. Once during the course of an adventure, you may be required to make a DC 5 saving throw to prevent damage to such an item, usually after a fall or other substantially vigorous activity.

**Threadbare (cloth items).** This garment is shoddily made with the minimum materials needed for its construction. You gain disadvantage on any Charisma checks to impress people when wearing it or disadvantage on any saving throws against exhaustion or other negative environment effects when relying on its protection. Such items are usually half the normal cost or less.

### GIFTS

**Clever (toolkits).** These items are designed to make your work as easy as possible. You can spend inspiration before making a check with this tool. If you do so, instead of rolling, you are considered to have a 10 on the d20, to which you add your proficiency bonus and ability modifier as normal. If circumstances mean you should have advantage on the check, the result is considered to be 15 instead. Such tools can be up to double the normal price.

**Impressive (clothing).** The item is well-made, using materials and techniques beyond everyday concerns, marking you as a person of importance. While the clothes are brand-new, the first time you meet someone you gain advantage on the first Charisma checks required.

**Sturdy (any item).** If an environmental effect (such as fire) would destroy this item you can instead remove this gift. The object survived this time, but next time it won't be so lucky. Sturdy items often sell for half again as much as a normal item (e.g. a sturdy shovel might cost 24s).

## SOCIETY AND SERVICES

Most of the time a Hero will be invited to stay at the invitation of a local lord or other ring-giver, and this invitation will extend to their Followers and maybe even crew. In such a case there are no bills to pay. But at other times the Hero will need to provide their own lodging or may be responsible for their Followers and crew. The Hero rarely deals with these expenses directly, usually sending a trusted Follower with the coin purse.

### LODGINGS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The following services are available in larger population areas, not every settlement or outpost will be able to provide everything listed.

ITEM OR SERVICE	COST
Ale (mug)	2p
Ale (gallon)	10p
Banquet (per person)	2£
Bread (loaf)	1p
Cheese (hunk)	5p
Rent for a horse	2s/day
Passage on a ship	1s/day
Pay for a skilled labourer	16s/day
Pay for an unskilled labourer	10p/day
Meals (squalid, per day)	1p
(poor, per day)	3p
(modest, per day)	15p
(comfortable, per day)	4s
(wealthy, per day)	6s
(aristocratic, per day)	16s
Meat (chunk)	15p
Messenger	1s/day
Stabling (per horse, per day)	2s
Toll (road or gate)	1p
Wine (pitcher, common)	10p
Wine (bottle, fine)	2£

## MASTER CRAFTS

Many meadhalls will have expert shipwrights, armour-smiths, weapon-smiths and other craftspeople attached to them. Such master crafters are able to improve equipment by adding gifts to it, and are able to remove burdens. Most commonly, the only way to access their services is at the behest of the local ruler, who may require services in return.

Remove an equipment or ship burden	2£ (minimum)
Add an equipment or ship gift	3£ (minimum)

Those not directly under the patronage of a ring-giver will at the very least require an expenditure of silver to sufficiently win them over to work for the Hero. The prices listed here may or may not refer to a direct coin-based transaction, but they represent the amount of treasure that needs to be expended in the effort to secure such services. A Hero wishing to spend less silver on improving their equipment and ship might wish to invest some time in their downtime journaling (See page 134.)

The Gamemaster is also encouraged to think about how such services are acquired, and how long it takes, and what further story hooks this might create. What interest might a skilled shipwright, resident at a queen's hall, have in silver? What else might they need?

## TRADE GOODS, LIVESTOCK AND MOUNTS

The following items are more likely to be available in most settlements, though there will still be exceptions.

GOODS OR ANIMAL	COST
Bees, Swarm	3s
Bees, Hive	6s
Canvas (1 sq. yard)	2s
Chickens (5)	1p
Cow	14s
Dog, Lap	2s
Dog, Hound	20s
Dog, King's Hunting	1£
Dog, Common House	4p
Ewe and Lamb	1s
Flour (1 lb.)	1p
Goat	2s
Horse, Draft	3£
Horse, Riding	6£
Horse, War	30£
Ox	20s
Peregrine Falcon	1£
Pig	7s
Salt (1 lb.)	3p
Sheep	3s
Sparrow Hawk	6s
Spices (Exotic)	1£
Wheat (5 lbs.)	2p

### Gifts for Animals

The following improvements for animals can be made by spending time training the animal. See the Training activity on page 133.

**Keen Senses** (Hound, King's Hunting Dog, Falcon or Hawk). The animal has advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks.

**Tireless** (Horse or Ox). The animal has advantage on saving throws against exhaustion.

**Tough** (any animal). The animal has its maximum hit points, instead of the average (for example a goat would have 8 hp instead of the standard 4).

**FINES AND WERGILDS**

We expect both the Player and the Hero to be noble and virtuous but there may be times when they (or those that they serve) must pass out judgement upon others. While real Anglo-Saxon fines were complex and varied, we've simplified them here, focusing on two categories of individuals: ceorls (free folk) and thegns (soldiers, often landowners).

ACTIVITY	FINE
Ceorl seeking a new lord	60s
Ceorl entering into illicit union	50s
Ceorl neglecting military duty	30s
Ceorl working on a holy day	60s
Ceorl assaulting a ceorl	3£
Ceorl assaulting a thegn	*
Thegn accepting service of another's ceorl	3£
Thegn binding an innocent ceorl	10s
Thegn entering into illicit union	100s
Thegn neglecting military duty	3£
Thegn assaulting a ceorl	60s
Thegn battling another thegn	3£
Violation of a ceorl's protection	6s
Violation of a church's protection	50s
Violation of a thegn's protection	2£
Violation of the king's protection	5£
<b>Wergilds</b>	
Ceorl	10£
Thegn (landless)	30£
Thegn (landed)	60£

**ANGLO-SAXON SLAVERY**

The presence of slaves (théowas) can be a challenge for some players and there are several ways to deal with these concerns.

It is possible to tell the stories of Heroic deeds in the lands of legends without once having to concern yourself with slaves or slavery and it can simply not exist in your games: all peoples encountered are free.

But some may wish for a more nuanced rendering: in Anglo Saxon times, free folk sometimes sold themselves into slavery to improve their own prospects, or were captured in a raid or the aftermath of a battle. The laws of the land provide some protections for slaves, and give hope that they can win their freedom.

The Church, with its lessons of all of humanity being equal before Heaven, is fond of emancipation whenever possible. Including the plight of the least fortunate members of society may give your Hero new ways to express their valour. If you do wish to include the third class of slaves, then these fines and wergild are appropriate:

Ceorl assaulting a slave	60s
Slave working on a holy day	30s(†)
Slave assaulting anyone	*
Thegn assaulting a slave	60s
Wergild for a slave	60s(‡)

\*Such an offense would likely result in corporal punishment rather than a fine.

†This fine would be assessed to the slave's owner.

‡Payable to the slave's owner.







## SHIPS

In BEOWULF, all Heroes receive a ship at the outset of their life as a Hero. Along the way they may lose the ship, but such inconveniences are part of an epic tale, and a Hero will always be able to secure the return of the ship or the acquisition of a new one. The Ship is considered large enough to hold the Hero, their Followers, and the rest of the benches are filled by the Crew. The Crew don't take much part in the adventure, beyond making the ship "go". By and large, the crew of sailors do the unglamorous work of getting the ship from A to B. We don't spend too much time thinking about them.

### THE BASIC SHIPS

Since the Hero uses the Whale Road to reach adventure, a basic ship is always available to them. Even if the worst misfortune has beset the Hero and their ship is utterly destroyed and they themselves penniless, their reputation and family name are enough to borrow a basic vessel with which to return home, or at the very least be given passage on a passing ship. Of course, a successful Hero will want to improve their transportation and they have many options to do so.

Each ship has two basic values, its **Speed** and its **Range**. A sleeker ship will be quicker and thus able to pounce on an enemy vessel or escape from a dangerous sea monster. Sturdier and larger ships have more room for supplies and can last longer on the open ocean but are not as quick.

SHIP TYPE	SPEED	RANGE
Long-sided	24 + Proficiency Bonus	2 + (½ of Proficiency Bonus)
Wide-beamed	16 + Proficiency Bonus	4 + Proficiency Bonus

**Speed** is the number of feet that the ship can move in one round during naval combat. It has a base value that is improved by the captain's skill (the Hero) and ship improvements (gifts, see below).

**Range** is the number of days that the ship can travel without needing to be resupplied. Long-sided ships have a base value and add half the Hero's proficiency bonus, rounded down to represent the Hero's management and foresight. Gifts can also increase the ship's range.

Each ship has a standard crew of 12, allowing up to 6 passengers without affecting the ship's speed or range. The Hero never counts towards these numbers. Standard ships counts as Huge in size, some gifts and burdens might change this.

### THE CREW

A beginning vessel comes with a willing crew, who are able to operate the ship in almost any condition. They are not Heroes or even Followers — at the first sign of a Monster (or even some Foes) they will scatter and hide. But they can be relied upon to help the ship carry the Hero to their destination.

For a basic vessel, the crew size is 12. The ship can be operated by only half this number (6) but it gains the Missing Crew burden (see below). The ship can carry additional passengers equal to half the crew (i.e. 6 passengers for a total of 18 people carried) without an impact on speed. More passengers means that the ship has the Encumbered burden.

### MORE CREW

If you are carrying more sailors than your ship has seats, those additional sailors count as passengers, not crew. You can add crew by selecting the Additional Benches gift below. This increases the normal crew size by 2, the minimum crew size by 1, and the passenger size by 1. It also reduces the Range of the ship by 1 day. A ship must have a Range of at least 1, otherwise it cannot leave port.



The Extra Stores gift increases a ship's range. Both imply either additional construction to an existing vessel or a possible upgrade to a new ship.

## FOLLOWERS AS CREW

Any Follower with the Sailor gift can count as a crew member instead of a passenger. Of course, Followers sometimes perish during adventures while your crew might flee a monster but are rarely in direct danger.

## SHIP UPKEEP

The Hero must pay 2ℓ per voyage for the ship's upkeep. This represents regular maintenance, crew recruitment and wages, and the restocking of regular items. Crew can be found all around the Whale Road, and any time upkeep is paid on a ship, the crew is considered to be replenished to its full complement. You might also spend money repairing the ship (to remove burdens) or improving the ship (to add gifts).

## BURDENS AND GIFTS FOR SHIPS

The following options provide positive or negative properties for various ships. Some negative properties can be corrected by time and/or money, others are inherent to a craft and can't be changed.

### BURDENS

The following negative properties can be used to represent issues with a ship:

**Damaged.** The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The repair cost is 10ℓ and a month of work.

**Encumbered** (*applies if you have more passengers than allowed*). The ship's Speed is reduced by 1 for each additional person. The ship's Range is decreased by 1 day for each three additional persons, rounding down. The ship has disadvantage on manoeuvres (see next page).

**Missing Crew** (*applies automatically if you have half or less of your standard crew*). The ship's Speed is reduced to half its normal value, rounding down. The Range is increased by one-half, rounding down (i.e. a ship with a Range of 3 has a Range of 4 with Missing Crew).

**Small.** This ship is small for its intended purpose (it is a Large object). Reduce the crew by half and the passengers by half as well. Add half again to the Range of the ship. Round down in all cases. This burden is inherent and cannot be changed without acquiring a new ship.

*Example: a Small Long-sided ship helmed by a starting Hero would have a crew of 6, can hold 3 passengers (plus the Hero), and has a Range of 4 days.*

**Weakened.** The ship has been hurt in some way, but not enough to count as being properly damaged. The ship's Speed is reduced by 1 and it has disadvantage on manoeuvres. You can remove this Burden by spending 5ℓ and 1 week in repairs.

### GIFTS

The following properties provide benefits for the ship. Each entry that can be added to an existing ship gives you cost and time requirements.

**Additional Benches.** You gain the room for two more Crew, allowing you to carry more Passengers but also requiring a higher minimum Crew (see the rules for Crew, above). Add 1ℓ to the monthly upkeep cost. You can take this Gift up to three times (six times if the ship is Large). Costs 3ℓ and one week of work.

**Deep Bite.** The ship has advantage when making the Come To manoeuvre. This improvement involves lengthening the rudder and costs 5ℓ and one month of work.

**Musician.** Your crew improves their oar timing and efficiency. Costs 1ℓ and 1 week of training. The ship gains 1 Speed.

**Extra Stores.** The ship gains room for more supplies, increasing Range by 1 day. Spend 5ℓ once and add 1ℓ to the monthly upkeep. You can take this Gift up to three times (six times if the ship is Large).

**Large.** This ship is exceptionally wide or long and is a Gargantuan object. Such ships must be built with this gift inherent and will likely cost the Hero 50ℓ or more if they must pay for its construction.

**Reinforced.** The ship has advantage on Constitution saving throws. Costs 2ℓ and two weeks of work.

**Rigging.** An expert sailor teaches you how to set your rigging for maximum effect. Costs 1ℓ and 1 week of training. The ship gains 1 Speed.

**Shield-rack.** An attacking ship has disadvantage on any ranged attacks made against your crew. Costs 1ℓ and a week of work.

**Trimmed Sails.** You have become an expert at positioning the sails to catch as much wind as possible. Costs 5ℓ and a month of training. The ship gains 1 Speed.

## SHIP COMBAT

During this age of the world, ships rarely do damage directly to another. Ships are expensive and it's the goal of any mannish Foes to capture the ship, not destroy it. Even monstrous sea beasts are much more interested in the edible crew and Followers, rather than the tough and indigestible ship.



**Manoeuvring Speed.** This value is equal to 1/10 the ship's maximum Speed, rounded down. You'll use this value to make sudden changes during combat.

*For example: Bold Herugar's ship Battle-starling has a maximum speed of 24, and its manoeuvring speed is 2 (24/10 = 2.4, rounded down).*

## BEGINNING A SEA BATTLE

A sea battle begins when the ships are within sight of each other. This could be miles away, or considerably closer in the fog-bound and rough seas of the North. If the Hero's ship is faster than the enemy, then they can outpace them and avoid the encounter if desired. Otherwise, when the ships are within ranged weapons' fire (i.e. 600 ft. or so) it is time to roll for initiative, but using Wisdom (for piloting knowledge) instead of Dexterity.

## SHIP MANOEUVRES

On each ship's turn, the ship has movement and an action. Also, on the same initiative count any non-crew can take an action and/or use their movement, such as using a ranged weapon, or making a horizontal jump onto an enemy ship, or extending a boarding plank or grappling line (see below).

### Ship Movement

Ships always move before taking any actions. A ship can be moving at any speed up to its maximum Speed. The ship first moves its current speed forward in the direction that it is facing. The pilot can then increase or decrease the ship's speed by its manoeuvring speed (up to its maximum speed). It can also change its facing by one step (e.g. from travelling north-west to either north or west).

*For example: The Battle-starling is getting close to the raider's ship and Herugar does not want to overshoot his foe, so he reduces speed. The ship moves forward 24 feet this round and reduces its current speed by 2, so next round it will only move forward 22 feet. He also moves the rudder so that his ship is facing due west for next turn's move.*

### Ship Actions

One of the following actions can be taken:

**All In.** The ship surges forward its Manoeuvring Speed as the crew makes a desperate effort to gain a little more. Note: this surge forward does not affect the ship's current speed as it is a temporary effect.

**Come To.** The ship changes its facing by one step or two steps if the Hero succeeds at a DC 15 Strength (Watercraft) check.

**Full Stop.** The ship's current speed is reduced by its Manoeuvring Speed. Note that this is in addition to any reduction made during the movement step, so a ship can reduce its speed quite effectively by taking this action.

**Uncontrolled.** The ship makes no change during this turn. This action is required if the Hero uses their action this turn to do anything other than control the ship.

## BOARDING ACTIONS

When ships get close, within 30 feet of each other, boarding actions can begin. The usual procedure is for some of the warriors to throw grappling lines in order to tie the ships together, then others cross over by leaping or using boarding planks. Each of these are an action, but once the character is on the other ship, combat can proceed as normal. The only difference might be that the setting of the combat is constrained and only a certain number of Followers are available.

**Grappling Lines.** You can activate a Follower to hook the enemy ship with a rope and draw them together. The Follower must succeed at a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Once three lines are established, one Follower can Leap Across per round.

**Leap Across.** If the ships are tied together, you can activate a Follower to take the Leap Across action and automatically succeed. If the ships are not tied together but are within 10 feet of each other then the Follower must succeed at a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to make the leap.

**Boarding Plank.** If the ships are within 10 feet of each other, you can activate a Follower to place a boarding plank between the two ships. Each plank placed allows one Follower to move to the other ship each round.

## FIGHTING MONSTERS

When sea monsters attack, they usually do so by surprising the ship and emerging from the depths directly underneath or next to the ship. A monster that is wholly in the water can only be targeted by ranged weapons. Monsters with tentacles or those who tend to climb on the ship can be fought with melee weapons. Otherwise you use the normal rules for combat and Followers.

Some monsters might target the ship directly, using AC 10 to damage it. When the ship has taken 20 points of damage, it gains the Weakened Burden. If it takes 40 points of damage then the Weakened Burden becomes Damaged instead. If the ship takes 80 points of damage then it is destroyed and the crew, Followers and Hero must swim to safety. You can use the Rescue the Hero Follower ability to make sure that your Hero reaches the shore.



## LOSING A SHIP

It might chance that due to damage or other reasons that a ship is lost to the Hero. As mentioned earlier, a Hero always has the opportunity to acquire a new ship but, by default, that ship has none of the Gifts (and none of the Burdens) of the old ship. Additional crew are left behind since there are no benches for them, and the sailors must learn the new ship before any special training will take hold (meaning that you'll need to spend money and time again before acquiring those sorts of Gifts). The GM may or may not allow the Hero a choice of basic ship. A local ship owner will always take a chance on gifting a Hero a basic ship.

If the Hero desires more than a basic ship as a replacement, then they face a problem. Powerful ships are not simply waiting to be bought at a ship-shop anywhere around the Whale Road. Vessels like these are powerful tools, built under the patronage of nobility, and anyone who owns one has a use for it. They cannot be simply bought.

In order to acquire a ship with similar or identical upgrades to the one they lost, a Hero will need to return to their home hall, or occasionally a recent hall where they have won significant favour. They will need to arrive bearing suitably rich gifts, may need to make peace with their home ruler if necessary, and may well be asked to perform service for, or swear oaths to, that ruler. To replace a lost ship with one of similar upgrades will cost a minimum of 20-30£ in gifts, and should always come with adventure hooks, and opportunities to roleplay the relationships involved. The gifted ship will also be very likely to come with strings attached, and if the gift price is lower, then the services owed will be more costly.

## HEROIC FEATS

A feat represents a talent or an area of expertise that gives a character special capabilities. It embodies training, experience, and abilities beyond what a class provides.

At certain levels, your class gives you the Ability Score Improvement feature. Using the optional feats rule, you can forgo taking that feature to take a feat of your choice instead. You can take each feat only once, unless the feat's description says otherwise.

You must meet any prerequisite specified in a feat to take that feat. If you ever lose a feat's prerequisite, you can't use that feat until you regain the prerequisite.

For example, the Grappler feat requires you to have a Strength of 13 or higher. If your Strength is reduced below 13 somehow—perhaps by a withering curse—you can't benefit from the Grappler feat until your Strength is restored.

### ARMOUR OF FAITH

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be The Church*

Improve your Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma score by 1. You have advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

### AT SPEAR'S LENGTH

*Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher*

Improve your Strength score by 1. If you are wielding a spear, you can use your reaction when an enemy within reach attacks to fend off most of its attacks, allowing it to make only one weapon attack per turn.

### BALANCED MIND

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Neutral*

Increase your Constitution score by 1. You have become finely tuned to the pattern of your own thoughts. By spending a minute in quiet contemplation you can end any charm or enchantment effect upon yourself.

### BASHING STRIKE

*Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher*

Increase your Strength score by 1. You are adept with fighting offensively with your shield, which must have the battering property. When you do melee weapon damage to an opponent of Medium size or smaller, you can use your bonus action to cause it to make a Strength saving throw versus 8 plus your proficiency bonus and your Strength modifier. If the creature fails the saving throw it is pushed five feet away from you and knocked prone.

## CUNNING MOVEMENT

*Prerequisite: Dexterity 13 or higher*

Increase your Dexterity score by 1. You can take a bonus action on each of your turns in combat. This action can be used only to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

## DIVINE STRIKE

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be The Church*

Increase your Wisdom score by 1. By uttering a quick prayer, you can bring truth and light to the Monsters of the world. You gain the following benefits:

- You have Prayer points equal to 1 plus your Wisdom modifier, (minimum 1).
- When you do damage to a Monster, you can spend a Prayer point to add your proficiency bonus to the damage total and convert the damage type into radiant damage.

You regain spent Prayer points by devout worship during a long rest.

## FERAL BRUTALITY

*Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher*

Advance your Strength score by 1. You gain the following benefits:

- You gain advantage on initiative rolls.
- If you are wielding weapons in both hands, they do not need to be light weapons, as long as they are not heavy or two-handed.
- Your unarmed strikes do 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

## FRIEND TO ÆLL

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Neutral*

Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1. When you enter a Mead Hall or other meeting place, you make your first ability check with advantage and continue doing so until you fail a roll.

Once you've used this feature, you must take a long rest before using it again.

## FOE MOCKERY

*Prerequisite: Charisma 13 or higher*

Improve your Charisma score by 1. You have learned how to use your wit to distract, confuse and otherwise sap the confidence and competence of others. You gain the following benefits:

- You have Mockery points equal to 1 plus your Charisma modifier, to a minimum of 1 point.
- When a creature that you can see within 60 feet of you makes an attack roll, an ability check, or a damage roll, you

can use your reaction and spend a Mockery point to reduce the roll by your Charisma modifier. You can choose to use this feature after the creature makes its roll, but before the GM determines whether the attack roll or ability check succeeds or fails, or before the creature deals its damage. The creature is immune if it can't hear you or if it's immune to being charmed.

You recover spent Mockery points when you take a long rest.

## FORTUNE'S TIDE

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways or Neutral*

When you roll a 1 on the d20, you gain a Fortune point if you accept the result. You can spend a Fortune point to reroll the d20, choosing to do so after you have rolled but before the GM has announced whether the roll was successful or not. You can only spend one Fortune point per d20 roll.

## GRAPPLER

*Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher*

Improve your Strength score by 1. You've developed the skills necessary to hold your own in close-quarters grappling. You gain the following benefits:

- You have advantage on attack rolls against a creature you are grappling.
- You can use a bonus action to make a single unarmed attack against a creature that you have grappled.



## HERO'S RESOLVE

You gain proficiency in saving throws for either Strength, Intelligence or Charisma. You cannot select an ability for which you are already proficient with that saving throw. You can take this feat more than once, choosing a new ability each time.

## HORDEBREAKER

*Prerequisite: Charisma 13 or higher*

Increase your Charisma score by 1. When you kill an opponent in combat you can use a bonus action to force each ally of that opponent to make a Charisma saving throw (the difficulty is 8 plus your proficiency bonus plus your Charisma modifier) or gain the following feature:

**Coward:** This creature gains the defeated condition when any ally is slain.

*Note: the feature only affects the opponents going forward, so the next time you slay one of them then those that failed the saving throw will be defeated.*

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.



## MIRACULOUS AVOIDANCE

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be The Church*

Increase your Dexterity score by 1. When an attacker hits you with an attack, you can use your reaction to negate all damage from that attack. You must then take a long rest before using this feature again.

## NATURAL COMMUNION

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways*

Increase your Wisdom score by 1. You are at peace with the spirits of the world and can benefit from their presence. You gain the following benefits:

- If you take a short rest in a natural environment, you recover hit points equal to your level plus your Wisdom modifier without spending any Hit Dice.
- If you spend 10 minutes communing with the local spirits, you can ask the GM three questions, each of which can be answered by 'yes', 'no', 'in flux' (for uncertain answers) or 'unknowable' (for questions beyond the local spirits).

You must take a long rest before attempting another communion with the nature spirits.

## PRIMEVAL SENSES

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways*

Increase your Intelligence score by 1. You gain preternatural senses that help you in combat. You gain the following benefits:

- You cannot be surprised in combat.
- When you attack a creature you cannot see, your inability to see it does not impose disadvantage on your attack rolls against it.
- You are aware of the location of any invisible creature within 30 feet of you, as long as the creature isn't hidden from you and you are not blinded or deafened.

## QUICK STRIDE

*Prerequisite: Dexterity 13 or higher*

Improve your Dexterity score by 1. Your speed increases by 10 feet as long as you are not wearing heavy armour.

## RAGEBEARER

*Prerequisite: Constitution 13 or higher*

Improve your Constitution score by 1. You can use your bonus action to fight with primal ferocity. While enraged, you gain the following benefits:

- When you make a melee weapon attack, you add your Proficiency Bonus to your damage roll.
- You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage.
- You have advantage on melee attack rolls but opponents have advantage on all attack rolls against you.

The effect lasts for one minute or if your turn ends and you haven't attacked a hostile creature since your last turn or taken damage since then. You can choose to end the effect as a bonus action.

You must take a short rest before you can use this feature again.

## REMEMBERED SECRET

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways*

Increase your Intelligence score by 1. When you take this feat, choose one of the following benefits:

- You can sense the presence of magical items and creatures within 30 feet of you. You can spend an action studying a visible creature or object to have a vague understanding of its power and type. You cannot detect targets protected by 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, a thin sheet of lead or 3 feet of wood or dirt.
- You have learned the language of beasts: choose either air (for birds and bats), water (for fish, amphibians, water-going mammals or reptiles) or land (for most mammals and reptiles). You can spend up to 10 minutes communicating with a friendly beast, possibly learning something about the local area and what they have perceived in the last day or so. You might be able to persuade a beast to perform a small favour for you, at the GM's discretion.
- You can touch a dying creature and invest enough of your own spirit into them so that they become stable. This has no effect on undead or constructs.

You can perform your chosen benefit twice and then must take a short or long rest. You can choose this feat a second time, if you do so, you learn the other two benefits and may perform any combination of benefits up to five times before resting.

## SECOND WIND

*Prerequisite: Constitution 13 or higher*

Raise your Constitution score by 1. You have a limited well of stamina that you can draw on to protect yourself from harm. You gain the following benefit:

- On your turn, you can use a bonus action to recover hit points equal to 1d10 plus your Constitution score.

Once you use this feature, you must take a short or long rest to use it again.

## SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be The Church*

Increase your Intelligence or Wisdom score by 1. You are very familiar with guiding small groups of people that understand precepts of the Church. If you are able to spend 1 minute speaking to a group no larger than ten times your Proficiency Bonus, you can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) or Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, the group will perform one task for up to four hours.

For example, you might suggest that they all shelter in their homes, set up simple barricades to protect their village, prepare a meal for visitors or similar tasks. The group will not perform actions that are clearly harmful or dangerous.

You must take a long rest before using this feature again.

## SKILL ADEPT

When you take this feat, choose three skills. You become proficient in the skills, or if you are already proficient, you gain expertise in the skill.

## SPEAR THROWER

*Prerequisite: Strength 13 or higher*

Improve your Strength score by 1. You have mastered throwing a spear harder and further than most: when you throw a spear it has a range of 25/75 and does 1d8 piercing damage.



## SOOTHING WORDS

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways*

Improve your Wisdom score by 1. You know some of the secret words of the universe that can give creatures new strength. You have a healing pool equal to your proficiency bonus plus your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1 point).

You can spend a bonus action and 1 or more points from your pool to restore 1d4 hp per point to yourself or another character by touching the recipient. If you spend three points on a spent Follower then they become no longer spent.

You regain any expended points after taking a long rest.



## TURN THE UNHOLY

*Prerequisite: Divine Strike*

Increase your Wisdom score by 1. By reciting the Holy Tenets, you can exert control over fiends and the undead. You gain the following benefit:

- As an action, you spend a Prayer point and target any fiends or undead within 30 feet of you. Each must make a Wisdom saving throw (the DC is 8 plus your Proficiency Bonus plus your Wisdom modifier). If the creature fails its saving throw, it is turned for 1 minute or until it takes damage.

A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from you as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of you. It also can't take reactions. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature must use the Dodge action.

## WARRIOR'S REST

Improve your Charisma score by 1. During a short rest, you can perform a song or oration to revitalise yourself and any allies. You have a healing pool equal to your level plus 5 times your Charisma modifier. You may spend points from this healing pool to restore hit points for yourself or an ally or you may spend 10 points from the pool to remove a condition from yourself or an ally. You recover all points when you take a long rest.

## WORDS OF DOOM

*Prerequisite: your alignment must be Old Ways*

Increase your Charisma score by 1. By uttering words of praise to the Old Gods, you can bring doom to the Monsters of the world. You gain the following benefits:

- You have Doom points equal to 1 plus your Charisma modifier, (minimum 1).
- When you do damage to a Monster, you can spend a Doom point to add your Proficiency Bonus to the damage total and convert the damage type into force damage.

You regain spent Doom points by meditating on the inevitable ending of the world during a long rest.



## MORE THAN ONE PLAYER

In BEOWULF: AGE OF HEROES we usually expect one Hero — an exceptional individual who is accompanied by Followers that aid them but are rarely directly in the action. However, this doesn't always need to be the case. It is true that a lot of our inspiration draws on stories about a singular hero, but there are

other stories about a team of exceptional people and you can use that model as well.

## BUILDING A GROUP

If you choose to play BEOWULF with multiple players then your group will not have any Followers. Instead, the group should be able to accomplish together what a singular Hero and their Followers could by themselves. There are at least three different ways to build such a group:

- **Use the Hero class as-is.** (Best for small groups.) If you've been playing with your spouse or offspring and they want to show off to one of their friends then limiting the Followers to just a few per Hero and allowing a second Hero works well.
- **Use the Hero class** but adjust the starting values. If there are three or more Heroes, each Hero starts with 8 plus their Constitution modifier hit points instead of the higher starting amount. There are no Followers.
- **Use outsider classes**, using the core rules for character generation.

## NO FOLLOWERS

If you're playing with multiple Heroes (or other classes) and you don't have any Followers then when an adventure gives a Follower a burden or gift, a player character receives it instead. If a burden or gift requires you to become spent, you instead gain a level of exhaustion, and if a gift makes a Follower unspent you recover a level of exhaustion instead. If a burden or gift indicates that the recipient would be killed, the character instead loses half (rounded down) of their current Hit Dice. If a burden indicates that a Follower cannot be activated, then choose one of the PC's features. That feature is no longer available to the character until they take a long rest.

## BALANCE EXPECTATIONS

Development has shown that a singular Hero with a full set of Followers is about equal in power to a group of four standard characters. This makes using Challenge ratings and even non-BEOWULF adventures very easy.

If you have two Heroes with their extra starting hit points and a few Followers this pattern will continue through the lower levels. But at higher levels you may wish to carefully judge the situation as it is easy for enemies with legendary and lair actions to outperform dual Heroes. If you have a regular sized party of Heroes (or other classes or a mix of core classes and Heroes) then you can continue to use challenge rating and level suggestions. Of course, there is always the caveat that these tools are not perfect and can't anticipate your group's exact composition, tactical acumen, or environmental factors.

PART THREE  
FOLLOWERS





*A faithful hearth-troop, oath fated  
A shield and shelter to their lord  
No hanger back when hard hacking was heeded.  
A Bloody blade companion beside his lord  
Never once his master needed  
check his back in boisterous battle.  
His loyal stout spear  
As straight as his service.  
She a steady ship bearing her lord.  
Through a crashing sea of seething swords  
Made loyal by love and mead's measure  
Rewarded in firebright rings and bold friendship  
A wound binder bound by fighter oaths.  
Neither would unravel in faithless fealty*

## FOLLOWERS

*And now the bold one from bands of Geats  
comrades chose, the keenest of warriors  
e'er he could find; with fourteen men  
the sea-wood he sought, and, sailor proved,  
led them on to the land's confines.  
Time had now flown; afloat was the ship,  
boat under bluff. On board they climbed,  
warriors ready; waves were churning  
sea with sand; the sailors bore  
on the breast of the bark their bright array,  
their mail and weapons: the men pushed off,  
on its willing way, the well-braced craft.*

Beowulf does not go to face Grendel or his mother alone, neither should your Hero venture forth without some loyal friends to aid them. These companions are known as Followers in BEOWULF. A starting Hero has a few Followers from their home meadhall, and will encounter many more on their adventures. Winning and retaining Followers is an essential part of the game.

### FOLLOWERS IN THE GAME

Each Follower in the game has a name, any descriptive elements you care to add (like a physical description or personal history), and one or more gifts and/or burdens. These are recorded on a Follower Card. A blank card is provided on page 263. Collectively we call both gifts and burdens tags. Each tag provides some rules that allow (or require) a Follower to do something special, outside of the normal rules. But it also serves as a descriptor: sometimes an adventure might ask if any of your Followers are Brave, Distracted, Prophetic or Witless (Or more, there are many Burdens and Gifts).

### THE FOLLOWER TURN

Outside of combat a Follower can be consulted to use a passive feature or activated to make use of a direct feature at any time. In combat, the Followers roll initiative as a group and, during their turn, can move and act as the Hero directs, perhaps activating a single Follower or a group of Followers depending on the action given.

### FOLLOWER CHECKS, SAVING THROWS AND ATTACK ROLLS

For record-keeping simplicity, it is assumed that all Followers have +0 to all of their ability checks, saving throws and attack rolls. Certain burdens and gifts might give them advantage or disadvantage on a roll but they never add or subtract anything from the d20 result.

### FOLLOWER DAMAGE

Followers don't receive hit point damage like enemies or the Hero. Ignore any such damage, only making death saving throws when a

Follower's burden or gift specifies. You can imagine that they have sufficient hit points to face a monster, just like the Hero does.

### ACTIVATING FOLLOWERS

A Follower is available if the Follower is in the same location as the Hero. An available Follower can be activated and the Hero can benefit from any passive benefits the Follower provides. Otherwise Followers fade into the background or are present at any location that it would be reasonable to find them. This means that many times the Followers are quietly accompanying the Hero, until they are needed.

Followers are activated to use one of their gifts or burdens. A Hero can activate a Follower on the Follower Turn and can also use their reaction to activate a Follower. This means in most normal cases up to two Followers can be activated in a combat round. However, some Follower tags cause all Followers with that tag to become active (for example 'Rescue the Hero' and 'Weapon-bearer'). This might allow many more Followers to be active, especially if it is an important fight.

A Follower might be killed or slain. The difference is that 'slain' represents a heroic death rather than just bad fortune, and can provide mechanical benefits.

### SPENDING FOLLOWERS

Many times a Follower will become spent, meaning they cannot be activated again until the Hero takes a long rest. When you activate a Follower's gift (or if the GM activates a burden) then the Follower may become spent. A spent Follower is no longer available — they might return to the ship, be laid up in a bed at the meadhall, or otherwise gone. Sometimes they've just had their big narrative moment and might remain with the Hero, but they won't come back into the story in an important way.

It's important to note that not all gifts or burdens require a Follower to become spent. Those that do will clearly specify when the Follower becomes spent. Followers become unspent when a Hero takes a long rest.

### WHAT ELSE CAN FOLLOWERS DO?

For the most part, Followers are used solely via their gifts and burdens, but sometimes they have additional parts to play. An adventure may specify that a Follower can assist the Hero in swaying a NPC's opinion, or offer extra mechanical options to help the Hero resolve an encounter. Followers' tags may also be used as a hook for an additional mechanical effect.

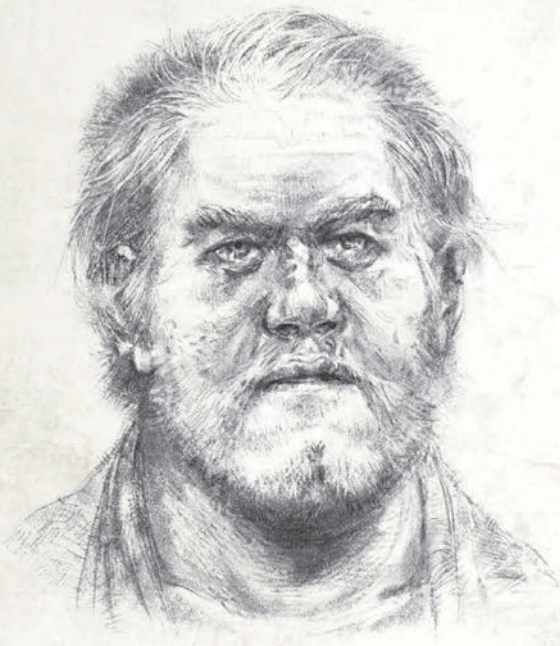
### IS EVERYONE A FOLLOWER?

No. The crew of the Hero's ship and most of the background characters at a meadhall or other location are just regular non-player characters and will not join the Hero on their dangerous missions in the way Followers do.

## NON-HUMAN FOLLOWERS

A Hero may chance to meet an exceptional beast, known as a Noble Animal, who can serve as a Follower. Noble Animals can earn gifts and burdens like other Followers, but also have some that are only appropriate for them (see page 89). If a Noble Animal receives a gift or burden that doesn't make sense for them, swap it for one of their native ones.

GMs might allow an adversary or even a Monster to serve as a Follower. In these unusual cases, the Follower can receive any gifts and burdens that it earns, but if a gift or burden does not make sense for that adversary then the GM will select an alternative one.



## HOW MANY FOLLOWERS CAN A HERO HAVE?

The number of Followers that a Hero can command is based on their fame, station and personality. Use the following formula to determine a Hero's current maximum Followers:

(twice the Hero's proficiency bonus) + Charisma modifier

If, for some reason, a Hero finds themselves with more Followers than they can command, they must release Followers (see page 88) at the earliest opportunity. Which Followers to release is always at the choice of the Player.

**Example:** *Swirtvara is a new Hero, with a proficiency bonus of +2 and a Charisma modifier of +3. Her calculation is  $(2 \times +2) + (+3)$ , or a total of 7. She can have up to seven Followers under her command. When her proficiency bonus goes to +3, this will automatically increase to nine.*

## NEGLECTED FOLLOWERS

If a Hero tries to keep more Followers than their maximum, when they had the chance to release them, all of their Followers gain the Malcontent burden. The Follower limit represents the Hero's ability to keep their Followers engaged and feeling useful. Both fame (proficiency bonus) and personal magnetism (Charisma) contribute, but every Hero has a limit to their retinue.

**Malcontent.** *This Follower is rarely happy with their lot in life. When activated, roll a d20. On a 1, they refuse to act.*

## MAKING NEW FOLLOWERS

When you create a new Hero and a home meadhall for that Hero, you will also want to create a number of Assistants that are available at that meadhall. This should be a collaboration between the Player and the Gamemaster, perhaps each of them creating half of the Followers, or taking turns selecting gifts and burdens.

## CHOOSING GIFTS

Each Assistant begins with Engage, either Rescue the Hero or Take a Blow, an optional alignment gift (Church-goer, Fence-sitter or Sky-minder), and up to two starting gifts (those marked with an asterisk). You can choose to add a burden for colour or take a burden on in order to earn another gift (starting or regular). You should focus on creating a variety of Followers. After all, a simple Follower with limited skills will be less expensive to maintain over their lifetime. A highly able Follower will be more expensive, and probably more specialised.

Once you've created a sufficient number of Assistants (we recommend at least equal to the maximum number of Followers that the Hero can take with them) you can work with the Gamemaster to select starting Followers. The Gamemaster might require a certain number to be Warriors, to already have some Followers pre-selected or the two of you might take turns picking out who you feel will be most interesting for the adventure.

## NOBLE ANIMALS STARTING GIFTS

A noble animal Follower starts with either Rescue the Hero or Take a Blow and two gifts (starting or regular) of your choice. You can select one burden for colour or one burden to add an additional gift.

## RECRUITING FOLLOWERS

During the course of an adventure, the Hero will meet NPCs who may become Followers. These fall into three categories. Some will be *Simple Warriors* who can be found at every meadhall in every land; others might be *Potential Followers*, put into the adventure for the purpose of being recruited, and who may well have some interesting gifts and burdens; others still will be *Assistants*, who are foreground NPCs who temporarily aid a character during the course of a story and might later join the Hero on a permanent basis.

A *Simple Warrior* begins with four gifts: Engage, Rescue the Hero, Take a Blow and your choice of Weapon-bearer (Axe) or Weapon-bearer (Spear). As they accompany the Hero on future adventures they might acquire additional gifts and burdens, but for now they are very straightforward Followers. Recruiting Simple Warriors is automatic and they will initially join you for the fame and fortune that travelling with a Hero brings.

To recruit a *Potential Follower*, you must make them an initial offer of payment to secure their loyalty, which is equal to 10 shillings for each of their gifts. Their burdens do not affect the cost (like many people, Followers often have a poor sense of their strengths and weaknesses). If you offer twice this amount or more, you have advantage on the recruitment check.

To make the recruitment check, make a Charisma (Persuasion) check where the DC is 10 plus the Follower's number of gifts. On a success, the Potential Follower agrees to come with you, becoming a regular Follower. If you fail the check, the Follower declines to join you, at least immediately.

*Assistants* may be converted from temporary helpers to permanent Followers, but only if some special requirements are met. These requirements are given in the adventure where they appear.

You generally get a chance to recruit new Followers as part of the ending of an adventure, so that you are ready to begin your next adventure with your companions in place. Some adventures might allow you to recruit additional Assistants at the beginning or middle of the story. When you return to your meadhall, any Followers from your homeland might still be there to recruit. See Follower Journals starting on page 134 for more information about this.

### FAILWARDS WITH FOLLOWERS

A Follower rejecting the Hero's recruitment offer is a perfect opportunity for interesting roleplaying or assigning a secondary quest to an adventure. The NPC has some reason that they won't (or can't) join the Hero. This might be due to an old feud (that the Hero has to make amends for, with either words or treasure), an existing oath or obligation (perhaps the Hero can cause the oath/obligation to be released by performing some service), or a boastful nature that requires the Hero to prove their worthiness as a leader by taking some action or competing against the Follower.

### RECRUITING A NOBLE ANIMAL

Having a noble animal join your Followers requires something a little different. You don't pay noble animals to join you or even to remain with your crew. They join only if they judge you worthy and remain only as long as that judgement remains.

To prove yourself worthy, make a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check with the DC set at 13 plus the noble animal's number of gifts. On a success, you gain the noble animal as a Follower. On a failure, you cannot have the noble animal yet. You cannot make another attempt until you chance across the noble animal again (having at least one adventure before that happens).



## THE REWARD STAGE

As an adventure ends, the local rulers might reward the Hero with treasure: silver and gold in many forms. But the Hero is not just a ring-winner, but also a ring-giver, because they in turn must reward their loyal crew and Followers.

This stage takes place at the end of the adventure, either before the Hero sets sail for their next destination or perhaps onboard the ship or at their home meadhall afterwards.

### REWARDING CREW

The crew's regular payment is part of the ship's maintenance cost (see page 75). If you decide to reward them for extraordinary service then a gift of 10-30 additional silver pennies (an average of 1 or 2 each) is acceptable.

### RETAINING FOLLOWERS

For each of your remaining Followers, you must pay 10 shillings for each of their gifts (their burdens do not affect this amount, except for the exceptions below). As long as you pay this amount and do not cause strife among your Followers, they will stay with

the Hero and continue to adventure with them, at least until they believe they're ready to become Heroes themselves (see below).

While the required costs are given in shillings, treasure-items are often provided in terms of £-value. Remember 40 shillings is equivalent to 1£. Some small measure (perhaps 1-2£ worth) of a leader's reward will be given in coins, which will help keep things balanced. Followers tend to live in the moment and will not remember that you overpaid them last time if they are being shortchanged this time.

The following conditions can cause strife:

- **If a Follower is paid much less than everyone else.** A Follower that receives half the pay or less of the next least paid Follower gains the *Envious* and *Sullen* burdens.
- **If a Follower with more gifts gets less money than a Follower with fewer gifts.** The Follower with more gifts gains the *Unappreciated* and *Sullen* burdens. A Follower with the *Eager* burden loses it if they become *Unappreciated*.
- **If you cannot afford to pay your Followers at all.** Each unpaid Follower gains the *Unappreciated* and *Sullen* burdens temporarily. The burdens are removed as long as you pay the Follower after the next adventure.

**Envious.** *When you pay this Follower you must either pay them 20 shillings for each of their gifts or you must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain them. On a failure, the Follower leaves the Hero.*

**Unappreciated.** *After paying this Follower you must make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain the Follower. On a failure, the Follower departs.*

**Sullen.** *This Follower cannot be activated without also becoming spent at the end of the activation. This tag is permanent, unless the Player chooses to remove it (see page 88).*

## SLAIN FOLLOWERS

Over the course of the adventure, Followers might be slain by a Monster. This is different from being killed as the result of failing a death saving throw against an environmental challenge or minor adversary. When a Follower is slain, it is because the Player has chosen for that Follower to make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the Hero.

Such a sacrifice is transformative for the Hero and they gain an XP bonus to represent the new wisdom and responsibility the Hero shoulders as they go forth without their friend.

**XP bonus** = 25 × (Follower's number of gifts - Follower's number of burdens) × Hero's proficiency bonus

The Hero receives the XP bonus and gains inspiration if they do not already have it. If you are using Achievement awards instead of XP, this event can count as an Achievement award.



## DEAD FOLLOWERS

The Hero fights Monsters and that sometimes means that Followers die. However, this is not ignored in the story—villagers will ask after their fate, the crew will wonder what became of their friend, and, sooner or later, the Hero will have to inform the Follower's family of their fate. Also, those Followers who survived will tell their own tales. If the Hero's tale contradicts their own, then shadow will hang over the Hero's head.

If you are recruiting Followers after an adventure in which three or more Followers were slain, or two or more Followers were killed, then you have disadvantage on your recruitment checks.

The family of a dead Follower may demand wergild, at least one pound of silver for each gift the Follower possessed. A Hero may make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) roll to reduce this cost by the number of burdens the Follower possessed but speaking ill of the dead also causes disadvantage on any other social rolls made in the same hall or village.

If the total number of dead Followers exceeds the Hero's level plus their proficiency bonus then any current Followers gain the *Untrusting* burden, permanently.

**Untrusting.** *This Follower doubts the good intentions of the Hero. In a dangerous situation, the Follower must succeed at a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw in order to be activated.*

Further consequences of a callous approach to Followers may involve other penalties: kings may be reluctant to host the Hero, ship-builders might charge more for repairs or upgrades, spiritual Followers may have trouble connecting with nature or God, etc.

## DEPARTING FOLLOWERS

Followers accompany a Hero hoping to gain fame, fortune and expertise. When they are ready, they will step forward and take up the mantle of Hero for themselves, leaving the Hero's band. If one or more Followers have more than 7 gifts at the beginning of the Reward stage, then they will want to depart from the Hero and seek their own fortune.

If the Hero celebrates this and announces it to the assembled hall then the newly freed Follower has an auspicious beginning and the Hero is recognised for their wisdom. They gain an Advancement award or the level-appropriate amount of Meeting XP. See page 129 and on.

The Hero might instead try to convince the Follower to remain. This requires a Persuasion check with the DC equal to 10 plus the number of tags that the Follower has. A Follower that agrees to stay will not attempt to depart again until they have received two more improvements or two years have passed, whichever comes first. A Follower kept in this way gains the *Oath-bound* burden.

***Oath-bound.*** *This Follower has promised the Hero to remain with them as opposed to seeking their own way. The burden remains until the Follower receives two improvements or two years pass, whichever comes first. The binding may attract unwanted attention from creatures that can sense the Follower is unhappy.*

## RELEASING FOLLOWERS

A Hero may encounter characters that they are interested in recruiting, but they already have their maximum number of Followers. A Hero may also find themselves in unexpectedly reduced circumstances, and unable to command as many Followers as before. In such cases, the Hero must release one or more of their Followers.

The Player gets to pick which Followers leave when releasing Followers. They may do so at any credible opportunity during or after an adventure, when the released Follower can safely move on to other things. It is up to the GM to adjudicate if a Follower will accept being released at that moment. If the Hero's band find themselves at a busy meadhall, then a parting of the ways can easily occur. Deep in a subterranean cavern would be a less suitable place to abandon one's Followers, and they might credibly resist leaving.

The Player may want to work with the GM in order to create a pleasant release process. Perhaps the Follower has met someone

over the course of the previous adventure that they have fallen in love with, or met someone they wish to study under, or have received word from their homeland that they must return. No matter what solution you develop, provided it is credible, the process of releasing a Follower is automatic and they move off the stage gracefully.



## IMPROVING FOLLOWERS

Followers can be improved. At the end of the adventure, the Player can make a choice between these actions:

- **Transform a temporary gift into a permanent one.**
- **Give one Follower a new temporary gift.**
- **Make a burden temporary.**

The Player can take a number of actions up to their proficiency bonus, making their choice each time.

***Example:*** *Cassandra is improving her Followers. Her Hero, Alys, is 5th level and thus has a proficiency bonus of +3. One of her Followers, Saewine, received Sign from Above as a temporary gift in the last adventure. Cassandra decides to make that gift permanent. For her second choice, she decides that since the GM has been dropping hints about Gruni's Death-mark, she will make that burden temporary. She briefly considers using her third choice to give a Follower a new gift but instead decides to make Thormund's Malcontent burden temporary as well.*



## TRANSFORMING A GIFT

If a Follower has a desirable gift that is temporary, you can use this action to improve that gift into a permanent one.

## GIVING A NEW TEMPORARY GIFT

You can select a gift for one of your Followers to receive. It becomes a temporary gift that they will start the next adventure with. After the adventure, you will need to select the Transform action to make it permanent.

## MAKING A BURDEN TEMPORARY

You can choose to make a permanent burden temporary. This is the only way (usually) to remove burdens from Followers. The burden still applies for the next adventure but is removed at the end of that adventure. Oftentimes the Gamemaster will add details to the Follower's story in order to help explain the easing of the burden.

## ADDING A BURDEN

The Player can choose to add a burden to a Follower, in order to add another temporary gift to that same Follower. The burden counts as permanent, but can be made temporary at the next reward stage. You can only add one burden for each reward stage, no matter how many Followers you have.

## FOLLOWER JOURNALLING

If the Player provides a detailed account of a Follower's story, they gain one additional action with which to make a mechanical change to represent the story. Even if a Player maintains journals for each Follower, you can only gain one additional action for each reward stage.

### NEW GIFTS

The idea that a new gift is, at first, temporary allows the Player to experiment with the abilities of Followers. It is also a good rule to remember if the Gamemaster created a home-ruled gift that ends up being more (or less) powerful than expected.

You can simply declare that the gift needs revision before making it permanent or you might outright forbid it in the worst cases. Try to do this sparingly. Hopefully the Player will understand — a game is not very much fun if it's too easy or ridiculously hard.

## TEMPORARY BURDENS AND GIFTS

After you're finished with improving Followers, any remaining temporary gifts are removed from each of the Followers and any old temporary burdens go away as well. Burdens made temporary by the improvement process will last until the next reward stage.

## FOLLOWER BURDENS AND GIFTS

The following is a list of burdens and gifts to use when creating and improving Followers. Some gifts that represent a Follower's background can be selected as extra starting gifts and don't count towards a Follower's initial number of gifts. Some gifts cannot be selected for a starting Follower, as they represent advanced training for that Follower.

Some burdens or gifts might cancel each other out. For example, if you have two gifts, one which gives the Follower advantage on death saving throws and one that gives that Follower disadvantage on the same then they roll death saves as normal (neither advantage or disadvantage).



## BURDENS

The following burdens are available for starting Followers or might be received during play:

**Awkward.** This Follower has disadvantage on Charisma checks.

**Blind.** This Follower has disadvantage on ability checks that require seeing.

**Clumsy.** This Follower has disadvantage on dexterity checks.

**Deaf.** This Follower has disadvantage on ability checks that require hearing.

**Death-mark.** There's a price on this Follower's head — somebody wants them dead.

**Dullard.** This Follower has disadvantage on Intelligence checks.

**Eager.** This Follower provides advantage on recruitment checks.

**Envious.** When you pay this Follower you must either pay them 20 shillings for each of their gifts or you must make a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain them. On a failure, the Follower leaves the Hero.

**Foolish.** This Follower has disadvantage on Wisdom checks.

**Frail.** This Follower has disadvantage on Strength checks.

**Guileless.** The Follower has disadvantage on any Charisma checks involving deception.

**Hobbled.** This Follower moves at half normal movement speed.

**Infirm.** This Follower has disadvantage on Constitution checks.

**Malcontent.** This Follower is rarely happy with their lot in life. When activated, roll a d20. On a 1, they refuse to act.

**Mute.** The Follower does not (or cannot) speak.

**Oath-bound.** This Follower has promised the Hero to remain with them as opposed to seeking their own way. The burden remains until the Follower receives two improvements or two years pass, whichever comes first. The binding may attract unwanted attention from creatures that can sense the Follower is unhappy.

**Slow.** This Follower does not move as quickly as most Followers.

**Sullen.** This Follower cannot be activated without also becoming spent at the end of the activation. This tag is permanent, unless the Player chooses to remove it (see page 88).

**Troubled.** This Follower has been bothered by the Hero's behaviour. Before paying this Follower you must make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain the Follower. On a failure, the Follower departs.

**Unappreciated.** After paying this Follower you must make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to retain the Follower. On a failure, the Follower departs.

**Untrusting.** This Follower doubts the good intentions of the Hero. In a dangerous situation, the Follower must succeed at a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw in order to be activated.

**Weakened.** This Follower has disadvantage on death saving throws.

**Young.** The Follower is notably younger than most. When their age or inexperience would likely affect them, they have disadvantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks.



## GIFTS

Gifts marked with an asterisk(\*) are starting gifts (see page 85). Those marked with a dagger(†) are advanced gifts and cannot be chosen for a new Follower.

**Alert†.** If this Follower is present for a combat, roll initiative for the Followers with advantage.

**Aggressive†.** This Follower has advantage on all attack rolls and disadvantage on death saving throws. (Cannot be combined with the Defensive gift.)

**Animal Wisdom (Noble Animal only).** This Follower can use their reaction to add 1d6 to any skill check. The Follower must then make a DC 5 Constitution saving throw or become spent.

**Baker\*.** This Follower knows how to make bread and pastries. Spend this Follower in a location with appropriate supplies and equipment to feed a group of people.

**Battle-bred.** When the Hero takes damage from a successful attack, spend this Follower as a reaction. The Follower reduces the damage by half and must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become spent.

**Bear-blooded\*.** This Follower has advantage on Strength checks and saving throws.

**Bearded Axe.** Spend this Follower in combat. The Hero gains advantage on all of their attack rolls this turn and the Hero's target does not benefit from their shield (if they have one).

**Blessing of the Forest Lord (Old Ways only).** Spend this Follower to grant the Hero advantage on one ability check, attack roll or saving throw within the Dark Forest.

**Brewer\*.** The Follower is familiar with making ale or other fermented beverages. Activate them to gain advantage on a check or saving throw to do with alcohol.

**Church-goer\*.** This Follower is aligned with The Church.

**Climber\*.** This Follower has a climb speed equal to its normal speed.

**Combat Expert†.** This Follower has advantage on the first attack roll of each combat.

**Deadly Strike†.** This Follower can spend inspiration to turn a successful attack into a critical hit.



**Defensive†.** This Follower has disadvantage on all attack rolls and advantage on death saving throws. (Cannot be combined with the Aggressive gift.)

**Determination.** The first time this Follower would become spent, they can make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, they remain unspent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to convert it to a permanent gift (see page 88).

**Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

**Farmer\*.** This Follower has experience with plants and livestock. Activate them to provide advantage on appropriate Animal Handling or Nature checks.

**Fast.** This Follower can move more quickly than others.

**Fence-sitter\*.** This Follower has a Neutral alignment.

**Green Thumb\*.** If you use a Hit Die during a short or long rest and eat a meal prepared by this Follower you regain one more hit point than normal for your first Hit Die.

**Hardened†.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Healer.** Spend this Follower for the Hero to regain half of their Hit Dice (as if they took a long rest).

**Heavy War-hand†.** This Follower uses twice as many dice for damage as a Weapon-bearer (e.g. a spear-bearer normally does 1d6 piercing damage, this Follower would do 2d6 piercing damage normally and 4d6 piercing damage on a critical hit; see page 84).

**Herbalist.** Activate this Follower to make a DC 10 Intelligence check. On a success the Hero recovers one Hit Die.

**Hunter.** This Follower is familiar with stalking animals in the wilderness. Activate the Follower to gain advantage on a Nature or Survival check or to make a ranged weapon attack with advantage at a creature within 80 feet, doing 1d6 piercing damage on a success.

**Intimidating.** Activate this Follower to make a creature that can see and hear this Follower make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the creature is frightened of the Follower.

**Keen Senses\*.** Choose a sense (sight, hearing or smell). This Follower has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks involving that sense.

**Learned (Old Ways only).** This Follower can tell the Hero about the ancients and the Old Ways and even a bit about the giants. Activate this Follower to translate Ogham or interpret some other clue. The Follower must make a DC 10 Intelligence saving throw, becoming spent on a failure.

**Lore of Kings\***. This Follower knows many stories about the rulers of the mannish world and many names of kings, queens and other leaders. You may activate the Follower to gain advantage on a relevant Intelligence (Legends) check. The Follower is not spent.

**Merchant\***. The Follower knows much about the value of goods and services. Spend this Follower to gain advantage on an ability check for a negotiation.



**Meek**. This Follower cannot be attacked by a creature unless they are the only target within range.

**Mounted**. This Follower has a mount and can keep up with other mounted characters. If using Weapon-bearer against an unmounted enemy, roll the weapon damage dice twice and take the best result.

**Multiple Strikes†**. When this Follower takes an attack action (for example when Weapon-bearer is activated), they make two attack rolls.

**Nimble\***. This Follower has advantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.

**Pattern of Heaven**. At a certain point in the adventure, a powerful sense of foreboding will take this Follower. You can spend the Follower to change one result on a d20 to any result (1-20) you want. The new value counts as the natural roll of the die.

**Poet\***. Spend this Follower to give the Hero advantage on all Charisma checks and saving throws until they take a short or long rest.

**Prophetic**. Spend this Follower to allow the Hero to reroll a failed saving throw.

**Pure\***. This Follower has advantage on Wisdom and Charisma saving throws.

**Quick**. This Follower can use their own reaction to move anywhere within reason.

**Raven-mind\***. The Follower has advantage on Intelligence checks and saving throws.

**Ready**. The Follower automatically succeeds at any checks necessary in order to activate them.

**Rescue the Hero\***. When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

**Resolute**. The first time that this Follower would become spent, the Follower can instead spend a token from the Follower Inspiration Pool and remain unspent.

**Sailor\***. This Follower can serve as a crew member.

**Scout**. Activate this Follower to explore one nearby area. The Follower can make a Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid detection. If the Follower returns safely, they report to the Hero and are spent.

**Scribe\***. This Follower has advantage on Intelligence checks and saving throws. They can read and write one language of your choice.

**Seer**. Activate this Follower to roll a d20. Spend this Follower to substitute that roll for any d20 roll made by the Player.

**Shieldwall**. When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift forms a shieldwall around the Hero. If the Followers were engaged with enemies they do not have to make a death saving throw this round but can use their turn to make an attack against their opponent as normal. If there are four or more members of the shieldwall then the Hero can use their action to expend a Hit Die and recover hit points as if they were taking a short rest. If the Hero has a shield then they count towards the members of the shieldwall. The shieldwall remains up for a number of rounds equal to its members or until the Hero orders the shieldwall to disperse.

**Sign from Above**. This Follower has recently been marked by a near-death experience that they survived. They have advantage on saving throws.

**Sneak Attacker†.** When this Follower attacks with advantage or if another ally is within 5 feet of their target, they do an additional 1d6 bonus damage.

**Sky-minder\*.** This Follower is aligned with The Old Ways.

**Songster.** This Follower has advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks. Spend this Follower to add two tokens to either the Follower or the Hero's Inspiration Pool.

**Stealthy†.** This Follower makes Dexterity saving throws and checks with advantage. Activate this Follower to explore one nearby area; after they report to the Hero they become spent.

**Supple\*.** This Follower has advantage on Sleight of Hand checks.

**Take a Blow\*.** When the Hero receives damage from a successful attack, activate this Follower as a reaction. The Follower absorbs the damage and must make a death saving throw.

**Two-handed Blow†.** When this Follower makes a Weapon-bearer (Axe or Spear) attack, they use a d8 instead of a d6 for damage.

**True Believer\*.** If an effect targets this Follower because of their alignment, they receive advantage on their saving throw.

**Unfazed.** The Follower automatically succeeds at any checks forced on it by a Monster.

**Useful Knick-knack.** During any scene with a NPC (not the Monster) you can activate this Follower and remove this gift in

order to gain advantage on an ability check. The Follower does not become spent.

**Weapon-bearer (Axe).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) slashing damage on a hit.

**Weapon-bearer (Bite) (Noble Animal only).** Activate all weapon-bearers, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 1d4 piercing damage.

**Weapon-bearer (Claws or Hooves) (Noble Animal only).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 1d4 slashing or bludgeoning damage.

**Weapon-bearer (Spear).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit.

**Weapon-master†.** If this Follower rolls a 1 on a weapon damage die they may reroll that die. They must keep the new result, even if it is a 1.

**Well-traveled\*.** This Follower has experience with many different cultures. They have advantage on any Intelligence or Charisma checks when meeting strangers.

**Wound-binder.** This Follower is skilled in treating hurts. Activate them during a short rest to make your first Hit Die spent heal its maximum value. The Follower does not become spent.



PART FOUR  
THE ADVENTURE





*Baegstan spoke clear voiced to his crew  
It heartens every hero to win wide fame  
To have monstrous foes felled by courage and cunning  
To plough sea's foamy furrow pulled by cloth of winds  
To aid those in dangers deepest  
A comfort to the weak and woe-wracked.  
So let us sail the swan's way  
and wherever wyrd winds us  
A worthy ship cargoes with courage  
Onward- eager for honour!*

## BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

*Then about that barrow the battle-keen rode,  
atheling-born, a band of twelve,  
lament to make, to mourn their king,  
chant their dirge, and their chieftain honor.  
They praised his earlship, his acts of prowess  
worthily witnessed: and well it is  
that men their master-friend mightily laud,  
heartily love, when hence he goes  
from life in the body forlorn away.  
Thus made their mourning the men of Geatland,  
for their hero's passing his hearth-companions:  
quoth that of all the kings of earth,  
of men he was mildest and most beloved,  
to his kin the kindest, keenest for praise.*

In BEOWULF: Age of Heroes a singular Hero and their Followers venture forth from a place of safety into dangerous circumstances. In that deadly place, they may meet people under threat, might seek for answers among those people or places and will certainly confront the danger, usually a Monster of some form, and seek to defeat it. If successful, the Hero will be richly rewarded and safety will be restored to the location. Then the Hero will hear news of another distant threat and set sail for adventure again.

This is the pattern seen in the Beowulf poem and many contemporary, earlier, and later adventure stories. It's the format

that most adventures in BEOWULF the game will use. To take this standard approach and break it down, we have the following elements:

- **Preparation and Portent:** The Hero learns of the danger and accepts the quest. They gain some hint as to what is to come.
- **Sail and Surf.** The Hero and their Followers leave safety and voyage to danger.
- **Meadhall and Mystery.** The Hero arrives at their destination. They seek to learn more about it from the people and places they explore.
- **The Monster.** Sooner or later the danger must be met head-on. If the Hero has not completed their investigation, this will likely end with the Monster temporarily victorious. Eventually, the Hero learns the necessary secrets and defeats the Monster. Or dies trying.
- **Rest and Rewards.** If the Monster is defeated, there may be rewards at hand. A newly-freed people may be generous in their gifts or the Monster itself might have a hoard of stolen items. But the Hero must also be generous, providing Followers and crew with well-deserved riches.

Each of the above entries has its own section and together they comprise the rules for playing BEOWULF: Age of Heroes.







## PREPARATION AND PORTENT

*Yon battle-king, said he,  
far o'er the swan-road he fain would seek,  
the noble monarch who needed men!  
The prince's journey by prudent folk  
was little blamed, though they loved him dear;  
they whetted the hero, and hailed good omens.*

Your Hero will seek out monsters that trouble the lands of other lords and will necessarily travel to reach these distant places. In BEOWULF, the voyage is an important transition moment, as the Hero leaves behind a familiar meadhall and calls upon strangers to offer their services.

By various means, the Hero hears of a distant place in need of their help. Struck by some monstrous curse, the local ring-giver has sent out a call for aid. And the Hero responds!

Word might reach the Hero in any number of ways: by desperate messenger, in the words of a song, in a story told at the heath-side, or in a petition from travellers from a distant, imperilled land.

Before undertaking a voyage, the Hero learns a Portent. These wise words provide a pool of inspiration tokens, some for the Hero, some for their Followers and some for the Gamemaster.

## THE PORTENT

Not even a Hero plys the Whale Road without some sense of what the sea has in store for them. Before leaving, they will consult wise folk and look for oracles in the sky, the water and in their own hearts. As they set about preparing to embark, a Portent will make itself known to them. Whether it be a supernatural

prophesy, a sign from their god, or simply the overhead song of a scop on the wind, an omen arises. The GM will decide how the Hero hears the Portent.

The generation of the poetic Portent sets up the inspiration pool, as well as providing the GM with some randomly generated happenings for the imminent sea voyage. An ill-favoured Portent may make the quest more difficult. Favourable omens delivered in the Portent may make life easier for the Hero.

You will need four inspiration tokens - regular coins or buttons work well if you can't get your hands on some of our amazing BEOWULF metal tokens. You can also print the token images provided on our website ([www.handiwork.games](http://www.handiwork.games)), and stick them onto card or counters.

You will also need an Inspiration Pool. This can be as simple as three labelled circles drawn on a piece of paper, a print-out of the inspiration pool from our website, or a deluxe inspiration pool mat. A Portent is composed of 4 parts, together forming a couplet.

For example:

“Shrine Battle, Beaten High-born”

The four parts here are “Shrine”, “Battle”, “Beaten” and “High-born”.

Each part of the Portent is randomly generated, using tables of Adjectives and Nouns.



## THE FIRST HALF OF THE PORTENT

To generate the first part of the Portent, the Player rolls 1d4 and consults the following structure table:

1d4	
1	Adjective Adjective
2	Adjective Noun
3	Noun Adjective
4	Noun Noun

This tells you which sort of table to roll on: for an “Adjective Adjective” result, roll up 2 adjectives to form the first part of the couplet. For the “Noun Adjective” result, roll once on a Noun table, and then once on an Adjective Table.

To roll on an Adjective or Noun Table, roll 1d6 for the horizontal axis, and 1d6 for the vertical axis. Cross reference the result to give you a word or phrase.

The GM determines which specific noun or adjective table relate to the adventure. A selection are provided in this book for variety (see below and page 261). The GM may wish to make their own adventure-specific tables.

### ADJECTIVES TABLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Forgotten ✕	Sorrowful ✕	High ✕	Gale-whipped ✕	Broad ✓	Quick ✓
2	Stern ✕	Greedy ✕	Oath-bound ✕	Doomed ✕	Woven ✓	Sharp ✓
3	Ruddy ✕	Weathered ✕	Bloodied-red ✕	Mended ✓	Buried ✓	Bold ✓
4	Weary ✕	Tempered ✓	Beaten ✓	Threaded ✓	High-born ✓	Bear ✓
5	Grey-green ✓	Timbered ✓	Battle-scarred ✓	Close-sewn ✓	Eagle ✓	Trusted ✓
6	Red-gold ✓	Gallant ✓	Dazzling ✓	Glinting ✓	Stout ✓	Oaken ✓

### NOUNS TABLE

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Twilight ✕	Mere ✕	Boast ✕	Hurt ✕	War ✓	Bronze ✓
2	Frost ✕	Funeral ✕	Woe ✕	Portent ✕	Clamour ✓	Iron ✓
3	Night ✕	Raven ✕	Cruelty ✕	Swordplay ✓	Battle ✓	Gold ✓
4	Fen ✕	Brine ✓	Shield-clash ✓	Cacophony ✓	Sword-Arm ✓	Silver ✓
5	Shrine ✓	Waves ✓	Salt water ✓	Battle cry ✓	Talisman ✓	Salmon ✓
6	Faith ✓	Honour ✓	Ring ✓	God ✓	Amulet ✓	Gods ✓

Each part of the Portent you generate also determines where an Inspiration token is assigned. Each adjective or noun sits on a colour. These colours show which pool gains one of the four inspiration tokens. Add tokens to the appropriate pool:

**Red (X):** GM/Monster Pool

**Blue (P):** Follower Pool

**Green (K):** Player Pool

**Example:**

*Nina rolls 1d4 for the first half of her Portent. She rolls a 3, meaning the first word will be a Noun and the second word will be an Adjective.*

*She rolls 1d6 for the horizontal axis and 1d6 for the vertical axis of the Noun table. She rolls a 6 and a 3. This gives the result of "Gold". And it's on green, so she places one inspiration token in the Follower Pool.*

*Next she rolls an Adjective by swapping to an adjective table. Again, she rolls her two six-sided dice, with a result of 4 and 5. That gives the result "High-born", on blue. She places one inspiration token in the Follower Pool.*

*The first half of her Portent is "Gold High-born". She notes it down.*

## THE SECOND HALF OF THE PORTENT

Repeat the same process again for the second half of the Portent:

Roll 1d4 for the structure, and then make your 2d6 rolls on the appropriate Noun and Adjective Tables, and assign the Inspiration tokens as instructed.

**Example:**

*Nina rolls her 1d4 again, getting a 1. The second part of the Portent will be "Adjective Adjective". She rolls her 2d6, getting 5 and 3. This gives the result "Buried" on blue. Another token goes into the Follower Pool. She rolls the second adjective, this time getting 4 and 4. This gives "Threaded" also on Blue. Another token goes in the Follower Pool.*

*The second part of the Portent is "Buried Threaded".*

*The full Portent is "Gold High-born, Buried Threaded". Very mysterious and portentous! The result for the Inspiration pools was 3 in the Follower Pool and one in the Player Pool. Not a bad Portent all in all!*

*Her Hero's Followers are likely to play a big part in the adventure, and she has a fall back point of Inspiration should she need one quickly. Luckily there was no aspect of ill Portent here, and the Gamemaster gains no tokens. The omens are good!*

## MEANWHILE

While the Player is rolling up and noting down the words of the Portent, *the GM should also note down the numbers rolled, in order.* These are used by the GM to determine which challenges happen during the Voyage, in the Sail and Swell part of the adventure.



## PREPARING THE SHIP

Almost all travel in BEOWULF is accomplished by sea, using sailing ships that are not too dissimilar to the popular image of a 'Viking' longship. The ships are open, with the crew, the Followers and the Hero all exposed to the elements for the most part. Some ships might be gifted with an enclosed tent area but most don't have the room. Travel is cold and wet, full of adventure and bold action.

## READYING THE SHIP

The craft is loaded with ballast, stones that are each about a child's head in size. This gives weight to the ship, causing it to ride lower in the water (without a proper keel the draft of the ship and the rudder are the only ways to allow the ship to sail at an angle to the prevailing winds). In the event of the ship capsizing, the stones will easily fall out, allowing the ship itself to remain afloat.

Above the ballast but below the floorboards, the supplies are laid in. Everything will get wet over the course of the voyage, so food and other perishables are carefully wrapped to minimise damage. If the ship has a sail then the mast is stood up in the keelson and supported by the mastfish (both of these are made of wood and are removable blocks that lock in place) and ropes called stays (fore and aft) and shrouds (sides) are tied to keep the mast in place. The yard (the crossbeam that the sail attaches to) and the sail are kept unattached and furled until needed.

There are benches and oar-holes for the crew. Additional supplies can be lashed onto the deck, under the benches or along the inside edge of the ship. Shield-locks allow for the Followers and Hero to display their shields on the side of the ship. Keeping the shields in place during rough weather is not practical and thus the shields are only set out when wanting to make an impression whilst in a safe harbour or when arriving somewhere. The ship might have a figurehead or other symbol that represents the Hero and their family.

With the Portent ringing in their ears, the Hero, their Followers and Crew embark upon the Whale Road!

## SAIL AND SWELL: THE VOYAGE

*Then moved o'er the waters by might of the wind  
that bark like a bird with breast of foam,  
till in season due, on the second day,  
the curved prow such course had run  
that sailors now could see the land,  
sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills...*

Your Hero will seek out monsters that trouble the lands of other lords and will necessarily travel to reach these distant places. In BEOWULF, the voyage is an important transition moment, as the Hero leaves behind a familiar meadhall. Voyages consist of a number of challenges, which are events along the way.

### WHAT IS A VOYAGE?

A voyage is a trip from one place (perhaps the Hero's homeland, or their current location) to another, which begins the adventure. Before heading on a voyage, the Hero will consult the wise and learn predictions of what is to come. See Portents on page 97 for these rules. Travelling inside an adventure doesn't use the Voyage rules. We just simply refer to these smaller journeys as trips or sailing to a new place, since they are not as extensive as the important Voyage that begins an adventure.

### THE PURPOSE OF A VOYAGE

The intent of the Voyage rules is to provide a short, summarised opening for the main body of the adventure. In the poem Beowulf, our Hero is so great a sailor and ship's captain that no challenges cross his path at all. The Voyage serves to establish how the Hero arrived at the site of the adventure, and get everyone in the mood. Alongside the Portent it also provides some variation for the Hero's arrival. A ill-fated voyage could see the Hero arrive in slightly less glorious condition than that in which they embarked!

### ARE ALL VOYAGES ON THE WATER?

In the world of BEOWULF, the kingdoms known to the Hero are small, bright dots of civilisation, separated from each other and more dangerous unknown lands by the Whale Road — the cold, unforgiving sea. Thus, whenever a character seeks out adventure, they almost always use a ship to reach their destination. It is possible that some monsters might lurk elsewhere, such as a mountaintop cave, or in the depths of a dark forest, but most every voyage begins and ends with a ship. If a Hero is returning to a land that they have already visited along a route that they have already used, then there is no need for any preparation. They can sail to the destination with no restrictions, and are considered to be sailing familiar waters. Otherwise, the Hero must prepare for a new Voyage. This is done in several steps:

- The GM has already recorded the numbers the Player rolled when creating the Portent.
- Next, the length of the voyage must be considered. A short voyage requires less effort and contains fewer challenges than a longer one. There are three categories: Short (1 challenge, with one to two days of travelling time), Medium (2 challenges, from two to four days of travelling time) and Long (3 challenges, five or more days of travelling time).
- After all challenges have been dealt with, the ship has reached its destination and the Hero is ready for the next step. If they are in the right place, that usually means a visit to the meadhall (see page 107).

### BUT WE DON'T HAVE FOLLOWERS

If you're playing with multiple Heroes (or other classes) and you don't have any Followers then you can assign any burdens or gifts to a PC. If a burden or gift requires a Follower to become spent, you instead gain a level of exhaustion, and if a gift makes a Follower unspent you recover a level of exhaustion instead. If a burden or gift indicates that the recipient would be killed, the character instead loses half (rounded down) of their current Hit Dice. If a burden indicates that a Follower cannot be activated, then choose one of the PC's features or traits. That feature or trait is no longer available to the Player.

### CHALLENGES

Over the course of a voyage, the Hero and Followers will be challenged by the sea, the sky, the dangers of the world and perhaps by the discord they bring with them. For each challenge needed, use a set of the grid numbers from the Portent. The first number now indicates the Challenge Type and the second number indicates the individual challenge.

*For example, let's say the first element of the Portent was 4,1. The 4 indicates a Sky challenge and the 1 indicates that it will be "Clearest Skies".*

Do this in order until each of the challenges has been generated. These are the challenges that the Hero will encounter at sea.

FIRST NUMBER GENERATED	CHALLENGE TYPE
1	Wyrd
2	Land
3	People
4	Sky
5	Wind
6	Water

## WYRD

1	<p><b>Vigorous Debate.</b> Choose two Followers of different alignments. If all Followers are of the same alignment or none of your Followers have alignment gifts, treat this as <b>Fellowship</b> instead (below). Each selected Follower must make a DC 15 Intelligence check. If both succeed, or both fail, nothing happens. If one Follower succeeds, the other Follower gains the Questioning Faith burden.</p> <p><i><b>Questioning Faith.</b> If an effect targets this Follower because of their alignment, they receive disadvantage on their saving throw. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p>
2	<p><b>Conversion.</b> Choose a Follower with an alignment to preach and a target Follower with the Questioning Faith burden as the target. If no Follower has the burden, then treat this result as <b>Fellowship</b> instead. The preacher must make a DC 15 Intelligence check. On a success the target Follower loses the Questioning Faith burden and their original alignment gift. The Follower gains the alignment gift of the preacher and becomes spent.</p>
3	<p><b>Fellowship.</b> Choose two Followers of the same alignment and have each roll a d20. The one with the higher result gains the True Believer gift.</p> <p><i><b>True Believer.</b> If an effect targets this Follower because of their alignment, they receive advantage on their saving throw. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to convert it to a permanent gift (see page 88).</i></p>
4	<p><b>Vision.</b> On a lonely watch sometime during the voyage, a Follower of your choice receives a vision. They gain the Fortunate gift.</p> <p><i><b>Fortunate.</b> This Follower has been marked by fate. One time during the current adventure they may reroll the d20. This gift is removed once they use it. If they reach the end of the adventure and still have the gift, they lose it before the reward stage (see page 86).</i></p>
5	<p><b>Foreboding.</b> A dream comes to one of the Followers (determined randomly) and disturbs them deeply. The Follower gains the Despair burden.</p> <p><i><b>Despair.</b> If this Follower fails a check they become spent, even if they would not normally be spent by the action. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p>
6	<p><b>Resolution.</b> Choose one Follower. During the voyage, this Follower has strengthened their will to help the Hero. They gain the Resolve gift.</p> <p><i><b>Determination.</b> The first time this Follower would become spent, they can make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, they remain unspent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to convert it to a permanent gift (see page 88).</i></p>





	LAND
1	<p><b>Fantastic Animal.</b> One of your Followers has a chance to hunt an exceptional beast on an island along the way. If you choose to do so, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity check. On a success, the Follower is spent but you gain the Well-fed gift. On a failure the Follower is not spent and receives no gift. If the Follower chooses not to pursue the beast, the Follower instead receives the Blessing of the Forest Lord gift.</p> <p><i><b>Well-fed.</b> The Follower with this gift is spent. The Follower can remove this gift to counteract any challenge or event that involves hunger for the Hero or other Followers. This gift is temporary and removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p> <p><i><b>Blessing of the Forest Lord.</b> The Follower can grant the Hero advantage on one check within the Dark Forest. The Follower becomes spent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to make it permanent (page 88).</i></p>
2	<p><b>Excellent Campsite.</b> You have located a nearly perfect place to rest ashore overnight. Water and food are plentiful, and the Followers not on watch are able to get plenty of rest. Choose a spent Follower and make them unspent but also give them the Spoiled burden.</p> <p><i><b>Spoiled.</b> This Follower is convinced that they have already done enough to serve the Hero. In order to activate them, the Follower must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the Follower does not activate but remains unspent. The reaction is wasted. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p>
3	<p><b>Visiting Pedlar.</b> One of the locals decides to take advantage of your presence on the shore as you pull in for the rest or water, and sells something to one of your Followers. Roll 1d20: on a 1-10 the Follower gains the Wasted Money burden, on 11-20 they gain the Useful Knick-knack gift.</p> <p><i><b>Wasted Money.</b> If you give this Follower a reward before the end of this adventure, its value counts as halved for determining its effectiveness. This burden is temporary and removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p> <p><i><b>Useful Knick-knack.</b> During any scene with a NPC (not the Monster) you can activate this Follower and remove this gift in order to gain advantage on an ability check. The Follower does not become spent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure (if not before).</i></p>
4	<p><b>Rough Landing.</b> It is difficult to find a safe place to pull the ship ashore here, and several of the crew and your Followers must get into the dark, cold water in order to navigate it up onto the beach. Choose two Followers, each must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the Follower receives the Wounded burden.</p> <p><i><b>Wounded.</b> If this Follower is required to make a death saving throw, they automatically fail. This burden is temporary and if the Follower survives the adventure you may remove this burden at the end.</i></p>
5	<p><b>Stormfront.</b> The weather turns ugly and it is impossible to set sail. The Hero and the crew must take shelter. The long hours and cramped space set the crew ill at ease. The Hero must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, one Follower (chosen by the Player) must take the Stormtouched burden.</p> <p><i><b>Stormtouched.</b> This Follower is withdrawn and moody. In order to be spent, the Hero must first spend inspiration in order to encourage the Follower to act. This burden is temporary.</i></p>
6	<p><b>Cove.</b> While searching for a landing site, the crew has found what seems to be a perfectly sheltered place to land the ship. Such a location might have attracted other attention however: Roll a d6, on a 1 it is the home-base of a pirate crew (Bandits, page 202). You may spend a Follower in order to have your ship escape, otherwise the GM will improvise an encounter.</p>

PEOPLE

1	<p><b>Disease.</b> Some illness is spreading amidst your crew. Choose two Followers. Each must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or gain the Sickness burden.</p> <p><i>Sickness.</i> This Follower makes all checks with disadvantage. If the Follower succeeds at a check anyways they may remove this burden. Otherwise this burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</p>
2	<p><b>Bandits.</b> Your camp has been noticed by rovers, who come to attack in the night. You can choose to play out the combat or you can spend a Follower in order to rouse the camp in time to easily drive them away.</p> <p><i>Use the stats on page 202 for the bandits. There are as many bandits as the Hero has levels.</i></p>
3	<p><b>Disagreements.</b> A series of arguments divides your crew, and puts everyone in a foul mood. Starting with a Follower of your choice, have each Follower make a DC 5 Wisdom (Insight) check, stopping when a Follower fails the check, or you have rolled for all of your Followers. If a Follower fails, that Follower receives the Sullen burden.</p> <p><i>Sullen.</i> This Follower cannot be activated without also becoming spent at the end of the activation. This tag is permanent, unless the Player chooses to remove it (see page 88).</p>
4	<p><b>Overboard.</b> By accident, a Follower has gone overboard. You must either spend another Follower to rescue the first Follower (who also becomes spent because of the fatigue incurred) or consign the first Follower to death. The GM can choose to have the Follower survive, and receive the <b>Vengeance</b> burden.</p> <p><i>Vengeance.</i> Abandoned by the Hero, this Follower will make a future appearance in an adventure (this one or a future one). Spend the Follower to impose disadvantage on all of the Hero's attack rolls until the end of their next turn and make an attack roll, doing 1d8 slashing damage if successful.</p>
5	<p><b>Abandoned Vessel.</b> Your ship has come across the remains of an abandoned vessel. It could be anything from a capsized fisherfolk's boat to a complete warship, empty and crewless, floating in the fog. Brave folks might wish to investigate the find, but the creepiness has a way of sticking in your mind. Choose three Followers, each must make a DC 10 check. On a failure, they gain the <b>Unnerved</b> burden.</p> <p><i>Unnerved.</i> This Follower has disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</p>
6	<p><b>Pirates.</b> Such a rich ship as the Hero's cannot help but attract some attention, but of late it has gathered the worst kind. Plunderers move to attack the ship, hoping to steal it and the prizes won by the Hero and their Followers. In the coming battle, choose two Followers. Each must make a death saving throw. If they fail, it counts as a heroic death. If both fail, the ship gains the <b>Damaged</b> burden.</p> <p><i>Damaged.</i> The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The ship must be repaired, see page 75.</p>





	SKY
1	<p><b>Clearest Skies.</b> There is not a cloud to be seen in the pale blue sky for the entire voyage. Instead the blazing sun always seems to be shining, reflecting brightly off the waves and even every metal fitting of the ship and the Hero's armour. Choose a single Follower. They must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or gain the Sunstroke burden.</p> <p><i><b>Sunstroke.</b> This Follower has been deeply affected by their exposure to the elements. When activated they must make a DC 5 Constitution check. On a failure they cannot be activated and become spent instead. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p>
2	<p><b>Cold and Unfamiliar Stars.</b> The night sky is amazingly clear and the stars are out in force. But something in their placement concerns the crew and those Followers who are well acquainted with the sea; the ship is off course. Choose a Follower, they must make a DC 13 Intelligence check or become spent as they spend all night working out a new course so that the Hero can reach their destination.</p> <p><i>Note: As an alternative, instead of the Follower becoming spent, the ship might be too far off course. In which case, the ship must make for whatever territory is at hand and might well encounter a different adventure than the one they set out on.</i></p>
3	<p><b>Witch's Aurora.</b> The dark skies crackle with eldritch energy and eerie lights dance on the horizon. If the witches are bold, then even the ship itself is lit and sailors' hair stands on end and they can feel the cold eyes of the sorcerers on the back of their head. Choose a Follower to make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw, gaining the Witch-touched burden on a failure.</p> <p><i><b>Witch-touched.</b> This Follower is convinced that they have certain obligations to fulfill before acting on behalf of the Hero. When this Hero is activated, they do not act or become spent until the next round.</i></p>
4	<p><b>Sky-rock.</b> Bright streaks race across the sky, and one comes entirely too close to one of your Followers on the prow of the ship. Choose a Follower to make a DC 5 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the Follower is struck by a meteorite and slain instantly. On a success, the Follower receives the Sign from Above gift.</p> <p><i><b>Sign from Above.</b> This Follower has recently been marked by a near-death experience that they survived. Until the end of the adventure, they have advantage on saving throws. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.</i></p>
5	<p><b>Lightning.</b> The storm rages and the sky flashes. Lightning races from cloud to cloud, and it is said that sometimes the wise can see the desires of the Heavens in its forms, if they are brave enough. You can choose one Follower to try and interpret the storms. They must make a DC 15 Intelligence check, on a success they gain the Pattern of Heaven gift. On a natural 1, they are struck by an errant lightning bolt and slain. This counts as being slain.</p> <p><i><b>Pattern of Heaven.</b> At a certain point in the adventure, a powerful sense of foreboding will take this Follower. You can activate the Follower to change one result on a d20 to any result (1-20) you want. The new value counts as the natural roll of the die. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to make it permanent (see page 88).</i></p>
6	<p><b>Dragon-flight.</b> There are dragons high in the sky today, and while the Hero might welcome the challenge, most of the crew would rather escape the attention of the monsters. The dragons remain high in the sky and there are those who consider such a sighting a mark of good fortune. Choose one Follower to receive the Dragon-luck burden.</p> <p><i><b>Dragon-luck.</b> If this Follower fails a saving throw, they can reroll it. If they do so, a powerful greed develops in their heart and any reward they receive counts as only half its value.</i></p>





	WIND
1	<b>Crosswind.</b> A powerful wind blows in a contrary direction, and only an expert sailor can get any use of such a wind. Choose a Follower to make a DC 10 Intelligence check. On a failure, choose three other Followers to become spent as they must row the ship for long hours against the wind.
2	<b>Doldrums.</b> There is no wind at all, neither for nor against the ship. Choose two Followers, each must make a DC 10 Strength check, becoming spent on a failure.
3	<b>Storm.</b> Rain lashes down and the wind howls. The sail must be furled and the ship is tossed without any clear sense of direction. Choose a Follower to make a DC 10 Strength check. On a failure they become spent, on a natural 1 the ship gains the <b>Damaged</b> burden.  <i>Damaged.</i> The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The ship must be repaired, see page 75.
4	<b>Freezing Cold.</b> Even though the crew is used to sailing in extraordinary conditions, the cold of the far north can be deadly. Choose three Followers to make DC 10 saving throws. They receive the Shivering burden on a failure.  <i>Shivering.</i> No matter what efforts this Follower takes, they cannot seem to become warm. They have disadvantage on all checks until the end of the adventure, when this burden is removed.
5	<b>Fog.</b> A thick fog surrounds the ship, making it hard to know how much progress has been made. The cold fog saps the energy of the crew. Select three Followers, each must make a DC 10 saving throw. On a failure, they gain the <b>Enervated</b> burden.  <i>Enervated.</i> This Follower has disadvantage on attack rolls. This burden is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure.
6	<b>Strong Winds.</b> The winds are with the Hero's ship and it speeds across the waves. You bypass one challenge if any remain. So fast does it go, it is hard to steer and difficult to beach. When the ship reaches its destination, you must choose a Follower to make a DC 15 check. On a failure the ship is Damaged by the landing.  <i>Damaged.</i> The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The ship must be repaired, see page 75.



	WATER
1	<p><b>Shoals or Reefs.</b> The ship must travel narrow straits in a precise manner to avoid being damaged. A Follower must make a DC 10 check to pilot the ship, with the ship receiving the Damaged burden on a failure.</p> <p><i>Damaged.</i> The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The ship must be repaired, see page 75.</p>
2	<p><b>Visitors from the Deep.</b> Creatures from the deepest parts of the ocean sometimes find themselves near the surface, carried there by a storm or other turbulence. At night, a strange luminescence might surround the ship, or the crew might catch sight of ocean giants much larger than their ship. Choose a Follower to serve as lookout, if they succeed at a DC 15 check then they gain the <b>Nature's Wonders</b> gift.</p> <p><i>Nature's Wonders.</i> This Follower has recently been inspired by the beauty and majesty of the world. The first time you activate them to help you with a natural problem (i.e. one not dealing with men or monsters) they do not become spent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to make it permanent (page 88).</p>
3	<p><b>Perfectly Still.</b> The water is as smooth as glass and no breeze troubles the sea at all. Looking over the sides of the ship, you can see the shapes of various fish and other sea creatures swim by. Only oars will do now, and the crew is hard-pressed. Select two Followers, each must make a DC 10 Constitution check. They become spent on a failure.</p>
4	<p><b>Rough Waters.</b> The sea swells and shifts around the Hero's ship. The water crests over the bulwarks and threatens to swamp the crew. The Hero must hold the tiller straight and keep the ship on course. A Follower can make a DC 10 Strength check to assist. On a failure, the ship is Damaged.</p> <p><i>Damaged.</i> The ship's Speed and Range are reduced by half (rounding down). The ship must be repaired, see page 75.</p>
5	<p><b>Giant's Stones.</b> A mischievous giant has hurled several large boulders near the water's edge and the ship must be carefully steered between them. Choose a Follower to go to the prow and call out directions to the Hero. That Follower must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or the ship scrapes against a rock, Weakening it.</p> <p><i>Weakened.</i> The ship has been hurt in some way, but not enough to count as being properly damaged. The ship's Speed is reduced by 1 and it has disadvantage on manoeuvres. The ship must be repaired, see page 75.</p>
6	<p><b>Sea-monster.</b> Some creature from the deep attacks the ship. If you like, you can play this out as a combat. Otherwise, choose two Followers. Each Follower must make a death saving throw. A Follower that succeeds gains the <b>Resolute</b> gift.</p> <p><i>Resolute.</i> The first time that this Follower would become spent, the Follower can instead spend a token from the Follower Inspiration Pool and remain unspent. This gift is temporary and is removed at the end of the adventure unless the Player chooses to make it permanent (page 88).</p>

## USING CHALLENGES

The challenges found in these tables are the starting point for your Voyages. When running the game be sure to include them as part of a wider description of the time spent at sea. Also take some time to flesh out the challenge, and feel free to interpret and alter its description.

The aim of these mechanical rules is to set up how the Hero arrives at the main part of the adventure, and to give them something of a tale to tell when they arrive. It also helps the

Gamemaster keep travel at sea fresh and interesting. But they're intended as a framework and a tool, not the whole story! Be sure to weave them into the adventure along with some evocative description of things the Hero sees from the rail, the conditions at sea, and some role-play with the Hero's crew and Followers.

It is of course entirely possible to add your own encounters at sea, and any adventure might include elements that are written beforehand, seamlessly interwoven into the mechanically created Voyage challenges.

## MEADHALL AND MYSTERY

*... Corselets glistened  
hand-forged, hard; on their harness bright  
the steel ring sang, as they strode along  
in mail of battle, and marched to the hall.  
There, weary of ocean, the wall along  
they set their bucklers, their broad shields, down,  
and bowed them to bench: the breastplates clanged,  
war-gear of men; their weapons stacked,  
spears of the seafarers stood together,  
gray-tipped ash: that iron band  
was worthily weaponed! — A warrior proud  
asked of the heroes their home and kin.  
“Whence, now, bear ye burnished shields,  
harness gray and helmets grim,  
spears in multitude? Messenger, I,  
Hrothgar’s herald! Heroes so many  
ne’er met I as strangers of mood so strong.  
‘Tis plain that for prowess, not plunged into exile,  
for high-hearted valor, Hrothgar ye seek!”*

The Hero has set sail for adventure and mastered the challenges of the Whale Road. Now, their destination draws close. This section is largely for the Gamemaster, and if you’re a Player, you may wish to allow some mystery to remain, and stop reading now.

As you create adventures for the Hero, you’ll want to set a variety of challenges in front of them. Some of your adventures might be quite straightforward — the Monster is out there (in some wild place) but comes to civilisation at regular times to kill or terrorise the people. All the Hero needs to do is find out when and where, and then confront the creature. But usually it’ll be trickier than

that. Like Grendel’s immunity to weapons, the Monster might well have some secret that first must be discovered and understood in order to defeat it: Monsters are impossible for ordinary people to kill, and that’s why they need a Hero. A Hero is by definition one who performs the impossible.

Monsters are often intrinsically linked to the places they trouble. Grendel is angered to murderous rage by the music and merry-making at Heorot. Without the raising of such a wondrous hall, the Monster Grendel would never have struck. The specifics of the community cursed by the visits of a Monster are worthy of investigation by the Hero to discover the underlying story.

This second act of the adventure forms a bridge between the Hero’s arrival, and the final confrontation with the Monster. The Hero will be seeking to introduce themselves to the community, and then find out all that they can about the Monster. Some special rules additions and an established framework for every BEOWULF: Age of Heroes adventure are designed to structure that path.

### USING THIS CHAPTER

Unlike earlier sections, where there are clear rules for generating Heroes, portents, challenges, Followers and the like, these sections concern themselves with building an adventure. Therefore they are full of suggestions and inspirations, which by their very nature will not all be compatible with each other. As you read through, look for ideas that appeal to you and choose one or two of them to build an adventure around. The rest of the material can wait for another time and another adventure. Don’t feel like you have to include every idea that appeals, the Player doesn’t have the benefit of seeing what you’re planning and might get overwhelmed if there are too many plot threads.





## LANDING

*Their haven was found,  
their journey ended. Up then quickly  
the Weders' clansmen climbed ashore,  
anchored their sea-wood, with armour clashing  
and gear of battle: God they thanked  
for passing in peace o'er the paths of the sea.  
Now saw from the cliff a Scylding clansman,  
a warden that watched the water-side,  
how they bore o'er the gangway glittering shields,  
war-gear in readiness; wonder seized him  
to know what manner of men they were.*

When Beowulf first arrives in Denmark, he and his crew are challenged by a shore guard. That there are guards assigned to watch the seas and beaches for approaching ships is one of the first signs that despite the terror of Grendel, Hrothgar is still a capable and wise leader. In your tales, the first sights and sounds of the afflicted land can set expectations for the rest of the adventure.

## FIRST SIGHTS

Describing the appearance of the destination as it comes into view will provide the Player the very first clues as to the nature of the land.

What kind of land is it? And what evil troubles it? From the moment of arrival, the Hero will be seeking to understand these mysteries and as Gamemaster you have powerful tools you can use to set expectations. For example, a Hero that arrives at a busy and cheerful port full of merchants must suspect that the evil of the land is hidden and secret. However, if the ship lands at a desolate strand of beach, and there is not even a shore warden there to greet them, then they know that the evil here may be less discreet.

Tall cliffs tell the Player that this place is cut off from the outside world and contains dangers, while a wide and sandy beach is a welcome sight but also means that others may come. It might even hint that the danger comes from the sea.

A low island with little vegetation or habitation is a place where things cannot be easily hidden. A bustling settlement with actual quays and docks speaks of rich commerce but also many



dealings, some of which might be questionable or even evil. A village surrounded by dark forest lands or perched halfway up a mountain is isolated, set apart from all the others and more vulnerable for it.

In the heroic world of the Whale Road, the weather is always portentous. A glum overcast land, flung far from the main trade routes might moulder under constant rain. A mysterious and fey place might endure under a constant blanket of sea-fog.

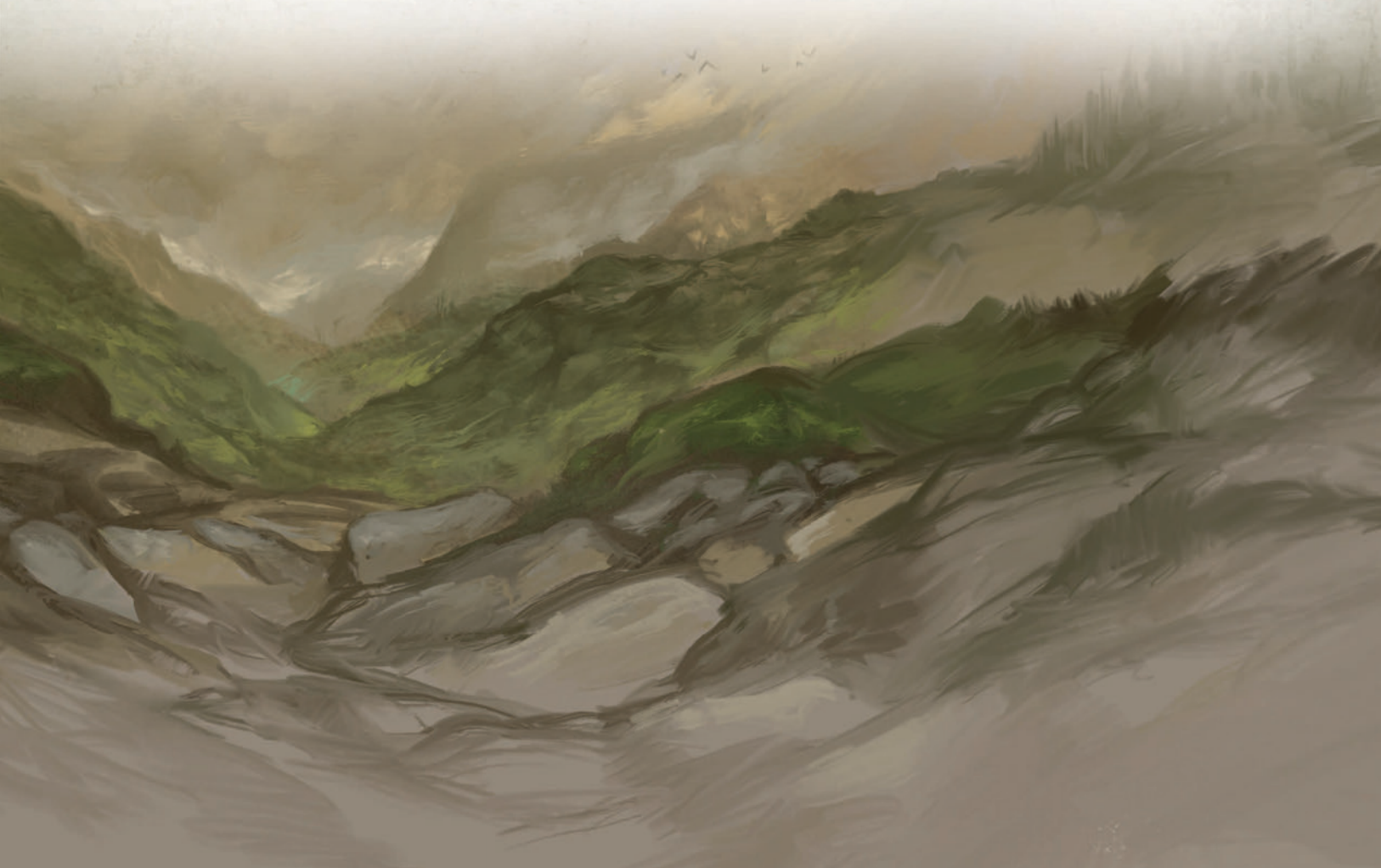
Make some notes about what the Hero and the crew are likely to see, hear and maybe even smell as they approach their destination, making sure that it provides hints to the Player about what is to come.

## GUARDING THE SHIP

A ship is a valuable thing and, while it is a conceit of the game that a Hero can always get ahold of a ship somehow, once the Player has invested time into a ship they will probably not want to lose it. This will often mean setting a guard on the ship, which

could be the crew, one or more Followers (possibly including the crew), or in the strangest circumstances the Hero themselves (if, for example, the Monster was known to haul themselves up out of the sea on moonless nights and attack ships then the Hero would be the perfect choice). It is also possible that a wise and benevolent leader will offer the services of their folk to guard the ship. This might be a welcome offer, or if the leader is a wolf in sheep's clothing, a nasty trick to make sure that the Hero has no means of escape available.

You can threaten the crew of the Hero's ship in order to establish the danger of the Monster (or other enemies) but be careful — you don't want to overuse this technique, especially since the Hero gets the crew and ship for free. Similarly, Followers who guard the ship might be in danger, but the Player might well want to use their gifts to keep the Follower alive or strike out at the danger. This can be fine, if you want to create a 'cut-scene' where the Follower acts on their own initiative to deal with a problem, but you'll want to keep the focus primarily on the Hero and not the Follower. Remember, however, the Player might become upset if their favourite Followers are slain without any recourse.



## LOOKOUTS

A well-established beach-head or port will have lookouts stationed by the local leader. It is often their responsibility to challenge any visitors and determine if they are friend or foe. This can cause some tense and exciting moments, if you and the Player are interested in roleplaying things out. It may be that you'll allow the Hero to quickly identify themselves and be taken to the local meadhall immediately, but when a land is under threat the guards are more likely to question everyone closely.

Most of the time the Hero will be able to establish themselves in relationship to the leader, in the same way that Hrothgar knew Ecgtheow, Beowulf's father. Other Heroes might rely on their own leader having good relations with the land's leader or their own personal reputation.

If the lookouts take responsibility for the Hero's ship then they too might come under threat of the Monster.

## OTHER APPROACHES

Most adventures begin with a sea voyage. During the Migration Period, ships were the easiest and most common way of reaching new lands, and often the interior of those lands remained unknown — dark, primordial forests and steep, cloud-covered mountains. Sometimes, however, a Hero might be called to these areas by news of a Monster haunting the in-land areas.

In these cases, you will want to adapt the challenges to the overland travel or simply prepare a number of custom challenges (and quite possibly a custom Portent) that fits the themes of the adventure. Like other exceptions to the rule, don't feature this too often — the Heroes are walkers of the whale-roads, not forest delvers or mountain climbers.

## MEETING

*“Hither have fared to thee far-come men  
o’er the paths of ocean, people of Geatland;  
and the stateliest there by his sturdy band  
is Beowulf named. This boon they seek,  
that they, my master, may with thee  
have speech at will: nor spurn their prayer  
to give them hearing, gracious Hrothgar!  
In weeds of the warrior worthy they,  
methinks, of our liking; their leader most surely,  
a hero that hither his henchmen has led.”*

The Hero will eventually make their way from their point of landfall to the community who have sent out the call for help. For ease of reference we call this ‘the meadhall’, but there are plenty of instances where the central site of an adventure is not a literal meadhall. There's more detail on different kinds of meadhalls in “Other Meeting Locations” on page 115.

There are strong reasons for why the Hero will almost inevitably immediately head to the local meadhall. In the lands around the Whale Road, this is customary — when arriving in a strange kingdom bearing arms, it is only honourable to make oneself known, state one's name and present your intentions. The local community leader is always keen to know who is about in their lands. The Hero is engaged in responding to a call for aid, and the meadhall is the place to present oneself as a Hero ready to help, and to find out more. BEOWULF: Age of Heroes assumes a certain level of genuine goodwill on the part of Heroes.

Beowulf's world is centred upon the meadhall. It is where both Grendel and his mother choose to make their attacks, sowing fear and doubt into Hrothgar and his forces. It is not a coincidence



that Beowulf also heads to Heorot as soon as he arrives, to present himself to Hrothgar and make his claim to defend the hall against Grendel. When he leaves Denmark, he sails back to his own lord Hygelac and meets with him in the king's hall.

On arrival at the meadhall, the journey to action is complete, the first act is over, and so begins the second. As part of the deliberate structure of a Beowulf scenario, the meadhall is where the Hero begins to uncover the secrets of the Monster, by engaging the local community.

By using their skills, abilities and Followers, the Hero can find out a little bit more about the situation, and how to resolve it. This might include “unlocking” side-quests that reveal extra information, introductions to other NPCs, or clues. Just how long and involved the discovery of information about the Monster needs to be is entirely up to the Gamemaster.

A wise GM will take into account the kind of Hero their Player has chosen, and figure that into their scenario. And a good BEOWULF scenario will allow a range of approaches to the mystery. It is just as worthy to flex one's heroic martial prowess as it is to carry out a careful, monk-like investigation.

Most often the heart of the situation is that a monster is causing strife, and must be slain, defeated or driven off. Within the community at the meadhall are found sufficient opportunities to unravel the riddle of what the beast is, where it can be found, and just how to defeat it.

There are of course a wealth of different options in how the Monster at the centre of a scenario might be tracked down and defeated. A central part of that is interaction with NPCs in the meadhall.

Some NPCs will have information to uncover by impressing or befriending them with social skills, or perhaps a test of wits. Another NPC might want to wrestle the Hero in a test of strength. Others might offer the chance to find out more by undertaking a task somewhere else before returning to the meadhall. Sometimes that might even end the second act and progress the plot, opening one door while closing others. It depends on the particular adventure.

To make meadhall social encounters extra interesting, some, many, or even all of the foreground NPCs at a meadhall can be interconnected, and the order and manner in which they are approached might be important. Success with one NPC might mean harder success with their rival. Or easier success with their friend.

For your initial adventures keeping things simple is a good idea. As you get used to the setting and the rules you can add in greater levels of complexity between NPCs.

## SOCIAL STAT BLOCKS

At the heart of most meadhalls in BEOWULF are a network of characters for the Hero to meet and special social stat blocks for those NPCs. These offer criteria for having advantage and disadvantage in the exchange. They set the stakes for the conversation. Each important, or “foreground” NPC has the following stat block.

**Name.** The character's name(s). Note that a character's name can be the Player's first hint at their culture and upbringing.

**Description.** This includes not only physical details about the person, but also their manner.

**Challenge.** This section gives a summary of what the Hero needs to overcome to win this NPC's help. This entry includes one or more ability checks that the Hero can attempt to learn more from the character.

*So for example, Cnut, a cowardly scribe, who saw the giant-like monster approaching from the Eastern Fens before it attacked the Smith's house, might be in a state of shock, and be looking to escape his king's service as soon as possible. The Hero will need to convince them that they can defeat the monster in order to win their help. This might need a DC 14 Charisma (Perception) check.*

**Advantage criteria.** Careful observation and deduction can often allow a Hero to realise a way to improve their chances with an NPC. This section will list something that the Hero can do to improve the situation. Interactions with other NPCs may well affect any relationship with the Hero.

*In our example, our cowardly scribe might be terrified of gruff warriors, and prefer a Hero with high Charisma over a Hero with high Strength. Any Hero with over 15 Charisma gains advantage on checks in this interaction.*

**Disadvantage criteria.** Similarly, a NPC might have specific things they do not like to hear, or ways in which they resist being treated. The NPC might suffer biases or prejudices that mechanically affect their interactions. This criteria may well include behaviour towards other NPCs within the community. If a Hero approaches a character and enacts the behaviours listed under disadvantage criteria, or the NPC witnesses the Hero displaying this behaviour to others, they will struggle to win the NPC's favour.

*Cnut is still in a state of shock. If the Hero is witnessed shouting at any other NPC, or yells at Cnut, they will gain disadvantage in this interaction.*

**Follower hook.** There might be times that the presence of a specific Follower can influence the NPC's attitude. A Follower hook gives the criteria for a Follower to become involved in a social encounter with this NPC.



*The presence of a Follower who has gifts related to writing or literature will raise any success with Cnut by one level.*

Once the Hero approaches the character and accounts for all of the above options, they can make a check, according to the challenge listed above. The dice results are compared to the chart below:

- **Success by 5 or more.** This should represent a complete success, with possible additional rewards. If this success level does not make sense, it is not necessary to include it.

*Cnut will agree to show the Hero where he saw the Monster, and additionally, while accompanying the Hero to the location, share some extra information he discovered in an old book that helps identify the Monster's weakness.*

- **Success.** This is a basic success, the Hero has made a connection with the character and will learn something useful from them. Success might open up a side quest or useful piece of information. It might provide advantage in an interaction with another NPC present.

*Cnut will reluctantly agree to show the Hero where he saw the Monster. Which will provide the Hero with some tracks to follow.*

- **Failure.** The Hero has failed at making a connection with the character. This person may become standoffish and won't give up their best information. They may well attempt to absent themselves from conversation, or provide mildly misleading or unhelpful information.

*Cnut will say that he has a great deal of work to do with his master's books, having been kept from his work by the actions of another NPC, and excuse himself. However this gives away the existence of a collection of books which might prove useful, as well as something about another NPC.*

- **Failure by 5 or more.** This represents an unusually terrible failure. The Hero has offended the character and hurt their future chances somehow. This level of failure does not need to be included in situations where it would not make sense.

*Cnut resolves that this situation is only going to get worse, and brings forward his plans to leave. He will scurry away to gather his things. Unfortunately this means he will be the next person to encounter the Monster. Or perhaps he leaves open the meadhall door when he leaves. This kind of catastrophic failure might well be used by the GM to advance the plot in negative or dramatic ways for the Hero.*

**Further challenges.** Some characters will have additional information or tasks for the Hero. Each of these should be listed here. Keep additional challenges simpler than the primary one, as the Player has already succeeded with the character to reach this stage.

**Recruitment.** Some characters can be recruited as temporary Assistants. If so, this section should indicate how they can be convinced to join the Hero and provide their Follower statistics. Assistants can provide additional temporary help to the Hero, as well as adventure specific help that the Hero's band might not be able to achieve alone. They're also useful to make up the numbers, should the Hero's Followers meet a grisly end.

## FAILWARDS

An important feature of BEOWULF is the idea of "failwards" — rewards for failing. Social checks in the meadhall should never result in rolling the dice to make nothing happen.

A failed challenge in the meadhall will change the way the NPCs relate to the Hero and indeed each other. It will create a *different* story, and probably one that is less generous to the Hero. But a failed check should never create dead ends. It should simply open a different door — it could provide a longer or more difficult route to the same conclusion as success, or unlock a different outcome entirely. Sometimes there's more to see by going the long way round. The Player should not be afraid of failing: this is especially important in a duet game. The Player does not have a group of allies in the shape of the other players with whom to commiserate failure. If they are punished for failing a check, they can be forgiven for getting despondent and uninterested in the game a lot faster than when part of a multiplayer adventure.

## CLUES, INFORMATION, SIDE QUESTS AND MORE

What kind of information or help might a Hero expect to discover from overcoming successful social challenges? Layering these kinds of rewards together can help you frame the planning of a scenario.

At a very basic level, these are the facts the Hero is looking for:

- Where the monster lives
- What its strengths are
- What its weaknesses are
- How to defeat it

A simple adventure will place a series of skill checks in-between the Hero and this information. In addition to skill checks clothed in the form of an NPC, with their own social needs to be met, skill checks might be found in the form of a location which involves a series of skill checks — a high cliff that must be climbed for example. Or they might be a combination of many such checks, layering up to a complex, multi-pathed story that can be replayed many times with many outcomes.

An interesting adventure will make the path to this information a winding one with great views along the way. The basic information of how to find and defeat a Monster can be broken down, and spread amongst NPCs and locations around the adventure locale.



What an NPC might want from a Hero:

- Reassurance, friendship, respect,
- To make their enemies look bad
- To make their friends look good
- Material reward
- Material help
- A promise of future help or reward
- Assistance in furthering their goals or aims

These things might involve simple social challenges, like a single successful Charisma check, or involved side quests, like accompanying a carpenter deep into the forest to gather timber when no one else will go, which results in battling the outlaws that live there. Victory over the outlaws might in turn open up new skill checks at the meadhall.

An NPC might need several criteria of different kinds to be met. The Hero, for example, may need to impress a second NPC, in order to discover that a precious object has been lost, discover its location, retrieve it at some peril, and then return it to its owner, the first NPC, and thereby unlock a vital piece of information.

This list provides some inspiration for types of information that an NPC or location might hold. Any of which might be incorrect or misleading:

- Useful information about another character
- An introduction to another character
- The location of another character
- Awareness of a place
- The location of a place
- Additional information about a place
- Awareness of an event
- The location of an event
- Additional information about an event
- Awareness of a thing
- The location of a thing
- Additional information about a thing
- A thing itself

Remember that a character might have their own motivations, their own hierarchy of needs, and rank information in their own way. To them, the name of their neighbour's horse might be the funniest joke they've ever heard, and they're more inclined to share that, than the details of the weird carving they saw on a standing stone on the moors.

High levels of success with an NPC might not necessarily get the Hero exactly what they expect. It is up to the GM to decide how far along a winding path the Hero is led by the adventure, and what kind of mix of challenges would best suit a Player.

## CHARACTERS FOUND AT A MEADHALL

### LEADERS

If the meadhall is an active place, then there is almost certainly one or more leaders present. This may be a king or queen, a prince or princess, or an entire royal family. In some cases, the true leader may be gone or lost and then a steward, retainer or trusted councillor might stand in for the leader.

By tradition, male leaders are expected to be more focused on warfare and exploration, while women are peace weavers and skilful deal-makers. However, both stories and histories are full of examples of folk who defied their common roles and provided exceptional leadership. Feel free to mix things up and have a young princess lead her folk to war or an aged king who only wants peace with his neighbours through diplomacy.

The Hero will want to present themselves to the leader as soon as practical, and it is also the leader's responsibility to greet the Hero and put either restrictions or responsibilities (or both) on the Hero as the leader feels appropriate. As a guest in a foreign court, the Hero should respect the leader's authority and try to work within the bounds they are given.

Usually, the leader will explain or recap the threat posed by the Monster and its recent activities. This should be used to set expectations and a timetable. A Monster that only hunts by the light of the full moon is less active than one who comes every night without fail. Thus the first Monster might have complex requirements to learn how to defeat it, whilst the second is a more present threat and might need a simpler solution.

It is possible that the leader has been corrupted by the Monster, a changeling has taken their place, or that simple fear holds them in check. If this is the case, then you should provide the Hero with chances to discover this, either by speaking to others or by the leader struggling to resist the control, or inconsistencies in the narrative (be careful with this last one, we're all human and make mistakes, so the Player might forgive you 'mis-speaking' without ever becoming suspicious).

### WARRIORS

Warriors around the Whale Road can be categorised into several types. Firstly, "the good", who follow social expectations to the letter. They are loyal to their leader, and serve the meadhall by protecting its folk and keeping its laws. There are also more mundane types, who while not being exemplars of their class, are decent enough people. They might not be as brave as the best, most loyal hearth guards, nor be as willing to do their duty unto death. But they're there to defend the hall when called upon.

Wandering warriors are largely held in great suspicion. The difference between a leaderless, oathless warrior and a bandit is next to nothing. Where oaths and pledges of allegiance form



the better part of the law, armed men and women who have no allegiance are literally “outlaws”. Whether the perception of such heartless wanderers is accurate is entirely up to the scenario.

Warriors may be sent as messengers from another meadhall, and they may have a demeanour which reflects their leader, or the nature of business between halls.

Warriors are frequently competitive, keen to prove their skills, loyalty and deeds in battles of words around the hearth. The Hero might encounter failed heroes who have tried to face down the Monster and might have valuable information for the Player or be simply passing through on a quest of their own.

## CRAFTSPEOPLE

Every settlement will have a number of craftspeople who serve the material needs of the community. The larger the settlement, and the richer its hall, the more specialised craftspeople might be found. Generally speaking, the more specialised and useful the craft, the higher the esteem assigned to the crafter.

- Weaver, leatherworker, garment-maker, embroiderer
- Blacksmith, metal-worker, jeweller, goldsmith, sword smith
- Antler or bone worker
- Carpenter, builder, woodcarver, wood turner, wheelwright, shipwright, musical instrument maker
- Potter, glass-maker
- Parchment or vellum maker
- Charcoal burner
- Brewer

There are a wide variety of craftspeople who are itinerant skilled workers travelling to where they are needed, alongside those who abide in a single hall, with the leader as their patron. It is not impossible for an entire settlement to be based around a single craft — a renowned weapon smith might have their own hall. And while not as grand nor as martial as that of a king, it might still be a significant settlement in need of a Hero’s help.

Where craftspeople acquire their raw materials and tools is of great importance to both the settlements they serve and to them personally — and thus to adventures.

How long crafts take to complete can have a big impact on a community and the craftspeople — it can take months to tan hides, or season timber — and requires craftspeople remain in place, preserving the community’s long term investment. This too can play a role in an adventure.

## CLERGY

Devotees of the Church, the Followers of the Book can be found all around the Whale Road. Some rulers and kingdoms regard the Church as bringing many benefits, foremost amongst them being reading, writing and literature. Written law is in some places seen as the province of the more successful and beneficent ruler.

A member of the clergy of the Church might be a permanent advisor to the local ruler, or they might be present as part of a mission to bring knowledge of their faith to those who still worship the Old Gods.

Priests of the Church are generally considered separate to common society, and as favoured guests of the local leader willing to reap the benefits of literacy and the promises of eternal life after death, may enjoy special privileges.

Some priests are well-read, wise, and benevolent, while others misuse their power and privilege for personal gain or control of a community. The variety of humanity and its relationship to power is not so different in the Age of Heroes.



The ways of the Old Gods generally place less emphasis on a class of clergy, and it is most common for rulers to lead observance of the Old Ways, any individual kingdom might have representatives of the Old Gods who oversee rituals and the local shrines. Being closer to the Old Gods may mean these individuals are in some way marked out as special or “god-touched”. They may speak in strange voices, or enact mysterious behaviour. They may have a tyrannical influence over the community, wielding fear with the threat of a direct line to the supernatural, or they may simply be a wise elder of the community who marks the passing of the seasons and preserves the stories and traditions of their people.

A meadhall might be home to both representatives of the Church and the Old Ways, who may be locked in debate, may vie for attention and patronage, or live in a delicate balance under a leader who wants to hedge their bets, or who is yet to make a decision on what they believe.

## SERVANTS

A number of those present in any meadhall will be there as servants, keeping house for their lord, bearing cups to guests, preparing food, maintaining the linen cupboard and so on. Servants do not share the privileges of warriors or noble folk, nor even craftspeople. But they have access to many more people and places within a settlement.

Whether a servant is proud of their community and hall, and works for its betterment, or harbours secret resentments and old grudges is the stuff of great stories. A wise Hero will be aware that servants go everywhere and see everything. Whether they are prepared to share anything they've seen is another matter.



## COMMON FOLK

Most folk living around the Whale-Road are not specialised in a single craft or calling. They are subsistence farmers, living in family groups and performing a wide range of tasks to survive. Animal, land and woodland husbandry is complex and skilled work. The common folk tend to have many skills which they can perform to a competent level — maintaining their own homes, enclosures, animals and modest crops. Some common folk subsist on hunting or simple tasks like wood-gathering, rather than having land to work. Common-folk may actually live in the meadhall, or have travelled here to socialise, to pay what they owe to their leader, or to request their help.

## FOLLOWERS AND ASSISTANTS

A meadhall is very likely to include Followers in waiting, whether they are Simple Warriors, or more experienced Potential Followers, who could serve as trainers or advisors to the Hero. You may choose to have number of recruitable Followers prepared with a Follower Card, whether they're likely to be used or not.

The attendees and associated hangers-on at the meadhall can be helpful Assistants. One or more of the workers might dream of a life on the open ocean and want to leave the hall. Others might be able to heal the Hero or provide advice during the course of the adventure. A hearthguard or hunter might be sent with the Hero to guide them.

Such available Assistants should be listed out and a Follower card prepared for them. Even if your intention is that the Assistants remain at home after the adventure having a completed card speeds up gameplay.

## INTERESTING FOLK

Some of those present at a meadhall might not like the Hero or have an objection to them based on alignment or homeland. Others will be more welcoming. You can use these disputes and differences in attitude to highlight the Hero's place in the world or to build eventual rapport between former enemies. Unferth challenges Beowulf's bragging rights but when the hero proves himself, he also recognises Beowulf's greater strength and gifts him his sword. That journey between developing characters is an important one.

## OTHER MEETING LOCATIONS

The meadhall at the top of the hill does need to be the only place to visit in order to make introductions, though it almost always is the most appropriate place to start. In the absence of a meadhall a large farmhouse might provide a similar function. A famed smithy may provide the centre of a settlement. A people driven out of their hall, and forced to live in the nearby ruins can provide the same kind of opportunity for a social encounter and investigation. The Hero might be invited into a private home or military encampment.

The rules of hospitality are the same for the lowest hovel as the richest meadhall; the host will provide food, drink and the safety of the house and the guest will do whatever they can to honour their host. Within a warriors battle camp, there is a great difference between known allies and suspicious strangers, and each will be treated accordingly.

More mythical places can also serve as meeting locations. The witch's hut in the Forest is a common location, but so is a simple clearing, especially if you are fated to meet a Noble Animal. Sometimes the most meagre hut holds someone bound by prophecy to help the Hero in their quest.

The central location of the meadhall is a notional one, and it can take any number of forms. It doesn't even need to have a gathering of people — part of the challenge the adventure poses is travelling between far flung individuals, undergoing checks to locate the next one, and glean a little more information about the Monster. Once you understand the heart of this second act is an idea, you can fly with it.

### MEETING NOBLE ANIMALS

Most animals will seem out of pace at many kinds of meadhall. If it is your destiny to meet a noble animal, it will most likely be in the wild somewhere (see the next section, opposite). Noble animals normally appear as exceptional individuals of their kind: larger than average, with an intelligence in their eyes that transcends normal beastly intelligence.

Most noble animals are found in the wild, in places suitable for their kind. However, it may be possible that such a beast is waiting in town for the Hero, if they know that a Hero is coming. Most Heroes can identify noble animals on sight, unless the animal chooses to repress its own nature, perhaps as part of a test for a Hero.

Some noble animals might be able to fly, as adjudicated by the GM — no noble animal is big enough to carry anyone or anything other than a small package or note.

A noble animal that is recruitable as an assistant or Follower should have a Follower card. See page 85 for information about burdens and gifts for noble animals.

### BACKGROUND TEXTURE

In any meeting location of size, there might be a number of people who are there as observers, the household, hearthguards and other folk who are not decision-makers and whose importance to the story being told is minimal. However, Players being Players, they still might be the subject of the Hero's interest.

Feel free to have minimal details sketched up on these individuals. In fact, if you have a ready answer to a random individual's name, occupation and purpose, many Players will assume that they must be important, since you knew such things without hesitation. There are a series of tables in the appendix of this book to help you create background NPCs.

Of course, a fun thing to do in roleplaying games is make the Player's wildest theories turn out to be true, so if they spend an hour sharply interviewing a servant who has no planned knowledge or influence on the story, then it is within your purview to give her another character's knowledge and make her important to the story.

Eventually, the investigation part of this second meadhall act will either be complete, be interrupted, or will come to a premature end as the Monster makes its presence felt. Frequently this will result in the Hero travelling outside of the bounds of the hall, and into the wilds beyond.



## EXPLORATION

*... The footprints led  
along the woodland, widely seen,  
a path o'er the plain, where she passed, and trod  
the murky moor; of men-at-arms  
she bore the bravest and best one, dead,  
him who with Hrothgar the homestead ruled.  
On then went the atheling-born  
o'er stone-cliffs steep and strait defiles,  
narrow passes and unknown ways,  
headlands sheer, and the haunts of the Nicors.  
Foremost he fared, a few at his side  
of the wiser men, the ways to scan,  
till he found in a flash the forested hill  
hanging over the hoary rock,  
a woful wood: the waves below  
were dyed in blood. ...*

The Hero will explore all kinds of environments in their search for the Monster. Some of these are natural — wind-swept cliffs, caves hollowed out by slamming ocean waves or the slower drip, drip, drip of flowing freshwater, dangerous heights and deep forests, mud and muck, and sometimes, just sometimes, green grass and clear skies. Others are man-made, either by recent inhabitants or those of ancient days. And some, worst of all, were made by Monsters and there they still may dwell.

The encounters and challenges of the meadhall are very likely to see the Hero sent off to explore the surrounding area. And eventually it is very likely that the Monster will need to be hunted to its lair.

## NATURAL FEATURES

These cover non-constructed landscape features, though it can sometimes be hard to tell. Some have mistaken ancient burial mounds for natural hillocks and some caves were made by Dweorhas (dwarfs) or Ylfes (elves) for their own purposes. The natural aspects of the land are most often background details and the clues to the adventure are in how the people, or the Monster, have changed the landscape to suit their needs.

## CAVES

Most caves that a Hero will encounter are either of the sea cave or karst varieties, although there are other, more scarce, options as well.

A sea cave is found at sea level, and made by the repeated waves on an area of the shore that has a weak spot. The water carries away some of the stone each time, creating a cave. It may be more easily accessible at low tide, or geological action may have caused part of the cave to rise above the water level, allowing some chambers to stay dry all the time. Sea caves make excellent lairs

for Monsters that have some love of the sea and are also ideal for Heroes with smaller craft that might sail into the darkness in hunt of a monster. In the extreme areas of the north, the cave might be carved into the side of a glacier instead of stone.

A karst cave is formed by the slow action of water gaining natural acidity and then dissolving limestone as it percolates through the rock. As the water opens up new spaces, its accretion process creates artefacts such as flowstones, stalactites, stalagmites, helictites and columns of stone. These are the most common form of cave and most in-land caves will be of this type. They can be fairly simple (one or two large chambers, easily reached) or deadly complex (many such caves have small openings and long winding passages that can be very tight). The Monster might know their way in the darkness and trick a Hero into pursuing them into a dangerous area that has a sudden fall or precarious formations. Most of these caves will have submerged areas if the cave is deep enough to reach the local water table.

A primary cave is formed at the same time as the stone around it, usually by a lava tube — the lava exposed to the air begins to cool while under the surface it continues to be liquid and flow downhill. If enough of it reaches the lower areas, then the upper areas of the flow will have tunnels beneath the surface. A Monster might make their lair in such a tunnel, especially if they're fond of the earth or heat. Most such creations in the lands of our stories are truly ancient and are in no danger of becoming active again.

Rivers and winds can carve cave-like channels through stone, and if either can reach into a karst cave they can cause it to expand. Fracture and talus caves are formed by the collapse of rock and boulders and are temporary, not to mention extraordinarily unstable and dangerous.

For most of a Hero's career, a complex cave system is as close as they may get to a 'traditional' dungeon. And they can be exciting in measure, providing new dangers (or at least the threat of a danger) around every corner and intelligent Monsters may use the many passages to outmanoeuvre the party and surprise them in the worst way. And certain cave features can be dangerous in themselves — darkness, brittle nearly-eaten-away stone, deep cold water, sudden flooding or the appearance of predators or vermin as a distraction. If your Player enjoys the process of exploring a cave then they can feature more prominently, but for many Players they should be reserved for an 'extra-special' session featuring a Monster or other threat of significant challenge.

## THE FOREST

During the Age of Heroes, much of Northern Europe is covered with primordial forests. Eventually a time will come when these forests will be cleared, to build ships, homes, mills, and workshops and to provide fuel for a growing population. But for now, only a few live at the edges of the woods, and there are dark rumours about what lays within its depths. The hearts of forests are strange places, full of mysteries and said to be home to Ylfes and other

Monsters. Folk might disappear into a forest and wander lost forever, or find themselves emerging from the woods far from home. Others say that they have accidentally gone to sleep in a glade only to find that years have passed once they return home, or that they have lost all memory of their former lives. Few folk go willingly into the deep wood.

For most adventures, the voyage signals the transition from the normal world to the dangerous world of Monsters. If you're going to set an adventure in the Forest however, you might want to skip the voyage, or minimise it. Instead the hike to reach the heart of the forest becomes the voyage. You still generate the Portent as normal, but you'll either want to adapt the challenges or make a suitable number of custom ones for the adventure.

Within the forest, meetings are less likely, at least with other humans. Noble Animals might be found more often, or perhaps a strange hermit that seems to live alone. The Hero might encounter a trio of strangers to deal with. In the old tales, these are most often treacherous witches or other dangerous folk, but perhaps they are just a small but normal family, or an unusual bonding that desires freedom from the scrutiny of life beyond the forest.

Elves live in the Dark Forest, in faerie mounds with secret or magical entrances or among the tops of trees. Few mortals see them (unless they wish to be seen) but their presence can be known by an eerie feeling of being watched as you explore the woods. Elves rarely serve as the Monster in a BEOWULF tale but they have no love for humans and might torment a Hero for their own amusement.

A Monster might lair up in a tree, or inside the hollow base of one, or in a clearing or small cave or thicket. Other dangers roam the Dark Forest as well, most notably hungry wolves but occasionally the forest might have reclaimed land once cleared and what looks like a hill with trees growing out of its top is actually an ancient barrow. Its occupants might be bothered by the roots tickling their dead feet and blame the Hero, unfortunately enough.

## FARMLAND AND PASTURES

These lands are not precisely 'natural' but many have been used for time out of mind. They are often on the edge of villages and towns, though a brave or desperate farmer might try plots further afield. Most fields near settlements belong to a certain family by ancient tradition and rows of stones divide the land. With more and more people settling down these plots are often subdivided — some day they may get so small that a farmer cannot live off their own land, but for now there is enough for most families to be generous.

The most common crops are wheat, barley, and oats with legumes (beans and peas) as a common alternative crop. Farmhouses have crofts next to them where the farmer grows cabbages, onions, beans and peas, and often has an apple, cherry or pear tree.

Pastures are usually a little further away from population centres and require less maintenance. Folk keep cattle and oxen, hogs, sheep and sometimes horses. Younger members of the family are often assigned to keep watch as shepherds, often assisted by well-trained dogs.

Players will often think of farmland as part of the 'safe' area, along with villages and towns. A Monster attacking a farm or pasture is almost as transgressive as attacking the centre of town. You can emphasise these contrasts by setting scenes in rapid succession: a hearty meal at the family's table, followed by trudging out into the pasture to keep watch during the long hours of the night. As the Hero listens to the sounds of the darkness so close to the domestic tranquility of the farmhouse they might realise that this is another sort of boundary between civilisation and wilderness.

### HEATHLAND AND MOORLAND

Heaths are stretches of open land where nothing taller than heather and wiry grasses grow. Moors are much the same, though the ground may be wetter and there might be a great accumulation of peat underneath the ground-cover, which can be dangerous for unwary travellers. Moorland can also mean a series of low hills, but one thing is certain — there are no trees and little places to hide.

This desolation can bring a strong flavour to the adventure. In these lands, the Monster must have some special secret — a hidden cave or hiding spot, or an ability to become invisible or disperse itself among the flat landscape. Perhaps there are one or more tors, chunks of stone revealed by the constant erosion that form strange shaped peaks at the tops of the hills where the Monster hides.

### ISLAND ASPECTS

The seas of the Whale Road are dotted with countless islands, ranging hugely in size. During this time, as ships continue to

explore the oceans, many islands are occupied. The isolation of an island, where no one can arrive or leave without others knowing of it can provide the perfect setting for a BEOWULF adventure.

Every island has some sort of border into the sea. Some islands have gently sloping beaches, others are at steeper angles with darker and sharper stones instead of soft sand. Still others have little other than stark cliffs that the waves pound against. Hopefully the Hero might find a sea cave with a well-worn passage all the way to the top of the island in such a case. Most inhabited islands are going to have some way of receiving visitors and shipments.

The island itself might have one or more different types of geography on it, depending on size. Many islands will have nothing other than heathland, others might have small (or big) stands of forests. Some might be more water than land and qualify as a brackish sort of swampland. Others might be the very tip of an underwater mountain emerging from the sea and resemble a mountain peak in shape but not height.

### LAKES, PONDS, RIVERS, BROOKS, AND STREAMS

There is no precise difference between lakes and ponds, they are both stationary bodies of freshwater, though (on average) something called a lake will be bigger and/or deeper than a body of water called a pond.

The same is true with rivers, brooks, and streams — a brook is likely smaller than a river, though both could be called a stream. All of them refer to moving freshwater, most often from a higher



elevation where snowmelt or an underground spring provides a source to a lower drainage point, which could be a lake, a pond, some sort of wetland (see below) or the ocean itself. Some are seasonal, some are year-long but wax and wane with the weather and climate.

Sources of freshwater are important not only for daily life but also for agriculture and many valuable trades. Flowing water also can provide access to resources otherwise inaccessible, for example panning for gold or silver, collecting smooth river rocks or digging for clay on a river's banks. Most settlements are near a water source, and a Hero who finds a river or lake on their travels might readily guess that they are close to civilisation.

### MARSHES, SWAMPS, FENS, AND BOGS

All of these terms refer to wetlands and the primary differences are in the amount of water present and the types of plants. Marshes have standing or slow-moving freshwater, or a mix of fresh and saltwater in salt marshes, found near coasts. Marshes have smaller plants and bushes, adapted for the water conditions.

Swamps are similar but usually have more exposed land and always have trees. Fens are areas where soil saturated with water has been trapped by a layer of peat and moss, and are usually covered by grasses, sedges, rushes and wildflowers. Bogs are similar but rely more on rainfall or other external water sources.

All of these wetlands are known for their great variety of life — many different types of birds roost or hunt in the area, there are amphibians, eels and other fish in the water, reptiles hiding in the grass and even bigger creatures that hunt lesser ones as well. A wide variety of plants call the wetlands home and in some unusual conditions, even 'hunt' for their meals instead of taking it from the soil, sunshine and air. Especially at night, these lands sing with life and a Hero might feel out of place amid the reeds and water.

If a Monster lives here, it might be semi-aquatic, hiding from the sun or hunters during the day by digging into mud and muck, and then emerging to hunt at night. Others might just make use of the intimidating terrain and live at the centre of a swamp or fen. There will be people here as well, hunters and trappers who rely on the wetlands for food, or those that gather and dry peat as a fuel or fertiliser.

It is of note that the people who became known as the Anglo-Saxons left mainland Europe in part due to rising sea levels turning their homeland to marsh and swamp. And so swamp, whether primordial or spreading fenlands, may well be remembered as a place of some horror.

Heroes should feel off-balance in wetlands, forced to either stand in the muck and deal with difficult terrain or guide a small boat or raft amid the pools of water, hunting for something that can surely see them, but is hidden from the Hero's sight.

### MOUNTAIN-LANDS

Just like the Dark Forest provides a different sense of adventure rather than a more usual trip to an island or seashore location, so does the challenge of reaching a mountainous location. You can use the Portent system as normal, but you will likely want to present challenges unique to the environment and especially the changing climate of mountains — the higher the Hero must climb, the more dangerous environments they will face (see Great Heights, below).

#### GREAT HEIGHTS

None of the mountains around the Whale Road are so high as to worry about the lack of air at their heights. But the peaks will be considerably colder than the feet of the mountains, and there can be other dangers, such as avalanches, crevasses that are hidden by accumulated snow, areas that can only be reached by vertical climbing, falling rocks, weathered formations that break as soon as weight is applied and others. You can use these sorts of dangers as challenges — in this way, the ascent of the mountain becomes a background element (much like the Voyage) told in a montage of challenges and then the true adventure begins at the top of the mountain.

The lowest part of the mountains tend to be surrounded by smaller hills and clad in trees. Many mountains provide the source for streams and rivers, and their sources can often be found here — springs emerging from the rock, or snowmelt slowly gathering and then spilling down into the lowlands. As you head up the mountain, the trees become more sparse and hardy. There may be meadows of grass and wildflowers with no trees at all. Sometimes you might find a flat shelf of ground formed by the mountain's movement. Such places might have ponds or lakes, surrounded by plants. The ground is soft here, full of peat. Higher up, there are almost no plants at all, just bare stone and snow. At these heights, it remains cold enough that the snow remains all year long.

Mountains may make you think of spectacular views and thoughtful isolation, but there may be some inhabitants, shepherds at the lower heights moving their herds up the side of the mountain as the seasons change (and then back down to the lowlands), hermits who wish to be left alone (perhaps with dark secrets), miners seeking rich veins underneath the mountain. Mountains are also the traditional home of Dweorhas (dwarfs), along with some Eotenas (trolls and ogres) and Gigantas (giants).

Mountains provide a series of dangers to the Hero, several of which must be personally overcome. They are high places and may have religious associations, even if not they almost demand a sort of secular reverence, because of the effort required to reach their



heights. Monsters here might reflect these sentiments, causing the Hero introspection and new points of view, or they might represent the raw power of nature and its many dangers.

## THE SEA

The ocean is an element in almost all BEOWULF stories, it is the Whale Road, the means by which the Hero reaches their new adventure. The sea also provides isolation, especially around islands, so that a Monster can threaten a place or people and they have little recourse other than to endure it.

You can use the ocean to represent the mood of the adventure. If you want the Hero to feel trapped then the wind blows, raising great waves that slam onto the shore and causing driving rains that demand everyone stay inside while the Monster hunts in the storm. If you want a more introspective air, then the wind is nonexistent and the ocean is flat, reflecting only the clouds and birds flying overhead. When the Hero vanquishes the Monster, the clouds part, the sun is warm and a gentle breeze blows towards the Hero's home (or next destination).

The ocean is also deadly, especially in Northern Europe, though it is dangerous everywhere in the world. But, especially during the cold months, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea can be dangerous for a sailor who goes overboard or a ship that capsizes, as the low water temperature means that a victim might have only minutes before hypothermia sets in. Sharks and sea-monsters also swim these seas and blood in the water will draw them to the attack.

## ANCIENTS AND GIANTS

In the stories of the Migration Era, there are two groups of people who stand out as needing special attention. The first of these, which story tellers call 'the ancients' represent the forebears and assorted relations of the folks who are telling the stories. They represent a time even before the age of Beowulf, recalling ancient Byrthonic tribes, the Celts, the nameless forebears of the Picts, the Sami and others. Some of these people are still separate groups, having been changed by contact with others, and some are trying to keep their own cultural identities. Our stories are largely seen through the eyes of Anglo-Saxon storytellers, telling heroic stories, and thus ancient or distant peoples may appear in a story as strange and mysterious; whereas in their own tales, the Anglo-Saxons are the strange foreigners with barbaric customs.

The second group are held to be among the giants: builders of the great ruined cities, pavers of long and steady roads, makers of walls that span an entire land, and other such impossibilities. The organisation and resources needed to operate on the scale of an ancient empire is simply impossible to imagine for the folk of The Whale Road, and so their remains are wholly mysterious and unknowable.

In the game, both of these folk provide handy providers of ancient ruins, weird inscriptions, half-remembered legends and such.

Many fantasy settings touch on the idea that once, long ago, there were great people who knew more than present day folk knew and were capable of miracles. This is the source of that inspiration. That the world was once greater than they have known was a key part of medieval philosophy and that provides an excellent excuse for adventures.

## BARROWS

Since the days of the earliest ancients, people have built barrows in a variety of shapes and for different purposes. Some are round, some are more rectangular; some are aligned to important natural features such as the winter solstice, others seem to disregard such things; some hold many bodies, some have none. They are built with local materials: wood, stone or clay. There are also dolmen, tombs made out of menhir (very large stones). No one knows why the ancients built these, and there are likely to be dangerous secrets to do with their construction or whomever lies buried within.

In some areas the people still make use of the barrows for burials. This may be part of an unbroken tradition that stretches back to the dawn of memory, or it may just be that they are taking advantage of an existing structure. Of course, there's a danger that the dead may not remain in peaceful rest if they are disturbed.

You can use barrows in many ways. Foremost they provide the threat of the undead, as many tales are known of the Dréag — the again-walkers who do not stay in their graves — and the Héag — the mound-dwellers that protect their fellow dead against who would rob the tombs. But they also might house the Monster, especially an ancient dolmen built by the ancients and recently rediscovered. Or the barrow or dolmen might attract the Monster, providing some clue as to its goals and desires.

## RUINS

Both the ancients and the giants produced ruins, though the works of the giants are much more extensive than those of the ancients. In some places they built entire cities, only to abandon them as their time waned. The people of the Whale Road have no use for these cities and steer clear of them - they are full of ghosts and old curses, and are not a healthy nor wise place to linger.

Current-day rulers often do not have the skills or labour required to maintain the forts as the giants did, so when an old building fails it is often replaced by one built in the current style. Thus, a well-maintained fortress might contain a mix of roundhouses, longhouses and giant-built structures.

Ruins can be a source of Monsters, if some ancient defensive magic is destroyed by careless looting or new construction. Or a Monster from the old days might return to the ruins because it has memories of what once flourished there. Having a battle with the Monster set in ruins can offer some spectacular scenes with lots of changing terrain as walls or columns come tumbling down, or a floor gives way, collapsing both Monster and Hero into darkness.



## STANDING STONES

Both the ancients and the giants raised up stones, though often for different reasons.

The stones made by the ancients are rougher in nature but often possess supernatural power. Solitary stones are called menhir and are sometimes arranged into complex structures (the most famous of which is Stonehenge). Standing stones are often labelled, the three most likely systems are ogham (the writing used by the ancients), picture-stones (illustrations that impart information without any specific language being used) and runes (used by the Anglo-Saxons and their neighbours to the east). Any of these could be used for ordinary, everyday information or for magic spells and protective charms. An investigative Hero will want to pay careful attention to the standing stones.

Standing stones, especially with writing, are a great way to convey information to the Hero. Even just their presence can be valuable information — in an area that has little worked stone, the fact that a menhir has been left alone by later folks indicates that they believe it to be special or powerful. Or if such a stone has been recently disturbed and only then did the Monster begin to trouble the people, it is likely that they are related. And, of course, stones with writing on them might provide riddles or clues to the Hero or, if necessary, explain to them what is going on in plain terms.

## BUILT STRUCTURES

These are homes, defensive structures, work-centres and other buildings made by the present-day inhabitants, their direct ancestors or another people known to those folk who occupy the land now. The Monster might attack such buildings directly or as part of an effort to reach the common folk cowering within.

Structures can be built out of wattle and daub (woven sticks and mud), thatch (gathered grasses), sod, wood, stone, or a combination of materials. Seasonal or temporary structures are often made out of easier to work materials, with permanent structures having more effort invested in them. However, a temporary structure might acquire a sort of permanency over time, as regular visitors continue to repair, refine and expand the building to suit their needs.

## DWELLINGS

Depending on the age and who lives in them, this could be older style roundhouses, usually made out of wattle and daub with thatched roofs, similar roundhouses with a stone wall and a sod roof, wooden longhouses with thatched roofs, or sometimes a triangular hut again with a thatched roof.

Many longhouses have sunken floors, giving more space inside and helping with temperature regulation. The most elaborate can have 'cellars' of nine feet deep, meaning that there is a suspended floor with foodstuffs and other supplies stored below the central hall.

Families live together with little expectation of privacy. In bad weather, the family's animals join them in the shelter, providing even less available space. If a person invites someone into their house, they become responsible for keeping that person safe and that person becomes (temporarily) part of the family and is expected to behave as such. Defying the expectations of hospitality can create a blood-feud, providing a strong incentive to honour the traditions. Guests should be quick to announce their loyalties and attachments, a Hero who answers to a king is more trustworthy, because they have more to lose by betraying an oath.

## OUTBUILDINGS

Workshops and storage areas often follow the same sort of architecture as the dwellings of the area, but are smaller (or larger) depending on the needs of the building's purpose. Additionally, the chosen profession may influence the structure of the building. A people that prefer to work with wood and straw might still build a smithy out of loose-fitted stone to reduce the danger of fire. The amount and kind of outbuildings can speak to the wealth (or poverty) of a village or town.

## DEFENSIVE STRUCTURES

In history, walls and ditches were surprisingly uncommon around Anglo-Saxon settlements, and they seemed to have relied on the security of the Hall, and its door as their primary defensive structure.

The Whale Road in the Age of Heroes is long and broad, and in the interests of variety and adventure, a Hero may also encounter other kinds of defences. Beyond a strong hall, the most common defensive structure is a palisade made of sharpened logs, situated upon a dyke before a ditch. Sometimes additional fence stakes might be leaned forward, such that they helped brace the fence but also exposed their points to any attackers. A thick hedge of thorns may be cultivated atop a dyke, or an especially strong animal fence might be deployed to defend a settlement. More ancient defences might see reuse - tumble-down stone defences built centuries before by the giants or the ancients, or mysterious, ruined double-skinned towers, or odd rectangular enclosures might be re-inhabited in times of need.

The state of defensive structures is an important clue to the situation at hand for a Hero. If the location has strong and well-maintained defences then they are martially-focused and ready to face enemies. If those defences are recently destroyed that is a sign of tremendous force and dedication by a Monster or enemy. If the defences are untended and left in a state of disrepair, the place might not face threats often or the leaders of the land are inattentive or unwise.

## TEMPORARY PLACES

Hunters and travellers might construct makeshift shelters as they travel. Some of these might become semi-permanent as the same location is used over and over again throughout the years or if

several different people make use of the site. The simplest sorts of construction is often with unfinished wood or simple earthworks — a lean-to or windbreak. These can be expanded into a full hut or actual house with additional work.

Visitors to these areas can quickly determine the status of the structure. If it is in good shape, any damaged areas patched, and especially if it is stocked with supplies then the Hero can determine that it is in regular use and might even expect to see others soon, depending on the time of year. However, if it is weathered and broken down then it may have been some time since anyone used it. This could be part of the story, if a Monster chased away or consumed all the game or slew all of the hunters.

### ABANDONED BUILDINGS

Unlike temporary locations, these structures were built to house people all the time but are now no longer in use. They will be similar to the Dwellings and Outbuildings referenced above but may have extensive damage. Timber is so easily come by in this age that many settlements built by the Anglo-Saxons drift across the landscape year by year. It is easier to build a new timber house than to repair an old one. The Hero will likely want to determine who used to occupy the buildings and what became of them.

### SHIPS, BOATS AND WRECKS

Many locations that the Hero visits will be near the ocean as the Whale Road is the most prominent way that people will reach the land. On suitable beaches, you might see a motley collection of boats and ships, both of local and foreign make. Very few vessels are designed to stay in the water all of the time, most are supposed to spend at least part of their lives on a sandy beach.

Boats are smaller craft, designed for fishing or transporting supplies or people between larger vessels. While they almost certainly have an owner, they often don't have a designated or permanent crew (except for family-owned fishing vessels). Ships are bigger, designed for deep water operation and can support their crew without regular landings. That said, most sailors of this age prefer to hug the coastline, landing the ship each night and sleeping on solid ground.

Building a ship or boat is one of the most complex construction projects undertaken by most societies and can take months or years. Due to the importance of the Whale Road, shipbuilders are important craftspeople in every society and one way to measure the wealth or success of a kingdom is by how many ships it can send forth (along with the number of warriors). For more information on using ships, see page 74.

Sailing does not always go smoothly and the Hero is likely to encounter ruined ships on occasion. There are two primary types of wreck: underwater and on land. Of course, some wrecks might be only partially submerged.

To explore an underwater wreck, the Hero and any accompanying Followers will have to hold their breath and swim to the ship. If the ship has been underwater for any length of time, finding bodies is unlikely — the local sea life will have already consumed their flesh and scattered the bones. Still, other valuable things may remain, and if the Monster is the one responsible for sinking the ship then the Hero might learn valuable clues from inspecting the ship.

### HOLDING YOUR BREATH UNDERWATER

A creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to  $1 +$  its Constitution modifier (minimum of 30 seconds).

When a creature runs out of breath or is choking, it can survive for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 round). At the start of its next turn, it drops to 0 hit points and is dying, and it can't regain hit points or be stabilised until it can breathe again.

*Example: a creature with a Constitution of 14 can hold its breath for 3 minutes. If it starts suffocating, it has 2 rounds to reach air before it drops to 0 hit points.*

### MONSTER LAIRS

A Monster can lair in any environment — many will find a suitable cave, forest thicket or ruin and be well satisfied. Other monsters might be more subtle and have powers that allow them to live in disguise among the people. Others might be more incorporeal and fade into their surroundings, often haunting a location of great significance to themselves. Some live next to or in the water and might only come onshore to hunt or might never leave the water.

A Monster that is representative of a natural force (even one being corrupted or disturbed by human activity) is likely to have a lair in a natural object. Conversely, those Monsters who are descended from corrupt people or the cursed line of Cain are more likely to lair in some place that has some memory of the ancients, the giants or other people. This is not always true — Grendel's mother kept herself in a cave at the bottom of a deep lake despite her heritage and dragons often seek out man-made barrows for the treasure stored within.

It is not unknown for Monsters, which are themselves “of the impossible” to dwell in impossible spaces. Places that only appear under certain conditions, at certain times, when the right words are sung, or which seem to defy natural laws.



## THE MONSTER

*Grendel in days long gone they named him,  
folk of the land; his father they knew not,  
nor any brood that was born to him  
of treacherous spirits. Untrod is their home;  
by wolf-cliffs haunt they and windy headlands,  
fenways fearful, where flows the stream  
from mountains gliding to gloom of the rocks,  
underground flood. Not far is it hence  
in measure of miles that the mere expands,  
and o'er it the frost-bound forest hanging,  
sturdily rooted, shadows the wave.  
By night is a wonder weird to see,  
fire on the waters. So wise lived none  
of the sons of men, to search those depths!*

This chapter talks about the monsters of BEOWULF but does not have any stat blocks in it (those begin on page 185). Instead, this chapter concerns itself with what the Monster means within the story and how to deploy it (or them, since you will sometimes have more than one Monster).

### USING THIS CHAPTER

Monsters serve as the ultimate foe of the Hero. The battle against the Monster is most often the climax of a BEOWULF adventure. The destruction of the Monster solves the kingdom's problem, allowing the leaders to celebrate and reward the Hero. In some adventures, things are not so simple — perhaps the Monster must be driven away and cannot be slain or perhaps the leader or others must take action to set things right.

From the storyteller's point of view, the Monster often represents something important about the world, something beyond the control of ordinary folk. Grendel might represent a force of nature, or the power of evil, slaying with strength that no normal person can withstand. His mother might represent the dangers of blood-feuds, as she takes revenge for her son but is also slain in her turn.

And the dragon? Perhaps it represents the greed of the wealthy and their apparent invulnerability to the masses. Or perhaps, in other tales, the dragon is a dragon, a beast of fire and power, to thrill the audience and do combat with our Hero.

### THE ORIGINS OF THE MONSTER

Every Monster has a source and determining this can help define the Monster and suggest its strengths and weaknesses. We've come up with the following general categories, though it's possible that some Monsters don't fit into any of these, or perhaps could belong to more than one.

#### BORN OF EVIL

Beowulf the poem traces some of Grendel and his mother's lineage for us. The church-going scribes tell us that they are descended from Cain, who murdered his own brother. Thus some Monsters are inherently evil, a notion that we know does not apply to people in the real world, but is exceedingly helpful for a storyteller setting up a clear threat to a Hero.

Monsters that are born of evil are irredeemable within the sagas. They represent things that man cannot control and that only Heroes have a chance of defeating.

#### TRANSFORMED BY POWER

These Monsters were made, not born. Perhaps a powerful sorcerer placed a curse on them, or they made such a terrible decision that one of the gods punished them directly, or another Monster caught them and made the person become a Monster themselves. These Monsters were not originally evil and thus there is some hope for them.

A Monster transformed by power might be able to be saved or restored by the actions of the Hero, especially if they learn the exact method used to transform them into evil. In the sagas, these stories of redemption still often end with the erstwhile monster dying anyway — the person that became the Monster will likely bear guilt for everything they did as the Monster and even the most forgiving community would be hard-pressed to lay no blame at their feet.

#### TWISTED BY NATURE

In the far corners of the world and deep places of the sea there are terrible things waiting to be found. These Monsters are not inherently evil, nor were they made evil by another power. Instead they are part of nature and have natural reasons for their actions — they attack and consume because they are hungry, they fight to protect their den or offspring, or wreak havoc to win a mate. Their instincts are not evil, but when they run counter to the needs of people they can still come into conflict.

It might be that a clever Hero can find a resolution for a natural Monster, though most cannot reason or clearly communicate with people. Otherwise, to slay this kind of Monster is a grim need. Like a wolf that hunts sheep, they must not be allowed to continue but neither does the wise person begrudge them for making the attempt.

#### THE UNRESTING DEAD

In these dark and tumultuous times even the sleep of the dead is troubled. Some of the undead are of only minor concern — the barrow-folk that guard their kin from grave robbers are of little concern except for those who steal from the dead. But the dead who wander away from their resting place, seeking revenge or other evil things, are Monsters that must be reckoned with. Similar spirits sometimes emerge from the sea, with accusing stares for the living that failed to rescue them.

Most undead Monsters can only be laid to rest by being bodily destroyed, releasing the spirit and depriving it of a vessel. However, some that have returned because of a driving need to complete a task might have their passage eased if the Hero is able to help the spirit instead of fighting it.

## BUILDING THE MONSTER

Most of the creatures in the Bestiary have the potential to be Monsters, but none of them are Monsters according to their base stat blocks. This is because in order to qualify as 'capital-M' Monster, it must have a driving force behind it, something that may make it undefeatable, at least until the Hero acquires the necessary knowledge or technique in order to slay it. This may be a magic of its own kind (and likely offset by some talisman of the ancients unless the monster has roamed freely forever), or part of its inheritance (creatures born of evil might quail in the face of sincere religious conviction), it might be a secret weakness (such as a vulnerability to a certain metal, or a missing scale on its armoured body), or even time of day or location (such as an undead that possesses great power in its barrow but, if tricked into the bright sunlight is easily destroyed).

It is worthy of note that some adventures will reveal the backstory of a Monster as the riddle of how to defeat it is resolved. Other adventures will not concern themselves with this at all.

## THE BASE STAT BLOCK

Each stat block in the Bestiary is not a Monster. Instead it is a base version of a creature that can serve as a common Foe, or if so desired, be upgraded into a Monster. To be a Monster, a creature needs the undefeatable special trait (see next page), and a means by which that special trait can be removed.

It serves most adventures to have some kind of story, however simple, attached to the Monster to make it a worthy foe for a Hero, and to make defeating it a satisfying challenge.

Transforming a creature into a Monster raises the creature's challenge rating by two steps, e.g. from CR 2 to 4 or from 1/8 to 1/2. A Hero with a full complement of Followers is able to handle a Monster within a few challenge steps difference. For example, a 1st level Hero will have a stiff challenge with a challenge 4 Monster whereas a challenge 1 Monster will be less of an overall threat.

## LEXICON AND KENNINGS

OLD ENGLISH	MEANING	QUIRKS
<b>Dēofol</b>	Demons	Breeder of bad deeds, Hell-brute, Tormentor of all
<b>Dracan</b>	Dragons	Harrower of the Dark, Hoard-guardian, Sky-winger
<b>Dweorhas</b>	Dwarfs	Daylight-shy, Deep-dweller, Earth-friend
<b>Englas</b>	Angels	Company of Glory, Flock of the Court, Host of the Heavens
<b>Eotenas</b>	Ogres and Trolls	Corpse-maker, Shadow-stalker
<b>Galdreas</b>	Sorcerers	Creature of Charms, Spell-maker, Wyrd-weaver
<b>Gigantas</b>	Giants	Mountain-wolf, Rock-gentleman, Wind-sender
<b>Gryrefugol</b>	Evil Birds	Blood-crane, Corpse-vulture, Wound-grouse
<b>Haegtes</b>	Hags	Cauldron-minder, Child-eater, Witch-worker
<b>Nicoras</b>	Sea-brutes	Sea-creature, Ship-chaser, Wave-eater
<b>Orcnēas</b>	Ghouls	Dead-eater, Visitor to the Corpse-fjord
<b>Searwa</b>	Constructs	Clever-walker, False-folk, Tricks of the Old Ones
<b>Ylfes</b>	Elves	Invisible-walker, Mound-dweller, Poison-wielder
<b>Wildēor</b>	Beasts	Forest-keeper, Heather-stepper
<b>Wulfas</b>	Wolves	Evening-rider, Hound of Corpses, Steed of Trolls
<b>Wyrmas</b>	Serpents	Flashing fish, Ring of the Meadow, Valley-trout

It is entirely permissible and desirable to create your own unique Monsters from scratch, enabling them to be a true mystery and a never-before discovered challenge. You'll find many new and unique Monsters in published adventures for BEOWULF: Age of Heroes.

### THE MONSTROUS GIFT: UNDEFEATABLE

The Undefeatable special trait is common to almost all Monsters, and it is what makes them appear impossible to slay. It prevents the Monster from taking significant damage until the Hero uncovers some salient collection of information, helpers, or items, that will allow them to achieve victory. In mechanical terms the Hero is most often attempting initially to remove the undefeatable trait.

***Undefeatable.** This creature is immune to the defeated condition. When an undefeatable creature takes damage from any source it only takes 1 point of damage.*

### STRANGE FOES FROM AFAR

The bestiary included draws from the Beowulf poem and adjacent materials to build a selection of foes, including mortal adversaries, wild beasts and a variety of monstrous foes. But the Whale Road is long and there are many places between the two seas that are unexplored. If you want to feature a creature from a different source that's no problem. You may want to help give it an appropriate moniker by using the table on page 125 listing of categories and kennings (brief descriptive phrases).

When bringing a monster in to visit, also remember that very few Heroes have any proper magic about them. Use the Undefeatable gift to reflect supernatural resistances and immunities and raid our bestiary for other gifts or burdens that can represent a creature's magical features or weaknesses.

### MEETING THE MONSTER

Grendel is not an unfamiliar foe for Hrothgar or his folk, they have seen the work of the Monster many times and many have tried and failed to stand against him. During the course of your adventure, the Monster can make themselves known in similar ways. These appearances can take several different forms, and as many writers of thrillers recommend, sometimes less is more — a half-seen, half-guessed at Monster is more scary than something that is clearly seen, identified and catalogued.

### CONSEQUENCES

The most mysterious way for a Monster to make their appearance is just by seeing the consequences of their actions — broken doors, toppled piles of stone, blood stains, bits of discarded clothing, wargear or even body parts. If the creature can attack at will and remain unseen the entire time, what can the common folk do against it?

As the Hero first learns of the Monster, the tales of most folk should take this shape, allowing them to realise that there is

an enemy present but each individual interview provides little definitive information.

### SIGNS AND SPOOR

If the Hero braves the haunts of the Monster then they might see signs or spoor of the Monster. These will be things like bent or broken branches, huge footprints, tufts of hair or skin left behind, perhaps even a discarded weapon or tool. Some Monsters may leave behind a strong odour that lasts for some time, which the Hero might be able to follow to a lair or favoured hunting ground.

### THE MONSTER ATTACKS

This is the most direct way for the Monster to make an appearance and perhaps the most dangerous. Players are Heroes after all, and Heroes don't like to flee from Monsters. Fortunately, their Followers might help get them out of a dangerous situation if they have not yet discovered the Monster's weakness.

Perhaps the best compromise here is for the Monster to attack another group and have the Hero arrive just in time to see the consequences of the attack and receive information from eyewitnesses without seeing the Monster themselves. The Monster may be working to its own agenda, and have no wish to stand and fight at this time. Be wary of pitting your Hero toe-to-toe with an unbeatable foe too soon. There is a careful balance in keeping the pressure on the Player, without really pushing them into an unwinnable fight.

### LORE AND MONSTERS

Beowulf mostly gets lucky in defeating his monsters: he quickly judges that facing Grendel unarmed is the key to success, he finds the sword that slays Grendel's mother within her own lair, and he has mixed luck with the dragon — Naegling breaks upon the dragon's skull, but Wiglaf's sword and Beowulf's dagger prove sufficient in the end. His plans, such as they are, are made quickly and in the heat of the moment, to surprise and delight the listener or reader.

In BEOWULF: Age of Heroes we have translated this into situations where the Hero can take a little more time and have a reasonable chance of discovering the Monster's weakness, and can then take action to make that happen. Being lucky, and making spur of the moment choices is exciting in both stories and games but if everything comes down to blind chance then the Player will easily become frustrated. Many of the ancillary stories are about the cleverness of humans.

### THE MONSTER'S SECRET

If the Monster has some sort of secret weakness, it is likely that someone knows this secret, or at least once knew it. It may have become part of the local legend of the monster and the Hero has to sort the truth from various rumours and other legendary components. It may have been known to the ancients and recorded on a stone somewhere in Ogham. Or perhaps the secret was

entrusted to a special group of people and they currently possess the secret. Or perhaps they no longer realise the significance of what they know and the Hero must convince them to investigate their own archives or reflect on the true meaning of an ancient riddle.

Those who know may need some show of good faith from the Hero, or require their help in order to share what they know.

If the Monster's weakness is entirely unknown then it needs to fit into the logic of the story. In other words, there must be hints available as to its nature. For example a creature that is weak to iron might take great measures to prohibit people in the area from carrying such weapons. Discovering and understanding these hints form the adventure.

A Monster's secret need not be complex, rather just hidden at first, waiting to be uncovered by the Hero to resolve the story. It may be made of parts, or simply require unusually brave deeds that those who are not Heroes are unable to perform. Most of all it needs to be satisfying, and while it has no need to be logical in a scientific sense, it should make some kind of poetic sense.

### THE MONSTER'S LAIR

Most monsters will have some kind of lair. The lair of the Monster may serve as a safe hiding place, or it might be that the Monster was once trapped there and now remembers nothing else. It may be that the Monster took it from people or other monsters and now considers it a place of power. It might be remote and inaccessible, such that the Monster feels safe there because no one else could possibly survive the trek. It might be underwater, so deep that the Hero would need to hold their breath for an impossibly long time in order to reach the lair. Discovering how to reach the home of the beast might well form part of an adventure's challenge.

### THE MONSTER'S GOAL

Each Monster desires something — for the more primitive kinds, these needs are simple: a steady supply of food, sufficient shelter, and peace from intrusive Heroes that would slay it. Others will be more complex — they may be trying to achieve power or keep it, they might seek revenge, or to destroy their bindings, to punish those they feel have wronged them, or to trick mortals into doing evil acts. Knowing a Monster's goal will help develop the plot of the adventure as it will inform you of what the Monster will want to do whenever it has a chance to act. "Why?" Is a very common question for a Hero to ask, and there should be an answer, even if it is never fully understood.

### DEFEATING THE MONSTER

Generally speaking, for most BEOWULF adventures, the Hero will need to discover what the Monster is, where it is, how to make it vulnerable to some kind of attack, and then plan and

execute that attack. But "attack" is a broad word to use here. Some kinds of monster may not need to be slain with swords and spears once they are made vulnerable to being defeated. They may gain the defeated condition by losing a battle of wits. Or by removing the log bridge back into their cave, exposing them to the dawning sunlight. Or by being driven off with fire. Others will indeed need to be smote with blades once they become vulnerable to attack.



The defeated condition provides ample inspiration for different ways a Monster might cease to be a threat to a local community. Once subject to the defeated condition a creature may:

- have its fighting spirit broken and attempt to flee, never to be seen again
- surrender to the creature who inflicted the defeated condition
- become doomed to die from wounds, slinking away never to be seen again
- be in some way disarmed, or transformed
- become vulnerable to suggestion or command by a Hero
- be permanently pinned, imprisoned or immobilised
- become harmless in some other way the GM invents to fit the circumstances

It is important to provide varied challenges, and to bear in mind the nature of your Player's Hero. If they are playing a bookish, intelligent Hero, they may well prefer challenges that are more cerebral, requiring careful investigation and planning, rather than delivering 1d8 damage per round. A Bench Breaker might just want to lop off a Monster's head. Be sure to allow for these outcomes when you design a monster and its accompanying challenges. Your Player will enjoy using their Hero's special abilities to defeat a Monster. Of course, mixing it up once in a while can also be fun!

## OTHER KINDS OF MONSTER

While the vast majority of Monsters encountered around the Whale Road are at least something like giant beasts and trolls, literal *monsters* to be battled in hand-to-hand combat, occasionally a Hero might encounter a stranger kind of monster which doesn't conform to the "gigantic creature" monster-type. Underneath a superficially different skin, there's no reason why a more lateral kind of threat can't be dealt with in a very similar way to a regular Monster. A cloud of poisonous fumes, an ancient cure or blight, or a school of skeletal seals might play the part of the Monster, and require a similar investigation and then planned confrontation. The final resolution may not be a battle using spears.

## DEFEATING A MONSTER

Once the Hero knows the Monster's weakness and the Monster's location, then they can prepare themselves for a final confrontation. This should rarely be the first time the Hero and the Monster have met, but it should be the first that the Hero knows how to defeat the Monster.

The location of this final conflict should be in a significant location: the Monster's lair, the Mead-hall of the Ruler that hired the Hero or a place of significance in the Monster's story — for example, the site of a ghost's now-lost family home or the place where the Monster was cursed or transformed into the terror that it is now. The Hero's remaining Followers should be there as well, ready to take their final actions in support of the Hero.

The fate of the Monster should be clear. If the Monster does not die, it should be 'fixed' in time and space. For example it might be entombed in its own lair, never to re-emerge until the stars themselves change. Or if it flees, the scop should be clear to say that it never troubled those lands again. In every case, if the Hero succeeds then it should be a clear victory.



## MORE THAN ONE MONSTER

Sometimes the Monster may not be alone. You might decide to have a mated pair of Monsters appear, or have the Monsters share a family connection, like Grendel and his mother. They may even be Monsters of two different kinds who have agreed to work together — an ogre and a sea brute that lay claim to anyone who approaches their small island, dividing the danger and the man-flesh between them. Monsters that are found as a pair should be weaker individually than singular monsters but also should be usually encountered together. Remember, of course, that a pair of Monsters has twice as many turns as a singular Hero so multiple Monsters should probably have a challenge rating equal to or lesser than the Hero's level. It is also possible that the Monsters may appear in sequence, like Grendel's mother only showing up once her son was mortally wounded, or what is likely to occur in *The Three Ogre Brothers*, since each brother is likely to remain in their own domain. In this case, the Monsters can be of equal or escalating challenge to the Hero, since each will appear individually and the Hero will have a chance to recover after each meeting.



## REST AND REWARDS

*Ne'er heard I of host in haughtier throng  
more graciously gathered round giver-of-rings!  
Bowed then to bench those bearers-of-glory,  
fain of the feasting. Featly received  
many a mead-cup the mighty-in-spirit,  
kinsmen who sat in the sumptuous hall,  
Hrothgar and Hrothulf. Heorot now  
was filled with friends; the folk of Scyldings  
ne'er yet had tried the traitor's deed.  
To Beowulf gave the bairn of Healfdene  
a gold-wove banner, guerdon of triumph,  
broidered battle-flag, breastplate and helmet;  
and a splendid sword was seen of many  
borne to the brave one. Beowulf took  
cup in hall: for such costly gifts  
he suffered no shame in that soldier throng.  
For I heard of few heroes, in heartier mood,  
with four such gifts, so fashioned with gold,  
on the ale-bench honoring others thus!*

Once the Hero has successfully defeated the Monster, the adventure is drawing to an end. But it is not quite over — after the successful completion of a mission there is a time for celebration, reward and perhaps some subtle politics.

While the scops rarely concern themselves with what Heroes do when they are not adventuring, we do provide some structure to these times, in order to more readily set the stage for the next adventure.

### USING THIS CHAPTER

You can use this chapter as a guide to bringing a BEOWULF adventure to a satisfactory conclusion. A completed story should contain many, if not all, of the following components in order to meet the Player's expectations.

### RETURN TO THE MEADHALL

Unless the Monster was defeated as it attacked the meadhall, the Hero will want to return to the leader of the community with evidence of the creature's destruction or testimony of it fleeing the area. Sometimes such evidence may not exist — Heroes are by necessity trustworthy people and so the leaders will naturally believe them when they report that the Monster was destroyed or exiled. Of course, a Hero that abuses this faith will become known as false and no longer trusted.

If you want to represent this mechanically, assign the Hero the false burden, allowing them to make it temporary after one adventure in which they tell no lies and then removing it after a second sequential adventure with no falsehoods:

*False.* The Hero is known for untruths. They have disadvantage on Charisma checks that rely on their honesty.

When the Hero returns to the meadhall they gain the benefit of a long rest. Afterwards, the Hero will be fêted by the leader and the community with both food and alcohol in abundance. They will be asked to relate the story of their experiences many times and their Followers will be encouraged to add their own observations and wry remarks. This helps solidify the experience and creates the tale that the scop has told of the Hero's adventure.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

Some Gamemasters will want to eschew experience points (XP), using appropriate moments in the narrative to increase a Hero's level instead. For those who do want to use XP, the following table gives awards for adventures such that a character will always experience two adventures at a given level — the first to experience their new features and the second to enjoy their mastery of those features.

CURRENT LEVEL	XP AWARD	CURRENT LEVEL	XP AWARD
1	200	11	10500
2	400	12	10500
3	900	13	11000
4	2000	14	12000
5	4000	15	13000
6	5000	16	14000
7	6000	17	20000
8	7000	18	20000
9	8000	19	30000
10	10000	20	40000

If you choose to use the XP given above, here are some suggestions for how to break the total up into an XP award for the Monster, any generic enemies, rewards for meeting with NPCs and rewards for discovering information.

Most of these smaller rewards can be subdivided between multiple opportunities (e.g. if you have a budget of 600 XP for meetings and 5 major NPCs then a success with each of them can be worth 125 XP).

A challenge rating suggestion is given next to the XP components for appropriate entries.

CURRENT LEVEL	MONSTER	ENEMIES	MEETINGS	INVESTIGATION
1	100 (1/2)	25 (1/8)	50	50
2	200 (1)	50 (1/4)	100	100
3	450 (2)	200 (1)	200	200
4	1100 (4)	450 (2)	350	350
5	1800 (5)	1100 (4)	600	600
6	2300 (6)	1100 (4)	700	700
7	2900 (7)	1800 (5)	800	800
8	3900 (8)	1800 (5)	900	900
9	5000 (9)	1800 (5)	1000	1000
10	5900 (10)	2300 (6)	1100	1100
11	5900 (10)	2300 (6)	1200	1200
12	5900 (10)	2300 (6)	1200	1200
13	7200 (11)	2300 (6)	1200	1200
14	7200 (11)	2900 (7)	1200	1200
15	8400 (12)	2900 (7)	1200	1200
16	10000 (13)	2900 (7)	1200	1200
17	13000 (15)	3900 (8)	1600	1600
18	13000 (15)	3900 (8)	1600	1600
19	18000 (17)	8400 (12)	2000	2000
20	25000 (20)	11500 (14)	2500	2500

### ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Some GMs will not be interested in breaking down XP awards into discrete amounts. If that's you, you can think of each category (Monster, Enemies, Meetings, and Investigation) as an award category. You might even predetermine particular, adventure-specific Achievements in each category that the Hero might complete. When the Hero receives six or seven awards over the course of a couple adventures then they're ready for the next level. Some adventures might not feature a certain category, so you might sometimes have multiple Investigation awards or a high number of Meeting awards, for example.

#### ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Achievements don't have to fall neatly into one of the four categories above. As long as the Hero achieves something noteworthy or makes significant forward progress you can reward them with an Achievement award.

Or, if you want to be even simpler, two completed adventures (or even one completed adventure for a faster pace) might be all the Hero needs to gain a new level. Conversely you can slow the pace down by requiring three or more complete adventures (or nine awards if you use the above method).

### RICH REWARDS

It is the duty of a leader to richly reward those people who provide them service. Doing so shows the wealth of the leader and the community, encourages loyalty and effort in all who witness it, and provides material for the gift-giving economy, since the receiver of the treasure will pass some of it on to their retainers and even to their liege, as proof of their success in foreign lands and to show gratitude for being allowed to embark on such endeavours.

Such rewards will be in proportion to the Hero's fame, the nature of the service done and the generosity of the community leader(s). The table below gives a modifier to the Hero's proficiency bonus in pounds of silver.

For example, destroying the Monster for a generous leader would provide a reward of 18£ for a Hero with a proficiency bonus of +3.

Some leaders can be influenced and either made more (or less) benevolent based on the Hero's social encounter with them, or, more simply, the Hero's overall behaviour.

While measured in pounds of silver, the actual rewards come in a variety of different pieces of treasure, plus a handful of coins. If your Player likes to document the exact nature of what they receive, use the Treasure Rewards tables on page 139 to determine the details.

SERVICE	MISERLY	AVERAGE	GENEROUS
Monster destroyed	2×	4×	6×
Monster ran off	1×	2×	4×
Other service	0.5×	1×	2×

### SCALING REWARDS

As Gamemaster, you'll want to keep an eye on the amount of rewards being distributed and also the Hero's regular expenditures. A Hero with an average five Followers with five gifts each is spending 3-4£ on Follower rewards and 2-3£ on ship maintenance; a Hero with fifteen Followers each with six gifts and an upgraded ship might pay 22-24£ on Follower rewards and 8£ on ship maintenance. You'll want to vary the types of leaders and extra opportunities to make sure that the Hero keeps sailing the Whale Road.

### THE MONSTER'S HOARD

Depending on the Monster, it is possible that the creature possessed treasure, often things from long ago. While the coins minted by the giants are of limited use (only possessing the value of their metal in most cases) other items may be of greater worth. A Monster's hoard is the perfect place for a Hero to find a piece of magical wargear or other special item.

A Monster's hoard is also an ideal way to help explain the Monster's history and origins. Especially if the Monster does not

speak, what the Hero finds in its lair can reveal its nature. Broken chains and bars tell of imprisonment (probably justified) while a creature that sleeps near to the graves of its ancestors might have been driven by profound loss and loneliness.

The following table lists monsters by type and gives some idea of how much treasure (use the multiplier given times the Monster's challenge rating) might be in the hoard. It also provides a chance to roll 1d8, if the given value comes up then there is at least one magical item in the hoard. Note that you should only make rolls for those creatures who are likely to possess such items. For example, a Galdre might well have a hoard and a magic item, but a group of Hrēoþingas likely has neither.

MONSTER TYPE	TREASURE	MAGIC (D8)
Ceorlcund	2×	6+
Dēofol	1×	7+
Eotenas	3×	8+
Firas	2×	8+
Gigantas	2×	7+
Gryrefugol	2×	8+
Mererúnan	3×	8+
Orcnēas	5×	7+
Wildēor	—	—
Wyrmās	4×	6+
Wyrmeynnes	6×	5+

You can use the rules on page 138 and on to generate details for treasures and magic items.



## SPECIAL TREASURES

Either a leader's vault or a Monster's hoard might contain one or more special treasures, things whose value exceeds strict monetary measurements. For example, the horses that Hrothgar gives Beowulf (those that he may pass on to Hygelac and Hygd) would count as a special treasure, since trained warhorses are worth more than their normal market price.

### PRACTICAL REGIFTING

Beowulf receiving the horses from Hrothgar and then gifting them to his own king and queen seems utterly practical from the point of view of a Hero wandering the Whale-road. He can't transport horses all the time on his ship (at least his return to Geatland was quick and unchallenged) and a land-bound king has more need of warhorses for his knights than a seaborne Hero.

Future expansions to BEOWULF will provide information on the responsibilities and challenges of rulers (after all, Beowulf does sit on the throne for quite some time) but for now the focus is on Heroes and their wanderings. A generous GM may allow the transfer of such ungainly gifts to happen 'off-screen' during downtime and not trouble the Player with such concerns. Unless, of course, getting four warhorses and their gear back to your leader's hall is fated to be an exciting adventure.

Special treasures can come in the form of wargear that has one or more gifts, normal gear that has at least one gift, a ship with a gift, or a valuable animal (such as a dog, falcon or hawk, or horse), especially one with a gift. See the Equipment chapter, starting on page 58.

## MAGICAL ITEMS

The hoard of the Monster provides an exceptional opportunity for a magical item to appear and for the Hero to claim that item. Of course, very few folk inside the adventure story would call a magical item by so bland a name. Instead it is a piece of battle gear with a legendary history, perhaps one that traces back to Weland the smith at the dawn of time, an extraordinary piece of jewelry made by the *dweorhas* (dwarfs), a clever device of the giants, or a rune-scored talisman of power made by the ancients. Some magic items are not items at all, but otherworldly creatures with remarkable powers or knowledge.

It is possible that the magic item will be discovered over the course of the adventure and might be part of how the Monster itself will be defeated instead of a reward afterwards. Sometimes a magic item might only be on loan to the Hero and must be returned to its rightful owner. Such items don't count towards the rewards that the Hero receives, of course. A magic item that the

Hero can keep is compensation beyond any weight of silver and should usually count as the majority of the reward given.

Generating and improving magical items is covered in Part Five, starting on page 138.

## FOLLOWERS, CREW AND OTHERS

Once the Hero has received their reward from the leaders present, it is time for them to pass on some of those riches to those that aided them on their quest. The crew's base compensation is included in the monthly ship maintenance cost (see page 75). If you pay at least a shilling more per crew member (usually a dozen) then the ship gains the loyal crew gift.

**Loyal Crew.** *When a challenge indicates the loss of a Follower, you can choose one of the crew to die instead. The crew then loses this gift.*

The Followers must also be compensated, see page 86 for details.



## BETWEEN ADVENTURES

It is possible that word of another danger might reach the Hero's ears just as they conclude their business with the prior Monster but even the boldest Hero might tire of constant activity after a while. In fact, it's quite appropriate to require a certain amount of rest, relaxation and reflection before awarding a new level to a Hero.

### DOWNTIME

When a Hero takes downtime, the most important factor is if the downtime is at home (the Hero's home kingdom) or away. Some Heroes may not have a home kingdom (or it is too far away or other obstacles keep them from returning). Many of these Heroes will still have an adopted home — some leader who trusts them well enough to allow them to stay in their hall without question or complaint and will welcome them and their Followers with open arms.

A Hero at home can undertake any of the following activities, paying only the cost given for the activity.

A Hero taking downtime away from home can stay somewhere else for up to four weeks without additional cost. After this, their Followers begin to grumble and their host's hospitality may be wearing thin. The Hero must pay a shilling for themselves and a pence for each Follower for each day of downtime after the first four weeks. These payments include spending money on supplies directly but also recognising their host's continued generosity. The crew is included in the Hero's expenditures.

### Recuperation

You can use downtime between adventures to recover from a debilitating injury, disease, or poison.

After a week spent recuperating, you can make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, you can choose one of the following results:

- End one effect on you that prevents you from regaining hit points.
- For the next 24 hours, gain advantage on saving throws against one disease or poison currently affecting you.

### Research

While many halls along the Whale Road store their knowledge in the songs of their scopas, there are places where knowledge has been recorded — written codexes and scrolls waiting in the abbeys founded by the giants, places where runestones rest or tapestries hang, or in the tales of the old folk.

When you begin your research, the GM determines whether the information is available, how many weeks of downtime it will take to find it, and whether there are any restrictions on your research (such as needing to seek out a specific individual, tome, or location). The GM might also require you to make one or more ability checks, such as an Intelligence (Investigation) check to find clues pointing toward the information you seek, or a Charisma (Persuasion) check to secure someone's aid. Once those conditions are met, you learn the information if it is available.

For each week of research, you must spend 1 shilling to cover your expenses. This cost is in addition to your normal expenses (if any).

### Shipwork

One problem that can keep a Hero away from home is a ship that needs repairs. For ambitious Heroes ship improvements can be just as pressing. If the location has the proper facilities, the Hero can spend the money and time necessary for a repair or improvement. See the ship burdens and gifts, starting on page 75.

### Smithwork

A Hero might choose to commission a new piece of superior wargear. To do so, they must pay a fee equal to twice the normal weapon's cost (for example, a great spear would cost 4£ and a

sword would cost 10£) and spend downtime equal to one week, plus one week for each £ of its cost (rounding up as needed).

The Hero can make a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check to lower the price. On a success the cost is reduced by 10% or by 20% if the Hero succeeds by 5 or more. If the Hero fails the check by 5 or more however then the cost is increased by 10% as the smith 'suddenly remembers' some esoteric aspect of the work.

At the end of the downtime, the Hero receives the new piece of wargear with a single gift of their choice.

### Training

You can spend time between adventures learning a new language or training with a set of tools. First, you must find an instructor willing to teach you. The GM determines how long it takes, and whether one or more ability checks are required.

The training lasts for 30 weeks and costs 1 shilling per week. After you spend the requisite amount of time and money, you learn the new language or gain proficiency with the new tool.

## PLAYER JOURNALS

The conclusion of an adventure often means the end of a session as well. If your Player is interested in journaling for their Followers (see next page) during the time before the next session then this is an excellent time to have a conversation about the process.

You'll want to set some clear explanations for what journaling will allow — some GMs might just provide bonus XP to the Hero, while others will allow the addition of new temporary gifts or burdens, or even turning a permanent burden or gift into a temporary one as results.

The normal process of adding or removing gifts or burdens is discussed on page 88. The next section covers the journaling process in depth.

## THE HERO'S FATE

This may be a good time to reflect on the Hero's larger story as well. Some Players will happily slay Monsters until there are no more between the two seas. Others might want a bit of variety, every once in a while facing off against mortal foes or perhaps dealing with their own leaders with a visit to their homeland. Some may wish to achieve other goals and future supplements will support that. And some may be ready to pass on their wargear to a new warrior and retire into a life of peace and reflection.

Be sure to touch base with your Player and make sure that you're providing them with the sorts of adventures that keep them excited about the world of BEOWULF!



## PLAYER JOURNALS

*The linden yellow,  
his shield, he seized; the old sword he drew: —  
as heirloom of Eanmund earth-dwellers knew it,  
who was slain by the sword-edge, son of Ohtere,  
friendless exile, erst in fray  
killed by Weohstan, who won for his kin  
brown-bright helmet, breastplate ringed,  
old sword of Eotens, ...  
For winters this war-gear Weohstan kept,  
breastplate and board, till his bairn had grown  
earlship to earn as the old sire did:  
then he gave him, mid Geats, the gear of battle,  
portion huge, when he passed from life,  
fared aged forth. For the first time now  
with his leader-lord the liegeman young  
was bidden to share the shock of battle.*

Between adventures, the GM will be busy preparing a new story for the Player and perhaps helping to adjudicate the downtime activities of the Hero. But what about the Followers and the Player. Are there things they can be doing to help build out the world of BEOWULF?

This chapter introduces optional rules for Player-facing activities to help develop the gameworld, mostly by focusing on Followers and their backstories. As Followers develop, they can even ‘graduate’ into becoming Heroes themselves, which might then become available as a new character for the Player to use. However, if the Player is not interested in journaling or exploring the setting then these rules can be safely ignored. The basic rules for advancing Followers can still be used and there is no major difference in mechanical effect, Followers will just advance at a slightly slower pace (or you can allow the number of improvements to be 1 + the Hero’s proficiency bonus and keep the same pace).

### JOURNAL SESSIONS

The Player can do one journaling session between adventures, unless the Gamemaster allows them to do additional sessions.

Nominally the journaling counts as part of the reward stage, though it is often completed after the rest of it. It’s fine for the Player to just note ‘I will also do journals for Hengsk (an active Follower) and Berta (a new possible Follower).’

### THE HERO JOURNAL

Players can choose to keep a journal of their Hero, recording each adventure, along with their feelings and reactions to those events. These journal entries can also help highlight what the Hero found most interesting, providing hints to the Gamemaster about future sessions. The structure and length of the Hero journal is up to the Player.

Gamemasters might want to encourage Hero journaling by giving the character an Advancement XP checkmark or level-appropriate Meeting XP, depending on what experience system you’re using. See page 129 for details.

### ACTIVE FOLLOWER JOURNALS

Instead of just following the regular rules on page 88 for Improving Followers, a Player that does journaling gets an additional improvement choice. Just like the regular improvement choices, you can add a new temporary gift, transform an existing temporary gift into a permanent one, or turn a permanent burden into a temporary one. In order to do this, you (the Player) write a short narrative about that Follower and what happened to cause that improvement action.

The rules for the narrative are simple: you can’t involve other Followers or the Hero, except as brief appearances, only the current Follower experiences change or growth over the course of the narrative and you don’t write anything contradicting the established information of the game world.

### FOLLOWER EVENTS

If you are stumped for a way that the Follower may have made a change, you can pick from or roll on the table below, which might inspire an idea for the narrative.

1D6	EVENT AFFECTING THE FOLLOWER			
	(1d6 for each column)			
1	A family member	asks for your help with	a missing/broken	bit of knowledge.
2	A mentor	charges you with a crime regarding	a personal	leader/ruler.
3	An old flame	has cheated/tricked you regarding	a secret/hidden	magic/special item.
4	A rival	makes a generous offer for	a treacherous	promise/oath.
5	A stranger	sells/gives you news of	a unique	relationship.
6	Another Follower	wishes to hear an old story about	a valuable	treasure.

## NEW FOLLOWER JOURNALS

In addition to advancing an existing Follower, you can also spend your time journaling about a new potential Follower. You can make one change to this Follower each time you have a Journaling session. If you give this Follower a burden (and did not give any other Followers a burden during the reward stage) then you can add a temporary gift in addition to your first improvement choice.

It is the Gamemaster's discretion where the new potential Follower will be made available and when. You should work with the GM when you're interested in introducing the Follower.

### FOLLOWERS ON THEIR OWN

If there are one or more Followers that the Hero has met and failed to recruit, you can also use the above table and a Player journal to keep track of what they've been up to and when the Hero might get another chance to recruit them. Work with the GM to make sure that any reunions make sense in the shared story.

### PLAYER-CREATED FOLLOWERS

As a Gamemaster it might seem unusual for the Player to be creating NPCs. However, this is part of the benefit of duet style play — you want your one and only Player to be able to connect with (and find valuable) the various NPCs, especially Followers. By having the Player create some of them, you're more likely to find success here. Always try to be fair to the Player's potential Followers and introduce them as soon as it's reasonable — after all, they've been waiting in the wings for a while.

## WORLDBUILDING

As you write about your Hero and your Followers, you will (perhaps inadvertently) do some measure of creating the setting as well as the characters. Coordinate with the Gamemaster to make sure that you do not invalidate each other's ideas. It may be that the GM will want to 'assign' certain areas of the setting to your care, to serve as homelands and background locations for your Followers. Remember that the world of BEOWULF is home to many tiny, fractious kingdoms. One of your Followers might leave their home hall to travel only a few days in any direction in order to find a completely different land, complete with a strange Meadhall and strange rulers with strange ideas. The world is vast and even what we would now consider short distances are enough to separate various folk.

One particularly remarkable way to play BEOWULF is for the Player and Gamemaster to take turns in each other's roles. So you might journal as a Player about a specific place, and then have your partner's Hero visit that location when it's your turn to be Gamemaster. Then they might journal about it as well, the two of you creating a tapestry woven of many elements.

## APPRENTICE HEROES

When a Follower departs because they've achieved enough gifts (see page 88) they become an apprentice Hero — they're almost ready to be an actual Hero but just need a little final consideration.

A Player can choose to write a special series of journals to transform the apprentice into a ready-to-play Hero. You might do this if you want to have another Hero exploring the Whale Road in a different direction, or if you're about to retire a Hero (or worried that they will soon meet their match in deadly combat).

### THE FIRST JOURNAL — HISTORY

The first entry is about the history of the Follower and their previous experiences. You'll choose an appropriate Background for the Hero (the Sidekick background is always available but you can also dig deeper into the former Follower's personal history) and take either an appropriate quirk from the table or transform one of their gifts into a new quirk.

This journal should be all about the previous experiences of the apprentice and congeal elements like their alignment, personality traits, ideals, bonds and flaws.

### THE SECOND JOURNAL — AMBITION

The second journal for the prospective Hero should be focused on how they will achieve their ultimate goals. By interpreting the remaining gifts and burdens you should determine which of the six different tales is most appropriate for the apprentice and make connections between their old life and their new one.

Note that their old Follower gifts and burdens begin to fade as they train to be a Hero, their new features taking their place. You should make a conscious effort to have the nature of their tale become evident by their capabilities or goals.

### THE THIRD JOURNAL — TEMPERING

The last entry completes the transition from Follower to Hero. Part of this journal should reflect the Follower's feelings about becoming a Hero and their new responsibilities. You should use information from the other journals and the Follower's card to determine their equipment and wargear, plus any remaining details for the new Hero character.

As the apprentice completes their training, the last journal should provide some hints as to their abilities and features and what sort of Hero they have become.

### THE END OF ONE ROAD

Once you've completed the third journal, go ahead and fill out the new Hero's character sheet. You have now created a new 1st level Hero to begin adventuring on the Whale Road.



*A worthy hoard- battle bought  
Glittering gear and shining serpents of the fore-arm  
Not niggling was their reward  
A gleaming host of torcs and treasures  
A fine feast of dwarfs long labours  
Bright brooches, rings and well gifted weapons  
A garnet set sword finely fettled-  
A rich reward for weathering war breezes.*



A dark, atmospheric illustration of a forest. The scene is dominated by gnarled, grey tree trunks that rise from a rocky, uneven ground. In the foreground, a shallow stream flows through a narrow channel, its water reflecting a bright, golden light. This light emanates from a small, glowing treasure chest or container lying on the streambed. The background shows a misty, teal-colored horizon, suggesting a distant body of water or a foggy landscape. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

PART FIVE  
THE TREASURES

## TREASURE

In BEOWULF, treasure is measured in pounds of silver (£). The economy of the Whale Road is a mixed and mythic one, composed of coinage, bartering, gift-giving and lordly patronage. We use pounds of silver as a convenient way for players, as denizens of the modern world, to assign consistent value to a wide variety of goods, and focus on the work of a Hero rather than the specifics of barter.

Heroes have regular need to reward their Followers and maintain their wargear and ship, so almost every adventure will provide them with a certain amount of silver as a reward, along with other objects which might found along the way. The GM should keep a close eye on how much silver a Hero needs to maintain their Followers and Ship, and make decisions on how much treasure to make available and precisely how it can be won accordingly.

Most treasure hoards will contain coins and treasures of a more varied type. This section will help define the various valuable objects a Hero might encounter on their adventures in addition to coins.

Coins themselves might well come from all around the Whale Road, featuring the mysterious names, faces and symbols of various kings who have had those coins struck. Some might well come from more ancient times, and lost peoples. Others come from more distant lands to the south and east, brought by traders and travellers. Even a pile of coins can tell a tale or provide the opening to an adventure.

The precise value of any individual object is largely up to the GM - a finely-inscribed comb of walrus ivory might be as valuable as a golden cross. Any item of non-magical treasure can be worth any number of £ of silver, depending on the quality of its make. Most treasure items range from 1-3£.

When creating non-magical treasure items there are three concerns of which to be mindful:

- A range of thematic treasure items is atmospheric and enhances the heroic feel of the setting more than piles of coins can.
- Too many highly-detailed descriptions of pieces of treasure are hard to absorb and boring to listen to. Describing some key, interesting items is great, and making up the rest in simple arm rings, neck rings and brooches each worth 1£ does the trick.
- The ability to “spend” the item (or not) is significant. A piece of treasure worth 1£ can be easily given to a Follower as a reward, or readily traded for coins. A single item worth a large amount of £ starts to stretch credulity if it is broken up and “spent” as easily as a 1£ item.

The following tables are numbered to allow random rolling as required, but the GM should feel happy to simply create items by choosing their preferred options.



## TREASURE ITEMS (1D10)

**1: Jewellery (1d8)**

1. Finger Ring
2. Arm Ring
3. Head ring
4. Crown
5. Neck Ring
6. Necklace
7. Pendant
8. Torc

**2: Personal Effects (1d6)**

1. Mirror
2. Comb
3. Buckles and scabbard fittings
4. Brooch
5. Horse harness and harness fittings
6. Buttons and toggles

**3: Art Objects (1d6)**

1. Figure or statue - a warrior, an animal, a ship, a king
2. Sceptre
3. Illustrated manuscripts, books or parchments
4. Gaming pieces in glass, bone or precious metal
5. Decorative sword and scabbard fittings - pommel cap, guard, chape, mouth
6. Ornate box

**4: Drinking Vessels & Tableware (1d12)**

1. Goblet
2. Drinking horn
3. Bowl
4. Plate
5. Salver
6. Trencher
7. Eating knife
8. Spoon
9. Glassware
10. Cauldron
11. Bowl
12. Bucket/Tub

**5: Tools (1d6)**

1. Ornamented fire striker
2. High quality metal working tool
3. High quality wood working tools
4. Decorated loom weight
5. Finely crafted spindle
6. Decorated whetstone

**6: Cut and Uncut Gems and Beads**  
(See Materials, Gems and Similar)**7: Ingots of Precious Metal (1d4)**

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Bronze
4. Copper

**8: Base metal ingots (1d6)**

- 1-3 iron
- 4-6 lead

**9: Precious Raw Materials and Trade Goods (1d20)**

1. Rare wood
2. Antler
3. Soapstone
4. Walrus tusks
5. Glass
6. Narwhal horn
7. Amber
8. Shark skin
9. Leather
10. Hides
11. Furs
12. Bolts of Silk
13. Fine linen
14. Fine woven wool
15. Wire of precious metals
16. Barrel of scented oils
17. Barrel of wine
18. Unhillted sword blade of fine make
19. Axe heads of fine make
20. Spear heads of fine make

**10: Ritual Objects (1d6)**

1. Cross
2. Statue of the Saviour
3. Statue of Woden
4. Statue of Thunor
5. A human head preserved in cedar oil
6. Reliquary with bones of a saint



## MATERIALS AND DECORATION

A precious object might be made from a wide range of materials, some peculiar to the Whale Road. Items from a treasure hoard are very likely to be decorated. The following lists provide some inspiration on the details.

### *Precious Metal (1d4)*

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Bronze
4. Copper

### *Other Materials (1d6)*

1. Antler
2. Bone
3. Horn
4. Narwhal tusk
5. Walrus ivory
6. Ivory

### *Wood (1d6)*

1. Ash wood
2. Yew wood
3. Oak wood
4. Alder wood
5. Lime wood
6. Box wood

### *Decoration (1d10)*

1. Carved with animal designs
2. Etched with spiral designs
3. Marked with interlacing designs
4. Carved with faces
5. Enamelled with bright colours
6. Inset with wire filigree designs
7. Set with gems
8. Engraved with the names of kings, queens, gods or heroes
9. Carved with scenes from The Book
10. Etched with scenes from the old tales

### *Gems and Similar (1d8)*

1. Garnet
2. Shell
3. Amber
4. Black amber (jet)
5. Amethyst
6. Glass
7. Carnelian
8. Rock crystal

## MAGICAL TREASURES

This section presents a number of magical artefacts that a Hero might come to own in the course of their voyages. It also gives the Gamemaster tools to reliably create their own magical treasures for the Hero to find.

These are divided into various categories to help Gamemasters navigate the options, but be aware that these categories might not be known to the people who actually live in the Age of Heroes.

The items listed here are by no means exhaustive, and due to the magic of the 5th Edition rules, it is possible to add a Whale Road flavour to most magic items found elsewhere, perhaps using the forms given here as inspiration.

In the absence of player character spellcasters in this setting, and with just one player character, such items are very precious indeed. Talismans and amulets are a common form of folk magic, especially among Heroes, and after a few adventures it is likely every Hero will have a few of these to fall back on. Regardless of their potency, magical treasures are always unique and often sacred possessions, or else they are hidden, legendary treasures that only the very bold could ever hope to possess.

Heroes are not sorcerers or spell-singers. Their knowledge of matters mystical is usually rather limited and practical, and so most of these magical treasures are of a simple, straightforward nature. They are precious, and they “do a thing”, so that they sit comfortably in the hands of a Hero, and do not require expert research or arcane knowledge. Magical treasures in the Age of Heroes are fantastical but folksy.

To aid the Gamemaster and to keep items unique to each Hero's story, this section provides a menu of options for each treasure, with suggestions for its physical form appropriate to the setting, along with suggested powers that make a worthy treasure.

## TALISMANS

Talismans are small magical items which can be carried around the person, be it worn on a thong around the neck, hung from a belt or stowed in a pouch. Talismans are intended to ward off malign influences, bring good luck, or aid in a particular endeavour.

They are relatively common amongst Heroes, who seek out such means of protection and help. They are generally of a lower order of mystical power than amulets.

Most Heroes can spot that a talisman is more than a common piece of jewellery, but it might take a specialised sage or wise person to reveal the full extent of a talisman's powers, although talismans do not require attunement.

A talisman might take any of the following forms:

- A pierced coin showing warriors and or monsters
- A ring made of metal or wood
- A small figure carved in wood, antler, or bone, or cast in metal
- A fragment of an ancient cremation urn carved with runes
- A brooch, made of antler, bone, or precious metal
- A carved disc on a thong made of bone, antler or wood
- A metal medallion or pendant
- A pierced shell

A talisman might have one of the following powers. It is possible that a talisman might have more than one power, but this is rare. Typically a talisman can be used once per day.

- Once per day, as a bonus action, the talisman may be used to gain inspiration.
- Once per day, as a bonus action, the talisman may be used and until the start of your next turn, any critical hits against you are considered normal hits.
- Once per day, as a bonus action, the talisman may be used to provide advantage on a specific skill check.
- Once per day when the bearer fails a skill check they gain inspiration
- Once per day when the bearer takes damage they gain inspiration
- Once per day when the bearer fails a saving throw they gain inspiration
- Once per day when the bearer fails a saving throw they gain 1D4 hit points for each point of proficiency bonus.
- Once per day, as a bonus action, this talisman may be used to cause another talisman to be useable an additional time per day.
- Once per day, spend inspiration to gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks for 1 minute while in possession of this talisman.
- Once per day, spend inspiration to gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks for 1 minute while in possession of this talisman.
- Once per day, spend inspiration to gain advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) checks for 1 minute while in possession of this talisman.
- Once per day, spend inspiration to gain advantage on saving throws against poison damage for 1 minute while in possession of this talisman.

The power of a talisman can be activated in a number of different ways

- By invoking an Old Gods name or the God of the Book
- By offering a silent prayer to the God of the Book
- By swearing an oath
- By making a loud declaration
- By rubbing it
- By holding it aloft
- By squeezing it in your hand

Every talisman has a story, even if it is a mysterious one. Its appearance usually relates in some way to its powers, and a talisman almost always has a name. Such backstories might even provide future adventure hooks, or ideas for player journaling.

## EXAMPLE TALISMAN

### The Monster Shilling of Dinys Edin

From the North of Northumbria, this ancient, verdigris'd coin, pierced on a leather thong, shows a fierce and hideous monster, grimacing as it is impaled by spears. Is it Woden? Is it a progeny of Cain? No one knows. Once per day when the bearer takes damage they gain inspiration.

## AMULETS

Amulets for the purpose of categorisation are small items, worn around the neck or hung from a belt, which are more powerful than talismans. Amulets may have charges, or limited uses per given time period. Just like a talisman, an amulet can be recognised by a Hero as 'special' but not necessarily immediately identified. They may need help with uncovering the true powers of an amulet, and all amulets require attunement.



An amulet might take any of the following forms:

- Sprigs of dried flowers or woody herbs (especially where charges are used)
- A carved bead of jet, amethyst or amber
- A short length of ivory or wood carved with runes
- A piece of sanctified cloth
- Ancient worked flint
- A stone shell (a fossil)
- An oak, birch or yew ball
- A crystal sphere mounted in precious metal
- A pierced human bone
- An enamelled and inlaid pendant or medallion

An amulet might have one of the following powers. It is possible that an amulet might have more than one power, but this is rare. Greater amulets have stronger powers, and have their own list.

- The wearer is immune to disease.
- The wearer is immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.
- When wearing this amulet, you have a dark vision range of 60 feet.
- Gain +1 hp per level while in possession of this item.
- You gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks while in possession of this item.
- You gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while in possession of this item.
- You gain advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) checks while in possession of this item.
- You gain advantage on saving throws against poison damage while in possession of this item.
- Once per day the wearer may spend inspiration to cause a spent Follower to become unspent.

A greater amulet might have one of the following powers:

- While in possession of this item you may ignore difficult terrain.
- While in possession of this item you move at double your normal walking speed.

- While in possession of this item you can jump 3 times your normal distance.
- While in possession of this item you can breathe underwater or on land.
- While in possession of this amulet, once per day you may spend inspiration to become invisible for 1 minute.
- While in possession of this amulet you may use your action to expend a charge to increase a specific ability score by 1 until your next long rest. The amulet has up to 1d3 charges, and (optionally at the discretion of the GM) regains 1d2-1 expended charges at dawn.
- While in possession of this amulet you have resistance to one type of damage: acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, radiant or thunder.
- When you fail a Dexterity/Strength/Constitution Saving throw, expend a charge to succeed on it instead. The amulet has 3 charges, and regains 1d2 expended charges at dawn.
- When in possession of this Amulet you have advantage on all saving throws.
- While in possession of this amulet your [chosen ability score] is increased by 1/2/3/4, to a maximum of 20 while wearing this item.
- While in possession of this amulet, use an action and expend 1 or more charges to heal wounds (1 charge per 1d8 of healing) The item regains 1d3 charges daily at dawn (optionally, at the discretion of the GM)

## THE STORY OF A MAGICAL TREASURE

Discovering, winning and possessing magical treasures that have a story woven into the places and peoples of the Whale Road really helps the Player feel like a mythic hero, and reinforces the atmosphere of the setting. There are no simple +1 swords in BEOWULF: they are all unique artefacts with a story which someone, somewhere knows, and which the Hero might uncover. This might be simply background detail and stage-setting. Or it might provide a reward of experience. It might even add additional qualities and powers to an artefact once its whole story is known. It might even unlock the riddle of defeating a Monster.

So how might a Hero find out more?

The most straight-forward way is for an NPC to tell the tale of the object before the Hero finds it, making it an object worth seeking out, or one that is recognised by the Hero when they later discover it.

A mysterious treasure might also be found without any foreknowledge of its name or tale. A Hero can usually discern

if an object seems to be of importance, and they may well go looking for answers. Whether they are told ahead of time, or after discovering an object, such a tale might be related by a wise woman brewing her medicines, a travelling scop entertaining the meadhall, a local noble who has always wondered where the treasure is hidden in their kingdom, a Follower who heard the tale as a youth, a monk poring over their texts, or a child singing an old rhyme as the Hero passes by.

### Simple Stories:

- It was made by the giants.
- It was dropped by an old god.
- It was made by the ancients.
- It was blessed by the Saviour.
- It was made by a saint.
- It was made by a wise woman.
- It was made by a dwarf.
- It was made in far away Pictland/Denmark/the burning lands to the far south beyond the Forest.
- An elf gave it to an ancestor.

- While in possession of this amulet, once a day you may make your shield invulnerable to splintering for the next 10 minutes.
- While in possession of this amulet, once a day you may make your helmet invulnerable to splintering for the next 10 minutes.
- While in possession of this amulet, one ability score of your choice is increased by 1 point to a maximum of 20.
- While in possession of this item you may be immune to the stunned condition.

Even more than talismans, every amulet has a story. Its appearance usually relates in some way to its powers, and an amulet always has a name.

### EXAMPLE AMULET

#### A Sprig of Mugwort Comeliness

This amulet has 3 charges, which cannot be recharged. Expend a charge by using your action to proudly show off the amulet in order to gain advantage on your next Charisma (Persuasion) check while in possession of this item.

Mugwort is a well-known magical herb, and if prepared correctly can prove very effective in enhancing the attractiveness of any who wear it in their cloak-pin.

## MAGICAL WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

In the world of BEOWULF, weapons and armour have several qualities which might make them superior and worthy of a Hero. The boundaries between such wargear being very old, very well made, culturally significant, and magical are often blurred.

Weapons and armour might possess one or more of the following qualities, up to a maximum of 4.

Such weapons almost always have a story, which is either known in the region in which it is found, or can be uncovered later.

### PATTERN-WELDED SWORDS, SEAXES, SPEARS, JAVELINS AND AXES

Most weapons are created with some level of pattern welding, due to the poverty of iron available in this age of the world. However, master-worked pattern welded weapons are exemplary examples of this technique and have prodigious strength, flexibility and enduring sharpness.

Any edged weapon considered worthy of the name pattern-welded in a tale will have the characteristic smoke, herringbone or snake patterns running along its blade.

Any pattern-welded blade confers +1 to hit, and +1 to damage, and the weapon is considered magical, such is the skill of its manufacture. A pattern welded weapon may have other qualities which raise these bonuses, and they are considered cumulative.

### NAMED, ANCESTOR AND BARROW WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

A weapon which has been given a name which has become widely known, or which has been owned by ancient ancestors, or has been found in a barrow or ancestor grave, provides +1 to hit, and +1 to damage for that weapon, and the weapon is considered magical. The benefits of such Named, Ancestor or Barrow weapons and armour can be applied to other types of magical weapons and armour and the bonuses are considered cumulative.

### RUNE-SCRIBED WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

A weapon which has been scribed with mysterious runes provides +1 to hit, and +1 to damage for a weapon, and that weapon is considered magical. Rune-scribed armours provide +1 to Armour Class, and the armour is considered magical.

Rune-scribing can be applied to other types of magical weapons and armour and the bonuses are considered cumulative.

### DWARF-MADE WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

Weapons and armour of any type which appear to be of exceptional quality are often referred to as "Dwarf-made". A Dwarf-made weapon deals an additional amount of damage equal to the wielder's proficiency bonus. A Dwarf-made armour adds additional points of Armour Class equal to half of the wearer's proficiency bonus, rounded down. Dwarfs never make light armour and rarely make anything other than heavy armour.

Dwarf-made weapons and armour may have other qualities which raise these bonuses, and they are considered cumulative.

### EXAMPLE MAGICAL WEAPON

#### Westenwaeg, Rune-scribed Ancient Barrow Langseax

This Langseax of great age was taken from a barrow in time out of mind. It possesses a smoke patterned blade of slender and wicked curves, and an undulating edge of prodigious sharpness.

Scribed along its length is the name Westenwaeg, which mean the Wave of the West. It also bears the line: "*A faithful hearth-troop, oath-fated, a shield and shelter to their lord*"

Legend tells that Westenwaeg was forged from iron found in the Vale of Glamorgan.

As a *named, pattern-welded, barrow-sword* Westenwaeg is considered magical and gains +3 to hit and +3 to damage.

## GIFTED WEAPONS

An heirloom, or well-thought-of weapon can make for an impressive gift. The giving of such finely made gifts reflects honour on the giver and the receiver, binding them to one another. Such weapons generally have +1 to hit or +1 to damage. They are very finely made weapons, but the damage dealt is not considered magical.



## NAMING WEAPONS AND ARMOUR

The people of the Whale Road really enjoy alliteration, and for them it holds power. So a good name will often be alliterative. Weapons and armour also have certain cultural qualities that are often reflected in their names. It is possible to construct thematic sounding names by twinning two words: so “hard-head” or “swift-shaft”. Often, but not always these are firstly an adjective, then a noun.

### Example First Words

Hard	Hard-filed	Swift	Joyful
Smoke	Butcher	Wound	Blood
Bone	Death	Fierce	Battle
War	Sharp	God	Woden
Board	Fire	Skull	

### Example Second Words

Shaft	Head	Blade	Hand
Finger	Giver	Taker	Maker
Flame	Lightning	Storm	Biter
Breaker	Seeker	Board (for a shield)	Wife
Husband	Flood	Harvest	Reaver
Hound	Hart	Bird	Crow
Raven	Wolf	Boar	Bear

These words work well when translated into Old English, to give more mysterious-sounding names. The Anglo-Saxons also revelled in kennings, and research into these poetic euphemisms provides endless inspiration for the names of treasures.

Weapons and armour might also have names in Old English that reflect what they do: “Hrunting”, the named sword in the poem Beowulf means “thrusting”. “Naegling” means “nailing”, or “hole maker”.

In other, broadly related works, we see swords that are dedicated to a particular god or powerful legendary figure, like the sword Mimung, which means “dedicated to Mime” - the teacher of Weyland, the Smith who forged the sword.

Sadly, providing a complete Old English dictionary is beyond the scope of this book, but many user-friendly examples are available. Check the reading list at the back of this book.

## ADDITIONAL WARGEAR QUALITIES

Magical wargear might also possess abilities which do not have a mechanical impact but do add to its wonder.

- never rusts
- is always sharp
- never bends or breaks
- always gleams
- has a mystical origin
- is made from a special kind of material, like star iron
- was made by a legendary smith
- was quenched or hardened in an unusual material - blood
- has a rainbow sheen
- has snake or smoke patterns

## HEALING TREASURES

Herbs, salves, medicines and potions are made by exceptional individuals. There are no shops or stalls that sell this kind of healing, and it is always unique to the maker.

The knowledge to make such items is rare, and keenly sought after. Those with the skill keep them closely guarded, and whether they are found in a remote abbey, or hidden sacred grove deep in the Forest, such goods are to be treasured and only used at great need.

Gaining such items might require the performance of service to a local ruler, an offer of protection to a remote monastery, or the isolated creator of the healing goods. They might be discovered as rewards for slaying a Monster, or discovered in a unique location along the way.

Such healing goods might take one of the following forms:

- A bunch of fresh herbs
- A bundle of dried herbs bound with twine
- A salve made of goose or swan fat
- A brew made with herbs and fermented pine needles
- A honey sweetened fermented milk drink
- A thick, unpleasant-looking paste wrapped in birch bark
- A clear liquid that tastes of metal, kept in an ancient glass vessel

It might have any one of the following effects:

- You may use your action to apply, drink, or give one dose of the medicine. The recipient gains 1d4+2 hit points.
- You may use your action to apply, drink, or give one dose of the medicine. The recipient gains 2d8+2 hit points.
- You may use your action to apply, drink, or give one dose of the medicine. The recipient ceases to be poisoned.
- You may use your action to apply, drink, or give one dose of the medicine. The recipient is cured of any disease.



Special healing treasures might be found that comes in useful when given to a Follower.

- Cause a Follower to become unspent
- Give a Follower a temporary Gift
- Cause a Follower's Engage Gift to last an extra round

## EXAMPLE POTION

### The Witchbrew of Mistlebranch

This carved yew-wood bottle with antler stopper contains a thick, milky brew. It smells faintly of pine-needles and mistletoe. When drunk by a Follower it allows them to use their Engage gift for one extra round. If drunk by anyone else it has the following effect:

#### Roll 1d4

1. The imbiber feels faintly nauseous, but otherwise suffers no effects.
2. The imbiber feels highly nauseous, and gains the poisoned condition.
3. The imbiber gains 1d4 hit points up to their maximum.
4. The imbiber feels fantastic and gains inspiration.

## CURING STONES

Curing stones are magical artefacts which can heal specific ills. Curing stones can be made by Dwarfs, or Elf-magic, or by wise-folk of ancient times, or left scattered across creation for the mighty and faithful by God. No one really knows for sure.

They usually take the form of a rock, crystal or pebble, clearly possessing some kind of mysterious power.

Curing stones are held against the injured party, and concentrated upon. Their magic cures wounds, poison or disease, depending on the particulars of the stone. All curing stones require attunement.

Curing stones might take any of the following forms, any of which might be carved with ancient designs or magical runes:

- A river-worn pebble with unusual striations
- A carved lobe of granite
- A fist-sized block of black amber
- A ball of amber containing preserved flies
- An oval of flint

A curing stone will have one of the following powers:

Once per day spend inspiration to:

- Restore 1d3 hp per level of the bearer
- Restore 1d4 hp per level of the bearer
- Restore 1d6 hp per level of the bearer
- Remove the poisoned condition
- Remove the blinded condition
- Cure any disease
- Gain 10 temporary hit points, which last one hour

## EXAMPLE CURING STONE

### The Honey Scopstone

A rounded, oval chunk of baltic amber, the honey Scopstone sits easily in the palm of a hand and is warm to touch. Curiously, trapped inside the stone is what appears to be a desiccated white butterfly.

Once per day, anyone holding the Scopstone and spending inspiration, regains 1d3hp per level.

## TREASURES OF THE BOOK, HOARDS OF THE OLD GODS

There are in the world, certain magical treasures that require a specific philosophical alignment to use or gain benefit, as the owner or wielder. These items can only be use by Heroes of the specific alignment connected to the item. Neutral Heroes can only use items of the Church or the Old Ways that correspond to their current alignment die. (See page 28 for more information on alignment). Only Neutral Heroes can gain the effects of specifically Neutral items. All of these items require attunement.

## TREASURES OF THE CHURCH

The church is the source of many relics and sanctified goods which can be of aid and inspiration to the faithful. Carried as symbols of faith, and as warnings to the enemies of God, such objects reflect the nature of the God of the Book. These are most often either prayed over to receive a blessing from above, or boldly presented to foes of God to achieve their effects. Some of these treasures work directly, as if they directly hold wondrous power. Others function by way of inspiring the owner to greater resilience or moral strength.

A Treasure of the Church might take one of the following forms:

- Illuminated pages of the gospel on vellum
- A clay tablet inscribed with an acrostic Lord's Prayer
- A highly decorated gold reliquary containing a relic of saints
- A very simple or humble reliquary containing a relic of a saint
- A relic of saints such as a finger bone, thigh bone, or pieces of shroud
- A decorated cross, engraved with scripture
- A book containing a series of wise written law codes
- A book containing a written lineage of kings, dedicated to the Church

A Treasure of the Church might confer one of the following effects:

- Once per day, you may spend an action to gain inspiration.
- Once per day, you may spend your reaction to gain advantage on saving throws caused by creatures aligned with the Old Ways.

- Once per day, you may spend inspiration to learn a piece of information relevant to your current adventure.
- Once per day, you may spend inspiration and your action to deal 1d4 damage per level of the bearer to creatures aligned with the Old Ways within earshot
- Once per day, you may spend inspiration and your action to inflict the prone condition on all creatures aligned with the Old Ways within 30 feet
- Once per day, enemies aligned with the Old Ways have disadvantage on their to hit rolls against you and your allies within 20 feet for 1 minute.
- The bearer gains advantage on saving throws against magic.
- Once per day, you may spend inspiration and your action to cause undead creatures within 30 feet to make a DC 17 saving throw or gain the stunned condition.
- Once per day, you may spend inspiration and your action to cause creatures aligned with the Old Gods within 30 feet to make a DC 17 saving throw or gain the stunned condition.
- Once per day, use your action to add an inspiration token to the Hero Pool.
- Once per day, use your action to add an inspiration token to the Follower Pool.
- Once per day, use your action to remove an inspiration token from the GM Pool.
- Once per day, spend inspiration to gain a bonus to your armour class equal to your proficiency bonus for 10 minutes.
- Once per day, spend a bonus action to gain advantage on your next to hit roll.

## EXAMPLE TREASURE OF THE CHURCH

### The Cross of St Cuthbert

This inscribed and garnet-studded golden cross stands 18 inches tall, and is mounted on a heavy base of carved stone. On the front of the base is carved an acrostic Lord's Prayer in Latin.

Once per day, by brandishing the Cross of St Cuthbert as your action, you may spend inspiration to inflict the prone condition on all creatures aligned with the Old Ways within 30 feet.

## TREASURES OF THE OLD WAYS

The mysterious and secret rites of the Old Ways frequently involve ritual objects, many of which contain power to affect the middle earth of mannish peoples.

The followers of the Old Ways also tend towards a more superstitious bent than those of the Church, putting even more faith in magical objects than the followers of the Church. The Old Gods are known to scatter artefacts across the world to help the mighty battle giants, or simply as things they have grown tired of and have discarded.

There are many different kinds of secret knowledge in the world of the Old Ways, and they manifest themselves in artefacts just as varied as the kinds of Old Ways shrines and temples across the world.

A Treasure of the Old Ways might take the form of:

- A hammer pendant
- Ogham staves carved into a wooden token or staff
- A carved, wooden god head
- A sacred sickle
- A magical wolf skin
- A war-horn dedicated to one of the Old Gods
- A carved tablet of stone
- An antler carved with magical runes

A Treasure of the Old Ways might have one or more of the following powers:

- Once per day, you may spend an action to gain inspiration
- Spend inspiration and your action to inflict the prone condition on creatures aligned with the Church within 30 feet
- Once per day, use your action to call upon the strength of your ancestors add thereby an inspiration token to the Hero Pool
- Once per day, use your action to call upon the favour of local spirits, and thereby add an inspiration token to the Follower Pool
- Once per day, use your action to swear an oath and thereby remove an inspiration token from the GM Pool
- Once per day you may call upon the battle-wrath of Thunor in order to lower your Armour Class by up to three points until the start of your next turn, adding the same number of points to your attack rolls.

## EXAMPLE TREASURE OF THE OLD WAYS

### The Hammer of the Danes

This hammer is a heavy golden pendant, stamped with many concentric circle patterns, threaded onto a string of glass and amber beads. Weapon of mighty Thunor, the hammer brings good fortune to all those who cleave close to the Old Ways. Once per day, use your action to grip the hammer, and add an inspiration token to the Hero Pool.

## UNALIGNED TREASURES

There are a number of precious objects in the world that are unaligned with either the Church or the Old Gods, and yet which seem to possess rare power in the world. These might be textual works of great research and knowledge, great artisanship, or simply deeply mysterious objects not understood by any faith held by people. While these can be used by anyone, those of great faith in The Old Ways or the Church may be highly suspicious of them and their origins.

Unaligned treasures might take the form of:

- A leech guide to medicine
- A map made in curious style from beyond the Whale Road
- A work calendar - when to plant, when to reap

- A written history, like *The Arrival of Kings*
- A written heroic poem
- A work on monsters
- A history which impugns ancient peoples
- An inscriptions on lead
- A story of travellers from far-off lands

Such an unaligned treasures might have one of the following powers:

- Once per day during a short rest you may add your proficiency bonus to the total number of hit points regained.
- Once per day, gain advantage on any Intelligence test.
- Once per day, use your action to add an inspiration token to the Hero Pool
- Once per day, use your action to add an inspiration token to the Follower Pool
- Once per day, use your action to remove an inspiration token from the GM Pool

## MAGICAL ANIMALS

A Hero may come to own a magical animal. These are distinct to Noble Animals in that they do not count as Followers, and are far less active as NPCs. Magical animals tend to have above average intelligence for their kind, along with the ability to communicate in a rudimentary way with their owner. Magical animals are not as independently intelligent as a Noble Animal or human Follower.

Magical animals provide some similar effects to magical items, while also being the equivalent of a pet or working animal companion for the Hero. Magical animals are too small and weak to feature in combat. They can be stolen or lost, just like any magic item. It is very unlikely that a magical animal would be killed by an adversary — they're too small to be targeted, and too agile to be easily struck. Friendship with a magical animal requires attunement.

Forms Taken:

- a small bird like a mistle-thrush or starling
- a weasel
- an otter
- a mouse
- a snake

Effects:

- Once per day, if they provide a reasonable explanation of what the magical animal does to provide it, the owner may gain advantage on a skill check. Whether the animal has been able to scout out an area and relay useful information, or provides some kind of warning is up to the owner to describe.
- Once per day, the company of the animal provides the Hero with inspiration.

- Once per day, whether through comfort and companionship, or magical spittle, the animal provides you with 2d8 hit points of healing.

## VARYING IT UP

Magical treasures should hold a unique place in any Hero's story. The following information can be used to vary the frequency with which an item can be used, or how long its effects last. The use of an item typically has some kind of cost, be it a charge, or the expenditure of an action or inspiration. Where an item has charges, these can vary in amount, and how often they recharge.

Frequency:

- Single use only
- Once per adventure
- Once per day
- Once per long rest
- Once per short rest
- For the next 10 minutes
- For 1 minute
- Until the start of your next turn
- Per charge expended

Cost:

- Spend inspiration
- Expend a charge
- Use an action
- Passive effect that works when conditions are met
- Passive effect always active

Charges, where appropriate:

- 1d2
- 1d3
- 1d2 + 1
- 1d3 + 1

Recharging, where appropriate:

- 1d2-1 at dawn
- 1d3 at dawn
- 1d3 per adventure
- 1d3 per season or year



PART SIX  
THE THREE OGRE BROTHERS





*A baleful and blasted kingdom  
Barren of hall and harvest.  
Where mere and mire merge with midden  
There bitter Braegde bides as lord.  
Lonely and wind whipped hills  
Are a mighty throne for Magan's malice  
Bald holds the mountain's manevolent hidage  
A bone tythe boon to feast the bretwalda!  
Three kin-callous cynings rule there  
A hated realm - a hearth for hardship.*

## THE THREE OGRE BROTHERS

*From time to time, a thane of the king,  
who had made many vaunts, and was mindful of verses,  
stored with sagas and songs of old,  
bound word to word in well-knit rime,  
welded his lay; ... of the warlike deeds  
he had heard in saga of Sigemund.  
Strange the story: he said it all, —  
the Waelsing's wanderings wide, his struggles,  
which never were told to tribes of men,  
the feuds and the frauds, save to Fitela only,  
when of these doings he deigned to speak,  
uncle to nephew; as ever the twain  
stood side by side in stress of war,  
and multitude of the monster kind  
they had felled with their swords.*

*The Three Ogre Brothers* is an introductory scenario for BEOWULF. It is designed for a 1st or 2nd level Hero, who will gain a level before the end of the scenario. The adventure has room for any sort of Hero, but it will require some exploration and investigation as the ogres are initially undefeatable Monsters. Depending on your meeting length and game pacing, this adventure will likely occupy two to three play sessions. We also offer a free introductory scenario, *The Hermit's Sanctuary*, which is intended to introduce the various new rules within BEOWULF. You can find links to it at the Handiwork Games website. If you haven't run it before, you might want to run that adventure first and this one second. *The Hermit's Sanctuary* follows the adventure outline in Part 4: The Adventure much more closely, while *The Three Ogre Brothers* uses that format to introduce the story and then expands it into three parallel locations. If you use the same Hero for both and follow the guidelines starting on page 129, it's likely that the Hero will start this adventure at 2nd level, which is fine.

## THE BEGINNING

In this adventure, our Hero travels to Eotenalond, the Ogre Lands, where three cruel ogre brothers rule over the remains of their father's kingdom. Their father, in turn, had conquered and stole the land from the rightful human king. Now, the ordinary people chafe under the power of the ogre brothers and any who question them disappear and are never seen again. The Hero must free the people and set things right but will have to contend with each of the ogres and their special defences.

## NEWS OF THE OGRES

It is now time for the story to begin, to tell of how the Hero learned of the evil ogres, and sailed to the land to free its people from the cruel ogre brothers and their monstrous weapons...

You can roll on the following table or choose one of the suggestions for the Hero.

### RUMOURS

1d6	Rumour
1-2	Ringold and Taska are traders that sail from one end of the two seas to the other. Recently they visited one of the kingdoms near Eotenalond and heard that the old ogre king had died and his cruel sons had broken up the kingdom between them.
3-4	Linas is a young deckhand on a visiting ship and if you get him drunk, he'll tell you the story of fleeing the Ogre Lands when he heard that the old king had been murdered and stowing away on the first ship he could find.
5-6	A scop by the name of Herewynn is recounting all the news of the day. When she tells of the Ogre Lands and the three cruel ogre brothers who now rule that land, something moves the Hero to know more. She cannot tell anything more than she already knows, other than where to sail in order to reach Eotenalond, the Ogre Lands.

Once the Hero has decided to take on the adventure of *The Three Ogre Brothers* then they begin to prepare for the journey.

## PORTENT

Prepare the portent according to the rules on page 97 and create the inspiration pool at the same time. Make note of each die rolled; the Ogre Lands are far away and the Hero will face more than one Challenge as they make their way there.

As the Portent is recited, the Hero and their Followers prepare to depart. The ship is loaded with food and other supplies, in addition to the battle equipment of the group. When all is ready, they launch into the cold water of the north and begin to head towards the lands where the sun rises from, knowing that they seek the Ogre Lands.

## THE JOURNEY

How far away the Ogre Lands lie is up to the Gamemaster; it's probably best for it to be a Medium or Long voyage in order to have the sense of travelling to distant lands. Using the numbers already generated from the portent, fill out either two or three challenges accordingly.

Make sure to accurately record the number pairs and prepare each of the Challenges before they come up — knowing in advance the type of challenge allows you to better present it. Then briefly narrate the ship's departure and it crawling along the coast towards its destination, occasionally punctuated by the challenges. Once a challenge is resolved, 'zoom back out' and continue your narration until the Hero reaches the Ogre Lands.

## A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

*The Three Ogre Brothers* provides a set of three parallel locations to visit, adapting and expanding the structures in Chapter Four. But first the Hero will visit a welcoming location where they can learn the story of the Ogre Lands and the brothers, and begin their investigation.

## STORMTOSSED SAILORS

As the Hero's ship draws closer to the Ogre Lands, the sea begins to swell with a storm and black clouds obscure the already darkening sky. The Whale Road is about to become very dangerous. Then, one of the crew cries out. There is a light! A bright beacon on a nearby island, indicating a safe place to land the ship and wait out the storm.

If the Player decides to land the ship, all is well. If they press on, the storm grows stronger and winds blow the ship to and fro. The crew cry out and one of the Followers advise the Hero to try once more for the island, in order to escape the storm.

If the Player insists on sailing to the mainland, they can do so, but their ship is Weakened (see page 75) by the storm damage. Perhaps some of what the Hero would have learned on the island can come to them or one of their Followers as a series of visions.

## WHALEROADING

When you see one of these boxes, this is us, the writers, addressing you, the Gamemaster, directly. That's pretty much true for the regular text too, but we will use these boxes when we want to point something out directly. At this point in the adventure, it might seem like we're trying to force the Player to choose to land on the island. Of course, we'd like the Player to land — this is our chance to provide a 'regular' (if slightly spooky) meadhall and let the Hero know what's going on. But if the Player rejects the two chances to land on the island, don't force it. You can drop hints in later, and they could circle back.

## THE LIGHTHOUSE

As the group moves closer to the centre of the island, they see a bright-lit stone structure ahead. It has a rectangular main section with steeply angled wooden rafters supporting a shale roof attached to a square tower that is at least three storeys tall. At the top of the tower burns a beacon-fire. A Follower, either aligned with the Church or well-travelled, may speak up and identify this as a holy place of the New God if the Hero does not. Light spills out from underneath the door leading into the primary structure. Inside the room are a series of rough-hewn stone benches, half a dozen on either side with a central walkway aligned with the door. Beyond the benches are an empty altar and alcoves carved into the wall where dozens of candles stand, each burning brightly. Hand-painted shutters along the long walls illustrate what might be scenes from the stories of the Book. There are three figures here, two seated together on one bench, the other on a different one. Each faces the altar and the visitors can hear what seems to be an invisible choir sing in some unknown language. In a few moments, the singing stops and the figures begin to move, standing up and now looking at the visitors.



## BARTAS

An old man, balding, with a golden circlet around his head. He wears thick woollen clothes under his furs. Despite his age, he stands upright, although he walks with a limp. He smiles at anyone he meets warmly and his deep voice expresses nothing but love and respect for all his visitors. He wears a small silver cross around his neck, the symbol of the Church.



**Challenge.** While Bartas will always be kind to any visitor, the Hero does need to convince him that they are worthy of hearing the story of how he and his sons came to the island. This is a DC 10 Charisma (Perception) check.

**Advantage criteria.** A Hero aligned with the Church has advantage on this check.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero treats Bartas rudely or with open disrespect they earn disadvantage.

**Follower hook.** None. Bartas sees keenly that the Hero is in charge and wishes to speak with them.

### Result:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Bartas tells his part of the story, that deals with the invasion of Kiejstut, the original ogre king. See 'The Story', below. He might even hint that he was the king disposed by Kiejstut.
- **Success.** Bartas tells the first part of the story but makes no personal connections to it.
- **Failure.** Bartas only says that he failed his duties and has been sent to the island to atone. He ruefully directs the Hero to explore what is now called "The Ogre Lands".
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Bartas only says that he must atone for his failures in life. He is too ashamed to speak further, and he ruefully directs the Hero to explore what is now called "The Ogre Lands" and wishes them better fortune in leadership. Add a token to the Follower Pool.

**Further challenges.** If the Hero chooses to ask Bartas his advice on command and rulership, they will discover he has much to say. This might provide a small XP bonus or an Achievement award. If the Hero has learned of his daughter and asks about her, Bartas shakes his head sadly, saying that 'she has turned away from us.'

**Recruitment.** This is not possible.

## BERNARDAS

The elder son of Bartas, he sat beside his father earlier. He is open-faced and takes pride and joy in his position and responsibilities and does not let doubt trouble his mind. His clothing is as rich as his father's, though there are splotches of dark brown stains on the garments now. His blonde hair and bright blue eyes make clear his heritage of the north.



**Challenge.** Bernardas can tell the Hero about the ogre king's frustration with his three sons and the solution that Gnorri provided the king. This requires a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check.

**Advantage criteria.** A Hero that is a straightforward fighter earns advantage on the roll.

**Disadvantage criteria.** A Hero that relies on misdirection and subterfuge has disadvantage with Bernardas.

**Follower hook.** If three or more of the Hero's Followers only have gifts related to combat then the Hero will have advantage with Bernardas as the young man is impressed by the Hero's retinue of warriors.

### Result:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Bernardas tells his part of the tale (see 'The Story', opposite), about the old ogre king's plan for his sons. He might embellish it a bit, claiming that his own father is lucky to have his first-born son be the most suitable for rulership.
- **Success.** Bernardas tells the story but isn't confident enough to brag.
- **Failure.** Bernardas says only that he was sent here to the island by the three ogre brothers.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Bernardas only says that he failed in battle and was sent to the island for his failure. He wistfully wishes the Hero better luck than he had in fighting his foes. Remove a token, if possible, from the Monster pool.

**Further challenges.** If the Hero asks Bernardas for advice on confronting the ogre brothers, he will advise that Magan is the strongest, but has the worst-made weapon. He also tells the Hero that bravery is often a cover for deep-seated fear. If asked about the youngest ogre brother, he begrudgingly says that it is better to talk to his brother about that one, since they are much alike. If asked about his sister, he frowns and says 'she ran away, and that is why she is not here.'

**Recruitment.** This is not possible.



## KADARAS

The younger man is tall and lanky, with a weathered appearance that neither of the other two have. His clothes are simpler and darker than the others. He watches the Hero and the others warily as they approach, but is willing to speak quietly to them. It is easy to see that he avoids both his father and brother.



**Challenge.** Kadaras knows the latest news from the Ogre Lands but the Hero must prove trustworthy before he will divulge it. This requires a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check or a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** If the Hero has experience as a diplomat, or some other wily role, then their subtlety can win advantage with the younger brother.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero is as straightforward as Bernardas then they have disadvantage on their check, as Kadaras thinks little of his brother's accomplishments.

**Follower hook.** If the Hero asks one or more of their Followers to keep an eye on Kadaras, he will notice the extra attention and be flattered by being considered dangerous. The Hero will have advantage on their check.

### Result:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Kadaras tells about the reactions of the brothers to their gifts and Braegde's plan (see The Story, below). He laments that he was sent to the island as well, but fortunately their sister is still free, hiding somewhere.
- **Success.** Kadaras finishes the story of the ogre brothers and only hints that there may be more to the story.
- **Failure.** Kadaras only says that the ogre brothers are still alive and that is why he came to the island.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Kadaras simply says that he failed in his duties to his father and he has come here to atone for his sins. He wishes the Hero sharper wits. Add a token to the Hero pool.

**Further challenges.** If the Hero asks Kadaras about Braegde, he will warn them about the youngest ogre brother's cleverness and how he is likely to try and trap the Hero in the rules of hospitality instead of facing the challenge directly. If pressed on the news of his sister, he only says 'she is gone from our eyes now and we cannot reach her.'

**Recruitment.** This is not possible.

## A FAMILY STORY

There are three men, one older and two younger. The family resemblance between all three is easy to see. The old man wears a golden circlet on his head and all three are dressed in warm furs. The Hero can mingle with them, and address each of them in turn.

## THE STORY

The Hero might not learn all of the story of the Ogre Lands from Bartas and his sons. Instead, or additionally, if they examine the painted shutters of the chapel, they will see scenes from various stories and parables. Strangely, some of these seem to concern the ogre king and his three sons. If the Hero makes a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check they can learn the story. A Follower with the Lore of Kings gift can provide advantage on the check.

Bartas, or the first shutter can tell:

*Once, there was an Eotenas Cyning, an Ogre King who had three sons. The king ruled a great land, after ruthlessly defeating the previous, goodly human king in brutal battle. The mannish king and his sons stood no chance against the brutality of the giant-kin. Now the Ogre King was old and had not named an heir, for his oldest was strong but not brave or cunning; his middle-child was brave but not cunning or strong and his youngest was cunning but neither strong nor brave. He rued any choice. But he was lucky enough to have a Dweorhas (Dwarf) as a servant and he sent for the creature. 'Make each of my sons a weapon such that they must fight and thus whoever lives shall be my heir.'*

Bernardas, or the second shutter can tell:

*The dwarf was Gnorri the Clever, a great smith of magical weapons. He made a club for Magan the oldest, an axe for Bald, and a sword for Braegde the youngest. He told each of them 'While your weapon is in your care, no other blade shall bite upon you, other than those of your brothers.' Thus, Gnorri told the king, they must fight each other for otherwise they would each be in danger.*

Kadaras, or the third shutter can tell:

*And Bald was first to act, challenging both his brothers to duels. But Braegde thought for a moment and said 'It is unwise for us to fight — you might chance to beat me, for you are braver than me, but it is unlikely that you would chance to win against Magan who is stronger than both of us. Then too, one of us might slay him, either by boldness or cleverness. If you value your life, we should make a pact.' Then they slew their father for pitting them against one another, and Gnorri too, so that no one would know the secrets of their weapons.*

*And thus they did, each ogre brother choosing a land... the coastal fens for Braegde, the rolling middle lands for Magan, and the high mountains for Bald. And each claimed a portion of their father's servants, to do with as their cruel hearts desired.*

## THE TOWER

There is a single door on the wall behind the altar, it leads to a stairway that climbs up to the top of the tower. There, a huge bonfire burns. A Hero that spends significant time up here will notice that, despite its bright light and heat, the flame never seems to consume its firewood.

## THE NEXT MORNING

After introductions are made, and stories are told, the three men invite the Hero and the others to rest, lying down on the stone benches or between them. They have supplies of simple food, mead and ale, which they are happy to share with great ceremony, and it seems a long while since they had guests in their house. When morning comes, the chapel seems very different — the roof is gone (as well as the rain, fortunately) and there is no sign of the tower, the walls, or the three men they met last night. The only thing that remains is some rubble and scorched bits of timber showing faint signs of the paint from the decorated shutters. The morning comes, clear and bright, and they can easily see the Ogre Lands nearby and their ship waiting on the beach. The Hero has met with the ghosts of the old King and his two sons.

## THE OGRE LANDS

The kingdoms of the three ogre brothers are nestled between other, more ordinary kingdoms. Near to the ocean are briny marshes and mires, then there are a series of gently rolling hills covered with grass, and, finally, the hills grow steep, joining the mountains that mark the borders of these lands. The Hero's ship can reach the edge of the fens and find a safe place to beach the ship. The Hero can choose to visit these lands in any order, but the natural progression is to explore the fens where the ship lands, then the grasslands, and finally the slopes. The Hero will likely

visit these areas more than once, as they learn more about the ogre brothers, their weapons and what it takes to defeat them.

## THE EVIL OGRES

We purposefully hint at the ogres' cruelty and evil, without ever 'showing' anything too troubling 'onscreen'. Depending on your Player and both of your preferences, you might have truly despicable acts occur directly in front of the Hero, with innocents torn limb from limb due to the ogre's rage or hunger. Or the non-player characters may tell similar stories, with more or less gory detail. It's up to you how much of this you want to include — we've tried to keep it to just hints so that you can develop it to your comfort level. Be sure to consider the preferences of your Player in any description that tends to the extreme.

These movements inside the kingdom can happen as just a bit of narration, there are no special rules needed for travels inside an adventure.

## THE FENS OF BRAEGDE

The marshlands belong to Braegde, the most clever of the ogre brothers. He chose these lands so that his brothers would not be jealous of him and that he might be the first to see visitors to their land.

The land is divided between deeper swamps that are filled with peat (when dried, it is used as fuel), and higher lands where pigs dig in the mud for tubers until they themselves are harvested



to feed the people of the land and Braegde himself. Braegde is generous with his cooperative servants, knowing that a content populace is one that will not rise up against its leader.

For these reasons, the ship can safely be left with just the crew to guard it. The Hero can travel inland, meeting either the peat gatherers or pig farmers before reaching the grasslands or search for Braegde's fort here, in which case they meet both before finding the fort.

### THE ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

Since it is most likely that the Hero will explore the fens first, these sections have a bit more details and structural advice provided. However, each of the three ogre kingdoms have many parallels.

There are always one or more representatives of the common folk that live in the land, an 'outsider' that might help the Hero, a strange creature that is not the Monster itself but may be allied to it, and the final location, the home of the ogre brother and his guards. These strong parallels are part of the storybook-like nature of this adventure.

In whichever land the Hero first begins to explore, they should have a chance to meet the common people first and perhaps to meet any outsiders. They also should not be shy about going to meet with the brothers; unlike some other Monsters in our tales, the ogres can talk with the Hero and, in their bragging, will almost certainly reveal the secret to their defeat.

### THE PEAT GATHERERS

As the Hero and their Followers explore the land, they will come across groups of workers cutting up strips of peat from the ground and piling them on carts so that they can be air-dried. The first time the Hero encounters such a group, they will meet Sverra, who can tell them about the land and her work here. Other groups are much the same, but will be more timid about talking to the Hero.

One of the workers, a well-muscled and severe-looking woman in her mid-twenties looks up and begins to approach you. The only weapon she has is her bog-knife but she displays no fear or hesitation.

Sverra and her crew return to their work as the Hero and their Followers depart. She will provide directions to Braegde's fort if needed. If this is the Hero's first visit to the land they will still happen across some pig farmers on the way to the fort, or if they are returning after visiting other areas then they can head straight to the fort.

## SVERRA

Sverra wears mud-stained linens and carries a wide and thin-bladed knife designed to cut blocks of peat. Her dark locks are shorn at the shoulder and when she stands up straight she is taller than average with a lanky frame. She is friendly and curious, especially about strangers bearing weapons in these lands.



**Challenge.** While Sverra is the boldest of the workers, the Hero still needs to make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check in order for her to share any details with the newcomers.

**Advantage criteria.** A Hero who has experience in the gruelling aspects of manual labour can earn advantage on their check by sympathising with Sverra.

**Disadvantage criteria.** A Hero that has a noble background receives disadvantage on their check.

**Follower hook.** If the Hero sets their Followers to work stacking the newly cut peat, they earn advantage for the check.

#### Result:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Sverra tells the Hero of Braegde and is certain to mention both the Moat Snake (see page 157) and the youngest ogre's love of clever tricks.
- **Success.** Sverra warns the Hero that Braegde is 'a tricky one' and that the ogre will likely trick the Hero into a dangerous promise.
- **Failure.** Sverra proclaims that the Hero and Followers are marching to their own deaths.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** As above, but Sverra also sends a messenger ahead to the crannog, giving Braegde more time to plot (see page 159).

**Further challenges.** If the Hero returns to talk to Sverra after learning the unusual properties of the ogres and their weapons, Sverra can be encouraged to help with the final attack if she is promised a position of power after the ogres are destroyed.

**Recruitment.** Until she believes that the Hero can destroy Braegde, she is too cautious to defy the ogre or leave her home. After Braegde's defeat, she can be recruited, see her card on page 178.

## THE PIG FARMERS

The lands of the swamp are poor for growing many crops, but the farmers do keep great herds of pigs. The omnivorous animals do well here, eating roots, tubers, insects and just about anything else that they can surround and trip up.

The first time the Hero comes through these lands, they meet Hidulf, watching over one of the herds and his young assistants, who patrol the 'fence,' which is just a series of thick ropes tied between the trees on the driest bits of land. The farmers move the herd in a great circle over the course of a season, to prevent the pigs from digging up one area too much.



## THE FEN WITCH

The Hero will not find this location by accident, they need either to have been sent here by Braegde directly or have sought it out based on what Hidulf said to them. If they're searching for the Witch's house then the Hero must succeed at two DC 13 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) checks in a row to find it. On a failure, they can't find the house today and must rest outside, gaining a level of Exhaustion unless they are well prepared (having a tent, food and drink).

Once they do find the house, it is a low building, covered with the boughs of trees as extra protection and also to hide the structure from passers-by. There is a small garden surrounded by a sturdy fence that keeps out any wild pigs. Thin smoke gathers around the matted roof of the home. This is the home of Helge, called the Fen Witch by some. In truth, she is the daughter of King Bartas and the rightful ruler of the land.

If the Hero and Followers are polite, use the NPC format below. If they have been tricked by Braegde and attack her immediately, use her stat block on the next page. If they attempt to get her necklace by diplomacy or intimidation they will fail automatically. If the Hero instead asks for an explanation, use the rules below.

## HIDULF

The pig farmer is dressed in worker's clothing, though it is well-made and seems clean. He carries himself with pride, perhaps too much, and tends to speak down to the Hero. Worse, he believes things are not so bad under Braegde's rule. His hair is beginning to grow grey, though his blue eyes are still keen. He is portly, as a result of letting the youngsters be responsible for herding the pigs.



**Challenge.** The Hero must make a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check to peek beneath the farmer's outward bluster and, if successful, then can make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to learn more. Alternatively, a Hero can make a DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check to disperse Hidulf's pride and have him answer directly.

**Advantage criteria.** Hidulf is cautious and a bit superstitious, believing that the ancients had great power. Heroes that openly show that they follow the Old Ways will win advantage.

**Disadvantage criteria.** Short of directly criticising him or the ogres, the Hero is not likely to garner disadvantage with the proud man.

**Follower hook.** Hidulf has eyes only for the Hero, unwisely ignoring the Followers.

### Result:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Hidulf is willing to admit that more of his herd makes it to Braegde's fort than the farmers' own tables and he tells the Hero that there is a witch in the fens that they should avoid. He provides directions to the crannog as needed.
- **Success.** Hidulf admits that the ogre and his servants claim more of his herd than the common folk, but 'that is as should be'. He will give directions to the fort, if needed.
- **Failure.** The pig farmer refuses to say much, other than things are better now that the old king is dead and his son that rules here is very smart.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Hidulf refuses to speak ill of Braegde and dismisses the Hero. He'll gladly give them directions to the crannog since he's sure the ogre will deal with the troublemakers quite directly.

**Further challenges.** It is possible that the Hero may return to Hidulf to acquire some pigs with which they will feed the Moat Serpent. This requires a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the Hero succeeded earlier with Hidulf they have advantage on the roll. If they failed, the Hero now has disadvantage.

**Recruitment.** Hidulf cannot be recruited, he is too happy with the status quo.

## HELGE, THE FEN WITCH

A woman of frank words tinged with dark humour at life's twists, Helge sometimes wears an apron if she is out picking out wild herbs from the swamp or vegetables from the garden next to her small house. Her hair is early in turning to white, offsetting her still-smooth face and dark brown eyes. Many pouches hang from her rope belt.



**Challenge.** Proud and undaunted by Braegde, Helge greets each visitor to her home crisply, asking their business of her. To get her to speak openly of the ogre and his powers requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** Helge followed the Old Ways even when her father turned to the new Church, and a Hero that follows the protocols used when visiting the wise and powerful will impress her.

**Disadvantage criteria.** Helge has no use for the new teachings of peace and forgiveness and such words or symbols will put her in a bad mood.

**Follower hook.** If the Hero presents one of their Followers as a fellow expert on herbs, she will look more kindly on the Hero and grant advantage.

### Compare the result to below:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Helge tells the Hero how her family once ruled these lands before the ogres came. If the Hero returns with an ogre's weapon then she will readily agree to aid them, even if she must share power with Sverra (page 155).
- **Success.** As above, but she will not agree to share power easily and must be convinced (another Persuasion check) to do so. She will not relinquish her necklace no matter what.
- **Failure.** She only speaks of her family's losses with the coming of the ogres and makes no mention of defeating Braegde.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** She dismisses the Hero without explaining anything.

**Further challenges.** Unless the Hero received the worst result, Helge will explain that her necklace is the last surviving piece of royal jewellery from her family. Giving it to Braegde would be giving up her claim to the land and she will not do that.

**Recruitment.** If the Hero defeats Braegde then Helge might agree to accompany them in fighting the other brothers. See page 178 for her Follower card.

## HELGE, THE FEN WITCH

*Medium human, the Old Ways*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	8 (-1)

**Armor Class** 18 (see below)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Con +3

**Skills** Legends +3, Religion +3, Insight +6, Medicine +6, Perception +6

**Senses** passive Perception 16

**Languages** Latgalian, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the fen witch starts their turn with less than 11 hit points, they become defeated.

**Nimble.** The fen witch's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice their Dexterity modifier.

**Strange Words of Power (recharge 5-6).** As a bonus action, the fen witch can chant in an unearthly voice that disturbs their opponents. Any unfriendly creature within hearing has disadvantage on attack rolls until the beginning of the witch's next turn.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The fen witch makes two attacks with their dagger.

**Bronze Dagger.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage, plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

### REACTIONS

**Pinch of Bite (Recharge 6).** When attacked the fen witch throws out a cloud of potent spices. The attacker must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until they spend an action to wipe their eyes clear.

## THE MOAT SNAKE

This serpent 'guards' the waters around Braegde's fort, which is built atop a crannog, an artificial island. The main causeway to the island is wide enough that folk can travel in the middle of it without fear of the snake attacking them, but anyone trying to sneak up to the crannog by swimming may have to contend with it.

Braegde is careful to keep it hungry — he only sends someone to feed it when it has not caught a meal in a while. And, if it consumes both the meal and its bearer, then that's alright with him.

The Moat Snake is a challenging creature but not the Monster of the setting; it exists to add extra challenge for the Hero and to make sure that they don't have too easy of a time with the Monster itself.

## THE MOAT SNAKE

*Large beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 38 (4d10 + 16)

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

**Saving Throws** Con +6, Wis +3

**Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3

**Damage Resistances** Poison

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious.** The moat snake can breathe air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the moat snake starts its turn out of water and grappled, it becomes defeated.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) poison damage.

**Poison Spit (Recharge 5-6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 15/45 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) poison damage.

### REACTIONS

**Horned Nose.** When struck by a weapon, the moat serpent can attempt to disarm the attacker by hooking the grip of the weapon with its horn. The attacker must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become disarmed.



## BRAEGDE'S FORT

Braegde's fort is a large roundhouse built atop an artificial island in the centre of the marsh-lake in which the Moat Snake lives. The foundation is a series of pilings interlaced with loose rock, made long ago, upon which earth has been used to build up the height of the island well above the water level.

Braegde has built a great wooden causeway that approaches the crannog from the western side. It is wide enough that travellers can easily pass by without being troubled by the Moat Snake. The main entrance to the roundhouse is on this side and workers have enlarged these doors and the passages that lead to the centre room, where Braegde rules.



As the Hero approaches, they will see the wide causeway leading to the island and the great doors of the roundhouse. The island sits in the centre of the small lake and you can tell that it was made by hand, there are great pilings of stone and tree trunks sinking into the water and a low mist collects around its base. The doors are obviously new and adapted into a once-smaller frame, illustrating the ogre's desire to take over the home of the previous rulers.

There is a smaller door on the opposite eastern side, used mostly by the servants to gather water or other supplies that might be left outside the roundhouse itself. There is a ring of screened off rooms and tight passageways accessible from this door and also from the larger areas.

## RUDE AND UNKEMPT MEN

Most of the folk here are **Braggarts** (page 203), who have come to attend Braegde, hoping that by their drink and wit to keep him entertained and have themselves grow in power and influence in the kingdom. The foremost way to do this is to encourage the ogre to select themselves or a family member as a wife. And even doing so does not stop the scheming, for ogres are known to be peckish on occasion and might need a new wife before long. Braegde has not taken a wife yet, being instead consumed with a need to free himself from the threat of his brothers so that his rule is incontestable. He also keeps a small force of paid guards: a dozen **Bandits** (page 202) led by a **Fallen Warrior** (page 204). They mostly keep to themselves in the guardroom or by standing watch at the main door.

The braggarts are rowdy and unrefined. If the Hero makes a formal appearance before the ogre then the braggarts will mock them and any prior accomplishments. If the Hero spends time among the braggarts, they soon learn that Petras is the cruelest of them and the leader in mocking the Hero, along with his friend Paal. Only Edgarras sits aside, he makes japes as well, but his comments are more clever and just as likely to skewer one of the other braggarts as the Hero or one of the servants. None of them make fun of Braegde and everyone always laughs at the ogre's jokes, regardless of quality.

## THE CLEVER OGRE

Braegde, the youngest and smartest of the three ogre brothers, sits uneasily upon his council-seat. He knows that the alliance between himself and his brothers will fall apart soon and he prepares for that day. He's clever enough to have won most of the populace to his side, but he still strives for legitimacy as well.

When the Hero arrives, Braegde's reaction depends on the character's approach:

- If the Hero outright demands a duel, then he waves back his men, saying that he'll be generous enough to allow the Hero the first blow while he sits unmoving on his throne. Whatever the character uses, any weapon (other than those of his brothers) does no damage upon his skin. The braggarts laugh, and tease the Hero — 'Everyone knows that he can't be hurt!' Braegde smiles, and asks the Hero if they will withdraw from the duel and talk like civilised folk instead.
- If the Hero introduces themselves and their Followers as travellers then Braegde receives them with an outward show of generosity but also announces that they seem to be hearty folk and won't they do a couple of favours for him in exchange for hospitality? If the Hero agrees, then Braegde asks the Hero to feed his pet, the Moat Snake, and retrieve a necklace from the Fen Witch, 'which belongs to me, despite whatever she says.'
- If the Hero tries to use Braegde's reputation for cleverness against him, it might well work. For example, they might

challenge the ogre to a contest of riddles, betting their life or service against a loan of Braegde's sword. The ogre will be canny enough to specify that the sword can't be used on himself, but might be tempted to let the Hero challenge one of his brothers to a fight. To run the riddle contest, have both Braegde and the Hero make three Intelligence checks (DC 15, 17 and 19). The one who achieves more success has won, if they tie repeat the process until there is a clear winner.

- If the Hero attempts some sort of disguise or trickery then Braegde becomes suspicious. He will ask questions of the strangers and not offer hospitality until he is satisfied with their answers. He'll still attempt to get away with asking the Hero to do the above favours, if he can.



If the Hero agrees to the tasks, Braegde will provide details and even a few bits of treasure with which to buy a piglet or two if the Hero indicates the need. Of course, Braegde would not be upset if the Hero is injured or slain during the course of the favours but if the Hero is successful then they are allowed to eat and sleep inside the roundhouse and have nothing to fear from its inhabitants. Depending on his understanding of the Hero's goals, Braegde may send warnings to his brothers, in order to present himself as a necessary first line of defence. Or, if he feels that the Hero might threaten his brothers and not him, he might not warn them. After all, if they're slain by the Hero then he might get control of their lands too.

If the Hero returns to the crannog, either with one of the other brother's weapon or in secret in an attempt to steal the sword then the following conditions apply:

- Approaching by swimming the lake offers the best chance for success, but requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check and DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If the Hero succeeds, any Followers succeed.
- If the moat snake is still alive, having it attack now or as the Hero tries to escape the crannog can add an extra layer of excitement.

- Once the Hero reaches the island, the eastern door can be opened with a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.
- Inside, if the characters stick to the smaller passages they must make another group DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check or face 1d4+2 guards (**Bandits**, page 202). If they use the larger passageways then the DC goes to 15.
- If they already befriended a servant or succeed at a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check they can get directions to Braegde's sleeping chambers. Once there, he holds the massive sword against his body as he sleeps and a character must succeed at a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to take it from the ogre without rousing him.
- If they do rouse him, or are otherwise caught by the guards, they can attempt to run. Have the Hero make three opposed Strength (Athletics) checks by the guard captain (**Fallen Warrior**, page 204). If the Hero succeeds on two or more of the checks, they make it out of the roundhouse and into the swamp. Otherwise, the group must fight the guard captain and the remaining guards.

### ANYTHING MIGHT WORK

The Player may create additional plans, traps, clever devices or distractions to help win the sword. Work with them — it's very easy to hand out advantage to reward clever thinking.

## THE SWORD OF BRAEGDE

The weapon of the youngest ogre is a mighty two-handed weapon that seems large even in the hands of Braegde, as he is also the smallest of the three brothers. It is massive, meaning that a Hero whose Strength is 14 or lower does not add their Strength modifier to their damage roll. Instead they must use all of their effort just to control the weapon.



Without his sword, Braegde takes damage as normal. So the Hero may, after stealing the weapon away, attempt to attack him with it, or another weapon. Using the sword is dangerous, since Braegde will try and disarm the Hero and regain his undefeatable feature. Or the Hero may decide to take the weapon and head to one of the other kingdoms, to either challenge that ogre to a duel or to attempt a less heroic assassination. Note that the Undefeatable benefit does not extend to the Hero, the dwarf-made weapon only protects the ogre brothers.

## OVERVIEW

In this section, the Hero should have explored the swamp and learned of Braegde the ogre, his sword and his invulnerability

## BRAEGDE, THE CLEVER OGRE

*Large giant*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

**Armor Class** 13 (hide armour)

**Hit Points** 59 (7d10 + 21)

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 8

**Languages** Ogrish, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Disarm.** If Braegde has a target grappled, he can use his action to attempt to disarm the target by making an opposed Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A target that is holding a weapon with two or more hands has advantage on the check. If the creatures are different sizes, the smaller creature has disadvantage on the check. A failed check means that the creature that attempted the disarm takes damage from the weapon.

**Undefeatable.** Braegde only takes 1 point of damage from any attack as long as he wields his magical greatsword. Only his brothers' weapons can hurt him.

### ACTIONS

**Ogre Greatsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) slashing damage, massive two-handed.

**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14).

### REACTIONS

**Fearsome Roar.** After a missed melee attack roll, the ogre can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 11 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of the ogre. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.

**Gifts/Burdens:** Adroit, Clever, Disarming, Ogre Weapon (Special), Undefeatable



to almost any weapon. It's possible that they may have stolen the sword, taking it to use against one of Braegde's brothers or they might even have used it against the youngest ogre directly. They also might have learned some of the history of the land and perhaps made arrangements for one of the ordinary folk to regain control of the land.

## THE GRASSLANDS OF MAGAN

Beyond the fens of the flatlands at the edge of the sea the land rises up gently to a series of rolling hills before reaching the mountains proper. These lands are home to the ploughed fields and the great plains possess great herds of horses, both wild and domesticated.

Before the coming of the ogres, the people of this land were accounted well-off, because they had plentiful food and even the lowest ceorl had at least one horse to their name. Nowadays all of the crops and all of the herds belong to Magan the Ogre and the people suffer. His emissaries come to each steading, taking what they claim is a 'fair share' for the folk in the Hall, which always leaves the farmers worse off than before.

### EVERYDAY FOLK

As the Hero enters this land, they will likely wish to meet with some of the ordinary people who live here. Due to the gentle landscape and the grazing needs for the livestock, steadings are some distance apart and only where the old King's Road crosses the rivers, and at Magan's Hall, do the folk cluster together.

Vandran's steading is close to the Road, so she and her family are likely to meet the Hero. There are a number of fields divided by low walls made of dry-fitted loose stone. Most lie fallow but in some are a few cattle or sheep. Two boys Gudlaug (older) and Karr (younger) watch the strangers' approach warily, but will show the Hero to their mother if asked politely.

Gudlaug is stoic and hard beyond his years. With his father and uncles dead, he has taken on much responsibility. He tries to bear it all, so that his younger brother can still be a child, albeit the child of a farmer whose chores must be done to keep the farm running. The younger boy will ask questions of the Hero, mostly to do with The Outrider (overleaf) and whether or not the Hero knows him.

Vandran's home is a low-built longhouse with a turf roof. It is cut down into the earth, keeping the temperature more regular and allowing even a meagre fire to warm the structure. The Hero must stoop to enter the household, and it is dark inside. Benches are cut into the side of the structure and flat-topped boulders serve as tables. Vandran sits at one near the entrance, using the sparse light to sew a new garment for one of the boys.

## VANDRAN

Vandran wears a simple dress that has been repaired many times. Her face is etched with worry, but there is still kindness in her eyes. When she speaks, it is softly, with only a hint of the anger that she possesses deep within her. She is solidly built, the result of long hours tending the farm.



**Challenge.** To have Vandran speak meaningfully of Magan or other threats requires a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** A Hero that openly wears the symbols of the Church or comments on her older son's name (Gudlaug means 'blessed by God') gains advantage on this check.

**Disadvantage criteria.** A Hero that openly blasphemes the beliefs of the Church will have disadvantage instead.

**Follower hook.** Any Follower with experience with livestock or farming in general can comment that this farm once must have had many more people working here. From the longhouse to the number of fields, it was once the focus of an entire extended family. This will prompt Vandran to speak about Magan's killing of her husband and her brothers (see below).

### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Vandran tells of the coming of Magan and his claiming ownership of all the livestock of the land. She will also tell of the rebellion against him, during which her husband and other family members were slain. If the Hero asks to rest at her longhouse, she relents (see below).
- **Success.** Vandran tells the Hero that an evil ogre rules these lands and that they and their Followers should return to their ship and leave before they find themselves the subject of his cruelty. However, if the Hero asks to be able to rest overnight here, she will allow it (see below).
- **Failure.** Vandran warns the Hero as above, but will not allow such a large and dangerous party to stay at her steading.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Vandran says little, other than if the Hero continues on their path they will be in terrible danger. She encourages them to move swiftly on, either to return to their ship or go anywhere, as long as they don't stay **here**.

**Further challenges.** If the Hero can tell Vandran of the ogres' weakness, and, especially if they can prove that they've already slain Braegde then the Hero can recruit Gudlaug with a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The Hero can take a long rest here, if Vandran allows. See Advancement During an Adventure, overleaf.

**Recruitment.** Vandran cannot be recruited, but her older son Gudlaug might be available. His card is on page 178.

## ADVANCEMENT DURING AN ADVENTURE

In longer or more complex adventures it might not always make sense to wait until the conclusion of an adventure in order to award XP or to gain a level. Since this adventure sees the Hero deal with three different Monsters, not to mention additional foes, it's a good idea for the Hero to get an early chance at gaining a level.

If the Hero can find a safe space to at least take a long rest, they can benefit from their experiences. If they've earned enough XP (or have enough Achievement awards) to gain a level they can go ahead and advance their character. The Hero wakes up, refreshed and revitalised, and somehow (divine intervention or new-found resolution) is ready to deal with the ogre brothers and their minions.

You shouldn't allow this more than once an adventure, otherwise it may seem to the Player that advancement is trivial. Also, leaving a level advancement for downtime helps explain how the Hero improved themselves (either by training or practice).



## THE OUTRIDER

There is a legend among the common people, a rumour that on the edges of the land there is a hero that still rides free. It is said that he hides from the ogre king in secret places and strikes out when he can against Magan's warriors, trying to bring justice to the land. In more fanciful versions of the story, he rides the legendary Thunderclip or that great horse's kin (usually Thunderclip's brother or son) and wields a sword of lightning and a shield that makes the sound of crashing thunder whenever it is struck.

These rumours are only partially true. For Ejnar lives, and his horse Hrossrik as well. But he is only an ordinary man, he will tell you, and he only has an ordinary man's powers of defiance and battle-cunning. His age is beginning to show and his beard and hair are turning grey. Still he sits high in the saddle and is proud of his efforts.

Ejnar can only be found if he decides to approach the Hero, if he is met during the Storm Hunt (page 163), or if Magan sends the Hero to hunt him down (page 164).

## EJNAR

Ejnar wears a knee-length mail hauberk and an iron-ribbed helm over simple woollen clothes. He carries a shield and a bearded axe. His hair and beard are white and close-cropped. He speaks with defiance and scorn about the ogres and his voice sounds strange, the influence of many lands and tongues. Hrossrik wears a well-made saddle and a thick woollen coat (like Ejnar saw in the southern lands long ago) that serves as protection for the horse.



**Challenge.** To convince Ejnar to aid the Hero in defeating Magan. This requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** A Hero that has slain one of the other ogres has advantage on this check.

**Disadvantage criteria.** A Hero that has not faced any of the ogres in direct battle has disadvantage on this check.

**Follower hook.** Ejnar has had a long life and once travelled many places along the seas, even to distant lands in the south that are spoken of in the Church's book. A Follower with a similar background or the Well-travelled gift can also provide advantage on the Hero's check.

### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Ejnar agrees to aid the Hero, participating in whatever plan they devise. If asked for advice, Ejnar suggests that he and most of the Followers can occupy Magan's riders while the Hero and a few chosen Followers can face the ogre directly.
- **Success.** Ejnar agrees to help the Hero, but warns them of Magan's strength and the deceptions of Hjördis. If asked for advice, he suggests that separating the riders from the ogre is the foremost problem.
- **Failure.** Ejnar is reluctant to join his cause to the Hero's. He will instead watch from afar and only ride into combat if it seems that he can turn the tide against the ogre.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Ejnar shakes his head sadly, saying that the Hero has yet to prove themselves to him. He will remain here, and, perhaps, if something changes, he might ride to Magan's Hall another time.

**Further challenges.** None.

If the Hero has a successful result here and needs to take a long rest, they can do so — Ejnar shows them to a hidden dell with a small spring and enough old standing stones to keep out the worst of the wind. See **Advancement During an Adventure**, this page.

**Recruitment.** With a success, Ejnar is available to the Hero (see his card on page 179). On a regular failure, he may choose to join the battle anyways (this is up to you — Ejnar does not want to waste his life failing, but if the ogre is nearly defeated and if he can strike the killing blow he will do it).

The following statblock is used **only** if the Hero attacks Ejnar as an enemy.

### EJNAR, WITH HROSSRIK

*Medium human mounted on large horse, Neutral*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Armor Class** 17 (knee-length mail hauberk, swine-crested helm)

**Hit Points** 45 (6d8 + 12)

**Speed** 30 ft, (60 ft when mounted)

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Con +4

**Skills** Legends +3, Insight +4, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Latin, Ogrish, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Battle-trained Mount.** Any attacks against Hrossrik are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack Hrossrik receive the Troubled burden. Hrossrik wears horse armour and has AC 14.

**Defeatable.** If Ejnar begins his turn unmounted and Hrossrik has been killed then he must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become defeated.

**Hooking.** Ejnar's axe has a feature which allows it to catch the rim of a shield and pull it away from the user. When Ejnar scores a critical hit he hooks the shield instead of doing damage. A shield that has been hooked provides no bonus to AC until the beginning of the shield user's next turn. A hooked shield is considered violently pulled aside, temporarily creating an opening in the shield user's defense. It is not broken or dropped.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Ejnar makes two attacks with his bearded axe.

**Bearded Axe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage or 8 (1d10 + 3) if used with both hands.

### THUNDERCLIP

The horses of the grasslands are good stock, bred for both strength and endurance and would be praised as a gift by any king or queen. But the horse called Thunderclip by the local folk is different — perhaps it was chance, or the will of one of the gods, old or new, or a throwback to the legendary horses of the dawn of time. Thunderclip is huge, with great corded muscles beneath his chestnut coat and both intelligence and wisdom behind his dark eyes.

Magan desires the remarkable horse and believes, if Thunderclip could be broken, that it could serve as a mount worthy of an ogre king. But the horse runs wild on the grasslands, faster than any other, and Magan's servants have never caught him.

Thunderclip is a Noble Animal and might become a Follower if convinced that the Hero will put an end to Magan's rule. The characters will only meet the horse if they join in the Storm Hunt, see below.

### THE STORM HUNT

When the rain comes, it arrives as dark storm clouds, racing towards the mountains. On those days, a brave person might see Thunderclip racing the lightning as the storm passes. Of late, Magan has sent his riders out into the storm, seeking to capture Thunderclip. Ejnar and Hrossrik also like to watch the magnificent horse race the heavens, but now have to contend with the evil riders.

The Hero might venture forth into the storm to seek rumours of Thunderclip or Ejnar, or perhaps to prove their boldness to Magan. Or, because of the intensity of the storm, they might use the cover of the thunder and lightning to attack Magan in one-on-one battle.

If they seek Thunderclip in order to capture him for the ogre king they will fail (the Hero and Followers can make whatever rolls you ask for, but whatever result they achieve will not be enough). But if they approach the noble animal with a pure heart and wish to ally with him against Magan then the creature can be recruited with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check as the Hero shouts into the wind, promising freedom for all. If the Hero and Followers have fought the evil riders already, the Hero gets advantage on this check. Thunderclip's Follower card is on page 178, he will temporarily aid the Hero.

### THE HALL OF MAGAN

Where the rolling hills of the grasslands get a bit taller before growing into the foothills of the mountains, Magan has built a new longhouse. Visitors first seeing it in the distance make little remark upon it, it is only once you get closer that you can appreciate the immense size of it, since Magan is the tallest of the three brothers and the hall is built at his scale.

At the foot of the hill are scattered smaller longhouses, the homes of those who find it profitable to be near their new king at all hours. There is no palisade, nor ditch or dirt wall, the only signs of defence are the occasional riders who seem to patrol the outside boundaries of the structures.

Taking the winding side-path up the hill, brings one closer to the main hall. Its roof is thatched with bright yellow straw, proof of its newness, and its wooden columns are carved with images displaying feats of strength and scenes of battle. In all of the

imagery, Magan is shown to be victorious. A few guards with spears stand outside the doors to the hall, one of them wears a horn on a baldric.

It requires a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to gain entry to the Hall. On a failure, Rafnkel, commander of Magan's guard (see below), comes out and questions the Hero closely before dismissing them saying that the ogre king has no time for strangers.

If the Hero gains access to the Hall, when they enter they will see war-banners hanging from the interior columns, several fire pits in a line in the centre of the structure, with benches close to the fires and cots, blankets and lightweight screening frames further away.

At the far end of the hall Magan sits upon a great treasure-seat, surrounded by smaller forms who chortle at some rough joke. The ogre watches the Hero's approach — expectant in any cause, but also cautious if they bear the weapon belonging to either of their brothers. Next to him is Rafnkel, commander of Magan's personal guard (there are a dozen of these are **Bandits**, page 202, Rafnkel has the Commander's Orders gift), and Hjördis, leader of the riders sent out to chase Thunderclip in the Storm Hunt and to collect taxes from the steadings.

Magan's reaction to the Hero and their party depends on their approach:

- If the Hero asks for hospitality then Magan frowns. The ogre explains that the Hall is already crowded. If the Hero presses, then Magan will relent (see the notes about the Storm Hunt below).

- If the Hero asks what service they can render to earn hospitality then Magan will tell them of Thunderclip and the Storm Hunt. He asks them to capture the horse and bring it to him. More importantly, Hjördis and her riders will accompany them and attack the Hero and Followers if they fail to capture Thunderclip or betray the ogre.
- If the Hero challenges Magan to single combat, then Magan rises and accepts, swearing that 'none of my guards will interfere'. He waves to the Hero at the field outside. This, of course, leaves Hjördis to do as she pleases and the Hero may want to address this before the combat (see below).
- If the Hero challenges Magan to feats of strength then he will be very cautious in his acceptance. He doesn't mind showing off to the Hero, but won't risk his club in a bet. If the Hero and the ogre agree on some suitable stakes, then he challenges the Hero to feats of strength, such as throwing stones and lifting whole tree trunks, with a final challenge being an arm-wrestling competition. Each of these are contested Strength (Athletics) checks, best out of three wins.

## EVIL RIDERS

These are the folk who pledged their loyalty first to Magan and were rewarded by gifted strong horses and the responsibility of collecting taxes from the steadings. This allows them the first choice of anything given in payment and they have become very rich and very cruel. If the Hero gains the hospitality of the hall, they will have a chance to interact with the uncouth riders. They are led by a younger woman named Hjördis, probably the cruelest of them all. She has no love for Magan or any of the other ogres but always intends to win, no matter what. The riders are **Raiders** with the Mounted gift (see page 206), and see Hjördis' stats opposite.



## HJÖRDIS

Hjördis wears a long-sleeved mail byrnie, a battle-masked helmet and metal-rimmed shield. She carries a sword in a well-worked leather scabbard. She keeps her hair short to fit within her helmet and while she is short and stocky, it is all muscle. She tries to shock those that she meets — her manners and language are crude, worse than the others, perhaps to make sure no one outshines her.



**Challenge.** To convince Hjördis and her warriors to not come to the aid of Magan. This requires a DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check.

**Advantage criteria.** If Ejnar is openly a member of the Hero's retinue, they get advantage on the check.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero attempts any other negotiation with Hjördis before intimidating her, they have disadvantage on this check.

**Follower hook.** A Follower with the Lore of Kings gift can advise the Hero appropriately to counter the disadvantage criteria.

### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Hjördis is mollified and will not interfere if the Hero challenges Magan to single combat, even if the ogre begs her to save him. She will hold back all of the warriors as well.
- **Success.** Hjördis acknowledges the words of the Hero and will attempt to keep impartial if the Hero fights Magan. However, if the ogre begs for her assistance she (and only herself) will join the fight.
- **Failure.** Hjördis smiles cruelly and announces that the Hero is too soft to speak of honour and righteousness when it is widely known that the victors are the ones who sing the songs and tell the tales. She will look for an opportunity to strike the Hero unawares in order to help her king.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Hjördis outright rejects the arguments of the Hero and says that the combined might of her leader and warriors will make quick work of the Hero and their Followers.

**Further challenges.** None.

**Recruitment.** Hjördis would never follow the Hero.

## HJÖRDIS

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Armor Class** 19 (mail byrnie, shield, battle-masked helm)

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft. (60 ft. when mounted)

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Wis +4

**Skills** Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Battle-trained Mount.** Any attacks against Hjördis' mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who do so receive the Troubled burden.

**Defeatable.** At the end of her turn, Hjördis must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw if one or more raiders were killed since her last turn, becoming defeated on a failure. If the raiders outnumber their enemies, Hjördis has advantage on the saving throw.

**Duelling.** As long as Hjördis wields only a single weapon she gains +2 to her damage rolls, included below.

### ACTIONS

**Sword. Melee Weapon Attack:** +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 10 (1d8 + 6) slashing damage.

**Gifts/Burdens:** Mounted, Well-armoured

## THE STRONG OGRE

If Magan agrees to single combat, he will specifically tell his guards not to assist him. Note that single combat against a Hero mounted on Thunderclip is still honourable. However, Magan relies on Hjördis and her riders to sneak attack the Hero if the combat proves to be too much for him. Ejnar, if present, will lead the Followers in a counter-attack that prevents her from attacking the Hero.



## MAGAN

Large giant

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	13 (+1)

**Armor Class** 15 (Scale Mail Harness)**Hit Points** 59 (7d10 + 21)**Speed** 40 ft.**Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +1**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 11**Languages** Ogrish, Trader's Tongue**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)**Noisy.** Magan has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing his armour.**Undefeatable.** Magan only takes 1 point of damage from any attack as long as he wields his magical ogreclub. Only his brothers' weapons can hurt him.

## ACTIONS

**Ogreclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage, awkward (on a natural 1, the wielder loses control of the unbalanced weapon and drops it), massive, two-handed.**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).**Gifts/Burdens:** Adroit, Meek, Ogre Weapon (Special), Strong, Undefeatable, Well-armoured

## THE OGRECLUB OF MAGAN

The weapon of the strongest ogre is a mighty two-handed club, as big as a tree trunk. It is massive, meaning that a Hero whose Strength is 14 or lower does not add their Strength modifier to their damage roll. Instead they must use all of their effort just to control the weapon. It is also awkward, meaning that the wielder drops the weapon on a natural 1. (This is because Gnorri could do very little dwarf-magic with a club and so left the weapon with a flaw.)



Without his club, the ogre takes damage as normal. Or, if the Hero wields a weapon belonging to another ogre brother, then Magan also takes damage as normal.

So the Hero may, after stealing the weapon away, attempt to attack him with it, or another weapon. Note that the Undefeatable benefit does not extend to the Hero, the dwarf-made weapon only protects the ogre brothers.

## OVERVIEW

The Hero may have visited with the second ogre, or possibly has met their first ogre. If they were successful with acquiring Braegde's sword, they might have challenged Magan to direct combat. Or if they stole Magan's club they might have been forced into combat. Or, perhaps, they have stolen the ogreclub and are heading back towards the swamp (or into the mountains) being pursued by Hjördis and her riders.

This is the middle of the adventure, when things might seem the bleakest or most challenging to the Hero. As GM, provide points of hope if everything seems overwhelming. Perhaps a Follower can ask 'what's next?' providing a chance for the Hero to formulate a plan with feasible single steps to achieve their goal. Or it may be that a very successful Hero is travelling towards the mountains with two ogre weapons to their name.

 THE SLOPES OF BALD

The last ogre brother lives in the mountains that divide the Ogre Lands from the human lands. There are a few people here, just some herders and the servants of the fortress that Bald holds captive. The ogre gives little thought to his people, as long as they continue to serve him. Instead he plots against his brothers, wondering when he should lay claim to all of his father's lands. But, of recent, there is also another concern. A young frost dragon has taken one of the mountain peaks as its lair, and Bald wishes to move against the creature before rumours of his weakness reach the ears of his brothers.

## THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

As the Hero reaches the mountains, the various horse paths and roads converge into a single trail that leads up into the heights. The number of steadings has steadily grown fewer, but each of them is larger — there are no longer close-cut fields of grains and vegetables, but wide-bordered areas where sheep and cattle graze.

The Hero may be pursued by agents of either ogre brother, though the most likely pursuer is Hjördis and her raiders. In any case, the narrowing trail, which snakes its way up the high mountain slopes, becomes a liability, as the pursuers can easily see their quarry above them and the Hero's party slows down as the trail becomes steeper. Followers of the Hero might become nervous, suggesting something must be done before they are surprised by their enemies.

## ARNFINN

Arnfinn wears a leather smock over woollen clothes and carries a seax of his own making in front of his smock. He is not from these lands originally, but was brought here as a young man by a raiding party. His hands and arms bear marks from the whip and his long hours of work. His voice is similarly rough. He won his freedom and now keeps sheep and serves as a blacksmith (though business has been especially bad since Bald came into power).

**Challenge.** To convince Arnfinn to help the Hero and to learn more history of the land. This requires a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** If the Hero is bold about declaring themselves as a well-travelled stranger. Arnfinn would love to hear tales of other lands and the Hero gains advantage on the check.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero is rude or dismissive to Arnfinn, or accuses him of being in league with the ogres.

**Follower hook.** A Follower with the Well-travelled gift can improve the Hero's result by one step.

### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Arnfinn tells the Hero that, as of late, Bald has asked him if he could undo dwarf-work in his forge. He hasn't answered the ogre yet, he suspects the answer is no, but also is wary of Bald's anger at that answer. He also tells the Hero of the frost dragon, and its recent arrival. If they don't already know it, he can tell the Hero of the betrayal of their father by the ogre brothers and the division into three kingdoms, though he does not know the story of the magic weapons.
- **Success.** Arnfinn makes some mention of his forge but does not directly reveal Bald's questioning him about

dwarf-made materials. He'll tell the Hero about the frost dragon and the backstory of the brothers, as needed.

- **Failure.** Arnfinn spends much time asking for news of other lands and, in exchange, will tell the basic history of the three brothers as he understands it. He does not share any other info.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Arnfinn asks a few questions of the Hero but does not seem to be in the mood for tales and soon grows quiet. If the Hero continues to question him, he says that they should go up to the top of the mountain and visit the Recluse.



**Further challenges.** The Hero may be interested in determining Bald's purpose in asking the blacksmith about destroying one or more of the weapons. If they show the weapon to Arnfinn and had at least a basic success, he agrees to try to unmake it. However, a human's forge is no match for dwarf-work and the weapon barely gets hot, letting out a curious 'ping' sound when struck by the hammer. When this happens, each of the other weapons also make the same sound, potentially alerting the brothers to the attempted undoing of the other weapon.

Even on the worst failure, Arnfinn is willing to allow the Hero to stay overnight at his home, allowing them to get a long rest.

**Recruitment.** While Arnfinn may advise the Hero, he is not interested in fighting at their side.



Any reasonable plan to surprise the enemy should work, and their foes should easily become defeated — they are far away from their home base and fatigued by their travel. It is also dangerous to pursue the fleeing enemy, for the same reasons.

### FEW AMONG THE VALES

As mentioned above, there are few farmers and ranchers in these lands. Arnfinn's steading stands out — it is close to the road, has a smithy (and advertises as much, with a wooden sign painted with a blank anvil), and the Hero seems to arrive there just as the sky begins to grow dark.

#### A CHANCE TO REST

If the Hero has not yet had a chance to rest, earn XP and hopefully level up, this would likely be their chance now. See *Advancement During an Adventure* on page 162 for more information.



### THE RECLUSE

Ingrunn is a person with questions; about the world, life, and their purpose in creation. So when a priest of The Church visited years ago, Ingrunn listened attentively. They were delighted to learn some answers, but there were too many temptations in the world and Ingrunn decided to move into the wilderness, in order to have peace and hope to understand the God of the Book. Curiously, when the frost dragon arrived, Ingrunn befriended it, named it Grimrik and began to explain their understanding of the world to the dragon.

When the Hero arrives at their cave, they are an unwelcome distraction from Ingrunn's simple life.

### THE FROST DRAGON

The trail up into the mountains ends close to Ingrunn's home, another, now forgotten, trail close by leads down into a pass on the other side of the mountains. But a determined person can instead climb up to the cave that Grimrik the Frost Dragon has claimed as his home. There's no checks required for the climb, it is tiring but not exceptionally challenging.

In clear weather, Grimrik will often be out flying above the mountains or hunting for goats, sheep, deer or other animals. Ingrunn knows the dragon's habits and will take the Hero to visit when the dragon is likely to be home.

## INGRUNN

Ingrunn wears simple woollen clothing. Their head is balding, their hands well-worn and their back (if it becomes visible) crossed with scars from the lash. Despite this, their attitude is almost joyful, approaching each problem as a temporary delay on a journey to a welcoming home. Ingrunn carries a wooden staff, which they sometimes lean on. However, in combat, they are surprisingly effective with it as well.



**Challenge.** To convince Ingrunn to provide advice or assistance on dealing with the dragon and Bald the ogre. To gently lead them to the subjects is a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check, to be more direct requires DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion).

**Advantage criteria.** If the Hero bears the symbols of The Church then they have advantage.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero pretends to be in alliance with the ogres.

**Follower hook.** If two or more Followers have the Church-goer gift then the Hero gains advantage.

#### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Ingrunn agrees that Bald is a problem and wonders if a peaceful solution with Grimrik can be reached. They are willing to help with negotiations (see below).
- **Success.** Ingrunn refuses to do anything directly against Bald. They do mention that the dragon is intelligent and it might be possible to negotiate with it.
- **Failure.** Ingrunn tells tales of Bald's strength and boldness and that they have warned Grimrik of its danger staying here.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Ingrunn only says that Grimrik the dragon is doomed, one way or another.

**Further challenges.** Though they do not realise it, Ingrunn's return to the lower slopes would be heralded by many as a sign of the Hero's righteousness. With a good result with Grimrik this is likely to happen. If they are part of a new kingdom then it increases the land's stability.

**Recruitment.** Ingrunn is not directly recruitable.



## GRIMRIK

Grimrik is just about 8 feet long from nose to tail-tip but his wing-width is at least double that. His scales are light-blue to white and his eyes are the dark grey of storm-laden sky. He is young, and equal parts cautious and curious about the Hero.



**Challenge.** To convince Grimrik that attacking Bald and making a treaty with the people of the land is the right thing to do. This requires a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

**Advantage criteria.** If Ingrunn accompanies the Hero and vouches for them.

**Disadvantage criteria.** If the Hero approaches alone.

**Follower hook.** No Follower gifts can assist.

### Results:

- **Success by 5 or more.** Grimrik trusts Ingrunn and will attack Bald at the same time the Hero does so. He will rely on Ingrunn to make arrangements between himself and the regular people as to his safety and ability to hunt in the mountains. If Ingrunn is present with the Hero then they will agree to join the attack as well.
- **Success.** Grimrik will watch from above as the Hero attacks Bald and will attempt to make at least one pass at the ogre to soften him up for the Hero. The dragon presumes that this aid will earn him hunting rights in the mountains but unless the Hero is very persuasive this will become an issue later on (see page 172).
- **Failure.** Grimrik knows too much of the powers of Bald and refuses to attack him.
- **Failure by 5 or more.** Grimrik refuses to attack Bald and is dismissive of the Hero, possibly causing other problems.

**Further challenges.** Grimrik's presence and hunting in the mountains will be a future issue, especially if Ingrunn dies in the battle.

**Recruitment.** Neither Grimrik and Ingrunn are directly recruitable, but if they agree to attack the ogre then you can use their Follower cards during the battle.

## GRIMRIK, THE FROST DRAGON

*Medium dragon*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 45 (6d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +5

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +5

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 13

**Languages** Draconic, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Defeatable.** The frost dragon becomes defeated if it is restrained on the ground and does not have its frost breath available. It also becomes defeated if it starts its turn with 19 or fewer hit points.

**Swoop.** If the frost dragon uses at least 30 ft of its flight movement it can make a bite attack with advantage.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Frost Breath (Recharge 6).** The dragon exhales icy air in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Gifts/Burdens:** custom variant of air dragon

## BALD'S FORTRESS

The ogre Bald lives in a hill-fort constructed on the lower slopes of the mountains. It provides an excellent view of its surroundings and it is almost impossible for an enemy to sneak up on the fort. Most of the hill is steep, with just the north side having a gentle slope that allows an easy approach. A fieldstone wall surrounds the encampment, built to around five feet in height, and thicker, higher columns at the entrance. Bald's longhouse is positioned such that the door of the hall faces any visitors and the Cold Iron Guard (see page 170) stand watch here, challenging any that approach.

Also within the enclosure are pens for animals, a series of older roundhouses for those people who don't live in the longhouse proper, and two larger roundhouses, an abandoned chieftain's house that now serves as storage, and Gnorri's forge which no one has dared to touch since the dwarf's death.

The guards challenge the Hero as they approach and will not allow anyone to visit Bald bearing weapons. If news of the Hero's



defeat of either of Bald's brothers has reached these lands then the guards are especially on edge and unwilling to expose their lord to any danger. In this case, the Hero's only chance is to call out Bald for cowardice — a DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, the gigantic form of Bald stoops through his doorway and emerges to fight the Hero one-on-one. If the Hero's Followers join in the fight then so do Bald's Iron Guard.

If Grimrik attacks Bald then the Iron Guard object loudly, though if Bald dies before they can effectively counterattack they will hesitate before actually joining the combat. The same goes for Ingrunn or any other locals that fight with the Hero.

### GRIMRIK AS A FOLLOWER

If you compare Grimrik's Follower card to his statblock on page 179, you'll notice some differences. Of course, as a Follower he doesn't have a set number of hit points. But also, as a Follower he won't use his breath weapon, instead attacking twice, once with his bite and once with his claws, when activated. This represents the dragon concentrating on physical attacks and not willing to chance getting his allies in the area of effect of his breath weapon. By making these quick strikes he'll do just about as much damage as he would on a regular turn (10 average vs. 9 for a standard bite attack).

If the Hero begs for hospitality and does not openly reveal any of the ogres' weapons, this requires a DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, with Deception being required if the Hero lies to the ogre. In this case, Bald will show a minimum of respect to his 'guests' and then ask the Hero to accompany him on his dragon hunt in the morning, planning to betray and kill the Hero once they are away from any witnesses other than his Cold Iron Guard. (If the Hero agrees, there are at least three Iron Guard, and all six of them might join if the Followers come too. Bald attacks before reaching

Grimrik's lair, and if the Hero has made friends with Ingrunn and/or Grimrik that they might fight on behalf of the Hero.)

### THE COLD IRON GUARD

These cruel servants of the ogre Bald are known as the 'cold iron guard' for their extensive armour and full-face helms. Despite their formidable protection and weapons, they have little loyalty to the ogre as he commands by fear and makes decisions based on his personal quirks rather than any sense of military tactics.

#### COLD IRON GUARD

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

**Armor Class** 17 (Long-sleeved Mail Byrnig, Battle-masked Helm)

**Hit Points** 19 (3d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +4, Survival +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Ogrish, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Noisy.** The cold iron guard has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing their armour.

**Defeatable.** If their commander is killed, the cold iron guard becomes defeated.

#### ACTIONS

**Great Spear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**At Spear's Length.** Fend off most attacks, allowing a creature to only make one weapon attack this turn.

**Gifts/Burdens:** Custom

## THE BRAVE OGRE

Bald, boldest of the ogre brothers, laid claim to their father's fortress and resides there still. He worries over his brothers, knowing that Braegde is more clever than him and Magan is more strong, and he must project an air of confidence otherwise he would surely fall. But Bald is a bully and, like all bullies, at his centre he is afraid: terrified of losing his home, his weapon and his life.



Thus, when the Hero arrives, it is this fear that drives him. If the Hero approaches spoiling for battle, that is what Bald will give them, though he tries to arrange for it to be a solitary battle, knowing that such a situation favours himself. If the Hero instead asks for hospitality, Bald's fear will not let him act honourably and he will begin to plot against the Hero. The recent arrival of the frost dragon provides an opportunity to get the Hero alone and attack them with the element of surprise on his side.

The longhouse is dark inside, the trench-fire burns low and fuel is only added as a last measure before it goes out. Bald sits on one end of the hall on a massive treasure-chair that is almost too big for him (it was built by his father and none of his sons quite match him in overall size). The magic axe that protects his life rests across his lap and the ogre sometimes runs his finger across the sharp edge as he speaks with visitors.

If the Hero does chance to make arrangements for Bald's hospitality then there should be warning signs as to the ogre's intentions — the central feeling of the longhouse and, indeed, the entire fortress is one of waiting fear. Everyone seems to be on edge, hoping to please the ogre while trying their best to not draw his personal attention.

A cautious and sympathetic Hero might draw out stories of the ogre's rage by making a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check; they learn of random acts of cruelty, just the other week a serving boy was devoured by the ogre for tripping and spilling Bald's flagon.

## BALD

*Large giant, unaligned*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	13 (+1)

**Armor Class** 13 (Scale)

**Hit Points** 66 (7d10 + 28)

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +1

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 11

**Languages** Ogrish, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Noisy.** Bald has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing his armour.

**Undefeatable.** Bald only takes 1 point of damage from any attack as long as he wields his magical greataxe. Only his brothers' weapons can hurt him.

### ACTIONS

**Ogre Greataxe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) slashing damage, massive two-handed.

**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 19).

### REACTIONS

**Fearsome Roar.** After a missed melee attack roll, Bald can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 11 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of him. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.

**Gifts/Burdens:** Resilient, Ogre Weapon (Special), Strong, Undefeatable, Well-armoured

## THE AXE OF BALD

Bald's great axe has a head as big as an ox's and a shaft as tall as a person. Bald's fear causes him to sleep on his seat, surrounded by iron guards. A Hero that steals it must deal with at least four of them, and Bald will be easily awoken.



It is massive, meaning that a Hero whose Strength is 14 or lower does not add their Strength modifier to their damage roll. Instead they must use all of their effort just to control the weapon.

Without his axe, Bald takes damage as normal. Or, if the Hero wields a weapon belonging to another ogre brother, he also takes damage as normal. Note that the Undefeatable benefit does not extend to the Hero, the dwarf-made weapon only protects ogres.

## OVERVIEW

Bald might be the first ogre that the Hero meets, but he is more likely the second or third, meaning that a direct fight with him is a likely outcome. Heroes will only need to interview some of the people on the mountain slopes or take the temperature of his longhouse to know that slaying the ogre will serve the common good. Of course the Gamemaster should work to make sure that this fight, especially if it is the last one is a thrilling scene, whether it's a matter of a one-on-one duel in front of Bald's longhouse, a betrayal atop a snowy mountain or an assault by the people of the ogre kingdoms onto the last fortress held by an ogre.

If defeating Bald removes the last ogre from power, then the Hero can move onto the next (and final) section. Otherwise, they might have to return to one of the other areas.



## THE NEW KINGDOMS

With the ogres defeated and removed from power, the people of these lands have a new chance to organise themselves and create a new destiny. The Hero might help shape that destiny. Or they may simply sail away, leaving the people to make their own tale.

### THE HERO, THE KING

One tempting solution is to have the Hero themselves claim rulership over the newly freed lands. This will be tricky, because even though they will initially be celebrated for defeating the ogre brothers, the Hero is ultimately an outsider. We only recommend this if the Player is more interested in the challenges of rulership than of fighting Monsters across the Whale Road. Future supplements will cover these options in depth.

## THE PEOPLE RESTORED

The fate of the land is most dependent on the Hero's immediate actions. They may simply accept the peoples's thanks, collect their treasure and sail away. You may still want to concern yourself with ensuing events if you want the Hero to return one day to face a new challenge.

If the Hero is interested in making peace then they might immediately seek out Helge and back her claim to a reunited kingdom. It is possible that a single kingdom will arise out of the three different lands. This requires a few things:

- The Hero could suggest or promote Sverra as a thane to watch over the coastal area of the kingdom. Hidulf might also suggest himself as a leader but will do poorly.
- Either Vandran or Ejnar could serve as thane in the grasslands. If Hjördis still lives, she will be a thorn in their sides.
- If Ingrunn blesses the choice of Helge as queen then more people are pleased with her claiming the treasure seat. Since Helge is of the Old Ways this may require some fast-talking by the Hero. Arnfinn could serve as thane, especially if Helge chooses to be more of a neutral over-Queen rather than claiming a territory as her own.
- Especially if Grimrik aided in defeating Bald, the people will initially support a plan that leaves the dragon in place. Of course, he will want rewards, most notable food from the livestock of the mountains and grasslands. There's a strong chance that the people will come to forget this arrangement and the Hero might return to these lands one day, having heard of a dragon that was stealing beasts from the farmers' fields.

If the Hero is not able to convince people of the above plan or has other ideas for peace, here are some notes for each area:

### THE FENS

If Helge was killed or fled from the Hero, Sverra and Hidulf fight over the right to rule. Sverra is more dedicated to the concept and eventually wins, but the conflict between the two intensifies and many loyal folk die in an unnecessary war.

If the Hero suggests to Helge that the kingdom be broken up into three separate kingdoms and she rule over only the coastal lands, she will initially be upset. However, if the Hero advises her that such an arrangement would be more stable — a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check — then she will agree to the plan.

### THE GRASSLANDS

Ejnar is an obvious candidate for this land, though he personally won't step forward unless the Hero proposes it, or if Hjördis is still alive as well. She will claim Magan's longhouse and his riders for herself and it will be a bitter fight before the fortress is recovered.

If the Hero proposes that Vandran (or another NPC) serve as ruler of the grasslands then Ejnar willing steps aside. She will object that she is not nobility but Ejnar will counter-argue that her family is well-known and well-respected in the land and that she is certainly more noble than the ogres.

### THE MOUNTAINS

Ingrunn initially refuses any concept of them taking over rulership of the mountain lands, though they are willing to advise another ruler. Only a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check can

change Ingrunn's mind. Otherwise, Arnfinn might come forward. Nominally, he is an outsider, like the Hero, but has lived here so long that many of the remaining folk will readily overlook this. Once the iron guards have been stripped of their armour and weapons, they flee in terror or go to hide in remote reaches of the land.

Any plan that involves Grimrik taking command of the people will receive derisive laughter from him and fear from the regular folk. He has no wish to spend his days on the ground resolving human squabbles and it is difficult for even the most open-minded ceorl to accept a dragon as a lord.

## REWARDS AND THE FUTURE

It is likely that the Hero has earned enough XP or Achievement awards to reach level 3 at the conclusion of this adventure. Other adventures will take a slightly more sedate approach to experience, but with three ogre brothers to fight this adventure had significant challenges for a starting Hero.

If the Hero simply grabs what treasure they can find from Bald (or another ogre brother, whomever they defeat last), they make out with 18ℳ, and get on their ship to leave. You can use the Treasure Reward tables on page 139 to determine the exact nature of the gifts to the Hero.

If the Hero managed to form a central rulership out of the three fractured kingdoms then Helge (or whomever serves as ruler) awards them 24ℳ if all three ogres are dead, or as little as 12ℳ if the ogres were simply run off. Making peace with Grimrik awards 2ℳ as a bonus.

As to the ogre weapons, their magic is limited to the ogres themselves and they won't be of any particular use to the Hero. If the Hero wishes to keep one of them for its massive size and extra damage, the ruler will agree to this. Otherwise, Arnfinn dusts off

Gnorri's forge and figures out how to melt the weapons down and turn them into useful implements for the people.

The Hero is welcome to stay long enough for a downtime activity, if they wish.

## OTHER SOLUTIONS

This adventure provides various locations, along with the people, their motivations and situation. With a little bit of anticipation about the Hero's actions, this usually gives an outline of how the adventure will proceed. But there are many other possibilities as well. For example, the Hero might decide to try and get all three ogre brothers together and encourage them to fight it out after all. Then the Hero has to only defeat a single ogre, one likely hurt by his recent battles with his brothers. Or there might be even more trickery involved, promising to support one ogre against another (or against a threat like Grimrik or Ejnar) and then turning on the ogre. These solutions might be less honourable than direct confrontations, but the Hero might only be concerned with the outcome and not the means.

As Gamemaster the best thing you can do is provide the framework for the Hero's story. That means using the information we've given you and your own best guesses about how characters will react in order to tell the Player what happens next.

Don't be afraid to ask for a short break or even to call a session early so that you have more time to think things through. Even if things go completely astray, it's still a story, perhaps one you didn't expect to tell, and you'll be able to bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, even if you have to move elements of the adventure around, changing the time or place (or both) of certain events.

We hope you enjoyed this foray into the Age of Heroes! To continue playing, check [www.handiwork.games](http://www.handiwork.games) for more information.



## AWARDS

As the Player progresses through the adventure, they earn Experience Points or Achievement awards. This section provides a series of suggested check points, along with appropriate XP awards. The first value given is the amount of XP if the character starts at 1st level, the second is if the character starts at 2nd level. If a single value is given then that's XP from defeating foes. If you're using Achievement awards then each item listed is worth an award.

### A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS (50/100)

As long as the Hero talks to the ghost king and his sons, or learns the story from the paintings in the chapel, this is a success as either a meeting or an investigation.

### THE FENS OF BRÆGDE

These sections are larger and have several opportunities.

#### The Peat Gatherers or The Pig Farmers (50/100)

If the Hero succeeds with Sverra or Hidulf then they should receive a Meeting award.

#### The Fen Witch (50/100)

A successful meeting with Helge is worth a separate Meeting award.

#### The Moat Snake (450)

If the Hero confronts the Moat Snake and defeats it, award XP. If they simply avoid the issue then they receive no XP/award.

#### The Clever Ogre (1100)

If the Hero manages to defeat Braegde then they receive the XP/award here. If they simply steal his sword then award 50 or 100 XP for a successful investigation.

#### The Sword of Braegde (50/100)

If the Hero discovers the secret of the ogre weapons it counts as a successful investigation.

### THE GRASSLANDS OF MAGAN

This section provides several achievement opportunities, it also provides the first chance for the Hero to level up.

#### Everyday Folk (50/100)

A successful meeting with Vandran is worth XP/an award. If Vandran allows the Hero to stay and they have enough XP or Achievement awards then they might go from 1st level to 2nd (this is almost guaranteed unless they've had a very hard time) or from 2nd level to 3rd (this is more challenging, unless they defeated the Moat Snake or Braegde himself).

#### The Outrider (50/100)

A successful meeting with Ejnar is worth XP/an award.

#### Thunderclip (50/100)

Finding Thunderclip is a successful investigation.

#### Evil Raiders

It is possible that the Hero may come into direct conflict with these folk, otherwise it may count as a meeting or investigation. If the Hero ignores their taunts then there's no reward for this scene, but no danger either.

#### The Strong Ogre (1800)

If Magan is defeated he is worth XP or an Achievement award.

#### The Ogreclub of Magan (50/100)

If the Hero learns of the nature of the ogre weapons here, it counts as a successful investigation.

### THE SLOPES OF BALD

There's a number of different challenges here, plus another chance for the Hero to earn a level.

#### The Mountain Trail

If the Hero has to deal with any enemies here then they will earn XP or an award for the battle.

#### Few Among the Vales (50/100)

A successful meeting with Arnfinn is worth Meeting XP/award. Arnfinn can also allow the Hero to rest, providing a chance (if the Hero didn't already do so before) to level up.

#### The Recluse (50/100)

Meeting with Ingrunn successfully is worth Meeting XP or an award.

#### The Frost Dragon

Either defeating or successfully negotiating with Grimrik is worth XP or an Achievement award.

#### The Cold Iron Guard

If the Hero fights the Iron Guard they receive XP or an award. If they sneak around the Iron Guard then they also deserve XP (as an Investigation) or an Achievement award.

#### The Brave Ogre (1800)

When Bald is defeated he is worth XP or an award.

#### The Axe of Bald (50/100)

If the Hero makes it here without already realising the nature of the Ogre weapons, they earn the XP/award now.

### THE PEOPLE RESTORED (100/200)

If the Hero successfully helps the people of the Ogre Lands restore their rightful place then they should receive a double Meeting XP reward or two Achievement awards. The Hero might reach 3rd level (if they haven't already) at the conclusion of the adventure.



BRAEGDE'S FORT



THE HALL OF MAGAN



BALD'S FORTRESS



NAME Sverra  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Untrusting.** This Follower doubts the good intentions of the Hero. In a dangerous situation, the Follower must succeed at a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw in order to be activated.

**GIFTS** **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Nimble.** This Follower has advantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.

**Weapon-bearer (Spear).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit.

NAME Gudlaug  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Young.** The Follower is notably younger than most. When their age or inexperience would likely affect them, they have disadvantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks.

**GIFTS** **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Hardened.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Rescue the Hero.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

**Weapon-bearer (Spear).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit.

NAME Helge  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Death-mark.** There's a price on this Follower's head—somebody wants them dead.

**GIFTS** **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Green thumb.** If you use a Hit Die during a short or long rest and eat a meal prepared by this Follower you regain one more hit point than normal for your first Hit Die.

**Learned (Old Ways only).** This Follower can tell the Hero about the Ancients and the Old Ways and even a bit about the giants. Activate this Follower to translate Ogham or interpret some other clue. The Follower must make a DC 10 Intelligence saving throw, becoming spent on a failure.

**Sky-minder.** This Follower is aligned with The Old Ways.

**Weapon-bearer (Spear).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit.

**Weapon-master.** If this Follower rolls a 1 on a weapon damage die they may reroll that die. They must keep the new result, even if it is a 1.

NAME Thunderclip  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** None.

**GIFTS** **Take a Blow.** When the Hero receives damage from a successful attack, activate Thunderclip as a reaction. He absorbs the damage and must make a death saving throw.

**Animal Wisdom (Noble Animal only).** This Follower can use their reaction to add 1d6 to any skill check. The Follower must then make a DC 5 Constitution saving throw or become spent.

**Hardened.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Multiple Strikes.** When this Follower takes an attack action (for example when Weapon-bearer is activated), they make two attack rolls.

**Weapon-bearer (Hooves).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

NAME Inggrunn  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Slow.** This Follower does not move as quickly as most Followers.

**GIFTS** **Church-goer.** This Follower is aligned with The Church.

**Defensive.** This Follower has disadvantage on all attack rolls and advantage on death saving throws.

**Hardened.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Lore of Kings.** This Follower knows many stories about the rulers of the mammish world and many names of kings, queens and other leaders. You may activate the Follower to gain advantage on a relevant Intelligence (Legends) check.

**Rescue the Hero.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

**Wound-binder.** This Follower is skilled in treating hurts. Activate them during a short rest to make your first Hit Die spent heal its maximum value. The Follower does not become spent.

NAME Ejnar  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Giftless.** The Follower has disadvantage on any Charisma checks involving deception.

**GIFTS** **Bearded Axe.** Spend this Follower in combat. The Hero gains advantage on all of their attack rolls this turn and the hero's target does not benefit from their shield (if they have one).

**Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Heavy War-hand.** This Follower uses twice as many dice for damage as a Weapon-bearer.

**Mounted.** This Follower has a mount and can keep up with other mounted characters. If using Weapon-bearer against an unmounted enemy, roll the weapon dice twice and take the best result.

**Multiple Strikes.** When this Follower takes an attack action (for example when Weapon-bearer is activated), they make two attack rolls.

**Weapon-bearer (Axe).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a hit, this includes Heavy War-hand.

NAME Grimrik  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Young.** The Follower is notably younger than most. When their age or inexperience would likely affect them, they have disadvantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks.

**GIFTS** **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Hardened.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Heavy War-hand.** This Follower uses twice as many dice for damage as a Weapon-bearer.

**Ready.** The Follower automatically succeeds at any checks necessary in order to activate them.

**Weapon-bearer (Bite).** Activate all weapon-bearers, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 2d4 piercing damage (includes Heavy War-hand).

**Weapon-bearer (Claws).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 2d4 slashing damage (includes Heavy War-hand).

NAME Grimrik  SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

**BURDENS** **Young.** The Follower is notably younger than most. When their age or inexperience would likely affect them, they have disadvantage on Intelligence and Wisdom checks.

**GIFTS** **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, the Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage an opponent.

**Hardened.** This Follower has advantage on death saving throws in combat.

**Heavy War-hand.** This Follower uses twice as many dice for damage as a Weapon-bearer.

**Ready.** The Follower automatically succeeds at any checks necessary in order to activate them.

**Weapon-bearer (Bite).** Activate all weapon-bearers, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 2d4 piercing damage (includes Heavy War-hand).

**Weapon-bearer (Claws).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls, this Follower makes an attack roll with advantage. On a success, the Follower does 2d4 slashing damage (includes Heavy War-hand).



*Ymir's Kin; cursed and callous  
Striding mountains with ease and anger  
His broad belly a shield wall's width  
A ground grumbler, cleaver of clouds.  
Snapper of spears, mangler of mail  
Arms like hall beams- hefty and heaving  
Children dead-dangle like tallow tapers  
His belt their raven gluttoned gallows  
Future feasting for a hateful hunger  
hunkered on snow blown hill brow  
Born of boulder- hewn from hill  
His heart held fast in frost's frozen fist.*

PART SEVEN  
**MONSTERS**



## MONSTERS

*... Now many an earl  
of Beowulf brandished blade ancestral,  
fain the life of their lord to shield,  
their praised prince, if power were theirs;  
never they knew, — as they neared the foe,  
hardy-hearted heroes of war,  
aiming their swords on every side  
the accursed to kill, — no keenest blade,  
no farest of falchions fashioned on earth,  
could harm or hurt that hideous fiend!  
He was safe, by his spells, from sword of battle,  
from edge of iron. ...*

For BEOWULF: AGE OF HEROES we have drawn from the poem itself, other contemporary writings and a group of other inspirational sources: we plunder folk and fairy tales that might have been part of the oral traditions for uncounted years, but were only written down within the last five-hundred years or so. The adventure is a story being told, don't be afraid to introduce something new and exciting to this retelling.

## FOES AND MONSTERS

In BEOWULF we distinguish between foes — the ordinary sorts of monsters and opponents that a Hero faces over the course of a fantasy adventure and Monsters, which are usually singular, nearly-unbeatable enemies that the entire adventure is themed around and are often the 'final battle' of the adventure.

### NAMES

Quite a few of the enemies listed here are known by different names, and, sometimes, the ordinary folk in our stories of adventure will be uncertain as to the identity of the creature or conflate two different names as meaning the same thing.

In entries we introduce the creature by using a well-attested Old English name (or our best guess for those creatures who are more speculative in nature). We usually then can use a modern English version of that name or another name that has survived in stories we still tell today. Sometimes, we only have one name available to us and will use that at all times.

And, of course, in the Beowulf poem the few monsters that appear are often named with many of these categories. We imagine that these serve as similes (or at least metaphors) for the audience;



Grendel is not a *dēofol*, he just shares some characteristics of them.

Some categorisations are necessary for a role-playing game, but it is good to remember the people who inhabit the Deer Sea around The Whale Road have no such dependence on categorisation. A Monster is a Monster.

## FOES

Every enemy listed in this chapter is designed as a foe, in other words, a monster that is part of the story but not its main focus. Foes are defeatable, i.e. they can gain the defeated condition. So it is unlikely that the Hero or the Followers will need to fight to the death against a foe. Certain classes of foes (for example, *Firas*, which are human foes) do not have the option to become Monsters.

## MONSTERS

Most of the enemies in this chapter however can become Monsters. To do so, you'll remove the Defeatable feature from the foe's stat block and add the Undefeatable gift listed with the rest of the gifts. The enemy's write-up and notes under Undefeatable gift will give you some suggestions about the Monster and its

powers but you can also come up with your own backstory and weakness for the Monster. For help, see the Monster tables starting on page 250.

## ACTIONS, FEATURES AND REACTIONS

Like ordinary enemies in 5e, each foe has a number of actions (listed under the action header in the stat block), a number of features (listed before the actions) and, possibly, a reaction or two (if the base version of the foe has a reaction there will be a header for it in the stat block).

## BURDENS AND GIFTS

Adding burdens or gifts to a foe changes it, by either adding or removing features, actions and reactions to the enemy's stat block. You can make a foe weaker, reducing its challenge rating in order for a lower-level Hero to experience fighting such a creature, or you can make the foe stronger, in order to threaten a higher-level Hero.

To determine the XP for a given challenge rating, you can use the table on page 130 or see the core reference guides.



## INSPIRATION

In BEOWULF, the GM has an inspiration pool as well. Many foes and Monsters have gifts that allow them to spend inspiration in order to do a special action or reaction.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Certain Monsters can become legendary by taking the appropriate gifts. A legendary creature can do things that ordinary creatures can't. It can take special actions outside its turn, and it might exert magical influence for miles around.

A legendary creature can take a certain number of special actions—called legendary actions— outside its turn. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. A creature regains its spent legendary actions at the start of its turn. It can forgo using them, and it can't use them while incapacitated or otherwise unable to take actions. If surprised, it can't use them until after its first turn in the combat.

Foes capable of becoming legendary also have a description of their lair and available lair actions and regional effects if appropriate.



## DEFEATABLE AND UNDEFEATABLE

While many foes will fight to the death, most foes are optionally defeatable — a Hero can fulfill some condition that will cause the foe to be defeated, and the foe will not fight to the death, instead following one of the behaviours listed below. The stat blocks list some suggested criteria for becoming defeated.

### THE DEFEATED CONDITION

Once subject to the defeated condition a creature may:

- have its fighting spirit broken and will immediately attempt to flee, never to be seen again
- surrender to the creature who inflicted the defeated condition

- become doomed to die from wounds, slinking away never to be seen again
- be in some way disarmed, or transformed
- become vulnerable to suggestion or command by a Hero
- be permanently pinned, imprisoned or immobilised
- become harmless in some other way the GM invents to fit the circumstances

As a rule of thumb, the majority of mundane foes will simply flee or surrender when subject to the defeated condition. A Hero can routinely leave surrendered foes to their Followers to manage — and most often Followers will disarm them and send them on their way. Having been defeated they will not trouble the Hero again.

## UNDEFEATABLE

Capital-M Monsters are undefeatable, meaning that they take almost no damage from regular attacks and defeated condition triggers no longer apply. Only Monsters can have the Undefeatable feature and gaining it is what turns a foe into a Monster. Some high-level Heroes can use their abilities to force an undefeatable creature to become defeatable. Most of the time it is up to the Hero to figure out how to remove the Undefeatable feature, and then how to bestow the defeated condition — or to simply beat the Monster to death by removing all its hit points where that is possible.

## COMMON MEANS OF DEFYING UNDEFEATABLE MONSTERS

This listing provides common ways to remove the undefeatable feature, Monster entries will have custom suggestions as well. It is entirely possible that a Monster might need more than one of these criteria to be met in order to defeat it:

- **The Right Tool.** The Hero needs to find, craft, steal or otherwise acquire a special weapon created specifically to defeat the Monster.
- **Soft Underbelly, Slipped Scale.** The Hero must discover knowledge of, and attack, a hidden or secret weak spot.
- **An Artefact of Woe.** The Hero may need to bring a specific item before the monster, to make it vulnerable to defeat.
- **True Name.** Discovering the secret true name of a Monster and revealing it sometimes is enough to break its immunity to defeat.
- **The Right Place at the Right Time.** The Hero may have to engineer a method of bringing the Monster to a specific place, possibly at a specific time, where it loses its undefeatable feature.
- **Destined Enemy.** The Hero must rouse a special enemy of the Monster to fight it.



## CEORLCUND

These creatures might resemble humans but if they were ever of normal stock, they have now been twisted into hideous new forms. Galdre (Sorcerers) and Haegtes (Fury-witches) can still choose to appear unthreatening until they reveal their true forms, while the inhumanity of Hrēoplings and Wulvers is plain to see.

### GALDRE

These sorcerers could have been born human, but they have transcended both mortality and morality in their unending desire for power. Now in truth they are nothing but husks of humanity, but their magic can hide this.

**Glamour.** Whenever sorcerers choose to interact with common people (or even leaders, most of the time), they use their magic to hide their inhuman form and often appear as an older person, wise and venerable.

**Tactics.** Sorcerers are clever folk and often choose to interact with Heroes and others in social situations first, in order to judge their threat. If attacked directly, they will use all of their magic available to them to defend themselves, however. A Monstrous sorcerer will often brag about their immortality and be more prone to purposefully showing its true form.

**As a Monster.** The sorcerer's goals and methods may be more esoteric than other Monsters and it may have direct plans for the Hero and their Followers. Its lair is likely wondrous or eerie

in some way and they may have traps or otherworldly servants guarding it.

### BURDENS

**Awkward.** Reduce the sorcerer's Charisma to 13 (+1), Deception and Intimidation to +3.

**Unstable.** The sorcerer has been consumed by its powers and no longer thinks rationally. At the beginning of its turn, roll a d6. On a 1, the sorcerer spends its turn lecturing or berating its enemies, taking no actions. On a 2-3, it uses one of its magical features if it has any, otherwise it uses its Broken Gaze. On a 4-6 it takes a normal combat turn. This burden reduces the sorcerer's challenge rating by 1, to a minimum of 5.

### GIFTS

**Keen Intellect.** Increase Intelligence to 22 (+6), Intelligence saving throws and Legends to +9, all spell attacks to +9 and the DC for all magical effects increases to 17. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Magical Feature.** Choose one of the following features to add to the sorcerer. You can take this gift more than once, raising the sorcerer's challenge rating by 1 for every three magical effects. The sorcerer's magical features use Intelligence.

- **The Moon's Wheel.** The sorcerer chooses a spot within 60 feet and uses their action to cause a sphere with a radius of 15 feet to plunge into complete darkness. The sorcerer can still see the creatures within the area of effect. Other creatures in the area are blinded unless they have a way to see

## SORCERER

*Medium humanoid*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Armor Class** 14 (magic armour)

**Hit Points** 71 (11d8 + 22)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Int +7, Dex +4

**Skills** Deception +5, Insight +4, Intimidation +5, Legends +7, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Ancients, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the sorcerer begins its turn with less than 30 hit points, it gains the defeated condition.

**Magic Armour.** The sorcerer's AC is equal to 13 plus its Dexterity modifier.

**True Form.** If the sorcerer begins its turn with less than 15 hit points, it drops its glamour and can be seen for its true form, a tall and spindly twisted being made of dark and oily shadows.

### ACTIONS

**Broken Gaze.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft, one target *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Twist and Torment (Recharge 5-6).** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage.

### REACTIONS

**Magic Shield.** When attacked, the sorcerer can use its magic to increase its AC by 5 until the end of its next turn.

in darkness. Ordinary light sources cannot pierce the effect. The effect ends after ten minutes or when the sorcerer uses another magical feature.

- **Burst Lappings.** As an action, the sorcerer selects a creature within 60 feet and makes a ranged spell attack. On a hit, the target deals only half damage with weapon attacks that use Strength for the next minute or until the sorcerer uses another magical feature.

- **Rafter-Plough/Mouse-kin.** As an action the sorcerer causes a creature within 30 feet to become larger or smaller. If the creature is unwilling, it can resist with a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. Everything the creature wears and carries changes size with it, any dropped items immediately return to their normal size. These effects last for one minute or when the sorcerer uses another magical feature.

**Rafter-Plough.** The target's size doubles in all dimensions, and its weight is multiplied by eight. This growth increases its size by one category — from Medium to Large, for example. If there isn't enough room for the target to double its size, the creature attains the maximum possible size in the space available. Until the spell ends, the target also has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. The target's weapons also grow to match its new size. While these weapons are enlarged, the target's attacks with them deal 1d4 extra damage.

**Mouse-kin.** The target's size is halved in all dimensions, and its weight is reduced to one-eighth of normal. This reduction decreases its size by one category — from Medium to Small, for example. Until the spell ends, the target also has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. The target's weapons also shrink to match its new size. While these weapons are reduced, the target's attacks with them deal 1d4 less damage (this can't reduce the damage below 1).

- **Branch-sorrow.** With a bonus action, the sorcerer's weapon becomes wreathed with magical flame. On its turn it can make a melee spell attack (+7, or +9 with Keen Intellect) to do 10 (3d6) fire damage. The weapon sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for another 10 feet. The effect lasts for ten minutes or the sorcerer uses another magical effect.
- **Iron-fire.** The sorcerer can use an action to make a metal object glow red-hot. A creature in physical contact with the object takes 9 (2d8) fire damage. On subsequent turns the sorcerer can use a bonus action to cause this damage again. If a creature takes damage from the object, it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or drop the object if it can. If it cannot, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and

ability checks until the start of the sorcerer's next turn. The effect lasts for one minute or until the sorcerer uses another magical effect.

- **Hand-Stay.** The sorcerer uses its action and chooses a person that it can see within range. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be paralysed for one minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can make another Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

- **Sight-Shield.** As an action, the sorcerer becomes invisible, along with everything it is wearing and carrying. The effect lasts one hour, or if the sorcerer attacks a creature or uses another magical effect, it ends.

- **Misty Step.** As a bonus action, the sorcerer surrounds themselves with silvery mist and teleports to an unoccupied spot it can see within 30 feet.

- **Flame-Feeder.** The sorcerer uses its action and makes three ranged spell attacks, each at a target within 120 feet (it can choose the same or a new target for each attack). On a hit the target takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.

- **Sky-Hammer.** As an action the sorcerer causes a painfully intense ringing noise to emit from an area within 60 feet of it. Each creature within 10 feet of the point must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 3d8 thunder damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

- **Gale Counsel.** The sorcerer uses an action and suggests a course of activity (limited to a sentence or two) and magically influences a creature it can see within range that can hear and understand the sorcerer. Creatures that can't be charmed are immune to this effect. The suggestion must be worded to make the course of action sound reasonable. Asking the creature to stab itself, throw itself onto a spear, immolate itself, or do some other obviously harmful act ends the spell. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, it pursues the course of action the sorcerer described to the best of its ability. The suggested course of action can continue for the entire duration (8 hours). If the suggested activity can be completed in a shorter time, the spell ends when the subject finishes what it was asked to do. The sorcerer can also specify conditions that will trigger a special activity during the duration. If the sorcerer or any of its allies damage the target, the spell ends.

- **Lie Killer.** As an action, the sorcerer creates a magical zone that guards against deception in a 15-foot radius sphere centred on a point of its choice within 60 feet. Until the spell ends, a creature that enters the spell's area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature can't speak a deliberate lie while in the radius. The sorcerer knows

whether each creature succeeds or fails on its saving throw. An affected creature is aware of the effect and can thus avoid answering questions to which it would normally respond with a lie. Such a creature can be evasive in its answers as long as it remains within the boundaries of the truth.

**Tough.** Increase Constitution to 16 (+3) and hit points to 82 (11d8 + 33).

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The sorcerer only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If the sorcerer's revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +8 for all attacks (+10 with Keen Intellect) and raise all saving throws and skills by +1.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Wound-proxy.** Sorcerers might use techniques like redirecting the damage they take to another person or object in which case the connection must be broken.

**Severed-soul.** The sorcerer's soul or heart is hidden in an external vessel and must be found and destroyed.



## HÆGTES

Fury-witches might have once been human, those who abandoned their homes because their anger was too strong and too frequent to be a useful member of society. They sought out places of power and became transformed by the darkness they had found.

Other legends say that the furious ones are not born but instead created from the ordinary resentments and unspoken upsets that any people might have. Such strong feelings wander out into the world, and take shape in the dark places of the Forest, eventually returning to plague their forebears.

### FURY-WITCH

*Medium humanoid*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 18 (see below)

**Hit Points** 95 (10d8 + 50)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Con +8

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Armour of the Furious.** The fury-witch's AC is equal to 10 plus its Strength and Constitution modifiers.

**Defeatable.** If the fury-witch is prevented from harming anyone or taking damage from any source for three consecutive rounds, it loses its fury and gains the defeated condition.

**Fury.** The fury-witch enters a fury as a bonus action. While in the fury, it has advantage on Strength checks and saving throws, gains a +3 bonus to damage from Strength-based attacks (see below) and has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage.

#### ACTIONS

**Relentless Assault (Recharge 5-6).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) slashing damage or 24 (4d8 + 6) slashing damage while furious.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage or 15 (2d8 + 6) slashing damage while furious.

#### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When attacked, the fury-witch dodges out of the way, taking only half damage from the attack.

**Tormentors of All.** Fury-witches trouble ordinary folk and nobles. They almost always show knowledge of their victims, tailoring their torments accordingly.

**Tactics.** Fury-witches, as their name implies, act directly in combat, rushing at the foes that they consider to be the greatest danger and are unlikely to be distracted from their targets. They will use their Relentless Assault whenever possible and do almost anything to make sure they don't lose their fury and retreat. Those with magical effects tend to be slightly more strategic in their choices but are still desperate to harm their foes.

**As a Monster.** If a fury-witch serves as the Monster, it is possible that the adventure will concern its transformation or corruption, or might be about the creature's efforts to recruit others. There might be magic circles or runestones that must be destroyed or a ritual to interrupt.

## BURDENS

**Cackling.** The fury-witch has the disturbing habit of laughing to itself constantly. It can never surprise an enemy.

**Cursed.** The fury-witch has been prevented from taking any sort of fair form. It has disadvantage on Charisma checks and cannot select the False Image gift.

**Weaker.** This fury-witch is younger or less hardy than most. Reduce its Constitution to 16 and its hit points to 75 (10d8 + 30). Reduce challenge rating by 1, to a minimum of 5.

## GIFTS

**Climber.** The fury-witch gains a climb speed of 40 feet and is able to contort its body so that it usually has all four limbs in contact with the surface whilst still being able to see anywhere in its vicinity.

**False Image.** Add *Illusory Appearance*. The fury-witch covers itself and anything it is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes it appear as a creature of similar size and shape. The illusion ends if the fury-witch stops it with a bonus action or it dies. The illusion does not hold up to physical inspection and a character that makes a visual inspection and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discerns that the fury-witch is disguised.' to its list of actions.

**Keen Intellect.** Increase Intelligence to 18 (+4), all spell attacks to +7 and the DC for all magical effects increases to 15.

**Magical Feature.** Choose one of the features listed on pages 185-187 to add to the fury witch. You can take this gift more than once, raising the fury-witch's challenge rating by 1 for every three magical effects. The fury-witch's magical features use Intelligence.

**Mimic.** Add *'Mimicry.* The fury-hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.' to the fury-witch's list of features.

**Swift Response.** Add *'Quick.* Spend inspiration to make a single attack at the end of another creature's turn.' to the fury-hag's list of reactions.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice to 12 and hit points to 112 (12d8 + 60).

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The fury-witch only takes 1 point of damage from any attack unless it is a special attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** *If the fury-witch's revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +7 for all attacks (+9 for Keen Intellect) and raise all saving throws and skills by +1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Routine-wrecker.** Fury-witches might be protected by a daily ritual which can be uncovered and disrupted

**Bond-breaker.** A Fury-witch might have extracted promises from individuals granted benefits by the witch in exchange for a share of their life-force. By attacking or freeing them, the witch might become vulnerable.



## HEALFHUNDINGAS

The name for these folk translates as ‘half-dogs’, but they are also called wulvers. They are humanoid creatures, having a dog-like head and a tail, but otherwise human characteristics. They tend to be just a bit shorter than the average person.

Wulvers can be found as solitary creatures, inhabiting lonely places, and enjoying their own simple existence. A solitary wulver will tend to live a habitual life, going through simple routines which can be observed from afar, and marking its territory with special stones or ‘wulverstones’. A wulver of this type will know a great deal about the lands around them, and local people may consult their local wulver on important issues like the weather, soil and animal migrations. It is not unknown for such wulver to help local people with supplies of food.

There are also tales of hidden communities of wulvers, who are either largely benevolent, and just “different”, or actively hostile raiders who pose an ever-present threat to goodly folk.

### WULVER

*Medium humanoid*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 13 (weaponshirt, shield)

**Hit Points** 19 (3d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +3, Survival +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Trader’s Tongue, Wulver

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the wulver begins its turn with less than 10 hit points and is not within 5 feet of an ally, it gains the defeated condition.

**Keen Smell.** The wulver has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The wulver has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wulver’s allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn’t incapacitated.

#### ACTIONS

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft and range 20/60 ft, one target *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Axe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**A Sophisticated People.** Wulvers speak their own language and can understand the Trader’s Tongue, though their mouths are not shaped to speak it. When trading with others they nod or shake their head or use simple signs to negotiate. Wulvers wear linen and hide clothes and armour, often trading their livestock or hides for wargear. Legends say that most of their kingdoms are to the far north or east and most of them are visitors to the lands between the two seas.

**Tactics.** Clever and well-schooled in war, wulvers who operate in groups often will split a large force into several ‘packs’, and each of those will have a specific goal in the battle. A favoured tactic is to draw an enemy’s attention with one pack while another attacks them on the flank. Injured wulvers put trust in their allies to protect them in combat and won’t retreat unless they find themselves isolated.

**As a Monster.** If a wulver is the Monster, it may have found an artefact or other item that has granted them monstrous powers. At other times, it is possible that another Monster has imbued the wulver leader with powers as part of their own designs. While wulvers mostly fight to maintain their own territories, a wulver twisted by power might strike out and attempt to destroy their neighbours and claim new lands.

A solitary wulver may have become embittered by poor treatment from its neighbours whether this is taking its land for farming, moving its special stones, or turning against it due to an influx of the Church.

### BURDENS

**Slow.** Reduce the wulver’s speed to 20 feet.

**Uncooperative.** Remove the wulver’s Pack Tactics feature. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

**Young.** Remove one of the wulver’s Hit Dice and adjust their hit points to 13 (2d8 + 4). Reduce challenge rating by one step.

### GIFTS

**Bellicose.** Add *‘Aggressive.* As a bonus action, the wulver can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.’ to the wulver’s list of features.

**Biter.** Add *‘Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.’* to the wulver’s list of actions.

**Fierce (requires either Biter or Shield Attack).** Add *‘Multiattack.* The wulver makes a bite attack and a melee weapon attack.’ or *‘Multiattack.* The wulver makes a shield bash and a melee weapon attack.’ to the creature’s stat block as an action. Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Shield Attack.** Add *'Shield Bash. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.'* to the wulver's list of actions.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The wulver only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase its challenge rating by 2.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Hungry and Thirsty.** A Monstrous wulver might be manipulated with food or drink of a specific kind.

**Leader of the Pack.** A Monstrous wulver be made vulnerable by drawing it away from its pack.

**Restoration.** A Monstrous wulver may simply want its territory returned, or its sacred stones restored. A clever Hero might be able to defeat a Monstrous wulver with simple kindness.



## HRĒOPLING

Commonly called screamers for their strange battlecries and guttural and incomprehensible language, these humanoids are shorter than the average person, but stockier and stronger. They're able to bear intense pain, especially when they form into groups to do battle with others. They carry simple clubs or cudgels and shields made of wicker and hide.

### SCREAMER

*Medium humanoid*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Armor Class** 15 (Shield)

**Hit Points** 19 (3d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Defeatable.** Screamers work in pairs. If a member of the pair is slain, the other one will become defeated. If two defeated individuals are within 10 feet of each other, roll a d6: on a 3-6 they form a new pair and lose the defeated condition.

**Pack Tactics.** The screamer has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the screamer's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

#### ACTIONS

**Battlecry.** Each screamer within 30 feet of this screamer gains 1d6 temporary hit points.

**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Wanderers and Outcasts.** Whenever people move into a land occupied by the hrēoplings, the two folk find themselves in conflict sooner or later and eventually the screamers move on, seeking new lands that are untroubled by humanity. But such peace is short-lasting and trouble frequently begins anew.

**The Earth-buried.** The screamers seem to have access to primal earth magic and some of them have undergone a ritual that transforms them from living creatures to undead forms, having already 'died' once before and rejected the afterlife in order to return to the worldly earth.

**Tactics.** Screamers tend to operate in pairs, each one of them attempting to protect the other while making attacks whenever they are able. While they don't form ranks, they do tend to keep together in a scrum that will advance whenever they have open space to do so. Individuals without their battle-partners tend to flee the field or join a new pairing.

**As a Monster.** Some scops tell stories of the screamers having some knowledge of the Old Gods, or perhaps their own strange deities from the beginning of time. Thus it is possible that the occasional hrēopling can somehow possess strange and mysterious powers. When that occurs, they tend to lead their fellows into attacks on human lands, in retribution for long-forgotten skirmishes against the tribe in years past.

### BURDENS

**Underfed.** The screamers are particularly hurting for food. Reduce Strength to 12 (+1) and Constitution to 13 (+1). Reduce their hit and damage values by one and their hit points to 16. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

**Wild.** These screamers have been forced from their former tribes and are only loosely knit together. They lose their Pack Tactics feature.

### GIFTS

**Grave Travel.** If the screamer is undead you can choose to add this gift as well. Add '**Earthen Ways.** If the undead screamer is at a barrow or other place of the dead, it can teleport itself to another barrow or resting place of the dead in sight.' to its list of actions.

**Knife Fighter.** The screamers have acquired metal weapons. Add '**Seax. Melee Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.' to the screamer's actions and raise its challenge rating to 1.

**Relentless in Battle.** Add '**Relentless.** If the screamer takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points it makes a Constitution saving throw with the DC set to 10 or the damage taken, whichever is higher. On a success it drops to 1 hit point instead.' to the screamer's statblock.

**Strong.** Increase Strength to 18 and add +2 for to-hit and damage for the screamer's club. Increase challenge rating to 1 if it is not already there.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 2, and hit points to 32 (5d8 + 10). Increase challenge rating to 1, or if it is set at 1, raise it to 2.

**Undead.** The screamer has undergone the earth-buried ritual. It now has a Wisdom saving throw of +3, is immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition, and its Constitution is



now 16 (+3) and its hit points are 22. Add **'Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the screamer to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the screamer drops to 1 hit point instead.' Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The screamer only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase its challenge rating by 2.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Tricked.** A Monstrous screamer might have a connection to the magic of the earth. Lifting it from the ground, or tricking it onto water might sever that bond.

**Run Rings.** A Monstrous screamer might be tricked into wearing a ring of a particular material which severs its connection to its pair.



## DEOFOL

This category of monsters provide some samples of the fiends that trouble the Lands between the Two Seas. Nihtgenga are night-demons who hide in the darkness, to grab at those who stray and strangle them to death with their spindly yet strong limbs. Sceaðugenga are the tall, pale, four-armed shadow-walkers who stride across the bogs and lonely fields of the lands hunting hermits and unwary travellers.

## NIHTGENGA

The explanations for night-demons differ from land to land and from alignment to alignment, but all agree that the creatures are otherworldly. They are possessed of a cruelty and a desire for death that mortal beings simply don't have.

**Creatures of the Great Darkness.** As their name implies, night-demons are active once the sun disappears beyond the horizon. During the day they are not seen, perhaps they hide in deep caves, thick and overgrown groves or in the shadows of gravestones, or even in another realm entirely. However, at night they come out to hunt and that is when everyone must be inside, safe behind walls, torches and nightly prayers.

**Tactics.** Night-demons use their superior sight in darkness and stealth abilities to stalk whatever targets they desire and then strike

out at them at the most opportune moments. Bright lights or the coming of day will shock the fiend and cause it to flee.

**As a Monster.** If the night-demon is the Monster of the adventure, the Hero is sure to hear stories about a demon that stalks the night, invincible and unrelenting.

## BURDENS

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action from the night-demon. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Poorly Trained.** Remove the Expertise feature from the night-demon. Its Athletics becomes +4 and its Stealth becomes +9.

**Weaker.** A weak night-demon has 51 (6d10 + 18) hit points, and Dexterity 18 (reduce Armour Class by 2, reduce to hit and damage for actions by 2). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 4 or lower, then its to hit modifier becomes +8 for all attacks, its saving throws become Dex +8 and Con +5. Reduce Athletics and Stealth by 2 and Perception by 1.

## GIFTS

**Climber.** The night-demon gains a climb speed of 30 feet and is able to contort its body so that it usually has all four limbs in contact with the surface whilst still being able to see anywhere in its vicinity.

## NIGHT-DEMON

*Medium fiend*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 16

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +6

**Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +5, Stealth +12

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 15

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Defeatable.** The night-demon will use the Dash, Disengage or Dodge action to avoid or leave combat during the day at the first opportunity. At night, if it starts its turn with 37 or less hit points it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become defeated.

**Expertise.** The night-demon doubles its proficiency bonus for Athletics and Stealth (included above)

**Keen Smell.** The night-demon has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the night-demon can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The night-demon makes an attack with its bite and claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) slashing damage and if the target is Large or smaller creature it is grappled (Escape DC 16).

**Throttle.** The night-demon does 20 (4d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage to a grappled creature.

### REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** When attacked, the night-demon dodges out of the way, taking only half damage from the attack.

**Disappearing.** Add *'Invisibility.* As a bonus action the night-demon can become invisible for one minute. It loses its invisibility if it takes an Attack action.' to the night-demon's list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Fast.** Add 5 feet to the night-demon's speed.

**Nimbleness.** Add *'Nimble.* The night-demon's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice its Dexterity modifier.' and change its Armour Class to 22. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Swift Response.** Add *'Quick.* Spend inspiration to make a single attack at the end of another creature's turn.' to the night-demon's list of reactions.

**Tough.** Increase Constitution to 20 (+5) and hit points to 95 (10d10 + 40). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The night-demon only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If its revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +10 for all attacks, raise Athletics and Stealth by 2, and Perception and all saving throws by 1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Dragged into the light.** A Monstrous night-demon fought in the bright light of day might be more susceptible to attack.

**The Power of prayer.** The right spells or prayers might break its connections to otherworldly powers. Where can they be learned?



## SCEADUGENGA

Shadow-walkers are another sort of fiend that occasionally trouble the living. Most of the time they are just seen as faint shapes moving in the fogs among the hills and barrows or during the darkest times of night. They are very tall, almost gaunt, with at least four limbs that end in grasping claws.

### SHADOW-WALKER

*Huge fiend*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 92 (8d12 + 40)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +8, Wis +5

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 12

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Defeatable.** If deprived of all four limbs, the shadow-walker becomes defeated.

**Magic Resistance.** The shadow-walker has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.

**Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the shadow-walker must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the shadow-walker's stench for 24 hours.

**Strange Limbs.** The shadow-walker has four spindly limbs that end in claws. A creature can declare that they are attacking one of the shadow-walker's limbs and, once that limb takes 35 hit points or more of damage, that limb is destroyed and any creature grappled by that claw is released. A shadow-walker that is not slain outright will regenerate any destroyed limbs after a long rest.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The shadow-walker makes an attack with each of its remaining claws (four if it is unharmed).

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage and if the target is Large or smaller creature it is grappled (Escape DC 14). If a creature is grappled by the claw, it takes 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Stealer of the Living.** Shadow-walkers sometimes emerge out of their hiding places and gather up several people, then return to the mists and darkness. Those who are taken are never seen again. Some of the creatures can make human-like sounds, pretending to be a lost child or hurt person in order to draw victims to them.

**Tactics.** Shadow-walkers try to avoid fair fights, instead wanting to pick off individuals. If forced into a fight they will use their multiple limbs to attack as many targets as possible. If they begin to lose their limbs then they will consider retreat.

**As a Monster.** If the shadow-walker is the Monster of the adventure, the shadow-walker might actually glow with a pale and sickly light and it will probably be much bolder, able to visit a larger group of people without fear of being seriously harmed, picking out choice victims and then retreating into the dark night.

#### BURDENS

**Slow.** Reduce the shadow-walker's speed to 30 feet.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the shadow-walker's Armour Class to 12 (natural armour). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Weaker.** This shadow-walker is younger or less hardy than most. Reduce its Constitution to 16 and its hit points to 57 (6d12 + 18). Reduce challenge rating by 2, to a minimum of 5.

#### GIFTS

**Alert.** Add *'Alertness.* The shadow-walker has advantage on initiative rolls as long as they are not surprised.' to its list of features.

**Deadly Strike.** Add *'Deadly Power.* The shadow-walker can spend inspiration to turn a successful attack into a critical hit.' to its list of features.

**Extra Limbs.** Add two more limbs to the shadow-walker. Add 6 Hit Dice (69 hit points, if Resilient as well: 81 hit points) and increase its challenge rating by 2. You can take this gift up to twice.

**Mimic.** Add *'Mimicry.* The shadow-walker can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check.' to the shadow-walker's list of features.

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 24 (+7), changing hit points to 108. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Sharpened Claws.** Change the damage for shadow-walker's claw attacks (including for grappled targets) to 17 (3d8 + 4). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The shadow-walker only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note:* If its revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then improve the shadow-walker's to hit modifier and all saving throws by 1. If 13 or higher then add another +1 for to hit modifier and saving throws.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Let the Sunshine in.** Allowing sunlight into the hidden home of a shadow-walker might render it weak enough to be destroyed. But that would mean finding its home...

**Running water.** The healing power of flowing water is said to be poison to a shadow-walker.



## EOTENAS

Eotenas are lesser giants, such as ogres (who are known for at least sometimes pretending to be civilised) and trolls (who rarely bother with such things).

### OGRE

The average ogre is about eight feet tall, weighs several hundred pounds and roughly resembles a human, albeit a crudely-featured and grotesquely-proportioned one. Making little by their own hand, their clothing is often stolen or scavenged and always ill-fitting. They are cruel and intimidating but, like many bullies, have at their centre a core of fear that drives them.

#### OGRE

*Large giant*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	13 (+1)

**Armor Class** 11 (hide armour)

**Hit Points** 59 (7d10 + 21)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 8

**Languages** Native language, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Defeatable.** Ordinary ogres rarely fight to the death. If the Ogre begins its turn with less than 20 hit points it will gain the defeated condition. Ogres are very selfish and might even push their allies into the path of its enemies in order to slow them down.

#### ACTIONS

**Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage and, if the target is Medium-sized creature or smaller, the target is grappled (escape DC 14).

#### REACTIONS

**Fearsome Roar.** After a missed melee attack roll, the ogre can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 11 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of the ogre. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.

**Rulers.** Ogres are a fractious people and it's common for most all of them to believe that they could better lead their people than the current ruler. Not only does this make ogre politics inherently unstable, but it also tends to tiny and fractured areas of control.

Occasionally a Monstrous Ogre or small family group are able to assert greater control, which can be very dangerous as the ogres then stop fighting amongst themselves and look instead to expanding their borders.

**Maneaters.** While ogres know of many human customs, including diplomacy, alliances and even political marriages, their unfortunate tendency to consider human flesh a delicacy means that if humans fall under the sway of an ogre ruler they must keep the ogre well-fed or find themselves on the menu.

**Tactics.** Ogres are often more intelligent than their Trollish cousins and will attempt to intimidate foes before closing with them. Once in battle proper they will fight with unrelenting fury until they find themselves worn down and badly hurt, in which case they might retreat.

**As a Monster.** If the ogre is the Monster of the adventure, you can presage the appearance of the ogre by hearing legends of a terrible giant that rules over the land.

#### BURDENS

**Clumsy.** The ogre has a Dexterity score of 6, providing a -2 modifier. Its Armour Class is reduced to 10.

**Meek.** Remove the ogre's Fearsome Roar.

**Young.** A young ogre has 34 (4d10 + 12) hit points and Strength of 16 (+3), meaning its Greatclub is +5 to hit and does 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

#### GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 12 (+1) and Armour Class to 13 (15 if Well-armoured).

**Clever.** Increase Intelligence and Wisdom to 10 (+0) and Charisma to 14 (+2). Set passive Perception to 10.

**Disarming.** Add **'Disarm.** If the ogre has a target grappled, it can use its action to attempt to disarm the target by making an opposed Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A target that is holding a weapon with two or more hands has advantage on the check. If the creatures are different sizes, the smaller creature has disadvantage on the check. A failed check means that the creature that attempted the disarm takes damage from the weapon.' to the ogre's stat block.

**Heavily-armoured.** Change Armour Class to 13 (12 if Clumsy) and add **"Noisy.** The ogre has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing its armour." to its features. Increase challenge rating by 1 if this is the only gift added, otherwise this gift does not change its challenge rating.

**Ogre Weapon.** You can give the ogre a sword that does 2d8 slashing damage, a spear that does 2d8 piercing damage and can

be thrown 40/120, a two-handed club that does 2d10 bludgeoning damage or a two-handed sword that does 2d10 slashing damage. Each of the weapons is massive, (a Hero with Strength 14 or lower does not add their strength modifier for damage).

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 18 (+4), changing hit points to 66 (95 if Tough as well).

**Strong.** Increase Strength to 22 and add +2 for to-hit and damage. Increase challenge rating by 1

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 3, and hit points to 85 (10d10 + 30). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The ogre only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If its revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its to hit modifier goes up by 1.*

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Pig-headed.** An ogre's worst enemy is their own kind, and indeed themselves. Using their strengths and rivalries against them in a wide variety of ways might make them vulnerable.



## TROLL

Trolls are larger and more bestial than ogres. They stand up to 10 feet tall but generally tend to be more spindly than their ogre cousins. They prefer dark, dank places such as caves and marshes and some of them rely on being regularly in contact with water to help strengthen their natural protection. Trolls are truly hideous to behold, belying their nature as primordial enemies of humanity. As such they present a wide variety of forms, some carrying a pot belly, others being disturbingly skeletal. A troll might have huge tusks jutting out of its jaw, or rows of hundreds of wickedly sharp teeth. All trolls exude an awful stench, but some are far worse than others. Many trolls deck themselves with rotting and broken trophies of their enemies and prey, and can be curiously creative in their decorative efforts.

### TROLL

*Large giant*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 63 (6d10 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +2

**Damage Resistances** cold, poison; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 12

**Languages** Native language, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the troll starts its turn with less than 10 hit points, it gains the defeated condition.

**Keen Smell.** The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

#### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage, and if the target is Medium-sized creature or smaller, the target is grappled (escape DC 14). The troll can have only one creature grappled at a time.

#### REACTIONS

**Relentless Grasp.** If a grappled creature succeeds at its escape attempt the troll can make another claw attack at that creature.

**Hungry Hunters.** No matter how well-fed a troll is, it will always complain about an empty stomach. Left to its own devices, it

will clear an area of wildlife in only a few months. Many trolls demand tribute from local farmers and other folk, preferably in the form of livestock. Some of the more cruel trolls ignore any attempts at diplomacy and raid for the food they want, whether it's the livestock or the farmers.

**Angry Carmudgeons.** Trolls particularly dislike others experiencing good fortune or enjoying merry-making. A troll may decide to dedicate its obsessive existence to destroying any such good fortune or enjoyment. Sometimes the appearance of such a harassing troll is understood to be a punishment from God or the gods.

**Tactics.** Trolls are very direct in battle, usually relying on their natural protection to allow them to pick off various opponents. Clever trolls will fling the dead and unconscious into a pile, which will serve as a larder later. Their grasping claws rarely allow foes to permanently escape, though they might negotiate, trading a valuable prisoner for the immediate reward of food or further safety.

**As a Monster.** You can hint at a Monstrous troll by telling the Hero about legends of a creature with an unending hunger and terrible destructive power.

## BURDENS

**Cackling.** The troll keeps up a constant conversation with itself in its own language and will never surprise an enemy.

**Frail.** Reduce the troll's Strength to 11 and reduce its hit values to +2 and change all damage calculations to +0. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Vulnerable.** This troll has not grown any natural armour, its Armour Class is 10. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## GIFTS

**Bellicose.** Add **Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the troll can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.' to the troll's list of features.

**Deadly Strike.** Add **Deadly Power.** The troll can spend inspiration to turn a successful attack into a critical hit.' to its list of features.

**Fierce.** Add **Multiattack.** The troll makes a bite attack and a claw attack.' to the creature's stat block as an action.

**Heavily-armoured.** Change Armour Class to 16.

**Poisonous Stench.** Add **Hideous Stench.** The troll can spend inspiration to blast out a disgusting fart, belch, or release its heinous body odour from its various crevices. Any creature within 10 feet must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute.' to its list of actions. Increase challenge rating by 1.



**Strong.** Increase Strength to 19 (+4) and add +2 to both to hit and damage. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 2, and hit points to 84 (8d10 + 40). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The troll only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If the troll's revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then raise all to hit modifiers, saving throws and skills by +1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Out of Water.** A Monstrous troll might need constant contact with water to maintain its strength. Damming the flow of water into its lair, or somehow changing its course or purity could help the Hero to victory.

**Out-Riddled.** Trolls are incredibly stupid and driven by overriding passions. If a Hero can uncover its obsessions, they may be able to trick it into defeat or vulnerability.



## FIRAS

This section covers regular human enemies. These folk never serve as Monsters; a human that becomes a Monster is somehow transformed and might become something like Ceorlcund (the man-like creatures) or Dēofol (evil spirits). Instead, these foes serve as ordinary threats that the Hero might encounter along the Whale Road, or as rivals in a location, or in service to the Monster. A variety of types are available, mostly differentiated by how much battle-experience they possess.

## BANDITS

These folk are often desperate, having fallen on hard times or have been pressed into service by more dedicated raiders or fallen warriors. Individually they don't have much experience but can still be dangerous in large groups.

### BANDIT

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 13 (weaponshirt, iron-ribbed helm)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the bandit takes damage for the second time in a combat it will become defeated.

#### ACTIONS

**Long-seax.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

**Hunting Bow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The bandit adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the bandit must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Blood and Fear.** Bandits fight out of fear, whether that fear is of a cruel master or the fear of having nothing, of dying hungry and homeless. Thus, they won't surrender or flee at first blood, but a second wounding strike will often convince them to take their chances elsewhere. If the Hero can be certain that the bandits are ordinary folk fallen to their worst desperations, offers of food and shelter might be enough to open a parley.

**Tactics.** Bandits tend to attack directly, without much strategy, unless commanded by others. If so, they might be held back to serve as archers due to their low morale. They might also serve as fodder, perhaps being the first wave to soften up a defence before more heavily armed fighters approach.

## BURDENS

**Clumsy.** Reduce Dexterity to 8 (-1), Armour Class to 11 and damage for weapons to 2 (1d6 - 1). Reduce challenge rating one step (to 0 unless the bandit has one or more gifts that raise challenge rating).

**Note:** A CR 0 creature that does damage is worth 10 XP when defeated.

## GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 16 (+3), Armour Class to 15, to-hit becomes +5 and damage becomes 6 (1d6 + 3). Increase the bandit's challenge rating one step (to CR 1/4).

**Brutish.** Add **'Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bandit hits with it.' and then change the long-seax to 8 (2d6 + 1) piercing damage. Increase the bandit's challenge rating one step (to CR 1/4).

**Mounted.** Add '(60 ft when mounted)' to the bandit's speed. Add **'Battle-trained Mount.** Any attacks against the mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack the mount receive the Troubled burden.' to their features.

**Resilient.** Increase the bandit's Hit Dice to 3 and its hit points to 16 (3d8 + 3).



## BRAGGARTS

These folks may have some knowledge of war, but never as much actual experience as they claim. Instead they are well-known for telling stories of their own exceptional prowess or disputing the claims of others. In battle, this boldness might be rewarded, but their bravado is often a temporary thing.

### BRAGGART

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

**Armor Class** 17 (scale, iron-ribbed helm, shield)

**Hit Points** 18 (4d8)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Deception +5, Intimidation +5, Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the braggart is frightened or cannot see any of their allies at the start of their turn, they become defeated.

**Evil Words.** The braggart can use their bonus action to claim superiority and speak words of discouragement to a creature. If the creature can hear and understand the language, it must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw, taking 1d4 psychic damage on a failure.

**Noisy.** The braggart has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing their armour.

#### ACTIONS

**Axe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft and range 20/60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Bold Words.** Braggarts are known for being loud-spoken, especially in large groups. If they seem to have the upper hand then they will brag and make threats of horrible retribution and punishment for the Hero and their Followers. These seem credible at first, but if the braggarts can be broken apart into individuals their individual courage soon fails them.

**Tactics.** Braggarts will often hang back, seeking defensive cover from which to throw their spears and taunt their enemies. When confronted by an actual foe, they will begin to swing their axes or probe out with their spears. They look for quick and easy kills, often bypassing more dangerous foes. If questioned by a commander on this, they always have some ready excuse.

## BURDENS

**Awkward.** Reduce the braggart's Charisma to 13 (+1), Deception and Intimidation to +3, and the DC for Evil Words to 11.

**Weakly Armoured.** Exchange the braggart's scale armour for a weaponshirt. Its Armour Class becomes 15. Remove the Noisy feature.

## GIFTS

**Fast.** Add 5 feet to the braggart's speed.

**Mounted.** Add '(60 ft when mounted)' to the braggart's speed. Add **'Battle-trained Mount.'** Any attacks against the mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack the mount receive the Troubled burden.' to their features.

**Spy.** Add **'Sneaky.'** The braggart has expertise in the Stealth skill.' to the braggart's features and add 'Stealth +5' to its list of skills.

**Strong.** Increase Strength to 19 (+4) and add +1 to all to-hit and damage values.

**Weapon Upgrade.** Exchange the braggart's axe for a great axe and update damage to 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage. Remove their shield (AC 15).



## FALLEN

These warriors once served a ruler, but their ring-giver has been killed. They are not oathbreakers — perhaps they were not at their lord's hall when it was attacked or left for dead by the enemy but they served their leader honourably. Bereft of proper leadership, they often seek out a new hall and often find themselves serving folks who strain to recruit more reputable warriors.

### FALLEN

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 17 (scale, battle-masked helm, metal-rimmed shield)

**Hit Points** 37 (5d8 + 15)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Athletics +6, Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the fallen has less than 10 hit points at the start of its turn, it becomes defeated.

**Noisy.** The fallen has disadvantage on its stealth checks when moving.

#### ACTIONS

**Bearded Axe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if wielded with two hands. Hooking (see page 68).

**Angon.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/30 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage. On a critical hit, it may choose to instead splinter a shield or helm.

#### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The fallen adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the fallen must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Reliable.** A fallen warrior will fight for their new leader until almost the very end before thinking about retreat.

**Tactics.** Fallen warriors have enough wargear from their prior service that they have no hope of sneaking up on foes. Instead they will meet them in direct battle, using their angons against enemy shields if possible. They will then challenge their foes, seeking single combat if possible.

## BURDENS

**Battle-burnt.** The first time the fallen takes damage in combat, they must make a Wisdom saving throw with the damage amount as the DC. If they fail the save, they become defeated. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

**Poorly Equipped.** Remove the fallen's helm and shield and adjust Armour Class to 14. Change their Bearded Axe to a regular Axe doing 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage on a hit. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

## GIFTS

**Deadly Strike.** Add *'Deadly Power.* The fallen can spend inspiration to turn a successful attack into a critical hit.' to its list of features.

**Disarming.** Add *'Disarm.* If the fallen has a target grappled, they can use their action to attempt to disarm the target by making an opposed Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A target that is holding a weapon with two or more hands has advantage on the check. If the creatures are different sizes, the smaller creature has disadvantage on the check. A failed check means that the creature that attempted the disarm takes damage from the weapon.' to the fallen's stat block.

**Mounted.** Add '(60 ft when mounted)' to the fallen's speed. Add *'Battle-trained Mount.* Any attacks against the mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack the mount receive the Troubled burden.' to their features.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 2, and hit points to 53 (7d8 + 21).



## OATHBREAKERS

These warriors are those who broke their vows to their leaders, abandoning them to the enemy or cruel fate. As the lowest of the low they now scavenge what they can, often serving as leaders of raiding bands or underlings to an even more cruel and despot individual than themselves.

### OATHBREAKER

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Armor Class** 17 (scale, shield, iron-ribbed helm)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the oathbreaker starts their turn with 28 or less hit points, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure the oathbreaker becomes defeated.

**Noisy.** The oathbreaker has disadvantage on their stealth checks when moving.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The oathbreaker makes two sword attacks. If they have a long-seax drawn, they can also make a long-seax attack.

**Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

**Lang-Seax.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**War Bow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

**Untrustworthy.** Anyone with wisdom will ignore the meaningless promises of an oathbreaker. Instead, those who rely on their services use other means of discipline or simply rely on the warrior's greed and limited prospects to keep them loyal enough, for now.

**Tactics.** Heavily armoured and armed, oathbreakers often lead from the front — for those who remember their promises with regret may seek the release of dying in honourable combat. When direct combat is not feasible, they will make use of their war bows and attempt to soften up a foe before a battle begins.

## BURDENS

**Focused.** Remove the oathbreaker's Multiattack action. Reduce challenge rating by 1 or by 2 if they are also Poorly Equipped and Weakly Armoured.

**Poorly Equipped.** Remove the oathbreaker's lang-seax and war bow.

**Weakly Armoured.** Exchange the oathbreaker's scale for a weaponshirt and set their Armour Class to 15. Remove the Noisy feature.

## GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 16 (+3), Armour Class to 18, and the war bow's to hit becomes +5 and damage becomes 7 (1d8 + 3). Increase the oathbreaker's challenge rating by 1.

**Bellicose.** Add *'Aggressive.* As a bonus action, the oathbreaker can move up to their speed toward a hostile creature that they can see.' to the oathbreaker's list of features.

**Evade.** Add *'Evasive.* The oathbreaker only takes half damage from this attack.' to the oathbreaker's statblock as a reaction.

**Liar.** Improve the oathbreaker's Charisma to 15 (+2) and add *'Deception +4, Insight +3'* to their list of skills.

**Mounted.** Add *'(60 ft when mounted)'* to the oathbreaker's speed. Add *'Battle-trained Mount.* Any attacks against the mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack the mount receive the Troubled burden.' to their features.



## RAIDERS

When the crops don't come in as expected, or wolves and winter claim too many livestock, ordinary folk may turn to raiding other lands to make up for their losses. This sometimes creates a vicious cycle of theft, as one injured party raids another, each trying to compensate for the raids on their own lands.

### RAIDER

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

**Armor Class** 14 (iron-ribbed helm, shield)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Wis +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** English, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Defeatable.** At the end of their turn, if one or more raiders were killed during that turn the current leader of the raiders must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw, becoming defeated on a failure. If the raiders outnumber their enemies, the leader has advantage on the saving throw. If their leader is defeated, all raiders become defeated.

#### ACTIONS

**Javelin (1/day).** *Ranged Weapon Attack.* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack.* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft or range 20/60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used in two hands.

**Professionals.** Over time, some folk find themselves better suited for the life of a sea-born raider than others. After all, farming may be dangerous but a well-managed sparse year might be less dangerous than finding yourself on the wrong side of a sword in battle. But those who tend to raid every time are those who would rather take chances than spend their lives in constant toil.

**Tactics.** A raider group clusters around a leader, but if they fall in battle, a new leader will usually step up. When they engage in battle, they'll use their javelins first at distance and then engage with spears and shields (if they're trained to strike with them). Once they have the supplies they want, they will retreat — raiders are very unlikely to venture far from their ships or stay in one area for very long.

## BURDENS

**Disorganised.** Add *'Poor Leadership.* The raider has disadvantage on their initiative roll.'

**Slow.** Reduce the raider's speed to 25 feet.

## GIFTS

**Alert.** Add *'Alertness.* The raider has advantage on initiative rolls as long as they are not surprised.'

**Fierce (requires Shield Attack).** Add *'Multiattack.* The raider makes a spear attack and a shield bash.'

**Mounted.** Add '(60 ft when mounted)' to the raider's speed. Add *'Battle-trained Mount.* Any attacks against the mount are at disadvantage and unheroic — any Followers of the Hero who attack the mount receive the Troubled burden.'

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 17 (+3), changing hit points to 15.

**Resolved.** Add *'Resolve.* The raiders have advantage on Wisdom saving throws.'

**Shield Attack.** Add *'Shield Bash. Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.'

**Well-armoured.** The raider wears a long-sleeved mail byrnie, battle-masked helmet and a metal-rimmed shield. Increase their AC to 19. Add *'Noisy.* The raider has disadvantage on its stealth checks when moving.'



## SCHEMERS

These enemies represent the plotters and planners, the wicked advisors to kings and queens that cause them to make foolish decisions or engage in petty disputes with their neighbours. While reluctant to face a Hero on the battlefield they can sometimes be forced into direct conflict and the Hero might learn that they have earned their place, if only by cruelty and treachery.

### SCHEMER

*Medium human*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

**Armor** 13 (weaponshirt, iron-ribbed helm)

**Hit Points** 60 (11d8 + 11)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons (see below)

**Skills** Deception +9, Intimidation +7, Insight +7, Perception +5, Persuasion +7

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the schemer takes damage in a combat they must make a DC 10 Charisma saving throw or become defeated.

**Expertise.** The schemer doubles their proficiency bonus for Deception and Insight (included above).

**Resistance.** The schemer has a magical amulet that provides resistance to normal weapon damage and allows them, twice a day, to succeed at a saving throw instead of failing it.

**Words of Doom.** The schemer uses their bonus action to promise personal doom and destruction to everyone that opposes it, targeting one creature in specific within 30 ft of the schemer. That target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 9 (1d8 + 5) points of psychic damage.

#### ACTIONS

**Staff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

**Hunting Bow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft, one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The schemer adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the schemer must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Bearer of Magic.** While true magic is beyond them, schemers have often planned ahead and acquired a powerful amulet that helps protect them when troublesome Heroes try to interfere

with their plans. They also have learned words in an ancient tongue that sounds terrible — there may or may not be any true power in the words, but as long as their audience believes that there is danger to them, they react accordingly.

**Tactics.** A schemer will try to keep their distance, using their Words of Doom and hunting bow to lash out at their enemy. It is only when they become desperate that they will brandish their staff in melee combat. A defeated schemer may well use their next turn to attempt to tempt the Hero with their service.

## BURDENS

**Unadorned.** Remove the Resistance feature from the schemer. Reduce their challenge rating by two steps.

**Unconfident.** Remove the Words of Doom feature from the schemer. Remove their challenge rating by one step.

**Weaker.** This schemer is less hardy than most. Reduce its Constitution to 8 (-1) and its hit points to 31 (9d8 - 9). Reduce challenge rating by one step.

## GIFTS

**Alert.** Add *'Alertness.* The schemer has advantage on initiative rolls as long as they are not surprised.' to their list of features.

**Booming Voice.** The schemer's Words of Doom affect all enemy creatures within 30 feet of it. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Evade.** Add *'Evasive.* The schemer only takes half damage from this attack.' to the schemer's statblock as a reaction.

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 16 (+3), changing hit points to 67 (9d8 + 27). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its to hit modifier increases by +1 for all attacks, Parry becomes +3, and required saving throws become DC 16.



## GIGANTAS

The giants are a monstrous people who live at the edges of the world, sometimes venturing forth because of hunger or the simple will to do evil to the smaller peoples. Huge in size and often possessing extremely ugly features, giants represent the worst aspects of humanity literally writ large. Gluttonous, driven by rage and stupidity, giants are at the mercy of their low intellects and insatiable drive for destruction and consumption.

These giants are those of the oldest legends, huge man-like creatures. Some of them have only a single eye, some have the normal two eyes but are possessed also of an extra head. The giants are the primordial enemies of people everywhere, and constantly work towards the destruction of all that is good and just in the world. In the Old Ways, the giants are part of an everlasting cycle of war and destruction, to the Church they are the servants of the great adversary, and the evil descendants of fallen angels, and the get of Cain, the first murderer.

### ONE-EYED

A few of these giants once had two eyes and became blinded by a childhood mistake or battle injury, but most were born this way. They watch the world with a singular central eye, never quite seeing everything that is around them.

**Relics of a Lost Age.** Legends tell of a time long ago, when winter gripped the lands between the two seas for unending years. It was during this time that the giants thrived, hunting other huge beasts and wandering from one frozen shore to the next. But the great beasts became scarce and humans grew stronger while the

giants became fewer and fewer. Now there are only a few tribes, mostly in the Dark Forest and they rarely have anything to do with regular folk.

**Tactics.** When giants fight amongst themselves war is sport, few are ever slain and most battles degenerate into rock throwing competitions (which can be dangerous to onlookers, especially if the giants are single-eyed). Thus, in real combat they have a tendency to be overly cautious and easily retreat even when holding their position would be better.

**As a Monster.** Sometimes particularly bold and impressive giants wander down from the mountains or out of the forest, intent on destroying the little folk and razing their homes to the ground. Such giants might be protected by a magical talisman, a powerful weapon or their own self-certainty.

### BURDENS

**Clumsy.** The giant has a Dexterity score of 9, providing a -1 modifier. Its Armour Class is reduced to 11.

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action from the giant. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Young.** Reduce the giant's Hit Dice by 4, Constitution to 16 (+3) and hit points to 57 (6d12 + 18). Reduce Strength to 15 (+2) and lower Athletics, all to hit modifiers and the Escape DC by 2. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 4 or lower, then all skills and to hit modifiers are reduced by 1.

## ONE-EYED GIANT

*Huge giant*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Armor Class** 13 (thick-hide armour)

**Hit Points** 115 (10d12 + 50)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Skills** Athletics +7

**Senses** passive Perception 8

**Languages** Giant

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the giant has taken damage since its last turn, it must make a DC 5 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure it becomes defeated.

**Poor Vision.** The giant has disadvantage on ranged attacks.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The giant makes two Greatclub attacks, or one Greatclub attack and one Fist attack.

**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 17).

**Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 40/120 ft, one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

### REACTIONS

**Catch.** When a boulder or similar missile is launched at it, the giant makes a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. If successful, it catches the rock. On a failure it is struck by the rock.



## GIFTS

**Bellicose.** Add *'Aggressive.* As a bonus action, the giant can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.' to the giant's list of features.

**Brutish.** Add *'Brute.* A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the giant hits with it.' and then change the Greatclub to 22 (4d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Increase the giant's challenge rating by 1 if this is the only gift you select.

**Clever.** Increase Intelligence and Wisdom to 10 (+0) and Charisma to 9 (-1). Set passive Perception to 10.

**Deadly Strike.** Add *'Deadly Power.* The giant can spend inspiration to turn a successful attack into a critical hit.' to its list of features.

**Heavily-armoured.** Change Armour Class to 14 (Scale Armour) — 12 if Clumsy — and add *"Noisy.* The giant has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when wearing its armour." to its

features. Increase challenge rating by 1 if this is the only gift added, otherwise this gift does not change its challenge rating.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 2, and hit points to 138 (12d12 + 60). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Two Eyes.** Remove the Poor Vision feature from the giant.

**Undefeatable.** The giant only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If its revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then its to hit modifier goes up by 1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Pinned down.** Tricking a giant into a space where it gives up all of its size advantage might be key to defeating it.

**Riddle-weak.** Giants are not renowned for their intelligence, but it is known they can be tricked into riddling.



## TWO-HEADED

Two-headed giants are much the same as one-eyed giants, except that they have better natural vision. They react much the same, using the same tactics and have the same outlook. The most obvious difference is the second head. For some two-headed giants this provides them with an advantage - the adage “two heads are better than one” might well apply.

However, giants are not known for their teamwork nor their ability to take counsel in good grace, and so a two-headed giant is more likely to be a walking quarrel, with each head harbouring an abiding dislike of the other.

**Punch-up.** A two-headed giant will often display evidence of injuries inflicted upon itself during arguments. It is not uncommon for a two-headed giant to sport four black eyes following a punch-up with itself.

**Sly.** Having two heads, and thereby being a little bit more sly, such giants are reputed to enact schemes to steal food from humans, and are thought to be even more susceptible to the insatiable appetites of their one-headed cousins. A two-headed giant might also be more likely to lead a group of ne'er-do-well mannish followers, its two heads being better at convincing others to follow it. It is also likely to be more prepared for battle than a one-headed giant, and be more willing to enter into wily discussion with a Hero. Two-headed giants sometimes go by other names, like ettin, boggle-man, or bogle.

**Tactics.** See One-Eyed Giant.

**As a Monster.** See One-Eyed Giant.

## BURDENS

**Clumsy.** The giant has a Dexterity score of 9, providing a -1 modifier. Its Armour Class is reduced to 11.

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action from the giant. Reduce challenge rating by 2.

**One Eye Each.** The giant only has one eye per head. Remove the Two Heads feature.

**Quarrelsome.** Add *'Quarrelling.* Both heads argue constantly. The giant cannot surprise foes and has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.' to its list of features.

**Young.** Reduce the giant's Hit Dice by 4, Constitution to 22 (+6) and hit points to 75 (6d12 + 36). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## GIFTS

**Bellicose.** Add *'Aggressive.* As a bonus action, the giant can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.' to the giant's list of features.

**Brutish.** Add *'Brute.* A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the giant hits with it.' and then change the Greatclub to 22 (4d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Increase the giant's challenge rating by 1 if this is the only gift you select.

**Fearsome.** Add a reaction to the giant: *'Fearsome Roar.* After a missed melee attack roll, the giant can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 13 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of the giant for 1 minute. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.' Increase the giant's challenge rating by 1.

## TWO-HEADED GIANT

*Huge giant*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	26 (+8)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Armor Class** 12 (thick-hide armour)

**Hit Points** 145 (10d12 + 80)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Giant

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the giant has taken damage since its last turn, it must make a DC 5 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure it becomes defeated.

**Two Heads.** The giant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The giant makes three spiked greatclub attacks.

**Spiked Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage.

**Rock.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 40/120 ft, one target. *Hit:* 22 (3d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

### REACTIONS

**Catch.** When a boulder or similar missile is launched at it, the giant makes a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. If successful, it catches the rock. On a failure it is struck by the rock.

**Swift Response.** Add 'Quick. Spend inspiration to make a single attack at the end of another creature's turn.' to the giant's list of reactions.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 2, and hit points to 174 (12d12 + 96). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The giant only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then its to hit modifier goes up by 1.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Sowing Discord.** With two angry and stupid heads, a two-headed giant might be set at war with itself. This might buy a Hero time to complete the task of removing the undefeatable feature, or be the breach in the giant's armour.





## GRYREFUGOL

This section covers 'evil birds', both the huge vulture-like eormenultur and the spying nihtróc.

## EORMENULTUR

With wingspans of 20 feet or more, eormenultur are determined hunters. While most content themselves with sheep and other livestock, some gain a taste for human blood, swooping down to attack adults over and over again with their razor-sharp bronze beaks. They also carry children away to feed their own young, ensuring a new generation of evil.

### EORMENULTUR

*Large beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Armor Class** 16 (see below)

**Hit Points** 65 (10d10 + 10)

**Speed** 20 ft, fly 60 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +3

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the eormenultur becomes trapped on the ground or starts its turn with less than half of its maximum hit points it will gain the defeated condition.

**Flyby.** The eormenultur doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Keen Smell.** The eormenultur has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Nimble.** The eormenultur's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice its Dexterity modifier.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The eormenultur makes an attack with its beak and its talons.

**Bronze Beak.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

**Talons.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

**Swoop.** If the eormenultur uses at least 30 ft of its flight movement it can make a beak attack with advantage.

#### REACTIONS

**Cloud of Feathers.** The eormenultur can spend inspiration to impose disadvantage on an attack roll.

**Mountain Dwellers.** Eormenultur are said to prefer to live high up mountain-tops where there's plenty of exposed rock for them to sharpen their beaks on. They build their nests out of whatever metal they can find, along with shiny rocks and gems. These rumours attract treasure hunters, but the birds are territorial and do not easily surrender their nesting sites to invaders.

If there are no mountains nearby, they might live near a tor or other rock outcropping or perhaps at the edge of a forest.

**Iron Kin.** Tales persist of eormenultur with iron beaks and feathers. These might be even bigger and are certainly more dangerous.

**Tactics.** The eormenultur will use its advantage of flight to make raking attacks — swooping in, attacking and then flying out of reach. A larger group might attract the attention of a mated pair and their offspring, providing a steep challenge to a Hero.

**As a Monster.** If the eormenultur is the Monster of the adventure, you can presage its appearance by having the Hero encounter lesser raptors and also carrion birds feeding off of the scraps that the eormenultur has left behind.

## BURDENS

**Clumsy.** The eormenultur has a Dexterity score of 12, providing a +1 modifier. Its Armour Class is reduced to 12 (or 11 if the bird is Young as well). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Young.** A young eormenultur has 32 (5d10 + 5) hit points and Armour Class 13 (it does not have the Nimble feature). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## GIFTS

**Iron Beak.** Remove the Bronze Beak action and replace it with "**Iron Beak.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage." Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Metal Feathers.** Remove the Nimble feature and change Armour Class to "20 (natural armour)." Increase challenge rating by 1 if this is the only gift added, otherwise this gift does not change its challenge rating.

**Swift.** Increase the eormenultur's flight movement to 70 ft. This does not impact its challenge rating.

**Tough.** Increase Constitution to 18 (+4) and hit points to 95 (10d10 + 40). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The eormenultur only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +8 for all attacks and its saving throws become Dex +6 and Con +4.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Deadly-dart.** An arrow fletched with its own feathers might prove useful.

**Flame and fume.** Fire and smoke might prove to be the bane of an eormenultur.

**Like against like.** A weapon forged from the beak of another eormenultur.

**Hidden treasures.** Something hidden in its nest might be the Monster's undoing.



## NIHTHRÓC

Also known as night-ravens, these pitch black birds are said to spy for the Old Gods, among others. They only come out at night and spend their days in secret, hidden nests avoiding the sun. They only directly attack in retaliation, knowing that they are weaker than most other creatures.

### NIGHT-RAVEN

*Tiny beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 10 (4d4)

**Speed** 10 ft, fly 40 ft

**Skills** Perception +5, Stealth +6

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 15

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the night-raven takes damage it will gain the defeated condition.

**Flyby.** The night-raven doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Keen Sight.** The night-raven has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

**Perfect Memory.** The night-raven can recall any detail that it observed within the last 24 hours.

#### ACTIONS

**Beak.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

**Talons.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) slashing damage.

**Trained Spies.** Stories tell of night-ravens who not only can mock the speech of people but can also accurately repeat entire conversations, including different voices and accents, to their masters.

**Tactics.** Night-ravens caught in the open will make initial attacks against a foe, but will soon turn and attempt to flee if hurt, or the opportunity to escape and hide somewhere else presents itself.

**As a Monster.** It's possible that an exceptional night-raven might (accidentally?) learn a bit of magic and make themselves more powerful or even more intelligent. It's also possible that they might be granted such benefits by an old forgotten god or powerful benefactor in order to further enhance their spying abilities.

## BURDENS

**Unfocused.** Remove the night-raven's Perfect Memory feature.

**Weaker.** This night-raven is younger or less hardy than most. Reduce its Hit Dice to 2 and its hit points to 5 (2d4). Reduce challenge rating by one step.

## GIFTS

**Desperation Attack.** Add *'Desperate Attack.* The night-raven spends inspiration and attacks a creature that comes within reach with both its beak and talons.' to its reactions.

**Nimbleness.** Add *'Nimble.* The night-raven's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice its Dexterity modifier.' and change its Armour Class to 18. Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Swift.** Increase the night-raven's flight movement by 10 ft. This does not impact its challenge rating.

**Tough.** Increase Constitution to 14 (+2) and hit points to 18 (4d4 + 8). Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Mimic.** Add *'Mimicry.* The night-raven can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check.' to the night-raven's list of features.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The night-raven only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase the night-raven's challenge rating by two steps.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Egg-plough.** Finding and destroying its hidden nest during the daytime might weaken the night-raven.



## MERERUNAN

This section covers creatures of the sea — a few, such as sea dragons and sea serpents are in their own categories — but we include whales, deadly kraken and the shape-changing Nicors here.

### HWÆEL

Far from gentle giants of the ocean, whales of the two seas can bear terrible enmity for humanity and attempt to destroy people and ships whenever they can. They can use both brute strength and tricky to sate these desires.

#### WHALE

*Huge beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 138 (12d12 + 60)

**Speed** 0 ft, swim 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Con +9, Wis +6

**Senses** blindsight 120 ft, passive Perception 12

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the whale starts its turn with 68 or fewer hit points, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or gain the defeated condition.

**Echolocation.** The whale can't use its blindsight while deafened.

**Hold Breath.** The whale can hold its breath for 90 minutes.

**Keen Hearing.** The whale has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

**Siege Monster.** The whale deals double damage to objects and structures.

#### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 21 (4d6 + 7) piercing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

**Brute Strength.** Whales may have reinforced skulls or horn-like growths used to ram ships or skewer sailors. Those that go overboard are devoured whole.

**Trickery.** Some whales can create the illusion of an island on their backs, attracting sailors to land. Once the unfortunates have left their ship and are investigating the isle, the whale dives, dispelling the illusion and drowning the explorers.

**Tactics.** Fierce whales will ram ships as soon as they see them; ones more focused on trickery will cause a fog or other distraction and then use their illusory form as a 'safe harbour'. Once the

whale has a number of folk thrashing in the water, it may feed on them, returning for multiple passes.

**As a Monster.** Finding the whale might be a major concern of the adventure. The Hero may need to improve their ship before embarking on a whale hunt.

### BURDENS

**Slow.** Reduce the whale's swim speed to 30 feet.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the whale's Armour Class to 12 (natural armour). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

### GIFTS

**Extra Attack.** Add '*Multiattack.* The whale makes a bite attack and then a tail attack.' to the whale's list of actions. If the whale has the Skewer action you can substitute that attack for one of the ones given. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**False Vision.** Add '*Illusionary Terrain.* The whale creates the illusion of an island-like area on its back. Once explorers disembark the ship, the whale can choose to dismiss the illusion as an action and then dive, causing the sailors to be stranded in the water.' to the whale's list of actions.

**Horn.** Add '*Skewer. Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) piercing damage.' to the whale's list of actions.

**Reinforced Skull.** Add '*Ram.* If the whale moves at least half its speed on its turn, it can use its bonus action to ram a creature or object its size or larger. The rammed target makes a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 20 (2d12 + 7) bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.' to the whale's list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The whale only takes 1 point of damage from any attack unless it is a special attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Turning the Tide.** Discovering special tides or currents in which the whale is vulnerable.

**Smothered.** Restricting the whale's breathing could have a part to play in removing the undefeatable condition.



## KRAKEN

A monster of the most deep and terrible seas, the kraken is one of the most dangerous threats along the Whale Roads. The gigantic creature attacks ships, tearing sailors from the deck with its biting tentacles and eventually drawing them into its arms that surround its mouth. From there, the arms take turns stuffing creatures into its mouth, each to be sliced apart by its razor-sharp beak.

**A Kraken's Lair.** Krakens shelter in deep parts of the sea, possibly within the wreck of a very large ship, a sea cave, or some other sort of structure.

**Lair Actions.** If the kraken has one or more legendary actions, it can also benefit from lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the kraken can cause one of the following effects:

- A portion of the structure comes loose and falls on top of a creature. It must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage.
- A powerful current moves through the lair. Each creature must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become prone.
- The area fills with particulates, causing the lair to become heavily obscured.

**Regional Effects.** The water is dark and murky, due to regular discharges of the kraken's ink, and makes the entire region, including the lair, lightly obscured. If the kraken dies, this effect fades after several weeks.

**Tactics.** Krakens will use their tentacles to grab prey creatures and drag them towards its arms, which then grapple and hold creatures while it focuses on attacking a single creature at a time. Kraken will often disappear below the waves temporarily after collecting a goodly amount of 'food', consume their enemies and then return for more.

**As a Monster.** If a kraken serves as Monster of the adventure, every port in the region will tell tales of the kraken and the ships that it has sunk. Perhaps an older sailor or retired ship's captain might know something more of the kraken's earliest days and might be able to provide information that would allow a Hero to destroy it.

### BURDENS

**Dull Senses.** Remove the Keen Smell feature from the kraken.

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action from the kraken. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## KRAKEN

*Huge monstrosity*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 175 (14d12 + 84)

**Speed** 5 ft, swim 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +10, Wis +5

**Senses** blindsight 120 ft, passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Amphibious.** The kraken can breathe air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the kraken starts its turn with 87 or less hit points it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become defeated. If it did 20 or more points of damage on its previous turn it has advantage on the saving throw.

**Keen Smell.** The kraken has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Siege Monster.** The kraken deals double damage to objects and structures.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The kraken makes two attacks, one with its beak and one with its tentacles.

**Beak. Melee Weapon Attack:** +12 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. **Hit:** 19 (2d10 +8) slashing damage.

**Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack:** +12 to hit, reach 25 ft, one target. **Hit:** 15 (2d6 + 8) piercing damage and, if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is dragged ten feet towards the kraken's beak.

**Arms.** The kraken attempts to grapple all creatures within 10 feet of it. If a creature has already been grappled (escape DC 18), then it will move that creature to within 5 feet of its beak and hold it there until its next turn.

### REACTIONS

**Ink Cloud (Recharge 6).** While underwater and when a creature approaches within 60 feet of it, the kraken expels an ink cloud in a 60-foot radius. The cloud spreads around corners, and that area is heavily obscured to creatures other than the kraken. Each creature other than the kraken that ends its turn there must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A strong current disperses the cloud, which otherwise disappears at the end of the kraken's next turn.



**Vulnerable.** Reduce the kraken's Armour Class to 12 (natural armour). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Young.** Reduce the kraken's Hit Dice by 4, its size category by one step and adjust its hit points to 115 (10d10 + 60). Reduce its Strength by 4 and reduce its to hit and damage modifiers by 2. Reduce challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If its revised challenge rating is 8 or less, then lower the kraken's skills, saving throws, to hit modifiers and escape DCs by 1.*

## GIFTS

**Ambusher.** Add *'Sudden Strike.* If a creature is within 25 ft of the kraken and unaware of its presence, the kraken can spend inspiration and use its action to automatically grapple the creature with its tentacle.' to the kraken's list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Enduring.** Add *'Legendary Resistance (3/Day).* If the kraken fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.' to its list of features. Increase the kraken's challenge rating by 1.

**Impervious.** The kraken's natural armour provides it immunity to all non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Renowned.** The kraken gains 1 legendary action; select one of the kraken's actions and create a legendary version of the action. You can pick this gift more than once, for each pick the kraken gains another legendary action and you create another legendary action based on one of the kraken's regular actions. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Resisting (requires Enduring).** Add 'The kraken can spend inspiration to restore one use of Legendary Resistance to itself.' as a feature.

**Thrashing Body.** Add *'Roiling Waters.* Water and any mobile surface (such as the deck of a ship) within 120 feet of the kraken counts as difficult terrain as its thrashing body creates waves of tremendous force.' to the kraken's list of features.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The kraken only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If its revised challenge rating is 13 or higher, then raise the kraken's skills, saving throws, to hit modifiers, and escape DCs by 1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Dweller in the deep.** Heat, or a weapon hot enough to scald.

**Transformation.** The Hero might need to be transformed by magical means into a creature that can fight in the water.



## NICOR

Nicoras live on the small islands that dot the two seas, usually one just offshore from the mainland. Most of the time, they appear as seal-like creatures, though longer and narrower than the natural beasts. They frolic in the water, seemingly unconcerned about the powerful waves smashing against the shores.

**Skins and Souls.** Despite their idyllic appearance as simple animals, nicoras are more — sometimes they put aside their seal-skins, grab weapons and armour from hidden caches and decide to go raiding or, sometimes, just a-visiting. In humanoid form, nicoras do not speak, not even to bark like they do in their other form.

During more peaceful times, the nicor may take an ordinary person as a spouse and either stay on the mainland or drag them back to their islands. According to the Old Ways, these unions can be a blessing, representing the joining of two peoples, but the new Church is uncertain if nicoras have souls and what to make of their silent ways.

**Hidden Places.** Each nicor has some chosen hiding spot on land, where they keep their wargear hidden when they are out to their islands, and their skin hidden while they are on the mainland. Legends say that the spear-blade of a nicor is sharp enough to

cut sea dragon hide, but no nicor has ever yielded their weapon for such a purpose, nor has anyone ever seen a nicor in humanoid form fight a dragon.

**Tactics.** In their natural form, nicoras will often use their greater speed to flee; biting only at an enemy if there is no escape route. In humanoid form they're much more aggressive, attacking first with their angons in hope of destroying their enemies' shields and then closing with the enemy and using their spears as a melee weapon. A poorly equipped nicor will use both hands on their weapon in order to get the higher damage results.

**As a Monster.** Living near nicoras can be dangerous, although many communities reach some sort of understanding with their neighbours — nicor raiders rarely attack a community that has one or more nicoras living within it. But if a nicor is rejected, they can sometimes turn bitter and either turn to their native moon magic or necromancers to gain powers.

## BURDENS

**Clumsy.** This nicor is uncoordinated, especially in humanoid form. Reduce its Dexterity to 9 (-1) and humanoid AC to 14 (11 if poorly equipped, see below). Reduce challenge rating by one level.

## NICOR

*Medium monstrosity (shapechanger)*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)

**Armor Class** 13 (natural armour) or 16 (mail corslet, shield, iron-ribbed helm)

**Hit Points** 90 (12d8 + 36)

**Speed** 10 ft, swim 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +3, Con +5

**Skills** Athletics +6, Perception +5, Survival +5

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** does not speak, understands local languages and Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 4 (1, 100 XP)

**Amphibious.** The nicor can breathe air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the nicor's skin is stolen and shown to the nicor (each nicor can recognise its skin on sight and will not be fooled by a duplicate) then the nicor will become defeated and begin to negotiate for the return of its skin. If the nicor starts its turn with less than 45 hit points then it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the nicor becomes defeated.

**Magic Resistance.** The nicor has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Skinchanger.** The nicor can use its action to change into a humanoid form (speed 30 ft, swim 30 ft) or back to its true seal-like form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. In humanoid form, it possesses what appears to be a treated seal-skin. It must have this in its possession to transform back to its seal-like form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is not transformed. It remains in its current form if it dies.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack (Humanoid Form Only).** The nicor makes an attack with its angon and then with its spear or it makes two melee attacks with its spear.

**Bite (Natural Form Only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 +4) piercing damage.

**Angon (Humanoid Form Only).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/30 ft, one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage. Splintering (can destroy shield on critical hit instead of doing damage).

**Spear (Humanoid Form Only).** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft or range 20/30 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage or 8 (1d8 + 4) if held in two hands to make a melee attack.

**Lost Skin.** This nicor has lost their seal-skin and is trapped forever in the shape of a humanoid. Remove the Skinchanger feature from its statblock.

**Poorly Equipped.** This nicor has lost, or never had, most of its wargear. Remove the shield and iron-ribbed helm and reduce AC to 13 (11 if also Clumsy).

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the nicor's natural Armour Class to 12.

## GIFTS

**Evade.** Add *'Evasive.* The nicor only takes half damage from this attack.' to the creature's statblock as a reaction.

**Moon Magic.** The nicor can use its action to perform one of the following effects:

- They can prepare a written message on parchment or by painting runes on stone. To the writer and intended targets the message makes sense, but to all others it seems to be a strange language with strange symbols. The message lasts for 10 days.
- The nicor creates an illusion of an object no bigger than a 5-foot cube. The illusion is not substantial and a character that makes a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check realises it is an illusion. Otherwise it lasts for 1 minute.
- The nicor designates a creature within 30 feet of it. While it maintains concentration for up to 1 minute, it has advantage on the first attack roll on that creature each round.

Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 18 (+4), changing hit points to 102.

**Spy.** Add *'Sneaky.* The nicor has expertise in the Stealth skill.' to the nicor's features and add 'Stealth +5' to its list of skills.

**Swift.** Add either 5 ft to the nicor's base speed or 10 feet to its swim speed.

**Undead.** An undead nicor no longer cares about its skin and transforms between shapes carrying a spectral version of its weapons and armour in humanoid form. It gains *'Undead Fortitude.* If damage reduces the nicor to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the nicor drops to 1 hit point instead.' to its list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The nicor only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If the nicor's revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then all to hit modifiers, skills, saving throws and passive ability scores are improved by +1. If the nicor has *Spy*, the *Stealth* skill is increased by +2.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Skin-thief.** Acquire the nicor's skin.

**Turn of the blade.** Use its own weapons against it.



## ORCNĒAS

Orcnēas are corpse-creatures, the most common of undead in the lands between the two seas. There are the dréag, revenants that have come back from the dead, usually for some particular purpose, but sometimes only because their eternal slumber was disturbed. Similarly the héag are associated with the barrows of the dead, but they are defenders of the dead — warriors whose drive to protect others extends beyond death itself. And, finally, there are the mearcstapa, the undead creatures who go walking into the wilderness, detached from their own history and seeking some purpose in the dark corners of the world.

### DRÉAG

These are revenants, those who return from death, that have arisen again for some purpose. Many are the stories of folk who come back because they have left some uncompleted in life and who finally rest after completing such missions. It's noble for Heroes to assist the dead if the purpose of the dréag is honourable but sometimes the dead rise to answer the call of a greater evil, or to take revenge on the living. In these cases, the Hero must destroy the dead and scatter their bones so that they cannot return.

**Broken and Misguided.** Too often the good reasons that the dead do not rest easily become twisted and malformed by whatever animating force guides the undead creature. They fail to recognise the needs of the living or that the situation has changed since their death or that their purpose is impossible to achieve. But the revenants will continue blindly forward, repeating the same actions over and over again, despite the futility.

**Tactics.** Once they realise the danger from attackers, revenants will cluster together in a semblance of the skirmishing formations

they once employed while alive. If they can take advantage of allies, they will focus on enemies in pairs. Otherwise they attack one by one, without any clear coordination between the revenants.

**As a Monster.** If a revenant is the Monster of the adventure, the chill of the grave will seem to be present everywhere, and it's likely that a Hero will find any nearby gravesites to be disturbed, most often from within. The revenant's purpose will be linked somehow to the settlement's history, but it might take the Hero uncovering secrets before they learn the real reason for the undead's awakening.

### BURDENS

**Cackling.** The revenants constantly make noise, either a bizarre cackle, groaning, or a clattering of bones. They can never surprise an enemy.

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

**Shieldless.** Remove the revenant's Shield Bash action and reduce its AC to 9.

**Unstable.** At the beginning of the revenant's turn, roll 1d6. On a 1 it takes no action or movement this round. On a 2 or higher, it takes its turn as normal. Reduce challenge rating by one step.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is zero and it can still do damage to a Hero, defeating the revenant is worth 10 XP.

### GIFTS

**Brutish.** Add **'Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the revenant hits with it.' and then change the Spear to 9 (2d6 + 2) or 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage and Shield

## REVENANT

Medium undead

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)

**Armor Class** 11 (Shield)

**Hit Points** 26 (4d8 + 8)

**Speed** 20 ft

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the revenant starts its turn without an enemy within 5 feet of it, and more than half of the

revenants that started the combat have been destroyed, the revenant becomes defeated.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The revenant makes an attack with its spear and shield or twice with its spear.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft and range 20/60 ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Bash to 7** (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. Increase the revenant's challenge rating one step.

**Cooperative.** Add *'Pack Tactics*. The revenant has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the revenant's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.' to its list of features. Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Fast.** Add 5 feet to the revenant's speed.

**Relentless in Battle.** Add *'Relentless*. If the revenant takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points it makes a Constitution saving throw with the DC set to 10 or the damage taken, whichever is higher. On a success it drops to 1 hit point instead.' to the revenant's statblock. Increase challenge rating by one step.

**Resilient.** Increase Constitution to 18 (+4), changing hit points to 34.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The revenant only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by two steps.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Location.** Attacking it inside its original burial grounds might be necessary.

**Weapon.** A revenant might be especially susceptible to an ancestral weapon to which it is attached.



## HÉAG

These undead serve as tomb guardians, protecting the barrow or other gravesite against trespassers and robbers. Once warriors that served to protect their people, their sense of duty extends past death. Those that laid them to rest did so in as much ornate armour as possible, to allow them to perform their duties with ease.

### TOMB GUARDIAN

*Medium undead*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

**Armor Class** 20 (Mail hauberk, battle helm, shield)

**Hit Points** 57 (6d8 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Con +7, Wis +4

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 11

**Languages** Those it knew in life

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the tomb guardian is not on its own burial grounds and starts its turn with 28 or fewer hit points it becomes defeated.

**Earthen Power.** If the tomb guardian is inside or in contact with its burial area, it recovers 1d10 hit points at the start of its turn.

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the tomb guardian to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the tomb guardian drops to 1 hit point instead.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The tomb guardian makes two attacks with its sword and one attack with its shield bash.

**Sword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft, one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

#### REACTIONS

**Parry.** The tomb guardian adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the bandit must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

**Dedicated Protectors.** Tomb guardians rarely venture from beyond their gravesite, unless they must seek retribution or recover a stolen item. Few of them trust in the living and few among the living can distinguish between the honourable tomb guardian and a corrupted revenant so they rarely bother to communicate their intentions.

**Memories of Long Ago.** If a Hero comes to a gravesite protected by a tomb guardian and shows the proper respect and performs the correct rituals, then it is possible to speak to a tomb guardian and gain their advice. Unfortunately their memories of life are very dim, unless it is to do with a great battle that they fought or a terrible Monster that they faced.

**Tactics.** Tomb guardians rarely emerge from their gravesite, so they will likely fight defensively, relying on their connections to the grave-soil to restore their power. If they have access to magical powers, they will use them to attack at range if they are threatened. If forced to become aggressive, they still use as much caution as possible, venturing only a short distance away from their gravesite unless they must hunt a thief in order to recover a stolen item.

**As a Monster.** It is rare for tomb guardians to become corrupted, but it is possible that a conflict might arise, especially between a tomb guardian dedicated to the Old Ways and overzealous agents of The Church. Or perhaps a sorcerer has taken control of the guardian and now uses it as a distraction from their other plans.

## BURDENS

**Poorly Equipped.** Remove the tomb guardian's helm and change its armour to a mail byrnie and adjust Armour Class to 17. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Slow to Act.** The tomb guardian has disadvantage on initiative rolls.

**Weaker.** This tomb guardian is less hardy than most. Reduce its Constitution to 16 and its hit points to 67 (6d8 + 18).

## GIFTS

**Desperation Attack.** Add **'Desperate Attack.'** The tomb guardian spends inspiration and attacks a creature that comes within reach with both its sword and shield.' to its reactions.

**Magical Feature.** Choose one of the following features to add to the tomb guardian. You can take this gift more than once. Raise the challenge rating on the guardian the first time you take this gift.

- **Cloaking Mist.** As an action, the tomb guardian creates a 20-foot-radius sphere of fog centred on a point within 120 feet of it. It lasts for up to an hour, a wind of moderate or higher speed disperses it, or the guardian uses another magical feature.

- **Deadly Touch.** As an action, the tomb guardian makes a +4 attack roll against a target within 5 feet. On a hit, the target takes 3d10 necrotic damage.
- **Words of Retribution.** As a reaction to being damaged, the guardian surrounds the attacker with flames if they are within 60 feet. The attacker must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw and takes 2d10 fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. If the attacker is not within range there is no effect.

**Sorcerous Protection.** Add **'Magic Resistance.** The tomb guardian has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.' to its list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Strong.** Increase Strength to 20 and add +2 for to-hit and damage for both Sword and Shield Bash. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The tomb guardian only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by two steps.

**Note:** If the tomb guardian's revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then increase its saving throws (including the one required by Rebuke), skills and to hit modifiers by 1.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Washed clean.** Immersing a tomb guardian in running water until it no longer has any of its burial dirt on it may prove effective.

**Confused priorities.** Causing the Monster to break some parameter of its guardian duties may make it defeatable.



## MEARCSTAPA

March-steppers are those undead who have lost their connection to their burial site and now wander the wilderness. Their bodies, clothing and gear seem faded and mist-like, allowing them to fade into the fogs of the moors. Most of them are tall and gangly, seemingly stretched into a larger shape than their original bodies. Some legends say that this is because they are always reaching up to the heavens to beseech the gods and always being denied.

### MARCH-STEPPER

*Large undead*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 76 (9d10 + 27)

**Speed** 40 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +6, Wis +6

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 13

**Languages** Those it knew in life

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the march-stepper is alone and starts its turn with 21 or less hit points then it becomes defeated.

**Magic Resistance.** The march-stepper has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Mists of the Marches.** The march-stepper uses a bonus action and surrounds itself in a thick fog that is a 10-foot-radius sphere that travels with the creature. The mists heavily obscure the march-stepper.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The march-stepper makes two attacks with its great spear.

**Great Spear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Retaliation.** When a creature within reach makes an attack roll and misses, the march-stepper makes a single attack with its great spear.

**Ceaseless Wanderers.** March-steppers no longer return to their home graves and instead journey great distances in search of new power or an ending to their in-between state. While not unintelligent, they have a hard time communicating with the living, as that world is strange and distant to them and living things cause anger and pain to rise within them.

**Hidden Dangers.** March-steppers cloak themselves with fog, either magical or natural, and sometimes hunt the living for unknown purposes. Legends say that some of them can cloak their true shape, and appear as other sorts of creatures or that they can steal a person's soul with a touch.

**Tactics.** March-steppers use the cover of their fog to surprise their enemies if possible. They also take advantage of their great spear's longer range and their long strides to engage and then retreat from combat without their enemies being able to properly react.

**As a Monster.** If the march-stepper is the Monster of the adventure then the lands will be covered in mist and fog and the people may seem in a constant dream-like state where nothing is ever urgent or completely understood.

### BURDENS

**Smaller.** This march-stepper's size is Medium. Change its hit points to 67 (9d8 + 27).

**Unprotected.** Remove the march-stepper's Magic Resistance feature.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the march-stepper's Armour Class to 15 (natural armour). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Weaker.** This march-stepper is less hardy than most. Reduce its Constitution to 12 and its hit points to 58 (9d10 + 9). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Note:** If the march-stepper's revised challenge rating is 4 or lower, then decrease its saving throws, skills and to hit modifiers by 1.

### GIFTS

**Ambusher.** Add **'Sudden Strike.** If a creature is within 15 ft of the march-stepper and unaware of its presence, the march-stepper can spend inspiration and use its action to automatically grapple the creature (escape DC 15) to the march-stepper's list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Bellicose.** Add **'Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the march-stepper can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.' to the march-stepper's list of features.

**Draining Touch.** Add **'Cold Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage and the march-stepper recovers hit points equal to half the damage done.' to the march-stepper's list of actions.

**False Image.** Add **'Illusory Appearance.** As an action, the march-stepper covers itself and anything it is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes it appear as a creature of similar size and shape. The illusion ends if the march-stepper



stops it with a bonus action or it dies. The illusion does not hold up to physical inspection and a character that makes a visual inspection and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discerns that the march-stepper is disguised.'

**Greater Fog.** Increase the march-stepper's Mists of the Marches to be 30 feet in radius.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 3, and hit points to 102 (12d10 + 36). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The march-stepper only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Alder-bound.** The march-stepper may be bound to a living tree. Destroying the tree, or breaking the bond with magic or prayer, may make the Monster vulnerable.



## WILDEOR

The Hero and Followers may have to confront the dangers of the wilderness. We have provided statblocks for two of the most likely dangers they will encounter: the bear and the wolf, and a few options to modify them, perhaps to model a different creature.

### ARTH (BERA)

Bears appear often in the stories of Heroes as one of the most dangerous wild creatures you can find. And, in truth, a Monstrous bear possesses deadly force and great cleverness.

#### ARTH

*Large beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	19 (+4)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 38 (4d10 + 16)

**Speed** 40 ft, climb 20 ft

**Skills** Athletics +7, Perception +4, Survival +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the bear starts its turn with less than 19 hit points it gains the defeated condition.

**Keen Smell.** The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) slashing damage.

**Names Are Bad Luck.** Few people call bears by their proper name (Arth) since that is believed to summon them. Instead they just call them 'bera' (the brown one) and hope for the best.

**Throwbacks.** The brown bears of the Whale Road still carry some memories of their forebears and occasionally an echo of the massive cave bears of old will be born and it will be more hungry and more deadly than all the others.

**Tactics.** Bears will lash out at whoever gets the closest to it. They are unlikely to pursue a fleeing foe.

**As a Monster.** A few breeds of ancient cave bears might possess sufficient power to attain a Monstrous form, at least when they

are within their own caves or during a storm. Other Monster Bears might be the result of corruptive magic, a special collar, or other artefact that gives it such power.

#### BURDENS

**Clumsy.** The bear has a Dexterity score of 6, providing a -2 modifier.

**Young.** A young bear has 19 (2d10 + 8) hit points and Strength of 16 (+3), meaning its weapons are +5 to hit and reduce damage by 2. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

#### GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 12 (+1).

**Cave Bear.** Increase size to Huge and Hit Dice to 8, raising hit points to 84 (8d12 + 32). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Desperation Attack.** Add '*Desperate Attack*. The bear spends inspiration and attacks a creature that comes within reach with both its bite and claws.' to its reactions.

**Fearsome.** Add a reaction to the bear: '*Fearsome Roar*. After a missed melee attack roll, the bear can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 13 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of the bear for 1 minute. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.' Increase the bear's challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the bear's Defeatable feature. The bear only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its to hit modifier goes up by 1 and the DC for Fearsome becomes 14.

#### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Insatiable.** A Monstrous bear may be susceptible to things it eats, driven by its impossible appetites.

**Play dead.** A bear might be tricked by pretending to be dead, as part of a larger scheme to bring it to a place, or near an artefact.



## WOLF

This is not the slinky grey predecessor of the common dog that hunts only at need, in organised packs. Instead it is the night-monstrous black-furred inhabitant of the darkest parts of the Forest, emerging to slaughter livestock and steal babes from cradles.

### EVIL WOLF

*Large beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10)

**Speed** 50 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +4

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Defeatable.** An evil wolf will not relent against a foe unless it starts its turn with less than 10 hit points, in which case it gains the defeated condition.

**Keen Smell.** The evil wolf has advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

#### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

**Loners.** Unlike its more common cousins, evil wolves usually operate alone, unwilling to trust even their own kind to fairly divide the spoils of an attack or not to betray an injured companion.

**Denizens of the Forest.** Evil wolves prefer the deep parts of the Forest and are rarely found troubling the coastal kingdoms that a Hero often visits. But sometimes a stronger foe will take an evil wolf as a pet or servant. Or a monstrous wolf might expand their search for new victims or seek some new conquest.

**Tactics.** The evil wolf will use its superior speed, if possible, to move into and out of combat. It can be clever enough to realise which creatures it can safely move away from and which ones it will better to stay close to in order to attack again.

**As a Monster.** If the evil wolf is the Monster of the adventure, you can presage the appearance of the wolf by allowing the Hero or Followers to hear the howls of its servants in the distance.

## BURDENS

**Slow.** Reduce the wolf's speed to 30 feet.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the wolf's Armour Class to 13. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 18 (+4) and Armour Class to 15 (natural armour).

**Evade.** Add *'Evasive.* The wolf only takes half damage from this attack.' to the creature's statblock as a reaction.

**Fierce.** Add *'Multiattack.* The evil wolf makes a bite and claw attack.' to the creature's stat block as an action. If this is the only gift that affects challenge rating, then increase challenge by 1.

**Swift Response.** Add *'Quick.* Spend inspiration to make a single attack at the end of another creature's turn.' to the wolf's list of reactions.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 3, and hit points to 60 (8d10 + 16). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the evil wolf's Defeatable feature. The evil wolf only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its saving throws, skills and to hit values all increase by 1.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Pack Animal.** Some Monstrous evil wolves might still have a powerful connection to its pack, which gives it power. Severing that connection might be necessary.

**Tooth and Claw.** It may not be possible to defeat this force of nature with mannish weapons. It must be fought bare-handed.



## WYRMAS

This section covers both *snacas* — land-bound serpents and *merenædre* — fresh-water serpents.

### SNACA

The serpent as a monstrous entity has a long tradition, especially in the stories contained in the book of the Church. Some are dangerous because of their venom or their crushing loops, others because of their tricky and honeyed words.

#### SERPENT

*Huge beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 95 (10d12 + 30)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Con +5, Wis +3

**Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the serpent starts its turn with less than 10 hit points it gains the defeated condition.

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the serpent can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

**Expertise.** The serpent doubles its proficiency bonus for Athletics and Stealth (included above).

#### ACTIONS

**Constrict.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 ft, one Large size or smaller target. *Hit:* the creature is grappled (escape DC 19). On subsequent turns, a grappled creature takes 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

**Swallow.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one Medium size or smaller target. *Hit:* the target is swallowed. On subsequent turns, a swallowed creature takes 10 (3d6) acid damage. A conscious creature can attack the soft insides of the serpent, piercing weapons have advantage on their attack rolls, bludgeoning weapons have disadvantage. There is no penalty for darkness.

**Hidden Threats.** Serpents prefer to remain hidden for as long as possible, perhaps in long grass, caves, rotten hollows of trees, underneath the leaf litter of a forest or another suitable hiding place. They then strike out, surprising their target.

**Cult of the Earth.** As creatures in constant contact with the ground (or, especially in the case of horned serpents, those who dig through the earth), serpents are regarded in a nebulous fashion — a creature that buries itself, only to re-emerge alive again. Legends tell of undead serpents made of the bones of other creatures and reanimated by the power of the earth itself.

**Tactics.** As mentioned above, serpents often hide to surprise their foes. They also use their Aggressive feature to attack a foe that doesn't realise it is in danger. They will swallow dangerous looking foes, hoping to destroy them with their internal acid.

**As a Monster.** If the serpent serves as the Monster of the adventure, the land might be filled with rumours of an unseen foe that stalks anyone unwise enough to travel alone, or an enemy that attacks the livestock. A beguiling serpent might even have a village or at least a family farm under control and frightened folk might feel forced to send the Hero to their doom.

#### BURDENS

**Slow.** Reduce the serpent's speed by 5 feet and remove its Aggressive feature. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Young.** Reduce the serpent's hit dice by 4, its size category by one step and adjust its hit points — 51 (6d10 + 18). It can constrict Medium or smaller creatures and swallow Small or Tiny creatures. Reduce its challenge rating by 1.

#### GIFTS

**Ambusher.** Add **'Sudden Strike.** If a creature is within 15 ft of the serpent and unaware of its presence, the serpent can spend inspiration and use its action to automatically grapple the creature and constrict it.' to the serpent's list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Beguiling.** Add a language to the serpent and increase Intelligence to 10 (+0). Add **'Enchant.** The serpent targets a creature within 60 feet that shares a language with it. The creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the serpent. The serpent can suggest a course of action that would sound reasonable to the creature (no self-harm or dangerous activities). A creature that fails the saving throw spends the next 10 minutes attempting to follow that suggestion. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw if it takes damage or another creature with a shared language spends their action arguing against the suggestion.' to the serpent's list of actions.

**Burrowing.** Add a burrow speed to the serpent's normal speed (equal to or lower than the standard speed). Many burrowing serpents also have a Horn, see below.

**Chameleon-like.** Add **'Chameleon.** The scales of the serpent change colour depending on its environment. This gives the serpent advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.' to the serpent's list of features.

**Envenomed.** Remove the serpent's Constrict and Swallow actions. Add **'Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one Medium size or smaller target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) poison damage.'** to its list of actions.

**Horned.** The serpent has a bone horn as part of its facial structure, often used to aid in digging. Add **'Horn. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.'** to the serpent's list of actions.

**Undead.** By mighty rituals the serpents of the earth can cross back from death's threshold. Change the serpent's type to undead, it becomes immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition, and add **'Undead Fortitude.** If the serpent takes damage that would reduce it to 0 hit points it makes a Constitution saving throw with the DC set to 10 or the damage taken, whichever is higher. On a success it drops to 1 hit point instead.'

 to the serpent's features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. Any attack on the serpent does only 1 point of damage maximum. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If the serpent's revised challenge rating is 5 or higher, then its to hit modifiers and saving throws go up by 1.

### REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Gulped.** If a creature allows themselves to be swallowed, the Hero can do normal damage. Once the serpent takes 48 points of damage internally it begins to thrash around and expose its wounds, allowing attacks against it to do normal damage.

**A Slipped Scale.** The serpent might have a weak spot on its belly and a Hero that buries themselves and waits for the serpent to crawl over them can attack that spot repeatedly, allowing them to do regular damage.



## MERENÆDRE

These are serpents that live in lakes, with only one such creature for each body of water. They're very territorial — some of them are protective of the locals, but many more have made some sort of arrangement for monthly or weekly sacrifices of food and possibly valuables.

### LAKE SERPENT

*Huge beast*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

**Armor Class** 19 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 172 (15d12 + 75)

**Speed** 15 ft, swim 30 ft

**Saving Throws** Con +8, Wis +4

**Skills** Deception +3, Insight +4, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Amphibious.** The lake serpent can breathe air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the lake serpent starts its turn out of water or grappled, it becomes defeated.

#### ACTIONS

**Swallow.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft, one Medium size or smaller target. *Hit:* the target is swallowed. On subsequent turns, a swallowed creature takes 14 (4d6) acid damage. A conscious creature can attack the soft insides of the serpent, piercing weapons have advantage on their attack rolls, bludgeoning weapons have disadvantage. There is no penalty for darkness.

**Tail-lash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft, one Large size or smaller target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage and the target must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw or become prone.

**Water-blast (Recharge 5-6).** The serpent shoots forth an intense blast of water in a 50-foot line. All characters must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw. On a failure the creature takes 14 (2d6 + 7) bludgeoning damage and becomes prone. On a success the creature takes half damage and remains standing.

#### REACTIONS

**Cloud of Mud.** The serpent can spend inspiration to impose disadvantage on an attack roll.

**Manipulations and Magic.** Many of the lake serpents of legend can speak and are known for ensorcelling others. Other legends tell of their ability to work even greater magics.

**Tactics.** A lake serpent will often try to negotiate with potential foes and then hit them with an initial Water-blast if necessary. While waiting for that ability to recharge, it will use its tail lash and any magic it has. It rarely swallows foes, unless it believes it is a safe option.

**As a Monster.** If the lake serpent will be the Monster, the reputation of the serpent may be widely known and it might even command the local area. There are sure to be rumours and legends considering its defeat.

### BURDENS

**Mute.** Reduce the lake serpent's Intelligence by 2. The lake serpent speaks no languages, though it might still understand one or more languages. (Cannot be combined with the Beguiling gift.)

**Short Tailed.** Remove the lake serpent's tail attack. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the lake serpent's Armour Class to 17 (natural armour). Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Young.** Reduce the serpent's hit dice by 4, its size category by one step and adjust its hit points to 115 (11d10 + 55).

### GIFTS

**Adroit.** Increase Dexterity to 18 (+4).

**Beguiling.** Add **'Enchant.** The lake serpent targets a creature within 60 feet that shares a language with it. The creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the serpent. The serpent can suggest a course of action that would sound reasonable to the creature (no self-harm or dangerous activities). A creature that fails the saving throw spends the next 10 minutes attempting to follow that suggestion. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw if it takes damage or another creature with a shared language spends their action arguing against the suggestion.' to the lake serpent's list of actions.

**Evade.** Add **'Evasive.** The lake serpent only takes half damage from this attack.' to the creature's statblock as a reaction.

**Magical Feature.** Choose one of the following features to add to the lake serpent. You can take this gift more than once, raising the serpent's challenge rating by 1 for every three magical effects. The lake serpent uses Wisdom for these features.

- **Burst Lappings.** As an action, the serpent selects a creature within 60 feet and makes a ranged spell attack. On a hit, the target deals only half damage with weapon attacks that use Strength for the next minute or until the serpent uses another magical feature.
- **Rafter-plough/Mouse-kin.** As an action the serpent causes a creature within 30 feet to become larger or smaller. If the creature is unwilling, it can resist with a DC 15 Constitution

saving throw. Everything the creature wears and carries changes size with it, any dropped items immediately return to their normal size. These effects last for one minute or when the serpent uses another magical feature.

**Rafter-plough.** The target's size doubles in all dimensions, and its weight is multiplied by eight. This growth increases its size by one category — from Medium to Large, for example. If there isn't enough room for the target to double its size, the creature attains the maximum possible size in the space available. Until the spell ends, the target also has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. The target's weapons also grow to match its new size. While these weapons are enlarged, the target's attacks with them deal 1d4 extra damage.

**Mouse-kin.** The target's size is halved in all dimensions, and its weight is reduced to one-eighth of normal. This reduction decreases its size by one category — from Medium to Small, for example. Until the spell ends, the target also has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. The target's weapons also shrink to match its new size. While these weapons are reduced, the target's attacks with them deal 1d4 less damage (this can't reduce the damage below 1).

- **Hand Stay.** The serpent uses its action and chooses a person that it can see within range. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be paralysed for one minute. At the end of each of its turns, the creature can make another Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.
- **Sight Shield.** As an action, the serpent becomes invisible, along with everything it is wearing and carrying. The effect lasts one hour, or if the serpent attacks a creature or uses another magical effect, it ends.
- **Sky-hammer.** As an action the serpent causes a painfully intense ringing noise to emit from an area within 60 feet of it. Each creature within 10 feet of the point must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 3d8 thunder damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.
- **Lie Killer.** As an action, the serpent creates a magical zone that guards against deception in a 15-foot radius sphere centred on a point of its choice within 60 feet. Until the spell ends, a creature that enters the spell's area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, a creature can't speak a deliberate lie while in the radius. The serpent knows whether each creature succeeds or fails on its saving throw. An affected creature is aware of the effect and can thus avoid answering questions to which it would normally respond with a lie. Such a creature can be evasive in its answers if it remains within the boundaries of the truth.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 3, and hit points to 207 (18d12 + 90). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The lake serpent only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** If its revised challenge rating is 9 or higher, then improve all saving throws, skills and to hit modifiers by 1.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Driven ashore.** Forcing them onto land perhaps to expose a weak area.

**Hard Breath.** The Hero needs to hold their breath for an impossible time.

**Eeltrap.** Trapping and binding the serpent may make it susceptible to blows.



## WYRMEYNNES

There are many varieties of dragons and occasional confusion between breeds — a dragon with massive wings who enjoys flying might be called a Lyftfloga by those that have not yet seen it breathe fire yet (a Ligdraca), and there is plenty of confusion from common folk on the distinctions between sea dragons and lake dragons and also lake serpents. We present four different types of dragons here, though there are certainly others and locals may confuse the names in any case.

### COMMON DRAGON BURDENS AND GIFTS

As a general rule, while dragons are a broad category, they are more alike than different and thus we've provided some common burdens and gifts that can be given to any dragon.

Each specific dragon breed entry provides additional burdens and gifts specific to that kind of dragon.

#### BURDENS

**Cautious.** The dragon has had unfortunate experiences with something in the past; choose a common sort of terrain feature, weapon, or combat technique. If the dragon encounters such a situation again, it must succeed at a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the area/creature for 1 minute.

**Injured.** The dragon has taken some sort of permanent damage from a previous enemy. Adjust its stats slightly, for example: -10 feet for its ground speed for a game leg or from its flying speed for a broken and badly healed wing; disadvantage on perception checks for a destroyed eye or ear; or -1 to its Armour Class for an exposed bit of soft skin.

**Mute.** Reduce the dragon's Intelligence by 2 and reduce its Intelligence saving throw and any appropriate skills by -1 as well. The dragon speaks no languages, though it might still understand one or more languages.

**Young.** Reduce the dragon's hit dice by 4, its size category by one step and adjust its hit points accordingly. Remove Frightful Presence. Reduce its Strength and Wisdom scores by 4 and reduce any appropriate saving throws and skills by 2 as well. Reduce challenge rating by two steps.

#### GIFTS

**Beguiling.** Add *'Enchant.* The dragon targets a creature within 60 feet that shares a language with it. The creature must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed by the dragon. The dragon can suggest a course of action that would sound reasonable to the creature (no self-harm or dangerous activities). A creature that fails the saving throw spends the next 10 minutes attempting to follow that suggestion. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw if it takes damage or another creature with a shared language spends their action arguing against the suggestion.' to the dragon's list of actions.

**Bellicose.** Add *'Aggressive.* As a bonus action, the dragon can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.' to the dragon's list of features.

**Enduring.** Add *'Legendary Resistance (3/Day).* If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.' Increase the dragon's challenge rating by 1.

**Impervious.** The dragon's natural armour provides it immunity to all non-magical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing damage. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Renowned.** The dragon gains 1 legendary action; select one of the dragon's actions and create a legendary version of the action. You can pick this gift more than once, for each pick the dragon gains another legendary action and you create another legendary action based on one of the dragon's regular actions. Increase challenge rating by 1 if the legendary action does damage.







## LIGDRACA

Fire dragons are some of the most fearsome foes in the Lands Between the Two Seas, their ability to fly, breathe fire and terrible physical strength means that only Heroes can oppose them.

**A Fire Dragon's Lair.** Fire dragons prepare their lairs in mountainous terrain, preferring areas where there are hot springs, geysers or other signs of geological activity. A fire dragon that nests in a dormant volcano may cause, through its own internal heat, for the volcano to stir once more.

**Lair Actions.** If the fire dragon has one or more legendary actions, it can also benefit from lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the fire dragon can cause one of the following effects:

- A jet of superheated water or gasses erupts, hitting a single creature. They must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d6 fire or acid damage.
- The chamber fills with noxious vapours, everyone other than the dragon must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of the round.

**Regional Effects.** The lair of a fire dragon is cloaked with sulfurous vapours and the permeating smell of burnt charcoal.

Any plant life is stunted and animals are scarce. If the fire dragon is slain, these effects fade out in a month's time.

**Tactics.** The fire dragon will attempt to deal with its enemies as a group first, either by using Frightful Presence or its Fire Breath. It then will focus its attacks on the Hero, recognising them as the most dangerous threat.

**As a Monster.** If a fire dragon serves as the Monster of the adventure, the area of desolation around its lair will be larger, and all local people will live in fear of the dragon's wrath. But the dragon itself is rarely seen, unless hunting. It prefers instead to remain within its lair, resting on its gathered hoard of treasure.

## BURDENS

**Meek.** Remove the dragon's Frightful Presence. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

## GIFTS

**Dangerous Wings.** Add another legendary action to an existing legendary action. Add **'Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions)**. The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.'

## FIRE DRAGON

*Huge dragon*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	10 (+0)	24 (+7)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 243 (18d12 + 126)

**Speed** 40 ft, climb 40 ft, fly 60 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +5, Con +12, Wis +6, Cha +9

**Skills** Deception +14, Insight +6, Perception +11, Stealth +5

**Damage Immunities** fire

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 21

**Languages** Ancients, Draconic, English, Latin, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 15 (13, 000 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the dragon starts its turn with less than half of its maximum hit points, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become defeated. The dragon has advantage on the saving throw if its fire breath has been recharged or unused.

**Swoop.** If the dragon uses at least 30 ft of its flight movement it can make its bite attack with advantage.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon can use either its Frightful Presence or Tail. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 18 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 the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6).** The dragon exhales fire in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 56 (16d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Scorching Flames.** Upgrade the dragon's Fire Breath to do 70 (20d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw.

**Strong.** Increase Strength to 30 (+10). All melee attacks become +15 to hit and increase damage on each of them by 2. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Swift.** Add 20 feet to either the dragon's base speed or its flying speed.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The fire dragon only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note: If the dragon's revised challenge rating is 17 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +14 for all attacks (+16 if Strong) and all saving throws are increased by 1. Deception and Perception add +2, other skills add +1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Dampener.** Somehow quenching its internal fire.



## LYFTFLOGA

Air dragons are the masters of the earthly heavens and some legends say that they can even reach other worlds with their wings. They roost in the highest places of the land, only emerging to hunt livestock or perhaps to offer their advice to a chosen leader.

### AIR DRAGON

*Huge dragon*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	23 (+6)	24 (+7)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 135 (10d12 + 70)

**Speed** 20 ft, climb 20 ft, fly 80 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +11, Con +12, Wis +10

**Skills** Deception +6, Insight +15, Legends +7, Perception +15, Stealth +11

**Damage Immunities** cold, psychic

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 25

**Languages** all, telepathy 120 ft

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Defeatable.** If the air dragon starts its turn with 67 or fewer hit points and two or more active enemies it becomes defeated.

**Flyby.** The air dragon doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Swoop.** If the air dragon uses at least 30 ft of its flight movement it can make a bite attack with advantage.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon can use either its Frightful Presence or Tail. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 14 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 the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Wise Consultation.** The knowledge of the air dragons is legendary and from their high perches they seem much of what passes in the world. A Hero might choose to venture a climb into their territory in order to consult with one. However they must not forget to bring rich and wise gifts to the dragon, otherwise it will refuse the meeting.

**An Air Dragon's Lair.** Air dragons lair in caves at the tops of mountains, making a cave when an appropriate one cannot be found.

**Lair Actions.** If the air dragon has one or more legendary actions, it can also benefit from lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the air dragon can cause one of the following effects:

- Freezing air moves through a passage, covering an area of 20 feet by 20 feet. Each creature in the area other than the dragon must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 2d6 cold damage.
- An ice shard falls from the roof towards a creature of the dragon's choice. It has a +10 to hit and does 1d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage if it does hit.

**Regional Effects.** The mountain peak around the dragon's lair is constantly obscured by a snow storm and high winds whip around the mountain in a circular pattern. These effects cease as soon as the dragon dies.

**Tactics.** An air dragon that has decided to fight will use its superior mobility to its advantage, flying into reach in order to make attacks and then flying back. It will use Frightful Presence and its breath weapon (if present) to break up groups and then try to concentrate on the greatest threat first. If it thinks it has the upper hand, it might allow the enemy to surrender so that it doesn't face an extended combat.

**As a Monster.** If the air dragon is the Monster of the adventure you can presage the appearance of the air dragon by having the Hero see it from a great distance high above or by describing the great heights surrounding the meadhall or other important places.

#### BURDENS

**Awkward.** Reduce the dragon's Charisma to 9 (-1) and Deception to +4. Reduce DC for Frightful Presence to 12.

**Meek.** Remove the dragon's Frightful Presence. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

#### GIFTS

**Breath Weapon.** Add *'Frost Breath (Recharge 5-6)*. The dragon exhales icy air in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 65 (18d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.' to its list of actions. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Dangerous Wings.** Add another legendary action to an existing legendary action. Add **'Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions).** The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.'

**Detective.** Add a legendary action and the option **'Detect.** The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.' to its list of legendary actions.

**Nimbleness.** Add **'Nimble.** The air dragon's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice its Dexterity modifier.' and change its armour class to 22. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Sorcerous Protection.** Add **'Magic Resistance.** The air dragon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.' to its list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Swift.** Add 20 feet to either the dragon's base speed or its flying speed.

**Undefeated.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The air dragon only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** *If the dragon's revised challenge rating is 17 or higher, then its to hit modifier becomes +12 for all attacks and all saving throws are increased by 1. Insight and Perception add +2, other skills add +1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Grounded.** Binding it to the ground might dispel the magic.

**Wise Words.** An air dragon can be convinced to move on if it there are better hunting grounds elsewhere.



## SAEDRACAN

Sea dragons are the only dragons that do not fly at all, instead gracefully swimming through the ocean water. Some seem not to have wings at all, others still do, but use them only underwater, to steer their way between the waves.

**Out on the Ocean.** Sea dragons are rarely seen near land and those folk who do not sail the Whale Road are convinced that the tales of the sailors are just exaggerations of the salt-water lake dragons. But sea dragons do exist, spending most of their days hunting sharks and whales beneath the waves, or chasing down unlucky nicoras that venture too far from their island sanctuaries. And they do not begrudge themselves a nice ship's worth of sailors from time to time.

**A Sea Dragon's Lair.** Sea dragons prefer the same sort of lairs as kraken do (wrecked ships and sea caves), and a battle between a kraken and a sea dragon for a particularly nice lair can be an amazing and daunting sight.

**Lair Actions.** If the sea dragon has one or more legendary actions, it can also benefit from lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the sea dragon can cause one of the following effects:

- A vortex of water forms and each creature in a 20-foot radius must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be shifted 20 feet in a random direction.
- A wave of numbing coldness affects up to three creatures, all of whom have to be within 30 feet of each other. They must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 1d12 cold damage.

**Regional Effects.** It is very cold around a sea dragon's lair and also tempestuous. If the sea dragon is slain these effects subside after a few days.

**Tactics.** Proudful creatures, a sea dragon may rely more on its Frightful Presence (and Fearsome Roar, if available) than is wise. It also may Ram a troublesome Hero. But once it takes a little bit of damage, it will begin to be more cautious and make use of its Lightning Breath and be wary of closing with a large group of warriors.

**As a Monster.** If the sea dragon is the Monster of the adventure then the storms and frigid water of the sea dragon's lair will be the legends of sailors throughout the region and perhaps the most ready way to find the dragon.

## SEA DRAGON

*Huge dragon*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	20 (+5)	26 (+8)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 116 (8d12 + 64)

**Speed** 40 ft, climb 40 ft, swim 60 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +12, Wis +5, Cha +4

**Skills** Perception +9, Stealth +9

**Damage Immunities** cold

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 19

**Languages** Ancients, Draconic, English, Latin, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Amphibious.** The dragon can breathe both air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the dragon starts its turn with 57 or fewer hit points, it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become defeated. The dragon has advantage on the saving throw if its lightning breath is available.

**Ram.** If the dragon uses at least 30 ft of its swim movement it can make its bite attack with advantage.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon can use either its Frightful Presence or Tail. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) cold damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 15 ft, one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

**Frightful Presence.** Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 14 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 the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

**Lightning Breath (Recharge 5–6).** The dragon exhales lightning in a 90-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## BURDENS

**Breathless.** The dragon does not have its Lightning Breath. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Focused.** Remove the dragon's Multiattack action. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the dragon's armour class to 14.

## GIFTS

**Fearsome.** Add a reaction to the dragon: *'Fearsome Roar.* After a missed melee attack roll, the dragon can roar at the attacker. If the attacker fails a DC 14 Charisma saving throw it is frightened of the dragon for 1 minute. At the end of its turn, the creature can repeat the saving throw to end the effect.' Increase the dragon's challenge rating by 1.

**Sorcerous Protection.** Add *'Magic Resistance.* The sea dragon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.' to its list of features. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Swift.** Add 20 feet to either the dragon's base speed or its swim speed.

**Tough.** Increase Hit Dice by 3, and hit points to 159 (11d12 + 88). Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The sea dragon only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

**Note:** *If the dragon's revised challenge rating is 13 or higher, then increase its saving throws (including the one required by Fearsome Roar), skills and to hit modifiers by 1.*

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Beached.** The sea dragon might be defeated by moving it onto land,

**Foe's Weapon.** The spear of a nicor might wound a sea dragon.



## YTHGEWINNES

Lake dragons are some of the smallest kindreds of dragons, perhaps due to their tendency to lair in even relatively small lakes. They are fierce enemies of the Merenædre, since they both fight over the same prime territories. Such combats can be a dangerous spectacle to behold, and usually don't improve the situation of the locals, since lake dragons are just as greedy and territorial as lake serpents.

### LAKE DRAGON

*Large dragon*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armour)

**Hit Points** 168 (16d10 + 80)

**Speed** 40 ft, swim 40 ft, fly 20 ft

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Con +9, Wis +6, Cha +8

**Skills** Deception +8, Insight +5, Perception +5

**Damage Immunities** cold

**Senses** blindsight 120 ft, passive Perception 15

**Languages** Ancients, Draconic, English, Latin, Trader's Tongue

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Amphibious.** The dragon can breathe both air and water.

**Defeatable.** If the dragon starts its turn out of the water or with 83 or less hit points, it becomes defeated.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft, one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft, one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d4 + 6) slashing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft, one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

**Fog Breath (Recharge 5–6).** The dragon exhales a thick fog in a cloud with a radius of 60 feet and height of 20 feet with itself as the centrepiece. The area is heavily obscured for all other creatures than the dragon.

#### REACTIONS

**Retaliation.** When a creature makes an attack against the dragon, it can make an attack against a creature within range. It can choose between bite, claws, or tail.

**Smaller Wings.** Lake dragons have small swept-back wings that they usually keep so close to their body that they might appear

nonexistent. They can fly, but rarely consider it an efficient form of transportation, unless they're trying to flee a ground-based enemy.

**Lake Dragon Lair.** Lake dragons usually make their lairs in the deepest part of their lake, or perhaps in a suitably sized underwater cavern if the lake has flooded the local caves as well.

**Lair Actions.** If the lake dragon has one or more legendary actions, it can also benefit from lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing ties), the lake dragon can cause one of the following effects:

- The water around the Hero(es) becomes extraordinary cold, causing 1d6 cold damage at the start of their turns.
- Small fish swarm around the Hero(es), giving them disadvantage on attack rolls for the remainder of the round.

**Regional Effects.** The lake seems to shimmer with silver and gold each sunrise and sunset, this effect ends within a week after the lake dragon is defeated.

**Tactics.** Lake dragons will attempt to use their fog breath to prevent Heroes and Followers from being able to attack it, then dart in to make a series of attacks. They also react quickly to even missed attacks, using their Retaliation feature (and any Legendary Actions) to act even when it is not their turn.

**As a Monster.** If a lake dragon will be the Monster for the adventure, cold mists will lie over every lake in the region, and the locals will tell of gold and silver treasures lying at the bottom of the lake, guarding by a fearsome monster. There might even be arrangements made to feed the dragon or bribe it to leave them alone.

### BURDENS

**Focused.** Remove the Multiattack action from the dragon. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Slow.** Reduce either the dragon's regular or swim speed by 20 ft.

**Vulnerable.** Reduce the dragon's natural armour class to 13. Reduce challenge rating by 1.

**Note:** If the dragon's revised challenge rating is 8 or lower, then reduce its saving throws, skills and to hit modifiers by 1.

### GIFTS

**Caustic Cloud.** The dragon has learned the trick of adding its stomach acids to its fog cloud. When the dragon exhales the cloud and each time a creature starts its turn in the cloud or enters the cloud during its turn, it takes 3 (1d6) acid damage.

**Frightful.** Add **'Frightful Presence'**. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 16 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 the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.' to the lake dragon's list of features.

**Great Size.** Change the dragon's size to Huge and add 2 Hit Dice, for a total of 207 (18d12 + 90) hit points. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Nimbleness.** Add *Nimble*. The lake dragon's armour class is equal to 10 plus twice its Dexterity modifier.' and change its armour class to 20. Increase challenge rating by 1.

**Undefeatable.** Remove the Defeatable feature. The lake dragon only takes 1 point of damage from any attack. Increase challenge rating by 2.

*Note:* If the dragon's revised challenge rating is 13 or higher, then increase its saving throws, skills and to hit modifiers by 1.

## REMOVING THE UNDEFEATABLE FEATURE

**Cloud in a Bottle.** Capturing its fog breath in a vessel.

**Fear the Bite.** A special weapon made from a lake serpent's tooth.



## YLFES AND DWEORHAS: ELVES AND DWARFS

Elves and dwarfs are strange and unique within the Age of Heroes. They do not easily fit into the category of foes. And while an elf or dwarf might perform the role of capital-M Monster, they possess some unique features which set them aside in their own category, and cannot be easily represented by generalised stat blocks, and so we've chosen not to present stat blocks for them.

To the people of the Whale Road, elves and dwarfs are mysterious, often sinister forces of nature. They are not mortal creatures, and it is well known they cannot die in the way mortals die: they occupy a space somewhere between gods and mortals. They are considered "magical" or otherworldly: almost everyone has a story about a thing an elf or dwarf did, but very few people have actually seen an elf or dwarf first hand.

Both elves and dwarfs are shape shifters. They can appear in a huge range of forms, though dwarfs in the common imagination tend to be more consistent in their appearance. Both peoples are incredibly hard to sum up or even understand.

Such creatures work best as unique aspects of an adventure's plot and encounters, rather than as direct adversaries to be battled, and if any single word could sum up these strange creatures it would be "other".

There are certain features both elves and dwarfs hold in common:

- They are mysterious
- They are shape-shifters
- They are tremendously old, but do not age
- They cannot be killed, at least by normal people
- They possess skills beyond those attainable by humans
- They may appear in mannish forms, or as forces of nature
- They may appear beautiful or ugly but never in-between
- They love to set down rules and riddles
- They always have an agenda, most often selfish
- They might help, oppose, or be entirely ambivalent to a Hero
- They have exceptionally long memories and a vengeful nature
- They vary tremendously in power
- They have their own societies which are entirely unknown to humans

### OF ELVES

Elves are frequently considered to be spirits of nature or the elements, who can take human-like form, and each has their own mysterious and capricious agenda. Elves can appear as tall slender humans with an air of mysterious grace, or they can appear as grumpy, diminutive forms, depending on their personal power.

A barn-elf might look after a farmstead, if it is well treated by the people who live there, bringing them good luck, dry firewood and plentiful vegetable harvests, in return for daily bread and milk. It will never be seen, though occasionally it may leave its belongings, particularly its red cloth cap, around the farmstead to make its presence felt.

Other, more powerful elves dwell in the wild places off the world, within rocks or trees, and have little to do with humans. They might bring wind or rain, and make crops grow. Others are mysterious and inscrutable noble spirits of the deep forest who might grant boons in return for service. Such elves will appear as willowy, smoke-like figures, sometimes in bedecked in ancient garb. Another type of elf might inhabit a person's blood, cursing them to ill health until driven out with the right words, herbs and salves.

- An elf might be personified as a mannish figure, but may spend equal time in other forms, such as animals or glowing lights, or being entirely invisible.
- An elf might be the cause of disease, either by inflicting a curse-like illness or by literally inhabiting a person's blood.
- An elf might cause nightmares.
- An elf might cause bad luck, crop failure, or set milk to curdle.
- Elves are often considered the root cause of things which are hard to understand.
- An elf might appear as a human when it suits its needs.
- An elf might use humans for entertainment.
- The magnitude of the effect an elf has on a person seems to mirror that person's own power.
- Elves can be manipulated to some degree with the right words, actions, and herbs.
- Elves work to mysterious, unknowable rules of their own devising.

### OF DWARFS

In their dealings with humans, dwarfs are most often appear as wily craftspeople. Sometimes they appear slender, more often extremely burly and muscular. They are usually small of stature, presumably because they live underground, crouched in potholes and chasms.

- Dwarfs live under the ground, and are concerned with matters subterranean: metal, and death
- Dwarfs tend to relate to human beings better than elves
- Dwarfs are canny makers and crafters, who make the most highly-prized wargear
- Dwarfs make deals, and are interested in wealth and prestige
- Dwarfs are collectors
- Dwarfs are often jealous of other dwarfs
- Dwarfs have a hot temper
- Dwarfs sometimes appear ruddy of complexion, or with entirely black skin.

## IN GAME TERMS

- Elves and Dwarfs cannot be killed, they can only driven off or have their physical bodies temporarily destroyed. A transgression for which they will surely seek revenge.
- They exist to serve the story, rather than presenting a consistent, categorised “species”.
- They are so varied in form, especially elves, that the GM can use them however they want in a given adventure, and there is no need for them to fit any consistent form or continuity.
- Dwarfs are not necessary short, burly, bearded fellows, and elves are not really tall slender nature guardians. However, these archetypes to some extent have their roots in Old English myth, and in your game it might help to draw on these later archetypes to aid player understanding.

## ELVES AND DWARFS IN HISTORY

We are all so very used to the well-categorised elves and “dwarves” of fantasy fiction, that the Anglo-Saxon versions can seem very confusing. We don't really know how an Anglo-Saxon would view these beings. Some scholars posit that they would see elves and dwarfs as the same kind of creature. Did they believe in their literal existence? Were they a more symbolic embodiment of some long-forgotten belief? Or were they simply part of a good story? We just don't know. There is some evidence that they are related to the Aesir and Vanir families of Norse Gods, though this seems to come about largely after the time of the Anglo-Saxons, and like so much of our knowledge of the era was recorded by Christians, rather than those who directly believed in such things.

Both elves and dwarfs in later folklore fit the pattern of “the wise little people” who live in mounds or under the earth. Indeed, the word “gnome” has its roots the greek

gnosis, or knowledge. Garden gnomes retain the red hats of their murderous folkloric ancestors, whose fierceness has diminished over time.

A common theory is that both elves and dwarfs became small as part of the conversion to Christianity—being the old gods, or the representatives of an old way of life that has shrunk and disappeared beneath the ground. Retained in folk memory, such creatures still wield an illicit power.

We sadly lack space here to present a full treatise on the nature of these strange magical creatures, and to date, no one fully understands their meaning within Anglo-Saxon mythology. They do feel right to include here in BEOWULF as mysterious and threatening supernatural forces that have to be entreated, negotiated or bargained with, rather than fought with a sword.





*"Metod ever guides a hero's hand  
To steer unstinting through troubled tides  
A steady rudder through time's stormy seas  
An sword to sever wurm's winding wrath.  
Good deeds done with right and resolve  
Blow heralding horns to valhol's welcome"*



PART EIGHT  
APPENDIX

# ANGLO-SAXON NAME GENERATOR

Here follows a selection of Anglo-Saxon names. It is in no way exhaustive, but is intended to be accessible and immediately useful. Many more Anglo-Saxon names exist, and there are copious online resources available to find more names.

The Anglo-Saxons did not use surnames, though lineage might be shown in a similarity of names down the generations, or we might see the name of a people used as a surname. For example “Scyld Scylding”).

Commonly Anglo Saxon names are a combination of two parts, each having a meaning in Old English, so it is also possible to

create your own names from common prefixes and suffixes. The charts below provide plenty of examples that can be remixed to good result.

To generate a name, first roll 1D20 to determine the first letter (or simply choose if you want to ensure you have names with different first letters to aid memorising them in play,) and then roll the die-type shown to find a name.

Note that we have transcribed Old English letters into modern English for ease of use and pronunciation.

Roll 1d20:

## 1: A, roll 1d12

1. Addi
2. Afa
3. Alden
4. Aldfrid
5. Alfgar
6. Alfric
7. Alwin
8. Alric
9. Alwyne
10. Ascfrith
11. Athelric
12. Aylward

## 3: B, roll 1d12

1. Babba
2. Baeddel
3. Bada
4. Banna
5. Beor
6. Beorhtric
7. Beorhtsige
8. Beornraed
9. Bledda
10. Bracca
11. Brynca
12. Byrta

## 5: D, roll 1d12

1. Daedca
2. Daegel
3. Dafa
4. Denic
5. Deorwine
6. Denic
7. Dodinc
8. Dola
9. Dudda
10. Dunnuca
11. Dunstan
12. Dunt

## 7: F, roll 1d8

1. Faela
2. Fobba
3. Fram
4. Freca
5. Frithela
6. Frithuswith
7. Frod
8. Fulca

## 9: H, roll 1d20

1. Hacca
2. Haeda
3. Halda
4. Hama
5. Hebba
6. Heddin
7. Herel
8. Hereward
9. Hereweald
10. Hild
11. Hilda
12. Hildraed
13. Hnaef
14. Hnydda
15. Hogg
16. Hrothulf
17. Hrof
18. Hugga
19. Hund
20. Hwicca

## 8: G, roll 1d20

1. Gabba
2. Gamal
3. Gedel
4. Gerd
5. Gerta
6. Gicsa
7. Glaedwine
8. Goda
9. Godgiftu
10. Godiva
11. Godric
12. Godwine
13. Golda
14. Granta
15. Gunda
16. Gutha
17. Gymi
18. Gyrd
19. Glyric
20. Gythi

## 2: Ae, roll 1d20

1. Aebbe
2. Aelfgar
3. Aelfnoth
4. Aelfraed
5. Aelfric
6. Aelfstan
7. Aelfswith
8. Aelfweard
9. Aelfwine
10. Aella
11. Aellin
12. Aelred
13. Aesca
14. Aethelberht
15. Aethelflaed
16. Aethelfrith
17. Aethelric
18. Aethelstan
19. Aethelweard
20. Aethelwine

## 4: C, roll 1d20

1. Cadda
2. Ceadda
3. Cenhelm
4. Cenric
5. Ceol
6. Ceolmund
7. Cerdic
8. Cola
9. Cuthberht
10. Cyna
11. Cynebald
12. Cyneburg
13. Cyneburga
14. Cynefrith
15. Cynefrith
16. Cyneheard
17. Cynemaer
18. Cyneric
19. Cynesige
20. Cyneweard

## 6: E, roll 1d20

1. Eadberht
2. Eadburg
3. Eadgar
4. Eadgyth
5. Eadmund
6. Eadric
7. Eadwald
8. Eadweard
9. Eadwine
10. Eadwulf
11. Ealdgyth
12. Ealdraed
13. Ealdwine
14. Ealhhere
15. Ealhstan
16. Eardwulf
17. Eastmund
18. Ecgerht
19. Eoforhild
20. Eoforwine

## 10: I, roll 1d8

1. Ida
2. Idhelm
3. Illa
4. Indulf
5. Ing
6. Inga
7. Ingulf
8. Ingweald

**11: L, roll 1d20**

1. Ladda
2. Lafa
3. Lamwin
4. Lamfrith
5. Lamfred
6. Leodhere
7. Leofdaeg
8. Leofflaed
9. Leofgyth
10. Leofric
11. Leofsige
12. Leofstan
13. Leofwine
14. Lilla
15. Lissa
16. Litwin
17. Lod
18. Lubba
19. Luffa
20. Lylla

**14: O, roll 1d20**

1. Occa
2. Odo
3. Oeric
4. Offa
5. Oftfor
6. Ola
7. Olef
8. Onna
9. Ordgar
10. Osa
11. Osbeorn
12. Osberht
13. Osfrid
14. Osgar
15. Osgood
16. Osmund
17. Oswald
18. Oswin
19. Oswine
20. Otta

**17: S, roll 1d20**

1. Sawin
2. Saethryd
3. Saewine
4. Saeward
5. Saewynn
6. Saewulf
7. Sigebald
8. Sigeberht
9. Sigeric
10. Sigeward
11. Siward
12. Somerhild
13. Stithulf
14. Stanhild
15. Stanfleda
16. Strongric
17. Sunnhild
18. Sunngifu
19. Swithun
20. Swithulf

**19: W, roll 1d20**

1. Wassa
2. Wealdmaer
3. Weland
4. Wemba
5. Wigberht
6. Wigheard
7. Wigmund
8. Wigstan
9. Wilburg
10. Wilfrith
11. Wilheard
12. Wilmær
13. Winfrith
14. Wulfgifu
15. Wulfnoth
16. Wulfric
17. Wulfrun
18. Wulfsige
19. Wulfstan
20. Wynnstan

**2, roll 1d20**

1. Grendel
2. Guthlaf
3. Healfdene
4. Hama
5. Halga
6. Haethcyn
7. Hæreth
8. Heatholaf
9. Heardred
10. Heming
11. Hengest
12. Heorogar
13. Heorowearð
14. Herebeald
15. Heremod
16. Hereric
17. Hildeburh
18. Hnæf
19. Hoc
20. Hondscio

**12: M, roll 1d12**

1. Macca
2. Maegla
3. Mearth
4. Mede
5. Melda
6. Mildburg
7. Mildgyth
8. Milred
9. Mogga
10. Mull
11. Mynda
12. Myndel

**15: P, roll 1d12**

1. Pagga
2. Passa
3. Paega
4. Pechthelm
5. Penda
6. Penga
7. Peofa
8. Pippa
9. Pipbald
10. Plucca
11. Pruda
12. Pylta

**18: T, roll 1d20**

1. Teoda
2. Thedlef
3. Theoda
4. Theodfrith
5. Thryth
6. Thuna
7. Thymel
8. Tidhild
9. Tilberht
10. Tilla
11. Tilman
12. Tonhild
13. Toppa
14. Trumwulf
15. Trunwhit
16. Tuffa
17. Tunbert
18. Tunfrith
19. Twicca
20. Tydda

**20: Beowulf characters (1d4)****1 roll 1d20**

1. Ælfhere
2. Æschere
3. Banstan
4. Beowulf
5. Breca
6. Dæghrefn
7. Eadgils
8. Eanmund
9. Ecglaf
10. Ecgtheow
11. Ecgwela
12. Eofor
13. Eomær
14. Eormenric
15. Finn
16. Fitela
17. Folcwalda
18. Freawaru
19. Froda
20. Garmund

**3, roll 1d20**

1. Hrethel
2. Hrethric
3. Hrothgar
4. Hrothmund
5. Hrothulf
6. Hun
7. Hygd
8. Hygelac
9. Ingeld
10. Merewing
11. Modthryth
12. Offa of Angel
13. Ohthere
14. Onela
15. Ongenþeow
16. Oslaf
17. Scyld
18. Sigemund
19. Swerting
20. Unferth

**13: N, roll 1d6**

1. Nethel
2. Nerian
3. Nonna
4. Nordman
5. Nothwulf
6. Nothelm

**16: R, roll 1d12**

1. Raedfrith
2. Raedwulf
3. Ran
4. Randal
5. Ranwulf
6. Redwald
7. Redwulf
8. Regener
9. Regenweald
10. Ricberht
11. Rum
12. Rumbald

**4, roll 1D8**

1. Wæls
2. Wealhtheow
3. Weohstan
4. Wiglaf
5. Wondred
6. Wulf
7. Wulfgar
8. Yrmenlaf

## BEOWULF GAME FLOW





## A HALL FOR A HERO

### So! My hearth is a (1d6)

- 1: huge
- 2: large
- 3: well-proportioned
- 4: narrow
- 5: small
- 6: rude

### (1d4)

- 1: thronging with
- 2: crowded with
- 3: thinly peopled by
- 4 empty of (even)

### (1d4)

- 1: Famous for
- 2: Storied for
- 3: Spoken-of for
- 4: Lacking in

### Sitting (1d6)

- 1: on a cliff above the sea
- 2: at the head of a sea lake
- 3: at the mouth of a great river
- 4: on a golden hill
- 5: at the edge of the sea
- 6: on an island

### (1d6)

- 1: carved hall
- 2: rich hall
- 3: banner-hung hall
- 4: drafty hall
- 5: poor meadhall
- 6: ruined hall

### (1d6)

- 1: a bountiful folk.
- 2: a welcoming folk.
- 3: a kindly kin.
- 4: a wise folk.
- 5: a suspicious folk.
- 6: a cold kin.

### (1d8)

- 1: golden mead
- 2: weaponed-warriors
- 3: skilled smiths
- 4: the word hoard of its scop's
- 5: hard-hoofed horses
- 6: swift ships
- 7: amber ale
- 8: a warm welcome

### surrounded by (1d6)

- 1: mist.
- 2: great ash trees.
- 3: giant-carved stones.
- 4: thick walls.
- 5: a great ditch and dyke.
- 6: drifts of snow.

## A RULER FOR A HALL

### A (1d6)

- 1-2 A King
  - 3-4 A Queen
  - 5-6 A Ruler
- sits atop the treasure-seat**

### (1d12)

- 1: generous,
- 2: wise in their ways,
- 3: a wolf of war,
- 4: celebrated in songs,
- 5: prudent,
- 6: lacking in wisdom,
- 7: famed in meanness,
- 8: brutal,
- 9: a reneger,
- 10: oath-breaker,
- 11: a giver of many rings,
- 12: a reaver,

### (1d20)

- 1: huge their laugh,
- 2: enormous their strength,
- 3: hard-band of huscarls close at hand,
- 4: rune-etched sword across their knee,
- 5: their kinsman scheming,
- 6: teller of tall tales,
- 7: plotting,
- 8: great-girthed,
- 9: huge in height,
- 10: pious,
- 11: sorcerous in their ways,
- 12: salmon-quick of wit,
- 13: lacking in sons/daughters,
- 14: gifted beautiful sons/daughters,
- 15: wise wolfhound beside them,
- 16: red-painted shield hung above them,
- 17: sheened in dwarf-made mail,
- 18: a bear-fur cloak arrayed,
- 19: stabbing-sharp of tongue,
- 20: ill-favoured by fortune,

### (1d12)

- 1: rich in comeliness.
- 2: and red of hair.
- 3: and withering, white-haired.
- 4: and bristling of beard/black of hair.
- 5: and hard of eye.
- 6: and scourge of many tribes.
- 7: with a heavy brow.
- 8: bald of head, a shining nut.
- 9: battle-scarred, and broken in body.
- 10: red of face.
- 11: blessed with a beautiful wife/husband.
- 12: gifted with a willful wife/husband.



# MONSTER TABLES

## MONSTER ORIGINS AND GOALS

(roll 1d4 for origin and 1d12 for goal)

1d4	1	2	3	4
1d12	Born of Evil	Transformed by Power	Twisted by Nature	The Unresting Dead
1	A great injustice was done to an ancestor of the Monster, it seeks revenge on the perpetrator's descendants.	A creature was tricked into becoming the Monster by an evil wizard, ylfe (elf) or other magic-user. It desires its old life back.	Born in a distant corner of the world, this Monster is only following its instincts. There is no chance to reason with it, it will continue until dead.	In life, this person or creature swore a mighty oath to defend their kin. This oath carried through into death and now they rise again whenever they are in danger.
2	The Monster knows only hate and fear, hunger and desire. It will continue to attack as long as it lives.	Desiring more power, a person researched ancient rituals and then followed through with them, turning themselves into a Monster with no known way of returning to their former life.	This creature was forced from its homeland by some greater power. If the Hero can discover this, they might find a more worthy foe and be able to allow the Monster and the people peace.	A learned person sought out the means to live forever, but the ruinous process of defying the laws of nature have turned them into a Monster. Now they only seek eternal rest.
3	The Monster takes great delight in cruelty and torment. It often teases its victims and taunts them, only going in for a kill once the victim has given up entirely.	This Monster is the result of a foul bargain between evil things. It may owe its creator some sort of obligation or it may be under some spell shaping its actions.	Once, long ago, the people here had a sort of understanding with this Monster, knowing how to avoid its ire. But with the Old Ways fading from memory, the new settlers don't have such knowledge.	Some aspect of the funeral rites were not performed correctly and the Monster seeks a proper burial. However, expressing such a complex request is difficult when a hunger for living flesh overrides all other sensations.
4	Bred to defeat a singular foe, this Monster considers all others who oppose it to be nothing but obstructions to its eventual goal.	The result of a terrible accident, the Monster wishes for a return to a normal life, but has few ways to communicate this as its new condition clouds its mind.	The Monster has chosen this land as its new home and is currently in the process of transforming the land (for example, flooding low-lying areas, destroying villages, bringing unnatural cold or heat to the area, etc.)	In life this person had some mighty desire or purpose and when they died they could not remain still. They rose again and will attack anything that prevents them from achieving their goals.
5	This Monster was taught a hate for a particular alignment — it hates the Old Ways that tormented its ancestors, the Church whose faith now threatens its future or the Neutral stance that seeks peace among everyone. Its attacks follow the pattern of whatever it hates the most.	Regardless of how its original transformation occurred, the Monster now seeks out more to suffer the same fate. It drags its victims back to some sorcerous place of power or force—feeds them strange extracts or whatever is necessary to make its victims into Monsters just like itself.	The people here have gotten too greedy — they have dug too deeply, or cut down too many trees in the forest or taken too many fish from the lake or too much water from the well. In any case, they have disturbed something that should have remained asleep or unharmed. Now the Monster rages and it is almost impossible to put things right.	There is some great cycle at work here, a story that repeats itself, between generations of a family or between star-crossed lovers, or sworn enemies. And now, the bond has gone beyond death. The undead Monster is caught in the cycle and only the Hero can end this terrible business.
6	Once, long ago, this land was the home of the Monster. But folk of long ago captured and bound it, unable to kill the Monster but at least able to constrain it. Now it is free again for some reason (time, mistakes of the current residents, natural events, etc.) and it lashes out.	Reeling from a previous failure, someone vowed revenge on one of the leaders of the land or even on the Hero. They sought out some secret means of power and have now become a Monster, ready to settle the score.	The Monster is responding to a cycle of years so long that it is almost impossible for the human mind to fathom. But now it is time for it to leave its den, either to find a new one, seek a mate, or enter its next stage of life. The land that the Hero comes to is the setting of this unfortunate goal.	This land is full of old burial chambers or other strange customs. For many years the newcomers respected the old graves and left them alone. Now they have disturbed them for some reason: lack of space, perhaps, or desire for the stones that made the chambers, or even greed for the valuables of the dead. And now the dead rise.

7	<p>This Monster might be extraordinarily long-lived. In any case, its life-cycle is dominated by the heavens. The Hero might find records that give some indication of its ramage last time and perhaps some warning that stars are once again right.</p>	<p>The creature that became the monster found some artefact of evil and was transformed into the Monster. Now their fates are entwined. It might be enough to separate creature from artefact, but more likely the evil thing must be destroyed, almost certainly slaying the Monster as well.</p>	<p>The Monster was once a peaceful thing, perhaps even helpful. But a growing darkness has consumed its heart and turned it against all others. If the Hero can help the people remember their old protector then there's a chance to reverse the process, otherwise the new Monster must be destroyed.</p>	<p>Long ago, a sailor left this area to seek their fortune. They swore oaths that they would return to their loved ones by tragedy struck in foreign fields far away. But now they have returned, along with the rest of a ghostly crew and will likely be displeased that folk gave them up for dead.</p>
8	<p>This creature is a spirit of conflict, taking physical form when there is enough anger to sustain it. It then drives the petty angers and resentments into terrible relief as the people begin to fear the Monster and each other. The Hero's blade is of little use, they must be a peacemaker.</p>	<p>The Monster is not a single entity, but instead the merging of two distinct creatures, the combination of which drives it mad. While this may have happened by accident, it is more likely that some weak but evil thing took over a more suitable creature and then twisted it into the Monster's current form. Perhaps this can be reversed but most likely will be undone in death.</p>	<p>The Monster is not too unusual in its home, but it was lured here by false promises or incautious sailors. It finds itself in unfamiliar lands, and blames everyone for the trickery and deceit that brought it here (even though it was in truth its own blind ambition). The Monster refuses the truth and will not accept blame. Made angry, it attacks relentlessly.</p>	<p>An ancient people laid their dead to rest, never thinking that the land could change over time. But the land has shifted and what used to be the bogs where the dead were laid to rest are now dry and desolate, or the stone cairns have been broken open by the trembling earth and the dead have been disturbed.</p>
9	<p>Possessed of a great evil will, this Monster escapes punishment by hiding itself or its movements somehow. Perhaps it is normally invisible, or can fly, or change size or shape in order to hide.</p>	<p>This Monster was made by some creature experiencing some sort of subtle corruption. The Hero may not detect the corrupting influence or the presence of the Monster at first. But some change or threat will cause a change and draw it forth.</p>	<p>This Monster is naturally on the move at all times and does not have a permanent lair. The Hero has been lucky enough to catch some news of the monster but might have to travel several times over the course of the adventure to pursue it.</p>	<p>Whichever folk made use of the local barrows or dolmens were not the first. Indeed, a truly ancient folk made the original tombs and it is their spirits that have been disturbed and the Monster serves as either guardian of the tombs or punisher of the locals.</p>
10	<p>The Monster has stolen or otherwise somehow claimed some sort of powerful magical item, now the rightful bearer or the local leader asks the Hero for its safe return.</p>	<p>The Monster needs something to sustain itself — This might be fresh blood or meat, or something stranger, like gold, song, or an eternal flame. The folk have grown up knowing little else and thus resist any efforts at the Hero's attempts to change things.</p>	<p>The Monster has left its homeland in search of some legendary treasure. Such treasure may have, in truth, been stolen by humans or other Monsters long ago and might even rightfully belong to the Monster. Or it might be nothing more than contradictory legends and lies.</p>	<p>There used to be a powerful artefact here that kept the dead at peace. Greedy bandits or another Monster stole the artefact and now the dead are restless. The artefact must be found and returned to its proper place in the barrow.</p>
11	<p>This Monster seems to be a mockery of something more natural. For example, it might be a giant or ogre playacting at being a great leader, or a creature that seems at first part of the natural order but shows itself as evil, such as flesh-eating cattle or a sea-creature that walks upon the land.</p>	<p>This Monster is of extraordinary size or power. Its transformation was not into a Monster, for it was always evil but instead into something very large that threatens everyone, or perhaps to a smaller size that can hide more easily and sneak anywhere. The Monster might even be able to control its size and change it at need.</p>	<p>The Monster has been on the search for so long, it has forgotten its original purpose. Now only the more base needs of food and shelter drive it to seek new locations. If the Hero could learn of its original purpose, it might be able to stop it or at least set it on a different course. Otherwise, the only sure solution is the Monster's destruction.</p>	<p>This undead thing seems to have no home at all, and continues to wander the lands. Perhaps if the Hero can identify the Monster's past, they can lay it to permanent rest. Or it might be so far away that the only practical way of dealing with it is to destroy the Monster.</p>
12	<p>The Monster might at first appear friendly, or at least harmless. But this is just a ploy to grow closer to its victims and it will strike out at them when trust is needed the most.</p>	<p>The Monster has not reached its final transformation and instead draws close to a person or place where the item or event necessary for it is located. The Hero might witness this transformation and only be able to challenge the Monster afterwards.</p>	<p>If possible, the Monster disguises themselves as a wanderer and begs aid from people. Once inside the hall, however, it unleashes its fury and destroys all. If it cannot pretend, then it attempts to sneak its way in or otherwise surprise its victims.</p>	<p>The Monster calls out to people, pretending to be their ancestor. But it is only a ruse and the undead destroys the living. But the Monster might still have some special knowledge or power that the Hero must deal with.</p>

THE LAIR

(roll 1d8 for lair and then 1d6 for details)

1d8	Lair	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	<b>Natural Cave/ Burrow</b>	Underwater, swimming required or perhaps parts of the cave are flooded	High-up, climbing required, quite likely covered with or even made out of snow or ice	Labyrinthine, possibly with multiple entrances and exits	Secret entrance, either by natural formations or work of the Monster	Dangerously unstable areas that either the Hero or the Monster can take advantage of	The caves connect to something purpose-built, underground storehouses, gaols, or mines
2	<b>Thicket</b>	Dead trees (everything in the area is dead and blighted from the Monster)	Thorny (they seem to purposefully seek flesh, each doing 1d2 piercing damage; each round the Hero is attacked by 1d6 branches)	Twisted (the living trees untwist for the Monster or maybe at the command of a magic word)	Commanded by the Monster, the branches or vines can grasp at the Hero or Followers in combat.	The forest growth is so thick and the leaves so greedy for light that the interior is either dimly lit or total darkness	Wide enough that once you push through the brambles and trees you come to a proper clearing
3	<b>Built Structure</b>	Abandoned barn (the roof is partially caved in, if the barn was in use originally, only bits of livestock carcasses remain)	Defensible fortress (the Monster may have found this and restored it, or may serve as the ruler of people or, perhaps, its own kind)	Family home (family are prisoners, dead, or might have been tricked or magiced into serving the Monster)	Well (the monster lives at the very bottom of the shaft, or there is a secret side tunnel where it dwells)	Meadhall (the Monster hides among its own victims, or has possession of a meadhall no longer in use)	Ruined roundhouse. Once the dwelling of a powerful ruler, long abandoned to the elements. The house's history and the Monster's may well be connected
4	<b>Barrow / Dolmen</b>	Full of bodies, the Monster does not belong but does not disturb the bodies	The tomb contains the ancestors or descendants of the Monster	If the Monster was made, it is from the bones in the barrow, otherwise it perhaps consumed the dead	The Monster has rearranged the interior of the barrow to make a space that is its own	The Monster has a place already prepared for it, as if it was always supposed to be here	At solstice or equinox the tomb becomes lit. The Monster seeks power, perhaps an artefact tied to this design
5	<b>Lake/ Island</b>	The water is exceptionally deep or cold and the Hero must conquer this threat before reaching the Monster	The island or bottom of the lake is overgrown with grasping vines. They grab the Hero and possibly suffocate them	Either the lake is connected to a flooded cave system or the island is riddled with caverns beneath the water	If a lake, it would be more properly called a lagoon as it has some access to the sea and brackish water. If an island, it may be all or partially artificial and built up over the years	The lake or island has some trickery to its appearance, perhaps a lake with a false bottom due to silt in the water or magic. If an island it might only appear to be solid and sink as soon as weight is applied	If a lake, it is warm or hot, due to underground activity. The monster might be able to affect the temperature. If an island, it was formed by a volcano and may be dangerously close to becoming active again.
6	<b>Cleft/ Valley</b>	A crack in barren rock that runs deep enough to provide the Monster space to hide but does not provide enough room for combat	A deceptively deep or long rift in the land, possibly hidden by trees, bushes or some other sort of screening material	A mountain dell, well-hidden by other wings of the mountain, or only accessible through a narrow path, it feels like its own place, unconnected to the world outside	A narrow canyon, carved by a small river. If the Monster is aquatic there is a waterfall with pool, otherwise rills in the edges of the canyon provide cover	Deep in the forest, some sort of depression, perhaps due to a collapsed cave or carved by a forest stream. The Monster lives at the bottom, avoiding the light	From most angles the cleft seems to be only a small rill in the landscape, but there is some secret area that is much larger, perhaps even a cave

7	<b>Built Prison</b>	Underground or otherwise secret, will need to find the entrance first	Made for something else but then adapted to the Monster by whoever captured it originally	Designed for some other Monster and now the current Monster lairs here only out of convenience	An isolated place, such as on a small island, or high up in the mountains, perhaps a solitary tower	Designed to hold the Monster forever, but there is some flaw in the design that the Hero must resolve to make it permanent	Custom-made for the Monster, investigation might reveal clues about the Monster
8	<b>Guarded Areas</b>	Creatures very unlike to the Monster patrol the area	Creatures similar to the Monster protect it	The Monster itself is or was a guard for whatever lives here	A ruler brought the Monster here, hoping to train it to protect, now needs saving from same Monster	The Monster has come here to feast upon the guards and it hides somewhere in the area	The Monster escaped from this place, but there is something that draws it back, an item of power or maybe a mate?

### THE LAND AROUND THE LAIR

(roll 1d8 for each column)

1d8				
1	Abandoned farmland now	barren and desolate, but for	a disturbingly positioned	ancient cairn(s).
2	A close-set forest presently	darkened by storm-clouds overhead and has	a dozen same-sized	boulder(s) near the centre.
3	A foul-smelling swamp that is	disturbed by unseasonal winds and has	an exceptionally massive and solitary	menhir(s) lying on the ground.
4	A grassy bog now	dying and decaying, possessing	several broken and weather-worn	pile(s) of river-stones.
5	A pleasant valley now	fecund and flowering, with	a single, oddly-shaped	rock(s) scattered (or lying) about.
6	Rolling hills which are	made wet by recent storms, with	small and misshapen	runestone(s) in the area.
7	Sheer mountainside (or cliffside) with its base (or top)	overgrown and wild-looking, including	the remains of a completely destroyed	steep-sided tor(s) at its borders/edges.
8	A stretch of coastline or lakeside area	strangely peaceful and quiet, having	an unlikely number of	tree(s) in its centre.



# BACKGROUND NPC GENERATOR

The following tables allow you to randomly generate background NPCs. They use a mixture of selection and random rolls. Where tables sit next to each other horizontally, you may choose which table to roll on, or roll a die type equal to their number to generate a random result.

For example, in the first row of tables, you may wish to choose an age bracket for your NPC, or simply roll 1d3 to generate a wholly random result.

Work your way down through the rows to create an NPC. Where an entry shows a blank, that simply means there is no extra detail for this section, ignore the result of this row.

- 1: youthful
- 2: untried
- 3: young
- 4: half-grown
- 5: unseasoned
- 6: fledgling

- 1: middle-aged
- 2: seasoned
- 3: mature
- 4: proven
- 5: established
- 6: experienced

- 1: ancient
- 2: old
- 3: decrepit
- 4: grizzled
- 5: grey-haired
- 6: veteran

- 1: servant
- 2: retainer
- 3: cup-bearer
- 4: server
- 5: attendant
- 6: crofter

- 1: crafter
- 2: tutor
- 3: priest
- 4: merchant
- 5: traveller
- 6: scribe

- 1: warrior
- 2: spear-bearer
- 3: door-guard
- 4: hearthguard
- 5: spear-bearer
- 6: war-friend

- 1: noble
- 2: prince(ss)
- 3: warlord
- 4: princeling
- 5: ealdorman
- 6: reeve

## WITH A(N)

- 1: uncaring
- 2: wicked-looking
- 3: tired
- 4: unpleasant
- 5: mean
- 6: haggard

- 1: pleasing
- 2: lively
- 3: engaging
- 4: soft
- 5: courteous
- 6: reserved

- 1: sour
- 2: unpleasant
- 3: haughty
- 4: shrewd
- 5: obsequious
- 6: solicitous

- 1: friendly
- 2: welcoming
- 3: hospitable
- 4: enthusiastic
- 5: generous
- 6: kindly

- 1: stern
- 2: determined
- 3: stoic
- 4: stony
- 5: hard
- 6: distant

- 1: face
- 2: eye
- 3: manner
- 4: bearing
- 5: reputation
- 6: character



## GARBED IN A(N)

1: well-sewn  
2: attractive  
3: clean  
4: well-made  
5: rich  
6: expensive-looking

1: impressive  
2: fancy  
3: new-made  
4: well-fitted  
5: fine  
6: handsome

1: old  
2: threadbare  
3: Ill-fitting  
4: smelly  
5: creased  
6: dirty

1: striped  
2: checked  
3: embroidered  
4: fur-trimmed  
5: \_\_\_\_\_  
6: \_\_\_\_\_

1: nettle-dyed  
2: ochre  
3: blue  
4: woven-edged  
5: birch-dyed  
6: onion-dyed, golden  
7: heather-dyed, purple  
8: weld-green

1: nut-dyed, brown  
2: iron-dyed, green  
3: alder-orange  
4: blue-wood  
5: heather-dyed  
6: madder-red  
7: doe-skin  
8: calf-hide

1: moss-dyed, green  
2: red  
3: orange  
4: mustard  
5: rose  
6: lilac  
7: red-brown  
8: russet

1: jacket  
2: leggings  
3: stockings  
4: trousers  
5: hose  
6: trews

1: robe  
2: long tunic  
3: short tunic  
4: jerkin  
5: short-sleeved tunic  
6: long-sleeved tunic

1: long cloak  
2: short cloak  
3: hood  
4: scarf  
5: cowl  
6: cape

AND (A)

1: russet-brown  
 2: undyed  
 3: mauve  
 4: deep blue  
 5: green  
 6: ruddy-coloured  
 7: brown  
 8: plain linen  
 9: salmon-coloured  
 10: iron-grey

1: chestnut-coloured  
 2: tooled leather  
 3: copper-ornamented  
 4: curiously-made  
 5: well-made  
 6: Frisian  
 7: Frankish  
 8: Baltic  
 9: Finnish  
 10: Pictish

1: woollen hat  
 2: felt hat  
 3: frigidian cap  
 4: broad brimmed hat  
 5: headscarf  
 6: girdle

1: belt  
 2: long boots  
 3: shoes  
 4: sandals  
 5: ankle boots  
 6: baldric

OPTIONAL JEWELLERY

1: golden  
 2: silver  
 3: enamelled  
 4: copper  
 5: bronze  
 6: iron

1: rune-riven  
 2: whorled  
 3: knot-worked  
 4: beast-carved  
 5: glass-set  
 6: jewelled

1: brooch  
 2: torc  
 3: arm-ring  
 4: bracelet  
 5: amulet  
 6: finger-ring



## OPTIONAL WAR GEAR

### ARMOUR

- 1: fine
- 2: hard-hammered
- 3: interwoven
- 4: rivet-fixed
- 5: hard-welded
- 6: strong

### SHIELD

- 1: hard
- 2: large
- 3: generous
- 4: small
- 5: sturdy
- 6: stout

### AXE

- 1: long-handled
- 2: short-handled
- 3: large
- 4: huge
- 5: sleek
- 6: rough-looking

### SWORD

- 1: handsome
- 2: hard-hammered
- 3: long-bladed
- 4: fine-scabbarded
- 5: ring-hilted
- 6: fine

### SPEAR

- 1: roughly-made
- 2: well-made
- 3: sturdy
- 4: short
- 5: long
- 6: tall

- 1: sheened
- 2: glossy
- 3: shining
- 4: burnished
- 5: grey
- 6: silver

- 1: round
- 2: long
- 3: painted
- 4: leather-covered
- 5: patterned
- 6: metal-hung

- 1: cannily-made
- 2: hard-hafted
- 3: yew-hafted
- 4: iron-hooped
- 5: hard-headed
- 6: sharp-edged

- 1: plainly made
- 2: ivory-handled
- 3: gold-hilted
- 4: serpent-patterned
- 5: gem-set
- 6: rune-carved

- 1: oak-shafted
- 2: ash-shafted
- 3: hard-headed
- 4: hard-filed
- 5: sharp-edged
- 6: long-headed

- 1: war-mesh
- 2: byrnie
- 3: corslet
- 4: war-coat
- 5: harness of rings
- 6: ring-coat

- 1: battle-board
- 2: war-board
- 3: shield
- 4: battle-moon
- 5: killing-wheel
- 6: linden-shield

- 1: axe
- 2: shield-breaker
- 3: tree-foe
- 4: bulwark-breaker
- 5: board-splitter
- 6: axe

- 1: sword
- 2: langsax
- 3: wound-hoe
- 4: battle-blade
- 5: shield-serpent
- 6: wound-wand

- 1: spear
- 2: lance
- 3: rib-splitter
- 4: war spear
- 5: boar spear
- 6: winged spear



# FOREGROUND NPC GENERATOR

These tables are useful for generating important, “foreground” NPCs, which have a direct bearing on the investigation of the Monster.

To begin, use the **Anglo-Saxon name Generator** to generate 6 names. It is a good idea to ensure they have different first letters and sounds to make it easy to remember each one as a separate character in play.

It can also be very helpful to make use of the **Random Background NPC generator** as inspiration for each NPC and their appearance. Since these are more significant NPCs, it is more important to modify the results to make them consistent with main characters in your tale. Don't be afraid to pick results where you want to, or change them as you see fit.

Assign each NPC a letter: A,B,C,D,E,F in order to easily generate and track relationships.

It can be helpful to mark each NPC's name, with its assigned letter, evenly spaced, on a piece of paper, and then note down the results under each name. It's helpful to be able to see all of the information generated at a glance, and to be able to draw lines between connected characters where needed.

## For each NPC roll 1d6:

- 1: This NPC has a relationship with another NPC (Go to “Relationships”)
- 2: This NPC has a secret (Go to “Secrets”)
- 3: This NPC has a special piece of knowledge (Go to “Knowledge”)
- 4: This NPC owns a special object (Go to “Special Object”)
- 5: This NPC has a special skill (Go to “Special Skill”)
- 6: This NPC has an extra-special motivation (Go to “Special Motivation”)

You may make additional rolls for each NPC if you want to do so, or if it feels necessary or helpful. Layering up several aspects for all, or some of your NPCs can give good results.

These tables are here for inspiration, rather than providing unbending rules that must be followed. It is possible to make impossibly complex webs of characters using these generators, and it is important to pare that back should it become impractical. Sometimes you may not need to roll randomly for some of your NPCs - what is needed will become clear from the rolls attached to other characters.

You might find that a single, randomly-generated character set-up inspires a whole scenario, or that several rolls are needed for each character. You should always free to fill in any blanks in any way that you feel is right. These tables are a tool to be used, and dice are a good way to get you started. Note that these tables cannot write a plot for you, but they will hopefully inspire some useful ideas!

## RELATIONSHIPS

This character is especially motivated by their relationships, or their relationships have a big impact on how the Hero might win their trust, or gain useful help from them. The information generated by these tables might also affect the overall tone of the location at which the NPC is resident.

### This character:

#### 1d6

- 1-3: secretly
- 4-6: openly

#### 1d6

- 1: admires (roll again on the admiration table)
- 2: fears (roll again on the fear table)
- 3: loves (roll again on the love table)
- 4: hates (roll again on the hate table)
- 5: likes (roll again on the like table)
- 6: envies (roll again on the envy table)

#### 1d6

- 1: character A
- 2: character B
- 3: character C
- 4: character D
- 5: character E
- 6: character F

If the result is a relationship with the character themselves, that's fine: they may have strong feelings about themselves. You may need to exercise some common sense and re-roll some of the more detailed results if the relationship generated refers to the NPC themselves. It can be helpful to record relationships with a line on your sheet of paper between the two NPCs, along with an arrow connecting them. Be sure to record if the relationship is secret, and use the direction of the arrow to show the direction of the feeling.

Optionally, for each *secretly held* relationship, roll 1d6 for each NPC not involved in that relationship.

- 1: They suspect the secret feeling but have no proof
- 2: They have been told of the secret feeling by one of the NPCs involved
- 3-4: They have no idea
- 5: They wrongly suspect another NPC of harbouring that feeling
- 6: They are aware of the secret and protect it

### Admiration Table

If an NPC admires another, it may affect their interaction with the Hero, after seeing the Hero interact with the object of their admiration. Roll 1d6 to determine the cause of the admiration:

- 1: respect for ability
- 2: respect for kindness
- 3: respect for appearance
- 4: a desire to be like them
- 5: respect for their position
- 6: respect for their deeds or a specific deed

**Fear Table**

If an NPC fears another, this may have a clear impact on interactions they witness between the Hero and the object of their fear. Roll 1d6 to determine the cause of the fear:

- 1: They witnessed the subject of the fear commit a crime
- 2: They saw the subject of the fear lose their temper
- 3: They are frightened of this profession
- 4: The subject of the fear attacked them
- 5: The subject of the fear has threatened them
- 6: The subject of the fear is blackmailing them

**Love Table**

If an NPC loves another, the way in which they view interactions between the Hero and the object of their love will be affected. Roll 1d6 to determine details of the love/friendship:

- 1: *A lifelong romance/friendship*
- 2: *A newly kindled romance/friendship*
- 3: *A jealous love/friendship*
- 4: *A forbidden love/friendship*
- 5: *A love/friendship under great strain*
- 6: *A stable and happy relationship*

**Hate Table**

If an NPC hates another, it will affect how they view the Hero's interactions with the object of their hate. Roll 1d6 to determine the cause of the hate:

- 1: a prior deliberate misdeed (roll to find out more about the misdeed below)
- 2: a prior accidental misdeed (roll to find out more about the misdeed below)
- 3: a family dispute
- 4: a public argument over property
- 5: A feud which has been settled, but festers on
- 6: A personality clash

**Misdeed**

- 1-2: was done by the one who hates the other
- 3-4: was done by the object of the hate
- 5-6: was done by someone else, and the hatred is unjustified

**Likes Table**

If an NPC likes another, this will impact how they view the Hero's interactions with the object of their friendship. Roll 1d6 to determine more about the friendship:

- 1: They have known the object of their liking for all of their life
- 2: They regard themselves as a sibling/surrogate parent to the object of their friendship
- 3: They underwent difficulties with the other person
- 4: They are from the same place
- 5: They were helped by the other person
- 6: They share the same values

**Envy Table**

If an NPC envies another, it may affect their interactions with the Hero. Roll 1d6 to determine the cause of the envy:

- 1: A friendship
- 2: Wealth or a single, special item
- 3: A skill or ability or aptitude
- 4: A piece of luck
- 5: A romantic relationship
- 6: Their status, job, or reputation

**SECRET**

This character harbours a secret, which might affect their interaction with the Hero, other NPCs, and the way they act, how they might reveal information, or need help.

- 1-3: This character committed, or has or had a:
- 4-5: This character witnessed or knows about a:

- 1: murder (use the murder table below)
- 2: theft (use the theft table below)
- 3: lie (use the lie table below)
- 4: secret previous life (use the previous life table below)
- 5: secret relationship (use the secret relationship table below)
- 6: secret illness (use the secret illness table below)

**Their attitude towards the secret:**

- 1: deep regret
- 2: crippling shame
- 3: belief that it was justified
- 4: denial
- 5: plan to do it again/plan to reveal something they witnessed
- 6: pragmatic - it was regrettable but things happen.

**Murder:**

- 1: in self defence
- 2: in revenge
- 3: on the battlefield, and it affects the character
- 4: in order to take property
- 5: in defence of others
- 6: by accident

**A Theft**

- 1: long ago
- 2: very recently
- 3: somewhere else
- 4: here
- 5: of something small
- 6: of something huge

**A Lie**

This character lied about:

- 1: Their age
- 2: Their deeds
- 3: Their abilities
- 4: Their faith
- 5: Their origins
- 6: Their family

**A Previous Life**

- 1: as a slave or indentured servant
- 2: as a warrior
- 3: as a priest
- 4: as an outlaw/raider/thief
- 5: as a noble
- 6: with another family, somewhere else

**A Secret Relationship**

- 1: A secret marriage, or betrothal, without approval of the character's family
- 2: A friendship with someone from outside the settlement, which would be disapproved of
- 3: A friendship or romance across the lines of a family feud
- 4: A romantic relationship that cannot be revealed to the community
- 5: A secret relationship which ended badly
- 6: A secret relationship which ended in the death of the other person

**A Secret Illness**

- 1: flying venom (an airborne infection)
- 2: seizures (often considered an internal battle for the sufferer's soul)
- 3: lent disease (a kind of fever)
- 4: fiend-sickness (also considered an internal battle for the sufferer's soul)
- 5: elf-adle (another kind of fever)
- 6: nightmares

**KNOWLEDGE**

This NPC knows something useful, special, or thematic. It might relate to the mystery of the monster, and be discovered through winning their trust. Or perhaps by helping another, connected NPC. The resulting knowledge may give direct clues as to how to defeat the monster, may open up an opportunity to perform a side-quest to gain further knowledge or may help with a pre-existing side-quest. It might reveal the location of an important object or character. It may offer advantage on specific checks.

**1d6**

- 1: Geographical knowledge
- 2: One or more monster sightings
- 3: Practical wisdom/craft ability
- 4: Knowledge about another character
- 5: Historical knowledge
- 6: Magical, religious or folkloric knowledge

**SPECIAL OBJECT**

A special object in this context might indicate one of many things - an object that might be relevant to the mystery of defeating the Monster, an item of note that adds thematic details, or which communicates something about the character. It might inspire a relationship with another character, or the group of characters present at this location. It may provide biographical inspiration. It might figure in resolving a side-quest, or later problem. The way in which it came to the character might be a clue, or point to some useful information for the Hero. Whether it is currently in their possession, or lost, might have an impact.

**1d6**

- 1: A tool/implement/helpful, practical everyday object
- 2: A treasure
- 3: An heirloom
- 4: An amulet or talisman
- 5: A weapon
- 6: A piece of clothing

**SPECIAL SKILL**

This NPC possesses an unusual skill, which might be connected to the mystery of the Monster, which might help in a side quest, or which might simply be a flavourful addition to their character. The Hero might need to impress this NPC in order to gain access to this skill. Or it might indicate what this NPC might offer the Hero if they could be recruited as a Follower.

**1d6**

- 1: Building/Carpentry/Craft
- 2: Animal Husbandry/Farming/Hunting
- 3: Smithing/Bowyer
- 4: Writing/Clerical/Academic
- 5: Storytelling/Singing/Musician
- 6: Healing/First Aid/Herbalism

**EXTRA SPECIAL MOTIVATION**

This NPC has an especially strong need to do a particular thing, and this is their primary motivation. This may affect the way the Hero interacts with them, and the conditions required for winning their trust, or gaining information from them.

**This NPC wants:****1d6**

- 1: to leave
- 2: to stay
- 3: to avoid trouble
- 4: to prove themselves
- 5: to complete a specific task or goal
- 6: to make amends or impress another NPC

**IN CONCLUSION**

Lastly, an optional, further prompt for each NPC

**The features generated mean this NPC:****1d6**

- 1: is more resistant to questions/a relationship with the Hero
- 2: would like the Hero to go to a location
- 3: is looking for the Hero's intervention with another NPC
- 4: would like the Hero to recover an object
- 5: is more likely to want to join the Hero as a Follower
- 6: knows something about the Monster

# PORTENT TABLES

## ADJECTIVES TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Grim X	Slain X	Cruel X	False X	Broad ✓	Decorated ✓
2	Furrowed X	Reneged X	Heart-stricken X	Empty X	Woven ✓	Brave ✓
3	Bitter X	Deserted X	Rent X	Whorl-marked ✓	Buried ✓	Resolute ✓
4	Poison X	Sunlit ✓	Honey-Sweet ✓	Forked ✓	High-born ✓	Well-made ✓
5	Feather-Soft ✓	Ringing ✓	Singing ✓	Lath-planked ✓	Venturesome ✓	Noble ✓
6	Red-gold ✓	Gallant ✓	Dazzling ✓	Glinting ✓	Tough ✓	Remembered ✓

## ADJECTIVES TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Blood-soaked X	Foul X	Red X	Splintered X	Full ✓	Bountiful ✓
2	Fearsome X	Butcher X	Outcast X	Old X	Formidable ✓	Generous ✓
3	Dead X	Slain X	Hidden X	Ancient ✓	Courageous ✓	Bright ✓
4	Dreadful X	Salt-soaked ✓	Dark ✓	Burnished ✓	Canny ✓	Gleaming ✓
5	Moon-gleamed ✓	Long-limbed ✓	Hammer-beaten ✓	Deep ✓	Beloved ✓	Iron-hard ✓
6	Young ✓	Storied ✓	Trusted ✓	Radiant ✓	Lavish ✓	Moon-gleamed ✓

## NOUNS TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Sign X	Sword-din X	Grave X	Gale X	Church ✓	Loyalty ✓
2	Foe X	Shield-strife X	Barrow X	Tooth X	Heath ✓	Hope ✓
3	Runes X	Feud X	Adder X	Wolf ✓	Banner ✓	Truth ✓
4	Blood-lust X	Brow ✓	Ring-mail ✓	Voyage ✓	Strand ✓	Hawk ✓
5	Thorn ✓	Roots ✓	Corslet ✓	Path ✓	Council ✓	Harbour ✓
6	Steerboard ✓	Oar-step ✓	Blossom ✓	Gift ✓	Greeting ✓	Word hoard ✓

## NOUNS TABLE 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Corpse-maker X	Troll X	Prowler X	Reiver X	Meat ✓	Ring-giver ✓
2	Death-monger X	Ogre X	Fiend X	Night X	Glen ✓	Gift-giver ✓
3	Claw X	Creature X	Elf X	Birch ✓	Stream ✓	Shield ✓
4	Hell-beast X	Elder ✓	Meadhall ✓	Wine ✓	Ash ✓	Helmet ✓
5	Chief ✓	Watchman ✓	Timbers ✓	Spell ✓	Seeds ✓	War-mask ✓
6	Treasure-seat ✓	Ship ✓	Oak ✓	Linden tree ✓	Herbs ✓	Shieldwall ✓

NAME Touko

SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

BURDENS None.

GIFTS **Bear Blooded.** Touko has advantage on Strength checks and saving throws.

**Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, each Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

**Fence-sitter.** Touko has a Neutral alignment.

**Rescue the Hero.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

NAME Eikki (M)

SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

BURDENS **Guileless.** Eikki has disadvantage on any Charisma checks involving deception.

GIFTS **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, each Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

**Poet.** Spend Eikki to give the Hero advantage on all charisma checks and saving throws until they take a short or long rest.

**Take a Blow.** When the Hero receives damage from a successful attack, activate Eikki as a reaction. He absorbs the damage and must make a death saving throw.

**Weaponbearer (Axe).** Activate all weapon-bearers to make attack rolls. This Follower does 3 (1d6) slashing damage on a hit.

NAME Erja

SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

BURDENS **Slow.** Erja does not move as quickly as most Followers.

GIFTS **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, each Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

**Rescue the Hero.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

**Shieldwall.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift forms a shieldwall around the Hero. If the Followers were engaged with enemies they do not have to make a death saving throw this round but can use their turn to make an attack against their opponent as normal. If there are four or more members of the shieldwall then the Hero can use their action to expand a Hit Die and recover hit points as if they were taking a short rest. If the Hero has a shield then they count towards the members of the shieldwall. The shieldwall remains up for a number of rounds equal to its members or the Hero orders the shieldwall to disperse.

**Sky-minder.** Erja is aligned with The Old Ways.

**Well-travelled.** Erja has experience with many different cultures. She has advantage on any Intelligence or Charisma checks when meeting strangers.

NAME Valma

SPENT  SLAIN  KILLED  RELEASED

BURDENS **Mute.** Valma cannot speak.

GIFTS **Engage.** When you roll initiative, each Follower with this gift can be assigned up to two opponents in a battle. Engaged opponents spend their turn fighting the Follower unless the Hero is within reach, in which case the opponent can attack the Hero as normal. On the third and subsequent rounds, each Follower must make a death saving throw at the end of the opponent's turn if they were the target of the opponent. At the end of a round, a Follower can disengage from the opponent, becoming spent. Another available Follower can then use this ability to engage that opponent.

**Nimble.** Valma has advantage on Dexterity checks and saving throws.

**Rescue the Hero.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift rushes into the fight, trying to save the Hero from certain death. Each activated Follower must make a death saving throw. The Hero is rescued and has a chance to take a long rest before the adventure continues.

**Shieldwall.** When this gift is activated, each available Follower with this gift forms a shieldwall around the Hero. If the Followers were engaged with enemies they do not have to make a death saving throw this round but can use their turn to make an attack against their opponent as normal. If there are four or more members of the shieldwall then the Hero can use their action to expand a Hit Die and recover hit points as if they were taking a short rest. If the Hero has a shield then they count towards the members of the shieldwall. The shieldwall remains up for a number of rounds equal to its members or the Hero orders the shieldwall to disperse.

**Sky-minder.** Valma is aligned with The Old Ways.



## MONSTER WORKSHEET

MONSTER NAME/DESCRIPTION:

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ARMOUR CLASS	HIT POINTS	HIT DICE
CR / XP	MAXIMUM HIT POINTS	MAXIMUM HIT DICE

PROFICIENCY BONUS	INSPIRATION	PASSIVE PERCEPTION	PASSIVE INSIGHT
-------------------	-------------	--------------------	-----------------

STRENGTH		DEXTERITY		CONSTITUTION		INTELLIGENCE		WISDOM		CHARISMA
Saving Throw		Saving Throw	Stealth	Saving Throw	Saving Throw	Legends	Saving Throw	Medicine	Saving Throw	Persuasion

SPECIAL SENSES:  Blindsight \_\_\_\_\_ ft    Darkvision \_\_\_\_\_ ft    Tremorsense \_\_\_\_\_ ft    Truesight \_\_\_\_\_ ft

CONDITION IMMUNITIES:  Blinded  Charmed  Deafened  Exhaustion  Frightened  Grappled  Incapacitated  Invisible  Paralyzed  Petrified  Poisoned  Prone  Restrained  Stunned  Unconscious

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES:  Acid  Bludgeoning ( Magical  Silvered)  Cold  Fire  Force  Lightning  Necrotic  Piercing ( M  S)  Poison  Psychic  Radiant  Slashing ( M  S)  Thunder

DAMAGE RESISTANCES:  Acid  Bludgeoning ( Magical  Silvered)  Cold  Fire  Force  Lightning  Necrotic  Piercing ( M  S)  Poison  Psychic  Radiant  Slashing ( M  S)  Thunder

FEATURES

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ATTACKS AND ACTIONS

Name/Description	To-hit	Reach and Range	Damage/Effects:

REACTIONS

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SOCIAL ENCOUNTER SHEET

\_\_\_\_\_  
NPC NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
LOCATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
DESCRIPTION

CHALLENGE

ADVANTAGE CRITERIA

DISADVANTAGE CRITERIA

FOLLOWER HOOKS

SUCCESS BY 5 OR MORE

FAILURE

SUCCESS

FAILURE BY 5 OR MORE

FURTHER CHALLENGES

RECRUITMENT

# BEOWULF

AGE OF HEROES

HERO NAME

TALE

LEVEL

XP TOTAL

BACKGROUND

ALIGNMENT

PROFICIENCY BONUS

INSPIRATION

PASSIVE PERCEPTION

PASSIVE INSIGHT

Athletics

Acrobatics

Investigation

Animal Hand.

Deception

STRENGTH

DEXTERITY

CONSTITUTION

INTELLIGENCE

WISDOM

CHARISMA

Intimidation

Saving Throw

Saving Throw

Saving Throw

Saving Throw

Saving Throw

Saving Throw

Performance

Persuasion

TOTAL ARMOUR CLASS

INITIATIVE

FEATURES AND TRAITS

BODY

SPEED

HELM

SHIELD

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS

HIT POINTS

MAXIMUM HIT POINTS

MAXIMUM HIT DICE

HIT DICE

Successes

Failures

DEATH SAVING THROWS

PERSONALITY TRAITS

IDEALS

BONDS

FLAWS

WEAPON

ATK BONUS

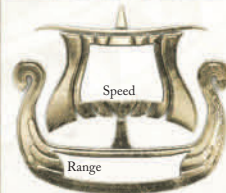
DAMAGE (TYPE)

OTHER PROFICIENCIES

TREASURES

EQUIPMENT

SHIP NAME



BURDENS

GIFTS

# BEOWULF

AGE of HEROES

HERO NAME

AGE

HEIGHT

WEIGHT

DESCRIPTION



CHARACTER  
APPEARANCE

FEATURES AND TRAITS

MAGICAL TREASURES

EQUIPMENT

BACKSTORY AND OTHER DETAILS

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