

Player's Secrets of

STJORDVIK



BIRTHRIGHT®

DOMAIN SOURCEBOOK



by Doug Stewart



stjordvik

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credits

Design by Doug Stewart
 Editing by David Eckelberry
 Creative Direction by Karen S. Boomgarden
 Art Direction by Robert Galica
 Prepress Coordination by Dave Conant
 Page Backgrounds by Starr Mahoney
 Page Frames by Dee Barnett
 Cover Art by Tony Szczudlo
 Interior Art by John Dollar
 Cartography by Rob Lazzaretti
 Typesetting by Nancy Kerkstra

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TSR, Inc.
 201 Sheridan Springs Rd.
 Lake Geneva
 WI 53147
 U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
 120 Church End
 Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 United Kingdom

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Oh, it's you. Come in. You must know by now that Stjordvik is in dire trouble. If you are certain that you want this job, it's yours. If not, no one will hold it against you. After all, I don't want it and that's why you're here. You have much to learn, and I fear the jarls won't be of much help.

Everything is in order. I will renounce the throne in the morning and go adventuring. I will be leaving immediately so no one becomes confused about who is ruling. The job, my bloodline, and the regency are yours—Your Majesty!

what you need to play

This domain sourcebook is designed for use with the BIRTHRIGHT campaign setting. In addition to the *Player's Handbook* and the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* for the *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* game, you or your Dungeon Master (DM) should have a copy of the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set. Be sure that both you and your DM read this product thoroughly. Explanations of abbreviations used in this book can be found in *Ruins of Empire* from the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set. Copies of *The Rjurik Highlands* sourcebook and the *Halskapa* domain campaign expansion, while not necessary to play, will enhance your understanding of the Peoples of the North.

how to use this domain sourcebook

This product is intended for players who wish to play Stjordvik characters in a BIRTHRIGHT campaign. It describes a realm caught between untrustworthy Rjurik and Anuirean allies, staring down the Blood Skull Barony. Here you will find vital information about the politics, history, holdings, and people of Stjordvik.

While this book provides you with the information you need to play the ruler of Stjordvik, feel free to ignore or change any part of it. For instance, you can decide that you have come to rule Stjordvik during a dark period of invasion, with orogs running about much of Lofkirdik and Udvika. Or you can choose to let someone else worry about leading the troubled land while you play a noble, commoner, or adventurer in the realm.

Once you have finished reading about Stjordvik, share this book with your DM. Point out what—if anything—you'd like to change or add, and then trust your DM to run a great adventure. **Remember:** The DM has final say about which parts of this information to incorporate and which to ignore or alter. Your DM will want to plan a few surprises for the newest regent of Stjordvik!

Lord Hjalmar Helder, Royal Chamberlain,
Sends His Greetings and Heartfelt Con-
gratulations to Your Majesty!

Sire, I apologize for my absence from your coronation observance. I understood that in keeping with former King Varri's desire, you wanted a quiet transition and investiture. Hopefully, it shall become clear to the realm soon enough that we have a new monarch on our throne. It is best that the people of Stjordvik learn this through your deeds rather than any overdone ceremony. Meanwhile, it was necessary that I inspect the state of the Great Oak Wall along our northern border—but more about that later.

The former king, Varri, was a man of great courage and honor. What sort of man can renounce throne and privilege for the greater good of his people? I hope we do not lose touch with him—as poor a monarch as he may have been, you could not find a better man at your side in a battle. I shall miss him.

I am delighted that one so capable as yourself now guides the realm. We have much to do. I hope you will pardon my directness and the breach of royal etiquette I make; the people of Rjurik have never stood on ceremony like the weak southern kingdoms, and we do not have time for useless ornamental orations.

state of the realm

It is my duty to report to you the miserable condition of your kingdom. While you may be aware of some of the details, Varri kept most of this knowledge away from the populace for fear that they would lynch him.

You should remember always that you govern only by the will of the people. Varri forgot this rule of statesmanship. Treat the people well, and they will be your best allies against recalcitrant jarls and hostile outsiders; deal with them falsely and you will soon be adventuring with the former king.

economic conditions

To phrase it politely, a depleted royal treasury awaits your command: The most recent accounting boasts but five gold bars.

We will not be embarking on any major rebuilding projects—to say nothing of new projects—for quite some time to come. Unfortunately, it is not because such projects are not needed; indeed the Great Oak

Wall—our chief defense in the north—might repulse one or two more attacks by the orogs, but you should consider it a

epistle from lofkirdik

military fiction. The Great Oak Wall shall be one of our priorities once we see our way past immediate problems and increase the size of the treasury.

Part of the problem is that King Varri had no mind for financial matters and ignored taxation as long as there were enough funds to pay for his few vices. The tax collectors are by long practice corrupt. Failing to charge their friends and doubling rates on others, they've made the system inequitable and wicked. To say the least, the people are displeased. One of your first jobs should be to tackle this problem. If you handle it well, the people will come to love you—and even it is done poorly, you can still increase your revenues. But if you fail to deal with this situation, the people will probably remove you. Forgive my bluntness, my king; I am sworn to tell you the truth. I hope that in the time we work together that you will come to perceive my candor as an asset, and not as a threat.

political conditions

Sire, the realm is in chaos. The provincial jarls exercise almost absolute authority outside the capital. They are independent and headstrong, recognizing no law, no rule, other than their own. Each jarl controls the law in his own province, and some have reverted to banditry more than once, raiding one another for "glory" and temporary gain. Meanwhile, the nomadic tribes disregard everyone and go their separate ways. In a very real sense, you are king of Ustkjuvil and the city of Hollingholmen. If Stjordvik is to be saved, this must change.

On the other hand, the people treat the jarls with barely disguised contempt. As several of the jarls

fail to recognize law or tradition other than their own whim, the people have grown dissatisfied with their rule. The people and I are united behind the throne, not any revolutionary jarl. Now may be the opportunity to bring Stjordvik into true nationhood.

The Blood Skull Barony snarls and nips at the heels of our northern border, but your army is sufficient, at present, to hold it at bay. Then too, the Great Oak Wall, even in its current state of despair, always forces the monsters to reconsider serious actions. Our watch to the north must remain vigilant. A war might unite Stjordvik with fire and steel, but it could very well destroy us.

In the west, certain tribes of the Rjurik lands have gone raiding on both land and sea, determined to take their toll on us and on our trading partners. Like scavengers, they sense a weakness in our guard and seek to take profit. Given their success, I fear that Hollingholmen may be reduced to a backwater bartering post, a turnabout for caravans and vessels from the east. We must stop these incursions.

We do have a treaty with Halskapa, but our neighbors have their own problems currently and I would not trust them to come to your aid. While I have taken the liberty of dispatching cavalry from the north to deal with the problem in the west, I hesitate to weaken the Oak Wall forces any further. We should do our best to keep our troop movements well concealed from the raiders and the Blood Skull Barony.

I should also warn you concerning the designs of the infamous White Witch. Our spies in the provinces report that she has sent agents into the land to stir dissent and create dissatisfaction. In truth we cannot guess at what she aims at, but if we allow her to continue distilling her bitter brew, the consequences will no doubt be grave. She is no friend of Stjordvik's people.

Not all is bleak. We enjoy cordial relations and comfortable trade with Dhoesone. Happily for us, Dhoesone shares a border with the Blood Skull Barony and has its own problems with the White Witch. There may be room for diplomatic profit here. We enjoy a mutual trade compact with them, and a military alliance seems logical.

religion

Fate, faith, and honor continue to guide the people as they have for centuries. Stjordvikers seek only Erik and follow the traditions of the druids. Günther Brandt of the Oaken Grove controls most temples in your realm, although the Emerald Spiral and its high priestess Gretta Seligsdotter hold a few. However, these spiritual leaders are far away in Halskapa. Our druids go their own way.

There are no foreign religions in Stjordvik. At least, none have become public. The people are content with a simple druidic faith in Erik.

In dealing with our people, remember our view of fate. We are all born to our destiny; none of us can escape it. We believe that each man's lot is cast at birth and what Fate determines will own you for all of your days. Your destiny is writ large across your life, lying in wait for you. For the most part we of Stjordvik accept this, although our independent natures make it hard not to rage against the heavens.

resources

We are rich in timber, furs, beer, and grain. In the catches of the fishing boats, the trade at our docks, our stocks overflow. Getting more out of that trade into the royal treasury, that's our task.

But your chief resource is your people, sire. Stjordvik freemen have always been fiercely independent, slow to anger but quick to right a wrong. Treat them well and they will reward you.

Then too, many—if not most—of the freemen would rather see the jarls put away. They feel that these arbitrary and hereditary but appointed governors are more trouble than they are worth. Of course, we agree. The people, if not the jarls, view the state as a kingdom, sire. And this is encouraging.

High Marshal Bern and I will remain steadfast. Use us as you would use your own sword.

Your Majesty's Most Loyal Servant,

Helder, Royal Chamberlain

a noble note

Sire,

I have left this note with High Marshal Bern with instructions for him to give it to you once the coronation is complete. There are few things that you need to know—things that Bern might find it too difficult to tell you.

There are few you will be able to trust. Helder will serve you, I am sure, as faithfully and loyally as he has served me and my mother before me. Listen to his advice and you should weather the storms that are sure to come. Lord Bern is an experienced campaigner who has been loyal in spite of what he thought of my rulership. He is one of those nobles who believes that if you can't honor the person, honor the office.

Queen Ljorrah, my mother, died three years ago. A good mother, she wasn't much of a ruler. She was more concerned with her grand balls and genteel parties than she was with statesmanship. I was even less capable than she. I have no statecraft skills whatsoever and, truth be told, were it not for Helder, I would have been removed before now.

I hope that you do not think too badly of me, but there is little I can do about that now. Still, there is one final gift that I can give you. I have entrusted one of my prized possessions into the care of High Marshal Bern, with instructions that he present it to you. It is a *cloak of invisibility* known to me as the *Ravenscloak*. Wear it for good and it will serve you well.

Varri

Varri the Guardsman

Pronunciation Guide:

"J"	pronounced as	"Y"
"Hr"	pronounced as	"R"
"fn"	pronounced as	"en"

So, Hrafnhild, for example, is "Raf-EN-hild."

Where "H" precedes the "J" ["Y"] sound, it is almost silent. Hence "Hjorvaal" is "hYorvaal" and Stjordvik is "Ste-YORD-vik."

A "djur" sound is "[d]JuR." The "d" is a gentle, aspirated sound as in "Djursund." So we get Djursunddotter ("dotter" is almost "daughter," which is what it means). Most other sounds are pronounced as spelled.



An Excerpt from Hjarring's Saga

*Thin chiefs gathered 'round frozen sand
and runestones cast on icy shores, cold fear.
Then Stjorndabl took his mighty mace, smote
the stones and spat and said "Enough.
Reynir speaks not through slaughter's gales."*

*Then it was that Stjorndabl gathered the loyal clans
and started south to seek the sun. Now this was in the
Bitter Winter, two years abast the Shadow Flight*,
as Azrai stained the harvest black and dead, and
loosed his wrath in snow.*

*When hunger is the hunter,
and famine is the foe,
fasting rats are prey.*

* -515 HC (Haelyn's Count, dated from the Battle of Deismaar, is the reckoning used in Stjordvik.)

early history

When the Shadow forced the five tribes to make their exodus out of Aduria and north to Cerilia, three of the tribes became pilgrims, traveling by foot and horseback across an ancient land bridge. But the Rjuven took to their longboats and sailed the great salt road (the popular poetic reference for the oceans) to the land now known as the Rjurik Highlands. Settled farmers and nomadic herdsman composed these people, and all fled north for survival. The first settlements were in the area now called Halskapa, to the north and west of Stjordvik.

Life was difficult for both groups of Rjuven. The nomads felt tied down, but survival required their participation in the settlements of meager farming. They hunted and protected their herds, but finding enough to eat for all was a continual battle.

Even today, most of the land is ill-suited for farming; only fierce and constant vigilance of their cropholds allow farmers to eke out anything more than subsistence from the cold, rocky soil.

Fishing in the frozen waters of the Tael Firth took its share of lives. The Rjuven were accustomed to the calmer waters and the more placid aquatic life in the Straits of Aerele. The narwhals and the great saw-toothed eels of the icy Tael Firth did not go hungry those first few years of settlement.

Only hunting produced bounty worth noting. Great fat bear, long-snouted boar, and sleek antlered deer saved the colonists from outright starvation.

Disaster struck in only the second year. What became known as Bitter Winter fell so early and so severely that the crops froze on the ground, and any game animals that survived migrated far to the south. The Firth was thick ice all the way to Dantier Island.

At the same time a struggle for control of the settlements developed between three of the chiefs.

Stjorndahl was not one of these bickering warchiefs struggling for power. He had no patience with what he called "tribal folly" when the settlement was on the brink of starvation. Stjorndahl gathered as many as would listen to him and headed south, vowing to "keep marching until we see green." And so they left, taking their animals with them.

a history of stjordvik

From the beginning of their long trek south, these exiles grew apart from their Rjuven kin. While paying lip service to their traditional clan affiliations, the constant battles to survive taught them to think as a tribe of their own. The journey even absorbed the few nomads' families who had joined the trek. All of the refugees fell into a common culture of struggle.

And so it was that Stjordvik was the first kingdom founded by the Rjuven people, named for its first king, Stjorndahl.

In -450 H.C. the humanoids attacked Halskapa and the northwestern lands in force. Sren Stjorndahlsson, Stjordvik's prince, fearing the inevitable southern expansion of the humanoids, decided to take action while the monsters were still busy in the west. He designed and constructed the Great Oak Wall. To this day, it defends the realm from the Blood Skull Barony and Rjuvik's raiders.

The Great Oak Wall is 10 feet tall, punctuated with sentry towers rising another 7 feet into the air. The towers are spaced at the edge of vision from one another (1000 yards), and a 5-foot-wide walkway runs the entire distance of the wall. The barrier traverses a total length of 85

miles across the northern border before it turns west for 90 miles, ending abruptly just outside the woodland province of Hollenvik. They say that so many fire-tempered, tall highland oaks were cut for the construction that shipwrights were forced to import mast timbers for the next 100 years.

The regents have staffed, maintained, and upgraded the Great Oak Wall since its completion in -438 H.C. The varied materials and methods employed through the Wall's history have made it appear much like a patchwork dam.

Stjordvik was fortunate to avoid involvement in the great war of the elves, the *gbeallie Sidhe*, but the years before the Battle of Deismaar were full of conflict. Stjordvikers fought off continual raids from the Blood Skull orogs, goblins, gnolls, and other monsters, attacks from the Giantdowns, and incursions from their neighbors to the west. Defenders repulsed most of these attacks at the Great Oak Wall. Some overwhelmed it.

The freemen learned to plow with their swords strapped on and to fish the Firth with arbalests lashed to the gunnels of their boats. Armed with crossbows, they raised sheep and herded cattle. And through it all they built their homes, harvested their crops, and established the capital city of Hollingholmen at the mouth of the Northbyrn River. Then they said that "Reynir smiled."

the battle of deismaar

The Battle of Deismaar decimated Stjordvik forces and ended Stjordahl's line. Monsters slew then King of Stjordvik Agli Gardarsson along with Reynir, and today the skalds still sing the tale.

The war ended with victory and the death of the gods. The Stjordvikers went home to recreate their realm, but so many had fallen that the future was not at all certain. A sense of impending, inevitable doom—probably a result of the Rjuven's deep belief in the immutability of Fate—drove the survivors into a state of near paralytic depression.

the aftermath

Then the people, defeated in their spirits, saying they could not go on, found Einar Wolfslayer. He took upon himself the mantle of leadership. By constantly haranguing anyone and everyone who would listen, he overcame the Stjordvikers' natural fatalism and convinced them that they had been spared because they were the best of the Rjuven (the adoption of the "Rjurik" name, which honors Erik, was not yet universal). They had a great purpose, he told them: to rebuild Stjordvik as a tribute to Agli and Stjordahl, and to honor the gods who died in their defense to give them the victory.

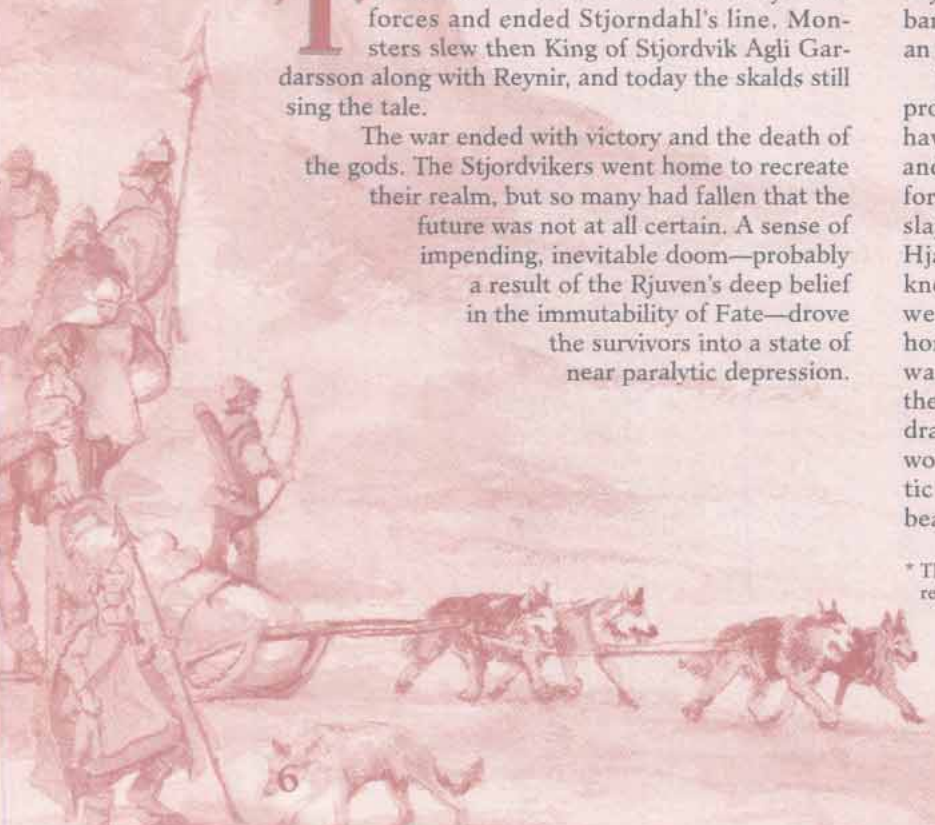
The tide turned in Einar's favor and the Stjordvikers formed a government. Einar was chosen king. The new monarch chose jarls among the people of the provinces. With spirits newly restored, life slowly returned to normal.

the anuirean years

In 15 HC, Roele, attempting to realize his dream to unite the Empire of Anuire, marched his army into the north with banners flying. He expected an easy conquest—the Rjuven (or "Rjurik," as they now called themselves) were mere barbarians, after all. What he received instead was an education from his "inferiors."

The cold-forged steel blades of the Rjurik proved a more formidable enemy than Roele could have expected. As one, settled freemen, nomads, and the tribes took up arms against the Anuirean forces. Behind the leadership of King Einar Wolfslayer of Stjordvik and King Starkad Leifsson of Hjalstone*, the Rjurik armies used their superior knowledge of the terrain and their own fervor as weapons. Angry over the destruction of their homes, the Rjurik people rallied to the banner of war. More than once, Anuirean generals found themselves led into deadly ambush among the tundra and snow, their supply lines cut by raiders that would "vanish into the tundra." Though no climactic battle was ever lost, Roele knew when he was beaten, and withdrew.

* The Anuireans conquered and settled this Rjurik kingdom, renaming it "Dhoesone."



under the iron throne

After his humiliation in the north, Roele rethought his conquest and set about trying to expand the empire by diplomacy, gifts, and guile. By 25 HC Stjordvik and Hjalstone, along with Rjuvik, Svinik, Halskapa, and Jankaping, decided to join the empire.

For almost 1,000 years, the Rjurik people paid their dues to the empire in coin and blood. As the years rolled on after Roele's passing, the rule from Anuire became more and more despotic, awarding jarldoms to foreigners, requiring heavy taxes from the north, and pressing unwilling Rjurik warriors into its armies.

After the death of Michael Roele in 973, the long wars of succession fought for possession of the Iron Throne severed the last rusty links of the chain of Rjurik fealty.

independence

In 1030 HC, Stjordvik and Rjuvik declared their independence from Anuire. The rest of the Taelshore realms quickly followed their lead. Only Hjalstone, conquered, settled, and renamed by the Anuireans years earlier, remained loyal to the Imperial Crown as the Barony of Dhoesone.

By 1100 HC the battles for independence were over. From that moment until this very day, the independent Rjurik Highlanders have lived as free men in their own lands, fighting their own battles, finding their own ways in the world.

the humanoid wars

The history of the Blood Skull Barony and of the Rjurik are intertwining spirals as closely bound as a serving girl's hair braids. While the *gheallie Sidhe* and the first Rjurik-Humanoid War passed over Stjordvik (perhaps because the westerly realms had larger populations), the humanoids soon discovered what they had overlooked.

After the Blood Skullers had licked their wounds and prepared, they attacked the Wall in force. Although the men and women of Stjordvik eventually repulsed the humanoids, the skalds still sing many tales of tragedy of this war, relating tales of fathers and farmers gone off to war and slain. Tradition dictates that Stjordvikers keep the

songs alive. From their childhood, Stjordvik's youth are taught a hatred of the humanoids just as they are warned of the need to be forever vigilant of their northern neighbor.

stjordvik today

In many ways, the problems of the realm today are the same ones that have plagued it for centuries. The Blood Skull Barony remains a threat positioned to wreak havoc upon Stjordvik's farmlands at any moment. To the west and east, nations that should be allies against the threat of invasion remain unreliable—often descending into border raids.

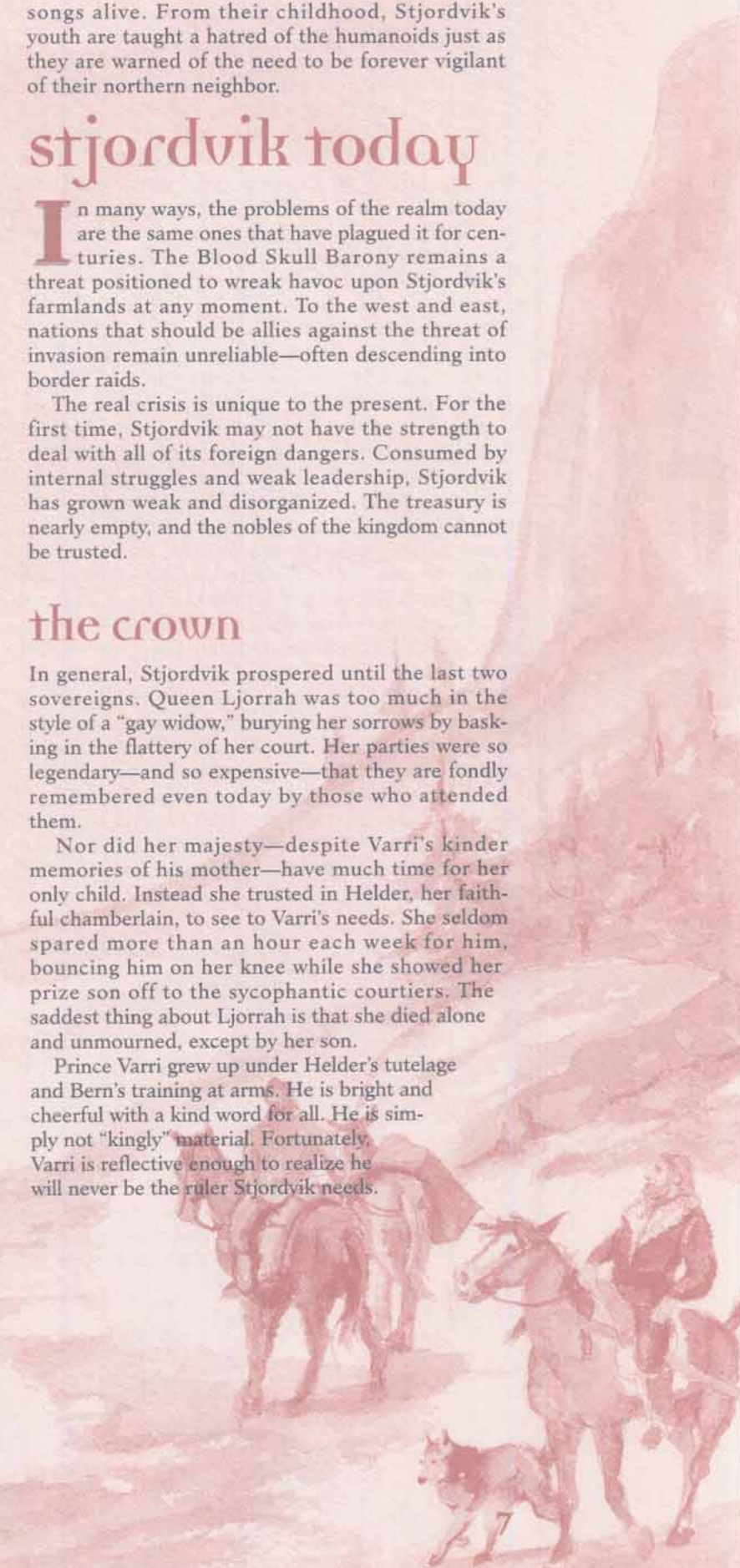
The real crisis is unique to the present. For the first time, Stjordvik may not have the strength to deal with all of its foreign dangers. Consumed by internal struggles and weak leadership, Stjordvik has grown weak and disorganized. The treasury is nearly empty, and the nobles of the kingdom cannot be trusted.

the crown

In general, Stjordvik prospered until the last two sovereigns. Queen Ljorrah was too much in the style of a "gay widow," burying her sorrows by basking in the flattery of her court. Her parties were so legendary—and so expensive—that they are fondly remembered even today by those who attended them.

Nor did her majesty—despite Varri's kinder memories of his mother—have much time for her only child. Instead she trusted in Helder, her faithful chamberlain, to see to Varri's needs. She seldom spared more than an hour each week for him, bouncing him on her knee while she showed her prize son off to the sycophantic courtiers. The saddest thing about Ljorrah is that she died alone and unmourned, except by her son.

Prince Varri grew up under Helder's tutelage and Bern's training at arms. He is bright and cheerful with a kind word for all. He is simply not "kingly" material. Fortunately, Varri is reflective enough to realize he will never be the ruler Stjordvik needs.



the bloodskullers

The Blood Skull monsters, under Thrakkazz, the Scarlet Baron (*MM*; *F12*; *An*, major, 38), use the Great Oak Wall as a training ground for new warriors. Their sporadic attacks, frequent in the spring, rare in winter, never strike at the same section twice.

Thrakkazz has tried every conceivable method from tunnels to catapults to break the Great Oak Wall. At Hjørvaal last year, he used a covered battering ram on a previously weakened segment. Thrakkazz personally designed the ram. It came equipped with a slate roof to deflect defenders' arrows and a 20-minotaur hitch to drive it. Sixteen massive iron-shod wheels rolled on eight heavily greased axles. He launched this contraption from the top of a high hill opposite the tender portion of the Wall. Down the hill it charged. Minotaurs running full speed, the ram crossed a convenient low spot in the Hjarring river. Then minotaurs and momentum pushed it to a dizzying speed, up and into the camouflaged pit Jarl Njall Olvisson had dug for just such an occasion. The monsters hauled the surviving minotaurs from the wreckage and carried them home on litters. The ram was left where it lay.

Thrakkazz's attacks don't always fail, but he has never been able to hold and reinforce any captured territory. The roads, overgrown as they have become, allow Bern's light horse to move swiftly and reinforce any province in a matter of hours.

The losses frustrate Thrakkazz unendingly. The current lull in heavy activity is only a result of the time the Scarlet Baron is taking to gather forces and make plans.

rjuvik

Up until a century ago, constant raids by Rjuvik "jarls"—who were hardly more than barbaric chieftains—pounded the Wall that separates the two realms. Many claimed the provinces of Stjordvik as their own. They burned, chopped, and dug their way through to pillage Namverg and Hjørvaal, regardless of the lives lost. Sometimes they raided as deep as Saerskaap, or boarded their longships for an attack on Hollenvik.

Only Ustkjuvil, with its armed merchantmen and fast caravels, was immune to attack. The Jarl of Yvarre, Rjuvik's only sea province, tried once. His six longboats never made land. The ballistae of the merchantman *Harvest Moon*, inbound from Talinie, dispatched them. The great ship suffered no damage in the uneven exchange. The Rjuvik longships were lost with all hands.

For the last 100 years, however, Rjuvik has been seeking softer targets. The raids come on occasion, like a habit the realm can't break, but the raiders rarely return home with more than trinkets.

Fulgar of Rjuvik forbade the practice of "going aviking" while he is trying to establish trade with his neighbors, but many snort that coins and timbers are no substitutes for honor and glory.

diplomacy

Thanks to Hollingholmen and the city's trade center, relations with most of Cerilia are cordial. In the interest of continuing their profitable trade, eastern kingdoms promise all sorts of friendship and alliances. Of course, such promises have yet to amount to much, and no treaties have been signed. Moreover, as much as the Anuirean realms might acknowledge common enemies, they are far enough away to make a military response difficult. Even if the Anuireans decided to rally to its aid, Stjordvik might be in ruins by the time such reinforcements arrived. Still, if a major invasion of Cerilia were to begin here, Stjordvik could likely expect support to arrive. The value of Stjordvik as a trading station to Cerilia's north is simply too high.

Among the Rjurik people, the folk of Stjordvik are unique. The circumstances of their origin forged ties amongst the Stjordvikers stronger than is common in other Rjurik realms.

As in all Rjurik realms, men and women are equal before the law and in war. Yet throughout the Rjurik realms, settlers grew "more equal" than nomads, developing greater power and privilege.

Stjordvik is an exception. Here, the tension between those who are settled and those who wander has almost been erased—another result of the unique unifying origins of this realm. Indeed, the nomads' semiannual visits are welcomed with great celebrations in the provinces. Trade, feasting, and

the people and the land

drinking bring welcome relief from the tedium of the lives of rural farmers. Even Hollingholmen's citizens hold celebrations as merchants vie with each other over nomadic pelts, gems, and gold.

Stjordvikers are hard working, honest people. They are warriors out of necessity rather than nature, preferring their farms and herds to raids and warfare. Still, they never run away from a fight. Quick to take offense if they feel that even a casual remark impugns their honor, they have no qualms about settling insults or disputes with axes or fists.

While the people of Stjordvik are different from folk in the rest of the Taelshore Domains, they do share the common Rjurik belief in Fate. Nothing a man or woman can do will alter the destiny and final doom that Fate ordained on the day of birth.

Stjordvikers do not believe in an afterlife as such. Instead, one lives on through stories told and songs sung by the skalds. At best, after return to the soil, one's essence lives on in others. And so the people of Stjordvik strive for honor, strength, and courage, crafting skills and displays of talent. These things will endure in legend after they have left the world.

climate

While Stjordvik is the most southerly of the Rjurik realms and its winters are milder than those of Halskapa, the weather doesn't spare Stjordvik when the long cold season comes. Its gentle hills and soft plains are

snow-covered and wind-swept during the death of snakes (winter). Still, the summer growing season waxes longer than that of the northwestern realms, and the land is generally more fertile. An unfortunate side effect of Stjordvik's good fortune is that foreign raiders see the realms as a ripe target.

Summer temperatures hover near 75 degrees Fahrenheit, although a few days of 80-degree heat are not unusual during high summer and on rare days the temperature has been known to go as high as 90.

villages

Each province contains but one village, and common practice dictates that Stjordvikers name villages for the current jarl. The practice has driven many foreign cartographers to throw up their hands in disgust every time a new jarl comes to the fore, but most Stjordvikers see it as honor due their leaders.

the plains provinces

*There are no pines on Arvaald's plains,
no gold in Saerskaap,
there are true hearts in Hollenvik,
but none in Namverg's keep.*

—Stjordvikan children's chant

arvaald

Arvaald is an enclave province completely surrounded by other provinces and thus afforded some protection—or at least, early warning—from the Blood Skull orogs. Its location protects Arvaald from the raids of the Rjuvik as well. Jarl Olfjor Ylvarrik (MRj; F9; Ma, major, 25) rules from his compound at Olfjorby, and has developed into a thorn in the crown's side. Although he has no pretensions to the throne himself, he very much wants to be left to rule his province as he alone sees fit. He opposes all attempts to strengthen the monarchy.

Arvaald itself is a quiet community of farmers in a land of gently rolling hills and terraced fields. While minor streams yield a few fish, the major trading staples are crops of wheat,



flax, barley, and heavy-coated Rjurik pigs.

While all Rjurik is known for its elegant embroidery, the ancient and exquisite patterns of Arvaald are sought after as far as the Khinasi realms, and custom orders (at custom prices) are common.

saerskaap

They say that forest once covered all of Stjordvik and that the only remnants of the wood are the provincial forest of Saerskaap and the sylvan province of Hollenvik. The wall consumed trees by the score.

The Jarl of Saerskaap, Skjada One-Eye (*MRj; F3; Re, minor, 24*), is a jovial man with a penchant for ale and tall tales. It is said that in Skjadaby he holds court in an alehouse. In his youth he was a fighter, adventurer, and mercenary, but he always said he'd retire when he turned 30. He did that, married the former jarl's daughter, and took over the position when the old man died. Political enough to know how to play the game, he's wise enough to stay clear of it.

While he treasures his independence, he thinks that having a king is a fine idea. He may be lax in Council meeting attendance, but Skjada always pays his share of taxes and troop levies. He enjoys good relations with Dhoesone. The Three Trees Traders profit well from trade, selling the province's excellent highland oak mast timbers to the highest Dhoesonian bidder.

Skjada, like most men of Rjurik, considers himself

a steward of the land. He never overcuts and demands that his servants plant at least two seedlings for every tree felled: "one for the future and one for Erik."

The Northbyrn River marks the southeastern boundary of the Rjurik Highlands and the province of Saerskaap. The river basin also fertilizes some of the finest black soil farmland in the realm. Wheat and oats grow thick and heavy and it is not unusual at all for Saerskaap to produce both a summer crop and a late fall harvest, called "Erik's gift."

In addition to grain and timber, the province's wheat brew, Skjada Weissbier, is legendary for its taste and its potency.

namverg

Unique among the provinces of Stjordvik, and perhaps in all of the Rjurik lands, a Council of Freeman rules Namverg. The province's last jarl, Huljim Ironhand, was a tyrant: quick to anger, heavy-handed in matters of law, and terrible in a fight. Finally, he sentenced a nomadic tribesman to death by drowning for stealing a loaf of bread. This misdeed was the final straw. The people of the province decided to take action. Since they could not count on Varri to intervene, they drew lots and selected six individuals to execute the jarl.



In the third hour before day break, the small band of assassins crept into the jarl's longhouse. Mysteriously, they found all of the guards asleep at their posts at the wall. They entered Huljim's sleeping chambers and stabbed him where he lay, and each of their blades repeatedly tasted his blood. Huljim made no sound as he died on his bed.

On the same day, the citizens held a general meeting and announced the terrible news that Huljim had "died in his sleep." After the applause and cheering ended, the citizens decided not to elect a new jarl, but to create a Council of Six to oversee the province. Brand Fyrisson was selected to head the council as chief freeman. Strangely enough, the six members elected were also the assassins.

The council's first action was to pardon the bread-snitching nomad and see to it that his family had enough to eat and a place to live. Next, the council informed King Varri of recent events. The council's third action was to rename the tiny village of Huljimby "Freemenske."

Namverg borders two provinces in Rjuvik, the capital province of Nalhorske and the province of Dankmaar. Fulgar the Bold, regent of Rjuvik (*MRj; F12/T9; Br, minor, 14*), does not look kindly on the social experiment that this freemen's province represents. Since he has been trying to establish mercantile trade with Stjordvik and Dhoesone, he bides his time for the moment. If trade develops, he is likely to leave the province alone. Little is known in Namverg about what is happening in the province of Dankmaar: It seems leaderless, and two years have passed since a raid came from that quarter.

The terminus of the Great Oak Wall is at the border of Hollenvik and Namverg, and it is to this weak position that the Royal Chamberlain sent the cavalry from Lofkirdik.

hollenvik

Hollenvik possesses two resources in abundance: magnificent highland oak timbers and the outstanding hauls of its fishing fleet.

The Great Forest of Hollenvik is one of the true treasures of Stjordvik. The well-trained foresters here are rightfully proud of their profession. They cull the trees according to a strict code that they believe comes directly from Erik:

*First the felled by wild storm,
then the aged before life ebbs,
last the ones' prevent new growth.
For each you cut, plant two in rut.*

—From *The Foresters' Saga*

Even with these restrictions, the forest produces most of the shipbuilding timber used on the Taelshore.

The fishing fleet plies its trade throughout the Firth, and its nets bring in several tons of fish each week. The catch always exceeds Stjordvik's own needs, and spoilage is often a problem. Hence the fishing boats double as markets, fishmongering up and down the coast.

Jarl Guthrim Gauksson, like his friend and ally Olfjor of Arvaald, has a rabid independent zeal. While claiming to have no desire for the crown, he contends that his province is a realm unto itself. Lately, he has begun to insist that his people address him as "Your Highness."

Jarl Guthrim controls both law and trade within Hollenvik and makes a tidy profit from his exports.

Hollenvik's chief problem is the lack of farm and grazing land. It must import all meat and grain. The people of Hollenvik prepare for the harsh coastal winter by storing large quantities of salt pork and beef, grain, and other staples.

The people of the province consider Guthrim, bent and stooped, a misshapen buffoon. They are content as long as they maintain their comfortable living and stocked winter supplies.

ustkjuvil

The Firth bounds the "Royal Province" in the south, and the Northbyrn River bounds it in the east. The rich, fertile soil here, like that of Udvika, frequently yields double crops. The fishing fleet, while smaller than that of Hollenvik, brings in substantial yields of saltwater fish, crabs, and mollusks from the Firth and freshwater fish, clams, and crayfish from the river. The rest of the province thrives on good pasturage and fine grazing land.

the border provinces

... and winter comes, cold dead winter brings the wolf, brings the winter wolf, brings cold death 'neath uncaring pines.
—Hjarring's Saga

Hjorvaal

It was in Hjorvaal province that Stjorndahl and his wandering band of refugees first "saw green," and it was here that they made their first settlements. Today the province is situated on the borders of both the Blood Skull Barony and Nalhorske, the capital province of Rjuvik. Hjorvaal's jarl, Njall Olvisson, (MRj; F5; Br, tainted, 9) is perhaps the least rebellious of the provincial jarls. His tiny town of Njallby functions as a trade and diplomatic center in times of peace and a mustering point during war.

The plains are natural grazing grounds that require no tending or planting, so the province has developed a reputation for its cattle and pony herds. The herdsmen are warriors and travel the province with weapons close at hand.

Hjorvaal boasts a small mountain called Isgerd's Vanishing. Where the name originated, no one knows. To this day, no one who has dared its slope has returned.

The Blood Skull Barony secretly sends small platoons through breaches in the Great Oak Wall to cache weapons and station elite units in the mountains of Hjorvaal, Lofkirdik, and Udvika for the "Day of Reckoning" that the Blood Skullers promise is sure to come. No reports have ever been received from the humanoids' advance outpost on Isgerd's Vanishing.

About halfway up Isgerd's Vanishing, the mountain becomes impossible to climb—except on the eastern face. A gentle clearing there leads to an easy slope from which it is possible to hike to the top. Unfortunately, an ancient deadly white pudding has lived here since the glaciers receded, and it all but covers the entire clearing.

Deadly white pudding, ancient: AC 5; MV 7; HD 12; hp 107; THAC0 7; #AT 1; Dmg 10d4; SA Dissolves animal and vegetable matter in one round; SD immune to acid, cold, and poison; half damage from fire and magic missiles; SZ G (100 yds); ML none; Int non (0); AL N; XP 4,200. Surrounding it is a huge cache of humanoid

weapons, belt buckles, armor pieces, and miscellaneous jewelry. Human artifacts consist of a silver belt made of linked, square panels, etched and studded with 2,000 gp of rubies, prospectors' picks and tools, and a corroded metal hair comb.

Unknown to the Stjordvikers who hate wizards (seers are allowed while "wizard" has negative connotations in Rjurik lands), is that Ohlaak the Dragon (MRj; W9; Br, major, 34), a renegade Rjurik "seer" who is actually a wizard, has seized control of a source (3) in Hjorvaal. He has forged ley lines between this near-empty province and his base in the province of Vejle in the White Witch's realm. He plans to use the ley lines in battle against the White Witch.

Lofkirdik

Living in the province with the longest border facing the Blood Skull Barony, the people of Lofkirdik live under the constant threat of war. Like Hjorvaal, the land is one of excellent free range and pasture, and, like Hjorvaal, its shepherds and herdsmen are always armed. The stretch of the ancient Oak Wall on the south shore of the Hjarring River is by necessity the strongest section. Every spring, citizens compete in the Oak Wall Festmachten to strengthen the barrier. Citizens build four alternating layers of mud and clay and fire them at the end of the festivities. The winner is the person who gathered the most material by weight.

Jarl Arnora Hadrimsdotter (FRj; F3; Re, major, 38) treads a narrow path. Hadrim, her father, died twelve-month past, and he was a gentle and just man who never raised his voice. Arnora is autocratic and dictatorial, as she must be, but she is well loved. She balances her demands with her father's sense of justice, her own style of humor, and happy celebrations for all. Her relationship with the crown is erratic at best, but she knows that the survival of her province depends on support from royal troops.

All citizens of Lofkirdik are warriors, and training begins at an early age. By custom, males practice at arms while tending their herds; females have regularly scheduled practices, typically three times a week at the Great Oak Wall. The most elite fighting force in Lofkirdik is the all female, yellow-clad Spears of Erik. They represent a fierce first line of defense should the orogs breach the Wall.

Lofkirdik also possesses a single tall hill nestled in a gentle range. Even adventurers rarely visit the hill, called Ottar's Cloudforge, though reports of gold and silver in large enough quantities to mine have been substantiated. Several packs of winter wolves daunt all but the most greedy. While a single silver pelt brings 1,000 gp in Anuirean markets, and almost twice that in the Khinasi bazaars, few have survived to claim the bounty.

Winter Wolves

(2d4x3); AC 5; MV 5; HD 6;

hp 45 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1;

Dmg 2d8; SA frost breath; SD immune to cold; SW fire causes an additional point per die; SZ L (7–12'); ML elite (13); Int average (13); AL NE; XP 975 each.

Winter wolves are possessed of a foul disposition. They can expel a stream of frost from their mouths once every 10 rounds that causes 6d4 points of damage to everything living within 10 feet.

Hidden in the caves of Ottar's Cloudforge is a large advance base of Blood Skull orogs. The troops are well armed, but small in number; it may be a boon to Lofkirdik that the winter wolves trim their forces.

udvika

Udvika shares its longest border with Dhoesone, but it too skirts the orog barony. Like those in Hjordvaal and Lofkirdik, the people must maintain constant vigilance.

Jarl Hrafnhild Djursunddotter (FRj; F4; Re, Minor, 29) is a close friend of Jarl Arnora. The pair has much in common. Hrafnhild took over the province from her aging father; her brother died in a mountain slide years before. The old man, Djursund, is still alive but too infirm in mind and body to deal with the pressures of office.

Arnora and Hrafnhild confer frequently, and interprovincial festivals occur at least twice a year. Over the centuries, a healthy rivalry has developed between the people of the two provinces during the Oak Wall Festmachen. Last year Udvika mudslingers won for the first time in 50 years.

Udvika claims a small range of hills, the Three Sisters. They are so collectively named after the individual hilltops within the range. Alfhild, the largest, sports the highest peak in the province. Herka, in the middle, has an active coal mine that ekes out enough material to fuel Udvikan homes in winter. Unn, in the south, boasts a rich forest below the tree line, and good hunting. The Three Sisters harbor packs of winter wolves, but only Alfhild hides a humanoid advance base—there is too much activity on the other mountains for concealment to be possible.

cold colony

*On the Day of Rebirth what words did I speak
in Tjarvaald on that frozen Sarimiere day?*

*Take me back to the ice fields in summer melt
to hear what I said as my promise unthaws.*

Back the anchor, send the sails,

No living is made out hunting the whales.

—From *Lies Told a Rich Man's Daughter*

A traditional Rjurik whaler's chantey

tjarvaald

Stjordvik possesses one colony on Thaele. Tjarvaald is, relatively speaking, a prosperous, dependent settlement. However, it is wholly dependent on the crown for protection, on the Three Trees Traders for food and supplies, and on the Oaken Grove for spiritual leadership. Its loyalty is unquestioned but beyond the range of influence.

Jarl Andros Drakkenvir (MRj; R12; Ma, minor, 18) was an active warrior, now well beyond his years. Queen Ljorrah loved the old man, but couldn't convince him to retire. She finally hit on the idea of appointing him governor of the colony. With smiles and subtlety, she convinced Andros that he was the only person in the realm who could protect and build the icy land of Tjarvaald. Andros hesitated, only finally accepting when his queen's ire roused, and it seemed she would send him anyway. He made one demand, which his curious queen granted. He asked for a whaling ship for transport, one that would then remain with him in the arctic colony.

The new jarl had always had a flair for leadership, but his new responsibilities revealed that he was an excellent administrator. In less than a twelvemonth he had begun to export bear skins, narwhal oil, ivory, and small quantities of gold. All told, it was soon enough to break even with the colony's imports from the Three Trees Traders.

He also established a colonist's council to advise him, and he has become a familiar figure on the streets of Androsby, talking to merchants, hunters, and sailors. His prestige and popularity make it impossible for him to be denied, regardless of the request.

Andros organized a militia he calls the Ice Guard. The guard defends the colony from ice troll raids and the occasional forays by pirates. The militia's other responsibility is to accompany its governor when he hunts remorhaz for sport. They say that the only good deed that Queen Ljorrah ever did was promoting Andros.

physical features roads and ruts

Queen Ljorrah's father, Snorri Snidilsson, may not have been a statesman, but he was a military genius. He led his own troops into battle against the humanoids and the Rjuvikers and survived to tell the tale.

The lack of speed at which troops could move from one province to another bothered Snorri, and he decided to do something about it. Of course, Snorri's treasury could stand up to such a drain of resources. He brought a man up from the east who was experienced in such matters, and together they set out to build roads to connect the provinces by the shortest possible route (see map).

The job took almost four years to complete. The Rjuvik and the humanoids saw the roads as a threat, as indeed they might be, since they stopped just short of connecting the borders of their realms.

Raids from Rjuvik and the Blood Skull Barony constantly harassed the road builders. It must be said, though, that on the one occasion that raids from both opponents occurred together, the Rjuvik fought with the Stjordvikers and decimated the humanoids.

The lone Stjordvik quarry in Arvaald that supplied stone for river crossings and bridge supports was besieged five times, and each time the army was recalled from road building duties to break the siege. Finally, Snorri took the ultimate step of raising taxes and increasing the size of the army.

At long last the roads were finished, and they cut travel time between any two points in half.

Snorri's highways remain a double-edged sword. The raiders began to see their use too. Snorri countered this by setting traps, many of which still exist, at key points along the routes—at the centers of crossroads, around sweeping bends, and at sections of the road near borders. He then made certain that every Stjordviker knew the location of every trap. That trust has never been betrayed.

The traps themselves are deep pits set with fire-hardened highland oak spears about 6 inches apart (1d8 points of damage per spear on which the victim is impaled, no saving throw). The basketweave cover consists of branches covered with mud. When set in place and allowed to dry, a single man, even a couple, could walk across them without falling through. A platoon or a horse, on the other hand, would cause the

branches to snap and the stakes to skewer the victims. The tragic part of this story is that few today remember the locations of all the pits; victims fall every year.

While the roads exist today, most of them are in sad states of neglect. The byways and little used routes are overgrown. The major tradeways are scarred with deep ruts filled with detritus. Today these courses are used mainly by the freemen to move grain and produce to market. The army uses them as guides but marches at the sides of the gutted thoroughfares.

on the wall

Sporadic maintenance work over the last few years has resulted in the collapse of several sections. The entire Wall is in desperate need of repair. The northern leg that protects Hjorvaal, Lofkirdik, and Udvika is in better shape than the western leg. The jarls and freemen of these provinces have the most to lose if the Wall is allowed to further deteriorate. Even in the northern provinces, orogs, goblins, and others from the Blood Skull pass through holes and gaps in the Wall, headed either for the advance bases or simply to prey on unsuspecting villagers and farmers. While these nuisance raids rarely end in the loss of human lives, there is no doubt that where there is a hole, there can be a chasm. Raids have a way of becoming wars.

Thrakkazz will never give up until he cracks the Wall and traps the roads. One of his current plans is to send a band of orogs, mounted on subterranean lizards, into the eastern section through Dhoesone, at night. Coming in behind the Wall, the riders will spread caltrops behind them to cripple horses and injure riders, as they charge to the west and escape the wall on the Hjorvaal/Rjuvik border.

Orogs (4d4): AC 3 (banded mail); MV 9 or 12 (mounted); HD 3; hp 19 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon +2 (melee and thrown weapons); SZ M (6' tall); ML elite (14); Int high (10); AL LE; XP 120 each.

A 6HD chieftain will ride with the band. He has a THAC0 of 15 and receives a +4 bonus on all damage rolls. A 5HD battle priest who wields the spell powers of a 5th-level cleric serves the chieftain. In bright sunlight, all orogs suffer a -2 penalty to attack and saving throws (-1 on cloudy days).

Subterranean lizards (4d4): AC 5; MV 12; HD 6; hp 39 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6; SA double damage on a natural roll of 20; SZ H (20' long); ML average (8); Int non (0); XP 650 each.



The western leg of the Wall has deteriorated to a condition even more miserable, because of the relative peacefulness of the Rjувik. Still, even in its current state, it is formidable enough to slow any advance (even rubble has its advantages).

a folk culture

Deeply felt beliefs about fate have influenced the realm's arts. It is a fine thing for bards and skalds to sing the praises of heroes who have shed their arrow-dew (blood) and passed from the world. But how are ordinary people of other, more common skills remembered? They live on through the works of their hands and their skill in the arts.

Arvaald has exquisite and almost legendary embroidery, but there is much more in the catalogue of Stjordvikan craft than embroidery.

Weavers vie one another in provincial and cross-realm competitions to see who can produce the most beautiful fabrics and garments. Their creations are judged on style, execution, and utility.

Stoneworkers and woodcarvers, who are typically shepherds, hold similar contests. The sculptors do not limit themselves to heroic themes; the subjects range from the weather-etched faces of farmers and seafarers to detailed models of animals. More than once have strangers petted and called to the dogs and cats of wood.

Metalworkers, weaponsmiths, armorers, blacksmiths, and leatherworkers strive for excellence and

the achievement of "immortality" within their fields.

Few of these artisans are true professionals. They have other occupations, but feel compelled to fulfill a need in themselves to create.

nomads

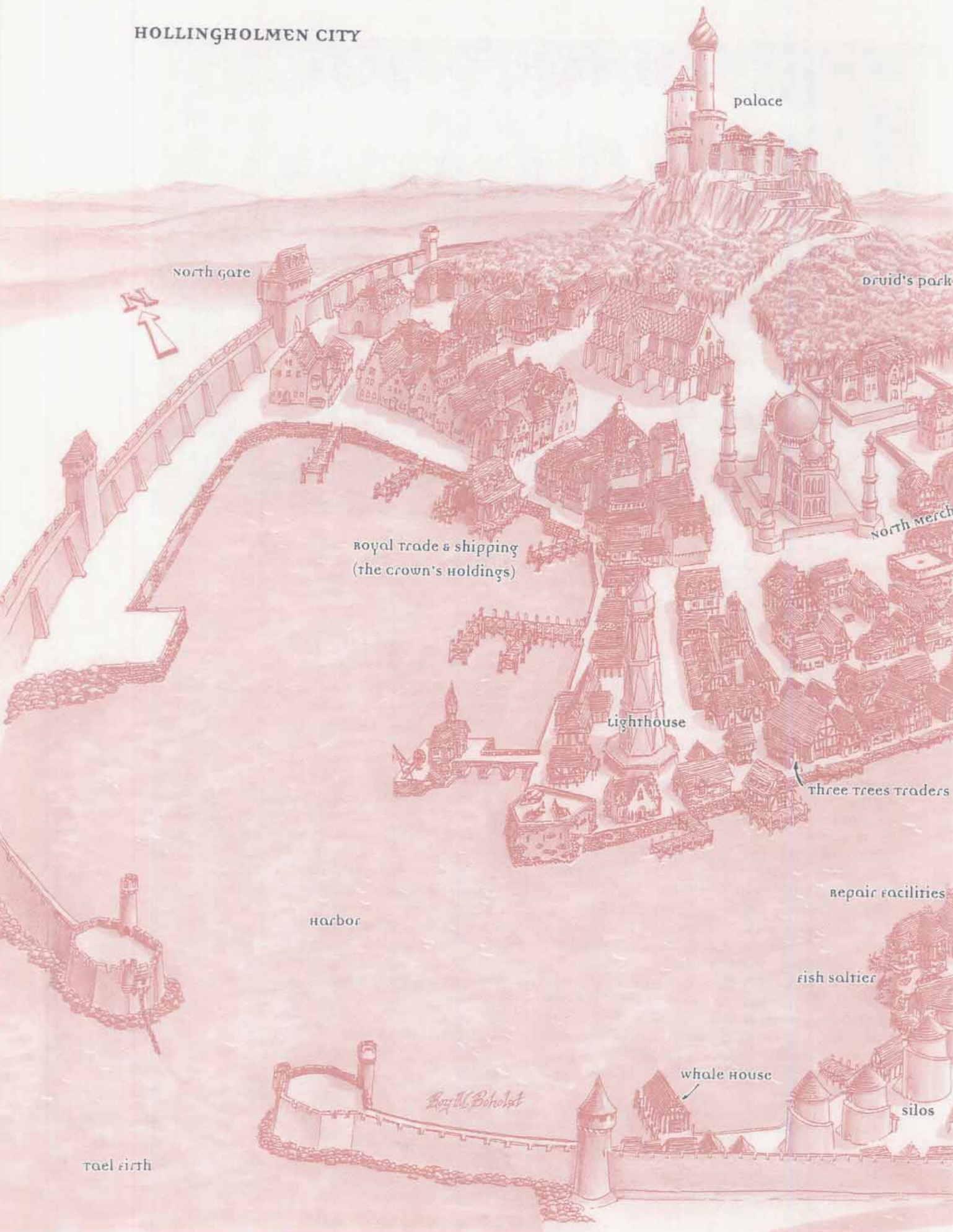
Several nomadic tribes have found Stjordvik to be a desirable stopping place. Perhaps only here, in all of the Highland domains, have they received a true welcome, treated as equals with farmers, herders, and craftsmen.

The nomads remain able to involve themselves in all elements of Stjordvik life. The tribes often compete—and win—in artistic competitions held by the various craftsmen. Because of such openness and acceptance, the tribes have been known to assist in the defense of the realm when the Bloodskullers attacked.

They usually graze their sheep and other animals in spacious Hjordvaal, since it is nearly empty outside its small village. Hence there is no risk of their sheep destroying some farmer's graze for his cattle. In midsummer, the nomad's heavy wagons wobble on the rutted roads, headed for town markets to trade their goods, swap lies, and find an evening's entertainment.



HOLLINGHOLMEN CITY



palace

north gate

druid's park

north merc

royal trade & shipping
(the crown's holdings)

lighthouse

three trees traders

repair facilities

fish saltier

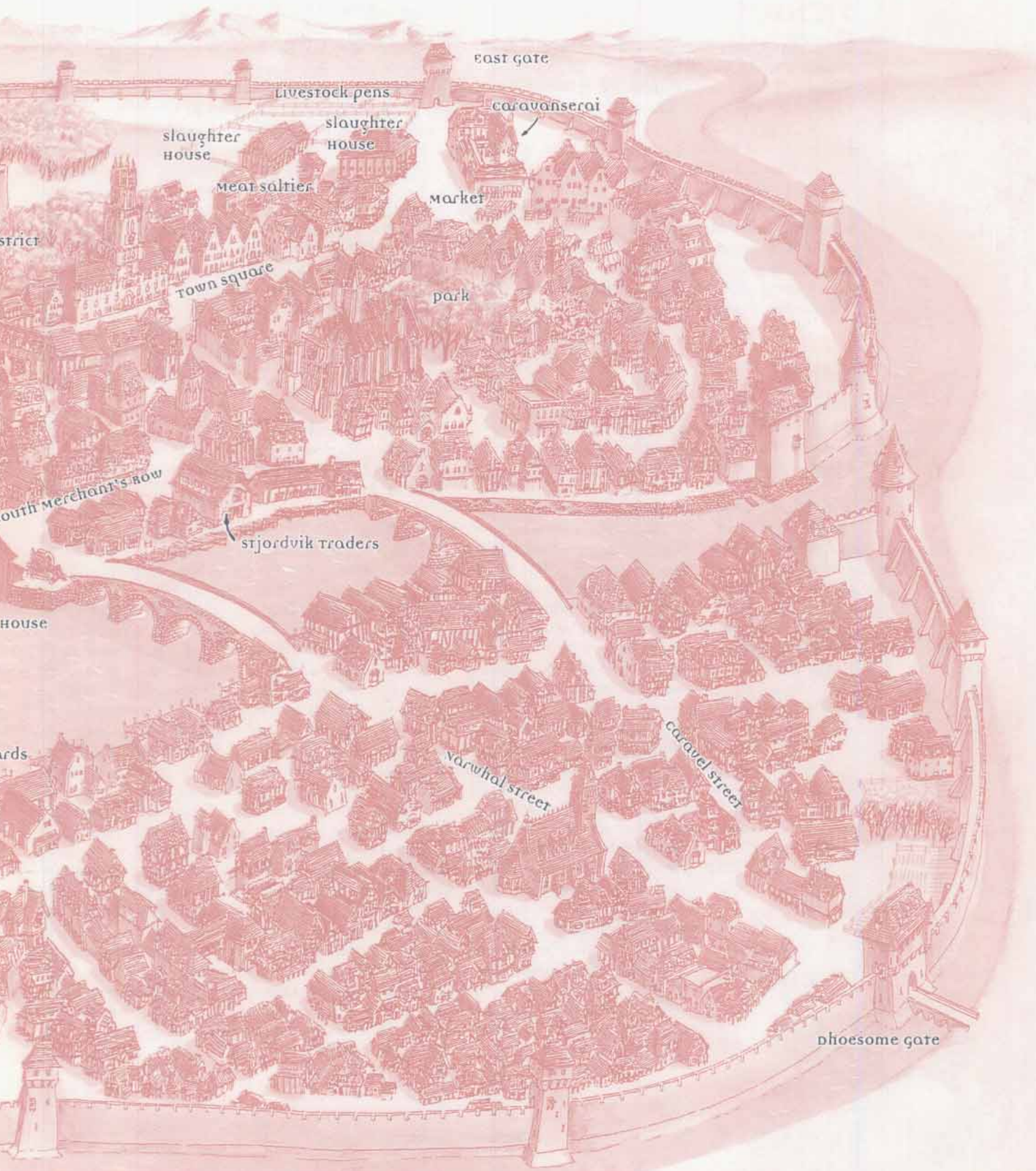
whale house

silos

harbor

Boyd B. Boholot

tael firth



east gate

livestock pens

caravanserai

slaughter house

slaughter house

meat salter

market

park

town square

stjorvik traders

south merchant's row

caravel street

narvhal street

phiosome gate

nomadic tribes

fjrlaaf

Kingdom: Rjuvik
Winter Province: Sjarkhoelle
Summer Province: Lofkirdik and Hjorvaal
Chief: Linna (*FRj; R9; Re major, 22*)

For years, the Fjrlaaf have been regular, late summer guests in Njallby in Hjorvaal and Arnoraby in Lofkirdik. The chief and her people are among the most nonviolent tribes in the Highlands. They fight when they must, but with reluctance.

A pleasant, gentle people with strong interests in the arts, they are welcomed in most realms.

For more about this unique tribe, see the *Rjurik Highlands* campaign expansion.

rjkar

Kingdom: Stjordvik
Winter Province: Angarr (Blood Skull Barony)
Summer Province: Lofkirdik and Hjorvaal
Chief: Kjalnaar (*MRj; F11; Br, major, 20*)

The Rjkar summer in Lofkirdik and Hjorvaal. Unlike the Fjrlaaf, the Rjkar disdain outsiders and keep to themselves. They avoid local authorities, amenities, and generally do as they will. The law and its officials tend to ignore them, except in serious, capital cases. (Even in those rare cases, the jarls are usually content to let tribal justice take its course under the eyes of an observer.)

The authorities of Stjordvik have made this concession to the Rjkar tribe a tradition since Kjalnaar's father Oakkard was credited with saving the realm

30 years ago. Hjorvaal was about to be overrun by a dusk attack of a combined force of orogs, goblins, gnolls, and minotaurs. The defenders were outnumbered two to one. As Oakkard and his

tribe crested the last hill before setting up summer camp, a rider, one of the Highland

Scouts riding for reinforcements from Lofkirdik, stopped him. The scout warned the nomads away, telling them of the attack. Instead, Oakkard drew his sword and rode down to the fray,

his warriors trailing him at a heavy pace. Few of them

wore armor at the moment and none

of the rest

could spare the time to put it on, including Oakkard. Hacking and slashing their way through the Blood Skull troops in a savage rage, they turned the tide. The monsters soon decided they had had enough and ran. The enemies' losses were piled high and uncounted, but of their 50 warriors, the Rjkar lost six.

The skalds could not describe the feelings of awe and gratitude that Olvi of Hjorvaal and Hadrim of Lofkirdik expressed. They lavished gifts of food, beer, clothing, gold, and imported wines on Oakkard and his people. They also granted the Rjkar, in perpetuity, the right to use their lands as the tribe's own and to act as a sovereign people while on those lands. The only thing withheld was the right to try capital offenses, except as given leave.

For more about this unique tribe, see the *Rjurik Highlands* campaign sourcebook.

loddi

Kingdom: Unknown
Winter Province: Unknown
Summer Province: Saerskaap
Chief: Letuska Menameach (*Unknown; B4; An, minor, 8*)

The Loddi are a strange and mysterious people. They are so outgoing and gregarious, so given to music, dance, and song that the freemen of Saerskaap always anticipate their arrival.

No one (not even the Loddi, they say) knows the origin of this tribe. They come from the east in summer and retreat to the east in fall. That they have elf blood in their veins is obvious from their slim builds and tipped ears. Whether that heritage is enough to grant the Loddi true magic or whether their tricks are merely extravagant slight-of-hand is anyone's guess—the Loddi refuse to speak on the subject. Almost half of the members of the tribe are blooded, another mystery that might never be solved.

The arrival of the Loddi is cause for a celebration. A huge feast is prepared for their arrival in Skjadaby on Anafire 32nd. The ale flows for days while the Loddi perform with their animals, demonstrate high-rope skills, and dazzle with card tricks. For a pair of silver coins, the Loddi will read fortunes to reveal a person's destiny for the next twelvemonth. For 5 sp, they tell the jarl what the fate of the province will be in the following year. And annually, each summer, one of their number travels to Hollingholmen, in secret, to predict the lot of the realm in the coming cycle. The bizarre truth is that they are rarely wrong.

The capital of Ustkjuvil is one of the oldest true cities in the Highlands. In contrast to the rustic and sometimes primitive conditions in the rest of Stjordvik, Hollingholmen stands apart as remarkably sophisticated. Tucked neatly into the southeast corner of the province on the peninsula where the Northbyrn River flows into the Tael Firth, the city boasts a large, sheltered harbor. Extensive shipbuilding and repair facilities dominate the shoreline, and great storage sheds line both sides of its causeways.

Because of Stjordvik's location and excellent facilities, its port has grown into a center for goods

moving into and out of the Highlands. Western and eastern merchantmen exchange cargoes before returning home with rich profits. Finished clothing, silks, fine wines, fruits, rare spices, and other goods come into the port of Hollingholmen for shipment to the western realms. Gold, furs, grain, beer, weapons, embroidery, wool, hides, salted fish and meat, and timber come in from the Rjurik Highlands and are loaded on ships bound for points in lower Cerilia.

The fishing fleet keeps itself to its own quarter off Narwhal Street. Once taken from the sea, the fresh catch is taken to special salting sheds. There the fish are scaled and packed in coarse Khinasi salt to preserve each day's catch for shipment to a variety of points in Cerilia. A separate shed, almost the size of one of the merchant warehouses and equipped with sea doors, handles whales from the frozen northwest.

North Merchants' Row, on the leeward side of the channel, manages a confusion of open air vendors, street corner entertainers, taverns, markets, and guildhalls. Chandlers do a brisk business in rope, dry goods, and ships' supplies. Inns offer meals, lodging, and amusements for every taste and every purse. A great variety of services, some of them even legal, may be found in the Row. While rubbing elbows with strangers, travelers, and traders from Dhoesone and other lands, one can find just about anything one desires on the North Row—for a price.

The Three Trees Traders, headed by Jan Hrustaad, maintains offices and a warehouse on the windward side of South Merchants' Row, as does Storm Holtson's Stjordvik Traders. Most of the great warehouses can be found here.

About halfway down the South Row, equidistant between the Three Trees Traders and Storm Holtson's establishment, is a clean, black warehouse, called the Black House. The structure is large enough to glide a trade caravel inside its walls. No one is ever seen entering or leaving, though some have spotted the occasional ship, usually at night, passing through its massive sea doors on the channel side. What transpires here is anyone's guess. Both Jan Hrustaad and Storm Holtson have paid thieves, informers, and adventurers to discover the

secret of the Black House. King Varri sent in a curious druid who volunteered; as yet, the few investigators to return from these missions have nothing to report. It is possible that the Black House is under the control of the White Witch, but that is mere gossip, the speculation of idle wharf rats.

The ancient Royal Palace, Ravensroost, sits proudly atop the lofty summit of the city. Here alone the sovereign is the lord of all he surveys. Royal decree forbids that any building be constructed closer than one-half mile from its outer

hollingholmen city

wall. And, by the written and posted edict of Queen Ljorrah, no other building is allowed to approach its grandeur—much to the dismay of Storm Holtson, who very much wants to advertise himself as the richest man in the realm.

The architecture of the palace is a collection of building designs that display the passage of over 700 years, and a great variety of designers. At its core, it is a rude, damp, stone structure, typical of stone castles of long ago. Today, that section is the unused east wing of a far grander edifice.

The second construction period reveals a strong Anuirean influence. Marble and granite adorn the walls and floors, inlaid with complex designs. Despite the massive stonework, the rooms from this period feature a light, airy quality with wide windows and high, vaulted ceilings.

After the second construction, it becomes difficult to separate the various sections into defined styles. Some rooms were built out of simple necessity, and some betray styles that make one wonder where a hired architect studied, although the skalds will name dozens of origins. There is even a suite of rooms, it is said, done in a pure Khinasi style.

It is to the marble and gilded Accommodation Hall of Ravensroost that jarls are called together each spring equinox and each winter solstice to report the conditions of their provinces and to work out any problems for their mutual benefit. Beginning in Queen Ljorrah's reign—it would be a lie to call her time on the throne a "rule," any more than Varri's governance deserves honors—the jarls stopped coming. One by one they withdrew to the comfort of their own homes, becoming less and less interested in the affairs of the kingdom of Stjordvik. Today, the attendees are limited to the crown, the high chamberlain, and, occasionally, Skjada One-Eye and Njall Olvissan.

Carved into the throne, which has served the royal seat for several centuries now, is the runic legend: "Of the Crown, By the Freemen." That statement, attributed to Stjorndahl, defines the government of the kingdom of Stjordvik.

of the crown

The specific rights and duties of the sovereign of Stjordvik have never been committed to parchment or carved into stone. Instead, the power of tradition places a number of strictures on the king, and he must rigidly adhere to them. For each "right" of the sovereign there are matching responsibilities.

The crown has the right to collect taxes from each province. Even in the current state of affairs, the jarls have grudgingly collected and forwarded provincial taxes to Hollingholmen. In exchange, the crown has the responsibility to protect and defend the provinces.

The throne has the right to appoint provincial jarls—and to remove them. But the sovereign must seek and obtain the approval of the freemen of the province in either case.

The monarch alone may make decisions and laws concerning the lives and livelihoods of the whole nation. But the freemen have the right to a hearing, through their jarls—and, in special circumstances, by a personal audience. The freemen meet in semiannual councils. Their loud voices, while filled with good intent, make the current situation all the more volatile.

Only the crown has the right to sentence an offender to death or slavery (thralldom), and tradition dictates that any accused person has the right to trial-by-majesty. This assumes, of course, that the local authorities make the effort of dealing with legalities; with Huljim of Namverg, for example, the trial is optional before sentencing.

The crown has the right to declare war, without review by jarl or freeman, but the crown depends on the support of both lowborn and highborn in waging battles. Woe betides the sovereign who declares war without the consent and support of the freemen.

Finally, the monarch (and in the case of a vacant throne, the Jarl's Court) has the right to name a successor, but the freemen must ratify the choice in provincial assemblies.

By tradition, the sovereign is forbidden to make laws concerning the druids, to try them, or to allow them to be tried in provincial courts. The druidical courts jealously guard their own "rights."

by the freemen

For the freemen's part of the contract, as they call it, all other rights devolve to them.

The freemen have all rights to the land: to own it, to till the soil, to catch the fish, to hunt the stag, and to pass these rights on. The sovereign is perhaps more properly described as "King of the Stjordvikers," rather than "King of Stjordvik." Stjorndahl's original idea was that the king or queen would be "chief among equals," not the arbitrary landlord of a people.

The concept has remained close to heart with all of the realm's people.

In addition, the freemen have the

right to remove provincial jarls by petition to the crown, and the implied right to remove the crown itself. No established legal method exists, but there will always be rebellion, kidnaping, and regicide.

Perhaps because of Stjordvik's strong sense of unity, no monarch and few jarls have been removed. The presence of Stjorndahl seems to live in the hearts and minds of all Stjordvikers. The crown has never attempted to impose its will on the freemen's sovereign rights, and the nomads are accepted here as citizens like any other.

government

the army

The pride of Stjordvik is a military force impressive even today. High Marshal Heidrek Bern, an old and experienced campaigner, has personally seen to the troops' training and upkeep. Before taking his new position as Governor of Tjarvaald, Jarl Andros Drakkenvir held the title of Marshal of Stjordvik under Bern, and his infectious leadership combined with Bern's training and drills to forge a formidable fighting strength of men. The troops have been so identified with Bern, himself, that the orogs of the Blood Skull Barony refer to them as Bern's Bruins (or, near Tjarvaald, it is sometimes Andros's Animals).

The army comprises the following Rjurik units:

Number of Units	Dispersal	Name/Type	Usual Station
1		Varri's Own Archers	Lofkirdik
3	(1)	Erik's Freeman Infantry	Hjorvaal
	(1)	The King's Foot (infantry)	Lofkirdik
	(1)	The Frontier Thunderers (infantry)	Udvika
1		Bern's Light Horse Guards (cavalry)	Lofkirdik
1		Territorial Grays (housecarls)	Namverg
1	(½)	Andros's Highland Scouts*	Hjorvaal
	(½)		Udvika

* Andros's Highland Scouts are split, with a half-strength unit in each province. Udvika shares the cost for the entire unit with the crown (see below).

While the strength of the regular army has diminished during the reigns of Varri and his mother, their pride is as strong as ever. To date, they remain more than a match for anything the Blood Skull Barony can throw at them.

The regular army costs a total of 7 GB to maintain, but that cost is divided equally between the crown, the province where they regularly station the troops, and the guilds and temples within that province. The exception is Hjorvaal, where the province pays what it can, Udvika supports a portion, and the crown makes up the difference.

The army is supplemented by well-trained citizens, especially in the threatened provinces. Saerskaap, Ustkjuvil, and Hollenvik are provinces that are reasonably secure. Should war come to these realms, the trained citizenry is expected to hold their assigned positions until units of the regular army troops can be brought up to support them.

holdings

Holdings Table

Province	Law	Temple	Guilds	Sources
Arvaald (2/3)	Ol (2)	OE (2)	ST (2)	—
Hjorvaal (0/4)	Nj (0)	—	—	Oh (3)
Hollenvik (2/3)	Gu (2)	OE (2)	Gu (2)	—
Lofkirdik (1/4)	An* (1)	OE (1)	ST (1)	—
Namverg (2/3)	CF*† (1)	ES (2)	TT (2)	—
Saerskaap (4/2)	Sk (2)	OE (3)	ST (1)	—
	WW† (1)	—	WW† (2)	—
Udvika (1/4)	Hr (1)	ES (1)	TT (1)	—
Ustkjuvil (3/2)	Va (3)	OE (3)	Va (2)	—

* Both of these provinces have passed to their current female heirs (see text).

† A Freeman's Council now rules Namverg, points accrue to the Chief Freeman.

‡ The White Witch's activities (even her very presence) are unknown. She does not share in troop maintenance.

Abbreviations: Ol=Olfjor; Nj=Njall; Gu=Guthrim; An=Arnora; CF=Chief Freeman; Sk=Skjada; Hr=Hrafnhild; Va=Varri; Oh=Ohlaak the Dragon; ST=Stjordvik Traders (Storm Holtson); TT=Three Trees Traders (Jan Hrustaad); WW=White Witch; OE=Oaken Grove of Erik (Günther Brandt); ES=Emerald Spiral (Gretta Seligsdotter)

law

The sovereignty of law is taken very seriously in Stjordvik. Unfortunately, the crown's jurisdiction and influence has so waned as to be unnoticed outside of the province of Ustkjuvil and Hollingholmen.

The provincial jarls administer justice with varying degrees of equality, but most make the attempt of being fair-minded. The freemen usually petition to correct the few "errors" in the jarls' judgement, or they take other actions (see *Namverg*).

Infractions are rarely serious; most Stjordvikers are law-abiding people. Of course, brawling and public drunkenness are not considered crimes here. In the hinterlands, an occasional nomad will get into trouble, usually for petty theft, or a visitor from a neighboring province might make a questionable remark about the jarl and start a riot if the jarl is especially loved or hated. Strangely, fighting is not against the law, but "rioting" ("four or more engaged in battle") is punishable.

Sometimes jarls, nomads, and other foreigners run afoul of the law. When they do, tradition holds that they

are treated the same as any other law-breaker; Stjordvik's justice makes no distinctions.

Every freeman knows his rights and fights to protect them. The jarl who willingly infringes on those rights can find himself ruling from the bottom of a peat bog as his successor is sworn in. Some of the governors appointed by the emperor during the old Anuirean days learned the nature of Stjordvik's spirit of independence the hard way.

Unknown to Skjada One-Eye, he shares control of Saerskaap with the White Witch. She keeps a tribe of common goblins concealed in caves in the forest. Given their coarse nature, the goblins will not remain hidden for long. Riding dire wolves, they occasionally venture into the surrounding area on raids. Skjada is aware of the raids, but believes the goblins come from the Red Skull Barony. The White Witch's designs for her goblins are unknown. Perhaps she enjoys anonymous harassment.

Goblins (6d6): AC 7; MV 6; HD 1-1; hp 6 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SW bright light or sunlight imposes a -1 on attack rolls; SZ S (4'); ML average (10); Int low (6); XP 35 each.

Goblin Chief (F4): AC 4; MV 6; HD 2; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (longsword) by weapon; SZ S (4'); ML average (10); Int average (10); XP 65.

Worgs (Wolf) (4d4): AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 24 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; M (7'); ML average (10); Int low (6); XP 175 each.

guilds

The condition of trade and mercantile relations in Stjordvik is frenzied, to say the least. The regent controls trade in Ustkjuvil and the Stjordvik Traders, under Storm Holtson (MRj; T6; Br, major, 23), control the trade in Arvaald, Saerskaap, and Lofkirdik. Storm also manages a great deal of the trade in Talinie through his puppet guildmaster Anphelan Halloravant (MA; T4; An, minor, 18), Master of the Fellowship of Miners & Sawyers. Ever ambitious, Storm struggles to take over the foresting guilds in Dhoesone.

The House of the Three Trees Traders and its guildmaster Jan Hrustaad (MRj; T4, Re, major, 21) aspire to be the preeminent mercantile house in Stjordvik. Hrustaad frequently works with Helder and the regent to further his goals. He has remained a loyal and valuable asset for the crown, apparently of the opinion that allies will be necessary if he is ever to surpass Holtson. Three Trees currently has centers only in Namverg and Udvika but is rapidly trying to fill the gap. Hrustaad is only aware of the Stjordvik Traders' holdings in Stjordvik. No one is

aware of just how extensive Storm Holtson's operations are or of the clandestine inroads made by the White Witch. She has agents in secluded centers in Saerskaap, Namverg, and Ustkjuvil.

Guthrim also has two holdings in Hollenvik Forest due to his considerable timber operations and his fierce tenacity in holding onto them.

temples

The Oaken Grove of Erik has 11 holdings in Stjordvik, and the Emerald Spiral has but three. But these holdings represent the strength of the people's faith in Erik, not necessarily the number of adherents. The faith of Stjordvik is strong, permeating every facet of life; the freemen bless, swear, and curse by Erik's name.

Both these branches of the druidic faith have their mother chapters and leaders in Halskapa. Ironically, both leaders in Halskapa are new to their responsibilities. Time will tell how well they can deal with their eccentric, removed druids in Stjordvik.

Erik's druids in this realm pay lip service to their far away leaders, but are as fiercely independent as the freemen and the jarls. They go their own ways and have their own traditions. For example, the friction that exists between the Oaken Grove and the Emerald Spiral in other realms does not endure here. Again, the

bond that has developed in the Stjordvik people supersedes the more petty frictions of tribe or faith.

Rumors persist that Günther Brandt, the Chief Druid of the Oaken Grove, intends to pull tight the reins of these wayward and independent druids. Gretta Seligsdotter, High Prelate of the Emerald Spiral, has no desire to make rules and regulations or to force her followers into line, and she has remained quite open about her liberal views. Should the rumors about the Oaken Grove be true, the druids here may form a splinter organization, or Gretta could find her organization growing.

sources

Stjordvikers, like the rest of the Rjurik Highlanders, believe that wizards are dark sorcerers to be shunned and feared. Hence the sources in Namverg are held with a view to keep wizards away from them more than for any possible development.

Yet Stjordvik's land can conceal any number of secrets in its vast empty reaches. In the same areas where the orogs make their tunnels into the land is a source. Ohlaak, whoever or whatever he may be, has a source (3) in the empty regions of Hjorvaal. Ohlaak uses this to create ley lines that extend into the Vejle Province of the White Witch's domain. If her agents discover this, or if the druids find it out, the situation could explode.



major players, nobles, and scoundrels

varri haraldsson

former king of Stjordvik
3rd-level fighter

S: 15
D: 12
C: 14
I: 14
W: 16
Ch: 18

AC: 4
hp: 27
MV: 12
THACO: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Brenna, minor, 17.

Blood abilities: Blood history, detect illusion.

Equipment: Bronze plate mail, shield, rope of climbing, Ravenscloak (cloak of invisibility).

Typical dialogue: "I never heard that! . . . are you sure? Why wasn't I told? Well, I guess, go ahead. Yes, I'm the king. Oh, I mean, I AM THE KING. I suppose, if you say so. Is it time for a hunt? Breakfast? Lunch? Dinner? Hey Helder, want to wear a crown? By Erik, I'd love to meet a sleeping dragon!" (At the Vernal Equinox Council) "Helder, where are my jarls?"

Description: Standing an even 6 feet tall, Varri weighs about 200 pounds. His slick brown hair is graying at the edges, betraying his otherwise well-worn forty-five years of life. His nose is crooked, the casualty of a youthful duel, but his eyes are bright and clear. His mouth hides the hint of a smile, even in the most serious negotiations. He is gentle, with a warrior's ready and fearless confidence, but he is out of his element and nervous in formal situations and those calling for decisions

out of battle. A sincere, proud man, he has no real quarrel with anyone; a slur or a challenge brings his sword joyfully from its scabbard. Unfortunately, his father died when Varri was but three years old.

Background: The queen's father, the old king Snorri Snidilsson, pampered Varri's mother. She was an only child, but Snorri raised her as a warrior; she became the son he never sired. Snorri's own statecraft skills were passing, but he had a brilliant chamberlain. Snorri taught Ljorrah every thing he knew. Regrettably, none of this had much to do with being a ruler; rather, he taught her wilderness survival, swordsmanship, and fishing. These same skills she passed on to Varri. Through her lessons, he became a great hunter and fighter, but a poor ruler and weak king.

lord hjalmar helder

Royal Chamberlain and First Lieutenant
5th-level Druid

S: 12
D: 10
C: 13
I: 16
W: 17
Ch: 9

AC: 10
hp: 36
MV: 10
THACO: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Basaia, minor, 20.

Blood abilities: Alertness.

Equipment: Staff, green tunic, knapsack.

Typical dialogue: "Sire, we must raise taxes. Now. The freemen know the Wall needs repairs and the army must be expanded. They know the roads need work. Our people may be simple, but they are not stupid; these things must be done for their safety. Sire, are you listening?" (At the Vernal Equinox Council) "I'm not sure, Your Majesty, perhaps problems at home delayed them."

Description: A graying man in his 60s, Helder stands tall (6'1") in spite of his years. His craggy face radiates wisdom, and his dark eyes reflect an infinite sadness. He is slow and gentle in his speech, and always tries to soften bad news.

Background:

Helder is a druid on semipermanent loan from the Oaken Grove. He has held his current position since Snorri's day and has an intense desire to retire to the forests. His keen sense of honor forbids him from leaving the kingdom in turmoil.

Varri's father died when Varri was an infant. Helder is the only father he's ever known and probably Varri's only true friend.

lord heidrek bern

High Marshal of the Armies,
Second Lieutenant
10th-level fighter

S: 17
D: 11
C: 12
I: 15
W: 10
Ch: 9
AC: 0 (8)
hp: 86
MV: 12
THACO: 11
#At: 1
Dmg: 2d8



Bloodline: Reynir, tainted, 9.

Blood abilities: Enhanced sense.

Equipment: Full plate mail, shield, two-handed bastard sword named *Reynir's Vengeance*.

Typical Dialogue: "I'll tell you how to deal with Olfjor and Guthrim, Varri. I'll spit them on the tip of *Reynir's Vengeance* and you can take Arvaald and Hollevik, the bloody forest province, for the asking. Yes, Sire, I am sure it can be done. Action, boy, action will weld this kingdom together like iron forged into a Halskapan sword. Our steel will taste their blood!"

Description: Small for a warrior of such military stature, Bern barely clears 5 feet. His face is scarred from wounds inflicted by the minions of the Blood Skull Barony, and he bears the marks proudly. He is 54 years of age, yet the years have not slowed him in the least. His voice is crusty and carries his bellowed orders (the latter is mostly due to partial deafness resulting from a well-thrown orog spear).

His usual garment, when not in plate mail, is a black leather hauberk (AC 8) that reaches to his knees. He carries a battle axe tied to his belt at his hip. His motto is "always prepared."

Background: Bern was born in Svinik to nomadic parents. At the age of 13, having tired of wandering up and down the Taelshore, he lied about his age and joined the Light Horse Guards (the same unit

that would bear his name 35 years later). With a knack for both strategy and tactics, and an attitude which refused to accept defeat, Bern rose quickly through the ranks. He has headed the royal forces for the past 10 years.

Despite Bern's gruff exterior, he fancies himself a poet at heart. He has been working, in secret, on *Bern's Saga* for 30 years. The saga, a historical tale of Bern's adventures in the Stjordvik armies, has reached 13,751 stanzas and shows no sign of ending anytime soon.

olfjor ylvarrik

jarl of Arvaald
9th-level fighter

S: 18/76
D: 10
C: 15
I: 12
W: 13
Ch: 10
AC: 4
hp: 76
MV: 12
THACO: 12
#At: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Masela, major, 23.

Blood abilities: Divine aura.

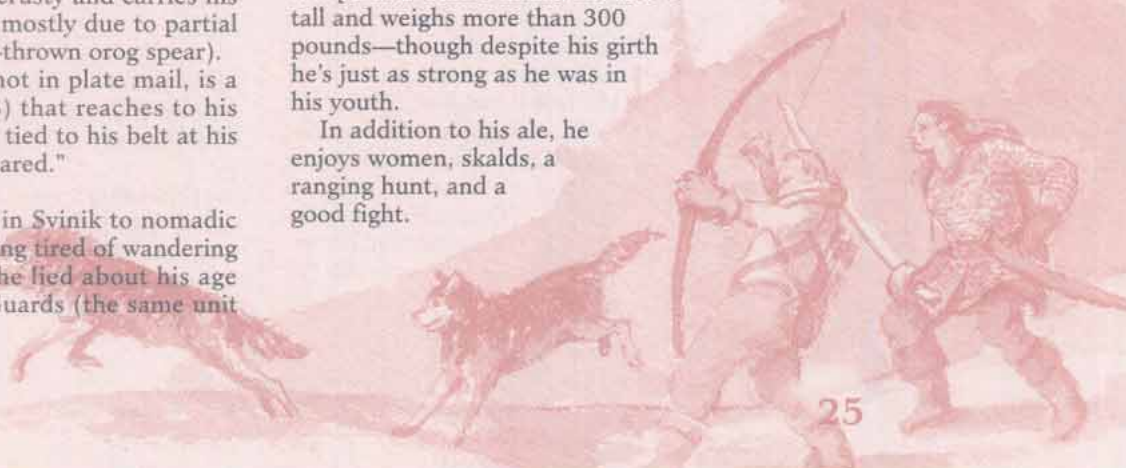
Equipment: Olfjor owns a pair of *gauntlets of ogre power* that he uses to perform peculiar stunts at parties. More practically, he hunts with a bow +1.

Typical Dialogue: "The king? He's just another jarl like me; no better, maybe worse. Besides, why should I worry? Varri's not coming after me, the Blood Skullers have to go through the border provinces before they get here, the price of pigs is up 30%, and we've got Erik's Gift crops of wheat and barley.

"Tell his stinking royal majesty I'm too busy to go off to Hollingholmen."

Description: Powerful and loud, Jarl Olfjor has a thick red beard and long, golden braids. Fond of his ale, he has put more than a few pounds on his frame. He is 5'9" tall and weighs more than 300 pounds—though despite his girth he's just as strong as he was in his youth.

In addition to his ale, he enjoys women, skalds, a ranging hunt, and a good fight.



Background: Olfjor's father raised his son in his own image. As soon as the young man came of age (13 in the Rjurik lands) he taught him to hunt and to fight. The *Jarlsson* (as they called him) soon developed a reputation as the best swordsman in the country, and, arguably, he still is. Olfjor continues his father's tradition of gala celebrations awash in liquor, many of them lasting for an entire week.

His independence, like his father's, is proverbial. He has supported Varri because the king is weak and unlikely to interfere with the way he runs his province.

His constant parties keep his popularity high and his realm happy.

guthrim gauksson

jarl of Hollenvik
8th-level fighter

S: 16
D: 9
C: 14
I: 12
W: 10
Ch: 4

AC: 3
hp: 72
MV: 12
THAC0: 13
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8+2

Bloodline: Reynir, major, 25.
Blood abilities: Animal affinity.
Equipment: Bronze plate mail, shield.

Typical Dialogue: "The king, ya say? I'll have no part o' that. As long as he stays in Hollingholmen City, I'll stay here and send him timbers. I'll build me own roads and fight me own battles."

Description: A toadlike little man, Guthrim is wizened and bent. If he could reach his full height, he might be 5'4" in his stocking feet. He has been so deformed since birth. He uses his affliction to make sure no one ever forgets his misery.

His face is pinched. His ears lie close to his skull, and his nose is but a tiny knob hanging on the end of his face.

Oddly, Fortune compounded his visage with the most



astonishingly beautiful head of auburn hair. It is said that to be in Guthrim's presence is to shudder at the power of destiny.

Background: Guthrim was the son of the previous jarl, Gauk Sotisson, and an escaped thrall, a serving slave from Rjuvik with lovely auburn hair. Guthrim was kept out of sight during his childhood; Gauk's wife despised his origin, and no one could stand to look at him.

He showed an early flair for account books and administration, and spent his time in the dank cellar office his father had authorized for him. As the years grew so did the jarl's fear—with no other children, Guthrim would succeed him. To that end, his father reluctantly trained him as a warrior. To everyone's amazement, the misshapen lad took to fighting like a bear cub. In battle, he takes revenge on the world for his birth.

The day Guthrim's father feared came sooner than expected when an irate farmer caught the jarl pursuing his wife and killed the jarl with a pig prod. Today Guthrim's tragic demeanor presides over a reasonably prosperous territory, and his people are as content to ignore him as he ignores the crown.

Guthrim's attitude is similar to Olfjor's, except that where Olfjor supports the weak monarch, Guthrim wants no king. Lately, he has been insisting on being addressed as "Highness."

storm holtson

6th-level Rjurik
thief from Svinik

S: 10
D: 15
C: 12
I: 16
W: 14
Ch: 16

AC: 8
hp: 19
MV: 12
THAC0: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d4

Bloodline: Brenna, major, 23.
Blood abilities: Character reading, detect lie.
Equipment: Twin throwing daggers.

Typical Dialogue: "What? I don't care. Buy the place. I'm sure we can persuade the merchants to sell their interest at a reasonable price. No, more reasonable than that. Who do those peasants think they're dealing with?"



Description: A man of average height and build, there is nothing about Storm that would make him stand out in a crowd—an impression that Storm would like to encourage and use to his advantage. He wears his long black hair tied behind his head and disguises himself when the situation calls for it. He has puppet guildmasters in Talinie and other places he would prefer remain undisclosed.

Background: Guildmaster of the Stjordvik Traders, he is ruthless and aggressive. He has completely adopted the idea and the role of the “modern” trader. He is out to build a trade empire and doesn’t care who he must destroy to get there. The Three Trees or Dhoesone trading companies, it’s all the same to him. He is battling for control of the forestry guilds in Dhoesone and already controls a vast amount of Talinie trade.

His ambitions know no bounds, and he’s often far from Stjordvik, trying to expand into Thurazor, Aerenwe, Brecht, and the Vos lands. So far these excursions have yielded little, but the Brechts are considering a joint timber and mining operation with Storm and his company.

Ohlaak the dragon

9th-level wizard

S: 9
D: 12
C: 10
I: 17
W: 15
Ch: 13

AC: 10
hp: 28
MV: 12
THAC0: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d6+2



Bloodline: Brenna, major, 34.

Blood abilities: Unknown.

Equipment: Unknown—but Ohlaak is reputed to possess a *staff of the oriflamme* +2, (1d6+19 charges) previously unknown to Cerilian wizards. The staff has the following powers: at no cost in charges—*affect normal fires, flaming sphere, pyrotechnics, sundazzle, and sunfire*; for one charge—*conjure fire elemental, sun stones, and enhance fire creatures*. A flame wizard or a wizard capable of true magic may

use *conflagration*, at the cost of four charges. As long as the wielder holds the staff, he is under a *flameproof* spell. When all charges of the staff are expended, the *flameproof* spell disappears.

Typical Dialogue: Unknown.

Description: He—if, indeed, “he” is a he—is variously described as short and fat, tall and thin, and every possible variation in between. Ohlaak—if that is his name—is said to prefer black clothing, although men have reported him wearing red, white, and even violet robes. Other details are even more vague and contradictory.

Background: About 25 years ago, a five-year-old Rjuvik child disappeared. The child’s name was Ohlaak Brynjolfsson. It is this tenuous connection to a figure reported to be about the right age, which has led to the identification of this figure as “Ohlaak.” It seems apparent that Ohlaak is comfortable with this identity; at least, he has yet to dispute it.

Thrakkazz, the scarlet baron

Male orog
12th-level fighter

S: 18
D: 12
C: 18
I: 13
W: 12
Ch: 3
(18 to goblins, orogs and gnolls)

AC: 0
hp: 88
MV: 12
THAC0: 9
#AT: 3/2
Dmg: 2d4+4 or 1d8+4



Bloodline: Anduiras, major, 38.

Blood abilities: Battlewise, detect lie, regeneration.

Equipment: Morning star, full plate mail, shield (recently “appropriated”);

Thrakkazz receives a +4 bonus on damage rolls. Thrakkazz has a *ring of regeneration*, and that ring is the

secret of his long survival. The ring, combined with his regeneration blood ability, allows him to live through the most brutal injuries and return to devastate the enemies who inflicted them.

There are rumors that he possesses several magical items stolen from the vanquished, but what they are and what their powers might be is unknown.

Description: Mean and ugly, even by orog standards, Thrakkazz stands nearly 7 feet tall. His short, stocky, twisted legs support a massive torso. His arms, covered with scars from old wounds, are long and powerful. His right hand, lost long ago in a duel with a contender for the Blood Skull Seat, was replaced with an ornately inscribed iron claw, fashioned—at no charge—by the loser's brother. Thrakkazz wears an ape's carved face with fierce, anger driven eyes, which ends in a short, stubby muzzle and flat nostrils. He is hairless, like the rest of his breed, and his hide is a greasy gray in color.

Typical Dialogue: "What problem? Kill. I don't like? Kill. Dinner overcooked? Kill cooks. Ale flat? Kill slaves. Life simple, has simple answers. No problems. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. What so funny?"

Background: Thrakkazz took control of the Blood Skull Barony when he killed the previous baron during the Battle of Innsmark in 1514 HC. After the disastrous defeat of the humanoids in that battle, he seized control of the demoralized barony and began to rebuild it in his own image. He knows of the battles and outright warfare that the disparate races under his control have been waging against each other since time before memory, and he is trying to unify these chaotic elements under his skull charged banners. Strangely, perhaps due to his extraordinary charisma with his subjects, he is succeeding.

Thrakkazz's subjects are a mixed breed of orogs, gnoils, goblins, fhoimoriens, and minotaurs, and others not yet known to outsiders. By his decree, each controls at least one of the barony's nine provinces. It was one of his first steps to balance the fortunes of each, so that none would have any good reason to fight another.

skjada one-eye

jarl of Saerskaap
3rd-level fighter

S: 15
D: 10
C: 10
I: 14
W: 11
Ch: 18

AC: 6
hp: 19
MV: 12
THACO: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Reynir, minor, 24.
Blood abilities: Courage (major).

Typical Dialogue: "Hollingholmen is a long way away. Take me to an alehouse. Tell the king I'm loyal, but weary.

"Away with ye, wife. I'll see no more petitioners today unless they have a tale to tell I haven't heard or a glass of early Heffebier.

"By my honor, I'll hear no words against Varri; go, return to your master."

Description: A pleasant and jovial man, Skjada's plan was to retire at 30 and "go to seed." He has been highly successful. His bright red face and stark white whiskers give him a grandfatherly mein, which he exploits when necessary. If one looks closely enough, one can see striations of muscle and healthy sinews undiminished after all the years. He's still a warrior that a man would want by his side in a fight.

Background: Skjada's only skills of note lay in fighting. Where others saw a dreary life as a common foot soldier, Skjada saw a career in a moment. When he enlisted in Erik's Freeman Infantry, he said that when he was 30 he'd retire and marry a great lord's fat daughter. He kept his word, married the jarl's daughter, and the rest is history.

The document is a distillation of intelligence reports received by Bern (mostly foreign) and Helder (mainly domestic) over the past two years.

rumors

Being a compilation of tales tall and otherwise, and what is said abroad and at home.

foreign reports

There are those of Rjurik descent in Dhoesone who have never forgotten Hjalstone. Remember that the kingdom was lost almost 800 years ago! These reactionaries call themselves the Sons of Hjalstone. Reports have it that a legitimate heir has been found,

an infant male with impeccable credentials. While their purpose is to plot revolution, they do make excellent spies.

Helder has been feeding their dreams

rumors, secrets, and plots

while gathering intelligence, and they report the following myths, current in that land.

The baroness believes that Stjordvik is about to launch an attack into her heartland. Someone on her own staff has conjured up visions of massive troop buildups on our side of the border—who or why is unknown. What is worse is that she seems to believe that Stjordvik is in league with the White Witch, and that units of Stjordvik, the Witch, and the Blood Skull Barony will support the “invasion.”

In Rjuvik and Svinik, the monarchs there believe that our new king is a myth. They think the confirmation of the new King of Stjordvik is something cooked up by Bern and Helder to send them a “hands-off” message. I doubt they’ll press us, but one never knows what thoughts lurk in the northwest.

It is also rumored in those lands that the independence of the Oaken Grove Druids is about to end. Günther Brandt is said to be preparing to tighten control of his foreign holdings and put them under his direct and personal governance.

domestic reports

There is a wizard whom some of the folk of the border lands have reported to have established sources and ley lines within Stjordvik. While there is no direct knowledge of this, it has a ring of truth. Provincial agents report to have seen one or several wizards—not seers—casting spells that can only be

intended to produce ley lines.

Perhaps more alarming, it has been said that there are orogs within Stjordvik’s borders, hidden inside great, secluded fortresses.

In some news that you may find amusing thanks to its absurdity, there have been complaints from the eastern provinces that an itinerant priest of Haelyn is seeking converts among the freemen. He obviously doesn’t know what realm he’s in, and he’ll probably find himself leaving Stjordvik as a druid.

Finally, from Hollenvik come two tales. The first is that his current majesty bought the crown from an avaricious Varri for an undisclosed sum, but word is that it was equal to the current treasury. The second is that the new regent of Stjordvik is actually a scion of the Anuirean Royal House, bent on conquest and empire. Neither, of course, has any substance, but belief in both grows in the telling.

secrets

Much of Varri’s “government” took place behind his back. Bern and Helder did this not only to protect him, but to prevent his veto over decisions that were necessary for the preservation of the realm. Helder and Bern executed the following plans without the king’s knowledge.

the moonlight treaties

For the safety of the realm, Bern and Helder started negotiations, hammering out a series of secret treaties that bind all the Rjurik realms on the Taelshore, from Halskapa to Stjordvik, to mutual defense, trade, and support.

Known as the *Moonlight Treaties*, they grant some unusual powers to the regents of these realms. They would allow the regent of Stjordvik, for example, to call on Fulgar the Bold, regent of Rjuvik, for assistance in putting down a “rebellion” in Hollenvik.

The treaties also guarantee current borders, call for joint naval action and sharing of intelligence, and require third party arbitration in the case of disputes between treaty partners. All in all, the agreements were revolutionary in not only their broad scope but also for their modern nature.

operation deep circle

The comment in Helder’s letter about sending Bern’s Light Horse to Namverg for fear of an invasion from the north is disingenuous. It is not that he does not trust his new regent and liege—far from it. His fear is that the missive, coming all the way from Lofkirdik, might fall into the wrong hands.

Rjuvik is not the real problem. It is Hollenvik. Helder and Bern want to remove Jarl Guthrim Gauks-son; but by necessity they must proceed cautiously. Their intent is to gradually surround Hollenvik, move in the two units of infantry over the trade roads, bring up the Light Horse along with two units of Rjuvik irregulars, and arrest him in his own keep. Rjuvik, for its part, has also promised extra vigilance on the border with the Blood Skull Barony for the duration.

creating a kingdom

Helder and Bern are no less convinced of the need to "modernize" than Storm Holtson. They realize that the old days and the old ways are vanishing, and Stjordvik must change, even if they must drag it, kicking and screaming, into a new era.

Toward that end, they have recruited and trained an assembly of teachers, men and women whose primary qualification is that they share certain philosophies about Stjordvik. The teachers come from all over the realm, from every province and occupation. They do not receive pay for their services, but donate them for the future of the realm. After training, the teachers, using ancient skaldic texts, sagas, and their own quick wits, establish local "tree schools."

These schools meet irregularly, as teachers, youth, and carefully selected men and women have time. As often as possible, they study to learn reading, writing, and sums. Of course, fighting techniques and battle strategy are essential disciplines too. Nomads who wish to learn are more than welcome.

They also teach the adults to lead their neighbors to think about change and consider what to say in taverns and when talking with friends.

A sampling:

"You know, the road system the government created has certainly enriched our purses and cut down on the raids by the humanoids. Perhaps the jarls should be put out to pasture and the crown should run things."

"The militia is adequate, but I'd feel safer with the regular army handling things. They don't seem to drink as much, or cause half as much trouble."

"I don't know much, but I've seen Hollingholmen. Why is this village just a collection of backwater hovels?"

"I hear Dhoesone (or Rjuvik, or the Blood Skull Barony, or the Giantdowns) was planning an invasion until the king and Bern made them back down with a show of force and a well-placed lightning bolt thrown by Helder."

"Humph. Jarls come and go . . . the good ones bribe us with ale and festivals, the bad ones raise our taxes. A plague take them all!"

The tree school system has been in place for seven years now, and, while progress has been slow, attitudes have already begun to change. The new administration in Namverg can be traced directly to the influence of the tree schools.

plots a labyrinth of lies

Jarl Guthrim is not the gross fool his gnarled appearance may lead some to believe. He has a plan to remove his province from Stjordvik and create his own realm.

He has made secret contact with Fulgar the Bold, also known as Fulgar the Fox. His agreement with Rjuvik will turn Fulgar's forces to Guthrim in the middle of battle. This is in exchange for exclusive rights to the timber trade leaving the Hollenvik Forest.

But Fulgar has his own plans for the rich forest province of Hollenvik: He intends to annex it if the conditions are right. When they call him, he will dispatch not the irregulars he promised, but two units of well-trained, hard-disciplined raiders disguised as irregulars. A unit of housecarls, hidden in the forest in advance of any troop movements, will support these units.

This gives Fulgar three options. He can obey the Moonlight Treaty he signed if he feels the Stjordvik forces are too strong. He can support Guthrim with his housecarls, holding the raiders back if it looks like the treaties will hold and the rest of the Highlands will enforce them. He can always claim later that he had no control over the deserters who fought for Guthrim. If it appears that the treaty is not worth the parchment it is inscribed upon, he will turn his forces loose on the Stjordvikers and then turn on Guthrim. The very thought has lifted his spirits of late.

the witch in the south

Last week, a Stjordviker agent, a man whose name is unknown to all save Bern (who refuses to reveal it) stumbled into the Helder's office in the palace and, as he slumped to floor in death, blood pouring from wounds, delivered a written report.

The report stated that the Sons of Hjalsone are the innocent tools of the White Witch. She established the group through her agents and intends to use it as a *casus bellum* to foment a war between Dhoesone and Stjordvik.

While the two realms are occupied fighting each other, the report said, she will slip in the back door. Using her trading centers as bases and her established sources for power, she will take control of both realms.

The mention of sources and the references to trade centers frightened both Helder and Bern, neither of whom were aware that she had any active interests in Stjordvik.

strategy and tactics

As king of Stjordvik, you have your work cut out for you, and it won't be easy. Your northern border is being pushed by the Scarlet Baron, who already has troops stationed on your land. Your western border is unsecured due to the erratic nature of Fulgar. You have rebellion and apathy running rampant through the kingdom, and we are undecided as to which threat is worse. Lord Bern and I have conferred, and we offer the following advice and counsel.

king of what?

Your first task is to get this kingdom under control, to unite it into one realm for "king and freeman." You will find that the freemen are already ahead of the jarls in this, and you may count on the support of most of them.

To unite the kingdom, you must first subdue Guthrim and Olfjor. Guthrim poses an immediate threat that must be dealt with. If you can take them both out of power, the other jarls will have no choice but to join you or be pulled down themselves.

Since we know what Guthrim intends, we must cut off both him and Fulgar. We recommend that you order the Light Horse to lead Fulgar's "irregulars" astray. They do not know these lands and should be easily deceived. Let the cavalry lead them to Arvaald, and put the fear of the crown into Olfjor. Conveniently, the cavalry would be that much closer to the Wall. Meanwhile, create a false unit of housecarls by dressing trusted Hollingholmen citizens in uniforms. (This is risky, though they can be placed under a veteran's command and taught how to look proper.) Send them into Hollenvik Forest to deal with Fulgar's housecarls. When his troops discover the lack of supporting raiders, they will split and run, trapped between our two "forces."

As for Guthrim, his bark is loud, but he hasn't any teeth. He should surrender when the infantry and the "housecarls" land on his doorstep with not a single Rjuvikian in sight. You should lead these

forces and deal with Guthrim personally. Fulgar's fangs are thus pulled too.

Meanwhile, Lord Bern himself will take command of the Light Horse (they are "his" after all and suspicions won't be aroused.) If they sufficiently mislead the Rjuvik raiders, Lord Bern will lead the combined forces to Olfjor and bluff the jarl into surrender. If not, he will send the raiders home on feigned orders and an excuse that "something has gone wrong" and take the cavalry back home to guard the wall.

The plan, of course, is imperfect. It depends on many outside variables. It is also hazardous but, we hope, not overly so. The idea of overcoming your enemies by using their own treachery as your weapon is simply irresistible.

A final note on this subject. The freemen "experiment" in Namverg seems to be working. You may wish to consider similar council governments in Arvaald and Hollenvik—at least for a time. This would serve to keep your praises on the freemen's lips.

the question of dhoesone

While opposition from the northwest would not allow the inclusion of Dhoesone in the Moonlight Treaties, we must make a pact with Baroness Fhiele Dhoesone, a treaty of mutual defense. She must know that it is the White Witch and the Blood Skull Barony who threaten both of us. Half-elf that she is, she may know the ways of magic. She would be a valuable ally.

As soon as the internal situation improves, you should seek an audience with the baroness. We must inform her that the Sons of Hjalson is an instrument of the White Witch, not Stjordvik, and that we have no plans to march east. Go with only the arms and armor you need to protect yourself from brigands, a herald, a lightly armed guard, and Lord Helder.



guilds, improvements, and taxation

As soon as you have this realm under your control, raise taxes. We must have the funds. You should be popular enough to get away with it—just be certain you explain why. The people will tolerate reasonable taxation if they know the reasons.

The road system is in bad repair and must be improved; the same is true for the Great Oak Wall. For trade and security, these must be priorities.

Likewise, you must begin to expand your own guild holdings. Holtson may one day be rich enough to *buy* the kingdom! We must stop him, or at least slow him down. And, again, you need the money. One way to do this may be to include some of your own trade provisions in the proposed treaty with Dhoesone (the baroness has a problem with Holtson too, I hear) and cut Holtson out of the opportunity for profit.

Sire,
Do not reflect upon your fate overmuch. We all have our own doom which must find us one day. Accept that, and do what must be done.

We are always at your service; you have but ask.

For King and Stjordvik we are,

Faithfully Yours,

Helder
Royal Chamberlain Helder

Bern
Bern, High Marshal





JANKAPING

HOGUNMARK

Stornomark

Veikanger

the
BLOOD
SKULL
BARONY

SVINIK

RJUVIK

Viborg

STJORDVIK

Tael Firth

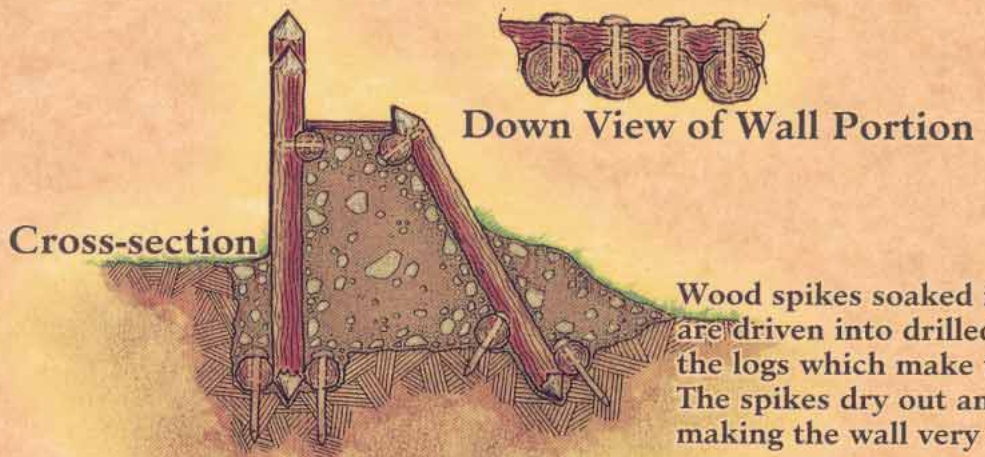
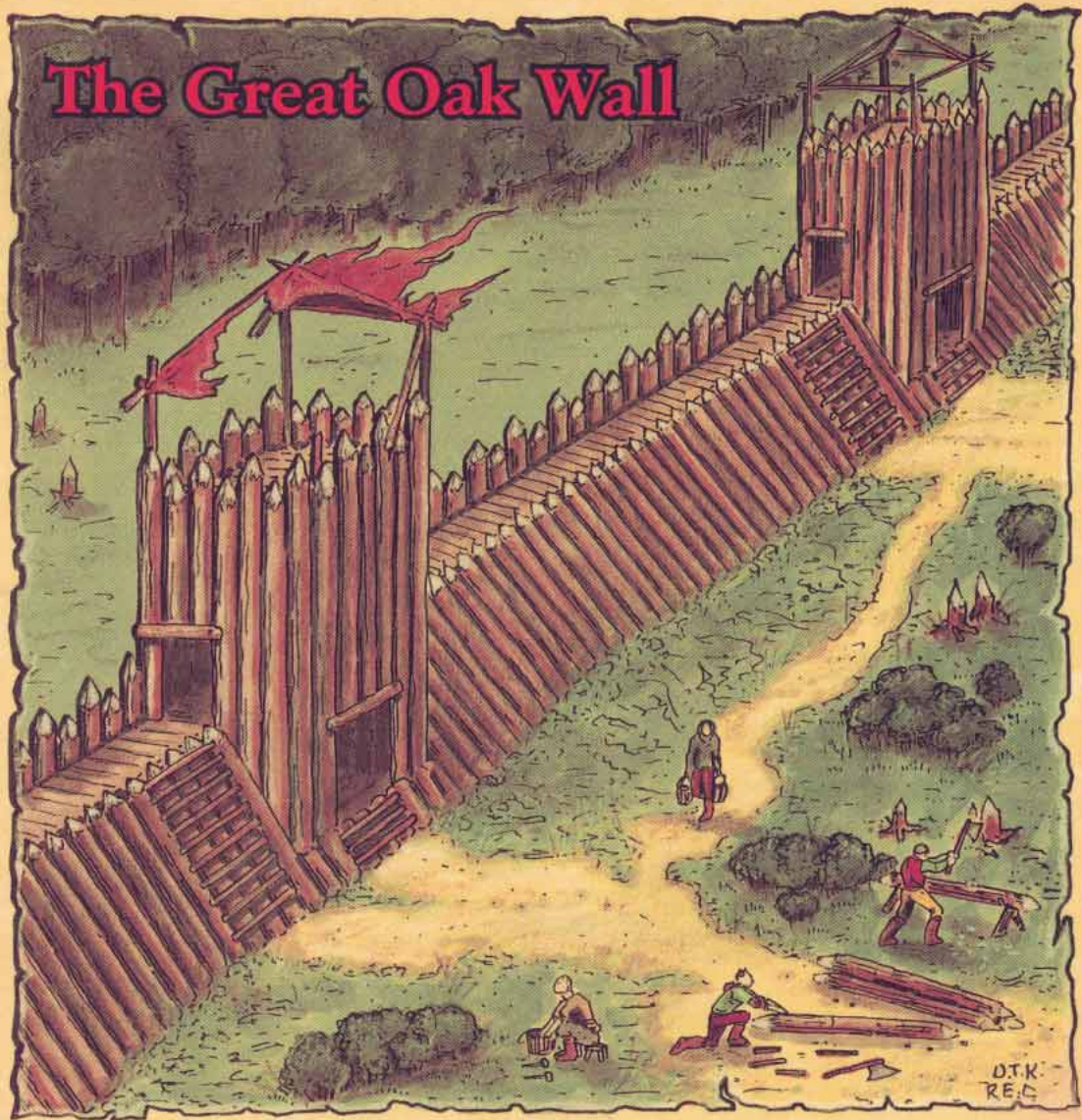
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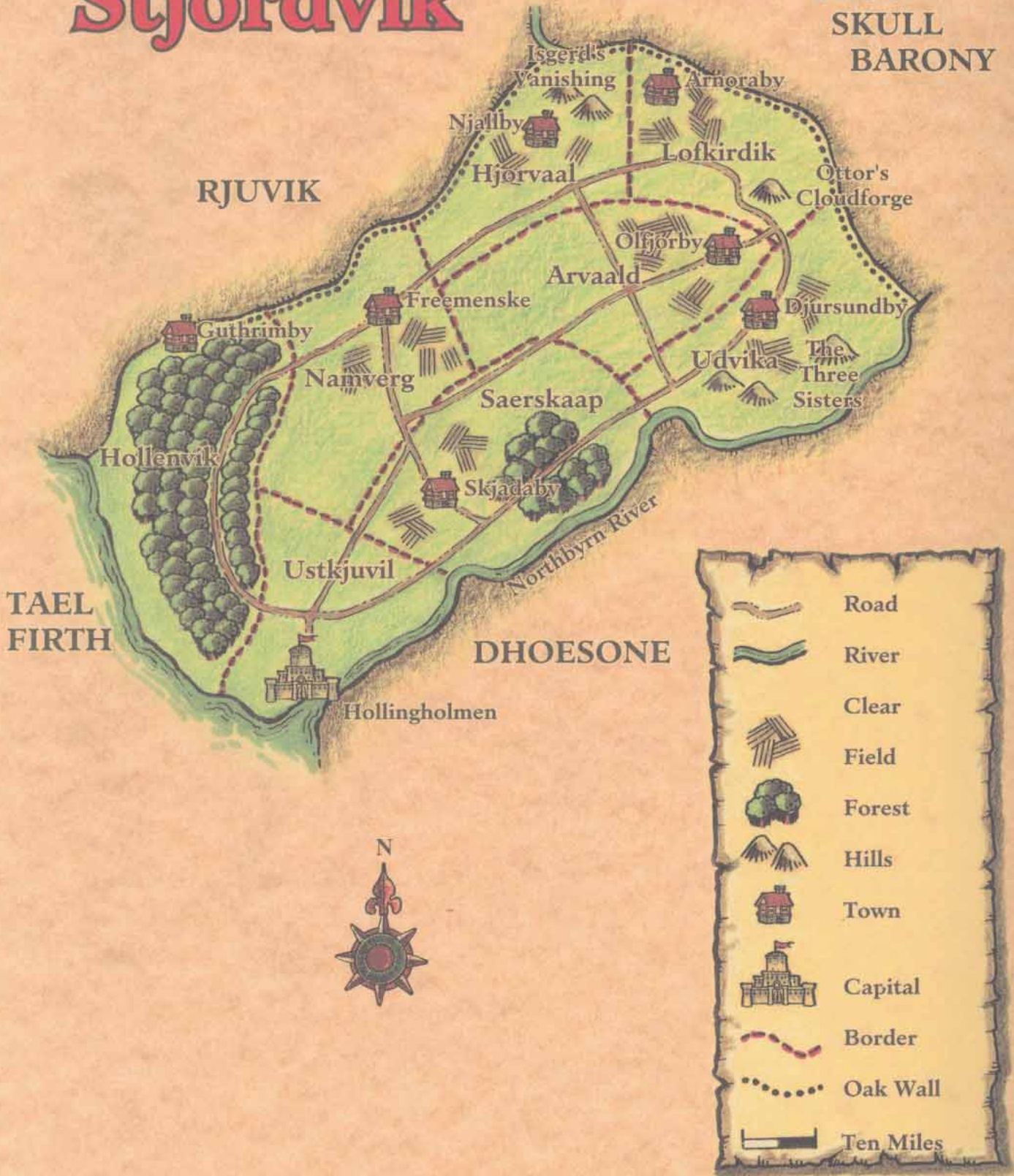
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Stjordvik

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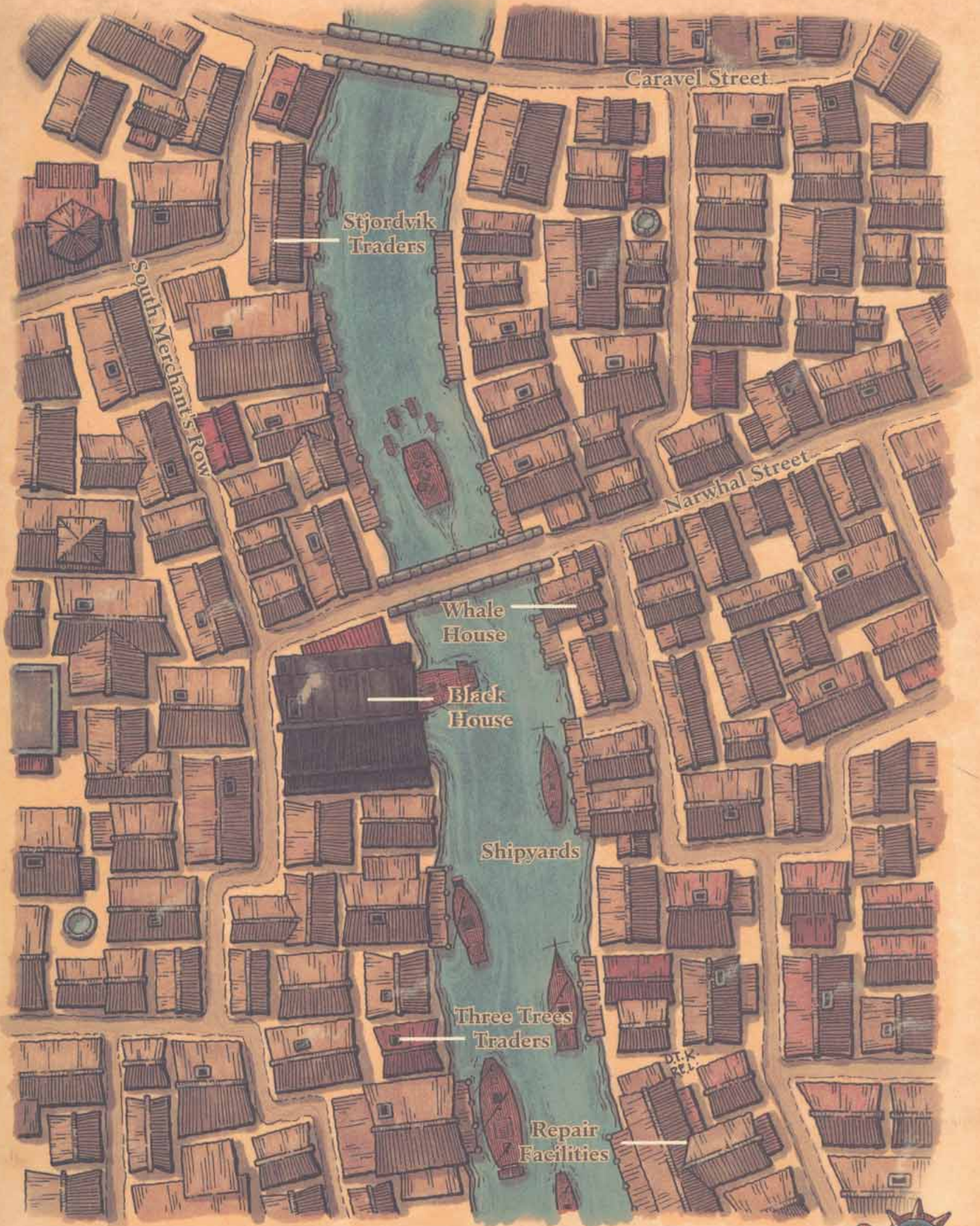


Ravenroost Castle



D.T.K.
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A Section of Hollingholmen City



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STJORDVIK

BIRTHRIGHT

DOMAIN SOURCEBOOK

by Doug Stewart

Stjordvik is a domain teetering on the brink of economic collapse, but rich in resources that could inject fresh life into the royal treasury. The land is politically fragmented by provincial jarls who go their own way rather than heed their king, but at the same time populated by freemen who disdain those petty power-seekers. For centuries the Great Oak Wall along the northern and western borders of Stjordvik has kept the orogs of the Blood Skull Barony and the barbarians of Rjuvik at bay, but now the barrier is near collapse in many places—and if it goes down, so goes Stjordvik.

As the new ruler of this old and proud kingdom of warriors, it is your job to suppress the other jarls and unite the provinces; to build up the army and the treasury by drawing upon the support of the freemen; and to shore up the weak spots in the Great Oak Wall before a horde of invaders can destroy everything you have worked for. Your fate and the fate of Stjordvik are intertwined—what will that fate be?

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TSR, Inc.
201 Sheridan Springs Rd.
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



TSR Ltd.
120 Church End
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

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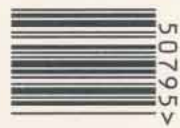
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