

Wargames FACTORY

THE RAVEN'S TALE

SCENARIOS FOR: BATTLE TROLL

"Orn caught up his bow and set an arrow to the string, and came out of doors just as they were getting to horse. He shot and found a mark, and a man fell down off his horse - it was Helgi, the son of Arn

Hen-Thorir

This volume features a number of short 'skirmish' style combats taken from the Icelandic 'Family Sagas', two larger multi-player games designed for a rowdy invention or game-day kind of event, and some ideas for you to devise your own scenarios

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SCENARIOS FROM THE SAGAS

From HRAFNKEL'S SAGA: THE LYME KNOLL.

"Eyvind Bjarnason was just crossing the river at Skala Ford carrying a bright shield that shone in the sun. He's a worthy target for revenge, an outstanding man like him."

Unnamed laundrywoman in **Hrafnkel's Saga**

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The theme of revenge is always popular in the sagas. This scenario is the consequence of a festering quarrel between two landowners, Hrafnkel and Sam Bjarnasson; Sam was able to use his legal knowledge and craftiness to have his rival outlawed and dispossessed. Some years later, after Hrafnkel has restored his wealth and reputation to some extent, a servant-woman, washing clothes, sees Sam's brother Eyvind riding by - on his way to see Sam at the farmstead that used to belong to Hrafnkel - and taunts her employer about his shameful defeat. He decides it's time for retaliation ---

TERRAIN:

The Saga refers to the place of the fight as being on this knoll, with eroded sides and lyme grass on top. Eyvind's men picked up stones for missile. Below the knoll was a hollow, and nearby a bog. The country is grassy, with ridges and valleys all round.

THE SIDES:

Eyvind and six other riders: Eyvind is a hero, the two merchants are 'huskarls', the three servants karls; the boy will be sent for help to Adalbol rather than fight. Nobody wears armour, but Eyvind and the merchants have shields. Give Eyvind 3 hero attributes, and, since they are heavily outnumbered, allow them leather jerkins and caps. Nobody has a bow.

Hrafnkel is accompanied by Sighvat and Snorri Hallsteinsson and their farmhands, by Thord and Halli Hrolfsson with theirs, as well as his own men, eighteen men in all. None wear armour, but all have fetched weapons. Since the fight is heavily in their favour, let us say that Hrafnkel and two of the named brothers are heroes, the other two are Huskarls, and the rest are Karls. Of the thirteen karls, let's allow two to be archers, and five to have shields. Some may merely be equipped with staves, knives and stones.

CHARACTER: Hrafinkel: You are a proud chieftain known for your bad temper and your refusal to make restitution for several killings. You have been living for a number of years with the memory of your humiliation by Sam Bjarnason, who had you outlawed, tortured you and seized your farm. When a washerwoman sees Sam's brother Eyvind arrive with a ship after several years away, she ridicules your courage, and says, "He's a worthy target for revenge". You are goaded beyond endurance by these words, so you gather your farmhands and summon your neighbours to hunt down Eyvind as he rides across country with his travelling companions and servants.

CHARACTER: Eyvind: You are just returned to Iceland after travelling as far as Constantinople. You have made a lot of money, and are come to visit your brother Sam at his farm, Adabol, which he took from a man called Hrafinkel in a lawsuit. This was several years ago. You are riding with two fellow comrades, two of Sam's servants, and your own servant boy, with sixteen pack-horses of cargo from your vessel. As you cross Thordale Moor the boy sees that you are being followed by a party of riders, and recognizes a tall man in blue as Hrafinkel. Despite his urging that you race for Adalbol, you wait at a steep knoll with a hollow beneath it, to see who is following.

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

The saga recounts that Hrafinkel attacked immediately without any talk, and that Eyvind and all his men were killed, save for the boy who rode for help. Twelve of the attackers were also killed, but Hrafinkel survived. Sam arrived with 20 men too late to save his brother, pursued Hrafinkel unsuccessfully, and was attacked at his farm the next day by Hrafinkel and seventy men. We might suggest that one player take the doomed merchant and his band, while three take his assailants. If Eyvind is able to hold off the attack for a certain length of time, Sam might arrive with help.

II) From LAXDAELA SAGA: THE AMBUSH OF KJARTAN.

"--- and now An fell, having fought for some time with his entrails coming out. At that moment Kjartan hacked off Gudlaug's leg at the thigh, and that was his death-wound."

LAXDAELA SAGA

Laxdaela Saga is a complex tale built around a love triangle, featuring - according to the back of the Penguin edition - Gudrun Osvif's-daughter, "the imperious beauty who is forced to marry her lover's best friend". This reaches a climax in this scenario and its sequel.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Kjartan Olafsson is embroiled in a feud with the Osvifssons, Gudrun's brothers, which began after he jilted her. Gudrun has married Bolli Thorleiksson, Kjartan's foster-brother. The feud has escalated, through harsh words and a series of thefts, to the point where Kjartan has caused great humiliation to his rivals by blockading them in their farmhouse - without, we are told, access to the privy - for three days. As a result, Gudrun prompts her brothers to kill Kjartan. They decide to ambush him as he rides back from purchasing land. He has been accompanied by Thorkel Whelp, his brother Knut, and apparently eight unnamed men, but sends them away so that nobody thinks he is afraid as he nears the land of his foes.

TERRAIN:

Svinadal is a long, wide valley with a shallow river and rocky hills on either side. Kjartan and two companions are riding down the valley from the north. Halfway down the valley is a ravine, Havragill, where a small stream flows into the Svin river. The Osvifsson party (AKA 'the men of Laugar', after their farm) is hiding in the ravine. There are a number of huge boulders in the valley.

THE SIDES:

Kjartan and two comrades: Kjartan is a hero, with skills 'agile' and 'fast'. He is equipped with a cheap sword (-1 to damage rolls) rather than his best weapon, a gift from the king of Norway. An the Black could be a hero (skill 'Iron-Won't-Bite') or a huskarl; Thorarin is definitely a huskarl, a tough one too.

On the other side are nine men: 'The men of Laugar'; Bolli Thorleiksson, the five Osvifssons (Ospak, Helgi, Vandrad, Torrad, Thorolf), Gudlaug, a nephew

of Osvif. Odd and Stein, sons of one Thorhalla the Gossip are also present. Bolli is a hero, skill iron-won't-bite', with the named sword Legbiter (+2). Ospak is a hero, though not an impressive one. Thorolf might be a hero or a huskarl, Gudlaug ("a very promising young man") a huskarl, all the others karls.

No bows are mentioned, nor any armour except for shields. Leather caps and jerkins might be allowed simply as outdoor gear for travelling.

BRIEFINGS:

CHARACTER: Kjartan: You are one of Iceland's leading men, a friend of King Olaf Tryggvasson of Norway, and highly regarded in all ways. As such, you cannot be bothered overmuch with the Oxvifssons, and regret ever having fallen for their sister. You have sent your other travelling companions away, save for An the Black (who has strange dreams) and Thorarin Thorisson, with whom you have concluded a land sale. You expect an attack from the Osvifssons. You do not think Bolli will join in with them. You do wish to avenge yourself on Thorolf Osvifsson, the thief who stole the sword that King Olaf gave you.

CHARACTER: An the Black: You are Kjartan's friend and will stand with him. You have had a strange dream in which an old woman with a knife ripped your belly open, pulled out your entrails, and stuffed brushwood in their place. Then she went away. You told your friends about this, and now they call you 'An Brushwood-belly'. You think there must be something in this premonition.

CHARACTER: Ospak Osvifsson: You are the eldest of the men five sons of Osvif. You have endured the arrogance and insults of Kjartan long enough. Your sister Gudrun has taunted you about your failure to take revenge on Kjartan for all the disgrace he has heaped on you, saying that you and your brothers have the spirit of 'peasant's daughters' and 'the memories of hogs', that 'you just sit at home pretending to be men, and there are always too many of you about'. It is time to put this matter to rest. You wonder whether your brother in law Bolli will fight with you against his beloved foster-brother.

CHARACTER: Bolli Thorleiksson: You are Gudrun's husband and Kjartan's foster-brother, and keenly feel the feud between them. Gudrun has made her position clear; "You don't have the luck to be able to please everybody - and if you refuse this journey it will be the end of our marriage." So you have travelled with her brothers, but despise yourself for doing so. Still, Kjartan has done much, since your marriage, to dishonour you—

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

In the event, Bolli stood aloof while a general attack ensued against Kjartan's band. An the Black fell "having fought some time with his entrails coming out", but defied fate and medical probability to fight again another day. Kjartan took

off Gudlaug's leg with a Great Blow, which he did not survive. Ospak then called on Bolli to join in, saying that it was impossible even to make Kjartan fall back. Bolli then drew 'Legbiter', and Kjartan (being a saga hero) threw down his own rather feeble sword, saying that he would "rather accept death at your hands, cousin, than give you death at mine". Bolli then slew Kjartan with one blow. At this point the fight ended, with Bolli weeping over his foster-brother. Stirring, romantic stuff, eh?

Gufi erected this stone in memory of his son Olaf, a very tough lad. He was killed in Estonia.. Havard cut the stone.

inscribed on a standing stone, Norra Asarp, Vastergotland.

III) From LAXDAELA SAGA: THE SHIELING.

"When I was carried home to Tongue, more dead than alive, after Kjartan had fallen, my one thought was that I would gladly do Bolli some harm if ever I had the chance."

An the Black in **Laxdaela Saga**

WHAT'S GOING ON?

This scenario follows the last. After the death of Kjartan, his father Olaf the Peacock took legal action in which the Osvifssons were outlawed and exiled. He chose to take no action against Bolli, which angered his wife and sons. After Olaf died three years later, his widow, Thorgerd, stirred up her sons to get revenge on Bolli, who was farming at Saelingsdale Tongue, not far from their home. They gather a band of eight men and ride out to kill Bolli at his summer pasture (a 'shieling').

TERRAIN:

The Shieling consists of two huts, the one a small cabin and the other a dairy. It lies close to a stream. Behind the buildings a long mountainous ridge rises. The avengers begin the game dismounting in some woods, at a distance from the shieling, where they are spotted by Bolli's shepherd. Beyond the stream is a stretch of grassland known as Hamar meadow.

THE SIDES:

The Avengers consist of;

The Olafssons - Halldor (hero, eagle-eye) Steinthor, Helgi, Hoskuld (huskarls)

Bardi Gudmundsson (hero, Troll-blooded)

An Brushwood-Belly (hero, Iron-won't-bite)

Lambi Thorbjornsson, Thorstein the Black, Helgi Hardbeinsson (huskarls)

Thorgerd is present to oversee, "for I know you well enough, my sons, to realize you will need spurring on."

Bolli (hero, Iron-won't-bite) has a shield and the sword Legbiter (+2) and a leather jerkin, no helmet. Gudrun Osvifsdottir counts as a hero if she fights. Both begin the game in the cabin. The shepherd boy (karl) starts up on the mountain.

BRIEFINGS

CHARACTER: Thorgerd: You are here to make sure that your worthless sons do their duty to their dead brother Kjartan. If you don't spur them on, they'll lose heart and go home.

CHARACTER: Halldor: You have been goaded into this killing, knowing it to be against your father's wishes. Let's get it done.

CHARACTER: An the Black: You fought with Kjartan, were wounded there, and have your own strong reasons to seek revenge against Bolli this day.

CHARACTER: Bardi Gudmundsson: You are here to support the family, and because you really like a good fight.

CHARACTER: Bolli Thorleiksson: So, at last they have come for you. If you are to die today, you will make a good stand and make sure you are remembered.

CHARACTER: Gudrun Osvifssdottir: Kjartan's family will not let the old quarrel die. Perhaps Bolli will be killed today. You must find out who these men are, for you will make sure that they, in their turn, fall to the sword.

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

The result of this scenario would appear to be the inevitable death of Bolli. What he has in his favour, in addition to his skills and weapon, is that he can fight the avengers at 1-1 odds provided that he holds the cabin doorway; if he is pushed back from the door a second attacker can get into the fight if the Avenger's cards come up before his own. Let Bolli's side move on red cards, the Avengers on black. Bolli did indeed fall after killing An the Black and crippling Lambi Thorbjornsson in a heroic defence. Gudrun left before the fight, but made careful note as to who was present, so as to arrange revenge in due course.

IV) **From NJAL'S SAGA: THE ICE FLOW.**

" *Njal called out to Skarp-Hedin, 'Where are you going, kinsman?'*

'To look for sheep', he replied.

'You said that once before,' said Njal, 'but then you hunted men'.

Njal's Saga

WHAT'S GOING ON?

After a series of insults against them following a sequence of misadventures in Norway, the sons of Njal decide on blood vengeance against their rival Thrain Sigfusson and his cronies.

TERRAIN:

This combat takes place in winter, across a river channel where thick ice has formed on the water in one place, forming an ice-bridge. On the far side ice has formed on the river bank, in a sheet 'as smooth as glass'. Thrain Sigfusson has formed his men on the ice-sheet, looking across the river.

THE SIDES:

Thrain is a hero, described as *"extremely ostentatious --- he always wore a blue cloak and gilded helmet, and carried the spear that Earl Hakon had given him, a splendid shield, and a sword at his belt"*. However, he begins the scenario bareheaded. He is accompanied by seven men; Killer-Hrapp (a nasty piece of work), his nephews Gunnar Lambasson and Lambi Sigurdsson, Grani Gunnarsson, Lodin and Tjorvi. An eighth man is not named. Lodin, and the nameless fellow are karls, the others heroes or huskarls depending on the number of players. Grani and Gunnar are both striplings, so count as 'feeble',

Thrain (+1 spear)

Killer -Hrapp (clever-tongued, boastful)

Gunnar Lambasson (feeble)

Lambi Sigurdsson (Eagle-eyed)

Grani Gunnarsson (boastful, feeble)

Lodin

Tjorvi (agile)

Nameless karl

The Njalssons are heroes. The saga description runs thus; "Skarp-Hedin was in the lead, dressed in a blue jacket and carrying a round shield, with his

axe hoisted on his shoulder. Next to him was Kari, wearing a silk jacket and a gilded helmet; there was a lion painted on his shield. Behind him walked Helgi, wearing a red tunic and carrying a red shield decorated with a hart. They all wore coloured clothing. " I have no idea why Grim and Hoskuld get no mention here.

Skarp-Hedin (Iron-won't-bite, +2 axe, "Battle-Troll")
Grim (troll-blooded)
Helgi (agile)
Hoskuld
Kari Solmundarson (lucky)

BRIEFINGS:

CHARACTER(S): The Njalssons: You have had enough of the taunts of Thrain and his men. Thrain was once a friend but chose to offend Jarl Hakon of Norway, who had given him fine gifts and gracious hospitality, by aiding the murderer Hrapp, and then permitting the jarl's anger to fall on Helgi and Grim Njalsson. Thrain has refused all requests to make good this injustice, and his men - especially the wicked Hrapp and the young whelp Grani Gunnarsson - do nothing but insult you and your family. Settlement will be made in blood.

CHARACTER: Thrain: You are a proud man, hardly to be bothered with these loutish sons of the beardless Njal. If they wish to fight, let them come on.

CHARACTER: Hrapp: You are a wicked, troublemaking man with a sharp tongue and a general desire to make fools of anyone you wish - in this case the sons of Njal, who took the blame for your escape from Norway, the hapless dolts!

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

A special rule is needed to allow for the slippery ice. Anyone who chooses to run will slide the full distance rolled, but may strike an opponent as they pass by! This was the method by which Skarp-Hedin ran at Thrain immediately, killing him with a great blow that split his helmet. Grim and Helgi killed Hrapp, with a certain amount of banter in the process, while Kari killed Tjorvi. The rest of Thrain's men were given quarter, with forebodings that they would prove faithless in the future, being that sort of story.

V) From EGIL'S SAGA: THE FARM ON HISING ISLAND

'They arrived just before dawn, surrounded the house and shouted out their war-cry. The noise woke the men inside, they rushed for their weapons --'

Egil's saga

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Thorolf Kvedulfsson, once a trusted comrade of the powerful Norwegian king Harald Finehair, has been outlawed due to the slanders and manipulations of his enemies. Prime among these are two viking leaders, Hallverd and Sigtrygg. Thorolf is raiding the Baltic coasts in a great longship with a hundred followers. At Hising Island at the mouth of the Gota River, in south-eastern Norway, he attacks the family farm owned by his foes as a small act of vengeance (they do like their vengeance, don't they?)

TERRAIN:

The centrepiece is a large farm, probably a long hall and some outbuildings, surrounded by a high stockade. The raiders approach up the river and land some small distance from the farm. There are woods nearby. Sorry to be vague, but there you have it. Set up the scenery to favour the defenders, since they will need all the help they can get.

THE SIDES:

Thorolf is a hero, as his his standard-bearer Thorgils Gjallandi, a brave and powerful man. No doubt they are equipped in full mail and helmet. Nobody else is named, so create a few huskarls if you like. There are 100, count 'em, 100 men in all, so 90+ karls. Reduce this by half if you like. Allow Thorolf and Thorgils 2 hero attributes each. Choose these yourself.

The unlucky farmers consist of Thorgeir and Thord, younger brothers to Thorolf's viking enemies - we'll call them both heroes - and 20 retainers, varying from actual warriors to the boy who cleans the spoons. If you halved the opposing numbers, you could halve these, or leave 'as is' to give a sporting chance of survival.

BRIEFINGS:

CHARACTER: Thorolf: It's time to let your enemies know that Thorolf is not a man to trifle with, and burning their farm seems like a good starting place.!

CHARACTER: Thorgils: You follow your lord Thorolf eagerly. His foes are your foes.

CHARACTER: Thorgeir: You drank a gallon of ale and went to bed with a comely wench (as the term is) and all of a sudden you are under attack! To arms men! Defend the hall!

CHARACTER: Thord: You have a terrible headache from a cargo of Frankish wine and suddenly there are enemies all around. Best run for the woods to rally and make a stand against these unknown attackers!

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

I suspect this is a very one sided affair, so play this one with the veteran wargamers as the besieged farmers and let the bright-eyed new gamers play the heroes. The saga tells that Thord had his hand chopped off by Thorgils while escaping to the woods; Thorgeir fell defending the hall.

*"Saksi set up this stone in memory of his comrade Asjorn Tokisson
He fled not at Uppsala
But kept on fighting while he could hold weapon"*

inscribed

on a standing stone, Sjorup, Skane

VI) From EGIL'S SAGA: A DUEL OF HONOUR

'Egil told Ljot to get ready. 'I want us to settle this duel', he said.'

Egil's Saga

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Egil Skallagrimsson, the poet, runeworker and armed lunatic, has volunteered to take the place of the likeable but somewhat underpowered Fridgeir in a challenge issued by the Swedish Berserker Ljot, who has demanded the hand of Fridgeir's sister. He's that sort of fellow.

TERRAIN:

A hazelled ring on an island off the coast of Norway. See the rules for duels.

THE SIDES:

Egil (hero, iron-won't-bite) has two swords, both +2 weapons, and a shield, but no armour. He has a very thick skull, which counts as a metal helmet (!)

Ljot is a berserker, and all berserker rules apply. He has a shield and a normal weapon, no armour.

BRIEFINGS:

CHARACTER: Egil: This pale-skinned berserker needs to be taken down a peg. Odin will aid you in killing him. Gain extra RPs by making up a poem about the affair!

CHARACTER: Ljot: You have made a fortune challenging farmers for their lands, killing a lot of them. Now you want the woman ---- who is this ugly beggar they've sent to fight you, anyway?

PLAYING THE SCENARIO:

This is a very straightforward affair to be played following the rules for duelling. The saga tells that Egil attacked remorselessly, allowing Ljot no chance to strike him (lots of successful counterblows) until, in the second round, he sliced the berserker's leg off. Which was it for Ljot.

SMYRNADALASAGA

or

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE TO GET ON WITH THE NEIGHBOURS?

This is a fictional, multi-player scenario designed for a loud, raucous game between the kind of gamers who can trade insults and share a horn of ale or six, while following the general objectives of their briefings. The setting is the spring assembly of a mythical valley in western Norway, Smyrnadal, where a number of characters come together to resolve their disputes by the kind of advocacy and arbitration familiar to readers of the sagas. Each protagonist has his supporters, some favouring an honourable compromise, others more interested in mayhem for their own reasons. There are also those present for purposes of their own, unrelated to the lawsuits. The object of the game is a sprawling, unpredictable, and usually very funny game in which there is much opportunity for low humour, foul slander and a great deal of nefarious double-dealing. Sometimes there might even be a good faith effort to resolve matters. At the very least, players have reasons to talk to one another - at least for a while - before the serious axe-swinging takes over.

GAME REQUIREMENTS:

There are no special rules for this scenario.

TERRAIN:

A big table with an inlet of a fjord at one edge or corner. Much rough Country of hills, rocks and forest - a cave if you can manage one. The assembly takes place at an open space at the foot of the law rock - basically a rock where a speaker can address a crowd. Whenever I've run this scenario, I place Skeggi's farm close by, to serve as the place where our Norsemen come to eat, drink, make merry and steal the livestock. This consists of 2-3 buildings and some cattle pens. Don't place the farm too close to the water's edge - the irate father and his crew need to have some country to traverse before they reach the assembly. Use whatever you have available. The cow pasture that everyone wants to argue about is not shown on the board.

THE SIDES:

There are, potentially, 14, characters. If you don't have 14 players bursting to play, focus on the two chief antagonists and their supporters, followed by either the 'spoiler' characters - the outlaws, the berserker brothers - or the 'kidnapped daughter' sub-plot characters. The merchant and the horse-coper are the most disposable characters. The characters are counted as heroes. Where it says that a character has a band of retainers, give 3-6 karls; I prefer about 4, as it tends to mean more diplomacy and less mindless violence. The sons, brothers, partners etc are huskarls who serve, at least in part, as 'understudies' in case the character gets sliced and diced. The berserker brothers do add a certain anarchic charm to the game.

PLAYING THE GAME:

It is a good idea to let each player have two index cards, each with the character name on it. These are shuffled into a deck and pulled in random sequence for movement (in one memorable game, the berserker brothers' player sneaked a third card in!). On the card's appearance, the character and his band may talk, drink, fight etc; others may talk back to them rather in the same way as they might defend themselves against attack. I have presented this game several times with wildly different results each time. There is always much jocular name-calling, bawdy joking and egging one another on to stupid behaviour. Skeggi seldom keeps his cattle.

Smyrnadal is the Norse name for the old Viking settlement of Smyrna, Tennessee, where this game was first inflicted on an unsuspecting public.

"You must go down through this district and collect men, for I am now going to drive those people clean off my land. Torfi shall go up Hals way and let them know of our mustering, and we will all meet together at Steinsvad"

Tungu-odd in Hen-Thorir

CHARACTER: You are Thorgeir Sveinsson, a free farmer in Smyrnadal. You have a long-lived dispute over a cow pasture with Einar Hildisson, and he has impugned your honour by lewd references to your love of cattle. Your friend, Kari, told you about Einar's jokes, and says that you shouldn't stand for it. He's pretty hot about being sued for his servants burning his neighbour, Gunnar's hayricks - which, knowing his farmhands, you think is actually more than likely. You have with you your son Harald, and a band of trusted retainers.

CHARACTER: You are Kari Thorasson, a free farmer in Smyrnadal. You are Thorgeir's friend, and heard Einar's ugly jokes about Thorgeir's relationship with

his prize heifer. You think he should stand up for his rights and bring Einar down a peg or two. Einar's friend Gunnar has a lawsuit against you because he claims your farmhands let a fire get out of control and burned his hayricks. You say it might just as well have been his own servants, or vagrants. You have with you your son Thorvald, and a band of trusted retainers, who swear they are not arsonists!

CHARACTER: You are Skeggi, known as 'the Wise', a free farmer in Smyrnadal, and law-speaker of the assembly; this means you preside over the formalities, and you pride yourself on your fair dealing. You are friends with Thorgeir, but have no quarrel with Einar, though he talks too much. You would like to see the matter of the pasture resolved peaceably, before too much bad feeling causes violence. You know Thordar as a braggart and a fool, and consider Kol Egilsson a dangerous man. You have no opinion as to Gunnar's claim about the burned hayricks, but think Kari can be too stubborn for his own good. You have with you your grandson Thrain, and a band of trusted retainers.

CHARACTER: You are Einar Hildisson, a free farmer in Smyrnadal. You have a long-lived dispute over a cow pasture with Thorgeir Sveinsson, who is a sanctimonious fool who cannot stand a joke. You'll stand on your rights about the pasture, which was given to your grandfather by his in return for ten ells of red cloth and some amber he'd got trading in the Baltic. You remember him telling you all about it. You have with you your son Bjarni, and some of your drinking companions.

CHARACTER: You are Kol Egilsson, a kinsman of Einar's from the next dale. You have taken on Einar's dispute with his stupid neighbour Thorgeir, not because you care about the cow pasture, but because you want to be known as a clever man when it comes to making lawsuits; also, you just like to stir up the pot! You have with you your brother An and a band of young fellows you brought with you for the sport.

CHARACTER: You are Gunnar Leifsson, a free farmer in Smyrnadal. You are a friend of Einar's, and wish he'd keep his mouth shut when he's had a few horns of ale. He's right about his claim to the cow pasture, though. His kinsman, Kol, seems like a bit of a stirrer, though undoubtedly clever. You have a claim against Kari Thorasson, for damage done to some of your hayricks by one of his servants carelessly letting a fire spread to your field. You have with you your nephew Hjort, and a band of trusted retainers.

CHARACTER: You are Thordar Bignose, a famous viking with a farm in Smyrnadal. You usually enjoy the yearly assembly, with much drinking and spending money and having a good time. However, you are angry because two of your slaves, an Irish boy and a young girl you captured in a raid up the north coast last summer have run away, and you will be laughed at if you can't recapture them. Aside from that, you want these farmers to know who's a big

man in these parts. You have with you your son Ragnar the Lean, and a band of trusted retainers, ugly customers with big muscles.

CHARACTER: You are Gilli the White. You are a horse-coper, known for your fighting horses. You've brought a vicious stallion along in the hope of getting one of these rubes to take it on with his own horse. You'll make a killing, possibly in more than one sense! If need be, you are well armed ---

CHARACTER: You are Grim the Axe, a wandering berserker. You and your brothers usually like these district gatherings, because there's always a lot of ale and wagering and horse fights and a chance to see these farmers call each other names. With luck, there'll be a fight! You have with you your oldest brother Ingvar the Mad, little Thorstein and a band of lesser thugs you keep around for the fun of it!

CHARACTER: You are Killer-Hrut, an outlaw, lurking in the fastnesses above the dale. These farmers are always very lax at the time of the assembly, and you may well have the chance to seize cattle, or attack a merchant, or generally seize your chances! You may be killed on sight by anyone, so you don't much care about the rights of others - though neither do you wish to be hunted down! You have with you your partner Cutthroat Ivarr, and a band of desperate men of no real worth.

CHARACTER: You are Osmund the Black, a merchant from Stad, bringing a shipload of cargo to sell at the annual Smyrnadalsting. You always make money at these district gatherings, as the locals don't see good merchandise very often, and the men buy anything bright and shiny to take home to their wives. You'll have to watch out, though, because the hills are full of outlaws. You have with you your business partner Sverri Olafsson, and a band of trusted retainers.

CHARACTER: You are Gudrun Asgrims-daughter, aged 16. You were seized by vikings last summer, and brought south as a slave. You were secretly betrothed to Eirik Helgasson, a handsome neighbour of your father's, but now realise that you love Niall, an Irish boy who is also a slave of the horrible viking Thordar. You and Niall intend running away together, either to Ireland or to your father's home in the Trondelag.

CHARACTER: You are Asgrim Ulfsson, of Vessing in the Trondelag, whose daughter has been kidnapped by Thordar Bignose in a raid last year, and on whom you seek revenge and the return of your dear Gudrun. You bring a neighbour, the generally useless Eirik, who has surprised you by his willingness to come on this expedition. You have with you your eldest son Snorri, two younger sons, Ari and Knut, and a band of trusted retainers.

CHARACTER: You are Eirik Helgasson, of Vessing in the Trondelag, neighbour to Asgrim Ulfsson, and in love with his kidnapped daughter Gudrun. You dislike the old man, but will help him as far as rescuing Gudrun, to whom you are secretly betrothed. You want him to survive the journey, but don't feel that way about his sons, Snorri, Ari and Knut. If you marry into this family, you'd prefer a few less brothers-in-law! You have with you your brother Sturla and most of your friends, cousins and farmhands.

THE DWELLERS ON THE SAND SPIT

A LARGE, ROWDY AND PROBABLY SOMEWHAT SMELLY CONVENTION-STYLE GAME BASED ON *EYRBYGGJA SAGA*

This game is a free-form scramble through the plots and sub-plots of Eyrbyggja Saga, an endearingly violent tale of neighbourly dislike and dastardly double-dealing in the western district of Iceland known as Snaefellsness. Eyrbyggja Saga is less convoluted than some stories, focussing closely on one particular district, but moves through several generations. To make the saga viable as a game, many episodes have been compressed, simplified and generally mix 'n' matched into the initial briefings to permit them all to appear more or less simultaneously. All the characters, with the exception of the endearingly hospitable Gudrun and her dad, are from the saga (I just made them up when I found a female figure of pronounced expectancy - thanks *Irregular Miniatures*) though they might not appear together in the saga, while other characters in Eyrbyggja Saga are left out completely.

WHAT'S GOING ON:

Snorri the Priest is the leading chieftain in Alptafjord (Swan Fjord). He is a crafty and not wholly likeable character. His urge to build his own prestige and dominate the region is what drives the saga. He has friends and enemies, all with hopes and dreams (together with nefarious schemes and the odd bit of sorcery) of their own. Prospective umpires should read the briefings and see how it is laid out for future conflicts. There are several sub-plots. Vermund has two berserkers in his retinue who are a lot more trouble than he bargained, while the pregnant Gudrun is out to find someone to support her child; Katla the mysterious Hebridean woman and her son have their own goals, while Eric the Red and son make a showing, with important and upset foes in hot pursuit. The quarrelsome Thorleif Kimbi has a lot to say, while Bjorn the Viking pursues the course of true love with Snorri's widowed sister. You can add some hauntings too, if it helps keep things boiling along. All in all the kind of brew that a writer of soap operas would kill for, with no need for those dodgy plotlines involving amnesia and evil twins ---

THE TERRAIN:

It is unlikely that anyone could make an exact model featuring all the areas, homesteads etc that appear in the saga on a single table. I didn't try. I used a 10' by 6' table, covered with a 'sea' cloth, with long edge pieces representing coastline on either side of the fjord, and a large number of islands and promontories

extending into the sea. I don't think it much matters as to exact geography, as long as several key features appear:

Snorri's farm; I put this on a large island in the centre, quite inaccurately.

Steinthor's farm; I put this on a coastal piece at a corner, again, inaccurately.

The Holy Island, where the assembly is held, and it isn't allowed to fight or relieve oneself (you have to go to the offshore rocks known as 'dirt skerries')

Katla's home of Holt may be shown as a hovel or similar low-rent dwelling - I had her live in a cave on one of the islands (very nice too).

The other places mentioned can be 'off board', with characters and their following appearing at set places on the edge of the board. An alternative would be to employ significantly underscale models of buildings in order to show more 'farms' on the table.

THE SIDES:

It may be hard to get together all the characters listed. Most important are Snorri, Steinthor, Thorleif, Styr and Bjorn. If I were to leave out a sub-plot, it would be the Eric the Red element, which is peripheral to the saga itself, but worthy of a game in itself. An active umpire with role-playing skills can play the lesser characters sufficiently to add colour and spectacle to a game with only the major characters.

SCENARIO RULES:

The time span in this game is very compressed, with some turns being fairly long (days, weeks, months) and others just long enough to beat somebody about the head with an axe. Indeed, in a single turn you might have some players making lengthy, time-consuming actions while others are having a wild five seconds with an armed and angry foeman. Try not to worry about this. The saga runs for decades, after all, with gaps here and there of years and years.

Players move in order of current Reputation Points, the lowest going first through the sequence. However, at any time a player who has not 'gone' yet may choose to take his turn early, either immediately following the card currently drawn or immediately prior, so as to pre-empt somebody's turn. This uses up his turn. You can't pre-empt someone else's pre-empt. Umpires may need to keep close control over this mechanism to prevent chaos breaking out completely. RP levels will change throughout the game, so going through the numbers verbally each turn may be necessary to keep players on track.

DIPLOMACY isn't really the word I want, but between each turn cycle I allow all players who are close to one another on the board to have a few minutes to plot, plan and otherwise scheme things out. Keep this down to about five minutes or you'll never finish the game.

MOVEMENT is greater in this game; instead of moving 2 or 3 D6 x inches, use multiples of 6" instead (e.g. a roll of '9' = 4'6" move) . Umpire can revert to normal movement for tactical moves when fighting breaks out. When a character is moving with others, the whole group moves on the turn of the character with the highest reputation.

REPUTATION POINTS go up and down in this game quite freely, and should be given by the umpire - with player input - for things that go well and badly, for following the code of proper Norse behaviour or not, for following your own briefing correctly, for pithy jests at the right time and, well, you get the idea.

TREASURE implies the use of a minimalist financial system of Silver Pieces, though most wealth will be in the form of other kinds of property (farms, livestock, weapons and jewels) rather than actual cash, which is rare in these parts. Everyone would like to get richer. I use Hershey's kisses - small chocolate morsels - of differing types as 'coinage', and players can eat their booty during the game if they so wish. They keep it at the end. What they want to avoid is having to pay out large sums in compensation for injuries and deaths inflicted by themselves or their friends and relatives (this part is important). This is what tends to prevent disputes from turning into mass murder at every opportunity. Have a look at the section on Icelandic Law.

THE ASSEMBLY is held annually on the Holy Island, towards the end of the game, to resolve all disputes, lawsuits and other matters pertaining to the Alptafjord community. No violence is allowed on the island (there are signs posted to that effect) and voting is based on the democratic principle of most important people's votes count more than poor folks. Your RPs are your voting score, so a couple of bigshots can outvote a bunch of honest yeomen. Sorry about that.

GHOSTS AND TROLLS can be brought in by the umpire, with proper foreshadowing. They exist singly, at night, and should restrict themselves to a particular area of the board. Use sparingly.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW:

This game is pretty wild when it gets going, and the umpire's role is more about keeping it headed in the right general direction rather than administering the rules, which are fairly minimal. The tendency is for the turn sequence to be thrown out by 'pre-empting', and for combats to draw in as many players as possible. When fights break out it may be a good idea to let players who aren't engaged with their characters to control the lesser combatants rather than sit

around waiting for the end of the fight - or, alternatively, a second umpire can control the fight while others take their turns. Experienced players can run the combat themselves. Diplomacy rounds always take longer than you'd think ("let me have a quick word with Vermund, just a moment ---) so be strict on the players.

I'm sure there's something else, but you can make things up just as well as I can ----

*" We have men to deal with who are rather overbearing.'
'Let them pay for their bluster;, he said, 'if they cannot control it'"*

Grettir's saga

BRIEFINGS

CHARACTER: Snorri Thorgrimsson 'the Priest', a chieftain. A lawyer and man of affairs rather than a slow-witted warrior. Single, 29. Has a sister, Thurid, who has a child by Bjorn Asbrandsson, rather than by her late legal husband - a very discreditable thing. You can say for certain you are not the father of Gudrun's baby, thank Thor. You are a priest of Thor, not that you take religion seriously; it's a political thing. Can muster 5-10 men.

OBJECTIVES: You wish to increase your wealth and prestige without doing anything stupid, like getting killed.

OBLIGATIONS: You must give advice, either good or bad, to anyone you can. The advice must be to your own advantage, if not theirs.

FRIENDS: Thorleif Kimbi. Thorgest the Old, who is in pursuit of that fool Erik the Red, who killed his sons. No real friends, though.

FOES: Anyone who won't cooperate with your wishes. Bjorn, if he won't stay away from Thurid.

REPUTATION PTS: 20

TREASURE: 100 silver pieces.

CHARACTER: Thorleif Kimbi, a farmer in Alptafjord, known as an impulsive man known to start fights and keep grudges. Dresses in a flashy style. Brothers are Thorodd, Snorri, Thorfinn, Thormod, foster brother Freystein Bofi (5 men). You might be father to that little slut Gudrun's brat, damn them both.

OBJECTIVES: To get revenge on Bjorn and his brother Arinbjorn for your being hit with a porridge kettle some years ago. To get revenge on Steinthor for turning you down as husband to Steinthor's sister Helga.

OBLIGATIONS: To be a loudmouth and stir up Snorri and others to acts of violence.

FRIENDS: Snorri (blood brother)

FOES. Bjorn and Arinbjorn, Steinthor of Eyr.

REPUTATION PTS: 9

TREASURE: 50 Silver pieces.

CHARACTER: Steinthor Thorlaksson of Eyr, a wealthy and much respected farmer, 28, single. 3 brothers (Thormod, Bergthor, Thord Blig) and 2-4 other men. Seen in the district as the only man at all able to contest with Snorri. You are held to be one of the best fighters in Iceland. You turned down Thorleif Kimbi when he asked for your sister Helga's hand in marriage, because he is a buffoon.

OBJECTIVES: Add to your reputation and wealth - ideally to replace Snorri as chieftain if chance arises.

OBLIGATIONS: To support friends and family in an honourable way.

FRIENDS: Bjorn & Aribjorn

FOES: Thorleif Kimbi & his brothers.

REPUTATION PTS: 16

TREASURE: 100 silver pieces

CHARACTER: Styr of Hraun AKA Killer-Styr, a wealthy farmer, 39, married to Gudny, daughter Asdis, 18 and eligible. Two sons (Hall and Thorstein) and 3-5 other men_Something of a bully in the past, killing several men without paying compensation. often arguing with your brother Vermund the Slender about stupid things.

OBJECTIVES: To prove that you are a powerful man who bows down to no man.

OBLIGATIONS: To kill at least one man, and to pay no compensation.

FRIENDS: Erik the Red

FOES: Anyone who gets in your way.

REPUTATION PTS: 14

TREASURE: 80 silver pieces

CHARACTER: Vermund the Slender, a wealthy farmer, 34, younger brother to Styr of Hraun. You do not always see eye to eye with your bullying brother, and on a trip to Norway you acquired the services of two Swedish berserkers, great fighters, which seemed like a good way of building up your image as an important man. You regret this, as they constantly demand gifts, beer, food etc and cause fights. They are free men, but you have promised them anything they want, and, well --- oh, and you might be the father of that slattern Gudrun's unborn child, another stupid indiscretion due to too much ale and a trusting character --

OBJECTIVES: To get rid of the berserks without resorting to violence - after all, they are twice your size ! To get along with your brother as an equal.

OBLIGATIONS: To behave honourably at all times. To act as arbitrator in disputes.

FRIENDS: Everyone likes Vermund.

FOES: None, except for older brother Styr sometimes ---

REPUTATION PTS: 12

TREASURE: 60 silver pieces

CHARACTER: Halli and Leiknir, berserkers. Tough, powerful Swedes whose tremendous skill as warriors is somewhat overset by really appalling behaviour most of the time. What you demand, you expect to get! You are disgusted by the feeble Vermund and this boring country. You can't imagine why you agreed to come with him.

OBJECTIVES: To bully your way around. To have boisterous fun. Halli has seen Vermund's niece Asdis - ooh baby baby come to nice Swedish berserker boy ---

OBLIGATIONS: To behave boorishly whenever possible.

FRIENDS: Each other.

FOES: Everyone else, really.

REPUTATION PTS: 8

TREASURE: 25 silver pieces value in weapons etc. A lot of beer.

CHARACTER: Erik the Red. Settler from Norway, outlawed for some killings, now looking at the same punishment here in Iceland - no sense of humour, these farmers. You need to provision your ship before heading off to an unknown land in the west, and your friend Styr will help, no doubt. You need to meet your son Leif with pack horses before your enemy, Thorgest the Old., catches up with you. You wish you hadn't killed quite so many of his sons - that was rash! You have 6 men, Leif has 4.

OBJECTIVES: to meet Leif, get 50 silver pieces worth of provisions, and head off to the west.

OBLIGATIONS: To argue pointlessly with at least one character you don't even know.

FRIENDS: Styr, Thorleif Kimbi.

FOES: Thorgest the Old.

REPUTATION PTS: 15

TREASURE: 25 silver pieces cash, about 75 in ship, weapons etc.

CHARACTER: Leif Eriksson, son of newly outlawed (for the second time) Erik the Red. You are travelling across country with pack horses of goods to meet your father's ship in Alptafjord. You have 4 men.

OBJECTIVES: You need to evade the enemy, the great chieftain Thorgest the Old, who is anxious to kill Erik before he leaves Iceland.

OBLIGATIONS: You must be brave to a fault, but not quarrelsome.

FRIENDS: Styr of Hraun. Thorleif Kimbi.

FOES: Thorgest the Old.

REPUTATION PTS: 9

TREASURE: 5 silver pieces in cash, 50 in provisions.

CHARACTER: Thorgest the Old You are one of the greatest chieftains in Western Iceland, and have brought your band of 12-15 men in pursuit of the outlaw Erik the Red for the killing of your sons. You believe he intends to provision his ship and meet his son Leif at Alptafjord - you will find him there.

OBJECTIVES: To kill Erik, Leif and any man with them.

OBLIGATIONS: To avoid feuding with the lawful men of the region unless they support Erik with arms.

FRIENDS. Snorri the Priest, if you can trust him.

FOES: See above.

REPUTATION PTS: 18

TREASURE: 300 silver pieces at home, 50 with you on this expedition.

CHARACTER: Gudrun the Slutty, daughter of Vigfus Bjornsson. You are 17 and pregnant, either by Vermund the slender, Thorleif Kimbi or Odd Katlasson. Actually you can rule out Vermund, because he was, er, unable to participate, though he doesn't know this.

OBJECTIVES: To marry Vermund, or Thorleif, but not Odd, oh no. To get your father to calm down.

OBLIGATIONS: You have a loose tongue, and must tell at least one person the truth about the father of your child.

FRIENDS: You talk to Thurid, Snorri's sister, who is having an affair with Bjorn Asbrandsson.

FOES: Odd's mother, Katla, who is probably a witch.

REPUTATION PTS: 1 and falling --

TREASURE: One baby, due later in the game.

CHARACTER: Thurid Thorgrims -daughter, 27, widowed sister of Snorri the Priest. You have buried two husbands, but your only child is a son by your lover Bjorn Asbrandsson, a handsome viking.

OBJECTIVES: To carry on the relationship with Bjorn, despite Snorri's hostility.

OBLIGATIONS: To help young Gudrun, who is pregnant. She is regarded quite unfairly as a slattern, often by the men who took advantage of her.

FRIENDS: Bjorn, Gudrun

FOES: None

REPUTATION PTS: 10

TREASURE: 60 silver pieces, from your late husbands's estates.

CHARACTER: Bjorn Asbrandsson of Breidavik, a bold viking, great fighter. You are back in Iceland after a career as a warrior with the Jomsviking brotherhood in the Baltic. You have resumed a love affair with Snorri's sister Thurid, with whom you have a young son (never publicly acknowledged) . Snorri hates you for this. You and your brother Arinbjorn have an old quarrel with Thorleif Kimbi, all his fault, about a kettle of porridge years ago.

OBJECTIVES: To carry on the affair with Thurid. To get the better of Thorleif Kimbi, one way or another.

OBLIGATIONS: To protect Thurid and your son.

FRIENDS: Steinthor

FOES: Snorri, in a low key fashion. Thorleif Kimbi.

REPUTATION PTS: 15

TREASURE: 40 silver pieces.

CHARACTER: Vigfus Bjornsson, a free farmer, an argumentative man currently incensed by the fact that your 17 year old daughter Gudrun is pregnant by an unnamed man, and that her reputation and yours are being impugned. You need to resolve this. You have 3 men.

OBJECTIVES: To find out who the father is. To get Gudrun married off honourably, or get revenge on the father if he refuses to marry her,

OBLIGATIONS: To quarrel with at least one character.

FRIENDS: None

FOES: The unnamed father.

REPUTATION PTS: 4

TREASURE: 30 silver pieces.

CHARACTER: Odd Katlasson, 19 year old son of Katla of Holt. You are a shiftless, argumentative youth with no real skills or abilities. You may be the father of Gudrun's baby, though you won't readily admit this. Your mother will get you out of trouble. She's a witch. No, really.

OBJECTIVES: To cause trouble, just for the fun of doing so.

OBLIGATIONS: To quarrel with at least one character.

FRIENDS: None

FOES: None, yet.

REPUTATION PTS: 2

TREASURE: None

CHARACTER: Katla of Holt, a wise woman from the Hebrides, 'a fine-looking woman but not very popular'. You are a gifted witch, and can cause magic storms and fog, protect from weapons and make someone invisible. You have a son, Odd, who you will do anything for. You have noticed that there are some good-looking men in this district, and are working on a love potion ---

OBJECTIVES: To work your love spell. To get revenge on anyone who spurns you. To look after Odd, who gets into trouble on his own.

OBLIGATIONS: To keep your witchcraft secret.

FRIENDS: Odd

FOES: None

REPUTATION PTS: 5

TREASURE: 10 silver pieces

BUILDING YOUR OWN SCENARIOS

Think about the following few lines:

"In time, Eirik's thralls caused a landslide to crash down upon the farm of Valthjof at Valthjofsstadir, whereupon Valthjof's kinsman Eyjolf Saur killed the thralls --- for this Eirik killed Eyjolf Saur. He killed Holmgang-Hrafn too at Leikskalar. Gerstein and Odd of Jorvi, both kinsmen of Eyjolfs, took up his case, and Eirik was driven out of Haukadale."

The Saga of Eirik the Red

In this paragraph we have the bare bones of several dramatic events; a landslide, possibly deliberate, three killings in a cycle of reprisal, and a lawsuit in which Eric is either formally outlawed or made to leave home in a hurry. And that's all we know. Which means we can make up the rest, secure in the knowledge that nobody else knows any more. In this case we could make a separate small scenario from each of these events leading to Eirik's hurried departure from Haukadale. We have broad scope as regards numbers, terrain, everything ---

Here are some ideas for starting points for development:

> The classic 'raid' scenario. Obviously the whole idea of a Viking raid is to pillage an easy target (which does nothing for me as a game), but can be made more interesting by random events and the surprise arrival of enemy troops bent on revenge.

> Foraging or scouting parties move through unknown territory against possibly less skilled but determined locals who know the area. Perhaps the lead men get separated and attacked before the main body arrives.

> The enemy attack while our lads are portaging a ship between rivers. The Vikings must save the vessel if they are to have a future themselves.

- > Enemies set up a careful ambush against unwary Vikings.
- > A ship is wrecked on an unknown shore and the crew must fight or finesse it's way out.
- > A party of strange beings is found sheltering under an odd boat on the shore.
- > The Vikings attack a minor fort or hall, using typical low cunning. Time for a hall burning, perhaps?
- > A fight breaks out at a feast.
- > Enemies surprise the Vikings while asleep or drunk (shurely not --)
- > Neighbours argue over rights to a beached whale (food for weeks) in a time of famine.
- > A ship is blown off course and enters a bay that nobody recognizes.
- > A woman leaves her husband and her kinfolk demand he hand over her dowry and property.
- > Strangers come as unbidden guests to a hall, with the intent of murdering the host while he sleeps.