



Wayfarer's Song

Book One: Setting and Rules

Being a game of adventure set in the lands of Mithgerd

As described by Christopher Johnstone

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MythoSaga

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Part One: Introduction

He came to the wide valley to see with his own eyes the place of the last battle. The air was crisp, and smelled of spring, of melting earth, of new green sap. Standing on the ground where the blood of kings and queens feeds the summer grasses, he shuffled off his bearskin cloak. Naked to the waist, but for the daubs of ochre paint on his arms and chest, he breathed deep of the magic.

For there was magic here, and power. He spread his arms wide and took in the feel of it, and saw in his mind's eye that last terrible day, when gods and men fought and the earth shuddered. A ghostly swarm of wraiths played out for him their last battle: cries and agonies and deaths.

For he could see the unseen. For he was one of the last of the sorcerer-king's line, and the blood of god-magic ran in his veins as it did in the kings of old.

He lingered for a while among the ghostly dead, before leaving an offering of ochre and gold on the valley floor. Collecting his cloak he turned his back on the frozen north. Turned back to the valleys and summer-green woods of the south. For he had seen the gods of his forefather's fight and die. Had seen those whose names would roll forever on the tongues of men. Now he aspired to be as they had been. To be a god among men. To be remembered.

Think back through the roll of years. Past history, past legend, into myth, into a time when the peoples who will one day be legend now dwell among the fjords and misty mountains and snowy vales of the north. For this is a dark age of the unknown in northern Europe, an age lost to us, an age that came before all that is recorded in our histories. It is an age of lost realms, magic and kings, an age so distant that all that will come to us are a few fragmentary tales. Powerful sorcerer-kings walk the earth, wielding enchanted weapons of iron and bronze, and make for themselves legends that will become myths, that will in time become the sagas of the gods. It is the Age that the Norse will recall as the Ragnarok, when ice freezes the earth, a time when the world was rent by upheavals, and strange monsters still dwelled in the dark wilds. It is an age of myth.

What is Wayfarer's Song?

Wayfarer's Song is a role-playing (RPG) of mythos and magic. It is set in a lost age, ruled by forgotten kings who legend shall recall as gods. In the game you play characters who aspire to become 'gods' themselves, to become timeless, to be the rulers of their age. For if one should gather enough enchantment, if one should harvest enough magic, if one should become immortal, what then will men call make of you but a god?

Terminology

Player-Character: Each player plays the part of a single character in the game. These are termed player-characters to differentiate them from all other non-player characters.

Storyteller: The Storyteller is the only character without a personal character. Instead she plans adventures, and controls all the various non-player characters, natural elements, and act-of-god plot devices of a game.

Legalese

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Further Legalese Necessitated by Stupid People

Now repeat after me: I am not an elf; I cannot cast magic spells; there is in fact no such thing as magic; there are no fairies in the bottom of my garden; I do not have a unicorn in my room. This entire book is fantasy. It is a game, it is not real, it is a game, it is not real, it is a game etc.

The Concept

Wayfarer's Song is a role-playing game set in an imaginary mythic pre-history of northern Europe. Players create, and then take on the role of characters in this imaginary world. Characters in Wayfarer's Song are heroes, questors, and sorcerers who quest in search of renown, kingship and magic. As characters interact with the setting a narrative is created. Rules are employed to resolve how the narrative plays out.

Overseeing all of this is the Storyteller. The Storyteller is a player without a character. She plans exploits, adventures and rewards for the other players. She also plays the role of villains and allies, and is an adjudicator of the rules.

The Setting

The key to Wayfarer's Song setting is imagining that what are recalled in European myth as gods were actually mortal men, powerful kings and sorcerers, but men nonetheless. The myths we have are the corrupted recollections of lives of these godlike men in an age of magic. Players fill the role of these forgotten heroes.

Yet another fantasy RPG?

In many ways Wayfarer's Song is much like the many fantasy games available in stores and on the web. It has dwarves and elves, though they were included because the setting is loosely based on Saxon-Norse myth, rather than because dwarves and elves are 'fantasy'. It places a large importance on the race of a given character. It assumes that a group of players will adventure. It assumes combat will be an important part of the game. Character creation options take up large sections of the rules.

Wayfarer's Song, however, places more importance on legend making and narrative than a lot of games. It also has a strong element of dark, earthy magic, that is at once powerful and dangerous, beautiful and corrupting.

In Summary

On balance, I'd like to think Wayfarer's Song is worth a read-over. Maybe you'll play it. Maybe you'll simply find inspiration for your own homebrews. One thing that sets it apart is its mood. The game is heavily steeping in mythic, brooding dark magic. Power has a price in Wayfarer's Song. Magic is both alluring and dangerous. And fame, heroic renown, is more important to characters than a chest of gold could ever be.



Designer Notes

Wayfarer's Song is an amalgam of some of the better systems I have invented over the years melded into some ideas from other games I've liked. Personally, I like magical and quirky characters and I think this shows through in the game. I also dislike drawn out combat – another feature of the game is reasonably fast and easy combat.

The Setting

Why create yet another RPG set in a fantasy world? The most obvious and truest answer is simply that there are, to my knowledge, no fantasy worlds on the market that meets my particular tastes of the moment. So, what are those tastes and will they appeal to you?

Some points of design

- A game that is easy to pick up and play – medium rather than long term campaigning.
- A system for 'spell-casting' that reflects a dangerous, corrupting nature of magic.
- Quick and dirty combat system, placing playability above realism.
- An at least partly, novel approach to various system mechanics. In particular I wanted to reduce the system's reliance on numbers in favour of descriptive words.
- A system for testing skills that is quick and easy to use. Again playability ahead of realism.
- Character advancement based on a 'Task and Level' system.

Modular Game Design

Love them or hate them, (and I am somewhere in between), White Wolf did spur a renaissance in gaming in 1990s. One aspect of White Wolf games that I find interesting is their modular approach to worlds – in which there is a basic umbrella of rules, but the individual 'games' centring on vampires, werewolves, or mages provide different sub-rules for magic and skills. For White Wolf this was an organic process: as they created spin-offs from Vampire modules were created. With Wayfarer's Song I decided to try this approach, but in a more purposeful way, hopefully avoiding a mishmash of crossover problems. But why?

- A modular design highlights variation. Elves become less like humans with pointy ears.
- The approach gives a better feeling of a world filled with variety and strangeness.
- It allows me to tinker *ad nauseum*, without wrecking the core rules set. I love to tinker, but the problem is that I often adjust a game into oblivion. Modular game design allows me to tinker with elvish magic to my heart's content while everyone plays humans.

The upshot of this is that the core rules treat no one in particular as a player race. Character creation and race specific rules are found in the Kith-Books.

An introduction to the Rules

Wayfarer's Song uses rules to govern game-play. All RPGs use rules to some extent; some use more complicated rules, others rely on simpler rules. The number and complexity of rules you like to deal with in a game is very much a matter of taste. RPGs use rules to resolve situations that arise when two players may disagree on the outcome of actions.

What makes up a character?

Attributes

Wayfarer's Song uses four simple Attributes to measure a character's raw physical and mental abilities. These are Fortitude, Dexterity, Perception and Willpower.

Skills

Skills represent learned talents that not all characters might have. Wayfarer's Song uses a freeform system for skills, allowing players to invent and define their own.

Disciplines

Disciplines are used to represent magical talents, powers, and sorceries. Any rules pertaining to a given Discipline are always discussed in the text of the discipline.

Rules: A Test of Attribute

for player characters attributes are measured on a simple scale of 1 to 8. Most Tests of Attribute require only a simple roll-under Attribute rank on a d10. Thus if your character has a Fortitude of 6, you need to dice 6 or less to pass a simple Test of Fortitude.

Sometimes characters face more strenuous situations and a greater level of difficulty must be overcome. In this case cumulative roll-unders must be made. If you roll under the first attempt, you then roll again, and again, until you fail. The number of successes you score in a row determines your degree of success.

Very Easy	No successes needed
Average	One consecutive passes
Fairly Hard	Two consecutive passes
Very Hard	Three consecutive passes
Extremely Hard	Four consecutive passes
Phenomenally Hard	Five consecutive passes

Rules: A Test of Skill

A Test of Skill is made by rolling a single d10. You will always need to roll a value equal to, or less than, a given value for success. The number you need to roll under will depend upon the difficulty of the task being undertaken relative to how the skill of your character.

Skill Expertise and Difficulty are measured on the same scale. Thus you might possess a Rudimentary skill and attempt a task of Rudimentary difficulty. The higher the level of difficulty relative to your skill, the lower your chance of success.

Rank	Expertise
Rank 0	Unskilled
Rank 1	Rudimentary
Rank 2	Basic
Rank 3	Average
Rank 4	Fair
Rank 5	Advanced
Rank 6	Penultimate
Rank 7	Paramount

The following chart (also found on your character sheet) summarises this.

Action is	Success
Less Expert	10/10
Equal to Skill	8/10
More Expert by One Rank	6/10
More Expert by Two Ranks	4/10
More Expert by Three Ranks	2/10
More Expert by Fours Ranks	0/10

Following this chart, if your character has a skill at Basic he would: always succeed at **Unskilled** or **Rudimentary** actions. He would succeed at **Basic** 80% of the time, at **Average** 60% of the time, at **Fair** 40% of the time, at **Advanced** 20% of the time and could never hope to perform a **Penultimate** action.

Example

A character is trying to pick a lock. The Storyteller sets the difficulty at Fair. The Character has a Lock Pick skill of Basic. Fair is More Expert by Two Ranks above Basic. This gives a 4/10 chance of success. The Player rolls a 3 on a d10 and succeeds. Anything from 5 to 10 inclusive, would have been a fail.

Part Two: Setting

The spirit had plagued the small stone-encircled handful of huts all the long winter. Fourteen sheep were missing. And two children. It took the form of a wolf, though its eyes glowed like moonlight and its fur was silver as snow. When the hunters came they did not ask for carved sea-ivory, or gold or salt as some would. They wanted only the flesh and blood of the wolf-spirit.

As he stood in the cold the shepherd wondered what the hunters wanted with the spirit corpse. Abut a shepherd is a simple man and a shepherd should not ask such questions. So he stood by the door of his hut with a spear, and waited and guarded his wife and children. He could hear the small sound of his youngest son sobbing, and could smell the subtle aroma of lamb turning on the spit. He was hungry, but there was no telling if the hunters would do as they had promised. And if they failed the wolf-spirit would be crazed with wrath. Of that he was sure. It was always the way with the wild spirits. Always vengeful. Always full of hate for anything that went on two legs. He wondered what the race of men must have done so long in years past to deserve such hate.

Mithgred, in the Third Age, is a land in which the kindred of men are slowly, irrevocably dying. There is no sense to the seasons any longer. Winter lasts without end. Snowy wastes stretch not only across the north, but the south too and vast withered heaths mar once fertile lands. Great grinding rivers of ice churn out of the mountains, and crush all life out of the soil. What forests remain are dark places, haunted, pine-thick, and heavy with snows. The beasts have turned feral, huge, and violent, as if they sense that the age of the mastery of man is nearing an end.

The Lands of Ragar Nathrok

To the far north stretch vast wastes of snow, cut by glacial rivers of grinding ice. These are the spirit realms, where the half dead queen of dead souls and evil spirits dwells. This land is sometimes called after the name of the snow queen, Himinglaeva, though also called the Wastes of Niflar, or simple the Great Ice.

South of the Great Ice stretches a land of blackened soils, straggly, burnt remnants of forests and still smouldering fires. This is the remains of the great spell of fire that drove back Himinglaeva and her winter night creatures. It is called the wastes of Muspellar by men, which means simply the end of the world. Separating the blackened fiery wastes from the lands of men is the pass of Ragar Nathrok where the sorcerer kings of the last age gave their lives to force the queen of the winter to retreat.

Spreading south from the Muspellar are lands of mountains, deep iron-black forests, rugged coasts lines, and snowy braes and heaths. These are lands in which the mortal folk, the aelfan, duergar and ettin alike eke out a meagre living.

To the far south the lands grow not less cold, but dryer and less hospitable. Strange tribes of men dwell there, with powerful magics, and no love for strangers. Some say the gods of old still dwell in the southern lands, or that dragons rules over men, or the dead walk, or that men are not bounded by form, and may go as beasts and birds as they please. But none know for sure how true these tales may be.

The Folk of Mithgred

Wayfarer's Song presents four player races: Men, Aelfan (elves), Duergar (dwarfs) and Ettin (giants). Each player race has a separate 'kithbook', which details culture, magic, beliefs and politics as well as character creation. You will need both the core rules and at least one kithbook to play Wayfarer's Song.

Flesh of Clay: Mortal Men

Of all the peoples of this age, the men of mortal blood and bone are those most numerous and the most powerful. It is these folk, the fiery and the doomed to die, who fill up the ranks of heroes, swell the roll of sorcerers and through force of arms and strength of purpose, reshape the world to their ends. These are the makers of kingdoms, the builders of towns and high hillforts, of towers tall and ships proud. The slayers of gods.

Creed

The Mortal Men are the most varied and widely scattered of any of the races of the Mithgred. Yet there are ties which bind them as one in ways that no other race is bound. Mortal Men cherish their families and clans above almost all else. They have a love for life that is unmatched in the hearts of other races and put a value on such

things as the acts of kindness, charity or mercy that are against the very nature of Aelfan, and Duergar and Ettin.



Appearance

Mortal men are the first stock of intelligent living creatures from which all other folk, Aelfan, Duergar, Ettin are descended. They are tall, yet not so slender or fragile as the Aelfan Folk, sturdy yet not so stony-fleshed as Ettin.

Views

Aelfan Folk: Such beauty is not for mortal eyes. Their songs will drift over the dewy hills and snare away the youngest maids and proudest thanes to wander forever in their realms.

Duergar: Trade with the Duergar at your peril - their arts are subtle, cunning and treacherous.

Enchanted Blood : Aelfan Folk

The Aelfen Folk are the eerie, beautiful, rulers of deep enchanted realms – not divine but nonetheless immortal. The Aelfan first appeared on Mithgerd during the god-slayer wars. Each of the progenitors of the folk was reborn and reshaped as a consequence of drinking the blood of too many gods. As a result the Aelfan are as much spirit as flesh, and have souls thick with enchantment. They are probably the most

powerful living reminder of the magic of the gods of old.

Aelfan realms are dangerous places, and the magic of the Aelfan Folk is different to mortal sorcery, it is more living, more brooding and more fluid. It gathers around the Aelfan where they live, transforming the forest and creatures within. Their realms need no walls, for those allowed to pass the borders find their way along paths that seem to appear; while those who are unwanted stumble and find at every turn a wall of thorns, or a snow-white pack of wolves.



Creed

The Aelfan are regal creatures and beings who at best may be carefree and capricious and at worst may show little empathy for either the pain or suffering of others. They know only the indulgent sort of emotions, and see no perfection in the world more convincing than their own.

Appearance

To the casual eye one word describes the Aelfan Folk: beautiful. Their hair is shimmering gold, their eyes a tempting silver lure, their lithe bodies full of grace that hints at power. But all is not as it seems. The Aelfan are creatures of illusion, and the wrack of sorcery, in truth, has broken, and malformed this folk. The beauty of the Aelfan folk is not even skin deep - it illusions the air about them.

Views

Duergar: Who ever took a Duergar seriously? He who craves what the Duergar craft.

Mortal Men: Theirs is a quick, fiery life, filled with pride, passion and pain. They are all commoners to us be they wearing crowns or rags.

The Ugsome Ones: Duergar

Breed from the blood of men to serve the gods as craftsmen, Duergar short, stocky, ugly and hunchbacked, the Duergar are those who will never be beautiful and yet lust after beauty in every shape and form. Most famed as traders, merchants, smiths and tinkers, there remain other aspects to the secretive, dark-dwelling folk.



Their clans have rich and varied traditions from poisonous and death-dealing arts to ancient and mysterious lores. But their chief fame of the

Duergar will ever remain those relics of great craft and magic which take shape under their hammers. No other craft was ever sought by the Gods of Old, who prized Duergar-workmanship even above their own.

Creed

The mores of Duergar vary from clan to clan but always tend towards selfishness: some are peaceable - if coin-hungry craftsmen and farmers, other are violent, outright greedy, cunning and lustful in every sense of the word. Duergar love the beauty that takes shape in their hands far more than the beauty of living things.

Appearance

There are numerous clans of Duergar in the realm of Wayfarer's Song but to humans they all look very much alike: short, hunchbacked, ugly, with skin blackened by the forge.

Views

Aelfan: Never believe the words of Aelfan folk for they will lure you away with illusory music and make you their slave. I thank my ancestors that Duergar blood is thick and slow to quicken - the Aelfan charms have less power over me.

Mortal Men: Tall, proud, full of the vigour and the bravado of a young, young race. In them is the last spark of the Gods of Old, but like those gods men are bickering, greedy, sometimes hateful, and often foolish.

The Magic of Mithgerd

Their leader, the chief among them, the most powerful of sorcerers, their king, lay dead upon a bower of straw. The smell of tar and blood and peat smoke filled up the cramped air of the long hall. It had been an assassin's blade that took him away. Treachery. And revenge was demanded - but first there was the matter of the ritual. While some wailed with grief and anger, the solid of heart took his body, washed it, wrapped it in sheepskin, and cleanly cut away his head, catching every last drop of his blood in a copper cauldron. The head they placed on his chest, and then each took up a place in a circle about the body. Mead was poured into the cauldron and swirled until it was crimson. Each man spat once into the broth. The first to take his drink shuddered as he gulped greedily at the blood. As he passed the cauldron to the next of the kinsmen, an inner fire burned in his eyes, and flames flickered about his body. The magic of the dead sorcerer-chief was already seeping into the drinker's flesh. Each waited their turn with fearful anticipation, watching each drinker with a keen eye. Who could guess what magic would be awakened in the heart of each who drunk of the sorcerous blood?

Magic is a powerful, peculiar and almost living element in the world of Wayfarer's Song. With a force of an almost intelligent purpose, it can inhabit both places and objects and people. There are rank fens into which dark magic has seeped to make the beasts that dwell there cunning and the waters poisonous. There are swords inhabited by ancient powerful magic, harps that sing enchantments, rings of wonders and charms. Sorcerers whose blood runs thick with the magic stolen from the gods of old.

Magic exists as an almost sentient yet invisible force. It may infest a place, a person or a thing. It may pass into a bloodline or enchant an entire race of beings until they are as much creatures of magic as they are beings of flesh and blood.

Enchantment

Magic may infect people, places and things. Enchanted places are rich with magic and mystery, and among the most powerful and least understood expressions of magic in the world. Enchanted relics can come about through chance, but may also be crafted. The finest craftsmen of enchanted relics are the Duerger who dwell in the deep places of the earth. Enchanted people are most often termed sorcerers.

Laws of Magic

- 1 Magic answers need. Magic will seldom allow itself to be woven into trivial or work-a-day charms.
- 2 Magic will taint and infect. A wolf living in an aelfan forest will learn a little magic of its own in time. A dark spell cast in a cavern will taint that cave forever with sleepless malice. Spells may linger in a place long after the sorcerer himself has vanished from the world, and the magic will affect things and people dwelling nearby.
- 3 Magic has intent. A spell cast with malignant intent is born of dark and murderous thoughts. Enchantments intended to heal are born of cathartic and nurturing magic.
- 4 Magic is personal. Any use of magic will carry with it a sense of the sorcerer or being that invoked the charm. A person with the second-sight will recognise a spell by its pattern and may hear and echo of the voice and the will of the sorcerer in the charm.
- 5 Magic is natural. It will allow a sorcerer to command the physical, the mental, and the spiritual: to change, protect, harm and heal, but it will not allow for a sorcerer to create something out of nothing, or to do anything that violates the basic nature of the world.

Sorcerers

Sorcerers are those people who have become enchanted, and gained powers as a result. The sorcery of Wayfarer's Song is of an earthy sort. In mood and power and effect it is highly naturalistic. Sorcerers receive their power from the blood of gods who were born out of the nature of the world.

Because of the alluring nature of magic in Wayfarer's Song sorcerers will always have an uncanny glamour, an appeal to those people they meet who are without magic of their own. Unless otherwise stated Sorcerers always count as creatures of least enchantment. Thus a sorceress may find she develops - perhaps unwanted - command over the very least willed of people or creatures through prolonged contact.

Corruption

Magic is changeful. It cannot dwell long in a person, place or object without eventually working changes upon the physical state of its vessel. Enchanted forests become uncanny, twisting places full of weird lights and strange sounds. Enchanted blades will gleam, perhaps even change colour, glow or hum over time.

For players the most important effect of the Corrupting effects of magic is that it will have on their characters. Sorcerers are as subject to corruption as any other thing, although they may use their own personal resolve and willpower to try and resist the changes.

Soulburn

Channelling magic through a frail body has its risks. Magic has a way of working itself into the blood and Sorcerers who work long with it slowly become tainted by their own charms.

The more a Sorcerer relies on spells, the more magic builds up in his blood. The more magical energy builds up in a Sorcerer's body the greater the chance that the magic will take on a life of its own and erupt out of the Sorcerer leaving a Taint in its wake.

This effect is called Soulburn, and its effects vary depending upon the type of magical energy that is being channelled. Healing and protective magic tends to do little damage to the caster. Magic meant to neither hurt nor heal is of a middling sort and only sometimes becomes destructive. Magic channelled to destroy causes the worst *Soulburn* and can leave a Sorcerer bloodied and ruined.

Places of Enchantment

She waited in the glade day in and day out. Mist entwined her form, and spirits, little more than rude, sprites and elementals danced about her. She waited there with her sword across her knees, in the glade of magic. Waiting. For from the great tree of the glade hung the heads of sixteen challengers. Those who had sought to take the mastery of the glade from her, as she had taken it from the warrior-shaman before her. From those who came seeking answers to questions she took but meat and bread and gold. From those who came seeking power she took heads.

A shadow fell into the glade. A young man stepped into the bars of golden light and shadow that spread through the trees. He was young, though already stitched with the scars of a hard life. Over his shoulders he wore the pelt of a stag as a cloak, and its scoured skull as a helm. As he drew a great iron axe, she stood, and nodded to him and with her sword poised she waited. There were still many more branches on the sacral tree.

Scattered across the mortal earth are many places where sorcery and beliefs have seeped into the very soil and air creating powerful inherent magic. Those who know the proper rituals and observances are able to tap into these age-old stores of magic, and as such those of beneficial power they are often jealously guarded by a order of sorcerers, a clan or warlord.

All Enchanted places possess strange and magical powers, and are often attended by invisible spirits - elementals. Many Enchanted places display powers to extract revenge for insults or trespasses. Their powers are mostly associated with the elements: storms, rains and floods.

Enchanted places will tend either expel unwanted visitors or entrap them and make them a part of the enchantment. When working to repel, an enchanted place is likely to use natural powers. Storms, flash floods, mists, fogs, landslides and avalanches are some of the potential dangers that an enchanted place may use to waylay the unwanted. More dangerous is the enchanted place that wants to claim a soul, rather than repel it. Such a place may use gross physical barriers to herd a being deeper into its heart, but will have also let bleed from the earth dark phantoms, golden lures, taunting airy voices, tranquil dozing airs, and fearful nightmarish visions.

Guardians

Typically a place of enchantment will ensnare, either willingly or unwillingly one or more guardians. These guardians gain enchanted powers particular to their place of enchantment as long as they remain in the favour of the magic. By leaving the area of enchantment a guardian loses these powers. If a challenger approaches whom the enchantment deems more worthy of

power, then it may well withdraw its magic from the guardian already present.

Typical powers of a guardian might include the ability to immediately or near immediately heal any injury, the power to conjure illusions, or command the elementals that are attracted to enchanted places. In some rare instances the enchantment may taint the guardian, changing mortal flesh into some weird amalgam of human, and element or animal.

Appeasement

When visiting the place of enchantment for the first time it is a common belief that a person should perform a ritual of appeasement. This usually involved leaving an offering of green leaves, food, ale or similar. In the case of the enchanted waters an offering is thrown into the water.

Although it is not necessary to repeat the appeasement those who err on the side of caution do so. The result of this is that groves surrounding Enchanted objects that are passed often become denuded of foliage.

Guardian Stones

Erected long ago, single standing stones were placed in sites of importance to watch over a fallen fortress or temple. These stones however still have attached to them powerful spirits - often the wraith of a sacrificial victim cursed to be forever a guardian awaiting the call of a master. The rituals to summon and command the guardians chained to these remote stones are jealously kept secrets and a priesthood or clan lucky enough to know this lore is often considered above insulting by virtue of their power to exact terrible revenge through a deathly servant.

Healing Waters

Holy wells, streams, and springs are well known, and much visited sites of pilgrimage for the ill and unwell. Such places often have attendant priests who know the appropriate rituals with which to perform while bathing the ailed parts of the body in healing waters.

Sacral Forges

In remote rocky places there are many ancient caves in which long ago, first tin, then bronze then iron was smelted under the eye of patron gods and spirits. These forges have acquired such a special and potent magic that now any tool or weapon made within them gathers a little blessed magic of its own.

Shrines

There are many hallowed shrines, often in places of natural beauty, hollows, waterfalls, deep grottos set in amongst the hills, fields and mountains. A given shrine is usually associated with a particular power that resides in a shrine. A shrine dedicated to fertility may allow visitors to undergo a ritual that will guarantee a child. A

shrine dedicated to plenty may be associated with rituals that appeal for a good harvest. A shrine dedicated to fortune may be attended by shamans who are able to foretell the future by certain signs and rituals.

Stone Circles

Even in the mythic age of Wayfarer's Song the builders of the ruinous, weathered old stone circles are a forgotten people from a forsaken age. Stone Circles are associated with the oldest dead many are haunted by guardian spirits. Great magic has long been worked in within these ancient and monumental circles and anyone entering into a circle gains a temporary +1 rank to all disciplines.

Witness Stones

There are certain stones often richly decorated that are associated with either a spirit or the power to exact revenge for a false oath sworn in their presence. Some of these stones are used in courts, others as the place for marriage vows or the ordaining vows of kings or shamans.

Enchanted Relics

The dull and distant thud of an axe biting wood reassured him that his father was well away from the cottage. So, taking careful note of how the wools and furs in the chest were arranged, he drew them out one by one. At the base of the chest it lay dreaming. Its haft of sea-ivory gleamed white, its blade was inlaid with a swirl of red and gold ribbons. As he stroked the axe with his fingers he wondered why his father never took it from the chest. Never showed it to friends, or kinsmen.

There were times when it seemed his father would glance furtively at the chest, as if he had heard something coming from the wood. Was he afraid of the axe?

But the boy knew better. He heard something deep and ancient reverberate from the steel, and imagined himself a hero with this proud weapon. He knew the depth of the wyrde woven for this axe. He knew one day it would be his, and all would know his name, and fear the axe of red and gold.

Relics can gather magic about them through any number of ways. An object left too long in a place rich with magic will sop up some of the enchantment itself. Likewise an object used to work great sorrow, or associated with heroic deeds, or feats of wonder may acquire a little of the magic of those intangible things. Relic can also be crafted through the crafter working a little of the magic of their own love, lust, hate or anger into the object.

Relics become more powerful the more connected to the magic the wielder of the relic is. This is represented in the game by ranks of power, that increase as the wielder uses the relic or discovers more about it.

The History of Lost Ages

They say it was a petty thief, a craven rag-picker, who snuck up to the lair in the mountains and stole a bauble from the dragon's heap of ill-gotten gold.

Was it all for the sake of one trinket that a rain of fire came to her land? Villages were burnt to husks. Men, woman, sheep, and dogs, now blackened, stinking corpses. So now she came to the lair. For she was the queen of her tribe, and this was her duty.

It lay sprawled in a long coil of scales, and spines and wings about the haggard boulders of the earth. One great amber eye watched her as she drew a short bronze sword, and readied a crude shield. It was heavy, covered with a sheet of iron for the fire. Smoke drifted like the ghosts of the slain from its nostrils. It snorted once, then raised a great horned head back, and fixed her with both those deep, gold eyes. Brandishing the sword sweep she advanced, with sorcery whispering on her tongue. She would eat its heart when this was done. For everyone knew there was sorcery in the hearts of dragons...

The First Age

So it is said in the lore of the tribes of the north, in times past there were many gods. Gods of air and wind, of earth and wood, of river and sea, and all walked the earth as masters over the lesser spirits.

But there were others in the world, birds, and beasts... and men. For a long age the gods did not deign to notice ugly, clumsy mortal man, least beautiful of all animals. But there came a day when man learned to carve stone, and tame fire, and make for himself weapons of iron. The gods wondered at the new strength of this beast, and became afraid, for gods dwelled in beautiful, but fragile bodies. To protect themselves from men they wrought new flesh out of the earth, sky, air, and water, and then went amongst the mortals.

'We are your masters,' said the gods, 'submit, and let us rule over you.'

And the men were afraid, for the gods had teeth of ice, and eyes of emerald, and hair of sea-form. So they bowed to the gods, and the gods were the first kings and queens of Mithgerd.

But they were not kind rulers.

Men became their playthings. Their servants. Their slaves. Many they corrupted and tortured into new forms, to better please their whims.

The Second Age

There came a day when an old man appeared out of the great forest of the north, and each village he came to the folk were afraid of him. For though he walked like a man, and wore the flesh of a man, and spoke as mortals speak, he had many lesser spirits bound to him by invisible chains, his beard was like frost, and his eye glowed with power.

Finally, at one village, a young boy went out to meet him, and said to the stranger 'who art thou?'

'I am Imsenir.'

'Art thou man or god?'

'I am both.'

'How can that be?' said the boy.

In the mountains I found a goddess asleep by a lake. Before she awoke I took my knife of iron and slit her throat. It is the custom of my people to drink the blood of our slain foes. That I did. And when I did I knew all the secrets of the gods. Spell sought spell after spell in me. Wisdom sought wisdom after wisdom in me. Follow me, O' men of mortal flesh. Follow me, for the gods are cruel, and we will overthrow them. We will be free. And once their blood is drunk, you too shall be gods.'

Thus it was that the first war swept over the lands of Mithgerd. Great towns, and fortresses were devoured by fire. And the gods were smote down, and gutted, and their blood drunk. It was thus, the first sorcerers were born, and to this day, those descended from the blood-drinkers have the magic of dead gods in their veins.

For a long age sorcerer kings and queens ruled Mithgerd. Races and clans split asunder, some went to the seas, others to the forests, others to the hills, and lived in lands they loved best. In hills, and woods and seas they rejoiced, and sang songs of the last god who was slain, and whose blood was greedily drunk by the last progenitors of the bloodlines of sorcery.

But they were wrong. There was left one goddess. One who had never loved those creatures that went on two feet, and chattered, and dug up the earth, and hewed down the trees. One who had never sought to use mortal men as servants. She dwelled alone in the wastes of the north, in lands too cold for humankind, in a fortress wrought of ice as hard as stone. And she

shed bitter tears over the murder of her brothers and sisters. And as the age passed she hated mortals all the more.

The Third Age

Her name in the tongue of men is Himinglaeva, and they call her also the Sorceress of the North, and the Snow Queen, though she is no mortal woman. Himinglaeva dwelled long centuries in her halls of frost, shedding tears, and bitter with hate for all mortals. Over the long passing of years she made the creatures of her arctic realm into guards against mortal trespassers. Those mortals who she could capture alive she took and tortured and the mingled their blood with lesser spirits and made for herself a throng of warriors and servants, that were at once alive and dead. Sages and storytellers began to say that it was to the north than the souls of wicked men fled when they died. And perhaps they were right, for strange, evil wraiths also dwelled in her halls.

The north became a haunted land, a place no man lived. Rivers of ice groaned out of the Snow Queen's realm, destroying and grinding all. For a time she was content to be alone. But she never forgot the deaths of her brothers and sisters. Never forgave. There came a day when the pain and the memory became too great, the thirst for vengeance too strong, and she set her eyes south. To the lands of men.

When Himinglaeva came out of the north she brought with her not just an army, but also the eternal winter of the north. Snows fell heavy on the fields, ice encrusted mill wheels, great rivers turned muddy and frozen. A winter as like no other, a winter that was unending, an age of ice befell the earth.

And then her army came.

Land after land fell to the onslaught of the Sorceress of the North. None were left alive in the swath of her revenge. Villages were blasted by blizzard, and ground by ice. Whole armies fell to their knees and froze, and were torn limb from limb by spirits. The old kingdoms were broken. The children of the sorcerer-kings were scattered and hidden by desperate kin.

When a last war-pact of mortal men, a ragtag army of desperates, led by the sorcerer-king Othinnar marched, and met Himinglaeva at a pass in the high mountains there was little hope in their hearts. Arrows sung in the sky. Blades

cut and thrust. But the power of the Sorceress of the North was too great. Her will too strong. Her sorcery too cold.

It was when all hope was gone, when the lines broke, and the cruel creatures of the north were picking men off, one by one, that a horn sounded over the field of battle. Othinnar summoned to him all the power of his tribe, and the last friend of humanity in its hour of need. Fire. Fire that cooks flesh. Fire that warms the hands. Fire for the saga-tellers.

Fire swept the earth clean and black, and the Sorceress of the North was caught and half her flesh was seared away leaving her alive, but now both half-hideous, half-beautiful. Her creatures, the chained souls of the wicked dead, these were destroyed, but so too were many great kings and queens. When the spell was cast Othinnar put his life force into it, and his bones turned to stone, and his flesh to dust.

It is said that the great wall of fire blazed for a hundred days and a hundred nights. The pass, for the death of so many great kings, came to be called Ragar Nathrok in the tongue of men, which means Death of Kings. The blackened valleys beyond, bleak and desolate, the Wastes of Muspellar, for they are at the world's end, and so means the name.

The Fourth Age

This is the Age of Ragar Nathrok. The age of dead kings, for so many of the powerful, the good, the wise, died at the pass that their bones lie as thick and white as drifts of snow.

It is to the children of the sorcerers and kings of the last age that the fate of the world now falls. To them the new age belongs.

Of Ages Yet Unborn

What will become of this age? The heroes of today will become the gods of tomorrow. Already the names of the sorcerer kings and queens who fought at the Pass of Ragar Nathrok are becoming legend, the All-Wise Othinnar, fiery, strong-armed Drunnor, Fryeana with his boar-skull helm, and so many others.

The old god-kings and queens are dead, but their grandsons and granddaughters now tread the earth. Who among them will claim the title of god in days to come?

Part Three: Core Rules

His crown of silver was set with green jade the same colour as his eyes. And it hung loosely, at an angle over his brow. Those deep green eyes that once, long ago were bright and keen, were now watery and awash with beer. His face, once young and proud, wore a foolish smile on his old-man's lips. He stumbled as he stepped down from his throne. Groans and whispers arose from the shadows of the great hall. They could all see that drink had him, they could see him stagger. But before any lord or lady could steer him back to his seat his withered old hand fell on the riot of woven carving that was the witness-stone. Silence fell. What strange, drunken whim would he make law? Who of the young thanes would he send away to fetch some half-heard-of relic? What quests would his beer-besotted mind dream up?

Listen to the wayfarer's song and hear in it all the places he has been. Hear the high notes of a winter in the mountains, the low and gentle voice of a river in green fields, the airy, artless tune that recalls a strange, little folk who he once met, long ago in a hidden valley.

Style

Wayfarer's Song is a game heavy on magic and high fantasy. The rules attempt to create an impression of magic as a dangerous thing. Magic of any sort is seductive in its power – but be it sorcery, an enchanted relic or a village-witch's cantrip. Dealing with a power that could potentially overwhelm and change you forever can have troublesome effects.

Otherwise, the overall aim was to create a feeling of a heroic epic along the lines of Beowulf and the Norse sagas. The weapons and armour are purposely restricted to what one might find in a Dark Age warlord's cellar, and battle is bloody and short.

Beginner? Advanced?

The general consensus of my players is that this game is not ideal for beginners. There are a lot of rules, some of which are a little unusual. Anyone who has played more than one or two role-playing games should find this rules easy to understand – if *you* are confused then the fault lies with me for not explaining things properly.

Layout

Wayfarer's Song has one core rules-book detailing system, and a second detailing setting. These two books form the foundations of the game.

Kith-books provide more character generation rules for each of the player races.

Terminology of the Game

Game Session is the term used for each period of play. A game session has no predetermined duration, although two to four hours would be average. A game session may be a single stand-alone plot (somewhat like a short) story, or it can be more like a chapter in a novel - leading into upon a complex continuing story expanded upon week-to-week.

When built up weekly into an over-arching story, a series of Game Sessions is termed a **Campaign**. Campaigns can be epic and highly rewarding, but require considerable planning as well as spur of the moment invention on the part of the Story Teller.

The Players

The **Storyteller** is the term Wayfarer's Song uses for the player who acts as the game overseer. The Storyteller plots out each adventure, and then through a process of description and invention presents the world, the journey and the story to the other players.

All other players in a game will have a **Character**. This is an assumed persona that a player takes on during a game. You might for instance play a stealthy thief, or a rune-wise sorcerer or a kind healer. Details of each player character are recorded on a **Character Sheet**. The character sheet is the piece or pieces of paper on which all the details, attributes, abilities and notes concerning your character are recorded. Blank character sheets are provided as a download.

The **Non-Player Characters** (NPCs) are all the cast, extras, monsters and creatures controlled by



the Storyteller. NPCs are sometimes also referred to as **Extras**.

What do I Need to Play?

The system is based exclusively on ten sided dice (d10s). Each player needs one d10 to play. You will also need paper, pencils, and copies of the character sheet provided. Both the Core Rules and at least one Kithbook are needed to play the game.



Foundations

A game consists of characters interacting with their setting, to create moments of tension that must be resolved. Rules are applied to story in order to create a sense of fairness and order. They prevent one player saying 'bang, you're dead', and another replying, 'no, I'm not'.

Rules, therefore, tend to apply to tense situations. Ordering a meal in a tavern, stepped outdoors in the morning, eating breakfast, walking down the street: these are all examples of activities that require few or no rules. Rules are needed for situations of conflict or danger. Jumping a crevice, climbing a sheer wall, working spells of sorcery, fighting an enemy hand-to-hand, are good examples of when a rule may help to determine an outcome.

Wayfarer's Song uses ten sided dice (d10). Each player will only need at most one d10. Whenever you roll remember that as a general rule a low result is almost always good. i.e. more difficult actions will require a lower roll to succeed.

The Character Sheet

You write down all the details of your character, from his name to various skills to magical talents and belongings, on a Character Sheet. A black Character Sheet is provided for your use with

this system, and you should make as many copies of the Character Sheet as you require. Presented on the next page is the core character sheet for a Mortal Man. Each race has its own character sheet. The following is filled out, and is accompanied by explanations of what things mean.

Attributes

Attributes are used to measure of your character's basic innate physical and mental abilities. There are four Attributes: Fortitude, Dexterity, Perception and Willpower. Attributes are measured on a scale of one to nine.

Skills

Skills are specific talents relating to practical areas of expertise. A skill allows a character to develop a heightened talent for a specific activity. Winning a battle is an activity that can be developed by working on personal skills such as sword fighting, archery or brawling.

Disciplines

Innate magical abilities and talents are termed Disciplines and are measured against a five-point scale: rank one being the least powerful and rank five being the most powerful.



Character: Gnarr Tricksleeve ¹

Archetype: N/A ²

Age: Coming of Age ³

Legacy: Competent ⁵

ATTRIBUTES ⁴

Dexterity	● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○
Fortitude	● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Perception	● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Willpower	● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

DISCIPLINES ⁷

		Insight
Serendipity	● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____

INJURIES ⁸

Armour: Patchwork Armour (1) ⁹

Shield: N/A **Cover** /10

FATIGUE ¹⁰

<input type="checkbox"/> Hale	None	No penalty
<input type="checkbox"/> Winded	½ min	No penalty
<input type="checkbox"/> Weary	1-2 Min.	+1 to rolls
<input type="checkbox"/> Drained	10 Min.	+2 to rolls
<input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted	½ Hour	+3 to rolls
<input type="checkbox"/> Collapsed	1 Hour	+4 to rolls

SKILLS ⁶

	Rank	Notches
• Awareness	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Climb	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Dodge	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Folklore	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Hide	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Ride	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• Swim	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Brawling</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Cajolery</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Cookery</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Fast Talk</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Forage</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Melee</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Pilfer, Run</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Persuasion</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Set Snares</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• <u>Sling Shot</u>	<u>Rudimentary</u>	_____
• _____	_____	_____
• _____	_____	_____

TESTS OF SKILL

Rank 1	Rudimentary
Rank 2	Basic
Rank 3	Average
Rank 4	Fair
Rank 5	Advanced
Rank 6	Penultimate
Rank 7	Paramount
Less Expert	10/10
Of Equal Rank	8/10
More Expert by One	6/10
More Expert by Two	4/10
More Expert by Three	2/10
More Expert by Four	0/10

Weapons and Menace ¹¹

<u>Short Sword</u>	<u>7 /10</u>
_____	_____ /10
_____	_____ /10
_____	_____ /10
_____	_____ /10

0 Passes
1 Pass
2 Passes
3 Passes
4 Passes

Wound ¹²

Minor
Deep
Severe
Grave
Mortal

Outwit

Confused
Baffled
Fumbling
Stumbling
Humiliated

Press

Winded
Weary
Drained
Exhausted
Collapsed

Ranged ¹³ <u>Small Bow</u>	<u>6 /10</u>	Close (Bas) <u>10 paces</u>	Medium (Fair) <u>20 paces</u>	Long (Pen) <u>40 paces</u>
_____	<u>6 /10</u>	Close (Bas) _____	Medium (Fair) _____	Long (Pen) _____



The Character Sheet

On the previous page is a character sheet for Mortal Men. The character sheets for Aelfan, Duergar and Ettin differ, though not greatly.

- 1 The Character's name.
- 2 Depending on whether you are using quick-start rules, you may have an 'archetype'. Archetypes are simple templates that allow you to quickly create a character. This character was created from scratch, thus does not have an archetype.
- 3 Age: for human characters, age is important. Coming of Age is a young adult category.
- 4 All characters have attributes which represent raw physical and mental potential.
- 5 A measure of experience used so as to be able to create more or less powerful characters from scratch.
- 6 All characters have skills. Skills are learned abilities that vary from character to character.
- 7 If your character has awakened to any magical Disciplines then write them in here and record their rank.

- 8 You record here any injuries that your character sustains during the game. New characters will not be injured in any way.
- 9 Armour: the higher the rank of protection the better. 1 for patchwork armour is not particularly good, but is better than nothing.
- 10 Fatigue. If you character over exerts herself then she may lose levels of Fatigue.
- 11 You record here any weapons that your character owns and the Menace of each weapon. Higher Menaces are more deadly.
- 12 A successful attack may be used to either wound, outwit or press your enemy. Wounding is based on Weapon Menace. Outwitting is based on Dexterity. Pressing is based on Fortitude.
- 13 Record any missile weapons, such as bows or slings, which your character owns here. Also record the Range Step of your weapons.

Attributes

Wayfarer's Song uses four broadly defined Attributes: Dexterity, Fortitude, Perception and Willpower.

Mechanics

Attributes are only used in touch and go situations. Dexterity, Perception and Fortitude play varying roles in combat. Willpower has an important role in casting and resisting magical spells. Attributes are measured on a scale of numbers ranking from one (pathetic) to nine (phenomenal).



Skills

Wayfarer's Song allows you to invent and define any skills you want for your character, within the bounds of common sense and at your Storyteller's discretion. The lists provided are to be treated as suggestions and do not have definitions for that reason. Only those skills associated with day-to-day life and termed 'Common Skills' are defined more clearly than this.

Be aware that inventing a skill that mimics one of the Common Skills of a given kith is somewhat pointless. The common skills vary kith-to-kith. Where as for Mortal Men climbing or riding a horse may seem a fairly unremarkable thing, for a short, hunched Duergar both feats would be reasonably remarkable.

Mechanics

Skills are measured using a set of descriptive words with seven ranks of proficiency from

Dexterity

Eye-hand co-ordination and reflexes.

Fortitude

Brute physical strength and stamina.

Perception

Wits, general awareness and agility of mind.

Willpower

Strength of mind and force of will.

Unskilled to Paramount inclusive. For now it is important only to remember that Skills are measured against a scale of words not numbers.

Discipline

Many magical abilities are defined within the bounds of a five-tier structure of increasing power termed a Discipline. At each increasing level of power the magical ability may grant improved chances of success or slightly different abilities, ranges or knacks. See Blood of Magic in Part Three for more information on Disciplines.

Mechanics

Disciplines are measured on a scale of one to five. Often a given level of power simply entitles a character to perform an act of magic such as shape-shifting into a wolf, or seeing a vision of the future. If any random rolls are required to use a Path the rules to do so are discussed within the Discipline-text.

The Action Round

What is an Action Round?

Although having its most obvious application in battle, the action round is a useful way to divide up and control any chaotic situation in which many characters may be trying to do different things all at the same time. The Action Round is an arbitrary unit of time during which every character is allowed to take a short sequence of actions to resolve conflict.

Scenes

An Action Round is divided into one or more Scenes. A Scene is a sequence during which characters who are in conflict or otherwise interacting are allowed to resolve some of their actions. The idea is that as the Storyteller you alternate between scenes with different player characters in much the same way that a film alternates from clip to clip. Each Scene should be short but allowing enough time to deal with a bit of conflict in a fluid way.

Terminology

Action

An action is any simple act that can be feasibly accomplished within a few seconds. To attack an enemy in combat, to climb a rope, rummage through a pack, or cast a spell all count as examples of actions.

Round

A round is an arbitrary measure of time during which all the characters involved in a Scene have the option of attempting a single test of skill. This may be an opposed contest of skill, such as in combat or a test of skill against a set difficulty, such as casting a spell. Characters involved in an opposed test of skill do not get to test their skill twice (one for each opposed character) but only once for the both of them.

Scene

A scene is a phase during which several interacting characters are spot-lighted for the space of a few actions. Because of the mechanics used, combat can sometimes be resolved in a few actions, but if it lingers on the Storyteller may choose to switch from one scene to another, much as a director does in a film.

Designer Notes

I have suggested the use of scenes rather than a turn-by-turn method for a one major reason. Scenes create short sequences of action spotlighting one or two characters at a time and in so doing help to remove the fractured or blocky feel of a turn-based system.

If however you want a turn-based system you can do so in one of two ways. A somewhat random but simple method is just to make everyone roll a d10 each round and then count down from highest to lowest in order. Values that tie are rolled again. Alternatively you can carry out actions in order of highest dexterity to lowest – a less predictable but easier method.

Setting the Scene

Action will develop when characters come to a point in the game where they face conflict or dangers. Combat will obviously create action, but trying to save a floundering ship in a storm, chasing an escaped pig through long grass, or escaping a burning or collapsing building are examples of non-combat action.

Example

Three characters, Kerrin the Sorceress, Murgio the Archer and Aelfreid the Warrior are making their way through a forest on an urgent errand. They are confronted by a pack of wolves, and the chief wolf states that he is the king of the forest and demands a tribute. All the wolves are interested in is meat, and the players have little to none to offer. They have the option of taking a time consuming detour or challenging the wolves on their threat. Glancing at one another they nod and draw weapons.

Dividing up Scenes

Action rounds are divided into scenes. At the beginning of an Action Phase each player declares their immediate action – and the Storyteller declares the actions of any extras. From these actions the action into scenes and spotlight one scene at a time, allowed a few actions and resolutions before moving on.

Example Continued

There are seven wolves including the large chief wolf, and being both pack animals and driven by a sense that alpha males are dangerous, four of



the wolves rush at Aelfried the warrior who is large and powerful looking. The three remaining wolves rush at Murgo the archer. Aelfried declares he will stand against the wolves in close combat. Murgo the archer declares he will try to get off one or two shots before the wolves close in. Kerrin finds herself free from attack and decides to help Murgo with some magic while keeping an eye on Aelfried.

This creates two scenes: one in which Elfried is having to deal with four wolves, and one in which Kerrin and Murgo are dealing with three wolves.

Shifting the Spotlight

As the Storyteller, pick a scene that you think will be resolved the quickest, either because the player characters or the non-player characters have an obvious advantage. If a scene is resolved before the others, you can allow a character to enter to enter another scene after a delay to recover and look around.

Example

Although it would seem that the sorceress and archer have a good advantage, the Storyteller knows from previous experience that Aelfried is a very competent warrior and is more likely to either overpower one or two wolves than the archer and sorceress.

The spotlight shifts to Aelfried and some action is resolved. He does strike one wolf through the chest with a spear but then draws a longknife and tries to wrestle and brawl with the others, but being outnumbered he soon has three wolves dragging him down. He is in trouble so we shift the spotlight.

Murgo looses two arrows in quick succession. One strikes a wolf and although it is not a serious injury, the wolf is startled and in pain. The remaining two wolves leap at the archer and in this time the sorceress casts a spell setting one wolf on fire. The remaining wolf takes a few more actions to deal with, but eventually limps away with a knife wound to a leg.

Bringing Action Together

The Storyteller needs to keep a mental tab on what is happening where, and vaguely how long each scene is taking. If one scene is resolved before another then allow characters to rush in to help their friends – but also be sure to take

account of any lag that may be occurring between scenes.

Example

Kerrin and Murgo have done well, but it took them some time, and the Storyteller decides Elfried will have to go a few more actions alone with his wolves before his friends rush to his aid. Elfried struggles and throws one of the wolves off, but is more than grateful when a couple actions later his friends leap in and scare off the remaining two wolves.

Rounds and Actions

Within each scene, there will be one or more rounds. A round is a short phase during which all the characters involved in a scene declare an action and are allowed a test of skill to judge success. Often as the Storyteller you will have to decide who acts first in a given round. In the example above, does Murgo shoot his arrows before the wolves reach him? If so, how many arrows? Is Kerrin able to cast any spells in this time?

Timing and Distance

As Murgo's player declares he will loose arrows at the on coming wolves, the Storyteller makes an arbitrary judgement: depending on how far away the wolves are he must decide Murgo is able to loose one, two, three or more arrows before they reach him.

When a lot of characters are involved in a scene a simple scale can be used determine the order of their actions: Fast, Average, Slow.

Fast Actions

Attacking an opponent from where you are standing, yelling insults and drawing attention to yourself.

Average Actions

Taking a running jump. Charging an opponent and attacking them. Unbuckling a shield and drawing a sword. Drawing and firing an arrow. In effect anything that requires an 'and' somewhere in the sentence.

Slow Actions

Climbing a tree. Casting a spell. Sneaking around behind an opponent. Charging across an open field. Actions that are complex or would take some care to carry out. Any prolonged action, movement, or undertaking.



Attribute Tests

Very Easy

Fairly Easy

Fairly Difficult

Very Difficult

Extremely Difficult

No test of Attribute required

One Attribute Test required to pass

Two consecutive Attribute Tests required to pass

Three consecutive Attribute Tests required to pass

Four consecutive Attribute Tests required to pass

Tests of Attribute are used for touch-and-go situations, with two potential outcomes. A character either will or won't dodge an arrow that is accurately shot at her. A character either will or won't jump a stream without getting wet. In either case a Basic Test of Dexterity would do to determine the outcome of the action. The Test is successful if the result found by rolling a d10 is equal to or lower than your character's relevant Attribute.

Difficulty

Not all actions are equally easy to perform. Jumping a wide rivulet should be more difficulty than jumping a narrow gutter. To represent this, we introduce the Cumulative attribute test. To beat a higher difficulty the player must roll a given number of consecutive successful Attribute Tests.

Attribute Contests

Attribute Contests, as opposed to an Attribute Test, are used in situations where two characters are working against one another in an unskilled and simple conflict. Examples might include an arm wrestle between drunken warriors, or a contest of willpower between a sorcerer and a wraithlike spirit. In an Attribute Contest both characters engage in a contest of cumulative Attribute Tests. The character who scores the highest number of consecutive passes wins the contest. Draws are treated as just that - equal results with no obvious winner.

Example

To dodge an incoming arrow a character must make a Test of Dexterity. If a character has a Dexterity of four then they must roll four or under on a d10 to dodge an arrow.

Example

A character is running to escape an angered mob of villagers and cuts through a wood. There are several obstacles he has to cross to get through the copse of trees successfully. The first is a fallen tree, which the Storyteller deems to be Fairly Easy to jump. The character has a Dexterity of 6. The player rolls a d10 and scores a 5. This is equal to or under 6 and so the character leaps the log. Next he must jump a small stream - this is more tricky and the

The Storyteller deems it to be Fairly Difficult. The player rolls a 6 and then an 8. Even though the 6 is a pass, the character needs two consecutive passes to jump this stream and the 8 is a fail. He trips and falls with a splash into the cold water.

Example

The sorceress Ithrelia commands a troublesome wild spirit to quit haunting a grove of trees and both characters enter into a contest of wills. Ithrelia has a Willpower of 7 and rolls a 1 (pass) ...4 (pass)...1 (pass)...9 (fail). Three successes. The spirit has a Willpower of 5 and rolls a 3 (pass)...1 (pass)... 6 (fail). Two passes. The sorceress wins this contest of wills and the sprite is forced to concede and flee the grove.

Attribute Advancement

Through exertion and use a person's basic attributes can improve over time. Physical exercise will eventually result in better physique. Mental exercise will result in heightened acuity. This is catered for in Wayfarer's Song by a simple in-game rule:

Whenever a character attempts a Test or Contest of any Attribute but fails, then the Attribute gains a notch. When the number of notches matches the Attribute's rank then the Attribute increases by one rank and the notches drop to zero.

Example

Ingor performs a Test of Fortitude. His Fortitude is Rank 6 and he has 5 notches from five previous failed Tests of Fortitude. He fails his

Test of Fortitude and so gains another notch and now has six. Because he has as many notches as ranks in Fortitude, his Fortitude increases to Seven and the notches drop to zero.

A character who falls back on her Fortitude a great deal is more likely to enjoy an increase in Fortitude over time. A character who never uses her Dexterity will seldom improve upon the Attribute.

As an optional rule any given test or contest of Attribute can only result in one rank of Attribute improvement. Thus, in the above example, even though Ithrelia scored two natural ones in the contest of Willpower with the spirit her Willpower only increases one rank after the contest is settled.

Disciplines

Disciplines are used to quantify, usually inherent or instinctual, magical talents that are found throughout Mithgerd. Disciplines are always based on a five tier scale of Ranks. Rank One is the least powerful tier. Rank Five is the most powerful tier. Increases in Ranks are usually associated with increases either in the scope, raw power, control or flexibility of a given Discipline.

Some examples of Disciplines include; Second Sight, which allows a character to see invisible auras, spirits and ghosts; Healing Touch, which allows a character to heal wounds and injuries; Visions, which allows a character to gain oracular visions pertaining to the future; and Skinchanger, which allows a character to shape-shift into a specific animal.

Rules

The rules for any given Discipline are always included in the discipline write up. Most are very simple and allow a character to perform a feat of magic without any checks or tests, others require a Test of Willpower, some cause gain of Soulburn.

Discipline Advancement

Magic in Wayfarer's Song is a highly personal and innate affair. Advancement to higher ranks of power requires personal epiphanies rather than long and arduous courses of study. In effect a character has to try and reach out and grab hold of the next rank of power with their soul.

Circumstances

The circumstances under which a character can choose to try and advance a rank of power are very important. Magic answers need and does not like to be dealt with casually. A character wishing to deepen their understanding of their personal magic can only do so when there is an immediate need to call up the power and something of personal value must be at risk if the character should fail.

Rules for Advancement

Each of a character's Disciplines has an associated advancement stat termed insight. Insight always begins play at a value of 1. When a character attempts to advance a discipline rank the player rolls a d10. Success follows a roll equal to or under Insight. If the rolls fails then Insight increases 1 rank to 2. The process repeats, either, until the character passes a Test of Insight and the stat returns to 1, or the Insight stat reaches 10: at which point the attempt passes automatically and the stat returns to 1.

In the case of success the character gains immediate access to the next rank of power. If the attempt fails however, then the character loses heart and is unable to tap the Discipline in question for the remainder of the game session.

Designer Notes

The system I've outlined is quite harsh and does not allow for easier advancement at lower ranks of power. That the system is quite harsh is I think appropriate considering that advancement results in a, sometimes, considerable increase in power. That there is no gradation in difficulty doesn't strike me as a particular problem as there is no reason that advancing from rank 1 to 2 *should* be easier than advancing from rank 4 to 5.

Tests of Skill

A Test of Skill is made by rolling a single d10. You will always need to roll a value equal or less than a given value for success. A low result is always good. A high result is always bad. The number you need to roll under will depend upon the difficulty of the task being undertaken relative to your level of skill.

Skill Expertise and the difficulty of any given task are measured on the same scale. Lets look at expertise...

Rank	Expertise	Example: Swordplay
Rank 0	Unskilled	You know about as much as the average swineherd
Rank 1	Rudimentary	You have at least held a sword
Rank 2	Basic	You are unlikely to be run through in the first fray
Rank 3	Average	You can hold your own in a melee
Rank 4	Fair	Quite good, able to outmatch most but not all swordsmen
Rank 5	Advanced	Your blade in a flash of blue steel in the sun
Rank 6	Penultimate	You fight left handed just for the challenge
Rank 7	Paramount	You carry a necklace of dragon teeth

The difficulty of an action is a measure of the expertise that you need to be able to carry out the action comfortably. The following chart (also found on your character sheet) summarises this.

Action is	Success	Succeed if you roll a...
Less Expert	10/10	1 to 10 on d10
Equal to Skill	8/10	1 to 8 on d10
More Expert by One Rank	6/10	1 to 6 on d10
More Expert by Two Ranks	4/10	1 to 4 on d10
More Expert by Three Ranks	2/10	1 to 2 on d10
More Expert by Fours Ranks	0/10	Impossible

Following this chart, if your character has a skill at **Basic** he would: always succeed at **Unskilled** or **Rudimentary** actions. He would succeed at **Basic** 80% of the time, at **Average** 60% of the time, at **Fair** 40% of the time, at **Advanced** 20% of the time and could never hope to perform a **Penultimate** action.

Example

A character in the game is trying to pick a lock. The Storyteller determines that it is a reasonably well-made lock and sets the difficulty at Fair. The Character has a Lock Pick skill of Basic. Fair is More Expert by Two Ranks above Basic. This gives a 4/10 chance of success. The Player rolls a 3 on a d10. This is within the 40% (1-4 on a d10) range so the character passes their Test of Skill and the lock clicks open. If the player had diced anything from 5 to 10 inclusive, the test of skill would have failed.

Additional Rule: 1 and 10

To give low-level characters a chance, and to make high levels characters at least a little worried, use the following rule: A roll of 1 is an automatic pass no matter what. A roll of 10 is an automatic fail.

Prolonged Tests of Skill

There will be some situations in which the question is not; can you do this? but rather, how long will it take you to do this? Good examples are: you are looking for herbs in a forest, you are hunting for the trick to open a secret door, or you are foraging for food for the night. In all cases a determined character is simply not going to give up in the first few minutes.

Wayfarer's Song uses a chart-based system to tell you how long it will take you to complete this sort of action relative to the result of your dice roll and the difficulty of the action.



Action is	Result of Dice Roll				
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Less Expert	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	10 mins	20 mins
Equal to Skill	5 mins	5 mins	10 mins	20 mins	40 mins
More Expert by One	5 mins	10 mins	20 mins	40 mins	3 hrs
More Expert by Two	10 mins	20 mins	40 mins	3 hrs	6 hrs
More Expert by Three	20 mins	40 mins	3 hrs	6 hrs	-
More Expert by Fours	40 mins	3 hrs	6 hrs	-	-

Contest of Skill

A Contest of Skill represents a conflict between two characters. The base system is the same as a standard Test of Skill - and to all intents and purposes works like so: I perform a test of skill at a difficulty I choose. Now, you must match my test of skill or suffer the consequences - be it an axe-blow to the head in battle, or wounded pride after losing a game of chess.

Challenging someone to a test of skill opens you up to the consequences if *you* should fail. Let us say you hide from an enemy. If you fail, and your enemy passes her test of search skill, then she will spot you. If you attack an enemy in battle and fail, and yet your opponent passes her test of melee, he will have the option of doing you an injury.

Steps in a Contest of Skill

- Step One** Nominate Challenger and Defender
- Step Two** Challenger chooses a skill difficulty e.g. Basic
- Step Three** Both characters test their skills at that difficulty
- Step Four** Both Pass: Null result
Both Fail: Null result
One Pass/One Fail: Winner takes advantage

Step One

In a Contest of skill there are a Challenger and a Defender. The challenger is usually the character who has the initiative.

Step Two

The Challenger gets to set the level of difficulty. Both her, and the opponent's Tests of Skill, are carried out at this level of difficulty. Choosing a higher level of difficult makes it more difficult for both the challenger and defender to pass the test. The advantage of being a challenger rests mostly on being able to set a level of difficulty that you know is reasonable for you - if your opponent is more skilled than you she may set a level of difficulty beyond your ability and win by default.

Step Three

Both Characters Test their skill at the nominated difficulty.

Step Four

There are three potential outcomes here: 1) both characters pass. 2) Both characters fail. 3) One character passes, one character fails.

Outcomes

- 1** Both Characters Pass: In this case, unless one character has an obvious and significant advantage, it is reasonable to assume that two passes nullify one another.
- 2** Both Characters Fail: A null result - both characters are too incompetent to do anything. Note also that because of skill failure, both characters receive a Notch for their skill.
- 3** One character Passes, the other Fails: The character who passed takes the advantage. If he is hiding from pursuers he remains hidden. If he is fighting a battle, he may injure his opponent (see below for more detailed rules for battle). The character who failed gains a Notch for their skill.

Skill versus Skill

It is not always necessary (or even sensible) to carry out a contest of skill matching the same two skills. If a Challenger uses a Track skill to follow a Defender then Stealth may be used to counter the tracking.



Skill Advancement

Aptitude Rank

Skills are measured in Aptitude Ranks – the higher your rank, the more proficient you are in any given skill. There are seven aptitude ranks, ranging from 'Rudimentary' (the worst), to 'Paramount' (the best). You advance an Aptitude Rank in a skill once you have accumulated enough Experience.

Advancement		Notches	Total
Unskilled	to Rudimentary	5	5
Rudimentary	to Basic	10	15
Basic	to Average	15	30
Average	to Fair	20	50
Fair	to Advanced	25	75
Advanced	to Penultimate	30	105
Penultimate	to Paramount	35	140

Experience Notches

You gain a point of experience (termed a 'Notch'), for a given skill, each time you fail a test of that skill. You need five Notches to advance from Unskilled to Rudimentary aptitude. Ten Notches are needed to advance from Rudimentary to Basic aptitude, and so on... The basic rationale is that people generally learn more from errors than from successes. From the point of game balance more skilled characters generally make fewer mistakes, and so advance more slowly.

Experience and Action Rounds

You can handle Experience during Action Rounds exactly the same way as in most normal, calm situations – a failed test of Skill grants one experience notch. However, this can result in extremely rapid advancement of Combat Skills. Alternatively no experience is earned during an Action Round, but at the end of the action, an experience notch is awarded for each skill that a

character has used regardless of failures or successes.

Example

Herluin has a fletching skill of Rudimentary. Using his fletching skill he tries to make an arrow. His player makes a roll but fails. The arrow is botched and will never fly, but Herluin receives a notch on his Fletching skill. As luck would have it Herluin has already acquired nine notches on his Fletching Skill. The extra notch is enough to push his skill from Rudimentary to Basic. He now needs another fifteen notches to advance his skill to Average.

Gaining New Skills

Any character can attempt any activity that the Storyteller deems requires a 'skill' at the Unskilled rank. To learn a new skill the player need only make a note of the skill at Unskilled proficiency and then progress as normal as he or she uses it in game-play.

The Course of Battle

*Loud sang the trumpets to stern-minded foe-men:
The dewy-winged eagle watched them march onward,
The horny-billed raven rejoiced in the battle play,
The sly wolf, the forest thief, soon saw his hearts desire
As the fierce warriors rushed at each other.
Great was the shield breaking, loud was the clamor,
Hard were the hand blows, and dire was the downfall,
When first the heroes felt the keen arrow shower.*

Elene (The Morning Battle)
CYNEWULF

Close Combat

Close combat is resolved as a contest of skill (as described above). Some additional rules are needed however to clarify this complex and dangerous aspect of a game. Can you be injured? Knocked down? Exhausted? Disarmed by your opponent? All these issues need to be addressed.

Ranged Combat

Ranged combat is dealt with slightly differently – the skill of the archer or spear-thrower is important, as are various modifying factors: a small or distant target, a moving target, or a concealed target.

Magic in Combat

Magic in Wayfarer's Song tends to be subtle and doesn't permit gross summoning or wizard's fire from nowhere. But magic can be used to make indirect attacks, for instance: commanding a tree to spring to life and grapple an opponent, summoning a bolt of lightning from the stormy sky, or causing waves of water to rear out of a river and crash upon an enemy. Rules for indirect magical attacks vary from spell to spell are dealt with in the appropriate areas of the various kith-books.

Armour and Magic

Any injurious sorcery negates unenchanted armour, be the armour natural or worn. Only enchanted armour can defend against enchanted attacks.

Terminology

Advantage

Advantage is a somewhat subjective bonus based on a general weighing up of the factors in favour

of two characters in a battle. If one character has a shield and the other does not, then the shield can be seen as an advantage. Taking up higher ground, or standing behind a defensive palisade would also grant Advantage. Who has the overall advantage is the Storyteller's discretion.

Menace

The potential of a weapon to do injury is measured in Menace. A high Menace will potentially do more damage. A low Menace score will potentially do less.

Outwit

You can choose to outwit an opponent rather than inflict an injury if you win a contest of skill. Pulling a rug out from under someone, sliding through a giant's legs, or disarming an aggressor are all examples of outwitting the opponent. The extent to which you outwit an opponent is based on a cumulative test of Dexterity and the exact outcome is at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Press

You can choose to press an opponent rather than inflict an injury when you win a contest of skill in combat. If you do, you force your opponent to make a test of fatigue.

Protection

The Protection granted by armour grants is deducted from a weapon's menace. For instance: you are wearing padded leather with a protection of 2 and are struck with a longsword with Menace 8. The Menace of the longsword drops to 6 (8-2) because of the armour.

Wound

Wayfarer's Song uses a system of ranks to represent injuries – there are five ranks of



wounds: Minor, Deep, Severe, Grave and Mortal, in that order. The life-threatening nature of a wound depends on the severity of the injury.

Designer Notes: Miniatures

Using miniatures, or even erasers and pencil sharpeners, to arrange where everyone is during a battle can be helpful. I don't provide rules for miniatures here because I don't use strict rules myself. When I use miniatures I tend to allow movement and manoeuvres that fit my subjective view of what makes sense in the context of the moment. You can easily invent rules that suit you, or look for a good set of rules to import from another game. Arranging characters on hex-paper or a chessboard can also be helpful.

Attacking

Attacking an enemy in close combat provokes an opposed contest of skill. Remember, just because you are the aggressor does not mean you are invulnerable to being injured.

Potential Outcomes

In a contest of close combat, there are three potential outcomes.

1) Both Characters Fail

This is a null result. Both characters have fumbled in their attempt to land a blow on the other character.

2) Both Characters Pass

This is a situation that is modified by Advantage. Advantage is subjective and at the final discretion of the Storyteller. Having a shield while your opponent does not, or by taking up a stance on higher ground are both examples where Advantage is gained. If both characters pass their test of skill then the character with the advantage is deemed to have won.

If no advantage is obvious both characters simultaneously inflict injury on one another.

3) One Character Passes, the other Fails

The character who passed their test of skill inflicts an injury on their opponent.

Counter-Attacks

The most common response to being attacked is to level a counter-attack. A melee skill can be used effectively to defend against any incoming attack and potentially to deal injury to the attacker too.

Dodging Attacks

The common skill 'Dodge' is a combat skill that allows you to defend yourself in battle without relying on a counter-attack. In situations where you do not actually wish to injure or kill your opponent, Dodge becomes very important. It is also the skill used to dodge missiles such as arrows or spears.

Using Shields

Using a shield to protect yourself in battle adds a bonus to a character's Protection. Thus a character using a targe (+2) and wearing Leather Armour (Protection 2) gains an overall protection of 4 (2+2).

A character can also choose to take cover behind a shield during melee. This is a highly defensive action, and a character who is shielding herself from blows is not allowed to carry out anything other than defensive action during a round. A test of cover is then made by the Storyteller. The test is a simple roll under or equal to on a d10. If the test of cover is successful, then the missile thuds harmlessly into the cover, not the target. Use the following table as guide to work with...

Shields	Protection	Cover
Small Shield	+1	2/10
Medium Shield	+2	4/10
Great Shield	+2	7/10

Multiple Opponents

The major point in favour of co-operating against a single enemy is that all of the gang are granted Advantage over the enemy. Note also that a single character is only allowed to inflict one injury per round. Any subsequent victories over attackers are deemed to be merely skillful defences.

Surprise Attacks

A surprise attack can be made when an opponent is either unaware of the attacker or is surprised by a sudden or traitorous attack, or walks into an ambush. A surprise attack not only grants the Advantage to the attack, but the defender in this case is exactly that: he can not inflict an injury on his opponent – even if he passes a Test of Skill and the attacker fails.

Advantage

Advantage is a primarily tactical concept. Having the Advantage over your opponent



results from any number of tactical factors. Use the following table as a gauge. More important Advantages come later in the table and outweigh lesser advantages...

Rank One: Shields

You are using a shield or offhand weapon to parry with, whereas your opponent has only one weapon.

Rank Two: Unarmed

Your opponent is unarmed while you have a weapon.

Rank Three: Height

You are standing on higher ground or in a similarly tactical position. Unusually large or tall opponents might also gain a height advantage.

Rank Four: Palisade

You have a defensive structure such as a parapet or palisade in your advantage.

Rank Five: Environment

You are fighting in your natural environment. Your opponent is not and is unfairly hampered.

Rank Six: Sensory

You have a significant sensory advantage over your opponent. A person would have this advantage if his opponent were partially blinded.

Rank Seven: Ganging Up

You and your allies are attacking your opponent all at once. Facing multiple opponents incurs obvious disadvantage.

Rank Eight: Ambushed

You have surprised your opponent completely and utterly. This advantage is likely to only last a round or two and then vanish as your enemy realises what is happening.

Melee: An Example

Eldoren

Melee	Average
Brawling	Rudimentary
Dodge	Average
Longsword	Menace 8
No Armour	-
Targe Shield	Increases Dodge to Advanced

Thoron

Melee	Basic
Brawling	Basic
Dodge	Average
Battle-Axe	Menace 9
Fur Armour	Defence 1
No Shield	-

Eldoren has been ambushed by Thoron so she is at the disadvantage. Without worrying about injury at this point, we will run through a few steps of battle...

*Thoron has both the initiative and the advantage. He chooses to attack Eldoren with an **Average** attack. This is **more advanced by one** above his **Basic** melee skill so he must make a **6/10** roll. He rolls a 5. Eldoren could either Dodge (Advanced with her shield) or counter-attack using her Melee skill (Average). She chooses to counter-attack and needs an **8/10** to pass. She rolls a 4 and passes. Both rolls pass, but because Thoron has the advantage he wins and deals Eldoren a blow with his axe.*

Eldoren now has the initiative and, as she is no longer surprised, the Storyteller deems that neither character has the advantage. Now if there is a draw it will be a null result. Eldoren chooses to make a **Fair** attack using Melee. This is one step above her skill (**Average**) and she needs a **6/10** to succeed. Fair is two steps above Thoron's Basic skill, so he needs **4/10** to pass. Eldoren dices a 4 (**pass**) and Thoron dices a 7 (**fail**). Eldoren strikes Thoron with her sword.

Thoron now chooses to make a **Basic** attack giving him an **8/10** chance of success. But, what he doesn't know is that Eldoren's skill is Average - one above Basic. She succeeds automatically. Thoron dices a 9 and he fails. Eldoren's automatic success means she strikes him again with her sword.



Resolving Combat

When successfully pressing an attack upon an enemy a character has three options. She can either choose to inflict injury with a weapon, exhaust an opponent, or outwit them.

Option One: Wound

In Wayfarer's Song, resolving injury in Melee can be divided into steps answering two questions:

- Step One** With what did you strike?
Step Two How hard did you strike?

Weapons	Menace
Knife	5
Dirk	6
Short Sword	7
Long Sword	8
Armour	Protection
Soft Leather	1
Padded Leather	2
Chain Mail	3
Iron Breastplate	4

With what did you strike?

Heavier or sharper weapons can potentially inflict a more vicious wound and thus have a higher Menace. Stronger characters, i.e. those with a high Fortitude, can wield more menacing weapons.

Armour Modifiers

Protection subtracts from the Menace of a weapon. Generally armour protection ranges from 1 to 4. If you strike a person protected by chain mail (3) with a long sword (8) the menace of the attack is reduced to 5 (8-3), for example.

Menace of 10 and above

Usually a weapon will not exceed a Menace of eight. A Menace of nine is all but fatal to an unarmoured man. However Menaces can exceed 9. Dragons can wield Menaces of 15 or more. When dealing with a menace or 10 or more, deduct Protection the armour from the Menace as usual. This may bring the Menace below 10. If, however, the Menace remains above 10, treat it as Menace 9 - there is only so much abuse that a body of flesh can take at once before excess damage becomes irrelevant.

How hard did you strike?

To determine how hard you have hit your opponent you make a Cumulative Test of Menace. For each consecutive success the severity of wound is increased by one rank.

Example

In the earlier example Meldora has successfully out-skilled Thoron. She decides to inflict an injury. Meldora is using a long sword, which has a menace of 8. Her opponent is wearing furs, which has protection of 1. So the Menace is now $8-1 = 7$. Meldor's player rolls a d10, and dices a 6. This is equal to or under 6 so it is a pass and he rolls again: scoring a 3 (pass), 4 (pass), and an 8 (fail). She stops rolling. In total Meldora scored 3 passes, causing a Grave wound.

Rank	Severity of Wound	Test of Menace
Rank 1	Minor Wound	No Passes on Test of Menace
Rank 2	Deep Wound	Pass on one Tests of Menace
Rank 3	Severe Wound	Pass on two successive Tests of Menace
Rank 4	Grave Wound	Pass on three successive Tests of Menace
Rank 5	Mortal Wound	Pass on four successive Tests of Menace



Option Two: Outwit

Outwitting an opponent represents trying to force her to trip over, lose her weapon or otherwise find herself compromised to a point where she cannot fight. It is, in effect, a non-fatal way to overcome and embarrass an enemy.

Test of Dexterity

To outwit your opponent make a cumulative test of Dexterity. Each time you pass you test, step the rank by one. Use the following examples as a guide only.

Confused

Momentarily taken aback.

Baffled

A Baffled opponent might have a blanket or rug thrown over her head, or be distracted enough that someone else could sneak up behind her.

Fumbling

A Fumbling opponent is easy to escape from or out manoeuvre. A character surrounded by a gang of ruffians could slip by them by attacking one and causing the ruffian to fumble.

Stumbling

At the Storyteller's discretion a stumbling opponent may drop her weapon, trip over or completely lose sight or her opponent.

Humiliated

A humiliated character finds herself completely entangled, entrapped, disarmed or otherwise at the mercy of their attacker.

Rank	Severity	Test of Dexterity
Rank 1	Confused	No Passes on Test of Dexterity
Rank 2	Baffled	Pass on one Tests of Dexterity
Rank 3	Fumbling	Pass on two successive Tests of Dexterity
Rank 4	Stumbling	Pass on three successive Tests of Dexterity
Rank 5	Humiliated	Pass on four successive Tests of Dexterity

Option Three: Press

Rather than choosing to do injury to your opponent you can choose to try and exhaust her into submission. To press your opponent, rather than inflicting a wound you force her to become fatigued. This can be a slower but surer way to wear down heavily armoured enemies.

Test of Fortitude

To Press your opponent make a cumulative test of Fortitude. Each time you pass you test, step the rank by one. Use the following examples as a guide only. Refer to the section on Fatigue later in this book for more detail on the consequences or fatigue.

Rank	Severity	Test of Fortitude
Rank 1	Winded	No Passes on Test of Fortitude
Rank 2	Weary	Pass on one Tests of Fortitude
Rank 3	Drained	Pass on two successive Tests of Fortitude
Rank 4	Exhausted	Pass on three successive Tests of Fortitude
Rank 5	Collapsed	Pass on four successive Tests of Fortitude



Ranged Combat

Difficulty	Close Range	Medium Range	Long Range
	Basic	Fair	Penultimate
Throwing Axe	5 paces	10 paces	20 paces
Spear	10 paces	20 paces	40 paces
Small Bow	10 paces	20 paces	40 paces
Long Bow	15 paces	30 paces	60 paces
War Bow	20 paces	40 paces	80 paces

Ranged combat is resolved differently from hand-to-hand combat. In Wayfarer's Song the chance to hit a target is a function of the distance to the target, the weapon being used and the skill of the archer.

Range Steps

Each weapon has a Range Step representing a distance measured in paces. At the first Range Step, Close Range, the difficulty to hit a human-sized target is Basic. At Medium Range the difficulty increases to Fair. At Long Range the difficulty increases to Penultimate. You will find space at the bottom of your character sheet to record the Range Steps of any ranged weapons your character owns.

At each Range Step the distance doubles. Thus a player should only have to remember the first distance in paces to easily figure out whether or not a target is within Close, Medium or Long Range. Anything beyond Long Range is beyond the capacity of the weapon to hit.

Other Modifiers

When a target is declared the Storyteller must state roughly how far away the target is. From this distance the base difficulty to strike the target is determined. Adjustments to the base difficulty based on cover, low light and the size of target can be made at this point, but remain purely at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Dodging for Cover

An unaware target has no defence against a missile. However, a target that is aware of missile fire can try to duck for cover; either by hiding behind something large and solid like a fallen tree, or a stone wall, or by holding up a shield.

A test of cover is then made by the Storyteller, and is based on a quick subjective consideration of cover available. A number between 1 and 10 inclusive is set by the Storyteller. The test is a simple roll under or equal to on a d10. If the test of cover is successful, then the missile thuds harmlessly into the cover, not the target. Use the following table as guide to work with...

Rose bush	1/10
Small Shield	2/10
Young tree	3/10
Medium Shield	4/10
Ale Barrel	5/10
Small Boulder	6/10
Great Shield	7/10
Fallen oak	8/10
Stone wall	9/10

Archery: An Example

In the following example an Archery attack is divided into three steps:

Step One	Archer tests skill against Distance
Step Two	Target dodges for cover
Step Three	Resolve damage if any

Step One: Test Archery Skill versus Range

Quillow is taking aim to shoot at an enemy warrior on the field of battle with his war bow. The war bow has a Range Step of 15 paces and the enemy warrior is approximately 40 paces away. Quillow's Range steps are 15/30/60 so 40 paces is long range. Quillow has an Archery skill of Advanced. He tests his skill against Penultimate difficulty and succeeds. Unless the enemy warrior evades the arrow it will strike home.

Step Two: Evade

The Enemy warrior notices that Quillow is aiming at him and chooses to raise his shield to hide behind. He has a medium sized shield. Glancing about he also spots a dead horse and ducks behind that. All up the Storyteller decides he has about 80% coverage so makes an 8/10 test of cover. The Storyteller rolls a 10 and the arrow strikes the warrior.

Step Three: Resolve Damage

Arrows and other missiles have Menace much like melee weapons, and are made less effective by armour in the same way.

Designer Notes

I am aware that the above rules for Archery sacrifice reality for a simpler system of resolution. After tinkering with a lot of ideas I am resigned to the belief that a system to accurately mimic ranged attacks in a game, one that takes account of distance, size of target, movement, cover, wind speed and skill of both attacker and evader, would be complex to the point of idiocy.

In the above system, however, I had three major points of design in mind. The first is that hitting a target that is either inanimate, or unaware of the attack, should be reasonably easy. The second is that striking an actively and wilfully dodging target is much more difficulty. The third is that missile fire is reasonably deadly and characters should want to avoid being struck by arrows.

I think the above system takes care of these points reasonably well.

One arrow can be lethal. As the Storyteller, you may wish to quickly suggest ducking for cover to your players the first time they encounter missile fire.

Injury and Healing

Injury from Wounding

One of the most obvious and common ways for a character to die is through sudden and violent injury, such as a wound sustained in a battle. Injuries are ranked in five levels of severity from Minor to Mortal. The more severe the injury more likely it is that a character will die as a result.

Minor Wound	Barely a Scathe
Deep Wound	Painful
Severe Wound	Incapacitating
Grave Wound	Death in ½ Hour
Mortal Wound	Death in Minutes

Barely a Scathe

No serious effects in game play, but the injury hurts like hell, and there is always a risk of infection.

Painful

You move about with difficulty. There may be blood seeping all about your wound, and any action that will put serious strain on your injury requires a Test of Willpower.

Incapacitating

To prevent yourself bleeding to death you must apply pressure to the injury and refrain from moving.

Death in ½ Hour

Just that, unless you are treated with some first aid, herbs or healing magic you will otherwise die of blood loss and shock in half an hour.

Death in Minutes

You have either suffered massive internal haemorrhaging or the equivalent of having a limb cut off. The wound is a fountain of deep arterial blood. Serious magic is about all that is likely to save you.

Designer Notes

One quirk with this system is that a character can theoretically keep taking dozens of minor wounds and never suffer any effects in game-play. Personally, I think this is realistic. A dozen grazes and paper cuts do not add up to a serious health threat. Some players, however, react badly to this. If this includes you, try using the following optional rule: When a character takes a wound – no matter how minor or severe – he or she must make a Test of Fatigue.

Injury from Falling

Falling from a height causes massive injuries to the entire body. The higher the height, then naturally the worse the injury that is incurred. Armour provides no protection from falling injuries.

A Few Feet	Menace 5
A Single Storey	Menace 6
A Tall Tree	Menace 7
A Low Cliff	Menace 8
A High Cliff	Menace 9

Injury from Fire

Burns if localised can be treated much like a normal sharp-force or blunt-force injury to a non-vital, vital or critical area. If more generalised, then burns are treated as whole-body injuries and may incur levels of shock at the Storyteller's discretion.

Hotter and more fierce fires cause worse burns.

A Small Flame	Menace 5
A Pitch Torch	Menace 6
A Campfire	Menace 7
An Intense Blaze	Menace 8
A Forge Fire	Menace 9

Recovering From Injury

Healing at a natural rate is reasonably slow and requires rest to prevent a wound reopening. Use the following table for natural recovery without the use of magic or herbs.

Minor Wound	A few days
Deep Wound	A few days
Severe Wound	A week
Grave Wound	Two weeks
Mortal Wound	Three weeks

First Aid for Injuries

Using a healing skill to stabilise an injury requires a test of skill and enough time to bandage and treat the injury with some first aid. A successful attempt will prevent a character bleeding to death in the immediate future and sterilize the injury, preventing infection.

First Aid	
Minor Wound	Test at Basic
Deep Wound	Test at Average
Severe Wound	Test at Fair
Grave Wound	Test at Advanced
Mortal Wound	Test at Penultimate

Augmenting Healing

Using a skill to speed the healing process can also be done. In this case the amount of aid lent to the injured party is the basis for the test of skill.

Augment healing by...	
One Day	Test at Basic
Two Days	Test at Average
Four Days	Test at Fair
One Week	Test at Advanced
Two Weeks	Test at Penultimate

Healing with Magic

Rules for healing with magic are included under the magic system and vary from spell to spell.



Fatigue

Fatigue is used to measure physical exhaustion and is mentioned a few times in various rules. In particular in association with strenuous activities, trances or frenzies. Rested characters are considered Hale. Only exhausted characters will become winded, weary and so forth.

		Recovery	Penalties
Rested	Hale	None	None
Rank One	Winded	Half minute	None
Rank Two	Weary	A few minutes	+1 to rolls
Rank Three	Drained	Ten Minutes	+2 to rolls
Rank Four	Exhausted	Half Hour	+3 to rolls
Rank Five	Collapsed	One Hour	+4 to rolls

Tests of Fatigue

A test of fatigue can be asked for at the discretion of the Storyteller whenever a character is labouring under extreme conditions. Struggling to hold a gate open against a flood of water, carrying a large barrel, trying to get free of a wolf that has a firm hold on your leg are examples of instances when a test of Fatigue might be needed.

Tests of Fatigue can either be Fortitude (physical) or Willpower (mental) based. To test your Fatigue, make a test of the appropriate attribute. If you pass, you suffer no ill effects. If you fail you gain a level of Fatigue. Fatigue is measured on a scale of five ranks.

Recovering from Fatigue

A character recovers from fatigue reasonably quickly given a chance time to rest, and breath

deep. At the lower levels of fatigue, a character recovers quicker, taking only a few minutes. A weary character may however, take a few minutes to fully recover; an exhausted character half an hour; and a collapsed character may need up to an hour of rest.

Penalties due to fatigue

Thinking and performing at one's best while sweating, wheezing for breath, and with a skull full of pounding blood is tricky. Fatigued characters suffer penalties to the rolls they make when performing tests of Skill, Attribute or Discipline.

Because in Wayfarer's Song low rolls are always preferable the penalties add to a natural dice roll. For example if an Exhausted character rolls a natural 6, the roll becomes a 9 because of the +3 penalty from being exhausted.

Poisons and Medicinals

Poisons of Weak Potency
Poisons of Middling Potency
Poisons of Strong Potency

Require One Test of Fortitude to resist
 Require Two cumulative Tests of Fortitude to resist
 Require Three cumulative Tests of Fortitude to resist

A character may be exposed to either a poisonous or medicinal substances throughout the game. Poison is a general term for any substance having ill effect. Medicinal is the term used for drugs, antidotes or other substances with healing or curative properties.

Medicinals generally have one or two beneficial affects which are assumed to occur upon ingestion or application of the drug in the correct way. No roll or test is needed to benefit from a Medicinal.

Resisting Poisons

Whether or not a poison will affect a character depends on the Potency of the poison and the Fortitude of the character. To resist the affects of a poison a character must make one or more cumulative tests of Fortitude.

Antidotes

Antidotes are specific cures for poisons. Antidotes are sometimes brewed from the poison itself, sometimes from a completely unrelated source.



Part Four: Enchantment

Magic is an important force in Mithgerd, arguably the most important force, and as a concept it is something that both the players and the Storyteller will have to come to understand. From the perspective of those who dwell in the mortal world it would be wrong to call magic supernatural. It is, if nothing else, eminently natural - an expression of the power of all aspects of nature.

Enchanted is a term applied to any place or thing that is imbued with a permanent flicker of magic. Enchantment is measured on a five-tier scale. Those things suffused with more enchantment have a more legendary aspect, more power to do harm or good, and also a greater purpose - magic in Wayfarer's Song is above all else interwoven with intent. Very powerfully enchanted places or objects attain a limited degree of sentience.

Things, places and people may become enchanted in one of several ways.

The sorcerer who commands magic to do his bidding does so at his own risk. Magic is changeful, and changing: it may merrily obey the will of the powerful, and then turn on its master with teeth bared. For magic craves change, and who better to reshape than the sorcerer himself? The taint of long years of dealing with magic can become all too obvious in those older sorcerers. Unnatural, eldritch things can happen to a mortal who allows magic to linger to long in their blood.

Rank One	Least Enchantment
Rank Two	Lesser Enchantment
Rank Three	Greater Enchantment
Rank Four	Grander Enchantment
Rank Five	High Enchantment

Blood: Blood retains the magic of that which spilled it - and although not so powerful a transferring agent as death itself, it can be used to pass on some enchantment to an object or person washed in it. Blood when drunk will pass enchantment to the drinker.

Death: Places or objects in the presence of either horrific death or the death of a powerful person or creature may gather a little enchantment as it spills out. Battlegrounds become 'haunted' places because of this. A sword used to slay a dragon may gather a little of the dragon's spirit

and turn fiery whenever other dragons come near.

Forging: An object forged using magic or a place reshaped by magic from an already enchanted material or by magic hands will gather a little magic. Human mortals have little skill in the forging of magical things and although Aelfan Folks, Ettins, and Trolde all have some talent for it, in this art it is the Duergar who are the undisputed masters.

Imprinting: An object used for a particular purpose, especially an emotional one, will gather magic over time. For instance a sword passed from father to son over three generations may gather enough magic to never break while someone of the bloodline is holding it.

Ritual: A normal object can be intentionally made enchanted through the ritual 'contamination' of the object with magic. For instance a sword can be left in the enchanted shrine of a war god until it gathers a little of the shine's magic. This is a protracted process and usually produces nothing more than relics of least enchantment.

Remains: The bones of a powerful person or creature or person retain some enchantment long after death. Swords made of dragon bone or staffs made from the arm bone of a dead wizard are examples of this sort of relic.

The Lure of Enchantment

Magic is dangerous thing. It is a lure for the soul, a trap for the unwary, and a death for the overbold. The magic of a place or object can easily overpower the weak of will, making them into obsessive slaves, drawing the soul into the very fabric of the enchantment and reshaping it into a new-born servant.

Susceptibility to magic depends largely on the Willpower of the character in question. Characters with a higher Willpower are less likely to overwhelmed by an enchantment.

Coming into contact with an enchantment that is too strong for a character's Willpower provokes a Test of Willpower. A failed Test of Willpower places the character into the grasp of



enchantment, only lightly at first, but with more contact deeper, and deeper. This may affect characters in different ways and will depend greatly on the intent of the enchantment itself. A sword that seethes with dragon-slaying magic may force its bearer to wander the land in search of dragons. A land rich with healing magic may heal those who stay there for a while, but may force them to linger and offer help and aid to anyone else who chances by the place.

A character can resist the effects of an enchantment for a number of failed tests equal to their Willpower. If the character runs out of these graces then he becomes irrationally, and utterly

Least Enchantment	Affects Willpowers of 2 and less
Lesser Enchantment	Affects Willpowers of 4 and less
Greater Enchantment	Affects Willpowers of 6 and less
Grander Enchantment	Affects Willpowers of 8 and less
High Enchantment	Affects all Willpowers

drawn into the enchantment eventually becoming a slave to, and a part of it. All is not lost even at this point. A dominated character can be forcefully parted from the enchantment within the first twenty four hours of domination – although if this is done the shock causes the character's will the break a little and he permanently loses one rank of Willpower. He will also very likely suffer from longings to return to the enchantment for the rest of his days.

Corruption

Magic is changeful. It cannot dwell long in a person, place or object without eventually working changes upon the physical state of its vessel. Enchanted forests become uncanny, twisting places full of weird lights and strange sounds. Enchanted blades will gleam, perhaps even change colour, glow or hum over time.

For players the most important effect of the Corrupting effects of magic is that it will have on their characters. Sorcerers are as subject to corruption as any other thing, although they may use their own personal resolve and willpower to try and resist the changes.

Soulburn

Channelling magic through a frail body has its risks. Magic has a way of working itself into the blood and Sorcerers who work long with it slowly become tainted by their own charms.

The more a Sorcerer relies on spells, the more magic builds up in his blood. The more magical energy builds up in a Sorcerer's body the greater the chance that the magic will take on a life of its own and erupt out of the Sorcerer leaving a Taint in its wake.

This effect is called Soulburn by Sorcerers, and its effects vary depending upon the type of magical energy that is being channelled. Healing and protective magic tends to do little damage to the caster. Magic meant to neither hurt nor heal is of a middling sort and only sometimes becomes destructive. Magic channelled to

destroy causes the worst *Soulburn* and can leave a Sorcerer bloodied and ruined.

Designer Notes

I sort of envision the process of taking a taint as appearing a little like the Quickening in the old Highlander movie. i.e. Lots of static electrical flashes and ripples of light and crackling energy that makes the sorcerer both unapproachable and incapable of doing anything but shudder for half a minute or so. Any character who takes a taint could also make at least one a willpower based test of fatigue.

Laws of Soulburn

- 1 Every newly created Sorcerer begins play with zero Soulburn.
- 2 Whenever a spell is cast the Sorcerer gains a minimum one level of Soulburn.
- 3 If Soulburn reaches a level equal to your willpower then you suffer tainting. For instance: if you have eight in willpower you can take up to seven Soulburn before becoming tainted.
- 4 The Taint roll should be made by the Storyteller and in secret. If the Taint is obvious/visible then it should be explained. However, some are not, and these can be left to the players to discover later.



Loosing Soulburn

Sorcerers naturally loose Soulburn while sleeping: one level of Soulburn is lost per two hours of sleep. Sorcerers may also smoke a pipeful of Juniper Leaf, an expensive but sometimes necessary way to reduce one's Soulburn.

Taints

A Taint roll is made when a character's Soulburn equals their ranking in Willpower. As the Storyteller you make the decision as to which chart to roll on. Base your decision on the nature of the magic the sorcerer has been working. But remember that the table is a list of suggestions only and should be treated as such. Feel free to interpret a given taint how you like and to invent new taints that are in theme with the magic that has caused them.

Autumn Days

- 1 Your eyes turn rusty and coppery
- 2 During autumn, leaves that fall follow you about on a swirl of constant wind
- 3 You can crush up natural autumn leaves into a poultice that heals injuries up to serious wounds
- 4 Your hair turns to a mingled red-gold-bronze colour
- 5 Any tree you touch turns autumn red
- 6 You leave a trail of autumn leaves, which appear in the air in your path
- 7 In autumn you gain a temporary +1 to Willpower
- 8 Fruit ripens as soon as you pick it up
- 9 During Spring you suffer a -1 penalty to Willpower
- 10 You loose the ability to cast any spell during the Spring equinox

Birds and Beasts

- 1 Once a week an animal of your affinity decides to follow you about all day
- 2 You gain the ability to speak with one species of bird of storyteller's choice
- 3 Wild animals when encountered act friendly 1-4, neutral 5-8, territorial and hostile 9-10
- 4 Gain a subtle animal-affinity feature of storyteller's choice e.g. cat-like eyes, furry ears
- 5 If you see an animal suffering or in pain you physically feel the same pain
- 6 If you kill an animal using tools or fire, you will loose your ability to cast spells for one week
- 7 You can no longer stomach preserved food, although cooked food is still digestible
- 8 Gain a major animal feature of storyteller's choice e.g. horns, fur, hooves
- 9 Small wild animals follow you about constantly
- 10 Any injury you cause to a wild animal appears also on your body

Day and Sun

- 1 Your eyes glow with a radiant, sun-like sheen at night
- 2 During the day you can always tell north
- 3 During the day you can heal minor wounds by touch
- 4 Your hair turns golden and shimmering
- 5 Your skin turns tanned and bronze
- 6 Varying numbers of tiny dancing orbs of light hover about you constantly
- 7 When you become angry your eyes blaze like suns
- 8 Spirits of the dark become afraid of you
- 9 At night you suffer a -1 penalty to Willpower
- 10 You loose the ability to cast any spell during the midnight hour



Earthy Magic

- 1 Your eyes turn grey and milky: you now see spirits and ghost as more solid than people
- 2 Any stone thrown at you stops in mid air and falls to the ground - no effect on falling stones
- 3 Iron and steel glow red how when within two feet of you, take a severe burn if touched
- 4 You can heal minor wounds by touch as long as you are touching the earth i.e. barefoot
- 5 Intricate knot-work carvings appear over any small stone that you pick up
- 6 Intricate knot-work carvings appear over any wood surface, (doors, tables) that you touch
- 7 You become uncomfortable if away from a forest or wilderness
- 8 Woodland spirits find you intriguing and may try to lure and trap you
- 9 Nature spirits of least power find themselves unable to disobey your voice
- 10 You loose you magic while you are not in physical contact with the earth: i.e. barefoot

Evil and Malice

- 1 Any spells or relics crafted against evil do an extra rank of damage to you.
- 2 Wards or relics charmed against evil glow red when you pass.
- 3 The spirits of anyone you kill with magic return as a wraith of least power and haunt you.
- 4 Your flesh shrivels and you begin to look like a walking corpse.
- 5 You find sunlight painful but not unbearable.
- 6 You can no longer stomach cooked food and must instead eat only raw flesh
- 7 Anyone who touches or is touched by you suffers a deep wound.
- 8 Animals panic and bolt in your presence. Small animals may die of fright.
- 9 Anyone you talks to must make a Test of Will or feel overwhelming fear.
- 10 You are engulfed by fire. Treat this as a Menace 9 blast to the whole body.

Fire and Light

- 1 Your eyes now look fiery and flickering in dim light
- 2 You can control the shape and colour of small puffs of smoke by concentration
- 3 You can pick up a small natural flame out of a natural fire and carry it about
- 4 You can cause a single crystal or gemstone to glow with fiery light by concentration
- 5 Gain Fiery Touch: 1-2 sparks, 3-6 cause a minor burn, 7-10 take a minor burn
- 6 Natural fires burn brighter and leap higher when you pass
- 7 You can control the shape and colour of campfire sized blazes by concentration
- 8 You can light small fires on flammable material by touch and by passing a test of Willpower
- 9 You are immediately blasted by a 4 foot radius column of fire – take a Menace 6 burn
- 10 You are immediately blasted by a 8 foot radius column of fire – take a Menace 8 burn

Harm and Injury

- 1 Your blood becomes poisonous leaving you wracked with pain
- 2 Your shadow now wilts plants
- 3 You now bleed from your eyes whenever you cast a spell
- 4 Age ten years in a matter of minutes
- 5 Your skins shrivels and withers, making you look like a living corpse
- 6 You now cough up blood constantly, permanently losing one level of Fortitude
- 7 Animals fear you: dogs growl, horses sweat, cats hiss in your presence
- 8 Runes or relics crafted against darkness glow red when you are within ten feet
- 9 You find sunlight very painful, but not quite unbearable
- 10 You can no longer stomach any food except raw flesh



Healing

- 1 You can now heal minor wounds by touch and concentration
- 2 You become younger by five years in a matter of moments
- 3 Your blood, when dripped on the ground, bursts into flowers and plants
- 4 The next wound you take will heal in minutes
- 5 Your blood when mixed with wine will create a potion that heals the wounds of the drinker
- 6 Your natural life-span increases five years
- 7 You now feel the pain of any injury you cause to another
- 8 You can take a wound from another and give it to yourself by touch and concentration
- 9 Any non-enchanted weapon you hold for longer than five minutes turns to dust
- 10 You now suffer the same wounds as those that you inflict on others

Gaud and Flash

- 1 Gain the ability to speak to one type or bird or animal of Storyteller's choice.
- 2 Gain the ability to mimic any voice.
- 3 Gain the ability to mimic any animal or bird sound
- 4 Your eyes now subtly change colour according to your mood
- 5 One feature of your face or body becomes more attractive in colour or shape.
- 6 Your eyes glow when you become passionate or emotional
- 7 Any object you hold looks older and more worn than it really is
- 8 Any idle attention is at least briefly drawn to you if you enter a room or crowd
- 9 Illusions now affect you as if they were real and solid
- 10 Enchanted creatures find you intriguing and will follow and ask questions

The Green of Summer and Spring

- 1 If you harm or cut down a living tree then you will lose you ability to cast spells for a week
- 2 Plants and trees now untangle and move aside for you to pass
- 3 Plants grow noticeably larger and wilder overnight wherever you sleep the night
- 4 Your eye and hair now changes colour with the seasons
- 5 Trees near you place of dwelling change permanently to live in your favourite season
- 6 Fruits ripen for you upon holding them
- 7 Dead wood you touch is magically covered with intricate knot-work patterns
- 8 Take an extra level of damage from fires, natural or otherwise
- 9 Dead wood you touch (i.e. staffs, tables), magically sprouts shoots, roots and green leaves
- 10 You loose the ability to work magic at all unless you are holding a staff

Moon and Night

- 1 Your eyes glow with a pale moonlit sheen
- 2 Your eyes turn black as night
- 3 During the night you can heal minor wounds by touch
- 4 Your hair turns black with silvery streaks
- 5 Your skin turns pale and ivory-like
- 6 Shadows gather about you during the day and rooms grow darker when you enter
- 7 Candles and torches have a 4/10 chance of snuffing out when you pass within a foot
- 8 Minor spirits of the dark become attracted to you and begin to follow you about
- 9 During the day you suffer a -1 penalty to Willpower
- 10 You lose the ability to cast any spell during the noon hour



Storms and Skies

- 1 You can tell exactly what the weather will be like in the next 24 hours by staring at the sky
- 2 You can change the direction, but not speed, of wind by concentration
- 3 Your eyes light up like lightning when you become angry
- 4 You can summon harmless, if showy, lightning at your hands by concentration
- 5 Spirits of the air now find you attractive and follow you about
- 6 Air temperature drops, and candles may snuff out when you enter a room
- 7 Your skin feels deathly cold to the touch, and you now cannot die of exposure to cold
- 8 Your hair is constantly caught in a strong wind that affects no one else
- 9 Storm clouds rain and wind follows you about always, almost but never quite catching you
- 10 You now find buildings painfully uncomfortable, and find it impossible to sleep under a roof

Raw Magic

- 1 Your eyes glow silver in moon or starlight
- 2 Your hair turns snowy white
- 3 You can sense when someone is lying by passing a Test of Willpower
- 4 Magical relics glow with pale blue light when you come within ten feet
- 5 Small globes of coloured light permanently dance around you
- 6 Your children will inherit your taints
- 7 The air temperature drops when you enter a room and chill winds follow you
- 8 Your shadow, while remaining attached to your feet, now moves of its own accord
- 9 Horses sweat, shy dogs growl, and cats hiss when you pass
- 10 Any charm or ward against enchantment affects you

Rivers and Lakes

- 1 Water you collect is purified of diseases or toxins
- 2 Water that you breathe over will heal up to shallow wounds when drunk by others (but not by self)
- 3 You can see through water no matter how murky
- 4 You can put out a small natural fire, no larger than a campfire by concentration
- 5 Where you rest for the night there is a 1/10 chance of a spring bursting from the earth
- 6 Water spirits find you intriguing and will try to lure and trap you
- 7 Water that you breath over will heal up to deep wounds when drunk by others (but not by self)
- 8 You can no longer drink anything but natural water i.e. no beer, wine, juices of fruits
- 9 Watercourses, springs and rivers swell noticeably when you stand within ten feet
- 10 Anywhere you sleep more than seven nights starts to become swampy and wet

Winter and Snows

- 1 Your hair turns snowy white
- 2 Your eyes turn a silvery white and appear almost without iris or pupil
- 3 Anything your touch for more than a minute gathers a harmless frosting of ice and rime
- 4 You no longer suffer discomfort in cold, and cannot die from it
- 5 You now find spring or summer heat unbearably hot
- 6 Your hair becomes permanently laced with crystals of ice
- 7 Anyone who touches or is touched by you suffers a minor wound from the cold
- 8 You can cause normal water to freeze by breathing on it
- 9 Minor, spectral and somewhat useless spirits of the snow and ice begin to follow you about
- 10 You lose the ability to work magic during the month of mid-summer



Disciplines - Blood of Magic

Gaining New Disciplines

The only means a non-magical character has of gaining a magical discipline is through the stealing it away from some other magical being. The first godslayers did this by drinking the blood of 'gods': the most powerful of the spirits called the Wild Folk. But, magic can be stolen by drinking the blood, or eating the heart of any number of enchanted creatures, lesser Wild Folk, dragons, trolde, even other sorcerers or Aelfan.

Most mortals, Duergar, and Aelfan frown upon cannibalism, although it is not unknown, and though Ettin consider eating the flesh of a respected enemy to be a show of respect, they view the murder of someone for their blood with distaste.

When a character drinks a full small cauldron of blood from any of the following creatures, use the following tables to determine the effect. Eating a heart adds +1 to the roll. Use a d10 and add what bonuses are accrued.

Spirit of Least Enchantment	Add +1 to the roll
Spirit of Lesser Enchantment	Add +2 to the roll
Spirit of Greater Enchantment	Add +3 to the roll
Spirit of Grander Enchantment	Add +4 to the roll
Spirit of High Enchantment	Add +5 to the roll

Sorcerer or Shaman	Add +0 to the roll
Aelfan Folk	Add +3 to the roll

Trolde	Add +2 to the roll
Dragon	Add +4 to the roll

- 1 Gain a taint, rolled at random, or chosen by Storyteller at Storyteller's discretion
- 2 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 1, of Storyteller's choice
- 3 Gain two taints, rolled at random, or chosen by Storyteller at Storyteller's discretion
- 4 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 2, of Storyteller's choice
- 5 Gain three taints, rolled at random, or chosen by Storyteller at Storyteller's discretion
- 6 Gain two magical disciplines, at Rank 1 of Storyteller's choice
- 7 Gain four taints, rolled at random, or chosen by Storyteller at Storyteller's discretion
- 8 Gain two magical disciplines, at Rank 2 of Storyteller's choice
- 9 Gain five taints, rolled at random, or chosen by Storyteller at Storyteller's discretion
- 10 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 1, of Player's choice
- 11 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 2, of Player's choice
- 12 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 3, of Player's choice
- 13 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 4, of Player's choice
- 14 Gain a magical discipline at Rank 5, of Player's choice
- 15 Drinker becomes Aelfan

Blood of Magic: Godhood

To be enchanted, charmed, timeless, to be remembered through the ages. To be a god. This is the dream of many who go out into the world seeking adventure, fame, and power. For those who drink of enchanted blood, who eat the dragon's heart, to these come the charms of the sorcerous. And eventually magics so powerful that hero becomes a legend and the legend becomes a myth. And the mortal becomes a god on earth.

Aspects

Goodhood is measured against your characters total sorcerous power. The cumulative ranks of your character's disciplines are used as a yardstick. If your character has two disciplines, one at Rank Two, and one at Rank Three, then her total cumulative rank is five.

Cumulative Rank Chart

Zero	Mortal	Your natural lifespan is fifty years
Five	Charmed	Your natural lifespan is now seventy five years
Ten	Ensorcelled	Your natural lifespan is now one hundred years
Fifteen	Long-Lived	Your natural lifespan is now two hundred years
Twenty	Immortal	You can not die of sickness or old age, but still grow old
Twenty-Five	Timeless	You cease aging
Thirty	Godlike	You can only die if beheaded, burned or stuck through the heart

Enchanted Relics

This weapon, named Hrunting, was made of brass, dyed with drops of poison, and dipped in blood. Hrunting had never failed its wielder, yet Unferth did not have the courage to wield it himself, but gave it to Beowulf.

Beowulf

N. L. GOODRIDGE'S Translation

Relics can gather magic about them through any number of ways. An object left too long in a place rich with magic will sop up some of the enchantment itself. Likewise an object used to work great sorrow, or associated with heroic deeds, or feats of wonder may acquire a little of the magic of those intangible things. Relic can also be crafted through the crafter working a little of the magic of their own love, lust, hate or anger into the object.

Arms and Armour

In Wayfarer's Song, the power of enchanted weapons and armour is measured on the same scale as all other magic. Weapons of Least Enchantment are the least powerful, while Weapons of High Enchantment are the most powerful.

Use the following rule to determine the advantage of a weapon or armour of enchanted quality:

- Armour of lesser enchantment does not protect against weapons of greater enchantment.
- A weapon and armour of equal enchantment negate one another's magic.
- Armour of greater enchantment cannot be penetrated by weapons of lesser enchantment.

Thus, a sword of Greater Enchantment with a menace of 8 when used against chain mail of...

No Enchantment	Provides no protection at all. The menace remains 8.
Least Enchantment	Provides no protection at all. The menace remains 8.
Lesser Enchantment	Provides no protection at all. The menace remains 8.
Greater Enchantment	Provides normal protection. The menace is now 5.
Grander Enchantment	Provides complete protection – the sword cannot cut through.
High Enchantment	Provides complete protection – the sword cannot cut through.



Wielding a Relic

By using an enchanted relic in earnest a character is said to be wielding it. Whenever a character uses a relic they open themselves up to the power of the magic that dwells therein. Such magic is both corrupting and addictive and for those of weak will it may be that the relic dominates them and not the other way around.

Potency of Relic	Requires Test of Will only if...
Least Enchantment	If a character with willpower 2 or less wields it
Lesser Enchantment	If a character with willpower 4 or less wields it
Greater Enchantment	If a character with willpower 6 or less wields it
Grander Enchantment	If a character with willpower 8 or less wields it
High Enchantment	Whenever it is wielded by any character

Addiction

Each time a character wields an Enchanted Relic and fails their Test of Willpower she progresses further into a deluded state of fear and lust centred on the artefact in question. The ranks are cumulative beginning with slight anxiety and ending with a state of obsession in which the will of the relic itself becomes all important in the characters mind. In effect a character that reaches *Stage Five* in this process has lost so much of their free will that they are no longer playable and should be retired as surly as if a dragon had devoured him.

Stage One: Anxiety

You become afraid of loosing the Enchanted Artefact in question – let's call it your *Precious*. You keep it by your side or hidden on your person whenever it is not in use.

Stage Two: Fear

You know that everyone else is jealous of you and your *Precious*. You will not let them see it unless you have to use it and will take any comment about your precious as a personal comment.

Stage Three: Obsession

You take out your precious in secret and gloat over it, polishing, cleaning and caressing it. When it is sensible you will always use the *Precious* above any similar item. For instance if your precious is a sword you will never use another sword.

Stage Four: Increased Obsession

You use you *Precious* to the exclusion of any other tool or means you might have of solving a problem or safely passing a danger. If someone

tries to take you precious away you will kill him and justify it for the good of your *precious*.

Stage Five: Maddness

You have descended into a spiral of madness. How this is expressed depends upon the will of the relic. A relic made with healing magic might force you to ceaselessly travel as a healing beggar. A sword might drive you to kill anyone who knows you have the relic in the first place. A cloak of the unseen may make you as secretive as a shadow, driving you to hide away in a cave or deep forest so that no one can find you to steal your *precious*.

Stage Six: Undeath

Magic does not respect borders of life and death and the power of your artefact along with your own intractable will to live and care for it will slowly eat away at your life-blood and replace it with magic. You become a hollow thing an undead being whose flesh may wither or turn to dust or shadow. Again the form you take depends upon the magic that courses through your *precious*. A Cathartic Relic will preserve you in a way that is not wholly painful or unpleasant but a Destructive one will make you a monster, wracked by torment and tortured into a shape fit to be its servant.

Is every relic cursed?

Yes and no. A theme running through Wayfarer's Song is that magic will eventually overpower and corrupt those who try to tame it – especially those who are overcome by greed or have a weak will. Having said that remember that a character with a strong enough Willpower is immune to the affects of all but a Relic of High Enchantment.



Part Five: The Game

*The Life, the delight and the sorrow
Of troubles and chivalrous years
That knew not of night nor of morrow,
Of hopes or of fears.
The wars and the woes and the glories
That quicken, and lighten and rain
From the clouds of its chronicled stories
The passion, the pride, and the pain*

SWINBURNE

An RPG is at its heart a game in which the players are central. This is important to remember when plotting out stories for your players. A clever plot in which the player characters are little more than observers is seldom fun for your players. RPG plots thrive on interaction, and resolution of conflict by the player character's themselves.

RPG plots are also, by and large, simple; far simpler than even the most basic pulp novel. An RPG plot also needs to be open-ended. It cannot have a definite ending in view, only a set of prospective endings, which the players may or may not arrive at. Even trickier are the instances when your players invent solutions to conflicts that you, as Storyteller, never envisioned. In situations like this you will simply have to roll with the story - make it up on the fly - and hope for the best.

Personal Plot-Hooks

One way to provide material to work with in a game is to ask each player to provide a personal motive or reason for adventuring. The reason can be as complex as a page-long background full of intrigue and mystery or a short one-line description about how the character has always wanted to own a great deal of money.

Conflict in the Game

In the myths of the north certain plot conflicts appear and reappear through the sagas. Pitting the heroes of the story against outsiders, or monsters, or the very elements of nature, conflict is the keystone of any story. The following are some ideas for conflict as a plot-hook in the Wayfarer's Song setting.

The Accidental Wrong

A wrong has been done, either by accident or by the thoughtless actions of a friend, companion or relative, and must be put right - one way or another. In the Accidental Wrong the central characters are sometimes led into committing a wrong by an unscrupulous sort who will then claim recompense. Sometimes both victim and wrongdoer are innocent of malicious intent, but a wrong remains a wrong and must be amended.

The heroes of the story are invited to join a wrestling match or friendly contest of wooden swords and shields. Such matches often have a grand prize at stake. When one of the heroes takes part she accidentally kills another competitor. Perhaps it is not entirely the character's fault. Perhaps the wrestler has a heart attack or chokes on his tongue. Either way the wrong is done and the family of the dead are entitled to claim recompense. Will they ask for gold or silver, or something more valuable? Will the characters agree, and keep their honour, or ignore the right of the family and dishonour themselves?

Out in the woods and wilds the urge to casually hunt beasts for meat or pelts is often too much for a character to resist. If your players are often setting snares or hunting then this may make them a little more wary. One day when hunting a beast, perhaps a wolf, or a hawk, or even an otter, the heroes find to their horror that the body of the slain beast has changed, upon death, into that of a young man with a cloak of skin about his shoulders. They may try to seek out the boy's parents, or hide the crime, but soon enough the boy's father comes looking for him. His family are all of a sorcerous nature and his son was hunting for the dinner table in the guise of a beast. He is within rights to demand a high price in gold for the son's murder. Will he? Will he ask for something more rare? More dangerous to acquire?

The heroes find themselves surprised, outnumbered, over powered and surrounded by something or someone who, it seems, has chosen to waylay them for no good reason. Perhaps a large band of Ettin, or a sorcerer with a huge swarm of elementals at his command. The heroes are offered the chance to go free and unhurt if



they perform some trivial, and seemingly harmless, task. Give a rose to the daughter of a local king. Go to the woods and cut down a certain tree. Stop the first person they meet and ask him a riddle. Whatever the task is, it has some hidden meaning or menace and the heroes, so long as they keep their word will find themselves responsible and blamed for a great wrong. Perhaps the rose was poisoned? The tree a spirit in disguise? The stranger a man who is the subject of a curse and is forced by sorcery to try and answer any riddle until he has the right answer. Perhaps he was on his way to do something important?

A very elderly widower who is a friend or even a father to one of the heroes makes nuisance of himself by one day simply walking into the house of a farmsteader and abducting a daughter to be his new wife. The practise of abducting a wife, once common, is now frowned upon, if still barely tolerated, and the daughter's brothers go immediately to the local lord to demand her return or an outrageous price in gold. The heroes themselves may feel that the old man has gone too far, but he is set in his ways, a bit senile, and simply refuses to admit he has done wrong. The young woman is distraught and refuses to believe that a friend or relative of her abductor could mean her any good. The lord may be understanding of an old man's ways to begin with, but the brothers are persistent, and soon he may take action of his own, unless the heroes can resolve the situation.

The Boast

Boasts that are made can be tricky, sometimes dangerous to live up to. When drunk, or challenged, when one's pride is at stake or one's honour. The boast, made in idle, and then called in can be a powerful hook into a story.

The heroes wake up, rather dazed and a little worse for wear after a night of mead and revelry in the great hall of a small village. Not more than a few moments later and a burly, but equally hung-over, looking young braggart saunters over to them and asks them when they wish to be off. For, so he tells them, they were all quite adamant that a certain dangerous place or beast or person nearby is of no danger at all - to them. One boast led to another. Challenge led to challenge. And today is the day to live up to it all. The heroes however have no recollection of anything. Did they really make these boasts or is the village taking advantage of a group of likely looking

strangers to take care of something that has been plaguing them for a while. Certainly if they argue that they were drunk and didn't know what they said they'll be mocked for cowards who can't handle their mead. What to do?

Heroes are often asked to tell their tales, keen listeners abound near the hearth, wide eyed children and nodding elders. But on one particular night everything the heroes say earns a scoff from somewhere in the shadows of the great hall. The scoffs in time turn to sniggers and then to guffaws. Perhaps it is a burly thane nursing a mug of mead, or a beautiful, but feral looking warrior maiden? Whoever it is, he or she has no respect for the heroes, and makes it clear they he or she is by far a better swordsman, archer, sorcerer or whatsoever it is that the heroes pride themselves upon. If pressed a challenge will be suggested. Something to test their mettle. It is all in good nature of course - or is it? Perhaps there is something darker to the scoffs and derision?

The Challenge

Lone warriors with glowing eyes who guard bridges, an ettin with a knotted axe, a thin and phantom ghost guarding an road that wends like a tunnel through a blackened wood. The ways through the lands of legend are often barred by strange beings, creatures who demand sacrifice, gold or battle to impress them.

The heroes are surprised one day to find a bridge, that they need to cross, bared by an elderly man with a pitted sword. He will not let them pass unless they can best him in three of five short bouts - the winner takes first blood. Whoever accepts the challenge will beat him the first time without any effort. He looks exhausted but rests and takes a drink from a wineskin. In the next bout his fighting prowess has improved - it is a fair fight and he may either win or loose. Again he takes a drink from the wineskin. Now he moves like a young man and with incredible skill. He easily, and with little effort outmatches the challenger. But at the end of the last bout the man seems pleased with himself and offers to let the heroes pass anyway. If any of them show an interest in his wineskin he will offer to sell it to them, for a hefty price. The wine however is quite normal, it is the man who is not old. He has used a small illusion to make himself look old, but is in truth a young, powerful warrior. The heroes will soon discover the ordinary nature of the wine, and find themselves mocked and



laughed at in the next village they come to for falling for the old man's trick. Will they go back looking for revenge with a sword? Or perhaps there are others in the village who have been sorely tricked by the man? Perhaps he comes to visit now and again? Perhaps a less violent, more intelligent plan for revenge may be in order?

The Impostor

Often in the tales of the north shapeshifters and mask-wearers try their hand at tricking others into thinking they are someone of importance, power or wealth. The tricks are usually only found out after a great deal of harm has been done.

The heroes upon their journeys come to a village perched on a small hill with no walls or fortifications, although the surrounding hills and coast are well known for being the haunts of raiders and Vikings. They find that the king of this village has a 'pet' monster - perhaps a tolde or small dragon that lairs nearby and comes to his aid if he calls it. It acts pleasant, even docile around him, and is generally much loved by the villagers. The problem is that the monster is two-natured. As soon as the backs of the villagers are turned he goes back to his feral ways, killing and devouring anyone hapless enough to cross his path. The king has heard rumours but dismissed them. He will not hear a word against his pet. Will the heroes take matters into their own hands and risk the wrath of the villagers? Will the monster hunt them down if it learns that they have found out about its trickery? Can the king be moved to believe the heroes?

A wayworn warrior arrives at the gates of one of the hero's home village and asks for shelter for one or more nights. He seems pleasant, and proves himself to be quite friendly and charming, and tells many brave stories. At the same time rumour reaches the town of a raid on a nearby settlement by a longship that is plundering the coastline. The guest is no other than the Viking chief dressed up in fine clothing and has a band of men ready to swarm the town as soon as everyone is asleep and he opens the gates for them. Will he carry out this plan easily? Perhaps he will try to drug everyone's food, or ply likely warriors with more and more mead? Will his words or actions arouse suspicion? Will the heroes rally in time if the attack comes?

The Test of Good Graces

Heroes are often put to the test as much as by the patience they need to deal with an ill situation as with the brute skill and strength they possess to make things right if an ill situation turns worse.

The heroes arrive tired, wet, and cold at the gates of a fine, walled fortress. Warm lights from within shine invitingly. The place looks good for a nights respite, but upon the opening of the great doors the heroes find themselves confronted by a terrible sight. The master of the fortress is no less than a great, sharp toothed, stony skinned Ettin, and he has come personally to greet and invite the weary travellers to his table. He seems friendly enough, but will the heroes trust such a large and monstrous host, even past his gate? To make matters worse, when they sit down to eat a roast is served. Once the heroes have begun eating the Ettin asks them how they like the meat. Upon a reply, he casually mentions that, 'it is quite tender, I think. Yet when I killed him he said he would be tough and stringy, and that I shouldn't bother. How odd.' Then continues eating without concern. How will the heroes react, and what, exactly, are they eating? The Ettin will no doubt take offence if his hospitality is spurned.

The heroes are drawn by chance to the sound of someone sobbing in a wooded and remote place. They find an old woman, crouched on a rock and sobbing hysterically. When pressed as to why she is so distraught she explains that her three sons have come back home after being away at sea for months and are generally wrecking her home, causing her ruin, and refusing to leave. If the heroes offer to move them on or convince them that they should respect their mother she will accept, but make it quite clear that she doesn't want her sons hurt. Upon arriving at the small hovel they discover, not three living sons, but three draugnar, dripping wet, large as oxen, and bloated and blackened by death. The sons died at sea but have returned as undead to their home. Draugnar are powerful undead, and though these three seem content to mop around the house breaking things and scaring the cats, they need to be convinced to go restfully to their grave... one way or another. All the while of course the old woman hovers nearby, clutching her apron and weeping. Surely the heroes wouldn't hurt her sons, no matter what they have become, or would they?



The heroes spy from a distance a large flock of black ravens and crows circling their path. If they continue on they will find a battlefield, recently fought over by two opposing bands of men. There are a dozen bodies strewn over the ground, but perhaps the fight is continuing somewhere close by because there are still cries from the dying. If the heroes follow the cries they will find that two of the warriors are still alive, but each if of an opposing kingdom. Both will threaten, cajole and promise great things if the heroes heal the one, but slay the other. How will the heroes deal with this difficult Situation. Will allies of one or both sides arrive?

The heroes meet a haggard man of noble bearing and birth accompanied by a few loyal retainers. The man tells them a sad story. He was once the just and rightful king of a dominion not far away, but there came a day when his uncle, growing greedy and jealous seized the throne and exiled the rightful king under pain of death. Now the land groans under the weight of unjust taxes and terrible, draconian laws. The old king, however, has a plan, a means to seize back the crown but needs just a few more strong arms to help him. The only problem for the heroes is that the story the king is telling is not quite true - he was once a king but it was he who was an unjust tyrant. The usurper has proved to be a kind, and just ruler much loved by the local populace. Will the heroes realise this in time?

The Poisoned Gift

Gifts given to heroes are not always what they seem. A cloak may be woven of poisoned thread, a ring may be cursed, a sword may hunger for blood that the hero wishes not to spill.

A king or queen has received a gift of a jar of perculair, sweet and aromatic mead. But once the mead is drunk the ruler immediately begins to crave more of the drink. Riders are sent through the realm to discover the source of the drink, but none can be found.

A week passes and a strange eldritch aelfan sorcerer arrives at the court of the ruler offering more of the addictive mead. But there is a provisio. He wants something in return that the ruler cannot bear to give. Perhaps it is a relic, stolen, which rightfully belongs to the aelfan. Perhaps it is the ruler's only daughter? Perhaps it is something stranger and more charmed.

The ruler offers something else, gold, gems, riches and the aelfan without indication of joy or anger takes it, gives over the mead and leaves.

Every week thereafter the aelfan arrives again and offers the same drink and asks for the same price. Again the ruler gives other riches and other payments. The kingdom is being ruined and the lords and thanes of the ruler seek out heroes to help. Will the heroes be able to find a cure for the addiction? Will they confront the aelfan? Follow him back to his stronghold? Devise some clever plan to trick the aelfan into divulging the secrets of the mead.

The Savage Beast

Strange beasts, ancient dragons and terrible trolde are forever a bane of men, dwarf and elf. And when savage beasts roam the night, heroes are called upon to slay the beast.

A strange monster is nightly raiding a village, hillfort or stronghold. First it took sheep, then horses, then dogs, and now it is taking people. All the warriors of the tribe or clan are unable to fight the monster - in fact they are as much prey as anything else. Will the heroes be able to face the beast toe-to-toe or might they have to resort to other means. Traps and tricks and weaknesses to be exploited?

A great and fearsome wild beast, be it a boar, bear or wolf has roamed the local countryside for years. It is famed, but also growing older and the local king or queen organises a hunt to once and for all bring the creature to ground. A fine reward is offered to the hunter who brings in the trophy.

Rumours of a fell beast gloating over a hoard of ill-gotten gold reach the ears of the heroes. If they decide to put an end to the creature and claim its riches then all will go well until they actually confront the beast. The creature will not fight but beg to be left alone. If pressed it will claim to be a mortal under a curse and bound by magic to protect the hoard of an absentee duergar - a duergar who went a-wandering on a journey years ago but has not yet returned. Will the heroes be less than heroic and kill the pitiable creature anyway? Or might they be able to hunt down the duergar? Discover why he has vanished and get from him the cure for the curse?

The Theft

Heroes are often called upon to put right thefts, restore the stolen to the rightful owner, hunt



down the culprit and if needs be, be the bringer of justice.

An Ettin has stolen several relics of great power and importance to a local kingdom, and is demanding an unfair and ridiculous price for their return. Perhaps he wants to be declared ruler? Perhaps he wants the ten most beautiful women in the land given to him?

The Heroes are hired to hunt down the Ettin and bring back that which he stole.

A thief has stolen a simple gold crown from a shrine. But what the thief, and indeed the priests themselves, did not know is that the crown is more than it appears. It had woven into it a powerful spell that has kept a dragon that dwells deep beneath the shrine in a huge cavern asleep for a hundred years.

As soon as the crown is gone the shrine begins to tremble and quake. A crevice opens and an acolyte crawling down into the earth looks through a thin crack and sees the rousing, half-awake dragon.

The dragon is an ancient elder of the world, and probably beyond the power of the heroes to subdue even if they could get to it before it fully wakes? Can the thief be found in time to restore the crown to the shrine?

The Untenable Bargain

Bargains that have been made, but cannot be kept for one reason or another are a common theme in the legends of the north. Perhaps what was on offer was too good to resist, or too good to be true? Perhaps the bargain was struck by parties who never intended to keep their word? Or the bargain may have been struck out of desperation, by those who are now equally desperate not to uphold their end.

An Ettin arrives at the gates of a player character's home town. He offers to rebuild the village wall out of enchanted and hardened stone, an offer the village elders find hard to resist. But, what he demands in return is outrageous. Perhaps he asks for every horse the village owns. Perhaps he asks for the hand of the chieftain's only daughter. Will the village agree? Will they keep their word to the letter or find a way out of the deal?

The player characters encounter a wagon of travelling Duergar. They have many great wonders and treasures in their cart, but their prices are high. They may ask for a night in the bed with any female characters who may be present. They may ask to take two of a character's fingers and then - once the bargain is struck - suggest that they would like his thumbs. They may ask for the colour of a character's eyes and then take so much that she is left blind. Can the player's go back on their bargain? Will they?

The player characters hear tell of a queen, so besieged by a monstrous creature, perhaps a dragon or trolde, that he has offered either great treasures or the heir to his kingdom to anyone who can rid him of the monster. But, when the player characters arrive at the hillfort they discover that another has beaten them to the kill. An unlikely and ugly Duergar has procured the monster's head, and now the village is ready to riot over the prospect of keeping the bargain. Was the monster even real? Did the duergar really slay it? Perhaps another hero slew the monster and took not the whole head but the tongue? The duergar may then have found the body and taken the head for himself? But what has delayed the genuine monster-slayer?

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