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THE ADVENTURE ROLEPLAYING GAME
PREVIEW KIT

RUNE RPG RELEASE

Hack-and-slash comes into its own with this roleplaying adaptation of Human Head Studios' brutal **RUNE™** video game for Macintosh and PC. You and your band of bloodthirsty Vikings pursue epic adventure and glory in a land of Scandinavian myth, smashing anything that gets in your way. From the icy depths of Niflheim to the whispering evil of Svartalfheim, only the gods, or perhaps the apocalypse of Ragnarok itself, could hope to deter your ravaging course.

The **RUNE** roleplaying game includes stunning concept art from the video game, and stays true to its roots with its "competitive roleplaying" approach; players earn victory points during their exploits, and a winner is named at the end of the campaign ... that's right, **you can win** this roleplaying game! And for die-hard combat fiends whose Game Moderator may be contemplating defection to a "storytelling" system, **RUNE** offers a group GMing experience to lighten the load, in which players each design an encounter that the GM inserts into the larger plot. For added background depth, the **RUNE** roleplaying system is based on a streamlined version of *Ars Magica™*, making it an easy, entry point into Mythic Europe™, or a way to spice up combat for your covenant.

Copies of Human Head Studios' **RUNE** demo will be included in each hardcover copy of Atlas Games' roleplaying game. With this partnership, **RUNE** promises to bring the gore back to gaming!

Available in March 2001



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The Pillaging Has Only Begun...

CONTINUE YOUR VIKING ADVENTURES WITH THE RUNE ROLEPLAYING GAME

...Coming In 2001 From Atlas Games



In the **RUNE Roleplaying Game**, you seize the reins of action as you and your friends create your own fierce adventures and further explore the world of **RUNE**.

In a roleplaying game, you create your own heroes, grab fistfuls of dice, and watch their action-packed adventures unfold before your eyes. You use rules to determine whether you hit a foe, how much damage you do to him, if he hits you back, whether you can jump that raging river, and so on.

In a traditional roleplaying game, one player becomes the Game Master, who controls everything about the world, inventing its story lines and populating its monster-filled subterranean passageways. He gets to be in charge, but loses out on the opportunity to send a mighty-thewed character of his own screaming through the monsters' lairs, swinging his bloody battle-axe. Everybody else sticks to his chosen role of player, enjoying the battles but having no real say over the direction of the game. Although they're called "games," traditional roleplaying games offer no end-point, no overall winner. The game goes on indefinitely, and, supposedly, "everyone is a winner."

To that, the **RUNE RPG** says, bah! What kind of Viking attitude is that?

THIS IS A GAME YOU CAN WIN!

- A winner is declared at the end of every session.
- You also keep track of an overall winner over a series of games.
- You can play **RUNE** in tournament format, or in a league.
- In **RUNE**, you score points every time your mighty sword slashes your foe. Naturally, you get extra points every time you strike a fatal blow — even if you've stolen the kill from a fellow player who's whittled the enemy down for you! You also get points whenever you succeed at one of your non-combat abilities, when you bring back bushels of silver to enhance your family's stature, or when you act in a suitably Viking manner.
- There is no single Game Moderator. Everybody gets a chance to pillage and slay!

THE WORLD OF RUNE

- Everyone takes a turn running and creating scenarios. Players build scenarios from a checklist, using a set number of points: things that endanger the heroes cost points; elements that might benefit them add points. (So do terrain features, which make the fights more interesting and challenging.) So you pay points for traps and tricky tests of skill, but gain them for including treasures or easy challenges.
- And, even when you're the GM, *you can still win!*

If that's not enough to convince you to haunt your local game store until our dragon-prowed long-boats deliver shipments of the **RUNE RPG**, let's take a closer look at its features.

(Note that we are still honing these rules in our dwarven cyber-forge, and that some details may change between the writing of this pre-view kit and the release of the actual game.)

The world of **RUNE** offers both danger and glory to young Viking warriors such as yourselves. Enormous serpents infest the seas, ready to wrap their tails around longships and drag their crews down to watery graves. Giants stride through mountain passes, their noses hungry for the smell of manflesh.



Elves both light and dark dwell in woods too deep for men to survive in. Deep in the mountains lie trackless miles of caverns and passageways, infested with all manner of creatures, from lowly but devious goblins to massive wyrms who can devour an entire raiding party without filling their monstrous bellies.

Men are but pawns in a war between gods, a battle which will reach its catastrophic climax when the day of Ragnarok comes. The chieftain of the gods dwells in Asgard, where he rules over two joined families of gods: the Aesir and Vanir. He is Odin, also called the All-Father, who cast out an eye and hung himself from the cosmic ash tree to gain divine wisdom. His son, Thor of the thundering hammer, is our warrior god, spurring us on to win glory in battle. Balder is Odin's fair-haired and glowing son of innocence and light. The prophecies of the three weird women, called the Norns, tell us that someday Balder will be slain by his half-brother, the cruel and ambitious Loki. Loki now writhes in chains in a secret chamber far below the earth, imprisoned by Odin and Thor in an attempt to stave off this predicted murder; for when Balder dies at Loki's hand, the final battle between giants and gods will commence. The grim ship Naglfar, made from the nail parings of the dead, will lose its anchor as the sea monster Jormungandr, one of the monstrous spawn of Loki, makes its way towards the shores of Asgard, the godly realm. Loki's other progeny, Fenrir the wolf and Hel, queen of the damned, head an army to fight our gods. The

RUNE ROLEPLAYING GAME OVERVIEW

prophecies tell us that the forces of both good and evil shall be utterly destroyed in this inevitable conflict, and, with it, our mortal world.

You see that our legends are as dark and gloom-enshrouded as the cold and foggy fjords in which we make our homes. We believe in no ultimate victory of good. Destruction is the final fate of man and god alike. The best we can do is forestall this inescapable doom, by keeping Loki's forces in check. This we do with axe and sword, felling those who serve him, and those who stand in the way of this goal. The winding caverns and passageways beneath the mountains and fjords connect our mortal realm to those of the gods. Warriors who fight well will win the favor of the gods, gaining the superhuman powers needed to cross over to those mythic places and thrive despite their many perils.

The world we live in, the place of births and harvests and feast days, is called Midgard. We have explored it widely, having raided the homes of many other peoples who share the world with us. They are ignorant of Ragnarok's approach, and worship gods unknown to us. Though their beliefs are foolish, it is not for us to convert them to our ways. They will be but bystanders in the ultimate battle between light and darkness.

On the edges of these distant realms are found the places of myth and story, which lie on the border between Midgard and the lands of the gods. To the East is Jotunheim, the mountainous place where giants stride. Further north than even we dare to dwell is

Nidavellir, the underground realm of the Dwarves. Svartalfheim is the dense and woody domain of the Dark Elves, who will march in Loki's armies in the final battles. Though these can be reached by arduous far-travel, shortcuts exist to each of these realms, and more, by following the network of caves and passageways beneath the earth. Only those who enjoy the blessings of the gods may use these faster — and more hazardous — routes. This shadowy domain is known by many names, but we call it the Underworld.

As you delve through the Underworld, your exploits will come to the attention of the many gods of the Aesir and Vanir. They will gift you with great powers that ordinary men can only envy. But beware their machinations. Not all of the gods believe that Ragnarok brings all-encompassing doom.

Many of them scheme to position themselves to rule the existence they believe will follow Ragnarok. Perhaps these ambitious gods are correct; if so, it would be wise to accept their gifts, in preparation for the rewards of this unknowable new day. But if they are wrong, they merely play into the hands of Loki, and hasten our rush towards destruction. In any event, there are few gifts which do not come with a price. The more gifts you accept from a single god, the more his puppet you become. At times you will find your sword hand moved, or stilled, by your patron god, as he uses you to advance his scheme of the moment. It is best to take gifts only from gods you can trust, or to take but a few gifts from each god. And though it is possible to earn the dark gifts of Loki and his monstrous kin, the perils of such greed are vast.



RULES BASICS

Your hero is deep in the underworld, in a strange cavern which seems to swallow up and feed upon the light from his torch. He steps carefully forward. Suddenly, a net falls upon him! Can he avoid the net, or will he be trapped?

Of course he can avoid the net! He is a hero, and heroes make their own luck by the strength of their backs, the speed of their feet, and the quickness of their wit.

In this example, you play the role of your hero while a competing player is currently GM. His notes tell him how difficult it is for your hero to evade the net.

Your character's game statistics include Characteristics, Abilities, and Gifts. Characteristics measure his innate mental and bodily talents, including his strength to wield an axe, his speed to hit an enemy before the enemy hits him, and his wit to gather information before he enters a fight. Abilities are the everyday, non-magical skills your character learned in the course of his upbringing, from sparring to shipbuilding. Gifts are extraordinary powers granted by the various gods. They allow your character to do things that ordinary people can't do, but may from time cause him to fall under the control of the god to whom he stands in the greatest debt.

When you try to do something in the game, and the outcome of your attempt is uncertain, you roll a ten-sided die and add it to your bonus — a number derived from some combination of your charac-



teristics, abilities, and gifts. The GM then compares it to a Difficulty number. The tougher the task, the higher the number.

Various circumstances set out in the rules may change your die roll either upwards or downwards. A number added to your die roll is called an increase. A number subtracted from your die roll is a decrease.

Sometimes something bad will happen to your character and he will suffer a decrease to every roll he makes until the problem is rectified, either by your actions, or through the simple passage of time. This state is known as impairment. Each point of decrease is called an impairment point.

Often the difference between your result and the Difficulty becomes important.

So, that net was falling on your hero. The GM for the encounter has decided that it is Tough to evade — that is, that your bonus plus die roll must equal or exceed a target number of 9. The GM tells you which Characteristics, Abilities, or Gifts to derive your

TARGET NUMBER CHART

Degree of Challenge	Difficulty
Very Easy	3
Average	6
Tough	9
Very Tough	12
Nearly Impossible	15
Superhuman	16+

bonus from; you can also use the rules to remind the GM of other applicable game statistics he may not have thought of. In this case, you derive your bonus from your Quickness characteristic (which is 3), plus your Swiftmess of Sleipnir gift (which is 2). Thus you add a total of 5 to your die roll. You roll a 3. 5 plus 3 is 8 — one less than the target number of 9. Looks like your hero will indeed fall prey to that net. But don't despair — as a mighty-thewed Viking, you have more than one way of overcoming the dangers of the Underworld.

Almost any action undertaken by a warrior in the heroic but doom-laden world of **RUNE** carries with it the potential for both overwhelming achievement or devastating misfortune; this is accomplished with open-ended rolls. Whenever you roll a 10, you score a triumph. Reroll, take the result and add it to the 10 you already have. Unless, that is, that result also comes up as a 10, in which case you add that, too.

Junie rolls a 10. She rerolls, getting a 3. She adds it to her original 10, for a result of 13.

Janie rolls a 10. She rerolls, getting another 10. She rerolls, getting yet another 10. She rerolls, getting a 6. Her result is a 36.

However, if you get a 1 on your initial roll, you suffer a botch. Reroll and make the result a negative number. If you get a 10 on the rerolled die, it becomes part of your negative total, and you keep rolling. Further 10s are also rerolled and added.

Junie rolls a 1. She rerolls and gets a 4. Her result is -4.

Junie rolls a 1. She rerolls, and gets a 10. She rerolls, getting a 7. Her result is -17.

CREATING YOUR HERO

The hero creation process is as follows:

Step 1: Name Your Hero

Your hero needs a suitably Norse name. Odin will not smile upon a Fred or Jimbo. He must be a Thorleik or Ansgar to earn the favor of the gods.

Step 2: Buy Characteristics

In this step, you'll juggle the numbers to give your hero the Characteristics you desire.

Step 3: Buy Abilities

Here you'll do the same for Abilities.

Step 4: Choose Your Weapons

Outfit yourself with as many weapons as you can carry. On second thought, you should perhaps leave some space in your pack for other useful items. Still, it is good to have a great many weapons.

Step 5: Other Important Numbers

Certain other game statistics are derived from your combined Characteristic, Ability and weapon choices. These are figured here.

CHARACTERISTICS

As previously mentioned, Characteristics are basic talents resident within a hero's body and mind. There are eight of them: Strength, Stamina, Dexterity, Quickness, Perception, Intelligence, Communication and Presence.

Each Characteristic a character has ranges from -3, the absolute worst possible score for any living human being, and +3, the apex of mortal possibility. The vast majority of people from your home village have a score of 0 in most of their Characteristics; it is the human average. Through Divine Gifts, you may be able to increase Characteristics beyond the human limit of 3.

Each Characteristic is associated with a particular Norse god. Heroes with many Gifts boosting a particular Characteristic are apt to owe a great debt to that patron deity.



RUNE ROLEPLAYING GAME OVERVIEW

- **Strength** (STR) is muscle power, which you use to lift, shove, push, manhandle and — above all — hit those things in need of lifting, shoving, pushing, and hitting. You use it to smash down doors and to increase the damage done to your foes when you strike them. Thor the Thunderer is the patron god of Strength.
- Where the previous Characteristic measures the damage you can dish out, **Stamina** (STA) shows how well you can take it. Stamina allows you to push yourself past the point of exhaustion, to resist diseases and poison, and to keep your head above water where weaker men would drown. The brave, suffering god Tyr, who lost a hand in battle, grants gifts of Stamina.
- **Dexterity** (DEX) measures the grace and precision with which your hero moves. Most importantly, it determines your accuracy when wielding weapons. It also allows you to pick locks and stay on your horse when he rears back. Ull, god of the hunt, is patron to the dextrous.
- If your hero has a high **Quickness** (QIK) rating, he runs fast and reacts quickly to sudden dangers. It allows him to strike first in battle and to dodge blows. Njord, enigmatic god of the wind, extends Quickness to those who please him.
- **Intelligence** (INT) measures your hero's memory and ability to reason his way through problems. He might use it to

recall the exact pattern of a series of runes he saw several encounters ago, or to figure out the answer to a riddle posed by a menacing bridge troll. Intelligence is sometimes seen as suspect, for it is the trickster Loki who, of all the gods, possesses it in abundance.

- If your hero has a high **Perception** (PER) rating, he is good at noticing fine details in the world around them. His intuition allows him to sense dangers his conscious mind may not be aware of. He might use Perception to see the tell-tale glint of light that reveals a sword being drawn in the woods up ahead, or to eavesdrop on a conversation between a priest of Hel and one of her undead minions. Watchful Heimdal, who guards the Bifrost Bridge linking Asgard and Midgard, is the god of Perception.
- **Presence** (PRS) measures a hero's ability to make an immediate positive impression on others of his kind. A high score means that he is consid-

ered handsome, according to the standards of his people, that he walks with confidence, and that he attracts the rapt attention of others. In some cases, Presence might indicate a strong negative impression that nonetheless commands obedience: a fearsome warrior might be big, mean-looking, and speak in a deep, booming voice shot through with menace. Presence is the trait of chieftains and leaders, so it is fitting that Odin, chieftain of the gods, grants it to the heroes he favors. It is also the trait that powers many of the Divine Gifts, super abilities granted by the gods which you acquire during play.

- **Communication** (COM) allows a hero to speak clearly and persuasively. It determines his talent not only for talking, but for listening to others, so as to best understand how to convince them to do what he wants. Freyr, the god of growing crops and bulging purses, blesses his favored heroes with the powers of Communication.



ABILITIES

After purchasing Characteristics, you buy your Abilities with the points left over. Some cost more than others, depending on how important they are to your adventures.

You might not want to spend all of your creation points in the Ability stage, though, because you can also use them to purchase hit points, which increase the number

of injuries you can take before things really start to get serious.

The various abilities are listed in the chart to the right.

HIT POINTS

A fight where a Viking warrior does not get bloodied is hardly a fight at all. Your hero begins the game with a number of hit points,

which represent his ability to keep going even while injured.

Your starting hit points are determined by your combined Strength and Stamina Characteristics, as per the chart below.

You can buy additional hit points by spending creation points. The number of extra hit points you get for each creation point spent varies according to your Stamina rating.



ABILITIES CHART

Ability	Characteristic
Animal Handling	Presence
Awareness	Perception
Balance	Dexterity
Bargain	Communication
Bows	Perception
Bravery	Stamina
Brawling	Dexterity
Carouse	Stamina
Chain Weapon	Dexterity
Climb	Strength
Crossbows	Perception
Deception	Presence
Demeanor	Presence
Disarm Trap	Dexterity
Disguise	Intelligence
Divine Awareness	Presence
Dodge	Quickness
Gamble	variable
Great Weapon	Dexterity
Healer	Dexterity/Perception
Insight	Communication
Jump	Strength
Leadership	Presence
Longshaft Weapon	Dexterity
Lore	Intelligence
Map	Intelligence
Music	Communication
Pick Lock	Dexterity
Pursuit	Perception
Repair	Dexterity
Ride	Dexterity
Runes	Intelligence
Seamanship	variable
Sing	Stamina
Single Weapon	Dexterity
Skald	Intelligence/Presence
Ski	Dexterity
Sleep	Stamina
Sprint	Strength
Stealth	Dexterity
Survival	Intelligence
Swim	Strength/Stamina
Thrown Weapon	Perception
Two Weapons	Dexterity

STARTING HIT POINTS

STR + STA	Hit Points
-4 or less	37
-3 to -1	40
0	44
1 to 3	48
4	52
5	56
6	60



A word of warning: the hit points of the enemies you face are determined in relation to the hit point ratings of the heroes in your raiding party. So if everyone buys huge numbers of hit points, no one benefits: you just make your enemies tougher. (Students of game theory will recognize this as a variant of the prisoner's dilemma, where it is good to be the only person claiming a benefit, but bad to be one of many.)

Injuries can temporarily reduce your hit points below your normal, or maximum level. Most injuries you receive are purely picturesque punctures, abrasions, and contusions which make you look appropriately courageous but do nothing to hamper your actions. That is, unless you receive a Impairment — an especially nasty hit that can affect your character's performance permanently.

BUYING HIT POINTS

Stamina	Hit Points
-3	1
-2	2
-1	3
0	4
1	5
2	6
3	7

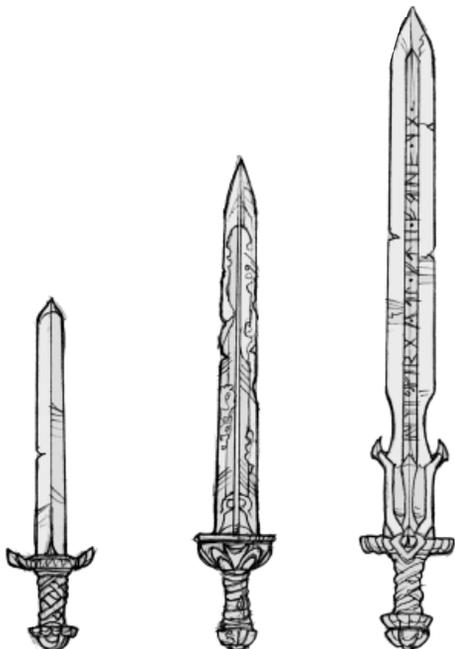
WEAPONS

A mighty warrior's weapons become an extension of himself. Your warrior begins the game equipped with a selection of ordinary weapons created by his village's smith. In the course of his adventures, he will gradually accumulate even more powerful weapons. Some are so large that he'll be able to use them properly only through the blessings of the gods.

Weapons, just like heroes, have game statistics. These are as follows.

INITIATIVE RATING (INIT)

The bigger the weapon, the shorter the distance between its killing surface and the skulls of your foes. The shorter the distance, the sooner you act. The faster the weapon, the higher the initiative rating.



VIKING SHORT
SWORD

ROMAN
SWORD

VIKING BROAD
SWORD

ATTACK RATING (ATK)

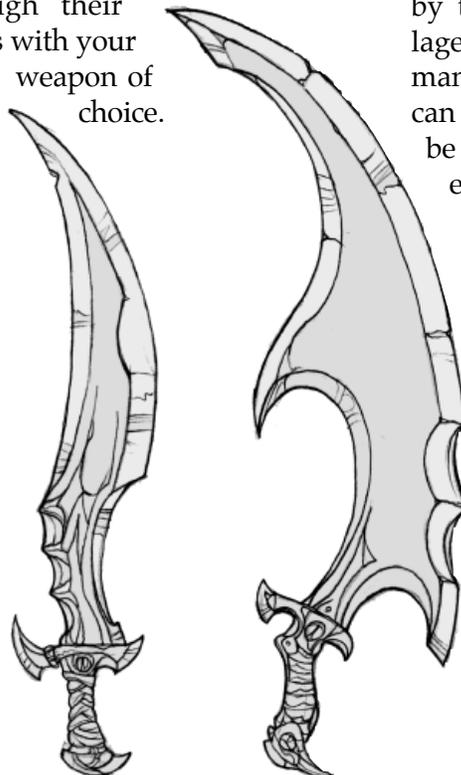
Some weapons are more wieldy than others. The easier it is to hit your foe with a weapon, the higher its attack rating.

DEFENSE RATING (DFN)

Most close-range weapons can be used to parry incoming blows. The more useful the weapon is when avoiding the attacks of others, the higher its defense rating.

DAMAGE (DAM)

This is the amount of injury you inflict on your enemies as you mow through their ranks with your weapon of choice.



DWARVEN WORK
SWORD

DWARVEN BATTLE
SWORD

LOAD

Load measures a weapon's weight. You can only carry so much, and your weapons contribute to the total Encumbrance you suffer when lugging all of your gear around.

ABILITY

The chart below notes the Ability you must use in order to wield the weapon. For example, you'll see that a shortspear falls under the Single Weapon Ability, while a flail calls for the use of Chain Weapon.

AVAILABILITY

Weapons are either common or rare. Common weapons are made by the smiths of your home village. You can start play with as many common weapons as you can carry. Rare weapons can only be gained in the course of play, either through trade or by looting the corpses of the slain.

CHOOSING YOUR WEAPONS

At the beginning of the game, you may pick up to 3 common weapons.

WEAPON CHART

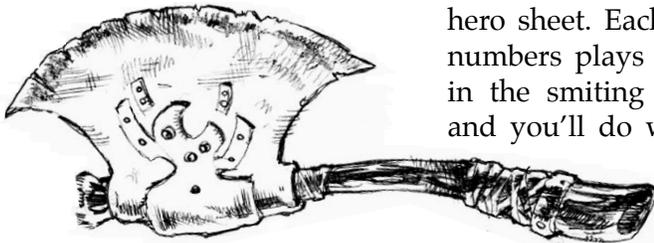
Name	INIT	ATK	DFN	DAM	Load	Ability	Availability
Billhook	+5	+6	+1	+8	1.5	Longshaft	Rare
Chair	+2	+2	+3	+1	NA	Brawling	—
Composite Bow	-1	+1	NA	+8	0.5	Bow	Rare
Dagger	+2	+1	+2	+3	0.25	Single	Common
Double-bladed Axe	+6	+5	+7	+12	3	Great	Rare
Dwarven Battle Axe	+8	+7	+8	+14	4	Great	Rare
Dwarven Battle Hammer	+8	+8	+10	+14	3	Great	Rare
Dwarven Battle Sword	+8	+6	+10	+12	1	Great	Rare
Dwarven Work Hammer	+6	+6	+8	+10	2	Great	Rare
Dwarven Work Sword	+6	+4	+6	+8	1	Great	Rare
Fist/Kick	+1	+0	+0	+0	NA	Brawling	—
Flail (2 handed)	+2	+7	+1	+7	0.5	Chain	Common
Four-bladed Mace	+4	+4	+3	+7	0.5	Single	Rare
Gauntlet	+1	+0	+1	+1	0.25	Brawling	Rare
Goblin Axe	+4	+2	+2	+7	1	Single	Rare
Goblin Spike Club	+3	+2	+3	+6	0.5	Single	Rare
Hand Axe	+3	+1	+2	+6	0.5	Single	Common
Heavy Crossbow	-10	+2	NA	+14	1	Crossbow	Rare
Light Crossbow	-6	+2	NA	+12	0.5	Crossbow	Rare
Long Bow	-1	+1	NA	+10	1	Bow	Rare
Mace	+3	+2	+3	+5	0.5	Single	Common
Morningstar (two-handed)	+1	+5	+0	+8	0.5	Chain	Rare
Net	+0	+4	+2	+0	0.5	Chain	Common
Pike	+6	+4	+1	+6	1.5	Longshaft	Rare
Polearm	+6	+3	+5	+9	1.5	Great	Rare
Puny Knife	+1	+0	+1	+2	0.15	Single	Common
Quarterstaff	+6	+4	+8	+3	1	Great	Common
Rock	+4	+0	NA	+2	0.0	Thrown	Common
Roman Sword	+3	+1	+4	+4	0.5	Single	Rare
Sap	+1	+0	+1	+2	0.15	Single	Common
Severed Arm	+1	+1	+1	+1	NA	Great	Special
Short Bow	+0	+0	NA	+6	0.5	Bow	Common
Shortspear	+5	+1	+2	+3	0.5	Single	Common
Shortsword	+4	+2	+3	+3	0.5	Single	Common
Shortsword + Dagger	+6	+5	+6	+5	0.75	Two Weapons	Common
Sling	+2	+2	NA	+3	0.1	Thrown	Common
Spear (thrown)	+0	+2	+0	+6	1	Thrown	Common
Spear/Lance	+5	+6	+4	+6	1	Longshaft	Common
Throwing Axe	+1	+1	+0	+4	0.5	Thrown	Common
Throwing Knife	+1	+1	n/a	+3	0.2	Thrown	Common
Two Hand Axes	+4	+3	+5	+7	1	Two Weapons	Common
Two Short Swords	+6	+3	+5	+7	1	Two Weapons	Common
Viking Axe	+5	+3	+4	+10	1.5	Great	Common
Viking Broadsword	+5	+3	+4	+6	1	Single	Common
War Maul	+5	+2	+4	+10	1.5	Great	Common
Whip	+0	+6	+0	+2	0.5	Chain	Common

ARMOR

Although you, as an eager warrior who has yet to be blooded, may have visions of running shrieking into combat, protected only by your screaming blades and the valor of your heart, veteran Vikings will tell you that there is no substitute for good armor protection. Someday a treacherous foe will jab past your parrying sword or blocking shield, and on that day you will be glad you wrapped your hide in as much protective gear as you could muster.

You can start the game with any one type of common armor, and one common shield of your choice.

Each armor configuration, as you'll note from the chart, carries two values. Initiative has already been explained. Protection (PROT) is taken into account when calculating Soak, which allows you to shrug off blows that would injure an warrior wearing lesser armor.



ARMOR CHART

Type	PROT	INIT	Load	Availability
Quilted/Fur	1	-0	1.0	Common
Heavy Leather	3	-1	1.5	Common
Studded Leather	5	-3	2.0	Common
Chain Mail	7	-5	2.5	Common
Steel Scale Mail	9	-7	3.0	Rare

SHIELDS

Shields add their Initiative, Attack, Defense, Damage, and Load values to the values of the single weapon with which they are paired.

SHIELD CHART

Name	INIT	ATK	DFN	DAM	Load	Ability	Availability
Buckler	-1	+0	+2	+0	0.25	Single	Common
Round Shield	-1	-1	+3	+0	0.5	Single	Common
Kite Shield	-1	-1	+4	+0	2	Single	Common
Tower Shield	-3	-2	+6	+0	3	Single	Rare

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Before you wade into combat, you need to calculate some more game statistics and note them on your hero sheet. Each of the following numbers plays an important role in the smiting of your enemies, and you'll do well to have them handy at all times.

INITIATIVE (INIT)

It's good to hit your enemies before they can hit you. A high Initiative allows you to do this. Calculate your Initiative score as follows:

$$\text{Your QIK Characteristic} + \text{Your Weapon Ability} + \text{Your Weapon's INIT}$$

Note that you have a different Initiative value for each weapon you use, and that it changes whenever you add or discard items in your pack.

ATTACK (ATK)

A high Attack score increases your likelihood of actually hitting your foe in combat. Again, each weapon grants you a different Attack value.

Calculate the Attack values of melee weapons as follows:

$$\text{Your DEX Characteristic} + \text{Your Weapon Ability} + \text{Your Weapon's ATK}$$

Your Attack values for missile weapons (whose ranges are greater than Close) are calculated like so:

$$\text{Your PER Characteristic} + \text{Your Weapon Ability} + \text{Your Weapon's ATK}$$

DEFENSE [DFN]

Your Defense score measures the degree to which you can avoid being hit by opponents, either by getting out of the way of their blows, or parrying them with your weapon or shield. Missile weapons don't confer Defense scores; if you're holding one when attacked, use your Brawling ability (as modified by the Fist/Kick statistics on the Weapons Chart) as the basis for your Defense score. Calculate Defense as follows:

(Your QIK Characteristic + Your Weapon Ability + Your Weapon's DFN) - Your SIZ

DAMAGE (DAM)

Hitting your opponent is all well and good, but once you've done it you'll want to know whether you've just scratched his hide, or delivered a disemboweling death-blow. Your Damage score tells you how much harm you do to your foe. Once more, it varies by weapon.

When using a melee or thrown weapon, calculate it like so:

Your STR + SIZ + Your Weapon's DAM

Missile weapons use the straight DAM rating of the particular weapon.

SOAK

Although even the bravest Viking prefers not to be hit in the first place, he knows that eventually a

foeman's blade will taste of his flesh. When that time comes, it is good to be tough, and have the capacity to shrug off some of the damage. Your Soak score allows you to do that, and is calculated as follows:

Your STA + Your SIZ + Your Armor's PROT

COMBAT

When you enter combat, you first roll Initiative to see who goes first. If you get a really high result, you may be able to strike more than once in a single round. When you strike, you roll a die and add your Attack value; your opponent rolls a die, to which he adds his Defense value. If your result is equal to or greater than his, you've hit him. He suffers damage equal to the Damage rating of your weapon plus the difference between his Defense result and your Attack result. He subtracts his Soak from that Damage; the rest is subtracted from his hit point total. When he reaches 0 hit points, he's dead or dying.

Missile combat works a bit differently; here you roll either against a Difficulty to hit, which is based on factors like the distance between you and your enemy, the range of your weapon, and any cover your target might be cravenly lurking behind. Your opponent can always Dodge if he feels it will improve his odds of evading your missiles.

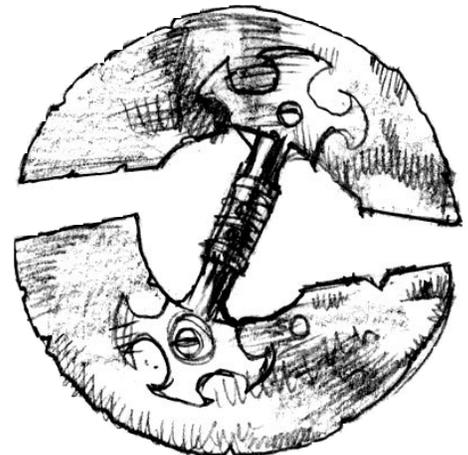
In a fight, you have a number of options you can trot out to suit your circumstances. If you're already toe-to-toe with your

enemy, you can increase your Defense by ducking and weaving, or bolster your Attack by holding ground. When your foe seems on the cusp of death, you can more easily dispatch him by going berserk, adding your Defense to your Attack value. But beware: if you don't finish him, he gets a free shot at you, and your Defense is zero!

Other special choices may occasionally add a bloodthirsty dimension to your battles. For example, you score extra points if you can beat a foe to death with his own severed arm.

OTHER WAYS TO GET MANGLED

Of course, it is entirely possible that you will succumb to your foes' attacks. And you must also evade a host of other dangers outside of combat. Fire, poison, drowning, falling, and exposure are chief among them.



GIFTS OF THE GODS

Ever aware of the dangers you face, the gods smile grimly on heroes whose axes smite their foes. As you progress, you can acquire the Gifts of the gods, magical superpowers which extend your heroes' survivability and capacity for destruction. Divine Gifts may increase your Characteristics, pump up your hit points, or grant you even more spectacular talents. Examples include:

Agony Postponed

Allows you to ignore penalties you'd otherwise suffer when severely wounded.

Aura Of Phlegmatic Acceptance

Allows you to ignore victory point losses you'd otherwise take from injuries in combat.

Banish His Blade

When you disarm a foe, his weapon travels further than it normally would — and you gain extra victory points, too!

Boon of Angrboda

Allows you to temporarily increase your size; named after a giantess paramour of Loki's.

Bone-Setters' Blessing

Makes you tougher to hit when you're healing your comrades' wounds.

Buffeting Gale

Knocks your foes down when you hit them.

The Chattering Squirrel

Grants you extra victory points for the use of Deception.

The Clatter of Rushing Boots

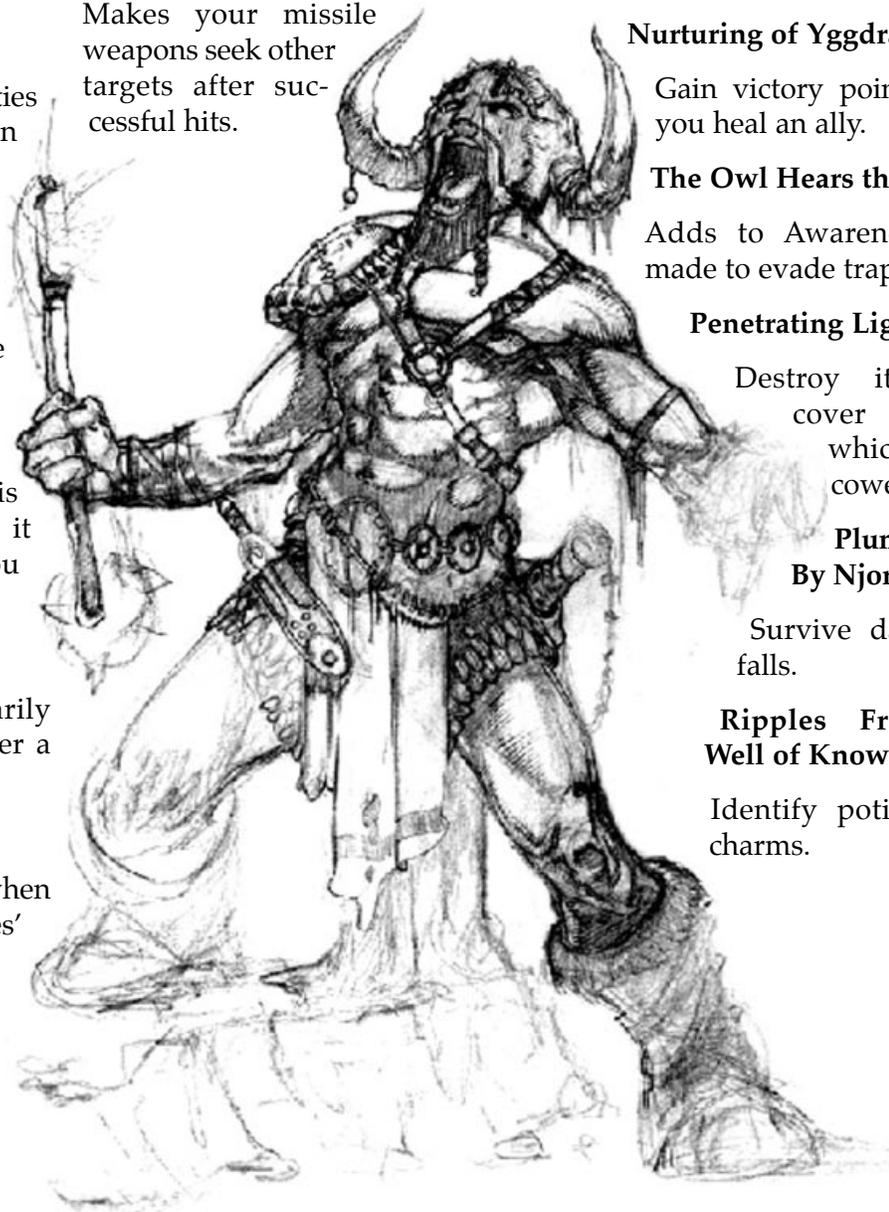
Increases the potency of your attacks when you charge.

Dying Blow

Allows you to keep fighting when mortally wounded, so that you may add one last legendary act to the list of great deeds recited at your funeral.

The Eager Arrow

Makes your missile weapons seek other targets after successful hits.



Eyes Like Glowing Coals

Stare down weak foes, discouraging them from hitting you.

From Lofty Asgard's Peaks

Gain bonuses when fighting from superior ground.

Imprecation of Doom

Designate a foe who will also be wounded whenever you hit any other enemy.

The Knitting of Meat and Bone

Magically heal yourself during combat.

Nurturing of Yggdrasil

Gain victory points when you heal an ally.

The Owl Hears the Viper

Adds to Awareness rolls made to evade traps.

Penetrating Lightning

Destroy items of cover behind which foes cower.

Plumed Up By Njordsbreath

Survive dangerous falls.

Ripples From the Well of Knowledge

Identify potions and charms.

RUNE WEAPONS

Long before they turned their back on the Aesir to make blades and armor exclusively for Loki, the dwarves aided Odin and his kin by discovering a system of magical correspondences between various weapons and the elemental runes of power. Odin shared these secrets with the other Aesir, who in turn parceled them out to their favored warrior devotees, both on Midgard and in Valhalla.

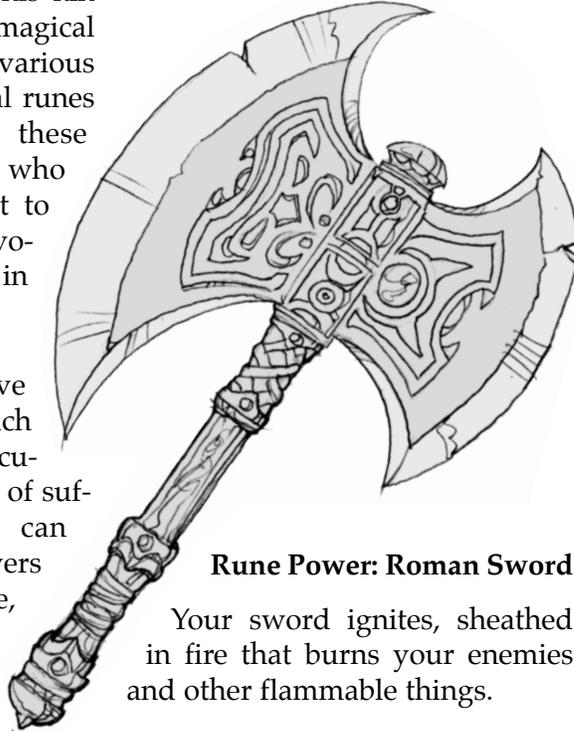
Many weapon types have innate magical power. Each power is unique to a particular type of weapon. A hero of sufficient accomplishment can learn to activate these powers for brief periods of time, provided that he bears the required weapon. He can use any version of that weapon, including the one with which he started his career, to activate Rune Powers.

Unlike other Divine Gifts, Rune Powers can be used by anyone who knows the secrets behind them. Even goblins, dwarves, elves, the Dishonored, and trolls can use them. In fact, some Rune Powers are associated with weapons used by dwarves and goblins. These secrets were released by the dwarves after they concluded that Odin had swindled them out of fair payment for their discovery.

Rune weapon Powers do not increase your divine rating. Nor do they have patron deities. Otherwise they work exactly as any other Divine Gift.

Rune Power: Viking Short Sword

When you activate the Rune Power of the Viking Short Sword, a glowing, translucent sphere appears and shields you from damage.



Rune Power: Roman Sword

Your sword ignites, sheathed in fire that burns your enemies and other flammable things.

Rune Power: Viking Broad Sword

When you activate this Power, all actual Damage you deal to opponents (after Soak is taken into account) is added to your hit point total.

Rune Power: Dwarven Work Sword

When you activate this Power, lightning launches out from the tip of your sword, seeking out up to three enemies.

Rune Power: Dwarven Battle Sword

Your weapon emits a beam of magical energy which seeks out a chosen opponent and scorches him with armor-ignoring arcane force.

Rune Power: Hand Axe

When you activate the Rune Power inherent in your hand axe, you become insubstantial.

Rune Power: Goblin Axe

When you activate this Power, you may once per round create a magical duplicate of the axe, which you can then throw at an opponent using your Thrown Weapons skill.

Rune Power: Viking Axe

Turns an enemy into a fanatical ally for a short period.

Rune Power: Double-Bladed Axe

Transform your foe into a crow.

Rune Power: Mace

You may cause the mace to emit a single blast of radiating force which buffets the characters closest to you.

Rune Power: Goblin Spike Club

When you activate this Power, you cause a cone-shaped barrage of rocks to fire outwards from the business end of your outstretched club.

Rune Power: Four-Bladed Mace

Activating this Power turns you into the center of a raging conflagration.

Rune Power: Dwarven Work Hammer

When you activate this Power and then strike an opponent with the dwarven work hammer, he immediately turns to ice.

Rune Power: Dwarven Battle Hammer

This Rune Power is a more fearsome version of the above: the victim turns permanently to stone instead of ice.



ENCOUNTERS

When your turn to GM comes around, your challenge is to use the rules to design an encounter most likely to yield you victory points. Your goal is to reduce as many heroes as possible to within a quivering inch of death, without actually killing them off.

A group of encounters is called an adventure. One player becomes the plotter, choosing the location of the adventure. He creates three encounters (the Set-Up, Development, and Climax) around which the rest of you wrap your own encounters. He chooses where the encounters are set. For example:

- *Scandinavia*: The adventure takes place in various wilderness locations and villages near your home base. You'll be negotiating with other Vikings, occasionally fighting them, and braving the hazards of travel in difficult, rocky territory.
- *Jotunheim*, the mountains where giants live: The heroes face the dangers of cold weather and treacherous mountain terrain, as well as the threats, puzzles, and challenges posed by giants. Giants are sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile.
- *Nidavellir*, the strange domain of the mechanistic dwarves: All or most encounters will be

with dwarves or their mysterious devices. Carefully-engineered traps of incomprehensible workmanship abound.

- *Svartalfheim*, the thick, gloomy forest where the Dark Elves live: Encounters will take place in the wilderness. Opponents often include unusually ferocious wild beasts. Traps consist of snares and other outdoorsy hazards.
- *Foreign Lands*: The players go to another region of Midgard and lay waste to it in search of treasure. You must specify where they go. They might burn down wealth-laden abbeys in England, battle hostile natives on the cold and rocky shores of Newfoundland, or serve as mercenaries in the Holy Land. This hook works splendidly if everybody is a history buff, but should be used with care if some of your fellow players couldn't tell a Varangian guard from a Valencia orange.
- *Other Dimensions*: The heroes visit another fantasy world or game setting with which all of the players are already familiar, in order to sack and pillage it. The further afield you go from a Viking world, the more work you and the other players will have to do ahead of time to develop extra rules for guns, laser cannons, or whatever other trappings of the setting cry out for game system support.



OPPONENTS

No RUNE encounter is complete without a bone-crunching, viscera-spewing fight scene. You can pick any of the creature types you'll know from the computer game: goblins, dwarves, land crabs, Sark Amen, and wendols. You can include one big fight, or a small and a medium one. You decide how threatening the opponents are in relation to the heroes. Foes come in seven threat categories, from Pitiful to Terrifying. You give them their Atk, Dfn, Dam, Soak and other game numbers depending on the collective strength of the heroes. The greater the threat category, the fewer foes appear: you get only one Terrifying foe for every four heroes. On the other hand, Pitiful foes outnumber the heroes by four to one.

A handy flow-chart governs the behavior of enemies in combat, preventing you from playing favorites and killing off the guy who never pays for his share of the pizza.

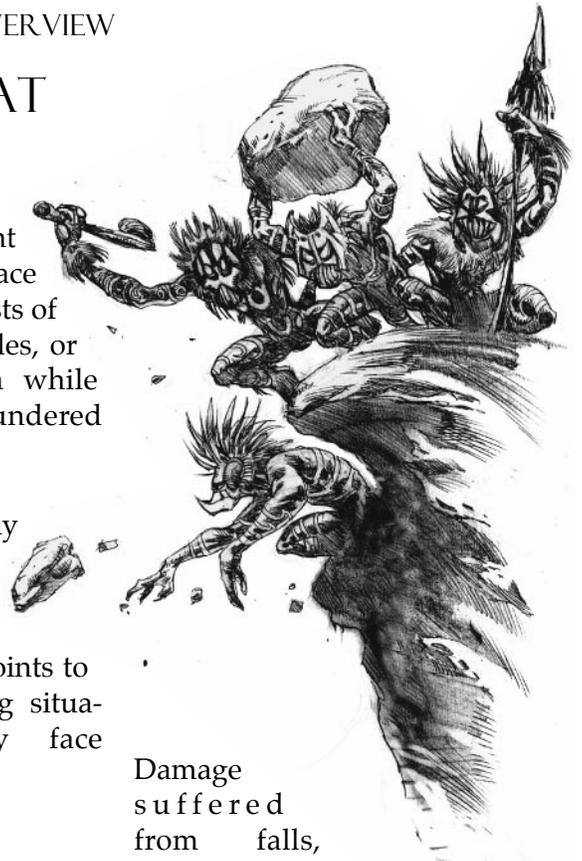
NON-COMBAT OPPONENTS

Not every enemy will fight the heroes. Some might face them in non-violent contests of skill, subject them to riddles, or try to out-bargain them while swapping silver for plundered gear.

You must pay points for any situation in which the heroes must overcome a Difficulty greater than 6. You can gain encounter points to use elsewhere by creating situations in which they face Difficulties less than 6.

TRAPS

You'll build traps by choosing the Difficulty to avoid and the Damage dealt. Costs vary for special cases. Sometimes only one hero need successfully roll to avoid a trap. On other occasions, everybody can try. In others, everybody must succeed. Some traps target specific characters. Some types of trap carry special rules: the rules spell out the



Damage suffered from falls, depending on the height and the hardness of the landing. Some traps, like fire and acid, deal out recurring or escalating damage. Others take multiple shots at the heroes until deactivated. Especially nasty traps deal out Impairment, a much-feared penalty against every subsequent roll a hero makes. You name it; if a trap can do it, there's a rule and a price for it.



TERRAIN

For the first couple of fights, a battle waged on a flat and featureless surface remains as exciting as any in the Norse sagas. But then you need to add terrain features to spice things up a bit, making each combat distinct from the last. You get encounter points when you add terrain features; even better, these convert to victory points if they actually have an impact on the course of the battle when you run the encounter. Add cover, sloped or slippery surfaces, multiple levels, or traps to which both heroes and villains are vulnerable; these are just a few of your available choices.

GAINS

Pay for your traps and high-Difficulty ability rolls with plenty of goodies for the heroes to take away with them. These gains might be intangible, like clues to use in later events during your encounter, or they might be opportunities to win status or please the gods, which score the

players victory points. They can even be actual swag, from ounces of silver to salvaged equipment to magical charms, potions, and amulets. The more potent the item or bigger the haul of silver, the more points you gain to spend elsewhere in the encounter.

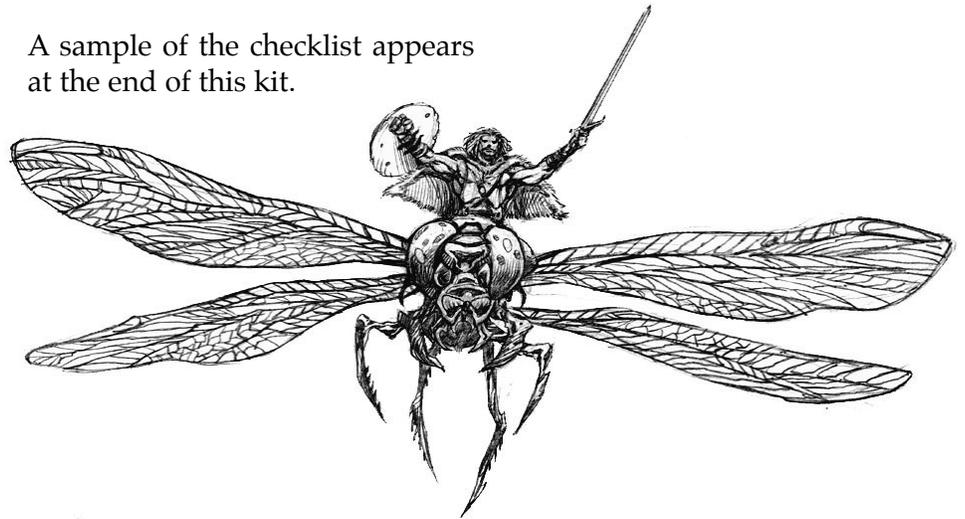
THE CHECKLIST

Manage all of your encounter purchasing with our handy checklist, surely a gift from Odin himself. You can either photocopy the entire list and check off the appropriate boxes, or download it as a document file from our web site and cut and paste it into an order that makes sense for you.

A sample of the checklist appears at the end of this kit.

ENCOUNTER TRADING

Because encounters all obey a standard format and can be mixed and matched to fit into any adventure sharing the same basic hook, you'll be able to trade your encounters with other **RUNE** players via the Internet. Thus, even when you don't have time to whip up an encounter of your own, you can still bring a suitably fun and fiendish fight-fest to the table when it's your turn to run.



MORE ON THE WORLD OF RUNE

A chapter devoted to the creatures of **RUNE** provides additional information on the creatures you fight in the computer game, as well as other figures in the shadows, from dark elves to giants.

Another chapter provides further information on Ragnar's world, from the different areas of Scandinavia, to foreign lands ripe for plunder, to the mythic realms of the gods.

JOIN US FOR GLORIOUS BATTLE!

As we write, it's fall of 2000, and we're hip-deep in testing the **RUNE** rules. Amid the bodies of the slain, we ready ourselves for your onslaught as you descend upon game stores in search of the **RUNE Roleplaying Game**. By Odin's beard, both our rules and your fellow players will be ready to face its grim but heroic challenges. Are you ready, young warrior?



TRAP/HAZARD SHEET

Event #:

Sheet #:

Nature of trap / hazard:

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blade trap | <input type="checkbox"/> Crushing trap | <input type="checkbox"/> Impaling trap | <input type="checkbox"/> Flame jets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Falling debris | <input type="checkbox"/> Acid jet | <input type="checkbox"/> Fall | <input type="checkbox"/> Slide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impact | <input type="checkbox"/> Breakaway stairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Magic | <input type="checkbox"/> Drowning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acid bath | <input type="checkbox"/> Avalanche | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposure | <input type="checkbox"/> Freezing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poison | <input type="checkbox"/> Disease | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep deprivation | <input type="checkbox"/> Alarm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuisance animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Tube-striker | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of status | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ | | | |

Unorthodox Description: (specify) _____ / +10

- Appears:
- out of combat / Costs positive, as normal
 - in combat, but foes are not at risk of falling prey to it / Costs positive, as normal
 - as combat terrain feature / All positive costs (except Difficulty) treated as negative (treat values of less than -30 as -30)
 - area effect, spreads in:
 - all directions / -15
 - linear manner / -20

Roll to Avoid

Ability _____

- Difficulty:
- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 / -20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 / -10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 / +0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 / +10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 / +20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 / +30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 / +40 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 / +50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13 / +60 | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 / +70 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 / +80 | |

- Singular?
- No
 - Rush
 - Dogpile
 - No-fault / -15
 - Limited Targeting, affects:
 - 1 victim / -15
 - 2 victims / -10
 - 3 victims / +0
 - 4 victims / +0
 - 5 victims / +0
 - 6 victims / +0

Selection method:

- Affects heroes who choose to: _____
- Random
- Specific Targeting, affects:
 - 1 hero / +25
 - 2 heroes / +20
 - 3 heroes / +5
 - more than half the party / +5
 - Singles out victims with the
 - highest _____
 - lowest _____

- Exotic roll
- Characteristic only / +6
- Divine rating / +12
- Ability no hero has / +20
- Alternate method / -10
- Simultaneous with another roll / +15 (that roll appears _____)
- Cannot be avoided (cost doubles)
- Can be conditionally avoided by _____ / Cost -10
- Equipment not needed / -3
- Tube-striker may hurl heroes into it / Cost ____ (+7 per tube striker)

RUNE ROLEPLAYING GAME OVERVIEW

Extra rolls allowed:

- Hero may make ___ extra attempts after initial failure / Cost ____ (-5 per attempt)
- faces no set limit on extra attempts / -20
- loses a combat action for each attempt / halve above Cost; adjusted Cost = ____

Extra rolls required:

- every round until condition is met / +25
Specify condition: _____
(if roll required, see sheet # ___ for description)
- distance to task ___ / Cost ____ (+10 for each 15 paces over 30)
- By a single hero, over a period of:
 - 3 / +15 4 / +20 5 rounds / +25
- By any number of heroes, for a total of:
 - 3 / +15 4 / +20 5 rolls / +25
- All must succeed, with following # of players:
 - 2 / +10 3 / +25 4 / +40
 - 5 / +60 6 / +75
 - Additional players / Another +25 per additional player / Cost ____

Parallel task: # of tasks ___ / Cost ____ (# of parallel tasks _ all above cost elements)

Positional modifier

- maximum increase ___ / Cost ____ (-increase _ 10)
- maximum decrease ___ / Cost ____ (+increase _ 10)

Zone of shelter:

- increase of ___; shelters up to ___ heroes (-decrease _ heroes sheltered _ 3)

Nature of Harm:

Fixed number of hit points

- Dam rating 15 or less

Dam rating ____ Cost ____ (total Dam rating)

- Dam rating > 15:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 / +21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17 / +22 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 / +23 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 / +24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 / +25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21 / +31 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 / +32 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23 / +33 | <input type="checkbox"/> 24 / +34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 / +35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 / +41 | <input type="checkbox"/> 27 / +42 | <input type="checkbox"/> 28 / +43 | <input type="checkbox"/> 29 / +44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 30 / +45 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 / +55 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40 / +65 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45 / +70 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50 / +85 | |

- Damage recurs:

- every round / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 2.5)
- every 5 minutes / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 2.25)
- every hour / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 2)
- every 3 hours / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 1.75)
- every 8 hours / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 1.5)
- every 24 hours / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 1.25)

- Action required to end recurring damage: _____

- distance to task ___ / Cost ____ (+10 for each 15 paces over 30)

- Damage escalates

- every round / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 6)
- every 5 minutes / Adjusted Cost: ____ (above cost _ 5)

RUNE ROLEPLAYING GAME OVERVIEW

- every hour / Adjusted Cost: ___ (above cost _ 4)
- every 3 hours / Adjusted Cost: ___ (above cost _ 3)
- every 8 hours / Adjusted Cost: ___ (above cost _ 2)
- every 24 hours / Adjusted Cost: ___ (above cost _ 1.5)

- Action required to end recurring damage: _____
- distance to task ___ / Cost ____ (+10 for each 15 paces over 30)

Dam rating derived from die roll

Number of dice: ____ Cost ____ (# of dice _ 6)

Impairment:

- general, affects

- ___ combat sequences / Cost ____ (# of sequences _ 30)
- ___ rolls to avoid traps or trigger gains / Cost ____ (# of rolls _ 5)
- ___ freestanding rolls / Cost ____

Total base cost ____

- specific, affects the following ability/roll: _____

- roll affected ___ times / Cost ____ (# of occurrences _ 5)

- roll occurs in ___ combat sequences / Cost ____ (# of sequences _ 10)

Total base cost: ____

- deals ___ points of Impairment / Final Cost ____ (# of points _ base cost)

Does Damage Ignore Armor?

- No

- Yes / Cost ____ +(heroes' average Armor Prot)

Triggered by Combat Event?

- character falls down o character takes damage

- dropped weapon or object

- divine power used

- other (specify) _____

- Parallel traps: # of traps ___ / Cost ____ (# of traps _ final cost of single trap)

LEGALESE

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PO BOX 31233
ROSEVILLE, MN 55113
INFO@ATLAS-GAMES.COM
WWW.ATLAS-GAMES.COM

