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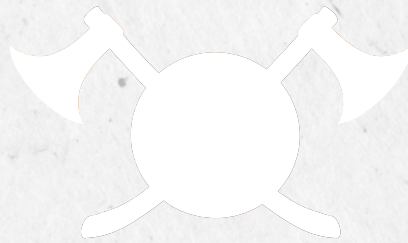
THE
CITADEL AT NORÐVÖRN
— TFRÖR HFXF —



BY DOUGLAS H. COLE



THE CITADEL AT NOROVORN



— PIRKPIHTT 188 —





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THE CITADEL AT NORÐVÖRN TFRÖR HFXF

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FOREWORD

By Sean Punch

For those who missed the **HALL OF JUDGMENT** foreword: Hi, I'm the designer of **Steve Jackson Games' DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME**. **Gaming Ballistic** has invited me back to write a few words about **THE CITADEL AT NORDVÖRN**, which I find exciting for several reasons.

The **DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME** Kickstarter campaign was funded in less than three weeks (September 1-17, 2016)—a success by most measures. Still, the RPG market is flooded nowadays, with new products pushing old ones off shelves in mere weeks, too. Success is hard to *sustain*. In our case, post-Kickstarter sales weren't strong enough to justify more in-house support for the game.

Fortunately for us, Douglas Cole—hajarl of **Gaming Ballistic**—wanted to take up the quarrel (jarls love quarrels). He proposed adapting **LOST HALL OF TYR** as **HALL OF JUDGMENT** for the **DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME**, and *that* Kickstarter campaign was fully funded in 11.5 hours on June 19, 2018. That's a success even by exacting standards!

On the heels of that success, Doug came back to **SJ Games** and asked if we'd be interested in seeing him publish more support. He and I started an informal discussion on July 25, 2018. That heated up over the summer and eventually involved Alain Dawson, Director of Licensing; Phil Reed, CEO; and Steve Jackson, Hajarl (okay, "President and Editor-in-Chief").

It took considerable number-crunching and soul-searching, but Doug's figures and answers finally convinced us: On October 16, 2018, **SJ Games** issued **Gaming Ballistic** a license to publish *three DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME* supplements, **THE CITADEL AT NORDVÖRN** being the first. We've since signed off on a smaller item in addition to these.

Now we watch and wait. If this supplement and the two that follow do well, we're likely to extend Doug's license further. I won't claim the sky's the limit, mostly because it isn't my place to commit Doug's time. That said, if the lean operation that is **Gaming Ballistic** can support a product from **SJ Games**—which is larger and more diversified, with the overhead that implies—we might just have a winning formula.

But there's more to it than that.

For one thing, thanks to the success of **HALL OF JUDGMENT**, **SJ Games** has decided to reexamine supporting the **DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME** in house. I'm writing this in February 2019, and in March, we'll be launching a Kickstarter for a reprint of the game along with the release of a second collection of monsters, **DUNGEON FANTASY MONSTERS 2**. If you're reading this in the future, you'll know how that went... but all I can do right now is cast the runes. Still, if our Kickstarter and **THE CITADEL AT NORDVÖRN** both fly, you can expect more releases across the board.

For another, Doug has done me an honor: He tells me that a mini-setting of mine—**GURPS DUNGEON FANTASY SETTING: CAVERNTOWN**—was an inspiration for how to present a town in RPG writing. In his words, it's like a checklist for everything you have to include if you want the place to be not just interesting color but also *useful* in a game with real players who want to do really crazy stuff. It inspired not the *locations* in **HALL OF JUDGMENT** and **THE CITADEL AT NORDVÖRN**, but how they were presented. Your support of those works is a big vote of confidence for me, personally.

But this is Doug's party, not mine, so I'll get back on message: Thank you Doug and thank you Doug's customers! The continued backing of **Gaming Ballistic's** projects is a *fantastic* vote of support for the **DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME**.

Sean Punch,
GURPS Line Editor,
Steve Jackson Games
February 14, 2019





PREFACE

THE CITADEL AT NORDVÖRN started as a bit of an experiment. Instead of a series of encounters or a quest, Citadel began as a **RELATIONSHIP MAP**. I started out with the premise of a single, simple interaction between two parties, and then applied the Bujold Principle (“What’s the worst thing that can happen to this character? Hmm? Oh, yeah...I’ll do that.”) over and over until there were sufficient dangling threads that a group of PCs wouldn’t be able to avoid (or resist!) pulling on them.

It’s also a trial of a micro-setting that’s not a pure quest or subterranean delve for the **DUNGEON FANTASY RPG**. **HALL OF JUDGMENT**, my first licensed product for **Steve Jackson Games’ POWERED BY GURPS** boxed set, was well received and well supported by the **GURPS** fans. A full third of the boxed-set Kickstarter backers wound up backing **HALL OF JUDGMENT**, which meant well over 500 folks. That was amazing and paved the way for this adventure...and two more that are being written. That one was a straight-up quest-in-a-box, with a side order of the elements that made **DUNGEON FANTASY: CAVERTOWN** so much fun.

This one? It’s even more of **CAVERTOWN’s** style, plus a giant pre-made web of interactions for the players to tangle themselves in. Speaking of webs...

THE SPIDER-MAN HYPOTHESIS

No, not that one. Not that one either. The first Tobey Maguire one: “Like any good story, this one is all about a girl.” Well, it worked for Homer and Shakespeare and Howard. Who am I to argue with greatness?

This most basic of all romantic plotlines, two people who want to be together but can’t, was and is the heart of the relationship map. It’s basic, primal, and so very human. Further, the answers to the obvious questions have an instant appeal. Why can’t they be together? Who’s interfering? Why? What would the pair do to thwart the restraints upon them? Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

Folks can relate.

The basic conflict (spoiler alert!) is that of Ylsa and Asbjorn: two children of powerful leaders who would love to find common ground—and did—but were prevented from doing so. Ylsa’s father’s unwillingness to allow the match—and more importantly, why—provides the spark that leads to the conflagration.

The tangled web extends as far as it can from question to question: why does Dad (Orm) not want Asbjorn to court his daughter, Ylsa? How did that happen? Is he just petty? How would Asbjorn react to that? How, in a Viking-inspired culture, would Asbjorn’s family react to such a slight?

Well. This is high fantasy, and an adventure setting besides. No one is going to slink away and simply move on. There have to be feuds, conspiracies, factions, and high stakes.

If this winds up being as much fun to play as I think it will, I’ll explore this method further. Start with a core conflict or relationship (or several), and then build out the web of interactions and attitudes from there. And see what factions form, and which may already exist.

FOUR FACTIONS AND MORE

The world of Norðlond is a chessboard in which a minimum of four factions vie for supremacy; as the musical *Chess* noted so lyrically: “*Nobody’s on Nobody’s Side.*” In any interaction, one has to consider how the major players are involved.

The gods created the world in which the characters romp; that is a certainty in the cosmology of the setting. They are based on the Norse gods of saga and myth and popular culture with the serial numbers barely filed off. The assumption of the Norðlonders is that this is the only cosmology; there are the Norðlond gods and, well, that’s it. That may or may not be true in your game world! There is no question, though, that the Norðlond gods are real, provide divinely powered magic, and in many cases have physically interacted with certain inhabitants of the realm. (Obviously change that if you need to, but the presumption here is that it’s possible to meet the God of Thunder in the woods and have a drinking contest. Which you’ll lose. Badly.)

Set against the gods were the Elder Dragons. These ancient and powerful creatures displaced the Giants and conquered their realm (related to Norse myth: the

dragons conquered *Jotunheim* in a giantish Ragnarök event). Then they turned their eyes on *Midgard*—the mortal, human realm in which Norðlond and the rest of the world sit—and made great progress in enslaving the population there.

At some point, they met the Winter Faerie, and fought a great war. The faerie are powerful, but find chaotic joy in playing the games of power; they never really contemplated, until it was nearly too late, that the dragonkin would wage a war of total annihilation. The faerie were forever...how could that change?

During that war, both sides were savaged, and even the fabric of magic was damaged. The dragons—the godlike Elder Dragons—were locked in a sort of spiritual stasis. Both their “lesser” kin and their degenerate offshoots, the *eðlufólk* and *gangaeðla* (**LIZARD-MEN** and **DINOMEN**), were left scattered and independent. As a group, they strive to wake the Elder Dragons and challenge the gods of Norðlond for supremacy.

And of course, then there are the demons who vacillate between wanting to dominate all life and just watching the world burn.

Each of these factions is present in one form or another in and around **THE CITADEL AT NORÐVÖRN**.

IT’S ALL UP TO YOU

THE CITADEL AT NORÐVÖRN is deliberately open-ended. How the Castellán and his wife react to the many threats all coming at once and what happens to the towns of Löngrú and Áinferill and the Hunted Lands is up to the players to determine. Will their characters take sides? Choose one faction over another? Try to tamp down the bandits or join them? Overthrow or support the misbehaving jarl of Áinferill?

The area is so teeming with strife and peril that the players will have the opportunity to stand at the fulcrum of many crises.

Good luck, and may the Fates have a bold destiny in store for you!



ABOUT NORÐLOND

Norðlond itself is “fantasy Viking land” with a lot more good-quality steel. Based on physical archaeology, one seems to have “nothing” and “short chain mail haubergeons” as the only armor options in the Viking age. Perhaps a few bits of lamellar belonging to mercenaries. No leather thick enough to look at and say “yep, that’s armor.”

But this is the **DUNGEON FANTASY ROLEPLAYING GAME!** Norðlond is not Iceland or Norway. The culture is layered on top of a fantasy infrastructure for maximum coolness and a touch of verisimilitude. Characters can be immersed piecemeal in the culture and attitudes (the easiest way to introduce the setting, and why so much time is spent on festivals and culture). Either way, there’s a lot here to dig into, and much that can be ported into alternate campaigns—players of my prior effort, **HALL OF JUDGMENT**, did exactly that, with great success.

A LAND OF ADVENTURE

The Citadel at Nordvörn is a *mini-setting*, not an adventure module. There is no singular quest to be completed, no Holy Grail that once obtained, you can sit back and say “we won!”

Rather, there are many adventures, plus more trouble the players will doubtless create on their own. There are many intersecting plots, and it is certain that the players will bump into several of them. You can’t swing a dead *gangaeðla* without hitting adventure in Norðlond.

Where to start? That’s always the question, and for this setting, it’s probably best to start with a party.

The festivals that are detailed in the chapters for each settlement are there to provide more than just fun culture: they provide a low-key method to introduce the players to the environment. They can and should partake in the competitions and general revelry that surround the event, giving them a chance to make their allegiances known—do they join in the fellowship of the braethralag of the gods of Norðlond? Which one? As mighty heroes (the starting templates of the **DUNGEON FANTASY RPG** are in the top tier of ability), they can expect to do very well in any competitions in which they engage. Norðvörn in particular (and Norðlond in general) takes fighting competitions seriously: a good showing in a wrestling, archery, spellcasting, or sparring competition will provide a reputation that will open up invitations to dangerous fun.

Alternately. Start the setting off with a fight. If the players come into town freshly bloodied by an attack by bandits, faerie, or dragonkin, that’s an instant plot hook, and nothing grabs a party’s attention like having a group of lizard-folks trying to eat their face.

Welcome to Norðvörn and its surrounds. We hope you like it here.

Try the goat: it’s *especially* good.



NORÐLOND GLOSSARY

The glossary gives Norðlond terms used in *THE CITADEL AT NORÐVÖRN*, their pronunciation, and a brief description of the word or phrase's meaning.

Term	Pronunciation	Notes
Akkerisborg	AH-kehr-iss-borg	The second-largest city in Norðlond, it anchors the east end of Audrey's Wall, where the Jotunnáin meets the ocean.
Alf/Alfar	AHLF-ahr	Singular/plural for the "high" faerie as opposed to their minions and lesser beings.
Alfheim	AHLF-haym	The realm of the alfar; one of the Nine Realms of Norðlond's cosmology.
Alþingi	AHL-ting-yay	Town council meeting.
As a ciall	AHZ a key-ALKH	An alfar phrase meaning "the outcast ones," with a strong undertone of "because they're dangerously insane."
Bolvaðr	BUHL-vadthr	Accursed one. Soulless progeny of demons and humans; like eldhúð but evil, but undetectably so.
Braeðralag	BREYE-dthra-lach	Brotherhood. The loose organization of Norðlonders who worship a common god in a settlement.
Dánarhátíð	DAHL-nar-hal-tidth	The Valor Festival, held in late fall/early winter.
Dýrð-óðir	DEERdth Oh-thvir	"Glory mad." Said about folks who make a habit of killing and taking victory tokens (sigurtákn).
Eðlufólk	EYE-dth-la-folk	Lizard-men; servitors and warriors for the true dragons.
Eldhúð	ELD-hoodth	"Fire hide," the progeny of a union of a usually-shapeshifted demon and a human, with distinctive features and a notable resistance to fire and heat.
Flalleglygi	FAHL-leg-gee-gee	"Beautiful lie." A type of shapeshifting demon that uses the victim's own desires and weaknesses to gain access to their soul in order to consume it forever.
Gangaeðla	GONG-eyedth-lah	Lesser dragonkin; "leg-lizards." Dinomen.
Gestrisni	GEST-riz-knee	Hospitality, or guest-right.
Ginnungagap	GINN-noon-gah-gap	The primordial magically-charged abyss that supposedly existed before the gods created the world.
Guðrun	GUDTH-ruun	God's secret lore; messages and commandments from the Norðlond gods.
Hugrekki próf	HEW-grecky PROHWV	Bravery bump. A casual and deliberate challenge to a contest of strength or prowess. Usually delivered to an unarmed stranger.
Huskarls	HOOS-kar-uhls	The pledged military retainers of a jarl. Not necessarily always warriors (they may be spellcasters).
Isfall	EYEZ-fyath	Ice Mountain. A town in the northwest corner of Norðlond.
Jarl	YARL	The chiefs of Norðlond; more broadly, a generic term for the noble class, or "folks in charge."
Karl	KAHRL	A free yeoman, landowner, or equivalent. Neither a chief (jarls) nor slave (thralls).
Kvoldomur	KVOHL-dome-urr	A demon of chaos motivated by the desire to cause suffering.

Term	Pronunciation	Notes
Lægribær	LIE-gree-buy-ur	"Lower Town," the residential and commercial area of Norðvörn, located on the west bank of the Jotunnáin.
Landsvæði gripa	LANDS-vay-d the GREE-pah	An eðlufolk territory war.
Landvaettr	LAND-vay-turr	The semi-aware spirit of place that has been long steeped in magic. The landvaettr of broken leyferðs (below) are frequently insane.
Leyferð	LAY-ferdth	Remarkable places where ley lines of mana crossed. Powerful magic was performed on leyferðs. They were shattered during the end of the faerie-dragon wars.
Meðaltal Jöfur	MEHD-al-tah JER-fer	Average Joe
Muspelheim,	MUHS-pell-haym	The realm of fire; home of demons.
Norðalf	NORDTH-ahlf	A small, capricious, malicious faerie found in Norðlond, especially near the Frostharrow.
Norðlond	NORDTH-lund	The barbarian lands in the far north of the continent.
Norðvörn	NORDTH-ver-tuh	Yes, really. "North guard," or casually, Northwatch. Consists of the Citadel and Lægribær ("Lower Town").
Róaðu þig	ROH-ahdth-oo thig	"Calm down."
Seax	SAY-acks	A term used for a long, single-edged knife or a short single-edged sword. The Norðlonders don't much distinguish.
Sérstakt Konar Heimskur	SEE-ehrr-staht CONE-ahr HAYM-skoor	"A special kind of stupid." In Isfall, used nearly exclusively for those that wander alone in the wilds near the Frostharrow.
Sigurtákn	SIG-uhr-towk-en	Trophy, or victory token. The spoils of a victory in battle, usually by formal challenge. Honorably won; questionable nonetheless.
Slátrun	SLAU-troon	Slaughter. The annual meat harvest of domestic animals, held in October.
Stóralf	STOHR-ahlf	"Large" or "Big" faerie. Man-sized alfar.
Svartalfheim	SVAHRT-ahlf-haym	Dark elf home. The spirit realm of faerie pocket dimensions.
Thegn	THAYNE	A particularly well-respected or wealthy karl. The word conveys a sense of personal power and influence and is a descriptor, rather than a title.
Thurs	THURZ	A large faerie, related to trolls.
Tyrann	TEER-ahn	A demon motivated by the desire to dominate and rule over all.
Uppvakninga	UHP-vahk-nin-gah	Zombies; "the walking dead."
Veiddarlond	VAY-tahr-lund	The Hunted Lands. A region in Norðlond that is overrun with faerie.
Weregild	VEHR-yeld	Payment to an injured party as redress for a crime or slight.
Ýlir	EEE-lihr	The Allfather's Hunt, a festival ending with the Winter Solstice.





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