

CHARACTERS



# Sir Sigmund

Sir Sigmund is official protector of the village, and he has once again failed his responsibilities. The first time was when the Strangers led a bloody attack on the village almost twenty years ago, and he could not protect his first wife and son. The failure has tormented Sigmund ever since. Now, three women were abducted by the Strangers on his own wedding day, and Sigmund feels that it is his duty to bring them home safe and sound. He is dedicated and honor bound, but back in the village he has left behind his young wife, who is not yet pregnant with the heir he covets so much.

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Sigmund was only a boy when his father died, and he inherited the title of knight. For many generations, his family had held the title and protected the village against robbers, wolves and the Strangers. From early childhood he trained in sword fighting, leadership and courtly speech, and for a while everything went well. He married a good woman who gave him a healthy son. It was a relief to know that the family's future was assured. But fortune would prove whimsical. At that time there was a tenuous truce between the village and the Strangers, and a hot night in late summer, it broke.

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*Sigmund was woken by someone hammering on the door. The noise caused his son to wake up crying in his crib, and his wife picked him up and held him close, while Sigmund left the chamber. Burkhart from the militia stood outside, sweaty and agitated. He had a firm grip on the wrist of a young girl from the village. Edrys, was her name, and her eyes were red from crying. She accused Burkhart of murdering one of the Strangers, who she had been in love with, in cold blood. Burkhart defended himself by saying that he had thought that it was a rape. Sigmund cursed the whole situation, as he listened to their explanations and recriminations. He had to make a swift decision, but he did not like any of the options. Responsibility for the village's safety rested on his shoulders, and it was a responsibility he must not fail.*

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The truce was too fragile, and Sigmund knew that the conflict between the Strangers and the villagers could escalate very quickly. If the Strangers were told that one of their own was murdered by one of his militiamen, the truce would collapse and the villagers' lives would be in danger. It was clear to him that there was only one thing to do, and finally he spoke. He admonished Edrys to say that that it *had* been a rape, if she was to have any hope of retaining her honor as a woman and still being able to marry one of the men from the village. Sigmund himself would then inform the Strangers about the rape and that their man had died accidentally when Burkhart had tried to rescue the girl. By placing the responsibility for the incident with the Strangers, Sigmund hoped that the situation could still be resolved diplomatically.

The Strangers had learned about the death much faster than Sir Sigmund had feared. Before he had managed to put his plan into action, the Strangers attacked the village, and everything escalated with lightning speed. Several farms and houses were burned down. In the confusion, Sigmund had not even been able to protect his own wife and son, who were ruthlessly murdered.

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*The flames from the pyre licked up against the night sky, and Sigmund saw the fire consume his dead wife and his only son and heir. All around him were the sound of mourning voices, and voices demanding revenge. The truce was broken forever, and Sigmund no longer harbored any hope of resolving the conflict with words. There was only one road left now, and he had to follow it to the bitter end.*

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Subsequently Sir Sigmund, Burkhart and a handful of men from the militia pursued the Strangers and tracked down a camp where a large clan of them lived. They executed them on the spot. In the years to follow it came to countless bloody clashes between the villagers and the Strangers. Sigmund included more young men in the militia and trained them in the use of weapons. When he got information about the Strangers' whereabouts in the wilderness, he led the militia attack and chased the Strangers down.

## SIR SIGMUND

The prisoners that were taken alive were hanged in the town square. Eventually, the attacks on the village grew fewer and fewer, and life began to go on as usual. It turned out that Edrys bore the child of the Stranger in her womb, and many in the village had demanded that the fetus should be killed, but Sigmund had listened to Edrys' pleadings and let the child live. Not out of pity or of the goodness of his heart, but because the child was to serve as a living reminder of his failure as a protector of the village and his own family. Never should it happen again. He issued a decree that banned all dealings with the Strangers.

Though he would not have found it difficult to find a new wife, for many years Sigmund refrained from it. Partly because the pain of his loss hurt too much, partly to punish himself with a life of solitude. For a long time Sigmund had no other priorities than to serve and protect the village, but as he got on in years, it became urgent to marry again, so that he could secure a male heir to take the title of knight after himself. After prolonged courtship he therefore proposed to the much younger Wilona. Her father of course said yes, and she was not unhappy with her elevated status in the village. For their wedding party Sir Sigmund had taken off on the traditional stag hunt with many of the village's men at his side. If the groom could kill a stag, it would bring the marriage fertility, and Sigmund was content that he brought down a fine animal. The joy did not last long, however. The Strangers had taken advantage of their absence to attack the village and kidnap three of their women.

### **Equipment**

Longsword, helmet, chainmail, shield, thoroughbred stallion.

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*Sigmund walked as in a nightmare among the burning buildings and overturned tables. The smoke tore into his nostrils and got his eyes watering. He stepped over the body of a dead militiaman, and several confused villagers ran past him. He saw in his mind his first wife as he had found her during the attack so many years ago and he could not get the image of her body out of his head. Her skull had been had been smashed by a stone from a sling, when she had tried to bring their son to safety, and the infant was crushed under her weight. Sigmund had not been able to protect his wife and son, as it was a man's duty to do, and he had not been able to protect the village as it was a knight's duty to do, neither then nor now. He discovered that he still bore the body of the dead stag over his shoulders and let it fall into the bloody mud where he had given his vows just hours ago. With a brisk pace he went to his farm to put on his chainmail.*

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The heavy guilt that weighed down Sigmund was not something he showed on the outside, as the village needed a strong leader now more than ever. He announced that he would strike out to personally bring the captives safely home, but in the back of his mind he was not sure if he did it for the captives' sake or his own.

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**Keywords:** Burdened with guilt and responsibility, guided by common sense and cold calculation, by duty and honor, must put an heir into the world.

## Relations

**Burkhart:** After the skirmishes against the Strangers Burkhart went to fight in the King's war against the Strangers on the other side of the mountains. Two weeks ago he returned home after fifteen years of service. He is the only one besides Sigmund with real combat experience in this endeavor, but the war has left its mark on him, and his mind is dark and gloomy. Burkhart is a dangerous man, no doubt about it, and Sigmund is convinced that Burkhart will try to challenge his authority sooner or later.

**Godric:** Godric is the son of the village's largest landowner, and Sigmund sees great potential in him. Despite his only 16 years of age Godric possesses great courage and strength, but he is still just a peasant boy. He is deeply in love with his abducted girlfriend, Eda, and if Sigmund had not eventually allowed him to join the party, he is convinced that Godric would have struck out on his own.

**Lothar:** For many years Lothar made his living as a hunter wandering around in the wilderness, but now he has a wife and children, and he has settled down to cultivate the land. Lothar is one of the few in the village who has ever spoken up for the Strangers. Sigmund has suspected him of having been in contact with the Strangers during his travels, but has never been able to prove anything.

**Ranulf:** Ranulf is the bastard that was the result of Edrys' affair with the Stranger that led to so much pain and suffering. The young man is a reminder of Sigmund failure as a knight, and he entertains no warm feelings towards the boy, but Sigmund would not deny him his right as a man to help rescue his half-sister Siglinde. Perhaps something good may come out of the fact that Sigmund allowed him to live so many years ago.

## About the game

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Here is an overview of the game's overall structure.

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## Cast

### Main characters

**Sir Sigmund:** 48 years. The knight and protector of the village.

**Burkhart:** 42 years. A seasoned veteran, who recently returned from nearly fifteen years of fighting the Strangers.

**Lothar:** 36 years. A loner and former hunter. Now a family man and farmer.

**Ranulf:** 18 years. A half-blood bastard whose mother was raped by a Stranger.

**Godric:** 16 years. A hearty farmboy with his life ahead of him.

### The abducted

**Siglinde:** Ranulf's half-sister. 8 years.

**Eda:** Godric's girlfriend. 15 years.

**Rosmunda:** Lothar's older sister. The village herb-wife. Burkhart's love from before he went to war. Unmarried. 40 years.

### Back in the village

**Wilona:** Sir Sigmund's new wife.

**Rheda:** Lothar's wife.

**Aedan and Aedra:** Lothar's 2-year-old twins.

**Edrys:** Ranulf's mother.

**Kendra:** Ranulf's girlfriend.

**Fulco:** A young man who has tried to woo Kendra for some time.

**Alvin:** Godric's father. Owns the largest farm in the village.

**Hild:** Godric's mother.



**Burkhart is a tough and uncompromising warrior, and his heart is filled with hatred for the Strangers. For many years he has fought against them as a soldier in the King's army for the sake of his beloved Rosmunda, and the middle-aged and worn out veteran has only recently returned to the village to settle down.**

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Burkhart was a young man when he fell in love with the herb-wife Rosmunda who lived alone with her younger brother, Lothar. She also loved him, and Burkhart toyed with the thought of proposing to her one day. At that time there was a fragile truce between the villagers and the Strangers, but Burkhart never trusted that the Strangers had honourable intentions, and as a member of the village militia, he was always watchful when they were nearby. He was especially wary of the way some of the Strangers looked after Rosmunda and the other women.

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*Burkhart was halfway through his round when he found a Stranger in the process of raping Edrys, one of the young girls from the village. Burkhart was filled with rage at the sight and jumped on the Stranger without hesitation. He got a good grip around the Stranger's slender neck with his fists and squeezed. "You fucking pig," he whispered. "Here is the price for laying your hands on our women." Burkhart squeezed and squeezed until the Stranger's eye turned white and he became limp and lifeless. Only then did he notice Edrys' cries and screams for him to stop. This made no sense, and he did not understand why she was beating on him. Only slowly did it dawn on him that she had given herself to the Stranger by her own free will.*

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Sir Sigmund had had a sombre and serious facial expression, when Burkhart had awakened him with Edrys in tow and explained the situation. To save the unmarried girl's honor and opportunity to find herself a husband in the village, the knight decided to make the affair known as a rape, and he had persuaded the sobbing Edrys to back the story up for her own sake. When it later turned out that she had become pregnant, Sigmund allowed her to keep the baby, which she gave the name Ranulf. It was not a decision that Burkhart understood or condoned. Later on he told the story of the rape so many times over a mug of beer, that he eventually almost forgot that it was a lie.

Shortly after the killing of the Stranger the truce broke and the strife led to nightly attacks on the village. The Strangers set houses and farms on fire and murdered at random before they retired to the darkness where they had come from. During the bloodiest of these attacks they killed Sir Sigmund's wife and infant son. Subsequently Burkhart, Sir Sigmund and a handful of brave men from the militia managed to track down a camp where a large clan of Strangers lived. They executed everyone they found. It was the first revenge, but there was still work to be done so the people in the village could live in safety. For each battle Burkhart became better at fighting, and he discovered that his hands were not made to farm the land, but to cleave enemy heads with an axe. He was a born warrior, and even though Sir Sigmund was better trained, Burkhart's abilities soon exceeded his. And Burkhart let his abilities come to good use. Every time they managed to take a Stranger alive, he nodded with satisfaction as the prisoner dangled from the gallows in the town square. Finally, the attacks on the village got fewer and fewer, and life began to go on as normal. The threat of the Strangers never left Burkhart's thoughts, but it was far away when he was walking hand in hand with Rosmunda, dreaming of their future together.

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Burkhart had still not proposed to her the day a recruiting officer rode into the village. The officer gathered the men of the village men and told them that various clans of Strangers had joined forces together on the other side of the mountains, and that the King was gathering men for his army to strike them down once and for all. That night Burkhart was lying restless in his bed. He fervently wished to stay with Rosmunda, to begin their life together. But what kind of a man would he be for her if he did not do his duty? The next day he took leave of her and went away.

## BURKHART

The war dragged on, and in the end Burkhart served for nearly fifteen years. To some the war seemed pointless and without end, and many cowards deserted and disregarded the oath of allegiance they had sworn, but Burkhart stubbornly fought on. The Strangers lived in the treacherous bogs and impassable forests in the farthest reaches of the kingdom where they attacked remote towns and farms. Every time the King's army was about to tighten its grip on the Strangers, it was as if they slipped between their fingers. As shadows in the fog, shadows had never really been there at all.

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*Burkhart crept slowly through the dense undergrowth with the rest of the patrol spread out behind him. Twilight closed around them, and there was still no trace of the lost patrol that should have replaced them a week ago. He abruptly signaled to halt when he spotted a camp among the trees. He slowly approached, and in the semi-darkness he could make out the soldiers standing around the camp, but they did not move at all. Something was wrong and a shiver ran down his spine as he slowly approached the first figure. The soldier had been dead for days, and the body had been impaled from ass to jaw, a pointed stick in the ground keeping it upright as if undead. All the men were raised in this macabre way, as if they unabashedly lived on after their death. Burkhart felt for the first time in his life fear wash over himself, and his hands began to shake. This was unnatural. Wrong. The dead soldier just stared into the darkness.*

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Burkhart hardened his soul and filled it with hate. When they managed to find one of the Strangers' hide-outs, the soldiers had standing orders to kill all the Strangers they could find. Women and children too, so they would not again grow in number. There was no room for doubt in Burkhart's mind, and when he tore a child away from his mother's breast, he thought of the atrocities the Strangers had committed back in the village. Of all those killed, and the rape of Edrys who had started it all. He would kill the pig who had raped her again and again, if he could. When Burkhart fought for his life on the battlefield smeared in blood and mud, it was hatred that drove him. He imagined what the Strangers would do to Rosmunda if they got hold of her, and it gave him strength. After all the years the war had lasted, he knew deep down that he had lost her and that she now lived another life with another man back in the village. He still found strength in the knowledge that she could live a safer life at home for each of the Strangers he killed with his axe.

Eventually, the Strangers west of the mountains had finally been brought to heel and when Burkhart was told that he could return home, he noticed for the first time how exhausted he was. The war had almost worn him out, and he was tired to his very bones. While he covered the long ride back to the village, the only home he had ever known, he could picture himself sitting in a chair in front of the fireplace with a good pipe of tobacco on a dark winter evening. A quiet and uneventful life. That was all he wanted now, and if he had not deserved it, who the heck had?

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Two weeks ago he rode into the village again and it turned out that Rosmunda had still not married. At first it was awkward to talk to her after all the years in which they had been separated, but they slowly began to get closer again. Burkhart's parents had died many years ago, and the farm had been allowed to fall apart in his absence. The roof and one wall had collapsed, the wood rotted, and the weeds had almost strangled the small vegetable garden. Burkhart began to slowly rebuild the farm and the work did him good.

### **Equipment**

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Leather jerkin, battle axe, shield, crossbow, war horse.

His time home in the village had been too short. Sir Sigmund was going to marry again, and together with most the other men Burkhart went on the traditional stag hunt. While they were away, the Strangers attacked the village and kidnapped Rosmunda and the two girls. Two weeks. Two weeks at home in the village they had given him before they had torn her away from him. Burkhart felt tired and looked across the ravaged fairground with the corpses and the downtrodden garlands. For a moment he considered to let bygones be bygones. To give up even before the hunt had begun. But then hatred flared in him with renewed vigor, and the hatred gave him strength.

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**Keywords:** Tough and uncompromising, veteran, hates the Strangers, has always struggled for Rosmunda's safety, worn and tired, wants a life of peace and quiet.

## Relations

**Sir Sigmund:** Although Burkhart respects Sigmund's skill with a sword, the knight is an irresolute man, who thinks rather than acts, and Burkhart is not going to let the women's fate rest in his hands.

**Lothar:** Rosmunda's little brother who previously lived as a hunter. At the time of strife between the villagers and the Strangers, the young Lothar never joined the fight to strike the Strangers down, and since then Burkhart has regarded him a coward. After letting Rosmunda wait all these years, Burkhart is sure that his chilly feelings are reciprocated.

**Ranulf:** This bastard should never have been born. The craven blood of the Strangers is flowing in his veins, and therefore he can never be trusted entirely. Ranulf sees himself as one of the men of the village, but he never will be. He's going to work hard to earn just a smidgen of Burkhart's trust, and Burkhart will keep a watchful eye on him.

**Godric:** Godric is the son of the village's largest landowner and has his whole life ahead of him. The boy is head over heels in love with the kidnapped Eda, and Burkhart recognizes his own love for Rosmunda in his eyes. He is full of youthful recklessness, and Burkhart has no time for babysitting during this endeavor. The sooner a real man is made out of Godric, the better.

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**Alvin:** Godric's father. Owns the largest farm in the village.

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# ✂ Lothar

Lothar is a loner who has been the village hunter for years. He has always been restless, and has only really felt alive riding over the great, desolate expanses with the wind at his back, or sitting crouched by the fire in the large pine forests on a starry night. Now he has married Rheda, is the father of a pair of twins and has settled in the village to cultivate the land. He desperately wants to be there for his children, but the free life in the wilderness has still not loosened its grip on him.

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Lothar's parents had a small piece of land they cultivated, but his father earned his living primarily as a hunter. Lothar's fondest childhood memories are of his father taking him into the wilderness. Sometimes for days at a time. His father taught Lothar to survive in the wilds and to tell one plant from the other. He taught him to track animals and to shoot with bow and arrow. Lothar hung on every word his father said.

When Lothar was nine his mother died, and his father began to withdraw into himself. He was away from the village for longer and longer stretches, and he never told where he had been or what he had done. Therefore, it was primarily up to Lothar's older sister, Rosmunda, to take care of him. The two siblings developed a close relationship, but Lothar never stopped loving his father or hoping that one day he would take him out into the wilderness again. When his father was away, Lothar went up on the hill, where you could see for miles in all directions, and peered out of the wilderness in the hope of seeing his father appear in the horizon. The walk back to the hut was always lonely. The times his father did come home, it was as if he was not aware of the children. He ate the food Rosmunda served, but he never really spoke with them. His father's eyes became increasingly distant and one day when he went out into the wilderness, he did not return.

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*"He's not coming back home," Rosmunda said. She and Lothar had eaten their porridge in silence, and her words broke the silence in the cabin. Lothar nodded meekly. Deep down, he knew it as well, but it was easier to forget when you did not say it out loud. Rosmunda looked earnestly at him. "It's only the two of us now, Lothar. You and me. But it does not matter. We'll make do. I'll take care of you." Lothar looked up from the empty bowl. "Do you promise that you won't leave too?" "I promise," she said.*

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She kept her word. The family's hut was outside the village, and the two siblings mostly kept to themselves. Rosmunda learned to use healing herbs of one of the old women, and soon the village farmers were giving her food and crops to care for their sick. She also started a relationship with the slightly older Burkhart, who served in the village militia. Lothar started to work as a farmhand on the biggest farm in the village, but the work was repetitive and it bored him. The wilderness tugged at him, and he soon followed in his father's footsteps as a hunter. He began to travel further away from the village on the hunt, and when he traveled in the wilderness, he felt free. He could go his own way and no one told him what to do. He told himself that he would never relinquish that freedom.

Back then there was a brief truce between the village and the Strangers. Most of the village was skeptical about the Strangers and feared that they would betray them. Lothar however, was curious and optimistic. The truce collapsed when one of the Strangers raped a girl from the village. The Stranger was killed when Burkhart had come to the girl's rescue, and shortly after the Strangers attacked the village and burned down several farms. Among those killed were Sir Sigmund's wife and infant son. Many attacks and confrontations had ensued. Sigmund, Burkhart and the rest of the militia managed to locate and destroy large groups of Strangers, and Sigmund forbade anyone to have dealings with the Strangers on their own. Lothar took no part in the fighting against the Strangers, and he did not like the look on Burkhart's face the times the men brought back a Stranger and hanged him in the village square.

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Fifteen years ago a recruiting officer came to the village to gather soldiers for the army, and Burkhart left Rosmunda to go to war against the Strangers on the other side of the mountains. Lothar wanted no part of it. The following years his hunting trips carried him further and further into the wilderness. And one day several years ago, his travels brought him face to face with one of the Strangers.

## LOTHAR

*Lothar stood still and stared at the Stranger warrior woman standing on the other side of the forest lake. Her teeth were filed to sharp points, and she had a small spear in her hands. She stood motionless like him. He carefully reached for his bow and started to nock an arrow, but he did not aim it when he saw that she had not raised her spear to throw. Slowly they both started to circle around the small forest lake, while they held each other's gazes watchfully. But none of them attacked, and she disappeared into the woods as suddenly as she had come.*

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It was not the last time the two met. Now and then Lothar saw signs that she had been near, and sometimes they caught each other out of the corner of an eye. Slowly, very slowly, they began to approach each other, and for each time they met the mistrust dwindled. She was called Aldona, and over time they developed a cautious bond. Lothar was always on guard and watched every move when he met with her, and it was clear that she did the same. Although the situation was always tense when they met, they began to share stories and knowledge of the wilderness and the dangers lurking out there. It was always she who found him when he was traveling, and he never found out how. Lothar knew that all contact with the Strangers was strictly forbidden, but his curiosity was greater than his fear of being exposed.

A good three years ago, Lothar fell in love with Rheda from the village. His journeys into the wilderness started to grow shorter so he could come back to her, and he grew fonder of her every time he saw her. Lothar began to dream of starting a family, and one day he proposed to her. To his delight she said yes and moved in with him and Rosmunda. Before he knew it, she became pregnant and bore him twins, Aedan and Aedra. Earlier in their relationship Rheda had unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to stop his travels for good, but in that moment he decided to stay home in the village and settle down.

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*“Here, hold him,” Rosmunda said and handed the infant to him. Lothar smiled awkwardly to his older sister, who had midwifed the birth, and embraced his son. He then sat down on the edge of the bed where Rheda lay with their newborn daughter in her arms. Her smile was tired but content. Lothar felt the love of Rheda and the twins flow through his body, and at the moment they were all he cared for in the world. He had a family now, and he would never leave them. He would see his children grow up, and he would always be there for them.*

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Lothar hated the monotonous life of a farmer. The same chores day in and day out. When he got up in the morning, he knew exactly how the day would proceed, and there were no surprises in store. It was as if the village closed in further around him with every day that passed. He felt suffocated. Lothar loved Rheda and the children, but the wilderness had not loosened its grip on him. For over two years he had not been outside the village, and thoughts of the wild rivers, deep forests and open spaces crept their way into his mind as he trudged behind the plow.

Lothar had gradually accepted that he would never leave the village again when the Strangers attacked the village. They struck while he and most of the other men had participated in the traditional stag hunt during Sir Sigmund's wedding, and they had kidnapped Rosmunda and two other girls. Lothar immediately volunteered to ride out with Sir Sigmund and rescue those taken. Rheda was reluctant to let him go, but she understood that he had to save Rosmunda. He kissed Aedan and Aedra goodbye, but he promised himself that he would return to them again soon. Lothar could not help but feel a slight glimmer of relief and excitement as the group rode out of the village. He tried to ignore it, but he could not deny the liberating feeling of once again being able to feel the wind in his face, and a steed beneath him.

### **Equipment**

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Bow, quiver, dagger, flint, riding horse.

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**Keywords:** Loner, has had dealings with a Stranger, adventurous, torn between the family at home and the freedom of the wilderness.

## Relations

**Burkhart:** Burkhart returned to the village two weeks ago after having been at war for nearly fifteen years, and all that time Rosmunda waited for him. Burkhart has done some courtesy calls, but otherwise he has mostly kept to himself and started to rebuild his departed parents' dilapidated farm. Rosmunda still loves him, but Lothar despises him for having left her alone for all those years and he will not allow him to betray her again.

**Sir Sigmund:** Sir Sigmund is a skilled warrior and a responsible leader for the village, but since the skirmishes many years ago Sigmund has been paranoid about the Strangers. At one point he asked a lot about Lothar's travels, and Lothar is afraid that the knight has come to suspect his meetings with Aldona. Sir Sigmund would see it as a betrayal, if it was revealed.

**Ranulf:** Ranulf is a half-blood bastard. It was his mother who was raped by the Stranger back then, and he has had a tough upbringing in the village. A couple of times, Lothar has tried to talk to him about the Strangers, but Ranulf has shut him out every time. Lothar would like to tell the young man that not all the Strangers are evil.

**Godric:** Godric is the son of the city's wealthiest farmer who Lothar originally worked for as a young kid. Godric has always lived a safe and secure life with a bright future ahead of him and has never really needed anything before. Lothar is afraid that it will do more harm than good to have him in tow, but he is willing to give Godric the benefit of the doubt.

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**Ranulf is a half-blood bastard. His father was a Stranger, who raped his mother, and Ranulf is the product. The young man is struggling with the darkness within him, caused by the Stranger's blood coursing through his veins. More than anything he wants to prove his worth and to prove that he belongs among the people in of the village. Not least to himself.**

---

People have always been able to see that Ranulf is not like the others in the village. He is short and slight of build, his skin has a grayish tone, and his hair is snow-white. Just like the Strangers he can see in the dark, but he has tried to keep that to himself, so as not to stand out more than necessary.

Back when Ranulf's mother was raped, there was a brief truce between the village and the Strangers. It was broken when one of the Strangers assaulted his mother and took her by force. Burkhart, who served in the village militia, came to her rescue and killed the Stranger on sight. Then the hostilities flared up, and the Strangers attacked the village, set fire to houses and farms and killed many good people. Sir Sigmund, Burkhart and other brave men from the militia beat the attacks back and chased the Strangers down.

His mother could have laid him out in the woods as a baby, but she had kept him and raised him as a normal child. But Ranulf was not like the other children. He had always known. He was a constant reminder to the other villagers of the Strangers' malice. He understood why they did not trust him, and he did not blame them.

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*Fulco threw Ranulf around the pigsty, sat on Ranulf's back and pressed his face into the mud. The other boys yelled. Ranulf twisted his arms to get free, but Fulco was too strong, and he could taste the mud and shit in his mouth. Fulco bent his face down to Ranulf's ear and whispered softly to him. "Me and the other boys know what you are. We know what your father did, and we know that you are like him. And we are watching you. Never forget it." Ranulf stopped resisting and remained down long after Fulco and the others had gone away.*

---

Ranulf knew that Fulco was right, which made it hurt all the more. He had a darkness in him, and he did not want to let it loose. The human in him kept the Stranger in check, but he dared not think of what would happen if the Stranger one day got the upper hand. Ranulf hated the Strangers for all the evil they had done to the village. He hated his father for what he had done to his mother. And he hated himself for what he was.

It took many years before a farmer finally took pity on his mother and married her even if it meant he also had to take care of Ranulf. Soon after Ranulf got a half sister by the name Siglinde. His stepfather was always cool to him and kept him at a distance, but Ranulf and Siglinde developed a strong bond.

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*A bolt of pain shot through Ranulf's body as a farmhand kicked him in the side. The other gave him a good thump in the ass, and Ranulf tried in vain to get up. They laughed. The men stank of beer and spirits, and you could still hear the music from the wedding in the background. One of them raised a stick over his head. "Stop," a voice said. The two men turned and saw Siglinde who stood a few feet behind them. They barely spared the little girl a glance and turned to Ranulf again. "I would not do that if I were you," she said in a clear voice. "My father is going to fetch Sir Sigmund, and you'd better disappear before they come back." The biggest of the men began to laugh scornfully, but something in Siglinde's face spurred him to silence. He kicked Ranulf one last time and then pulled his buddy with him. "Let us get going," he said, "The little bastard's not worth it." As soon as they were gone, Siglinde ran to Ranulf and helped him to his feet. "Come, Ranulf, let's get out of here before they find out I lied." He smiled weakly at her. "You're crazy." She smiled again.*

## RANULF

Siglinde had saved him from being beaten that day, and he admired her courage and loyalty, but deep down it gnawed at him too. It was he who should take care of her, and not vice versa. Maybe it was the Strangers' blood in him that made him cowardly and weak?

---

When his stepfather died of illness a few years ago, Ranulf was the only man in the house, and he had to step up. Ranulf worked hard in their small field and lent a hand to others when he could. Several began to smile or nod to him, and the harsh remarks became fewer and fewer. He was slowly becoming one of them. Ranulf had never really been part of the youth community in the village, but last summer he helped Godric's father get the harvest in. Godric's family had so much land that they sometimes needed an extra pair of hands and occasionally Ranulf and Godric would talk during the hard work in the fields. Ranulf was not sure whether they were becoming friends, or if Godric looked down at him, as all the others did.

And then there was Kendra. They had smiled at each other from afar for a while, but he could not quite understand why she was interested in him, and when his old tormentor Fulco began to woo her, Ranulf was sure that he had lost her. But one day she kissed him behind the big barn, and never had he felt so much as an ordinary human. He had never dared to dream that a girl from the village would be in love with him. They had been together ever since, but even though he toyed with the idea, he had not yet gathered the courage to propose to her. But he wanted to. He dreamed of a family and to farm his own land like all the other young men.

### Equipment

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Firewood axe, knife, work horse belonging to Godric's father.

Just at the time when Ranulf was finally beginning to feel like a part of the village, the Strangers attacked. They struck during Sir Sigmund's wedding, while Ranulf and most other men had been off on the traditional stag hunt.

---

*Ranulf ran through the village as fast as his legs could carry him. Around him farms and houses were burning, and the wounded screamed in pain. He found his mother, who grabbed his hands and looked at him with a desperate look in her eyes. "Siglinde. They took Siglinde." Ranulf started running, shouting her name. Through the smoke he saw Godric, who was coming towards him with red-rimmed eyes. The Strangers had abducted his girlfriend, Eda. The two young men stood face to face in the middle of the overturned banquet tables and downtrodden garlands. Their eyes shone in the glow of the flames. "We'll get them home," Ranulf said. "We find the girls and get them home." Godric grimly pulled a dagger from his belt and traced a bloody line on the palm of one hand. He took Ranulf's hand and did the same with it. "We swear it," he said, and their bloody hands found each other in a firm grip. "I swear," they said in unison.*

---

After the attack Ranulf noticed that several of the villagers began to send him distrustful looks, and he could not blame them. It was as if the old wounds had been opened, and the others had been reminded that he did not belong. Even if his little sister Siglinde had not been among the three abducted, he would have gone with the rescue party. He sees it as his chance to prove once and for all that he is not one of the Strangers, and that he does belong in the village. Only through his actions he will be able to prove that he is a human and not a Stranger. Not least to himself.

---

**Keywords:** Half-blood bastard, trying to fit in, fearing his inner darkness, wants to prove his worth.

## Relations

**Godric:** Godric is the son of the largest landowner in the village and has always had an easy life with a bright future ahead of him. Although he is two years younger than Ranulf, he is both bigger and stronger. Now they are sworn blood brothers, and they have left with Sir Sigmund to bring the kidnapped girls home.

**Burkhart:** Burkhart is a veteran and has recently returned from the wars against the Strangers on the other side of the mountains. It was him who killed the Stranger that raped Ranulf's mother back then. Ranulf admires him for his lack of compromise in fighting against the Strangers, but can see the distrust in his eyes. Perhaps Burkhart will think higher of him if Ranulf proves himself?

**Sir Sigmund:** Ranulf is only alive because of Sir Sigmund's grace, and he owes him his life. Despite that, and despite the great respect Sigmund enjoy in the village, Ranulf does not think much of him. It is Sir Sigmund's responsibility to protect the village, he was not able to prevent Ranulf's mother from being raped back then, and now he has failed again.

**Lothar:** Lothar used to travel a lot in the wilderness. Although he is one of those in the village who has treated Ranulf best, Ranulf has never cared much to speak with him. On several occasions Lothar has started to tell him about the Strangers, but Ranulf is afraid to let thoughts about the Strangers into his mind. He is afraid that it will let the darkness in him grow.

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# Godric

Godric is a hale and hearty farmboy at the age of 16, and his father owns the largest and richest lands around the village. He is a good and faithful son, who helps his father in the field every day without a murmur, but his thoughts can also be flighty, and sometimes he daydreams about old tales of heroes and all-conquering love. Godric has no siblings, and the family's future rests on his shoulders, as he will someday take over the farm.

---

Godric's father had worked hard all his life to increase the family's fortune and prosperity, and now that he was getting on in years, it was soon Godric's time to take over the majority of the toil. Although most days consisted of hard work from morning to night, Godric appreciated farming the land at his father's side. After a long day in the field, it was always with a great sense of satisfaction that he dropped into his bed.

Godric was well pleased with his simple life in the village and could not really imagine living another life, but sometimes he had a way of daydreaming and fantasizing. When he was little, his mother always told him old stories of heroic deeds during the dark winter nights, and they touched something inside him. Especially those about heroes who went through gruesome ordeals to save the love of their life. It was his favorite stories. To think that love could be so powerful that it could get a man to travel to the world's end and endure untold hardships and trials for the sake of his beloved. As he grew older, Godric dreamed about getting to experience such a great and true love himself, and one day he fell in love with Eda. She was the sweetest and most beautiful girl in the entire village, and though they had only been a couple for a year, Godric knew that they would be together forever. It was Eda, who would give birth to his children, and they would grow old together. Godric loved her with all his heart, and there nothing he would not do for her. She also loved him, and when she smiled at him, it bubbled in his stomach. She was the love of his life.

---

*The clouds shifted lazily across the sky, and Eda and Godric were lying between the burdock leaves by the river. "Is it true that Wilona is getting married to Sir Sigmund?" he asked, and lay down with one elbow supporting his head. Eda nodded and blew the head of a dandelion, so the seeds flew away dancing in the wind. "Uhm..." "She's lucky. It's a great honor to be married into his family." "Her father is also pleased with the marriage ... My father hopes to get me married just as well." She smiled when she saw his face, and laughed. "Yes, that means you, Godric." He smiled a big, goofy smile and they kissed under the burdock leaves.*

---

The village was the place where Godric belonged and where he would live to the end of his days. He loved the sight of the rolling fields in the summer. He loved when the young swallows began to fly from beam to beam in the big barn every spring. And he loved when someone struck up a dance during a feast, and laughter and shouts mixed with music and song. Godric was well liked among the other young people in the village and had always had many friends. The other young men looked up to him, and the girls looked after him, even though he only had eyes for Eda himself. The only one of the other young people who Godric had never had much to do with, was the two years older Ranulf, who was half a Stranger and a bastard. His mother had been raped by one of the Strangers, and many in the village believed that he should never have been allowed to live. Well, Ranulf had never done anything to Godric, but until recently there had not been any reason for keeping his company either. However, last summer Godric's father had hired Ranulf to help with the harvest, and the two young men had fallen into conversation working in the field. To his surprise, Godric had discovered that he actually sort of liked Ranulf, even though he was always sulking about.

---

Everything was as it should be in Godric's life and his future was laid out for him. But then the attack on the village came, and everything changed. The Strangers struck during Sir Sigmund's wedding, and Godric had not been there to defend Eda. Along with the knight, and most of the other men, he had taken off on the traditional stag hunt. It was the first time he had been allowed to participate. On the way home with the spoils they had seen the flames from the village from afar, and he had hurried back as fast as he could. But it was too late. The Strangers had retreated to the darkness again, and they had taken Eda with them.

## GODRIC

Godric paid no heed to the cries, the burning buildings, or the dead and wounded lying between the overturned banquet tables and downtrodden garlands. Only Eda was on his mind. His family was safe, but he could not find her anywhere, and his heart was beating faster and faster. He eventually found her mother. With tears in her eyes she told him that the Strangers had taken Eda with them, and for the first time in his life, Godric felt fear gripping his heart. Then he saw Ranulf through the smoke and heard him call after his half-sister, Siglinde. "We'll get them home," Ranulf said, when it dawned on him that Eda had also been taken. "We'll find the girls and get them home." With set teeth Godric pulled a dagger from his belt and traced a bloody line on the palm of one hand. He took Ranulf's hand and did the same. "We swear on it," he said, and their bloody hands found each other in a firm grip. "I swear," they said in unison.

---

Every moment Eda was at the mercy of the Strangers was a moment too many, and Godric could hardly stand the thought of it. He had had the love of his life torn from his hands, and he could not rest until he could take her in his arms and hold her tight once more. When Sir Sigmund put together a party to pursue the Strangers and rescue the abducted women, he initially refused Godric, but the knight finally gave in when he saw the determination in Godric's eyes. When they left the village and rode out across the fields, Godric felt as one of the heroes in the old stories. He straightened his back.

### **Equipment**

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Flail, dagger, work horse belonging to his father.

---

**Keywords:** A good son, romantic, deeply in love with Eda, young and somewhat naive, brave bordering on reckless.

## Relations

**Ranulf:** With his greyish pale skin, his snow-white hair and his slender, fragile frame Ranulf has always looked different, and Godric has never been quite sure what to think about him. Now they are sworn blood brothers in search of the Strangers, and an oath is not something to take lightly.

**Sir Sigmund:** Godric has never doubted that Sir Sigmund is a good man. He is brave, just and honorable like the heroes of the old tales, and Godric is proud to follow him on this journey. He will go to great lengths to prove himself worthy of the knight's trust in him, and to prove that he is no longer just a kid who is still wet behind the ears.

**Burkhart:** Burkhart has recently returned to the village after many years of war against the Strangers on the other side of the mountains. He seems moody and mostly keeps to himself, but there is something about his clenched facial expression that fascinates Godric. He acts like a man who should not be crossed, but whom it is valuable to have on your side.

**Lothar:** As the village's hunter Lothar has always traveled a lot, until he settled down and started a family a few years back. Godric's father says that Lothar has become strange because of all his long journeys in the wilderness, and that you cannot rely on a man who would rather wander about than farm the land as an honest man.

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When the characters are out on their quest, tell them about what happens at home in the village. You should illustrate the bad things that happen to their potential lives in the village - everything that they miss, and all the opportunities that are slipping through their fingers. You can also tell how your character begins to rebuild his life.

The game master will crossfade to your descriptions between scenes, but feel free to initiate descriptions during scenes if you find it appropriate.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the cracks in the characters' home life slowly emerge. In Chapters 3 and 4 the problems should become obvious enough that the players understand that this is their character's last chance. In Chapter 5, you need to show the final consequences.

Below are some ideas for what can go wrong for the characters that continue their journey. They are loosely written, and it's up to you to adapt them to your specific playthrough.

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**Sigmund:** Wilona is not getting pregnant. The villagers write to the King and ask him to appoint a new knight, or maybe they turn to someone else for leadership.

**Burkhart:** His half-finished home falls apart. *If Rosmunda was rescued, she becomes old and lonely.*

**Godric:** The crops are left unharvested. His father wears himself out. The family is forced to sell off more and more of their land. *If Eda was rescued, her father will try to get her a good marriage.*

**Ranulf:** Fulco is courting Kendra and she gradually becomes more receptive. His mother misses him and languishes. *If Siglinde was rescued, their mother is not taking care of her properly.*

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# Ghost

For the rest of the game, your job is to influence the remaining characters to continue their journey to its bitter end. You can appear in scenes as the ghost of your dead character.

The other characters cannot actually see and hear you, but they subconsciously experience the things you do and say, and can take them in.

Remind them of their promises and what they have given up to get this far. Tell how great it will all be, if only they see it through. Remind them that they are real men. Appeal to their thirst for vengeance or their fear of what the Strangers might do. Nourish their illusions that they are on a hero's journey.

Exploit their weak points and their obligations to the women who are still out there with the Strangers. Below you can read some of the things that motivate the characters.

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**Sigmund:** Is burdened by guilt. He should have protected the women, and he sees it as his personal responsibility to bring them home safely.

**Burkhart:** Know what horrors the Strangers are capable of. Has let Rosmunda wait for him for 15 years, while he was at war.

**Lothar:** Is attracted to the free life in the wilderness and feels trapped at home in the village. Rosmunda took care of him when they were both children.

**Ranulf:** Wants to prove his worth and his loyalty - both to the others and to himself. He and Godric swore a blood oath. Although Siglinde is just a little girl, she would never betray Ranulf.

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**Sigmund:** Is burdened by guilt. He should have protected the women, and he sees it as his personal responsibility to bring them home safely.

**Burkhart:** Know what horrors the Strangers are capable of. Has let Rosmunda wait for him for 15 years, while he was at war.

**Lothar:** Is attracted to the free life in the wilderness and feels trapped at home in the village. Rosmunda took care of him when they were both children.

**Ranulf:** Wants to prove his worth and his loyalty - both to the others and to himself. He and Godric swore a blood oath. Although Siglinde is just a little girl, she would never betray Ranulf.

**Godric:** Wants to be a hero. He and Ranulf swore a blood oath. Eda is the love of his life, and he will never be happy without her.

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