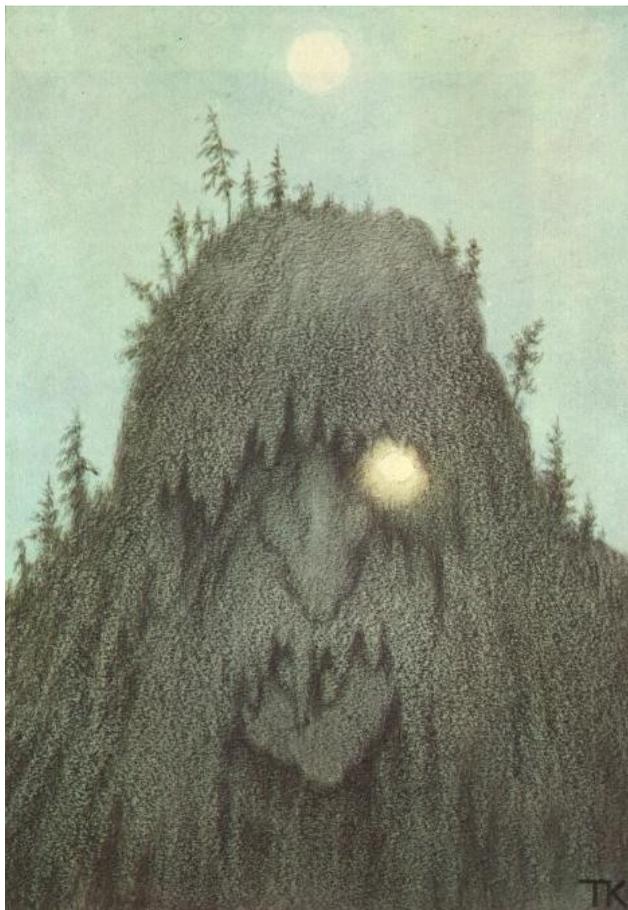


TROUBLE IN TROLLWOOD



A WILDERNESS ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 4-5



INTRODUCTION

What follows is a small sandbox adventure suitable for character levels 4-5, loosely based on Old Norse-Icelandic sources. The adventure may be set in a fantastic version of medieval Scandinavia, or anywhere in the Referee's campaign world where mead-halls and Norse trolls are deemed fitting. "Trouble in Trollwood" is dedicated to the combined legacies of Magnus Magnusson, Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. I also acknowledge the inspiring work of David "Zeb" Cook.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Poetic Edda (trans. Carolayne Larrington), Oxford University Press, 1996.

The Saga of King Hrolf Kraki (trans. Jesse L. Byock), Penguin, 1998.

Seven Viking Romances (trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards), Penguin, 1985.

Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (trans. Jesse L. Byock), Penguin, 2005.

RECOMMENDED LISTENING

Hedningarna, *Hippjokk*, Silence, 1997.

Sequentia, *Edda: Myths from medieval Iceland*, DHM, 1999.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

A few suggestions for getting the party started.

The party is hired – or commanded – to investigate the non-appearance of the royal tribute due from Earl Skuli the Slender.

Robbers have been active in Trollwood recently. There is a bounty on the head of their leader, Helgi the Outlaw.

The party seeks an ancient burial mound said to contain valuable treasures.

A cursed scroll or similar teleports the party to the middle of Trollwood.

The party is just passing through.

RUMOURS

The player characters might have heard rumours of Trollwood and its inhabitants. The Referee can distribute rumours as she sees fit, perhaps in exchange for the characters handing out gifts or simply plying the locals with drink.

Roll	Rumour
1	A man's luck will turn sour as soon as he enters Trollwood. (False)
2	Earl Skuli's hall has been attacked and ransacked by trolls.
3	Earl Skuli and his men were changed into wolves and now they lurk in the depths of the forest. (False)
4	Earl Skuli is dead. Some of his men have joined Helgi the Outlaw's gang.
5	Helgi the Outlaw and his gang of robbers prey on travellers in the wood.
6	A trollish-looking ruffian lives in the wood. His dog is as big and fierce as a bear!
7	A mighty warrior lies buried in a mound in Trollwood.
8	A great treasure lies buried in a mound in Trollwood.
9	The giantess Hyndla stews men in her cooking pot.
10	The giantess Hyndla is said to be very knowledgeable on many topics.
11	Someone – or something – dwells in a cave behind a waterfall in the north-eastern quarter of Trollwood.
12	Never trust a dwarf!

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

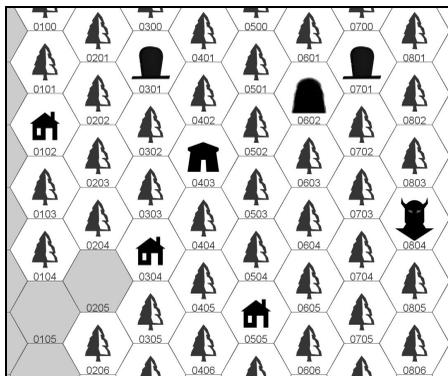
Trollwood is an ancient forest in a hilly region sloping westwards to the sea. Though there are no main roads, the forest is criss-crossed with rough tracks and game trails and movement is not especially difficult. The Referee should make three encounter checks per day of travel in Trollwood, with an encounter occurring on a roll of 1 or 2 on 1d6. To determine the type of creature encountered, roll on the table below.

Roll	Encounter
1-4	Bear
5-6	Giant, Norse (see New Monsters)
7-10	Human, Bandit
11	Human, Berserker
12	Human, Buccaneer (Viking raiders in longships)*
13	Human, Merchant
14	Human, Völva (see New Monsters)
15	Lycanthrope, Werebear
16	Lycanthrope, Werewolf
17-18	Troll, Norse (see New Monsters)
19-20	Wolf

*Coastal hex only. Otherwise no encounter.

MAP OF TROLLWOOD

Scale: 1 hex = 6 miles



0102 THE RUFFIAN

In the middle of a clearing is a shack. This is the home of a ruffian called Grubs, who is seven feet tall and immensely strong. (He has troll blood in his veins.) Inside the shack is a single room. On the wall hangs a splendid *shield +2*. If he is surprised, Grubs tries to grab the shield from the wall at the earliest opportunity. Until then, his AC is only 9 [10]. He fights with a large, iron-bound wooden club (treated as a mace for combat purposes) and does +3 damage due to his great strength.

Grubs has a dog called Garm. Garm is twice the size of any other dog, with a huge head and a wide, fearsomely fanged mouth.

Grubs wears a gold arm-ring worth 200 gp. The remainder of his treasure is hidden in a hole under a flat rock in the floor of the shack. It takes a combined strength of 18+ to lift the slab. The hoard consists of a carved walrus ivory casket (600 gp) containing twelve marks of silver (192 gp) and four antler-handled bone combs (2 gp each), all wrapped in an *elven cloak*.

Grubs: HD 6; hp 29; AC 6 [13]; AT 1 club (1d6+3); MV 12; SV 11.

Garm: HD 4+4; hp 22; AC 6 [13]; AT 1 bite (2d6); MV 12; SV 13.

0301 THE RUNESTONE

Hidden among tangled undergrowth (and noticed/found as if it were a secret door) is a six-foot high standing stone carved with a pattern resembling a serpentine dragon. Archaic runes are incised within the worm's body. *Read languages* translates them thus:

*The unwise man
Lies awake all night
And worries about things;
He's worn out
When morning comes
And everything is as bad as before.*

Anyone who sleeps within ten yards of the stone for a full night *without mounting a watch* will not be molested by wandering monsters and, on waking, will be healed of 1d6 lost hit points. Moreover, he or she receives a bonus of +2 on the first saving throw required thereafter. The stone cannot be moved.



0304 THE TROLLS

In this part of the forest, the party becomes aware of a droning, buzzing sound and the horrible stench of putrefying flesh. The smell comes from dozens of flayed human corpses hanging from the boughs of trees, surrounded by huge clouds of flies. Earl Skuli the Slender maintained a great mead-hall and a retinue of warriors here. A pair of Norse trolls (see **New Monsters**) slew the earl and most of his retainers and took over the hall. Now the massive doors hang in splinters from the great iron hinges. The floor inside is strewn with bones, gore and unnameable filth. The trolls lounge at ease on high seats, attended by their unfortunate servant.

People call the male troll Flayer-Egil. He stands nine feet tall and is spectacularly ugly, with thick black eyebrows and a coarse mane of black hair. The gaunt troll-wife, Isgerd, is seven feet tall and has the powers of an 8th-level magic-user. If forced into combat, she uses a long, wickedly barbed whip.

The greatest of the late earl's champions is a tall, strong man called Thorolf. This Thorolf slew a famous viking called Ospak Oddsson in a bloody sea battle. Hence, he is called Thorolf Ospak's-Killer. He is in thrall to the troll-wife's sorcery and will fight to the death to protect her unless the charm is broken. He wears mail, carries a shield, and wields a battle axe. He gains a +1 damage bonus due to his strength.

If combat takes place, Isgerd casts *haste* on Thorolf, who moves to engage the strongest-looking fighter while Isgerd targets any obvious spellcasters in the party, using *sleep*, *charm* and *hold*. If the battle goes well for the trolls, Flayer-Egil simply watches the entertainment with evident relish. If things go awry, or he is attacked, or his courage is called into question, Egil will spend a round speaking the following verse, then wade into the fray wielding his two-handed sword, Höggevandi:

*My sword has spilled
A stream of bright blood,
Ravens have reddened
Their beaks in that river;
I've stripped the skins
From spear-shaking men,
Not for nothing
Am I known as Flayer.*

The trolls' treasure hoard (formerly the property of Earl Skuli) consists of 5,000 sp, 1,000 gp, a bag of multi-coloured glass beads (10 gp), an engraved silver cup (200 gp), two gold brooches (100 gp each), and a small casket made of gold and walrus ivory (200 gp) containing a set of finely carved walrus ivory chess pieces (100 gp).

Flayer-Egil: HD 6; hp 39; AC 4 [15]; AT 1 sword (1d10+1); MV 12; SV 11.

Isgerd: HD 4; hp 23; AC 4 [15]; AT 1 whip (1d4+1); MV 12; SV 13. Spells: *charm person, detect magic, hold portal, sleep; detect invisibility, ESP, locate object; clairvoyance, haste, hold person; polymorph self, curse.*

Thorolf Ospak's-Killer: Fighter 6; hp 42; AC 4 [15]; AT 1 battle axe (1d8+1); MV 12; SV 9.

0403 THE ROBBERS

A gang of robbers lives in the forest. They prey on travellers transporting trade goods. There are thirty of them, including their leader Helgi the Outlaw. All wear leather/hide armour and carry shields and an assortment of spears, hand axes and short swords. Six of their number are reluctant brigands who were formerly retainers of Earl Skuli the Slender (hex 0304) and these men might be amenable to joining an attack on the trolls to restore their lost honour.

The robbers' camp consists of several tents made of animal hides stretched over wooden frames. In Helgi the Outlaw's tent is a cask of wine (partly drunk – what remains is worth 50 gp), a box containing three pounds of ground pepper (worth 240 gp around these parts), a pile of animal pelts (rabbit, beaver, wolf, etc. – approximately 180 pounds weight, worth 540 gp in total), three marks of hack-silver (48 gp), and a pouch containing 22 gp.

Robbers (29): HD 1; hp 5 each; AC 6 [13]; AT 1 weapon (1d6); MV 12; SV 17.

Helgi the Outlaw: As above, except Fighter 4; hp 19; SV 11.

0505 THE GIANTESS

A she-thurs (see **New Monsters**) called Hyndla is the height of two tall men. She lives in a large but crudely constructed hall, and considers herself very wise. She enjoys displaying her knowledge and, if the opportunity arises, she challenges the party to a duel of wits. If they win, she will tell them the location of the magic sword Trolls bani but, should they lose, one of the party goes in her cooking pot. If the party accepts, they must nominate their cleverest member as champion, whereupon the trial begins. The party's champion goes first, and may ask any question of the giantess. If Hyndla cannot answer, she loses the contest. If she answers correctly, she gets to ask a question of the champion, and so on until one of the contestants fails to answer.

The Referee may prefer to role-play this battle of brains (time to break out some Anglo-Saxon riddles, perhaps?) or simply have the contestants make Intelligence checks each round. (Roll Intelligence or under on 1d20. Hyndla has Int 17.)

If she wins, Hyndla lets everyone but the nominated champion go. She will become very angry if the champion doesn't meekly submit to being boiled, or if the party makes any attempt to renege on the deal. In combat she wields a huge cleaver for 2d8 damage.

Make a reaction roll if Hyndla loses. If the result is hostile, she flies into a rage, seizes her cleaver and attacks. Otherwise, she grudgingly gives the party a filthy map showing the location of the mound (hex 0804) and consoles herself with the thought that the party will surely meet the Mound-Dweller – and she says nothing of the ritual required to use Trolls bani.

Hyndla wears a gold arm-ring (800 gp) and two great gold brooches (1,000 gp each). The rest of her treasure is kept in a chest and consists of ten marks of silver (160 gp), a *potion of invisibility* and a *rope of climbing*.

Hyndla: HD 8; hp 38; AC 4 [15]; AT 1 cleaver (2d8); MV 12; SV 8. Special: Hurl rocks for 2d8 damage.

0602 GINNAR

The sound of splashing water leads to a small pool beneath a waterfall. Behind the curtain of falling water, accessible via several slippery, mossy rocks (the Referee may require each character to make a Dexterity check to avoid an inadvertent cold bath), is a small, dimly-lit cave. Here dwells Ginnar, an especially ugly Norse dwarf (see **New Monsters**) with black hair, black eyes, and all the abilities of a 6th-level magic-user and a 6th-level thief. He tells the party that his brothers – Fjalar, Frosti and Finn – have cheated him out of his inheritance. He wants revenge, and the treasure. He has an amulet “from south-over-sea” bearing unfamiliar runes. He



claims that this device enables its owner to change into a dragon. (In fact, it's an *amulet of riparian ambushade* – see **New Magic Items** – but crocodiles are unknown to dwarves and men alike in these high latitudes.) Moreover, he is – or says he is – willing to part with it in return for the party's assistance.

Ginnar is ruthless and full of deceit. He does his best to persuade the party to aid him, promising them jewels and magical gifts from his brothers' hoard. If they agree, he leads them to the brothers' lair (hex 0701) but hangs back from any fighting, using his new friends as “cannon fodder” and hoping they will distract and/or weaken his brothers sufficiently for him to achieve victory without undue risk to himself. Afterwards, depending on the circumstances, Ginnar will renege on any deal if he thinks he can get away with it. If forced into fighting, he wields a common hand axe.

Ginnar: HD 6; hp 31; AC 7 [12]; AT 1 axe (1d6); MV 6; SV 11. Special: Thieving skills. Spells: *detect magic, magic missile, shield, sleep; detect invisibility, invisibility; clair-audience, clairvoyance.*

0701 THE BROTHERS

A great boulder stands in a quiet forest glade. Close inspection may reveal a cunningly-wrought secret door in the stone surface. Inside, a narrow – and unlit – staircase winds down sixty feet or so to a spacious cavern that is the lair of three Norse dwarves: Fjalar, Frosti and Finn. They are the brothers of Ginnar (hex 0602). They resent intrusion, but are not inherently antagonistic – unless Ginnar is present and/or the party acts aggressively. The truth is that Ginnar attempted to abscond with all their most valuable treasures, but his brothers caught him in the act, beat him and threw him out.

Brown-haired, cautious Fjalar wields Sledda, a *short sword* +2 with a *healing stone* set in the pommel (heals 1d6 hit points, once per day).

Frosti is short and skinny, with a wild white beard. He has bright eyes and a wide grin, and is uncommonly charismatic for a dwarf (Cha 16). He wears a *shirt of protection* +1 (functions as the ring of the same name) and wields Tyktan, a *warhammer* +2.

Finn has black hair and eyes like his brother Ginnar. He is taciturn and surly. He owns a pair of minutely detailed *golden boar figurines* (see **New Magic Items**) and carries a dagger for emergencies.

The dwarves' treasure hoard contains twenty marks (ten pounds) of hack-silver (320 gp), seven large red garnets (200 gp each), a bale of gold wire (200 gp), a gold arm-ring (190 gp), and an exquisite necklace of gold filigree beads (1,400 gp). The necklace bears a weird curse: whoever takes it without permission suffers a -2 penalty to saving throws versus snake venom thereafter.

Fjalar: HD 5; hp 16; AC 7 [12]; AT 1 sword (1d6+2); MV 6; SV 12. Spells: *charm person, detect magic, read languages, sleep; detect invisible, levitate; dispel magic.*

Frosti: HD 5; hp 26; AC 7 [12]; AT 1 hammer (1d6+2); MV 6; SV 12. Spells: *charm person, detect magic, read languages, sleep; ESP, phantasmal force; protection from normal missiles.*

Finn: HD 5; hp 25; AC 9 [10]; AT 1 dagger (1d4); MV 6; SV 12. Spells: *detect magic, light, read magic, sleep; detect invisible, invisibility; haste.*

0804 THE MOUND

There is an old burial mound here – a large pile of carefully-laid stones overgrown with thick moss. No entrance is visible. Breaking in takes 3d4 man-hours of labour, or twice that long without appropriate tools for excavation. Don't forget to roll for random encounters.

Inside the mound-chamber sits the corpse of a warrior, grave-blackened and bloated to the size of a bull. Its eyes blaze with icy fire, like polar stars. The hideous sight causes all NPCs present to make an immediate morale check. Those who fail flee in terror for two whole turns. Player characters may do as they will.

The Mound-Dweller attacks anyone disturbing its long rest. If it scores a hit, it grapples its victim, who takes 1d6 points of cold damage and must make a Strength check every round thereafter to break free (or use whatever grappling rules the

Referee favours). Each round the victim is gripped, he or she takes 1d6 cold damage and must save versus death or suffer a fatal heart attack from supernatural shock.

As an undead creature, the Mound-Dweller is immune to *charm*, *hold* and *sleep* spells. It may be turned by a cleric as if it were a mummy. The only way to destroy it permanently, though, is to behead it, burn the remains and scatter the ashes. Otherwise it returns to its mound, fully restored, at the next new moon.

From the rotten remnants of an old wooden chest spills the Mound-Dweller's treasure: 1,000 gp, four pieces of amber (100 gp each), a carved whalebone gaming board (250 gp) with a mouldering pouch full of walrus ivory playing pieces (750 gp), and a gem-studded silver reliquary taken from a foreign monastery (2,000 gp). Lying amidst the loot is Trollsbani, a *sword +1, +3 vs. trolls*. Trollsbani requires special handling. When the sword is drawn from its scabbard, the wielder must breathe lightly on the blade and whisper a brief verse of praise to the Norse gods – Odin, Thor and Freyr – before entering combat. As a result, the wielder always strikes last in the first round of combat. Failure to perform the sacred rite results in the sword acting as if it were a cursed *sword -2*. If the sword is drawn and battle is not joined immediately, or if it remains drawn for more than a minute or two after combat has ceased, it protests by howling loudly.

Mound-Dweller: HD 5+1; hp 25; AC 3 [16]; AT 1 grapple (1d6); MV 6; SV 12. Special: Fear, death-grip.



NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Amulet of Riparian Ambuscade

This item is certainly not Norse, and probably came from some sorcerer of the subtropical desert kingdoms far to the south. It is a necklace of many sharp teeth, engraved with magical runes. (*Read magic* reveals symbols pertaining to “water”, “predator” and “metamorphosis”, among others.) The wearer of the amulet may change him- or herself (and all he or she carries, including the amulet itself) into the form of a large crocodile – HD 6; AC 3 [16]; AT 1 bite (2d8); MV 9/Swim 9. The change may be undertaken once per day and lasts 1d6+6 turns. Each time it is used, there is a 1% chance that the change is permanent.

Golden Boar Figurines

These items, about the size of two clenched fists, are worth 3,000 gp each for the workmanship alone. Upon command, they transform into living boars – HD 3; AC 7 [12]; AT 1 tusk (2d4); MV 15 – and fight at their owner's behest for the duration of one combat encounter. If slain they turn back into figurines but may be used again, up to once per week.

NEW MONSTERS

Dwarf, Norse

Unlike their non-Norse namesakes, these beings aren't always stocky and/or bearded. They are (usually) short, though, and ugly. They are dwellers in rocks and mountains, the dark counterparts to light-loving elves. Expert craftsmen and sorcerers, all Norse dwarves are able to cast spells as a magic-user of level 2-12. In most cases, a Norse dwarf's hit dice will match its magic-user level.

If exposed to direct sunlight, a Norse dwarf must pass a saving throw (once per minute) or be turned to stone.

Hit Dice: 2+

Armour Class: 4 [15]

Attacks: 1 weapon (by weapon)

Saving Throw: Varies

Special: Spells

Move: 6

Alignment: Any

Challenge Level/XP: Varies

Giant, Norse (Thurs)

In appearance, dress and demeanour, these enormous brutes (ranging from 12 to 24 feet tall) resemble human barbarians. They are fond of showy jewels and other finery, and they enjoy hunting, fighting, feasting and drinking – always to excess. One in every six knows a single spell of level 1-6 (Referee's choice or determine randomly).

Hit Dice: 8-11

Armour Class: 4 [15]

Attacks: 1 weapon (2d8)

Saving Throw: Varies

Special: 1 in 6 knows a spell

Move: 12

Alignment: Chaotic

Challenge Level/XP: Varies



Human, Völva

A völva (pl. völu, though they are almost always encountered singly) is an itinerant prophetess or witch-woman. She might have at least some trollish blood. She travels the land – with an entourage of 5d6 non-combatant children and youths – from the mead-halls of earls and chieftains to the steadings of wealthy landowners, offering her services as a weather forecaster and teller of fortunes.

Typically, a völva is gifted with the powers of *bestow/remove curse*, *speak with the dead*, and *commune* as if she were a 16th-level cleric. However, the divination “spells” are not memorised, and require elaborate shamanistic rituals to enact. For example, the ritual of speaking with the dead involves the völva “sitting out” overnight at a crossroads, burial mound, or some other place in close contact with the spirit world. Casting *commune* requires the assembly of a wooden platform whereon the völva sits while her youthful assistants chant for hours to facilitate her entry to a trance-like state.

Payment is expected for a völva's services: usually food and overnight accommodation in addition to a valuable gift of some kind. Performing impromptu divinations for adventurers encountered on the road or in the wilderness is highly irregular, and the völva would require a handsome reward (at least a hundred marks of silver, or 1,600 gp) for her trouble.

In several sagas there are characters who object to having their fortunes told, and at least one völva has ended up with a bloody nose. Only brave or reckless people dare assault völu, however, because of their power to bestow curses or – in extreme cases – haunt their slayers, causing bad luck to bedevil the striker of the blow. The details of such supernatural retribution are left to the Referee.

Hit Dice: 1-3

Armour Class: 9 [10]

Attacks: See above

Saving Throw: Varies

Special: Spell-like powers (see above)

Move: 12

Alignment: Neutral

Challenge Level/XP: Varies

Troll, Norse

Norse trolls vary somewhat in appearance, but in general they resemble big, strong humans. They are usually (but not always) ugly. They inhabit dense forests, remote valleys, and similar locations far from civilisation, and they resent intrusion. Some raise flocks of sheep and goats for sustenance. Many Norse trolls are sorcerers. There is a 50% chance that any Norse troll encountered has the spell-casting ability

of a magic-user of level 2-12. This ability is innate; they neither use nor require spell-books. If forced into melee, they wield huge clubs, axes, swords and other weapons, doing 1d10+1 damage due to their great strength.

N.B. Unlike the "classic" troll, Norse trolls don't regenerate, nor are they inherently vicious or stupid. Furthermore, there is a popular misconception that Norse trolls turn to stone in sunlight. They don't; that's dwarves. (See above.)

Hit Dice: 4-7

Armour Class: 4 [15]

Attacks: 1 weapon (1d10+1)

Saving Throw: Varies

Special: 50% have spells

Move: 12

Alignment: Chaotic

Challenge Level/XP: Varies

CREDITS

Words

Alan Brodie

Map

Made by Alan Brodie using the Pro version of Hexographer from Inkwell Ideas.

Pictures

Cover: Forest Troll by Theodor Kittelson, 1906.

Page 2: Norns weaving destiny by Arthur Rackham, 1912.

Page 6: Landscape with Rune Stone (detail) by Andreas Achenbach, 1841.

Page 9: "Once again the buzzing fly came in at the window" (detail) by Arthur Rackham, 1901.

*Page 11: Drawing of a 4.6 cm gold-plated silver Mjöllnir pendant found at Bredsättra on Öland, Sweden. The original is housed at the Swedish Museum of National Antiquities. Image from *Nordisk familjebok*, 1913.*

Page 13: The giants seize Freyja by Arthur Rackham, 1910.

A Final Note

The verse inscribed on the runestone (hex 0301) is my translation of the twenty-third stanza of the Eddic poem *Hávamál*. The skaldic verse spoken by Flayer-Egil (hex 0304) is, for better or worse, all mine.

LAWSPEAK

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