

Start-up guide

1. Let everyone share their expectations

2. Introducing the scenario

* A low-fantasy drama. Tone: Serious with touches of both hope and melancholy.

* Seven warriors defend a village against a large group of bandits. Two of the players have two characters, while the other three just have one.

* Focus: The motivations of the characters – why do they fight? Many are at a crossroads in their lives, and the defence of the village can help define their fate. Who survives and who dies? And how does the stay in the village change them?

* Three acts. The overall lines are quite fixed, but there is some freedom in the exact scenes and outcomes.

3. Background of the story

* Two cultures: Five characters are lowlanders and two are mountain folk.

* The lowlanders: Loose feudal structure which has gradually disintegrated during a civil war. Gender roles have been traditional, but the norms have changed. Villages are protected by a knight who carries a sword as a symbol of his status.

* The mountain folk live frugally in small clans. Children are taken from their parents as young as five to train as warriors with longbows and two-handed swords. When they are 15 years old, they go out into the world to become mercenaries. Excellent warriors who earn money for their clan. After ten years, they go home, have children, and help train the next generation. Stand outside the feudal society of the lowlanders and have total gender equality.

* The civil war: Started twenty years ago as a battle between two king's sons. No one can recognise the original factions and society has broken down.

* Three years ago, a large group of bandits arrived in the village led by the deserter Lambrecht.

- The village was protected by the knight Osmund.
- The bandits attacked and killed Sir Osmund and pretty much the entire militia. Lambrecht took the knight's sword.
- The town gives half of the harvest to the bandits. Last winter many died as the harvest had been bad.

* The peasant Wilfred was the only survivor of the militia. He has sought out a seer who has predicted that seven warriors will be able to defend the village.

* About 100 people live in the village. The village will be introduced in more detail during the first act.

4. Distribute characters

* Introduce the different role types and talk to the players about what they usually prefer to play.

- There are two double roles, which give a little less immersion, but a little more influence on the story. In the second act of the scenario, each of those two players must write out one of their characters.
- There are three roles where you can immerse yourself more in a single character.

* Distribute the roles according to your best judgement while considering the preferences of the players. Present them as you hand them out:

- The seasoned and pragmatic Udo and Sir Hartwig, who is missing his sword.
- Udo's daughter Sigrun and the rootless Bogdan of the mountain folk.
- The formidable strategist Korva of the mountain folk.
- The embittered mercenary Frieda.
- The peasant Wilfred, who has taken the fate of the village into his own hands.

* Let the players read the roles.

* Answer any questions.

5. Present the act structure

* **Act One:** The warriors arrive at the village and begin building defences and training peasants. Focus on establishing roles and conflicts. Takes place over a few weeks.

* **Act Two:** The bandits begin to appear. Small skirmishes and drama scenes. The two players with dual roles write one of their characters out of the scenario. Takes place over a few days.

* **Act Three:** The bandits' final assault. All characters can be written out. Takes place over a day and is a short act.

6. Combat

* The combat between the characters and the bandits takes place through narrative scenes where the players have the right to define their character's fate.

- The detailed guidelines are explained at the start of the second act.

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): Seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Prominent bandits

Lambrecht: Leader of the bandits who killed Sir Osmund. Lambrecht wears chainmail and a worn officer's uniform. He has medium-length, blond hair, and a well-trimmed full beard streaked with grey. His frequent smiles never reach his cold, grey eyes. Lambrecht is armed with shield and carries Sir Osmund's sword.

Gunvor: Lambrecht's second-in-command, who often negotiates on his behalf.

Heiko: A deadly archer.

Roslyn: An unscrupulous woman of noble birth.

Borda: Deadly warrior woman dressed in bearskin.

Norbert: A giant man with a large two-handed hammer.

Vaclav: One of the mountain folk and the bandits' best warrior.

The rest of the bandits

(Inspiration for characteristics)

Hawk-nose	Gugel
Strong upper arms	Raven black hair
Worn uniform	Smells like sweat
Rotten teeth	Unkempt beard
Shaved head	Sad eyes
Bushy moustache	Straight back
Sunken cheeks	Soft hands
Tall and skinny	Missing an ear
Motley cloak	Shifty eyes
Bull neck	Grayish skin

Armament

Spear	Axe
Dagger	Club
Shield	Bow
Crossbow	

Secondary characters (The Village)

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister has lost both her husband and her parents in a few years and is afraid of losing her brother and daughter as well. Since her husband Ewald was killed by Lambrecht, she has worked their farm alone, but it is difficult and the house feels empty without her husband.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter. She looks up to her uncle Wilfred and wants to fight the bandits. She is fascinated by the warriors and wants to know more about them.

Godwin (46): The wealthiest farmer in the village, to whom many of the others listen. Stubborn opponent of fighting. He is rich enough for his family to manage, even if they give half to the bandits.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter is the most desirable young woman in the village.

Egill (64): A stubborn, stooped widower who runs the village's water mill. He lost much of his family in the bandits' attacks and more to starvation and disease. He wishes he could still fight, and wholeheartedly supports Wilfred's resistance to the bandits.

Germund (43): A scarred blacksmith with a full beard, who as a young man briefly participated in the civil war and experienced the horrors of the war first-hand. He is worried about how his son will fare in battle.

Wina (38): Germund's wife and Edric's mother. She wants her son to be married to someone from the village.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's son. A handsome young man with an innocent and somewhat naive mind. The village's is his entire world.

Alwin (22): A peasant's son with jug ears who is one of the first to sign up to fight. He is a quick learner when the militia is trained.

Rolf (28): The village's lanky coal-burner, eager to fight, but very clumsy.

Baldo (33): A weather-beaten woodsman who knows the area around the village well. He is worried if they stand a chance against the bandits.

Osmund (†): The deceased knight of the village.

Ewald (†): Wilfred's brother-in-law who was killed by Lambrecht.

Names for improvised supporting characters

Elma/Hild/Iwona

Egbert/Strang/Wulfric

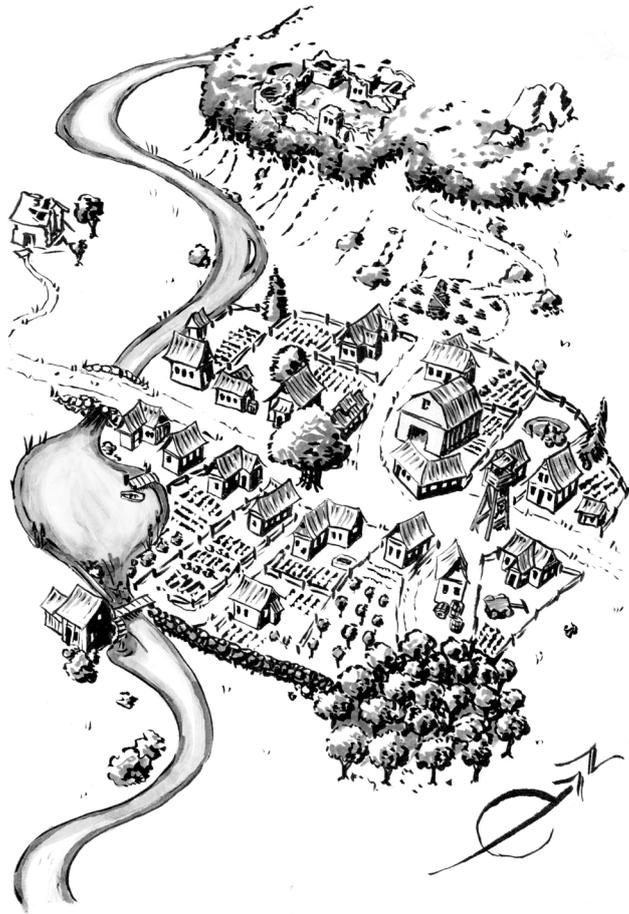
Locations

The Castle Ruin

At the top of the hill are the ruins of a castle tower. Nettles and other weeds grow between cracks in the old stones.

The Burial Ground

At the foot of the hill, the villagers bury their dead beneath small cairns, built of stones from the fields. From the burial site, a carved path with some stairs along the way continues up the steep cliffside.



The Square

In the middle of the village there is an open space that forms the village square. Here an ancient oak tree grows close to the village's only well. It was in the square that Sir Osmund trained the militia.

The Watchtower

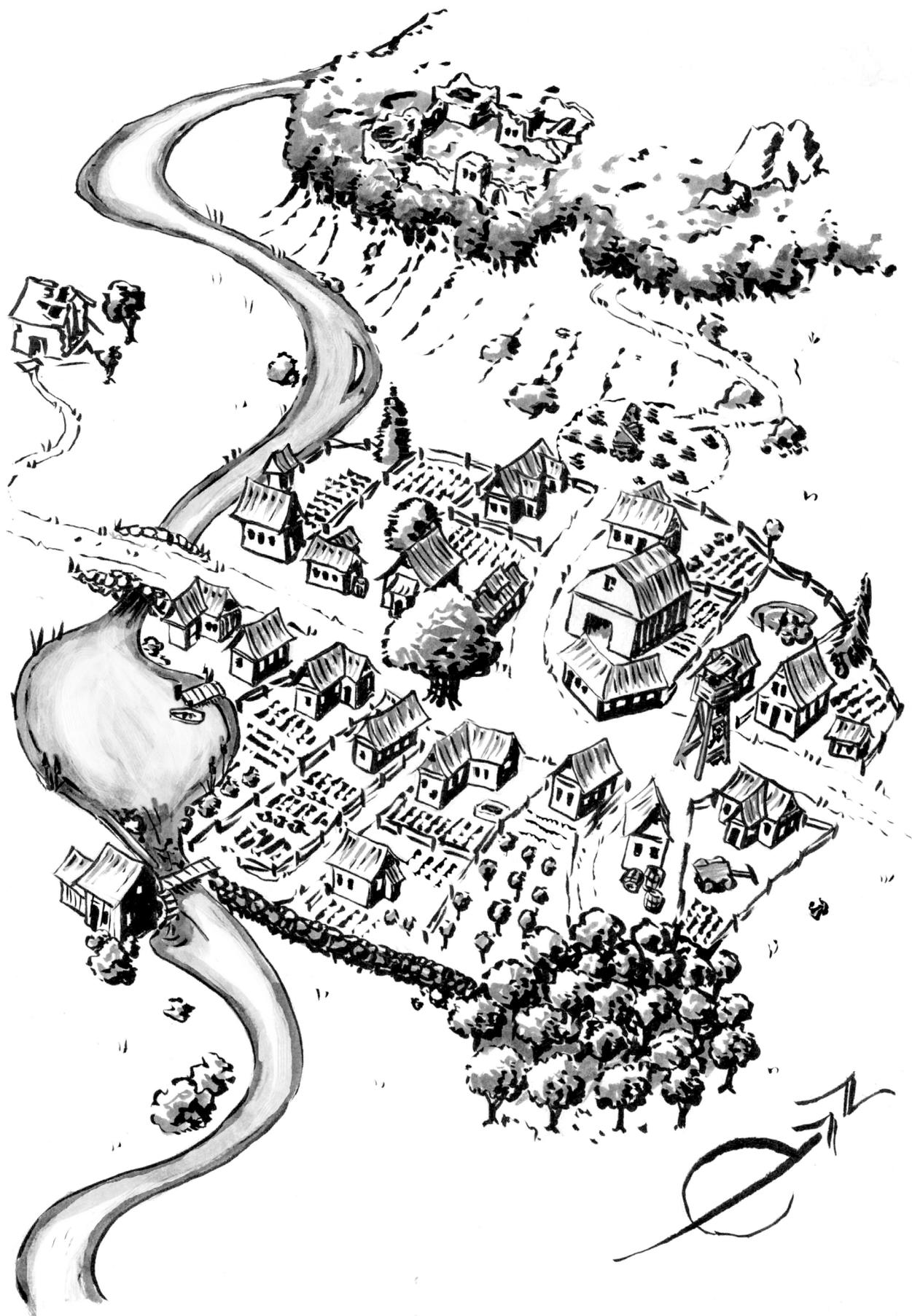
A rickety, wooden tower with a ladder up to a covered platform overlooking the village and surrounding countryside. An old cast-iron bell can be used to alert the villagers of enemies.

The Water Mill

The mill is located on the west side of the village and is a solid building that goes all the way to the stream. From the back door, a simple footbridge can take you across the stream.

The Cherry Grove

One of the most idyllic places in the village. However, it is evident that it has been a dry summer. West of the grove is a stone fence with sporadic gaps.



Characters

Wilfred

Wilfred, 24 years old

Wilfred

Wilfred is a peasant who set out to fulfil a prophecy to gather seven warriors who could save his village, and who became one of them himself. He is afraid that his thumb on the scale will forfeit the prophecy, for he isn't really a warrior, and he will be at fault if it isn't fulfilled.

Wilfred became the seventh warrior when he saw that there was no one else.

Wilfred was born as a peasant and always thought he would die as a peasant. From the time he was small, he helped work the farm with his big sister Isa. He fed the chickens, herded the goats and helped plow and harvest the fields. He was just a boy when civil war broke out, but the battles happened far away, and the village elders said that it was a problem for princes and soldiers – not peasants. Later, as the seasons changed and society fell apart around them, the village had only Sir Osmund to protect it from the ravaging groups of deserters and bandits brought about by the civil war. Osmund was a dogged, quiet man that Wilfred always looked up to. When Osmund wanted to strengthen the militia with new recruits, Wilfred was one of the first young men to join, and he also convinced his brother-in-law Ewald that it was their duty to protect the village.

On several occasions, the sight of Sir Osmund in full armor and with the militia at his back scared roving bandits away, but three years ago, the deserter and bandit chief Lambrecht came to town and demanded that they hand over half of their supplies. Sir Osmund refused to bow to their threats and sent them away with nothing. As soon as they were gone, he mobilised the militia, and Wilfred had just enough time to find his post before the attack came.

Lambrecht put a leg on Sir Osmund's lifeless chest and pulled the axe in his shoulder blade out in a spray of blood. Wilfred had no idea how he and Ewald had managed to survive for so long, but he knew they didn't have a chance against the bandits. "We surrender!" he shouted in a high, clear voice. He and Ewald threw their spears to the ground and fell to their knees with their hands over their heads. Lambrecht collected Osmund's sword from the dust and walked slowly towards them. Before Wilfred could register what was happening, Lambrecht raised the knight's sword and hewed Ewald down. Lambrecht looked around at the nearby fields and barns, where the rest of the village's citizens were hiding. "I am not a greedy man," he shouted, "and I keep my word. We will only take half. But if you try to hide the smallest seed or lift just a single hand in resistance, we'll take your lives instead and burn the village to the ground." Wilfred sat between the corpses in the square, and Lambrecht didn't even look at him.

The corpse of Sir Osmund was hung in an iron cage in the old oak tree by the square, and Lambrecht forbade them to cut it down. It was to hang there as a reminder of what would happen if they crossed him. The years that followed were lean and bitter. Wilfred felt at fault for

The Village

Around 100 people live in the village. It lies at the foot of a wooded hill with a castle ruin at the top. On the west side of the village, a stream meanders, and next to that is a water mill. A road goes through the village, and there is an old stone bridge where it crosses the stream. On the square stands an old oak tree, where Sir Osmund's picked-over corpse hangs in an iron cage. Not far from there stands a watchtower built from rafters. The village also has an idyllic cherry grove and a graveyard with small stone cairns.

Ewald's death. He felt shame that he never had the bravery nor the will to cut down Osmund's cage and give him a proper burial. And he felt anger every time the bandits came to take half the food the peasants toiled in the fields for, and which they handed over with bowed heads. Belts were tightened more and more. When the rain came too early and the harvest failed, the bandits still took half of what little they had gathered, and they had to start eating the seed grains. Many of the sick and elderly didn't make it through the cold of winter.

One frosty, clear morning in the early spring, Wilfred had to bury his parents. Together with Isa and her daughter Saxa, he carried stones for their mounds to the burial site. It was then it became clear to him that things could not continue this way. Even if the year's harvest was good, there would be so little grain that they would only survive if they kept it all for themselves. That night, when he sat alone in the dark in his parents' farmhouse, he decided that he needed to do something. But what could a simple peasant like him do against such a force? The other villagers shook their heads at him when he pulled his last, skinny goat across the square, but he walked with firm steps toward the forest, where the old seer lived in a little hut. If anything could be done to save the village, she would know.

The seer buried her wrinkled fingers in the goat's warm entrails and looked up at Wilfred with a broad, toothless smile before giving him the prophecy: "Seven warriors shall you find. No more, no fewer. Seven. Set out from the village and bring them back here before the moon has been full three times." Wilfred felt hazy and dizzy when he left the seer's hut. He had a hard time seeing how seven warriors could stand against so many bandits, no matter how skilled they might be. But a prophecy was a prophecy, and it was their only hope. He gathered the villagers in the square and proclaimed that he would set out to find the seven warriors from the seer's prophecy. Some nodded with serious expressions, but the rich farmer Godwin, who could most easily suffer losing half of his harvest, warned the others that if they listened to Wilfred, it would lead to their certain death. Scattered murmuring backed the farmer up, but Wilfred knew that many put great faith in the seer's prophecies, and would fight when he came home with the warriors.

The first two full moons came and went without luck, and Wilfred was on the verge of giving up when a friendly traveler spoke of someone from the mountain folk who lived on a farm in the area. Wilfred knew that the mountain folk's mercenaries were the best, and that he could never afford to hire even one of them, but something made him seek out the farm anyway. He found Korva in the process of mucking out the stables. To his astonishment, she agreed to protect the village. And as if that wasn't enough, she helped him find more warriors. First Frieda, who had refused to start with, but whom he had somehow convinced anyway. Even though Wilfred couldn't offer more than food and lodging, Korva managed to find them warrior after warrior. But in the end, they were still missing one.

The Bandits

The bandits are generally armed with either a spear, axe or dagger, as well as the occasional bow and crossbow. A few have leather armor, but metal is rare. A good handful have horses. When the harvest is in, they usually send a vanguard on horseback to look at the village before they send more people with carts. It is obvious that their stronghold is to the west, as that is usually the direction they come from. When they collect the harvest, they treat people roughly but keep to the agreement to take no more than half.

With just a few days left before they had to travel back to the village, and time running out, Wilfred declared that he himself would be the seventh warrior. He saw no other way if the seer's prophecy was to be fulfilled. As they traveled back towards the village, he felt more uncertain than ever before. Even though he had trained in the militia, he was at heart just a peasant, and when he looked around at his traveling companions, it was plain to see that his battle skills were insufficient, and that he didn't belong among them. Wilfred had always learned that prophecies should be taken seriously, and he had only managed to gather six of the seven he needed. If he had done nothing, the village would be doomed, but what if the whole thing would fail because he wasn't a real warrior?

Keywords: *Brave, in search of justice, insecure, strong-willed, responsible.*

Equipment:

Spear

Knife

Relations

Frieda: Frieda is an able warrior who sparred with Wilfred on the journey back to the village. She mostly keeps to herself, but when they train, she does not hold back. She has a wildness in her that both fascinates and scares him. Wilfred has never met a woman like Frieda before, and he's glad that she agreed to protect the village.

Sir Hartwig: Wilfred can't believe his luck that they found a real knight to protect the village, and Hartwig seems like a good and just man. Wilfred hasn't floated the idea to him, but he hopes that afterward, Hartwig would like to stay in the village. Once the bandits are defeated, Hartwig can get their old knight's sword and succeed him as the village's protector.

Korva: If not for Korva, Wilfred is certain he would have gone home empty-handed. Many of the others would have never joined their cause without her. He admires her and is grateful towards her, but Korva is also distant and more than just a little frightening.

Bogdan: Wilfred is glad to bring not just one, but two of the mountain folk back home to the village, but there's something mournful about Bogdan that Wilfred can't quite put his finger on. He doesn't seem quite as disciplined as Korva, but on the other hand, he's easier to talk to.

Udo: Udo is an experienced mercenary, and it is evident to Wilfred that he knows what he's doing. He has a hardness about him, but at the same time he's sociable and pleasant. Udo only came along because his daughter Sigrun convinced him, but Wilfred hopes he can prove to Udo that the village is worth saving.

Sigrun: Though Sigrun is a well-trained mercenary, she hasn't really been in a battle yet. Wilfred likes her bravery and sense of justice, but he feels guilty that so young a person should risk her life for a village she has never set foot in before.

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Bogdan and Sigrun are played by the same player. Sir Hartwig and Udo are played by the same player.

Secondary Characters

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister, who runs her farm alone after her husband Ewald died.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter, Wilfred's niece.

Godwin (46): The village's wealthiest farmer, whom many of the others listen to.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter.

Egill (64): A stubborn, crooked widow who runs the village's water mill.

Germund (43): The town smith, who as a young man briefly partook in the civil war.

Wina (38): Germund's wife, who would like her son to wed a reliable villager.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's handsome son.

Alwin (22): A quick-learning peasant's son.

Rolf (28): The village's clumsy charcoal burner.

Baldo (33): A woodsman who knows the area around the village well.

Lambrecht: The leader of the bandits, who killed Sir Osmund and took his sword.

Osmund (†) The village's dead knight.

Ewald (†) Wilfred's brother-in-law, who was killed by Lambrecht.

Korva

Korva, 35 years old

Korva

Korva is a formidable warrior and strategist who is fanatically obsessed with the traditions and customs of the mountain folk, but who does not realise her own arrogance. After her band of mercenaries was wiped out, she wandered around aimlessly, lonely and burdened by shame. She sees the defense of the village as an opportunity to make amends for the mistakes of the past, but is afraid of repeating them.

Korva became the first warrior when she saw an opportunity to regain her lost honour.

Korva was born to be a warrior. Like the other children of the mountain folk, she was removed from her parents at the age of five and instead raised and trained by the old warriors. Korva was quick to learn and was always the first to nail a new technique or fighting position. She was the strongest, the fastest and the most agile. She could feel the envious eyes of the other children and sense how they hoped that one day she would fail. That only made her train even harder. Every day at sunrise and sunset she meticulously performed each movement of the elaborate rituals that sharpened her body and mind. She mastered the art of saving her strength to use only exactly the necessary movements to conquer her foe, but she couldn't always resist the temptation to show off with advanced maneuvers.

Each time that happened, the old warriors slapped her with the cane to remind her of the humility and self-control that all mountain folk should strive for in every thought and every action. Korva learned not to boast that she was the best, but she never forgot it herself.

When Korva turned 15 and went to the lowlands to fight as a mercenary, she could not help but to preen. She knew that she would win great victories and that her exploits would validate the mountain folk's reputation as formidable warriors. As one of the mountain folk, Korva never had trouble finding work. The civil war in the lowlands had just begun, and there were many who needed a warrior with her skills. She quickly rose through the ranks when it became clear that she also had a natural understanding of tactics and strategy. After a few years, she became captain of her own company.

Korva made a lowlander called Udo her second in command, and they complemented each other well. Udo had a special talent for speaking to people in the company, especially the other lowlanders, whom Korva had trouble truly relating to. She had always known exactly what to do on the battlefield, but how to interact with other people came less naturally to her. She was most comfortable when she was alone and could focus on training and mastering the rituals without having to handle other people. With Udo's help she won her company quick and cost-free victories. Jubilant cheering and banging on shields filled her ears. Korva began to feel invincible. Everything went her way, and she sent more and more money back home to the mountain folk.

Soon she would be done with her ten years, and she would return home again. Korva was proud of her achievements but hungered after one last, glorious victory that would echo in eternity.

There hadn't been clear and obvious sides in the civil war for a long time, and big contracts began to come a lot less frequently. They had been without hire for months when the company made a contract with a rich army commander. The enemy was supposed to be of a manageable size, but the scouts soon returned with news that the opposing army was far larger and better armed than first assumed. During the following council, Udo had urged her to withdraw the company to a nearby river and wait for reinforcements, but his foot-dragging objections had annoyed her. Korva was sure that they could win a decisive victory here and now. Sure, the opposing army was bigger, but it would be her leading the battle. She had chosen a ravine where they could hold their ground and where the overwhelming number of the enemies would be less important. There would, of course, be losses, but it would also be a glorious victory that would never be forgotten. It was not until the next morning she found out that Udo had left the camp during the night, taking a considerable number of the soldiers with him. By then it was too late to change the plan.

Korva wandered around as if in a haze among the corpses in the ravine. One of her men lay gasping for breath, with bloody bubbles pouring out between his lips. He had a gaping wound in his chest through which his ribs were showing. Korva walked to her dying comrade who tried to speak, but only a hissing sound came out. Korva lifted her two-handed sword and looked at all the corpses around her. What should have been her greatest victory would now forever be a blemish on the reputation of the mountain folk. Her plan had been too ambitious, and she had been blinded by arrogance. But she also could not shake the thought that things would never have gone so wrong if Udo had not failed her at the most crucial time. She looked the dying man in the eyes as she let the sword drop, a tear running down her cheek.

Korva had won the battle that day, but her company had more or less been wiped out. When her tenth year ended, she did not return to the mountains. The shame was too great. Every coin she could spare she sent to the mountain folk, and she only kept enough to keep the worst hunger at bay and maintain her equipment. She felt like an empty shell, and she no longer had a purpose to live for. Perhaps she was only waiting to die. Not as a wretched vagabond, but as one of the mountain folk. As a warrior.

The day Wilfred the peasant sought her out, it lit a spark. Even though he found her shovelling shit in some farmer's stable, he looked at her in a way that made her remember who she was. He told of the village, the bandits and the seer's prophecy about the seven warriors who could conquer the enemy. At first Korva had refused to believe that seven warriors would be enough, but as Wilfred told her more about the village and its location, she became increasingly confident that she could lead them to victory. But it would require the right warriors.

Korva first took Wilfred to the warrior Frieda, who she knew lived close by. Before long she also made Bogdan of the mountain folk and the knight Hartwig join them. Korva had heard rumours that Udo was in the area, and she managed to find the place where he had camped with his daughter, who had taken up his trade. Korva hated that she had to ask him for help, but it was close to impossible to find experienced warriors who were willing to risk their lives for the village in the short time available. It was the daughter Sigrun who persuaded Udo to come with them.

With only a short time left before they had to head for the village, they were still one warrior short. That was when Wilfred declared that he would be the seventh warrior and fight by their side. He was not a great warrior, but perhaps he could improve, and Korva appointed Frieda to train him.

As the seven warriors drew nearer the village, Korva began to feel doubt nagging at her. Was she doing this only for the village, or because she had to do something magnificent, even if it would cost her or others their lives?

Keywords: *Ascetic, prideful, socially awkward, shameful, tradition-bound, lonely.*

Equipment:
Two-hand-sword
Bow and arrows

Relations

Udo: Korva blames Udo for having failed her and has never forgiven him. She knows he cannot be trusted, but she needs a mercenary with his skills and experience if she is to succeed in defending the village.

Bogdan: This year is the year where Bogdan is to travel back to the mountain folk. Korva has noticed that he is good with his bow, but also that he does not carry out the morning and evening rituals with anything near the sufficient dedication, and he does not wholeheartedly follow the ascetic ways of the mountain folk.

Wilfred: Wilfred is not good at fighting compared to the other warriors, but perhaps his valour and willpower can motivate the rest of the villagers to fight. He has at least lit a hope in Korva's heart that she can make amends for the mistakes of the past.

Frieda: Korva has heard good things about Frieda's fighting skills, and when she met her she was not disappointed. She will fight, and she will fight well. Korva worries a bit about her discipline, though.

Sir Hartwig: The knights are some of the best warriors of the lowlands, but it is not a good sign that Hartwig has lost his sword. Maybe he will be of most use training the militia.

Sigrun: Sigrun is a promising warrior, and Korva can feel the young woman looking up to her. She hopes Sigrun will not be too much like her father.

Before every battle Korva always makes a detailed map over the area of the battle. During the first act, the game master will set a scene where Korva shows the other warriors this map and tells them some of her plans for the defence of the village. In this scene the game master will give you the map as a handout, so you talk about it in game.

To help you present Korva as a good strategist, here you get some suggestions on things to do to help protect the village. Some of them you can introduce relatively early, while others will not come into play until the bandits attack and the game master ask which precautions you ended up taking there.

It is not important that you manage to play your way to a full and coherent plan, and the success of the defence does not directly depend on your choices. It is an opportunity to influence the game and help create interesting scenes.

North

Create an advanced position by the old castle ruin.

Make an ambush among the stone monuments on the barrows.

West

Barricade the stone bridge and place pointed sticks among the reeds in the stream.

Defend the mill as long as possible.

Or destroy the walkway that goes over the river.



East

Establish a line of defence by the outermost houses.

Reinforce the line with timber and wagons.

South

Repair the worst holes in the stone fence.

Set fire to the cherry grove if the bandits try to pass through it.

Additionally

Put a good archer in the watchtower.

Gather the ones who cannot fight in the village's biggest barn.

Collection of characters

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Bogdan and Sigrun are played by the same player. Sir Hartwig and Udo are played by the same player.

Secondary Characters

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister, who runs her farm alone after her husband Ewald died.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter, Wilfred's niece.

Godwin (46): The village's wealthiest farmer, whom many of the others listen to.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter.

Egill (64): A stubborn, crooked widow who runs the village's water mill.

Germund (43): The town smith, who as a young man briefly partook in the civil war.

Wina (38): Germund's wife, who would like her son to wed a reliable villager.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's handsome son.

Alwin (22): A quick-learning peasant's son.

Rolf (28): The village's clumsy charcoal burner.

Baldo (33): A woodsman who knows the area around the village well.

Lambrecht: The leader of the bandits, who killed Sir Osmund and took his sword.

Osmund (†) The village's dead knight.

Ewald (†) Wilfred's brother-in-law, who was killed by Lambrecht.

Frieda

Frieda, 25 years old

Frieda

Frieda is a young woman who took up arms to defend her hometown against raiders and was cast out for breaking with the norms. Angry and embittered, she now lives as a mercenary and makes a living defending villagers whom she despises. Sometimes she still dreams about the life she lost, and that she doesn't think she will ever get back.

Frieda became the second warrior when she fell in love with Wilfred.

Frieda was only a child when the civil war broke out. She lived with her family in a small village and for the first many years the war was something happening far away. The village knight was a good man who kept the village out of the conflict and made sure to keep the militia well trained and disciplined. Frieda did her chores, learned how to churn butter and harvest the field and she got her first kiss behind the sheepfold on a warm summer's eve.

As a young woman she got engaged to a man her own age who she had played with as a child, and she was looking forward to starting a family of their own and creating their own home. But rumours had started that groups of lawless and deserted soldiers had started ravaging the region, and that several of the surrounding villages had been attacked. When the civil war took over the village, it took Frieda with it. Away from the home she knew and the life she thought she was going to live.

Frieda walked restlessly around the barn where children, women and the old had sought refuge when the village was attacked. Outside they could hear yelling, cries of pain and the sound of steel against steel. She carefully put one eye to the gap in the barn doors. A couple of meters ahead of her, the village knight lay dead with his head half cut off. A raider stood with his back turned and axe lifted to chop down her fiancé who lay defenceless in the mud. Decisively she stepped through the barn doors and ignored her mother's pleas for her to stay. With quick steps she picked up the knight's sword from the ground and plunged it through the raider's neck. He had barely hit the ground before two other enemies stormed towards her. She put herself protectively in front of her fiancé and tightened her grip on the sword. It felt good in her hand.

Frieda fought for her village that day. For the sound of the old women talking around the spinning wheel. For the light in the eyes of young people dancing during the harvest festival. For the laughter of children as they dressed the village's scare crow each year. Even though she had never been trained to use a weapon, fighting came surprisingly naturally. She kept a cool head and she instinctively understood when she needed to attack, and when to take a defensive position. When the last of the raiders were outnumbered, they ran, and the surviving men burst out cheering. Several of them patted Frieda on the back and nodded appreciatively at her. At the edge of the circle of people, the knight's widow had watched the scene and with steady steps she

marched up to Frieda and demanded she hand over the sword. Frieda hesitated for a moment, heart pounding. Then she remembered her place and gave up the sword.

As time went by the villagers tried to forget and return to their old lives. Slowly it became clear to Frieda that she didn't fit in with her bloodstained hands. She started getting suspicious and contemptuous looks on the square, and some months after the attack her fiancé broke off the engagement. He wouldn't look her in the eyes when he did it. Even her own family had changed the way they saw her. They didn't say it, but she could tell by the silence when she stepped into the living room. Maybe she should have bowed her head and found her place again, but she couldn't. Defiance toward the injustice grew inside her and even if she tried to keep it contained it came out in small, pointed remarks. It shone through the way she carried herself and through the look in her eyes. It only made everything worse. As the distance between her and her family and the rest of the village grew, defiance turned into anger and Frieda realised she would never fit in with the rest of the village again. The day she packed her rucksack and left the village, she only received taciturn words and people put on a good face for her departure. It was like the whole village sighed in relief about not having to deal with her anymore.

Armed with an axe in one hand and a dagger in the other, she defended herself on the country road and it didn't take long before she began getting paid in food or coin to fight other people's wars. She noticed how most villagers looked funny at a female warrior like her, but when no one else was there to defend them, they found a use for her. They disgusted her, but she ate their food and took their wretched valuables. One day when she fought on the same side as group of mercenaries, they saw her potential and they let her join them. She learned to parry, feint, and get in strikes in a high and brutal tempo. Among the mercenaries she was accepted for who she was, and, on the surface, she was content with her life. Deep within her lived a longing for the things she said goodbye to. A longing for the life she thought she was going to have. She tried to hide that longing. Maybe because she was ashamed. Maybe because it hurt too much.

As time went by, she served as a mercenary both in different groups and alone. She was on her own when Korva of the mountain folk found her. Korva was a legendary mercenary and at first Frieda was flattered she had expressed a desire to fight side by side with her. That feeling was replaced by contempt when Korva had introduced her to the peasant Wilfred, who wanted her to defend his hole-in-the-ground village. Without paying for it. Always the villagers came crawling, when they had nowhere else to turn, but she knew their hypocritical minds and knew what they whispered about her in the shadows after she bleed for them on the battlefields. Frieda had told Wilfred to go to hell without even looking up from the hare she was skinning, but he hadn't moved and inch. Threateningly she had raised her dagger, but something in Wilfred's eyes made her lower it.

Frieda wasn't sure why she had agreed to go with them. Maybe it was something in Wilfred's voice. Maybe it was his tenaciousness. Maybe it was because he awoke a longing in her she thought she had forgotten. When they had found six out of seven warriors as Wilfred had been foretold, time was running out. Wilfred had surprised her by wanting to fight alongside them as the seventh warrior. When they made camp on the way to his village, she would train with him at Korva's orders. He wasn't a great warrior, but he listened to her instructions and slowly he became better. Maybe she had been wrong. Maybe his village was worth risking her life for after all. She started dreaming old dreams about a life that had long since been lost to her, but she shook them off. Deep inside she knew that her lot in life was as a mercenary now. That she would one day die for someone who didn't like her and that until then she was only tolerated by peasants who always sighed with relief when her service was concluded, and she left their village behind.

Keywords: *embittered, proud, down to earth, dreamer, tough, vulnerable*

Equipment:

Axe

Dagger

Leather breastplate

Relations

Wilfred: Frieda does not like to admit that she has started to have feelings for Wilfred. He seems like a good and decent man, and she respects his fighting spirit and courage. In many ways he reminds her of the man she thought her fiancé was. Frieda is not sure if she can open up her heart to anyone ever again - even if she wanted to.

Sir Hartwig: Hartwig doesn't carry a sword as a sign of his knighthood and Frieda doubts whether he's even a real knight. Either way, a knight's place is in the village he swore to protect, and Frieda doesn't trust Hartwig one tiny bit.

Sigrun: On one hand Frieda likes Sigrun, and the younger woman's impractical naivete and idealism makes Frieda want to keep her safe. On the other hand, Frieda feels slightly jealous of how easy and carefree life as a mercenary seems to be for Sigrun, compared to the price she herself had to pay.

Udo: Udo is an experienced mercenary and Frieda is comfortable in his company. There are no judgmental looks or expectations for her to be something she isn't.

Korva: Korva fully lives up to her reputation as a formidable warrior, but even though Frieda respects her abilities she also thinks that Korva is kind of an oddball without much connection to reality.

Bogdan: Bogdan seems far more compassionate than both Korva and all the other mountain folk Frieda met as a mercenary. He is accommodating and friendly, but she can also sense pain in his eyes.

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Bogdan and Sigrun are played by the same player. Sir Hartwig and Udo are played by the same player.

Secondary Characters

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister, who runs her farm alone after her husband Ewald died.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter, Wilfred's niece.

Godwin (46): The village's wealthiest farmer, whom many of the others listen to.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter.

Egill (64): A stubborn, crooked widow who runs the village's water mill.

Germund (43): The town smith, who as a young man briefly partook in the civil war.

Wina (38): Germund's wife, who would like her son to wed a reliable villager.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's handsome son.

Alwin (22): A quick-learning peasant's son.

Rolf (28): The village's clumsy charcoal burner.

Baldo (33): A woodsman who knows the area around the village well.

Lambrecht: The leader of the bandits, who killed Sir Osmund and took his sword.

Osmund (†) The village's dead knight.

Ewald (†) Wilfred's brother-in-law, who was killed by Lambrecht.

Bogdan & Sigrun

In the second act, one of your two characters must be written out. Maybe they die heroically. Maybe they tuck their tail between their legs and leaves the village. Maybe something completely different. It is up to you, which character is written out and to a large extent how it is done. If your character escapes, you have the option of letting it return in the third act at just the right moment, or perhaps just too late.

Bogdan, 25 years old

One of the mercenaries of the mountain folk, Bogdan has been trained to fight and kill his whole life. After learning how the lowlanders live, he has begun to question the traditions of his people, and he secretly dreams of having a real family.

Bogdan became the third warrior when he finally found something worth fighting for.

When he was five, like all other mountain folk, Bogdan was taken from his parents and trained as a mercenary. All the children slept together in a hut, and the only adults they interacted with were those experienced warriors who trained them. Bogdan missed his father and mother and younger siblings right down to his bones, and every night, when the others were asleep, he lay quietly crying in the dark. The first time one of the old warriors heard, she beat him with a stick until he could barely walk. She told him to forget his family if he wanted to survive as a warrior of the mountain folk. This repeated itself until Bogdan finally understood that the memory of his family's faces and voices made him weak, and he let them go.

From then on, the entire purpose of his life was to get ready to journey as a mercenary together with the other youngsters, so that they could send riches back home to their people. By day they were trained in weapons use, first with sticks, then with two-handed swords and bows. Bogdan excelled due to his sharp eyes and steady hand, surpassing many others with the bow and arrow. As the ascetic lifestyle of the mountain folk decreed, he ate only what was strictly necessary, and every sunset and sunrise, he repeated the same ritual exercises to hone his body and mind.

In his fifteenth year, Bogdan left his home to serve as a mercenary. The civil war in the lowlands meant that there was always work for mountain folk to find. As was customary, he only kept enough of his wages to maintain his equipment and have enough to eat. The rest he faithfully sent home to the mountains. It was a brutal civil war, and Bogdan saw many of his young mountain folk companions die in combat, one by one. He made sure to send their final wages home to the mountains, but every time he buried one of them in strange and unknown soil, sadness overtook him. As was expected of them, his friends had fought with discipline and given their lives for the mountain folk, but they died lonely, with nobody to mourn at their graves.

The carpenter's wife passed Bogdan a bowl of watery porridge, but when she wanted to pour him a glass of brandy as well, he politely declined. Bogdan didn't know how long the mercenary company would stay in town, or how long he would board with the carpenter family, but he felt comfortable in their home. The smoke from the carpenter's pipe spread in the living room. The older children had not been sent away to learn how to kill but sat by the fireplace carving wooden figurines. The carpenter took out his lute and played a dancing tune. Laughter and the stomping of boots filled the small room. As Bogdan sat on his bench in the corner, looking on, he felt his stomach clench with grief and the deprivation of never having a home or a family like this, even though in that moment he realised he wanted nothing more. The next time Bogdan was offered brandy, he did not reject it. The liquor burned his throat, spreading warmth throughout his body.

Bogdan was struck with shame at these thoughts. He knew well the reasons for the traditions and customs of the mountain folk. Why it had to be like this. And yet, Bogdan could never quite shake the feelings that arose in the carpenter's hut. It got ever harder to stay focused during his morning and evening rituals. He often found himself lost in thought, imagining another life instead. He knew that these were mere fancies, never to be true. He also knew the danger he put himself in: If he allowed these weak thoughts and fancies to distract him, he would become vulnerable, soft.

As lowlander society crumbled, it became ever harder to find hire at decent pay. When Bogdan met Sir Hartwig, some months ago, they teamed up. Bogdan appreciated his company - they told stories around the fire, taught each other new songs, and every now and then they passed a bottle back and forth under the open sky, the grease from a roasted rabbit feast dripping down their chins. They had each other's backs on the road and fought side by side when they found hire as mercenaries. Bogdan still sent his wages back to the mountain folk, and soon, the time drew near for him to travel home, something he did not look forward to.

Bogdan and Hartwig were working as guards at a roadside inn when they were sought out by Korva, a famed mercenary of the mountain folk. She wanted them to travel with her to defend a remote village against bandits. When the peasant Wilfred spoke passionately about his village, and the prophecy of the seven warriors who could save it, Bogdan quickly decided to join them. The way Wilfred described the village, it sounded like a place worth defending. For once, Bogdan would be fighting for something he believed in.

Keywords: *Melancholy, humble, companionable, trapped, sensitive, uprooted.*

Equipment:
Two-handed sword
Bow and arrows

Relations

Korva: Bogdan heard impressive things about Korva's skill as a warrior and strategist even as a child, and when he was to journey as a mercenary, he considered joining her company. But then he heard that the company had been obliterated, and the old warriors were suddenly saying that she had always been too haughty. She has been in the lowlands for more than ten years and should have gone home long ago, but apart from that, she is a fanatical devotee to the mountain folk customs.

Sir Hartwig: Bogdan regards Sir Hartwig as a good man and the closest to a friend he has. Bogdan has sensed Hartwig growing upset and restless when battle is afoot, and he has also noticed that Hartwig tends to get them jobs with a low risk of actual fighting. Bogdan wishes that he could help lighten the burdens on the knight's mind.

Wilfred: Bogdan likes Wilfred. With no skills or training to stand against the bandits, he still does so to defend his home. Because Wilfred is the only one who has journeyed out, Bogdan somewhat doubts that the rest of the village stands behind him, but this only makes Bogdan hold Wilfred in higher regard.

Frieda: Even though Frieda by no means has the same training as Bogdan, he can see that she is a capable fighter. She mostly keeps to herself and seems lonely in a way he recognises in himself. As if she doesn't fit in.

Udo: It is clear to Bogdan that Udo is only on this journey to protect the village because of his daughters, and that he cares nothing for the fate of the village itself.

Sigrun: Bogdan admires Sigrun's spirit, but she is obviously untested in actual combat, and he worries whether she will stand firm or break once it really matters.

Sigrun, 17 years old

Bogdan & Sigrun

Sigrun is a young mercenary with a strong sense of justice and a fighting spirit. She wants to become a better person than her father, but her idealism may not survive the harsh realities of life, and maybe she's more like him than she thinks.

Sigrun became the fifth warrior to defy her father.

Sigrun is a child of the civil war. Her mother worked at a fortified trading post in the heart of the kingdom, where two of the busiest roads of the realm met. Her father was a mercenary, who travelled on after getting her mother pregnant. Sigrun dimly recalled her early years at the trading post; her mother's smile, the smell of dried ham, and late nights by the light of a tallow candle, where she snuck in to hear the travellers tell tales of life on the road. When the other children called her bastard, she gave them a bloody nose or two in return - then the name-calling stopped.

Sigrun was only seven when her mother died. Her mother had caught the yellow plague that spread through the realm in those years, and the other adults did not let Sigrun say her good-byes. She wanted to hold her mother's hand and comfort her, but instead, her mother passed all alone. It just wasn't fair! In the weeks that followed, she lived off the scraps given to her by the other folk at the trading post, but nobody would take her in, and the alms became ever fewer and further between. One day, her father Udo came and found her. He took her with him on the road, and even though he occasionally talked about finding her a proper home, he never did. She lived with him in the camp of the mercenary band he belonged to, and that was where she preferred to be. Although there were no other children, the mercenaries took good care of her. They told her stories, kept her in their sights when Udo wasn't there, and they taught her to play dice and let her taste their beer. In due time, Udo started teaching her how to fight and how to hone her strength and endurance. He said that one must know how to defend oneself, because in the end, you couldn't count on anybody else.

As Sigrun grew older, it became clear to her what he meant: The mercenary company only took hire with those who could afford to pay them, but they would often pass by burned down farms or even entire villages razed to the ground because nobody had had reason to protect them. When she spoke of her thoughts of injustice to Udo, he would always give her a patient smile - as if she was a mere child, ignorant of the ways of the world. She knew that he was wrong. Sometimes, you had to do something just because it was the right thing to do.

Sigrun became a competent fighter with the axe and shield, but even as she fought on an even foot with several of the company's veterans in practice, Udo wouldn't let her fight by his side as a mercenary. He said that she wasn't ready, and this led to many arguments by the campfire. She put even more effort into her training, firmly determined to prove him wrong. The evenings were spent gambling, drinking and fighting. Sigrun slept with several of the other young mercenaries, men and women alike, but she would never commit to anyone. She had a great thirst for adventure and lust for life.

When Udo's old captain, Korva, found him and Sigrun, they had been out of hire for months on end. The people who could pay were fewer and fewer. Korva travelled with Wilfred the peasant, who told of his village which was besieged by bandits. He also told of the prophecy of the seven warriors that he needed to bring home with him, if the village was to be saved.

Sigrun felt her indignation rise as Wilfred told of his village. The peasants never asked for a war, and nobody cared about them any longer. As expected, Udo shook his head and refused the job. Too dangerous, the pay too low, it was useless. As Korva turned to leave, Sigrun stood in defiance. "Hold up... I'll come with you! I'll fight!" she shouted. She caught Udo's gaze, fire in her eyes. She expected her father to look at her in anger, but instead, he looked mostly sad. This made her hesitate, but then she found her voice again. "I'll go with them whether you want it or not. You can come if you please, but if not, we'll manage without you." She straightened her back and raised her voice. "It may be dangerous, it may be too little money, it may be useless - but it's the right thing to do!" Udo opened his mouth to speak, but then shrugged in defeat. Sigrun knew that she'd won.

Udo also ended up joining the mismatched band of warriors who were to defend the village. His old captain might have been surprised by this, but Sigrun knew all along that he wouldn't let her go alone. As they drew closer to the village, she felt a stab of concern about what she'd gotten them into. Then she thought of the injustice done to the villagers, and the blood flowed hot in her veins, fire in her cheeks.

Keywords: *Idealistic, free spirit, insistent, impulsive, light-hearted.*

Equipment:

Axe

Shield

Knife

Leather armor

Udo: Udo is Sigrun's only relative in this world, and even though he can be cynical and pessimistic at times, she loves him dearly. The life as a mercenary has hardened him, turned him cold, and Sigrun sometimes wonder what he would have been like if he had lived a life in peace. Sigrun is convinced that deep down, he has a good heart and wants to fight for others than himself. He just needs help realising it.

Korva: Korva is a living legend among mercenaries, and Sigrun has heard many riveting tales of her skills and deeds - not least from Udo, who served with her for years. Despite this, Udo has warned her that it's dangerous to follow Korva. Sigrun finds Korva to be weird and awkward, and she can't see any hint of a light in her eyes. However, Sigrun is deeply impressed with Korva's skills in weapons practice, and can't wait to see what she's like in actual battle.

Wilfred: Sigrun admires Wilfred's courage and vigour. A mere peasant, and yet willing to defy the superior force and risk his life for his village. She worries a bit about his lack of fighting skill, but the rest of the warriors he has gathered more than make up for it.

Frieda: Even though Frieda supposedly grew up on a farm and hasn't been trained to fight since she was a child like Sigrun has, she has deep respect for the other woman's skill in battle. And yet, there is something fragile and insecure about her that Sigrun can't quite define. It's obvious to Sigrun that Frieda fancies Wilfred, and she can't understand why Frieda doesn't act on it. Life is too short not to reach for what you want - maybe Sigrun should push her a little?

Sir Hartwig: Sir Hartwig seems quiet and reserved. He doesn't carry the sword that symbolises his standing, and Sigrun sometimes wonders what happened to the village he was sworn to protect.

Bogdan: Most mountain folk that Sigrun has met were boring sticks-in-the-mud who kept to themselves, but Bogdan seems different.

Collection of characters

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Bogdan and Sigrun are played by the same player. Sir Hartwig and Udo are played by the same player.

Secondary Characters

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister, who runs her farm alone after her husband Ewald died.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter, Wilfred's niece.

Godwin (46): The village's wealthiest farmer, whom many of the others listen to.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter.

Egill (64): A stubborn, crooked widow who runs the village's water mill.

Germund (43): The town smith, who as a young man briefly partook in the civil war.

Wina (38): Germund's wife, who would like her son to wed a reliable villager.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's handsome son.

Alwin (22): A quick-learning peasant's son.

Rolf (28): The village's clumsy charcoal burner.

Baldo (33): A woodsman who knows the area around the village well.

Lambrecht: The leader of the bandits, who killed Sir Osmund and took his sword.

Osmund (†) The village's dead knight.

Ewald (†) Wilfred's brother-in-law, who was killed by Lambrecht.

Sir Hartwig & Udo

In the second act, one of your two characters must be written out. Maybe they die heroically. Maybe they tuck their tail between their legs and leaves the village. Maybe something completely different. It is up to you, which character is written out and to a large extent how it is done. If your character escapes, you have the option of letting it return in the third act at just the right moment, or perhaps just too late.

Sir Hartwig, 29 years old

Hartwig & Udo

Hartwig grew up to become a knight and from an early age he learned to handle a sword and train the militia. But when war came to his village, his courage deserted him, and he bolted when he was needed the most. He is wracked with guilt and has a burning desire to find his courage this time and stand his ground.

Sir Hartwig became the fourth warrior when he saw an opportunity to become the man he should have been.

Sir Hartwig's entire childhood and youth was centred on preparing him for the day when he would take up his father's position as village knight. His father was a respected knight who kept the peace in and around his village. What Hartwig liked the most was weapons training and to be taught strategy and the laws of the land, and in his own time he daydreamed about becoming a knight like his father before him: just and able. On his deathbed, Hartwig's father was weak and feeble, but managed to find the strength to lift his sword and place its hilt in Hartwig's hand. He said that he was proud of Hartwig: of the man he had become, and the knight he would become. Then he died. The village and its protection were now Hartwig's responsibility.

Hartwig had inherited his father's ability to train the village militia, and the recruits young and old eagerly practised the formations he taught them. He was proud of his men, and he sensed that they trusted him. But as war approached and the first skirmishes were fought, Hartwig felt fear slowly tightening its grip on him. He told himself that it was only natural to be nervous about engaging in real combat, and that his long years of training would see him through. He was, after all, his father's son.

"Hold the line", shouted Sir Hartwig. Out of the corner of his eye he could see militia men firmly holding their spears, pointing them at the soldiers storming towards the opening in the dry stone wall where they stood. They were outnumbered, yes, but they could hold this position long enough for the detachment he had sent around the village to attack the enemy from behind. Again, Hartwig eyed the approaching soldiers, and he felt the fear growing stronger and stronger inside him. "Hold the line" was what he wanted to shout once again but no words left his mouth. It felt dry. His hands were sweaty. His heart hammered in his chest. He felt as if he were drowning. Sir Hartwig dropped his sword in the mud, turned, and ran.

The next thing Hartwig recalled afterwards was sitting huddled up in a chicken shed on the outskirts of the village. For a long time, he could hear the ring of steel and cries of pain. They floated and blended in his mind. He wanted to get up, rush out, and rescue his fellow villagers. But he could not. Only many hours later when darkness had fallen was he able to move and step out. Corpses of villagers lay strewn over the commons and inside houses. By the dry stone wall he found the militia men.

A few had wounds in their backs and must have been killed when they ran like he did. But most had been killed in a brave attempt to stand their ground as he had ordered them to do. His father's sword lay where he had thrown it, but Hartwig did not pick it up. He had lost his right to bear it. He did not look back at the village as he staggered out into the darkness and let himself be swallowed up by it.

For several years he earned his living as a travelling day-labourer. One day he came upon some dead bodies lying by the wayside. One was an elderly man in chainmail. The empty sheath at his belt told of a knight. About him lay a handful of men that had the look of brigands. Hartwig thought that the old man had fought them, and fought well, and nodded in respect. As he stood contemplating the dead knight, Hartwig decided that he had had enough of being a day-labourer. This was not the life that his father had brought him up for. Hartwig buried the knight by the side of the road, pulled on the chainmail shirt, and girded himself with the belt with the empty sheath. It felt as if he'd assumed the personality of the knight. It might well be that he was not a true knight, but could he perhaps become one by playing the role well enough and long enough?

Hartwig began working as a mercenary but only accepted work in desolate areas, far from where war raged. Many people wanted a knight in their service, mostly as a deterrent to stray brigands. Most days were spent on watch duty or escorting travellers but whenever battle became imminent, Hartwig felt the old fear tightening its grip on him. In most minor skirmishes he managed to hold it at bay. He had no illusions that he would ever be able to be completely free of it but perhaps he could learn to live with it, and prevent it taking over? Some months back he joined up with Bogdan of the mountain folk. They had each other's back on the road and signed up as mercenaries together. Though Hartwig liked Bogdan, he kept a little distance from him, for the more he appreciated Bogdan's company, the more afraid he became that one day he would fail Bogdan as he had failed his militia and his village.

Korva of the mountain folk and Wilfred the peasant found him and Bogdan at a roadside inn where they were doing guard duty. They asked them to defend Wilfred's village from brigands for no other reward than bread and board. Bogdan assented quickly, and after some consideration, Hartwig went along. Partly because of the prophecy about the seven warriors defeating the brigands, and partly because Wilfred had looked at him as if he were a real knight. As if he were the man he was meant to be. Hartwig had a burning desire to do the right thing this time. To hold his ground. To make amends for failing his village, and perhaps find a measure of peace with himself. But he also knew that this would be an entirely different matter from stopping a brawl at the inn or skirmishing with a few highwaymen. This would be a real battle. When sir Hartwig stepped out of the inn his hands were clammy and his heart thundered.

Keywords: *Responsible, decent, disciplined, fearful, haunted by guilt.*

Equipment:

Club
Chainmail shirt
Helmet
Shield
Empty sheath.

Bogdan: Bogdan does not fully live up to the image of the ascetic mountain dweller, being fond of both food and drink. Even though Bogdan is often the one to cause merriment at the campfire, Hartwig finds it obvious that he is plagued by dark thoughts. Hartwig has noticed that Bogdan's mind seems more and more weighed down as they get closer to the time when he must travel back to his mountains. Hartwig regards Bogdan as a friend, and he would do what he can to help him. At times Hartwig feels like taking Bogdan into his confidence and telling him about his village and the fear that has a hold on him. So far he has not dared.

Wilfred: Sir Hartwig admires Wilfred for his leadership and the way he assumes responsibility for his village. Wilfred's courage is contagious, and in his company Hartwig truly believes that he may find his own.

Frieda: Hartwig does not like the way Frieda looks at him. It is as if she looks straight through him. He is afraid that she has worked out that he is no true knight. She makes him nervous and insecure.

Korva: Sir Hartwig has heard stories about Korva's formidable skill as warrior and strategist. So far, she has lived up to her reputation. It gives him some courage to know that she is the one leading them, and he appreciates that it is not he that has to carry that burden.

Sigrun: Despite her young age, Sigrun seems a capable warrior, but Hartwig knows better than most that battle is the one true test. He hopes that she will do better than he did.

Udo: The veteran mercenary seems friendly and forthcoming, but Hartwig is not sure he can be counted upon when it matters. He seems to be a man not used to thinking about anyone but himself.

Udo, 43 years old

Udo is a seasoned mercenary with a strong survival instinct, who despite his jovial appearance always looked out for himself first. His idealistic, devil-may-care daughter has forced him to decide whether he will take responsibility for anyone else.

Udo became the sixth warrior because he wasn't yet ready to let his daughter go.

As a young man, Udo was serving in the King's army when the war broke out. He saw countless of his comrades sent to their deaths by incompetent leaders, losing their lives for a cause they did not understand, and quickly, Udo realised that it made no sense to fight for anybody besides himself. He switched sides several times depending on who had the upper hand, serving as a mercenary for anyone willing to pay. Luckily, plenty of people were, as Udo was just as good at talking to people as he was swinging an axe. The freedom of the open road suited him, and he owed nothing to anyone.

In those years, Udo would often make his way past a garrisoned trading post at the crossroads of two of the busiest roads in the kingdom. He set his eye on a peddler woman working there, and she on him. She got pregnant, and Sigrun was born while Udo was fighting on a faraway battlefield. When he passed by again, the peddler woman showed him his daughter in the hopes that he would stay with them, but Udo would have nothing of playing house. Before he left, he gave the woman a money bag - to tide them over for a while, and to relieve him of any feeling of responsibility.

After traveling for years on his own, Udo joined Korva of the mountain folk and her band. Even for someone from the mountains, she was a formidable warrior and strategist, and his professional admiration and respect for her quickly grew. Before long, Korva had named him second-in-command, and they complemented each other well. Korva had no great gift for or interest in understanding and socialising with her band, but Udo had always been good at reading others, and with a few choice words he could heighten morale on a rainy day. Things went well for years, and there was no enemy they couldn't defeat together, but the glory of victory clouded Korva's mind, murking her judgment.

"We can't win this battle without massive losses." Udo flung out his arms in defeat. "Their numbers are far greater than we thought." Korva did not answer. She was bent over the table in the middle of the tent, which had a detailed map of the surrounding landscape. Udo hesitated for a while, and silence hung in the air as Korva stared intently at the map in front of her before he spoke up again. "Let's retreat to the river. We can stand our ground there, while we wait for reinforcements." Korva still had her back turned when she planted one finger solidly on the map. "We can win here, by the gorge," she said. "They can't make use of their strength in numbers, and we are better warriors. A siege by the river could last for weeks."

She pointed at the map again. "We will win a great victory here." Udo knew there was nothing he could say to make her change her mind. He wasn't about to give up his life because of Korva's arrogance, and in the dark of night, he decided to leave camp with a large group of those soldiers closest to him.

Weeks later, Udo heard tell of the battle. Korva had been victorious, but at a high price. The band had been almost eradicated. Afterwards, Udo sometimes asked himself whether it had made a difference if he and the others had stayed. But a conscience was a luxury which a mercenary couldn't afford, and he was still alive.

A few months later, Udo travelled to the trading post at the crossroads, and heard that it had been struck by the yellow plague that had followed the civil war. He found seven-year-old Sigrun, now left to fend for herself after her mother's death. He could not bear to leave her. Udo took Sigrun with him on the road, but he had no intentions of being stuck with her. Life as a mercenary was no life for a child, and life as a father was no life for him. He figured that as soon as he found a suitable home for her, they would part. But time passed, and before he knew it, he grew to care for her. When he joined a new mercenary company, she lived in the camp with him, and as Sigrun grew older, he grew more and more attached to her. He trained her in weapons so that she could defend herself, because ultimately, you couldn't count on anyone but yourself in this world. He often fondly remembered the time when he could do as he pleased, but even though he still debated with himself over leaving Sigrun with whatever peasant family he met next, he never got around to doing so.

Sigrun showed a strong sense of justice from childhood, and she would question why the mercenaries only defended those who could afford to pay. The burned-down farms and villages across the land bore clear witness that everyone needed protection, no matter wealth or standing. As a young woman, she stubbornly clung to those same naïve ideas, and that worried Udo. The better Sigrun got at fighting, the more eager she was to test her skill on the battlefield, but Udo wouldn't allow it. Not yet. She might make a good mercenary someday, but first, she needed to understand that it was dangerous for a mercenary to put others before yourself.

Even though Udo knew that Korva was still alive, it was like seeing a ghost when early one morning, she came through the mists around their camp along with Wilfred the peasant. They spoke of the village in the middle of nowhere, which had no money and could offer no reward for fighting the bandits. They told of a prophecy foretelling certain victory, but Udo knew that prophecies were treacherous and never came true the way you wanted. He hadn't survived this long as a mercenary to die a foolhardy death in a godforsaken village, but Sigrun was full of fighting spirit, and tried to push him to say yes with fire in her eyes. Even though Udo knew she was manipulating him, and all his instincts told him to stay far away, he wasn't ready to let her go. He let her persuade him.

Keywords: *Pragmatic, selfish, professional, good-natured, social.*

Relations

Sigrun: Udo loves his daughter. Even though she can give him grey hair at times, deep down he appreciates her free will and reckless spirit. His warnings about how following Korva can turn disastrous fall on deaf ears, but on the other hand, Sigrun needs to stand on her own two feet soon. He can't be there for her forever, and he has his own life to live.

Korva: Korva is the best warrior and strategist Udo has ever fought with, but he still sees the arrogance in her eyes. He fears how many she will be willing to sacrifice to win glorious victory over the bandits. He knows that he did the right thing leaving her back then, but some small part of him cannot shake the annoying thought that he owes it to her to stay by her side this time. At least for a while.

Wilfred: Wilfred is both inexperienced and desperate to defend his village, and that is a dangerous combination. If Udo can't convince his stubborn daughter that they need to leave, it might be easier to make Wilfred doubt the course he's laid. If Wilfred gives up on his mission, the rest of the village will do so as well.

Frieda: Udo immediately saw that Frieda is a great warrior. He doesn't doubt that she will stand firm when things get dangerous, but he senses anger just beneath the surface that may lead to rushed and reckless decisions.

Bogdan: Bogdan is good with his two-handed sword and even better with his bow, but he's different from the other mountain folk that Udo has fought alongside over the years. Tensions might arise between him and Korva, and that could cause problems.

Sir Hartwig: Sir Hartwig knows how to use his weapons, and he will be able to train the peasants in the village, but there is something about his shifty eyes that makes it hard for Udo to trust him.

Equipment:

Axe
Shield
Leather armour
Dagger
Crossbow.

Collection of characters

The Seven Warriors

Korva (35): Famous mercenary from the mountain folk.

Frieda (25): Embittered mercenary.

Bogdan (25): seasoned mercenary from the mountain folk.

Ridder Hartwig (29): A knight who is missing his sword.

Sigrun (17): Udo's daughter, raised among mercenaries.

Udo (43): Seasoned mercenary, who was once Korva's second-in-command. Sigrun's father.

Wilfred (24): Desperate peasant who has gathered the warriors.

Bogdan and Sigrun are played by the same player. Sir Hartwig and Udo are played by the same player.

Secondary Characters

Isa (32): Wilfred's older sister, who runs her farm alone after her husband Ewald died.

Saxa (15): Isa and Ewald's daughter, Wilfred's niece.

Godwin (46): The village's wealthiest farmer, whom many of the others listen to.

Rosa (22): Godwin's beautiful daughter.

Egill (64): A stubborn, crooked widow who runs the village's water mill.

Germund (43): The town smith, who as a young man briefly partook in the civil war.

Wina (38): Germund's wife, who would like her son to wed a reliable villager.

Edric (17): Germund and Wina's handsome son.

Alwin (22): A quick-learning peasant's son.

Rolf (28): The village's clumsy charcoal burner.

Baldo (33): A woodsman who knows the area around the village well.

Lambrecht: The leader of the bandits, who killed Sir Osmund and took his sword.

Osmund (†) The village's dead knight.

Ewald (†) Wilfred's brother-in-law, who was killed by Lambrecht.