

Startup

Starting the game

1. Read the preview text aloud and let all the players voice their expectations

2. Introduction to the scenario

- A gloomy low-fantasy drama.
- The scenario is about five men who have gone to rescue three women that the Strangers abducted from their village. The timeframe extends over several years.
- The key choice for the characters are whether to go back home for good, or if they continue their journey to the bitter end.
- The overall narrative structure is fixed in advance and the players should focus on the characters' actions and choices in each individual scene. The game master paces the story, and makes sure that the characters get from scene to scene.
- Players witness the scenes their characters are not part of.
- Players should take the time to dwell in the individual scenes.

3. Setting

- Fantasy with few supernatural elements. The humans' society has a loose feudal structure and traditional gender roles.
- The village is in the far outskirts of the Kingdom and is the largest settlement in the vast rural areas east of the mountains.
- The village's official leader and protector is Sir Sigmund. There is also a village militia.
- The Strangers are not human. They are small of stature. Sinewy. Grayish skin and white hair. Cat-like eyes that reflect the light. Their warriors file their teeth until they are sharply pointed, and both men and women can be warriors. They fight with small spears and slings. They live as nomads in smaller clans.
- There has always been conflicts between the humans and the Strangers. Almost 20 years ago there was a tenuous truce between the village and the Strangers east of the mountains, but it collapsed and bloody conflicts ensued. The past several years there has not been any attacks on the village.
- For many years the King has wages war on the Strangers west of the mountains. One of the characters has participated.
- During Sir Sigmund's wedding a group of Strangers attacked the village, while most of the men took part in the traditional stag hunt. Farms were set on fire, militiamen were killed, and three of the women were abducted. When the scenario starts, the five player characters set out to rescue them.

4. Distribute characters

- Ask for what people like to play.
- Assess who should play what, and distribute characters.
- Answer any questions.

5. Narrative framework

- The scenario consists of five chapters. Chapters 1, 3 and 5 take place during the quest. Chapters 2 and 4 take place in the village, where the characters have returned for a short while.
- At any time a character can abandon the quest and go back to the village, or players can choose that their character dies trying to rescue the abducted. In both cases, the player is not out of the game, but will have a different function.
- If a character abandons the quest, he cannot change his mind.
- It is always the character's player who decides whether the character dies.
- These players get theme-oriented roles based on their character.

Preview

The Strangers

They could see the glare in the sky before the fire itself. Several houses in the village had been set ablaze and the villagers were now struggling against the flames. In the eerie glow, they could see corpses scattered about, both men and women, with slit throats or javelins protruding from their bodies. All around, wedding garlands had been trampled into the mud. And then there were the missing ones. The ones that The Strangers had carried into the night.

The Strangers is a scenario about five men and their journey to save their loved ones that The Strangers have kidnapped. The Strangers are a mysterious people with barbaric customs. They have always harassed the humans.

This is gloomy low fantasy with tired horses, threatening clouds and a single rusting chain-mail. It is the vast plains. It is time mercilessly grinding away. It is hushed voices around a dying campfire. And it is steel, slowly penetrating flesh, then twisting.

The scenario is about the voyage and about what sacrifices our heroes are willing to make if they are to follow the path until its bitter end. For back in the village, life goes on relentlessly.

Facts

Duration: 5 hours.

Number of players: One game master and five players.

Genre: Freeform fantasy drama.

Player type: Likes to play for the epic tale. Enjoys character development and relations.

Scenes

Chapter 1: The Hard Ride (45 min.)	Chapter 2: Home (45 min.)	Chapter 3: The Long Journey (90 min.)	Chapter 4: Home Again (30 min.)	Chapter 5: The Futile Search (30 min.)
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Chapter 1: The Hard Ride

The action extends for approximately half a year.

The First Campfire: A roaring campfire. Take turns describing the characters.

The River: A rushing river. A rope bridge. The abducted on the other side. No way over.

Deserters: A hanged Stranger. Shabby deserters. What will be the price of their knowledge?

The Rescue: The Strangers ambush. Horses panicked and dying. One abducted found tied up.

Chapter 2: Home

Cracks appear. The journey has a price. Take turns describing the characters.

Use suggested scenes or make your own. Let the players propose scenes.

Chapter 3: The Long Journey

The action extends for approximately two years.

Weapons Training: Conversation scene. Who practices with whom? A chance to pick up on things from Chapter 2.

The Massacre: An overturned vehicle. Bodies. What do they do with the wounded trader?

The Mining Town: Ramshackle hovels. Dirty men. A dying Stranger in an iron cage.

The Meal: Conversation scene. Room for theme-based roles.

Shelter: Old people on a farm. The Stranger warrior woman Aldona hidden. The law has been broken.

The Dead: A narrow mountain path. The dead abducted stands impaled in front of them. A crooked finger pointing back down the mountain.

Chapter 4: Home Again

The price of the journey is high. Last chance to salvage their life at home. Take turns describing the characters.

Use suggested scenes or make your own. Let the players propose scenes.

Chapter 5: The Futile Search

Events are mentioned offhand. The action extends for approximately three years.

The Swamp, Snowed In, Heavy Rain: Three short camp scenes. Do the characters speak? Room for the theme-based roles.

The Last Campfire: A windswept plateau. A dying campfire. In the morning they will find the last woman. Take turns describing the characters. Give ample time.

Stranger: The Strangers' camp. Children and old people. The last woman wants to stay. *Siglinde has spears and fled teeth. Eda is married and pregnant. Rosmunda tends to the sick, is tired of waiting.*

Character	Relation to the abducted	Relations back home	At stake back home
<p>Sir Sigmund 48 years. Knight and protector of the village.</p>	<p>No direct relations.</p>	<p>Wilona: Sir Sigmund's new wife. Significantly younger than him, but not naive. Aware of the status brought by her marriage and that an heir is needed to secure it.</p>	<p>Wilona is not getting pregnant. The villagers write to the King and ask him to appoint a new knight, or maybe they turn to someone else for leadership.</p>
<p>Burkhardt 42 years. A veteran recently returned from 15 years of war against the Strangers.</p>	<p>Rosmunda: 40 years. The herb-wife of the village. Burkhardt's love when they were young. Unmarried. Wise and independent. Waited for Burkhardt for 15 years when he was at war.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>His half-finished home dilapidates. <i>If Rosmunda was rescued, she becomes old and lonely.</i></p>
<p>Lothar 36 years. A loner and a former hunter. Now a farmer and a family man.</p>	<p>Rosmunda: 40 years. Lothar's older sister. The herb-wife of the village. Unmarried. Wise and independent. Took care of Lothar when they were children.</p>	<p>Rhedra: Lothar's wife. A fierce mother who would do anything for her children. Really wants Lothar to be there for them but will take things into her own hands if necessary. Aedan and Aedra: Lothar's twins aged 2. Fond of each embracing one of Lothar's legs and shouting "Daddy!".</p>	<p>The twins grow up without their father.</p>
<p>Ranulf 18 years. A half-blood bastard who believes his mother was raped by a Stranger.</p>	<p>Siglinde: 8 years. Ranulf's younger half-sister. A cheerful girl who likes to climb trees and skin her knees. Very fond of her big brother.</p>	<p>Edrys: Ranulf's mother. A sorrowful woman who never recovered from the loss of her first love. Loves Ranulf more than anything else, even Siglinde. Kendra: Ranulf's girlfriend. A carefree girl in love with Ranulf. Fickle and impulsive. Fulco: Ranulf's rival for Kendra's affections. Ranulf considers him a smarmy git.</p>	<p>Fulco is courting Kendra and she gradually becomes more receptive. His mother misses him and languishes. <i>If Siglinde was rescued, their mother is not taking care of her properly.</i></p>
<p>Godric 16 years. A hearty farmboy with his life ahead of him.</p>	<p>Eda: 15 years. Godric's girlfriend. A deliberate young woman. Not as much in love with Godric as he is with her, but he's a nice guy and a good match.</p>	<p>Alvin: Godric's father. Toiled all his life to build an inheritance. A tough old man who would work himself to death before complaining. Hild: Godric's mother. Fussess over Godric. Thinks he should get married to a nice girl, and there is plenty of those in the village.</p>	<p>The crops are left unharvested. His father wears himself out. The family is forced to sell of more and more of their land. <i>If Eda was rescued, her father will try to get her a good marriage.</i></p>