**Chapter 3. New Forms of Divine Magic**

***Runic Magic***

***(taken from Gazetteer 7: The Northern Reaches)***

*“The runes are there, for any fool to read,” Onund proclaimed. “But only he who has Hung on the Tree, as did Father Odin, one who has gazed on the Abyss and suffered its emptiness, may know their true meanings or tap the Power that lies within.*

*“It is said that the runes were given to Man by the Immortal Odin All-Father. The legends suggest that the Immortal ‘died’ – hung on the Great Ash Tree of the World, Yggdrasil. Through the experience of death and gazing on the incomprehensible void, Odin gained some insight into the magical significance and the power of the runes, and he gave it to his mortal children.*

*“However, anyone who wants to receive the All-FKather’s knowledge must make incredible sacrifices, like those made at the end of time. Because knowledge of the runes is always accompanied by ritual suicides and great deprivations…”*

In the everyday Northlands life, the runes are simply a special form of written language used by Northlands clerics, particularly used to write on wood, stone, and other hard surfaces. However, there is another type of particular runes, sacred to Odin known as the “runes of power”, which have special magical meaning. With the help of some cleric spells, the more skilled priests can enhance the power and significance of the runes to obtain miracles.

The commonest use of these runes is in seeking divine inspiration and guidance. The *interpret runes* spell allows the cleric to learn the Immortal’s will or see the future.

A second use of the runes is for inscriptions on standing stones. Standing stones are slabs of rock inscribed with a mixture of practical advice and mystical insights, about famous men or enlightened individuals, the trials they have faced, and the wisdom they learnt from their deeds. The skalds (Nordic bards) inscribe the stones erected along the roads to commemorate important events and relate the good and bad acts of man. The inscriptions have been left for those that come after, so that they may learn from the experiences of those eye witnesses inspired by the Immortals. These runic inscriptions can only be read by those with the *Read Runes* skill, or with the *read language* spell, which translates therunes into a known language. With regard to the runes of power, *read magic* doesn’t permit these symbols to be understood, but *analyise*, *know rune,* or *contact outer planes* can reveal their effects. These stones and the runes inscribed there are sacred to the Immortals of the Northmen’s pantheon. Defacing or removing them is a great sacrilage, and the followers of Odin never hesitate to avenge a similar affront to the runic stones.

The third way the runes are used is to enchant weapons, jewels, clothing, graves, and items with ritual value. The priest must use the *inscribe runes* spellto fix a specific rune of power on an item, thus creating magic items that only clerics can use; the magical properties of an item of this type are in fact only activated by the *bless rune* spell. To correctly add a rune of power to an item, the cleric must have learnt that specific rune by means of the *know rune* spell and must have undergone the dangerous nine night ritual associated with this spell.

**Runic Spells**

The following clerical spells are known at the appropriate level by all the clerics that possess the Read Runes general skill and serve the Immortals that belong to the group of the Aesir and Ásynjur (see the *Codex Immortalis*: *Book Two* for further information on the list of these Immortals, which belong to the cult called Asatru or Odinism), and to only Frey and Freyja of the Vanir group (by virtue of their particular tight bond with Odin as his advisers on war and “godchildren”) in addition to those given by the Immortals. Obviously, a cleric who worships one of the Immortals of this group under another name but doesn’ follow the doctrine of Asatru doesn’t have access to the runic spells.

Note: *bless rune* has been moved to 1st level (it was originally a 2nd level spell), while the *interpret runes* is the Nordic version of *oracle* (3rd level).

**Bless Rune**

**Level:** 1st

**Immortal:** Arnelee, Asterius, Forsetta, Frey, Freyja, Gorm, Halav, Ixion, the Korrigan, Loki, Maat, Madarua, Odin, Tarastia, Terra, Thor, Valerias

**Range:** touch

**Duration:** 10 rounds (or based on the activated power)

**Effect:** activate the power of a rune placed on an object

This spell activates a rune of power that has previously been correctly etched on an item. The blessing only activates one of the rune’s three effects (the powers of the 24 Runes of Power of Odin are listed next): the cleric must specify which power he wants to invoke, otherwise the spell fails and the rune isn’t activated. It isn’t possible to activate more than one effect simultaneously: the first has to end before a second blessing can be invoked.

**Inscribe Rune**

**Level:** 3rd

**Immortal:** Arnelee, Asterius, Forsetta, Frey, Freyja, Gorm, Halav, Ixion, the Korrigan, Loki, Maat, Madarua, Odin, Tarastia, Terra, Thor, Valerias

**Range:** touch

**Duration:** permanent

**Effect:** inscribe a rune of power on an object

This spell allows a cleric to place a rune of power on an item. Thel cleric must have learnt the rune with the Ceremony of the Nine Nights (see the *know rune* spell) and follow the appropriate ritual; any error or omission in the ritual ruins the spell’s effects.

To inscribe an item with a rune of power effectively, the cleric who performed the inscription and the tools used to make it must be purified through a ritual and consecrated to the Immortals with *holy aura*. The preparation for the ritual needs 2d4 hours for the purification, and the ritual itself needs 4d6 hours. The preparation for the ritual must be perfrmed by the same priest who cast the spell and made the etching. If the cleric is disturbed in any way during the ritual, the ritual is ruined and the spell cannot be used effectively.

Unless inscribed with this spell, a rune of power has no magical properties and cannot be activated. Once it has been correctly placed on an item, a rune of power can be activated by a cleric only with a *bless rune* spell.

Each item on which a rune of pwer has been placed becomes magically tied to the cleric that performed the ritual and uttered the spell. From now on, the cleric always knows when the rune is activated by a *bless rune* spell, or when it is destroyed physically (destruction of the rune or item) or magically (by a *dispel magic* spell or similar); which happens regardless of the distance to the item, as long as they are both on the same plane. The cleric knows nothing about the circumstances of the activation or destruction of the rune, only that it has been activated or destroyed.

There is a limit to the number of runes of power that a cleric can inscribe. The total number of runes is equal to the number of third level spells that the cleric can memorise. If the cleric tries to inscribe other runes above his natural, each effort will be vain and the incription will fail automatically, unless one of the previously inscribed runes has been destroyed.

Items with correctly inscribed runes keep their properties even after his death.

**Interpret Rune**

**Level:** 3rd

**Immortal:** Arnelee, Asterius, Forsetta, Frey, Freyja, Gorm, Halav, Ixion, the Korrigan, Loki, Maat, Madarua, Odin, Tarastia, Terra, Thor, Valerias

**Substitute:** *Oracle*

**Range:** touch

**Duration:** instantaneous

**Effect:** obtain a divine answer on a proposed action

Using a set of, carved and blessed, wooden tiles, the subject can ask the Immortal he serves advice about the course of an action. After casting the spell, the priest invokes the Immortal with the correct ritual phrases, describes the course of action that he proposes and then throws the tiles in front of himself. Based on the combination of tiles, the subject learns the response of his patron Immortal.

The Immortals generally respond in one of the following ways:

* *“You have chosen well. You have our blessing.”* (Good idea)
* *“Your fate is uncertain, but you have our blessing.”* (Not a bas idea)
* *“Your choice is unwise. May the fates bless your future.”* (Bad idea. If you try this, you’d better be lucky)
* *“Your choice offends us. May you live to regret.”* (Not only a bad idea, but against the principles of your cult. Your patron isn’t pleased, but may forgive you)
* *“SILENCE!”* (Could mean anything from “How could you waste my time with something so dumb?” to “Do that, and you’re not only dead, but your spirit will be looking for a new Immortal to serve”)

The Master, naturally has the chance to present the Immortal’s response in any form he wants, from a clear or cryptic phrase to a mystic vision.

**Know Rune**

**Level:** 2nd

**Immortal:** Arnelee, Asterius, Forsetta, Frey, Freyja, Gorm, Halav, Ixion, the Korrigan, Loki, Maat, Madarua, Odin, Tarastia, Terra, Thor, Valerias

**Range:** 0 (only the cleric)

**Duration:** 9 nights

**Effect:** learn the secret of a rune of power

This spell can be used in two ways: to find the magic powers of a rune of power inscribed on an item, or to learn the secret of one of the Runes of Power of Odin (or of a new rune created by the DM to inscribe it.

In the first case, he needs to cast the spell and touch the rune for one turn: at that point the cleric knows the three magic powers linked to the rune (useful if he wants to activate it later with *bless rune*).

In the second case, this spell must be accompanied by the Ceremony of the Nine Night adapted to the cleric’s cult. During the ceremony a cleric who knows the rune that the priest whats to learn must be present or an item that bears that rune inscribed correctly.

The ritual requires the ceremonial death (not real) of the cleric who wants to learn the rune. After having cast the spell, the cleric drinks a potion prepared to not kill him but paralyse his mind and body, inducing a death like state. The cleric remains awake for the nine days and nights, and cannot communicate, not even with his mind. Cut off from all perception of the world an unprepared cleric risks death or madness, as a result his near death experience. Because of this each use of the know rune spell involves a permanent loss of 1 Constitution point of the aspirant (at the DM’s discretion, rather than sacrificing his Constitution he could make a ST vs. Poison or a Constitution check to survive, but failure means his death!).

The ordeal varies based on the cult that organises it. In the cult of Odin, for example, a ceremonial noose is put around the cleric’s neck who is then buried in a watertight coffin in a sacred swamp for nine nights. In the cults of Thor and Tyr the ceremony is similar with the exception of the fact that the cleric is buried underground for nine nights. In the cult of Frey and Freyja, the cleric is cast on a ceremonial funeral pyre, which isn’t lit, in which he remains in a trance for nine days. In the cults of Hod and Forsetta, the cleric is sealed in the darkness of a cavern for nine days.

At the end of the Ceremony of the Nine Nights, the cleric must be revived from the ritual death: for this the spells neutralise poison (or an antidote that neutralises the effect of the ritual poison ingested by the cleric) and *cure serious wounds*. When the character is revived, he needs to make a *Divine Magic* check: if the check succeeds, it means that the cleric has gained possession of the rune he wanted to learn. If the check fails, the Immortal has simply chosen to give the character a different rune to the one requested (even a rune that is more suited to his cult). At times the requested rune is given at the end of a deed or on completion of a mission of which the priest was informed of during his trance. In rare circumstances the Immortal gives the cleric a previously unknown rune of power (that must be created by the DM).

Note: Many nations of the Known World view the know rune rituals with horror and disgust, because of the near suicidal associations. Therefore, these rituals are kept secret by the northmen clerics, though widel-rumoured. This may partially explain why rune magic is uncommon outside the Northern Reaches.

**Odin’s 24 Runes of Power**

These are the 24 Runes of Power known to the clerics of the Northern Pantheon. All characters can learn to recognise these runes, paraphrase their meaning, and understand their magical functions. However, only those inspired by sacrifice and communion with the Immortal (via the *know rune* ritual) can totally learn and invoke the power of these runes.

When activating a rune with the *bless rune* spell, the cleric must explicially say which of its listed powers he is evoking; the power remains active for 10 rounds (unless its description says otherwise). Finally, unless specified otherwise, only beings with greater than animal intelligence can avoid the effects of a rune with a successful ST vs. Spells.

**Other Runes:** There are many other runes of power, and other powers of these runes can be learnt through adventures. These runes are the property of the Immortals and can only be given as recompense for services rendered. When they are discovered, these runes cannot be understood without special knowledge (like an explanation given by the original inscriber, intense magic research, or divine inspiration). To invoke the power of a rune, the cleric must know what different effects the rune can produce and specifically request the desired effect when blessing the rune.

A desperate priest can try to invoke a rune of whose powers he is unaware of. If the priest is a PC, the player can tell the DM what magic effect he is trying to invoke. If this effect is in some way connected to the rune’s powers, there should be a chance that the rune activated. Normally nothing happens; occasionally something positive or negative happens (at the DM’s discretion based on the situation and the priest’s faith). Invoking a rune without specific knowledge of its powers is dangerous and should not be made lightly.

A charcter can occasionally be given his own personal rune by the Immortals. It is a sign of great respect, and often foretells of a great destiny for the character. Generally this destiny can be as much a curse as it is a blessing.

**Algir (the Elk)**

This rune signifies protection.

1. A shield or armour inscribed with this activated rune benefits from a +2 bonus to AC for the power’s duration.

2. The possessor receives a +3 bonus to all Saving Throws against magic.

3. A weapon inscribed with this rune will automatically parry a single attack per round for the power’s duration. The player must select to parry the attack before the damage is rolled.

**As (the Immortals)**

This rune signifies the Immortals and their celestial realms beyond the Prime Plane.

1. Reveal the real form of a magically disguised creature within the possessor’s field of vision, particularly demons, Immortals, and creatures from beyond the Prime Plane.
2. Create a circle of protection (like the 4th level *mystic circle* spell) that affects demons & undead for 10 rounds.
3. Give a +2 bonus to all Saving Throws.

**Berkana (the Birch)**

This rune signifies the durable vitality of the birch.

1. If wearing no armour, skin becomes as tough as bark, giving natural AC of 5 for a turn. Wearing any other armour (including magic armour) negates its benefits, but a shield can still be used.
2. Possessor suffers half damage from a physical or magic attack. The individual can choose to suffer half damage after knowing the amount of damage inflicted. The rune instantly ceases activation (even if the 10 rounds aren’t up).
3. Possessor automatically recovers 10 Hit Points. The rune instantly ceases activation (even if the 10 rounds aren’t up).

**Dagar (Day)**

This rune signifies the power of light and shadow.

1. The rune burns as bright as the sun for 10 rounds (without producing high temperatures). All areas in line of sight are fully illuminated, up to a distance of 200 feet. This magic effect isn’t affected by the *darkness* or *continual darkness* spells.
2. Reduces all artificial and magical light sources within 120 feet of the rune to 1% effectiveness (treated as shadow or gloom). All attacks suffer a –4 penalty.

3. Allow the rune’s possessor to see in the dark as if he had infravision within 60 feet for 1 turn.

**Ehwar (the Horse)**

This rune signifies empathy with and mastery of horses.

1. Possessor can enter a horse’s mind for the power’s duration, sharing and controlling all the animal’s senses.
2. Possessor automatically makes all *Ride horse* checks.
3. Possessor can summon a horse. If it is a specific horse that the character knows well, it appears instantly before him and obeys his orders even risking its life in daring moves if necessary. If instead he summons an unknown horse, it appears in 1d6 rounds, has Morale 7 and the standard statistics of a riding horse.

**Fehu (Cattle)**

This rune signifies wealth. Northmen traditionally calculate in terms of how many cattle they possess.

1. Indicates the presence of treasure, money, or valuable items (at least 100 g.p.) within 90 feet.
2. For 1 turn indicates the direction in which a specifically named treasure or precious object (including runes of poer and magic items) can be found.
3. Permanently shield a treasure from any form of magical detecton.

**Gefu (Giving)**

This rune signifies generosity and hospitality.

1. Provoke a positive reaction from intelligent creatures to requests for food, shelter, and clothing (+4 to Reaction rolls).
2. Provoke a positive reaction from hosile individuals by offers of gifts or weregild as compensation for any offence suffered (+4 to Reaction rolls).
3. Make a permanent everyday object, of medium size or smaller and a maximum cost of 10 g.p.

**Hagla (Cruel Nature)**

This rune signifies nature’s destructive and violent side.

1. Create a single lightning bolt 5 feet wide and 60 feet long that causes 3d6 points of damage (ST vs. Wands for half damage).
2. Create a violent storm of wind and rain in a 20 feet radius, centred on the rune. Creatures within the area must make a Balance check (or Dexterity at –4) each round to be able to perform their actions normally. Failure means that they cannot take any actions during that round. The possessor doesn’t have to concentrate for the effect’s duration, but isn’t immune to it.
3. Make all the vegetation in a 10 feet radius wither away for the effect’s duration, allowing the cleric to pass through undergrowth without being impeded or counter the magical growth of plants.

**Ihwar (the Hunter)**

This rune signifies the ability to follow tracks, set traps, and kill game.

1. Missile weapons on which this rune is inscribed gain a +2 bonus to Attack Rolls (but it doesn’t make it magical).
2. Traps and snares inscribed with this rune allow the capture of small or smaller animals without injuring them. If the species is native to the habitat in which the trap is placed, the creature is trapped within 24 hours. If the creature doesn’t live in the area, the rune has no effect.
3. For 1 turn the possessor can follow the tracks of any creature, regardless of the surface they travel over or physical or magical attempts to hide the tracks.

**Ingwar (Growth)**

This rune signifies the growth of natural things.

1. Normal plants grow to fill a 15 feet radius hemisphere centred on the rune. This unnatural growth causes the plants to deform, collapse, and intertwine to create a formidable barrier to those wanted to reach the rune or to block a straight path. The effect occurs in increments for the 10 rounds of the effect, finishing in the final round. The plants remain huge and distorted until they are destroyed or die naturally.
2. A single plant or item made of plant material grows up to five times larger than normal (transforming for example a wand into a staff, an arrow into a spear).
3. A natural animal grows up to double size in a round. The creature can only move at half its normal speed and has its Dexterity halved, but its Hit Points, damage, and carrying capacity are doubled.

**Isar (Ice)**

This rune signifies ice and cold.

1. Freeze a 10’ × 10’ surface of water, thick enough to support the weight of a normal man. If formed on fast moving water, the ice becomes an ice raft and floats with the current. After 1 turn, the ice melts in 1d10 rounds (regardless of temperature and conditions).
2. Cause a small 10’ diameter hail storm within 60 feet of the rune. Creatures within the area suffer 3d6 points of damage (ST vs. Wands for half damage).
3. The rune can replicate the effects of *chill* (see the 1st level arcane spell) for 10 rounds on a single target chosen by the cleric, who doesn’t need to concentrate.

**Jarn (Fruitful Nature)**

This rune signifies the bounty of wild nature (as opposed to domesticated animals and crops).

1. Possessor instinctively knows if animals or plants are safe to eat and also knows if the animals are magically animated or controlled.
2. For 1 turn show the direction of a specific species of plant or animal known to the cleric within 1 mile.
3. Create around the cleric the effects of an *anti-animal* or *anti-plant barrier* (see the druid spells of the same names) for 10 rounds.

**Kaunna (Fire)**

This rune signifies the warmth of the hearth, the light of a torch, and the destructive power of wildfire.

1. The rune burns like a torch for 2 hours, but doesn’t consume the material on which it is inscribed and illuminates a 30’ radius area. The fire also burns in intense rain, but not underwater.
2. The rune birns intensely for the effect’s duration. If a successful Attack is made with the rune-inscribed item, the target (or victim) suffers 3d4 points of fire damage.
3. The rune instantly produces a *burning ray* (see the 1st level arcane spell) then becomes inert.

**Lagur (Water)**

This rune signifies protection from drowning and the savage force of the sea.

1. Possessor can breathe underwater for an hour.
2. Possessor can float on the surface of water for an hour, regardless of personal encumbrance. He can also hold another person in addition to himself, as long as the former isn’t too heavy (max weight 175 lbs).
3. An activated rune inscribed in a ship’s hull protects it from sinking for 1d10 turns. It *doesn’t* protect the crew from the elements.

**Mannar (Man)**

This rune signifies knowledge and earthly wisdom.

1. Possessor knows the true intentions and alignment of a stranger; the effect can be focused on a different person each round.
2. Possessor can search the mind of another for the answer to a question. If the subject knows the answer, the character learns the answer. If the subject doesn’t know the answer, the character cannot get other information. The more complicated the question, the more uncertain, unreliable, and obscure is the response the cleric gets.
3. Holding an item belonging to another person, the possessor knows in what direction to travel to find him. The character has no sense of distance, just the direction, and the knowledge remains for 24 hours.

**Naudir (Desperate Need)**

This rune signifies great danger and the good fortune needed to avoid it.

1. Allow the cleric to delay the effects of a single physical attack until the end of the effect. The cleric must indicate the attack before the attack and damage rolls have been made. The attack’s effects are delayed until the effect’s end.
2. Allow the possessor to move at double his normal movement rate for the effect’s duration, without suffering from fatigue.
3. Grant the cleric a +2 bonus to all Saving Throws for the effect’s duration.

**Odala (Birthright)**

This rune signifies power over the fate ordained by the Immortals.

1. During the 10 rounds of the effect’s duration, the cleric can allow a creature (excluding himself) to ignore an effect (attack, magic, poison, etc.) that has reduced it to negative Hit Points or that has caused its death, after which the rune deactivates.
2. Possessor can ignore the effect of an attack that reduces him to negative Hit Points or that causes his death by poison or magic. The rune doesn’t need to active, but the cleric must have the rune-inscribed object in his hand and be able to cast the *bless rune* spell (so he must know the prayer, not have exhausted his 2nd level spells for that day, be conscious and able to speak the incantation to activate the spell). This action is performed automatically, regardless of the other actions the cleric has performed that round.
3. During the 10 rounds of the effect the possessor can ignore one of his dice results and reroll it, but not if it deactivates the rune.

**Pethru (the Unseen)**

This rune signifies concealment and hidden knowledge.

1. Those within 60 feet of the cleric fail to notice, as if effectively he wasn’t there. Even if they bump into him or see other evidence of his presence (shadows or objects interrupted in flight), they fail to recognise the significance of the evidence. Those watching the scene from beyond 60 feet are unaffected by this effect.
2. Messages written in runes are permanently hidden from sight if accompanied by the activation of this rune within the message. The message can only be read after activating another *Pethru* rune within line of sight of the hidden message.
3. The cleric can see invisible within 60 feet for a turn.

**Raidu (Travel)**

This rune signifies the traveller.

1. For a six hour period, the cleric awakes from sleep if an enemy or creature with hostile intent approaches within 100 feet.
2. If the possessor is lost, or the way to follow is unclear because of darkness or bad weather, he instinctively knows in which direction to travel to reach his destination, and has a vague idea of how far away it still is in terms of steps (if within half a mile) or days.
3. For a six hour period the cleric gains a +2 bonus to Constitution checks to counter fatigue or dangers due to bad weather conditions.

**Sowelu (the Sun)**

This rune signifies good health and healing.

1. A curative spell cast by the cleric automatically cures the maximum possible number of hit points. The rune’s activation ends instantly after this effect (even 10 rounds haven’t passed).
2. Heal the recently dead. If touched by the activated rune, the victim permanently loses 1 point of Constitution and rises to 1 Hit Point. The victim must have been below 0 hp for less than 10 rounds when the rune touches the corpse. If the victim has been reduced to –11 Hit Points or less, the rune has no effect.
3. The rune allows the touched subject to instantly recover all temporarily lost characteristic points because of a disease or any debilitating effect, but it isn’t able to restore permanently lost points.

**Thurs (the Giant)**

This rune signifies the giant races.

1. Provoke a favourable reaction to the cleric by giants (+4 to Reaction rolls).
2. Provoke paralysis in a giant for 10 rounds; the creature can make a ST vs. Spells each round to overcome the compulsion.
3. The cleric temporarily becomes a hill giant of large size, with all the appropriate skills and weaknesses: Strength 19, Constitution +2, Intelligence –4, Wisdom 9, brutal nature. Items worn by the character grow in the same way and his weapons do a higher dice of damage during the transformation.

**Tiwar (War)**

This rune signifies might and valour in arms.

1. A weapon inscrined with this rune automatically hits inflicting maximum damage. The rune’s activation ends instantly after this effect (even 10 rounds haven’t passed).
2. The bearer of the rune ignores the effects of fear and illusion magic for 1 turn.
3. Reduce by 2 points the morale of anyone who attacks the bear of the rune and is within a 10 feet radius, with a –1 penalty to all their Attacks against the rune’s possessor.

**Urur (the Auroch)**

This rune signifies the strength of wild animals.

1. Cause paralysis in a hostile wild animal.
2. Give the cleric the strength of a bear (Strength 18).
3. Attract the attention of all enemies within a 30’ radius and make them attack the cleric rather than his companions (like the auroch faces a pack of wolves to protect the herd).

**Wunju (Joy)**

This rune signifies great happiness and appreciation of life.

1. Cause a non hostile audience to react favourably to a story or song (automatic reaction: Friendly).
2. Provoke a positive reaction from an associate to a request for help (+4 to Reaction rolls).
3. All creatures within a 20’ radius temporarily cease fighting. Creatures that make a successful ST vs. Mental Spells can resist the rune’s effects, while creatures beyond the 20’ radius aren’t affected.