

The Cattle Raid At Ormthane Vale

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Note! This is a fan contribution. The information may be contradicted by official material.

Narrator Information

Benchmark: This episode is designed for heroes whose best ability is 7W. It emphasises physical combat.

Premise: Warriors of the Varmandi clan of the Colymar prove their mettle by raiding the Orleving clan of the Malani.

Relationships: The heroes will need to have a relationship to an Orlanthi. The clan's warriors may participate in the ale-right. Other heroes are present as guests. Narrators should change the names of the clans involved to suit their campaign. If the heroes gain followers as part of this episode, these followers drift away at the end of the episode unless the heroes cement them with a hero point. If the players raiding party looks a bit weak then Ortossi leader of the Varmandi weaponthanes can accompany them.

Scene 1: The ale-right

Key Points: At the ale-right the warriors boast of their deeds in the coming year and are gifted by the clan chief. The clan trickster incites the warriors to prove their words by stealing a herd of black cows from a neighbouring clan.

Details and Hero Knowledge:

The ale-right is a warrior ritual held each Sea Season among the Orlanthi clans. The warriors of the clan gather before the chief to receive gifts in exchange for promises of future service.

First the warriors drink mead flavoured with rosemary from the chief's collection of drinking-horns (which may not be put down, but must be drained), goblets and glass beakers.

Then each warrior in turn stands before his chief. The chief, seated upon the gifting stool, thanks the warrior for his service in the previous year and hands him the four gifts in recognition of his service past and service to come. The four gifts given are the four treasures: the arms, armour and horse that the warrior will use in his clan's service in the following year and a drinking cup. The more notable the deeds of the warrior, the finer expected to be the quality of the gifts given.

In return the warrior makes the boast of his deeds to come. The warrior should never promise success only to attempt or to die in the attempt.

The ritual of the ale right: Heortling Myths, Worship Storm Pantheon

Ritual Elements:

The gifting stool (1 bonus point)

The thanks for service (1 bonus point)

A boast (each person wishing to give support must boast successfully)

The four gifts (again must be give to each participant)

The ritual offers up 2 bonus points and allows Total support. The ritual takes a night to perform and must be performed on a traditional day in sea season. The chief can use the bonus once during the year to augment his leadership in battle, by calling on the warriors to remember their boasts.

Boast at the ale-right (17): Boastful, Relationship to chief or clan(-3), Brave or Drunk(-5)

Complete Victory: The hero's boasts inspire those around him, who thump the feast tables, bang their swords on their shields in approval and slap the hero heartily on the back. Assign a bonus to attempts to influence the clan's warriors this year. The hero will be among the first choices for undertaking clan tasks this year so that he can prove his words.

Complete Defeat: The hero's boasts are so ridiculous as to provoke laughter from the assembled warriors. Assign a penalty to attempts to influence the clan's warriors this year. The clan will think twice before calling on the hero this year.

Gentle Vastyr is the chief of the Varmandi clan. The last chief Rastorlanth did not return from Starbrow's rebellion. Vastyr is a Barntar devotee who 'knows all the times to plough, all the ways to help a birthing cow, all the signs of whether the frost is over, all the proverbs and stories to keep boys and warriors from fighting'. Many of the warriors chafe under his leadership.

The Hall of the Varmandi chief Gentle Vastyr is filled with the raucous shouts of drunken men. Light from the hearth spreads a ruddy glow around a hall that is hung with shields, swords, spears, mail-coats and the trappings of war. The smell of roast gammon and salt beef hangs in the air. The chief is seated on the gifting stool. Around the chief are gathered the Varmandi warriors. The inner ring of the Varmandi clan council is seated on places of honour at the benches.

One by one the warriors approach the chief to receive the four treasures and boast of their glorious deeds to come.

Action

The ale-right is restricted to heroes who have chosen the warrior keyword. Other heroes are guests at the feast. Each of the warriors should perform the ritual of the ale-right with the narrator taking the part of the chief and the assembled warriors.

After the last warrior has made his boasts allow the heroes to interact with the other warriors and guests assembled for the ritual.

As the mead flows and talk thick with deeds past and deeds to come fills the hall, a couple of the warriors notice that the clan trickster Egil the fool. Laughing the warriors gather round the trickster and begin to shove him roughly from one to the other, jeering and calling him names.

One of the warriors, Streng, trips Egil and he falls. Streng then empties his bladder over him to the laughter of those assembled. Egil stands, his face burning in shame, and addresses the warriors who taunt him:

"Many brave boasts have I heard in this hall tonight and I am reminded of the great days of Rastorlanth when the Varmandi were feared by their enemies the Orlevings who we bested with the Seven Beaver Pelts, and who harmed us with the Bison's Claw. It seems a puzzle to me then considering how many great warriors there are here tonight, that everyone around knows that many of the cows in the Orleving herds are Varmandi cows, and that the herd of black cows that once belonged to Rastorlanth are now owned by Barwulf of the Orlevings, and that the Varmandi are known far and wide not as warriors but as farmers".

Ask the heroes what they are going to do. If none call for a raid on the Orleving, one of the warriors stands up and shouts: "By Varmand's beard the fool is right, let us make good the promises made here tonight and take Rastorlanth's famous black herd back from the Orlevings."

Vastyr stands and addresses the warriors:

"There is always another way. We have few enough warriors since Starbrow's rebellion, let us not waste more in feuding with the Orlevings. There is still surplus for the winter, let us gift Barwulf of the Orlevings and then trade for Rastorlanth's herd"

If the heroes call for a raid allow them to attempt to convince Vastyr that the time is right for revenge.

Convince the chief to allow the cattle raid (5W): Relationship to clan/chief, Speak with Authority, Know Heortling Laws (-5); + 5 for complete success at the boasting, +2 for success.

If no hero succeeds Ortossi, the leader of the weaponthanes steps forward and speaks:

"Orlanth tells us that we should obey chosen leaders. And we will honour your decision Vastyr. And I am certain that your decision will also bring honour to the Varmandi. Honour that will make our enemies think twice before they raid the shielings in summer and make off with our cows. A reputation that will make the Orlevings think twice before raiding us this summer. Let not the mothers of the clan mourn dead sons and daughters this summer; let us bare our teeth like a snarling alynx so that our enemies will not think us easy prey".

Whether a hero sways Vastyr or Ortossi, Vastyr speaks:

"Violence is always an option, and peace is made through strength. While I do not wish to risk the lives of the sons of Varmandi without reason it would not do to be seen as a weak lamb of the flock for the wolves to prey on. We will raid the Orlevings."

Aftermath

Narrators will need a raiding party of about 12 individuals. If the heroes and their followers

do not reach this number assign two followers to any character who achieved a Complete Victory

in the ale-right boasting, or who convinced Vastyr to raid (three in total if they are the same person). If numbers are still low then Ortossi and up to three followers will join the raiding party. If he accompanies them, Ortossi will ask one of the heroes to lead the raiding party, he wants to test the heroes mettle, but he will offer advice if the hero leading get in trouble.

Scene 2: To Ormthane Vale

Key Points

The raiding party travels to Barwulf's stead seeking to avoid patrols.

Details and Hero Knowledge:

Cattle: To the Orlanthe cattle are wealth. Cattle are bred in late fire season and give birth in sea season. Then cattle and new calves are let out of the byres they have wintered in and graze on fields local to the stead, fertilising them with their manure. When the fields are sown the cattle are moved to rough pasture; when pasturelands are away from the stead those members of the stead who herd them live in sheilings, a small house of stone and turf. During summer the milk produced in the sheilings is turned into cheese and butter, and sent back to the stead. The cattle return after the harvest in fall and graze the stubble of the crops. Not enough food is available to feed all the cattle through the winter, so the excess are slaughtered and salted for the winter. This is a time of feasting for the clans. The cattle live in sheds called byres over the winter.

Cattle Raiding: Cattle raiding is about taking wealth, but it is also about warriors proving their skills. In spring and summer Orlanthe raid other clans for their cattle (with the benefit that they have not had to feed them through the winter) to swell their own herds. It provides a chance for warriors to gain honour by proving their mettle, either by repelling raiders from other clans or by stealing cattle themselves. Small-numbers and giving quarter are the order of the day; this is not war but a recognised outlet for social and economic pressures. Even clans who otherwise have friendly relations raid each other. Failing to observe restraint can lead to feuds.

Setting

To reach Barwulf 's stead the heroes must cross the Gejay Hills and then descend into Ormthane

Vale. Travelling away from lowland farmlands the hills become pasturage and forest. In sea season a southern wind brings rain and the hills are foggy and on a clear day the air is chill.

New spring flowers can be seen pushing their way through the forest floor as Voria begins to blossom. Trails in the hills consist of some well-known trade routes and hunting trails.

Action

The trip is about 40km and because the raiding party is trying to avoid the Orleving patrols and the terrain is hilly will take two days to travel. The overnight stop will need to be made in the hills, but the raiding party will be able to find shelter in one of the unoccupied shielings that are scattered amidst the upland pasturage. There a fire can be lit in safety to keep out the chill and damp of the night.

Avoiding Patrols

As the raiding party nears the Ormthane vale on the second day they will need to avoid the tula patrols.

Avoiding the tula patrols(17): Hide in Cover, Dragon Pass Geography(-5), Acute Hearing(-5)

Any Victory: The heroes avoid patrols on their way to the stead.

Minor Defeat: The heroes and the patrol encounter come upon other at close range.

Major or Complete Defeat: The heroes are spotted by the patrol at a distance who dispatch a rider to alert the clan and gather forces in case the heroes turn out to be a raiding party. The main body of the patrol rides out to confront the raiding party. If the dispatch rider escapes then in scene 4 a war band of 2 weaponthanes and 24 short-call men will pursue the raiding party, instead of the smaller numbers listed there.

Harmast Boliksson leads a patrol of 14 fyrdsmen. They will approach the raiding party and make the Greeting. If the raiding party makes no hostile moves the patrol will ask them their business on Orleving lands. The raiding party might attempt to bluff their way past the patrol though the task is difficult against warriors alert to cattle raiders.

If the patrol and the players end up in a fight, Harmast will only continue fighting until the patrol suffers 50% losses. Then he will give the order for the patrol to retreat. If anyone from the patrol escapes, the escapees will raise the alarm the clan will dispatch a war band to track down the raiders.

Scene 3: Barwulf's stead

Key Points

The raiding party steals cattle from Barwulf's stead.

Setting

The raiding party is encamped on the edge of the woods and rough ground that surround Barwulf's lands; about 15 minutes walk from the stead.

A dry stonewall surrounds the cluster of stead buildings and divide up a number of fields. The walls enclose about 700 acres of land. Smoke drifts from the gaps in the thatched roof of two large farmhouses set at either end of the compound. Pathways of split logs join the surrounding storage buildings and byres to the farmhouses. There are wicker outhouses outside the farmhouses and a small smithy next to the larger of the two farmhouses. Thane Barwulf's holding is a prosperous stead.

Cattle and graze on the fields around the stead, pigs root around the rough ground and woodland at the edge of the pastures. Chickens and geese wander close to the stead buildings.

The larger farmhouse is where thane Barwulf lives with his two sons Eonistaran and Harbard and three cottars Garrath, Kestald, and Terasarin who labour at the stead. All apart from Terasarin have wives and there are 12 children in the household. The smaller farmhouse belongs to Barwulf's brother Orlkarnth, his two sons Rostalos and Wilms, and Enastakos the cottar. Only Orlkarnth and Rostalos are married and there are 4 children in the household.

During the day the men will repairing stead buildings damaged in the winter storms, replacing worn areas of the split log paths, working in the smithy, repairing the dry stone walls and moving large stones from the fields in preparation for ploughing.

The famed black cows of Rastorlanth graze close to the stead.

Action

Using the dry stonewalls for cover the raiding party can attempt to sneak up on the cattle.

Surprise the stead(2W): Hide In Cover, Warband Tactics, Ambush

All: The victory or defeat level affects the contest to herd cattle before the stead is called to arms.

Complete Victory: The heroes are able to use the dry stone walls to sneak close to the stead and are unnoticed as they begin to steal cattle. The heroes steal 1-20 cattle before the stead is alerted; if they want to steal more the contest below proceeds as normal.

Major Victory: The raiding party reaches the cattle and begins herding before being spotted; +50% to the heroes attempts to herd cattle.

Minor Victory: The raiding party reaches the cattle and begins herding just as they are spotted; add +1 to the heroes' attempts to herd cattle.

Marginal Defeat or Marginal Victory: The raiders reach the cattle, but their bellowing alerts the stead; this has no effect on attempts to herd cattle.

Minor Defeat: The raiders are spotted when close to the stead; subtract-1 from herding attempts.

Major Defeat: The raiders are spotted halfway to the stead; -50% penalty to heroes herding cows.

Complete Defeat: The raiders are spotted when one of them disturbs a pig rooting in the rough ground near where they were encamped. The pigs' squealing alerts the stead. The raiders will be unable to begin herding before Barwulf's can men meet them on the field of battle.

When the farmers notice the raiding party descending on the stead, a cry of alarm goes up. The menfolk outside the stead abandon their work and head for the safety of its walls and buildings gathering up any children playing outside the stead along the way. Women gather the children inside the stead and retreat into the farmhouses. Screams and barked orders fill the air. The menfolk inside the stead scramble to grab arms and armour from the trunks in the farmhouses. Confusion is everywhere. Thane Barwulf must attempt to call the stead to arms; the raiding party must attempt to herd the cattle.

Attempting to herd cattle and escape before Barwulf calls the stead to arms is a contest.

Herd Cattle before stead is called to arms(Barwulf's Warband Tactics(2W)): Herding, Know Animals (-3), Riding (-5)

Complete Victory: The heroes successfully herd 2-40 cattle.

Major Victory: The heroes successfully herd 1-20 cattle.

Marginal or Minor Victory: The heroes successfully herd 1-10 cattle.

Any Defeat: No cattle.

When the stead's warriors have assembled Barwulf will send Garrath by horse to nearby steads

in order to raise the alarm. The remainder of Barwulf's men will attack the raiders in an attempt to drive them off. Barwulf's men will fall back to the safety of the stead when four of their numbers have fallen to the raiders, if they do not outnumber the raiders 3:1.

If Barwulf's men shelter in the stead then raiders can herd up to 3 cattle per member of the raiding party. There are up to 30 black cows to herd.

The raiders can flee when they have gathered as many cattle as they want. Barwulf's men will not follow but remain at the stead to await reinforcements.

Scene 4: Escape

Key Points

The raiding party must herd their cattle back to Varmandi lands avoiding pursuing Orleving warriors.

Setting

The raiders must flee back over the Gejay Hills into the Swan River Valley. Once they reach Tarkolar Keep the Orleving's will abandon pursuit. There will be rain and fog on the second day, removing tracks for the Orleving war band to follow but slowing travel.

Action

The raiders need to herd the cattle as fast as possible across the hills. The raiders should not stop for the night but push on through in order to capitalise on any lead they have over their pursuers.

Escape with cattle(17): Herding, Riding (-3), Stay Awake (-5); -5 if the raiders encountered a patrol on their way to Barwulf's stead.

Major or Complete Victory: The raiders return with all their cows losing their pursuers.

Marginal or Minor Victory: The raiders escape without meeting any patrols but the speed of their escape means that they lose 1-10 cattle from their herd, whom the Orlevings later recover.

Any Defeat: The raiders meet an Orleving war band, which has set out on their trail.

If the warband catches the raiders a fight will ensue as the Orlevings try to recapture their herd. If Barwulf survived the raid he will be leading the band. Otherwise the war band is led by Enastakos VarmandiSlayer. The warband will consist of 4 weaponthanes and 14 short-call men.

If the raiders attempt to flee, abandoning the cattle, the warband will not follow but set to work rounding up the missing cattle. Otherwise the warband will fight until it has suffered 8 casualties

at which point it will fall back when they no longer outnumber the raiders by at least 3:1.

Denouement/Conclusion

Key Points

The chief rewards the heroes.

Setting

Gentle Vastyr's Hall is filled with warriors and the Inner Circle of the clan ring. Vastyr is seated on the gifting stool. The raiders stand before him. A feast is laid out on the tables; the aroma of freshly baked breads, and roasted meats hangs in the air. The raiders will have seats of honour close to their chief. First Vastyr must reward the raiders who have returned to him Rastorlanth's herd.

Explanation

By tradition the returning raiding party gift the chief with the cattle they have won in the raid. The chief then listens to the story of the raid from the leader. Once the leader of the raid has finished the chief then gifts the leader. By custom this gift is a portion of what was gained on the raid, but it may be something else. If the leader speaks particularly highly of any member of the raiding band then the chief may reward them directly. Otherwise it is up to the leader of the band to reward the members of the party depending on how he felt they performed; this gifting should be done at the feast.

Telling the raid story(14): Boast, Relationship to chief or clan(-3)

Complete Victory: The raiding party is gifted two-thirds of the cows gained in the raid.

Major Victory: The raiding party is gifted one-half of the cows gained in the raid.

Marginal or Minor Victory: The raiding party is gifted one-third of the cows gained in the raid.

Marginal Defeat or Marginal Victory: The raiding party is gifted one-quarter of the cows gained in the raid.

Minor Defeat: The raiding party is gifted one-fifth of the cows gained in the raid.

Major Defeat: The raiding party is gifted one-sixth of the cows gained in the raid.

Complete Defeat: The raiding party is not gifted. The cows are being kept by Gentle Vastyr who realises he may have to gift the Orlevings to avoid raids or feuds.

Whatever Vastyr's gifting, the feast will go ahead late into the night.

In the future, the Orlevings may seek to gain revenge by launching their own cattle raid. If the raiders kill or badly injure any Orlevings, the Orlevings may seek wergild or blood vengeance in compensation.

Allies and Foes

Ortossi: Leader of the Varmandi weaponthanes Ortossi is an experienced warrior and leader who fought in Starbrow's rebellion. Ortossi is a warrior's warrior who cares about the welfare of his men.

Keywords: Heortling Warrior, Orlanth Adventurous Devotee, Warband Leader

Significant Abilities: Brave 7W, Warband Tactics 16W, Close Combat 15W (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting, Shieldwall Fighting)

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 19, Combat 12W, Movement 5W

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Chain mail Armor and Shield: 5

Harmast Boliksson: Harmast is an experienced Orleving weaponthane and a good leader. He understands the 'rules' of a cattle raid, he will not sell the lives of his patrol fanatically and he will give quarter to his opponents (captives can always be sold back to the raiders clan for profit and honor).

Keywords: Heortling Warrior, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Brave 3W, Warband Tactics 18, Close Combat 10W (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 2W(Javelin), Riding 17, Running 17

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 20, Combat 20, Movement 20

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Chain mail Armor and Shield: 5

Orleving Weaponthane: *A normal Orleving weaponthane. Keywords: Heartling Warrior, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate*

Significant Abilities: Brave 17, Close Combat 17(Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 17(Javelin), Riding 17, Running 17

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 17, Combat 17, Movement 17

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Chain mail Armor and Shield: 5

Orleving Short-call: *The short-call are those members of the fyrd who can respond at the short notice needed to meet cattle raiders.*

Keywords: Heartling Farmer, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 15 (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 15 (Javelin)

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 17, Combat 17, Movement 17

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Leather Armor and Shield: 2

Orleving fyrd: *Ordinary members of the fyrd.*

Keywords: Heartling Farmer, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 13(Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 13 (Javelin)

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 13, Combat 13, Movement 13

Armor and Weapons: Spear: 3 Shield: 1

Barwulf: *Thane Barwulf is a big intimidating man who has gained his wealth at the expense of others. He loves to bully others round to his way. Barwulf has started more than a few feuds.*

Keywords: Heartling Warrior, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Brave 17, Bully 4W, Warband Tactics 2W, Close Combat 7W (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 4W(Javelin), Riding 2W, Running 17

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 17, Combat 2W, Movement 18

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Chain mail Armor and Shield: 5

Eonistaran, Harbard, Orkaranth, Rostallos: *Barwulf's bloodline, mostly farmers but Barwulf's constant starting of feuds has ensured they can look after themselves in a fight. They live in fear of him more than love. If he were to die at the hands of a raiding party they would accept wergild over blood vengeance.*

Keywords: Heartling Farmer, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 16 (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 16 (Javelin)

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 13, Combat 15, Movement 13

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Leather Armor and Shield: 2

Garrath, Kestald, and Terasarin, Wilms, Enastakos: *Bullied Cottars. Some poor kin of Barwulf's some members of other bloodlines, they are more afraid of Barwulf than raiders.*

Keywords: Heortling Farmer, Orlanth Adventurous Initiate

Significant Abilities: Close Combat 13(Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 13 (Javelin)

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 13, Combat 13, Movement 13

Armor and Weapons: Spear: 3 Shield: 1

Garreth has Riding 13.

Enastakos VarmandiSlayer: *Enastakos loves killing Varmandi, so much so that he is a source of concern to his bloodline that fear the feuds he might begin. He is a skilled warrior who is ambitious to lead the Orleving clan's weaponthanes.*

Keywords: Heortling Warrior, Orlanth Adventurous Devotee, Warband Leader

Significant Abilities: Brave 3W, Warband Tactics 18, Close Combat 10W (Sword and Shield Fighting, Spear and Shield Fighting), Ranged Combat 10W (Javelin), Riding 2W, Running 3W

Magic: Initiate of Orlanth Affinities: Air 20, Combat 8W, Movement 2W

Armor and Weapons: Sword and Spear: 3 Chain mail Armor and Shield: 5