

The prisoner is led onto the field, his arms strapped unnaturally to a staff across the nape of his neck, violently forcing his head forward, none the less, still recognisable.

In front, strutted a tall, arrogant figure, surrounded by burly guards, taking pleasure in taunting and maltreating their captive, at the rear, a woman and her child trailed remorsefully, occasionally giving a cry of anguish upon the treatment of her man, sometimes out of sheer desperation, attempting to stop the rain of blows that fell about the captive, only to receive like treatment herself.

The head table fell silent upon seeing the (groups) entrance, only the children scampered off to greet the captives child, unaware and inexperienced in the violence of the mens appearance.

The Chief rose and extended his hand in gesture of welcome, which was accepted by the Jarl of the company, so heavily armed was the man that when he offered his sword as a token of good intent, as was the tradition, the Chief beckoned he should keep them, mainly to prevent his table being cluttered by this vast arsenal and not his preference in mead.

Chief: "What is your intent in holding this man in bondship"

Jarl: "This man is of your village and lands, yet he trespassed on mine. I demand recompense".

The Chief stroked his beard, pausing for a minute, then said,  
Chief: "Is it not true that he, Fullen and his two brothers fought combat against your warriors in defense of their land, and in doing so, slew your blood cousin?"

Jarl: "I do not deny this, but it has no bearing on this case, if I had wished, I could have had him slain the moment he crossed my border, but I am a fair man and expect fair justice".

Chief turned to the captive:

"What say you on this Fullen".

Fullen: "By the Gods that give us life and air to breath etc. this man lies, he seeks revenge for the death of his cousin. Surely if he had slain me as he states, he seals his own fate within the blood feud of my brothers. Now he seeks to veil his foul deed under the cover of justice"

The Jarl guffaws and sweeps his sword menacingly in the face of the struggling Fullen, his wife at his rear being restrained from her frantic kicking and yelling.

Chief: "What say you of this matter, woman".

Breaking free and grabbing her child, the woman approached the table.

Woman: "My husband speaks the truth, it was not he that trespassed, but Jarl Ironhorns, we were taken from our very dining table, it was he that trespassed and his carrion". She screamed venomously.

One of the Jarls men rushed forward as if to silence her but was halted in his path by the two spearmen that guarded the Chief, whose wife also attended in an attempt to console her, bringing her to be seated along side her at the table. As always, the children played, such was their lot.

The Chief thought for a moment and exclaimed:

"I am not going to be responsible for a blood feud that could commence this day, yet justice must be seen to be done"

He paused for a moment and continued:

"Trial by ordeal will decide, is this acceptable?"

Fullen; )  
Ironhorns: ) "Yes" came the short reply.

Chief: "Fullen and your brothers, will they abide by this decision?"

Fullen: "I am not my brothers keeper, let them speak for themselves".

With this, the two brothers stepped forward ominously laden with the arms of war.

2)

Chief: "What say you, brothers of Fullen?"  
Alan Axe: "Justice must be seen to be done, for me my brothers word is my law, but I have no fear for him in trial by ordeal".  
Chief: "And you Ferret".  
Ferret: "My brothers word is mine".  
Chief: "And what if the trial go against him".  
Alan Axe: "Our family have an unwritten law that blood shall only draw blood, it has always been that way. However, our father taught us to abide by the law of our Chief. You are our Chief but you are also our cousin! How say you?"

The two brothers placed their weapons on the Chiefs table. The Chief sat down confused by the answer and bellowed:

"Do you wish to choose champions"  
Ironhorns: "I choose Alric as my champion".  
Fullen: "I do not need one".  
"Trial by fire" was the Chiefs reply, beckoning for his guards to raise the fire and take forward the rope.

The trial began, the Chiefs guards being ordered to the front of the brothers on each side.

Fullen stood to the right of the table and Alric to the left, the strain taken, the two began. It seemed that Alric was the stronger man almost immediately but Fullen held his ground, but slowly, the stronger man pulled Fullen closer and closer to the fire, the outcome seemed almost certain.

Suddenly, Fullen pulled a burning log from the fire, and threw it at Alrics feet, tripping him instantly and reviving Fullens strength.

With this, a cry of rage came from Ironhorns, claiming the trial was a farce and looking ominously as if he was about to beckon his men forward to dispense with his arch enemy, this action being stopped by the Chiefs order of "Halt".

Meanwhile, Fullen had victoriously pulled Alric through the fire scatterinf the burning logs like leaves in Autumn and setting fire to Alrics back, which led to a panic that was only quelled by one of his own men grabbing him, throwing him to the ground and dousing the flames with his cloak and loose soil that lay about.

Enraged by his defeat, Alric stormed to the Chiefs table and bellowed, "The next trial, the next trial".

"To prevent foul play, an archer shall guard over you in this next contest, that is my justice. Trial by spear!" answered the Chief, beckoning Alric back to his position, then throwing his spear into the ground and beckoning two others to do the same.

Chief: "Give them shields".

The shields were taken to the men who immediately rushed forward to grab the spears. Alric reached them first, he grabbed one and barged Fullen over with his shield and immediately rose his spear and thrust it at him, missing only by Fullens agility to dodge, who grasped the ugly shaft and rose to his feet in a defensive position.

The Chief had called a halt not only to the combatants, but also the two brothers who had grasped for their weapons, only to be stopped by the towering figure of the Chief, fists clenched firmly each side of the weapons and staring the brothers full in the face, accusingly.

Meanwhile, the two combatants had ranged themselves at either end of the field. Alric, having grabbed the remaining two spears, threw one first. The spears flew true and were accurately glanced or dodged with their shields. Neither party seemed to be taking the advantage, then Alric, noticing that Fullen threw his last spear, returned one as soon as it landed, purely as a distraction. Ignoring the spear that had been thrown at him, Alric rushed forward as Fullen ran for the deliberately badly placed spear.

3)  
Archer: An archer looses an arrow on the onrushing Alric, but it skates past his feet harmlessly.

At the moment the spear was within his grasp, Alric reached, Fullens feet gasped at the air defensively out of desperation. Alric, having abandoned his shield, left his stomach wide open, and found himself thrown bodily through the air, crashing heavily to the ground behind.

Desperately, Fullen grabbed the spear and raised it for the death blow. Exhalted by his victory and generous in his heart, he pointed the spear to Ironhorns, holding the end of the shaft defiantly.

Shakily, Alric rose to all fours, only to be halted violently by the crashing down on his back of the shaft, wielded by Fullen.

Ironhorns was enraged but could only rave, knowing it was his champion who had fouled.

Fullen walked to his exalted brothers and appeared to order the Chief "Next trial" he jibed turning to face Ironhorns.

Chief: "This trial has been unfair on both parties, the last trial will be a Holmganger"

Ironhorns: "To the death! Yes, Invigi!"

Defiantly, Fullen called "If that be the case, I use my right to choose a champion".

Ironhorns: "Fear for your life, scum?"

Fullen: "No! but my younger brother, Ferret has a new sword, it has yet to be wetted by the warm blood of an animal, before being tried on the scull of a warrior".

Ironhorns: "So be it. But my champion is weakened by the cowardly attack while he was floored and I too, have a young warrior who could use the practice. Come forward Sven".

Sven and Ferret sparred up to each other for only a matter of seconds before battle began. It was hard and fast swords, feet and shields lashed violently in a turmoil of movement. Suddenly, Sven was down, Ferret lept, only to find himself being hurtled bodily into a hut, where he landed with a crash, at the same time Sven rushed to the fire, grabbed blazing torch and lobbed it into the hut, instantly setting it ablaze.

With what appeared to be hours, Ferret did not appear. Sven turned to Ironhorns and bellowed:

"This is the nearest he shall get to becoming a warrior, a warriors death in a funeral pyre".

At that moment, the side of the hut seemed to erupt into life, as Ferret burst through its blazing walls, sending tumbling, burning slabs onto the bragging Sven.

This insult was too much for Ironhorns as he screamed blindly for his warriors to slay this upstart that had belittled him in front of such an audience.

His men surged forward as Alan Axe and Fullen pushed aside the Chiefs guards and retrieved their weapons and accusingly shouting in the kings face "YOUR BLOOD - OUR BLOOD".

"So be it" replied the Chief, letting out a great war cry "ODIN".

A great battle ensued and many were slain, the Raven Banner at one time coming under attack, to be halted temporarily by the women and children of the village, defending it with stave and spearm until the warrior was slain by the Chief himself.

The battle ended almost at once and an eery silence covered the ground, all was still but the gallant defenders of the Ravens, then an arm moved, soaked in blood, the warriors attended warily in case it belonged to a foe. It was Ferret, who painfully rose to his feet, and glanced woefully at his two brothers who lay side by side.

Slowly and calculatingly, he turned to the Raven, grasped the staff and lifted the blade of his sword to the sky.

4)

Ferret:

"I take an oath on the Gods.

All that have any blood link with Ironhorns will rue this day, as my brothers blood mingles with the soil, mother earth, so shall his kith and kin, in torrents".

"ODIN HEIL".

