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The Varangian Way

A foolhardy attempt that could make history.

It is 750 AD. The unprecedented conquerers of Umayyad Caliphate have transformed the Mediterranean Sea into a battleground. The ancient trade route, from the Mediterranean to the north via the Atlantic coast has diminished because of this. The seafaring traders of Dorestad have launched a massive search for new trade routes. Dozens of ships with adventurous men have been launched in the quest, before their dwindling resources are diminished.

Birka is a tiny city-state located in the island of Björkö, next to where Stockholm resides today. It gains its income from taxing seal hunters and fur traders, who travel from the gulf of Bothnia southward along the Baltic Sea. In addition, they organize raiding parties every summer, along the baltic coast.

Asker "The Limper", King of Birka is a greedy man, and a merchant delegation from Dorestad brings him the promise of new markets and exploits. Therefore, he decides to arrange a grand feast for their honor in his long hall.

Asker's brother, Ragar the Brave is not invited. This jarl has, as long as they remember, been competing with his brother and so far has mostly been on the poor end of the affair. Brotherly love is a concept far from the minds of either of them.

For a long time, Ragar has received visions from Odin during his endless chewings of the mushroom. These visions show, that his time is about to come and because of them, he hasn't given up yet. The appearing of the Dorestad merchants must be the sign he has been waiting for, so he springs into action.

During the first hours of the morning, he attacks the five ships located in the harbor. Asker was planning to sell those grand vessels to the merchants after the feast. Ragar and his men slay the guards and row hastily towards the budding dawn. The merchant vessels are filled with loot: furs, amber, dried fish and walrus ivory.

A plan has been formulating in the mind of Ragar. One of his companions is an ex-slave called Castinus Bysanthean. The old man claims that there are grand trading centers beyond the vast eastern wilderness and that they could be reached using the endless rivers criss-crossing the forests. Perhaps the way could even lead him to his homeland.

Only desperate men like Ragar could start such an endeavor. Even if they can navigate the rocky and dangerous sea and escape the wrath of both Asker and the Dorestadians there is an unknown wilderness waiting for them.

Grains

- Blood is thicker
- Unknown breeds fear
- Small moves, big results

Castinus Bysanthean

Castinus is an old man, a man that has seen half the known world and mostly all the cruelty it has had to offer.

He is not a liar, he indeed is from the city of Constantinople but it has been twenty years since he saw the great walls of the glorious city. Great have been his hardships since then, leading from the first errors that destroyed his life back then.

His survival has been through his wits and knowledge in this harsh land. As a slave he has seen it all. Now he wants to get back home, or die trying. If he were to die, he would like to take as many of the bastards with him for who he has labored and suffered - the northmen.

Traits	
3	Educated It was long ago, but he has had formal education.
2	Ex-slave He has grown used to working.
2	Tough as an oak His civilized background has been beaten from him.
1	Deceptive He has ways to lure men to his cause.
1	Bitter Hatred gives him strength, more than escape.
Burdens	
1	Worn He is an old man, in a land where men seldom grow old.
1	Primitive In many ways he is more of an animal than his masters, even though he started higher.

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