

Northlands Saga

Conversion Notes
for

HEROIC
Fantasy

HEROIC FANTASY

(text based on the Black Hack v1.2 · 2016-04-03 by David Black)

A Fantasy Game of Heroics

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Based on The Black Hack by David Black, with elements borrowed from 'original' era rpg gaming, modern d20 theory and ideas from The Black Hack community.

All text is Open Content.

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NORTHLANDS SAGA

by Frog God Games

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The Northlands Saga Complete is a campaign setting and an adventure path all set in the Frog God Games' game world of the Lost Lands.

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Introduction

This short document provides some guidance and conversion notes to play in Frog God Games' excellent Northlands Saga epic campaign setting using the Heroic Fantasy RPG and, by extension, other 'The Black Hack' based games. This conversion started out as personal notes for my own game, but reached a point where I thought they could be shared, to showcase both the simple to play Heroic Fantasy game and the Nordic inspired Northlands setting.

These extended notes pre-suppose you have both game and setting and makes no attempt to replicate any of the text from them. There is sufficient flavour text in here to provide plenty of utility, with useful content for any The Black Hack fantasy games. The Northlands Saga text is considerably richer in flavour, with lots of hooks for great roleplaying.

Within you will find:

Notes on conversions - some general notes on converting settings to Heroic Fantasy

- Races of the Northlands - fully realised for Heroic Fantasy
- Classes of the Northlands - new and converted classes to fit the theme of the setting. Druidic and some Cunning Woman spell lists are included to provide a rich addition of magic
- Setting notes - a no nonsense scurry through some worthy additions to Heroic Fantasy

A Note on Conversions

The Northlands campaign book comes ready to play in two RPG flavours. The game statistics provided have enough about them to enable the agile GM to play out the adventures whilst converting to Heroic Fantasy on the fly. That's where I started, however after a light read through of the Northlands text I started to apply new Heroic Fantasy detail in my head. So, this short document came together quite quickly to give me just enough to get started and into the epic campaign.

The key thing with any conversion is to only do as much as is needed without attempting to replicate one game system's interpretation of the setting into another. Heroic Fantasy makes use of the accommodating 'The Black Hack' framework with a few twists of its own. A lot of character detail can be described using Aspects or the occasional Class Ability, especially dimensions such as social standing, profession and culture of origin.

Monsters in Heroic Fantasy can be placed, quickly, somewhere on the Hit Dice (HD) ladder, usually somewhere between 1 to 10. Base damage is based on HD, with some variation allowing for multiple or special attacks, such as breath weapons. Adding a special attack that requires a characteristic test is probably enough to give you all you need. As such there are no monster conversion notes in this guide. The creatures of the frozen North can be brought to life quickly ready to slay or be slain.

The Druid class has been included in this conversion. Though not strictly a specific part of the Northlands setting, it is referenced in the Saga text and adds a useful extra option to your campaign. The Nùklanders called for the Druid from the swirling storms and icy winds of this challenging, northern land. The elements seemed to demand inclusion, so here it is. A manageable number of Druid spells have been included to distinguish the realm of power the Class can bring to your narrative.

A Note on Balance

When creating a class for Heroic Fantasy then we suggest you follow in The Black Hack's footsteps by keeping to a small number of iconic spells at each casting level. These are simply described, as close to one line of text as possible. In play this is more than enough. A number of open 'System Reference Documents' are available for groups to add in extra should they wish. We use the excellent <https://dnd5e.info> but there are lots of others a couple of clicks away.

It is important to provide all players a sense that their characters have equal spotlight time in play and that they can each significantly affect the outcome of the narrative that you are creating. Much will depend on the stories that you tell as to the effectiveness of the niche classes and races that are in play, so there are no absolute hard and fast rules. A demon blooded wizard-paladin, personally blessed by five out of ten major deities, may affect more power in play than the

fat halfling robber-merchant, quivering across the table; assuming your game isn't about eating pies, or assessing trade markets in the northern settlements.

Sometimes apparent power and roleplay weave together more subtly. The Giant and Troll blooded races in the next section have some significant advantages inherent to them. If your game is about staying out in the wilderness, hunting monsters, and finding treasure troves, isolated from any society, then they may appear to be attractive options. However, once within the palisade, and seeking entrance to the great hall, these blooded characters are not going to have an easy time of it at all.

Having characters that are fun to play and that impact your gaming sessions is one thing, but somehow achieving complete parity in terms of some metric for game power is another. Heroic Fantasy, and this mini supplement provide you the former but can't absolutely guarantee the latter, and that should prove to be just fine.

Races of the Northlands

The next section provides some fleshed out fantasy races introduced in the Northlands campaign. The process of conversion is quite straightforward. Check the descriptive text for distinctive traits that might come out in play and note down a title for each. Then run through each and consider how to translate that into a racial ability that provides a useful game effect. Each race has been given a rich array of abilities. You may choose to use all or some of them as you see fit.

Giant Blooded

It is whispered in the most scandalous of the skalds' stories that, rarely, there is union between the hated giants and Northlanders. The offspring of such a cursed event is a Giant-blooded. Standing 8 or more feet tall, the cursed Giant-blooded must, somehow, have survived into adulthood. Most are quietly disposed of to spare being ostracised due to the shame that would besmirch a whole family. The curses may continue, with a legacy that the bloodline can be prone to further abominations for up to a dozen generations.

Giant-blooded are typically very strong and tough, but ugly, not the sharpest sword in the rack, and prone to impatient and violent mood swings. Giant-blooded make great warriors or wild barbarians. Some of the great thanes have been known to keep a Giant-blooded as part of their entourage acting as a rampaging and slightly unpredictable fighters that can smash through enemy shield walls.

Special Abilities

Lumbering: Giant-blooded are large creatures and are at a Disadvantage to any Stealth Tests.

Big Target: Giant-blooded add +1 to Defence tests against smaller creatures, which is most of them.

Giant smash: All Giant-blooded damage is one step higher on the damage ladder.

Long strides: Due to the long strides giant-blooded can take, their base speed is 40 feet.

Low-Light Vision: Giant-blooded can see twice as far as humans in conditions of dim light.

Hide of an Ox: Giant-blooded have tough skin that acts as natural armour for a 1d4 armour die. If wearing armour on top then the armour die is treated as the next higher die type.

Hated: Giant-blooded will struggle to fit into Northlander society, so are at a Disadvantage for any Social Tests.

Long Arms: Giant-blooded have a disproportionate arm-to-body length, and it is not unusual for one to be able to touch its calves while standing fully erect. Giant-blooded have a reach of 10 feet. Will often roll for Initiative at an Advantage.

Troll Blooded

Forbidden abominations, shunned, feared and hunted alongside the hideous monsters that roam the wilderness, Troll-blooded are even rarer than the Giant-blooded. The wretched offspring of a union between troll and human. Such progeny are usually disposed of, and that could be regarded as a mercy compared to the misery and hatred they will experience as hated outcasts from the warm halls of men.

They share many trollish traits, in particular a voracious need for the consumption of fresh meat, whatever it may be.

Troll-blooded have a series of frightening and blood thirsty abilities. To match, they tend towards an Evil alignment. Sometimes they are found as feared warriors in a lord's entourage, used to break a shieldwall or destroy themselves in a wild attack..

Special Abilities

Ferocity: When a Troll-blooded is reduced to zero hit points, instead of rolling on the OoA table it keeps going with a 1d6 usage die. The die is rolled at the end of each round of action. If a 1-2 is rolled the Troll-blooded collapses and rolls on the OoA table. If the action ceases the Troll-blooded continues on 1 hit point.

Fire Sensitivity: Troll-blooded, like their troll relatives, avoid fire. Fire attacks against Troll-blooded are at an extra step in the damage ladder.

Hunger for fresh meat: Fresh meat must be consumed every day. For each day where this is not possible the Troll-blooded loses 1 point of Constitution. After three consecutive days the Troll-blooded must make a Wisdom check, or consume any fresh meat available, including fellow adventurers. Constitution is restored at 1 point per consecutive day where fresh meat is consumed.

Long talon-like nails: Increase the class unarmed damage by one step on the damage ladder

Hated: Troll-blooded will not fit into any Northlander society. They are at a Disadvantage for any Social Tests and cannot have any useful human Social Aspects.

Nùklander

A rare sight, away from their most northerly of lands, the Nùk were once elves from the far south, who migrated north to the most frigid and difficult of domains. The Nùk are, essentially, elves, sharing their southern cousins' affinity with the bow, but replace arcane power with a mystical empathy with their northern realm and a consequential resistance to cold.

Typically play a Nùk as a Ranger, or possibly a Druid. Occasional Nùk are fighters, riding on their war trained reindeer (3 HD, 2 APs, Calm in battle conditions) into battle.

Special Abilities

Resist Cold: Nùklanders do not suffer from the great cold of their icy homeland; indeed, they tend not to feel the cold at all due to their innate resistance derived from their inherently magical nature. (CON)

Silent Hunter: The Nùk roll at advantage when stealthily approaching their prey. (DEX)

The Nùk are incredibly **vigilant**. They roll at an Advantage for Listen, Search and other awareness tests (WIS).

The Nùk are **great archers**. They roll at an Advantage when using bows (DEX).

Classes of the Northlands

The next section provides a conversion of some of the Northlands player character classes to Heroic Fantasy. The process of conversion is not dissimilar from that of the races. Drawing on equivalents in Heroic Fantasy, the Northlands Classes are carried over with a light touch, picking out key abilities that will provide some distinctive and fun abilities into play.

Bearsarker

These are the real deal, the feared and holy warriors of Wotan. Keeping to the old ways and those prescribed by their god, these warriors eschew armour for the bearskin, ploughing through enemies in a ferocious battle rage. Their training and quest for the wisdom of their god set them apart from other warriors, marked for greatness and glory, if not for old age and many children. Their ferocious and careless determination in battle strikes fear into their enemies.

Starting HP : $d10 + 4$

HP Per Level/Resting : $1d10$

Weapons & Armour : Any and All Weapons

Attack Damage : $1d8 / 1d6$ Unarmed or Improvising

Special Features

As part of their action a Bearsarker can make up to 1 attack per odd level with a melee weapon.

Once per battle a Bearsarker can see the red mist and go **berserk**. Whilst in this killing frenzy all rolls to attack and any tests to move towards an enemy are at an advantage and all other die rolls, including to defend, are at a disadvantage. The attack damage die is increased one step whilst berserk. A successful WIS test is required to withdraw from the frenzy. This can be attempted every Moment. Whilst in the frenzy the Bearsarker will move with all haste to find more enemies to kill.

Armour of Wotan: a Bearsarker who is not wearing physical armor gains a $1d6$ Usage Die of divine armour. On receiving any damaging hit, roll the UD, if anything other than a $1-2$ the attack does no damage. On a $1-2$ the armour has no effect and will not be active again through that action scene.

Unarmed Fury: On a successful WIS check, a Bearsarker's hands actually transform into bear claws while berserk. The Bearsarker cannot wield any weapons but gains 2 claw attacks that deal $1d6$ points of damage (a 3rd level Bearsarker would get 2 $\times 2$ claw attacks).

Once per hour, whilst in combat (but not whilst berserk), a Bearsarker can regain $d8$ lost HP. At 4th Level regain $2d8$ and at 8th Level regain $3d8$ HP. This is a free action.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for **STR** and **CON**.



Ulfhander

So, you wish to be an Ulfhander? Striding the uncharted wilderness between man and wolf, the Ulfhander spend time in ritual and contemplation of the boundaries between beast and man, man and the gods. Time will be spent as a wolf and amongst the pack.

The key to the Ulfhander's power is the whole wolf skin cloak, taken from a wolf bested in hand to hand combat. With this cloak an Ulfhander can ignore blows and even turn into a wolf. These warriors are greatly feared, not just for their wily power in battle, but because their spirit is as much the wolf as it is the man.

Starting HP : $d10 + 4$

HP Per Level/Resting : $1d10$

Weapons & Armour : Any and All

Attack Damage : $1d8 / 1d6$ Unarmed or Improvising

Special Features

Wolf Cloak: when wearing their wolf cloak the Ulfhander does not wear armour. Instead the skin provides protection as armour with $4 + \text{level}$ in armour points. As long as the Ulfhander keeps to the ways of the wolf, there is no usage die for the cloak.

Wolf Brother: an Ulfhander is attuned to a wolf that has HD equal to the Ulfhander's level and will increase HD as the Ulfhander increases level. Testing for Attacks and Defence on a base of 14 . In addition to the abilities of the companion, they also regain HP when resting just as their Ulfhander does. If the wolf is killed the Ulfhander immediately takes $1d8$ damage due to the loss.

Another wolf can be attuned when gaining another level or after a full session of play

Become the Wolf: On a successful WIS test the Ulfhander can transform into a terrifying giant wolf of legend. The transformation can happen 3 times per day. Once transformed note the following:

- Keep your HP as is.
- Armour is as per Wolfbrother above.

- Multiple attacks and regaining hit point abilities (below) are still in effect whilst a wolf.
- Attack damage is as per the HD table for monsters, with HD = Level
- Scent: roll for advantage in using your smell to track and locate things.
- Cunning: Roll for advantage when using stealth

As part of their action an Ulfhander can make up to 1 attack per odd level with a melee weapon.

Once per hour, whilst in combat, an Ulfhander can regain d8 lost HP. At 4th Level regain 2d8 and at 8th Level regain 3d8 HP. This is a free action.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for **STR** or **CON**.

Cunning Woman

The hermetic tradition of wizardry is largely unknown in the Northlands. Travellers may bring some of this mistrusted lore from the south, but the magic of the sorcerer and wizard is not trusted in the Northlands. Magic from such practitioners appears to erupt chaotically from the individual and can lead to nothing but trouble.

Instead there is a tradition of the wise woman, strong in some blood lines, the Cunning Woman provides wisdom, healing and lore. They have great power and are disliked by the godi for their power and the respect that they command.

Starting HP : $d_4 + 4$

HP Per Level/Resting : $1d_4$

Weapons & Armour : 1-handed Spear, Dagger and Staff

Attack Damage : $1d_4 / 1$ Unarmed or Improvising

Special Features

Roll with Advantage when testing INT to avoid damage or effects from spells or magical devices.

Evil Eye: On a successful WIS test the Cunning Woman can gaze on target filling them with a foreboding vision of their own wyrd. The target has $1d_6$ UD of Foreboding. This is rolled each round. Until a 1-2 is rolled the target will attack with a Disadvantage.

Healers: A Cunning Woman has a powerful healing ability that can heal someone up to $1d_6$ HP per odd level gained on a successful WIS test. So, a level 5 healer would heal $3d_6$ HP. A character can only receive the benefit of a healing ability once until damaged again. Esoteric healing draughts of frightful concoction, mud, blood, herbs and other practices are applied to create a healing effect.

Spellcasting

Cunning Women can cast a number of Arcane Spells per day as per Wizards from Heroic Fantasy. Cunning Women start with a range of magical recipes and rhymes of power for a total of $1d_4 + 2$ spells from the Level 1 and 2 Arcane Spell lists.

Note the following changes to the Arcane spell lists that apply to the traditions of the cunning women:

1

Cure Light Wounds : Heal 1d8 HP to a Nearby target (replaces Sleep)

3

Cure Disease : Cures a Nearby target of all diseases. (Replaces Fireball)

Curse : the caster selects how a nearby target is affected from one of the options below: ~1 min /Lvl

- Choose one ability score. While cursed, the target has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws made with that ability score.
- While cursed, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls against the Cunning Woman.
- While cursed, the target must make a wisdom saving throw at the start of each of its turns. If it fails, it wastes its action that turn doing nothing.
- While the target is cursed, your attacks and spells deal an extra 1d8 cunning damage to the target.

Remove Curse : Removes a curse from a Nearby target.

4

Cure Serious Wounds : Heal 3d8+3 HP to a Nearby target.

7

Restore : Heal 3d8 x Lvl HP to a Nearby target. Also cure all disease (Replaces Meteor Swarm)

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for **INT** or **WIS**.

Druid

In the times of the great sagas of Heroic Fantasy, people were closer to the primal realm of nature. There was power there, in the forest, rivers, the icy tundra and the far deserts. The Druid represents a guardian of nature, a wise priest of primal power, who draws from that to protect, shape and affect the natural realm. Their interests are not in the capricious outer gods, or even the activity within the walls and dwellings of the kingdoms of men, but rather to protect, preserve and advocate for the most powerful of voices, that of nature itself.

The Druid's spells reflect this affinity to nature. Their magic influences and affects the natural world.

Starting HP : $d8 + 4$

HP Per Level/Resting : $1d8$

Weapons & Armour : 1-handed Spear, Dagger and Staff, Wooden Shield, Leather Armour

Attack Damage : $1d6 / 1d4$ Unarmed or Improvising

Special Features

Roll with Advantage when testing DEX for stealth or movement in the wilderness.

Roll with Advantage when testing CHA to pacify or befriend a wild animal.

Animal Form. A Druid may transform themselves twice per day into animal form. The form can be retained for a number of hours equal to half the Druid's level. From 4th level the animal form can be a winged creature. Whilst in beast form the Druid retains their characteristic scores and hit points. Beast form attacks use the Monster HD table with the Druid's levels replacing HD. Beware high level Druid rabbits. From 8th level the Druid can cast their spells whilst still in beast form.

Earth Power. Once per day a Druid can attempt to recover some of their expended spell slots. On a successful WIS test, after 10 minutes meditation, whilst the Druid's feet are part buried in the earth, a number of spell slot levels can be recovered equal to half the Druid's level round up. So, a 5th level Druid could

recover 3 spell slot levels, which could be 1 x 3rd level, 3 x 1st Level or a 1st and 2nd level.

Stride with The Land. The Druid's movement is not affected by difficult terrain. Indeed the land helps the Druid by trying to get out of the way. This provides Advantage to any DEX test for chases in the wilderness and will ensure the Druid travels quickly and in advance of those who are crossing terrain by foot.

Leveling Up

Roll to see if attributes increase, roll twice for **CON** or **WIS**.

Druid Spells Per Day

Note: columns are spell slot levels, lines are character levels.

<i>Level</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
1	1	/	/	/	/	/	/
2	2	/	/	/	/	/	/
3	2	1	/	/	/	/	/
4	2	2	/	/	/	/	/
5	2	2	1	/	/	/	/
6	2	2	2	/	/	/	/
7	2	2	2	1	/	/	/
8	2	2	2	2	1	/	/
9	3	3	2	2	2	1	/
10	3	3	3	2	2	2	1

Druid Spells

1

Create/Destroy Water : Create or destroy 10 gallons of water.

Cure Light Wounds : Heal 1d8 HP to a Nearby target.

Fog Cloud : An obscuring 20' radius of cloud ~ 1 hr

Thunderwave : A 15' wave pushes everything away 10' and 2d8 damage or half on a CON save

Purify Food and Drink : Removes all diseases from all Nearby food and drink.

Speak with Animals : Speak with and comprehend animals. ~ 10 minutes

2

Animal Messenger : A creature delivers a 25 word message travelling for up to 24 hours

Barkskin : Gain 6 additional armour points with a 1d6 UD. ~ 1 hr

Find Traps : Notice all nearby traps - 10mins.

Locate Animals or Plants : Focus on one type within 5 mile radius

Pass without Trace : All selected within 30' at Advantage for Stealth and cannot be tracked without magic. ~ 1 hour

Spike Growth : 20' radius of spines and thorns. 2d4 damage per 5' travelled through it ~ 10 minutes.

3

Call Lightning : Summon a thunder cloud and select targets to take 3d8 lightning damage once per moment for 1 minute.

Conjure Animals : Summon friendly fey spirits that take animal form with HD up to casters level ~ 1hr

Daylight : A nearby area is illuminated by sunlight - 1hr.

Harvest : Increase the density of plants and improve the yield for a harvest in a 100' radius

Sleet Storm : Create a 40' radius ice and sleet storm, obscuring and making slippery ~ 1 minute

Speak with Plants : Converse with and command Nearby plants ~ 10 minutes

Water Breathing : Up to ten people can breathe underwater for 24 hours

4

Awaken : Bestow 3d6 INT score to a plant or animal

Blight : Create a withering blight affecting a Nearby creature or plant for 8d8 damage. Test CON for half damage.

Commune : Sense what nature knows in a 3 miles radius and ask 3 questions

Conjure Minor Elementals : Summon 3d4 HD of friendly elementals ~ 1hr

Invisibility : Become completely invisible ~ 1 minute

Mass Cure Wounds : Heal 3d8 HP for 6 people in a 30' radius

Tree Stride : Enter a tree and transport to outside another within 500' for duration ~ 1 minute

5

Fey Creature : Summon a fey creature with HD = to Lvl. Will follow your commands ~ 1 hr

Find the Path : Find the shortest route and never be lost ~ 24 hrs

Reincarnate : Return a dead humanoid to life in a new form.

Stoneskin : 1d8 UD resistance to most non magical weapons. ~ 1hr

Sunstrike : A beam of sunlight 60ft long shoots from the hand doing 6d6 damage to all in its path.

6

Control Weather : Control the Nearby weather to all extremes ~ 1 hour per level.

Earthquake : Test WIS for all Nearby creatures, passes are taken OofA.

Regenerate : Target recovers 4d6 + Lvl HPs over the duration of the spell. Missing limbs grow back. ~ 1 hr

7

Restoration : Returns all levels lost to monsters with level drain or lost Stats..

Storm of the Ages : A maelstrom of wind, rain, mist, lightning create 4d6 damage effects each round to 1d6 targets within the 500' radius storm. ~ 1 min

Wind Walk : Turn into mist and back, at will ~ 1day.

Notes On Other Classes

The Heroic Fantasy Bard can be played unchanged as Skalds. Emphasis is on the power of song and old legends rather than 'spell casting'.

Huscarls and Spear Maidens can use Heroic Fantasy Warriors with an Aspect or two.

Wizards will be very rare and typically foreigners from the south. Necromancers would be unheard of and hunted down if discovered.

Most of the priests, the godi, of the Northlands venerate the many gods rather than dedicating to just the one. Such godi do not typically have spellcasting like gifts from the gods. Unusually, player character godi do have such abilities. Clerics then are rarer than in other typical fantasy games, but the player characters represent 'the special' so they have their place. Suggest that such godi tie themselves to one of the deities and venerate them, gaining their power through them to act as their voice in the lands.

Inclusion of the Barbarian class is optional. The introduction of the Bearsarker and Ulfhander serve to provide a wild outsider with the capability to erupt into a frenzy of attacks. Most of your typical Northlander or Seagestrelander fighters would be a Heroic Fantasy Warrior.

The Ranger has a part to play as the guide out in the cruel wilderness, taking groups to forbidden and lost places as safely as possible.

The Rogue class has broad application throughout the Northlands given that it encompasses a number of roles that fit with the cultures. Merchants, orators and advisors to Jarls, tomb robbers, and brigand outcasts. Some will have an obvious place in the firelit halls of the Jarl, others would have their uses, others will stay on the periphery and not be entirely welcome.

Other Notes

The Spear

In the Northlands the use of the spear transcends any class restrictions and is available to be used by all.

Shield Walls

The Northlanders fight in line with interlocked round shields. When defending where there is an interlocked shield to both the left and right the defender gains a +2 bonus to their defence test.

Traits

Use Heroic Fantasy Aspects to describe the full range of Traits suggested in the Northlands Saga main book. You can particularly describe Social and Regional traits through Aspects to give your character some grounding in the Northland culture. Employ Advantages and Disadvantages depending on how these Aspects interact with the scene.

Test Difficulties

Some Tests will be more difficult than others. Tests are rated with a **Difficulty** from 1 to 10. For every **Difficulty** higher than the character's Level then add +1 to the die roll. This rule is similar to the Powerful Opponents Rule in combat but applies to all other Tests.

This rule works alongside Advantage and Disadvantage and applies to all die rolls made by the player.

Most Tests will have a difficulty of 1. But feel free to sprinkle in some tougher Tests.