

A VESSEL GAME BY SAMUEL E H YEAGER

LONGSHIP

A role-playing game of voyaging, legends, and cooperation in a world full of meddling gods.

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CHAPTER 1: RAISING THE SAILS

THE SHIP ITSELF

Through the course of your adventure, your crew will come upon challenges that demand they risk life, limb, and legend to succeed. When something threatens the crew, or when any member of the crew decides to do something risky, the GM notes the beginning of an encounter. During an encounter, each character has a pool of dice to draw from so that they can take action. The character's stats determine how many times they can call upon the power of that stat in an encounter. For instance, a character with strength of 5 can act in a way that uses their strength 5 times in an encounter, while a character with only 3 can only call on their strength 3 times. The goal, in an encounter, is to gain enough successful efforts that the foe or obstacle is overcome (this goal, the "threshold", is a secret number predetermined by the GM. Higher thresholds mean tougher encounters.)

When a character acts in an encounter, the GM will ask the player to describe that action, and, if unclear, which stat they're hoping to call on in that action. Then, the GM will ask the player to roll one d6. If the result is a 4 or higher, they succeed in doing what they hoped to do, although if this doesn't yet meet the threshold, consequences may be incurred. The GM should mark down a success for that player, as each player must reach the threshold individually to make it through an encounter totally whole. If the result is a 3 or lower, they have failed, and immediate consequences, at the GM's discretion, take place. In either case, the player marks that they have spent one of their available dice from the stat upon which they called.

If a character rolls enough successes to meet the threshold for the encounter, the GM will let them know. They can then take further actions, rolling dice that they have left, risking further consequences either to aid their comrades in need or increase their own glory.

After every player has either expended every chance for success, or has met the threshold, the GM narrates the end of the encounter. If every player has enough successes to match or surpass their threshold, the crew overcomes the obstacle. Should any fail, the GM narrates the consequences of coming up short. The greater the degree of failure, the greater the consequence, so every successful die counts, even if you don't get exactly what you want.

Tips for running the game: Consider the challenges of your obstacles. A threshold of one should be easy for anyone who is competent. A threshold of five is a real challenge. A threshold of nine is impossible for all but the most favored of the gods. Also, consider the varying degrees of failure. If all but one of the crew succeeds at a challenge, perhaps their

goal is met, but at a price. If all but one of the crew meets with failure, perhaps they just narrowly avoid absolute catastrophe.

CHAPTER 2: THE WORLD SPITS YOU OUT

WHAT'S YOUR STORY, FRIEND?

Now that you understand the core of the game, you can prepare to set off on your adventure. The first thing you need to play LONGSHIP is a group of friends, at least three people in total, but at most five. All but one player will then create a character, whom they will play in the game. The one left will be the Game Master, who is in control of the world around the crew, and keeps track of the supporting cast of characters, enemies, and all else that the crew interacts with. Next, gather up enough six-sided die (or d6) to accommodate every player (eight per person should be enough.)

The next step is to create your characters. Firstly, you need to know your character's strengths and weaknesses, or their Stats. There are four core statistics to know:

Strength: Your prowess in battle and your physical power.

Speed: Which decides your dexterity in movement and your swiftness.

Endurance: Your fortitude, your vitality, and the pain you can take before falling.

Cunning: Your cleverness, your skill with words, and the shame your name can bear.

To decide the numbers behind these powers, roll six d6, rerolling any results of 1, and then cut out both the highest and the lowest numbers. This will leave you with four results, which you then place in each Stat as you see fit.

In addition to the four core Stats, there are a handful of other numbers for players to keep track of:

Wounds: When you take enough wounds to be equal or greater than twice your Endurance score, your character falls in battle. Wounds are a possible, though not constant, consequence of failing a roll. One wound is recovered every time the crew rests safely for a night, perhaps more if attended by healers or doctors.

Shame: When your name carries as much Shame or greater than twice your Cunning score, your character is shunned from the crew. One Shame point is recovered for every success

given to another player, as well as at the GM's discretion after moments of heroism or redemption.

Favor: Every character starts with two points of Favor, which they can spend to increase their chances of success, and which can be advanced through the spending of their Glory points.

Bond: When you roll and decide to give over one of your successful results to a crew member, you mark down a point of Bond for each success given. You can then spend those Bond points when the crew is at rest to increase your Bond Power, which decides how effective your given successes are. Whatever your Power is, multiply it by the number of successes you are giving, and that product (rounded down) is what the helped crew member receives. Consult the chart in the appendix to see how to advance this Stat.

Glory: When you roll and have more successes than you need to surpass a challenge, you can choose to hoard your victories to yourself and gain Glory. If you gain Glory while others of your crew are failing the challenge, you will also gain Shame equal to the Glory you gain. You can then spend those Glory points when the crew is at rest to increase your Favor score. Consult the chart in the appendix to see how to advance this Stat.

After deciding your scores, you choose your character's destiny. This decides a little of your character's personality, their role in the crew, and gives a bonus to two of their Stats.

Additionally, should you find a way to justifiably tie in the answer of any of those background questions to a challenge, your dm may reward you! Anything from a reduced difficulty to a guaranteed pass with leftover successes could be your reward, so make it count. Once you resolve that question, make a check next to it and come up with a new one before the next session.

Choose your destiny from the list below:

The Berserker: Mad and vicious, the Berserker flies into battle without fear.

+1 Strength, +1 Speed

From whence does your rage come?

What weapon do you favor?

What wild animal do you admire most?

The Bulwark: Steady and strong, the Bulwark protects the crew from the front line.

+1 Strength, +1 Endurance

Who, at home, do you hold dearest?

What have you drawn upon your shield, why?

What is your favorite meal?

The Shipwright: Smart and experienced, the Shipwright keeps the vessel in working order.

+1 Strength, +1 Cunning

Who taught you this art?

What have you drawn upon the sail, why?

What is the name of the ship, why?

The Captain: Brash and proud, the Captain leads the crew across the vast expanse.

+1 Speed, +1 Cunning

What have you done to make your crew look up to you?

What, at home, do you fear most?

What do you value in a leader? Do you possess that?

The Scout: Swift and resourceful, the Scout keeps surprise on the side of the crew.

+1 Speed, +1 Endurance

In the wild, what do you see that others miss?

What, about civilization, can you not abide?

Where, in the wild, do you make your home?

The Sage: Wise and vital, the Sage offers wisdom and guidance the crew.

+1 Endurance, +1 Cunning

What ancient secret have you discovered?

What physical price have you paid for your knowledge?

What have you done to prove your knowledge?

After choosing your character's destiny, you choose their Artifact. This is a magical gift from the gods, bestowed upon your character to aid them on your journey. The Favor of the gods can be channeled through your artifact: By spending a point of Favor, you can add two successful results to any encounter. These results do *not* count as dice spent from your pool.

The Compass

Blessed with the possession of a magic compass, you know the best route to your destination. +2 Cunning.

The Spear

Blessed with possession a magic spear, you know where to strike the mighty beasts of the sea to bring them down. +2 Strength.

The Drum

Blessed with the possession of a magic drum, you keep time on the ship and spirits high wherever you go. +2 Speed.

The Cask

Blessed with possession of a magic cask, you keep the crew nourished, strong, and cheerful. +2 Endurance.

CHAPTER 3: GODS AND THEIR WHIMS

PLEDGE YOUR LIFE, PLEDGE YOUR DEATH

The Gods have things they want from you. Should you pledge yourself to one, you will be blessed any time you fulfill their will, but cursed when you act against them. When acting with their blessing, treat all die with values 3-6 as successes instead of 4-6. When acting against their will, treat only die with values of 5 and 6 as successes. In addition, your artifact will not function if you use it to act towards your god's anathema. You may pledge your character to a god at any time, or you may choose to never pledge fealty. However, once you dedicate your character to one God, you make that commitment until the character dies. The Gods do not forget promises.

ODIN

All-father, God of War, Wisdom, and Magic

His Will: Seeking knowledge, battle rage, magical power

His Anathema: Avoiding sacrifice, foolishness, material wealth

THOR

God of Thunder, battle, and revelry

His Will: Boasting, glory in battle, bravery

His Anathema: Cowardice, underhanded tactics, humility

FREYA

God of Love, Sex, and Growth

Her Will: Defense of the innocent, seduction, kindness

Her Anathema: Dishonesty, brutality, destruction of the earth

FRIGG

Queen of Asgard, God of Foresight, Education, and Nurturing

Her Will: Mentorship, prophecy, healing

Her Anathema: Combat, thievery, faithlessness

If you can make a case to your GM why your action should be in line with your god's will, they may grant the blessing. Should the GM see your action as in line with your god's anathema, they will grant their ire.

What's more, if you don't like the selection here, you're free to create a god of your own, or pull inspiration from real world pantheons, as I have. All you'll need is a name, the domain your god presided over, what they consider to be good and worth their blessing, and what they consider so wrong to be worth their active ire.

CHAPTER FOUR: CAST DOWN AND CAST OUT

YOUR BODY AND NAME CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH

Should a character accrue as many Wounds as twice their Endurance score, their sacrifice is not in vain. Whatever challenge the crew faces when the character falls, the player narrates how their sacrifice ensures the crew's triumph. The player can also pass the narration to the GM, if they desire. After the battle, the character's artifact disappears, and the player can

create a new character if they so desire, to be introduced into the crew when next it makes sense.

Should a character accrue as much shame as twice their Cunning score, they are somehow cast out of the crew, be it by mutiny, exile, or excommunication. The crew could abandon the character in the vast expanse, maroon them in some solitary haven, or even brand them as a villain and leave them to wander the world. Either way, the character must somehow be cast out of the crew, and is no longer part of the adventure. Their artifact disappears with them. The player can then create a new character if they wish, to be introduced when it makes sense.

APPENDIX

CHARTS, AND THANKS

Bond advancement: To advance the character's bond multiplier, which begins at 1, bond points must be spent to advance to the next tier.

Cost Multiplier

5 1.5

10 2.0

15 2.5

And so on.

Glory advancement: To advance a character's Favor stat, which begins at 2, Glory points must be spent to increase the maximum Favor. Spending Glory to increase Favor is also the only way to recover those points, as they do not return at rest. When a new tier of Favor is achieved, the character's Favor points rise to the new tier, and do not return until a new tier is reached.

Glory cost FavorTier

10 3

15 4

22 5

33 6

PARTING WORDS

Once you've got your characters, and you understand the flow of gameplay, you're ready to play! The Game Master sets the scene for your party, describing the world around you, and play begins. Good luck out there on the frozen sea. You're gonna need it.

Keep in mind: the game is meant to be played TOGETHER. As a player, you can strike off on your own, but you will be at extreme disadvantages, and the story you're telling won't be one the rules necessarily support. If you're having fun, go for it. Just don't expect the rules to support a solitary journey. What's more, this game is intended for campaigns lasting for many sessions, facing ever more challenging circumstances.

Finally, a few thank you's.

First, to my Patrons, especially Greg, Carol, and Morgan! Thanks so much for your support. It honors me, and I hope you enjoy. Anyone who wants on this list, see

patreon.com/sehyeager for info, and find out ways to support me, and get more games by me as soon as they are ready!

Next, to Kat, for listening to me rattle on.

To Jason, Tai, Kiki, Andy, and Amelia, for helping me playtest.

And to No Guild for all the good times!

Last, to you, dear reader! I hope you enjoy this game, seek and find adventure with it, and have fun!