

# Brondheim

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Brondheim lies to the north of Daria and south and west of the Lofty Mountains. Brondheim has never been completely settled. Even in the days of Celinadion colonization and annexation, Brondheim was considered uncivilized. After the collapse of the Empire, the men of Brondheim reverted back to the clannish system of government they possessed before the days of Celinad rule. Since that day, Brondheim has changed little. The only remarkable event in recent history was the Battle in the Snows, a short-lived conflict with Daria that occurred during the winter 3128- 3129. Responding to increased attacks by Brondheim raiders, a Darian legion crossed the river Jarlsblut and sacked Halbad, the northman capital. The ferocious winter prevented occupation troops from moving in, and by spring, the Darrians had decided that Brondheim was too inhospitable to be worth conquering. The invaders left, but strangely enough, for ten years thereafter, Daria suffered exceedingly harsh winters.

Brondheim is currently ruled by Skuurl, who holds the title of Jarl (king). He is even larger, hairier and more tempermental than most northmen. Under his leadership, viking raids are once again on the rise. Like all of his predecessors since the Battle in the Snows, he has no love for Daria. He tends to be suspicious of any other non- Brondheimers, but looks more favorably on those who bring him gifts or perform a service for him.

## Roleplaying Synopsis

Brondheim is a land of huge, warlike northmen, the barbarian kingdom of the Western Shores. It is very much like Viking Scandanvia. Everything is bigger in Brondheim (the mountains are taller, the rivers run colder, the men are tougher, etc.) A good place for PC barbarians to come from, Brondheim can also set the stage for wilderness adventures.

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

Brondheim is covered with rough, forested terrain. Summer is short, lasting only from May through August. The mountainous northern and eastern regions are especially frigid, and nearly uninhabitable. Even winters in the lowlands are quite cold, and snow is frequent. The coastline is ragged, with many impressive fjords.

Wildlife abounds in Brondheim, with bears, elk, wolves, deer and many types of smaller creatures. The land also has its share of monsters. Giants, ogres, and even some dragons haunt the mountains, and the Gvaarwald is said to be home to werewolves, walking trees, and huge, carnivorous bear-like creatures.

## LIFE IN BRONDHEIM

Survival can be a hard business for the weak in Brondheim. Fortunately, the men and women are strong, sturdy, and selfreliant. Even the children are taught at an early age how to survive the rigors of the wild alone. Brondheimers are capable outdoorsmen, hard workers, and ferocious warriors.

Brondheim is not as technologically advanced as its southern neighbors. Such items as plate armor, books, and steel plows are true rarities. Those found in Brondheim are most likely the spoils of a raid rather than the fruits of barbarian ingenuity. The average Brondheimer makes his living either hunting, fishing or trapping. Though most families plant a small garden for the short growing season, the climate is just too harsh to make farming pay. Because of this, the population of Brondheim has remained relatively small.

Many coastal clans use raiding to help support themselves. In spring, after the winter storms have subsided, Viking longships set sail from the fjords, with villages' entire population of battle-ready men aboard. These ships travel southward, sacking small coastal villages in Daria, Ambria, and sometimes even Irolo. Some, of course, are lost to storms and enemy warships, but enough return in the autumn of every year to make the raids worthwhile.

Each clan (a village-sized unit of 50-1,000 people) is ruled by a chieftain. The chieftain is responsible for governing the clan on a day-to-day basis, leading war parties, and performing marriage ceremonies. The only other individual of equivalent importance is the clan shaman, who conducts religious rituals, blesses warriors before going on a raid or into battle, and presides over funerals. Once every five years, the chieftains of each clan meet in Halbad for the Jarlspeln (King's games). The Jarlspeln is a series of competitions which test physical strength, endurance, combat prowess, and cunning. The Jarl acts as host and head referee, even though he may compete as well. The overall winner of these games becomes the new Jarl. Normally only clan chieftains are allowed to participate, although a non-chieftain Brondheimer may participate, with the Jarl's permission (this might make an interesting adventure for PC barbarians).

Brondheimers worship a Norse-style pantheon, headed by Odin, the Storm King. Other major gods include Tyr (god of war) and Loki (god of evil mischief). Magic is normally restricted to shamans, though warriors can employ magic weapons, shields, and armour.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**Halbad:** (pop. 60,000 in winter, 15,000 in summer) Though sacked by Daria 120 years ago, this city has been completely rebuilt, as its buildings are only made of wood. Most all of the structures are Viking-type longhouses or storage buildings. The Jarl and his household live in a huge hall just north of the trading plaza at the city center. The central city is built on a low man-made hill and is surrounded by a well-maintained ditch and wooden palisade. The city has many large totem statues revering the Brondheim gods, as well as a large shipbuilding district. In winter, the population of the city increases fourfold as clans seek shelter from the snows.

**Donholm:** (pop. 25,000 winter, 10,000 summer). A major fishing, trapping, and lumbering center, Donholm's most remarkable feature is a manicured belt of pine trees 10 miles long which serves as a windbreak along the town's northern edge. The River Jarlsblut: This river, whose name means King's Blood, gains its name from the Battle in the Snows, when Jarl Eskeldur died fighting knee-deep in its waters, trying to hold off the Darian invaders.

**Icebrand River:** A cold, swift mountain river, the Icebrand widens to form a long, glacial lake above Donholm. Its waters are home to many large fish.

**Gvaarwald:** This huge forest of tall, dark pine is very dense. While hunters and trappers work under its eaves, the interior is unexplored. It is filled with all sorts of wild creatures, not all of them friendly to man. Monstrous forest drakes and giants of huge size are rumored to live within, but none of these sightings have been confirmed.

**Isles of Skiirk:** These small, desolate islands are home to the Halfgiants. The islands are shunned by the Brondheimers, and Halfgiants may be the only beings tough enough to live here Occasionally, Brondheim criminals and exiles are sent here to die.

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