

Ironsworn Story 001 – set in the world of The Broken Sword

I'll have to change the Map and some locations. The game will mostly be set in Britain in the Late Dark Ages – I'll go for the year 999 (purely picked to allow for the turn of the century to occur during the game and there are still Vikings around).

I'll do some minor research to pick out some historical context, but aim to set the tale away from major historical events – probably starting in the area near where I live.

Aethelred (later known as “the Unready” – meaning “ill-advised”) became King of England in 979 after the assassination of his step-brother, Edward “the Martyr”.

**E**dward 'The Martyr' became King of England in July 975 after the death of his father Edgar. A crisis followed the death of the old king as both Edward and his half brother Ethelred had a claim to the throne and were supported by opposing parties. Edward was supported by the monastic party led by Aethelwine and Aethelred was supported by the anti-monastic party led by Ealdorman Aelfhere of Mercia. The Ealdorman wanted to curtail the powers of the monasteries. Edward was murdered near the site of Corfe Castle on the 18th of March 978 while visiting his step-mother Elfrida (or Elfhyrth ?). He was stabbed in the back by an assassin. His step-mother wanted Edward removed so that her own son Aethelred could become king. After being dumped in a well, Edward's body was removed and buried in a church in Shaftsbury where it was said that miracles occurred at the site of the tomb. The blind regaining their sight was one example. Elfrida atoned for her crime and founded two convents. She retired to the convent at Andover and remained there until she died.

[https://www.timeref.com/people/aethelred\\_ii\\_the\\_unready\\_king\\_of\\_the\\_english\\_978\\_1013\\_1014\\_1016.htm](https://www.timeref.com/people/aethelred_ii_the_unready_king_of_the_english_978_1013_1014_1016.htm)

Queen-Mother Elfrida will be retired to the convent in Andover.

King of Denmark at this time was Swein “Fork-beard”, whose son Canute would be about 4 ½ years old at the start of this adventure.

The other major Viking leader of the time was Olaf Tryggvasson.

994

... **Swein Fork-Beard invades Britain**

Swein Fork-Beard had overthrown his father King Harold Blue-Tooth Gormsson, King of Denmark in 988. With a huge fleet of 94 ships he arrived in the Thames estuary with Olaf Trygvasson by his side. London put up a good defence and drove the Vikings back so Fork-Beard moved his forces again to attack the south-east coast to plunder what he could find.

Winter **Trygvasson converted to Christianity**

Through the Winter months Aethelred provided the Vikings with lodgings and £16,000 in cash to stop the raids on his land. Aethelred was also the sponsor at the baptism of Olaf Trygvasson. Olaf was given instruction from the Bishop of Winchester.

995

... **Olaf Tryggvason becomes King of Norway**

Olaf was in England when he was approached by a messenger from Norway asking him to return and overthrow Earl Hakon who was ruling the country as a tyrant. Olaf returned and joined the rebels against the Earl who had gone into hiding. Hakon was killed and Olaf became King of Norway.

When Olaf went back to Norway, he will have left behind some of his Thanes who had converted to Christianity with him and made homes in England. One of these would be the father of my Ironsworn character "**Valgrym**". This name was inspired by "Valgard" the changeling of "Skafloc" in "The Broken Sword".

999

... **Durham Cathedral consecrated**

Bishop Aldhun, the first Bishop of Durham, consecrated a cathedral at the location where the remains of St. Cuthbert had been relocated to. The remains were at Lindisfarne and were moved because of the danger of Viking raids.

... **Sylvester II was elected Pope**

I'm starting the character in the village of Norton, near Evesham (as that's where I am in the modern day). It's pretty close to the middle of the map below.

**The entry for Norton in the Domesday Book (1066) shows...**

Hundred: Fishborough, County: Worcestershire, Total population: 17.5 households (medium).

Total tax assessed: 4 exemption units (medium).

Taxable units: Taxable value 8 exemption units. Taxed on 9.0.

Value: Value to lord in 1066 £7. Value to lord in 1086 £7. Value to lord c. 1070 £5.5.

Households: 13 villagers. 11 smallholders. 10 slaves. **1 Frenchmen!**.

Ploughland: 5 lord's plough teams. 11 men's plough teams.

Other resources: Meadow 12 acres. 2 mills, value 1.12.

Local Lord = the Abbot of St Mary's Abbey.

Nearby settlements are Evesham, Lenchwick & Harvington

The village is alongside the River Avon.

There are wooded hills and the Vale of Evesham has a lot of farming and fruit growers.

This land doesn't seem as dark and grim and under-populated as the typical Ironsworn setting – hope I don't ruin the game-play with this as this is my very first actual play of Ironsworn. I'll try to steer Valgrym away from civilisation at least at first.



*has begun raiding the villages, they may have killed someone important to you – seek them out and put an end to the raids (or exact vengeance).*

**Communities** – the villages are grouped into “Hundreds” and these group into “Shires”. However, the central authority is weak and local lords don’t worry about being overruled in their own lands. Even when the local Lord is an Abbot, they can be tyrannical sometimes. Nb. The Doomsday book lists “slaves” in the village even 66 years later. *Quest Starter: The Local Lord dislikes you for some reason (Ask the Oracle) and makes life difficult. He might push you into accepting some dangerous quest to “prove” yourself, in the hopes you don’t make it back.*

**Leaders – no need to change**

**Defence – no need to change**

**Mysticism** – Slight change to the first “Truth” Power lingers in this land (instead of “courses through it”). I like the existing Quest Starter: *Someone you love walked the paths of power, and succumbed to it. Who are they? Why did they fall into darkness? Where are they now? Do you seek to save them or defeat them? **It was this suggestion that led to the Inciting Incident I dreamed-up!***

## THE STORY

“Valgrym” half-viking, half-saxon is 19 at the start of this tale.

His father - “Cadigan Stormgrim”, recently deceased (wound festered after a Pictish raid)

His mother - “Mona” whose family owned a small farm in Norton, Worcestershire, leading to Cadigan moving west from the usual Danelaw territories.

The old man always pretended to be a devout Christian and has helped defend the Abbey of Evesham from raiders and won the trust and respect of the locals for himself and his family. He raised his son to secretly worship/respect the Norse gods and the Old Ways.

Inheriting his father’s strength, Valgrym has been trained as a warrior (skilled with a spear) and as a rider. His mother taught him to be kind and both of them filled his childhood with song, poetry and stories.

The “new” Abbot – Algar (actual name for the Abbot from 997 to 1002) arrived at Evesham Abbey 2 years ago. He helped Mona come to terms with her husband’s death and Valgrym considers him to be a good man.

There will be other people in the Community (Evesham, the Abbey & Norton) with whom Valgrym feels at home.

## THE GAME SYSTEM

One roll on Oracle tables for an Ironlander Name and two for Settlement names (happy coincidence of “grim” and “grym” I’d already decided on for the character name!)

Iron 3 (his highest stat)

Heart 2 and Wits 2 and “Skirmisher”, “Companion:Horse” and “Storyweaver” assets.

Leaving him with Edge 1 and Shadow 1

Initial Bonds will be...

- Mother “Mona Stormgrim”
- Community of Norton, Evesham & Evesham Abbey
- Gwenneth (his lost girlfriend)

As I’m not supposed to start with a fourth bond, I’ll say he’s not sufficiently bonded with the Abbot yet. If he returns to Norton, he can work on it.

COMPANION	COMBAT TALENT						
<b>HORSE</b> Name: You and your horse ride as one. <b>Swift:</b> When you <i>Face Danger</i> +edge using your horse’s speed and grace, or when you <i>Undertake a Journey</i> , add +1. <b>Fearless:</b> When you <i>Enter the Fray</i> or <i>Secure an Advantage</i> +heart by charging into combat, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit. <b>Mighty:</b> When you <i>Strike</i> or <i>Clash</i> at close range while mounted, add +1 and inflict +1 harm on a hit.	<b>SKIRMISHER</b> When you wield a spear... <b>Face Danger:</b> When you <i>Face Danger</i> by holding a foe at bay using your spear’s reach, roll +iron or +edge (your choice). If you score a strong hit, take your bonus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Iron: <i>Strike</i> now, and add +1.</li><li>• Edge: Take +1 momentum</li></ul> <b>Strike or Clash:</b> When you <i>Strike</i> or <i>Clash</i> in close combat and score a strong hit, you may drive your spear home and inflict +2 harm. If the fight continues, <i>Face Danger</i> +iron to retrieve your spear before using it again. <b>Secure an Advantage:</b> When you <i>Secure an Advantage</i> by bracing your spear against a charging foe, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.						
<table border="1"><tr><td>0</td><td>+1</td><td>+2</td><td>+3</td><td>+4</td><td>+5</td></tr></table>	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	
0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5		

PATH
<b>STORYWEAVER</b> <b>Secure an Advantage, Compel, or Forge a Bond:</b> When you <i>Secure an Advantage</i> , <i>Compel</i> , or <i>Forge a Bond</i> by sharing an inspiring or enlightening song, poem, or tale, envision the story you tell. Then, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit. <b>Make Camp:</b> When you <i>Make Camp</i> and choose the option to relax, you may share a story with your allies or compose a new story if alone. If you do, envision the story you tell and take +1 spirit or +1 momentum. Any allies who choose to relax in your company may also take +1 spirit or +1 momentum. <b>Sojourn:</b> When you <i>Sojourn</i> within a community with which you share a bond, add +2 instead of +1.

## The Inciting Incident

Until a few weeks ago, Valgrym was courting Gwenneth the young daughter of the local herbal woman Goodwife Radka— a widow of the village. Gwenneth was terrified of her mother and, despite Valgrym’s charms, has remained a virgin until she is married and her mother has stubbornly refused Valgrym’s many proposals, holding out for a larger settlement than he could afford. In a few months she will be 18 and legally able to make her own decision.

A few weeks ago, Gwenneth and her mother left to visit relatives in Pershore (a larger settlement only 8 miles away), intending to remain there a week. It is now 4 days past when they were due to return and Valgrym is concerned.

*I’ve already decided an outline story as a starting point but hopefully will let the Game guide me beyond this. Radka is a “witch” and has traded her daughter to Imrik the Elf-Earl in exchange for the recipe for a Potion of Youth. They kept riding when they reached Pershore and headed into the Forest to do the trade. Radka (now young and beautiful) has gone to seek a new life. Gwenneth is now a “possession” of the Elf-Earl and been taken to his hidden Keep.*

## THE GAME SYSTEM

Because of this initial story-line, I can’t think of a good long-term Starting Vow to make. I think I’m going to start with just the short-term Vow of “Find Gwenneth” which I decided to make “FORMIDABLE”.

Maybe as a result of this one, my Background Vow will emerge – possibly “Wipe out all Elves!” – I figure that “Kill the witch, Radka” would only be another short-term vow.

First significant roll “Swear an Iron Vow” pg 198.

I figure the Vow “Find Gwenneth” counts for the +1 as it is about a person with whom I share a bond.

Action Dice 4 +2 Heart, +1 Bond  
Challenge Dice 6 & 5, so STRONG HIT

Gain +2 Momentum (now +4) and I know what to do.

## Starting “in media res”...

I envisioned that the 8-mile ride to Pershore would not be a problem, so Valgrym will quickly discover that they aren't there. However, I figured Radka might expect me to come looking, so had told her cousin to say they had gone out to some dangerous location (just to throw him off their track). Unknown to the cousin, the witch has magically summoned some creature(s) to waylay him as he approaches.

The cousin tells Valgrym they have gone to gather herbs in Tiddesley Wood, a few miles away...



“The wood is owned by the Abbot of Pershore. On the northern edge of the wood”, he is told “there is a long low wall, (a ruin from roman times or even before). They were headed there, this morning to pick bluebells.”

Suddenly a monster lurches from the bushes...



Valgrym strikes hard with his spear, the iron tip burning its flesh, but it brushes the spear aside with a wing and claws at the mounted warrior.

## THE GAME SYSTEM

Ask the Oracle for a location.. “Wall” this made me think of the low wall in the novel/film “Stardust” which was a crossing point between this world and Faerie. There’s a wood called Tiddesley Wood a couple of miles out of Pershore that seemed a likely place to be sent into an ambush. As I looked at the local map, there is a place just north of the wood called “Drakes Broughton” so a “Drake” seems like a possible enemy.

I don’t want to kill Valgrym in this first encounter so decided a “Drake” would be similar to a Wyvern (but only Dangerous or Formidable rather than Extreme) and the other possible monster would be a Troll (Formidable)

Ask the Oracle – Drake ? (Likely) or Troll ?

D100 = 60, so DRAKE

Ask the Oracle, Dangerous or Formidable (50/50) D100 = 93, so FORMIDABLE

MOVE: Enter the Fray. I assumed V was “Ambushed”, so Roll +Wits

Action Dice 5 +2 Wits = 7

Challenge Dice 1 & 3, so STRONG HIT

+2 Momentum (now +6) and V has initiative

MOVE: Strike (with Spear).

Action Dice 4 +3 Iron = 7

Challenge Dice 7 & 4, so WEAK HIT

Inflicts 3 harm (2 for deadly weapon + 1 vs Faerie creature for Iron-tipped spear), but V loses Initiative.

The powerful claw sweeps overhead as the rider yanks the horse around and stabs up into the drake's belly.

Seeing the beast begin to falter, Valgrym decides to make a risky lunge and pin its snout to the ground.

The Drake is pinned with the touch of iron making black smoke rise from its flesh. It unexpectedly whimpers and begs for mercy (in broken, brutish words of the old language – similar enough to Valgrym's father's tongue to be understood).

## THE GAME SYSTEM

MOVE: CLASH because Enemy has initiative  
Action Dice 1 +3 Iron = 4  
Challenge Dice 1 & 5, so WEAK HIT

~~Inflicts 3 harm (2 for deadly weapon +1 vs Fae creature for Iron tipped spear), but then V must "Pay the Price"~~

**BURN MOMENTUM to turn this into a STONG HIT...**

Inflicts 4 harm (2 for deadly weapon, +1 for iron, +1 for strong hit), and V gains Initiative.

I believe I could now choose to attempt to "End the Fight" – the drake has taken 7 hits so far – but there are some risks, especially if the dice show a MISS, or I could Strike again and finish the fight by completing the Progress Track (10 hits). Despite the risks, the narrative options seem better if I try "End the Fight" – I could choose to have the creature surrender and maybe explain how it came to be here to ambush me.

MOVE: END THE FIGHT  
Progress = 7  
Challenge Dice 2 & 6, so STRONG HIT

The Drake surrenders and is at my mercy.

Rather than just get everything explained, I decided to use Compel to intimidate the Drake (with +1 as it is already beaten) into talking to me, intending to then use Gather Information.

MOVE: COMPEL  
Action Dice 4 +3 Iron +1 circumstance = 8  
Challenge Dice 8 & 6, so WEAK HIT

The enemy will ask something of me in exchange.

I figure this removes the need for Gather Information in this case.

The beast explains that Radka is a Witch and magically compels him to do her bidding. His instructions are to wait in this wood, near the gap in the Faerie Wall, for Valgrym to arrive, then kill him.

It will be forced by the magic to try again if Valgrym returns to the Wood.

The only way it can be free is to either kill Valgrym, or for the witch to be killed.

The Drake offers the secret of a magical ritual that can give some protection against the effect of magical spells and creatures – if Valgrym will swear an Oath to kill the Witch.

Valgrym agrees, he hates Radka anyway and when the Drake sees how strongly he makes this vow, it offers some advice on how to find the Witch “She was on her way to Wales to meet with an earl – I have no idea who or where, but your road takes you west, young ironsworn.”

**RITUAL**

**WARD**



- When you walk a wide circle, sprinkling the ground with salt, roll +wits. On a strong hit, choose two. On a weak hit, choose one.
  - Take +1 momentum when anything crosses the boundary.
  - Inflict 1 harm on anything or anyone crossing the boundary.
  - Your ward is ‘likely’ (*Ask the Oracle*) to trap an intruder within its boundary.
- As above, and improve the effect of your ward (+2 momentum, 2 harm, and ‘almost certain’).
- When you perform this ritual, add +1 and take +1 momentum on a hit.

Instead of gaining Momentum, I’m going to have it grant +1 Heart when I “Face Danger” from a magical spell if the spell crosses the Ward.

I envision that it is magically dominated by the Witch so a likely thing to ask is that I Swear an Iron Vow to kill her. Or that there is some magical item it needs recovering. On a Miss with a Match it would trick me with something like “the Witch used something pure to bind me, swear you will destroy it to free me” and then the “thing” turns out to be Gwenneth!

In my vision of this setting, Oaths to Fae creatures are magically binding with TERRIBLE consequences.

Ask the Oracle, “kill Witch” (likely) “recover item” D100 = 27, so it explains that Radka is a Witch and demands my oath to kill her. In exchange for this (and for letting the drake go) he will either tell me how to track her or give me something to help.

Ask the Oracle, (50/50) - offers me something to help – a Ritual Asset of WARD that will give some protection against her spells.

I agree and...

**MOVE: SWEAR AN IRON VOW**

Action Dice 6 +2 Heart = 8

Challenge Dice 7 & 6, so STRONG HIT

Gain +2 Momentum, (now +4) and it is clear what I must do next. (I’ll explain the “it is clear” by having the Drake tell me which way to go).