

JOURNEY TO RAGNAROK



THE RUNE THIEF
I. BLOOD STAINED SNOW



CREDITS

JOURNEY TO RAGNAROK is an Adventure and Setting inspired by Norse Mythology, compatible with the 5th Edition of the most famous role-playing game, designed by Michele Paroli

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MANA PROJECT STUDIO



BLOOD STAINED SNOW

Journey To Ragnarok: The Rune Thief Adventure #1: Blood Stained Snow

For characters of 1st level

The Rune Thief is a campaign set in the world of *Journey to Ragnarok*. It will take the characters from 1st level up to 7th level, exploring the heart of Midgardr and trying to stop a mysterious threat. Albeit the adventures are designed to be played one after the other to produce the most enjoyable and consistent narrative, each adventure can be played as a one-shot, with minimum effort on the part of the narrator to portray to the players the events leading up to that point.

INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME MASTER:

Alrekr Sigthollr (see pp. 14), Jarlr of Uppsala, has always been somewhat suspicious of the Icy Crows, despite having to deal with them daily. He sees them as untrustworthy, and he's often expressed his criticism of the work of the augurs that the Icy Crows regularly provide him with. As of late, Alrekr's discontent has gotten to the point that he has recently banished a diviner, called Ydreg Drufilsson because he could not provide the Jarlr with the divinations he craved. Every effort to explain that no one can control the runes and what they reveal during divination went unheard.

A resentful Ydreg, after having been beaten up for his disservice, was forced to leave Uppsala in a hurry. He reached the shore, buffeted by icy winds, where he met a lonely fisherman, all busy laying down his fishing nets and rods. The old fisherman then offered to take Ydreg to the other side of the channel that separates the lands of Svtjod and the Fenmark. "No one will hunt you down, it's the land of the outcasts. Just like you are." Said the old man.

The journey went on for several days, due to the frequent stops along the shore, and all through the trip,

the old fisherman kept asking Ydreg precise and eerily wise questions. He appeared to share and support the diviner's resentment towards the Jarlr. One evening, upon landing on the island located in the middle of the channel, the old man suddenly told Ydreg a tale: on that very island, a pile of rocks was said to be hidden, and it contained the skeletal remains of an ancient wise man, a runemaster, who dared to try and steal the knowledge of the Gods to obtain dominion and power over the other mortals. Not a minute later, Ydreg ventured deep towards the heart of the island, making its way through vegetation, ice and snow until he found what he was looking for: there it was, a pile of flat stones, engraved on the underside with the Futhark runes. The crumbling remains of a skeleton were resting beneath the rocks, still holding one of them in its hand as if that man had buried himself. Ydreg snatched the stone from the skeleton's cold grasp, and at that very moment, he experienced the most powerful vision of his life. He saw the old fisherman, with burning eyes, raising from the pile of stones and stretching long clawed hands towards his head, sinking his fingers, as cold as winter, deep in his skull while the thumbs plunged in his eyes. It was such a moment of revelation that the Earth appeared to shake beneath his feet, and Ydreg knew that he had just rediscovered an ancient and forgotten ritual, capable of stealing one by one the Runes from Midgardr. A power, not even the Gods could rival.

When he walked back to the boat, on the shore, there was no trace of the fisherman. The boat sat there, abandoned. Ydreg pushed it into the water and continued his journey towards the Fenmark, harboring dark intentions in his heart.

WHO WAS THE OLD FISHERMAN?

The Old Fisherman was no other than a manifestation of Loki, who conceived an elaborate plan against Midgardr and its people. He manipulated Ydreg into stealing the runes, and in so doing blinding all divinations, smothering all knowledge and in turn undermining the faith of the Norse people in their old traditions.

THE RUNE THEFT

To steal a rune, Ydreg must sacrifice an individual who embodies its essence (see Runic Divination, pp.306 *Journey To Ragnarok - Adventure and Setting*), through a dark and evil ritual.

When that happens, that rune disappears, leaving no trace of its existence in Midgardr and in the mind of its people: any representation of that rune vanishes; inside rune satchels like the ones runemasters use for their divinations, the runestone crumbles, leaving behind only a pinch of fine, flour-like dust (if a PC is a Runemaster or for some reason owns a satchel of runes, they notice the missing rune only if they check that all 24 of them are there). No one remembers the name of the stolen runes, all that's left is a blurred memory, the feeling that something is missing and there's a void where there shouldn't be. Nothing more. This feeling is much stronger for those individuals who used to embody that rune and its meaning.

As far as Runemaster PCs, their features and abilities are not affected by this from a mechanics point-of-view, and all their class features usually work. However, Futhark circles they summon appear incomplete, their elements with visual effects like light, auras or energy bursts now become flickering, unstable or visually weakened.

If someone performs divination and the result happened to be one of the already stolen runes, that result should not just be ignored to look at the next available rune. This method is handy if you are using a runic die; if you are using an actual bag of runes, just have the Narrator take away the stolen runes without showing the players how many and which ones are being removed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following hooks can help the players get into the adventure:

- Someone may be a citizen of Uppsala. Do they have a family? A job? What are their ambitions?
- Someone may have a relative or a close friend who lived in Uppsala. Who is this person? Why are they essential to the Characters? What does the PC find when they get there?
- Someone may have come to Uppsala to worship at the Great Temple. What are they praying for? How long have they traveled to get here? Did they go alone, or with other people?
- Someone may be on the run and have happened upon Uppsala almost by chance. From whom or what are they running? Why? Do they believe they are innocent or admit being guilty?
- Someone may have come to Uppsala only as an intermediate stop on a longer journey. Where are they going? Where do they come from? What do they hope to get from their journey?



PART I

The adventure could start in any location in Uppsala, for example, the **Travelers' Camp [C]** (see pp. 12) if all the PCs are foreigners, or right outside the gates if you decided that the PCs would be reaching Uppsala together.

The first scene unfolds as the PCs see a group of priests walking towards the **Sacrificial Altar [F]**. Numerous villagers are abandoning their tasks to gather and follow the priests.

If the PCs try to gather pieces of information by talking to people or by eavesdropping, they will hear things like:

"This time it's going to work!

I wouldn't miss it!"

"Every week is the same old story, the Jarlr is never going to be happy..."

"I heard a new diviner is supposed to come to Uppsala..."

"Let's hope they get a good reading, we all need it..."

"They say they are going to offer to the gods a huge boar the hunters caught in the Great Forest just two days ago... can't wait to see that beast, they say its tusks are as long as your arm!"

The crowd heads to the Sacrificial Altar following the priests. If the PCs do not intend to follow the crowd, not interested in what is happening, they will notice that one of the few people that didn't stop his work to join the group is the blacksmith: **Svenn Skallfoss** (see pp. 15). If they go talk to him, he'll recount how little he cares for the Jarlr's whims and paranoia, with the enormous amount of work he has at the forge. With a successful **Charisma (Persuasion) DC 10** check, the smith could be convinced to lay down the hammer for a couple of minutes and tell the PCs how the Jarlr has grown restless and impatient with the rune-readers, how he banished the last High Priest, and how people say there's already a new one coming from Skjult Borg. In any case, Svenn cuts the conversation abruptly with *"If you'd like to talk more about this, go talk to the Jarlr himself. *I* have work to do, you know."*

The PCs could encounter the Jarlr on his way back from the sacrifice, or at his palace. See further down what information can be provided by the Jarlr.

If instead, the PCs would like to join the crowd, read or paraphrase the following text:

"You follow the chattering crowd, now counting no less than 30 people with more and more joining in as you walk. The dirty snow beneath your boots creaks with each step, compressed by your weight; meanwhile, snowflakes gently fall and land on your heads and on your shoulders. Small clouds of vapor appear in front of your face, wetting your nose.

Eventually, you reach a depression in the ground, with a large rectangular stone in the middle. The stone bears the dark red stains of the countless sacrifices that have been officiated on top of it.

The priests surround the stone, lift their hands up towards the sky, and pay homage to Odinn, the All-Father, so he may share a fraction of his infinite wisdom. Your eyes spot a figure in the crowd that can be none other than the Jarlr, Alrekr Sigthollr: shrouded in the fur of a black bear, his stern gaze is fixed upon the priests, and he is accompanied by two armed guards and one that is probably just a house servant.

From the western side of the depression, five men drag and barely contain a large boar that, despite the wounds still spilling copious amounts of its warm blood on the snow, is trying to wrangle itself free of the ropes that bind it. The pungent smell of wilderness and blood reaches your nostrils from down there, and the savage grunts of the beast have many among the crowd take a step back.

With one mighty blow to the back of its neck with a heavy mace, the animal falls to the ground shaking violently and thrashing about for a moment. As soon as it loses its energies, it is grabbed by its legs and pulled on top of the sacrificial stone. The priests close in around it, their hands towards the sky, and the crowd lowers their head muttering prayers and litanies. A curved dagger is placed to the neck of the beast, and instantly every rattle stops, as a river of crimson blood flows to the cold stone. Each priest gathers the blood in a low bronze receptacle, stares into it intently, and then throws the blood violently in front of himself, creating a gory pattern of red stains, steaming with vapor."

The crowd goes silent. The oldest priest pulls a rune out of the leather satchel he carries around his neck and shows it directly to the Jarlr: "My lord, we have been granted an important insight: the Berkana rune is warning us. Unfortunately, once again we cannot give you the augury that you so ardently crave."

The priest lowered his eyes to the ground, not to meet the gaze of Jarlr Alrekr Sigthollr: "Unfortunately, even today we can give you the hope that you so desire."

The Jarlr does not even wait for the end of the sentence to turn around and walk away, with fury in his stride. The crowd murmurs and begins to disperse. You can feel hopelessness and disappointment in the air.

The PCs are free to interact with people, or to try and reach the Jarlr, or to talk with the priests to know more about what just happened.

With Charisma (Persuasion) DC 10 checks, whenever necessary, the PCs may gather the following information:

- The Jarlr is now impatient because he cannot get a favorable augury from the sages that read the runes.
- **Only the Jarlr will provide this piece of information:** The Jarlr would really like to see the Fehu rune extracted, for himself and for his city, as it heralds good fortune, prosperity and wealth.
- Rumor has it that the Jarlr has summoned from Skjult Borg a skillful diviner, upon a recommendation of the Icy Crows, but that he appears to be late on schedule.
- **Only the Priests will provide this piece of information** Jarlr has unfairly and rudely banished the former High Priest, Ydreg Drufilsson, under the charge of not giving the divinations that he and Uppsala deserve: "We diviners have no control over the visions we receive, no one can claim dominion over the runes, but that foolish Jarlr won't accept that."

Once the PCs are satisfied with the information gathered, they can make a **Wisdom (Survival) DC 10** check to realize the weather is about to change, and the wind is rising.

They are approached then by a man that they may recognize as the servant who has accompanied the Jarlr

earlier. He says his name is Hallfrid and that they got the attention of the Jarlr with all the questions they asked around town. Hallfrid explains how the Jarlr is impatient and worried about the new High Priest who was expected yesterday, from Skjult Borg. Truth be told, today's divination was supposed to be performed by this new diviner. Since the weather appears to be getting worse, the Jarlr would like to send someone along the coast to meet with the new priest and its escort, to check up on them and to give an example of the hospitality of Uppsala.

The PCs are offered, once they are back with the priest, a pay of 25 gold pieces each; they will also be given rations, mead and winter clothes for the trip. It is however of the utmost importance that they leave right away before the weather gets worse.

If he is asked about the diviner, Hallfrid says that he is a peculiar man, in touch with nature and attuned to the earth, but nonetheless quite the genius in his field of work: his name is **Thorgest "Ulfur Hjarta,"** which means *Wolf-heart*.

Shortly after, the PCs should be ready to leave.



Alrekr Sigthollr, Jarlr of Uppsala

PART 2

Read or paraphrase the following text:

“You begin walking along the path that leaves Uppsala in the direction of Skjult Borg, hoping to meet the diviner and his escort before the weather gets worse: icy winds blow against you, slowing your pace, and sleet relentlessly slashes your face. You walk for about two hours, no living soul in sight, when suddenly you make out something strange appearing on the path, some 100 ft ahead.”

Further ahead on the path there are 5 butchered bodies, face down in the snow. The frozen blood stands out on the snowy background like fresh brush strokes on a pristine canvas. The PCs can interact with the scene to gather more information:

- **Intelligence (Investigation) DC 10:** Two of the corpses, a man and a woman in their forties, are wearing civilian clothing and appear to be unarmed. The other three bodies on the contrary wear studded leather armor and are wielding weapons.
- **Wisdom (Medicine) DC 10:** The wounds on the bodies appear to be thick and jagged as if caused by bites of some kind. Several minor injuries are located around the ankles and the lower legs, but the lethal bite is always to the neck or to the face.
- **Intelligence (Nature) DC 10:** The tracks in the snow and the wounds are compatible with those of a pack of wolves. However, some prints and some wounds stand out for their incredible size, like nothing. The characters have ever seen before.
- **Wisdom (Survival) DC 10:** Human footprints leave the scene in a hurry and leaving a bloody trail in the snow. They go into the forest, and they seem to have been followed by the animals.
- **Wisdom (Asatru) DC 10:** The corpses are lying down inside a shallow depression in the snow. Closer inspection reveals a faint magic aura indicating a circle of protective runes, now almost completely vanished. **Vision:** *“Your gaze focuses on the blood stains in the snow, and suddenly your mind blooms in a flower of red hues and intense, violent emotions. The next moment, you see yourself and your companions from above, as if you were a bird flying over the carnage, and you see the blood stains*

forming a familiar shape: your hands instinctively reach inside your rune bag (if the PC has one), and you pull out a rune.

PULLING OUT A RUNE

Check out the Runic Divination chapter, pp 304 of *Journey To Ragnarok - Adventure and Setting*, to randomly generate a rune, and then try to implement the result in the scene. If it happens to be a rune that has already been stolen (so far, only the FEHU rune has), just ignore the result and take the next available effect, in order, keeping the direction (upright/reversed) of the rune.

On the bodies of the soldiers, it is possible to loot a longsword, a shortsword, a battleaxe; 3 suits of studded leather armor (albeit one is too Damage to be of any user); 1 wooden shield; 2d6 gold pieces.

On the corpses of the two unarmed civilians, PCs will find only private belongings of little value; 2d6 silver pieces and two tiny gold rings worth 2 gp each.

Note for the Game Master: the corpses are within the Futhark circle that the diviner created to protect the group from the wolves. Even if the magic is now almost completely faded, and wasn't enough to save the unlucky travelers, it still protects their bodies. For this reason, they were not devoured by the animals. If the PCs disrespect the bodies and try to steal what little they have, they commit a dishonorable act: the only exception is the longsword, that lies outside of the Futhark circle.

Anyone looting anything else must make a **DC 11 Charisma** saving throw precisely one minute after removing the objects. On a failure, they will take 1d6 Psychic damage and will have Disadvantage on all saving throws for the next 24 hours – as they are haunted by horrible visions of mangled corpses scattered on the snow, every time they blink their eyes. If they succeed at the Charisma saving throw, they see these images only for an instant and suffer no other ill effect.

PCs are free to follow the tracks outside the path, the snow that grows thicker and softer, towards the forest. Following the tracks does not require any skill check, as they are quite visible.

The tracks lead to a small cave after a 15-minute walk. A bloody handprint stands out on the bark of a tree not too far away, while the human footprints continue to leave a trail of gore up to the cave entrance.



The cave entrance is dark and cramped: it is difficult to make out anything inside, as it is no taller than 5ft and about 10 ft wide. PCs can make the following checks while they observe the entrance of the cave:

- **Wisdom (Survival) DC 10:** The animal tracks do not enter the cavern, they stop about 10 ft outside, and then scatter in various directions.
- **Wisdom (Perception) DC 10:** No noise comes from inside the cave. It feels almost unnatural.
- **Wisdom (Asatru) DC 15 or Detect Magic:** An almost-invisible demicircle of runes guards the entrance; they seem to be devoted to keeping everyone outside and punish those who dare enter. The runes symbolize fear, power, and deprivation.

The entrance is indeed protected by a Futhark circle. Anyone walking through the demicircle must pass a **DC 12 Wisdom** saving throw or be Frightened for 1 minute and forced to immediately move away using their whole movement – as their heart sinks into a pit of insecurity and despair.

If the saving throw is successful, the PC has to make a **DC 12 Strength** saving throw; on a failure they are pushed 10 ft outside the circle, taking 1d6 force damage in the process.

If this second saving throw is also successful, they have to make a third saving throw, on **DC 10 Wisdom**. On a failure, they are Blinded and Deafened for 1 minute.

If this third saving throw is also successful, the PC manages to enter the rune circle and enter the cavern.

If 3 saving throws are made successfully against the effects of the circle (not necessarily against all three different effects, nor by the same PC), the circle of runes deactivates, and the PCs are free to enter.

If 3 saving throws are failed before the circle is deactivated, the commotion will attract the wolves that were still roaming the woods nearby, waiting. They are **4 Wolves**, and **1 Worg** called Gharival.

Gharival appears on the rocky ledge on top of the cavern, towering above the PCs, with greasy black fur and the muzzle encrusted with blood. After his first terrible howl, the pack of wolves will join the assault from every direction.

Note for the Game Master: All the wolves, including Gharival, have been cursed by Thorgest when they tried to devour the bodies of his companions. For this reason, keep in mind they have Disadvantage with all their saving throws (they have however had the time to lick their wounds and recover from the damage).

GHARIVAL

This large black wolf (see **Worg**), its fur dirty and greasy, roams the snowy forests of the Svjtjod just like a blotch of ink ruins a delicate painting. He possesses almost-human intellect, and he can coordinate his pack in vicious assaults. He can even talk. He speaks the language of humans, but also a dark language that grants him dominion over the inferior members of his species. They say in his veins runs the blood of Fenrir and Loki, and that doesn't sound too far fetched, considering the ferocity and malice with which he torments his victims.

During a fight, on the first round, he summons his pack by howling. The wolves charge in pairs against the less armored enemies, if possible, while Gharival attacks the enemy that he perceives as the most dangerous (usually, the bigger and noisier one).

When 3 wolves are defeated, or Gharival is reduced to 8 HP, both wolves and Gharival abandon the fight. If Gharival is defeated, the wolves will flee immediately.

As soon as his eyes meet those of a PC, he will growl: *"A bleeding blossom will bloom, red rivers of rage and torment will ravish you; the great Gharival growls and your grim lives will leave you."*

PART 3

Once past the Circle of protective Runes that prevented access to the cave, the PCs find themselves in front of the following scene (read aloud, or paraphrase):

"The rocky ceiling is so low it forces the tallest among you to bow your heads. You peer through the darkness, and you see the flickering reflections of golden light, beyond the point where the tunnel, after about 15 ft, turns to the right. The only noise you hear is the water dripping from the cracks and forming tiny muddy pools on the ground. The tunnel continues, and the floor slowly descends, to the point that you can now all stand

comfortably upright. You make the turn to the right, and you spot a dying campfire that seems to have been fueled with only a few leaves and some pine needles. A lonely figure is sitting with its back against the wall: they are wearing a wolf fur, their leg is wrapped in blood-stained bandages, and are pointing at your faces a twisted staff with pointy quartz on top."

It is **Thorgest Úlfur Hjarta, Wolf-heart** (see pp. 15), the runemaster from Skjult Borg, meant to serve the Jarlr of Uppsala. He will recount what has happened as soon as the PCs identify themselves: along the way they have been assaulted by wolves. He tried to protect everyone with a runic circle, but it didn't work as well as usual. He had this weird sensation as if something was amiss. A large black wolf, as imposing and fierce as Fenrir himself, tore his armed escort apart, so he ran outside the rune circle to try and lure at least some of the beasts away. He found this cave and hid here hoping the wolves would eventually give up and that he was able to buy some time for his traveling companions.

He will be saddened to find out that they didn't make it. He will thank the PCs for rescuing him, and



Thorgest Úlfur Hjarta, Wolf-heart

he will offer to heal their wounds. He has two 1st level slots available, and 2 Futhark Circle Dice. He can walk, but slowly (15ft). He has 16 HP remaining (out of 38), an AC of 15, and attacks with his quarterstaff with a +3 bonus, dealing 1d8+1 damage on a hit.

If the PCs have already dealt with the wolves, Thorgest will be relieved to hear it. They can go back to Uppsala.

If the PCs managed to enter the cave before alerting the wolves, they ready to attack once the PCs and Thorgest come out. Once about to exit, they will hear the ominous and powerful howl of the Worg. Thorgest will use *Bless* spell to help up to 3 PCs in the fight; during the battle, he will use *Shillelagh*.

Once the wolves have been defeated the group will notice that the weather is getting worse by the minute. With a **Wisdom (Survival) DC 12** check (Thorgest helps with *Guidance*) the PCs can estimate that a violent storm will hit them on their way to Uppsala. If they opt for spending the night in the cave, they will only have to worry about gathering enough wood for the fire; however, in this case, the Jarlr will send another 4 people after the diviner, believing that the PCs didn't make it after all. This will cost the PCs 50% of what they were promised. These 4 people (2 hunters and 2 soldiers) will meet them just outside the cave the next morning, and take them to Uppsala. Vedi Parte 4.

If instead, they fail on their Survival check, they underestimate the severity of the storm or misjudge the time needed for the trip back, thinking they could make it to Uppsala before the worst of it.

In any case, if the PCs are traveling during the storm, hitting only 30 minutes later, they will suffer the following effects:

- Speed is halved because of the wind, the rain, and the mud. This means doubling the time needed to reach Uppsala.
- Every hour, they need to make a **DC 5 Constitution** saving throw, taking one level of exhaustion on a failure. This DC increases by 1 every hour after the first.

Every hour, roll 1d6 and consult the following table:

ÆTT / D6	EVENTS
FREYJA ↑ 1	The last character in march order twists an ankle, taking 1d4 damage that cannot reduce their HP to less than 1.
FREYJA ↓ 2	Sudden and violent gusts of wind tear away the cloak of the second to the last PC in march order: they cannot do anything but watch it fly away in the distance.
HEIMDALLR ↑ 3	Temperature falls sharply, the DC of Constitution saving throws to avoid exhaustion is increased by 5 until the end of the storm.
HEIMDALLR ↓ 4	A powerful lightning strikes a tree on the side of the road, making it explode in a rain of sparks and fiery debris. Everyone must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, or take 1d6 fire damage (success means half damage)
TYR ↑ 5	A tree has fallen and is blocking the road, forcing the PCs to go around it or climbing it: during these operations, the second in march order loses an object that they are keeping on their belt, like a dagger, a pouch, a horn.
TYR ↓ 6	The first PC in march order sinks in a deep puddle, ending up stuck up to their knee. They manage to wriggle free and come out but lose one boot that is immediately swallowed by the mud beyond any chance of recovery.

When finally the PCs reach Uppsala, they are awaited by Hallfrid (the servitor) and a pair of Huscarl. Hallfrid is primarily interested in verifying that Thorgest was rescued but soon takes everyone to the temple so that they can be given proper attention and shelter from the elements.

PART 4

Read or paraphrase what follows

“You follow Hallfrid and the two soldiers towards the giant ash tree that stands in front of the Temple of Uppsala. You notice the curious stares of the common people eying you from inside their houses. As you are walking under the canopy of the tree, on the small hill that overlooks the city, you are immediately surrounded by a warm feeling that seems to emanate from your inner self and project outwards in every direction, just like the branches of the tree reach for the sky and its roots sink into the earth.

This feeling lasts but a moment, but you are not sure if it was real, or just your imagination – maybe conditioned by the stories and legends about this tree, that people say is an effigy of Yggdrasil on Midgardr.

You are taken to the temple, a towering structure made of wood and stone, embellished with ancient carvings and surrounded by a thin veil of mist.

The interior is vast and comfortable, heated by the great bonfire burning in the middle of the room, around which the offering to the Gods are placed.”

Hallfrid leaves the PCs and Thorgest to the care of the temple priests, who offer a warm bath, a bed, a nutritious soup of roots and berries, and start bandaging their wounds.

About half an hour later, the Jarlr himself will make his entrance. Excited for the success of the mission (should the PCs have delayed their arrival, by not braving the storm in part 2, the Jarlr will be much less impressed), the Jarlr has had his servants prepare meat for the brave adventurers and his esteemed guest “Lichens and wood-berries?! Roasted mutton legs, the rind nice and crunchy, the fat still warm and soft! This is a meal worthy of those who devote their service to Uppsala!” He says, as two servants offer steaming plates with a delicious smell to the PCs. The Jarlr however now turns away from the PCs to welcome the diviner “I am Jarlr Alrekr, and I wanted to welcome you personally in my town, Wolf-heart the wise.” Thorgest replies with a deep nod, and shakes the hand of the Jarlr, who continues: “I am certain you will be able to divine great riches and fortunes for Uppsala! Now enjoy your meal, and forget the cold and the wild beasts: here you are my guests.”

Before leaving, the Jarlr will stop to compliment the PCs and pay them for their work.

Should the PCs have managed to carry with them the bodies of those who were traveling with Thorgest, or if they at least tried to give them a proper burial instead of just leaving them in the middle of the road, exposed to the elements and the animals, the Jarlr will grant them an extra 3 gp for each body that they recovered/honored, and the clerics of the temple will award them with 1 healing potion (2d4+2 hp)

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES!

Something terrible is about to subvert the order of things in Midgardr, threatening the true foundations of reality and knowledge.

"The Rune Thief" is a series of 9 adventures set in the world of Journey To Ragnarok, which will be published monthly starting from the 1st of March.

Where to find it:

English Edition: DrivethruRPG

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/.../pub/12301/Mana-Project-Studio>

Italian Edition: NeedGames!

<https://www.needgames.it/categoria-pro.../journey-to-ragnarok/>

Dare you face the Rune Thief?

APPENDIX

UPPSALA

Located in the southern part of the great forest under a huge hill this peaceful village lies on the ruins of the ancient city from which it takes its name.

The inhabitants of the village are, moreover, peasants and farmers who live a quiet life, contributing in large part to the sustenance of the many sages living in the temple.

Once an opulent and rich city, today the settlement is mostly modest huts and stables built out of the remains of the Uppsala of old.

The village is under the control of Jarlr Alrekr Sigthollr “*Pillar of Victory*”, who managed to be at the same time vassal to King Asbjorn and friend to the Leader of the Shadow Wolves.

A. The Jarlr’s House

The house of the **Jarlr Alrekr Sigthollr** (see page 130) is the largest and oldest dwelling in the village, the only one dating back to its golden age.

Its mighty structure and wooden walls are etched with fine knotwork and scenes portraying the Æsir. Within it, in addition to the Jarlr, live **4 Guards** and **4 Commoner** servants.

B. Temple of Uppsala

A sacred path connects the village of Uppsala to its temple, climbing the hill and then plunging into the trees for a few hours of traveling before allowing pilgrims to see the imposing temple.

A thick fog almost always shrouds the hilltop, giving the temple a mystical and yet frightening appearance.

All are welcome to Uppsala, whether in search of answers or forgiveness, and every day pilgrims bearing offerings arrive at the temple and are welcomed by the priests who live on the hill.

The temple and most of the sacred structures surrounding it date back to the ancient splendor of Uppsala. Only thanks to the meticulous care of the sages they have been preserved to the present day.

The hill hosts several circles of Druids and priests, that of the Icy Crows that make Upsala their true home being among the largest and most illustrious.

C. Pilgrims Camp

This area is the only one where pilgrims visiting Upsala can rest, a barren land for travelers to pitch their tents. No other comforts are offered to those who come in search for divine help.

D. The Workshop of Svonn Skallfoss

Not all those who arrive in Uppsala are there for the temple, however. It is said that the local blacksmith is none other than the famous **Svonn Skallfoss** (see page 151), one of the best of all Midgardr.

According to others, Svonn once worked for the court of King Asbjorn of the Odhinn’s Eye clan, going into “exile” for his dark past.

There are also those who believe he unearthed a dwarven forge dating back to the first settlement of Uppsala.

Whoever he is, those with enough gold to attract his attention have never been dissatisfied with his work.

E. Offering Fence

Simple wooden fences contain the offerings that the pilgrims have brought for the Gods.

Each enclosure contains a different type of offering, the most common being treasures and livestock although it is not unusual to see people as well.

F. Sacrificial Altar

At the center of a depression in the ground there is a huge rectangular stone that the sages think dates back to the age when the gods still walked in Midgardr.

Most of the sacrificial rites take place on this altar and for this reason its rock is stained red so that not even the strongest rain can wash it away.

A hole in the stone collects the blood spilled during the sacrifices and channels into vessels that are placed in front of the altar during the rituals.

G. The Priests Camp

This part of the hill is home to the many Priests and Druids staying or passing through the temple, either to pose questions to the Æsir or to offer a sacrifice.

In sharp contrast with the pilgrims’ area, the Priests camp is quiet and peaceful, the only noise that interrupts the calm is their litanies regularly rising above the tents.

Wisemen from all over Midgardr stay and, if the characters are looking for an expert on some arcane matter, they will surely find them here.

H. Seat of the Icy Crows

The circle of the Icy Crows uses as its headquarters an ancient and complex stone building. Thanks to the care of the clan the building is in excellent condition but its interior has been completely emptied and it is now a mystery what its original function was.

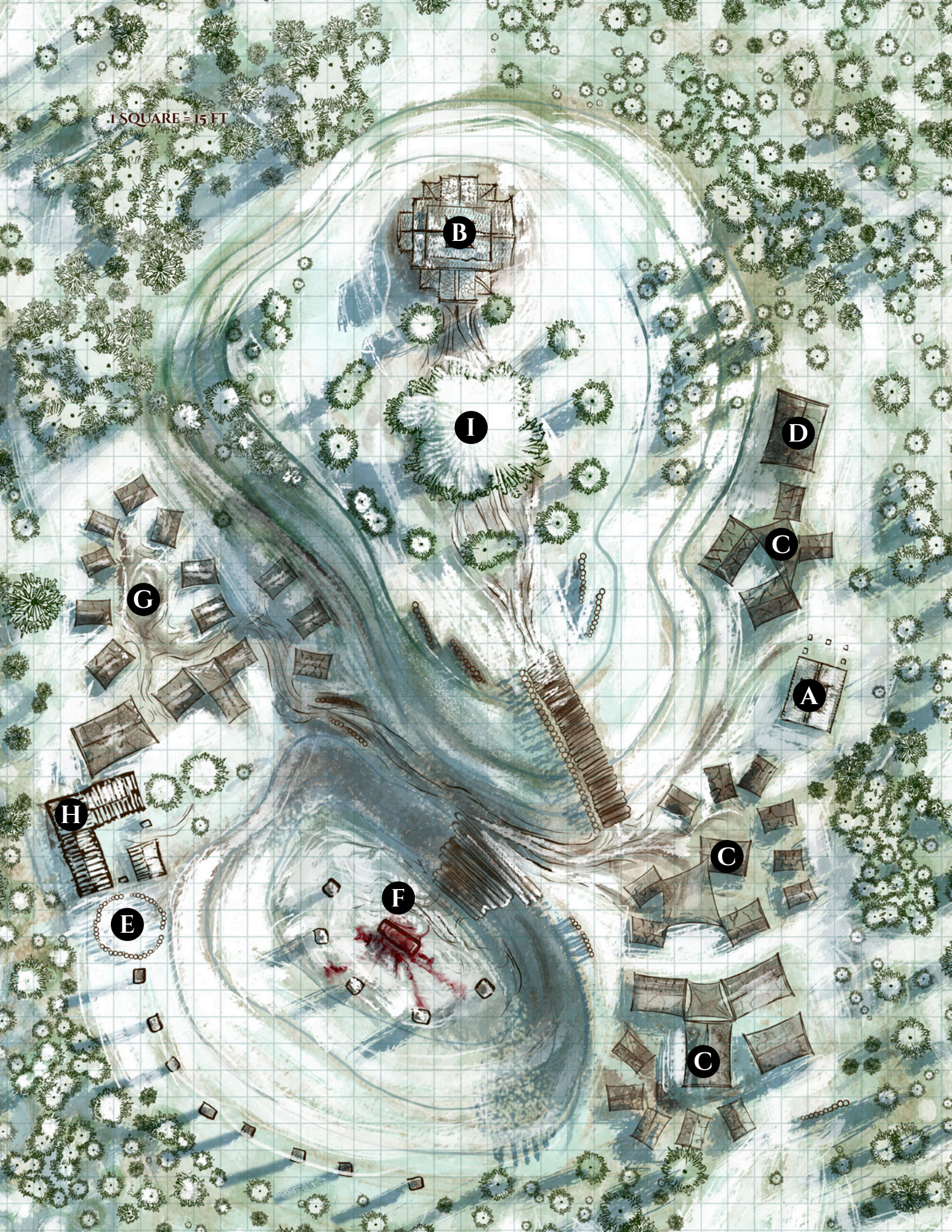
The largest part of the complex is composed of 5 adjoining buildings where all the Icy Crows not currently traveling throughout Midgardr sleep and live.

Close to the center of this complex is a larger building in which clan meetings are held, while in the side rooms are the quarters of the three great *Mímaneidhr* (see page 25): **Límrun**, the very young (see page 142), **Blóttre**, the adult (see page 132) and **Spekisvidhr**, the old one (see page 146).

I. Yggdrasill

At the top of the hill in front of the temple is a huge ash tree said to pre-date even the very founding of Uppsala. Many sages agree that the tree is an effigy of Yggdrasill on Midgardr and for this reason it is considered sacred and only certain priests can approach it and take care of it.

1 SQUARE = 15 FT



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ALREKR SIGTHOLLR

"One day, these ruins will shine again like in ancient times and I will be worthy of my ancestors".

Thanks to his political and speech skills, young Alrekr – son of a humble merchant – climbed the social ladder, gaining the trust of Kings and Jarls. After a great struggle with the noble houses that controlled the city, the father of King's Asbjorn made him Jarl of the ancient city of Uppsala.

While Uppsala is within the territories of the Odhinn's Eye, Alrekr earned the respect of the other Clans as well and today the jarl plays the role of mediator to prevent a new war in his city.

Despite the appearances, the jarl and the Icy Crows aren't going along well: a year ago the jarl's firstborn son became *Limrün*, new *Mitmaneidhr* of the Crows. This political move tied the jarl's hands, preventing him from swearing fealty to another clan to stabilize the city.



Alrekr

Roleplaying Alrekr

The jarl of Uppsala hides his true nature behind a calm and polite facade.

Alrekr is ready to do anything to achieve his goals and to face any opponent with his trademark guile and skill.

He will use those PCs that appear to be a useful resource, otherwise he will ignore them or find a clean way to dispose of them.

Alrekr's Goals

The main goal of the Jarl is to restore Uppsala to its ancient glory. He thinks that the influence of the Icy Crows bogged down this process and that the city should be controlled by a clan that can provide greater stability and security.

Meanwhile, he wants to free his firstborn from the Crows' clutches; Alrekr is no fool, he knows that this "great honor" they bestowed upon his son is just an attempt from the circle to control him.

If the characters oppose the circle or try to bring Uppsala under the wing of another powerful clan, Alrekr will do anything in his power to help them.

ALREKR

Medium Humanoid (Human), Chaotic Honorable

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Armor Class 18 (scale armor, shield)

Hit Points 76 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

Saving Throws Str +3, Con +5

Skills Deception +6, Insight +6, Perception +5, Persuasion +6

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Alrekr makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Jarl's Guard. If Alrekr fights in Uppsala and is not incapacitated, on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) he can summon 1d4 Guards to defend him.

SVENN SKALLFOSS (Veteran)

“With weapons in such a bad state, how do you think you can honor the gods? Pass by tomorrow and you will find them as good as the day they were forged!”

Svenn Skallfoss is considered one of the best blacksmith in the northern lands. According to some, his skills match those of the Dwarves of Nidavellir, as he is capable of forging items with magical properties, like them.

As his fame spread, King Asbjorn wanted him at his court to craft weapons and armor for his army. Initially enthusiast, the blacksmith forged formidable blades for the King's own guard and taught the craftspeople of Heil Hofn incredible techniques to make their weapons superior to those of the King's enemy and to conquest the Clans of the northern lands.

However, as Asbjorn returned from the great raid with a bride that made him forsake the Gods, Svenn fled Heil Hofn to find shelter close to the Uppsala temple.

Today, he offers his craft and skill to those adventurers who show respect to the Æsir and Vanir, who can buy all sorts of items in his shop, including those of a more exotic make.

Svenn can forge in a month any +1 magical weapon for 1000 gp.

If the characters earn his favor or liking, he gifts them a **Sword of Skallfoss** (see page 302).

THORGEST ÚLFUR HJARTA

“The runes whisper of the laws of this world.

Their voice, however, is harder to hear, now.”

Thorgest is a rune master who leads a secluded and simple life to be closer to nature and its laws. Although not much is known about him, word of his skill in reading the runes has spread across all Svrtjod and many call him Wolf-heart for the wolf skin headdress he is used to wear and his rustic habits.

Roleplaying Thorgest

Thorgest's manners are rough and he speaks in short sentences, often taking long pauses. In spite of this, he is a good and honorable man, kind and respectful of life.

Thorgest' Goal

Honoring the Nine Virtues with his devotion, living in harmony with nature and the world.

THORGEST

Medium humanoid (Human), lawful honorable

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)

Armor Class 13 (padded armor)

Hit Points 31 (4d8+8)

Speed 30ft.

Saving Throws Str +4, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +2, Asatru +8, History +2, Nature +2

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (700 PE)

Spellcaster. Thorgest is a 4th level spellcaster. His spellcasting Ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks) and has prepared the following Rune Master spells:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, shillelagh*

1st level (4 slots): *bles, cure wounds, faerie fire, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *augury, moonbeam, pass without trace*

Runic Circle: Thorgest casts a rune circle, magically carving the Futhark alphabet on the ground 60 ft., creating a 10 ft. radius Futhark Circle. To maintain the circle active, he must use a bonus action each turn and you must be able to see it.

When a creature Thorgest can see attacks a target other than him that within the circle, he can roll a Futhark Dice (1d6) as a reaction and subtract its result from the enemy's attack roll.

Thorgest can roll a Futhark Die (1d6) as an action and heal a creature of a number of hit points equal to the Die result plus his Wisdom modifier (+4). Thorgest has 4 Futhark Dice every long rest.

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, versatile 7 (1d8+2).



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