

# JOURNEY TO RAGNAROK



THE RUNE THIEF  
3. SMOKE ON THE MARSHES



## 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

**Author:** Andrea Back

**Art Director:** Michele Paroli

**Cover Art:** Andrea Guardino

**Interior Illustrations:** Andrea Guardino, Roman Kuteynikov

**Graphic Designer:** Michele Paroli

**Page Knotworks Design:** Milivoj Čeran

**English Translation and Editing:** Andrea Back, Federico Gavioli

**Playtesters and error hunters:** Nicola DeGobbis, Marco Munari, Matteo Pedroni, Enrico Romeo

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MANA PROJECT STUDIO





# SMOKE ON THE MARSHES

## **Journey To Ragnarok: The Rune Thief Adventure #3: Smoke on the Marshes**

For characters of 3rd 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.

### **PREVIOUSLY, IN THIS SERIES OF MODULES:**

The characters had the opportunity to witness a divination ceremony that displeased the Jarl once again. They learned that the Jarl was expecting another expert diviner. They were sent to investigate the diviner's delay and saved Thorgest from a pack of hungry wolves.

Unfortunately, the runemaster detected a disturbance in cosmic energies, an interference with the correct divination of the runes. On the day of the ceremony, he begged the adventurers to help him gather the ingredients for a ritual that may shed some light on what is happening. These ingredients weren't natural to get, on the icy coast North of Uppsala, and the heroes had to face terrible abominations to complete their quest. Thorgest could finally inform the Jarlr that he needed time to perform a long, elaborate ritual, aimed at investigating the cosmic energies looking for tears, flaws, or other problems.

The heroes are in Uppsala when suddenly grim news arrives from the Fenmark.

### **WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE FENMARK (NOTE FOR THE GM)**

Ydreg, the Rune Thief, has reached the swamps of the Fenmark, where met a large group of the clan-less Sons of Hrimgrimnir, exiles who live off of banditry, killing, raping and robbing the people of the Fenmark and the unlucky travelers.

Ydreg managed to force them into obedience, eliminating those who would not bend to his will. The power of the stolen Runes proved too much for the marauders and, once he had taken command, they followed him to attack the coastal village of Flaugunbarr. There he obtained several other runes, as the ritual required the killing of an incarnation of the specific rune, and the town presented a perfect occasion to increase his powers.

Once the village was destroyed, Ydreg left, leaving behind only a small group of marauders led by a brigand named Jask. Ydreg granted them a speck of his powers, inscribing their body with the runes he conquered.

### **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 has to sacrifice an individual who happens to personify its essence (see Runic Divination, pp. 306 JTR corebook), through a dark and evil ritual.

When that happens, that rune disappears, leaving no trace of its existence in Midgard 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 can 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's missing and there's a void where there shouldn't be, nothing more.

This feeling is much stronger for those individuals that 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 (i.e. All their features work as usual); however, Futhark circles that they summon appear

incomplete, their features with visual effects like light, auras or energy bursts now become flickering, unstable or weakened from a visual point-of-view (again, their mechanics are unaffected).

If someone performs divination and the result happened to be one of the runes that have been already stolen, you should just ignore that result and 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.

## RUNES STOLEN SO FAR

All the runes of the Aett of Freya, from 01 to 08.

## IN PREVIOUS ADVENTURES

I personaggi hanno assistito ad un rito divinatorio che ha deluso lo Jarl per l'ennesima volta. Hanno scoperto che Uppsala attendeva un nuovo divinatore di grande fama. Inviati a scoprire il perché del ritardo, hanno salvato Thorgest da un branco di lupi feroci. Il maestro di rune ha rilevato un disturbo nelle energie cosmiche, qualcosa che impedisce la corretta lettura delle rune. Il giorno della cerimonia ha implorato gli avventurieri di procurargli degli ingredienti per un rituale che possa far luce su cosa stia accadendo. Ottenere questi ingredienti sulla costa gelata a Nord di Uppsala non è stato facile e gli eroi si sono scontrati con abomini terribili. Sono riusciti a portare a termine il loro compito e Thorgest ha potuto informare lo Jarl della necessità di effettuare il lungo e complesso rituale prima di compiere la divinazione. Gli eroi, ospiti ad Uppsala, sono al servizio del maestro delle rune quando arrivano cupe notizie dal Fenmark.



# INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase what follows:

*"The sky is a vast expanse of dark grey clouds, continually evolving, pulled apart by the invisible claws of winter and wind. The air is cold, damp, and full of tension, atmospheric as well as emotional: the faces of the people of Uppsala betray the despair that grips them after yet another adverse divination. They do not trust the new diviner, that much is sure. Uppsalans walk along the muddy streets, minding their own business without ever lifting their eyes from the ground. They speak only when necessary as if words were a precious treasure. You have served the Jarl and his new diviner, Thorgest, have earned yourself food, lodging, and a decent wage. However, it is a couple of days since the Rune Master named Thorgest Wolfheart has locked himself in his hut to meditate, and the Jarl does not seem to need your services. Right as you were about to go hunting to fight boredom and gather some fresh food, you hear screams coming from the Priests Camp."*

Two fishermen are calling loudly for help, they live along the coast and often go to the Fenmark to spread their large nets. They are visibly scared and exhausted, and some people are going to rescue them.

If the characters intervene, they will be able to find out what happened to the fishermen. If they decide to ignore them shortly afterward, some inhabitants of Uppsala will come knocking in search of their help.

The oldest of the two fishermen, with shaggy gray hair and beard and a steel tooth, is called Urvi, the other, his son, is about thirty years old and has long graying hair tied in a braid, called Yurik.

Yurik has an overwhelming personality, exaggerated in ways as in speaking: he takes the floor and speaks above the others, often ignoring the questions to say what he thinks is most important, all at an annoyingly high volume and gesturing with passion. Urvi is shaken, and trembles with terror, unable to

make himself understood given his son's vehemence.

The story of Urvi is fascinating, but Yurik is willing to give his version of the facts. To allow Urvi to recount it is necessary to pass a Charisma test (using the appropriate skill) CD 12 to quell Yurik. After each revelation of Urvi, it is required to repeat the test to reassure Yurik and let the old man's story continue. To do this, you will always need to find a different approach, Yurik will not be fooled twice!

If the characters use violence, Yurik will calm down immediately, but both fishermen will not share the last sentence.

Yurik (young)	Urvi (old)
<i>"We were fishing when ... flames! Flames in front of us! A never-seen-before stuff! "</i>	<i>" I know there are numerous villages in the Fenmark mists: swamps, outcasts ... some are cannibals, bloodthirsty killers, but there are also so many unfortunate families call that inhospitable land home. "</i>
<i>"Something serious happened, we saw smoke, big columns of smoke getting up where the mists start ..."</i>	<i>"We sailed for about two days, our ship is small but travels very fast. "</i>
<i>"There is a village there on the coast, where the sea becomes a swamp, and perhaps the smoke came from there"</i>	<i>"It was late at night, the best time to catch squid with a lantern when we saw the sky light up on the Fenmark ... a great fire, no doubt, but I also saw blue and greenish flashes, like the Northern Lights! "</i>



*"My father always says never to go into the mists, that the waters there are poisonous and hide a thousand dangers"*

*"As a young man I went to Flaugunbarr, the village on the coast. They are mostly fishermen, good people. They go about their business and don't bother anyone. Who could have slaughtered them?"*

*"With the oar, coming back, I hit a lifeless body. She was a headless woman. Then I realized that the water was red with blood and that it was full of decapitated corpses."*

*"Coming back so fast we almost forgot about the offer to the Horror Chelate, among the rocks halfway. It is said to have the hardest armor in the steel, and the claws can break the oars ... his hunger can be appeased only with meat."*

When their story is over, the Jarl guards arrive with some priests to escort them to the temple to meet Alrekr Sigthollr.

While the characters attend the scene, Thorgest will come out of his hut: tired and with eyes marked by deep shadows, it is evident that the ritual is testing him. His body is covered with red symbols, no doubt traced in blood. Covered only by the wolfskin coat, completely barefoot snow, it reaches the group:

*"It may be a coincidence... but I've got a hunch. If you've got nothing better to do, try, and get the Jarl to let you investigate what scared the fishermen. Should he prove uncertain about an incursion into the Fenmark, well, you tell him such information could prove useful in dealing with the Odhinn's Eye and Wolves of the Shadows."*

Once he says that, Thorgest turns his back to the group and returns into his hut, without answering any question.

Right before returning to his ritual, he throws a knowing eye to the group and then slams the door shut, making some snowfall off the roof.

## PART I

The characters at this point should be looking for the Jarl to be sent Flaugunbarr's aid.

Jarl Alrekr against letting the characters go, parting with such precious resources. As such, he attempts to raise a score of questions and concerns that the group must address. In addition to the roleplay, the characters must pass a **DC 12 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion)** check. If an answer is particularly well thought out or sarcastic, the character rolls with Advantage.

The Concerns of the Jarl:

- Fenmark is neither Uppsala's nor the Jarl's problem.
- Why should the Jarl finance such an expensive expedition to a place that has been raided already?
- Maybe the bad omens from the runes were a message from the gods not to get involved? And who is he to go against their will?
- Were the characters to fall on foreign land, Uppsala would lose valuable assets. How can they be sure such a risk would pay off?

The heroes must pass all checks to convince the Jarl. Should they fail, they can still repeat any of the checks, but must present a different point each time and, should they fail again, they would have to fund the expedition with their own money.

If they were kind to the fishermen, they could ask them to borrow their *"small but fast"* boat.

Otherwise, they can rent a boat in town is 50 gp. The trip, if the weather does not get much worse, should take but a couple of days.

For additional information on vessel types and navigation and sailing rules, the GM can find them in *"Battles Beyond the Sea"*, to decide which ships are available in Uppsala.

## PART 2

The boat trip follows the coastline, without notable inconveniences besides the underwater rocks.

**Rests:** during the trip, it is not possible to take Long Rests, due to the bad weather; the characters will, however, be allowed a Short Rest every night.

Read or paraphrase what follows

*"As soon as you leave the coast of the Svtjod, the sky shatters and starts falling on your head in a myriad of wet fragments. Heavy rain starts pouring down, blighting the rest of the trip. At least the buffeting wind is feeding the small square sail, hastening your travel."*

During both days of travel, the characters must pass a series of skill checks to avoid danger. Each day, they need to make a **Strength (Athletics)** check to steer the boat, a **Wisdom (Survival)** check to keep the route, and finally an **Intelligence (Perception)\*** check to figure out the path with fewer obstacles, eddies, and rocks.

It is therefore essential to elect a Helmsman, a Navigator, and a Lookout. Any other PC will be at the oars, helping out as they can.

\*it is not a mistake! Sometimes it is possible to associate a skill with a different ability instead of the one it is usually associated with.

Depending on the result obtained with each check, the group will gain Degrees of Success. The more they get, the easier the trip for the day.

If at least one character is proficient with Waterborne Vehicles, the group gets 1 additional Degree of Success.

D20	DEGREE OF SUCCESS
1-5	- 1
6-11	0
12-17	1
18 IN SU	2

To determine the events for the travel, check the following table.

DIO	EVENTS
1 OR LESS	See the <i>Clash with the rocks</i> paragraph.
2	See the <i>Tipping</i> paragraph.
3	See the <i>Stuck oar</i> paragraph.
4	See the <i>Torn Sail</i> paragraph.
5	See the <i>Route loss</i> paragraph.
6 - 7	See the <i>No hitch</i> paragraph.
8	See the <i>A glimmer of sunshine</i> paragraph.
9 O PIÙ	See the <i>Treasure among the rocks</i> paragraph.



### CLASH WITH THE ROCKS

The boat is damaged, sailing is challenging: -2 Degree of Success for the rest of the journey. The helmsman takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

### TIPPING

A sudden wave overturns the boat: the characters take 1d4 cold damage and must overcome a **Constitution** saving throw with **CD 10** or suffer 1 level of Exhaustion.

### STUCK OAR

An oar gets stuck between the rocks, damaging those who hold it: a character randomly chosen among the sailors suffers 1d6 bludgeoning damage. If there are no sailors, it is the lookout that suffers damage.

### TORN SAIL

A sudden gust of wind rips the sail, making the support perform a sharp and violent movement. All characters must succeed a **Dexterity** saving throw on **CD 10** or take 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

### ROUTE LOSS

The haze and the strong current makes you lose the route. Pull 1d4 on this table and apply the new result. The Navigator suffers 1d6 psychic damage in trying to remedy it.

### NO HITCH

The journey continues as planned.

### A GLIMMER OF SUNSHINE

For a few minutes, the rain fades, and a warm ray of the sun warms you up a bit. The character with less HP gains Inspiration.

### TREASURE AMONG THE ROCKS

Among the rocky outcrops you see the remains of a wreck, perhaps something useful has remained between the timber, pull 1d6:

D6	TREASURES
1	Greataxe
2	Longbow and a quiver with 3d6 arrows
3	Backpack with 50 feet of rope, 10 climber nails, 1 blanket, 1 pot, and 1 wineskin with 0.5 liter of liquor (flammable!)
4	Tinderbox with 3d6x20 silver pieces
5	A precious metal shield, called <i>Steel Flame</i> , worth 175 gp (see below)
6	1 Potion of Healing (4d4+4)

**Steel Flame:** This shield is not magical, but nonetheless the work of an expert foreign blacksmith. The words "Steel Flame" are carved on the inside, written in the tongue of the Englar. Its unusual shape, elegant like a flame that wraps around the user's shoulder, and the proper grip seem to be perfect for protecting against ranged attacks. This shield grants only +1 AC against melee attacks, but +3 AC against ranged attacks. After two days of the boat trip, you can move on to Part 3.





## PART 3

Read or paraphrase what follows when the second day of the trip is turning to an end, and night is about to settle.

*"It's already two days that you have undertaken this perilous journey, pushed forward by your courage and your ambitions. You are however tired, trapped in the vicious grasp of the waters above and below you: the restless sea shakes the boat, and white foamy claws seem to be trying to drag you away, while the rain keeps tormenting your battered bodies from the dark skies above, creeping all the way into your frozen bones.*

*The night is descending, and you realize you are in the vicinity of the island that sits on the channel between Fenmark and Svtjod. You start looking for a spot to dock, but several sharp rocks are poking out of the foam, between waves, making the task arduous."*

Here, the **Clawed Horror** has its nest; the PCs may have been warned of this danger by the elderly fisherman Urvi. Otherwise, they know nothing of such a threat.

The **Clawed Horror** hides among the rocks, and tries to lure the prey by lighting up some multicolored organs on its back: no check is necessary to spot the faint luminescence near the surface, looking like rare and delicious deep sea fish. However, a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight)** check is enough to realize the lights are not moving, placed in an unusually symmetrical formation, as if they were but part of a larger structure.

The GM should make a **Dexterity (Stealth)** check for the **Clawed Horror** (its bonus is but +0, but it has Advantage as it's beneath the water) to see if it manages to surprise any character. As soon as they are within reach, it will burst out of the water and assault them.

When the boat is within range, the **Clawed Horror** strikes with a surprise round. If the characters have been warned by Urvi or have understood that there is something there, the Horror attacks, but initiative is rolled as usual. If the group opts, instead, to get away from the suspicious lights, the creature dives in to



attack with a surprise round.

The **Clawed Horror** is reminiscent of an enormous albino lobster, its shell hard and thick and vicious claws capable of tearing even rocks apart. It also has some jellyfish elements to it, however; its belly is transparent, on its back. There are some bioluminescent organs used as a lure, and several poisonous tentacles twist and writhe around its mouth.

The **Clawed Horror** uses the statblock of a **Chuul**, with the following exceptions:

- **Rock Defense:** As a Bonus Action, if the Clawed Horror is on a rock, it can immediately move behind it without provoking Opportunity Attacks, gaining cover (+2 AC).
- **Crab-apult:** As a Reaction on a critical hit with a Claw attack, if the **Clawed Horror** is on a rock, it can immediately make a free grapple check against the target: on a success, it flings them 20 ft behind itself. The goal takes 1d6 falling damage if they land on solid ground.

**Placating the Clawed Horror:** As the old fisherman said, it is possible to appease the beast with a nice big chunk of meat. If no meat is at hand, it is possible to try and use rations, fish or other food, but in this case, the PCs will need to succeed at a **DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check.

Once they have dealt with the **Clawed Horror**, the characters can land and take a short rest. They will, however, see on the coast of the nearby Fenmark, just a few hours away, some faint lights in the sky.

## PART 4

The following day, the group resumes their journey. After but three hours of sailing along the coast, they reach the edge of the marshes.

Read or paraphrase the following text.

*"The boat quietly soars through the water, murkier and muddier as you near the shore. Dense fog banks block your sight, but at least the bad weather that accompanied you these last couple of days seem to have vanished. Rain is now but a drizzle, annoying but almost imperceptible. Twisted and dying trees rise out of the flooded bog, starved by the salty water; several reeds and marsh plants force you to clear your way with your swords to allow the boat to pass through. Suddenly through the fog, you spot a village that seems to be floating on the marshes: the wooden huts perched on stilts and piled one upon the other. The lights you saw last night are still present, coming off of fires that haven't been put down and are still letting out pillars of black smoke. Nothing stirs around you, everything is silent, and the air is eerily still, sending shivers down your spine."*

At this moment, Rune Masters and anyone proficient in Asatru chosen by the GM has the following vision:

*"Your head starts spinning, you lose your footing, and you fall off the boat. Your vision is clouded, you are confused, you taste the salty, cold, and muddy water in your mouth and your nose. You struggle to find the surface and get a good lungful of air. Your hands grasp wood. Instinctively you pull, dragging yourself out of the water. But you are not anywhere near your boat, you are lying down on a little wooden dock. All around you, it's chaos. People are screaming, armed men dressed in oily and ragged furs are running all over the village, flames are blazing up on the straw roofs."*

*The light drizzle isn't enough to put down the fires, just to wash away the blood and ichor that pools in muddy puddles. You crawl on the ground, trying to stand on your feet when in the alley in front of you appears one of the marauders. With a savage grin, he raises his axe and walks confidently in your direction."*

The character now makes a **DC 11 Wisdom (Asatru)** check. On a failure, the vision gets clouded, and the character wakes up shaking in the boat with the group. They did fall in the water but were promptly rescued.

*"If the check is successful, the vision keeps going for a few instants. "On the face of the warrior lights up a rune. You see the veins in his neck pulse and surge, his muscles tense as he charges you with a howl. His eyes shine with the same blue radiance of the rune. He raises his axe above you and shouting the word "Ydreeeg!", He strikes with all his strength. And everything goes dark."*

The character wakes up after a sharp yet fleeting fit of pain, as they realize they are safe in their boat. Instinctively their hands have reached for the rune satchel and have picked one, to read into the future that awaits the group (Extract one rune).

### **APPROACHING THE VILLAGE**

If the group wants to speak, they will have to make a group **DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth)** check.

If the check is successful, consider any enemy they encounter as surprised, at least until they manage to give the alarm, or the characters make enough noise. If the check is not successful, or if the characters choose to simply get closer to the village without any precaution, the Sons of Hrimgrimmir will be ready and will start shooting against the boat with large, crude slings (read below) lobbing explosive heads at the group.

### **A. Jarl's Palace**

This building stands out over the rest, both for its size and position: it is built atop a small hill at least 20ft tall, from which it is possible to watch over the whole surrounding area. Thick reinforced wooden doors have been knocked down, showing the signs of battle, and



are now leaning against the door frame. They are only slightly ajar, enough to let the occupants get in and out comfortably. The interior is a large room supported by wooden pillars engraved with hunting and fishing scenes; there is a table large enough to seat more than twenty people; two smaller rooms function as kitchen and service room, while a set of stairs leads upstairs, to the Jarl's room. A hidden trapdoor, under a bear rug, behind the Jarl's throne in the main room, leads to a small underground dug out of the clay, where the Jarl used to keep his treasures and his secrets: now, unfortunately, it is only home to Jask's two slave girls.

### **B. The Cage**

A wooden square cage, about 15 feet by 15 feet, has been built in a crude but efficient manner not far away from the Jarl's Palace. Inside, four prisoners languish, malnourished, hurt, and bloodied. It is possible to open a breach on the side of the cage with a **DC 22 Strength** check, or by inflicting 25 damage to the cage.



*Jask Boneshredder*



### C. Meat Sling

The Sons of Hrimgrimmir built these ghoulish catapult-like slings by using the flesh, bones, and tendons of the unlucky villagers. There are two of these obscene contraptions, placed on the roofs of two huts, but from afar they are easily mistaken for people lurking on the rooftops... however, the bloodied faces and the unnatural position of the bodies betray the grim truth behind them.

The Sons of Hrimgrimmir operate these catapults, shooting human heads reinforced with spiked iron bars. They have a +4 bonus to hit and inflict 3d6 bludgeoning damage upon a hit. Recharging a Meat Sling requires an Action, so they can shoot only once every other round.

**Explosive Heads:** the severed heads of the locals have been gathered in baskets, a series of runes etched on them in flammable substances and their orifices sewn shut. Once the fuse is lit on fire, the head is thrown, detonating in a terrible explosion. A Son of Hrimgrimmir is stationed on the roof of the watchtower, ready to raise the alarm by lobbing these explosive heads. Lighting the fuse of an Explosive Head takes one action.

**Meat Sling:** (see above).

### E. Bridge

A 90 feet long wooden bridge connects the village to the mainland. In case of assault, it was easy to destroy it to stop the invaders from entering the town, and presently, it bears the signs of emergency repairs.

### F. The Great Tree

By the hill where the Jarl's Palace is built, there grows a tree with a dark, almost black bark; its branches have no leaves, and its trunk is twisted and bulbous. The bodies of five villagers are hanging from this tree, the meeting place for the village until the bandits came. Crows are eating the decaying flesh, and the sweet smell of putrefaction is perceivable from several feet away.

### G. Docks

Small sized boats can dock at several points around the village, tied to thick wooden poles driven deep into the mud. Some are still there, abandoned, and may hold something useful (ropes, nets, javelins, and torches).

**Sons of Hrimgrimmir:** In the village there are 12 warriors, led by Jask Boneshredder, a violent, cruel and sadist warmonger.

The warriors are divided as follows:

- 2 are manning the Meat Slings (see above).
- 2 teams of two warriors are patrolling the streets of the village.
- 2 are guarding the prisoners in the wooden cage
- Jack occupies the Jarl's Palace, with 4 of his most loyal warriors.

**Prisoners:** Even if Jask and his men have set fire to the village and killed almost all of the population, they spared some to torture them, enslave them and eventually... devour them. The Sons of Hrimgrimmir are cruel and ruthless people, and Ydreg's influence if anything made them crazier. In a wooden cage there are four prisoners: an old man (Olaf), a little girl (Ryma), a man (Alfrit) with a broken leg, and another man (Turri) mortally wounded, who requires magical healing, otherwise will die come midnight.

In the Jarl's Palace, two women have been enslaved, their bodies are covered in cuts and bruises.

**Treasures:** In the village, the group will find several useful things, both in the hands of the Sons of Hrimgrimmir and hidden as part of the raid's loot. Besides Jask's greataxe and the most worthless junk his henchmen use as weapons and armor, the characters will find:

- Within a small chest: 420 sp, 80 cp and precious gems for a total worth of 150 gp.
- A mysterious bone disc, obtained from a skull, engraved with arcane glyphs: a **DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana)** check identifies it as the equivalent of a scroll of the spell blindness/deafness.
- A set of bandages that emanate a faint magical aura if examined with Detect Magic; if used to stabilize a fallen creature, the bandages animate and fasten on the wound on their own. This means they can be used as a Bonus Action. The set contains enough bandages for 8 uses.

We advise the GM to put these items on the group's way but leaving it to their inquisitiveness to find them. For example, checking out that chest under a bed, or that mysterious bone disc tied to an enemy's neck, and so on. These treasures have also been listed at the end of the adventure for the GM's convenience.

**Enemies:**

- **Sons of Hrimgrimnir:** they use the **Gnoll** stat-block. They can use Awaken the Runes once per short rest.
- **Jask Boneshredder:** he uses the **Berserker** stat-block. As a bonus action, he can use Awaken the Runes up to four times per short rest. Jask wields a menacing greataxe shaped like a grinning visage.

**THE POWER OF THE RUNES**

Ydreg decided to empower his warriors with the runes, making them fearsome foes. Each Son of Hrimgrimnir can use Awaken the Runes as an Action: he invokes the name of Ydreg, and awaken the hidden power. His muscles swell up, his eyes burn with rage, and a bright rune will appear on his forehead.

The GM can randomly generate what rune affects the warrior. The effects last for 1 minute unless a different duration is specified (for convenience, these exceptions are marked by a \*).

D8	EFFECTS
1	Gains Advantage to all the ability checks and saving throws.
2	Gains Advantage on attack rolls against targets with lower strength. Gains Disadvantage on attack rolls against targets with higher strength
3	Damages taken are reduced by 1.
4	Gains Inspiration. (last one minute or until used).
5	Ignores a difficult terrain. As a part of the Awaken the Runes action, can move up to half the movement speed.
6	If the character fails an attack or a saving throw, gains Advantage on the same kind of check.



7	Chooses up to a conscious target in a range of 30 ft, adds his total Hit Points to the ones of the target and distribute the half (rounded up) to both. (the effect is instantaneous)
8	Gains Advantage on saving throws if near to an ally..

**TACTICS OF THE SONS OF HRIMGRIMNIR**

If the lookouts handling the Meat Slings spot the characters, they start shooting at them and raise the alarm. Jask isn't warned until the danger proves to be real, or until the group enters the village.

If the characters instead manage to land unnoticed, or they manage to take down the lookouts within the first round of combat, they will be able to wander around the village undisturbed, at least until they meet a patrol or the guards looking over the prisoners' cage. Both the guards and the patrols are easily distracted by noise, and will move immediately to investigate: it is, therefore, easy to lure them into ambushes.

If the characters are involved in an actual fight inside the village, a patrol of two Sons of Hrimgrimnir will rush in at the beginning of the third round (rolling for initiative). If the fight isn't finished by the end of the fourth round, the Sons of Hrimgrimnir will try to run away and hide inside the Jarl's Palace.

The guards overlooking the cage will not move away to help out their comrades unless the fight is close to their station. If attacked from afar, they will seek cover inside nearby huts or behind the cage, insulting and taunting the assailants.

Jask will not leave the Palace unless he is forced to (for example, by setting fire to the Palace or filling it with smoke). He is an expert warrior and urban fighter, who knows how to use cover to engage in melee.





If he hasn't been warned, Jask will be surprised feasting with his men. They have Disadvantage on their Initiative rolls, and they will have to draw their weapons and don their shields (which requires an Action). One of the two slaves is serving the table and as soon as she takes her turn, she will run to the kitchen where she will hide within sacs full of potatoes.

If instead Jask was warned of the arrival of the group, he would have turned the table and placed it between two wooden pillars. Behind the desk (cover +2 AC), two of his warriors are ready to shoot with their longbows; they Awaken the Runes on following rounds. The other two warriors hide behind the two pillars, (DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot them) ready to jump on whoever gets close enough. They will Awaken their Runes as soon as the character breach the doors. Jask pokes his head out of the kitchen, using the slave woman as a human shield (cover +2 AC) and starts walking towards the group and throwing his javelins. Each round, he activates Awaken the Runes as a Bonus Action.

The Sons of Hrimgrimmir always fight to the death, they even make reckless moves if it means taking down with them one of their foes. If mortally wounded, Jask could hack down one of the wooden pillars, trying to tear the building down on his enemies. At Initiative counter 0, parts of the hall start falling down; all creatures must pass a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 1d6 bludgeoning damage the first round, 2d8 the second and 3d10 the third. After the third round, the building has completely fallen into ruin, burying its occupants.

## PART 5

The goal of the characters in the previous section was to rescue the prisoners, and possibly eliminate Jask's threat. If the characters managed to enter the village, avoid fighting Jask and still escape with the prisoners, Jask would appear on a roof once the group is already far away, shouting at them

*"The time of man is over, He shall reign over Midgard, defying the Gods themselves! My brothers will punish you!"*

If instead the characters fought and defeated Jask, he will say those same words with his last breath, choking on his own blood, before dying with a cruel grimace on his face. The characters will undertake the return trip blessed by decent weather, despite the thick fogs; within two and a half days they will be back in Uppsala. The priests in the temple will be the first to come to their help, and to the prisoners'. After a while, one of the Jarl's servants will arrive to tell the group to rest a while, because they are expected by dinner time at the Jarl's Palace.

### DINNER WITH THE JARL

The long table carved out of a single huge fir tree trunk, has been prepared with a chopping board full of boar meat, small kegs of beer and a large cauldron of potato, leek and fish soup that emanates a divine smells.

The Jarl sits at one end of the table, on a beautifully carved and imposing chair; to his right, a smaller but still precious chair is empty, although its horn is full of beer and its plate laden with food as if its owner was to join the feast shortly.

To the left of the Jarl sits Thorgest, almost unrecognizable. His face is twisted and consumed by exhaustion, he looks like he aged years in but a week, his body is weak and frail, and his gaze is shrouded in despair, sadness or perhaps resignation. He looks into his bowl of soup with little interest, silently, immersed in his thoughts.

The Jarl will signal to the group to sit by Thorgest and will welcome them with an apology:

*"I must offer you my apologies for ever doubting you. You came back, alive and well, and gave a demonstration of the courage and the*

*generosity of Uppsala to the people of the nearby kingdoms. Both Thorgest and I are really eager to hear what you've got to tell us... but first, you must hear Thorgest's news."*

Thorgest will lay down his spoon, sigh loudly, then raise his head and fix his cold, blue eyes onto the characters, one by one, explaining:

*"The Ritual... the one that kept me busy for an entire week, consuming my energies, my spirit, and my life force... was alas an utter failure".*

The Jarl interrupts him and lays a hand on his shoulder

*"Don't say that, you made some progress. Seeing how much you devoted yourself to this matter, I cannot but admit that there may be a problem that goes beyond mere divinations"*

Thorgest lowers his head for a moment and continues

*"What I managed to understand is that an entire Aett, the one presided by our Lady Freya, is beyond our divinations. And the most curious thing is... for the life of me, I cannot name a single rune that was included in that Aett. And I bet neither you can. The Jarl says he has a faint memory of a rune that was supposed to be a good omen and fortune in some sense, and that was the rune he so ardently wanted to obtain... but it is as if those runes have been erased from our memory... and from reality. I don't know how that could happen. Those runes have vanished from writings, engravings, and even our satchels, leaving behind just dust."*

The Jarl turns serious, and for a moment he looks at the empty chair to his right, he sighs and concludes

*"We will find an explanation, now let's eat. Tomorrow is a new day."*

**Rewards:** the characters obtain 1800 XP each. They can keep with them anything they found on their quest and that they scavenged off Jask and his men, as listed below.

- A greataxe with the blade shaped like a grinning face, it belonged to Jask. When it strikes something hard, like another weapon, a shield or a solid surface, the sound that it makes resonates almost like Jask's crazed laughter. Or maybe, it's all in the character's heads...
- Several weapons and armor sets of terrible quality and worth nothing... but usable. They belonged to Jask's men.
- Loot inside a small chest: 420 sp, 80 cp, precious gems (total worth: 150 gp).
- A mysterious bone disc, obtained from a skull, engraved with arcane glyphs: an **Intelligence (Arcana)** check with **DC 12** identifies it as the equivalent of a scroll of the spell blindness/deafness.
- A set of bandages that emanate a faint magical aura if examined with Detect Magic; if used to stabilize a fallen creature, the bandages animate and fasten on the wound on their own. This means they can be used as a Bonus Action. The set contains enough bandages for 8 uses.

## 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.

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Dare you face the Rune Thief?

# APPENDIX

## JASK BONESHREDDER

### JASK BONESHREDDER

*Medium humanoid (human), chaotic dishonorable*

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

**Armor Class** 13 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)

**Speed** 30 ft

**Senses** Passive perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Reckless.** At the start of its turn, Jask can gain advantage on all melee weapon Attack rolls during that turn, but Attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

#### ACTIONS

**Grinning Axe.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d12 + 3) slashing damage.

#### BONUS ACTIONS

**Awaken the Runes:** a bright rune lights up on Jask's forehead. He is granted one of the following effects, at random. These effects last 1 minute, except those that state a different duration.

D8	EVENTS
1	Gains +1 to ability checks and saving throws.
2	Gains Advantage on attacks against targets with a Strength score lower than his. Has Disadvantage on attacks against targets with a Strength score higher than his.
3	Reduce damage taken by 1.
4	Gain Inspiration. (* lasts 1 minute or until spent).
5	Ignore difficult terrain; as part of the Action used to Awaken the Runes, he can move half his speed.
6	Whenever he fails on an attack or saving throw, he gains Advantage to the next roll of the same type.
7	Choose one allied and willing creature within 30 ft, add together the HP of the user and of the target, and divide them equally among the two. (*instantaneous effect)
8	Gains Advantage on saving throws if adjacent to at least one ally.

## JASK BONESHREDDER

*"I will wear your skins and dine on your flesh, you unworthy worms! You will crawl among your own entrails begging for my mercy."*

**Description:** Jask is 7ft tall, and weighs more than 250 lbs. He is extremely muscular, and has shaven hair on the sides while the rest is gathered in a ponytail on the back of his head. He wears just some piece of fur clothing, leaving both his arms and legs mostly naked. He wears a crude necklace made of human jawbones, and on his fur cloak are sewn the faces of many of his victims: men, women, even children. He wields a greataxe shaped like a grinning face; its curved blade is perfect for cleaning the flesh right off the bones of the defeated enemies.

**Roleplaying Jask:** Jask is crazed, bloodthirsty, savage warrior. He enjoys inflicting pain on his victims, both physical pain and psychological pain. He is by no means brilliant, but he shows a certain primal cunning. He won't hesitate to hide behind hostages or his own men in combat. He loves close quarter combat, because that's where he can feel the warm blood spilling all over his face. Jask respects only one thing: strength, power. He is the strongest of his tribe, that's why he rules unquestioned. He worships the Rune Thief for granting him even more power, and think he will one day become a king here in the Fenmark, ruling like a tyrant over its weak and scared people. He does not realize that his role in the Rune Thief plan is already spent: he is but an obstacle and a distraction left behind to hinder those who would hunt down the Rune Thief.

**Jask's Goals:** At the moment, Jask's primary goal is to impress Ydreg, the Rune Thief, so that he is granted even more power and he will be able to rule over the Fenmark. To impress Ydreg, he shows off his violence and ferocity at the expense of the village of Flaugunbarr, waiting for his master to return.



*Jask Boneshredder*



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