

# **CREDITS**

JOURNEY TO RAGNAROKis 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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# FROZEN TEARS

Journey To Ragnarok: The Rune Thief Adventure #2: Frozen Tears

For characters of 2nd 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, 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.





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.

#### **RUNES STOLEN SO FAR**

01-Fehu, 06-Kenaz, 08-Wunjo.

## IN PREVIOUS ADVENTURES

The characters witnessed a divination ritual that displeased the Jarlr once more and learned that he was waiting for a famed rune master from Skjult Borg. As the wise diviner was late and the weather was getting worse, one of the servants of the Jarlr advised the characters to meet up with Thorgest, to make sure he got to Uppsala safely. Unfortunately, a feral pack of wolves had attacked Thorgest, the only survivor of his group of travelers, who took shelter in a cave to recover from his wounds. The characters rescued him and led him to Uppsala, much to the joy of the Jarlr who hopes to receive the response he wishes from the gods.

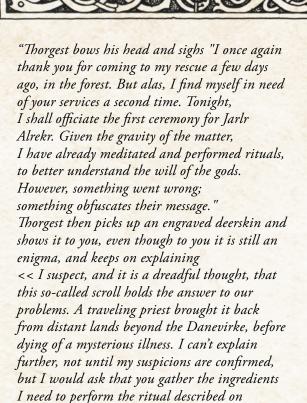


# INTRODUCTION

Read or paraphrase the following text:

"The city of Uppsala awakes this morning dressed in a white mantle of snow. The branches of the great ash tree thrash around, shaken by the icy northern wind, sprinkled with snowflakes: is this perhaps an omen of troubles and uncertainties? Lonely figures walk to and from the temple, hiding underneath thick furs and heavy winter cloaks since today is a day of the ceremony here in Uppsala. You immediately spot Thorgest Ulfus-Hjarta, Wolf-Heart, the new priest and diviner, among them; he is wearing his signature wolf pelt, and his quick stride betrays he might be worried about something. He is walking right towards you. He invites you to follow him with a gesture, and he leads you to his house in the Priests' Camp. He opens the door to this humble dwelling and lets you in. His dwelling is rustic and straightforward; you notice a series of tiny sealed jars and flasks lined in an orderly way upon a long shelf, a table with weird instruments, a mortar and some bizarre pieces of what looks like dried deerskin, flattened and whitened, all adorned with runes and symbols you cannot quite decipher."

Those are, of course, scrolls and writings from faraway lands, that will look obvious to the eyes of GM and Players but should be something that puzzles a Norseman, as their culture relied on oral rather than written stories.



Thorgest will not share the contents of the scroll or the goal of the ritual described in it. He will just explain that he hopes he is wrong because otherwise, a grumpy Jarlr will be the least of problems for Uppsala and Midgardr.

this scroll and that you do so before tonight's

ceremony.>>"

## **INGREDIENTS FOR THE RITUAL**

The ingredients Thorgest needs for his new ritual are the following:

- 12 leaves of **Sea Dagger**, a natural herb that grows on the shore, feeding on salty water. It has very tough leaves shaped like a spear-head.
- A good quantity of **Deadweed**: a dark, thin seaweed that gathers in big and tangled balls that end up snagged on the sharpest rocks and where the current converges.

It should be clear that these are ingredients to be found on the icy coast North of Uppsala, but in any event, Thorgest himself will point the party in the right direction. Also, a **Wisdom** (**Nature**) **DC 10** check may be enough for a character to identify that area as the ideal place to find those ingredients.





# PART I

The characters will likely head North without wasting any time (it's late morning, and they've only got the afternoon to gather the ingredients before evening).

The adventurers have 8 hours to complete their mission and return to Thorgest.

This time around, unlike the previous module (*The Rune Thief: Blood Stained Snow*), the characters will have to worry about providing their own rations, winter clothes and things that may be useful for their trip to the coast.

In Uppsala, the PCs can buy some dried codfish pieces at the northern Travelers' Camp, for 5 silver pieces (each counts as a ration). Alternatively, at the other Travelers' Camp to the South, they can buy some nutritious Blóðmör: a traditional dish made of sheep's blood, very caloric and beneficial; a portion costs 1 gold pieces and counts as a ration.

**Note for the Game Master:** this food grants +1 to saving throws made to resist the effects of cold climates (for the day); it can also be used as bait to lure predators. Also, it is possible to buy equipment, clothes, furs, and cloaks, and it's up to the GM to decide what is up for sale and for how much it is sold.

When the characters leave Uppsala and head North, read this aloud or paraphrase:

"The wind doesn't show any signs of calming down, and you struggle to move forward against it. After about 15 minutes along the main road, you spot a rock, about 3 ft tall, inscribed with a symbolic representation of waves. From that point, a less traveled path diverges and points towards the sea. Following this path, you can't help but notice how the little vegetation that manages to live on this harsh, rocky and cold soil leaves you exposed to the weather much more than the houses and the trees near Uppsala. After about 1 hour, you find a little patch of forest that promises a little respite from the elements, just as you begin to feel hungry. This could be an excellent opportunity to stop and have lunch."

At this point, the PCs that are not wearing winter clothing must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, suffering one level of Exhaustion upon failure. Remember that those who consume Blóðmör for lunch have a +1 bonus to this and all subsequent saving throws made against the cold temperatures. These saving throws must be repeated every hour that passes without wearing winter clothes, and the DC increases by 1 each time. In the forest, the characters can find berries or hunt small game with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check, rolled with disadvantage because of the dense mist.

If a PC for any reason does not have lunch, they immediately take one level of Exhaustion as the intense cold crushes their spirit and consumes their energies.

Moving within the forest is made all the harder by the thick fog:

#### 1. Forest Mist

The small forest is shrouded in fog that the howling appears not to be strong enough to lift and visibility is reduced to a few feet, forcing travelers to move with caution. To keep their heading in the mist, each character must pass a **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** check. If they tie themselves together with rope, only the one at the head of the column must roll for the whole group.

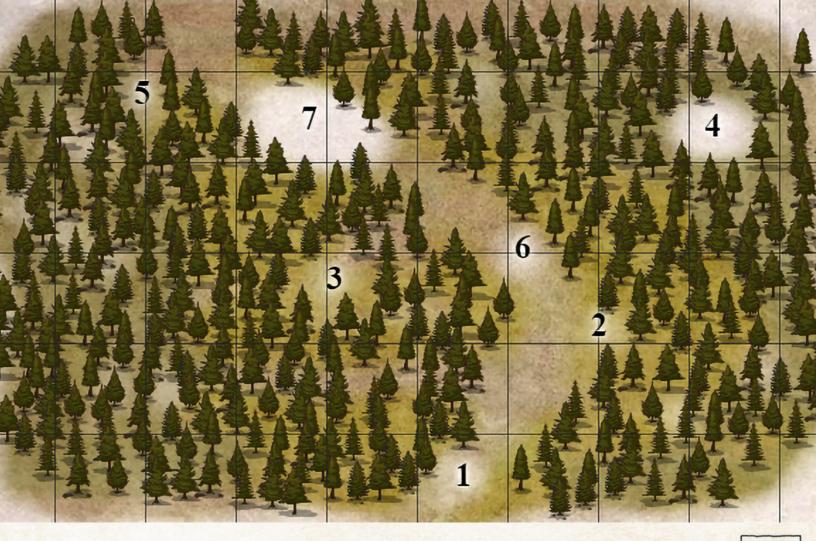
On a failure, the character heads in a random direction, chosen by the GM; shouting and calling help in reuniting with stray party members, but it also attracts the spirits that haunt the forest (see encounter 7).

#### 2. A rusty sword in the snow

The characters find a skeletal hand grasping a rusty sword, barely visible under the snow. It does not bear any symbols, and it is absolutely ordinary. It can be used straight away, but its damage is reduced by 1. It can be repaired by a blacksmith in just a few hours for 5 gold pieces, and restored to full functionality.

#### 3. What remains of the fire

the characters find the remains of a previous campfire. There are already stones in a circle where you can light a fire, and rocks and tree stumps to use as shelter or as seats. There is also a little woodpile covered in snow you can probably handle.



## 4. Three Ravens

The black corpses of three ravens, probably frozen to death, lie on the ground in the middle of a small clearing. Should the characters pay their respects to the Ravens, perhaps burning their bodies or burying them, with a prayer to Odhinn, the GM may grant Inspiration.

# 5. A Shivering Fisherman

In the clearing, the PCs spot a small tent and a flickering campfire. Inside the tent, there sits a fisherman that was going back to Uppsala. He didn't fish anything, as he ran away as soon as he saw something grab his oar from below the water... he let go of the paddle and got back to the shore as fast as he could. The fisherman will gladly share his fire and tent with the PCs, but there is not really space for more than two people inside, and he has no food to share.

# 6. A mysterious traveler

Face down in the snow, there lies a corpse. It wears a bright ocher-colored fur, of excellent make (counts as winter clothing). If the body's turned to face up, they could see it's a young man, about 30 years old, clean shaved, with brown hair tied into a ponytail. He's holding his side, where a dagger is still stuck deep, while his

face is frozen in a grimace of pain and suffering. The dagger is a mundane weapon that breaks if extracted. However its hilt is somewhat precious: it's silver, it can sell for as high as 10 gp, and it bears a mysterious script (**Intelligence Check DC 15** to decipher: "Bonne Nuit", Goodnight in the language of the French.

## 7. The spirits of the campfire

The smoke created by the campfire catches the attention of otherworldly, evil creatures that make their way to Midgardr through tiny and ephemeral tears in the veil that separates this world and Muspelheimr (the world of the primordial fire). Three Smoke Mephit hide above in the tree canopy and begin whispering to the characters with sweet voices "We are the spirits of this clearing, raise your hands to the sky and thank us for the shelter we are providing you". When the characters do so (or in any case, should they not obey), two of the three mephit use their Breath attack to blind the characters. The three of them will then move in and attack, focusing on one character at a time, favoring those who are blinded. The third mephit keeps its Breath attack to cover their escape or blind again the characters that regained their sight on the following turn.



**Time spent in the forest:** 1 hour, plus 1 if the group foraged for food, plus 10 minutes for each encounter (for a maximum of 1 extra hour). Once the party has managed to leave the forest, read or paraphrase what follows:

"The path starts to suddenly bend downward, getting steeper, until you reach a cliff overlooking the sea. Looking ahead, you spot the frozen shore and the rocky bay where you hope to find what you're looking for."

The descent takes 1 hour, and a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to go down without problems. In the event of a failure, the character falls, stumbles, slips or scratches against rocks along the way: this means they suffer 1d6+1 bludgeoning damage going down and must roll again. The group may decide to go down slowly and carefully, taking 1 extra hour, but obtaining an automatic success.

**Time spent:** 1 hour, plus 1 more if the group took their time to scale the cliff down..

# PART 2

"The shore is rocky and snowy. Large sheets of ice cover the sea for about 50 feet, the point where they break and fragment in smaller pieces floating like rafts at the mercy of the currents. On the shore, you can see some vegetation, small bushes, and maritime plants, coated by sleet and bent on a side due to the wind. What remains of a boat lies ahead, like the shell of a large walnut."

#### 1. Plants

With a **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature)** check the PCs can immediately recognize the Sea Dagger, with its small white berries and the dark green leaves, shaped like a spearhead. Most of the plants have been ruined by the elements, and the leaves look too damaged to be of any use. However, here and there you can find some in good condition for the ritual.



## 2. The Ship

The rotting wooden keel of a Knarr (see *Journey To Ragnarok - Battles Beyond the Sea*), breached in many points with pieces of wood dangling inside the dark entrails of the boat. If the characters get closer or lift the ship, they will scare off all the little critters that have taken shelter within this wreck, in addition to the 4 frozen zombies that once were its crew.

Obviously, the boat is in no condition to set sail again.

#### 3. The Ice

Up to the first 20ft, the ice is solid and thick. Lest they act recklessly, the PCs do not risk the ice breaking under their weight. Further ahead, however, it gets weaker. From 20ft to 40ft from the shore, each character must succeed at a **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check to move at half speed; this check is at Disadvantage should the PC weigh more than 200 lbs (including any equipment they are carrying). Beyond 40ft, the DC for this check increases to **15**.

A PC that fails a check, slips and falls prone. If the check was failed by 5 or more, the ice breaks and the PC falls in the dark and icy water beneath.

Falling into the water calls for a DC 15 Constitution

save each round they spend there. On a failure, the PC succumbs to hypothermia and suffers 1d4 cold damage; they do not have to take the saving throw anymore but suffer 1d4 cold damage every round until they dry up.

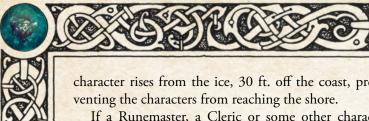
A PC that drops to 0 HP due to hypothermia is considered stabilized; however, they will die after 1 hour.

To get back up on the ice sheet the PC must make a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check with disadvantage, as the bank is slippery and unstable.

#### 4. Frozen Tears

A frozen corpse hangs onto the ice, 50 ft. Off the shore. Only its top half is left, the rest eaten by fish or crabs, and clutches a medallion with a bright ruby in its dead hands. Upon closer inspection, the jewel is worth 100 gold pieces or more, if brought to a royal court. However, acquiring the trinket is not easy; the moment a character grabs it, the skeletal remains of the corpse fall into the water, breaking the ice bank and imposing a **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check to the character. On a failed check, the character falls into the water as the ice cracks beneath their feet. In the meanwhile, one **Draugr of the Last Winter** per





character rises from the ice, 30 ft. off the coast, pre-

If a Runemaster, a Cleric or some other character proficient in the Asatru skill is dragged into the waters, they receive a vision. If it does not happen, then the vision is received when the group investigates the Draugr corpses. Black, glossy algae are entangled on one of the bodies, that the characters recognize as Deadweed by passing a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check; although it is insufficient for Thorgest's ritual, it is a clue to find more.

The character has the following vision:

"You find yourself aboard a medium-sized vessel, the sea is furious, and the sky is roaring with thunder and lightning in this stormy night. There are other four men with you on the boat, soaking wet and exhausted, trying in vain to maneuver the vessel. You look at your own hands, and they are callous and ruined by the cold and the salt water; your clothes are simple, and you see that on board you have some fishing nets, depressingly empty. You are distracted for a second, and the boat gets pushed towards the reef. You hit a rock, and you lose the grip on your oar. After that, the ship is entrapped into a small eddy, and the currents drag you with no remorse inside a small crevice in the rocks, a dark cavern with sharp and dangerous walls. You spot large bundles of dark, hair-like seaweed, almost like long black hair wet and tangled, snagged on the rocks and the shore."

If the PC successfully made the DC 13 Wisdom (Asatru) check, the vision continues: "Your gaze moves inside the darkness of this damp cavern, where suddenly two yellow, menacing points of light scare you. "

The vision moves away at blinding speed, exiting the cave, from whence resound the terrifying cries of the fishermen and who knows what abomination.

A character that succeeds at the Asatru check and gets to see the whole vision can immediately pull a rune from their satchel. Keep in mind that Fehu, Kenaz, and Wunjo have been stolen so they cannot be the result (see the Rune Theft paragraph).

The characters, at this point, have obtained the Sea Dagger and an important clue as to where they can find the Deadweed: inside a grotto by the sea. Although it appears there are no grottoes in sight, the character who had the vision is sure they need to be looking in another fjord nearby.

Time spent on the ice: 30 minutes plus 30 minutes if they recovered the medallion.

# PART 3

Read loud or paraphrase:

"You resume your walking along the path that brought you to this fjord, and soon you can turn towards the sun that struggles to shine behind the opaque veil of cold clouds, as grey as the stone. You are walking along the wind-ravaged coast, when you spot someone struggling to march against the wind, taking with them a large basket. Every now and then, the person kneels to pick up something from the shore or to make a small branch off a bush.

It's an old lady, with her wrinkly face that bears testimony to years of cold, wind and suffering."

The old lady will say her name is Yrma: she lives in a small hut on the shore, not far away, where she lived with her husband, a fisherman who didn't survive the winter. Now she keeps on crafting small tokens and lucky charms with what she gathers on the shore, to sell them in the city every now and then, or barter with travelers.

She shows her baubles: the characters will spot right away that they are cheap bracelets and necklaces, but that the string is made of Deadweed. She tries to sell these lucky charms to the characters: 1 gp for a bracelet, or 3gp for a necklace. She begs them to help her, as she is so old and it's all she can do to survive.

If the PC ask, the old lady will accept to take them to the cave where she finds the Deadweed. The old lady is actually an evil sea hag that lives in that grotto. She wanders on the coast to lure travelers and fishermen. She tries to seduce the PCs to her den.

If the characters believe her story and let her take them to the cave, this is easily reached from the coast, walking carefully along a rocky ledge no wider than 2 feet. A robe is tied to some pitons and offers muchneeded support to cross the ledge without fear.

Once cleared the ledge and descended to the pavement of the sea grotto, the old lady will offer her hand to the characters to help them get down. The characters will note how cold and eerily humid is her hand.

The inside of the cave is cold, dark and littered with pieces of wood, algae and other flotsam taken there by the currents. On the rocks just out of the water, there are large bundles of Deadweed. The carcass of a medium-sized vessel lies upside down just a few yards away.

As soon as the characters have all entered the grotto and are busy climbing on the cave's sides above the water to gather the Deadweed, (**DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check to avoid falling off), the old lady shows her true Sea Hag form and attacks. The most disturbing thing is her long, black and soaking wet hair... just like Deadweed!

She will attempt to overpower the least armored character with her claws, then she will try to use her Deadly Gaze to shut down in a single blow those that appear better armed and healthy. She is a cruel and cunning monster, and she realizes she is at a disadvantage: she won't hesitate to jump into the water to then re-emerge and use guerrilla tactics.

If at any moment the characters should grow suspicious of the old lady and force her hand, she will reveal her true, horrifying form, and try to get the party by surprise.

In the grotto, under the upside-down boat, there is a pile of human bones, some rags and the little personal belongings of her victims. Under the pile, however (**DC** 12 Intelligence (Investigation)) the hag has hidden a handful of pearls of various sizes (total value 25 gold pieces) and a short sword of good craftsmanship (twice the market value), on top of some 2d6 gold pieces she acquired from selling her baubles.

Once the sea hag is killed and the characters have their Deadweed, they are now free to get back to Uppsala.

#### Time passed: 1 hour.

The trip to Uppsala traces back the steps the group took arriving. It takes them 1 hour to go back to where the path climbs up from the coast. Then 1 hour to climb from there and, eventually, 1 more hour to Uppsala.

Time passed: 3 hours.



# Did the PCs take 8 hours or less to complete their quest?

If so, they will be welcomed with open arms by Thorgest, who thanks them warmly and gift them with a Healing Potion (2d4+2) and a healer's kit with 10 uses.

He will explain that the ritual will require several days of meditation, but that in the meantime he will be able to inform the Jarlr before today's ceremony about these last developments. He will ask the Jarlr to pay the PCs for their services to the temple, and one of the Jarlr's servants will show up come morning to give them 50 gold pieces and a small keg of honey-beer.

# Did the PCs take more than 8 hours to complete their quest?

If so, Thorgest won't be able to hide his disappointment. He had to let down the Jarlr, during today's ceremony, where he wasn't able to divine whatever rune the Jarlr was hoping for. Thorgest couldn't help but notice that the Jarlr appeared to be somewhat elusive... as if he wouldn't say exactly WHICH rune he really wanted. He merely complained about the rune he got (Hagalaz, the "interruption of a pattern"). At that point, Thorgest left to avoid confrontation.

He, however, does not blame the PCs and thanks them. "A grumpy Jarlr is the least of our problems, I fear. Here, this is what I can afford to pay you today: unfortunately I dare not ask the Jarlr to empty the town's coffers to pay you more."

Thorgest will then hand them a healer's kit with 10 uses, a small keg of honey-beer, and 25 gold pieces. He will explain that the ritual will require several days of meditation and that he will keep them informed as to the results he will get.





## 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/browse/pub/12301/ Mana-Project-Studio

#### Italian Edition: NeedGames!

https://www.needgames.it/categoria-prodotto/ journey-to-ragnarok/

Dare you face the Rune Thief?

# **APPENDIX**

## DRAUGR OF THE LAST WINTER

# DRAUGR OF THE LAST WINTER

Medium Undead, any chaotic

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	СНА
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 32 (4d8+12) Speed 30ft (swim 20ft)

Damaga Immunities C

Damage Immunities Cold, Poison Conditions Immunity Poisoned Damage Vulnerabilities Fire

Senses Darkvision 18m, Passive Perception 8

Languages can't talk Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

**Undead Fortitude.** If damage reduces the Draugr to 0 Hit Points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5+the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant, fire or from a critical hit. On a success, the Draugr drops to 1 hit point instead.

#### **AZIONI**

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) slashing damage. If it hits with this attack, the Draugr can immediately attempt to grapple the target.

#### **REAZIONI**

**Drag into the Abyss.** If the Draugr of the Last Winter is within 5 ft. of a body of water or a river and they are hit by a melee weapon attack, the Draugr grabs onto that weapon and delves into the water. The owner of the weapon must pass a **DC 13 Strength** saving throw to avoid getting dragged down by the Draugr. Alternatively, they can opt to let go of their weapon and not to roll the check.

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