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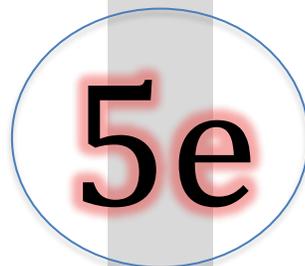
# FOR THE JARL!

In a world filled with raging seas, frigid storms and Loki's influence dwells two Northland settlements.

A powerful one, and yours, the luckless Ligr.

But today, the plight of your ill-regarded Northlands tribe will change. For it is foretold! Today you will take up arms against your powerful neighbor and attempt to banish your tribe's ill-favored luck. For the jarl!

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A unique module for  
Dungeons & Dragons'  
5<sup>th</sup> edition

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For monsters, we’ve either created them from common creature templates or recommended you to use some from our favorite publishers, Kobold Press.

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## **ABOUT THE ADVENTURE**

In a world filled with raging seas, frigid storms and Loki's influence dwells two Northland settlements. One of them swells with the riches of countless, successful raids; the other one stewes on its perpetual bad luck and paltry earnings. For the latter group, there is no gold, nor bejeweled treasures secured away in locked chests, just rusty, copper pieces. And few of

them! The adventurer and their hardy band are part of this ill-regarded Northland tribe, the Ligr. But today, the plight of their tribe will change. For it is foretold! Today the Ligr's shaman will call upon a small warband to ask one question: Will they take up arms against their powerful neighbor and forever banish their tribe's ill-favored luck?

## **ADVENTURE OVERVIEW**

Here are special notes on the module:

- It is intended to take at least 15 hours to complete;
- It has been written to accommodate all player levels in 5<sup>th</sup> edition Dungeons and Dragons; GMs will have to change creatures and some conditions depending on player levels;
- We have provided monster recommendations, including stats for a

couple of homemade creatures, as well as where to find others in different 5e publications.

- Locations are loosely described in most parts of this module as Heroes B&B gamers play 5<sup>th</sup> edition with a multimedia package of high-detailed maps and sound systems.

## **ADVENTURE BACKGROUND & HISTORY**

Ligr is a Northlands settlement located on a chain of small, rocky islands. It is covered most of the year by ice and the entire year by an unbreakable spell of bad luck. The spell is hardly magical, just the outcome of living in largely unlivable land that provides little in terms of resources, besides the plentiful cod caught in their tides. There is naught for iron here, nor much wood, even the skinny sheep are sparse. The Ligr trade their catch of cod to a much larger settlement of Northmen called the Bjarni. The Bjarni are located, with an aiding wind, two days away by sea-going boat. Even though the

settlements are close, the two Northland tribes are worlds away in terms of living conditions and prosperity. The Bjarni live on a vast mainland amongst towering trees and have resources aplenty, enough that the smaller, scrawnier men of Ligr say the Bjarni - meaning "the bear" in Norse - could hibernate through the fall and winter and still have enough food and ale to survive comfortably the next spring. Not surprisingly, the Bjarni are a strong, physically imposing people, rich in their history of successful raiding in the. Both Northland

settlements are made up of primarily humans but other races dwell here as well.

Because the Bjarni prefer to raid than to spend the long summer days of the North catching fish, they do trade with the Ligr. So there is familiarity between the tribes, but certainly not friendship, nor any reason for pleasantries. For one Northlands tribe represents a mighty, full-grown bear and the other a scrawny, sliver of a mouse. The mice, the Ligr, harbor resentment for their life, but most see their plight as a result of their inability to successfully raid other lands. The Ligr, physically, are mostly a smaller folk. They are tough and resourceful but lack adequate equipment. Their arms and armor are known to break under the slightest stress.

The Ligr live in a series of villages located in the center of their islands, as far away from the sea and its dangers as possible. The largest of the villages houses the jarl, a blacksmith of sorts, and crudely built, small housing structures.

The Ligr are ruled by two forces: Their living ruler, the jarl Destin, and their communicator with the gods, Asmund the volva. Destin the jarl was destined for greatness, a pearl among the scrawny men of Ligr. As a youth, he seized greatness by the hand, besting a man-eating shark, longer than he was tall, in one-on-one combat in the waters off Ligr. For this, he was given his tribal name: Destin, meaning "Determined for Greatness" in Norse. But the Ligr's streak of ill luck endured and the newly named Destin was unable to overcome his

shark-battle injuries. Though he remained strong of heart, Destin never went raiding. Still he was named the Ligr's jarl as the prized shark hide was sold to the Bjarni and from this the jarl was able to supply a small party (the PCs) with suitable weapons and armor. Destin is now past his prime and hobbles from his long-ago injuries. Still his heroics and fame endure.



Asmund the volva is a lean man, like most Ligr, and old. So old most won't even guess his age. But his voice still carries formidable weight with his people, not to mention the actual pitch of his voice still sounds like that of a man in his prime. Through the years, Asmund has shown the ability to foretell the fates of his tribe. His ability to track the location of the precious cod - the popular, savory fish of the islands - have proved to be extremely beneficial to his people. Recently, the Ligr gave their volva a gift for his remarkable visions - the tribal name of "Asmund," meaning the "Divine Protector" in Norse. This recent event, one of the few celebrations the Ligr have had in years, will lead to the PCs' possible downfall, for the celebration caught the attention of Loki the god himself. Two nights ago, Loki came to Asmund in the depths of the night and smothered the volva in his sleep. He has since possessed the volva's body and now will set in motion a plan

of chaos that will embroil both Northland settlements. And the Ligr, and the PCs, will

never be the same again.

### **GM/PLAYER POSSIBILITIES:**

If players want to, they could play this module in a “hard mode” scenario where PCs’ armors and arms follow Ligr custom - ie, are likely to break in combat. (50% chance of arms/armor breaking during combat) To reward their bravery, GMs could offer the PCs a magical item, in addition to the gold, they receive for the sea monster carcass they bring to the Bjarni in the second part of this module.

Consider a PC variant race for the Ligr that would include 1) increased Dex or Con but decreased Str; 2) advantage on athletic swim checks; and 3) no disadvantage on melee attacks underwater. We recommend you not limit the Ligr races as it’s possible this tribe of mostly humans could have taken slaves/prisoners of other races from past raids.

### **ADVENTURE OUTLINE:**

Introduction: Description of the Ligr, the Bjarni and the region. (This is provided above)

Activity: GM prologue

Part one: The PCs meet with the volva and the jarl in an experience that will shape the rest of the adventure.

Activity: RP

Part two: To sea! ... and to battle. PCs meet fellow islanders then take on dangerous sea creature at famed fishing grounds.

Activity: RP, combat

Part three: Reward ... PCs travel to the Bjarni harbor and set in motion the volva’s foretelling. Here they meet a merchant who has important, later-game connections.

Activity: RP

Part four: Surprise attack! .. and defeat: PCs are surprised as their ambush back-fires. Can they get out alive?

Activity: Combat



Asmund, the Ligr’s volva

Part five: Return ... The PCs return to Ligr, only to find their village under siege. They will find the jarl’s son on a boat, floating aimlessly off the island. The boy will have a note from the jarl, asking the PCs to find a way to get the gods’ favor

and reclaim their homelands.

Activity: RP, possible combat

Part six: Back to the Bjarni: To get the gods’ favor, they must divine how to do so - and the only way one capable of speaking to the gods is the Bjarni’s shaman.

Activity: RP

Part seven: The cave of the gods: The PCs make it to the Bjarni’s shaman and discover the incredibly daunting task necessary to gain the gods’ attention and favor.

Activity: Combat

Part eight: Return to Ligr’s island: The PCs return to their island and confront the evil presence that claims their homeland.

Activity: Combat



## PART ONE: It is foretold!

The PCs are invited by the jarl and the volva (actually Loki in hiding) to a secluded place

where the volva is known to hold his prophecies. This site is on one of the smaller, unpopulated islands of the Ligr. The prophecy is held atop a rocky plateau that overlooks the sea. A gnarled tree, bent and lifeless, stands like a sentinel here. Only the jarl, the volva and the PCs are in attendance.

The weather, threatening rain, holds for this meeting. Even a slight breeze that ripples the water ceases after the fake volva sits on his sacred spot and gives the PCs a false prophecy. The prophecy is this: They, and they alone, have the power to end the misery of the Ligr. Just as confidently as Asmund can detect the movement and location of the island's fish population, he will tell the PCs that he has foreseen their rise as true heroes in a series of visions.

BEFORE AND AFTER the telling of the visions, there should be the following clues that foreshadow the Asmund impostor:

- Before the visions begin, Asmund will, as he always does, ask the PCs to close their eyes and keep them closed to allow the visions to become clear for him. The PCs will be warned: If they open their eyes, they risk scaring the spirit visions away and thus fouling the foretelling. (Out of character - The PCs should close their eyes during this time. If any of them open their eyes, they will see the jarl's closed eyes moving strangely, back and forth, and his head twitching slightly. When the visions end and the jarl and PCs open their eyes,

the jarl will remember nothing of his strange behavior.)

- The PCs have been involved in such prophecies with the jarl and the volva before in this same location - three previous times over their lifetime. Have the players roll 3 d20s. Count the number of rolls that are 15 and over. (Add their perception modifier to the rolls.) This is the number of times that the PCs have felt, during previous foretellings, a mystical "spirit touch" of embrace - a breeze of cold air that hits and lingers upon their face. This "spirit touch" is not always felt by the PCs at each foretelling but it is somewhat common. It is thought this spirit embrace is a sign of good luck so it is often discussed after the foretelling. This time, however, nobody will feel the spirit embrace. (Have them roll checks but nobody will feel it)

THE VISIONS the fake Asmund (Loki in disguise) will relate are these:

- The PCs are sailing the Ligr's lone sea-going boat in rising seas, heading directly west, toward "Heit Feigr," rarely visited fishing grounds that are known to attract dangerously large predators. In Norse, this site is known as "Promised Death." The vision shows the PCs arriving at these grounds and then time passing. Clouds pass overhead, the sun descends, the moon rises and then ... a gentle stirring of the water from the depths transforms swiftly into a swirling, enraged sea of thrashing limbs and flashes of fist-sized, jagged teeth. The Ligr's boat begins violently rocking back and forth and a

call rings out, "To arms!" ....

... this vision fades and is replaced by another ...

- A vast, windy harbor, with dozens of boats moored to docks, each of them larger and better built than the Ligr's. Within this harbor, a handful of boats move swiftly over the tame sea. Two of these boats crystalize in the vision: a Bjarni longboat, with a red dragon head perched upon its bow. Within this boat, warriors lift ale-filled warhorns and sing bawdy songs of victory as a vast treasure of raid riches is strewn around their feet. Then the vision focuses on the Ligr's boat, shabby in comparison and barely afloat for it holds on its side an immense sea creature carcass, tied to the boat by thick ropes. The songs of the Bjarni warriors are diminished slightly as a throng of Bjarni merchants, on a nearby piece of land, sight the Ligr's boat and the carcass tied to it. Immediately the merchants react, running down to the harbor and upon the docks, gesturing to the Ligr and shouting out prices, bidding for the rights of this valuable creature.

... the vision disperses, and a last one appears ...

- A gold coin-filled chest, worn but of solid make, rests on the docked Bjarni longboat, moonlight glinting off it. The same moonlight, unburdened by cloud cover, also outlines a calm sea and an approaching smaller craft, the Ligr's. Upon the Bjarni longboat are unmoving, perhaps sleeping raiders, empty mead cups at their sides, and a vast treasure of coins, gems and even strangely

glinting armor. A fortune of treasure. Enough treasure to right the wrongs of the Ligr people, you think. Silence engulfs this Bjarni vessel ... and then a rush of feet, across a narrow plank that stretches across a calm sea that separates the two boats ...

The PCs, Asmund foretells, will board the longboat, kill the few drunken Bjarni warriors, steal this vast treasure and return to their people, bearing the real prospects for a better tomorrow. And they will be heroes - true Ligr heroes!

Asmund will tell all this in a trance-like state ... and then awaken.

This foretelling is bound to surprise and even shock the PCs, for the Ligr have not openly fought their Northland neighbors in recent generations. The simple thought would be absurd since the Bjarni heavily outnumber the Ligr and best them in physical size, prowess in battle and not the least, equipment. Even shocked with this foretelling, the PCs don't have a choice, for their religious leader acts as a direct communicator to their gods. And what the gods want, the gods get!

The jarl Destin, meanwhile, reacts strongly in favor of these visions. In fact, he gleams with pride. The old Destin, the one that slayed the massive shark, awakens in spirit and he confidently tells the PCs that he feels so right about this foretelling that he will commit his entire fortune in wood to this task. (Remind the PCs that nearly all wood has to be imported to the Ligr islands so its value is immense.) He offers the following: The PCs can use his reserve of wood to: (pick only one of the below)

- rebuild the "belly" of Ligr's sea-going ship, so it becomes sturdier and faster;

- build up the sides of the Ligr's ship, so it becomes more defensible from fighting within;



## PART TWO: To sea! ... and to battle

The improvements to the boat will take a day.

During this time, the PCs can interact with NPC

islanders. (It is important for the PCs to develop a sense of their homeland.)

Key Ligr NPCs:

- **Cnute, lone son of Destin**, a lad of barely 6 summers but a favorite of the islanders for his musical voice and youth-like promises to wreak havoc on the Ligr's enemies. He is especially fond of the PCs, his father's warband, and attaches himself to them as often as he's allowed;
- **Hrut, "Old Fish Bones"**, the weathered Ligr blacksmith who uses sun-hardened mud nails and dried, sun-bleached fish bones to piece together armor and arms ... that rarely stay as one piece for long. Hrut, however, is confident and proud - his blacksmith skills have been handed down over generations and if it's "goo' enough for me father's father, it's goo' enough for the likes of 'ou!"
- **Finn the finder**: A fisherwoman of some fortune (for the Ligr at least). Physically, one would be hard-pressed to find a flaw with her charming features and her attractive, muscular tone. Finn, however, will take no man - much to the islanders' chagrin - as she was told as a youth her innate ability to find the precious pearls of the islands would be forever lost if she lay with a suitor.

- have their tribe's woodworker build the likeness of a sea god on the boat, hopefully granting them this god's favor in decisive moments of battle.

Finn's luck in finding pearls in recent weeks, however, has changed, even as her commitment against marrying has not. And Finn believes she knows why ... (Cnute can relay to this PCs but won't give them specifics)

- **Halvdan, fisherman**: Halvdan, meaning "half" in Norse, was given this name after being enslaved in one of the few, slightly successful raids the Ligr have managed in the past dozen years. Halvdan, given his name because he is considered half an islander by natives here, has lived half of his life in the Ligr islands. He is now in his mid-teens. Before that, he grew up with the races that dwell south of the Bjarni. The Ligr know little of these people, for their small sea-going vessels have a difficult time traversing the sea beyond the Bjarni mainland. Halvdan, only half-believed for his wild stories, claims that something is happening around the islands - the cod population has suddenly diminished. Other local fishermen will be hard-pressed to agree for "w'at's spoken is w'at comes true, and dat don't fill these 'ere nets, do it?"

After the improvements are done to the Ligr's boat, they set off for the fishing grounds. The start of the PCs' adventure foreshadows ominous tidings:

- In the hours before the Ligr's boat is launched, the tide and swells increase in strength, as if the sea goddess Ran

herself is acting directly against the party. Heightened swells - as large as the tallest member of the party - pound the vessel as the party tries to launch it from the beach, causing it to repeatedly be cast back on shore. Roll for exhaustion as this is tiring, draining work. Con save, DC 12.

- A storm follows the enraged seas and the PCs, even after they launch, are hit for hours by cold, pelting rains that normally are only experienced in the winter. Roll again for exhaustion. Con save, DC 12. Note: The PCs may not turn back, even with these harsh conditions, for the volva's foretelling was date-specific.

#### THE FISHING GROUNDS ...

"Heit Feigr," known in Norse as The Promise of Death, is rarely visited by the Ligr. They have lost too many boats and men over the years to this area. The location, well off the coast but strangely shallow in water depth (20-40 feet deep), attracts enormous schools of baitfish and the larger predators that prey on these schooling fish that often jump out of the water to avoid their hunters.

The location is hardly remarkable, being well off the rocky coastline. Only the PCs' knowledge of these seas guides them to this spot.

The PCs arrive at the fishing grounds after a day and night at sea - this will give them a chance to recover from the possible exhaustion of launching the boat. The day they arrive at the fishing grounds should proceed like the volva's prophecy - they will arrive at the location in the afternoon and wait. The sun will be overhead when they arrive, then slowly sink in the sky before setting, and the moon will rise and finally, hours later, but before dawn, the first hint of the massive creature will appear, as the foretelling told.

The PCs' aim is simple: Slay the predatory creature and retain its carcass. They will then rope the carcass to the side of their boat and travel to the Bjarni harbor, thus setting in motion the volva's prophecy.



The Ligr's lone sea-going boat

#### GM NOTES FOR BATTLE:

- Before the predator emerges, the PCs should see large sharks cruising the area. These are common to the area but not large enough to fulfill the volva's foretelling. Still, when any creature is bloodied (either PC or the sea creature itself) during combat, this should trigger the sharks to re-appear. Roll a d6 to determine number of sharks and another d4 to determine what round they appear after the PC or creature is bloodied in the water.
- Among their weapons, the PCs have a limited number of heavy spears with crude but effective barbs. Each spear has a thick rope of 50 ft. tied to it. When the spear hits the sea creature, it lodges into its side. The PC must then use its action to hold the rope on future combat rounds. The PCs could potentially tie the rope around themselves instead of holding the rope.

If they do this, require Str checks to ensure the PC is not pulled into the water from the strength of the creature the spear is lodged into; and/or Dex saves for the PC to successfully use another weapon while tied with the rope around them (wielding a weapon while being pulled by a strong creature is not easy!). If a PC is pulled into the water, they could untie the rope, but then lose the spear and the rope, making it harder to retrieve the dead creature. If they are holding the rope when they fall into the water and try to swim back – with the rope still tied to them - do a percentage roll. 49 and below and favor is with them as the creature is not pulling against them but preoccupied with something else. DC 10 Str save to make progress back to the boat. Percentage roll of 50 and above, the creature is indeed pulling against the PC. DC 15 St save to make progress back to the boat. If they fail, they sink 5 feet under water and are restrained there. Depending upon the size of the creature, the PCs must hit the creature with at least 2-3 spears to be able to retrieve the creature after it dies. (It can then be tied to the side of the boat and taken to the Bjarni harbor.)

- Do a percentage roll at the start of combat:  
-A roll of 49 and below and the creature will target the bottom of the boat for its first round of combat, ramming it and possibly causing it to spring a leak. Roll a second percentage roll - if its 49 or below again the boat has sprung a leak, assuming the players did not fortify the boat's belly with the jarl's wood supply. If the belly of the boat is reinforced with the new wood, there is no leak. If there is a leak, roll a D4. One player will

require that many rounds to repair the leak. If the PCs are shipwrights, consider halving the time it takes them to complete this task. After the first round of combat and the players do not try to fix a leak, roll 2 d4s. The boat will sink in that many rounds if the players do nothing.

-50 and above: The sea creature does not target the underbelly of the boat. It does however use a roll action as part of its combat maneuver, and a part of its body literally smacks into the side of the boat. If the PCs did not reinforce the side of the boat with the jarl's wood, the creature's body momentarily hangs on the side of the Ligr's boat, causing it to nearly go underwater. After a heartbeat or two of terror, the creature falls off, the boat rights itself, but not before rocking violently. Dex save, DC 12. Failure and players are knocked prone on the boat. A roll of 5 or less causes the PC to fall into the water. They then will be targeted by the sea creature on its next turn. If the PCs did reinforce the side of the boat with the jarl's wood, the creature's body smacks the side of the boat, but does not cause any damage.

## MONSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

### SEA CREATURE:

**Low tiers:** Kongmato, CR 5, *Tome of Beasts*, page 265

**High tiers:** Dragon eel, CR 12, *Tome of Beasts*, page 146)

### GREENLAND SHARK

Large beast, unaligned  
Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d10+18)  
Speed swim 20 ft.  
Str 18(+4) Dex 11 (+0) Con 17 (+3) Int 1(-5) Wis 10(0) Cha 4(-3)  
Skills Perception +2  
Senses darkvision 30 ft.  
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

**Stench** - The shark emits a foul odor any creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 10 constitution saving throw or become poisoned. After you have been affected by it, you become immune to the effect for 24 hours.



sea, reaching the Bjarni harbor on the third day. The sea travel is taxing - the poor weather of the first days of their journey endures for two more brutal days. More exhaustion Con saves, unless the PCs' used the jarl's wood for religious purposes. In this case, the god lends a hand.

Once they arrive, the PCs will, as always, take in the wealth of the Bjarni. It is staggering. Whereas the Ligr's harbor consists of a couple of old, deteriorating fishing boats mired in a kelp-infested area, this place is like a fairy tale. Dozens of boats lie at anchor, their proud and colored dragon heads leering confidently at those who dare pass by. Even the mere fishing boats here seem pristine compare to the Ligr's.

As the foretelling predicted, the PCs will arrive at the mouth of the harbor at roughly the same time a Bjarni longboat does. The other

### PART THREE: The reward

With their prize possession tied to the side of their boat, the PCs travel across the

**Toxic flesh** - Any creature that hits the Greenland shark with a natural attack or gets hit by a Greenland shark must make a DC 12 constitution saving throw or take 5(2d4) acid damage.

**Water Breathing** - The shark can breathe only underwater.

\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage plus toxic flesh.

craft dwarfs the Ligr's vessel, just as the Bjarni men do - they are taller and more physical striking than the PCs. The Bjarni men's bawdy songs of victory are easily heard across the narrow stretch of sea separating the boats. Equally evident is the results of their just-completed raid - gold coins, multi-colored gems, even glinting armor and glossy, silver helms are seen arranged haphazardly across the bottom of the Bjarni longboat. Initially, there are jeers from the Bjarni raiders as they sight the Ligr

boat, tilting over due to the massive weight its carrying: "What an au-vir-di! (Worthless wretch)" .. "Aye! I wouldn't let my three-legged, blind dog aboard that reki!" (Reki=Norse for wreckage) ... If the PCs steer their boat so the massive sea creature tied to the side becomes visible, the Bjarni warriors will quiet, and even grunt in approval.

The PCs' vessel will quickly fall behind the faster, larger Bjarni boat, which will dock at one end of the harbor, away from the merchant side of the harbor. The PCs watch the Bjarni raiders' boat dock but continue further into the harbor.



Frey Hakon

There, as the foretelling predicted, the PCs and more importantly what they possess are spotted by merchants standing at the edge of the harbor. These merchants descend upon the Ligr's boat, first asking the PCs if they will sell their valuable cargo (the sea creature carcass). If they do, as foretold, merchants will line the dock and begin bidding, in silver, for the large carcass. The winner will be a Bjarni merchant named Frey Hakon, meaning in Norse, "Lord, and highest son."

FREY HAKON is a respected, well-known merchant. His bearing – he is a massive man even for the Bjarni – suggests he was once a leader of raiders. His hair is braided, much like the raiders the PCs just saw in the longboat. However, Hakon's clothing is that of a merchant. He does bear a weapon upon his belt but it's obviously ceremonial. Hakon, as he approaches the PCs, is quick to congratulate them for their accomplishment in besting this sea creature. He will note, for the PCs ears only, that their accomplishment would be considered honorable for Ligr and Bjarni alike, a compliment rarely, if ever spoken, by a Bjarni. If the PCs respond to him in a positive manner, he will pause speaking, consider his next words carefully and then confess to the PCs in a whisper that he rarely visits the harbor. His house is a full day's travel away and it is only by the gods' will that he was here today. He will tell them that he was visited by the Bjarni shaman not two days ago. The shaman foretold the Ligr's appearance at the harbor with the valuable sea creature. The shaman, however, did not speak to Hakon about the other part of the vision it saw: The Ligr's attempt at killing the Bjarni raiders and stealing their treasure. This the shaman saved for another Bjarni - the leader of the warband that just returned successfully from the raid and is now planning on foiling the PCs' "ambush."

If the discussion between the PCs and Hakon goes well, the massive merchant will invite the PCs to his house at a later date, as he has a number of important meetings to make that day since he rarely visits the coast. If the discussion does not go well, Hakon provides the agreed-upon price of 200 silver - this was the highest bid price among the gathered merchants - for the sea creature carcass and has a couple of guards in his entourage deal with the carcass. If the PCs took the "hard scenario" where they were equipped with shoddy armor/arms then Hakon will agree to 200 silver as well as one magic item, a plus-one item (weapon or armor depending on the PC's choice).

Upon Frey Hakon's departure, the PCs should note the merchant walks with a considerable limp.

By this time, it is after sunset. There are lamps lit around the harbor, providing dim light. The PCs know they have a number of hours before they can fulfill the final part of the prophecy – ambushing the Bjarni raider longboat and stealing their treasure.

AT THE HARBOR, there are a couple of places the PCs could visit before they set out for their ambush:

- Aegir's Alehouse: This finely crafted, wood and stone building of two stories features a prominent small pool at its entrance. A statue of an old, but physically imposing, bearded man emerging from waves of water rises from the center of the pool. At the bottom of this pool are hundreds of copper, silver and gold coins. It is custom for the Bjarni to make a coin sacrifice to the pool before going to sea. (Those that steal from this pool have a 50 percent chance (roll a percentage dice) of being poisoned or cursed (GM

discretion), a condition that persists until the stolen coins are returned. At the alehouse the PCs will find a host of Bjarni merchants but none of the recently returned raiders, seen previously in the longboat. The PCs also will spot a familiar face - Baen, a native to Ligr. Baen, like his Norse name indicates, is fair-skinned and of slight build, like most of the Ligr islanders. He is one of the few islanders who left Ligr to work among the Bjarni. (This is rarely done for such people are ill-regarded by their native family and friends and often mocked by the Bjarni, who rarely give the Ligr a decent job.) Baen knows the PCs by name but isn't terribly interested in talking with them, fearing retribution from his boss, who distrusts the Ligr in general. Baen, however, can be convinced to talk, with the right

amount of threats and/or coin. When he isn't working, Baen lives in a one-room shack that is connected to this two-story building. To reach Baen's shack, the PCs do not have to enter the tavern.

- Vali's Shop. This is one of the Bjarni blacksmiths. Like his Norse name indicates, Vali the blacksmith is big and strong. He prefers to do business with his own tribe but he will trade/sell to others as well. He will do so, however, with little social grace and will not offer any information or aid to the PCs. His shop is filled with an array of weapons and armor, none of which are magical. The items, however, are much better quality than the PCs can find on their island.



#### PART FOUR: Surprise ... on you!

The PCs' objective, told to them through the volva's prophecy, is simple: In the middle of

the night, they must reach the Bjarni raider longboat in silence, kill any guards present, pillage the considerable treasure there and leave the harbor as quickly and as quietly as possible. The PCs know if they are seen, they likely will be overrun by the faster Bjarni longboats, who usually carry 3x-4x the amount of crew the Ligr's small vessel can handle. Speed and silence are the key to the PCs' safety.

Unfortunately, the gods, more specifically Loki, aren't with the PCs. Loki has alerted the Bjarni's shaman of the PCs' intentions. So it will be the PCs that will be surprised and ambushed, not the Bjarni raiders.

GM NOTES FOR BATTLE:

- It is after midnight when this occurs – there is a light, misty rain (not strong enough to impact range attacks) and dim light.
- There are 2 ambush scenes - pick the one you prefer.

#### FIRST AMBUSH SCENE:

This is set in the sea, with land 120 feet away. There are three docks here. The first dock is 30 feet long by 10 feet wide. It should be in the northwest corner of your map. The second dock, the largest of the three, is 30 feet south and 20 feet east of the first dock. It is 40 feet long and 15 feet wide. The third dock is 30 feet south and 20 feet east of the second dock. Its size matches the first dock: 30 feet long and 10 feet wide.

Each dock has a boat tied to it. The PCs will be going after the longboat tied to the second

dock. The first and third docks have fishing vessels tied to them. These fishing boats are 20 feet long x 10 feet wide. The Bjarni longboat, the one the PCs are targeting, is the largest of the 3 boats, 50 feet long and 15 feet wide.

The fishing boats are 20 feet long. Half of the fishing boat area - the areas closest to the Bjarni longboat - is obscured by piles of heavy nets and small cages used to catch crab, lobster, etc. These piles of nets and cages extend 3 feet above the side of the boats, meaning seeing past them (and into the rest of the boat) is very difficult.

The sides of the longboat are 4 feet above sea level, higher than the Ligr's smaller craft. So seeing the entire interior area of the longboat would be difficult for the PCs unless they can find a way to get quite a bit above that 4-foot level.

Follow the below instructions on the Bjarni force the PCs will encounter at this ambush scene.

#### SECOND AMBUSH SCENE:

This scene is set at a port dock and is a potentially lethal site for the PCs due to the nearby land and the close proximity of dozens of Bjarni. The GM should ensure the PCs survive this scene. See below for hints on how to do this.



The scene has one main dock, with two smaller wood docks coming off of it. The main dock is connected to the port, with a number of buildings nearby. The smaller wood docks have 3 fishing boats on them, with room for the PCs' boat to come up and dock near the fishing boats. The main dock is built atop rocks and stands 5 feet above sea level. The smaller wood docks are connected to the main dock by stairs and lie at sea level.

The fishing boats are 20 feet long. Half of the fishing boat area - the areas closest to the area where the PCs will dock - is obscured by piles of heavy nets and small cages used to catch crab, lobster, etc. These piles of nets and cages extend 3 feet above the side of the boats, meaning seeing past them (and into the rest of the boat) is difficult.

The longboat is 80 feet long, with the bow and stern being a few feet higher than the middle section of the boat. As the PCs near the longboat, from one of the smaller, wooden docks, they'll be able to see into the middle part of the longboat, but not the higher bow or stern.

Setting up this combat:

- 1) This scene should start by calling attention to the conditions of the sea. In the foretelling, the fake volva's prophecy told of a calm sea. In fact the sea won't be calm. It is up to the players to remember this difference. This will be the first time reality differs from the vision. Ask a PC to roll a d4. 1 or 2 will indicate choppy seas; 3 and 4 will indicate rough conditions, including a wind that goes directly against where the PCs are heading for .... first, the Bjarni's longboat and secondly, out of the harbor in trying to survive this encounter.

- 2) The easiest route for the PCs to take, as they maneuver their boat near the Bjarni's longboat, is back into the heart of the harbor, out of the merchant area, and then north, into the longboat docks. Since it's the middle of the night, the PCs should see little to no activity in the harbor as they maneuver toward the Bjarni raider longboat.

As the PCs approach the longboat, from the smaller, wooden dock, they'll see 3 Bjarni raiders, all of them are sitting or sprawled on the ground or on the longboat, apparently sleeping, and most of the treasure (including gold coins, gems and sparkling armor) they saw on the longboat as they were entering the harbor. One of the raiders is on the main dock, the other two in the middle section of the longboat. All of the raiders have empty ale horns near them and their faces are covered by their metal horned helmets, which appear to have slipped over their faces as they fell asleep.

The three raiders are actually freshly dug up corpses, clothed in guards' gear. While the Bjarni made sure the corpses' faces are concealed, a closer inspection by the PCs will show the raiders' beards and hair have an unnatural amount of white in them. Plus, if within 10 feet, a PC's perception of 15 or higher will reveal the end of skeletal fingers barely sticking out the clothes the Bjarni placed on the corpses.

Once the PCs discover the "guard" raiders are actually corpses or that the treasure in the boat is an illusion, a surprise round should start.

Once the surprise round begins, the following should occur:

- From each of the fishing boats, beneath the nets, two Bjarni raiders should appear. In the two boats closest to the PCs' boat, the raiders should throw grappling hooks, with ropes attached to

them, at the PCs' boat. This way, the Bjarni can keep the PCs from fleeing initially. Hitting the PCs' boat with the grappling hooks should be relatively easy as it's a short distance and these are experience raiders: range attack roll of 10 (with attack modifiers) and over secures the grappling hook into the side of the PCs' boat. The PCs can slice the rope holding the grappling hook but must use an action to do so. Each Bjarni raiders has 2 grappling hooks ready; they can throw one per round as an action. The two Bjarni in the third fishing boat, the one farthest away, should double-move toward the PCs, with melee weapons in hand.

- On the dock, around the buildings, there are four other Bjarni raiders hiding. They should also double-move toward the PCs, melee weapons ready to attack.
- On the longboat, there are 4 Bjarni hiding, 2 in the bow and 2 in the stern - remember they should be obscured from the PCs' sight because the longboat's front and back sit higher off the water than the mid-section of the boat. One of the 4 hiding Bjarni is a mage that casts silent image when the PCs' boat is first spotted approaching the longboat's place in the harbor. (The silent image spell lasts 10 minutes) The silent image spell shows the gold, gems and magical armor. There is no real treasure aboard the longboat.

The PCs' surprise at this turn of events should be absolute. This is the first part of the volva's foretelling that is not going as planned. The most devout of the PCs could even spend a round in mild shock.

ADDITIONAL COMBAT NOTES:

- This should not be a fair fight - the Bjarni should not only win this battle, they should dominate it and send the PCs fleeing. Remember the Bjarni are a much richer Northland tribe, meaning their arms and armor are much better than the PCs'. Plus, because Loki alerted the Bjarni's shaman about the PCs' plans, the Bjarni know all about this "ambush" - including what will happen and when. Feel free to bring additional waves of Bjarni warriors to the scene if the PCs manage to fend off the first wave.
- This should not be a total party kill - the Bjarni want to teach the PCs a lesson but there is no real animosity between the two tribes as their dealings in recent years have been peaceful. Plus the Bjarni are secretly wary of upsetting the Ligr and losing a key food resource (the cod). All the Bjarni want to do is to send the PCs fleeing home, alive so they can tell their clan about the stupidity of trying to defeat the bigger, better-equipped Bjarni raiders. As a result, the Bjarni will not launch their longboat to chase after the PCs once they flee, unless the PCs linger in the harbor.
- To avoid PC deaths, consider having the Bjarni priest included in the first wave prepare to stabilize the PCs, if needed, and then put them back on their boat and send them home, in shame. Of course a priest may feel obliged to take the PCs' newly won silver for his efforts ...
- Remember the jarl's wood and how the PCs used it on their boat. If they used the wood to build up the sides of their boat, this could help the PCs against ranged attacks. Or if they built a god upon the boat, a divine presence may

intervene at some point during the battle. (GM call!)

## MONSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

Bjarni raider warband: The first wave should be 14 strong, with at least one mage, one priest and mostly barbarians/fighters.

### BJARNI WARRIOR

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral  
 Armor Class 16 (half Plate)  
 Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)  
 Speed 30 ft.  
 Str 16(+3) Dex 12(+1) Con 17(+3) Int 9(-1) Wis 11(0) Cha 9(-1)  
 Languages: Common  
 Challenge 2 (450 XP)

**Reckless:** At the start of its turn, the berserker 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\*\*\*

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



### BJARNI COMMANDER

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral  
 Armor Class 18 (adamantine plate)  
 Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)  
 Speed 30 ft.  
 Str 16 (+3) Dex 11 (0) Con 14 (+2) Int 11 (0)  
 Wis 11 (0) Cha 15 (+2)

**Saving Throws:** Con +4, Wis +2

Languages: Common  
 Challenge 3 (700 XP)

**Brave:** The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Multiattack:** The knight makes two melee attacks.

**Adamantine Greatsword.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10

(2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

**Leadership** (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 ft. of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

### Reactions

**Parry:** The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

### BJARNI PRIEST

Medium humanoid (human), Chaotic neutral  
Armor Class 15 (half plate)  
Hit Points 27 (5d8+5)  
Speed 25 ft.

Str 10 (0) Dex 10 (0) Con 12 (+1) Int 13 (+1)  
Wis 16 (+3) Cha 13 (+1)

**Skills:** Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4  
Languages common, primordial  
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

**Divine Eminence:** As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

**Spellcasting:** The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells

prepared:

**Cantrips** (at will): light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy

**1st level** (4 slots): cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary

**2nd level** (3 slots): lesser restoration, spiritual weapon

**3rd level** (2 slots): dispel magic, spirit guardians  
\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Mace.** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

### BJARNI MAGE

Medium humanoid (human), Chaotic neutral  
Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)  
Hit Points 38 (7d8+7)  
Speed 30 ft.

Str 9 (-1) Dex 14 (+2) Con 13 (+1) Int 16 (+3)  
Wis 11 (0) Cha 12 (+1)

**Saving Throws:** Int +5, Wis +2

**Skills:** Arcana +5, History +5

**Languages:** Common.  
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

**Spellcasting:** The Bjarni mage is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The illusionist has the following wizard spells prepared:

**Cantrips (at will):** dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion, poison spray

**1st level (4 slots):** shield, silent image, mage armor, magic missile

**2nd level (3 slots):** invisibility, mirror image, scorching ray

**3rd level (3 slots):** fireball, phantom steed

**4th level (1 slot):** greater invisibility  
\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Quarterstaff.** Melee Weapon Attack: +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8-1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

## PART FIVE: The worst is yet to come



Defeated and probably disillusioned, the PCs must sail back to Ligr, two days away from the Bjarni's mainland. The

two days goes by uneventfully, although the bulk of that time they are beset by unseasonably frigid temperatures and pelting,

cold rain. If they weren't miserable before, the weather will help them get there.

The unpredictable weather continues as the PCs near home. The pelting rains subside in the hours before they return and are replaced by shrouding fog. The latter conceals much of the islands and the PCs struggle to find the Ligr's

meager harbor. What they will find, however, is one of the few, small Ligr fishing boats set adrift at sea. At first glance, the boat does not appear to have anybody aboard, an ominous sign for the PCs who know the value of these fishing boats, of which there are precious few in the Ligr's possession.

Once the PCs sail close enough to the fishing boat, they'll notice young Cnute, the jarl's son, sprawled on the bottom of the boat, unconscious. The little boy's body is bloodied in multiple spots, primarily from gashes on his arms and upper body. A closer investigation of the injuries will reveal they are hours old, probably suffered during the previous night. A medicine check of DC10 will reveal the gashes, several inches long, are not caused by anything natural.

Besides remnants of fishing nets, there is one other item in the boat with Cnute - a letter, which the boy dropped as he fell unconscious the previous night. Once the PCs lift Cnute out of the boat, they will find the letter, partially damaged from the water at the bottom of the boat. The letter, written hastily, reads:

"The gods have forsaken us! What have we done to cause such unjust punishment? Why do they destroy what little they have given us? You must find out, my warriors. You must talk to the gods. You must ... " The rest of the letter is smeared by the water damage and unreadable.

Once the PCs help Cnute regain consciousness, he will awake in a panic, anxiously trying to cover himself with his arms, even trying to drop to the ground and curl himself into a ball, all while shouting out, "Father, run! Run Father! There are too many!"

Once calmed and assured of his safety, Cnute will relate the following: He and his father were awake last night by screams. His father immediately rose, grabbed his sword and shield and hobbled out of their house, into the

darkness, with Cnute following along. They didn't get but a few steps when several "man-imals" materialized. Cnute won't speak much about this for the memory terrifies him. He can remember only harsh, guttural words of nonsense the man-imals shouted at his father. He also remembers the man-imal's skin to be unnaturally white, they walked on two feet but were bent over, their mouths were nearly devoid of teeth, and their hands ... what was left of their hands ... were animal-like, with long, razor-sharp nails.

Cnute remembers his father killing two of the man-imals but not before being repeatedly slashed by them. His father then took Cnute into his arms and ran back into their house. There he quickly wrote the note to the PCs, took up the boy in his arms again and quickly made for the Ligr's harbor. On the way, Cnute remembers hearing more screams from the darkness. (GMs: Include a vision of one of the Ligr NPCs if the PCs RPed with them earlier) He also remembers seeing Asmund, the Ligr's volva, appearing from out of the darkness. Cnute says Asmund's eyes, from the depths of his hooded face, flashed a fiery red color, and he then spoke words that sounded much like the man-imal's language - harsh, guttural words that the boy didn't understand.

Once the jarl and the boy reached the harbor, Destin was able to launch a fishing boat into the surf, putting Cnute aboard, before more man-imals emerged from the sea. There they descended upon the jarl and then upon Cnute, who was unable to fend off attacks. Cnute recalls in anguish how the man-imals grabbed the side of the fishing boat he was in and swung at him from all sides of the boat, repeatedly slashing him ... Cnute won't say anymore and he cries out, painfully realizing that he has no idea if his father, the jarl, lives. Nor if anybody else on the island survived.

Cnute immediately tries to jump from the boat and swim for the island ...

The PCs have two choices:

- 1) Return to the island with Cnute and look for survivors. The morning has just begun and the thick fog lingers. They could possibly reach the island undetected but by the boy's story, it appears they will be hopelessly outnumbered if they are spotted by whatever evil has overtaken the islands.
- 2) Restrain Cnute, stay off their island and heed the jarls' words: "You must talk to the gods." With their own volva, Asmund, apparently possessed by an evil being, the PCs know of only one other that can speak to the gods: the shaman of the Bjarni.

If the PCs show any doubts about either of their two choices, young Cnute will look each of them in the eye and tell them to follow his father's words. He will then say with conviction, "Do it for the jarl!"

If the PCs return to the island, they will be able to get into the heart of the village and then be quickly surrounded by the man-imals – draugar, undead humanoids who died in the sea and have come ashore to do Loki's bidding. The draugar have killed most of the islanders – including perhaps some of the NPCs – and are destroying the Ligr's buildings and homes.

By sheer numbers alone, the draugar should overcome any hope the PCs have of staying on

the island and defeating the horde of undead there without the gods' help.

## MONSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

### DRAUGAR

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (Studded Leather)

Hit Points 45 (6d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

Str 15 (+2) Dex 14 (+2) Con 16 (+3) Int 10 (+0)

Wis 13 (+1) Cha 15 (+2)

**Skills:** Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Damage Resistance:** necrotic; fire, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities:** poison

**Condition Immunities:** exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses:** Darkvision 60 Ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages:** The languages it knew In life

**Challenge:** 3 (700 XP)

**Sunlight Sensitivity:** While in sunlight, the draugar has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Nausea:** A creature that is hit by an attack against the Draugar must make a DC 12 constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of its next turn. A creature becomes immune to this for 24 hours after it has been affected.

**Multiattack:** The Draugar makes claw attacks or two longbow attacks.

**Claw:** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: (1d10 + 2) slashing damage plus nausea.

**Longbow:** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.



seek an audience with the Bjarni shaman.

## PART SIX: Seeking divine favor

In order to gain their gods' favor, the PCs must return to the Bjarni mainland and

To do this, the PCs have two potential allies within the Bjarni that can help with this task: 1) Baen, the Ligr native and current tavern worker, and 2) Frey Hakon, the merchant who purchased the sea creature carcass from the PCs. If the initial RP with Hakon went well, then

Hakon is probably their best bet. To reach Hakon, the PCs will have to venture back to the Bjarni harbor, leave their boat and travel inland for one day. Unbeknownst to the PCs, the Bjarni raiders who fought the PCs have not alerted other Bjarni about the PCs' prior actions. So even if they are spotted in the harbor, there will be no guards on patrol or manhunt set up for them.

If the PCs set out for Hakon's estate, they will be able to reach it safely. Hakon's estate features a large, one-story dwelling, featuring a well-lit and furnished mead hall at the front, with bedrooms, a kitchen and an armory in the back. The armory is well stocked, featuring several, high-quality axes, swords and ranged weapons, but little in the way of armor.

If the PCs have a good relationship with Hakon, he will be surprised at their appearance but welcome them into his mead hall. Hakon will tell the PCs he has an errand to attend to but then will be able to meet with the PCs later. The PCs are free to rest in his estate until their meeting. Hakon has two guards outside of his estate's dwelling and servants in the estate, who offer to provide food and/or drinks to the PCs. The servants also will covertly watch the PCs, having no trust in the Ligr and immense gratitude for Hakon. If the PCs try to steal something while Hakon is tending to his errand, there is a 40 percent chance they will be caught by the spying servants. If this happens, they will tell Hakon when he returns.

Once Hakon returns from his errand, he will meet with the PCs in his mead hall. At this time, he will pointedly ask them why they have come. One of the following scenarios will then occur:

- 1) If the PCs have a good, prior relationship with Hakon and they tell him their full story - including the false prophecy from the volva - he will look immediately unsettled and rise from his

seat. He will pace around - hobbling as he does so - before looking again at the PCs and asking earnestly, "Are you telling me the truth?" If the PCs are deceiving him, role an insight check. If Hakon believes them or he simply trusts them, he will relate the following: He once led a Bjarni warband, a group of raiders that became renowned for their deeds. Not just for their successful raids on the races to the south but for slaying creatures of immense size and strength sent by the gods themselves. Every one of these immense creatures - sent as tests to this elite group of warriors - met their fates from Hakon's own axe, save one ... an undead menace that partially matches the description Cnute provided of the "man-imals." The undead warrior that Hakon recalls climbed aboard his longboat one late evening, killed several of his sleeping crew before finally maiming Hakon himself. The undead warrior, having bested Hakon, then spoke in a language that Hakon had never before heard but somehow understood. It said in its deep voice, "Loki shall joyfully watch you spend the rest of your days as a cripple and a drain on your people." The undead warrior, taller than Hakon himself, scornfully laughed and then returned to the sea. Hakon, with most of his crew dead and himself seriously wounded, barely made it back to the Bjarni harbor. He then spent months in bed, feverishly sick. Today, he tells the PCs, he has a chance to return the favor to Loki, who he believes is behind this wicked series of events that have befallen the PCs. Hakon offers to take the PCs to the Bjarni shaman so they can identify a way to gain the gods' favor and get the revenge he

desperately seeks. Further, he will provide each of the PCs a magic weapon they can use in their mission.

- 2) If the PCs have a good relationship with Hakon but they do not tell Hakon the full story, he will ponder their story. If he trusts them after hearing the story, he will provide them a location in which to meet the Bjarni shaman.
- 3) If the PCs are caught stealing or Hakon does not trust the PCs' story, he will tell the PCs he can be of no help since the Bjarni shaman is known to travel the countryside and that it rarely stays in one area for long. The latter is true,



### PART SEVEN: The cave of the gods

The Bjarni shaman dwells within “Hellir Tivar,” the cave of the gods. This is a day’s walk from the Bjarni

harbor. The trip is a tiring and treacherous journey. To get there, the PCs must venture several hours northwards from the harbor, following a clear pathway, to the foot of the mountains. Once here, they begin climbing up a series of stone steps that have been sculpted into the side of the mountain. This is a straight vertical stairway that is 150 feet high. There is one outcropping of rock, 70 feet up, that could allow one PC to rest at a time. These stone steps are centuries old and have crumbled in places. If the PCs are forced to move with any haste on these stairs, they should do an Athletics or Acrobatics check every 30 feet of movement. A DC 10 saves; otherwise they fall off the stone stairs, down the cliffside, potentially to their deaths. (Remember they might hit or land upon the outcropping at 70 feet)

**(Note:** See optional encounter for possible combat while the PCs climb the stairs.)

although on this occasion, Hakon does know the shaman’s whereabouts. But because he distrusts the PCs, he will not share this information.

If the PCs rely on Baen to find the shaman, they can find him sleeping in the shack (attached to the tavern) in the late night or the morning. Baen will be reluctant to discuss such matters for he fears losing his job at the tavern, which was hard enough to secure in the first place. Baen, however, can be swayed by offers of coin, perhaps even with promises of a stake in a future treasure. Baen also can be intimidated rather easily.

Once at the top of the stairway, the PCs behold a massive, circular hole in the side of the mountain. The hole is some 70 feet high and 50 feet wide. Once the PCs step up into this massive hole in the mountain-side – beyond the hole, the mountain cliff continues to climb skyward, although the stone staircase does not – and their eyes adjust to the dim light here, they notice their way forward into the mountain has four separate possibilities. If the PCs venture forward and toward their left, they will enter an opening into the mountain. A second opening can be found forward and to their right. There is a third option that forces the PCs to climb a slick, 15-foot wall (Climb DC 12) and a final one that is forward several paces and appears to be a hole in the stone underfoot – perhaps the hole of an animal, for its smaller than the other openings and circular. The openings are only wide enough for one PC to enter at a time. Even doing so, the PCs will have to enter sideways and still they will scrap against the stone.

As each PC steps into the opening, two things occur:

- 1) A magical darkness engulfs them;
- 2) In their head, they hear a soft female voice say, “Leaving in the field his arms, let no man go, a foot’s length forward, for it is hard to know, when on the way, a man may need his weapon.”

Require the PC to take an immediate action – give them only a second or two to react. There is no wrong answer here, unless the PCs do nothing. At that point, a strong wind materializes and blows the PC out of the opening in the wall and back towards the opening of the mountain-side. The PCs can try again to enter the mountainside again if they fail the first time. This exercise is the Bjarni shaman’s attempt to keep weak-willed, cowardly Northlanders away from its domain.

If the PCs do something after the woman’s voice speaks in their head, the darkness disappears and they find themselves in a circular cavern with nothing besides stone floor and walls. The cavern is nearly 15 feet wide and 30 feet high. The walls are bare of any runes or words and are, strangely, perfectly round. There is not a blemish on them, not a single imperfection. Once in this cavern, the PCs can see each of the four openings behind them and they will see their allies materialize from darkness, assuming they acted when they heard the woman’s voice. Once all allies are within the cavern, the sounds from the outside – including the constant wind – will cease, in total.

Not a single sound will be heard, even when the PCs attempt to speak. This condition will last for a minute before the circular walls begin to darken in color, going from a stone grey to a deep, dark black. When the blackness is complete, the same woman’s voice will call out,

although this time in an unfriendly tone, “Hellir Tivar, the cave of the gods, is not for the meek Ligr, the mice of the Northlands. Leave before the Allfather finds the mice in a bear’s cave.”

Regardless of the PCs’ response, the woman’s voice will continue to berate the PCs:

“Odin knows what you’ve done, Ligr mice – he knows the foolish mice sought to steal from the bear. He knows you were caught in your mousetrap and sent away, shamed!”

Await another PC response, then the woman will continue to try to persuade the PCs to leave:

“The Allfather will not come! The gods will not favor you weak, thieving mice with their presence. Why should they? You have done nothing but try to steal from the heroic warriors in which the gods lavish their treasured praise upon. And you failed that! Leave Ligr-mice!”

“Leave before I call upon Odin’s ravens to come from the mountainside and blind you with their beaks.”

If the PCs do not leave, the blackened walls will begin pulsating with magical energy and a moments later, dozens of ravens will begin flying in from the cavern’s four openings, now behind the PCs. The PCs will have to duck as more and more ravens fly into the cavern and begin flying in a tight circle, toward the 30-foot high ceiling.

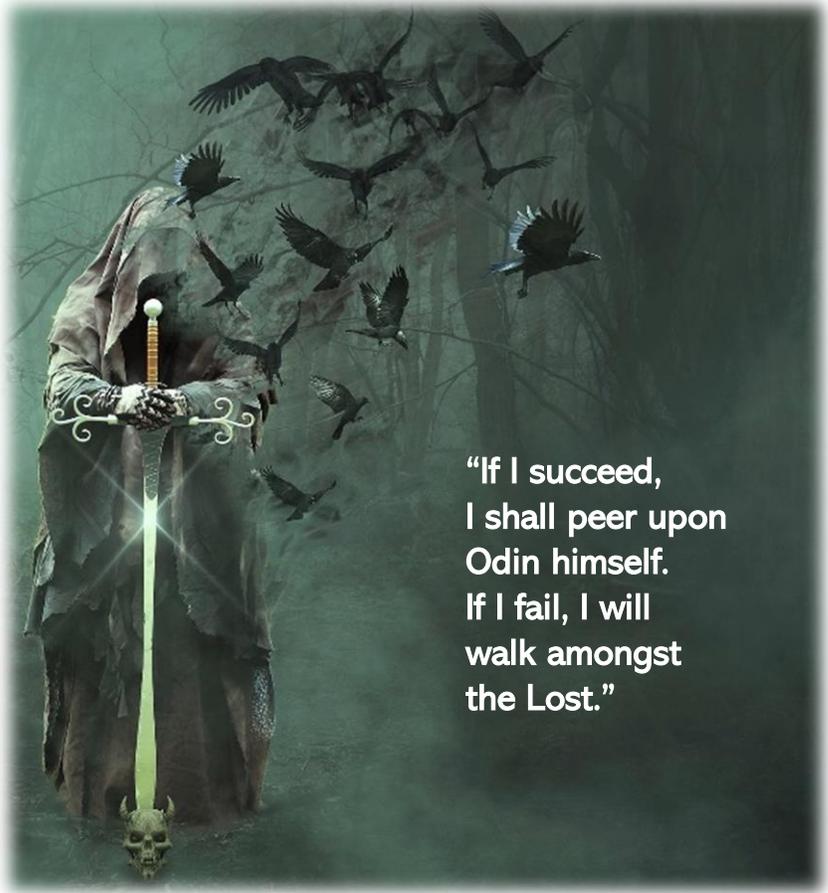
“Leave!” the woman’s voice commands. “I cannot stop them for long! They will feast upon your eyes.”

The ravens – continuing to fly into the circular tavern and numbering in the hundreds now – will begin darting toward the PCs’ heads, threateningly. None of the swooping ravens will strike the PCs’ eyes but a couple will get close enough to bump into the PCs’ heads or seize hair from their heads.

After another minute of this, several dozen of the ravens will fly into a tighter circle, then descend from the ceiling area toward the cavern’s stone floor. As a group, these ravens will continue to twist into a tighter and tighter circle until a mist forms beneath them. The mist thickens, surrounds them like a fog cloud and then the sound of the flapping of the ravens’ wings diminishes noticeably. The cloud then dissipates and what’s left behind is a cloaked, humanoid figure, its face completely covered in the blackness of a hooded cloak. The cloaked figure, at least a foot taller than the PCs, is slightly bent forward and its gloved-covered hands rest on the pommel of a glowing longsword, the tip of which sinks into the stone floor. The cloud of mist lingers below and around this humanoid.

From this cloaked figure comes the voice of an ancient man, deep in tone as it echoes over the cavern, “You wish a test? To challenge yourself against the gods’ mightiest creations to gain their attention and favor?”

The cloaked figure will await a response and then demand each of the PCs repeat what he says, “If I succeed, I shall peer upon Odin himself. If I fail, I will walk amongst the Lost, those Northmen who are forbidden from Valhalla. If I fail, I shall become shadow, forever silenced and forever diminished.”



Cloaked figure in the cave of gods

**“If I succeed,  
I shall peer upon  
Odin himself.  
If I fail, I will  
walk amongst  
the Lost.”**

If each of the PCs repeat this in full, the cloaked figure will stand erect, draw his gleaming longsword from the stone floor and utter a symbolic war cry of the Northlands, “Kjoso agi, taka beirra skulle!” (“choose terror, take their skulls!”)

The lingering mist then erupts from beneath the cloaked figure and flies toward the PCs, engulfing them. They feel the room spinning around them before they are teleported. One moment their feet rest on the cavern’s stone floor, the next moment they feel their Ligr boat beneath them, rocking against an agitated sea. As the mist around the PCs begins to dissipate, they can see and hear churning seas all around them as well as thunder booming out from a stormy night overhead. The PCs have only moments to detect what is happening – their

boat is caught in a giant whirlpool, going around and around in a circular motion – before a huge lightning bolt flares, illuminating the area and showing the outline of an immense creature rising from the center of the whirlpool.

“The Kraken!”

The beast of legend will immediately attack the PCs and their small boat. If any of the PCs perish in the battle but the group persists and wins the fight, that PC will be alive again as the players meet with Odin.

After the battle, and if the PCs survive, the agitated sea will calm and a single cloud will separate from the rest of the stormy sky, descend, eventually settling 20 feet above the PCs’ boat. From within this cloud, a vision will appear. It will show a god, Odin, resting upon a grassland, his gaze looking straight ahead. As the vision stabilizes, Odin will blink and slowly turn his head toward the PCs. He will gaze at them for several heartbeats before nodding and saying in a booming voice, “I see you, Ligr.”

Odin will rise from his restful spot, ball his hands into fists and then bring the fists together. As he does so, balls of light streak out from the cloud. The light fragments fall from the sky until they come to rest at the PCs’ feet. Each of the light fragments will form into a helm of glistening silver, with gold-plated nose guards and cheek plates.

“Take these gifts, brothers, and return to your homeland. Fight, brothers.”

Odin will take a step toward the PCs, raise his clenched fists at the PCs and shout, “Taka beirra skulle!” (“Take their skulls!”)

With that, the vision will diminish, the cloud will slowly lift back into the sky, which will slowly darken until it’s as black as the darkest part of the night. After a few moments, light will return and the PCs will find themselves back at the top

of the mountain stone stairway. The sound of ravens can be heard overhead as dozens of the birds fly down the mountainside, back toward the harbor.

Once the PCs place Odin’s silver helms upon their heads, they are immediately given two rewards: 1) an improvement in AC (1 or 2, depending on tier level); and 2) an epic boon, as described in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* (pg. 231-232). GMs will probably want to lessen these boons depending on tier level.

## MONSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

### OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER:

**Low tiers:** Frostveil (2), CR 4, *Tome of Beasts*, page 207

**High tiers:** Theullai (2-4), CR 10, *Tome of Beasts*, page 379

### MAIN ENCOUNTER:

Kraken, CR23, *D&D’s Monster Manual*, pg. 196

**Note:** The kraken is a lethal creature, and almost any character below 10th level could easily die from just one round against it. So with the lower tiers we want to not only decrease the stats of the kraken but increase the PC’s ability to take down such a legendary foe. Consider the below for an alternative kraken for lower tiers:

### YOUNG KRAKEN

Gargantuan monstrosity (titan), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 236 (14d20+95)

Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

Str 30 (+10) Dex 11 (0) Con 25 (+7) Int 22 (+6)

Wis 18 (+4) Cha 20 (+5)

**Damage Immunities:** lightning

**Damage resistances:** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Condition Immunities:** frightened, paralyzed

**Senses:** Truesight 120 ft.

**Languages:** Understands Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal, and Primordial but can’t speak, telepathy 120 ft.

**Amphibious:** The kraken can breathe air and water.

**Freedom of Movement:** The kraken ignores difficult terrain, and magical effects can’t reduce its speed or cause it to be restrained. It can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from

nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

**Siege Monster:** The kraken deals double damage to objects and structures.

\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Multiattack.** The kraken makes three tentacle attacks, each of which it can replace with one use of Fling.

**Bite:** Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (1d8 + 10) piercing damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature grappled by the kraken, that creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the kraken, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the kraken's turns. If the kraken takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the kraken must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the kraken. If the kraken dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

**Tentacle:** Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 30 ft., one target. Hit: 14(1d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The kraken has five tentacles, each of which can grapple one target.

**Fling:** One Large or smaller object held or creature grappled by the kraken is thrown up to 60 feet in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for

every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

**Lightning Storm:** The kraken magically creates three bolts of lightning, each of which can strike a target the kraken can see within 120 feet of it. A target must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

\*\*\*Legendary Actions\*\*\*

The kraken can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. The kraken regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Tentacle Attack or Fling:** The kraken makes one tentacle attack or uses its Fling.

**Lightning Storm (Costs 2 Actions).** The kraken uses Lightning Storm.

**Ink Cloud (Costs 3 Actions).** While underwater, the kraken expels an ink cloud in a 60-foot radius. The cloud spreads around corners, and that area is heavily obscured to creatures other than the kraken. Each creature other than the kraken that ends its turn there must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A strong current disperses the cloud, which otherwise disappears at the end of the kraken's next turn.



## PART EIGHT: Return to Ligr

For two days, the PCs will follow the flight of the dozens of ravens from the harbor of Bjarni back to their

homeland, across the sea. Once the PCs draw near Ligr, the ravens will fly away from the largest of the Ligr islands, where the jarl, the vola and the blacksmith live. The flock of ravens will veer toward one of the other islands and fly into a large cave, often half-filled with sea water from the tides. As the PCs draw near, the tide is

out, leaving the cave dry. Here they will see footprints leading from the beach and into the cave, a seldom-visited site since the sea claims its most of the day. The cavern extends into the island for nearly 40 feet, daylight illuminating the entrance and then quickly losing its strength as the cave bends to the left and away from the sunlight. Most of this area has dim lighting. Here the PCs will encounter the creatures that have come to do Loki's bidding. Among those is Loki's own kin, in the form of a magic beast. Located near the beast is a large, muscular

draugar - the one that bested Hakon and his crew so long ago. The creatures attack immediately. The beast bears a glowing amulet that every round summons more draugar from the sea. Roll a D4 to determine the number of draugar that answer the call.

## CONCLUSION

If the PCs survive ...

Loki's chaotic wishes came true: Unbeknownst to the PCs but their heroics will forever change the region. For the Ligr's bad luck and place as a lesser tribe will vanish as quickly as the undead in the cave do once their leaders are defeated. For in the back of the cave, easily viewable by the PCs, is an immense iron chest, its lid propped up by hundreds of goin coins that practically spill out of it. But the coins are hardly the valuable part of this find. For once the PCs try to lift the heavy chest, their hands will be

## MONSTER RECOMMENDATIONS

**Low tier:** Kamadan, CR 4, *Tomb of Annihilation*, pg. 225

**High tier:** Son of Fenris, CR 12, *Tome of Beasts* pg. 355

### CHAMPION DRAUGAR

Medium undead, neutral Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d8+64)

Speed 30 ft.

Str 18 (+4) Dex 14 (+2) Con 18 (+4) Int 13 (+1)

Wis 16 (+3) Cha 18 (+4)

**Saving Throws:** Str +7, Con +7, Wis +6, Ch +7

**Damage Resistances:** necrotic, psychic

**Damage Immunities:** poison

**Condition Immunities:** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

**Senses:** Darkvision 60 ft.

**Languages:** Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

**Regeneration:** The Champion Draugar regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the Draugar takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Draugar next turn. The Draugar body is destroyed only if it starts its

stained by a greasy, black substance. Oil! It bubbles up from the bottom of this cave in a constant stream – one that will make the PCs and the Ligr islands incredibly rich in the years to come.

If the PCs do not survive ...

Loki's chaotic wishes came true: For the death of the PCs will reach Hakon's ears and the Bjarni leader will bring a force large enough to claim the islands. In due time, a new Bjarni settlement will rise here and get rich from a discovery in one of the island's caves: Oil! The discovery will leave to civil unrest and eventually war within the Bjarni tribe. The PCs? If they die at the hands of the Kraken, they will rise as powerful Draugar, on Loki's bidding. Then they'll wander the depths of the sea, forever lost, forever diminished.

turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

\*\*\*Actions\*\*\*

**Multiattack:** It makes two fist attacks.

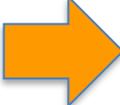
**Fist:** Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature against which it has vengeful glare on, the target takes an extra 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the Champion Draugar can grapple the target (escape DC 14) provided the target is Large or smaller.

**Glare:** The Champion Draugar targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it and against which it has sworn vengeance. The target must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed until the Champion Draugar deals damage to it, or until the end of the Champion Draugar's next turn. When the paralysis ends, the target is frightened of the Champion Draugar for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if it can see the Champion Draugar, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success.



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