

MADNESS OF THE VALKYRIES

by Asa Wheatley

CREATURE: *Valkyrie* | **LEVEL(S):** 12 | **CW:** *Infanticide*

SYNOPSIS

Hundreds of years have passed since the great war of Valhalla, but the repercussions are known throughout the lands. The Valkyries were once Odin's greatest warriors who ferried the dead to the eternal resting place of Valhalla. Odin tells it that their duties asked too much of them and their minds were corrupted. In fits of uncontrollable rage and anguish, they began to slaughter the warriors they once protected. Only four Valkyries survived the war; in their cowardice, they fled to Midgard and hid amongst the mortals. You have been tasked with finding the last Valkyrie and destroying her, once and for all ending the Madness of the Valkyries. But there may be more to learn in the once-great halls. *Madness of the Valkyries* is a 3-5 hour adventure for characters of 12th level.

ADVENTURE HOOK

As a one-shot, the adventure dives straight in with the party having already accepted the challenge as their boat crests onto the shores of Grojtfall; however, it is possible to integrate The Stranger into a campaign and have the hook for the adventure appear more naturally within an existing world.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

There was a great war for the honor of Valhalla, but the tales known to the wider world are skewed by Odin's lies. The Valkyries were not crazed; it was Odin who forced Valhalla into a war with the Valkyries. Odin was a cruel master who abused his position. When one of the Valkyries returned to Valhalla bearing a half-mortal child, Odin's anger could not be contained and he murdered both the Valkyrie and her child.

The remaining Valkyries revolted against their master, seeking vengeance for their fallen sister. And so, the war began. Not one to be maligned, Odin spread word of the Madness of the Valkyries — a lie he created to protect his position. Now Odin disguises himself as The Stranger, seeking adventurers to kill the Valkyries for him as he fears defeat at their hands.

A note on the gods and pantheons: This adventure works best using the Norse pantheon as presented in the 5th Edition Player's Handbook. However, as in our world, many different regions and peoples worship different gods, so it is plausible that none of the party will worship or have encountered the Norse pantheon before this adventure.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **THE STRANGER:** He looks like nothing more than a one-eyed old man in a black cloak, but hiding in this disguise is the powerful god Odin. He recruits adventurers to kill the Valkyries for him as he is too afraid to do it himself. He uses his influence to spread lies about them and their supposed betrayal to instill a hatred for them among the people.
- **SKULD:** The last of the Valkyries. There were nine sisters who served Odin. After the war, Skuld and three of her sisters managed to escape with their lives, but now only Skuld remains. She is waiting to die and wishes only that it be in battle to noble fighters, as she knows her death brings about the rise of her daughters.

CHAPTER 1 — THE RUINS OF GROJTFALL

The waves rock your boat softly as you approach land. Mount Verogur lies ahead, an imposing stone monument to the Gods. You remember the words of The Stranger: "*Mount Verogur, that is where your greatest challenge awaits.*" His dark hood covered most of his face, but the gnarled skin of a well-travelled man showed from within. As he spoke, the tavern-goers around you shifted their attention to him. "*The Valkyries were nine sisters, the greatest of warriors and the ferriers of the dead to the great Valhalla. Odin cherished them, but their minds were not strong enough, and in horrific fits of uncontrollable rage, they slaughtered those they had once carried to Valhalla. Odin fought well and protected the great realm, but four of the treacherous Valkyries escaped to Midgard and hid among the mortals.*" You remember this tale from your childhood — you remember the Madness of the Valkyries and how people would claim it had afflicted women prone to anger and hysterics. The Stranger continued and spoke of rumours: the location of the final Valkyrie, Skuld, at Mount Verogur. "*Grojtfall, the town located at the base of the great mountain, is plagued with attacks from the undead — warriors trapped in this realm after the Valkyries abandoned their positions.*" An unusual silence filled The Axe and Bear, and it was not long before you finished your drinks and sought a vessel to take you to Grojtfall. You asked for no reward or thanks. You took it upon yourselves to seek out the Valkyrie, for you are heroes, after all.

The boat crests onto sand, and you are brought back to Grojtfall--or at least what remains. The town, only 100 feet ahead, lies in ruin. Bodies--those of the undead, some seemingly humanoid others larger and more grotesque — line the streets beneath crumbled buildings and shattered statues. Everything is still in Grojtfall. As you step farther in, closer to the looming mountain, you spot two figures, searching through the ruins.

The attacks from the undead were summoned by Odin as a way to seed animosity towards the last remaining Valkyrie, Skuld, who resides on Mount Verogur.

SPEAKING WITH SURVIVORS

If the party approach the figures, they will see two humans, a male and a female, both around 40-50 years old, searching through the ruins for some of their possessions. The male, Karagad, is stern and harsh. His wife, Thora, mostly stays quiet. Karagad blames the Valkyrie for the destruction of the town, and if the party inquires, he tells them there are rumours she lies hidden in her halls for someone to challenge her.

DEVELOPMENT

Mount Verogur looms over the town of Grojtfall and is hard to miss. Whether the party speaks with the survivors or not, the next step in their journey is to climb the mountain.

CHAPTER 2 — MOUNT VEROGUR

THE CLIMB

This climb is not arduous or hard, but it is important to convey the time it takes and the heights to which the party climbs. Mount Verogur is over 5,000 feet above sea level. Skuld waits hidden behind the Hall of the Valkyries for noble adversaries to challenge her to battle.

As you begin your ascent of Mount Verogur, you are stunned by its immense and imposing size. You trek for hours, and the higher you climb, the colder the environment around you becomes. As night draws near, you come across a large alcove to the east of your path. You take a quick look and see a set of grand doors await you.

DEFENDERS OF THE LEGACY

As you make your way towards the doors, you see they were once elegantly carved and intricately decorated, but over time, they have lost their beauty. They stand 20 feet high and 15 feet wide; three female figures with blue war paint decorating their skin and armour, wielding spears and shields, guard the entrance.

This is the Entrance to The Hall of the Valkyries, and guarding the doors are three Shield Maidens, if you are playing with a large party, add more Shield Maidens so there is one fewer Shield Maiden than players. For the purposes of combat, the Shield Maidens act as **gladiators** with the following alterations and characteristics:

- The Shield Maidens no longer age and haven't for hundreds of years.
- Their only duty is to protect Skuld and the Hall of the Valkyries.
- Celestial is the only language they speak.
- They believe anyone who approaches the Hall of the Valkyries is hostile.
- The Shield Maidens defend the doors to the Hall of the Valkyries until death. None of them will ever retreat; however, they will not pursue fleeing enemies, either.

DEVELOPMENT

After the defeat of the Shield Maidens, the party can continue into the Hall of the Valkyries.

CHAPTER 3 — THE HALL OF THE VALKYRIES

INTO THE HALL

This once-great hall is now nothing but a shadow of its former self. It once told the great tales of the Valkyries, but those carvings have fallen into ruin. The Hall is made up of five locations: the Entrance, the Central Chamber, two Burial Chambers, and the Higher Hall.

THE ENTRANCE

Stepping past what remains of the grand entrance, you make your way into a deserted walkway. You look up at the cracked and ruined ceiling too high to reach. Faded carvings in the walls tell stories of the Valkyries — you presume—but they are too damaged to know the details of these once-idolized warriors. Ahead lies an opening to a large central chamber.

THE CENTRAL CHAMBER

This chamber is a test set up by Skuld to show any who venture inside the danger of trusting Odin's words.

Inside this large central chamber sits the history of the Valkyries. Across the walls, fragmented engravings of these once-renowned warriors tell their tales. The ceiling, towering 100 feet above you, has a seemingly-untouched carving of the ninth Valkyrie, Skuld, as she ferries the dead to Valhalla. Flanking both an eastern and western alcove stand eight statues: four on either side of the chamber, two on each side of the alcoves. To the right of each of the Valkyries rest shields carved into the wall. One thing stands out to you about these statues: they all seem to be missing their weapons. As you step farther into the room, words carved into the stone next to the first statue on the western wall catch your eye: 'Gordul holds an axe like no other and carves my enemies asunder, for my Valkyries are as sharp as their weapons' ODIN. At the base of the statue reads a name: 'Gordul.'

An axe made from the same stone as the statues lies in the room; a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds it.

The rest of the items are scattered throughout the three rooms. The exact location is vague so you are able to change this depending on the challenge you wish to give your party. If you want them to solve the puzzle easily, the items should be placed in their corresponding Burial Chambers. If you prefer to give your party a

challenge, hide some of the stone weapons within the burial tombs of the Valkyries, as well as throughout each of the chambers.

If the party tries to ascertain what weapons they would be holding based on the look and design of the statue, they must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence check for each of the statues.

If the party brings the axe to the statue of Gordul and places it in her hand, read the following:

The axe takes a bit of forcing but eventually fits. The grinding of stone is replaced by another, louder sound. Your eyes dart around the room, and before you, you watch rushing water shatter through each of the shields carved into the walls. An imposing stone tablet with glowing runes and writing etched into it crashes down, closing off the entrance from which you came, but you have a more pressing concern as the room rapidly fills with water.

If the party investigate the stone tablet that now blocks their way out, read the following:

The tablet reads: "Gordul would cleave but not with axe; a sword would fit better. Odin speaks of the Valkyries as his weapons of death and nothing more. He thinks his knowledge is almighty and his followers question none, but we know the truth of war, of death, of life, and the Valkyries. Odin speaks of madness that inflicts us, an infliction he is responsible for; responsibility is but a curse to him. Geirahod is unbeatable with a spear, and Sveid an inspiration in battle. Rota controlled the storms we rode through, as Geirdriful aimed unwavering. Hjorr tapped into the arcane as Lagerda needed nothing but her hands. Skuld and I chose the axe and shield."

The puzzle is fairly simple but has the added element of the room filling with water. The room fills with water in 10 minutes; after this time the party begins to suffocate (see condition in *PHB*) under the water. If you have a sand timer, this is the perfect time to use it; otherwise, a normal stopwatch will suffice.

To stop the water and open the ceiling leading to the Higher Hall, the party must correctly place the stone weapons with each of their corresponding Valkyries as per the list below. Each of the Valkyries have their names engraved into the base of their statue; this is also the order they appear in the room from west to east:

- Gordul — Sword
- Hjorr — Wand
- Geirahod — Spear
- Skeggjold — Axe
- Sveid — Horn
- Lagerda — Empty hands
- Geirdriful — Bow
- Rota — Staff

Once the puzzle has been solved, read the following:

The flow of the water comes to a slow stop as the ceiling splits down its center and opens to reveal another room above you.

THE BURIAL CHAMBERS

These burial chambers contain some of the weapons of the Valkyries; others will be scattered throughout the Central Chamber. These chambers house the bones of the the dead Valkyries that Skuld could retrieve. The tombs that lie behind the memorial stones are mostly empty unless you decide to hide some of the stone weapons within them.

These chambers house memorials to each of the deceased Valkyries, they are simple carvings with only slight changes between each of them.

THE HIGHER HALL

This hall runs around the edge of the Central Hall but also acts as its ceiling. It is only openable via the puzzle in the Central Hall; it leads to an opening onto a cliff edge of the mountain.

The ceiling to the Central Chamber now acts as the floor to the Higher Hall. A simple stone walkway encircles the room below with the majority of this room now floorless due to the open ceiling. As you step onto the higher platform, a single naturally-occurring cave leads outside to a cliff edge on the other side of the mountain.

SKULD

Skuld sits in the middle of this cliff edge awaiting the party. She believes they are worthy and hopes they have learned of Odin's lies. She is ready for battle and wants to fight for what she believes is next for her, knowing her defeat will call upon the Shield Valkyries.

As you step out onto the platform that makes up the side of the mountain, you see the grand figure of a Valkyrie awaiting you; her dress is similar to that of the Shield Maidens you fought outside the Hall, but her armour is speckled with the blood of her enemies and her war paint is smeared after years of battle. She stands a commanding 12 feet tall as her voice carries across the open mountain air, 'You have come further than many before you. I know who sent you, but I do not know if you do. Odin is as much of a trickster as Loki, shifting forms and shapes to get those unaware to do his bidding. He was much the same when we called him master... father even. But when Hjorr returned with a mortal child, his rage was uncontrollable and our vengeance was swift. So began the war of Valhalla. Four of my sisters died so the rest of us could live, and now I am all that remains, our legacy a concoction of Odin's lies. I am tired of hiding; I am tired bending beneath his lies. So I, Skuld, the final Valkyrie, ask you, are you ready for battle?' Skuld's wings unfurl in a radiant white light as her axe and shield appear in her hands.

For the purposes of combat, Skuld is a **planetar** with the following alterations:

- Skuld carries a shield so her armour class is increased to 21,
- Skuld wields an enlarged greataxe that she is able to hold with either one or two hands. It does the following damage:
- **Enlarged Greataxe. Melee Weapon Attack:** +12 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 2d8 + 7 slashing damage plus 22 (5d8) radiant damage if wielded with one hand or 2d12 + 7 slashing damage plus 22 (5d8) radiant damage if wielded with two hands.

CONCLUSION – THE COMING WAR

The death of Skuld marks the calling of her kin: The Shield Valkyries of Skuld. They have been waiting for their summons, to storm Asgard, and so, the great war of Ragnarok begins.

The final blow, is dealt and Skuld falls. She whispers something almost imperceptible, and before you can react, a crack of thunder shakes you. You see a sky full of armoured female warriors atop winged steeds; they look down upon you and speak in unison, ‘We are the Shield Valkyries of Skuld, the kin she has made in her time in Midgard. We bring the war to Odin, and the war is just beginning.’ In a flash of lightning, the Shield Valkyries are gone, and Skuld has passed. It is then that you realise what Skuld said as she fell; the word echoes in your ears: ‘Ragnarok.’

REWARDS

What do characters earn from the adventure?

CREATURE	XP GAINED
Shield Maidens	1,800 XP (for each Shield Maiden)
Hall of the Valkyries Puzzle	1,000 XP
Skuld	15,000 XP

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure was written to portray the way in which society will so easily take the word of a man over a woman as truth. Norse/Viking mythology and history has always been seen as progressive in the way that women were allowed to fight alongside men but even with this, like many medieval societies, women were treated as inferior to men. I wanted to present this in a way where this prejudice is dangerous to those that believe it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asa Wheatley resides in Buckinghamshire, England with a voracious appetite for everything Norse and *D&D* related. He has written a number of adventures previously for the DMs Guild, alongside multiple comics. He is always telling a story in one way or another, and can be found on Twitter as [@AsaWheatley](#).