

BRINE, BLOOD, AND OIL

A mystery written by Mikhail Aristov (Koveras Alvane at RPGGeek) for play with the *Monster of the Week* (Revised Edition) rules by Michael Sands and Evil Hat Productions.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

PREFACE

The bulk of the mystery takes place aboard an oil drilling platform off the coast of Norway, whose crew is being terrorized by an undead monstrosity from Old Norse myths in the middle of a fierce winter storm. Due to the cramped locale, this mystery is not recommended for groups of more than four Hunters. The Divine, Expert, Mundane, Professional, Spooky, and Wronged (prey: undead) playbooks fit well into the mystery theme. When selecting the Hunters' gear, bear in mind Norway's firearm laws, as detailed here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_politics_in_Norway.

Additional background information about petroleum production and offshore drilling can be found on <http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/energy/offshore-drilling.htm>, while a quick Google image search for "Troll A" will turn up any number of visual inspirations.

MYSTERY CONCEPT

Thorolf "Redbeard" Biornson was an infamous 10th century viking captain whose brutal raids along the east coast of Great Britain had brought him considerable wealth. When he died, his sons were so afraid of his legendary greed that they loaded most of his treasure onto his funeral ship, then set her adrift into the sea.

Half a year ago, the national oil company of Norway (NNOC) has commissioned its newest offshore drilling platform in the Norwegian Sea. In doing so, however, they have unwittingly disturbed Thorolf's final resting place, prompting him to rise as a "draugr"—a powerful Norse revenant—and to punish all whom he sees as looters of his hoard.

The draugr's first victim is the Norwegian diver Tale Hagen who conducted the sea floor inspection that originally woke the monster and who was the only one to have actually seen the remains of his funeral ship. A few nights later, the draugr ascended to the platform deck and viciously murdered Tale.

The mystery as written takes place in February 2016 and may have to be adjusted for a different season.

HOOK

The gruesomely mutilated body of a diving specialist named Tale Hagen is discovered on the Svartalfar oil platform off the coast of Norway. The local criminal investigation is stumped, but one thing is for certain: the killer wasn't human—and he will strike again.

COUNTDOWN

- Day** The Svartalfar oil platform is put into operation. Thorolf Biornson comes back from the dead as a draugr.
- Shadows** The draugr kills Tale Hagen. Marine life around the platform is driven insane by his presence.
- Dusk** The draugr severs the submarine power cable connecting the platform to the mainland. His presence summons a preternatural localized storm around the platform.
- Sunset** The draugr goes on a violent spree across the platform, killing and maiming multiple crew members.
- Nightfall** The draugr ruptures one of the concrete oil tanks below the platform, causing the worst oil spill disaster in Norwegian history.
- Midnight** The draugr hunts down and murders anyone left on the platform.

THREATS

THOROLF BJORNSON, THE VIKING DRAUGR

Monster: Torturer (motivation: to hurt and terrify)

This revived corpse of a viking captain buried at sea is hideously swollen and preternaturally massive, with blue-black skin, sunken-in eyes that glow in the dark, and a jarringly red beard. The ocean had long eroded away the armor and weapons he was buried with, so the draugr appears stark naked. Although unaffected by sunlight, he is mainly active during the night, and his presence is announced by the unmistakable stench of decay.

Since coming back from the dead, the draugr is mainly driven by the urge to protect his treasure and to take revenge upon all intruders. Furthermore, his burning jealousy of the living gives him a perverse pleasure from murdering them in particularly vicious ways.

Powers

- Unnatural Strength: The draugr is much stronger than any regular human. It is what allows him to move nimbly despite weighing well over 1300 pounds (600 kg).
- Bloat Up: The draugr can freely enlarge his body from normal (just under 6 feet or 1.80 m) to double its size. His body shape and weight remain unchanged, but his attacks deal an additional +1-harm when in the bloated state.
- Turn into Smoke: The draugr transforms into a cloud of sooty bluish smoke in order to leave and to return to his grave. When transformed, he cannot interact with solid objects but passes through any non-airtight barrier and can only be harmed by magical weapons.
- Fetid Stench: The sickening smell of decay surrounding the draugr is debilitating to most people.
- Insanity Aura: Animals and people gradually lose their sanity in the vicinity of the draugr.
- Weather Control: The draugr unconsciously influences the weather around himself and his grave.

Weakness The draugr's body must be incinerated and his ashes, buried in solid ground. Scattering his ashes over the sea (as the old Norse myths suggest) instead lets him reform and regenerate in his underwater grave, as long as it remains intact.

Attacks **Slam**: 3-harm hand forceful; **Bite**: 3-harm intimate life-drain; **Crush**: 4-harm intimate restraining; **Rip asunder** (only when bloated): 5-harm intimate messy

Armor Thick skin: 2-armor (normally) or 1-armor (when bloated); x-armor magic (smoke cloud)

Harm capacity 10. □□□□□□□□□□

SVARTALFAR OIL PLATFORM

Location: Prison (motivation: to constrain and prevent exit)

An offshore oil drilling platform in the Norwegian Sea, about 50 miles (80 km) off the west coast of Norway. The platform had been commissioned by the NNOC half a year ago to tap the reserves of the oil field “Svartalfar”.

Constructed using the Condeep technology, the platform consists of a sprawling deck and four reinforced concrete shafts that carry it 100 feet above the sea level. The hollow 800 feet tall shafts stand on the sea floor and are surrounded by concrete oil storage tanks. Their walls are six feet thick, and an elevator ride from the deck down to the sea floor level takes almost five minutes.

The rectangular main deck stretches from south to north. The southern end is occupied by a seven-story residential block with a helicopter landing pad on top, while the northern end houses an oil preprocessing plant, the main pumps, and a 150 feet tall slanted derrick. Various machine and generator rooms and cargo cranes occupy the remaining deck space. The outer walls of the platform are completely covered with scaffolding, to which the crew members latch themselves when working outside.

The residential block is comparable to a five-star hotel in terms of luxuriousness. In addition to personal rooms with TV and free wi-fi for every employee, it contains an around-the-clock staff canteen, a gym, a sauna, and a cinema. The management offices and the control bridge are situated on the top floor. The whole installation is connected to the mainland via a submarine power cable, which supplies most of its electricity demands.

The platform carries a large number of wet diving suits and two fully-enclosed atmospheric ones for missions at depths below 150 feet.

THE STORM

Minion: Right hand (motivation: to back up the monster)

The draugr has no conscious control over the weather, but his rage had called forth an unnatural atmospheric phenomenon that acts almost like an intelligent malevolent creature. Depending on what’s most advantageous to the draugr at the moment, this preternatural storm behaves as a location threat of type *Deathtrap (motivation: to harm intruders)*, *Maze (to confuse and separate)*, or *Prison (to constrain and prevent exit)*.

Storms are a common occurrence in the Norwegian Sea, although ships generally aren’t allowed to leave the harbor when the waves reach 10 feet (3 m) in height. This particular storm persists against all science as long as the draugr remains alive, but can be dispelled with a Big Magic ritual that fulfills at least two of the following requirements: it takes at least 6 hours to complete, requires at least 10 participants, and must be conducted outdoors.

VENOMOUS SHOALS

Minion: Plague (motivation: to swarm and destroy)

The presence of the draugr has driven a number of marine creatures around its grave insane. Perhaps the most dangerous of them are several shoals of greater weevers that lurk in the waters under the Svartalfar platform.

Powers

- **Venomous Sting:** The crazed weevers throw themselves at anyone who finds oneself in the water, attempting to stab them with their venom-carrying dorsal fins. These are long and sharp enough to puncture a wet diving suit, and a single sting is enough to debilitate an adult person with intense pain. Mechanically, the victim is immediately rendered unstable, regardless of how much harm they previously took, and remains so until the venom fully denaturates several hours later.

Attacks **Swarm:** 0-harm intimate poison (see above)

Armor 2-armor. It generally hard to hurt a shoal of tiny fish in their native element.

Harm capacity 5 per shoal. □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□

SOFIE TORDENSKIOLD, IRON LADY OF SVARTALFAR

Bystander: Skeptic (motivation: to deny supernatural explanations)

The Offshore Installation Managerin (OIM)—a position akin to the captain of a ship—of the Svartalfar platform in her mid-forties, who devoted the last eight years of her life to the project. Sofie has barely left the platform since it had been put into operation and spares no effort to avoid or at least to hush up any operating trouble or bad PR. Although she is well-liked and respected by her employees, most view her as way too stiff.

The eldest daughter of one of Norway’s few remaining noble bloodlines, Sofie is not married and the Svartalfar platform is her only child. Apart from the police officers, she is the only armed person on the platform, although she mostly keeps her firearm (a Beretta 9mm: 2-harm close loud) locked inside a safe in her office.

LAKHTA NOORANI, DISTRAUGHT ENGINEER

Bystander: Victim (motivation: to put themselves in danger)

The chief engineer (Offshore Operations Engineer) of the Svartalfar platform. Of Pakistani descent, Lakhta graduated with honors from the University of Trondheim’s Department of Petroleum Engineering. Spotting her talent, Sofie Tordenskiold took her under her wing soon after she was hired by the NNOC.

Lakhta was romantically involved with the draugr’s first victim, Tale Hagen. She was also the one who discovered Tale’s body.

BERGER HOLM UND KRISTIN NEGAARD, ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

Bystander: Busybody (motivation: to interfere in other people's plans)

A duo of Norwegian environmentalists from Svelgen. Berger is a drop-out law student, while Kristin studies mechanical engineering. To protest the exploitation of the environment by the NNOC, the two have decided, at their own risk, to sabotage the company's newest project. So far, they have managed to sneak onto the Svartalfar platform and remain undetected by the crew, thanks to the commotion caused by Tale Hagen's death (of which they are not yet aware). Their ultimate target is the main oil pump.

PLATFORM CREW

Bystander: Innocent (motivation: to do the right thing)

The Svartalfar oil platform is designed to house a crew of 120, including technicians, engineers, crane operators, scaffolders, divers, firefighters, meteorologists, geologists, seismologists, system administrators, and a large number of support personnel, such as a celebrity chef and a company physician. The platform is currently inhabited by about 80 employees who work around the clock in 12 hour shifts to keep it operational.

Work on an oil platform is dangerous and extremely demanding both physically and mentally, but its crew enjoys very high salaries (even for Norway) and long paid vacations. All crew members are required to wear orange reflective vests or jackets while working outdoors.

Male Names: Tonnes Hansen, Alrek Lysne, Fernando Berrefjord, Douglas Flatten, Norulf Claussen, Ronny Hamre, Ener Eid, Jarlstein Nelsen, Gulmund Hoium, Pe Thoen

Female Names: Janne Amundsen, Isolde Abel, Marissa Slinde, Sylvie Holten, Elny Kjelland, Kjerstina Ulberg, Kari Hagtvedt, Juliann Dullum, Jokomine Mathisen, Winnie Viste

TORVIL THUNE, INVESTIGATOR OUT OF HIS DEPTH

Bystander: Official (motivation: to be suspicious)

A criminal investigator of the Norwegian police dispatched to the Svartalfar platform with his two assistants to inquire into Tale Hagen's death. In addition to the confounding nature of the crime itself, Torvil's investigation so far has been continuously hampered by the NNOC's PR damage control measures, leaving him in an extremely irritated state.

In particular, Torvil has long lost any patience to deal with OIM Tordenskiold.

SVELGEN, SMALL TOWN ON THE COAST

Location: Crossroads (motivation: to bring people, and things, together)

The Svartalfar platform is supplied from a small coastal town named Svelgen. In the last few years, Svelgen saw a considerable expansion of its harbor, as well as the construction of a mainland control center for Svartalfar, a raw oil processing plant, and an oil refinery, all operated by the NNOC.

Despite being located almost at the polar circle (northwest of Trondheim), Svelgen enjoys an unusually gentle oceanic climate. Even in winter, temperatures rarely fall below 27°F (−3°C). The daylight hours in February are 9 am to 3:30 pm.

RAGNAR OLSEN, OLD SEA DOG

Bystander: Helper (motivation: to join the hunt)

A boat captain from Svelgen and one of the subcontractors hired by the NNOC to ferry supplies and personnel to Svartalfar and back. Ragnar was ranked Commander (OF-4) when he was honorably discharged from the Royal Norwegian Navy and later returned to his hometown to start a private business.

Unbeknownst to him, Ragnar is a direct descendant of Thorolf Biornson in 43rd generation.

THORSTEN TINGELSTAD, HISTORY PROFESSOR IN DISTRESS

Bystander: Witness (motivation: to reveal information)

Assistant Professor of Marine History from the University of Oslo, Thorsten is a childhood friend of Tale Hagen and the only one whom Tale told about his sighting of the draugr's funeral ship before his death. Excited about the discovery, Thorsten immediately traveled to Svelgen and was promptly denied passage to Svartalfar by the NNOC. Undeterred, he attempted to stow away on a supply boat but was discovered and apprehended. With the local police's hands full with Tale's murder, Thorsten remains detained at the station and grows increasingly restless.

FUNERAL SHIP

Location: Fortress (motivation: to deny entry)

The ancient remains of the Thorolf Biornson's funeral ship are resting 650 feet (200 m) below the sea level in the vicinity of one of the four shafts supporting the Svartalfar platform. Most of the draugr's treasure hoard still lies within the wreck and he uses it as his hideout during the day. The diver Tale Hagen was the only living person to have seen the grave in modern times.