

# Vylkinmar's Final Voyage

## Level Design Document



A Level developed for The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Level authored by John Benge

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## Overview

Vylkinmar's Final Voyage is a unique dungeon mod with a corresponding quest that the player progresses through as he or she works his or her way towards an encounter with the ancient Nord mariner Vylkinmar. Vylkinmar's Tomb contains several elements not found in other dungeons in Skyrim, including a vertical entrance through a sarcophagus accessed by completing a puzzle, an animated boat ride with enemies firing arrows and spells at the player, and a shipwreck encased in a glacier. The dungeon is designed with all players in mind, with encounters and rewards scaling to match the player's level.

**Recommended Level** – Any

**Approximate Completion Time** – 10-15 Minutes

## Level Backstory

Ancient texts speak of Vylkinmar, one of the most renowned Nordic mariners of the First Era. Centuries after his passing, historical records once thought lost were recovered. These documents indicated that Vylkinmar had not received the traditional ship burial received by most Nord mariners, choosing instead to be interred in a modest tomb on the northern edge of Skyrim. This information has reached the ears of two necromancers, Volalmoormo Thramor and Samelis Dractal, who have traveled to the supposed location of Vylkinmar's final resting place. It is here they remain, as the sarcophagus encasing Vylkinmar's remains is proving difficult to open.

## Player Goals

- Defeat the two necromancers trying to gain entry to Vylkinmar's sarcophagus and read Samelis Dractal's Journal
- Perform the ritual required to open Vylkinmar's sarcophagus
- Enter and Explore Vylkinmar's Tomb
- Defeat Vylkinmar

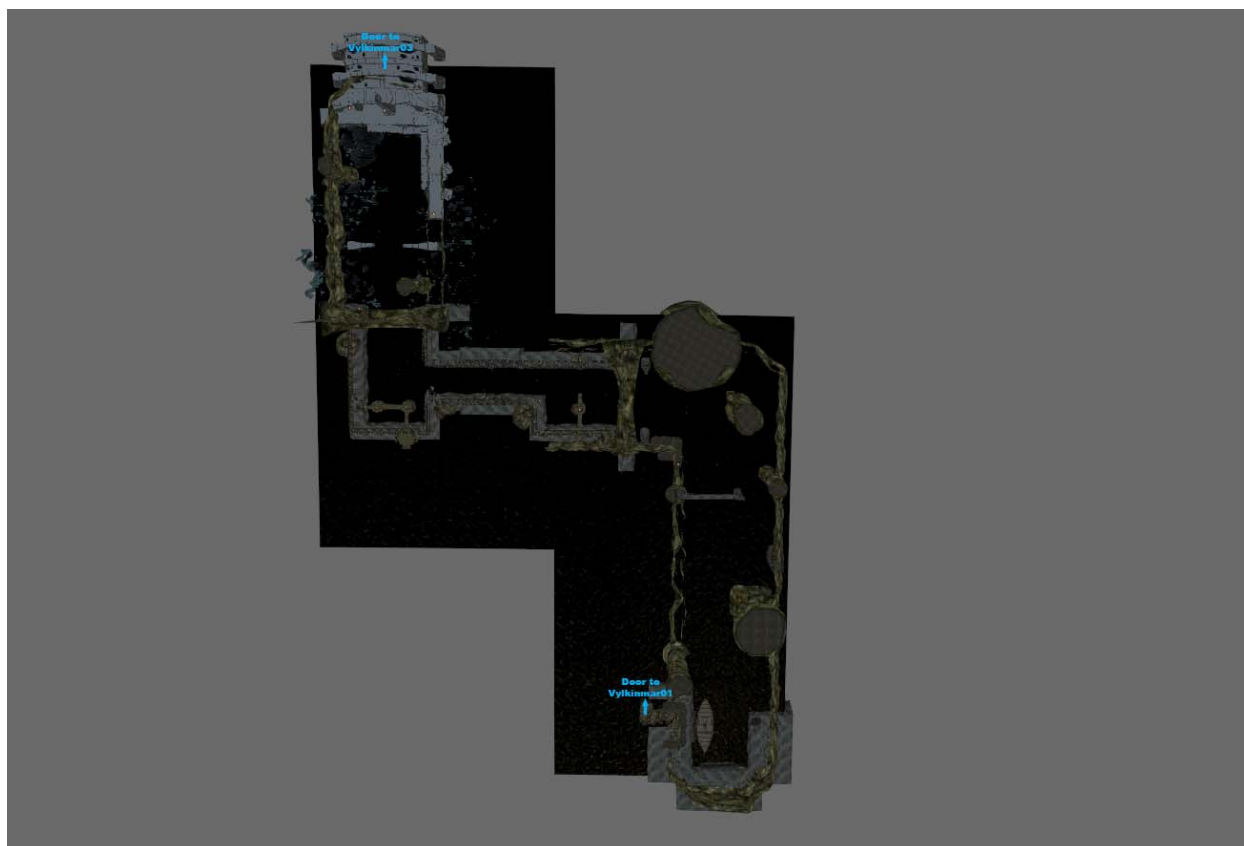
## Level Shelling

### Cell 1 – Vylkimnar's Tomb



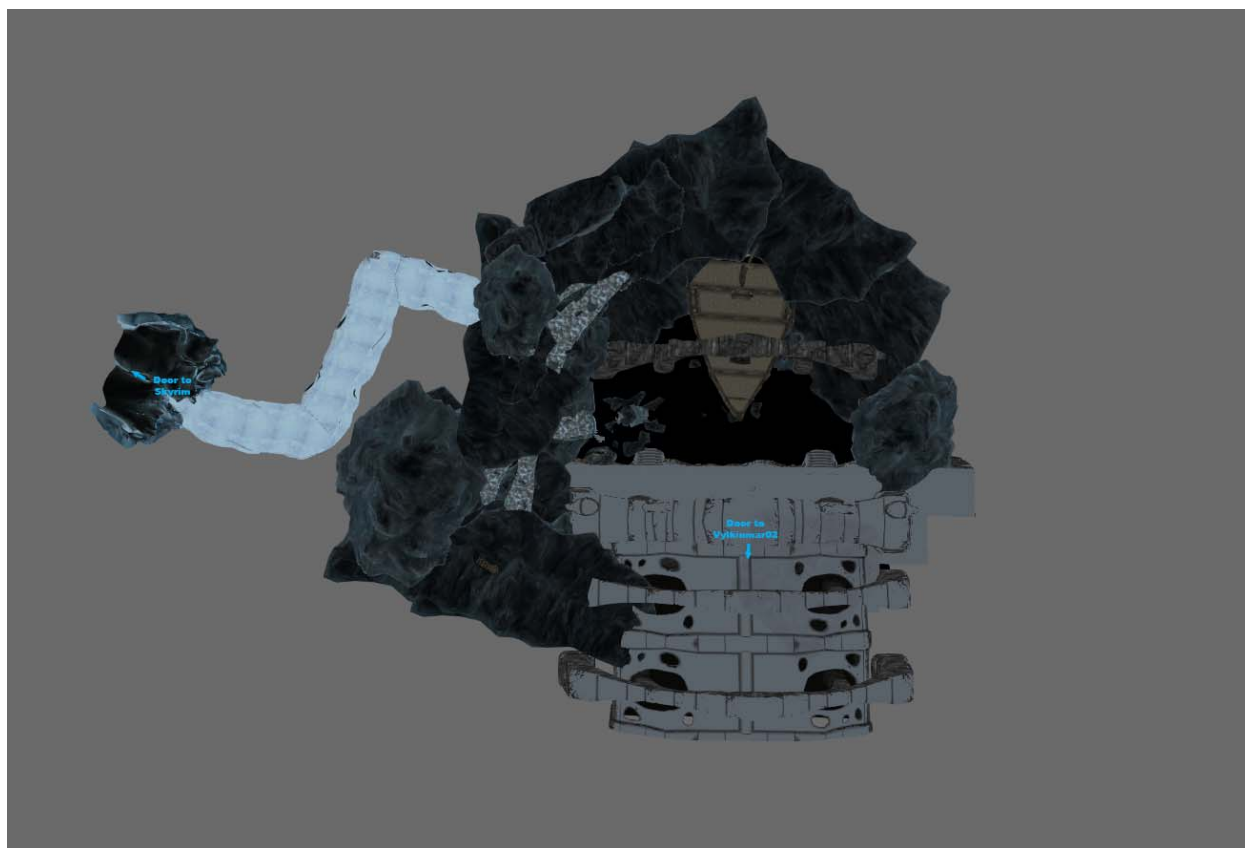
**Figure 1** – Vylkinmar's Tomb Shelling

## Cell 2 – Vylkimnar's Tomb Voyage



**Figure 2** – Vylkimnar's Tomb Voyage Shelling

## Cell 3 – Vylkimnar's Tomb Glacier



**Figure 3** – Vylkimar's Tomb Glacier Shelling

## Puzzles & Encounters

### Entering the Tomb



**Figure 1** - Necromancers idling before the player approaches

### Necromancer Encounter

The first encounter the player must survive. The entrance to Vylkinmar's tomb is trying to be breached by two necromancers, Volalmoormo Thramor and Samelis Dractal. These two magic users attack the player as soon as he or she comes within a certain radius.

### Basin Puzzle

After dispatching the two necromancers, the player must solve a puzzle in order to gain entrance to Vylkinmar's tomb. This puzzle, as well as the corresponding quest is initiated when the player reads Samelis Dractal's journal. Through reading the journal, the player learns that a ritual must be performed in order for the sarcophagus that serves as the entrance to the tomb to open. The ritual involves placing three items in a basin at the foot of the sarcophagus and lighting the basin on fire. The three items required are a red mountain flower, a sabre cat tooth, and a human skull. These items are provided on a nearby table, along with the journal.



**Figure 2** – Table containing Samelis Dractal’s Journal, the ingredients required for the ritual, and a Staff of Flames for the player to use in the ritual

Through reading the necromancer’s Journal, the player learns that these three items are required, and that Samelis Dractal, who was responsible for performing the ritual could not complete it successfully due to his being red-blue colorblind, which led to him using the wrong colored flower. This is reinforced by the presence of mostly blue flowers on the table, even though the journals states that red flowers required. There is a single red flower mixed in with the blue ones. It is implied that this red flower was gathered along with the others, with Samelis not perceiving the difference in color.

Samelis Dractal’s Journal text:

16th of Last Seed

I must admit, the thought of embarking on such an expedition with none other than Volalmoorno Thramor has me a little flustered. When I put word out that I may have uncovered the location of Vylkinmar’s remains, I never expected someone as well respected, at least as much as someone in our circles can be, to contact me, and straight away too. We’ve agreed to meet on the 26th and discuss preparations for the journey. I’d better show up well prepared, stories of Volalmoorno describe him as a man of little patience.

26th of Last Seed

Gods, but I understand where those stories are coming from. Having met Volalmoorno, I can now say for certain that he has the most intimidating presence of anyone I have thus far met. He’s a tall man with a cruel face and a humorless demeanor. Strangely enough, he didn’t wear black, like most mages of our following, instead **he wore a robe of red, or maybe blue?**<sup>1</sup> Throughout our entire encounter, I felt that he was evaluating me, measuring my usefulness. I kept expecting him to lose patience with me and end our arrangement then and there. I had planned on suggesting that we hire at least one mercenary for added protection, but I said nothing on the subject for fear of insulting him. We agreed, or

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<sup>1</sup> From this, the player can infer that the author has trouble discerning colors

rather he suggested, and I wasn't about to disagree, that we set out on the 1st of Hearthfire. Sooner than I was expecting, but sooner is probably better. Winter comes quickly to Skyrim.

#### 16th of Hearthfire

Can this be it? I would have expected Vylkinmar, one of the great mariners of the ancient Nords to have a much more extravagant resting place than a single sarcophagus on a lonely platform overlooking the Sea of Ghosts. The fact that the sarcophagus has remained undisturbed for this long stands testament to the powerful sealing magic placed on it. I just hope the ritual I uncovered really is the key to opening it.

#### 18th of Hearthfire

Why isn't it working? It's been two days now, and I can't get the damn thing to open. I'm starting to run out of ingredients. Sabre cat teeth and Nord skulls aren't exactly easy to acquire, even for a necromancer. Worse, Volalmoorno is growing increasingly impatient. How long do I have before he decides I'm no longer of use to him? I keep performing the ritual as it was written, one Nord skull, one sabre cat tooth, and one red mountain flower, than light it aflame, and nothing! Every time nothing! What am I doing wrong?

Once the player adds the required materials to the basin, he or she must light the basin on fire using a spell or fire staff. It is assumed that players will have at least one fire spell in their inventory, as the Flames spell is given to players during the game's opening. Additionally, a staff of flames is provided on the same table as the journal for the player's use. Once the ritual is complete, the sarcophagus lid opens and the player is allowed access to Vylkinmar's Tomb.

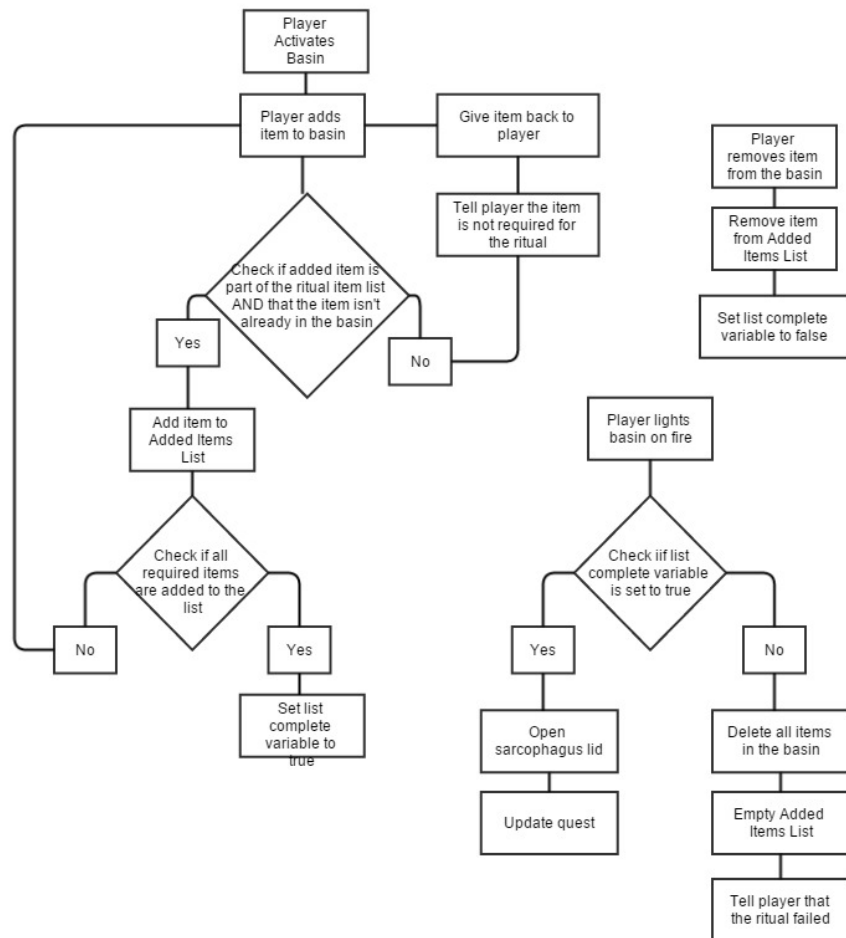


Figure 3 – Adding items to the basin



Figure 4 – Lighting the basin on fire

## Basin Puzzle Logic Breakdown



**Figure 8** – Logic breakdown of basin puzzle

## Exploring the Tomb

### Draugr Encounters



The player works his or her way through the dungeon, fighting off groups of leveled draugr. Some of these draugr have patrol routes, while others awaken from slumber to ambush the player. This is pretty standard fare for Skyrim dungeons.



**Figure 5** – Encounter 1 Draugr Ambush – easy x3



**Figure 6** - Encounter 2 Draugr Ambush – easy x1, Draugr Ambush – medium x1



**Figure 10** - Encounter 3 Draugr Ambush – easy x1, Draugr Ambush – medium x1



**Figure 11** - Encounter 4 Draugr Ambush – easy x3, Draugr Patrol – medium x1



**Figure 12** - Encounter 5 Draugr Ambush – easy x2, Draugr Ambush– medium x1



**Figure 13** - Encounter 6 Draugr Ambush – medium x1, Soul Gem trap x1, Lever activated portcullis x1



**Figure 14** - Encounter 7 Draugr Patrol – easy x1, Lever activated secret door leading to treasure chest x1



**Figure 15** - Encounter 8 Draugr Ambush – easy x3, Draugr Patrol – easy x1, Lever activated portcullis x1

## Boat Ride

In the second area of the tomb, players come across a boat docked on a subterranean waterway. After boarding the boat, and detaching the two mooring lines tethering the boat to the dock, the boat starts traveling along the waterway with the player and any companions he or she has in tow onboard. If the player is accompanied by a follower and or animal friend, a package will execute and tell the companion or animal to board. The boat will wait for the entire party to board before shoving off. A blocking volume prevents players from swimming the waterway instead of riding the boat. During the boat's journey, draugr will fire arrows and spells at the player as the boat is passing by. The player can shoot these far away enemies with arrows, shouts or spells, or he or she can simply try to dodge the incoming attacks.

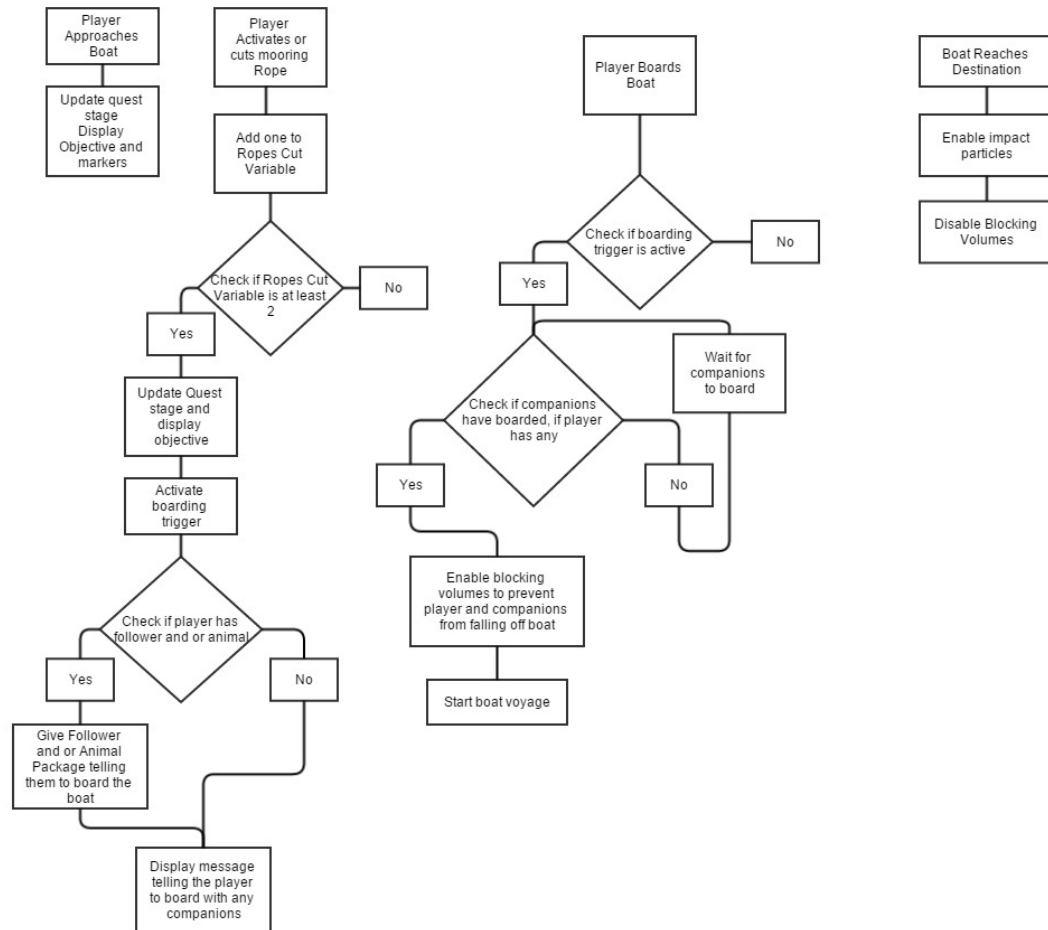


**Figure 16** - The boat the player must board

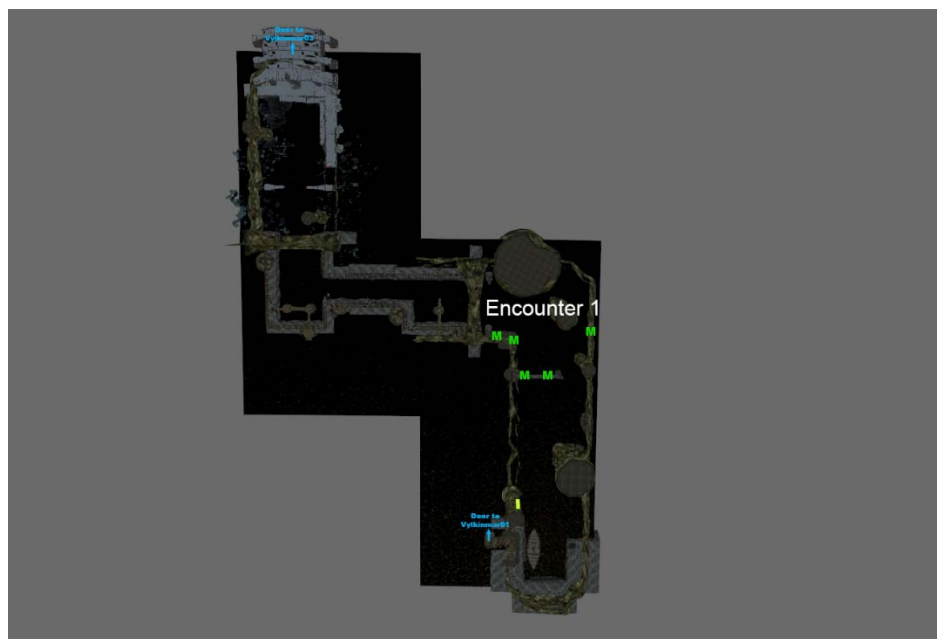


**Figure 17** – Ranged enemies firing at the player

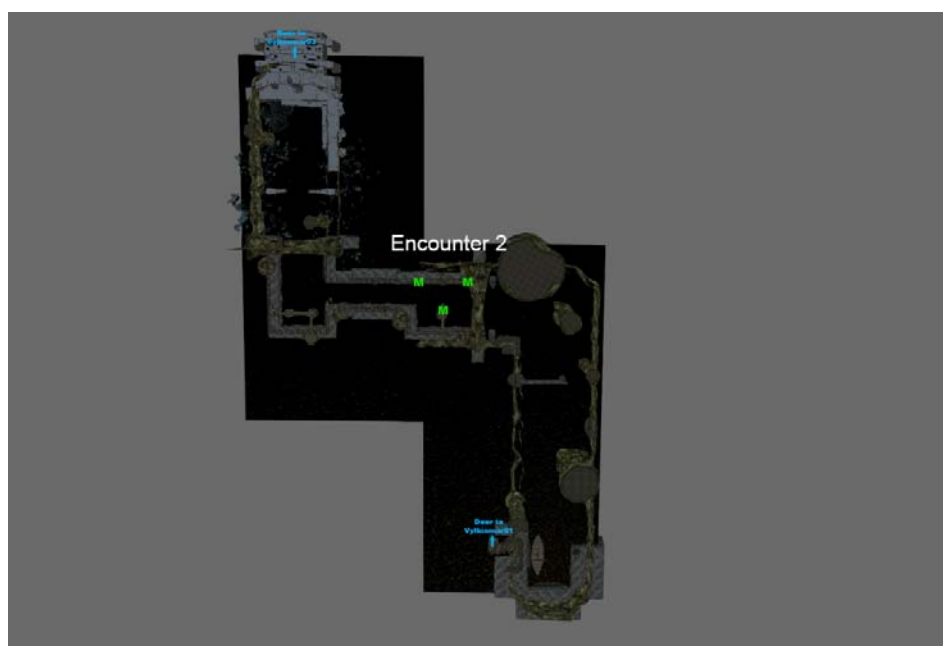
## Boat Launch Logic Breakdown



## Boat Ride Encounters



**Figure 18** – Encounter 1 - Draugr Missile guards - easy x3, Draugr Warlock guards – easy x2 Treasure Chest x1



**Figure 19** – Encounter 2- Draugr Missile guards - easy x1, Draugr Warlock guards – easy x2



**Figure 20** – Encounter 3 - Draugr Missile guards - easy x2, Draugr Warlock guards – easy x1



**Figure 21** – Draugr Ambush - easy x1, Draugr Ambush – easy x2

Once the boat reaches its final destination, it comes to rest near another dock, allowing the player to disembark. After stepping foot on solid ground the player must fend off two final draugr before entering the final cell and facing Vylkinmar himself.

## Final Encounter



**Figure 22** – Final Encounter area



**Figure 23** – Vylkinmar

The final encounter with Vylkinmar is a straightforward battle. Inside the final cell of Vylkinmar's Tomb, the player is confronted with an ancient ship partially encased in glacial ice.

Upon approaching Vylkinmar's true sarcophagus, it opens and Vylkinmar emerges and attacks the player. After he is dispatched, the quest ends, and the player is free to exit the dungeon through an exit leading players to the top of a glacier some distance north of where the player first entered Vylkinmar's Tomb.



**Figure 24** – Boss – Vylkinmar x1, Treasure Chest x1, Boss Treasure Chest x1, Unique Weapon Mastsplitter x1

Stuck in the mast of the encased ship there is a unique leveled weapon called Mastsplitter, along with a note to the player.

### Weathered Note Text

Here I let sleep this most precious and dangerous of treasures. I lay her here, close by, yet eternally beyond my grasp, for no man, nor mer or beast can claim her for his own. She belongs only to the sea, as she is the sea. She is the rogue swell that snaps the mast in twain. She is the maelstrom that lays waste to the proud vessel, leaving only splinters floating in its place.

I speak of her as Mastsplitter, but that is not her name, for no man knows her name, as no man can know the name of the sea, only that meaningless utterance intended to embody our flawed, incomplete concept of the unknowable sea. Take her in hand worthy traveler, and let her drink once more of blood and brine. She will drink blood greedily, but it will not abate her thirst. The sea is her source and her sustenance. Let her drink of the sea, and she will be appeased and requite you with her favor. Scorn her and she will be turbulent. Keep her close and enjoy her caress, but never lay claim to her, for she belongs to none.

# Quest Breakdown

**Quest Name** – Vylkinmar's Final Voyage

**ID** – VLQ01

**Script** – QF\_VLQ01\_02002EC0

## Quest Stages

0 – Initial Stage – The player has read Samelis Dractal's Journal to start the quest, and must now figure out how to gain entry to Vylkinmar's Tomb.

10 – The player has successfully performed the ritual, but hasn't yet entered the tomb

20 – The player has entered the Tomb, and must now make his or her way through it.

30 – The player has come upon the boat docked in the subterranean waterway. The player must next cut or untie the mooring lines to ride the boat.

35 – Handler stage for each time the player cuts or unties a rope.

38 – Both ropes are cut, waiting for the player to board with his or her companions

40 – The boat has embarked on its journey. The player must now fend off attacks from ranged enemies as the boat makes its way to its destination.

50 – The player has reached the far dock, concluding the voyage. Now the player must explore further, and find Vylkinmar.

60 – The player has found Vylkinmar's sarcophagus, and must now defeat him to finish the quest.

70 – The completion stage. The player has defeated Vylkinmar, thus ending the quest.

## Quest Objectives

0 – Perform the ritual to open Vylkinmar's sarcophagus

10 – Enter Vylkinmar's Tomb

20 – Explore the depths of Vylkinmar's final resting place

30 – Board the ship and cut or cast off the mooring lines

40 – Ride the boat to its destination

50 – Continue to explore Vylkinmar's final resting place

## 60 – Defeat Vylkinmar

# References and Inspiration

## Ocarina of Time – Shadow Temple

Much of the inspiration for the interior boat ride comes from a similar encounter found within the Shadow Temple in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. In this encounter, players board a ship floating mysteriously inside the temple. The ship carries players through the air, as enemies board the ship and engage the player in combat.



**Figure 25** – Ocarina of Time Shadow Temple Boat Ride



**Figure 26** – Ocarina of Time – Fighting enemies on the boat

## Technical Challenges

### Basin Puzzle

The basin puzzle requires a good deal of scripting. This type of container based puzzle isn't common in Skyrim, and is somewhat unique to this modification. Though a fair amount of scripting is required, this challenge is definitely achievable.

### Vertical Entry Dungeon

There are only one or two examples of vertical entry dungeons in Skyrim. Moreover, the secret passage sarcophagus is not meant to be used for this purpose. The player should be able to exit the dungeon if he or she decides to leave, so there needs to be a way out too. As with the basin puzzle, this is fairly easy to accomplish with some clever use of provided assets.

### Moving Ship

This is definitely the most challenging facet of this level to accomplish. Skyrim doesn't really have support for moving platforms, and there are no examples of moving platforms in the base game to draw from. Moreover, there is no way that I know of to create a navmesh that accounts for a moving platform, meaning that enemies and followers will get confused once the ship starts to move. Additionally, getting enemies to attack the player from very far distances could prove tricky to pull off. Finally, this feature may be troublesome in terms of line of sight. The waterway for the ship to travel on will have to be huge, and will have to extend for a pretty long distance. This could cause the area to lag, and could cause undesired effects such as fading in excessive fog. This aspect will prove challenging to accomplish, as some things, like the navmesh issue are engine limitations, and something I don't have control over.

### Glacial Ship

For the ship encased in a glacier, there are a few things that could cause problems. Most notably, the ship model is too large for even the 'large room' subset within the Ice cave tile set. There is no 'epic' subset for ice caves, only for default, 'green' caves. I will have to create an environment out of glacial pieces, which are meant to be used as part of the exterior landscape, and are not created with modularity in mind.

# Pipeline and Production

## Edited Cells

Wilderness (-11,28)

Wilderness (-11,29)

Wilderness (-9,34)

## New Cells

Vylkinmar01

Vylkinmar02

Vylkinmar03

## New Quests

Vylkinmar's Final Voyage

## New NPCs

Volalmoormo Thramor

Samelis Dractal

## New Objects

### Activators

VL Sarcophagus Load Door

VL Rope Load Door Box

VL Mooring Trigger

### Books

VL Samelis Dractal Journal

VL Mast Splitter Note

### Containers

VL Ritual Basin

### Doors

VL Rope Exit Door

VLDummyTrapDoor

### **FormLists**

VLRitualItems

VLObjectsInBasin

VLFireSpellList

### **Globals**

VLQ01MooringTotal

VLQ01MooringCut

### **Locations**

VylkinmarLocation

### **Leveled Items**

VLMAstsplitterList

### **Movable Statics**

VLShipLongBoatAnim010000

### **Actors**

VLVolalmoormoThramor

VLSamelisDractal

VLLvlDraugrMissileFarMale

VLLvlDraugrMissileFarFemale

VLLvlDraugrMissileNearFemale

VLLvlDraugrMissileNearMale

VLLvlDraugrWarlockNearMale

VLLvlDraugrWarlockNearFemale

VLLvlDraugrWarlockFarFemale

VLLvlDraugrWarlockFarMale

VLVylkinmar

### **Packages**

VLFollowerBoardBoat

VLANimalBoardBoat

VLDraugrBoardShip

VLAttackBoatRangedFar

VLAttackBoardShip

VLAttackBoatRangedNear

VLAttackBoatMagicNear

VLAttackBoatMagicFar

### **Quests**

VLQ01

### **Sound Descriptors**

VLAMBRainEntranceSplatter01

### **Sound Markers**

VLAMBRainEntranceSplatter

### **Statics**

VLRitualSkull

VLRitualTooth

VLRitualFlowerBlue

VLRitualFlowerPurple

VLRitualFlowerRed

### **Weapons**

VMastsplitter01

VMastsplitter02

VMastsplitter03

VMastsplitter04

VMastsplitter05

VMastsplitter06

## New Scripts

QF\_VLQ01\_02002ECO

VLBasinTriggerScript

VLFinalSarcophagusLidAdjust

VLFollowerBoardBoat

VLMooringCastOff

VLMooringCut

VLSamelisDractalJournalScript

VLsarcophagusEnterDoor

VLShipApproachTrigger

VLShipController

VLStayOnShip

VLswimTriggerMessage

VLtombTeleport

## Tilesets Utilized

Nordic Dungeon Tileset

Green Cave Tileset

Ice Cave Tileset

Glacial Landscape Pieces

## Cutbacks and Areas of Improvement

### Ship Encounters

The moving scene set piece proved to be as challenging as I had predicted. I originally hoped to have enemies board the ship from above and engage the player in melee combat. Getting enemies to jump down onto the ship wasn't working with any degree of consistency. Giving the enemies a package telling them to jump onto the ship when it reached a certain distance proved inconsistent, and enemies either missed the ship, jumping into the water, or died once they hit the deck of the ship.

### Mastsplitter

I originally wanted Mastsplitter to be a unique weapon with a unique way of charging its enchantment. The idea was to have the weapon draw its energy from the sea, having the weapon not gain charge from soul gems, but instead steadily gain charge from being submerged in water. This proved impossible to accomplish however, as Papyrus lacks functions and event hooks for manipulating weapon charge.

### Glacial Ship Reveal

A more minor element I would like is the reveal of the Vylknmar's ship. The player enters the cell containing the ship too low in relation to the ship. The reveal would have been more dramatic and effective if the player entered the cell higher, and could look down at the ship. This would also allow the player to get a better sense of the area surrounding the ship, and how to move through it.

### Lighting

I've tried to create a lighting setup that produces interesting and aesthetically appealing compositions, as well as allowing players to easily grasp the dimensions of their surroundings, but I feel that I lack the experience and trained critical eye to create a great lighting solution. This is definitely something I should be able to improve on over time, and I'd like to revisit the lighting and make iterative improvements in the future.

## Additional Images



Figure 27 - Vylkinmar Exterior Entrance



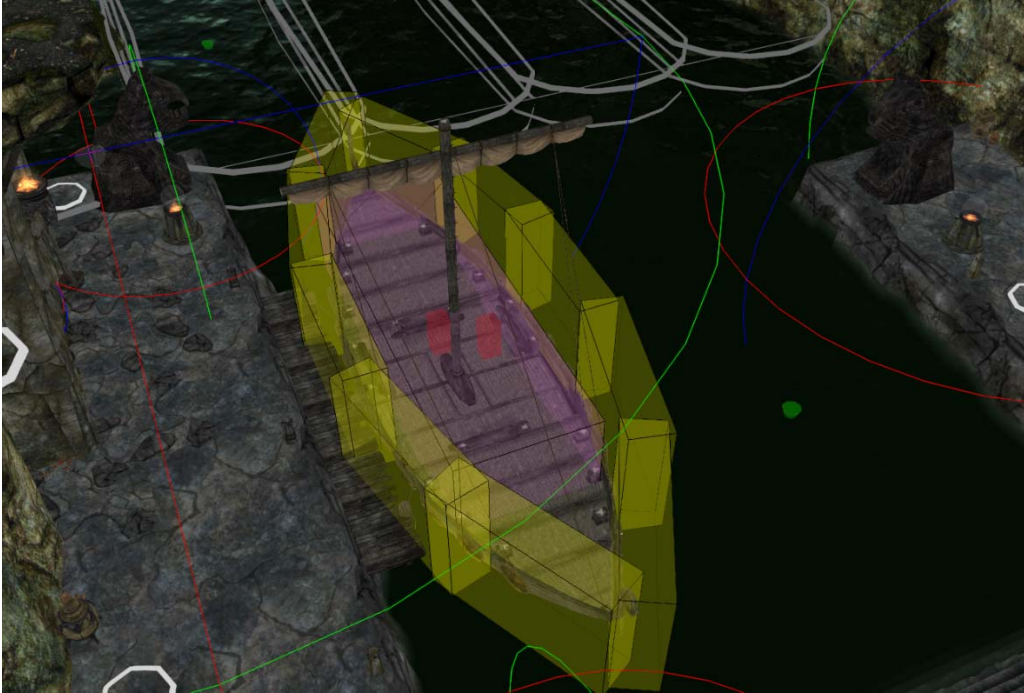
Figure 28 - Vylkinmar Sarcophagus Entrance



**Figure 29** – Vylkinmar Rope Exit



**Figure 30** – Vylkinmar Glacier Exit Exterior



**Figure 31** – Boat and blocking volumes



**Figure 32** – Far dock where boat comes to rest



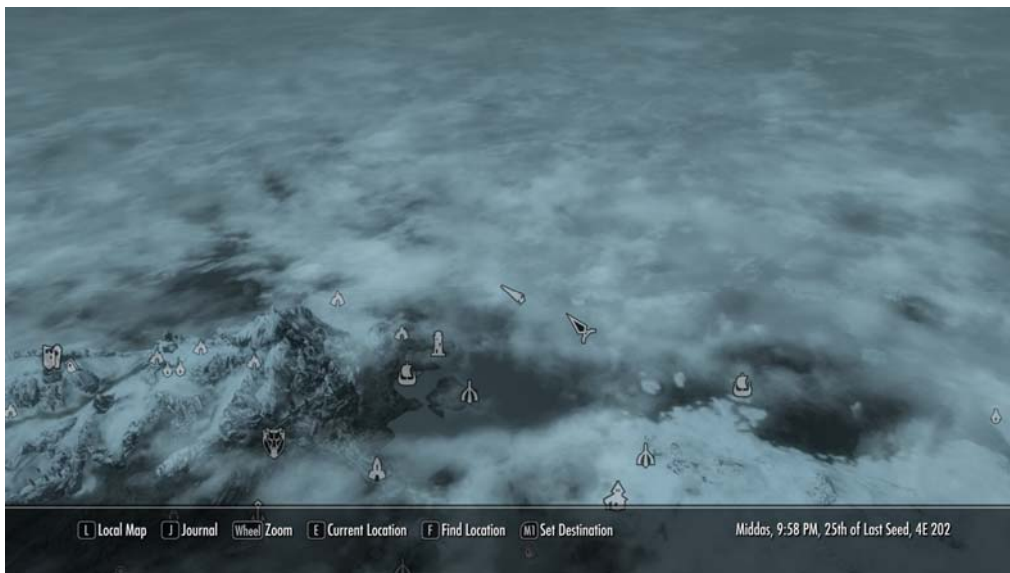
**Figure 33** – Mastsplitter stuck in the ship's broken mast along with a note



**Figure 34** – The approach to the exit with boss chest and another chest hidden behind icicles.



**Figure 35** – Vylkinmar location in Skyrim



**Figure 36** – The player exits through a glacier located north and slightly west of the entrance

## Download Link

<http://www.johnpbenge.com/wp-content/uploads/vylkinmar.zip>

Alternate Link

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-1E89Kte-nJNd1TTVBa19PRGs/view?usp=sharing>