

Norse Myths

Retold by Patrick Healy



Table of Contents

[Copyright](#)

[PART I: THE INHABITANTS OF ASGARD](#)

[FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO](#)

[DUNA AND HER APPLES](#)

[SIF'S GOLDEN HAIR](#)

[HOW BROCK BROUGHT JUDGMENT ON LOKI](#)

[HOW FREYA GAINED HER NECKLACE AND LOST HER
LOVED ONE](#)

[HOW FREY WON GERDA BUT LOST HIS MAGIC SWORD](#)

[HEIMDALL AND LITTLE HNOSSA](#)

[ODIN LEAVES ASGARD](#)

[ODIN GOES TO MIMIR'S WELL](#)

[ODIN FACES AN EVIL MAN](#)

[ODIN WINS FOR MEN THE MAGIC MEAD](#)

[ODIN TALKS TO HIS SON VIDAR](#)

[THOR AND LOKI IN THE GIANTS' CITY](#)

[HOW THOR AND LOKI FOOLED THRYM THE GIANT](#)

ÆGIR'S FEAST: HOW THOR TRIUMPHED

THE DWARF'S HOARD, AND THE CURSE THAT IT BROUGHT

FOREBODING IN ASGARD

LOKI THE BETRAYER

LOKI AGAINST THE ÆSIR

THE VALKYRIE

THE CHILDREN OF LOKI

BALDUR'S DOOM

LOKI'S PUNISHMENT

SIGURD'S YOUTH

THE SWORD GRAM AND THE DRAGON FAFNIR

THE DRAGON'S BLOOD

THE STORY OF SIGMUND AND SIGNY

THE STORY OF SIGMUND AND SINFIOTLI

THE VOLSUNG'S VENGEANCE AND THE DEATH OF SINFIOTLI

BRYNHILD IN THE HOUSE OF FLAME

SIGURD AT THE HOUSE OF THE NIBELUNGS

HOW BRYNHILD WAS WON FOR GUNNAR

THE DEATH OF SIGURD

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Copyright

Norse Myths

Retold by Patrick Healy

<http://storyworld.me>

October 2013

* * *

PART I: THE INHABITANTS OF ASGARD

FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO

Once there was another Sun and Moon, different from the ones we see now. Sol was the name of that Sun and Mani was the name of that Moon. But wolves always followed behind Sol and Mani. The wolves caught them at last and devoured Sol and Mani. Then the world was in darkness and cold.

The Gods lived in those times; Odin, Thor, Hödur, Baldur, Tyr, Heimdall, Vidar and Vali, as well as Loki, the doer of good and evil. The beautiful Goddesses were also living then, Frigga, Freya, Nanna, Iduna, and Sif. But in the days when the Sun and Moon were destroyed the Gods were destroyed too—all the Gods except Baldur who had died before that time, Vidar and Vali, the sons of Odin, and Modi and Magni, the sons of Thor.

At that time, too, there were men and women in the world. But before the Sun and the Moon were devoured and before the Gods were destroyed, terrible things happened in the world. Snow fell on the four corners of the earth and kept on falling for four seasons. Winds came and blew everything away. The people of the world who had lived on in spite of the snow and the cold and the winds fought each other, brother killing brother, until all the people were destroyed.

Also there was another Earth at that time, an Earth green and beautiful. But the terrible winds that blew destroyed forests and hills and homes. Then fire came and burnt the Earth. There was darkness, for the Sun and the Moon had been devoured. The Gods had met with their doom. The time in which all these things happened was called Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

Then a new Sun and a new Moon appeared and went traveling through the heavens. They were more lovely than Sol and Mani, and no

wolves chased them. The earth became green and beautiful again, and in a deep forest that the fire had not burnt a woman and a man woke up. They had been hidden there by Odin and left to sleep during Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

The woman's name was Lif, and the man's was Lifthrasir. They moved through the world, and their children and their children's children the new Earth. Of the Gods only Vidar and Vali, the sons of Odin, and Modi and Magni, the sons of Thor were left. On the new earth Vidar and Vali found tablets that the older Gods had written on and had left there for them, tablets telling everything that had happened before Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

The people who lived after Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods, were not troubled, as the people in the older days were troubled, by the terrible beings who had brought destruction upon the world and upon men and women, and who from the beginning had waged war upon the Gods.

THE BUILDING OF THE WALL

There had always been war between the Giants and the Gods—between the Giants who wanted to destroy the world and the race of men, and the Gods who wanted to protect the race of men and make the world more beautiful.

There are many stories about the Gods, but the first one that should be told is the one about the building of their City.

The Gods had made their way up to the top of a high mountain and there they decided to build a great City for themselves that the Giants could never destroy. They would call The City “Asgard,” which means the Place of the Gods. They decided to build it on a beautiful

plain that was on the top of that high mountain and they wanted to raise round their City the highest and strongest wall that had ever been built.

One day when they were beginning to build their halls and their palaces a stranger appeared. Odin, the Father of the Gods, went and spoke to him. “What do you want on the Mountain of the Gods?” he asked the Stranger.

“I know what the Gods want,” the Stranger said. “They want to build a City here. I cannot build palaces, but I can build great walls that can never be destroyed. Let me build the wall round your City.”

“How long will it take you to build a wall that will go round our City?” said the Father of the Gods.

“A year,” said the Stranger.

Now Odin knew that if a great wall could be built around it, the Gods would not have to spend all their time defending their City, Asgard, from the Giants, and he knew that if Asgard were protected, he himself could go amongst men and teach them and help them. He thought that no payment the Stranger could ask would be too much for the building of that wall.

That day the Stranger came to the Council of the Gods, and swore that in a year he would have the great wall built. Then Odin promised that the Gods would give him what he asked in payment if the wall was finished to the last stone a year from that day.

The Stranger went away and came back on the next day. It was the first day of Summer when he started work. He brought no one to help him except a great horse.

The Gods thought that this horse would do no more than drag blocks

of stone for the building of the wall. But the horse did more than this. He set the stones in their places and mortared them together. Day and night and by light and dark the horse worked, and soon a great wall was rising round the palaces that the Gods themselves were building.

“What reward will the Stranger ask for the work he is doing for us?” the Gods asked one another.

Odin went to the Stranger. “We marvel at the work you and your horse are doing for us,” he said. “No one can doubt that the great wall of Asgard will be finished by the first day of summer. What payment do you want? We will have it ready for you.”

The Stranger turned from the work he was doing, leaving the great horse to pile up the blocks of stone. “Father of the Gods,” he said, “Odin, the reward I shall ask for my work is the Sun and the Moon, and Freya, who watches over the flowers and grasses, for my wife.”

When Odin heard this he was terribly angered, for the price the Stranger asked for his work was beyond all prices. He went to the other Gods who were building their shining palaces within the great wall and he told them what reward the Stranger had asked. The Gods said, “Without the Sun and the Moon the world will die.” And the Goddesses said, “Without Freya all will be gloom in Asgard.”

They would have preferred to let the wall remain unfinished rather than let the Stranger have the reward he claimed for building it. But someone spoke. He was Loki, a being who only half belonged to the Gods; his father was the Wind Giant. “Let the Stranger build the wall round Asgard,” Loki said, “and I will find a way to make him give up the hard bargain he has made with the Gods. Go to him and tell him that the wall must be finished by the first day of summer, and that if it is not finished to the last stone on that day the price he asks will not be given to him.”

The Gods went to the Stranger and they told him that if the last stone was not laid on the wall on the first day of the summer not Sol or Mani, the Sun and the Moon, nor Freya would be given to him. Now they knew that the Stranger was one of the Giants.

The Giant and his great horse piled up the wall more quickly than before. At night, while the Giant slept, the horse worked on and on, hauling up stones and laying them on the wall with his great feet. Day by day the wall around Asgard grew higher and higher.

But the Gods had no joy in seeing that great wall rising higher and higher around their palaces. The Giant and his horse would finish the work by the first day of summer, and then he would take the Sun and the Moon, Sol and Mani, and Freya away with him.

But Loki was not disturbed. He kept telling the Gods that he would find a way to prevent him from finishing his work, and thus he would make the Giant give up the terrible price he had made Odin promise him.

It was three days to Summer time. All the wall was finished except the gateway. A stone still had to be placed over the gateway. The Giant, before he went to sleep, told his horse to haul up a great block of stone so that they might put it above the gateway in the morning, and so finish the work two full days before Summer.

It happened to be a beautiful moonlit night. Svadilfare, the Giant's great horse, was hauling the largest stone he ever hauled when he saw a little mare come galloping toward him. The great horse had never seen so pretty a little mare and he looked at her with surprise.

“Svadilfare, slave,” said the little mare to him and went trotting past. Svadilfare put down the stone he was hauling and called to the little

mare. She came back to him. “Why do you call me ‘Svadilfare, slave’?” said the great horse.

“Because you have to work night and day for your master,” said the little mare. “He keeps you working, working, working, and never lets you enjoy yourself. You dare not leave that stone and come and play with me.”

“Who told you I dare not do it?” said Svadilfare.

“I know you daren’t do it,” said the little mare, and she kicked up her heels and ran across the moonlit meadow.

The truth was that Svadilfare was tired of working day and night. When he saw the little mare go galloping off he became suddenly discontented. He left the stone he was hauling on the ground. He looked round and he saw the little mare looking back at him. He galloped after her.

He did not catch up to the little mare. She went on swiftly ahead of him. She went on over the moonlit meadow turning and looking back now and again at the great Svadilfare, who came heavily after her. The mare went down the mountainside, and Svadilfare, who now rejoiced in his liberty and in the freshness of the wind and in the smell of the flowers, still followed her. At dawn they reached a cave and the little mare entered it and Svadilfare followed. Then Svadilfare caught up to the little mare and the two went wandering together, the little mare telling Svadilfare stories of the Dwarfs and the Elves.

They came to a grove and stayed together in it, the little mare playing so nicely with him that the great horse forgot all about the passing time. While they were in the grove the Giant was going up and down, searching for his great horse.

He had come to the wall in the morning, expecting to put the stone over the gateway and so finish his work. But the stone that was to be lifted up was not near him. He called for Svadilfare, but his great horse did not come. He went to search for him, and he searched all over the mountainside and he searched as far across the Earth as the land of the Giants. But he did not find Svadilfare.

The Gods saw the first day of summer come and the gateway of the wall stand unfinished. They said to each other that if it were not finished by the evening they did not need give Sol and Mani to the Giant, nor the maiden Freya to be his wife. The hours of the summer day went past and the Giant did not raise the stone over the gateway. In the evening he came to them.

“Your work is not finished,” Odin said. “You shall not be given Sol and Mani or the maiden Freya.”

He tried to destroy one of the palaces, but the Gods seized him and threw him outside the wall he had built. “Go, and trouble Asgard no more,” Odin commanded.

Then Loki returned to Asgard. He told the Gods how he had transformed himself into a little mare and had led away Svadilfare, the Giant’s great horse. The Gods sat in their golden palaces behind the great wall and rejoiced that their City was now secure and that no enemy could ever enter it or destroy it. But as Odin, the Father of the Gods, sat on his throne he was sad in his heart, sad that the Gods had got their wall built by a trick and that promises had been broken in Asgard.

DUNA AND HER APPLES

In Asgard there was a garden, and in that garden there grew a tree, and on that tree there grew shining apples. Anyone who ate those shining apples never grew a day older, for eating them kept old age away.

The Goddess Iduna took care of the tree on which the shining apples grew. They would not grow on the tree unless she was there to look after it. No one but Iduna could pluck the shining apples. Each morning she plucked them and left them in her basket and every day the Gods and Goddesses came to her garden so that they could eat the shining apples and so stay young forever.

Iduna never left her garden. All day and every day she stayed in the garden or in her golden house beside it, and all day and every day she listened to Bragi, her husband, tell a story that never had an end. But a time came when Asgard lost Iduna and her apples, and the Gods and Goddesses felt old age approaching.

Odin, the Father of the Gods, often went into the land of men to watch over them. Once he took Loki ,the doer of good and evil, with him. For a long time they went traveling through the world of men. At last they came near Jötunheim, the realm of the Giants.

It was a bleak and empty region. Nothing grew there, not even trees with berries. There were no birds or animals. As Odin, the Father of the Gods, and Loki, the doer of good and evil, went through this region they became hungry but in all the land around they saw nothing that they could eat.

Loki, running here and there, at last came upon a herd of wild cattle. Creeping up on them, he caught hold of a young bull and killed him.

Then he cut up the flesh into strips of meat. He lighted a fire and put the meat on spits to roast. While the meat was being cooked, Odin, the Father of the Gods, sat thinking about the things he had seen in the world of men.

Loki made himself busy putting more and more logs on the fire. At last he called to Odin, and the Father of the Gods came and sat down near the fire to eat the meal.

But when the meat was taken off the cooking-spits and when Odin went to cut it, he found that it was still raw. He smiled at Loki for thinking the meat was cooked, and Loki, troubled that he had made a mistake, put the meat back, and put more logs upon the fire. Again Loki took the meat off the cooking-spits and called Odin to the meal.

Odin, when he took the meat that Loki brought him, found that it was as raw as if it had never been put on the fire. "Is this a trick, Loki?" he said.

Loki was so angry at the meat being uncooked that Odin saw he was playing no tricks. In his hunger he raged at the meat and he raged at the fire. Again he put the meat on the cooking-spits and put more logs on the fire. Every hour he would pick up the meat, sure that it was now cooked, and every time he took it off Odin would find that the meat was as raw as the first time they took it off the fire.

Odin realized that the meat must be under some enchantment by the Giants. He stood up and went on his way, hungry but strong. Loki, however, would not leave the meat that he had put back on the fire. He would make it be cooked, he declared, and he would not leave that place hungry.

The dawn came and he picked up the meat again. As he was lifting it off the fire he heard a whirr of wings above his head. Looking up, he

saw a mighty eagle, the largest eagle that had ever appeared in the sky. The eagle circled round and round above Loki's head. "Can't you cook your food?" the eagle screamed to him.

"I cannot cook it," said Loki.

"I will cook it for you, if you give me a share," screamed the eagle.

"Come, then, and cook it for me," said Loki.

The eagle circled round until he was above the fire. Then flapping his great wings over it, he made the fire blaze. A heat that Loki had never felt before came from the burning logs. In a minute he drew the meat from the spits and found it was well cooked.

"My share, my share, give me my share," the eagle screamed at him. He flew down, and seizing a large piece of meat instantly devoured it. He seized another piece. Piece after piece he devoured until it looked as if Loki would be left with no meat for his meal.

As the eagle seized the last piece Loki became angry indeed. Taking up the spit on which the meat had been cooked, he struck at the eagle. There was a clang as if he had struck some metal. The wood of the spit did not come away. It stuck to the chest of the eagle. But Loki did not let go of the spit. Suddenly the eagle rose up into the air. Loki, who held onto the spit that was stuck to the eagle's chest, was carried up with him.

Before he knew what was happening Loki was high up in the air and the eagle was flying with him toward Jötunheim, the kingdom of the Giants. The eagle was screaming out, "Loki, friend Loki, I have you at last. It was you who cheated my brother of his reward for building the wall round Asgard. But, Loki, I have you at last. I, Thiassi the Giant, have captured you, Loki. You, who are the most cunning of the

inhabitants of Asgard.”

Thus the eagle screamed as he went flying with Loki toward Jötunheim, the kingdom of the Giants. They passed over the river that divides Jötunheim from Midgard, the World of Men. Loki saw a terrible place beneath him, a land of ice and rock. There were great mountains and light didn't come from either a sun or a moon, but by columns of fire thrown up now and again through cracks in the earth or out of the peaks of the mountains.

The eagle hovered over a great iceberg. Suddenly he shook the spit from his chest and Loki fell down on the ice. The eagle screamed out to him, “You art in my power at last Loki, most cunning of all the inhabitants of Asgard.” The eagle left Loki there and flew in through a crack in the mountain.

Loki was indeed miserable on that iceberg. The cold was terrible. He could not die there, for he was one of the inhabitants of Asgard and death could not come to him that way. He might not die, but he felt bound to that iceberg with chains of cold.

The next day his captor returned, not as an eagle this time, but in his own form as, Thiassi the Giant.

“Do you want to leave this iceberg, Loki,” he said, “and return to your pleasant place in Asgard? Do you enjoy life in Asgard, even though only one half of you belongs to the Gods. Your father, Loki, was the Wind Giant.”

“If only I could leave this iceberg,” Loki said, with the tears freezing on his face.

“You can leave it when you are ready to pay a ransom to me,” said Thiassi. “You will have to get me the shining apples that Iduna keeps

in her basket.”

“I cannot get Iduna’s apples for you, Thiassi,” said Loki.

“Then stay on the iceberg,” said Thiassi the Giant. He went away and left Loki there with the terrible winds pounding like the blows of a hammer.

When Thiassi returned again and spoke to him about his ransom, Loki said, “There is no way of getting the shining apples from Iduna.”

“There must be some way, cunning Loki,” said the Giant.

“Although Iduna guards the shining apples well, she is simple-minded,” said Loki. “It may be that I could get her to go outside the wall of Asgard. If she goes she will bring her shining apples with her, for she never lets them go except when she gives them to the Gods and Goddesses to eat.”

“Make it so that she will go beyond the wall of Asgard,” said the Giant. “If she goes outside of the wall I shall get the apples from her. Swear by the World-Tree that you will lure Iduna outside the wall of Asgard. Swear it, Loki, and I shall let you go.”

”I swear it by Ygdrassil, the World-Tree, that I will lure Iduna outside the wall of Asgard if you will take me off this iceberg,” said Loki.

Then Thiassi changed himself into a mighty eagle, and taking Loki in his talons, he flew with him over the stream that divides Jötunheim, the kingdom of the Giants, from Midgard, the World of Men. He left Loki on the ground of Midgard, and Loki then went on his way to Asgard.

Odin had already returned and he had told the others in Asgard of

Loki's attempt to cook the enchanted meat. All laughed to think that Loki had been left hungry despite his cunning. Then when he came into Asgard looking so famished, they thought it was because Loki had had nothing to eat. They laughed at him more and more. But they brought him into the Feast Hall and they gave him the best of food with wine out of Odin's wine cup. When the feast was over the inhabitants of Asgard went to Iduna's garden as usual.

Iduna was sitting there in the golden house that opened onto her garden. Had she been in the world of men, everyone who saw her would have remembered their own innocence, seeing someone who was so fair and good. She had eyes as blue as the sky, and she smiled as if she were remembering lovely things she had seen or heard. The basket of shining apples was beside her.

To each God and Goddess Iduna gave a shining apple. Each one ate the apple given, rejoicing to think that they would never become a day older. Then Odin, the Father of the Gods, said the words that were always said in praise of Iduna, and then they all left Iduna's garden, each one going to his or her own shining house.

All went except Loki, the doer of good and evil. Loki sat in the garden, watching fair and simple Iduna. After a while she spoke to him and said, "Why do you still stay here, wise Loki?"

"To have a better look at your apples," Loki said. "I am wondering if the apples I saw yesterday are really as shining as the apples that are in your basket."

"There are no apples in the world as shining as mine," said Iduna.

"The apples I saw were more shining," said Loki. "Yes and they smelled better too, Iduna."

Iduna was troubled at what Loki, whom she thought so wise, told her. Her eyes filled with tears at the thought that there might be more shining apples in the world than hers. "Loki," she said, "it cannot be. No apples are more shining, and none smell so sweet, as the apples I pluck off the tree in my garden."

"Go and see then," said Loki. "Just outside Asgard is the tree that has the apples I saw. You, never leave your garden, and so you don't know what grows in the world. Go outside of Asgard and see."

"I will go, Loki," said the fair and simple Iduna,.

Iduna went outside the wall of Asgard. She went to the place where Loki had told her that the apples grew. But as she looked this way and that, Iduna heard a whirr of wings above her. Looking up, she saw a mighty eagle, the largest eagle that had ever appeared in the sky.

She ran back toward the gate of Asgard. Then the great eagle swooped down; Iduna felt herself lifted up, and then she was being carried away from Asgard, away, away over Midgard where men lived, away toward the rocks and snows of Jötunheim. Iduna was carried across the river that flows between the World of Men and the kingdom of the Giants. Then the eagle flew into a crack in a mountain and Iduna was left in a cavernous hall lighted up by columns of fire that burst up from the earth.

The eagle loosened his grip on Iduna and she sank down onto the ground of the cavern. The wings and the feathers fell from him and she saw her captor as a terrible Giant.

"Oh, why have you carried me off from Asgard and brought me to this place?" Iduna cried.

"So that I can eat your shining apples, Iduna," said Thiassi the Giant.

“That will never be, for I will not give them to you,” said Iduna.

“Give me the apples to eat, and I shall carry you back to Asgard.”

“No, no, that cannot be. I have been trusted with the shining apples and I can only give them to the Gods.”

“Then I shall take the apples from you,” said Thiassi the Giant.

He took the basket out of her hands and opened it. But when he touched the apples they shriveled. He left them in the basket and put the basket down. He realized that the apples would be no good to him unless Iduna gave them to him with her own hands.

“You must stay with me here until you give me the shining apples,” he said to her.

Then poor Iduna was frightened. She was frightened of the strange cave and frightened of the fire that kept bursting up out of the earth and she was frightened of the terrible Giant. But above all she was frightened to think of the evil that would fall upon the inhabitants in Asgard if she were not there to give them the shining apples to eat.

The Giant came to her again but Iduna still would not give him the shining apples. She stayed there in the cave, with the Giant troubling her every day. She grew more and more fearful as she saw in her dreams the inhabitants in Asgard go to her garden, and not being given the shining apples, feel and see a change coming over themselves and over each other.

It happened exactly as Iduna saw in her dreams. Every day everyone in Asgard went to her garden—Odin ,Thor, Hödur ,Baldur, Tyr , Heimdall, Vidar and Vali, with Frigga, Freya, Nanna, and Sif. There was no one to pluck the apples from the tree. And a change began to come over the Gods and Goddesses.

They no longer walked lightly; their shoulders became bent; their eyes were no longer as bright as dewdrops. When they looked at one another they saw the change. Age was coming on everyone in Asgard.

They knew that the time would come when Frigga would be gray and old; when Sif's golden hair would fade; when Odin would no longer have his clear wisdom, and when Thor would not have enough strength to raise and throw his thunderbolts. They were saddened by this knowledge, and it seemed to them that all the brightness had gone from their shining City.

Where was Iduna whose apples would give them back youth and strength and beauty? The Gods had searched for her through the World of Men. They couldn't find any trace of her. However, Odin, saw a way to find out where Iduna was hidden.

He summoned his two ravens, Hugin and Munin, These two ravens flew through the earth and through the kingdom of the Giants and that knew everything that was past and everything that was to come. He summoned Hugin and Munin and they came, and one sat on his right shoulder and the other on his left shoulder and they told him deep secrets. They told him of Thiassi and of his desire for the shining apples that the Dwellers in Asgard ate, and of Loki's deception of Iduna, the fair and simple.

Odin told the Council of the Gods what he had learnt from his ravens. Then Thor the Strong went to Loki and seized him. When Loki found himself in the grip of the strong God, he said, "What do you want with me Thor?"

"I would like to throw you into a chasm in the ground and strike you with my thunder," said the strong God. "It is you who is responsible for Iduna leaving Asgard."

” Thor,” said Loki, “do not crush me with your thunder. Let me stay in Asgard. I will try to get Iduna back.”

“The judgment of the Gods,” said Thor, “is that you, the cunning one, should go to Jötunheim, and by your cunning get Iduna back from the Giants. Go or else I shall throw you into a chasm and crush you with my thunder.”

“I will go,” said Loki.

Loki borrowed the dress of falcon feathers from Frigga, the wife of Odin. He put it on and flew to Jötunheim in the form of a falcon.

He searched through Jötunheim until he found Thiassi’s daughter, Skadi. He flew in front of Skadi and he let the Giant maid catch him and hold him as a pet. One day the Giant maid carried him into the cave where Iduna, the fair and simple, was being held.

When Loki saw Iduna there he knew that part of his quest was ended. Next he had to get Iduna out of Jötunheim and away to Asgard. He didn’t stay with the Giant maid, but flew up into the high rocks of the cave. Skadi wept for the loss of her pet, but at last she ceased searching and left the cave.

Then Loki, the doer of good and evil, flew to where Iduna was sitting and spoke to her. When Iduna knew that one of her friends from Asgard was near, she wept with joy.

Loki told her what she had to do. By the power of a spell that was given to him he was able to change her into the form of a sparrow. But before she did this she took the shining apples out of her basket and threw them into places where the Giant would never find them.

Skadi, coming back to the cave, saw the falcon fly out with the sparrow beside him. She cried out to her father and the Giant knew

that the falcon was Loki and the sparrow was Iduna. He changed himself into the form of a mighty eagle. By this time the sparrow and falcon were out of sight, but Thiassi, knowing that he could fly faster than them, flew toward Asgard.

Soon he saw them. They flew with all the power they had, but the great wings of the eagle brought him nearer and nearer to them. The inhabitants of Asgard, standing on the wall, saw the falcon and the sparrow with the great eagle pursuing them. They knew who they were—Loki and Iduna with Thiassi in pursuit.

As they watched the eagle coming nearer and nearer, those in Asgard were fearful that the falcon and the sparrow would be caught and that Iduna would be taken again by Thiassi. They lighted great fires on the wall, knowing that Loki would find a way through the fires, bringing Iduna with him, but that Thiassi would not find a way.

The falcon and the sparrow flew toward the fires. Loki went between the flames and brought Iduna with him. Thiassi, coming up to the fires and finding no way through, beat his wings against the flames. He fell down from the wall and died.

Thus Iduna was brought back to Asgard. Once again she sat in the golden house that opened onto her garden, once again she plucked the shining apples off the tree she tended, and once again she gave them to the inhabitants of Asgard. Those gods in Asgard walked lightly again, and brightness came into their eyes and into their cheeks; age approached them no more; youth came back; light and joy were again in Asgard.

SIF'S GOLDEN HAIR

Everyone who lived in Asgard, the Æsir and the Asyniur, who were the Gods and the Goddesses, and the Vanir, who were the friends of the Gods and the Goddesses, were furious with Loki. It was no wonder they were angry with him, for he had let the Giant Thiassi abduct Iduna and her golden apples. However, their anger made Loki want to do more mischief in Asgard.

One day he saw a chance to do mischief that made his heart rejoice. Sif, the wife of Thor, was lying asleep outside her house. Her beautiful golden hair flowed all round her. Loki knew how much Thor loved that shining hair, and how greatly Sif prized it because of Thor's love. Here was his chance to do a great mischief. Smilingly, he took out his shears and cut off the shining hair, every strand and every tress. She did not awaken while her treasure was being taken from her. Loki left Sif's head bare.

Thor was away from Asgard. Coming back to the City of the Gods, he went into his house. Sif, his wife, was not there to welcome him. He called to Sif, but there was no reply. Thor went to the palaces of all the Gods and Goddesses, but he did not find Sif, his golden-haired wife in any of them.

When he was coming back to his house he heard his name whispered. He stopped, and then a figure emerged from behind a stone. A veil covered her head, and Thor scarcely recognized his wife Sif. As he went to her she sobbed. "Oh Thor, my husband," she said, "do not look at me. I am ashamed that you should see me. I shall go from Asgard and from the company of the Gods and Goddesses, and I shall go down to Svartheim and live amongst the Dwarfs. I cannot bear that any of the inhabitants of Asgard should see me now."

“Oh Sif,” cried Thor, “what has happened to you?”

“I have lost the hair from my head,” said Sif, “I have lost the beautiful golden hair that you, Thor, loved. You will not love me anymore, and so I must go away, down to Svartheim and to the company of the Dwarfs. They are as ugly as I am now.”

Then she took the veil off her head and Thor saw that all her beautiful hair was gone. She stood before him, ashamed and sad, and he grew into a mighty rage. “Who was it that did this to you, Sif?” he said. “I am Thor, the strongest of everyone in Asgard, and I shall see to it that all the powers the Gods possess will be used to get your hair back. Come with me, Sif.” Taking his wife’s hand in his, Thor went off to the Council House where the Gods and the Goddesses were.

Sif covered her head with her veil, for she did not want the Gods and Goddesses to see her shorn head. But from the anger in Thor’s eyes everyone saw that the wrong done to Sif was great indeed. Then Thor told how her beautiful hair had been cut. A whisper went round the Council House. “It must have been Loki who did this. No one else in Asgard would have done such a shameful thing,” one said to the other.

“It was Loki who did it,” said Thor. “He has hidden himself, but I shall find him and I will kill him.”

“No, Thor,” said Odin, the Father of the Gods. “No one in Asgard may kill another. I shall summon Loki to come before us here. It is up to you to make him (and remember that Loki is cunning and able to do many things) bring back to Sif the beauty of her golden hair.”

Then the call of Odin, that all in Asgard have to obey, went through the City of the Gods. Loki heard it, and he had to come from his hiding-place and enter the house where the Gods held their Council. When he looked at Thor and saw the rage that was in his eyes, and

when he looked at Odin and saw the sternness in the face of the Father of the Gods, he knew that he would have to make amends for the shameful wrong he had done to Sif.

Odin said, “There is something that you have to do Loki. Restore the beauty of Sif’s hair to her.”

Loki looked at Odin, and then at Thor, and he saw that he would have to do as Odin commanded. His quick mind searched for a way of restoring to Sif the beauty of her golden hair.

“I shall do as you command, Odin All-Father,” he said.

There were other beings besides the Gods and the Goddesses in the world at the time. First, there were the Vanir. When the Gods, who were called the Æsir, came to the mountain on which they built Asgard, they found other beings there. These were not wicked and ugly like the Giants. They were beautiful and friendly and were called the Vanir.

Although they were beautiful and friendly the Vanir had no interest in making the world more beautiful or happy. In that way they were different from the Æsir who wanted to make the world a better place. The Æsir made peace with them, and they lived together in friendship, and the Vanir came to do things that helped the Æsir to make the world more beautiful and happier. Freya, whom the Giant wanted to take away with the Sun and the Moon as a reward for the building of the wall round Asgard, was one of the Vanir. The other beings of the Vanir were Frey, who was the brother of Freya, and Niörd, who was their father.

On the earth below there were other beings—the dainty Elves, who danced and fluttered about, looking after the trees and flowers and grasses. The Vanir were permitted to rule over the Elves. Then below

the earth, in caves and hollows, there was another race, the Dwarfs or Gnomes, little, twisted creatures, who were both wicked and ugly, but who were the best craftsmen in the world.

In the days when neither the Æsir nor the Vanir were friendly to him Loki used to go down to Svartheim, the Dwarfs' home below the earth. Now that he was commanded to restore to Sif the beauty of her hair, Loki thought of help he might get from the Dwarfs.

He went down, down, through the winding passages in the earth, and he came at last to where the Dwarfs who were most friendly to him were working in their forges. All the Dwarfs were master-smiths, and when he came upon his friends he found them working with hammer and tongs, beating metals into many shapes. He watched them for a while and took note of the things they were making. One was a spear, so well balanced and made that it would hit whatever mark it was thrown at no matter how bad the aim the thrower had. The other was a boat that could sail on any sea, but that could be folded up so that it would go into one's pocket. The spear was called Gungnir and the boat was called Skidbladnir.

Loki, praised their work and promised them things that only the inhabitants in Asgard could give, things that the Dwarfs longed to possess. He talked to them till the little, ugly folk thought that they would one day own Asgard and all that was in it.

At last Loki said to them, "Have you got a bar of fine gold that you can hammer into threads—into threads so fine that they will be like the hair of Sif, Thor's wife? Only the Dwarfs could make a thing so wonderful. Ah, there is the bar of gold. Hammer it into those fine threads, and the Gods themselves will be jealous of your work."

Flattered by Loki's speeches, the Dwarfs who were in the forge took up the bar of fine gold and flung it into the fire. Then taking it out and

putting it upon their anvil they worked on the bar with their tiny hammers until they beat it into threads that were as fine as the hairs of one's head. But that was not enough. They had to be as fine as the hairs on Sif's head, and these were finer than anything else. They worked on the threads, over and over again, until they were as fine as the hairs on Sif's head. The threads were as bright as sunlight, and when Loki took up the mass of worked gold it flowed from his raised hand down on the ground. It was so fine that it could be put into his palm, and it was so light that a bird might not feel its weight.

Then Loki praised the Dwarfs more and more, and he made more and more promises to them. He charmed them all, although they were an unfriendly and a suspicious folk. Before he left them he asked them for the spear and the boat he had seen them make, the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir. The Dwarfs gave him these things, though later they wondered why they had given them to him.

Loki went back to Asgard. He walked into the Council House where everyone in Asgard was gathered. He met the stern look in Odin's eyes and the furious look in Thor's eyes with smiling good humor. "Take off your veil Sif," he said. And when poor Sif took off her veil he put on her bald head the wonderful mass of gold he held in his palm. The gold fell over her shoulders, fine, soft, and shining as her own hair. When the Æsir and the Asyniur, the Gods and the Goddesses, and the Van and Vana, saw Sif's head covered again with the shining hair, they laughed and clapped their hands. The shining hair stayed on Sif's head as if indeed it had roots and was growing there.

HOW BROCK BROUGHT JUDGMENT ON LOKI

Loki wanted the Æsir and the Vanir to be friendly to him again so he brought out the wonderful things he had obtained from the Dwarfs—the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir. The Æsir and the Vanir marveled at such wonderful things. Loki gave the spear as a gift to Odin, and he gave the boat Skidbladnir to Frey, who was chief of the Vanir.

Everyone in Asgard was pleased that things so wonderful had been brought to them. Loki, who had made a great show in giving these gifts, said boastingly, “None but the Dwarfs who work for me could make such things. There are other Dwarfs, but they are as clumsy as they are ugly. The Dwarfs who are my servants are the only ones who can make such wonders.”

Loki in his boastfulness had said a foolish thing. There were other Dwarfs besides those who had worked for him, and one of these was there in Asgard. Unknown to Loki he stood in the shadow of Odin’s seat, listening to what was being said. Brock, the most spiteful of all the Dwarfs went over to Loki, trembling with rage.

“Ha, Loki, you boaster,” he roared, “you lie. Sindri, my brother, who would never serve you, is the best smith in Svartheim.”

The Æsir and the Vanir laughed to see Loki scolded by Brock the Dwarf in the middle of his boastfulness. As they laughed Loki grew angry.

“Be silent, Dwarf,” he said, “Your brother will know about a smith’s work when he goes to the Dwarfs who are my friends, and learns

something from them.”

“You think he should learn from the Dwarfs who are your friends? My brother Sindri learn from the Dwarfs who are your friends!” Brock roared, in a greater rage than before. “The things you have brought out of Svarheim would not be noticed by the Æsir and the Vanir if they were put beside the things that my brother Sindri can make.”

“Sometime we will try your brother Sindri and see what he can do,” said Loki.

“Try now, try now,” Brock shouted. “I’ll wager my head against yours, Loki, that his work will make everyone in Asgard laugh at your boasting.”

“I will take your wager,” said Loki. “My head against yours. I will be glad to see that ugly head of yours off your misshapen shoulders.”

“The Æsir will judge whether my brother’s work is not the best that ever came out of Svarheim. And they will see that you will pay your wager, Loki, the head off your shoulders.”

“We will sit in judgment,” said the Æsir. Then, still full of rage, Brock the Dwarf went down to Svarheim, to where his brother Sindri worked.

Sindri was there in his glowing forge, working with bellows and anvil and hammers beside him, and around him masses of metal—gold and silver, copper and iron. Brock told his tale, how he had wagered his head against Loki’s that Sindri could make things more wonderful than the spear and the boat that Loki had brought to Asgard.

“You were right in what you said, my brother,” said Sindri, “and you shall not lose your head to Loki. But the two of us must work at what

I am going to forge. It will be your work to keep the fire so that it will neither blaze up nor die down for a single instant. If you can keep the fire as I tell you, we will forge a wonder. Now, brother, keep your hands upon the bellows, and keep the fire under your control.”

Then Sindri threw into the fire, not a piece of metal, but a pig’s skin. Brock kept his hands on the bellows, working it so that the fire neither died down nor blazed up for a single instant. In the glowing fire the pigskin swelled itself into a strange shape.

But Brock was not left to work the bellows in peace. A gadfly flew into the forge. It landed on Brock’s hands and stung them. The Dwarf screamed with pain, but his hands still held the bellows, working it to keep the fire steady, for he knew that the gadfly was Loki, and that Loki was trying to spoil Sindri’s work. Again the gadfly stung his hands, but although his hands felt as if they were pierced with hot irons, Brock, still worked the bellows so that the fire did not blaze up or die down for a single instant.

Sindri came and looked into the fire. He said words of magic over the shape that was rising there. The gadfly had flown away, and Sindri told his brother to stop working. He took out the thing that had been shaped in the fire, and he worked over it with his hammer. It was a wonder indeed—a boar, all golden, that could fly through the air, and that shed light from its bristles as it flew. Brock forgot the pain in his hands and screamed with joy. “This is the greatest of wonders,” he said. “The inhabitants of Asgard will have to give the judgment against Loki. I shall have Loki’s head!”

But Sindri said, “The boar Golden Bristle may not be judged as great a wonder as the spear Gungnir or the boat Skidbladnir. We must make something more wonderful still. Work the bellows as before, brother, and do not let the fire die down or blaze up for a single instant.”

Then Sindri took up a piece of gold that was so bright it lit up the dark cavern that the Dwarfs worked in. He threw the piece of gold into the fire. Then he went to prepare something else and left Brock to work the bellows.

The gadfly flew in again. Brock did not know it was there until it landed on the back of his neck. It stung him till Brock felt the pain was tearing him apart. But still he kept his hands on the bellows, working it so that the fire neither blazed up nor died down for a single instant. When Sindri came to look into the fire, Brock was not able to speak because of the pain.

Again Sindri said magic words over the gold that was being smelted in the fire. He took it out of the glow and worked it over on the main-anvil. Then in a while he showed Brock something that looked like the circle of their sun. “A splendid arm ring, my brother,” he said. “An arm ring for a God’s right arm. This ring has hidden wonders. Every ninth night eight rings like itself will drop from this arm ring, for this is Draupnir, the Ring of Increase.”

“The ring shall be given to Odin, the Father of the Gods,” said Brock. “Odin will have to declare that nothing so wonderful was ever brought into Asgard. Oh Loki, cunning Loki, I shall have your head in spite of your tricks.”

“Don’t be too hasty, brother,” said Sindri. “What we have done so far is good but we must ensure that the inhabitants of Asgard give the judgment that delivers Loki’s head to you. Work as before, brother, and do not let the fire blaze up or die down for a single instant.”

This time Sindri threw into the fire a bar of iron. Then he went away to fetch the hammer that would shape it. Brock worked the bellows as before, but only his hands were steady, for every other part of him was trembling with expectation of the gadfly’s sting.

He saw the gadfly dart into the forge. He screamed as it flew round and round him, searching out a place where it might sting him most painfully. It landed on his forehead, just between his eyes. The first sting it gave took the sight from his eyes. It stung again and Brock felt the blood flowing down. Darkness filled the cave. Brock tried to keep his hands steady on the bellows, but he did not know whether the fire was blazing up or dying down. He shouted and Sindri hurried up.

Sindri said the magic words over the thing that was in the fire. Then he drew it out. “An instant more,” he said, “and the work would have been perfect. But because you let the fire die down for an instant the work is not as good as it might have been made.” He took what was shaped in the fire to the main-anvil and worked over it. Then when Brock’s eyesight came back to him he saw a great iron hammer. The handle did not seem to be long enough to balance the head. This was because the fire had died down for an instant while it was being formed.

“The hammer is Miölnir,” said Sindri, “and it is the greatest of all the things that I am able to make. Everyone in Asgard must rejoice to see this hammer. Only Thor will be able to handle it. Now I am not afraid of the judgment that those in Asgard will give.”

“The inhabitants of Asgard will have to give judgment for us,” Brock cried out. “They will have to give judgment for us, and the head of Loki, my tormentor, will be given me.”

“No more wonderful gifts than these have ever been brought into Asgard,” Sindri said. “Your head is saved, and you will be able to take the head of Loki who was disrespectful to us. Bring it here, and we will throw it into the fire in the forge.”

The Æsir and the Vanir were seated in the Council House of Asgard when a number of Dwarfs appeared before them. Brock came at the

head of the others, and he was followed by a band of Dwarfs carrying very heavy things. Brock and his attendants stood round the throne of Odin, and listened to the words of the Father of the Gods.

“We know why you have come into Asgard from out of Svarthheim,” Odin said. “You have brought wonderful things to us in Asgard. Let us see what you have brought, Brock. If they are more wonderful and more useful than the things Loki has brought out of Svarthheim, the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir, we will give judgment for you.”

Then Brock commanded the Dwarfs who waited on him to show the Dwellers in Asgard the first of the wonders that Sindri had made. They brought out the boar, Golden Bristle. The boar flew round and round the Council House, leaving a track of brightness. Everyone in Asgard said to each other that this was a wonder indeed. But none would say that the boar was a better thing to have in Asgard than the spear that would hit the mark no matter how badly it was thrown, or the boat Skidbladnir that would sail on any sea, and that could be folded up so small that it would fit in any one’s pocket. No one would say that Golden Bristle was better than these wonders.

Brock gave the marvelous boar to Frey, who was Chief of the Vanir,.

Then the Dwarfs showed the arm ring that was as bright as the circle of the Sun. All admired the noble ring. When it was told how every ninth night this ring dropped eight rings of gold that were like itself, everyone in Asgard spoke aloud, all saying that Draupnir, the Ring of Increase, was a wonder indeed. Hearing their voices raised, Brock looked triumphantly at Loki who was standing there with his lips drawn closely together.

Brock gave the fabulous arm ring to Odin, the Father of the Gods,.

Then he commanded the other Dwarfs to lay before Thor the hammer Miölnir. Thor took the hammer up and swung it around his head. As he did so he uttered a great cry. The eyes of all there lit up when they saw Thor with the hammer Miölnir in his hands and they cried, “This is a wonder, a wonder indeed! With this hammer in his hand no one can withstand Thor, our Champion. No greater thing than the hammer Miölnir has ever come into Asgard.”

Then Odin, the Father of the Gods, spoke from his throne, giving judgment. “The hammer Miölnir that the Dwarf Brock has brought into Asgard is a wonderful thing indeed. In Thor’s hands it can crush mountains, and hurl the Giant race from the walls of Asgard. Sindri the Dwarf has forged a greater thing than the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir. There can be no other judgment.”

Brock looked at Loki, showing his crooked teeth. “Now, Loki, give me your head, give me your head,” he cried.

“Do not ask such a thing,” said Odin. “Put any other penalty on Loki for mocking you and tormenting you. Make him give to you the greatest thing that it is in his power to give.”

“Not so, not so,” screamed Brock. “You inhabitants in Asgard protect one another. But what about me? Loki would have taken my head if I had lost the wager. Loki has lost his head to me. Let him kneel down now so I can cut it off.”

Loki came forward, smiling with closed lips. “I kneel before you, Dwarf,” he said. “Take off my head. But be careful. Do not touch my neck. I did not agree that you could touch my neck. If you do, I shall call on the inhabitants of Asgard to punish you.”

Brock drew back with a snarl. “Is this the judgment of the Gods?” he asked.

“The bargain you made, Brock,” said Odin, “was an evil one, and you must accept all its evil consequences.”

Brock, in a rage, looked at Loki, and he saw that his lips were smiling. He stamped his feet and raged. Then he went up to Loki and said, “I may not take your head, but I can do something with your lips that mock me.”

“What do you want to do, Dwarf?” asked Thor.

“Sew Loki’s lips together,” said Brock, “so that he can do no more mischief with his talk. You cannot forbid me to do this. Down, Loki, on your knees before me.”

Loki looked around at those in Asgard and he saw that their judgment was that he must kneel before the Dwarf. He knelt down with a frown. “Draw your lips together, Loki,” said Brock. Loki drew his lips together while his eyes flashed fire. With an awl that he took from his belt Brock pierced Loki’s lips. He took out a thread and tightened them together. Then the Dwarf looked on Loki in triumph.

“Oh Loki,” he said, “You boasted that the Dwarfs who worked for you were better craftsmen than Sindri, my brother. Your words have been shown to be lies. And now you cannot boast for a while.”

Then with great majesty, Brock the Dwarf walked out of the Council House of Asgard, and the other Dwarfs marched behind him in procession. Down the passages in the earth the Dwarfs went, singing the song of Brock’s triumph over Loki. The story of how Sindri and Brock had defeated Loki was told forever after in Svartheim.

After Loki’s lips were closed, there was peace and a relief from mischief in Asgard. No one amongst the Æsir or the Vanir was sorry when Loki had to walk about in silence with his head bent low.

HOW FREYA GAINED HER NECKLACE AND LOST HER LOVED ONE

Loki went through Asgard silent and with head bent, and everyone in Asgard said to each other, “This will teach Loki not to work anymore mischief.” They did not know that what Loki had done had sown the seeds of mischief and that these seeds were to sprout up and bring sorrow to the beautiful Freya, who the Giant wanted to carry off with the Sun and the Moon as payment for his building the wall around Asgard.

Freya had looked at the wonders that Loki had brought into Asgard—the golden threads that were Sif’s hair, and Frey’s boar that shone light from its bristles as it flew. The gleam of these golden things dazzled her, and made her dream constantly of the wonders that she herself might possess. She often thought, “What wonderful things the Three Giant Women would give me if I could go to them on their mountaintop.”

Long before this, when the wall around their City was not yet built, and when the Gods had set up only the court with their twelve seats and the Hall that was for Odin and the Hall that was for the Goddesses, three Giant Women had come into Asgard.

They came after the Gods had set up a forge and had begun to work metal for their buildings. The metal they worked was pure gold. They built Gladsheim, the Hall of Odin, and all their dishes and household ware with gold. That was the Age of Gold, and the Gods did not begrudge gold to anyone. The Gods were happy then, and no one had any idea of the evil that was to come.

But after the Three Giant Women came the Gods began to value gold

and hoard it. They lost the happy innocence of their first days.

At last the Three were driven out from Asgard. The Gods forgot about hoarding gold, and they built up their City, and they made themselves strong.

The lovely Vanir bride Freya, thought about the Giant Women and the wonderful things of gold they had flashed through their hands. However she did not tell her husband Odur, what she was thinking for Odur, more than any of the others in Asgard, preferred the days of happy innocence, before gold came to be hoarded and valued. Odur would not let Freya go near the mountaintop where the Three had their high seat.

But Freya could not stop thinking about them and the things of gold they had. “Why should Odur know I went to them?” she said to herself. “No one will tell him. What difference will it make if I go to them and get some lovely thing for myself? I shall not love Odur less because I go my own way for once.”

Then one day she left their palace, leaving Odur, her husband, playing with their little child Hnossa and went down to the Earth. There she stayed for a while, tending the flowers that were her charge. After a while she asked the Elves to tell her where the mountain was on which the Three Giant Women stayed.

The Elves were frightened and would not tell her, although she was queen over them. She left them and went down into the caves of the Dwarfs. They showed her the way to the seat of the Giant Women, but before they showed her the way they made her feel ashamed and miserable.

“We will show you the way if you stay here with us,” said one of the Dwarfs.

“For how long would you have me stay?” said Freya.

“Until the cocks in Svarheim crow,” said the Dwarfs, closing round her. “We want to know what the company of one of the Vanir is like.” “I will stay,” Freya said.

Then one of the Dwarfs reached up and put his arms round her neck and kissed her with his ugly mouth. Freya tried to break away from them, but the Dwarfs held her. “You cannot go away from us now until the cocks of Svarheim crow,” they said.

Then one and then another of the Dwarfs pressed up to her and kissed her. They made her sit down beside them on the heaps of skins they had. When she wept they screamed at her and beat her. One, when she would not kiss him on the mouth, bit her hands. So Freya stayed with the Dwarfs until the cocks of Svarheim crowed.

They showed her the mountain on the top of which the Three banished from Asgard lived. The Giant Women sat overlooking the World of Men. “What do you want, wife of Odur?” one who was called Gulveig said to her.

“Alas! Now that I have found you I know that I should ask you for nothing,” Freya said.

“Speak, Vana,” said the second of the Giant Women.

The third said nothing, but she held up in her hands a necklace of gold most strangely made. “How bright it is!” Freya said. “. Oh, how I should love to wear it!”

“It is the necklace Brisingamen,” said the one who was called Gulveig.

“It is yours to wear, wife of Odur,” said the one who held it in her

hands.

Freya took the shining necklace and clasped it round her throat. She could not bring herself to thank the Giant Women, for she saw that there was evil in their eyes. She bowed to them, however, and she went down the mountain on which they sat overlooking the World of Men.

In a while she looked down and saw Brisingamen and she felt happy again. It was the most beautiful thing ever made by hand. None of the Asyniur or Vanir possessed such a beautiful thing. It made her more and more lovely, and Odur, she thought, would forgive her when he saw how beautiful and happy Brisingamen made her.

She rose up from amongst the flowers and left the Elves and made her way back to Asgard. Everyone who greeted her gazed with wonder at the necklace that she wore. There came a look of longing into the eyes of the Goddesses when they saw Brisingamen.

But Freya hardly stopped to speak to anyone. As swiftly as she could she made her way to her own palace. She would show herself to Odur and win his forgiveness. She entered her shining palace and called to him. No answer came. Her child, the little Hnossa, was on the floor, playing. Her mother took her in her arms, but when the child looked at Brisingamen, she turned away crying.

Freya left Hnossa down and searched again for Odur. He was not in any part of their palace. She went into every house in Asgard, asking for news of him. No one knew where he had gone. At last Freya went back to their palace and waited and waited for Odur to return. But Odur did not come.

The Goddess, Odin's wife, the queenly Frigga came. "You are waiting for Odur, your husband," Frigga said. "Let me tell you Odur will not

come to you here. He went when he found out what you were doing. He was unhappy. Odur has left Asgard and no one knows where to search for him.”

“I will search for him outside of Asgard,” Freya said. She stopped crying and took the little child Hnossa and put her in Frigga’s arms. Then she mounted her carriage that was drawn by two cats, and journeyed down from Asgard to Midgard, the Earth, to search for Odur her husband.

Year in and year out, and over all the Earth, Freya went searching and calling for the lost Odur. She went as far as the border of the Earth, where she could look over to Jötunheim, where the Giant who would have carried her off with the Sun and the Moon as payment for the building of the wall around Asgard lived. But nowhere, from the end of the Rainbow Bifröst, that stretched from Asgard to the Earth, to the boundary of Jötunheim, did she find a trace of her husband Odur.

At last she turned her carriage toward Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge that stretched from Midgard, the Earth, to Asgard, the home of the Gods. Heimdall, the Watcher for the Gods, guarded the Rainbow Bridge. Freya went to him with a half hope fluttering in her heart.

“Oh Heimdall,” she cried, “Oh Heimdall, Watcher for the Gods, speak and tell me if you know where Odur is.”

“Odur is in every place where the searcher has not gone; Odur is in every place that the searcher has left. Those who seek him will never find Odur,” said Heimdall, the Watcher for the Gods.

Then Freya stood on Bifröst and wept. Frigga, the queenly Goddess, heard the sound of her weeping, and came out of Asgard to comfort her.

“Ah, what comfort can you give me, Frigga?” cried Freya. “What comfort can you give me when Odur will never be found by anyone who searches for him?”

“Look at how your daughter, the child Hnossa, has grown,” said Frigga. Freya looked up and saw a beautiful maiden standing on Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge. She was young, more youthful than any of the Vanir or the Asyniur, and her face and her form were so lovely that all hearts melted when they looked at her.

Freya was comforted in her loss. She followed Frigga across Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge, and came once again into the City of the Gods. Freya lived with Hnossa, her child in her own palace in Asgard.

She still wore round her neck Brisingamen, the necklace that caused her to lose Odur. But now she wore it, not for its splendor, but as a sign of the wrong she had done. She weeps, and her tears become golden drops as they fall on the earth. Poets who know her story call her The Beautiful Lady in Tears.

HOW FREY WON GERDA BUT LOST HIS MAGIC SWORD

Frey, the chief of the Vanir, longed to see his sister who had been gone from Asgard for so long. (You must know that this happened during the time when Freya was wandering through the world, seeking her husband, the lost Odur.) In Asgard there was a place from which one could overlook the world and have a glimpse of everyone who wandered there. That place was Hlidskjalf, Odin's lofty Watch-Tower.

That Tower went high up into the blue sky. When Frey reached it he knew that Odin was not on Hlidskjalf. Only the two wolves, Geri and Freki, that crouched beside Odin's seat at the banquet, were there, and they stood in the way of Frey's entrance to the Tower. But Frey spoke to Geri and Freki in the language of the Gods, and Odin's wolves had to let him pass.

But, as he went up the steps inside the Tower, Frey, chief of the Vanir, knew that he was doing a fateful thing for none of the High Gods, not even Thor, the Defender of Asgard, nor Baldur, the Best-Beloved of the Gods, had ever climbed to the top of that Tower and sat on Odin's seat. "But if I could see my sister once I should be contented," said Frey to himself, "and no harm can come to me if I look out on the world."

He came to the top of Hlidskjalf. He seated himself on Odin's lofty seat. He looked out on the world. He saw Midgard, the World of Men, with its houses and towns, its farms and people. Beyond Midgard he saw Jötunheim, the Realm of the Giants, terrible with its dark mountains and its masses of snow and ice. He saw Freya as she went on her wanderings, and he marked that her face was turned toward

Asgard and that her steps were leading toward the City of the Gods. “I have contented myself by looking from Hlidskjalf,” said Frey to himself, “and no harm has come to me.”

But even as he spoke his gaze was drawn to a home that stood in the middle of the ice and snow of Jötunheim. He gazed at that house for a long time without knowing why he looked that way. Then the door of the house opened and a Giant maiden stood in the doorway. Frey gazed at her. So great was the beauty of her face that it was like starlight in that dark land. She looked out from the doorway of the house, and then turned and went inside, shutting the door.

Frey sat on Odin’s high seat for a long time. Then he went down the steps of the Tower and passed by the two wolves, Geri and Freki, that looked threateningly at him. That night he could not sleep for his thoughts were fixed on the loveliness of the Giant maid he had seen. When morning came he was filled with loneliness because he thought himself so far from her. He went to Hlidskjalf again, to climb the Tower and see her once more. But now the two wolves, Geri and Freki, bared their teeth at him and would not let him pass, although he spoke to them again in the language of the Gods.

He went and spoke to wise Niörd, his father. “She,” said Niörd, “is Gerda, the daughter of the Giant Gymer. You must stop thinking about her. Your love for her would be a bad thing for you.”

“Why should it be a bad thing for me?” Frey asked.

“Because you would have to give up that which you prize most for the sake of being with her.”

“That which I prize most,” said Frey, “is my magic sword.”

“You will have to give your magic sword,” said his father, the wise

Niörd.

“I will give it up,” said Frey, loosening his magic sword from his belt.

“Think carefully, my son,” said Niörd. “If you give up your sword, what weapon will you have on the day of Ragnarök, when the Giants will make war on the Gods?”

Frey did not speak, but he thought the day of Ragnarök was far off. “I cannot live without Gerda,” he said, as he turned away.

There was someone in Asgard called Skirnir. He was a bold person who never cared what he said or did. Frey couldn’t tell anyone else but Skirnir of the trouble that was the punishment for his placing himself on the seat of the Odin.

Skirnir laughed when he heard Frey’s tale. “You, in love with a maid of Jötunheim! This is fun indeed! Will you marry her?”

“I wish I could speak to her or send a message of love to her,” said Frey. “But I cannot leave my watch over the Elves.”

“And if I should take a message to Gerda,” said Skirnir the bold, “what would my reward be?”

“My boat Skidbladnir or my boar Golden Bristle,” said Frey.

“No, no,” said Skirnir. “I want something to carry. I want something to use in my hand. Give me the magic sword you own.”

Frey thought about what his father said, that he would be left weaponless on the day of Ragnarök, when the Giants would make war upon the Gods and when Asgard would be endangered. He thought about this, and drew back from Skirnir, and for a while he remained in thought. All the time Skirnir was laughing at him out of his wide

mouth and his blue eyes. Then Frey said to himself, “The day of Ragnarök is far off, and I cannot live without Gerda.”

He drew the magic sword from his belt and he placed it in Skirnir’s hand. “I give you my sword, Skirnir,” he said. “Take my message to Gerda, Gymer’s daughter. Show her this gold and these precious jewels, and say I love her, and that I claim her love.”

“I shall bring the maid to you,” said Skirnir.

“But how will you get to Jötunheim?” said Frey, suddenly remembering how dark the Giants’ land was and how terrible the way to it was.

“Oh, with a good horse and a good sword one can get anywhere,” said Skirnir. “My horse is a mighty horse, and you have given me your sword of magic. Tomorrow I shall make the journey.”

Skirnir rode across Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge, laughing out of his wide mouth and his blue eyes at Heimdall, the Warder of the Bridge to Asgard. His mighty horse trod the earth of Midgard, and swam the river that divides Midgard, the World of Men, from Jötunheim, the Realm of the Giants. He rode on heedlessly and recklessly, just as he did all things. Then out of the iron forests came the monstrous wolves of Jötunheim, to tear and devour him and his mighty horse. It was good that Skirnir had Frey’s magic sword in his belt. Its edge killed and its gleam frightened the monstrous beasts. Skirnir rode on, on his mighty horse. Then he came to a wall of fire. No other horse but his mighty horse could go through it. Skirnir rode through the fire and came to the dale where Gymer lived.

Then he was in front of the house that Frey had seen Gerda enter on the day when he had climbed Hlidskjalf, Odin’s Watch-Tower. The mighty hounds that guarded Gymer’s home came and bayed around

him. But the gleam of the magic sword kept them away. Skirnir backed his horse to the door, and made his horse's hooves strike against it.

Gymer was in the feast hall drinking with his Giant friends, and he did not hear the baying of the hounds nor the clatter that Skirnir made at the door. But Gerda sat spinning with her maidens in the hall. "Who comes to Gymer's door?" she said.

"A warrior on a mighty horse," said one of the maidens.

"Even though he is an enemy and killed my brother, we shall open the door to him and give him a cup of Gymer's mead," said Gerda.

One of the maidens opened the door and Skirnir entered Gymer's home. He recognised Gerda amongst her maidens. He went to her and showed her the rich gold and the precious jewels that he had brought from Frey. "These are for you, fairest Gerda," he said, "if you will give your love to Frey, the Chief of the Vanir."

"Show your gold and jewels to other maidens," said Gerda. "Gold and jewels will never make me give my love."

Then Skirnir, drew the magic sword from his belt and held it above her. "Give your love to Frey, who has given me this sword," he said, "or meet your death by it."

Gerda, Gymer's daughter, only laughed at the reckless Skirnir, "Make the daughters of men fearful by the sharpness of Frey's sword," she said, "but do not try to frighten a Giant's daughter with it."

Then Skirnir the Reckless, made the magic sword flash before her eyes, while he cried out in a terrible voice, saying a spell over her:

Gerda, I will curse you. Yes, with this magic blade I shall touch you.

Such is its power that you will wither. It will leave you like a dried leaf.

Hearing these terrible words and the strange hissings of the magic sword, Gerda threw herself on the ground, crying out for pity. But Skirnir stood above her, and the magic sword flashed and hissed over her. Skirnir sang, I will leave you uglier than any maid ever was. You will be mocked by men and by Giants .Only a Dwarf will marry you.

She lifted herself on her knees and cried out to Skirnir to spare her from the spell of the magic sword.

“Only if you give your love to Frey,” said Skirnir.

“I will give my love to him,” said Gerda. “Now put away your magic sword and drink a cup of mead and then leave.”

“I will not drink a cup of your mead nor shall I leave until you yourself say that you will meet and speak with Frey.”

“I will meet and speak with him,” said Gerda.

“When will you meet and speak with him?” asked Skirnir.

“In the wood of Barri nine nights from tonight. Let him come and meet me there.”

Then Skirnir put away his magic sword and drank the cup of mead that Gerda gave him. He rode from Gymer’s house, laughing aloud at having won Gerda for Frey, and so making the magic sword his own forever.

Skirnir, riding across Bifröst on his mighty horse, found Frey standing waiting for him beside Heimdall, the Warder of the Bridge to Asgard.

“What news do you bring me?” cried Frey. “Speak, Skirnir, before you dismount from your horse.”

“In nine nights from now you may meet Gerda in Barri Wood,” said Skirnir. He looked at him, laughing out of his wide mouth and his blue eyes. But Frey turned away, saying to himself:

One day is long. Can I live through nine long days?

Those days were long indeed for Frey. But the ninth day came, and in the evening Frey went to Barri Wood and there he met Gerda, the Giant maid. She was as fair as when he had seen her at the door of Gymer’s house. When she saw Frey, so tall and noble looking, the Giant’s daughter was glad that Skirnir had made her promise to come to Barri Wood. They gave each other rings of gold. It was settled that the Giant maid should come as a bride to Asgard.

Gerda came, but another Giant maid also came. Everyone in Asgard was standing before the great gate, waiting to welcome the bride of Frey when a Giant maid in armor appeared there.

“I am Skadi,” she said, “the daughter of Thiassi. My father met his death at the hands of those in Asgard. I claim compensation.”

“What compensation do you want, maiden?” asked Odin, smiling to see a Giant maid standing so boldly in Asgard.

“A husband from amongst you. And I myself must be allowed to choose him.”

All laughed aloud at the words of Skadi. Then Odin said, laughing, “We will let you choose a husband from amongst us, but you must choose him by his feet.”

“I will choose him whatever way you like,” said Skadi fixing her eyes

on Baldur, the most beautiful of all the Dwellers in Asgard.

They put a bandage round her eyes, and the Æsir and the Vanir sat around in a half circle. As she went by she stooped over each and touched their feet. At last she came to one whose feet were so finely formed that she felt sure it was Baldur. She stood up and said, "This is the one that Skadi chooses for her husband."

Then the Æsir and the Vanir laughed more and more. They took the bandage off her eyes and she saw, not Baldur the Beautiful, but Niörd, the father of Frey. But as Skadi looked more and more at Niörd she became more and more contented with her choice for Niörd was strong, and noble looking.

These two, Niörd and Skadi, went first to live in Niörd's palace by the sea but the crashing of the waves would waken Skadi too early in the morning, and so she took her husband to the mountaintop where she was more at home. He could not live long away from the sound of the sea. Back and forward, between the mountain and the sea, Skadi and Niörd went. But Gerda stayed in Asgard with Frey, her husband, and the Æsir and the Vanir came to love Gerda, the Giant maid.

HEIMDALL AND LITTLE HNOSSA

Hnossa, the child of Freya and the lost Odur, was the youngest of all the inhabitants of Asgard. And because it had been prophesied that the child would bring her father and mother together again, little Hnossa was often taken out of the City of the Gods to stand by Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge, so that she might greet Odur if he returned to Asgard.

Little Hnossa was made welcome in all the palaces of the City of the Gods: in Fensalir, the Halls of Mists, where Frigga, the wife of Odin, sat spinning with golden threads; in Breidablik, where Baldur, the Well Beloved, lived with his fair wife, the young Nanna; in Bilskirnir, the Winding House, where Thor and Sif lived and in Odin's own palace Valaskjalf, that was all roofed over with silver shields.

The greatest of all the palaces was Gladsheim that was built with the golden-leaved wood, Glasir. Here the banquets of the Gods were held. Often little Hnossa looked in and saw Odin seated at the banquet table, with a blue robe over his shoulders and a shining helmet shaped like an eagle on his head. Odin would sit there, not eating at all, but drinking the wine of the Gods, and taking the food off the table and giving it to Geri and Freki, the two wolves that crouched beside his seat.

She loved to go outside the great gate and stay beside Heimdall, the Warder of the Rainbow Bridge. There, when there was no one crossing, she would sit beside Heimdall and listen to the stories that he told.

Heimdall held in his hands the horn that was called the Gialarhorn. He would sound it to let the Dwellers in Asgard know that someone was crossing the Rainbow Bridge. Heimdall told little Hnossa how he had

trained himself to hear the grasses grow, and how he could see all around him for a hundred miles. He could see in the night as well as the day. He never slept. He had nine mothers, he told Hnossa, and he fed on the strength of the earth and the cold sea.

As she sat beside him day after day, Heimdall would tell little Hnossa how all things began. He had lived from the beginning of time and he knew everything. “Before Asgard was built,” he said, “and before Odin lived, earth and sea and sky were all mixed together: what was then was the Chasm of Chasms. In the North there was Niflheim, the Place of Deadly Cold. In the South there was Muspelheim, the Land of Fire. In Niflheim there was a cauldron called Hveigelfer that poured out twelve rivers that flowed into the Chasm of Chasms.

“Ginnungagap, the Chasm of Chasms, filled up with ice, for the waters of the rivers froze as they poured into it. From Muspelheim came clouds of fire that turned the ice into thick mists. The mists fell down again in drops of dew, and from these drops were formed Ymir, the Ancient Giant.

“Ymir, the Ancient Giant, traveled along by the twelve rivers until he came to where another living creature was standing in the mists. This was a Giant Cow. Audhumla was the name of that cow. Ymir lay down beside her and drank her milk, and he lived on the milk she gave him. Other beings were formed out of the dew that fell to the ground. They were the Daughters of the Frost, and Ymir, the Ancient Giant, married one, and their children were the Giants.

“One day Ymir saw Audhumla breathe on a cliff of ice and lick with her tongue the place she breathed on. As her tongue went over and over the place he saw that a figure was being formed. It was not like a Giant’s form; it was more shapely and more beautiful. A head appeared in the cliff and golden hair fell over the ice. As Ymir looked

at the being that was being formed he hated him for his beauty.

“Audhumla, the Giant Cow, went on licking the place where she had breathed. At last a man completely formed stepped from the cliff. Ymir, the Ancient Giant, hated him so much that he would have killed him then and there. But he knew that if he did this, Audhumla would not feed him anymore with her milk.

“Bur was the name of the man who was formed in the ice cliff, Bur, the first of the heroes. He, too, lived on the milk of Audhumla. He married a daughter of the Ancient Giant and he had a son. But Ymir and Ymir’s sons hated Bur, and the time came at last when they were able to kill him.

“There was war between Ymir and Ymir’s sons and the son and son’s sons of Bur. Odin was the son of Bur’s son. Odin brought all his brothers together, and they were able to destroy Ymir and all his family—all except one. So huge was Ymir that when he was killed his blood poured out in such a mighty flood that his sons were all drowned in it, all except Bergelmir, who was in a boat with his wife when the flood came, and who floated away on the flood to the place that we now call Jötunheim, the Realm of the Giants.

“Now Odin and his sons took the body of Ymir—the largest body that ever was and they threw it into the Chasm of Chasms, filling up all the hollow places with it. They dug the bones out of the body and they piled them up as the mountains. They took the teeth out and they made them into the rocks. They took the hair of Ymir and they made it into the forests of trees. They took his eyebrows and formed them into the place where Men now live, Midgard. And out of Ymir’s hollow skull they made the sky.

” Odin and his sons and brothers did more than this. They took the sparks and the clouds of flame that blew from Muspelheim, and they

made them into the sun and the moon and all the stars that are in the sky. Odin found a dark Giantess named Night whose son was called Day, and he gave both of them horses to drive across the sky. Night drove a horse that is named Hrimfaxe, Frosty Mane, and Day drove a horse that is named Skinfaxe, Shining Mane. From Hrimfaxe's bit fall the drops that make the dew upon the earth.

“Then Odin and his sons made a race of men and women and gave them Midgard to live in. Ugly Dwarfs had grown up and had spread themselves over the earth. Odin made them go live in the hollow places beneath the earth. The Elves he let stay on the earth, but he gave them the task of taking care of the streams and the grasses and the flowers. He made peace with the Vanir after a war had been waged, taking Niörd from them for a hostage.

“Bergelmir, the Giant who escaped drowning in Ymir's blood, had sons and daughters in Jötunheim. They hated Odin and his sons and fought against them. When Odin lit up the world with the sun and the moon they were very angry, and they found two of the fiercest of the mighty wolves of Jötunheim and set them to follow them. And still the sun and the moon, Sol and Mani, are followed by the wolves of Jötunheim.”

Heimdall with the Golden Teeth told such wonders to Hnossa, the youngest of the inhabitants of Asgard. The child often stayed with him by the Rainbow Bridge, and saw the Gods pass to and from Midgard: Thor, with his crown of stars, with the great hammer Miölnir in his hands, with the gloves of iron that he used when he grasped Miölnir; Thor in his chariot drawn by two goats and wearing the belt that doubled his strength; Frigga, with her dress of falcon feathers, flying swiftly as a bird; Odin himself, riding upon Sleipner, his eight-legged horse, clad all in golden armor, with his golden helmet, shaped like an eagle, on his head, and with his spear Gungnir

in his hand.

Heimdall kept his horn in the branch of a great tree. This tree was called Ygdrassil, he told little Hnossa, and it was a wonder to Gods and Men. “No one knows of a time when Ygdrassil was not growing, and all are afraid to speak of the time when it will be destroyed.

“Ygdrassil has three roots. One goes deep under Midgard, another goes deep under Jötunheim, and the third grows above Asgard. A branch of Ygdrassil grows over Odin’s hall, and it is called the Peace Bough.

“You see Ygdrassil, little Hnossa, but you do not know all the wonders of it. Far up in its branches four deers graze. They shake from their horns the water that falls as rain on the earth. On the topmost branch of Ygdrassil, the branch that is so high that the Gods themselves can hardly see it, there is an eagle that knows everything. A hawk is perched on the beak of this eagle, a hawk that sees what the eyes of the eagle cannot see.

“The root of Ygdrassil that is in Midgard goes deep down to the place of the dead. Here there is an evil dragon named Nidhögg that gnaws constantly at the root, trying to destroy Ygdrassil, the Tree of trees. Ratatösk, the Squirrel of Mischief runs up and down Ygdrassil, making trouble between the eagle above and the dragon below. He goes to tell the dragon how the eagle is bent upon tearing him to pieces and he goes back to tell the eagle how the dragon plans to devour him. The stories that he brings to Nidhögg make that evil dragon more determined to destroy Ygdrassil, the Tree of trees, so that he can catch the eagle and devour him.

“There are two wells by the roots of Ygdrassil, and one is above and one is below. One is beside the root that grows in Jötunheim. This is a Well of Knowledge, and it is guarded by old Mimir the Wise.

Whoever drinks out of this well knows everything that will come to be. The other well is by the root that grows above Asgard. No one may drink out of this well. The three sisters that are the holy Norns guard it, and they take the white water from it to water Ygdrassil, so that the Tree of Life may keep green and strong. This well, little Hnossa, is called Urda's Well."

Little Hnossa heard that by Urda's Well there were two beautiful white swans. They made a music that the inhabitants of Asgard often heard. But Hnossa was too young to hear the music that was made by the swans of Urda's Well.

ODIN LEAVES ASGARD

Odin had two ravens. Hugin and Munin were their names. They flew through all the worlds every day, and coming back to Asgard they would land on Odin's shoulders and tell him of all the things they had seen and heard. Once a day passed without the ravens coming back. Then Odin, standing on the Watch-Tower Hlidskjalf, said to himself, I am afraid for Hugin in case he doesn't come not back but I watch more for Munin.

A day passed and the ravens flew back. They sat, one on each of his shoulders. Then Odin went into the Council Hall that was beside Glasir, the wood that had leaves of gold, and listened to what Hugin and Munin had to tell him.

They told him only of shadows and forebodings. Odin did not speak to the others in Asgard about what they told him. But Frigga, his Queen, saw in his eyes the shadows and forebodings of things to come. When he spoke to her about these things she said, "Do not fight against what must take place. Let us go to the holy Norns who sit by Urda's Well and see if the shadows and the forebodings will remain when you have looked into their eyes."

So Odin and the Gods left Asgard and came to Urda's Well, where, under the great root of Ygdrassil, the three Norns sat, with the two fair swans below them. Odin went, and Tyr, the great swordsman, and Baldur, the most beautiful and the best beloved of the Gods, and Thor, with his Hammer.

A Rainbow Bridge went from Asgard, the City of the Gods, to Midgard, the World of Men. But another Rainbow Bridge, more beautiful still, went from Asgard to that root of Ygdrassil which Urda's Well was under. This Rainbow Bridge was seldom seen by

men. Where the ends of the two rainbows came together Heimdall stood, Heimdall with the Golden Teeth, the Watcher for the Gods, and the Keeper of the Way to Urda's Well.

"Open the gate, Heimdall," said Odin, "open the gate, for today the Gods will visit the holy Norns."

Without a word Heimdall opened wide the gate that led to that bridge more colored than any rainbow seen from earth. Then Odin and Tyr and Baldur stepped out onto the bridge. Thor followed, but before his foot was placed on the bridge, Heimdall laid his hand on him.

"The others may go, but you may not go that way, Thor," said Heimdall.

"What? Would you, Heimdall, hold me back?" said Thor.

"Yes, for I am Keeper of the Way to the Norns," said Heimdall. "You with the mighty hammer you carry are too heavy for this way. The bridge I guard would break under you."

"Nevertheless I will go visit the Norns with Odin and my comrades," said Thor.

"But not this way, Thor," said Heimdall. "I will not let the bridge be broken under the weight of you and your hammer. Leave your hammer here with me if you want to go this way."

"No, no," said Thor. "I will not leave in any one's care the hammer that defends Asgard. And I will not be turned back from going with Odin and my comrades."

"There is another way to Urda's well," said Heimdall. "See these two great Cloud Rivers, Körmt and Ermt. Can you wade through them? They are cold and suffocating, but they will bring you to Urda's well,

where the three holy Norns sit.”

Thor looked out on the two great rolling rivers of cloud. It was a bad way for one to go, cold and suffocating. Yet if he went that way he could keep on his shoulder the hammer which he would not leave in another’s care. He stepped out into the Cloud River that flowed by the Rainbow Bridge, and with his hammer upon his shoulder he went struggling on to the other river.

Odin, Tyr, and Baldur were beside Urda’s well when Thor came struggling out of the Cloud River, wet and choking, but with his hammer still on his shoulder. Tyr stood there, upright and handsome, leaning on his sword that was inscribed all over with magic runes; There stood Baldur, smiling, with his head bent as he listened to the murmur of the two fair swans; and there stood Odin, clad in his blue cloak fringed with golden stars, without the eagle-helmet upon his head, and with no spear in his hands.

The three Norns, Urda, Verdandi, and Skulda, sat beside the well that was in the hollow of the great root of Ygdrassil. Urda was ancient and with white hair, and Verdandi was beautiful, while Skulda could hardly be seen, for she sat far back, and her hair fell over her face and eyes. Urda, Verdandi, and Skulda knew the whole of the Past, the whole of the Present, and the whole of the Future. Odin, looking at them, saw into the eyes of Skulda. For a long time he stood looking at the Norns with the eyes of a God, while the others listened to the murmur of the swans and the falling of the leaves of Ygdrassil into Urda’s Well.

Looking into their eyes, Odin saw the shadows and forebodings that Hugin and Munin told him of take shape. Then others came across the Rainbow Bridge. They were Frigga and Sif and Nanna, the wives of Odin and Thor and Baldur. Frigga looked at the Norns. As she did, she

turned a glance of love and sadness upon Baldur, her son, and then she drew back and placed her hand upon Nanna's head.

Odin turned from gazing at the Norns, and looked at Frigga, his queenly wife. "I will leave Asgard for a while, wife of Odin," he said.

"Yes," said Frigga. "Much has to be done in Midgard, the World of Men."

"I will change what knowledge I have into wisdom," said Odin, "so that the things that are to happen will be changed into the best that may be."

"You will go to Mimir's Well," said Frigga.

"I will go to Mimir's Well," said Odin.

"My husband, go," said Frigga.

Then they went back over that Rainbow Bridge that is more beautiful than the one that men see from the earth; they went back over the Rainbow Bridge, the Æsir and the Asyniur, Odin and Frigga, Baldur and Nanna, Tyr, with his sword, and Sif beside Tyr. As for Thor, he went struggling through the Cloud Rivers Körmt and Ermt, his hammer Miölnir on his shoulder.

Little Hnossa, the youngest of the inhabitants of Asgard, was there, standing beside Heimdall, the Watcher for the Gods and the Keeper of the Bridge to Urda's Well, when Odin and Frigga, his Queen, went through the great gate with heads bent. "Tomorrow," Hnossa heard Odin say, "Tomorrow I shall be Vegtam the Wanderer on the roads of Midgard and Jötunheim."

ODIN GOES TO MIMIR'S WELL

So Odin, no longer riding on Sleipner, his eight-legged horse, no longer wearing his golden armor and his eagle-helmet, and without even his spear in his hand, traveled through Midgard, the World of Men, and made his way toward Jötunheim, the Realm of the Giants.

He was no longer called Odin All-Father, but Vegtam the Wanderer. He wore a cloak of dark blue and he carried a traveler's staff in his hands. As he went toward Mimir's Well, which was near to Jötunheim, he met a Giant riding on a great stag.

Odin seemed a man to men and a giant to giants. He walked beside the Giant on the great stag and the two talked together. "Who are you, brother?" Odin asked the Giant.

"I am Vafthrudner, the wisest of the Giants," said the one who was riding on the stag. Odin knew him then. Vafthrudner was indeed the wisest of the Giants, and many went to try to gain wisdom from him. But those who went to him had to answer the riddles Vafthrudner asked, and if they failed to answer the Giant took their heads off.

"I am Vegtam the Wanderer," Odin said, "and I know who you are, Vafthrudner. I would like to learn something from you."

The Giant laughed, showing his teeth. "Ho, ho," he said, "I am ready for a game with you. Do you know the stakes? You have my head if I cannot answer any question you ask. And if you cannot answer any question that I ask, then your head goes to me. Ho, ho, ho. Now let us begin."

"I am ready," Odin said.

“Then tell me,” said Vafthrudner, “tell me the name of the river that divides Asgard from Jötunheim?”

“Ifling is the name of that river,” said Odin. “Ifling that is dead cold, yet never frozen.”

“You have answered rightly, Wanderer,” said the Giant. “But you still have to answer other questions. What are the names of the horses that Day and Night drive across the sky?”

“Skinfaxe and Hrimfaxe,” Odin answered. Vafthrudner was startled to hear someone say the names that were known only to the Gods and to the wisest of the Giants. There was only one question now that he could ask before it came to the stranger’s turn to ask him questions.

“Tell me,” said Vafthrudner, “what is the name of the plain on which the last battle will be fought?”

“The Plain of Vigard,” said Odin, “the plain that is a hundred miles long and a hundred miles across.”

It was then Odin’s turn to ask Vafthrudner questions. “What will be the last words that Odin will whisper into the ear of Baldur, his dear son?” he asked.

The Giant Vafthrudner was very startled at that question. He sprang to the ground and looked at the stranger closely.

“Only Odin knows what his last words to Baldur will be,” he said, “and only Odin would have asked that question. You are Odin, Wanderer, and I cannot answer your question.”

“Then,” said Odin, “if you want to keep your head, answer me this. What price will Mimir ask for a drink from the Well of Wisdom that he guards?”

“He will ask for your right eye as a price, Odin,” said Vafthrudner.

“Will he ask nothing less than that?” said Odin.

“He will ask nothing less than that. Many have come to him for a drink from the Well of Wisdom, but no one yet has paid the price Mimir asks. I have answered your question, Odin. Now give up your claim to my head and let me go on my way.”

“I give up my claim to your head,” said Odin. Then Vafthrudner, the wisest of the Giants, went on his way, riding on his great Stag.

It was a terrible price that Mimir would ask for a drink from the Well of Wisdom, and Odin was very troubled when it was revealed to him. His right eye! For all time to be without the sight of his right eye! He almost turned back to Asgard, giving up his quest for wisdom.

He went on, turning neither to Asgard nor to Mimir’s Well. When he went toward the South he saw Muspelheim, where Surtur stood with the Flaming Sword, a terrible figure, who would one day join the Giants in their war against the Gods. When he turned North he heard the roaring of the cauldron Hvergelmer as it poured itself out of Niflheim, the place of darkness and dread. Odin knew that the world must not be left between Surtur, who would destroy it with fire, and Niflheim, that would take it back to Darkness and Nothingness. He, the eldest of the Gods, would have to win the wisdom that would help to save the world.

So, grimly, Odin turned and went toward Mimir’s Well. It was under the great root of Ygdrassil which grew out of Jötunheim. Mimir, the Guardian of the Well of Wisdom sat there with his deep eyes bent on the deep water. Mimir, who had drunk every day from the Well of Wisdom, knew who it was that stood before him.

“Hail, Odin, Eldest of the Gods,” he said.

Then Odin bowed to Mimir, the wisest of the world’s beings. “I want to drink from your well, Mimir,” he said.

“There is a price to be paid. Everyone who has come here to drink has been unwilling to pay that price. Will you, Eldest of the Gods, pay it?”

“I will not shrink from the price that has to be paid, Mimir,” said Odin.

“Then drink,” said Mimir. He filled up a great horn with water from the well and gave it to Odin.

Odin took the horn in both his hands and drank. As he drank all the future became clear to him. He saw all the sorrows and troubles that would fall upon Men and Gods. But he saw, too, why the sorrows and troubles had to fall, and he saw how they might be dealt with so that Gods and Men, by being noble in the days of sorrow and trouble, would leave in the world a force that one day, a day that was far off indeed, would destroy the evil that brought terror and sorrow and despair into the world.

Then when he had drunk out of the great horn that Mimir had given him, he put his hand to his face and he plucked out his right eye. The pain that Odin endured was terrible but he did not cry out. He bowed his head and put his cloak over his face, as Mimir took the eye and let it sink deep into the water of the Well of Wisdom. There the Eye of Odin stayed, shining up through the water, a sign to all who came to that place of the price that the Father of the Gods had paid for his wisdom.

ODIN FACES AN EVIL MAN

Once, when he was less wise, Odin lived in the world of men with Frigga, his Queen .They lived on a bleak island, and were known as Grimner the Fisherman and his wife.

Odin and Frigga were always watching over the sons of men, to know which ones they could train so that they might have the strength and spirit to save the world from the power of the Giants. While they were staying on the bleak island, Odin and Frigga saw the sons of King Hrauding, and both thought that the spirit of heroes could be fostered in them. Odin and Frigga made plans to bring the children to them, so that they might be under their care and training. One day the boys went fishing. A storm came and drove their boat onto the rocks of the island where Odin and Frigga lived.

Odin and Frigga brought them to their hut, and they told them they would care for them and train them through the winter and that in the spring they would build a boat that would carry them back to their father's country. "We shall see," said Odin to Frigga that night, " which of the two can be formed into the noblest hero."

He said that because Frigga favored one of the boys and he favored the other. Frigga thought well of the elder boy, Agnar, who had a gentle voice and a quiet and kindly manner. But Odin thought more of the younger boy. His name was Geirrodd, and he was strong and passionate, with a high and a loud voice.

Odin took Geirrodd into his charge, and he showed him how to fish and hunt. He made the boy even bolder than he was by making him leap from rock to rock, and by letting him climb the highest cliffs and jump across the widest chasms. He would bring him to the den of the bear and make him fight for his life with the spear he had made for

him. Agnar went on the hunt, too, and showed his skill and boldness. But Geirrod overcame him in nearly every trial. “What a hero Geirrod will be,” Odin would often say.

Agnar often stayed with Frigga. He would stay beside her while she spun, listening to the tales she told, and asking questions that brought him more and more wisdom. Agnar heard of Asgard and of the inhabitants of Asgard and of how they protected Midgard, the World of Men, from the Giants of Jötunheim. Agnar, though he did not say it, said in his own mind that he would give all his life and all his strength and all his thought to helping the work of the Gods.

Spring came and Odin built a boat for Geirrod and Agnar. They could go back now to their own country. Before they set out Odin told Geirrod that one day he would come to visit him. “Do not be too proud to receive a Fisherman in your hall, Geirrod,” said Odin. “A King should give welcome to the poorest who comes to his hall.”

“I will be a hero, no doubt of that,” Geirrod answered. “And I would be a King, too, only Agnar was born before me.”

Agnar said goodbye to Frigga and Odin, thanking them for the care they had taken of Geirrod and himself. He looked into Frigga’s eyes, and he told her that he would try to learn how he might fight the battle for the Gods.

The two got into the boat and they rowed away. They came near to King Hrauding’s kingdom. They saw the castle overlooking the sea. Then Geirrod did a terrible thing. He turned the boat back toward the sea, and he threw the oars away. Then, for he was able to swim the roughest sea and climb the highest cliffs, he plunged into the water and headed toward the shore. Agnar, left without oars, went drifting out to sea.

Geirrod climbed the high cliffs and reached his father's castle.

King Hrauding, who had given up both of his sons for lost, was rejoiced to see him. Geirrod told him that Agnar had fallen out of the boat on their way back and that he had drowned. King Hrauding, who had thought both of his sons were gone from him, was glad enough that one had come safe. He put Geirrod beside him on the throne, and when he died Geirrod was made King over the people.

Odin, having drunk from Mimir's Well, went through the kingdoms of men, judging Kings and simple people according to the wisdom he had gained. He came at last to the kingdom that Geirrod ruled over. Odin thought that of all the Kings he had judged to be noble, Geirrod would assuredly be the noblest.

He went to the King's house as a Wanderer, blind in one eye, wearing a cloak of dark blue and with a wanderer's staff in his hands. As he drew near the King's house men on dark horses came riding behind him. The first of the men did not turn his horse as he came near the Wanderer, but rode on, nearly trampling him to the ground.

As they reached the King's house the men on the dark horses shouted for servants. Only one servant was in the stable. He came out and took the horse of the first man. Then the others called on the Wanderer to look after their horses. He had to hold the stirrups for some of them to dismount.

Odin knew who the first man was. He was Geirrod the King. And he knew who the man who served in the stable was. He was Agnar, Geirrod's brother. By the wisdom he had gained he knew that Agnar had come back to his father's kingdom disguised as a servant, and he knew that Geirrod did not know who this servant was.

They went into the stable together. Agnar took bread and broke it and

gave some to the Wanderer. He gave him, too, straw to seat himself on. But in a while Odin said, "I will seat myself at the fire in the King's hall and eat my supper of meat."

"No, stay here," Agnar said. "I will give you more bread and a blanket to cover yourself with. Do not go to the door of the King's house, for the King is angry today and he might send you away."

"How?" said Odin. "A King turn away a wanderer who comes to his door! It cannot be that he would do it!"

"Today he is angry," Agnar said. Again he begged him not to go to the door of the King's house. But Odin rose up from the straw on which he was seated and went to the door.

A porter, hunchbacked and with long arms, stood at the door. "I am a Wanderer, and I want rest and food in the King's hall," Odin said.

"Not in this King's hall," said the hunchbacked porter. He would have barred the door to Odin, but the voice of the King called him away. Odin then strode into the hall and saw the King at table with his friends, all dark-bearded, and cruel-looking men. When Odin looked at them he knew that the boy whom he had trained in nobility had become a King over robbers.

"Since you have come into the hall where we eat, sing to us, wanderer," shouted one of the dark men. "Yes, I will sing to you," said Odin. Then he stood between two of the stone pillars in the hall and he sang a song reproaching the King for having fallen into an evil way of life, and denouncing all of them for following the cruel ways of robbers.

"Seize him," said the King, when Odin's song was finished. The dark men seized Odin and put chains around him and tied him between the

stone pillars of the hall. “He came into this hall for warmth, and warmth he shall have,” said Geirrod. He called his servants to heap up wood around him. They did this. Then the King, with his own hand, put a blazing torch to the wood and the wood blazed up around the Wanderer.

The wood burned round him but the fire did not burn the flesh of Odin All-Father. The King and the King’s friends stood round, watching with delight the fires blaze round a living man. The wood all burned away, and Odin was left standing there with his terrible gaze fixed on the men who were so hard and cruel.

They went to sleep, leaving him chained to the pillars of the hall. Odin could have broken the chains and pulled down the pillars, but he wanted to see what else would happen in this King’s house. The servants were ordered not to bring food or drink to him, but at dawn, when there was no one near, Agnar came to him with a cup of ale and gave it to him to drink.

The next evening when the King came back from his robberies, and when he and his friends, sitting down at the tables, had eaten like wolves, he ordered the wood to be placed around Odin. And again they stood around, watching in delight the fire playing around a living man. As before, Odin stood there, unhurt by the fire, and his steady and terrible gaze made the King hate him more. All day he was kept in chains, and the servants were forbidden to bring him food or drink. None knew that a cup of ale was brought to him at dawn.

Night after night, for eight nights, this went on. Then, on the ninth night, when the fires around him had been lit, Odin lifted up his voice and began to sing a song.

His song became louder and louder, and the King and the King’s friends and the servants of the King’s house stood still and listened to

it. Odin sang about Geirrod, the King and how the Gods had protected him, giving him strength and skill, and how instead of making a noble use of that strength and skill he had made himself like one of the wild beasts. Then he sang of how the vengeance of the Gods was about to fall on this ignoble King.

The flames died down and Geirrod and his friends saw before them, not a friendless Wanderer, but one who looked more kingly than any King of the earth. The chains fell down from his body and he advanced toward the evil company. Then Geirrod rushed upon him with his sword in hand to kill him. The sword struck him, but Odin remained unhurt.

Your life runs out. The Gods are angry with you. Come near if you can. Odin you shall see.

So Odin sang, and, in fear of his terrible gaze, Geirrod and his company shrank away. And as they shrank away they were changed into beasts, into the wolves that range the forests.

Agnar came forward, and Odin declared him to be King. All the folk were glad when Agnar came to rule over them, for they had been oppressed by Geirrod in his cruel reign. Agnar was not only kind, but also strong and victorious in his rule.

ODIN WINS FOR MEN THE MAGIC MEAD

It was the Dwarfs who brewed the Magic Mead, and it was the Giants who hid it away. But it was Odin who brought it from the place where it was hidden and gave it to the sons of men. Those who drank the Magic Mead became very wise, and not only that but they could put their wisdom into such beautiful words that everyone who heard would love and remember it.

The Dwarfs brewed the Magic Mead through cruelty and villainy. They made it out of the blood of a man. The man was Kvasir the Poet. He had wisdom, and he spoke such beautiful words that what he said was loved and remembered by all. The Dwarfs brought Kvasir down into their caverns and they killed him there. “Now,” they said, “we have Kvasir’s blood and Kvasir’s wisdom. No one else will have his wisdom but us.” They poured the blood into three jars and they mixed it with honey, and from it they brewed the Magic Mead.

Having killed a man the Dwarfs became more and more bold. They came out of their caverns and went up and down through Midgard, the World of Men. They went into Jötunheim, and began to play their evil tricks on the most harmless of the Giants.

They came upon one Giant who was very simple. His name was Gilling. They persuaded Gilling to row them out to sea in a boat. Then the two most cunning of the Dwarfs, Galar and Fialar, steered the boat onto a rock. The boat split. Gilling, who could not swim, was drowned. The Dwarfs clambered up on pieces of the boat and came safely ashore. They were so delighted with their evil tricks that they wanted to play some more of them.

Galar and Fialar then thought of a new piece of mischief they might do. They led their band of Dwarfs to Gilling’s house and screamed out

to his wife that Gilling was dead. The Giant's wife began to weep. At last she rushed out of the house weeping and clapping her hands. Now Galar and Fialar had clambered up onto the roof of the house, and as she came running out they dropped a big rock on her head. It struck her and Gilling's wife fell down dead. The Dwarfs were delighted at the destruction they were making.

They were so insolent now that they made up songs and sang them, songs that were all a boast of how they had killed Kvasir the Poet, and Gilling the Giant, and Gilling's wife. They stayed around Jötunheim, tormenting all whom they were able to torment, and flattering themselves that they were great and strong. They stayed too long, however. Suttung, Gilling's brother, tracked them down and captured them.

Suttung was not harmless and simple like Gilling, his brother. He was cunning and he was greedy. Once they were in his hands the Dwarfs had no chance of making an escape. He took them and left them on a rock in the sea that the tide would cover.

The Giant stood up in the water taller than the rock, and the tide as it came in did not rise above his knees. He stood there watching the Dwarfs as the water rose up round them and they became more and more terrified.

"Oh, take us off the rock, good Suttung," they cried out to him. "Take us off the rock and we will give you gold and jewels. Take us off the rock and we will give you a necklace as beautiful as Brisingamen." So they cried out to him, but the Giant Suttung only laughed at them. He had no need of gold or jewels.

Then Fialar and Galar cried out, "Take us off the rock and we will give you the jars of the Magic Mead we have brewed."

“The Magic Mead,” said Suttung. “This is something that no one else has. It would be good to get it, for it might help us in the battle against the Gods. Yes, I will get the Magic Mead from them.”

He took the band of Dwarfs off the rock, but he held Galar and Fialar, their chiefs, while the others went into their caverns and brought up the jars of the Magic Mead. Suttung took the Mead and brought it to a cavern in a mountain near his home. Thus it happened that the Magic Mead, brewed by the Dwarfs through cruelty and villainy, came into the hands of the Giants. The story now tells how Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, at that time in the world as Vegtam the Wanderer, took the Magic Mead out of Suttung’s possession and brought it into the world of men.

Suttung had a daughter named Gunnlöd, who was both good and beautiful. So that he might have a guardian for the Magic Mead, Suttung enchanted Gunnlöd, turning her from a beautiful Giant maiden into a witch with long teeth and sharp nails. He shut her in the cavern where the jars of the Magic Mead were hidden.

Odin heard of the death of Kvasir whom he honored above all men. The Dwarfs who killed him he had closed up in their caverns so that they were never again able to come out into the World of Men. Then he set out to get the Magic Mead so that he could give it to men, so that, tasting it, they would have wisdom, and words would be at their command that would make wisdom loved and remembered.

How Odin won the Magic Mead out of the rock-covered cavern where Suttung had hidden it, and how he broke the enchantment that lay upon Gunnlöd, Suttung’s daughter, is a story often told around the hearths of men.

Nine strong workers were cutting grass in a field as a wanderer went by clad in a dark blue cloak and carrying a wanderer’s staff in his

hand. One of the thralls spoke to the Wanderer, “Tell them in the house of Baugi up there that I cannot cut anymore until a whetstone to sharpen my scythe is sent to me.” “Here is a whetstone,” said the Wanderer, and he took one from his belt. The worker who had spoken whetted his scythe with it and began to cut grass again. The grass went down before his scythe as if the wind had cut it. “Give us the whetstone, give us the whetstone,” cried the other workers. The Wanderer threw the whetstone to them, leaving them quarreling over it, and went on his way.

The Wanderer came to the house of Baugi, the brother of Suttung. He rested in Baugi’s house, and at supper time he was given food at the great table. While he was eating with the Giant a messenger from the field came in.

“Baugi,” said the messenger, “your nine workers are all dead. They killed each other with their scythes, fighting in the field about a whetstone. There are no workers now to do your work.”

“What shall I do, what shall I do?” said Baugi the Giant. “My fields will not be mown now, and I shall have no hay to feed my cattle and my horses in the winter.”

“I could work for you,” said the wanderer.

“One man’s work is no use to me,” said the Giant, “I must have the work of nine men.”

“I shall do the work of nine men.” said the wanderer, “Give me a trial, and see.”

The next day Vegtam the Wanderer went into Baugi’s field. He did as much work as the nine workers had done in a day.

“Stay with me for the season,” said Baugi, “and I shall give you a

great reward.”

So Vegtam stayed at the Giant’s house and worked in the Giant’s fields, and when all the work of the season was done Baugi said to him, “Speak now and tell me what reward I should give you.”

“The only reward I ask of you,” said Vegtam, “is a drink of the Magic Mead.”

“The Magic Mead?” said Baugi. “I do not know where it is or how to get it.”

“Your brother Suttung has it. Go to him and claim a drink of the Magic Mead for me.”

Baugi went to Suttung. But when he heard what he had come for, the Giant Suttung turned on his brother in a rage.

“A drink of the Magic Mead?” he said. “I will give no one a drink of the Magic Mead. Have I not enchanted my daughter Gunnlöd, so that she may watch over it? And you tell me that a wanderer who has done the work of nine men for you asks for a drink of the Magic Mead for his wage! Oh Giant as foolish as Gilling! Oh oaf of a Giant! Who could have done such work for you, and who would demand such a wage from you, but one of our enemies, the Æsir? Leave me now and never come to me again with talk of the Magic Mead.”

Baugi went back to his house and told the wanderer that Suttung would give none of the Magic Mead. “I hold you to your bargain,” said Vegtam the wanderer, “and you will have to get me the wage I asked. Come with me now and help me to get it.”

He made Baugi take him to the place where the Magic Mead was hidden. The place was a cavern in the mountain. In front of that cavern was a great stone.

“We cannot move that stone or get through it,” said Baugi. “I cannot help you to your wage.”

The Wanderer drew an auger from his belt. “This will bore through the rock if there is strength behind it. You have the strength, Giant. Begin now and bore.”

Baugi took the auger in his hands and bored with all his strength, and the Wanderer stood by leaning on his staff, calm and majestic in his blue cloak.

“I have made a deep, deep hole. It goes through the rock,” Baugi said, at last.

The Wanderer went to the hole and blew into it. The dust of the rock flew back into their faces.

. “You have not bored half-way through the rock. Work again.”

Then Baugi took the auger again and he bored deeper and deeper into the rock. He blew into it, and at last his breath went through. Then he looked at the Wanderer to see what he would do. His eyes had become fierce and he held the auger in his hand as if it were a stabbing knife.

“Look up at the top of the rock,” said the wanderer. As Baugi looked up the wanderer changed himself into a snake and glided into the hole in the rock. Baugi struck at him with the auger, hoping to kill him, but the snake slipped through.

Behind the mighty rock there was a hollow place all lit up by the shining crystals in the rock. Within the hollow place there was a hideous witch, with long teeth and sharp nails. But she sat there rocking herself and letting tears fall from her eyes. “Oh youth and beauty,” she sang, “Oh sight of men and women, sad, sad for me it is that you are shut away, and that I have only this closed-in cavern and

this horrible form.”

A snake glided across the floor. “Oh, I wish that you were deadly and that you might kill me,” cried the witch. The snake glided past her. Then she heard a voice speak softly, “Gunnlöd, Gunnlöd!” She looked round, and there standing behind her was a majestic man, wearing a dark blue cloak, Odin, the Eldest of the Gods.

“You have come to take the Magic Mead that my father has set me here to guard,” she cried. “You shall not have it. Rather shall I spill it out onto the thirsty earth of the cavern.”

“Gunnlöd,” he said, and he came to her. She looked at him and she felt the red blood of youth come back into her cheeks. She put her hands with their sharp nails over her chest, and she felt the nails drive into her flesh. “Save me from all this ugliness,” she cried.

“I will save you,” Odin said. He went to her. He took her hands and held them. He kissed her on the mouth. All the marks of the enchantment left her. She was no longer bent, but tall and shapely. Her eyes became wide and deep blue. Her mouth became red and her hands soft and beautiful. She became as fair as Gerda, the Giant maid whom Frey had wed.

They stayed looking at each other, and then they sat down side by side and talked softly to each other, Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, and Gunnlöd, the beautiful Giant maiden.

She gave him the three jars of the Magic Mead and she told him she would go out of the cavern with him. Three days passed and still they were together. Then Odin by his wisdom found hidden paths and passages that led out of the cavern and he brought Gunnlöd out into the light of the day.

He brought with him the jars of the Magic Mead, the Mead whose taste gives wisdom, and wisdom in such beautiful words that all love and remember it. Gunnlöd, who had tasted a little of the Magic Mead, wandered through the world singing of the beauty and the might of Odin, and of her love for him.

ODIN TALKS TO HIS SON VIDAR

Odin showed himself not only to Giants and Men in the days when he went through Jötunheim and Midgard as Vegtam the wanderer. He met and he spoke with the Gods also, with one who lived far away from Asgard and with others who came to Midgard and to Jötunheim.

The one who lived far away from Asgard was Vidar, Odin's silent son. Vidar sat far inside a wilderness, with trees and tall grass growing around him,. Nearby him a horse grazed with a saddle on it, a horse that was always ready for a speedy journey.

Odin, now Vegtam the wanderer, came into that silent place and spoke to Vidar, the Silent God.

” Vidar,” he said, “strangest of all my sons. God who will live when all of us have passed away. God who will bring the memory of the inhabitants of Asgard into a world that will know not their power. Vidar, I know why the horse that is always ready for a speedy journey grazes nearby you. It is so that you can spring on it and ride, a son speeding to avenge his father.

“I will only tell you Vidar what I have secretly been doing. Who but you can know why I, Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, hung on the tree Ygdrassil for nine days and nine nights? I hung on that windy tree so that I could learn the wisdom that would give me power in the nine worlds. On the ninth night the Runes of Wisdom appeared before my eyes, and slipping down from the tree I took them.

“I shall tell why my ravens fly to you, carrying in their beaks scraps of leather. It is so that you can make a sandal for yourself and with that sandal on you can put your foot on the lower jaw of a mighty wolf and tear him in two. All the shoemakers of the earth throw on the

ground scraps of the leather they use so that you can make the sandal for your wolf-rendering foot.

“I have told those on earth to cut off the fingernails and the toenails of their dead, or else the Giants will make for themselves the ship Naglfar from those fingernails and toenails and they will sail from the North on the day of Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

“Vidar, I will tell you more. I, living amongst men, have married the daughter of a hero. My son shall live as a mortal amongst mortals. his name shall be Sigi. Heroes shall spring from him who will fill Valhalla, my own hall in Asgard, with heroes in preparation for the day of our war with the Giants and with Surtur of the Flaming Sword.”

Odin stayed in that silent place for a long time talking with his silent son Vidar, who with his brother would live beyond the lives of the inhabitants of Asgard and who would bring into another day and another world the memory of the Æsir and the Vanir. Odin spoke with him, for a long time and then he went across the wilderness where the grass and the bushes grew and where that horse grazed in readiness for the sudden journey. He went toward the seashore where the Æsir and the Vanir were now gathered for the feast that old Ægir, the Giant King of the Sea, had offered them.

THOR AND LOKI IN THE GIANTS' CITY

All but a few of the inhabitants of Asgard had come to the feast offered by Ægir the Old, the Giant King of the Sea. Frigga, the queenly wife of Odin, was there, and Frey and Freya; Iduna, who guarded the Apples of Youth, and Bragi, her husband; Tyr, the great swordsman, and Niörd, the God of the Sea, Skadi, who married Niörd and whose hatred for Loki was fierce, and Sif, whose golden hair was once shorn off by Loki the mischievous. Thor and Loki were there. The inhabitants of Asgard, gathered together in the hall of Ægir, waiting for Odin.

Before Odin came Loki amused everyone by the tales that he told mocking Thor. Loki had had his lips freed from the thread that the Dwarf Brock had sewn them with. Thor had forgotten the wrong that he had done to Sif. Loki had been with Thor in his wanderings through Jötunheim, and about these journeys he now told mocking tales.

He told how he had seen Thor in his chariot of brass drawn by two goats go across Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge. None of the Æsir or the Vanir knew on what adventure Thor was headed but Loki followed him and Thor let him accompany him.

As they traveled on in the brass chariot drawn by the two goats, Thor told Loki of the adventure on which he was headed. He would go into Jötunheim, even into Utgard, the Giants' City, and he would try his strength against the Giants. He was not afraid of anything that might happen, for he carried Miölnir, his hammer, with him.

Their route was through Midgard, the World of Men. Once, as they were traveling on, night came and they were hungry and in need of shelter. They saw a peasant's hut and they drove the chariot toward it.

Leaving the goats standing beside the chariot, the two, looking ,not like those in Asgard, but like men traveling through the country, knocked at the door of the hut and asked for food and shelter.

They could have shelter, the peasant and his wife told them, but they could not have food. There was little in that place, and what little there had been they had eaten for supper. The peasant showed them the inside the hut. It was poor and bare, and there was nothing there to give anyone. In the morning, the peasant said, he would go down to the river and catch some fish for a meal.

“We can’t wait until morning, we must eat now,” said Thor, “and I think I can provide a good meal for us all.” He went over to where his goats stood in the hollow beside the chariot of brass, and, striking them with his hammer, he left them lifeless on the ground. He skinned the goats then, and picking up the bones very carefully, he left them down on the skins. He lifted up the skins and bones and bringing them into the house he left them in a hole above the peasant’s fireplace. “No one,” said he in a commanding voice “must touch the bones that I leave here.”

Then he brought the meat into the house. Soon it was cooked and laid smoking on the table. The peasant and his wife and his son sat round the board with Thor and Loki. They had not eaten plentifully for many days, and now the man and the woman fed themselves well.

Thialfi was the name of the peasant’s son. He was a growing lad and had an appetite that had not been satisfied for long. While the meat was on the table his father and mother had kept him going here and there, carrying water, putting wood on the fire, and holding a blazing stick so that those at the table might see to eat. There was not much left for him when he was able to sit down, for Thor and Loki had great appetites, and the lad’s father and mother had eaten to make up for

the days when they had nothing. So Thialfi got little out of that plentiful feast.

When the meal was finished they lay down on the benches. Thor, because he had made a long journey that day, slept very soundly. Thialfi lay down on a bench, too, but his thoughts were still on the food. When everyone was asleep, he thought, he would take one of the bones that were in the skins above him, and break and gnaw it.

So in the dead of the night the lad stood up on the bench and took down the goatskins that Thor had left so carefully there. He took out a bone, broke it, and gnawed it for the marrow. Loki was awake and saw him do this, but he, enjoying mischief as much as ever, did nothing to stop the lad.

He put the bone he had broken back in the skins and he left the skins back in the hole above the fireplace. Then he went to sleep on the bench.

In the morning, as soon as they were up, the first thing Thor did was to take the skins out of the hole. He carried them carefully out to the hollow where he had left the goats standing. He put each goatskin down with the bones in it. He struck each with his hammer, and the goats sprang up alive, horns and hoofs and all.

But one was not as he had been before. He limped badly. Thor examined the leg and found out that one bone was broken. In terrible anger he turned on the peasant, his wife, and his son. "A bone of this goat has been broken under your roof," he shouted. "For that I shall destroy your house and leave you all dead under it." Thialfi wept. Then he came forward and touched the knees of Thor. "I did not know what harm I did," he said. "I broke the bone."

Thor had his hammer lifted up to crush him into the earth. But he

could not bring it down on the weeping boy. He let his hammer rest on the ground again. “You will have to do service for me for having hurt my goat,” he said. “Come with me.”

So the lad Thialfi went off with Thor and Loki. Thor took in his powerful hands the the chariot of brass and he dragged it into a lonely mountain hollow where neither men nor Giants came. They left the goats in a great, empty forest to stay resting there until Thor called to them again.

Thor and Loki and the lad Thialfi went across from Midgard into Jötunheim. Because of Miölnir, the great hammer that he carried, Thor felt safe in the Realm of the Giants. Loki, who trusted in his own cunning, felt safe, too. The lad Thialfi trusted in Thor so much that he had no fear. It was a long journey, and while they were traveling Thor and Loki trained Thialfi to be a quick and strong lad.

One day they came out on a moor. All day they crossed it, and at night it still stretched far before them. A great wind was blowing, night was falling, and they saw no shelter near. In the dusk they saw a shape that looked like a mountain and they went toward it, hoping to find some shelter in a cave.

Then Loki saw a lower shape that looked as if it might be a shelter. They walked around it, Loki and Thor and the lad Thialfi. It was a house, but a most oddly shaped house. The entrance was a long, wide hall that had no doorway. When they entered this hall they found five long and narrow rooms running off it. “It is an odd place, but it is the best shelter we can get,” Loki said. “You and I Thor, will take the two longest rooms, and the lad Thialfi can take one of the little rooms.”

They entered their rooms and lay down to sleep. But from the mountain outside there came a noise that was like moaning forests and waterfalls. The room where each one slept was shaken by the

noise. Neither Thor nor Loki nor the lad Thialfi slept that night.

In the morning they left the five-roomed house and turned their faces toward the mountain. It was not a mountain at all, but a Giant. He was lying on the ground when they saw him, but just then he rolled over and sat up. “Little men, little men,” he shouted to them, “have you passed by a glove of mine on your way?” He stood up and looked all around him. “Ho, I see my glove now,” he said. Thor and Loki and the lad Thialfi stood still as the Giant came toward them. He leaned over and picked up the five-roomed shelter they had slept in. He put it on his hand. It was really his glove!

Thor gripped his hammer, and Loki and the lad Thialfi stood behind him. But the Giant seemed good-humored enough. “Where might you be headed for, little men?” said he.

“To Utgard in Jötunheim,” Thor replied boldly.

“Oh, to that place,” said the Giant. “Come, then, I shall travel with you. You can call me Skrymir.”

“Can you give us breakfast?” said Thor. He spoke crossly, for he did not want it to appear that there was any reason to be afraid of the Giant.

“I can give you breakfast,” said Skrymir, “but I don’t want to stop to eat now. We’ll sit down as soon as I have an appetite. Come along now. Here is my bag to carry. It has my provisions in it.”

He gave Thor his bag. Thor put it on his back and put Thialfi sitting on it. On and on the Giant strode and Thor and Loki were barely able to keep up with him. It was midday before he showed any signs of stopping to take breakfast.

They came to an enormous tree. Skrymir sat down under it. “I’ll sleep

before I eat,” he said, “but you can open my bag, my little men, and make your meal out of it.” Saying this, he stretched himself out, and in a few minutes Thor and Loki and the lad Thialfi heard the same sounds as kept them awake the night before, sounds that were like forests moaning and waterfalls. It was Skrymir’s snoring.

Thor and Loki and the lad Thialfi were too hungry now to be disturbed by these tremendous noises. Thor tried to open the bag, but he found it was not easy to undo the knots. Then Loki tried to open it. In spite of all Loki’s cunning he could not undo the knots. Then Thor took the bag from him and tried to break the knots by strength. Not even Thor’s strength could break them. He threw the wallet down in his rage.

The snoring of Skrymir became louder and louder. Thor stood up in his rage. He grasped Miölnir and flung it at the head of the sleeping Giant.

The hammer struck him on the head. But Skrymir only stirred in his sleep. “Did a leaf fall on my head?” he said.

He rolled over and went to sleep again. The hammer came back to Thor’s hand. As soon as Skrymir snored he flung it again, aiming at the Giant’s forehead. It struck there. The Giant opened his eyes. “Has an acorn fallen on my forehead?” he said.

Again he went to sleep. But now Thor, terribly roused, stood over his head with the hammer held in his hands. He struck him on the forehead. It was the greatest blow that Thor had ever dealt.

“A bird is pecking at my forehead. There is no chance to sleep here,” said Skrymir, sitting up. “And you, little men, did you have breakfast yet? Toss over my bag to me and I shall give you some food.” The lad Thialfi brought him the bag. Skrymir opened it, took out his

provisions, and gave a share to Thor and Loki and the lad Thialfi. Thor would not take food from him, but Loki and the lad Thialfi took it and ate. When the meal was finished Skrymir rose up and said, “Time for us to be going toward Utgard.”

As they went on their way Skrymir talked to Loki. “I always feel very small when I go into Utgard,” he said. “You see, I’m such a small and a weak fellow and the folk who live there are so big and powerful. But you and your friends will be welcomed in Utgard. They will be sure to make little pets of you.”

And then he left them and they went into Utgard, the City of the Giants. Giants were going up and down in the streets. They were not so huge as Skrymir said, Loki noticed.

Utgard was the Asgard of the Giants. But in its buildings there was none of the beauty that there was in the palaces of the Gods, Gladsheim and Breidablik or Fensalir. Huge but shapeless the buildings arose, like mountains or icebergs. Oh beautiful Asgard with the dome above it of the deepest blue! Asgard with the clouds around it heaped up like mountains of diamonds! Asgard with its Rainbow Bridge and its glittering gates! Oh beautiful Asgard, could it be indeed that these Giants would one day destroy you?

Thor and Loki with the lad Thialfi went to the palace of the King. The hammer that Thor gripped would, they knew, make them safe even there. They passed between rows of Giant guards and came to the King’s seat. “We know you, Thor and Loki,” said the Giant King, “and we know that Thor has come to Utgard to try his strength against the Giants. We shall have a contest tomorrow. Today there are sports for our boys. If your young servant should like to try his swiftness against our youths, let him enter the race today.”

Now Thialfi was the best runner in Midgard and all the time he had

been with them Loki and Thor had trained him in speed so Thialfi was not afraid of racing against the Giants' youths.

The King called on one named Hugi and placed him against Thialfi. The pair started together. Thialfi sped off. Loki and Thor watched the race anxiously, for they thought it would be good for them if they had a triumph over the giants in Utgard in the first contest. But they saw Hugi leave Thialfi behind. They saw the Giant youth reach the winning post, circle round it, and come back to the starting place before Thialfi had reached the end of the course.

Thialfi, who did not know how it was that he had been beaten, asked that he be let run the race with Hugi again. The pair started off once more, and this time it did not seem to Thor and Loki that Hugi had left the starting place at all for he was back there almost as soon as the race had started.

They came back from the racing ground to the palace. The Giant King and his friends with Thor and Loki sat down to the supper table.

"Tomorrow," said the King, "we shall have our great contest when Thor will show us his power. Have you ever heard of anyone who would enter a contest in eating? We might have a contest in eating at this supper board if we could get one who would match himself with Logi here. He can eat more than anyone in Jötunheim."

"And I," said Loki, "can eat more than any two in Jötunheim. I will match myself against your Logi."

"Good!" said the Giant King. And all the Giants present said, "Good! This will be a sight worth seeing."

Then they put scores of plates along one side of the table, each plate filled with meat. Loki began at one end and Logi began at the other. They started to eat, moving toward each other as each cleared a plate.

Plate after plate was emptied, and Thor standing by with the Giants was amazed to see how much Loki ate. But Logi on the other side was leaving plate after plate emptied. At last the two stood together with scores of plates on each side of them. “He has not defeated me,” cried Loki. “I have cleared as many plates as your champion, Oh King of the Giants.”

“But you have not cleared them so well,” said the King.

“Loki has eaten all the meat that was upon them,” said Thor.

“But Logi has eaten the bones with the meat,” said the Giant King. “Look and see if it is not so.”

Thor went to the plates. Where Loki had eaten, the bones were left on the plates. Where Logi had eaten, nothing was left: bones as well as meat were consumed, and all the plates were left bare.

“We are beaten,” said Thor to Loki.

“Tomorrow, Thor,” said Loki, “you must show all your strength or the Giants will cease to fear the might of the inhabitants of Asgard.”

“Do not be afraid,” said Thor. “No one in Jötunheim will triumph over me.”

The next day Thor and Loki came into the great hall of Utgard. The Giant King was there with a group of his friends. Thor marched into the hall with Miölnir, his great hammer, in his hands. “Our young men have been drinking out of this horn,” said the King, “and they want to know if you, Thor, would drink out of it. But I must tell you that they think that none of the Æsir could empty the horn at one drink.”

“Give it to me,” said Thor. “There is no horn you can hand me that I

cannot empty .

A great horn, brimming and flowing, was brought over to him. Handing Miölnir to Loki and telling him to stand so that he could keep the hammer in sight, Thor raised the horn to his mouth. He drank and drank. He felt sure there was not a drop left in the horn as he laid it on the ground. “There,” he gasped, “your Giant horn is drained.”

The Giants looked inside the horn and laughed. “Drained, Thor!” said the Giant King. “Look into the horn again. You have hardly drunk below the brim.”

Thor looked into it and saw that the horn was not half emptied. In a mighty rage he lifted it to his lips again. He drank and drank and drank. Then, satisfied that he had emptied it to the bottom, he left the horn on the ground and walked over to the other side of the hall.

“Thor thinks he has drained the horn,” said one of the Giants, lifting it up. “But see, friends, what remains in it.”

Thor strode back and looked again into the horn. It was still half filled. He turned round to see that all the Giants were laughing at him.

” Thor, Thor,” said the Giant King, “we do not know how you are going to deal with us in the next test, but you certainly are not able to drink against the Giants.”

Thor said, “I can lift up and set down anyone in your hall.”

As he said this a great iron-colored cat bounded into the hall and stood before Thor, her back arched and her fur bristling.

“Then lift the cat off the ground,” said the Giant King.

Thor strode to the cat, determined to lift her up and throw her

amongst the mocking Giants. He put his hands to the cat, but he could not raise her. Up, up went Thor's arms, up, up, as high as they could go. The cat's arched back went up to the roof, but her feet were never taken off the ground. And as he heaved and heaved with all his might he heard the laughter of the Giants all round him.

He turned away, his eyes flaming with anger. "I am not going to try to lift cats," he said. "Bring me someone to wrestle with, and I swear you shall see me defeat him."

"Here is someone for you to wrestle with, Thor," said the King. Thor looked round and saw an old woman hobbling toward him. She was bleary eyed and toothless. "This is Ellie, my ancient nurse," said the Giant King. "She is the one we want you to wrestle with."

"Thor does not wrestle with old women. I wrestle against your tallest Giants instead."

"Ellie has come where you are," said the Giant King. "Now it is she who will throw you."

The old woman hobbled toward Thor, her eyes gleaming under her falling fringes of gray hair. Thor stood, unable to move as the hag came toward him. She grabbed his arms. Her feet began to trip him. He tried to push her from him. Then he found that her feet and her hands were as strong against him as bands and stakes of iron.

Then a wrestling match began in earnest between Thor and the ancient crone Ellie. Round and round the hall they wrestled, and Thor was not able to bend the old woman backward nor sideways. Instead he became weaker under her terrible grasp. She forced him down, and at last he could only save himself from being left lying on the ground by throwing himself down on one knee and holding the hag by the shoulders. She tried to force him down on the ground, but she could

not do that. Then she broke from him, hobbled to the door and went out of the hall.

Thor rose up and took the hammer from Loki's hands. Without a word he went out of the hall and toward the gate of the Giants' City. He spoke no word to Loki or to the lad Thialfi who went with him for the seven weeks that they journeyed through Jötunheim.

HOW THOR AND LOKI FOOLED THRYM

THE GIANT

Loki told another tale about Thor and Thrym, a stupid Giant who had a cunning streak in him. Loki and Thor had been in this Giant's house. He had made a feast for them and Thor had not been paying attention.

Then when they were far from Jötunheim Thor missed the hammer Miölnir that was the defence of Asgard and the help of the Gods. He could not remember how or where he had mislaid it. Loki thought of Thrym, that stupid Giant who had a cunning streak in him. Thor, who had lost the hammer that he had sworn never to let out of his sight, did not know what to do.

But Loki thought it would be worthwhile to see if Thrym knew anything about it. He went first to Asgard. He hurried across the Rainbow Bridge and passed Heimdall without speaking to him. He didn't dare tell anyone about Thor's loss. He spoke to no one until he came to Frigga's palace.

He said To Frigga, "You must lend me your falcon dress to fly to Thrym's home and find out if he knows where Miölnir is."

"If every feather was silver I would give it to you to go on such an errand," Frigga said.

So Loki put on the falcon dress and flew to Jötunheim and came near Thrym's home. He found the Giant on a hillside putting golden and silver collars on the necks of his hounds. Loki in the plumage of a falcon perched on the rock above him, watching the Giant with falcon eyes.

While he was there he heard the Giant speak boastful words. "I put

collars of silver and gold on you now, my hounds,” he said, “but soon we Giants will have the gold of Asgard to decorate our hounds and our horses with, yes, even the necklace of Freya to put on you, the best of my hounds. For Miölnir, the defence of Asgard, is in Thrym’s possession.”

Then Loki spoke to him. “Yes, we know that Miölnir is in your possession, Thrym,” he said, “but you should know that the eyes of the watchful Gods are on you.”

“Ha, Loki, shape-changer,” said Thrym, “you are there! But all your watching will not help you to find Miölnir. I have buried Thor’s hammer eight miles deep in the earth. Find it if you can. It is below the caves of the Dwarfs.”

“It is useless for us to search for Thor’s hammer,” said Loki; “eh Thrym?”

“It is useless for you to search for it,” said the Giant sulkily.

“But what a compensation you would gain if you returned Thor’s hammer to the inhabitants of Asgard,” Loki said.

“No, cunning Loki, I will never return it, not for any compensation,” said Thrym.

“Yet just think for a moment Thrym,” said Loki. “Is there nothing in Asgard you would like to own? No treasure, no possession? Odin’s ring or Frey’s ship, Skidbladnir?”

“No, no,” said Thrym. “The inhabitants of Asgard could offer me only one thing that I would take in exchange for Miölnir, Thor’s hammer.”

“And what would that be, Thrym?” said Loki, flying toward him.

“She whom many Giants have tried to gain—Freya, for my wife,” said Thrym.

Loki watched Thrym for a long time with his falcon eyes. He saw that the Giant would not alter his demand. “I will tell them in Asgard of your demand,” he said at last, and he flew away.

Loki knew that those in Asgard would never let Freya be taken from them to become the wife of Thrym, the stupidest of the Giants. He flew back.

By this time everyone in Asgard had heard of the loss of Miölnir, the help of the Gods. Heimdall shouted to him as he crossed the Rainbow Bridge to ask what news he brought back. But Loki did not stop to speak to the Warden of the Bridge but went straight to the hall where the Gods sat in Council.

He told Thrym’s demand to the Æsir and the Vanir. None would agree to let the beautiful Freya go to live in Jötunheim as a wife to the stupidest of the Giants. Everyone in the Council was downcast. The Gods would never again be able to help mortal men, for now that Miölnir was in the Giants’ hands all their strength would have to be used in the defence of Asgard.

So they sat in the Council looking downcast. But cunning Loki said, “I have thought of a trick that may win back the hammer from stupid Thrym. Let us pretend to send Freya to Jötunheim as a bride for him. But let one of the Gods go in Freya’s veil and dress.”

“Which of the Gods would bring himself to do so shameful a thing?” said those in the Council.

“Oh, he who lost the hammer, Thor, should be prepared to do as much to win it back,” said Loki.

“Thor, Thor! Let Thor win back the hammer from Thrym by Loki’s trick,” said the Æsir and the Vanir. They left it to Loki to arrange how Thor should go to Jötunheim as a bride for Thrym.

Loki left the Council of the Gods and came to where he had left Thor. “There is but one way to win the hammer back, Thor,” he said, “and the Gods in Council have decreed that you shall take it.”

“How?” said Thor. “But no matter what it is, tell me what it is and I shall do as you say.”

“Then,” said laughing Loki, “I am to take you to Jötunheim as a bride for Thrym. You are to go in bridal dress and veil, in Freya’s veil and bridal dress.”

“What! I dress as a woman?” shouted Thor.

“Yes Thor, and wear a veil over your head and a garland of flowers on it.”

“I—I wear a garland of flowers?”

“And rings on your fingers. And a bunch of housekeeper’s keys in your belt.”

“Stop your mockery, Loki,” said Thor roughly, “or I shall beat you.”

“It is no mockery. You will have to do this to win Miölnir back for the defence of Asgard. Thrym will take no other recompense than Freya. I would mock him by bringing you to him in Freya’s veil and dress. When you are in his hall and he asks you to join hands with him, say you will not until he puts Miölnir into your hands. Then when your mighty hammer is in your hands you can deal with him and with everyone in his hall. I shall be with you as thy bridesmaid! Oh sweet, sweet maiden Thor!”

“Loki,” said Thor, “You planned all this to mock me. I in a bridal dress! I with a bride’s veil on me! Everyone in Asgard will never stop laughing at me.”

“Yes,” said Loki, “but there will never be laughter again in Asgard unless you are able to bring back the hammer that your carelessness lost.”

“True,” said Thor unhappily, “and is this, do you think, Loki, the only way to win back Miölnir from Thrym?”

“It is the only way, Thor,” said the cunning Loki.

So Thor and Loki set out for Jötunheim and the home of Thrym. A messenger had gone before them to tell Thrym that Freya was coming with her bridesmaid and that the wedding feast was to be prepared and the guests gathered and that Miölnir was to be at hand so that it might be given over to the inhabitants of Asgard. Thrym and his Giant mother hurried to have everything ready.

Thor and Loki came to the Giant’s house in the dress of a bride and a bridesmaid. A veil was over Thor’s head hiding his beard and his fierce eyes. He wore a red embroidered robe and at his side hung a belt of housekeeper’s keys. Loki was veiled, too. The hall of Thrym’s great house was swept and decorated and great tables were laid for the feast. Thrym’s mother was going from one guest to another, boasting that her son was getting one of the most beautiful maidens in Asgard for his bride, Freya, whom so many of the Giants had tried to win.

When Thor and Loki stepped through the door Thrym went to welcome them. He wanted to raise the veil of his bride and give her a kiss. Loki quickly laid his hand on the Giant’s shoulder.

“Stop,” he whispered. “Do not raise her veil. We in Asgard are

reserved and bashful. Freya would be much offended to be kissed in front of so many others.”

“Yes, yes,” said Thrym’s old mother. “Do not raise your bride’s veil, son. Those from Asgard are more refined in their ways than we, the Giants.” Then the old woman took Thor by the hand and led him to the table.

The size of the bride did not surprise the huge Giants who were in the wedding company. They stared at Thor and Loki, but they could see nothing of their faces and little of their forms because of their veils.

Thor sat at the table with Thrym on one side of him and Loki on the other. Then the feast began. Thor, not noticing that what he did was unbecoming to a refined maiden, ate eight salmon right away. Loki nudged him and pressed his foot, but he did not pay attention to Loki. After the salmon he ate a whole ox.

“These maids of Asgard,” said the Giants to each other, “they may be refined, as Thrym’s mother says, but their appetites are big enough.”

“No wonder she eats, poor thing,” said Loki to Thrym. “It is eight days since we left Asgard. Freya never ate on the way, because she was so anxious to see Thrym and to come to his house.”

“Poor darling, poor darling,” said the Giant. “What she has eaten is little after all.”

Thor nodded his head toward the mead vat. Thrym ordered his servants to bring some to his bride. The servants kept coming with mead for Thor. While the Giants watched, and while Loki nudged and nodded, he drank three barrels of mead.

“Oh,” said the Giants to Thrym’s mother, “we are not so sorry that we failed to win a bride from Asgard.”

Then a piece of the veil slipped aside and Thor's eyes were seen for an instant. "Oh, how come Freya has such glaring eyes?" said Thrym.

"Poor thing, poor thing," said Loki, "no wonder her eyes are glaring and staring. She has not slept for eight nights, because she was so anxious to come to you and to your house, Thrym. But now the time has come for you to join hands with your bride. First, put into her hands the hammer Miölnir so that she may know the great recompense that the Giants have given for her coming."

Then Thrym, the stupidest of the Giants, rose up and brought Miölnir, the defence of Asgard, into the feasting hall. Thor could hardly restrain himself from springing up and seizing it from the Giant. But Loki was able to keep him still. Thrym brought over the hammer and put the handle into the hands of her whom he thought was his bride. Thor's hands closed on his hammer. Instantly he stood up. The veil fell off him. His furious face and his blazing eyes were seen by everyone. He struck one blow on the wall of the house. Down it crashed. Then Thor went striding out of the ruin with Loki beside him, while within the Giants bellowed as the roof and walls fell down on them. So Miölnir, the defence of Asgard, was lost and won back.

ÆGIR'S FEAST: HOW THOR TRIUMPHED

The time between midday and evening wore on while the Æsir and the Vanir gathered for the feast in old Ægir's hall listened to the stories that Loki told in mockery of Thor. The night came, but no banquet was made ready for the guests from Asgard. They called to Ægir's two servants, Fimaffenger and Elder, and they told them bring them a supper. They did not get much but they went to bed saying, "The preparations that old Ægir is making to feast us tomorrow must be great."

The next day came, and still the Dwellers in Asgard saw no preparations being made for the banquet. Then Frey went to find old Ægir, the Giant King of the Sea. He found him sitting with bowed head in his inner hall. "Ho, Ægir," he said, "what of the banquet that you have offered to the guests from Asgard?"

Old Ægir mumbled and pulled at his beard. At last he looked his guest in the face and told why the banquet was not being made ready. The mead for the feast was not yet brewed. There was little chance of being able to brew enough mead for everyone, for Ægir's hall lacked a mead kettle that would contain enough.

When the Æsir and the Vanir heard this they were sorely disappointed. Who now, outside of Asgard, would give them a feast? Ægir was the only one of the Giants who was friendly to them, and Ægir could not give them full entertainment.

Then a Giant youth who was there spoke up and said, "My kinsman, the Giant Hrymer, has a mead kettle that is a mile wide. If we could bring Hrymer's kettle here, what a feast we might have!"

"One of us can go for that kettle," Frey said.

“Ah, but Hrymer’s home is beyond the deepest forest and behind the highest mountain,” the Giant youth said, “and Hrymer himself is rough and bad-mannered.”

“Still, one of us should go,” Frey said.

“I will go to Hrymer’s home,” said Thor, standing up. “I will go to Hrymer’s home and get the mile wide kettle from him by force or cunning.” He had been sitting subdued because of the mocking tales that Loki told about him and he was pleased with this chance to demonstrate his prowess to the Æsir and the Vanir. He buckled on the belt that doubled his strength. He drew on the iron gloves that enabled him to grasp Miölnir. He took his hammer in his hands, and he told the Giant youth to come with him and be his guide.

The Æsir and the Vanir applauded Thor as he stepped out of old Ægir’s hall. But Loki, mischievous Loki, threw a taunt after him. “Do not let the hammer out of your hands this time, bride of Thrym,” he shouted.

Thor, with the Giant youth to guide him, went through the deepest forest and over the highest mountain. He came at last to the Giant’s home. On a hillock in front of Hrymer’s house was a dreadful guard. She was a Giant crone, with many heads growing out of her shoulders. She was squatting down on her ankles, and her heads, growing in bunches, were looking in different directions. As Thor and the Giant youth came near screams and yelps came from all her heads. Thor grasped his hammer and would have thrown it at her if a Giant woman, making a sign of peace, had not come to the door of the home. The youthful Giant who was with Thor greeted her as his mother.

“Son, come inside,” she said, “and you may bring your companion with you.”

The Giant crone who was Hrymer's grandmother kept up her screaming and yelping but Thor went past her and into the Giant's home.

When she saw that it was one of the inhabitants of Asgard who had come with her son the Giant woman grew fearful for them both. "Hrymer," she said, "will be in a rage to find one of the Æsir under his roof. He will try to kill you."

"It is not likely he will succeed," Thor said, grasping Miölnir, the hammer that all the Giant race knew of and dreaded.

"Hide from him," said the Giant woman. "He may injure my son in his rage to find you here."

"I do not hide from the Giants," Thor said.

"Hide only for a little while! Hide until Hrymer has eaten," the Giant woman pleaded. "He comes back from the hunt in a stormy temper. After he has eaten he is easier to deal with. Hide until he has finished supper."

Thor at last agreed to do this. He and the Giant youth hid behind a pillar in the hall. They were barely hidden when they heard the clatter of the Giant's steps as he came through the courtyard. He came to the door. His beard was like a frozen forest around his mouth. He dragged along with him a wild bull that he had captured on the hunt. he was so proud of his capture that he dragged it into the hall.

"I have taken alive," he shouted, "the bull with the mightiest head and horns. 'Heaven-breaking' this bull is called. No Giant but me could capture it." He tied the bull to the post of the door and then his eyes went toward the pillar behind which Thor and the Giant youth were hiding. The pillar split up its whole length at that look from Hrymer's

eyes. He came nearer. The pillar of stone broke across. It fell with the crossbeam it supported and all the kettles and cauldrons that were hanging on the beam came down with a terrible rattle.

Then Thor stepped out and faced the angry Giant. "It is I who am here, friend Hrymer," he said, his hands resting on his hammer.

Then Hrymer, who knew Thor and knew the force of Thor's hammer, drew back. "Now that you are in my house, Thor," he said, "I will not quarrel with you. Make supper ready for Thor and your son and myself," he said to the Giant woman.

A plentiful supper was spread and Hrymer and Thor and the Giant youth sat down to three whole roast oxen. Thor ate one whole ox. Hrymer, who ate nearly two himself, leaving only small cuts for his wife and his youthful kinsman, grumbled at Thor's appetite. "You'll clear my fields, Thor," he said, "if you stay long with me."

"Do not grumble, Hrymer," Thor said. "Tomorrow I'll go fishing and I'll bring you back the weight of what I ate."

"Then instead of hunting I'll go fishing with you tomorrow, Thor," said Hrymer. "And don't be frightened if I take you out on a rough sea."

Hrymer was first out of bed the next morning. He came with the pole and the ropes in his hand to where Thor was sleeping. "Time to start earning your meal, Thor," he said.

Thor got out of bed, and when they were both in the courtyard the Giant said, "You'll have to provide bait for yourself. Mind that you take bait large enough. It is not where the little fishes are, the place where I'm going to take you. If you never saw monsters before you'll see them now. I'm glad Thor, that you spoke of going fishing."

“Will this bait be big enough?” said Thor, laying his hands on the horns of the bull that Hrymer had captured and brought home, the bull with the mighty head of horns that was called “Heaven-breaking.”
“Will this bait be big enough, do you think?”

“Yes, if you’re big enough to handle it,” said the Giant.

Thor said nothing, but he struck the bull full in the middle of the forehead with his fist. The great creature fell down dead. Thor then twisted the bull’s head off. “I have my bait and I’m ready to go with you, Hrymer,” he said.

Hrymer had turned away to hide the rage he was in at seeing Thor do such a feat. He walked down to the boat without speaking. “You may row for the first few strokes,” said Hrymer, when they were in the boat, “but when we come to where the ocean is rough, I’ll take the oars from you.”

Without saying a word Thor made a few strokes that took the boat out into the middle of the ocean. Hrymer was in a rage to think that he could not show himself greater than Thor. He let out his line and began to fish. Soon he felt something huge on his hook. The boat rocked and rocked till Thor steadied it. Then Hrymer drew into the boat the largest whale that was in these seas.

“Good fishing,” said Thor, as he put his own bait on the line.

“It’s something for you to tell the Æsir,” said Hrymer.

“I thought as you were here I’d show you something bigger than salmon-fishing.”

“I’ll try my luck now,” said Thor.

He threw out a line that had at the end of it the mighty horned head of

the great bull. Down the head went. It passed where the whales swim, and the whales were afraid to gulp at the mighty horns. Down it went till it came near where the monster serpent that coils itself round the world abides. It reared its head up from its serpent coils as Thor's bait came down through the depths of the ocean. It gulped at the head and drew it into its throat. There the great hook stuck. The serpent monster was terribly surprised. It lashed the ocean into a fury. But still the hook stayed. Then it tried to draw down to the depths of the ocean the boat of those who had hooked it. Thor put his legs across the boat and stretched them till they touched the bottom bed of the ocean. On the bottom bed of the ocean Thor stood and he pulled and he pulled on his line. The serpent monster lashed the ocean into fiercer and fiercer storms and all the world's ships were hurled against each other and wrecked and tossed. But it had to loosen coil after coil of the coils it makes around the world. Thor pulled and pulled. Then the terrible head of the serpent monster appeared above the waters. It reared over the boat that Hrymer sat in and that Thor straddled across. Thor dropped the line and took up Miölnir, his mighty hammer. He raised it to strike the head of the serpent monster whose coils go round the world but Hrymer would not let that happen. Rather than have Thor surpass him with such a feat he cut the line, and the head of the serpent monster sank back into the sea. Thor's hammer was raised. He hurled that hammer that always came back to his hand. It followed the sinking head through fathom after fathom of the ocean depth. It struck the serpent monster a blow, but not such a deadly blow as would have been struck if the water had not come between. A bellow of pain came up from the depths of the ocean, such a bellow of pain that all in Jötunheim were frightened.

“This surely is something to tell the Æsir of,” said Thor, “something to make them forget Loki's mockeries.”

Without speaking Hrymer turned the boat and rowed toward the

shore, dragging the whale behind. He was in such a rage to think that one of the Æsir had done a feat surpassing his that he would not speak. At supper, too, he remained silent, but Thor talked for two, boasting loudly of his triumph over the monster serpent.

“No doubt you think yourself very powerful, Thor,” Hrymer said at last. “Well, do you think you are powerful enough to break the cup that is before you?”

Thor took up the cup and with a laugh he hurled it against the stone pillar of the house. The cup fell down on the floor without a crack or a dent in it. But the pillar was shattered with the blow.

The Giant laughed. “The folk of Asgard are so feeble!” he said.

Thor took up the cup again and flung it with greater force against the stone pillar. And again the cup fell to the ground without a crack or a dent.

Then he heard the woman who was the mother of the Giant youth sing softly, as she spun her wheel behind him, Not at the pillar of the home, but at Hrymer’s big head. When you next the cup throw, let his head receive the blow.

Thor took the cup up again. He threw it, not at the pillar this time, but at Hrymer’s head. It struck the Giant full on the forehead and fell down on the floor in pieces. Hrymer’s head was left without a dent or a crack.

“Ha, so you can break a cup, but can you lift up my mile wide kettle?” cried the Giant.

“Show me where your mile-wide kettle is and I shall try to lift it,” cried Thor.

The Giant took up the flooring and showed him the mile wide kettle down in the cellar. Thor stooped down and took the kettle by the edge. He lifted it slowly as if with a mighty effort.

“You can lift, but can you carry it?” said the Giant.

“I will try to do that,” said Thor. He lifted the kettle up and placed it on his head. He strode to the door and out of the house before the Giant could stop him. Then when he was outside he started to run. He was across the mountain before he looked behind him. He heard a yelping and a screaming and he saw the Giant crone with the bunch of heads running after him. Thor raced, up hill and down dale the mile-wide kettle on his head and the Giant crone chasing him. Through the deep forest he ran and over the high mountain, but still Bunch-of-Heads kept after him. But at last, jumping over a lake, she fell in and Thor was free of his pursuer.

So Thor came in triumph, back to the Æsir and the Vanir carrying on his head the mile wide kettle. Those of the Æsir and the Vanir who had laughed most at Loki’s mockeries rose up and cheered for him as he came in. The mead was brewed, the feast was spread, and the greatest banquet that ever the Kings of the Giants gave to the guests from Asgard was eaten happily.

A strange and silent figure sat at the banquet. It was the figure of a Giant and no one knew who he was or where he had come from. But when the banquet was ended Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, turned toward this figure and said, ” Skrymir, Giant King of Utgard, rise up now and tell Thor of all you did to him when he and Loki came to your City.”

Then the stranger at the banquet stood up, and Thor and Loki saw he was the Giant King in whose halls they had had the contests. Skrymir turned toward them and said:

“Thor and Loki, I will reveal to you now the tricks I played on you both. It was I who you met on the moorland on the day before you came into Utgard. I gave you my name as Skrymir and I did all I might do to prevent your entering our City, for the Giants dreaded a contest of strength with Thor. Now hear me, Thor. The bag I gave for you to take food out of was tied with magic knots. No one could undo them by strength or cleverness. While you were trying to undo them I placed a mountain of rock between myself and you. The hammer blows, which as you thought struck me, struck the mountain and made great cracks and gaps in it. When I knew the strength of your tremendous blows I was more and more afraid of your coming into our City.

“I saw you would have to be deceived by magic. Your lad Thialfi was the one whom I first deceived. It was not a Giant youth who raced against him, but Thought itself. And even you, Loki, I deceived. When you tried to make yourself the greatest of eaters I put against you, not a Giant, but Fire that devours everything.

“You, Thor, were deceived in all the contests. After you had taken the drinking horn in your hands we were all afraid to see how much you were able to gulp down. For the end of that horn was in the sea, and Ægir, who is here, can tell you that after you had drunk from it, the level of the sea went down.

“The cat whom you tried to lift was Nidhögg, the dragon that gnaws at the roots of Ygdrassil, the Tree of Trees. Truly we were terrified when we saw that you made Nidhögg budge. When you made the back of the cat reach the roof of our palace we said to ourselves, ‘Thor is the mightiest of all the beings we have known.’

“Lastly you struggled with the hag Ellie. Her strength seemed marvelous to you, and you thought yourself disgraced because you

could not throw her. But know, Thor, that Ellie whom you wrestled with was Old Age herself. We were terrified again to see that she who can overthrow all was not able to force you onto the ground.”

So Skymir spoke and then left the hall. Once more the Æsir and the Vanir stood up and cheered for Thor, the strongest of all who guarded Asgard.

THE DWARF'S HOARD, AND THE CURSE THAT IT BROUGHT

Now old Ægir's feast was over and all the Æsir and the Vanir prepared to return to Asgard. However two went another way, Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, and Loki the Mischievous.

Loki and Odin hid their godly powers and strength. They were going into the World of Men, and they would be merely men. Together they went through Midgard, mingling with men of all sorts, kings and farmers, outlaws and true men, warriors and householders, labourers and councilors, courteous men and men who were ill-mannered. One day they came to the bank of a mighty river and there they rested, listening to the beat of iron upon iron in a place nearby.

Presently, on a rock in the middle of the river, they saw an otter appear. The otter went into the water and came back to the rock with a catch of salmon. He devoured it there. Then Odin saw Loki do a senseless and evil thing. Taking up a great stone he threw it at the otter. The stone struck the beast on the skull and knocked him over dead.

“Loki, Loki, why have you done a thing so senseless and evil?” Odin said. Loki only laughed. He swam across the water and came back with the creature of the river. “Why did you take the life of the beast?” Odin said.

“The mischief in me made me do it,” said Loki. He drew out his knife and ripping the otter up he began to skin him. When the skin was off the beast he folded it up and stuck it in his belt. Then Odin and he left that place by the river.

They came to a house with two smithies beside it, and from the smithies came the sound of iron beating upon iron. They went inside the house and they asked if they could eat and rest themselves there.

An old man who was cooking fish over a fire pointed out a bench to them. “Rest there,” he said, “and when the fish is cooked I will give you something good to eat. My son is a fine fisherman and he brings me the best salmon.”

Odin and Loki sat on the bench and the old man went on with his cooking. “My name is Hreidmar,” he said, “and I have two sons who work in the smithies outside. I have a third son also. It is he who does the fishing for us. And who are you?”

Loki and Odin gave names to Hreidmar that were not the names by which they were known in Asgard or on Midgard. Hreidmar served fish to them and they ate. “What adventures have you met on your travels?” Hreidmar asked. “Few folk come this way to tell me of happenings.”

“I killed an otter with a stone,” Loki said with a laugh.

“You killed an otter!” Hreidmar cried. “Where did you kill it?”

“Where I killed him is of no importance to you, old man,” said Loki. “His skin is a good one, however. I have it in my belt.”

Hreidmar snatched the skin out of Loki’s belt. As soon as he held the skin before his eyes he shrieked out, “Fafnir, Regin, my sons, come here and bring the workers from your smithies. Come, come, come!”

“Why do you make such an outcry, old man?” said Odin.

“You have killed my son Otter,” shrieked the old man. “This in my hands is the skin of my son.”

As Hreidmar said this two young men carrying the forehammers of the smithies came in followed by the workers. “Strike these men dead with your forehammers, Fafnir, Regin,” their father cried. “Otter, who used to stay in the river, and whom I changed by enchantment into a river beast that he might fish for me, has been killed by these men.”

“Peace,” said Odin. “We have killed your son, it would seem, but it was unwittingly that we did the deed. We will give compensation for the death of your son.”

“What compensation will you give?” said Hreidmar, looking at Odin with eyes that were small and sharp.

Then Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, said something that was unworthy of his wisdom and his power. He might have said, “I will bring you a drink of Mimir’s well water as compensation for your son’s death.” But instead of thinking wisely, Odin All-Father thought of gold. “Set a price on the life of your son and we will pay that price in gold,” he said.

“Maybe you are great kings traveling through the world,” Hreidmar said. “If you are you will have to find gold that will cover every hair on the skin of him whom you have killed.”

Then Odin, his mind being fixed on the gold, thought of a certain treasure, a treasure that was guarded by a Dwarf. No other treasure in the nine worlds would be great enough to make the compensation that Hreidmar claimed. He thought about this treasure and he thought about how it could be taken and yet he was ashamed of his thought.

“, Loki, do you know of Andvari’s hoard?” he said.

“I know of it,” said Loki sharply, “and I know where it is hidden. Will you, Odin, let me fetch Andvari’s hoard?”

Odin spoke to Hreidmar. “I will stay with you as a hostage,” he said, “if you will let this one go to fetch a treasure that will cover the otter’s skin hair by hair.”

“Very well,” said old Hreidmar with his sharp and cunning eyes. “Go now,” he said to Loki. Then Loki left the house.

Andvari was a Dwarf who, in the early days, had obtained for himself the greatest treasure in the nine worlds. He changed himself into a pike so that he could guard this treasure and he swam in the water in front of the cave where the hoard was hidden.

Everyone in Asgard knew of the Dwarf and of the hoard he guarded. They all believed that this hoard was not to be meddled with and that some evil was joined to it. However Odin had given his word that it was to be taken from the Dwarf. Loki set out for Andvari’s cave rejoicingly. He came to the pool in front of the cave and he watched for Andvari. Soon he saw the pike swimming cautiously in front of the cave.

He would have to catch the pike and hold him till the treasure was given for ransom. As he watched, the pike became aware of him. Suddenly he flung himself forward into the water and went speedily down the stream.

Loki could not catch that pike with his hands or with any hook and line. How, then, could he take him? Only with a net that was woven by magic. Then Loki thought of where he might get such a net.

Ran, the wife of old Ægir, the Giant King of the Sea, had a net that was woven by magic. In it she took all that was wrecked at sea. Loki thought of Ran’s net and he turned and went back to Ægir’s hall to ask for the Queen. But Ran was seldom in her husband’s house. She was now down by the rocks of the sea.

He found Ran, the cold Queen, standing in the flow of the sea, drawing out of the depths with the net that she held in her hands every piece of treasure that was washed that way. She had made a heap of the things she had drawn out of the sea, corals and amber, and bits of gold and silver, but still she was plying her net greedily.

“You know me, Ægir’s wife,” Loki said to her.

“I know you, Loki,” said Queen Ran.

“Lend me your net,” said Loki.

“That I will not do,” said Queen Ran.

“Lend me your net so that I may catch Andvari the Dwarf who boasts that he has a greater treasure than you will ever take out of the sea,” said Loki.

The cold Queen of the sea stopped plying her net. She looked at Loki steadily. Yes, if he were going to catch Andvari she would lend her net to him. She hated all the Dwarfs because this one and that one had told her they had greater treasures than she would ever have. But she especially hated Andvari, the Dwarf who had the greatest treasure in the nine worlds.

“There is nothing more to gather here,” she said, “and if you will swear to bring me back my net by tomorrow I shall lend it to you.”

“I swear by the sparks of Muspelheim that I will bring your net back to you by tomorrow, Queen of Ægir,” Loki cried. Then Ran put into his hands the Magic Net. Then he went back to where the Dwarf, was guarding his marvelous hoard.

The pool in which Andvari floated as a pike was dark but to him it was all golden with the light of his marvelous treasure. For the sake

of this hoard he had given up his companionship with the Dwarfs and his delight in making and shaping the things of their workmanship. For the sake of his hoard he had taken on himself the dumbness and deafness of a fish.

Now as he swam about in front of the cave he was aware again of a shadow above him. He slipped toward the shadow of the bank. Then as he turned round he saw a net sweeping toward him. He sank down in the water. But the Magic Net had spread out and he sank into it.

Suddenly he was out of the water and was left gasping on the bank. He would have died had he not undone his transformation.

Soon he appeared as a Dwarf. “Andvari, you are caught. It is one of the Æsir who has taken you,” he heard his captor say.

“Loki,” he gasped.

“You are caught and you shall be held,” Loki said to him. “It is the will of the Æsir that you give up your hoard to me.”

“My hoard, my hoard!” the Dwarf shouted. “I will never give up my hoard.”

“I will hold you till you give it to me,” said Loki.

“Unjust, unjust,” shouted Andvari. “It is only you, Loki, who is unjust. I will go to the throne of Odin and I will have Odin punish you for trying to rob me of my treasure.”

“Odin has sent me to fetch your hoard,” said Loki.

“Can it be that all the Æsir are unjust? Ah, yes. In the beginning of things they cheated the Giant who built the wall round their City. The Æsir are unjust.”

Loki had Andvari in his power and after the Dwarf had raged against him and defied him, he tormented him. At last, trembling with rage and with his face covered with tears, Andvari took Loki into his cavern, and, turning a rock aside, showed him the mass of gold and gems that was his hoard.

At once Loki began to gather into the Magic Net lumps and ingots and bracelets of gold with gems that were rubies and sapphires and emeralds. He saw Andvari snatch at something on the heap, but he made no sign of noticing. At last it was all gathered into the net, and Loki stood there ready to carry the Dwarf's hoard away.

“There is one thing,” said Loki, “the ring that you, Andvari, snatched from the heap.”

“I snatched nothing,” said the Dwarf. But he shook with anger and his teeth gnashed together. “I snatched nothing from the heap.”

But Loki pulled up his arm and there fell to the ground the ring that Andvari had hidden under his armpit.

It was the most precious thing in the entire hoard. Had it been left with him Andvari would have thought that he still possessed a treasure, for this ring itself could make gold. It was made out of gold that was refined of all impurities and it was engraved with a rune of power.

Loki picked up this most precious ring and put it on his finger. Then the Dwarf screamed at him, turning his thumbs toward him in a curse.

“The ring with the rune of power upon it, may it weigh down your fortune, and load you with evil, You, Loki, and all who wish to possess the ring.

As Andvari uttered this curse Loki saw a figure rise up in the cave and

move toward him. As this figure came near he knew who it was: Gulveig, a Giant woman who had once been in Asgard.

Far back in the early days, when the Gods had come to their holy hill and before Asgard was built, three women of the Giants had come amongst the Æsir. After the three had been with them for a time, the lives of the Æsir changed. Then they began to value and hoard the gold that they had played with. Then they thought of war. Odin hurled his spear amongst the messengers that came from the Vanir, and war came into the world.

The Three were driven out of Asgard. Peace was made with the Vanir. The Apples of Lasting Youth were grown in Asgard. The greed for gold was stopped. But the Æsir were never again as happy as they were before the women came to them from the Giants.

Gulveig was one of the Three who had affected the early happiness of the Gods. She was in the cave where Andvari had hoarded his treasure and with a smile on her face she was advancing toward Loki.

“So, Loki,” she said, “you see me again. Odin who sent you to this cave will see me again. Loki! I go to Odin to be your messenger and to tell him that you come with Andvari’s hoard.”

After having said this, and smiling into his face, Gulveig went out of the cave with swift and light steps. Loki drew the ends of the Magic Net together and gathering all the treasures in it he, too, went out.

Odin, the Eldest of the Gods, stood leaning on his spear and looking at the skin of the otter that was spread out before him. Someone came into the house swiftly. Odin saw that it was Gulveig who, once with her two companions, had troubled the happiness of the Gods. Odin raised his spear to throw it at her.

“Put your spear down, Odin,” she said. “I lived for a long time in the Dwarf’s cave. But your word released me, and the curse said over Andvari’s ring has sent me here. Put your spear down, and look at me, Eldest of the Gods.

“You threw me out of Asgard, but your word has brought me back to you. If you two, Odin and Loki, have bought yourselves free with gold and may enter Asgard, surely I, Gulveig, am free to enter Asgard also.”

Odin lowered his spear, sighing deeply. “Surely it is so, Gulveig,” he said. “I may not forbid you to enter Asgard. I wish I had thought of giving the man Kvasir’s Mead or Mimir’s well water rather than this gold as compensation.”

As they spoke Loki came into Hreidmar’s home. He laid on the floor the Magic Net. Old Hreidmar with his sharp eyes, and huge Fafnir, and lean and hungry-looking Regin came in to gaze on the gold and gems that shone through the net. They began to push each other away from gazing at the gold. Then Hreidmar cried out, “No one may be here but these two kings and I while we measure out the gold and gems and see whether the compensation is sufficient. Go outside, go outside, my sons.”

Then Fafnir and Regin were forced to go out of the house. They went out slowly, and Gulveig went with them, whispering to both.

With shaking hands old Hreidmar spread out the skin that once covered his son. He drew out the ears and the tail and the paws so that every single hair could be shown. For a long time he was on his hands and knees, his sharp eyes searching over every line of the skin. Still on his knees he said, “Begin now, kings, and cover with a gem or a piece of gold every hair on the skin that was my son’s.”

Odin stood leaning on his spear, watching the gold and gems being laid out. Loki took the gold, the ingots, and the lumps and the bracelets. He took the rubies, and the emeralds and the sapphires, and he began to place them over each hair. Soon the middle of the skin was all covered. Then he put the gems and the gold over the paws and the tail. Soon the otter-skin was so glittering that one would think it could light up the world. Still Loki went on finding a place where a gem or a piece of gold might be put.

At last he stood up. Every gem and every piece of gold had been taken out of the net. Every hair on the otter's skin had been covered with a gem or a piece of gold.

Still old Hreidmar on his hands and knees was peering over the skin, searching for a hair that was not covered. At last he lifted himself up on his knees. His mouth was open, but he was speechless. He touched Odin on the knees, and when Odin bent down he showed him a hair on the lip that was left uncovered.

“What do you mean?” Loki cried, turning on the crouching man.

“Your ransom is not paid yet. Look, here is still a hair uncovered. You may not go until every hair is covered with gold or a gem.”

“Peace, old man,” said Loki roughly. “All the Dwarf's hoard has been given to you.”

“You may not go until every hair has been covered,” Hreidmar said again.

“There is no more gold or gems,” Loki answered.

“Then you may not go,” cried Hreidmar, springing up.

It was true. Odin and Loki could not leave that house until the

compensation they had agreed to was paid in full. Where would the Æsir go for gold?

Then Odin saw the gleam of gold on Loki's finger. It was the ring he had forced from Andvari. "Your ring," said Odin. "Put your ring over the hair on the otter's skin."

Loki took off the ring that was engraved with the rune of power, and he put it on the lip hair of the otter's skin. Then Hreidmar clapped his hands and screamed aloud. Huge Fafnir and lean and hungry looking Regin came inside, and Gulveig came behind them. They stood around the skin of the son and the brother that was all glittering with gold and gems. But they looked at each other more than they looked at the glittering mass, and very deadly were the looks that Fafnir and Regin gave their father and each other.

All of the Æsir and the Vanir that had been at old Ægir's feast—Frey and Freya, Frigga, Iduna, and Sif; Tyr with his sword and Thor in his chariot drawn by the goats went over Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge,. Loki came behind them, and behind them all came Odin, the Father of the Gods. He went slowly with his head bent, for he knew that an unwelcome one was following—Gulveig, who once had been thrown out of Asgard and whose return now the Gods could not prevent.

FOREBODING IN ASGARD

What happened afterwards was the shame of the Gods, and mortals could hardly speak of it. Gulveig the Witch came into Asgard, because Heimdall could not forbid her entrance. She came inside and she sat amongst the Æsir and the Vanir. She walked through Asgard with a smile on her face, and where she walked and where she smiled dreadful foreboding came.

Those who felt the foreboding most deeply were Bragi the Poet and his wife, the fair and simple Iduna, who gathered the apples that kept old age from those in Asgard. Bragi stopped telling his never ending tale. Then one day, overcome by the fear and the foreboding that was creeping through Asgard, Iduna slipped down Ygdrassil, the World Tree, and no one was left to pluck the apples with which the Æsir and the Vanir stayed young.

Then everyone in Asgard was dismayed. Strength and beauty began to fade from all of them. Thor found it hard to lift Miölnir, his great hammer, and the flesh under Freya's necklace lost its white radiance. And still Gulveig the Witch walked smiling through Asgard, although now she was hated by everyone.

It was Odin and Frey who went in search of Iduna. She would have been found and brought back without delay if Frey had had the magic sword with him that he had bartered for Gerda. In his search he had to fight against the one who guarded the lake wherein Iduna had hidden herself. Beli was the one he fought against. He overcame him in the end with a weapon made of stags' antlers. It was not then but later that Frey regretted the loss of his sword. It was when the Riders of Muspell came against Asgard, and the Vanir, who might have won, but didnt because of the loss of Frey's sword.

They found Iduna and brought her back. But still worry and

foreboding crept through Asgard. It was known, too, that the witch Gulveig was changing the thoughts of the Gods.

At last Odin had to judge Gulveig. He judged her and sentenced her to death. Only Gungnir, the spear of Odin could kill Gulveig, who was immortal.

Odin hurled Gungnir. The spear went through Gulveig. But still she stood smiling at the Gods. A second time Odin hurled his spear. A second time Gungnir pierced the witch. She looked dead but did not fall down. A third time Odin hurled his spear. Then, pierced for the third time, the witch gave a scream that made all Asgard shudder and she fell dead on the ground.

“I have killed in these halls where killing is forbidden,” Odin said. “Take the corpse of Gulveig and burn it on the ramparts, so that no trace of the witch who has troubled us will remain in Asgard.”

They took the corpse of Gulveig the witch out onto the ramparts and they lit fires under the pile on which they laid her.

Loki was far away when all this was being done. Now he often went from Asgard, and his journeys were to look at that marvelous treasure that had passed from the keeping of the Dwarf Andvari. It was Gulveig who had kept the imagination of that treasure in his mind. Now, when he came back and heard the whispers of what had been done, a rage flamed up in him. For Loki was one of those whose mind was changed by the presence and the whispers of the witch Gulveig. His mind was being changed to hatred of the Gods. Now he went to the place where Gulveig was burnt. All her body was in ashes, but her heart had not been devoured by the flames. Loki, in his rage, took the heart of the witch and ate it. It was black and terrible in Asgard, the day that Loki ate the heart that the flames would not devour!

LOKI THE BETRAYER

He stole Frigga's dress of falcon feathers. Then as a falcon he flew out of Asgard. toward Jötunheim.

The anger and the fierceness of the hawk was in Loki as he flew through the Giants' kingdom. The heights and the chasms of that terrible land made his spirits rise up like fire. He saw the whirlpools and the smoking mountains and these sights gave him joy. Higher he soared until, looking toward the south, he saw the flaming land of Muspelheim. Higher still he soared. With his falcon's eyes he saw the gleam of Surtur's flaming sword. All the fire of Muspelheim and all the gloom of Jötunheim would one day be brought against Asgard and against Midgard. But Loki was no longer dismayed to think of the ruin of Asgard's beauty and the ruin of Midgard's promise.

He hovered around one of the dwellings in Jötunheim. Why had he come to it? Because he had seen two of the women of that home, and his rage against the Asyniur and the Vanir was such that the ugliness and evil of these women was pleasing to him.

He hovered in front of the open door of the Giant's house and he looked at those who were inside. Gerriöd, the most savage of all the Giants, was there and beside him, squatting on the ground, were his two evil and ugly daughters, Gialp and Greip.

They were big and bulky, black and rugged, with horses' teeth and hair that was like horses' manes. Gialp was the uglier of the two, if one could be said to be uglier than the other, for her nose was a yard long and her eyes were crooked.

What were they talking about as they sat there, one scratching the other? Of Asgard and the inhabitants of Asgard whom they hated.

Thor was the one they hated most of all, and they were speaking of what they would like to do to him.

“I would keep Thor bound in chains,” said Gerriöd the Giant, “and I would beat him to death with my iron club.”

“I would grind his bones to powder,” said Greip.

“I would tear the flesh off his bones,” said Gialp. “Father, can you not catch this Thor and bring him to us alive?”

“Not so long as he has his hammer Miölnir, and the gloves with which he grasps his hammer, and the belt that doubles his strength.”

“Oh, if we could catch him without his hammer and his belt and his gloves,” cried Gialp and Greip together.

At that moment they saw the falcon hovering in front of the door. They were eager now for something to hold and torment and so the hearts of the three became set upon catching the falcon. They did not move from the place where they were sitting, but they called the child Glapp, who was swinging from the roof tree, and told him to go out and try to catch the falcon.

Concealed by the great leaves the child Glapp climbed up the ivy that was around the door. The falcon came hovering near. Then Glapp caught it by the wings and fell down through the ivy, screaming and struggling as he was being beaten, and clawed, and torn by the wings and the talons and the beak of the falcon.

Gerriöd and Greip and Gialp rushed out and seized the falcon. As the Giant held him in his hands and looked him over he knew that this was no ordinary bird. The eyes showed him to be from Alfheim or Asgard. The Giant took him and shut him in a box until he would speak.

Soon he tapped at the closed box and when Gerriöd opened it Loki spoke to him. So glad was the savage Giant to have one of the inhabitants of Asgard in his power that he and his daughters did nothing but laugh and chuckle to each other for days. All this time they left Loki in the closed box to starve from hunger.

When they opened the box again Loki spoke to them. He told them he would do any injury to those in Asgard that would please them if they would let him go.

“Will you bring Thor to us?” said Greip.

“Will you bring Thor to us without his hammer, and without the gloves with which he grasps his hammer, and without his belt?” said Gialp.

“I will bring him to you if you will let me go,” Loki said. “Thor is easily deceived and I can bring him to you without his hammer and his belt and his gloves.”

“We will let you go, Loki,” said the Giant, “If you will swear by the gloom of Jötunheim that you will bring Thor to us as you say.”

Loki swore that he would do so by the gloom of Jötunheim, Yes, and by the fires of Muspelheim,” he added. The Giant and his daughters let him go, and he flew back to Asgard.

He returned Frigga’s falcon dress to her. Everyone blamed him for having stolen it, but when he told how he had been shut up without food in Gerriöd’s home those who judged him thought he had been punished enough for the theft. He spoke in a friendly manner to everyone in Asgard, and the rage and hatred he had against them since he had eaten Gulveig’s heart he kept hidden in his heart.

He talked to Thor of the adventures they had together in Jötunheim.

Thor would now roar with laughter when he talked of the time when he went as a bride to Thrym the Giant.

Loki was able to persuade him to make another journey to Jötunheim. “I want to tell you of what I saw in Gerriöd’s home,” he said. “I saw the hair of Sif, your wife there.”

“The hair of Sif, my wife,” said Thor in surprise.

“Yes, the hair I once cut off from Sif’s head,” said Loki. “Gerriöd was the one who found it when I threw it away. They light their hall with Sif’s hair. Oh, yes, they don’t need torches where Sif’s hair is.”

“I should like to see it,” said Thor.

“Then pay Gerriöd a visit,” Loki replied. “But if you go to his house you will have to go without your hammer Miölnir, and without your gloves and your belt.”

“Where will I leave Miölnir, and my gloves and my belt?” Thor asked.

“Leave them in Valaskjalf, Odin’s own home,” said cunning Loki. “Leave them there and come to Gerriöd’s dwelling. You will certainly be well treated there.”

“Yes, I will leave them in Valaskjalf and go with you to Gerriöd’s home,” Thor said.

Thor left his hammer, his gloves, and his belt in Valaskjalf. Then he and Loki went toward Jötunheim. When they were near the end of their journey, they came to a wide river, and with a young Giant whom they met on the bank they began to cross it.

Suddenly the river began to rise. Loki and the young Giant would

have been swept away only Thor gripped both of them. The river rose higher, and became rougher. Thor had to plant his feet firmly on the bottom or he and the two he held would have been swept away by the flood. He struggled across, holding Loki and the young Giant. A tree grew out of the bank, and, while the two held onto him, he grasped it with his hands. The river rose still higher, but Thor was able to pull Loki and the young Giant to the bank, and then he himself scrambled up on it.

Then looking up the river he saw a sight that filled him with rage. A Giantess was pouring a flood into it. It was this that was making the river rise and rage. Thor pulled a rock out of the bank and hurled it at her. It struck her and knocked her into the flood. Then she struggled out of the water and went shrieking away. This Giantess was Gialp, Gerriöd's ugly and evil daughter.

The young Giant who Thor had helped across insisted that the pair go and visit Grid, his mother, who lived in a cave in the hillside. Loki did not want to go and was angered to hear that Thor thought of going. But Thor, seeing that the Giant youth was friendly, was willing to go to Grid's home.

"Go then, but get to Gerriöd's home soon. I will wait for you there," said Loki. He watched Thor go up the hillside to Grid's cave. He waited until he saw Thor come back down the hillside and go toward Gerriöd's home. He watched Thor go into the house where, as he thought, death awaited him. Then in a madness for what he had done, Loki, with his head drawn down on his shoulders, started running.

Grid, the old Giantess, was seated on the floor of the cave grinding corn between two stones. "Who is it?" she said, as her son led Thor inside. "One of the Æsir! What Giant do you go to injure now, Thor?"

"I do not go to injure any Giant, old Grid," Thor replied. "Look at me!

Can't you see that I do not have Miölnir, my mighty hammer, with me, or my belt, or my gloves of iron?"

"But where in Jötunheim do you go?"

"To the house of a friendly Giant, old Grid—to the house of Gerriöd."

"Gerriöd a friendly Giant! You are out of your wits, Thor. Is he not out of his wits, my son—this one who saved you from the flood, as you say?"

"Tell him about Gerriöd, old mother," said the Giant youth.

"Do not go to his house, Thor. Do not go to his house."

"My word has been given, and I should be a coward if I stayed away now, just because an old crone sitting at a quernstone tells me I am going into a trap."

"I will give you something that will help you, Thor. Lucky for you I am mistress of magical things. Take this staff in your hands. It is a staff of power and will help you instead of Miölnir."

"I will take it since you offer it in kindness."

"And take these mittens, too. They will serve you for your gauntlets of iron."

"I will take them since you offer them in kindness."

"And take this length of string. It will serve you for your belt of strength."

"I will take it since you offer it in kindness."

"It is lucky indeed for you, Thor, that I am mistress of magical

things.”

Thor put the worn length of string around his waist, and as he did he knew that Grid, the old Giantess, was indeed the mistress of magical things. For immediately he felt his strength increased just as when he put on his own belt of strength. He then put on the mittens and took the staff that she gave him in his hands.

He left the cave of Grid, the old Giantess, and went to Gerriöd's home. Loki was not there. It was then that Thor began to think that perhaps old Grid was right and that a trap was being laid for him.

No one was in the hall. He came out of the hall and into a great stone room and he saw no one there either. But in the center of the stone room there was a stone seat, and Thor went to it and seated himself on it.

No sooner was he seated than the chair flew upwards. Thor would have been crushed against the stone roof but he held his staff up. So great was the power in the staff, so great was the strength that the string around him gave, that the chair was pushed downward. The stone chair crashed down on the stone floor.

There were horrible screams from under it. Thor lifted up the seat and saw two ugly, broken bodies there. The Giant's daughters, Gialp and Greip, had hidden themselves under the chair to watch his death. But the stone that was supposed to have crushed him against the ceiling had crushed them against the floor.

Thor strode out of that room in a rage. A great fire was blazing in the hall, and standing beside that fire he saw Gerriöd, the long-armed Giant.

He held tongs in the fire. As Thor came toward him he lifted up the

tongs and flung from it a blazing piece of iron. It whizzed straight toward Thor's forehead. Thor put up his hands and caught the blazing piece of iron between the mittens that old Grid had given him. Quickly he hurled it back at Gerriöd. It struck the Giant on the forehead and went blazing through him.

Gerriöd crashed down into the fire, and the burning iron made a blaze all around him. When Thor reached Grid's cave (he went there to return to the old Giantess the string, the mittens, and the staff of power she had given him) he saw the Giant's home in such a blaze that one would think the fires of Muspelheim were all around it.

LOKI AGAINST THE ÆSIR

The Æsir were the guests of the Vanir. Everyone in Asgard met and feasted in friendship in Frey's palace. Odin and Tyr were there, Vidar and Vali, Niörd, Frey, Heimdall, and Bragi. The Asyniur and the Vana were also there—Frigga, Freya, Iduna, Gerda, Skadi, Sif, and Nanna. Thor and Loki were not at the feast, for they had left Asgard together.

In Frey's palace the vessels were made of shining gold. They made light for the table and they moved on their own to serve those who were feasting. Everything was peaceful and friendly there until Loki entered the feast hall.

Frey, smiling a welcome, showed Loki to a seat. It was beside Bragi's and next to Freya's. Loki did not take the place but instead he shouted out, "I will not sit beside Bragi, the most cowardly of all the inhabitants of Asgard."

Bragi sprang up at that insult but his wife, the mild Iduna, quieted his anger. Freya turned to Loki and scolded him for speaking such unkind words at a feast.

"Freya," said Loki, "why were you not so mild when Odur was with you? Would it not have been better to have been a good wife to your husband instead of going behind his back for the sake of a necklace that you desired from the Giant women?"

Everyone was amazed at the bitterness that was in Loki's words and looks. Tyr and Niörd stood up from their seats. But then the voice of Odin was heard and all was still for the words of the All-Father.

"Take the place beside Vidar, my silent son, Loki," said Odin, "and let your tongue which drips bitterness be silent."

“All the Æsir and the Vanir listen to your words, Odin, as if you were always wise and just,” Loki said. “But must we forget that you brought war into the world when you hurled your spear at the messengers of the Vanir? And didn’t you allow me to deceive the one who built the wall around Asgard for a price? You speak Odin, and all the Æsir and the Vanir listen to you! But wasn’t it you who, thinking not of wisdom but of gold when a ransom had to be made, brought the witch Gulveig out of the cave where she stayed with the Dwarf’s treasure? You are not always wise or just, Odin, and we at the table here need not listen to you as if you always were.”

Then Skadi, the wife of Niörd, threw words at Loki. She spoke with all the fierceness of her Giant blood. “Why shouldn’t we rise up and chase from the hall this chattering crow?” she said.

“Skadi,” said Loki, “remember that the compensation for your father’s death has not yet been paid. You were glad to snatch a husband instead of it. Remember who it was that killed your Giant father. It was I, Loki. I have paid you no compensation for it, although you have come to live amongst us in Asgard.”

Then Loki fixed his eyes on Frey, the host of the feast, and everyone knew that he was about to attack him with bitter words. But Tyr, the brave swordsman, rose up and said, “You may not speak against Frey, Loki. Frey is generous. He is the one amongst us who spares the defeated and frees the captive.”

“Stop speaking, Tyr,” said Loki. “You may not always have a hand to hold that sword of yours. Remember this in days to come.

“Frey,” he said, “Because you are the host of the feast they think I will not speak the truth about you. But I will not be bribed by a feast. Didn’t you send Skirnir to Gymer’s home to trick Gymer’s daughter? Didn’t you bribe him into frightening her into a marriage with you,

who, men say, were the killer of her brother? Yes Frey. You parted with the magic sword that you should have kept for the battle. You had reason to regret when you met Beli by the lake.”

When he said this, every one of the Vanir rose up, their faces threatening Loki.

“Sit still, you Vanir,” Loki scolded. “If the Æsir are to do most of the fighting in Jötunheim’s and Muspelheim’s war on Asgard it was your part to be the first or the last on Vigard’s plain. But already you have lost the battle for Asgard, for the weapon that was put into Frey’s hands he bartered for Gerda the Giantess. Ha! Surtur shall triumph over you because of Frey’s bewitchment.”

They looked in horror at the one who could let his hatred speak of Surtur’s triumph. They would all have seized Loki but Odin’s voice rang out. Then another appeared at the entrance of the feasting hall. It was Thor. With his hammer upon his shoulder, his gloves of iron on his hands, and his belt of strength around him, he stood glaring at Loki with furious eyes.

“Ha, Loki, betrayer,” he shouted. “You planned to leave me dead in Gerriöd’s house, but now you will meet your death by the stroke of this hammer.”

His hands were raised to hurl Miölnir. But the words that Odin spoke were heard. “No killing may be done in this hall, son Thor. Keep your hands on your hammer.”

Then, Loki left the feast hall. He went beyond the walls of Asgard and crossed Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge. He cursed Bifröst, and longed to see the day when the armies of Muspelheim would break it down in their rush against Asgard.

East of Midgard there was a place more evil than any region in Jötunheim. It was Jarnvid, the Iron Wood. Witches lived there who were the most evil of all witches. They had a queen over them, a hag, mother of many sons who took the shapes of wolves. Two of her sons were Skoll and Hati, who pursued Sol, the Sun, and Mani, the Moon. She had a third son, who was Managarm, the wolf who was to be filled with the life-blood of men, who was to swallow up the Moon, and stain the heavens and earth with blood., Loki made his way to Jarnvid, the Iron Wood. And he married one of the witches there, Angerboda, and they had children that took on terrible shapes. Loki's children were the most terrible of the foes that were to come against the Æsir and the Vanir in the time that was called the Twilight of the Gods.

THE VALKYRIE

In preparation for the time when the riders of Muspelheim, with the Giants and the evil powers of the Underworld, would declare war, Odin was preparing a number of defenders for Asgard. They were not the Æsir or the Vanir. They were mortal men, heroes chosen from amongst the dead on fields of battle in Midgard.

To choose the heroes, and to give victory to those who he wanted to have victory, Odin had battle maidens that went to the fields of war. Those battle maidens were beautiful and fearless. They were wise also, because Odin showed the Runes of Wisdom to them. They were named Valkyries, Choosers of the killed.

Those who were chosen on the fields of the killed were called the Einherjar. Odin made a great hall for them. Valhalla, the Hall of the killed, it was called. Valhalla had five hundred and forty doors, and out of each door eight hundred champions would pass. Every day the champions put on their armor and took their weapons down from the walls, and went out and battled with each other. All who were wounded were made whole again, and in peace and friendship they sat down to the feast that Odin prepared for them. Odin himself sat with his champions, drinking wine but eating no meat.

For meat the champions ate the flesh of the boar Sæhrimnir. Every day the boar was killed and cooked, and every morning it was whole again. For drink they had the mead that was made from the milk of the goat Heidrun, that ate the leaves of the tree Læradir. The Valkyries, the wise and fearless battle-maidens, went around, filling up their drinking-horns with the mead.

The youngest of all the battle-maidens was Brynhild. Nevertheless, Odin had shown more of the Runes of Wisdom to her than he had

shown to any of her sisters. When the time came for Brynhild to journey down into Midgard he gave her a swan feather dress just as he had given before to the three Valkyrie sisters—Alvit, Orlun, and Hladgrun.

In the dazzling plumage of a swan the young battle maiden flew down from Asgard. She didn't yet have to go to the battlefields. She looked for some water, and as she waited for instructions from Odin she found a lake that had golden sands on its shore, and as a maiden she bathed in it.

Near this lake lived a young hero whose name was Agnar. And one day as Agnar lay by the lake he saw a swan with dazzling plumage fly down to it. While she was in the reeds the swan-feather dress slipped off her, and Agnar saw the swan change into a maiden.

Her hair was so bright, so strong and all her movements were so swift, that he knew she was one of Odin's battle maidens who give victory and choose the killed. Agnar was very daring, and he was determined to capture this battle maiden even though he would anger Odin by doing it.

He hid the swan feather dress that she had left in the reeds. When she came out of the water she could not fly away. Agnar gave the swan feather dress back to her, but she had to promise that she would be his battle maiden.

As they talked together the young Valkyrie saw in him a hero that someone from Asgard could help. Agnar was very brave and noble. Brynhild went with him as his battle maiden, and she told him about the Runes of Wisdom, and she showed him that the All-Father's last hope was in the bravery of the heroes of the earth. He would make battle in defence of Asgard with the chosen from the killed for his Champions.

Brynhild was always with Agnar's battalions. She hovered above the battles, her bright hair and flashing battle dress outshining the spears and swords and shields of the warriors.

But the gray bearded King Helmgunnar made war on the young Agnar. Odin favored the gray bearded King, and he promised the victory to him. Brynhild knew the will of Odin but she gave the victory to Agnar, and not to Helmgunnar,.

Brynhild was doomed the instant she went against Odin's will. She could never again come into Asgard. She was now a mortal woman, and the Norns began to spin the thread of her mortal destiny.

Odin All-Father was sad that the wisest of his battle maidens could never appear in Asgard nor walk by the benches at the feasts of his champions in Valhalla. He rode down on Sleipner to where Brynhild was. When he appeared in front of her it was his head, and not hers that was bowed down.

She knew then that the world of men was paying a bitter price for the strength that Asgard would have in the last battle. The bravest and noblest were being taken from Midgard to fill up the ranks of Odin's champions and Brynhild's heart was full of anger against the rulers of Asgard, and she did not care to be one of them.

Odin looked at his unbowed battle maiden, and said, "Is there anything you would have me do for you in your mortal life, Brynhild?"

"Nothing except this," Brynhild answered, "that in my mortal life no one but a man without fear, the bravest hero in the world, may claim me for his wife."

Odin bowed his head in thought. "I will do as you ask," he said. "Only

he who is without fear shall come near you.”

Then on the top of the mountain that is called Hindfell he had a Hall built that faced the south. Ten Dwarfs built it out of black stone. When the Hall was built he put round it a wall of fire.

Odin did more .He took a thorn of the Tree of Sleep and he pricked the battle maiden. Then, with her helmet on her head and the armor of the Valkyrie on her, he lifted Brynhild in his arms and carried her through the wall of fire. He laid her on the couch that was in the Hall. There she would lie in sleep until the hero who was without fear would ride through the flame and awaken her to the life of a mortal woman.

He said farewell to her and rode back to Asgard on Sleipner. He could not foresee what her fate would as a mortal woman. The fire he had left went rising and circling around the hall that the Dwarfs had built. For ages that fire would be a fence around where Brynhild, once a Valkyrie, lay in sleep.

THE CHILDREN OF LOKI

The children of Loki and the witch Angerboda were not like the children of men. They were as formless as water, or air, or fire, but each of them could take on the form that was most like their own evil desire.

Now everyone in Asgard knew that these powers of evil had been born into the world and they thought it would be better that they should take on forms and appear before them in Asgard. So they sent one of them to Jarnvid, the Iron Wood, asking Loki to bring before the Gods the powers born from him and the witch Angerboda. So Loki came into Asgard once more. His offspring took on forms and showed themselves to the Gods. The first, whose evil desire was for destruction showed himself as a fearful wolf. He was named Fenrir. The second, whose evil desire was for slow destruction, showed itself as a serpent. It was called Jörmungand. The third, whose evil desire was for withering of all life, took on a form also. When the Gods saw it they were frightened. For this had the form of a woman, and one side of her was that of a living woman and the other side of her was that of a corpse. Fear ran through Asgard as this form was revealed and as the name that went with it, Hela, was uttered.

Hela was thrown far out of sight of the Gods. Odin took her and hurled her down to the deeps that are below the world. He threw her down to Niflheim, where she took power over the nine regions. Hela reigns there, in the place that is lowest of all. Her hall is Elvidnir. It is set round with high walls and it has barred gates. Hunger is the table inside it, worry is the bed, and anguish is the wall hanging in the chamber.

Thor seized Jörmungand. He hurled the serpent into the ocean that

encircles the world. But in the depths of the ocean Jörmungand flourished. It grew and grew until it encircled the whole world. Men knew it as the Midgard Serpent.

Fenrir the Wolf could not be caught by any of the Æsir. Frighteningly he wandered through Asgard and they were only able to bring him to the outer courts by promising to give him all the food he was able to eat.

The Æsir were frightened to feed Fenrir. But Tyr, the brave swordsman, was willing to bring food to the Wolf's lair. Every day he brought him huge amounts of food and fed him with the point of his sword. The Wolf grew and grew until he became monstrous and a terror in the minds of everyone in Asgard.

At last the Gods in council considered it and decided that Fenrir must be tied up. The chain that they would tie him with was called Laeding. In their own smithy the Gods made it and it was heavier than Thor's hammer.

The Gods could not get the chain on Fenrir by force, so they sent Skirnir, the servant of Frey, to trick the wolf into letting it get on him. Skirnir came to his lair and stood near him, and he was dwarfed by the Wolf's monstrous size.

“How great is your strength, Mighty One?” Skirnir asked. “Could you break this chain easily? The Gods would like to see you try.”

In scorn Fenrir looked down at the chain Skirnir dragged. In scorn he stood still allowing Laeding to be placed on him. Then, with the least effort, he stretched himself and broke the chain in two.

The Gods were dismayed. But they took more iron, and with greater fires and mightier hammer blows they forged another chain. This one

was called Dromi, and it was half again as strong as Laeding was. Skirnir the bold brought it to the Wolf's lair, and in scorn Fenrir let the mightier chain be placed on him.

He shook himself and the chain held. Then his eyes became fiery and he stretched himself with a growl and a snarl. Dromi broke, and Fenrir stood looking menacingly at Skirnir.

The Gods saw that no chain they could forge would tie Fenrir and they became more fearful of him. They had another council and they thought them of the wonderful work the Dwarfs had made for them, the spear Gungnir, the ship Skidbladnir and the hammer Miölnir. Could the Dwarfs make the chain to tie Fenrir? If they would do it the Gods would add to their kingdom.

Skirnir went down to Svartheim with the message from Asgard. The Dwarf Chief swelled with pride to think that it was left to them to make the chain that would tie Fenrir.

“We Dwarfs can make a chain that will tie the Wolf,” he said. “We will make it out of six things.”

“What are these six things?” Skirnir asked.

“The roots of stones, the breath of a fish, the beards of women, the noise made by the footfalls of cats, the muscles of bears, the spit of a bird.”

“I have never heard the noise made by a cat's footfall, nor have I seen the roots of stones or the beards of women but use whatever you like, Helper of the Gods.”

The Chief brought his six things together and the Dwarfs in their smithy worked for days and nights. They forged a chain that was named Gleipnir. It was smooth and soft as a silken string. Skirnir

brought it to Asgard and put it into the hands of the Gods.

The Gods said that once again they should try to put a chain on Fenrir. But if he was to be tied they would do it far from Asgard. Lyngvi was an island that they often went to ,to play, and they talked about going there. Fenrir growled that he would go with them. He came and he played in his own terrible way. Then as if it were to make more fun, one of the Æsir shook out the smooth cord and showed it to Fenrir.

“It is stronger than you might think, Mighty One,” they said. “Why don’t you see if you can break it?”

Fenrir looked scornfully at them. “What fame would there be for me,” he said, “in breaking it?”

They showed him that none of them could break it, even though it was so thin. “Only you could break it, Mighty One,” they said.

“The cord is slender, but there may be an enchantment in it,” Fenrir said.

“You can’t break it, Fenrir, and so we do not need to fear you anymore,” the Gods said.

Then the Wolf was furious, for he lived on the fear that he made in the minds of the Gods. “I am willing to have this cord on me,” he said, “but if one of the Æsir will put his hand in my mouth as a pledge that I shall be freed of it, I will let you put it on me.”

The Gods looked thoughtfully at one another. It would be good for them all to have Fenrir tied up, but who would lose his hand to have it done? One and then another of the Æsir stepped back but not Tyr, the brave swordsman. He stepped up to Fenrir and laid his left hand in front of those tremendous jaws.

“Not your left hand—your swordhand, Tyr,” growled Fenrir, and Tyr put his swordhand into that terrible mouth.

Then the cord Gleipnir was put on Fenrir. With fiery eyes he watched the Gods tied him. When the cord was on him he stretched himself as before. He stretched himself to a monstrous size but the cord did not break off him. Then with fury he snapped his jaws on the hand, and Tyr’s hand, the swordsman’s hand, was torn off.

But Fenrir was tied. They fixed a mighty chain to the cord, and they passed the chain through a hole they bored through a great rock. The monstrous Wolf made terrible efforts to break loose, but the rock and the chain and the cord held. Then seeing him secured, and to avenge the loss of Tyr’s hand, the Gods took Tyr’s sword and drove it to the hilt through his jaw. the Wolf howled horribly. The foam flowed mightily down from his jaws. That foam flowing made a river that is called Von—a river of fury that flowed on until Ragnarök came, the Twilight of the Gods.

BALDUR'S DOOM

In Asgard there were two places that meant strength and joy to the Æsir and the Vanir. One was the garden where the apples that Iduna gathered grew, and the other was the Peace Stead, where, in a palace called Breidablik, Baldur the Well-Beloved lived.

No crime had ever been committed in the Peace Stead, no blood had ever been shed, and no lies had ever been spoken. Everyone in Asgard felt contented when they thought of this place. If it were not for the Peace Stead and Baldur's presence, the minds of the Æsir and the Vanir might have become gloomy and grim from thinking about the terrible things that were facing them.

Baldur was beautiful. He was so beautiful that all the white blossoms on the earth were called by his name. Baldur was happy. He was so happy that all the birds on the earth sang his name. Baldur was so just and so wise that the judgment he pronounced would never be altered. Nothing foul or unclean had ever come near where he lived.

Healing was done in Baldur's Stead. Tyr's wrist was healed of the wounds that Fenrir's fangs had made. Frey's mind became less troubled with the foreboding that Loki had filled it with when he scolded him about the bartering of his sword.

After Fenrir had been bound to the rock on the faraway island the Æsir and the Vanir felt at peace for a while. They passed days in Baldur's Stead, listening to the birds that made music there. It was there that Bragi the Poet wove into his never-ending story the tale of Thor's adventures amongst the Giants.

But foreboding came even into Baldur's Stead. One day little Hnossa, the child of Freya and the lost Odur, was brought there in such sorrow

that no one outside could comfort her. Nanna, Baldur's gentle wife, took the child on her lap and found ways of soothing her. Then Hnossa told of a dream that had frightened her.

She had dreamt of Hela, the Queen that is half living woman and half corpse. In her dream Hela had come into Asgard saying, "I must have a lord of the Æsir to live with me in my kingdom beneath the earth." Hnossa was so frightened by this dream that she had fallen into a deep sorrow.

When the Hnossa's dream was told they all fell silent. Nanna looked thoughtfully at Odin All-Father. And Odin, looking at Frigga, saw that a fear had entered her heart.

He left the Peace Stead and went to his watchtower Hlidskjalf. He waited there till Hugin and Munin would come to him. Every day his two ravens flew through the world, and coming back to him told him of everything that was happening. They might tell him of events that would let him guess if Hela had indeed turned her thoughts toward Asgard, or if she had the power to draw someone down to her dismal home.

The ravens flew to him, and landing one on each of his shoulders, told him of things that were being said up and down Ygdrassil, the World Tree. Ratatösk the Squirrel was saying them. And Ratatösk had heard them from the serpents that with Nidhöggr, the great dragon, always gnawed at the root of Ygdrassil. He told the Eagle that sat on the topmost branch, that in Hela's home a bed was spread and a chair was left empty for some lord.

Hearing this, Odin thought that it were better that Fenrir the Wolf should range ravenously through Asgard than that Hela should win someone from amongst them to fill that chair and lie in that bed.

He mounted Sleipner, his eight legged horse, and rode down toward the homes of the Dead. For three days and three nights of silence and darkness he journeyed on. Once one of the hounds of Helheim broke loose and followed Sleipner's tracks. For a day and a night Garm, the hound, pursued them, and Odin smelled the blood that dripped from his monstrous jaws.

At last he came to where, wrapped in their shrouds, a field of the Dead lay. He dismounted from Sleipner and called on one to rise and speak with him. He called on Volva, a dead prophetess. When he pronounced her name he uttered a rune that had the power to break the sleep of the Dead.

There was a groaning in the middle of where the shrouded ones lay. Then Odin cried, out, "Arise, Volva, prophetess." There was a stir in the middle of where the shrouded ones lay, and a head and shoulders were thrust up from amongst the Dead.

"Who calls on Volva the Prophetess? The rains have drenched my flesh and the storms have shaken my bones for more seasons than the living know. No living voice has a right to call me from my sleep with the Dead."

"It is Vegtam the Wanderer who calls. Who is the bed prepared and the seat left empty for in Hela's habitation?"

"The bed is prepared and the seat left empty for Baldur, Odin's son. Now let me go back to my sleep with the Dead."

But now Odin saw beyond Volva's prophecy. "Who is it," he cried out, "that stands with unbowed head and will not grieve for Baldur? Answer, Volva, prophetess!"

"You see far, but you cannot see clearly. You are Odin. I can see

clearly but I cannot see far. Now let me go back to my sleep with the Dead.”

“Volva, prophetess!” Odin cried out again.

But the voice from amongst the shrouded ones said, “You cannot wake me again until the fires of Muspelheim blaze above my head.”

Then there was silence in the field of the Dead, and Odin turned Sleipner, his horse and for four days, through the gloom and silence, he journeyed back to Asgard.

Frigga had felt the fear that Odin had felt. She looked at Baldur, and the shadow of Hela came between her and her son. But then she heard the birds sing in the Peace Stead and she knew that nothing in the world would injure Baldur.

To make sure she went to all the things that could hurt him and from each of them she took an oath that they would not injure Baldur, the Well-Beloved. She took an oath from fire and from water, from iron and from all metals, from earths and stones and great trees, from birds and beasts and creeping things, from poisons and diseases. They all gave the oath that they would not harm Baldur.

Then when Frigga went back and told what she had accomplished the gloom that had been on Asgard lifted. Baldur would be spared. Hela might have a place prepared in her dark home, but neither fire nor water, nor iron nor any metals, nor earths nor stones nor great woods, nor birds nor beasts nor creeping things, nor poisons nor diseases, would help her to bring him down. “Hela has no weapons to bring you to her,” the Æsir and the Vanir cried to Baldur.

Hope was renewed and they made games to honor Baldur. They had him stand in the Peace Stead and they brought against him all the

things that had sworn to leave him unharmed. Neither the battle-axe thrown at him, nor the stone out of the sling, nor the burning brand, nor the deluge of water would injure him. The Æsir and the Vanir laughed joyously to see these things fall harmlessly from him while a crowd came to join them in the games; Dwarfs and friendly Giants.

But Loki the Hater came in with that crowd. He watched the games from a distance. He saw the missiles and the weapons being thrown and he saw Baldur stand smiling and happy under the strokes of metal and stones and great wood. He wondered at the sight, but he knew that he could not ask the meaning of it from the anyone who knew him.

He changed his shape into that of an old woman and he went amongst those who were watching. He spoke to Dwarfs and friendly Giants. “Go to Frigga and ask. Go to Frigga and ask,” was all the answer Loki got from any of them.

Then Loki went to Fensalir, Frigga’s mansion,. He told those in the mansion that he was Groa, the old Enchantress who was drawing out of Thor’s head the fragments of a grindstone that a Giant’s throw had embedded in it. Frigga knew about Groa and she praised the Enchantress for what she had done.

” I have taken out many fragments of the great grindstone from Thor’s head by the charms I know,” said the false Groa. “Thor was so grateful that he brought back to me the husband that he once had carried off to the end of the earth. I was so overjoyed to find my husband returned that I forgot the rest of the charms and I left some fragments of the stone in Thor’s head.”

So Loki said, repeating a story that was true. “Now I remember the rest of the charm,” he said, “and I can draw out the fragments of the stone that are left. But won’t you tell me, Queen, what is the meaning of the extraordinary things I saw the Æsir and the Vanir doing?”

“I will tell you,” said Frigga, looking kindly and happily at the old woman. “They are hurling all kinds of heavy and dangerous things at Baldur, my beloved son. Everyone in Asgard cheers to see that neither metal nor stone nor great wood will hurt him.”

“But why won’t they hurt him?” said the false Enchantress.

“Because I have an oath from all dangerous and threatening things to leave Baldur unharmed,” said Frigga.

“From all things, lady? Is there nothing in all the world that has not taken an oath to leave Baldur unharmed?”

“Well, indeed, there is one thing that has not taken the oath. But that thing is so small and weak that I passed it by without thinking about it.”

“What can it be, lady?”

“The mistletoe that has no root or strength. It grows on the eastern side of Valhalla. I passed it by without asking an oath from it.”

“Surely you were not wrong to pass it by. What could the mistletoe—the rootless mistletoe—do against Baldur?”

Saying this, the false Enchantress hobbled off.

But the false Enchantress did not go hobbling far. He changed back to his real form and hurried to the eastern side of Valhalla. A great oak tree grew there and out of a branch of it a little bush of mistletoe grew. Loki broke off a piece and with it in his hand he went to where the Æsir and the Vanir were still playing games to honor Baldur.

All were laughing as Loki drew near, for the Giants and the Dwarfs, the Asyniur and the Vana, were all throwing missiles. The Giants

threw too far and the Dwarfs could not throw far enough, while the Asyniur and the Vana threw far and wide of the mark. In the midst of all that glee it was strange to see one standing looking unhappy. But he was one of the Æsir, Hödur, Baldur's blind brother.

“Why don't you enter the game?” said Loki to him in his changed voice.

“I have no missile to throw at Baldur,” Hödur said.

“Take this and throw it,” said Loki. “It is a twig of the mistletoe.”

“I cannot see to throw it,” said Hödur.

“I will guide your hand,” said Loki. He put the twig of mistletoe in Hödur's hand and he guided the hand for the throw. The twig flew toward Baldur. It struck him on the chest and it pierced him. Then Baldur fell down with a deep groan.

The Æsir and the Vanir, the Dwarfs and the friendly Giants, stood still in doubt and fear and amazement. Loki slipped away. Blind Hödur, from whose hand the twig of Mistletoe had gone, stood quiet, not knowing that his throw had taken Baldur's life.

Then a wailing rose around the Peace Stead. It was from the Asyniur and the Vana. Baldur was dead, and they began to mourn him. While they were grieving Odin came amongst them.

“Hela has won our Baldur from us,” Odin said to Frigga as they both bent over the body of their beloved son.

“No, I will not say it,” Frigga said.

The mother of Baldur went amongst the Æsir and the Vanir “Who amongst you would win my love and goodwill?” she said. “Who will

ride down to Hela's dark realm and ask the Queen to take ransom for Baldur. She might take it and let Baldur come back to us. Who amongst you will go? Odin's horse is ready for the journey."

Then Hermod the Nimble, the brother of Baldur stepped forward. He mounted Sleipner and turned the eight-legged horse down toward Hela's dark realm.

For nine days and nine nights Hermod rode on. His way was through rugged glens, one deeper and darker than the other. He came to the river that is called Giöll and to the bridge across it that is all glittering with gold. The pale maid who guards the bridge spoke to him.

"You are still alive," said Modgudur, the pale maid. "Why do you journey down to Hela's deathly kingdom?"

"I am Hermod," he said, "and I go to see if Hela will take ransom for Baldur."

"Hela's home is frightening to enter," said Modgudur, the pale maid. "All round it is a steep wall that even your horse cannot leap over. The bed inside is worry, the table is hunger and the wall hanging of the chamber is anguish."

"It may be that Hela will take ransom for Baldur."

"If everything in the world still grieves for Baldur, Hela will have to take ransom and let him go from her," said Modgudur, the pale maid that guards the glittering bridge.

"It is good, then, because everything mourns for Baldur. I will go to her and make her take ransom."

"You may not pass until it is certain that everything still mourns for him. Go back to the world and make sure. If you come to this

glittering bridge and tell me that everything still grieves for Baldur, I will let you pass and Hela will have to listen to you.”

“I will come back, and you, Modgudur, pale maid, will have to let me pass.”

“Then I will let you pass,” said Modgudur.

Happily Hermod turned Sleipner and rode back through the rugged glens, each one less gloomy than the other. He reached the upper world, and saw that everything was still grieving for Baldur. Hermod rode onward. He met the Vanir in the middle of the world and he told them the happy news.

Then Hermod and the Vanir went through the world seeking out each thing and finding that each thing still wept for Baldur. But one day Hermod came upon a crow that was sitting on the dead branch of a tree. The crow made no cry as he came near. She rose up and flew away and Hermod followed her to make sure that she mourned for Baldur.

He lost sight of her near a cave. Then in front of the cave he saw a hag with blackened teeth who didn't grieve. “If you are the crow that came flying here, grieve for Baldur,” Hermod said.

“I, Thaukt, will not grieve for Baldur,” the hag said, “let Hela keep what she holds.”

“Everything weeps tears for Baldur,” Hermod said.

“I will weep dry tears for him,” said the hag.

She hobbled into her cave, and as Hermod followed a crow fluttered out. He knew that this was Thaukt, the evil hag, transformed. He followed her, and she went through the world croaking, “Let Hela

keep what she holds. Let Hela keep what she holds.”

Then Hermod knew that he could not ride to Hela’s home. Everything knew that there was one thing in the world that would not grieve for Baldur. With head bowed over Sleipner’s mane, Hermod rode into Asgard.

When the Æsir and the Vanir, knew that no ransom would be taken for Baldur and that the joy and happiness of Asgard were gone indeed, prepared his body for burning. First they covered Baldur’s body with a rich robe, and left beside it his most precious possessions. Then they all left him, kissing him on the brow. But Nanna, his gentle wife, threw herself on him and her heart broke and she died of grief. Then the Æsir and the Vanir wept again. They took the body of Nanna and they placed it side by side with Baldur’s.

Baldur was placed with Nanna beside him on his own great ship, Ringhorn. Then the ship would be launched on the water and set on fire.

But it was found that none of the Æsir or the Vanir were able to launch Baldur’s great ship. Hyrroken, a Giantess, was sent for. She came mounted on a great wolf with twisted serpents for a bridle. Four Giants held the wolf when she dismounted. She came to the ship and with a single push she sent it into the sea.

Then when it rode the water fires rose up on the ship. In the blaze of the fires someone was seen bending over the body of Baldur and whispering into his ear. It was Odin All-Father. Then he went down off the ship and all the fires rose into a mighty blaze. Speechlessly the Æsir and the Vanir watched with tears streaming down their faces while everything grieved, crying, “Baldur the Beautiful is dead, is dead.”

What was it that Odin All-Father whispered to Baldur as he bent above him with the flames of the burning ship around? He whispered of a heaven above Asgard that Surtur's flames could not reach, and of a life that would come to beauty again after the World of Men and the World of the Gods had been covered with fire.

LOKI'S PUNISHMENT

The crow went flying toward the north, croaking as she flew, “Let Hela keep what she holds. Let Hela keep what she holds.” That crow was the hag Thaukt transformed, and the hag Thaukt was Loki.

He flew to the north and came into the lands of Jötunheim. He lived there as a crow, hiding himself from the fury of the Gods. He told the Giants that the time had come for them to build the ship Naglfar, which was to be built out of the nails of dead men, and sail to Asgard on the day of Ragnarök with the Giant Hrymer steering it. Listening to what he said, the Giants then and there began to build Naglfar, the ship that Gods and men wished to remain unbuilt.

Then Loki, tiring of Jötunheim, flew to the burning south. He lived as a lizard amongst the rocks of Muspelheim, and he made the Fire Giants rejoice when he told them of the loss of Frey’s sword and of Tyr’s right hand.

But in Asgard there was still someone who wept for Loki, Siguna, his wife. Although he had left her and shown his hatred for her, Siguna wept for her evil husband.

He left Muspelheim as he had left Jötunheim and he went to live in the World of Men. He knew that he had now come into a place where the fury of the Gods might find him, and so he made plans to be always ready for escape. He had come to the river where, ages before, he had killed the otter that was the son of the Enchanter, and Loki built his house on the very rock where the otter had eaten the salmon on the day of his killing,. He made four doors to it so that he might see in every direction. The power that he kept for himself was the power of transforming himself into a salmon.

He swam in the River as a salmon often. But Loki had hatred even for the fish that swam beside him. He wove a net so that men could have the means of taking them out of the water.

The fury that the Gods had against Loki did not go away. It was he who, as Thaukt, the Hag, had given Hela the power to keep Baldur. It was he who had put into Hödur's hand the sprig of mistletoe that had taken Baldur's life. Asgard was empty now that Baldur didn't live anymore in the Peace Stead. The minds of the Æsir and the Vanir grew grim and gloomy thinking about the terrible things that faced them. In his hall of Valhalla, Odin thought only about the ways he could bring heroes to him to help in defending Asgard.

The Gods searched through the world and at last they found the place where Loki had made his home. He was weaving the net to take fishes when he saw them coming from four directions. He threw the net into the fire so that it was burnt, and he sprang into the river and transformed himself into a salmon. When the Gods entered his home they found only the burnt out fire.

But one of them could understand all that he saw. The marks of the burnt net were in the ashes and he knew that these were something to catch fish. From the marks left in the ashes he made a net that was the same as the one Loki had burnt.

With it in their hands the Gods went down the river, dragging the net through the water. Loki was frightened to find what he had weaved used against him. He lay between two stones at the bottom of the River, and the net passed over him.

But the Gods knew that the net had touched something at the bottom. They fastened weights to it and they dragged the net through the river again. Loki knew that he could not escape it this time and he rose in the water and swam toward the sea. The Gods caught sight of him as

he leaped over a waterfall. They followed him, dragging the net. Thor waded behind, ready to seize him should he turn back.

Loki came out at the mouth of the river and there was a great eagle hovering over the waves of the sea and ready to swoop down on fish. He turned back into the river. He made a leap that took him over the net that the Gods were dragging. But Thor was behind the net and he caught the salmon in his powerful hands and he held him despite all the struggle that Loki made. No fish had ever struggled so much before. Loki got himself free except for his tail, but Thor held the tail and forced him to take on his proper form.

He was in the hands of those whose anger was strong against him. They took him to a cavern and they tied him to three sharp-pointed rocks. They tied him with cords that were made of the sinews of wolves, and they transformed the cords into iron bands. They would have left Loki there bound and helpless but Skadi, with her fierce Giant blood, was not content that he should be left untormented. She found a serpent that had deadly venom and she hung this serpent above Loki's head. The drops of venom fell on him, causing him pain drop by drop, minute by minute. So Loki's torture went on.

But Siguna with the pitying heart came to his relief. She exiled herself from Asgard, and endured the darkness and the cold of the cavern, so that she could take some of the torment away from him who was her husband. Siguna stood over Loki, holding in her hands a cup that the the serpent's venom fell into, thus sparing him from all the pain. Now and then Siguna had to turn aside to empty the cup, and then the drops of venom fell on Loki and he screamed in agony, twisting in his bonds. It was then that men felt the earth quake. Loki stayed there in his bonds until the coming of Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

SIGURD'S YOUTH

A King whose name was Alv reigned in Midgard, in a northern Kingdom. He was wise and good, and he had a foster son whose name was Sigurd.

Sigurd was so fearless and strong was he that he once captured a bear in the forest and drove him to the King's Hall. His mother's name was Hiordis. Once, before Sigurd was born, Alv and his father who was King before him went on an expedition across the sea and came to another country. While they were still far off they heard the din of a great battle. They came to the battlefield, but found no living warriors on it, only heaps of the dead. One warrior they noticed was white bearded and old and yet he seemed the noblest looking man Alv or his father had ever seen. His weapons showed that he was a King of one of the bands of warriors.

They went through the forest searching for survivors of the battle and, hidden in a clearing in the forest, they came upon two women. One was tall and proud with blue eyes and reddish hair, but wearing the clothes of a serving maid. The other wore the rich dress of a Queen, but she was short and her manner was frightened.

When Alv and his father came closer, the one who had on her the clothes of a Queen said, "Help us, lords, and protect us, and we will show you where a treasure is hidden. A great battle has been fought between the men of King Lygni and the men of King Sigmund, and the men of King Lygni have won the victory and have left the field. But King Sigmund is dead, and we who are from his household hid his treasure and we can show it to you."

"The noble warrior, white haired and white bearded, who lies over there, is he King Sigmund?"

The woman answered, “Yes, lord, and I am his Queen.”

“We have heard of King Sigmund,” said Alv’s father. “His fame and the fame of his race, the Volsungs, is known over the wide world.”

Alv said nothing to either of the women, but his eyes stayed on the one who had on the clothes of a serving maid. She was on her knees, wrapping skin two pieces of a broken sword in a animals’ skin.

“You will surely protect us, good lords,” she ,who had on the queenly dress, said.

“Yes, wife of King Sigmund, we will protect you and your serving maid,” said Alv’s father, the old King.

Then the women took the warriors to a wild place on the seashore and showed them where King Sigmund’s treasure was hidden amongst the rocks: cups of gold and mighty arm rings and jeweled collars. Prince Alv and his father put the treasure on the ship and took the two women aboard. Then they sailed from there.

That was before Sigurd, the foster son of King Alv, was born.

The mother of Alv was wise and had a sharp mind. She saw that of the two women that her son and her husband had brought into their kingdom, the one who wore the dress of the serving maid had proud eyes and great beauty, while the one who wore the queenly dress was lacking confidence. One night when all the women of the household were sitting round her, spinning wool by the light of torches in the hall, the Queen mother said to the one who wore the queenly clothes, “You are good at rising in the morning. How do you know in the dark hours when it is dawn?”

The one wearing the queenly clothes said, “When I was young I used to rise to milk the cows, and I waken ever since at the same hour.”

The Queen mother said to herself, “It is a strange country in which the queens rise to milk the cows.”

Then she said to the one who wore the clothes of the serving maid:

“How do you know in the dark hours when the dawn is coming?”

“My father,” she said, “gave me the ring of gold that I wear, and before it is time to rise I feel it grow cold on my finger.”

“It is a strange country, truly,” said the Queen-mother to herself, “in which the serving maids wear rings of gold.”

When all the others had left she spoke to the two women who had been brought into her country. To the one who wore the clothes of a serving maid she said, “You are the Queen.”

Then the one who wore the queenly clothes said, “You are right, lady. She is the Queen, and I cannot pretend any longer to be other than I am.”

Then the other woman spoke, “I am the Queen as you have said. The Queen of King Sigmund who was killed. Because a King was searching for me I changed clothes with my serving to confuse those who might be sent to carry me away.

“I am Hiordis, a King’s daughter. Many men came to my father to ask for me in marriage, and of those that came there were two who I had heard a lot about. One was King Lygni and the other was King Sigmund of the race of the Volsungs. The King, my father, told me it was for me to choose between these two. Now King Sigmund was old, but he was the most famous warrior in the whole world, and I chose him rather than King Lygni.

“We were married but King Lygni still wanted me, and after a while

he attacked King Sigmund's kingdom with a great army of men. We hid our treasure by the seashore, and I and my maid watched the battle from the edge of the forest. With the help of Gram, his wondrous sword, and his own great warrior strength, Sigmund was able to fight the great force that came against him but suddenly he was wounded. Then the battle was lost. Only King Lygni's men survived it, and they spread out to search for me and the treasure.

"I came to where my lord lay on the field of battle, and he raised himself on his shield when I came, and he told me that death was very near. A stranger had entered the battle at the time when it seemed that the men of King Lygni would retreat. With the spear that he held in his hand he struck at Sigmund's sword, and Gram, the wondrous sword, was broken in two pieces. Then King Sigmund received his fatal wound. 'It must be I shall die,' he said, 'for the spear against which my sword broke was Gungnir, Odin's spear. Only that spear could have shattered the sword that Odin gave my fathers. Now must I go to Valhalla, Odin's Hall of Heroes.'

"Then Sigmund turned his face to the ground and died. Odin's Valkyrie took his spirit from the battlefield. I lifted up the broken pieces of the sword, and with my serving maid I went and hid in a deep clearing in the forest. Then your husband and your son found us and they brought us to your kingdom where we have been kindly treated, Oh Queen."

This was the story that Hiordis, the wife of King Sigmund, told to the mother of Prince Alv.

"'I weep,' I said, 'because I have no son who will come from the great race of the Volsungs.'

"'For that you need not weep,' said Sigmund, 'a son will be born to you, my son and yours, and you shall name him Sigurd. Now take the

broken pieces of my marvelous sword and give them to my son when he reaches the age of a warrior .

Soon afterwards she gave birth to Sigmund's son. She named him Sigurd. After Sigurd was born the old King died and Prince Alv became King. He married Hiordis and he brought up her son Sigurd in his house as his foster son.

Before Sigurd, the son of Sigmund reached the age of a warrior, he was known for his strength and his swiftness and for the fearlessness that shone round him like a glow. "The Volsung race he sprang from was mighty," men said, "but Sigurd will be as mighty as any that have gone before him." He built himself a hut in the forest so that he could hunt wild beasts and live near to one who was to train him in many skills.

He was Regin, a sword maker and a cunning man besides. It was said of Regin that he was an Enchanter and that he had been in the world for longer than the generations of men. No one remembered, nor anyone's father remembered, when Regin had come into that country. He taught Sigurd the art of working in metals and he taught him, too, the tales of olden days. But even as he taught him he looked at Sigurd strangely, not as a man looks at his fellow, but as a fox looks at a stronger beast.

One day Regin said to young Sigurd, "King Alv has your father's treasure, and yet he treats you as if you were a peasant."

Now Sigurd knew that Regin said this so that he would anger him and use him to his own ends. He said, "King Alv is a wise and a good King, and he would let me have riches if I had need of them."

"You go about like a footboy, and not as a King's son."

“I can have a horse to ride anytime I like,” Sigurd said.

“So you say,” said Regin, and he turned from Sigurd and went to blow the fire of his smithy.

Sigurd was angry and he threw down the irons on which he was working and he ran to the horse fields by the great river. A herd of horses was there, gray and black and chestnut, the best of the horses that King Alv possessed. As he came near to where the herd grazed he saw a stranger near, an old but robust man, wearing a strange cloak of blue and leaning on a staff to watch the horses. Sigurd, though young, had seen Kings in their halls, but this man had a manner that was more regal than any King he had ever seen.

“You are going to choose a horse for yourself,” the stranger said to Sigurd.

“Yes, father,” Sigurd said.

“First drive the herd into the river,” the stranger said.

Sigurd drove the horses into the wide river. Some were swept down by the current, others struggled back and clambered up the bank of the field. But one swam across the river, and throwing up his head neighed as in victory. Sigurd noticed him. He was a gray horse, young and proud, with a great flowing mane. He went through the water and caught this horse, mounted him, and brought him back across the river.

“You have done well,” said the stranger. “Grani, who you have got, is the same breed of Sleipner, the horse of Odin.”

“I am of the race of the sons of Odin,” cried Sigurd, his eyes wide and shining with the very light of the sun. “I am of the race of the sons of Odin, for my father was Sigmund, and his father was Volsung, and his

father was Rerir, and his father was Sigi, who was the son of Odin.”

The stranger, leaning on his staff looked at the youth steadily. Only one of his eyes could be seen, but that eye, Sigurd thought, could see through a stone. “Everyone you have named,” the stranger said, “was the sword of Odin to send men to Valhalla, Odin’s Hall of Heroes. Everyone that you have named was chosen by Odin’s Valkyries for battles in Asgard.”

Sigurd cried, “Too much of what is brave and noble in the world is taken by Odin for his battles in Asgard.”

The stranger leaned on his staff and his head was bowed. “What would you do?” he said, and it did not seem to Sigurd that he spoke to him. “What would you do? The leaves wither and fall off Ygdrassil, and the day of Ragnarök comes.” Then he raised his head and spoke to Sigurd. “The time is near,” he said, “when you may possess the pieces of your father’s sword.”

Then the man in the strange blue cloak went climbing up the hill and Sigurd watched him go out of sight. He had held his proud horse Grani back, but now he turned him and let him gallop along the river in a race that was as swift as the wind.

THE SWORD GRAM AND THE DRAGON FAFNIR

Mounted on his proud horse Grani, Sigurd rode to the hall and showed himself to Alv, the King, and to Hiordis, his mother. In front of the hall he shouted out the Volsung name, and King Alv felt as he watched him that this youth was a match for a score of men, and Hiordis, his mother, saw the blue flame of his eyes and thought to herself that his way through the world would be like the way of the eagle through the air.

Having shown himself before the Hall, Sigurd dismounted from Grani, and stroked and caressed him with his hands and told him that he could go back to the herd. The proud horse happily galloped away.

Then Sigurd strode on until he came to the hut in the forest where he worked with the cunning smith Regin. No one was in the hut when he entered but over the anvil, in the smoke of the smithy fire, there was some of Regin's work. Sigurd looked at it, and a hatred for what he saw rose up in him.

Regin's work was a great shield of iron. Hammered out on that shield and colored with red and brown colors was the image of, a Dragon emerging from a cave. Sigurd thought it was the image of the most hateful thing in the world, and the light of the smithy fire falling on it, and the smoke of the smithy fire rising round it, made it seem really like a Dragon.

While he was still gazing at the hateful image, Regin, the cunning smith, came into the smithy. He stood by the wall and watched Sigurd. His back was bent, his hair fell over his fiery eyes and he looked like a beast.

“You see Fafnir the Dragon, son of the Volsungs,” he said to Sigurd.
“Maybe it is you who will kill him.”

“I would not fight with such a beast. He is so horrible,” Sigurd said.

“With a good sword you could kill him and win for yourself more fame than any of your forefather had,” Regin whispered.

“I shall win fame as my fathers won fame, in battle with men and in conquest of kingdoms,” Sigurd said.

“You are not a true Volsung or you would gladly go where the most danger and fear is,” said Regin. “You have heard of Fafnir the Dragon, whose image I have made here. If you ride to the top of the hills you can look across to the desolate land where Fafnir has his lair. It was once a fair land where men had peace and prosperity, but Fafnir came and made his home in a cave nearby, and his breathe as he went to and came from the River withered up the land and made it the barren wasteland that men called Gnita Heath. Now, if you are a true Volsung, you will kill the Dragon, and let that land become fair again, and bring the people back to it and so add to King Alv’s kingdom.”

“I will have nothing to do with the killing of Dragons,” Sigurd said. “I have to make war on King Lygni, and avenge the killing of Sigmund, my father.”

“What is the killing of Lygni and the conquest of his kingdom compared to the killing of Fafnir the Dragon?” Regin cried. “I will tell you what no one else knows about Fafnir the Dragon. He guards a hoard of gold and jewels the like of which has never been seen in the world. You can make all this hoard yours by killing him.”

“I do not want riches,” Sigurd said.

“No riches is like the riches that Fafnir guards. His hoard is the hoard

that the Dwarf Andvari had from the world's early days. Once the Gods themselves paid it as a ransom. And if you win this hoard you will be as one of the Gods."

"How do you know about all this, Regin?" Sigurd said.

"I know, and one day I might tell you how I know."

"And one day I might listen to you. But don't speak to me again about this Dragon. I want you to make a sword that will be mightier and stronger than any sword in the world. You can do this, Regin, for you are said to be the best sword smith amongst men."

Regin looked at Sigurd out of his small and cunning eyes and he thought it was best to make himself active. So he took the heaviest pieces of iron and put them into his furnace and he brought out the secret tools that he used when making a masterpiece.

Sigurd worked beside him all day keeping the fire at its best glow and bringing water to cool the blade as it was fashioned and refashioned. As he worked he thought only about the blade and about how he would make war on King Lygni, and avenge the man who was killed before he himself was born.

All day he thought only of war and of the beaten blade. But at night his dreams were not about wars or swords but about Fafnir the Dragon. He saw the land that was left barren by his breath, and he saw the cave where he had his den, and he saw him crawling down from his cave, his scales glittering.

The next day he worked with Regin to shape the great sword. When it was formed with all the cunning Regin knew, it looked indeed a mighty sword. Then Regin sharpened it and Sigurd polished it. At last he held the great sword by its iron hilt.

Then Sigurd took the shield that had the image of Fafnir the Dragon on it and he put the shield over the anvil of the smithy. Raising the great sword in both his hands he struck the iron shield with all his strength.

The stroke of the sword cut away some of the shield, but the blade broke in Sigurd's hands. Then in anger he turned on Regin, crying out, "You have made a weak sword for me. You must make me a Volsung's sword."

Then he went out and called to Grani, his horse, mounted him and rode to the river bank like the sweep of the wind.

Regin took more pieces of iron and began to forge a new sword, uttering as he worked runes that were about the hoard that Fafnir the Dragon guarded. That night Sigurd dreamt of glittering treasure that he desired, masses of gold and heaps of glistening jewels.

The next day they both worked to make a sword that would be mightier than the first. For three days they worked on it, and then Regin put into Sigurd's hands a sword, sharpened and polished, that was mightier and more splendid looking than the one that had been forged before. And again Sigurd took the shield that had the image of the Dragon upon it and he put it on the anvil. Then he raised his arms and struck his full blow. The sword cut through the shield, but when it struck the anvil it shattered in his hands.

He left the smithy angrily and called to Grani, his proud horse. He mounted and rode on like the sweep of the wind.

Later he came to his mother's room and stood before Hiordis. "I must have a greater sword," he said, "than one that is made of metal dug out of the earth. The time has come, mother, when you must give me the broken pieces of Gram, the sword of Sigmund and the Volsungs."

Hiordis measured him with the glance of her eyes, and she saw that her son was a mighty youth and one fit to use the sword of Sigmund and the Volsungs. She told him to go with her to the King's Hall. She took out of the great stone chest that was in her chamber the animal skin and the broken blade that was wrapped in it. She gave the pieces to her son. "These are the halves of Gram," she said, "of Gram, the mighty sword that long ago Odin left in the Branstock, in the tree of the house of Volsung. I want to see Gram new again in your hands, my son."

Then she embraced him as she had never embraced him before, and standing there with her reddish hair about her she told him of the glory of Gram and of the deeds of his forefathers in whose hands the sword had shone.

Then Sigurd went to the smithy, and he woke Regin out of his sleep, and he showed him the shining halves of Sigmund's sword. He commanded him to make out of these halves a sword for him.

Regin worked for days in his smithy and Sigurd never left his side. At last the blade was forged, and when Sigurd held it in his hand fire ran along the edge of it.

Again he laid the shield that had the image of the Dragon on it on the anvil of the smithy. Again, with his hands on its iron hilt, he raised the sword for a full stroke. He struck, and the sword cut through the shield and through the anvil, cutting away its iron horn. Then Sigurd knew that he had in his hands the Volsungs' sword. He went outside and called to Grani, and like the sweep of the wind rode down to the river bank. Pieces of wool were floating down the water. Sigurd struck at them with his sword, and the fine wool was cut in half. Gram could cut through both hardness and fineness.

That night Gram, the Volsungs' sword, was under his head when he

slept, but still his dreams were filled with images that he had not thought about in the day time. The shine of a hoard and the gleam of the scales of a Dragon that was too terrible for him to battle with.

THE DRAGON'S BLOOD

Sigurd went to war and with the men that King Alv gave him he marched into the country that was ruled over by the killer of his father. The war that he waged was short and the battles that he won were not difficult. King Lygni was old then, and his power over his people was feeble. Sigurd killed him and took away his treasure and added his lands to the lands of King Alv.

But Sigurd was not content with the victory he had gained. He had dreamt of great battles and fame that would be won the hard way. What was the war he had waged compared to the wars that Sigmund his father, and Volsung his father's father, had waged in their days? Sigurd was not content. He led his men back by way of the hills from the top of which he could look on the Dragon's home. Having come as far as those hills he told his men return to King Alv's hall with the treasure he had won.

They went, and Sigurd stayed on the hills and looked across Gnita Heath to where Fafnir the Dragon had his lair. The Heath was all wasted with the fiery breath of the Dragon. He saw the cave where Fafnir lived, and he saw the track that his comings and goings made for every day the Dragon left his cave in the cliffs, crossing the Heath to come to the river at which he drank.

For a day Sigurd watched from the hills the land of the Dragon. In the evening he saw him emerging from the cave, and coming on his track across the Heath, like a ship that travels swiftly because of its many oars.

Then he went to Regin in his smithy. Sigurd said to that cunning man, "Tell me everything you know about Fafnir the Dragon."

Regin began to talk, but his speech was old and strange and filled with runes. When he had finished Sigurd said, “Everything you have told me you will have to repeat in a language I can understand.”

Then said Regin,” I spoke of a hoard. The Dwarf Andvari guarded it from the first days of the world but one of the Æsir forced Andvari to give the hoard to him, masses of gold and heaps of jewels, and the Æsir gave it to Hreidmar, who was my father.

“The Æsir gave the greatest hoard that had ever been seen in the world to Hreidmar, for the killing of his son Otter. But Hreidmar didn’t have it long because his son killed him. That son was Fafnir, my brother.

“Then so that no one could disturb his possession of the hoard, Fafnir, turned himself into a Dragon so fearful that no one dared come near him. And I was stricken with desire for the hoard. I did not change myself into another being, but, by the magic my father knew made my life longer than the generations of men, hoping that I would see Fafnir killed and then have the mighty hoard in my hands.

“Now, son of the Volsungs, you know everything about Fafnir the Dragon, and the great hoard that he guards.”

“I care nothing about the hoard he guards,” Sigurd said. “I only care that he has made the King’s good lands into a waste and that he is an evil thing to men. I want to be famous for killing Fafnir the Dragon.”

“With Gram, the sword you have, you could kill Fafnir,” Regin cried, his body shaking with his desire for the hoard. “You could kill him with the sword you have. Listen now and I will tell you how you can give him the fatal blow through the coils of his armor. Listen, because I have thought of everything.

“The track of the Dragon to the river is wide, because he always takes the same track. Dig a pit in the middle of that track, and when Fafnir comes over it strike up into his coils of mail with Gram, your great sword. Only Gram can pierce that mail. Then Fafnir will be killed and the hoard will be left unguarded.”

“What you say is wise, Regin,” Sigurd answered. “We will make this pit and I will strike Fafnir in the way you said.”

Then Sigurd rode away on Grani, his proud horse, and he presented himself to King Alv and to Hiordis, his mother. Afterwards he went with Regin to the Heath that was the land of the Dragon, and in his track they dug a pit for the killing of Fafnir.

In case his horse should scream aloud at the coming of the Dragon, Sigurd had Grani sent back to a cave in the hills. It was Regin that took Grani away. “I am afraid and can do nothing to help you, son of the Volsungs,” he said. “I will go away and await the killing of Fafnir.”

He went, and Sigurd lay down in the pit they had made and practiced thrusting upward with his sword. He lay with his face upward and with his two hands he thrust the mighty sword upward.

But as he lay there he thought of a dreadful thing that might happen, namely, that the blood and venom of the Dragon might pour over him as he lay there, and dissolve his flesh and bone. When he thought of this Sigurd hurried out of the pit, and he dug other pits nearby, and made a passage for himself from one pit to the other so that he could escape from the flow of the Dragon’s venomous blood.

As he lay down again in the pit he heard the Dragon approaching and he heard the Dragon’s strange and mournful cry. The Dragon came on and he heard his breathing. His shape came over the pit. Then the

Dragon held his head and looked down at Sigurd.

It was the instant for him to strike with Gram. He did not let the instant pass. He struck mightily under the shoulder and toward the heart of the beast. The sword went through the hard and glittering scales that were the creature's armor. Sigurd pulled out the sword and drew himself through the passage and out into the second pit as Fafnir's venomous blood drenched where he had been.

Drawing himself up out of the second pit he saw the huge shape of Fafnir heaving and lashing. He ran to him and thrust his sword right through the Dragon's neck. The Dragon reared up as though to throw himself down on Sigurd with all his crushing size and terrible talons, with his fiery breath and his venomous blood. But Sigurd leaped aside and ran far off. Then Fafnir screamed his death scream. After he had torn up rocks with his talons he lay still on the ground, his head in the pit that was filled with his venomous blood.

Then Regin, hearing the scream knew that Fafnir was dead, came down to where the battle had been fought. When he saw that Sigurd was alive and unharmed, he uttered a cry of fury for his plan had been to have Sigurd drowned and burnt in the pit with the stream of Fafnir's venomous blood.

But he hid his fury and smiled at Sigurd. "Now you will have fame," he cried. "You will forever be called Sigurd, Fafnir's destroyer. You will have more fame than any of your forefathers had, Prince of the Volsungs."

"Fafnir is dead," Sigurd said, "and the triumph over him was not easily achieved. Now I will present myself to King Alv and to my mother, and the gold from Fafnir's hoard will make me rich."

"Wait," said Regin cunningly. "Wait. You still have to do something

for me. With the sword you have, cut through the Dragon and take out his heart for me. When you have taken it out, roast it so that I may eat it and become wiser than I am. Do this for me who showed you how to kill Fafnir.”

Sigurd did what Regin asked. He cut out the heart of the Dragon and he hung it from stakes to roast. Regin left him. As Sigurd stood before the fire putting sticks upon it there was a great silence in the forest.

He put his hand down to turn a branch into the heart of the fire. As he did a drop from the roasting Dragon heart fell on his hand. The drop burnt into him. He put his hand to his mouth to ease the pain, and his tongue tasted the burning blood of the Dragon.

He went to gather wood for the fire. In a clearing that he came to there were birds. He saw four on a branch together. They spoke to each other in birds’ notes, and Sigurd heard and knew what they were saying.

The first bird Said, “How simple is the one who has come into this clearing! He doesn’t know who his enemy is, and yet the one who was with him just a moment ago has gone away so that he can bring back a spear to kill him.”

“He would kill him for the gold that is in the Dragon’s cave,” said the second bird.

And the third bird said, “If he would eat the Dragon’s heart himself he would know all wisdom.”

But the fourth bird said, “He has tasted a drop of the Dragon’s blood and he knows what we are saying.”

The four birds did not fly away or stop speaking. Instead they began to tell of a marvelous place that they knew.

Deep in the forest, the birds sang, there was a Hall that was called the House of Flame. Its ten walls were Uni, Iri, Barri, Ori, Varns, Vegdrasil, Derri, Uri, Dellinger and Atvarder, and each wall was built by the Dwarf whose name it had. All round the Hall there was a circle of fire through which no one could pass. Inside the Hall a maiden slept, and she was the wisest and the bravest and the most beautiful maiden in the world.

Sigurd stood like a man enchanted listening to what the birds sang.

But suddenly they stopped their story, and their notes became sharp and piercing.

“Look, look!” cried one. “He is coming to kill the youth.”

“He is coming against the youth with a spear,” cried another.

“Now will the youth be killed unless he is swift,” cried a third.

Sigurd turned round and saw Regin coming toward him, grim and silent, with a spear in his hands. The spear would have gone through Sigurd had he stayed one instant longer in the place where he had been listening to the speech of the birds. As he turned he had his sword in his hand, and he flung it, and Gram struck Regin on the chest.

Then Regin cried out, “I die without having laid my hands on the hoard that Fafnir guarded. Ah, a curse was on the hoard, for Hreidmar and Fafnir and I have perished because of it. May the curse of the gold now fall on the one who is my killer.”

Then Regin died. Sigurd took the body and threw it into the pit that was alongside the dead Fafnir. Then, so that he could eat the Dragon’s heart and become the wisest of men, he went to where he had left it roasting. He thought that when he had eaten the heart he would go

into the Dragon's cave and carry away the treasure that was there, and bring it as reward of his battle to King Alv and his mother. Then he would go through the forest and find the House of Flame where the maiden slept who was the wisest and bravest and most beautiful in the world.

But Sigurd did not eat the Dragon's heart. When he came to where he had left it roasting he found that the fire had burnt it completely.

THE STORY OF SIGMUND AND SIGNY

He called to his proud horse Grani, stood up on a mound in the Heath and gave a great shout. Grani, in the cave where Regin had left him, heard and came galloping to Sigurd with flowing mane and eyes flashing fire.

He mounted Grani and rode to Fafnir's cave. When he went into the place where the Dragon used to lie he saw a door of iron in front of him. With his mighty sword Gram, he cut through the iron, and with his strong hands he pulled the door back. Then, in front of him he saw the treasure that the Dragon guarded; masses of gold and heaps of shining jewels.

But as he looked at the hoard Sigurd felt some shadow of the evil that lay over it all. This was the hoard that long ago the River Maidens watched over as it lay deep under the flowing water. Then Andvari the Dwarf forced the River Maidens to give it to him. Then Loki had taken it from Andvari, releasing as he did, Gulveig the Witch who had such evil power over the Gods. Fafnir had killed Hreidmar, his father for the hoard, and Regin had plotted death against Fafnir, his brother.

Sigurd did not know all this history but a shadow of its evil touched his spirit as he stood there before the gleaming and glittering heap. He would take all of it away, but not then. The tale that the birds told was in his mind, and the green of the forest was more important to him than the glitter of the treasure. He would come back with chests and load it up and carry it to King Alv's hall. But first he would take some things he himself could wear.

He found a helmet of gold and he put it on his head. He found a great arm ring and put it around his arm. On the top of the arm ring there was a small finger ring with a rune engraved on it. Sigurd put it on his

finger. This was the ring that Andvari the Dwarf had put the curse on when Loki had taken the hoard from him.

He knew that no one would cross the Heath and come to Fafnir's lair, so he did not worry about leaving the treasure unguarded. He mounted Grani, his proud horse, and rode toward the forest. He would search for the House of Flame where she lay sleeping, the maiden who was the wisest and the bravest and the most beautiful in the world. With his golden helmet shining above his golden hair Sigurd rode on.

As he rode toward the forest he thought of Sigmund, his father, whose death he had avenged, and he thought of Sigmund's father, Volsung, and of the grim deeds that the Volsungs had suffered and caused.

Rerir, the son of Sigi who was the son of Odin, was the father of Volsung. When Volsung was a young man he built his hall around a mighty tree. Its branches went up to the roof and made the beams of the house and its great trunk was the center of the hall. The tree was called "The Branstock", and Volsung hall was named "The Hall of the Branstock."

Volsung had many children, eleven sons and one daughter. All his sons were strong and good fighters and Volsung of the Hall of the Branstock was a mighty chief.

It was through Signy, the daughter of the house, that a feud and a deadly battle was brought to Volsung and his sons. She was a wise and fair maiden and her fame went through all the lands. Now, one day Volsung received a message from a King asking for the hand of Signy in marriage. Volsung who knew of this King through reports of his battles sent a message to him saying that he would be welcome to the Hall of the Branstock.

So King Siggeir came with his men. But when the Volsungs looked

into his face they did not like it. Signy shrank away, saying, "This King has an evil heart and speaks falsely."

Volsung and his eleven sons discussed it together. Siggeir had a great force of men with him, and if they refused to give her he could kill them all and harm their kingdom. Besides they had promised to give Signy when they had sent him a message of welcome. They discussed it together for a long time and at last ten of Signy's brothers said, "Let Signy marry this King. He is not as evil as he seems in her mind." Ten brothers said it. But one spoke out, saying, "We will not give our sister to this evil King. Rather let us all go down fighting with the Hall of the Branstock flaming above our heads."

It was Sigmund, the youngest of the Volsungs, who said this.

But Signy's father said, "We know nothing evil about King Siggeir. Also our word has been given to him. Let him feast with us tonight in the Hall of the Branstock and let Signy leave us with him as his wife." Then they looked at her and they saw Signy's face and it was white and stern. "Let it be as you have said, my father and my brothers," she said. "I will marry King Siggeir and go with him overseas." But Sigmund heard her say to herself, "It is trouble for the Volsungs."

A feast was prepared and King Siggeir and his men came to the Hall of the Branstock. Fires were lit and tables were spread, and great cups of mead went around the guests. In the middle of the feasting a stranger entered the hall. He was taller than the tallest there, and his manner made everyone show him respect. Someone offered him a cup of mead and he drank it. Then, from under the blue cloak that he wore, he drew a sword that made the brightness of the Hall even brighter.

He went to the tree that the Hall was built around, to the Branstock, and he thrust the sword into it. Everyone was silent. Then they heard

the voice of the stranger, a voice that was like a trumpet's call, "The sword is for the hand that can draw it out of the Branstock." Then he went out of the Hall.

Everyone looked at where the sword was placed and saw a wonderful brightness. Everyone wanted to lay hands on the hilt, but Volsung's voice told them to stand still. "It is only right," he said, "that our guest and our son-in-law, King Siggeir, should be the first to put hands on its hilt and try to draw the sword of the stranger out of the Branstock."

King Siggeir went to the tree and grasped the broad hilt. He tried hard to draw out the sword, but all his might could not move it. As he strained himself to draw it and failed, a dark look of anger came into his face.

Then others tried to draw it, the captains who were with King Siggeir, and they, too, failed to move the blade. Then Volsung tried and Volsung could not move it. One after the other, his eleven sons strained to draw out the stranger's sword. At last it came to the turn of the youngest, Sigmund, to try. And when Sigmund laid his hand on the broad hilt and drew it, the sword came with his hand, and once again the Hall was brightened with its marvelous light.

It was an extraordinary sword, a sword made out of better metal and by smiths more cunning than any known. Everyone envied Sigmund because he had won for himself that wonderful weapon.

King Siggeir looked at it with greedy eyes. "I will give you its weight in gold for that sword, good brother," he said.

But Sigmund said to him proudly, "If the sword was for your hand you should have won it. The sword was not for yours, but for a Volsung's hand."

Signy, looking at King Siggeir, saw a look of deeper evil come into his face. She knew that hatred for all the Volsung race was in his heart.

But at the end of the feast she was married to King Siggeir, and the next day she left the Hall of the Branstock and went with him down to where his great painted ship was drawn up on the beach. When they were parting from her father and her brothers, King Siggeir invited them to come to his country, as friends visiting friends and kinsmen visiting kinsmen, and see Signy again. He stood on the beach and would not go on board his ship until each and all of the Volsungs gave their word that they would visit Signy and him in his own land. “When you come,” he said to Sigmund, “be sure you bring with you the mighty sword that you won.”

Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, thought about this as he rode toward the edge of the forest.

The time came for Volsung and his sons to keep the promise they made to King Siggeir. They prepared their ship and then sailed from the land where the Hall of the Branstock stood. They landed on the coast of King Siggeir’s country, and they drew their ship up on the beach and they made their camp there, intending to come to the King’s Hall in the light of day.

But in the half light of dawn someone came to the Volsung ship. A cloak and hood covered the figure, but Sigmund, who was on watch, knew who it was. “Signy!” he said, and Signy asked that her father and her brothers be awakened and she would tell them about a treachery that was planned against them.

“King Siggeir has prepared a great army for your arrival,” she told them. “He hates the Volsungs, the branch as well as the root, and it is his plan to attack you, my father and my brothers, with his great army

and kill you all. He wants to possess Gram, Sigmund's wonderful sword. Therefore, I say to you, Volsungs, draw your ship into the sea and sail away from this treacherous land."

But Volsung, her father, would not listen. "The Volsungs do not run like broken men from a land they have brought their ship to," he said. "We all gave our word that we would visit King Siggeir and visit him we will. And if he is treacherous and attacks us, why we are the unbeaten Volsungs, and we will fight against him and his army and kill him, and carry you back with us to the Hall of the Branstock. The sun has risen now, and we shall go to the Hall."

Signy would have told them of the great army King Siggeir had gathered, but she knew that the Volsungs were never afraid of anything. She said no more, but bowed her head and went back to King Siggeir's hall.

Siggeir knew that Signy had been to warn her father and her brothers. He called the men he had gathered and he posted them cunningly along the way the Volsungs would come. Then he sent one of them to the ship with a message of welcome.

As they left their ship the army of King Siggeir attacked the Volsungs and their followers. The battle that was waged on the beach was very fierce, and many of King Siggeir's fierce fighters went down before the fearless Volsung's company. But at last Volsung himself was killed and his eleven sons were taken captive. Gram, his mighty sword, was taken out of Sigmund's hands.

The eleven Volsung princes were brought before King Siggeir in his hall. Siggeir laughed to see them before him. "You are not in the Hall of the Branstock now, to dishonor me with black looks and scornful words," he said, "and you will be given a harder task than that of drawing a sword out of a tree trunk. Before the sun sets I will see you

cut to pieces with the sword.”

Then Signy who was there stood up with her white face and her wide eyes, and she said, “I do not pray for a longer life for my brothers, for I know well that my prayers would not help them. But don’t you remember the proverb, Siggeir, ‘Sweet to the eye as long as the eye can see’?”

And Siggeir laughed his evil laugh when he heard her. “Yes, my Queen,” he said, “sweet to the eye as long as the eye may see their pain. They shall not die at once or all together. I will let them see each other die.”

So Siggeir gave a new order to his evil soldiers. The order was that the eleven brothers should be taken into the depths of the forest and chained to great beams and left there. This was done with the eleven sons of Volsung.

The next day someone who had watched and who was faithful to Signy came, and Signy said to him, “What has happened to my brothers?”

The watcher said: “A great wolf came to where the chained men are, and fell upon the first of them and devoured him.”

When Signy heard this no tears came from her eyes, but that which was hard around her heart became harder. She said, “Go again, and watch what happens.”

The watcher came the second time and said, “The second of your brothers has been devoured by the wolf.” Signy shed no tears this time either, and again that which was hard around her heart became harder.

Every day the watcher came and he told her what had happened to her

brothers. It came to the time when only one of her brothers was left alive, Sigmund, the youngest.

Then Signy said, “There is something we can do. I have thought of what is to be done. Take a pot of honey to where he is chained and smear Sigmund’s face with the honey.”

The watcher did as Signy told him.

The great wolf came again through the forest to where Sigmund was chained. When she came to him she found the honey on his face. She put out her tongue to lick his face. Then, with his strong teeth Sigmund seized the tongue of the wolf. She fought and she struggled with all her might, but Sigmund did not let go of her tongue. The struggle with the beast broke the beam to which he was chained. Then Sigmund seized the wolf with his hands and tore her jaws apart.

The watcher saw this happen and told Signy. A fierce joy went through her, and she said, “One of the Volsungs lives, and vengeance will be brought upon King Siggeir and on his house.”

Still the watcher stayed in the forest, and he saw where Sigmund built a hidden hut for himself. He often took things from Signy to Sigmund. Sigmund became a hunter and an outlaw, but he did not leave the forest. King Siggeir did not know that one of the Volsungs lived and was near him.

THE STORY OF SIGMUND AND SINFIOTLI

As **Sigurd** rode through the forest he thought about Sigmund, his father, his life and his death, according to what Hiordis, his mother, had told him. Sigmund lived for a long time as a hunter and outlaw, but he never strayed far from the forest that was in King Siggeir's land. He often got a message from Signy. They two, the last of the Volsungs, knew that King Siggeir and his house would have to be destroyed for what he had done to their father and brothers.

Sigmund knew that his sister would send her son to help him. One morning, a boy ten years old came to his hut. He knew that this was one of Signy's sons, and that she wanted him to train him as a warrior worthy of the Volsung.

Sigmund hardly looked or spoke to the lad. He was going hunting, and as he took down his spear from the wall he said, "There is the flour bag, boy. Mix the flour and make the bread, and we will eat when I come back."

When he returned the bread was unmade, and the boy was standing watching the flour bag with wide eyes. "You did not make the bread?" Sigmund said.

"No," said the boy, "I was afraid to go near the bag. Something moved in it."

"You have the heart of a mouse to be so frightened. Go back to your mother and tell her that the stuff for a Volsung warrior is not in you."

When Sigmund said this, the boy went away weeping.

A year later another son of Signy's came. As before Sigmund hardly

looked at or spoke to the boy. He said, “There is the flour bag. Mix the flour and make the bread for when I return.”

When Sigmund came back the bread was unmade. The boy had shrunk away from where the bag was.

“You have not made the bread?” Sigmund said.

“No,” said the boy, “something moved in the bag, and I was afraid.”

“You have the heart of a mouse. Go back to your mother and tell her that there is not the stuff for the making of a Volsung warrior in you.”

And this boy, like his brother, went back weeping.

At that time Signy had no other sons. But at last one was born to her. Him, too, when he was grown, she sent to Sigmund.

“What did your mother say to you?” Sigmund asked this boy when he showed himself at the hut.

“Nothing. She sewed my gloves to my hands and then told me pull them off.”

“And did you?”

“Yes and the skin came with them.”

“And did you weep?”

“A Volsung does not weep over such a thing.”

Sigmund looked at the lad for a long time. He was tall and fair and his eyes had no fear in them.

“What do you want me to do for you?” said the lad.

“There is the flour bag,” Sigmund said. “Mix the flour and make the bread for me for when I return.”

When Sigmund came back the bread was baking on the coals. “What did you do with the flour?” Sigmund asked.

“I mixed it. Something was in the flour, a serpent I think, but I kneaded it with the meal, and now the serpent is baking on the coals.”

Sigmund laughed and threw his arms around the boy. “You will not eat that bread,” he said. “You kneaded a venomous serpent into it.”

The boy’s name was Sinfiotli. Sigmund trained him in the ways of the hunter and the outlaw. Here and there they went, taking vengeance on King Siggeir’s men. The boy was fierce, and he never spoke a word that was false.

One day when Sigmund and Sinfiotli were hunting, they came upon a strange house in the dark wood. When they went inside they found two men lying there deep asleep. On their arms were heavy rings of gold, and Sigmund knew that they were the sons of Kings.

Beside the sleeping men he saw wolf skins, left there as though they had been thrown off. Then Sigmund knew that these men were shape changers and that they were ones who changed their shapes and ranged through the forests as wolves.

Sigmund and Sinfiotli put on the skins that the men had taken off, and when they did this they changed their shapes and became wolves. And as wolves they ranged through the forest, now and then changing their shapes back to those of men. As wolves they fell upon King Siggeir’s men and killed more and more of them.

One day Sigmund said to Sinfiotli: “You are still young and I do not want you to be too rash. If you come upon a company of seven men,

fight them. But if you come on a company greater than seven, raise up your voice as a wolf's cry and bring me to your side."

Sinfliotli promised that he would do this.

One day, as he went through the forest in his wolf's shape, Sigmund heard the din of a struggle and he stopped to listen for Sinfliotli's call. But no call came. Then Sigmund went through the forest in the direction of the struggle. On his way he passed the bodies of eleven killed men. Then he came upon Sinfliotli lying in the undergrowth, his wolf's shape on him, and panting from the battle he had waged.

"You fought eleven men. Why didn't you call to me?" Sigmund said.

"Why should I have called to you? I am not so feeble. I can fight eleven men."

Sigmund was angered by this answer. He looked at Sinfliotli where he lay, and the wicked wolf's nature that was in the skin came over him. He sprang on him, sinking his teeth into Sinfliotli's throat.

Sinfliotli lay gasping near death. Sigmund, knowing the deadly grip that was in those jaws of his, howled his regret.

Then, as he licked the face of his nephew, he saw two weasels meet. They began to fight with each other, and the first one caught the second by the throat, and bit him with his teeth and laid him out as if in death. Sigmund watched the combat to the end. But then the first weasel ran and found leaves of a certain herb and he put them upon the other's wound. The herb cured the wound, and the weasel that was bitten rose up and was well again.

Sigmund went searching for the herb he saw the weasel carry to his friend. As he looked for it he saw a raven with a leaf in her beak. She dropped the leaf as he came to her, and it was the same leaf as the

weasel had brought to his friend. Sigmund took it and laid it on the wound he had made in Sinfiotli's throat, and the wound healed, and Sinfiotli was well once more. They went back to their hut in the forest. The next day they burnt the wolf skins, and they prayed to the Gods that they might never be affected by the wolf's evil nature again. Sigmund and Sinfiotli never changed their shapes again.

THE VOLSUNG'S VENGEANCE AND THE DEATH OF SINFIOTLI

Sinfiotli had come to his full strength and it was time to take vengeance on King Siggeir for the killing of Volsung and the terrible fate he had set for Volsung's ten sons. Sigmund and Sinfiotli put helmets on their heads and took swords in their hands and went to King Siggeir's Hall. They hid behind the casks of ale that were at the entrance and they waited for the soldiers to leave the Hall so that they could fall on King Siggeir and his attendants.

The younger children of King Siggeir were playing in the Hall and one dropped a ball. It went rolling behind the casks of ale. The child peering after the ball saw two men crouching with swords in their hands and helmets on their heads.

The child told a servant who told the King. Then Siggeir arose, and he drew his men around him, and he set them on the men who were hiding behind the barrels. Sigmund and Sinfiotli sprang up and fought against the men of King Siggeir, but they were taken captives.

They could not be killed there and then, for it was unlawful to execute captives after sunset. But despite that, King Siggeir would not leave them above ground. He said that they should be put in a pit, and a mound made over them so that they would be buried alive.

The sentence was carried out. A great stone was put down to divide the pit in two, so that Sigmund and Sinfiotli could hear each other's struggle and not be able to help each other. Everything was done as the King commanded.

But while his servants were putting soil over the pit, someone came,

cloaked and hooded, and dropped something wrapped in straw into the side of the pit where Sinfiotli lay. When the sky was shut out from them with the soil that was put over the pit, Sinfiotli shouted to Sigmund, “I shall not die, for the queen has thrown down to me meat wrapped in a parcel of straw.”

A while afterwards Sinfiotli shouted to Sigmund, “The queen has left a sword in the meat which she threw down to me. It is a mighty sword. I think it is Gram, the sword you told me of.”

“If it is Gram,” Sigmund said, “it is a sword that can cut through this stone. Thrust the blade against the stone and try.”

Sinfiotli thrust the blade against the stone and the blade went through the stone. Then, one on each side, they took hold of the sword and they cut the great stone in two. Afterwards, working together, it was easy to shift the soil. The two came out under the sky.

In front of them was the Hall of King Siggeir. They came to the Hall and they set dry wood around it and they set fire to the wood and made the Hall blaze up. When the hall was in a blaze King Siggeir came to the door and shouted, “Who is it that has set fire to the house of the King?”

Sigmund said, “I, Sigmund, the son of Volsung, that you may pay for your treachery to the Volsungs.”

Seeing Sigmund there with Gram, the great sword, in his hands, Siggeir went back into his Hall. Then Signy appeared with her white face and her stern eyes, and Sigmund called to her, “Come out, come out. Come out of Siggeir’s blazing house and we will go back to the Hall of the Branstock together.”

But Signy said, “Everything is finished now. The vengeance is done

and I have nothing more to keep me in this life. The Volsung race lives on in you, my brother, and that is my joy. I did not marry King Siggeir happily and I didn't live happily with him , but I will die with him now happily.”

She went inside the Hall. Then the flames burst over it and all who were inside perished. Thus the vengeance of the Volsungs was done.

Sigurd thought about what Sigmund, his father, and Sinfiotli, the youth who was his father's kinsman did, as he rode through the forest, and of the things that happened to them after that.

Sigmund and Sinfiotli left King Siggeir's land and came back to the Hall of the Branstock. Sigmund became a great King and Sinfiotli was the Captain of his army.

The story of Sigmund and Sinfiotli goes on to tell how Sigmund married a woman whose name was Borghild, and how Sinfiotli loved a woman who was loved by Borghild's brother. A battle came in which the youths were on opposite sides, and Sinfiotli killed Borghild's brother, and it was in fair combat.

Sinfiotli returned home. To make peace between him and the Queen, Sigmund gave Borghild a great amount of gold as compensation for the loss of her brother. The Queen took it and said, “My brother's worth is judged to be this so let nothing more be said about his killing,” and she welcomed Sinfiotli to the Hall of the Branstock.

But although she appeared friendly to him her heart was set on his destruction.

That night there was a feast in the Hall of the Branstock and Borghild the Queen went to all the guests with a cup of mead in her hand. She came to Sinfiotli and she held the cup to him. “Take this from my

hands, friend of Sigmund,” she said.

But Sinfiotli saw what was in her eyes and he said, “I will not drink from this cup. There is poison in the drink.”

Then, to end the mockery that the Queen would have made of Sinfiotli, Sigmund who was standing by took the cup out of Borghild’s hand. No venom or poison could injure him. He raised the cup to his lips and drank the mead to the last drop.

The Queen said to Sinfiotli, “Must other men finish your drink for you?”

Later in the night she came to him again, with the cup of mead in her hand. She offered it to Sinfiotli, but he looked in her eyes and saw the hatred that was there. “Poison is in the drink,” he said. “I will not take it.”

And again Sigmund took the cup and drank the mead. And again the Queen mocked Sinfiotli.

A third time she came to him. Before she offered the cup she said, “This is someone who fears to take his drink like a man. What a Volsung heart he has!” Sinfiotli saw the hatred in her eyes, and her mockery could not make him take the mead from her. As before Sigmund was standing by. But now he was tired of raising the cup and he said to Sinfiotli, “Pour the drink through your beard.”

He thought that Sigmund meant that he should pour the mead through his lips that were bearded and make trouble no more between him and the Queen. But Sigmund did not mean that. He meant that he should pretend to drink and let the mead run down on the floor. Sinfiotli, not understanding what his uncle meant, took the cup from the Queen and raised it to his lips and drank. As soon as he drank, the venom that

was in the drink went to his heart, and he fell dead in the Hall of the Branstock.

Sigmund was terribly saddened for the death of his kinsman and comrade. He would let no one touch his body. He himself lifted Sinfiotli in his arms and carried him out of the Hall, and through the wood, and down to the seashore. When he came to the shore he saw a boat drawn up with a man on board. Sigmund went up to him and saw that the man was old and strangely tall. "I will take your burden from you," the man said.

Sigmund left the body of Sinfiotli in the boat, thinking to take a place beside it. But as soon as the body was placed in it, the boat went from the land without sail or oars. Sigmund, looking at the old man who stood at the stern, knew that he was not of mortal men, but was Odin All-Father, the giver of the sword Gram.

Then Sigmund went back to his Hall. His Queen died, and in time he married Hiordis, who became the mother of Sigurd. Then Sigurd the Volsung, the son of Sigmund and Hiordis, rode through the forest, the sword Gram by his side, and the Golden Helmet of the Dragon's Hoard above his golden hair.

BRYNHILD IN THE HOUSE OF FLAME

The forest paths led him on and up a mountain side. He came to a summit at last. Hindfell, where the trees fell away, leaving a place open to the sky and the winds. On Hindfell was the House of Flame. Sigurd saw the black and high walls, and all around them was a ring of fire.

As he rode nearer he heard the roar of the rising and circling fire. He sat on Grani, his proud horse, and for a long time he looked at the black walls and the flame that went circling around them.

Then he rode Grani to the fire. Another horse would have been frightened, but Grani remained steady under Sigurd. They came to the wall of fire, and Sigurd, who knew no fear, rode through it.

Then he was in the courtyard of the Hall. There was no sound of another living creature. Sigurd dismounted and told Grani to be still. He opened a door and saw a chamber with wall hangings on which was the pattern of a great tree, a tree with three roots, and the pattern was carried across from one wall to the other. On a couch in the center of the chamber someone lay in sleep. On the head was a helmet and across the chest was a breastplate. Sigurd took the helmet off the head. Then a heap of woman's bright-gleaming hair fell over the couch. This was the maiden that the birds had told him of.

He cut the fastenings of the breastplate with his sword, and he gazed at her for a long time. Her face was Beautiful, but stern. Her arms and hands were beautiful and strong. Her mouth was proud, and over her closed eyes there were strong and beautiful brows.

Her eyes opened, and she turned them and looked at Sigurd. "Who are you who has awakened me?" she said.

“I am Sigurd, the son of Sigmund, of the Volsung race,” he answered.

“And did you ride through the ring of fire to me?”

“Yes I did.”

She knelt on the couch and stretched out her arms to where the light shone. “Hail, Day,” she cried, “and hail, beams that are the sons of Day Night, and daughter of Night, may you look on us with eyes that bless. Hail, Æsir and Asyniur! Hail, fields of Midgard! May you give us wisdom, , and healing power, and grant that nothing untrue or fearful may come near us!”

All this she cried with eyes open wide. They were eyes that had in them all the blue that Sigurd had ever seen: the blue of flowers, the blue of skies, and the blue of battle blades. She turned those great eyes on him and said, “I am Brynhild, once a Valkyrie but now a mortal maiden, one who will know death and all the sorrows that mortal women know. But there are things that I may not know, things that are false.”

She was the bravest and the wisest and the most beautiful maiden in the world. Sigurd knew that it was so. He laid his sword Gram at her feet, and he said her name, “Brynhild.” He told her how he had killed the Dragon, and how he had heard the birds tell of her. She rose from the couch and tied her wonderful hair on her head. He watched her in wonder. When she moved it was as though she floated above the ground.

They sat together and she told him wonderful and secret things. She told him, too, how she was sent by Odin from Asgard to choose the slain for his hall Valhalla, and to give victory to those whom he willed to have it. She told how she had disobeyed the will of All-Father, and how for that she was made an outcast from Asgard. Odin

pricked her flesh with the thorn of the Tree of Sleep so that she would remain in sleep until the one who was the bravest of mortal men should waken her. Whoever would break the fastenings of the breastplate would take out the Thorn of Sleep. “Odin granted me this,” she said, “that as a mortal maid I should marry no one but the bravest in the world. And so that no one but him could come to me, All-Father put the ring of fire round where I lay in sleep. And it is you, Sigurd, son of Sigmund, who has come to me. You are the bravest and I think you are the most beautiful too, like Tyr, the God who wields the sword.”

She told him that she must marry whoever rode through the fire and claimed her as his wife.

They talked to each other fondly and the day flowed by them. Then Sigurd heard Grani, his horse, neigh for him again and again. He cried to Brynhild: “Let me go from the gaze of your eyes. I am that one who is to have the greatest name in the world. I have not yet made my name as great as my father and my father’s father made their names great. I have overcome King Lygni, and I have killed Fafnir the Dragon, but that is little. I want to make my name the greatest in the world, and endure all that is to be endured in making it so. Then I will come back to you in the House of Flame.”

Brynhild said to him, “You speak well. Make your name great, and endure what you have to endure in making it so. I will wait for you knowing that no one but Sigurd will be able to pass through the fire that guards where I live.”

They gazed into each other’s eyes and said little. Then they held each other’s hands in farewell, promising each other that they would take no other man or maiden for their mate. And for a sign of their vow Sigurd took the ring that was on his finger and placed it on Brynhild’s

. It was Andvari's ring.

SIGURD AT THE HOUSE OF THE NIBELUNGS

He left Hindfell and he came to a kingdom that was ruled over by a people that were called the Nibelungs as Sigurd's people were called the Volsungs. Giuki was the name of the King of that land.

Giuki and his Queen and all their sons gave a great welcome to Sigurd when he came to their hall, because he looked like someone who could win the name of being the world's greatest hero. Sigurd went to war beside the King's sons, Gunnar and Högni, and the three made great names for themselves, but Sigurd's shone high above the others.

When they came back from that war there were great rejoicings in the hall of the Nibelungs, and Sigurd's heart was filled with friendship for all the Nibelung race. He was close to the King's sons, Gunnar and Högni, he swore oaths of brotherhood with them. Henceforth they would be like family. King Giuki had a stepson named Guttorm and he was not bound in the oath that bound Sigurd and the others in brotherhood.

After the war they had waged Sigurd spent a whole winter in the hall of the Nibelungs. His heart was full of memories of Brynhild and of a desire to ride to her in the House of Flame and to take her with him to the kingdom that King Giuki would have given him. But he still would not go back to her, for he had sworn to give his brethren further help.

One day, as he rode by himself, he heard birds talk to each other and he understood the words they were saying. One said, "There is Sigurd who wears the marvelous helmet that he took out of Fafnir's hoard." The other bird said, "He doesn't know that with that helmet he can

change his shape as Fafnir changed his shape, and make him look like this creature or that creature, or this man or that man.” The third bird said, “He doesn’t know that the helmet can do anything so wonderful for him.”

He rode back to the hall of the Nibelungs, and at supper he told them what he had heard the birds say. He showed them the marvelous helmet. Also he told them how he had killed Fafnir the Dragon, and of how he had won the mighty hoard for himself. His two sworn brothers who were there rejoiced that he had such wonderful possessions.

But more precious than the hoard and more wonderful than the helmet was the memory of Brynhild that he had. But he said nothing about this.

Grimhild was the name of the Queen. She was the mother of Gunnar and Högni and their half-brother Guttorm. She and the King had one daughter whose name was Gudrun. Now Grimhild was one of the wisest of women, and she knew when she looked at him that Sigurd was the world’s greatest warrior. She wanted him to belong to the Nibelungs, not only by the oaths of brotherhood he had sworn with Gunnar and Högni, but by other ties. When she heard of the great hoard that was his she had a greater wish and will that he should be one with the Nibelungs. She looked on the helmet of gold and on the great arm ring that he wore, and she made it her heart’s purpose that Sigurd should marry Gudrun, her daughter. But neither Sigurd nor the maiden Gudrun knew of Grimhild’s plan.

The Queen, watching Sigurd closely, knew that he had someone in his heart that stopped him from seeing Gudrun’s loveliness. She had knowledge of spells and secret brews (she was of the race of Borghild whose potion had destroyed Sinfliotli’s life) and she knew that she could make a potion that would destroy the memory Sigurd held.

She mixed the potion. Then one night when there was feasting in the hall of the Nibelungs, she gave the cup that held the potion into the hands of Gudrun and told her carry it to Sigurd.

Sigurd took the cup out of the hands of the fair Nibelung maiden and he drank the potion. When he had drunk it he put the cup down and he stood amongst the feasters like a man in a dream. And like a man in a dream he went into his chamber, and for a day and a night afterwards he was silent and his mind was in a fog. When he rode out with Gunnar and Högni they would say to him, “What is it you have lost, brother?” Sigurd could not tell them. But what he had lost was all memory of Brynhild the Valkyrie in the House of Flame.

He saw Gudrun and it was as though he looked at her for the first time. The long tresses of her hair; were soft as were her hands. Her eyes were like wood flowers, and her ways and her speech were gentle. Yet she was noble in her bearing as a Princess who would come into a kingdom. From the first time she had seen him on Grani, his proud horse, and with his golden helmet above his golden hair, Gudrun had loved Sigurd.

In the season when the wild swans came to the lake Gudrun went down to watch them build their nests. While she was there Sigurd rode through the pines. He saw her, and her beauty made the whole place change. He stopped his horse and listened to her voice as she sang to the wild swans, the song that Völund made for Alvit, his swan bride.

Sigurd’s heart was no longer empty of memory. It was filled with the memory of Gudrun as he saw her by the lake when the wild swans were building their nests. Then he watched her in the hall, sitting with her mother embroidering, or serving her father or her brothers, and tenderness for the maiden kept growing in his heart.

A day came when he asked Gunnar and Högni, his sworn brothers, for Gudrun. They were glad. They brought him before Giuki the King, and Grimhild the Queen. It seemed as if they had cast off all trouble and care and entered into the prime of their life and power, so greatly did the King and the Queen rejoice at Sigurd's becoming one with the Nibelungs through his marriage with Gudrun.

When Gudrun heard that Sigurd had asked for her, she said to the Queen, "Oh, my mother, your wisdom should have strengthened me to bear such joy. How can I show him that he is so dear to me? But I shall try not to show it, for he might think that there is no sense in me. So great a warrior would not care for such love. I want to be with him as a battle maiden."

Sigurd and Gudrun were married and all the kingdom that the Nibelungs ruled over rejoiced. Queen Grimhild thought that though the effect of the potion she gave would wear away, his love for Gudrun would forever fill his heart, and that no other memory would be able to find a place there.

HOW BRYNHILD WAS WON FOR GUNNAR

Now that Sigurd had married Gudrun he was joined to the Nibelungs. He brought the hoard that was in Fafnir's cave and he left it in their treasure house. He went to his foster father's kingdom again, and saw King Alv and Hiordis, his mother. But he had no memory of the House of Flame, or of Brynhild, who waited there for him.

King Giuki died, and Gunnar, Sigurd's sworn brother, became King. His mother wanted him to marry, but Gunnar told her he had seen no suitable maiden.

When Sigurd and he were together Gunnar would talk about a maiden far away, that he often thought about. One day when Sigurd pressed him to tell who this maiden was, he spoke of one who the wisest of the poets talked about, a maiden in a Hall with a flame around it, a maiden named Brynhild who was guarded by a ring of fire.

Sigurd laughed to think that his shrewd brother was fascinated by someone who he had only heard of. But if he was mesmerized by stories about her, why shouldn't he go and marry her? So Sigurd said. Then Gunnar asked Sigurd if he would help him to win her? Sigurd took Gunnar's hand and swore that he would.

So Gunnar , Högni and Sigurd started off for Hindfell,. They rode on until they came in sight of the black walls with the rising and circling fire around them. Sigurd had no memory of the place. With the flame of eagerness on his face Gunnar went forward to ride through the ring of fire. He rode his horse Goti, near the flame, but the horse would not go through it. Then Gunnar thought that, mounted on Grani, Sigurd's horse, he could ride through the ring of fire. He mounted Grani and

came near to the flaring wall. But Grani, knowing that the one who rode him was afraid of the fire, reared up and would not go through it. Grani would only go through the flames with Sigurd on his back.

After they had considered it for a long time Högni the Wise said, “There is a way to win Brynhild, and that is for Sigurd to change shapes, using the magic of his helmet with Gunnar. Then Sigurd could ride Grani through the wall of flame and come to Brynhild in Gunnar’s shape.”

When Högni the Wise said this, and when he saw his sworn brother’s gaze fixed on him in pleading, Sigurd had to agree to ride through the flame and come to Brynhild in the way he said. So by the magic of his helmet he changed shapes with Gunnar. Then he mounted Grani and rode to the wall of flame. Grani, knowing that the one he carried was without fear, rode through the flaring fire. Then Sigurd came into the courtyard of the House of Flame. He dismounted from Grani, and he told his horse to be still.

He went inside the Hall and saw someone with a bow in her hands shooting at a target. She turned to him, and he saw a beautiful and stern face, with wonderful, bright gleaming hair and eyes that were like stars. He thought that the arrow in her hands had been shot through him. But it was not so. Brynhild threw down the bow and came up to him with that walk of hers that was like she was floating above the ground. When she came near and looked at him she uttered a strange cry.

“Who are you?” she said. “Who are you who has come to me through the wall of fire?”

“Gunnar, son of Giuki, of the race of the Nibelungs,” Sigurd said.

“Are you the bravest one in the world?” she asked.

“I have ridden through the wall of fire to come to you,” Sigurd answered.

“He who has come through that wall of fire may claim me,” Brynhild said. “It is written in the runes, and it must be so. But I thought there was only one who would come to me through it.” She looked at him, and her eyes had a flame of anger. “Oh, I want to fight you with warrior weapons,” she cried. Then Sigurd felt her strong hands on him, and he knew that she was trying to throw him.

They wrestled, and each was so strong that none could move the other. They wrestled, Sigurd the first of heroes, and Brynhild, the Valkyrie. Sigurd got her hand in his in the fight. There was a ring on that hand and Sigurd bent back the finger and pulled it off.

It was Andvari’s ring, the ring he had placed on her finger. When the ring was taken off it, Brynhild sank down on her knees.

Then Sigurd lifted her in his arms and carried her to where Grani, his horse, was waiting. He lifted her across his horse, and he mounted behind her and again he rode through the wall of flame. Högni and Gunnar were waiting, Gunnar in Sigurd’s shape. Brynhild did not look at them, but covered her face with her hands. Then Sigurd took back his own shape, and he rode in front of Gunnar and Högni to the hall of the Nibelungs.

He went inside, and found Gudrun, his wife, playing with Sigmund, his little son, and he sat beside her and he told her what had happened, how, for the sake of the sworn brotherhood, he had won Brynhild the Valkyrie for Gunnar, and how he had fought with her and had overcome her, taken off her finger the ring that he now wore on his own.

Even as he spoke to his wife the potion that Gudrun’s mother had

given him was wearing off, and he had memories of going to the House of Flame on a day that was not this day, and of riding through the wall of fire in his own shape. And again, as on the night when he drank the potion that Queen Grimhild made, his mind became foggy. He stood watching his child as he played, and his wife as she worked at her embroidery, and he was like a man in a dream.

While he was standing there Gunnar and Högni came into the hall of the Nibelungs bringing Brynhild with them. Gudrun rose up to welcome her brother's bride. Then Sigurd looked at Brynhild and then he remembered everything. When he remembered a mighty sigh rose from his heart which burst the links of the armor that was across his heart.

THE DEATH OF SIGURD

It happened one day that Brynhild, Gunnar's wife, and now a Queen, was with Sigurd's wife, bathing in a river. They were not often together. Brynhild was the proudest of women, and often she treated Gudrun with disdain. As they were bathing together, Gudrun, shaking out her hair, cast some drops on Brynhild. Brynhild went away from Gudrun. Sigurd's wife, not knowing that Brynhild was angry with her, went after her up the stream.

"Why do you go so far up the river, Brynhild?" Gudrun asked.

"So that you won't shake your hair over me," answered Brynhild.

Gudrun stood still while Brynhild went up the river. "Why do you speak like that to me, sister?" Gudrun cried.

She remembered that from the first Brynhild had been haughty with her, often speaking to her with harshness and bitterness. She did not know what reason Brynhild had for this.

It was because Brynhild loved Sigurd, the one who had ridden through the fire for the first time, had awakened her by breaking the binding of her breastplate and so drawing out of her flesh the thorn of the Tree of Sleep. She had given him her love when she awakened. But he, as she thought, had forgotten her easily, giving his love to this other maiden. Brynhild, with her Valkyrie's pride, was left with a mighty anger in her heart.

"Why do you speak to me like that, Brynhild?" Gudrun asked.

"It would be bad indeed if drops from your hair fell on someone who is so much higher than you, someone who is King Gunnar's wife,"

Brynhild answered.

“You are married to a King, but not to one more courageous than my lord,” Gudrun said.

“Gunnar is more courageous. Why do you compare Sigurd with him?” Brynhild said.

“He killed the Dragon Fafnir, and won for himself Fafnir’s hoard,” said Gudrun.

“Gunnar rode through the ring of fire. Mayhap you will tell us that Sigurd did the same,” said Brynhild.

“Yes,” said Gudrun, now angry. “It was Sigurd and not Gunnar who rode through the ring of fire. He rode through it in Gunnar’s shape, and he took the ring off your finger. Look, it is now on mine.”

Gudrun held out her hand which Andvari’s ring was on. Then Brynhild knew, all at once, that what Gudrun said was true. It was Sigurd that rode through the ring of fire the second as well as the first time. It was he who had struggled with her, taking the ring off her hand and claiming her for a bride, not for himself but for another, and out of disdain.

She had been won falsely and she, one of Odin’s Valkyries, had been married to someone who was not the bravest hero in the world, and she who could not accept untruth had been deceived. She was silent now, and all the pride that was in her turned to hatred of Sigurd.

She went to Gunnar, her husband, and she told him that she was so deeply shamed that she could never be happy in his Hall again and that he would never see her drinking wine, or embroidering with golden threads, or hear her speaking words of kindness. When she said this to him she tore what she was weaving, and she wept aloud so

that everyone in the hall heard her, and were amazed to hear the proud Queen cry.

Then Sigurd came to her, and he offered in amends the whole hoard of Fafnir. He told her how forgetfulness of her had come over him, and he begged her to forgive him for winning her in falseness. But she answered him, "Too late Sigurd. Now I have only rage in my heart."

When Gunnar came she told him she would forgive him, and love him as she had not loved him before, if he would kill Sigurd. But Gunnar would not kill him, although Brynhild's passion moved him greatly, since Sigurd was a sworn brother of his.

Then she went to Högni and asked him to kill Sigurd, telling him that the whole of Fafnir's hoard would belong to the Nibelungs if Sigurd were dead. But Högni would not kill him, since Sigurd and he were sworn brothers.

There was one who had not sworn brotherhood with Sigurd. He was Guttorm, Gunnar's and Högni's half-brother. Brynhild went to Guttorm. He would not kill Sigurd, but Brynhild found that he was weak willed. Then, she would try to persuade Guttorm to kill Sigurd. Her mind was fixed that he and she would no longer be in the world of men.

She made a dish of madness for Guttorm, serpent's venom and wolf's flesh mixed, and when he had eaten it Guttorm was crazed. Then he listened to Brynhild's words. She commanded him to go into the room where Sigurd slept and stab him through the body with a sword.

Guttorm did this but, before Sigurd died, he took Gram, his great sword, and threw it at Guttorm cutting him in two.

Brynhild, knowing what had been done, went outside and came to

where Grani, Sigurd's proud horse, was standing. She stayed there with her arms across Grani's neck, leaning across the horse that was a descendant of Odin's horse. Grani stood listening for some sound. He heard the cries of Gudrun over Sigurd, and then his heart burst and he died.

They carried Sigurd out of the Hall and Brynhild went to where they placed him. She took a sword and put it through her own heart. Thus Brynhild, who had been made a mortal woman for her disobedience to the will of Odin, and who became a mortal's wife by deceit died.

They took Sigurd and his horse Grani, and his helmet and his golden war gear and put it all on a great painted ship. They had to leave Brynhild beside him, Brynhild with her wonderful hair and her stern and beautiful face. They left the two together and launched the ship onto the sea. When the ship was on the water they set fire to it, and Brynhild once again lay in the flames.

So Sigurd and Brynhild went together to join Baldur and Nanna in Hela's home.

Gunnar and Högni came to dread the evil that was in the hoard. They took the gleaming and glittering mass and took it to the river along which, ages before, Hreidmar had his smithy and the Dwarf Andvari his cave. From a rock in the river they hurled the gold and jewels into the water and the hoard of Andvari sank for ever beneath the waves. Then the River Maidens had possession again of their treasure. But they wouldn't guard it and sing over it for long because now the season that was called the Fimbul Winter was coming over the earth, and Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods, was coming to the inhabitants of Asgard.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Snow fell on the four corners of the world. Icy winds blew from every side and the sun and the moon were hidden by storms. It was the Fimbul Winter. No spring came and no summer; no autumn brought harvest or fruit, and winter became endless.

There was three years' of winter. The first was called the Winter of Winds. Storms blew and snows drove down and there were great frosts. The children of men could hardly stay alive in that terrible winter.

The second winter was called the Winter of the Sword and those who were left alive amongst men robbed and killed for what was left to feed on. Brother attacked brother and killed him, and all over the world there were mighty battles.

The third winter was called the Winter of the Wolf. Then the ancient witch who lived in Jarnvid, the Iron Wood, fed the Wolf Managarm on unburied men and on the corpses of those who fell in battle. The wolf that was to be the devourer of Mani, the Moon grew and flourished. The Champions in Valhalla would find their seats splashed with the blood that Managarm spilled from his jaws. This was a sign to the Gods that the time of the last battle was approaching.

The rusty red cock of Hell crowed far down in the earth beside Hela's home and his crowing made a stir in the lower worlds. In Jötunheim Fialar, the crimson cock crowed, and at his crowing the Giants aroused themselves. High up in Asgard the golden cock Gullinkambir crowed, and at his crowing the Champions in Valhalla got ready.

Deep down in the earth, Garm the hound with bloody mouth barked. It was, barking in Gnipa's Cave. The Dwarfs who heard groaned in front

of their doors of stone. The tree Ygdrassil moaned in all its branches. There was a tearing noise as the Giants moved their ship and there was a trampling sound as the armies of Muspelheim gathered their horses.

But Jötunheim and Muspelheim and Hell waited nervously. Perhaps Fenrir the Wolf might not break the chains which the Gods had bound him with. Without his being released the Gods would not be destroyed. Then the breaking of the rock was heard as Fenrir broke loose. For the second time the Hound Garm barked in Gnipa's Cave.

Then the galloping of the horses of the riders of Muspelheim was heard; then the laughter of Loki was heard; then the blowing of Heimdall's horn was heard; then the opening of Valhalla's five hundred and forty doors, as eight hundred Champions made ready to pass through each door was heard.

Odin met with Mimir's head. He drew it up from the waters of the Well of Wisdom, and by the power of the runes he knew he made the head speak to him. Where would be the best place for the Æsir and the Vanir and the Einherjar, who were the Champions of Midgard, to meet, and how best could they fight against the forces of Muspelheim and Jötunheim and Hell? The head of Mimir advised Odin to meet them on Vigard Plain and to wage there such a war that the powers of evil would be destroyed forever, even though his own world would be destroyed with them.

The riders of Muspelheim reached Bifröst, the Rainbow Bridge. Now would they storm the City of the Gods and burn it down. But Bifröst broke under the weight of the riders of Muspelheim, and they did not reach the City of the Gods.

Jörmungand, the serpent that encircles the world, reared itself up from the sea. The waters flooded the lands, and what was left of of the

world's inhabitants was swept away. That mighty flood floated Naglfar, the Ship of Nails that the Giants had been building for so long, and floated the ship of Hell also. With Hrymer the Giant steering it, Naglfar sailed against the Gods, with all the powers of Jötunheim aboard. Loki steered the ship of Hell with the Wolf Fenrir on it to the place of the last battle.

Since Bifröst was broken, the Æsir and the Vanir, the Asyniur and the Vana, the Einherjar and the Valkyries rode downward to Vigard through the waters of Thund. Odin rode at the head of his Champions. His helmet was gold and in his hand was his spear Gungnir. Thor and Tyr were with him.

In Mirkvid, the Dark Forest, the Vanir stood against the army of Muspelheim. From the broken end of the Rainbow Bridge the riders came, all flashing and flaming, with fire in front of them and behind them. Niörd was there with Skadi, his Giant wife, fierce in her war dress; Freya was there also, and Frey had Gerda beside him as a battle maiden. Surtur's sword flashed terribly bright. No sword ever owned was as bright as his except the sword that Frey had given to Skirnir. Frey and Surtur fought and Frey perished in that battle, but he would not have died if he had had in his hand his own magic sword.

For the third time, Garm, the hound with blood upon his jaws, barked. He had broken loose on the world, and he rushed toward Vigard Plain, where the Gods had assembled their powers. Garm barked loudly. The Eagle Hræsvelgur screamed on the edge of heaven. Then the skies were covered, and the tree Ygdrassil was shaken to its roots.

The ship of Jötunheim, the ship of Hell, the riders of Muspelheim, and Garm, the hound with blood on his jaws reached the place where the Gods awaited them. Then the serpent Jörmungand came out of the sea that now surrounded the plain of Vigard.

What did Odin say to the Gods and to the Champions who surrounded him? “We will give our lives and let our world be destroyed, but we will battle so that these evil powers will not live after us.” Out of Hell’s ship sprang Fenrir the Wolf. His mouth gaped, his lower jaw hung against the earth, and his upper jaw scraped the sky. Odin All-Father fought against the Wolf. Thor could not help him, because Thor had to fight Jörmungand, the monstrous serpent.

Odin was killed By Fenrir the Wolf but the younger Gods were now advancing to the battle and Vidar, the Silent God, came face to face with Fenrir. He laid his foot on the Wolf’s lower jaw, that foot that had on the sandal made of all the scraps of leather that shoemakers had laid by for him, and with his hands he seized the upper jaw and tore his throat. So Fenrir died; the fiercest of all the enemies of the Gods.

Jörmungand, the monstrous serpent, would have overwhelmed all with the venom he was ready to pour forth but Thor sprang forward and crushed him with a stroke of his hammer Miölnir. Then Thor stepped back nine paces. But the serpent blew his venom over him, and blinded and choked and burnt, Thor, the World’s Defender, who then died.

Loki sprang from his ship and fought with Heimdall, the Warder of the Rainbow Bridge and the Watcher for the Gods. Loki killed Heimdall and was killed by him

Tyr, the God who had sacrificed his sword hand for the binding of the Wolf fought bravely. He fought, bravely and many of the powers of evil died at his strong left hand. But Garm, the hound with bloody jaws, killed Tyr.

Then the riders of Muspelheim came down onto the field. All their weapons were bright and gleaming. In front of them and behind them

went wasting fires. Surtur hurled fire on the earth. The tree Ygdrassil caught fire and burned in all its great branches. The World Tree was destroyed in the blaze but the terrible fire that Surtur brought on the earth destroyed him and all his army.

The Wolf Hati caught up to Sol, the Sun and the Wolf Managarm seized Mani, the Moon. They devoured them so stars fell, and darkness came down on the world.

The seas flowed over the burnt and wasted earth and the skies were dark above the sea, for Sol and Mani were no more. But at last the seas drew back and earth appeared again, green and beautiful. A new Sun and a new Moon appeared in the heavens, one a daughter of Sol and the other a daughter of Mani. No grim wolves chased after them.

Four of the younger Gods stood on the highest of the world's peaks. They were Vidar and Vali, the sons of Odin, and Modi and Magni, the sons of Thor. Modi and Magni found Miölnir, Thor's hammer, and with it they killed the monsters that still raged through the world, the Hound Garm and the Wolf Managarm.

Vidar and Vali found in the grass the golden tablets on which were inscribed the runes of wisdom of the elder Gods. The runes told them of a heaven that was above Asgard, of Gimli, that was untouched by Surtur's fire. Vili and Ve, Will and Holiness, ruled in it. Baldur and Hödur came from Hela's home, and the Gods sat on the peak together and spoke to each other, remembering the secrets and the events they had known before Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods.

Deep in a wood two of human kind were left. The fire of Surtur did not touch them. They slept, and when they awakened the world was green and beautiful again. They were a woman and a man, Lif and Lifthrasir. They walked over the world, and from them and from their children came the men and women who spread themselves over the

earth.